

MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD MATTER

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
MAY 2023- MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT

Mental Health is everything when it comes to children. When they are not feeling their best mentally it can affect developmental milestones, social skills, and their performance in school.

Children are constantly going through a variety of emotions. How do you know what they are going through?

Talking to children about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences helps their healthy growth and development. When you talk to children openly about their day, you can learn about concerns or problems they are dealing with, help problem solve, and build their confidence for facing future difficulties. The more you talk, the easier it is when difficult topics come up!

How to build a relationship with your children so that they will come to you. Start talking!

Here are three tips:

1. **Set the stage:**

- Pick times with low distraction, such as family dinners, bedtime routines, car-rides, or short daily walks.
- Model the behavior. Children learn by watching us.
 - If you share about your day, thoughts and feelings, your children will learn to do the same. If you had a hard day, share that too at the right developmental level. This helps children learn that emotions are normal and how to cope with them by watching you.

2. **Ask open-ended questions.** You can talk about all kinds of topics with your child, not just emotions or behaviors. Remember, your goal is to create the habit of comfortably sharing with you. For example, you could ask: What was the best part of your day? Or...what was the hardest part of your day?

3. **Find the right time for difficult conversations.** Pick a time when your child is calm. Ask permission to start the conversation and if your child is not ready, ask them when a good time would be?

What if they do not want to talk?

If they do not want to talk, that's OK! If you try to push it, they will shut down more.

- Compromise! Let them know you care about them and what is going on in their lives, so you want time to check in. Ask them when a better time would be instead and try again. Children are more likely to engage if they feel some control or choice over a situation.