

# LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

*Your guide in wellness & mental health*

## Talking with Teenagers about Mental Health

22% of people between the ages of 13-18 will experience a mental health or substance use challenge every year<sup>1</sup>



Talking to your teenager (or a teenager you know) about, well, anything, can be difficult. As conversations around mental health become more common, we must consider the mental health of everyone – especially teens. The more normal we make conversations about thoughts, emotions, and life challenges the easier having these conversations will get. And we know that one conversation can be pivotal when it comes to getting a young person facing a mental health challenge the help they may need.

### Here are some tips to make having these conversations a bit easier<sup>2</sup>:

- **Be genuine.** Use your words and actions to show them that you are in their corner, and not there to punish them. It is important that they realize you care about what they are going through, even if you feel uncomfortable or do not think their problem is that significant. Try to empathize with their feelings to not discourage your teen from coming to you for help in the future.
- **Allow for silence.** This may be hard at first, but it is crucial that you allow your teen to express themselves in their own words. Avoid “filling in the blanks” with what you think they will say next or how you think they may feel. This discourages teens from sharing their full experiences, and you may miss the full picture from their point of view. Apologize if you catch yourself jumping in or cutting them off and restate your desire to hear what they have to say.
- **Prepare to be an advocate.** Support your teen as you are able — take them to appointments, give them space and privacy to attend virtual appointments or support groups, or continue to have that open dialogue to make sure they are on the right track. It is also important for parents to seek their own support to ensure that you are staying healthy too.

### Learn the signs.

Watch for changes in moods – anger, sadness, irritability. Behavior – sleeping or eating more than usual, acting out or withdrawing from friends and family, taking drugs, and alcohol, and decreased interest or involvement in things they used to do. Feelings – loneliness, insecurity, hopelessness, or thoughts of suicide. Pain – headaches, stomach aches.

### Resources to help.

Consider online resources for your family – Learn to Live offers confidential, self-paced Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) tools on many topics – Stress, Anxiety and Worry; Insomnia; Depression; Social Anxiety; and Substance Use. These evidence-based programs are designed for sufferers ages 13 and older and use the same tools as in-person therapy. A 5-minute mental health assessment is available – get knowledge and information immediately. Visit [learntolive.com/partners](https://learntolive.com/partners) and enter code **INTACT1** for your no-cost resources today.

<sup>1</sup> [mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2017/06/5-tips-talking-teenager/](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2017/06/5-tips-talking-teenager/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mhanational.org/talking-adolescents-and-teens-starting-conversation>