

Samaritans and **Breathing Space** are places where there is someone who will listen when you need to talk. The websites give good advice on how to get started – and this can help when you talk to people you know about how you feel. They both give support to callers who are worried about someone else. Breathing Space also give telephone support on dealing with feelings and coping with problems.

Samaritans

Free phone line: 116 123 (24 hours)
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Breathing Space

Free phone support: 0800 83 85 87
available evenings and weekends
www.breathingspace.scot

Parent Network Scotland run courses tailored to meet the needs of today's parents. They focus on group work. Their courses work with you to look at the issues that are important to you. Exploring strategies and approaches that can help you in the real world of parenting.
www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk

Mindfulness is a mind-body approach to well-being that can help you change the way you think about experiences and reduce stress and anxiety. The Mental Health Foundation aims to make Mindfulness available to everyone.
www.bemindful.co.uk

Mind are a mental health charity with practical advice and support for people with mental health issues and the people close to them. They have specific advice for children and young people.
www.mind.org.uk



Hints & Tips Parents Supporting Teenagers with Poor Mental Health

Welcome to our Hints and Tips for parents who are supporting teenagers with poor mental health. When your child is struggling with poor mental health it can be a confusing and difficult time for the whole family. It can be difficult to know how best to support your teenager and to make sure that you aren't neglecting your own mental health and wellbeing. We've spoken to families around Scotland and put together some tips that we hope will help make it easier to support your teenager and to give you some ideas for how you can help them.

1

Listen

Let your child tell you how they feel without interrupting- it can be tempting to tell them they don't have anything to worry about but validating their feelings and letting them know they are not alone can be more helpful.

"I try to remember what it's like to be a teenager, how hard it can be at times. This helps me to try and listen to my son and not rush to find answers to the things he is saying."



Contact us

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Unit 3.10, The Whisky Bond, 2 Dawson Road, Glasgow G4 9SS

T: 0141 419 0451 E: admin@otbds.org www.otbds.org



2

Encourage your teenager

While it's important to make sure your child doesn't feel criticised or pressured, encouraging them to see their friends or get out for a walk can help. Make it clear the option is there but it's also okay if they don't feel up to it. Suggesting watching some of their favourite films or making their favourite food for dinner are some ideas if they don't want to go out.

"Because things are difficult at times- but also because it's good to do for everyone- we have tried to find activities that my daughter enjoys. So she learns news skills, meets new people and has new experiences to build upon. Over the years she has tried sewing, ice skating, swimming, Brownies and Guides, a local youth group and cycling."

4

Talk to someone

Supporting someone with poor mental health can be difficult for lots of reasons- it's upsetting to see someone you care about suffering and you can feel helpless. Talking to someone, like a friend or family member, about what you are going through can help. They may be able to offer advice and support that can help.

3

Don't get upset with your child

"We try to talk about how we feel about things and especially the things that worry us, like doing new things or going to new places and what things can help us."

Hearing that your child is struggling with poor mental health can be scary and upsetting, but try not to make your teenager feel as though you are angry or upset with them. Staying calm and supportive will make it easier for them to open up to you- chances are they might already be worried about upsetting you, so let them know that you will be there to talk without judgement.

"As I get older I'm beginning to realise that most people have times when they struggle a bit with their mental health. Life is difficult so perhaps it isn't surprising."

"Over the years I have built up a few friendships with some parents. We support each other and have known each other for a while now. It's good because we don't need to explain things."

5

Talk about the options

Do some research and think about what options might help your teenager. You can talk to them and see if they would like to talk to their GP, or if there are things their school could do to make things easier for them. Ask your child what might be helpful for them, and how you can support them in taking any steps they might want to take.

6

Let them know you love them

This is probably our most simple tip but one of the most important! Let your teenager know that you love them- poor mental health can cause low self-worth. Reassure them that they're not a burden and you are there to support them.

"My parents never said that they loved me or were proud of me. I was determined that I would be different with my kids. I have always told them that I love them and that I am proud of them. Now they are teenagers, they tend to look embarrassed - but I don't care. They know I love them and I do."

7

Don't blame yourself

It can be easy to feel responsible for your child's mental health, and to wonder if there is anything you could have done to prevent it. There are many reasons why mental health issues can develop and sometimes no reason at all- it isn't your fault, so try not to dwell on these thoughts.

"I used to think it was my fault but I know it isn't - it's just the way it is. And the best thing I can do is be supportive and understanding, and be there to help where I can."

8

Take time for yourself

Remember to look after yourself. If you are feeling good and looking after your own mental wellbeing you will be in a better position to support your child. Don't feel guilty for taking some time to yourself- it's important and can help avoid things piling up in the long run. Whether it's going for a run or sitting in front of your favourite movie, make sure you're creating some space for yourself to do the things that make you feel good.

"I have learnt that I need to look after myself. This means time and space for me. It's not being selfish it's just being sensible - I can't help my children and be a good mum if I'm worn out and exhausted."