TOP TIPS
for parents
and carers
We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health.

www.justtalkherts.org

Boys most commonly use physical activity and sports, and technology and video games as a coping strategy. Girls most commonly use music or chatting to friends. There are lots of things that can help boost a young person's wellbeing, such as making them feel good, it can be as simple as having a healthy meal, or as complex as learning a new skill or hobby.

Helpful coping strategies

- Connect: Spend time with family and friends.
- Be Active: It keeps you physically healthy and makes you feel good.
- Keep Learning: Try something new. Try a new hobby or learn about something just because it interests you.
- Take Notice: Take a break to see how you feel.
- Give: Do something for a friend or relation.
- Relax: Make sure you take a few deep breaths.

In a recent Hertfordshire survey, we discovered that if teenage boys were worried about their mental health, almost half of them would seek support from their parent before anyone else. However, other boys do worry about taking their concerns to their parents because they don’t want to burden them or worry they won’t understand.

It can help your son know that you are available to them if you tell them that if they ever want to talk about anything, you are there.

You could also broaden your knowledge of mental health by completing the free MindEd e-learning: www.minded.org.uk/families.

Don’t underestimate your role as a parent or carer.
Supporting Boys

The Hertfordshire campaign, ‘Just Talk’, has been developed with young people, and aims to make it easier for all of us to talk about our mental health, and seek help when it's needed. At the moment 70% of Herts boys and 72% of Herts girls think it's ok to talk about their mental health.

Listen – it's important to listen carefully and give your child your full attention. If you are in the middle of doing something else and can't give them your full attention then arrange a time to sit down together later.

We all get frustrated at times. Try not to express frustration or impatience, or rush in with solutions or judgments as this may prevent your child from opening up.

Remember that the teenage brain is still developing and works slightly differently to the adult brain – therefore what may seem like an over-reaction to an adult is a REAL challenge and may seem like an overwhelming workload to a young person.

If your child wants to talk

We can’t force someone to talk, but phrases like “I’m ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk” and “Let me know if/when you would like to talk” can be helpful.

Use ordinary situations at home as opportunities to have non-direct conversations to start with e.g. walking the dog together, doing the washing up, cooking dinner, etc.

Ask open questions such as “How are things going?” or “What was your day like?”

Make your child aware of local information sites

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/myteenbrain (for parents)
www.healthforkids.co.uk (for primary school aged children)
www.healthforteens.co.uk (for secondary school aged children)
www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk (for all ages and parents)
www.youngminds.org.uk

If your child doesn’t want to talk

Think about what language you use – phrases like ‘Man up’ and ‘Toughen up’ can really make it difficult for someone to talk about how they’re feeling for fear of appearing weak. Mental health problems are not a weakness, and talking about them should be encouraged as a healthy problem and a weakness, and feelings of poor mental health are normal and it’s difficult for someone to talk about how they’re feeling.

We need to talk about mental health, and when you are feeling ready to listen, let me know. When you are feeling ready to listen, let me know. When you are feeling ready to listen, let me know.

We can’t force someone to talk, but phrases like “I’m ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk” can be helpful.

It’s important to listen carefully and be prepared to talk about mental health if that’s what your child wants to talk about.

For the young person

Over-reaction to an adult is a REAL challenge and may seem like an overwhelming workload. If someone is telling you how they feel, you don’t need to make it easier for all people, and there is often no need to make it easier for all people. Think about what language you use – phrases like “I’m ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk” can be helpful.

You may notice that your child is feeling different.

Listen to what they’re saying. You may notice that your child is feeling different. If you are in the middle of doing something else and can’t talk about it, arrange a time to sit down together later.

Listen to what they’re saying.

When someone is struggling, it can be difficult for them to talk about how they’re feeling. It is okay to say “I’m ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk” and then listen carefully to what they are saying.

We need to talk about mental health, and when you are feeling ready to listen, let me know. When you are feeling ready to listen, let me know. When you are feeling ready to listen, let me know.

We can’t force someone to talk, but phrases like “I’m ready to listen when you are feeling ready to talk” can be helpful.