

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
MAY 2022 MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT

The daily goal of the mental health awareness is to fight stigma, provide support, educate, and advocate for individuals with mental illness and their families. In May, this message is amplified in Mental Health Awareness Month which was first established in the United States in 1949. One topic being discussed this year is sharing personal challenges and stories and finding the courage to ask for support. Talking about feelings and mental health can be difficult but sharing struggles can open the door to getting help. In this month's edition of MH TidBIT, we want to acknowledge Mental Health Awareness Month by discussing tips to get your children talking about their mental health.

How to get the conversation started

If you notice that your child or teenager seems depressed, angry, or withdrawn, let them know you are concerned and that you are available if they need to talk. Here are some suggestions on how to start the conversation.

- "I noticed you seem down lately. I am here if you want to talk."
- "Are you okay? It seems like you have had a hard week."
- "I am here if you need me. I love you."
- "Let's check in when you have some time..."

How to make your child feel heard and supported

Children may take some time to open up. If your child is not ready to talk right away, be patient and persistent. Check in regularly and let them know that you are there when they are ready to talk. When they are ready to talk, take the following steps to help them feel supported.

- Give them your full attention. Listen patiently and do not interrupt.
- Let the child lead the conversation and keep questions open-ended and non-judgmental. For example: "How do you feel when that happened" or "What did you think about that?"
- Do not minimize or dismiss your child's struggles even if they seem minor to you. Validate their feelings and offer support. Instead of saying "I'm sure things will work out," try: "That is so frustrating. I can see why you feel so upset."
- Resist the urge to solve the problem right away. Often children just need to talk. Ask what they want from the conversation: "I am happy to offer advice, or just be here to listen, whatever you need."
- When the conversation is over, let the child know you are proud of them for speaking up, and let them know you will be there to talk (or just listen) anytime they need support: "I am sorry you are going through that, but I am so glad you told me. I am here any time you need to talk."
- In some cases, a conversation is only the first step. If a child is experiencing mental health symptoms and might benefit from treatment, talk to them about reaching out to someone who can help. If the situation is emergent as your child is experiencing suicidal thoughts or is posing risk to others, you should contact Dauphin County Crisis Intervention by calling 717-232-7511. Otherwise, you can speak with your child's primary care physician or contact the behavioral health/mental health number on the back of your child's insurance card regarding options for mental health outpatient providers. For more specialized assistance and support in obtaining mental health treatment for your child, you may want to consider contacting Case Management Unit (CMU) by calling 717-232-8761 to have your child linked with a mental health case manager.