



for Scotland's mental health

A young man with dark, shoulder-length hair and bangs is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a chalkboard with some writing and a window looking out onto a building.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY CHILD

A SAMH guide for parents and carers

Children and young people, just like adults, have all kinds of thoughts and emotions.

It's natural for them to feel sad or worried from time to time. It's an important part of growing up and learning about how their feelings affect what they think and do.

However with three children in every classroom experiencing a mental health problem by the age of 16, the chances are your child will be affected by poor mental health at some point – whether directly or indirectly.

Just like physical health, we all have mental health, and it's important that we learn how to look after it. This booklet is designed to help you with useful support and information to help your child.

IDENTIFYING A PROBLEM

Our mental health is complex and there are no set rules. All of us can have bad days, and young people are no different. It's important to remember that the pressures of life and growing up might mean that your child is going through a difficult time, but - this does not necessarily mean that they have a mental health problem.

Is there something obvious that might have upset them or lead to them feeling out of sorts, such as:

- Moving house or school;
- Concerns about friendships, relationships, sex or sexuality;
- Using alcohol or drugs;
- Overuse or viewing inappropriate content on the internet;
- Family illness or bereavement;
- Problems coping with school work;
- Bullying;
- Parents arguing, separation or divorce;
- Other family members being stressed?

Understanding the things that are upsetting your child is really important, and if you have noticed a change in their behaviour, think about this in the context of what else is happening in their life.



When it starts to feel difficult to do every day things it could mean you have a problem with your mental health.

The list below can help to identify some of the changes you may be noticing. It is in no way extensive, and it's useful to ask yourself, how often is this happening? How severe or long lasting is it? Is it out of character? Is it affecting their ability to live a normal life?

- Losing interest in activities that they used to enjoy
- Making negative statements about themselves
- Losing their appetite or eating too much
- Feeling tired all the time, disturbed sleep or oversleeping
- Finding it hard to concentrate or switch off
- Feeling panicked or scared without cause
- Obsessing over calories or exercise
- Missing meals or avoiding eating in front of others.

If any of these sound familiar, it's important to start a conversation with your child about their mental health. At some point you may need to seek professional help.

If you notice any of the following, don't ignore these – it's important to get professional help as soon as possible:

- Deliberately avoiding certain places because of obsessive or compulsive behaviours
- Unexplained cuts, bruises, burns or clusters of marks
- Having sudden, overwhelming emotions where they feel 'out of control'
- Having thoughts about hurting themselves or ending their life.

If you're worried about how to start the conversation see SAMH's leaflet **'Starting the mental health conversation'**.



USEFUL CONTACTS:

SAMH (SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH)

t: 0141 530 1000

e: enquire@samh.org.uk

w: samh.org.uk

Details of local SAMH services and information and sign-posting for people concerned about mental health. Office hours 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday.

NSPCC HELPLINE

t: 0808 800 5000

e: help@nspcc.org.uk

w: nspcc.org.uk

Provides 24/7 help and support from trained helpline counsellors to thousands of parents, professionals and families.

BREATHING SPACE

t: 0800 83 85 87

(Monday to Thursday, 6pm – 2am; Friday 6pm to Monday 6am)

w: breathingspace.scot

A free, confidential helpline for anyone in Scotland feeling low, anxious or depressed.

MINDED

w: minded.org.uk/families

Online advice and support for parents of children who may be experiencing poor mental health.

NHS24

t: 111

w: nhs24.com

24 hour health service for Scotland.

PLACE2BE

e: Scotland@place2be.org.uk

w: place2be.org.uk

Providing emotional and therapeutic services in primary and secondary schools, building children's resilience through talking, creative work and play.

SAMARITANS

t: 116 123

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

e: jo@samaritans.org

Free, confidential service for anyone in the UK.

YOUNGMINDS

t: 0808 802 5544

(Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4pm)

w: youngminds.org.uk

Information and resources for young people and parents on mental health.

www.samh.org.uk

SAMH is the Scottish Association for Mental Health.
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