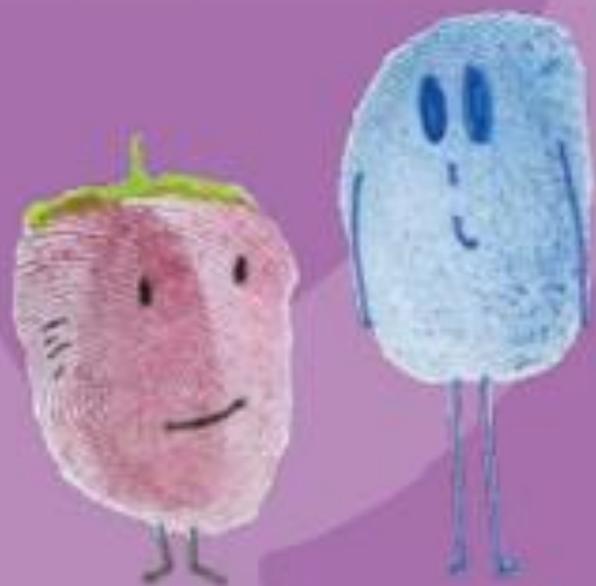




Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families



You're never too young to talk mental health



**Tips for talking for
parents and carers**

An introduction from our Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cambridge

“ As parents, we all want our children to have the best possible start in life. Encouraging children to understand and be open about their feelings can give them the skills to cope with the ups and downs that life will throw at them as they grow up.

It's important that our children understand that emotions are normal, and that they have the confidence to ask for help if they are struggling.

This is why I am proud to support the *You're never too young to talk mental health* campaign by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, which is being rolled out across primary schools this autumn.

The campaign's resources are excellent tools to support parents. They demonstrate how we can help children express their feelings, respond appropriately, and prevent small problems from snowballing into bigger ones.



What is mental health?

- ★ **We all have mental health.** Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- ★ **We all have small feelings every day:** These sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.
- ★ **Sometimes we experience big feelings:** These feel strong and overwhelming for a long time. They stop us doing what we want to in our lives.



- 1** **Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life:** Anywhere is a good place to talk; in the car, walking the dog or cooking together. Model everyday talk about feelings such as by talking about a TV character's feelings.



- 2** **Give your full attention:** We all know it's horrible to be half-listened to. Keep eye contact, focus on the child and ignore distractions.

- 3** **Check your body language:** Try to keep it open and relaxed and make sure you come down to the child's level.

- 4** **Take it seriously:** Don't downplay what the child is saying or tell them they're "just being silly". Resist the urge to reassure them that everything is fine.

- 5** **Ask open questions:** Such as "How did your day go today?" This will help to extend the conversation.



- 6** **Calmly stay with the feelings that arise:** It can be our automatic reaction to steer away from difficult emotions.

- 7** **Offer empathy rather than solutions:** Show that you accept what they are telling you but don't try to solve the problem.

- 8** **Remember we are all different:** Respect and value the child's feelings, even though they may be different to yours.

- 9** **Look for clues about feelings:** Listen to the child's words, tone of voice and body language.

- 10** **Some ways to start a conversation about feelings might be:**

"How are you feeling at the moment?"
"You don't seem your usual self. Do you want to talk about it?"
"Do you fancy a chat?"
"I'm happy to listen if you need a chat."



Talking Mental Health Animation

TALKING
MENTAL
HEALTH

Talking Mental Health is an animation designed to help begin conversations about mental health in the classroom and beyond.

The animation and accompanying resources have been created by a team of animators, children, teachers and clinicians, and is being taught to year 5 and 6 children around the UK.

The animation and resources are freely downloadable from www.annafreud.org



Finding support

ChildLine: For 18s and under
0800 1111

YoungMinds Parent Helpline:
0808 802 5544

NSPCC:
0808 800 5000

Youth Wellbeing Directory:
youthwellbeing.org

About the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families has developed and delivered pioneering mental health care for over 60 years.

Our aim is to transform current mental health provision in the UK by improving the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of treatment.

We believe that every child and their family should be at the heart of the care they receive, working in partnership with professionals.



