

# 10 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO FOR THEIR TEEN 'S MENTAL HEALTH

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## ✓ LISTEN – EVEN WHEN YOUR TEEN IS NOT TALKING

Children often talk to us through their choices and behaviors. Some teens are too embarrassed to admit their unhappiness to others, including their parents. Start the conversation. Do not expect to “fix it” right away. Identify what changes you have seen, invite them to talk about it, and offer to help.

## ✓ SHARE YOUR FEELINGS

Let your teen know they are not alone and that everyone has difficult emotions. Reassure them that these emotions are temporary.

## ✓ DO NOT ENCOURAGE PERFECTION FROM YOUR TEEN

Trying to achieve perfection is an overwhelming and never ending race. Suggest that your teen divide large tasks into smaller, more manageable ones when possible. Encourage them to participate in favorite, low stress activities to break up a stressful schedule.

## ✓ RECOMMEND EXERCISE

Physical activity can greatly impact mental wellness. Exercise releases endorphins which improves mood and eases pain. Experts recommend 30-40 minutes a day at least a couple of times a week.

## ✓ ENCOURAGE YOUR TEEN NOT TO ISOLATE FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It is usually better to be around others than to be alone. Do not push if they no, unless you have concerns for their immediate safety.

## ✓ DO NOT LET YOUR TEEN 'S DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY ESCALATE

Your child might be having a bad day, but it may be something more serious if their change in mood has been consistent for a couple of weeks. It is important to take notice of changes in mood and behavior, especially when your child has mentioned wanting to end their life. There are often multiple factors present when they are considering suicide:

- Loss (break up or death)
- Substance Use
- Peer or Social pressure
- Access to weapons
- Public humiliation
- Severe chronic pain
- Impulsiveness/Aggression
- Family history of suicide

## ✓ SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP QUICKLY

If your teen's behavior has you concerned, don't put off contacting a professional.

✓ **IF YOUR TEEN IS IN THERAPY, REMIND THEM NOT TO EXPECT IMMEDIATE RESULTS**

Therapy and/or medication take time to impact mood. Your child should not be discouraged if they do not feel better right away.

✓ **DO NOT SHRUG OFF THREATS OF SUICIDE AS TYPICAL TEENAGE DRAMA**

When a teen makes comments about wanting to end their own life, try not to react with shock, anger, or in a dismissive tone. Be willing to really listen. This is hard for any parent, but the immediate need is to console your child and tend to your own feelings later.

✓ **IF YOU KEEP WEAPONS AT HOME, STORE THEM SAFELY OR MOVE THEM ELSEWHERE WHEN YOU BEGIN TO HAVE CONCERNS FOR YOUR TEEN**

If you suspect your child might be a danger to themselves or others, it is *extremely* important to keep all firearms, alcohol, and medications locked and/or out of the home.