

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

PREPARING YOUR TEEN EMOTIONALLY FOR SCHOOL AND LIFE

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Adolescents need emotional problem-solving skills to handle challenges. Our children need a toolbox of skills and habits to use when they become stressed or overwhelmed.

Problem-solving skills can help teens from being overwhelmed. Teens need to learn what is going to help them regulate their emotions and take better control of their mood, so it does not get in the way of their friendships, academics, or typical day-to-day life.

So how do we prepare our children for the obstacles and challenges that life brings? Here are some skills that you can help teach your child.

1. Do not try to fix every problem: What teens need to hear, especially when they are feeling depressed, anxious, or overwhelmed, is that “It is okay not to feel okay.” Validate their feeling, but do not solve their problems. Possible responses include. “I am guessing this is really hard for you.” “I see that thinking about that test tomorrow is making you really anxious.” Then let them deal with the problem knowing you are there as a support net.

2. Practice mindfulness with your teen: This is the ability to be present in the moment and be nonjudgmental towards yourself and others. A nonjudgmental reframe would be “Wow, I did not do as well as I wanted on that” rather than “I am stupid, I am never going to understand this.” Sometimes mindfulness means just stopping to notice how your body is feeling inside, noticing what is around you and even taking some deep breaths before deciding how to handle a difficult situation.

3. Help your child establish good self-care: This means making sure to take care of your body to promote the best mood you can. Sleeping enough, exercising, healthy eating, and avoiding drugs and alcohol fall into this category.

4. Work on planning and “coping ahead”: A lot of distress can be avoided or reduced by helping teens learn to plan ahead. This includes not only how a task will be completed but planning how they will handle challenging situations. It is basically preparing yourself to be equipped emotionally to handle a certain experience.

5. Develop strategies for self-soothing: Develop a plan for what to do when difficult emotions are threatening to take over. They can come up with a written plan that includes weighing the pros and cons and thinking through consequences. The goal is to create a toolbox of things to try when they are feeling highly emotional or overwhelmed - things that will make them feel better instead of spinning out of control. It could include specific pieces of music, going for a run, or things to touch or smell that have a calming effect.

Excerpted from:

<https://childmind.org/article/preparing-for-college-emotionally-not-just-academically/>