Our Patron: Her Royal Highness
The Duchess of Cambridge
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Take Notice

- Listen to and learn to identify different bird song. Use this [RSPB bird song identifier](#) to help work out which song goes with which bird.
- Cloud spotting - looking for shapes.
- Patterns in nature.
- Listening to dawn chorus - or even just the birds at any time of day!
- Sit quietly outside and listen for sounds - how many can you hear?
- Growing something and watching it, appreciate.
- Lie on the ground be still and think about what you can feel.
- How many colours can you see?
- Spotting bird formations.
- Pay attention to an insect, watch its journey closely.
- Watch the flow of water and listen to the sound focus on the shapes that the water makes.
- How many different leaf shapes can you see?
- Bark rubbing - feel the bark and take a rubbing
- Woodland bathing - sit in a wooded area, be still and enjoy the sounds, colours and smells.



Get Creative

- Natural art - using objects from nature (blossom, twigs, stones, leaves, sand, shells etc.) to create a design or pattern. Take pictures, to preserve this natural art work!
- Pressing flowers in the traditional way using books or using a microwave for a quicker way to dehydrate the flowers. Create pictures/cards using the flowers (and give to others!)
- Research then design and create a garden/flower bed to attract wildlife (butterflies, bees, birds). This can be a small patch or even pots – the bigger the better for pots, as they take less looking after.
- Sketch or paint outdoors to capture natural landscapes/flowers/birds.
- Listen to and compose music with a natural theme e.g. linked to weather, water, woodland sounds.
- Create bug hotels, hedgehog houses and bird feeding stations to attract wildlife.
- Create a miniature garden on a plate - with gravel, pine cones, succulents, twigs, leaves etc.
- Make a rainmaker by recycling an old plastic bottle and filling it natural objects - pebbles, twigs, gravel etc.
- Create a story stick using elastic bands on a stick and then collect items on a walk through a natural environment in order to retell the adventure.

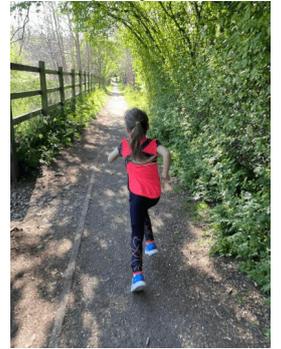


Be Active

There are so many things that we can do to be active in nature - many have already been mentioned in the sections above.

Here are a few more...

- Nature walk with list of specific things to find (a treasure or scavenger hunt) e.g. a stone that's not round, feathers of various colours and sizes, blossom, specific shape or colour leaf, something from each colour of the rainbow and/or school colours – record your treasure on digital camera/tablet.
- Allocate play leaders to lead or teach a new outdoor activity during playtimes.
- Challenge the children to make up or adapt a game using natural materials.
- Litter picking/collecting – also a good way of connecting with others!
- Make a hopscotch grid using things from nature - twigs, pebbles etc. and play hopscotch together



Give to Others

- Grow herbs (especially mint) in little pots and give as a small gift to family or community members.
- Be kind to nature (give to wildlife) build a bug hotel, squirrel or bird feeder.
- Litter pick for your community.
- Make daisy chains or weave willow bands to give to friends or family members.
- Share one of your favourite places with someone, explore it with your senses. Take a friend to your favourite place... hopefully somewhere they have never been.
- Choose one of the activities from the Get Creative section – make something to give to a friend or relative!



Connect with Others

- Growing seeds/plants at school or with friends or family.
- Growing a fast growing plants e.g. cress (possibly in egg shell?) and share with family online via Zoom/Facetime. Have some fun by drawing a face on the egg and then cutting crazy cress hairstyles!
- Make picture/collage using natural materials
- Listening game with a partner – how many nature sounds can be heard?
- Birdwatching - or insect watching - with someone.
- Gardening for someone else or a school or community garden/allotment with a group/friend.
- Photograph some nature and make your pictures into a collage for a card send to friend/family.
- Plantlife Survey – take part in this organisation's [Cowslip Survey](#) and connect with hundreds of others who care about the environment across UK.
- Listen together to stories and poems about animals, minibeasts, birds - children could suggest their favourite stories about nature to add to the connection.