

Children's Mental Health Awareness



Place2Be launched the first ever Children's Mental Health Week in 2015 to highlight the importance of children and young people's mental health. This is now its 7 year and children and young people are being encouraged to speak out about their mental health

From 1-7 February 2021 schools, youth groups, organisations and individuals across the UK will take part in Children's Mental Health Week. This year's theme is **Express Yourself**

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas in whatever way appeals to the young person.

It is important to remember that being able to **express yourself** is about finding ways to show who the young people are in their own right, how they view what is around them and what best helps to make them feel both positive and good about themselves.

Research tells us that as many as three children in every primary school class has a mental health problem. This is an issue which is growing and remember, these are only the reported number of diagnosed cases as not every child has a diagnosis and many struggle in silence for fear of being seen "differently" to their peers. At a young age, difference matters and so many struggle to conform to what they think is the norm, or the way they should be. If there is a problem within the home, or the young person is subjected to bullying, it is likely they will keep quiet and not reach out for support.

Of concern is that around 70% of children and young people who experience a mental health problem have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age. And this could be to do with being afraid to speak out, to express or understanding their feelings and also not to appear "different" to those around them. Children's mental health like adults should be given the same importance as their physical health.

In schools, children and young people are taught about a healthy lifestyle that includes; good nutrition, exercise, social contact etc. all vital to our physical wellbeing. It is equally as important for them to be taught also about "difference", about speaking out, expressing their feelings and of course being kind - not just to others, but to themselves. Thankfully, this is now being recognised more widely within schools. There is however, stigma around mental health which is why weeks like this encourage youngsters to speak out, to be heard and to talk about their feelings

Things that can help keep children and young people's mental wellbeing include:

- Being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- Having time and the freedom to play, indoors and outdoors
- Being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- Going to a school that looks after the wellbeing of all its pupils
- Taking part in local activities for young people.

Other factors are also important, including:

- Feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe
- Being interested in life and having opportunities to enjoy themselves
- Being hopeful and optimistic
- Being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed
- Accepting who they are and recognising what they are good at
- Having a sense of belonging in their family, school and community
- Feeling they have some control over their own life

There is help available to our children and young people and this includes:

- Help and support from professionals
- Schools
- Parents
- GP advice
- Being able to talk through their thoughts and feelings in a safe and confidential setting
- Child focused organisations
- Clubs and groups

Given the increase in mental health issues in children, we as adults need to be able to help them express themselves without fear of judgement or criticism. Join in the awareness week and help to give children and young people a voice.

Organisations and supportive information that can help:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/about-the-week>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.headstogether.org.uk/partners/charity-partners/>

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being>