

Grades
K-5

Parents have an influence over the

way children begin to understand and express their emotions. The following strategies are some of the ways you can help your child regulate his or her feelings:

begin the conversation

1. **Help your child understand their emotions** by first giving the feelings names and then encouraging them to talk about how they are feeling
2. Give them lots of opportunities to **identify feelings** in themselves and others
3. Teach your child the **different ways that they can respond to specific feelings**, conflicts, or problems
4. **Talk about your own feelings** with your children, and role play healthy behaviors
5. **When your child is struggling emotionally**, here are some helpful tools they can use:
 - **Identify the emotion** and why they may be feeling it
 - **Take deep breaths**; breathe in through the nose and exhale through the mouth
 - **Count to 10**
 - **Grounding exercises**, such as recognizing sights, sounds, tastes, or smells

Grades
6-8**continue the conversation**As a parent,
you can teach

and model healthy habits for mental health just as you would with physical health. Here are some tips for mental health awareness:

1. **Notice out loud.** Tell your child when you notice that something's bothering you, or your child. If you can, name the feeling you think you, or your child, is experiencing
2. **Listen to your child.** Ask your pre-teen to tell you what's wrong. Listen attentively and calmly
3. **Help your child think of things to do.** If there's a specific problem that's causing stress, talk together about what to do
4. **Limit stress when possible.** If certain situations are causing your child stress, see if there are ways to change the situation
5. **Be present.** Pre-teens do not always feel like talking about what is bothering them. Sometimes that is OK. Let your child know that you will be there when they do feel like talking
6. **Be patient.** As a parent, it can hurt to see your child unhappy or anxious. Try to resist the urge to fix every problem



own the conversation

Grades
9+

When it comes to sensitive issues like mental health, getting a conversation started with your teen can be difficult. Here are some tools to help continue the conversation:

1. **Be genuine.** Say something like, "This is hard for me to talk about, so I totally understand if it's difficult for you too."
2. **Allow for silence.** Just like anyone, teens may struggle at times to express what they want to say
3. **Switch up the setting.** Where you have a conversation about mental health could make you, or your teen, more comfortable. Be mindful of timing, and try to find a quiet, private place to talk
4. **Do not trivialize their feelings.** What may not seem like a big deal to you could feel very different for your child. Mental health challenges can occur at any age
5. **It's okay to talk about suicide;** this won't encourage or put the idea in their head. If your teen is considering harming themselves, there are resources available: **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255** (online chat is available), **Volunteers of America Crisis line 800-584-3578** (online chat available), **NAMI Helpline 800-950-NAMI** or text "NAMI" to **74174**



For more information about this campaign, please contact Skagit County Public Health at (360) 416-1500. Funding provided by Skagit County Public Health and the Washington State Health Care Authority.

