

# MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUR TEENAGER

Mental fitness is about being able to work, study and play to your full potential, cope with day-to-day stress, and feel connected to others.

in partnership with



## HOW TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL FITNESS

Talking about mental fitness can be difficult, especially if you think your teen is showing symptoms of a mental health problem. These simple steps can help you start the conversation...

### 1 Plan Your Approach

Pick a place and time where you both feel comfortable to talk.

### 2 Engage

Be sensitive, caring, positive and non-judgmental.

### 3 What to Say and How

Ask how they are and if they need anything from you. Listen and express concern.

- ✓ "I'm concerned" – "I'm worried about"  
"I've noticed that"...
- ✗ "Snap out of it" – "I'm sure it will pass"  
"I know how you feel"...

### 4 Discuss Options

Work together, offer information and assess the different actions you can take.

### 5 Manage Difficulties

Don't force the issue. Be patient - if a player does not want to talk, ask if there is anyone else they could talk to and suggest some resources.

## WHEN IS IT TIME TO SEEK HELP?

Have you noticed significant changes in your teen's usual behaviour or mood?

Can you identify multiple warning signs of anxiety or depression?

Is this change impacting on your teen's functioning in their day-to-day life? (e.g. at home, at school, at sport, in relationships)?

Remember ALEC

Ask – Ask how they are

Listen – Listen without judgement

Encourage action – Explore the options they might have and provide resources

Check in – Keep in touch with where they're at

## WHAT TO DO?

Talk openly and honestly with your teen, and let them know that you are concerned. Reassure them that you will be there for them, and ask what they need from you.

Let them know that there is help available that includes:

Your GP – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – Sports Psychologists – School counsellors – Psychologists – Social workers – Trusted family members, sports coaches or others whom the teen feels comfortable talking to.

If your teen doesn't want to seek help, it is best to explain your concerns and to provide them with information to read.

Sources of help for parents and teens:

ROI [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

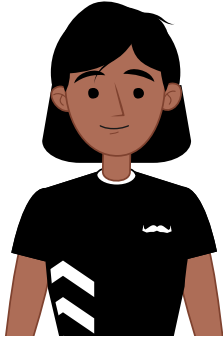
NI [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.jigsaw.ie](http://www.jigsaw.ie)

[www.textaboutit.ie](http://www.textaboutit.ie)

Changes in your teen's mental fitness can be gradual. The following guide will help you to spot the signs of a potential mental health issue.

## COMMON TEENAGE BEHAVIOUR



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Feeling tired, sleeping in, staying up late, laziness

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Changes in mood, moodiness

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Absent-mindedness, limited focus, short attention span

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Skipping dinner now and then, snacking on junk food

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Complaining, thinking pessimistically

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Feeling excited, nervous or worried about an event or activities e.g. schoolwork

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Lack of interest in doing some things, feeling bored

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Trying new things, experimenting with pushing boundaries

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If you have noticed a number of these warning signs in your teen for more days than not in the past 6 months, it may be time to seek help.

## WARNING SIGNS OF ANXIETY



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Fatigue, sleep disturbance, restlessness

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Persistent irritability

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Difficulty concentrating, mind going blank, can't complete normal, everyday tasks

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Changes in appetite, eating too much or too little, significant weight loss or gain

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Excessive anxiety which causes significant distress or impairment in life and functioning

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Feeling keyed up or on edge, physical agitation or muscle pain

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Avoiding anxiety provoking situations, putting things off

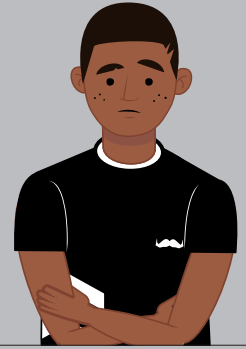
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Using alcohol or drugs to escape

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If you have noticed a number of these warning signs in your teen for more than two weeks, it may be time to seek help.

## WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION



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Persistent fatigue or lack of energy

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Persistent sad or irritable mood, low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness

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Decreased concentration, indecisiveness

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Significant changes in appetite, weight loss/gain, eating too much or too little

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Having persistent, recurrent negative thoughts

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Physical agitation, frequent unexplained aches and pains

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Loss of interest in doing things usually enjoyed, withdrawal from friends/family

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Reckless behaviour, risk taking, using alcohol or drugs to escape

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