

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Dear parents and carers,

7 - 13 February is Children's Mental Health Week. The week is run by the charity Place2Be, and focuses on the importance of promoting good mental health and wellbeing for children and young people.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Human beings change and grow – we do it all the time and in many different ways. Physical growth is easy to see as we grow from babies to children, teenagers to adults. But growing emotionally is also an important part of our development.

As parents or carers, you are an important role model for your child. Your child does not need you to be perfect - in fact seeing you make some mistakes can be really useful! What is important is that you are able to show them that you – and they – can continue to develop and grow even when things are hard. In fact, sometimes, this is when we learn and grow the most.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Here are a few simple ways you can support your child's emotional growth.

1. Talk about when your child was younger

Most children enjoy hearing their parents tell stories about when they were younger. Recall stories that highlight how your child has developed and changed over the years. For example, how you enjoyed teaching them to learn to ride a bike, or swim. Or how proud you were when they took part in a school assembly – even though they were nervous.

If you are an adoptive parent, foster or kinship carer, you will still have lots of memories to share from when you first came together as a family.

2. Notice when your child has developed and grown

You may have made marks on the walls to recognise how tall your child has grown over the years, or looked at old photos together. It is important to also recognise and praise emotional growth. This could be letting them know how proud you are when they have learnt to walk away rather than fight with a sibling, or how they have learnt to ask others to play when they used to be too shy to do so.

3. Encourage your child to try new things

This could be new foods, a new activity or a new experience. Praise their willingness to 'give things a go' rather than whether they were 'good' at it. This will give them confidence to continue to develop and grow.

4. Listen to your child's hopes and dreams for the future

Encourage your child to see that everything they are doing right now is a tiny step towards who they might want to become in the future. For example, your child staying away from home for a night is a step towards them being able to leave home for study or work in the future. Your child helping another child is an important step towards them becoming a counsellor, a doctor, a nurse or a teacher etc.

5. Support your child to learn from tough situations

It can be really hard when your child is not getting on with friends or having a problem with a teacher, or is disappointed with how something has worked out. Acknowledge the difficult feelings, but help your child to see that these situations help us to grow and develop so that we are better able to cope with life's ups and downs.

Activities from Place2Be's Art Room

Support Balloon – have a go at this simple art activity with your children. Aimed at primary-age children, this activity from can help children think about who supports them to grow.

bit.ly/3m2R9ib 

My Changing Shapes – try this activity designed for secondary-age children. This activity supports young people to look back at their past growth.

bit.ly/3nhiYTI 

Looking for free practical advice to help you support your child?

Parenting Smart, Place2Be's site for parents and carers, is full of expert advice and tips on supporting the emotional wellbeing and growth of primary-age children.

parentingsmart.org.uk 

Let your child know that if they are worried about something, they should always talk to an adult they trust. It could be you, someone in your family, a teacher or someone else in their school.

If you're worried about your child's mental health you can talk to your GP or someone at your child's school.

You can also find a list of organisations that provide support and advice on our website: place2be.org.uk/help 