



Billinghay Church of England Primary School

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Mental Health and Wellbeing – How to have a conversation with your child about their mental health.

Dear Parents / Carers

Further to the analysis of the mental health survey sent out recently I am writing with suggestions as to how you can have a conversation with your child about their mental health.

1. IT IS OK NOT TO BE OK.

It is important that your children are aware that it is ok not to be ok. This is a key part of our ethos within school and it is the same out of school.

2. ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING.

Sometimes we all feel unable to do or say the right thing if a child is struggling with their mental health. However, it is vital that we acknowledge that we won't always say or do the right thing or have the answers, but something is always better than nothing. As parents/carers don't let your concerns about saying or doing the wrong thing stop you from having conversations with your child/ren about their mental health. Below are some useful tips on having these essential conversations with your child/ren:

- Listen with a view to understanding.
- Don't think about giving advice or what you would say next. Just listen and be present in the moment.
- A few minutes can make a huge difference. Make time for a chat with your child no matter what. A five minute conversation where your child is heard is more powerful than a longer ineffective conversation.
- We recommend a quiet place or one in which you won't be disturbed to have this conversation. Going on a walk together is a good idea where you can talk and not have to face the person you are talking to.
- If you are finding starting a conversation about mental health challenging then why not provide your child with a book or paper so they can write down/ brainstorm their thoughts/feelings. This can then form the basis of discussions.
- Try not to assume what is coming next. Don't fill the gaps.
- Make use of silences. It can be awkward but it may give your child the chance to find the right words or think about what they are feeling so they can convey this to you more easily. Don't jump in to fill silences.
- Talk about the taboos. This is not easy but talking about things really helps. A child may not realise until they talk out loud what they are doing.

- If you don't feel able to talk about it then support is available from school and the list of support that is available is on our website.
- Finally, don't make promises you can't keep. Just be there to listen and remind your child you are going to support them.

If you would like more information on any of the above or any other matter regarding mental health and well being, then please contact me at school. If we don't know the answer, and many times we won't, we know where to help you find the answer / support.

Next we will look at giving advice on recognising early warning signs such as anxiety in your child/ren.

Kind Regards

Mr R Allen
Headteacher