



## Getting Through

It's more important now than ever before that parents reach out to their children to talk about their feelings and experiences. Mental health issues are rampant in children today. When it comes to talking about important subjects, there are three steps that will help you talk to them in a way that gets through. These three steps can help to open up a conversation where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. What are these three steps?

### Step 1. Ask and listen.

Ask good questions-

For example:

*How are you feeling about yourself?*

*I know these are confusing times, what concerns you the most?*

*How do you feel when you see someone being bullied or teased?*

Listen actively-

Give your children your full attention to motivate them to want to share. Listen with your eyes, as well as your ears, paying attention to facial expressions, tone of voice and body language.

Listen with empathy-

If you want your words to get through to your child, it's essential that you learn to *empathize* with them in the present moment. This means understanding what they are feeling, and caring about their feelings. This will encourage them to continue sharing and want to open up to you.

### Step 2. Give your opinions persuasively.

Be careful not to lecture. Let your kids know how bad you would feel if they began harmful habits and give concrete reasons for wanting them to abstain. Be sure that you talk from the place in your heart that loves them and cares about their health and happiness. Introduce mindfulness to your children. Help them to understand and deal with their emotions and not feel like they are alone. Find ways to teach them to "like" themselves and be confident in their choices.

### Step 3. Talk about consequences.

Unfortunately, many of the long-term "natural" consequences of depression and mental health issues don't occur for a long time. You can reduce the tendency for kids to ignore these consequences by adding a layer of "logical" consequences. These are consequences that you, as a parent, enforce to show kids what logically follows when they break a family rule. Some good logical consequences might include restriction to social media or limiting time spent on mobile devices. It's important they spend face-to-face time with other people and not live in an imaginary world.

It takes awareness, courage and skill for children to build confidence and be content with themselves. This is where parents can help. Talk to your kids about their emotions and the best ways they can deal with them in a positive way. Using these three steps to prepare your children to handle peer pressure with confidence and conviction can make the difference in the choices they make today that will have an impact for many years to come.

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