

RESPONDING TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

1. Pray with and over your child(ren) daily.

- a. Prayer is not our last resort. It should be our first line of defense when we identify that our loved ones are struggling.
- b. Philippians 4:6-7
"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- c. Prayer can and does change things. Model it for your children, and practice it with them.

2. Listen to understand and not simply to respond.

- a. Active listening is hard. Our response when our children tell us things that are difficult to hear teaches them what is/is not safe to share with us.
- b. Put down all the distractions, and engage in conversation with your child. They deserve your undivided attention. If they don't get this, they will seek it elsewhere.
- c. Practice reflecting what they are saying back to them to clarify that you heard them right, and to give them a chance to hear it through someone else's words.

3. Help them identify support systems and healthy coping skills.

- a. Just like dysfunctional behavior is learned, coping skills can be learned to.
- b. You don't need a toolbox full of 20 hammers, and likewise, one coping skill (deep breathing) is not sufficient to help in every situation. Children need a toolbox full of skills that they can access in a variety of settings.
 - Prayer and Memorizing Scripture
 - Deep Breathing
 - Grounding Techniques
 - Physical Activity
 - Self Care
 - Hobbies/Interests
 - Journaling

4. Don't be afraid to get outside help.

- a. Reach out and ask for resources early on, it's always good to have an idea of where to go if your child is struggling with their mental health.
- b. It may be necessary to talk with your child's doctor or find them a counselor to talk to.
- c. Speak with your child's pastor. Ask them to pray with you and share resources with you.
- d. Pervasive mental health concerns take a toll on even the strongest of parents. Practice good self-care habits for yourself as well, so that you are able to be your best for your child.
- e. Try not to take it personally if your child will open up to a trusted adult in their life that is not you. As their parents, sometimes no matter how hard you try, there can be resistance from children to completely opening up to someone so close to their life and situation.

5. Give them time.

- a. The issues did not develop overnight, so it is irrational to think that they will disappear overnight.
- b. Occasionally, especially with adolescents, the harder you push them the more they resist your help.
- c. The goal is not to get them "over it," the goal is to see them walk in their God-given purpose and trust in Him when the battle resurfaces in their mind.

Parenting Lunch and Learn

Resource Website: RealifeChurch.org/Parenting

Early Childhood & Elementary Resources

- **100 Empowering Notes for Kids**

These colorful notes are great to stick in the lunchbox, hang on the bathroom mirror and carry in the car to remind your kids how to pray scripture over themselves!

<https://a.co/d/hRObkJ7>

- **Focus on the Family Free Phone Counseling Services**

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/counseling-services-and-referrals/>

- **Helping Kids Conquer Their Fears** (Podcast with Danny Huerta)

A licensed counselor, Huerta explains why young children experience fear and how parents can respond. Rather than discounting their children's concerns, parents can help them learn to have courage and appropriately face fears.

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/helping-kids-conquer-their-fears/>

- **Learning to Lay Down Your Fears** (Podcast with Angie Smith)

Smith shares struggles she's faced since she was a small child—including questioning her purpose, God's plans, and if she's a "good enough" Christian—and how God is teaching her to trust Him and rest in His peace.

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/learning-to-lay-down-your-fears-part-1-of-2/>

Student Resources

- **Your Teenager Is Not Crazy:**

Understanding Your Teen's Brain Can Make You a Better Parent

<https://a.co/d/9lQlOMR>

- **Every Young Man's Battle:**

Strategies for Victory in the Real World of Sexual Temptation (The Every Man Series)

<https://a.co/d/5jPN5RK>

- **Every Young Woman's Battle:**

Guarding Your Mind, Heart, and Body in a Sex-Saturated World (The Every Man Series)

<https://a.co/d/gGOse6R>

Church Contact Information:

Kids Pastor: Pastor Sarah Hawkins | Sarah.Hawkins@realifechurch.org

Students Pastor: Pastor Tristan Heyde | Tristan.Heyde@realifechurch.org

Archives of today's Lunch and Learn as well as digital downloads of the presentation will be on the Parenting resource webpage.

RealifeChurch.org/Parenting