



Tricky chat guide



Hints and tips
to help your
teens and tweens
open up about
their mind health



Health

A helping hand to get you prepped

It might seem like yesterday you were tying their laces, but it's time to start taking a more adult approach. Treating your child as an equal will likely lead to more constructive conversations. In doing so, try out these tips:

Focus. Be present. Be there

Try not to ask questions in a busy household. Find a safe and confidential space. Giving your full attention is important.

*Be present
at all times*

Model good behaviour

You need to be open and talk about how you feel before you can expect to see the same from your child.

*If 1 is the worst
you could feel and
10 the best, where
are you in that?*

Use scaling

It's sometimes hard for your child to describe how they're feeling, so it's important to understand where their head's at.



Open-ended vs direct questions

Both are useful.

Don't be afraid of direct questions.

*How are you feeling?
How are things with you?
What was the best part of your day?
Can you tell me...
Describe how that felt...*

Distinguish big vs little feelings

We need help when there are big things we can't deal with ourselves.

While other smaller things we might be okay with on our own.

*How would you
feel if you were
someone else?*

Empathetic approach

It can help taking it away from child to a 3rd party.

Reassure and normalise

Young people need to know their thoughts are perfectly natural.

Validate

When children open up and talk, you should validate what they've said.

*I understand
I see where you're
coming from
I hear you*

Tips to keep the conversation going

Once you're up and running, you might like to try some of these techniques to keep things flowing smoothly:

Talk little and often

Don't wait until it's crisis time. Begin early and have smaller conversations – then build on them.

Leave the conversation open

Make sure they know you're always available to talk. And for older children, you should also consider pointing them towards other resources – such as their school or useful websites.



Don't force it

The time for talking doesn't have to be now. It can be later.

Have regular check-ins

Follow up and check in regularly. Plus make your teens and tweens aware there are other people they can talk to if they don't feel comfortable with you.

Be open

Don't make what they're talking about a secret, shame or stigma.

Encourage reflection

Leave things that your child can look at and reflect on. Not all children are going to want to talk immediately.

Know when it's time to STOP

STOP is a simple mindfulness practice that can help you manage your stress response. It allows you to take a break and to see how things are going:

Stop what you're doing for a moment.

Take a breath – this calms the mind.

Observe what is happening, what you're feeling and thinking.

Proceed – don't move forward with an emotional reaction.

Ask what they want to happen next and how you could help?

For more info visit

www.axahealth.co.uk/health-information/mental-health/children-and-young-people/

