

PARENT INFORMATION

Should you ever have concerns regarding your young person that are personal, family, social or school related, you may wish to make contact with one of us if you feel this could be helpful. We would need to be able to talk about how we then share our conversation with her. Perhaps you have an enquiry about which service to go to for particular help ... we may be able to make a recommendation.

If a young person is unhappy, worried or in trouble a lot at school or home, or if she is feeling afraid, bullied or alone, she is less likely to learn or feel safe and secure. It is much better to address any issues early.

Life can be difficult at times for all of us. Young people have less experience than adults do and many have yet to work out effective ways to manage their lives and relationships with themselves or others. This can mean they may not know how to share their troubles with a trusted adult and an issue or their life can begin to feel overwhelming.

What helps us get through the more difficult times is care and effective support.

SIGNS OF CONCERN WE RECOMMEND YOU ALWAYS LOOK OUT FOR AS PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: (from the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand)

- Being very sad a lot or emotional numbness
- Loss of pleasure in everyday activities
- Being irritable or anxious
- Poor concentration
- Feeling guilty or to blame or crying for no apparent reason
- A change in sleeping or eating habits
- Feelings of hopelessness and thoughts of death

These types of concerns could require professional assessment and support.

We recommend as well, to note any signs of concern below, such as:

- Changes in behaviour - perhaps very quiet or angry or aggressive
- Withdrawing socially from family and/or friends
- High levels of academic pressure or very high expectations to achieve
- A marked change in academic performance
- Expressions of not wanting to live
- Getting into trouble
- Less interest in school work, complains about school, not wanting to go, truanting school
- Cannot make decisions, has difficulty remembering things
- Taking risks and seems to have given up caring
- Drinking or drug use
- Losing weight, looking very thin, appears uncomfortable around food or over exercising – see your GP or a Counsellor
- Sadness around a fall out with a significant relationship (family member, friend, intimate relationship)
- Having serious concerns for a friend

SOME IDEAS WE OFFER FOR HOW YOU MIGHT HELP

- Take time to talk with her and listen calmly and with empathy to what she has to say to enable open communication
- Encourage her to share her feelings with you – this helps her to make sense of what is happening, feel less alone and feel supported.
- Listen until she feels you understand what she is saying – young people love and need to be heard and understood (catch yourself talking for them or rushing them as this will have them feel pressured or misunderstood and they may stop sharing. It can be a big step to share hard feelings).
- Ask supportive questions and leave plenty of space for them to think and find their words, as this will help them share more with you. The more you hear and understand, the better support you can be and the more she can feel that you care.
- Together, explore positive ways to manage her situation. This will help her development with skills for life to problem solve.
- Time with friends is a natural support link for young people. Boundaries are important to ensure she keeps herself safe
- Ask about her online activities. Are the social media sites being accessed safe or causing her any distress? Netsafe is an agency to offer advice and support so parents can keep up with what is accessible to our young people.
- If you can, watch controversial programmes together and discuss
- Encourage her with ways to keep focused on her studies while balancing leisure and healthy activities
- Talk your concerns through with the appropriate person; perhaps her Dean, teacher or a professional, such as your GP or one of the School Counsellors

Your enquiries with us will be treated professionally and confidentially.