



Mental Health

Russell Morris, clinical psychologist, shared insights around Mental Health, breaking things down into three categories: children, parenting adults, and "news you can use." Here are tips and takeaways from Russell and the parenting adults at the coffee.

Children

The pandemic coupled with historic social, political, and racial unrest, has led to a rise in mental health struggles in teens. Here are a few tips for supporting and empowering our children during this unprecedented time:

- Work with the school community to help reduce stress during vulnerable times in school
- Provide opportunities for teens to hear other teens speak up- it is a good model and helps children feel they are not alone
- Learn to recognize the signs that identify the need for mental health support
- Help teens find their people- who they can go to for help with different challenges
- Know what questions to ask so children feel comfortable coming to you to talk
- Support your child with working on how they respond when triggered
- Help your child identify little things to help them

Parenting Adults

For parenting adults, it is important to explore ways to be a support and a model for your child. Below are some tips:

- Take a step back and learn to trust
- Remember that "more is caught than taught;" effectively model appropriate ways of dealing with your own challenges
- Consider the importance of fit when choosing a mental health team for your family; therapists have different styles
- Organize multiple layers of support and a team approach; include different perspectives
- Think about family counseling, especially if you are a trigger for your child

- Explore different ways to "talk" with your child, such as journaling back and forth or texting; this can be effective as in the moment reaction does not get in the way of communication
- Remind yourself that you are solving a puzzle and the more you can speak to the nature and magnitude of the problem, the easier it is to find the solution
- Realize sometimes progress is realizing what does not work
- Never give up hope, even when you are not sure how to best support your child, or are unable to get needed support
- Believe there will be an answer and remain persistent- that mindset of hope will transfer to your child

The parenting adults on the call also discussed tips for co-parenting:

- Start with the parenting adult who is more ready to provide support; as the process ensues the child and parenting adult can work together to get the other adult more engaged
- Remember the 4S's needed when supporting your child- recognize struggles, strengths, supports, and stress relievers. One parenting adult may be better with navigating struggles while the other provides stress relief
- Acknowledge different parenting adult roles and the effort it takes to keep other things running while navigating mental health crises

News You Can Use

During our conversation we shared tools and strategies that can help with supporting your family:

- Learn to "apply the oxygen"- self-care is critical
- Trust your gut- you know your child best, so trust your intuition if something seems "off"
- Let go of fear and shame and realize that every child and every family goes through something some time; we've all been there or will be
- Remember the "bottom line" is our children need to feel safe and loved, and when these two critical conditions are met (or at least present to some noticeable degree) our children's resilience and our support will help them through almost anything

We recognize that we are all at a different place in our journey. Below are resources we can use to continue our journey in this process:

- Facebook Groups, resources, and websites shared by participants:
 - Facebook Group: Parents Helping their Teen Daughters' Mental Health
 - Facebook Group: Main Line Special Needs Parents
 - Facebook Group: Single Parents Support Network
 - Facebook Group: Parents of Teenagers Support Group
 - Facebook Group: PA Parent and Family Alliance
 - Facebook Group: Life Coaches

- [Live Well Teens](#) -Free for teens 14-18
- [Mental Health Resources in PA](#)
- [Family to Family through Main Line NAMI](#)
- [Conversation Zone Meetings](#)
- [SpeakUp's Support House](#)

If anyone has any additional questions or needs help connecting to resources, please email Erica Talley at etalley@speakup.org

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