

# SUPPORTING YOUR DAUGHTER'S MENTAL HEALTH



*An advice leaflet from Camden School for Girls PSHE Department*

## **What is mental health?**

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health.

It is about our range of emotions and affects the way we think and feel about ourselves and others, and how we deal with life.

When we experience a mental health problem, it can affect our thinking and feelings, our mood, and our ability to relate to others as we usually would.

The most commonly diagnosed mental health problems are depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), eating disorders, personality disorders and schizophrenia. (You can find out more about these on the Mind or Young Minds websites).

You might be surprised how common these experiences are.

One in ten young people will experience a mental health problem before the age of 16. So, even if mental health problems aren't affecting your family directly, you're very likely to know people who are going through the experience right now.

It's perhaps worth remembering that mental health can fluctuate in all of us, whoever we are – over the course of our lives, or even from day to day.

## **Common mental health concerns**

I'm worried that my daughter:

- Is not eating properly
- Is spending too long working
- Is not sleeping
- Is very tearful and moody
- Is having panic attacks
- Is carrying out self-harm
- Might be smoking
- Might be taking legal/illegal substances
- Is avoiding work
- Feeling isolated

## What do I do if I think my daughter is experiencing a mental health problem?

### 1 Show you're open to talking

One of the most significant things for young people is that they know they can come to talk to someone if they are worried about the mental health or the mental health of someone they know. Being open to talking about mental health, and showing you care, will mean a lot.

- Remind them you care
- Be patient: there are times when they won't feel like talking
- Everyday questions can help – like 'How are you doing?' or 'How was it today?'

If the opportunity to talk arises, here are five tips that might help:

1. **Listening:** It can be more important and significant than talking
2. **Small and informal:** You don't have to set aside hours to chat, and informal spaces can be great – like in the car, over a meal, or while you're watching TV
3. **Put experiences in context:** We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Mental wellbeing doesn't mean feeling happy all the time, and mental health problems are actually quite common
4. **Depersonalise:** You might find it easier to talk about hypothetical situations rather than their direct questions about their feelings. Like saying 'Exams can be really stressful, can't they?' or chatting about the experiences of a TV character
5. **Hearing what's real to them:** You might not understand or agree with their feelings or way of seeing things, but this might be real for them in that moment

Remember, you don't need to be an expert. It's OK not to know or understand things. Everyday words are often helpful – like stress, feeling low, depressed or anxious. You could even learn together.

### 2 Take your daughter to the GP to request a CAMHS referral

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) is the specialist NHS service that offers assessment and treatment when children and young people have emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

Children and young people and their families can be referred to CAMHS if children are finding it hard to cope with family life, school or the wider world. If these difficulties are too much for family, friends or GPs to help with, CAMHS may be able to assist.

The types of problems that CAMHS can help with include violent or angry behaviour, depression, eating difficulties, low self-esteem, anxiety, obsessions or compulsions, sleep problems, self-harming and the effects of abuse or traumatic events. CAMHS can also diagnose and treat serious mental health problems such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

You can discuss your worries about your child with their GP. If they are old enough and feel able to do so, your child can see the GP themselves.

It can be useful to write down what is worrying you before you visit the GP, including how long the difficulties have been happening and anything you feel might be causing them. The GP may be able to offer their own advice.

If GPs think specialist help is needed, they can write a letter to CAMHS asking them to make an appointment for your child.

## **Where to get further help?**

Your GP should be your first port of call for any help and support if you think your daughter may have a mental health problem.

You can also call the YoungMinds Parents' helpline for advice. **YoungMinds Parents' Helpline** free on **0808 802 5544** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm).

## **Don't forget about you**

If your child is having problems, don't be too hard on yourself or blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent.

Children often take it out on those closest to them, so you might be feeling the effect of their very powerful emotions.

Go to your GP if things are really getting on top of you. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength.

You can't help your child if you are not being supported yourself.

Some people worry their parenting will be judged and their children will be taken away if they admit they are struggling to cope. This should only happen if a child is being abused or neglected and the role of professionals is to support you to look after your child as well as you can.

*information in this leaflet has been taken from: the Time to Change website [www.time-to-change.org.uk/](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/) & Young minds [www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_parents](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents)*

## **Websites that will provide help and support**

- Young Minds  
[http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_parents/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/)
- My CAMHS Choices  
<http://mycamhschoices.org/>
- Choosing what's best for you  
<http://www.choosing.org.uk/>
- Time to Change  
<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>
- Doc Ready  
<http://www.docready.org/#/home>
- Youth Wellbeing Directory  
<http://www.youthwellbeingdirectory.co.uk/>
- NHS Young People & Mental Health  
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/youth-mental-health/Pages/Youth-mental-health-help.aspx>
- Samaritans for parents  
<http://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/our-campaigns/information-suicide-and-self-harm-parents>



Information is also available at the CSG PSHE channel on YouTube