



Top Ten Tips for young people's mental health and wellbeing



Tips for teachers and staff in schools as recommended by young people from the mental health participation group, Download; the Youth Cabinet, and with help from Lisa Buttery at boingboing www.boingboing.org.uk



Raising awareness and challenging stigma:

1. Make sure young people know who is there to help them, including specialist staff, and how to access services – publicise regular updates when staff change.
2. Create an environment where all health issues, both physical and mental, are treated equally.
3. Be creative! Mental health can be a discussion point and topic in all sorts of lessons. By casually and consistently embedding conversations about mental health across all lessons, awareness will be raised and stigma challenged.
4. Ensure that there is always time and space for talking about things.
5. Work using a whole school approach to address and challenge bullying.
6. Remember that socially marginalised young people face additional pressures. Reducing stigma surrounding LGBTQ, BAME, SEND and other marginalized groups will promote positive mental health.
7. Normalise the idea that we all need to take care of our mental health throughout school with a range of promotional materials, outside facilitators and speakers. Ensure staff are around afterwards to notice and pick up on anyone who might want to talk.
8. Display posters, music and art and show videos in assemblies that are youth-friendly around the subject of mental health and emotional wellbeing.
9. Make sure that links to information including – support, discovery college, website apps and local community groups are highly visible and accessible to all students.
10. Use parents' evenings, dress-down days and extended learning days to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing.



A whole school approach
means that **ALL** staff
have a responsibility

Promoting positive mental health

1. Don't just focus on the loudest pupils: be conscious of the quiet pupils in the room too. Remember – academic achievers can have mental health issues as well.
2. Schools should offer physical and emotional health that isn't a graded lesson or a team sport and activities such as yoga, informal sports, visits to the gym, gardening, and meditation.
3. Include mental health in the PSHE curriculum, not just a one off assembly.
4. If a school has trained counsellors, make sure pupils can access them easily and confidentially, in a safe space.
5. Make sure all school staff have the skills and knowledge to support issues around mental health and make pupils aware of this.
6. Have a named and trained teacher who pupils can approach to discuss mental health concerns. This should be a nominated teacher chosen by young people. Young people should be able to choose who they speak to.
7. Plan in specific 1-to-1 check in times with students to ask if students are okay. This can enable staff to pick up on any changes.

8. Remind students how common mental health issues are. You could co-create resources like posters or videos with young people that stress the similarities and links between physical and mental health. The campaign *Time to Change* have a bank of free materials on their site: [timetochange.brandstencil.com](https://www.timetochange.org.uk/brandstencil.com)
9. Have and promote a safe and informal space for students to meet and be themselves – lunchtime club, after school sessions, friendship benches etc.
10. Remember there is a huge gap in cultural understanding between adults and young people; young people are growing up in a rapidly changing digital environment and issues that impact their mental health can arise very quickly.

Practical barriers can prevent students getting help

- Are services available at the right times?
- Is the location accessible?
 - Is it private?

Young people recommend having an open-door policy during specific times.

Ten things not to do



1. Avoid patronising phrases such as:
 - x Try to be happy
 - x But you don't look sick
 - x You could have it worse
 - x Stop being... sad, moody, etc
 - x Just think positively.
2. Don't allow negative attitudes or comments about mental health to go unchallenged, by staff or other pupils.
3. Never treat mental health issues as a weakness or someone's fault – you wouldn't blame a pupil for having a physical illness!
4. Try not to address issues in front of whole class – be subtle and sensitive.
5. Don't jump to conclusions about a young person's behaviour as their actions, such as disengaging in class and behaviour that seems disruptive, may be a sign of a mental health need.
6. Avoid public confrontation – discussing the issues privately outside of the classroom will be more helpful.
7. Don't betray young people's trust; make young people aware of the school confidentiality policy, so they know what could be shared and what won't. Always try to get the young person's consent to share information.
8. Don't keep information from young people when having to break confidentiality; share the decision making with the young person regarding who will be involved and exactly what needs to be shared. Be open and honest throughout the process.
9. Don't avoid addressing more difficult subjects such as self-harm or suicide.
10. Don't feel you have to do everything alone – there is help for teachers out there so find it and use it.

Top ten sources of support

1. FREE Online counselling for young people 12-18 in East Sussex
www.e-motion.org.uk
2. Young Minds website – www.youngminds.org.uk
3. Department for Education guidance for schools – Mental Health and Behaviour: Advice for Schools pdf goo.gl/GQTb0F
www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2
4. The National Children’s Bureau toolkit A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health: a self-assessment and improvement tool for school leaders goo.gl/yygNtN
www.ncb.org.uk/resources-publications/resources/whole-school-framework-emotional-well-being-and-mental-health
5. PSHE Association – offers lesson plans on the subject of mental health goo.gl/8pD4Zk
www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and
6. Sussex Discovery College www.sussexrecoverycollege.org.uk
7. 360 website: an information portal for young people in East Sussex – www.c360.org.uk
8. BoingBoing – www.boingboing.org.uk
9. Chat health number in East Sussex for ESCC young people
07507 332473
10. Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families Schools in Mind Network – www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind
You’re Never Too Young to Talk Mental Health school resource
www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/youre-never-too-young-to-talk-mental-health

<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk>

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Some members of the East Sussex Youth Cabinet

