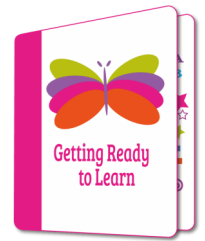


How to Support your CHILD'S Mental Health



1. Make sure your child gets enough sleep. Children who have good sleep habits have better attention, behaviour, memory and overall better mental and physical health. A pre-school child needs between 11 to 12 hours sleep a night.
2. Encourage kids to get outdoors in nature. Being outdoors in green spaces reduces stress and tension and makes us happier.
3. Ensure your child gets plenty of exercise. Guidelines from the NHS suggest that children under 5 should be active for at least 3 hours each day. Regular exercise will boost their mental and emotional health.
4. Encourage your child to be creative. Creative play allows your child to try out new ideas and can be a great opportunity to encourage new ways of thinking and problem-solving.
5. Encourage them to be helpful and do things for others. They could give away outgrown toys and clothes, make buns for friends and family.
6. Give them lots of opportunities to play. It is absolutely essential for a child's happiness. Playing is a great way of helping children to stay not just physically happy and healthy but it can contribute towards good mental health too. Playing is also important for children as it teaches them to be creative, learn problem-solving skills and learn self-control.



How you can support Your children's emotional understanding?

- Ask your children how they are feeling and try to notice their feelings throughout the day. e.g. when a child has a concern or problem, ask questions or make comments like, "It looks like you might be feeling sad about something."



Make your own simple flashcards—start with happy and sad. These cards can be used to open up conversations with your child.

<https://www.teatimemonkeys.com/emoji-emotions-flashcards/>



Play a Game—get a ball, throw it and say "When I'm sad, I" and take it turns to answer. Answers could include—throw things, shout and cry. Vary questions. Help them think of better solutions.



Look at photos of people you know, or look at pictures in a book and ask you child to tell you a story about how they are feeling. It will help their imagination too.

- Talk with children throughout the day about emotions. For example, when reading books to children, label the characters' emotions and point out the facial expression and body language of the characters in books.
- Talk about how you are feeling during the day. For example, "I am feeling happy today because today we are going to the park!" or "I am feeling sad today because we are not able to visit Granny." Encourage your child to look at your face and your body language as you say, "How can you tell I'm feeling happy today?"
- Talk about how people might feel in different situations to help children understand that all people have feelings. For example, when reading a book, ask questions like, "Why do you think she felt that way? How could you tell she was feeling sad?"
- Label feelings for children when they do not have the words to express how they are feeling. For example, "It looks like you might think that you won't get a turn on the swings today. That feeling is called worried. Let's figure out a plan to help you with the problem if you are feeling worried."
- When your child experiences a strong emotions, it's important to support their efforts to calm down so they will be better able to talk about how they are feeling. After children learn how to calm down and talk about how they are feeling, they can then begin to problem solve.

Help support your child to manage their emotions through these calming techniques:

- BLOWING BUBBLES—this can have a very calming effect on children as blowing encourages your child to practice deep breathing.
- PLAYING WITH PLAYDOUGH—engages the children for a long time. Include some calming smells such as lavender into the playdough.
- HOLD TIGHT—give your child a squeezey ball or cuddly toy as this can help your child release all that tension.
- PLAY SOME MUSIC—particularly calm music. Get your child to sing along as this can soothe and release tension
- TALK A WALK OUTDOORS—green spaces can be particularly calming
- HUG IT OUT—give your child a comforting hug as this will help your child feel safe and loved.
- STRETCH IT OUT—help your child to stretch their arms above their head, stand on their tip-toes. Help your child stretch as tall as possible, then flop back down. Show them how to stretch out like a cat or reach up to the sky
- CLOUD SPOTTING—lie on the ground with your child and encouraging them to stay as still as possible while you watch the clouds go by. See if your child can spot any shapes among the clouds.
- RELAX WITH CBEBBIES RADIO—relax and listen to calming music. CBeebies radio has relaxing sounds such as waves,

Children who are able to problem solve are better able to learn and to form friendships. As young children begin to problem solve on their own it helps build their confidence and sense of “I can do it!” attitude.

Help support your child to develop problem-solving skills:

- Help children talk about their problems.** For example, after your child has calmed down, say “You took a breath and calmed down, now you can tell me how you are feeling and what the problem is. Then we can figure out how to solve the problem.”
- Model feeling talk and problem solving throughout the day.** For example, “I think I need to take a deep breath and calm down. I’m feeling frustrated because I can’t find the book I was going to read to you. I’ll have to think where I put it. I had it when I walked into the kitchen. If I go into the kitchen, maybe I’ll find it.”
- Encourage children to share their feelings with each other.** For example, when problems arise, encourage children to talk with each other about their feelings and about the problem.
- Help children understand that all feelings are ok, but not all behaviours are ok.** For example, “It is ok to feel frustrated when you have to wait your turn to get on the slide but it is not ok to push your friend.”
- Be a cheerleader for your child when they are problem solving!** For example, “Jack you calmed down and told Katie how you were feeling. Then you talked to Katie about how to solve the problem so you could both play with the blocks. You were both great problem solvers!” Be specific when offering praise to children about their problem-solving efforts.



Pre-schoolers learn best when they are given lots of opportunities to solve problems that are relevant to them:

1. Provide opportunities for them to investigate, give them magnets, torches, play in water with funnels etc
2. Get your child to think creatively by using items in new ways such as—piece of string can be used to measure, can be used to make pictures with paint, or play dough, it could be used to create jewellery for toys, a web for spiderman, etc.
3. Promote brainstorming by asking lots of question - “What can you do with a ...? How many ways can you ...?”
4. Allow your child to find their own solutions. Offer help when they become frustrated but don’t offer the complete solution.
5. Use books to show your child how the characters in their favourite stories have solved their own problems.

