



Tips for Managing Mental and Physical Health For Your Child

Mental health plays a key role in our overall physical health. It can impact things in our daily life such as sleep, appetite and mood. This is true for adults, teens and even children. Mental health is health and it's important to treat it that way. Talk to your child early and often about their feelings and emotions, big and small. Children are less likely to have the words to verbalize what they are feeling and showing up as a safe space to help them process negative or confusing emotions is a great way to build trust.

There are lifestyle habits you and your child can start today, even the whole family, to improve overall mental and physical health.

When building a healthy lifestyle, it's best to choose one or two lifestyle changes to start at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed. A great place to start is identifying which area makes the most sense for you based on your current lifestyle habits.



Stick to a schedule: Have your child eat, sleep, take medications and complete tasks at the same time each day. Regulating your child's day gives them a sense of security and stability and decreases worry.



Get enough sleep: Stick to a bedtime schedule. Turn electronics off 30 to 60 minutes before bed. Help them relax by reading or dimming lights. Getting enough sleep is one of the most foundational habits to address that can impact mood, the ability to focus, and more.



Stay connected: Tune into your child by asking easy, specific questions, while reading or coloring. Give your child words—even colors like red for angry—for their emotions and let them know you want to listen. Ask them to draw how they are feeling.



Limit screen time: For both you and your child—everyone benefits when screens are off, and you can engage each other in an activity. It helps our brains reset. Consider choosing one 'digital free' afternoon or day every week.



Eat as well as you can: Offer a variety of healthy choices so that your child—picky eater or not—has access to snacks and meals that increase brain function and keep their energy up. Engage your child in helping to choose colorful fruits and vegetables and encouraging them to try small bites of new foods.



Move: Dance in the kitchen. Walk in the fresh air. Wiggle it out. Schedule 15 to 30 minutes a day for your child (and you) to move their body and get those endorphins (happy hormones) going.



Lend a hand: Volunteer with your child, visit a neighbor who lives alone, or help your child write a letter to someone who could use a smile.



Plan activities: Make plans for safe, fun activities that your child enjoys such as going for a walk, playing outside, visiting a park or beach.



**Spectrum
Health**

When to seek additional help

Seek additional help if you notice any of these reactions persisting in your child or interrupting their day-to-day life:

- Withdrawal from others
- Increased acting out behaviors
- Loss of interest in activities they used to love
- Anxiety that makes functioning difficult
- Reports of increased headaches or stomachaches that could be related to anxiety
- Thoughts of being dead

Helpful resources

Phone

Michigan Community Mental Health: 800.749.7720

Call 211 for Resources

Suicide Prevention Text Line: Text HELLO to 741741

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 or 800.273.TALK (8255)

Spectrum Health resources

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine: 616.267.2830

Web

[Mentalhealth.gov/talk/parents-caregivers](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/parents-caregivers) – Information to help you assess your child's mental health and talk to them about it.

[nowmattersnow.org](https://www.nowmattersnow.org) – Website for crisis situations, including strategies to safely cope with suicidal thoughts.

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)