Mental health and teenagers
A Parents’ Survival Guide

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How do we view physical health?
How do we view mental ill-health?
Stress is part of life!
Stressful times for teenagers
What is mental health?

“Emotional and spiritual resilience which allows us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others’ dignity and worth”
Main types of mental illness

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Eating disorders
- OCD
- Self harm
- Bipolar
- Psychosis
Physical signs of poor mental health

- Jumpy, irritable, aggressive
- Sad, no interest in life
- Tired, tearful
- Isolated
- Poor sleeping or eating
- Acting out of character
- But everyone has bad days...
Verbal signs of mental illness

• ‘I have to get 100% in maths’
• ‘Here we go again’
• ‘I’m stupid’
• ‘Nobody likes me’
• ‘If I don’t do well in these exams, I’ll never go to uni’
• ‘It’s all my fault’
Checking the signs

- Defiance is part of adolescence
- Personality plays its part
- Does the worrying behaviour seem to be ongoing?
- Is the behaviour out of the ordinary?
- Is it more than just usual rebelliousness?
- Trust your instincts!
Thinking about the key signs...

- Is the behaviour out of character for your teen, or does it fit in with their general way of dealing with things?
- Has the change been very sudden or have things been changing for a while?
- Is there anything obvious that might have upset or unsettled them? For example, moving house or school, divorce and separation, bereavement, friendship problems, illness?
- Is the behaviour having a negative effect on their daily life, for example, stopping them attending school or getting their schoolwork done; affecting friendships or family relationships; getting in the way of hobbies or activities; affecting their eating or sleeping?
- Is anyone else worried about their behaviour? eg other family members, teachers, friends?
- Has your teen said they think there is a problem or that they are worried?
What is resilience?

"an ability to recover from or adjust easily to challenge or change"

"bounceback-ability"

"Do not judge me by my successes: judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again"  
Nelson Mandela
Being a good enough parent

• Say something…almost anything is good!
• Listen
• Reassure and affirm
• Keep talking
• Set boundaries
• Lean in at least for a time
• Be a parent, not a friend
• Don’t lie for them
• Take action
Starting a conversation with your teen

• Challenging behaviour may be short-lived
• We all have bad days
• Talk to your teen
• Or email or text
• Ask for their ideas and solutions
• Find best place to talk to your teen
• Pick your time but seize the moment...
• If possible, involve teen’s other parent
Tips on talking to teenagers

• More open than yes/no questions
• Be genuine, natural and direct
• Don’t be afraid of silence
• Don’t make assumptions
• Try not to act shocked
• Use reflective listening: summarise, question
• Listen more than you tell
• You’re showing your love and concern
Conversation starters with teenagers

- How do you feel about.....?
- How are you feeling now?
- What’s going on for you?
- On a scale of 1-10...?
- What’s worrying you?
- Why are you so angry/sad/upset?
Helping your teen

• Be aware of social media
• Be active – burn off some energy
• Get enough sleep
• Try and restrict junk food
• Get them to chill out!
Helping your teen

• Make time for friends and family
• Accept who they are
• Enjoy the small things
• Help someone out
• Don’t let conflicts linger
• There’s always a Plan B
Look after yourself

• Don’t be too hard on yourself – easy to feel guilt
• Don’t transpose your problems onto them
• Look after yourself
• Ask friends or family for help
• Don’t gossip
If you need more help then...

- Achievement Co-ordinator
- Safeguarding team
  safeguarding@darrickwood.bromley.sch.uk
- GP
- CAMHS
- Young Minds
- Samaritans
- Mind