



## Healthy Minds Lincolnshire

### Parent Pack – Supporting emotional wellbeing of children and young people

Healthy Minds Lincolnshire is an emotional wellbeing service for children and young people aged 0-19 or 25 if the young person has been in care (Looked After) or has special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and was on an Education and Healthcare Plan at school (EHC)

Healthy Minds Lincolnshire provides emotional wellbeing support by delivering training and consultation to education staff and children's services staff and by delivering evidenced based brief interventions to children and young people. As an early intervention service our remit is to offer support when emotional issues first occur by providing education, coping skills and building resilience to help the young person deal with the variety of stressors that affect us all throughout our lives. This is usually done through workshops and groups at school, occasionally we will offer 1-1 sessions for between 1 and 6 sessions in the school environment.

**This guide provides some general advice about emotional wellbeing in children**

### Diet, Sleep and Exercise.

It is important to remember that physical health and mental health is closely linked. For example -if we don't eat a balanced diet we may end up with vitamin deficiencies that can leave you feeling lethargic and depressed, if we don't sleep sufficiently we feel tired and emotional and this can lead to problems both physically and mentally.



**Sleep** - Children and young people need significantly more sleep than adults to support their rapid mental and physical development. Sleep routine is important for us all to feel refreshed and motivated. Encourage your child to go to bed at the same time each night and to get up at the same time each morning. To get a good night's sleep it needs to be dark – ban electrical equipment from being used in the bedroom. As well as being over stimulated, light from this equipment prevents melatonin production which the body makes to control our natural sleep/wake cycles.

**Children age 6-13 need 9-11 hours of sleep a day, Teenagers should have between 8 and 10 hours sleep.**



**Exercise** - We all know that exercise and physical activity is beneficial for our physical health. It helps us maintain a healthy weight, strengthens our bones, muscles and internal organs and reduces the risk of some disease.

Exercise also increases our ability to deal with stress, gives us more energy and improves our sleep. When you are active your brain releases endorphins which can calm anxiety and lift your mood. There is good evidence to suggest that increasing activity will reduce your risk of depression nearly 20%.<sup>1</sup> As your mood improves and you feel fitter and stronger, your self-esteem will also improve. Good self-esteem has a protective effect that increases life satisfaction and makes you more resilient to

**stress.** (<sup>1</sup>Mental Health Research Consortium and UCL 2004)

**Diet** - Modern diets are often high in sugars, fats and salt and low in fibre, essential fatty acids and vitamins and minerals.

- Children should eat a balanced diet of three meals a day including breakfast.
- Try and avoid artificial additives, reduce pre-prepared meals and takeaways.
- If you find it difficult to get your child to eat a balanced diet consider a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement and essential fatty acids (Omega 3)



## You and Your Child

Make sure they know you love them and are proud of them. Even when things are busy or stressful, and it feels like you are in survival mode, a word or a hug can reassure them a huge amount. Praise them for what they do well, and encourage them to try new things.

- Be honest about your feelings - you don't have to be perfect. We all get things wrong and shout or say unkind things from time to time. If this happens, say sorry to your child afterwards and explain why it happened, they will learn from you that it's OK to make mistakes and that it doesn't make you a bad person.
- Be clear about what is and isn't acceptable - and tell them why. Children need to know what is OK and what isn't, and what will happen if they cross the line. Follow through on what you say as otherwise they may get confused or stop respecting the boundaries.
- Use positive consequences for good behavior and work hard to find opportunities to praise, notice or reward your child when they are good.
- Find opportunities to do things together as a family. Like all relationships we have to continually work on them to make them work.

Own your own role - you are the parent, so don't be afraid to take tough decisions. If your child sees you are scared of their reaction and always give in to them, it can make them feel very powerful, which can be frightening.

Children need to know that you are there to keep them safe.



helping  
children  
to succeed

## Helping Your Child

- Worrying or difficult behaviour might be short-lived, so give it some time. All children go through stages of feeling anxious or angry and they can show this in lots of ways, for example, tantrums, crying, sleeping problems or fighting with friends or siblings. They might be adapting to a change in the family or in their school life, or just trying out new emotions, and will generally grow out of worrying behaviour on their own or with family support.
- Talk to your child: Even young children can understand about feelings and behaviour if you give them a chance to talk about it. Take it gently and give them examples of what you mean, for example, 'When you said you hated Molly, you looked really angry. What was making you so cross?' or 'When you can't get to sleep, is there anything in your mind making you worried?'
- With older children, they might not want to talk at first. Let them know you are concerned about them, and are there if they need you. Sending an email or a text can work better if this is the way your child likes to communicate.
- Ask your child what they think would help - they often have good ideas about solving their own problems.

## On-line Support for parents

The first step for young people, parents and carers, or professionals is to follow the Emotional Wellbeing/Behaviour Pathway which self-help advice and links to resources which can be accessed at:

[www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/ewb](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/ewb)