

How To Talk To Kids About Mental Health : The Dont's

If you notice a change in your child's behaviour or that they seem to be struggling, there are many ways you can offer support. Here are things to avoid when talking to them



Don't Take It Personally

It can be difficult for children to share their feelings with you. They may be scared of an adverse reaction or unsure how to talk about difficult subject matters.

Don't Pressure Them Into Talking

If you create a comfortable and safe environment for your child, they will open up to you in time. Pressuring them will not help.



Don't Judge Them Or Punish Them

When your child trusts you enough to talk about their mental health, do not judge or punish them. This will discourage them from opening up to you again, making it difficult for them to get the help they need.

Don't Doubt Their Experience

A common reaction for parents is to tell their children that their issues are "not a big deal", and that childhood and adolescence are the easiest stages of life. This invalidates their struggle.



Don't Ignore Small Issues

It is easy to feel that small issues will pass in time, but sometimes they are indicators of underlying issues. Look out for recurring problems.

Don't Try To 'Fix' It Yourself

If a child is struggling with school or their peers, parents often try to solve the issue by inserting themselves in the situation.

This is usually counterproductive as children are more likely to address the issue when allowed to think of the solution independently.



What not to say :

If someone is bothering you, just tell me. I'll handle them for you.

I'm your parent, you have to tell me what the problem is right now.

You're lying, I don't think that's what really happened.

Just wait until you're an adult - that's when the real problems start.

If you keep acting like this, I will punish you.

You're just a kid, these issues aren't a big deal. Your childhood is the best time of your life! Just enjoy it.

Just relax!