

MAY 2023

Let's Talk

A Message from Our Site-Based Therapists



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

By CAC Site-Based Therapist Cyndee

As a mental health professional, working with children, teens, and their families, I often like to share this quote with caregivers: “When our little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it’s our job to show our calm, not join their chaos. – L.R. Knost”

With May being National Mental Health Awareness Month, “let’s talk” about children and their mental health; warning signs to look for indicating your child may be in distress, and ways you as their parent or caregiver can help support them. If you saw someone with a broken leg, would you tell them to “suck it up, and keep walking”? Of course not. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and it’s no different in its need for treatment. As parents or caregivers, it may be difficult to determine if your child needs help, or to accept they are struggling; but please don’t let that stop you from seeking help. Mental health is treatable, and young people can, and do, go on to live productive and successful lives. With the right support and care, your child’s mental health can become their

MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

Become a member of the CAC Monthly Giving Society, Rooted in Hope today!

You can help grow programs like therapy services at the Madison County Child Advocacy Center by making monthly contributions. Rooted in Hope donations help give hope and healing to the children and families who utilize the Center throughout the year. Learn more about our Rooted in Hope Monthly Giving Society by visiting our website, madco-cac.org



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"superpower"; because if they can learn how to navigate that, then there's nothing in life they cannot overcome. Since children will often show you before they tell you that they are struggling; here are some of the warning signs to look for that may indicate your child is in distress:

- Significant changes in eating, sleeping, grooming, and hygiene.
- A persistent negative mood or attitude, or frequent explosive outbursts.
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities or hobbies.
- Frequent somatic complaints like headaches, stomachaches, or excessive fatigue.
- Withdrawing from, or avoiding, social interactions with family and friends.
- Significant changes in academic performance, or school avoidance.
- Verbalizing thoughts of harm to self or others, or feeling hopeless.
- Difficulty participating in age-appropriate activities or task completion.
- Lack of self-care, or lost interest in grooming and hygiene.
- New or unusual thoughts, beliefs, or behaviors may be noted.
- Engaging in risky behaviors such as substance use, sexually acting out, or running away.
- Deliberate disobedience and opposition to an authority figure.

How can you help support your child's mental health as a parent or caregiver?

- Don't be afraid to reach out to your child's healthcare provider for help and referrals.
- Let your child know that it's okay to ask for help and that you will help them receive it.
- Talk to others who interact with your child on a regular basis to get other perspectives.
- Encourage your child to share about their day, and how it made them feel.
- Take interest in the things they love and learn about them, let them teach you.
- Encourage them to connect and build positive social relations with others.
- Create a time, or plan an activity, where you can spend 1:1 time with them.



- If your child expresses a worry or concern, help them find ways to manage it.
- Let them know when you see them make positive choices and use healthy coping skills.
- Make sure they are getting enough sleep and maintaining adequate nutrition intake.
- Try to create and maintain a daily routine and provide structure into their days.
- Encourage regular exercise, play, and physical activity to help release stress.

- Model good habits to them and admit when you make mistakes. They are watching you.
- Limit their electronic time and social media use and let them see you take breaks from it too.
- Educate yourself about different sites, so that you can be aware of what they may be exposed to.
- Encourage real-life connections with their friends, peers, and family members.

When exploring treatment options, it is always a good idea to begin with your child's primary healthcare provider, because they likely will have a history with your child and can evaluate any needs to be addressed. Seeking out the help of a counselor or therapist can help your child learn how to identify and express emotions, challenge negative thoughts, and learn positive coping and problem-solving skills. Medication can also be considered as part of a treatment plan if it's under the direct care of a physician who can explain both risks and benefits and help monitor its effectiveness. If your child has a mental health condition, they may also be eligible to receive accommodations in the classroom. If your child ever talks about wanting to hurt themselves, please don't leave them alone. Take them to an ER where they can receive a mental health evaluation, or if you are concerned about safety during transport, it's okay to reach out to your local first responders for assistance in getting them the help they need. Children and teens struggling with mental health are fighting a battle they never asked for so, let's join them on that battlefield and help them win this war.



We can all help prevent suicide. The **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States. By calling or texting **988**, you'll connect with mental health professionals with the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.



The green ribbon is the international symbol for mental health awareness. Wearing green, in particular a green ribbon, is an important way to show your support and ally-ship of mental health. It can show your colleagues, friends or simply those you walk past that you care about their mental health.



Celebrating 20 years of hope and healing for child abuse victims and their families.

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