

The beginning of the school year can be a difficult time for students. NAMI created The Three C's to help you and your child feel supported as you talk about mental health and wellness, identify concrete support, and connect empathetically at home.



1

GET CURIOUS

There may be moments at home when your child may seem disconnected, exhibiting changes in behavior, but stating that “everything is fine.” Because there is often stigma attached to mental health conditions, children can feel ashamed to talk about their anxieties, stress or concerns. Use the following conversation starters to talk with your child about what they are experiencing. Remember to listen with curiosity and empathize with them.

- It seems you are sadder during the evenings. Let's explore, together, why that may be the case.
- I've noticed you seem less interested in some of your favorite activities. Why do you think that is?
- When was the last time you felt this way? And what was happening around you?

2

GET CONCRETE

Having activities and concrete things you can do with your child to support their mental health can help normalize mental health symptoms, eliminate stigma and empower your child to seek the help and support they deserve.

In the home, here are some activities you can do with your child to support their mental health needs and encourage them to become more proactive and practical about their mental health:

- 10 Questions on a Tuesday
- A week of wellness

Use these activities to stay connected with your child, boost their self-confidence and practice resilience and self-care. Scan the QR code for more resources and support.

3

STAY COMPASSIONATE

Use compassionate language to ensure your child feels seen, heard and validated when discussing mental health and wellness. For example, try thanking your child after they express how they feel and showing you heard them by saying phrases like, “what I'm hearing you say is,” and “we're in this together.” Avoid making assumptions, practice active listening, get comfortable with silence and remain calm as your child learns to understand their emotions and mental health symptoms.

Remember you can't pour from an empty cup. It's important to remain kind and patient with yourself as you parent. If you need additional tips or support NAMI's HelpLine is a great resource. Dial **1-800-950-NAMI (6264)** or text “HELPLINE” to 62640 to connect with someone Monday-Friday 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., ET.