



No one will listen to how bad my child's mental health is. What can I do?

Firstly,, please know that you are not alone. This is a really common issue that many parents share. More and more young people are struggling with their mental health and it can be exhausting to keep fighting to get the support that you need. This can often feel like having to “survive the mental health battlefield”. As a parent there may be a variety of places where you have tried to seek support for your child including A&E, psychologists, counsellors, CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), school SENCO, speech and language therapists, youth workers, helplines, specialist charities and friends and family. It is easy to start to lose hope and to become emotionally and physically drained. Although this can feel overwhelming at times, there are some things that you can do to help yourself and your child.

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

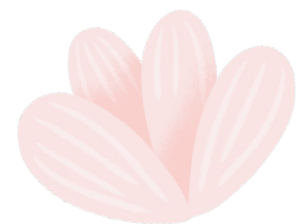
If you are struggling to get the right support for your child, then you may need to begin with starting to try to identify some of the issues that your child may be facing so that you can pinpoint the right support for them and for you. Some of

the ways that you can begin to do this is to start to log everything. As a parent, we rarely remember what they have had to go through to get to where we are today with our child. It can be useful to have information to show professionals, family and friends when you want to find support.

LOG ALL INCIDENTS, ANY BEHAVIOURAL CONCERNS, TRIGGERS, EMOTIONAL NEEDS AND ANY OTHER STRUGGLES THAT YOU ARE WITNESSING.

Log every appointment that you have and every time you send an email to the school or a professional.

Logging offers you a way to quieten your mind and can help you to feel empowered as a parent. You may also pick up on important moments that are easily missed otherwise. Get to know your child's triggers as these can offer vital clues as to how to help and support your child.





ARM YOURSELF WITH INFORMATION

Once you have started to make sense of what your child may be facing, the next step is to arm yourself with information. Research what your child is struggling with and learn all that you can about how to support them at home. Having this information can help you to feel more able to support your child and also to get the support that you need from other professionals. Get in touch with Parenting Mental Health for more resources.

REACH OUT

Now that you are getting to know more about how your child is struggling, reach out for support. Contact charities, organisations and local services who offer support for what your child is facing. There are many other support services who can offer helplines, counselling, training, advice and even advocacy. A good starting point is the PMH website where we have a list of organisations set up to support children and young people.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you feel that you are not being listened to, don't be afraid to follow a services formal complaints procedure and demand to be heard. You have rights as a parent to demand that your child receives the support that they need. There are also advocacy firms that will support you with any complaints and reaffirm your rights. Research your rights as a parent!

TRUST YOURSELF

You know your child best! No one will be able to support your child the way you can. You have been there through all the highs and the lows. You have witnessed every hurdle and have been there to wipe up every tear. You are your child's best resource, advocate and voice. If a professional suggests something that doesn't feel right, politely tell them so. Professionals should be hearing you and learning from you too. Trust your gut instincts and if you need a little back up then take someone with you to your appointments, if only to make notes so you have a clear outline of who said what and any next steps.

CREATE A SUPPORT CIRCLE

This is really important! Taking care of a child who is struggling with their mental health is exhausting for parents. You may not even realise what kind of a toll this is taking on your own physical and mental health. Be selective on who you spend your depleted reserves of energy with. Surround yourself with people who support you and believe in you. Check in with yourself and ask "how do I feel when I spend time with this person? Do I feel disempowered, low and exhausted or do I feel supported, empowered and cared for?"

Choose your circle wisely. Reach out to support groups like Parenting Mental Health and let others know when you



are struggling and need support. We all need support. Find people who will support you with appointments and difficult conversations with professionals and won't judge you for what you're going through.

HOW TO TALK WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH.

Be open and honest about how it feels to be in your shoes. Ask your family to support you and tell them how to do it. Know that your family and friends' opinions are not fact and they may not know what is best for your child. Trust your instincts! Let family and friends know your boundaries and keep them. Again, reserve your energy! Make sure that family and friends are on the same page and arm them with information about how to help your child. Set your expectations. You have a right to be heard and you have a right to be respected.

HOW TO TALK TO PROFESSIONALS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Many professionals are under a huge amount of pressure. It can be difficult to know how to help your child in a short appointment. Many services are experiencing more and more wait times and the time that you have with a professional is often short and pressured. With this in mind, go armed

with information. Take your log with you and stick to the facts. Don't be afraid to say it like it is. Share your logs and your research. Don't be afraid to tell professionals what you need and what your child needs. If you disagree with an opinion or a decision, then let them know this too. All professionals should be registered with an ethical body and have a complaints policy. If you disagree with your treatment, then don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion.

HOW TO TALK TO SCHOOL ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

All schools have policies which support children's mental and emotional health. They also have legal and ethical boundaries which they must work within to keep your child from physical or emotional harm. You can request to see their policies (or you might find them on the school website) and hold them accountable when they are not doing enough to ensure your child gets the support that they need. Speak with your school SENCO or wellbeing team and share your logs and the information that you have collected. Ask for their support. Many schools now have access to psychological teams to support young people and can organise assessments which may be helpful. Keep an open line of communication if possible. If you are struggling to communicate with school, then try to enlist the help of a mediator. This could be a friend or family member.

Remember that you are not alone! Your voice matters and you have the right to be heard!

Additional Advocacy Support

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

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



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