

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Adult Support: Parent to Elementary Child Social Emotional Health and Wellness Guide

Becoming aware of our child's mental health

- Approximately one out of every five children in America have a diagnosable mental health disorder.
- Mental health problems in young people are associated with outcomes such as suicide, substance use, an inability to live independently, justice involvement, school dropout, economic hardship and physical health problems.
- Untreated mental health concerns among children and youth affect not only the young person and their family, but also schools, communities, workplaces and the nation.
- The emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health.
- Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Care Tips

ROUTINE

- Give kids some predictable anchors in their day. Those could include basic chores with creative activities that interest your child.

SOCIAL TIME

- Making and building positive interactions is so important. These could include texting or video calling family and friends, playing board or card games, watching movies, playing video games together, making and sharing meals and exercising or doing a sport together.

DIET, EXERCISE AND SLEEP

- Healthy eating and exercise decrease risk and alleviate symptoms of depression. Regulating sleep is important to help depressive symptoms as well. Turn off electronic devices at least one hour before bed and charge them somewhere other than the bedroom.

GRATITUDE

- Research shows that a grateful heart is a happier heart. Help your child show gratitude to those around them. By focusing on what we are thankful for rather than what we've lost, our brain chemistry actually changes for the better.

FROM THE KIDS

- Encourage seeing a therapist; give them space but also listen when needed; ask them if they're all right and tell them they're loved; prioritize learning over grades; make them feel safe, help them with their work, listen to their stresses over online work; take them out of the house when possible.



UCS Resources

- Teachers, Principals, School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Psychologists and District Nurses. All of these individuals are accessible through your home school.
- UCS Wellness Page which is located on UCS main webpage, or at www.uticak12.org/UCS_Wellness has an abundance of resources.

Indicators a child is struggling

While it may be normal for your child to experience some of these signs from time to time, it may mean your child is struggling if:

- You notice a big change from what is typical for your child and/or
- If your child, his having a hard time with their day-to-day tasks or activities.

INDICATOR SIGN (New or Worsening symptoms may lead parents to suspect an increased stress level is present)	WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP
INCREASED HYPERACTIVE BEHAVIOR	Help your child burn off energy in a positive calming way: deep breathing exercises, listening to soothing music, stretching or yoga.
INCREASED TIRED FEELINGS (Lacks energy/motivation)	Offer opportunities for more body movement such as walks, sporting activities and backyard play.
SCHOOL REFUSAL (Attendance problems; not wanting to complete assignments)	Communicate with school staff to develop a plan to increase engagement which could include a scheduled break time or earning rewards.
WITHDRAWING FROM FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND SCHOOL ACTIVITIES (Not interested in doing those activities usually interested in doing)	Offer plenty of positive attention. Check in with your child by asking, "how are you feeling?" Maintain familiar routines to provide comfort such as schedule short periods of family together time or play games together. Speak to your child's teacher if you suspect he/she is having trouble with friends at school.
CHANGES IN SLEEPING HABITS (Nightmares, sleepwalking, fear of going to sleep alone, difficulty falling asleep)	Ensure child's routine is consistent. Consider using a visual schedule. Tell your child stories about other kids by describing feelings just like they are experiencing. It can help them feel better and lets them know that you understand their feelings.
BEDWETTING	Reassure your child that you are not angry when he/she has an accident; ensure your child has gone to the bathroom before bed (consider using a visual); ensure your child is not drinking liquids 1 hour before bedtime; see doctor to rule out a medical condition that could cause bedwetting.
INCREASED AGGRESSION (Hitting and yelling at others)	Young children (Kdg, 1, 2) Offer opportunities to release energy. Talk to your child. Try reading books about angry feelings (contact school social worker for book ideas) to help spark a conversation. Older children (4,5,6) Stay calm; set limits; and ask your child if they would like to talk about what is bothering them. If talking does not help, consider asking child if they would like to talk to a therapist.
CHANGE IN EATING HABITS (Overeating or eating too little)	Getting to the root of the anxiety can alleviate these behaviors. Parents can consider consulting with a helping professional/therapist.
TROUBLE CONCENTRATING AND COMPLETING SCHOOLWORK	Limit distractions as much as possible and communicate with school staff to develop a plan.
PERSISTENT SADNESS FOR TWO OR MORE WEEKS	Offer empathy and acknowledge the difficulty of the situation. Caregivers should consider consulting with a helping professional/therapist.
CHANGES IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	Contact the school to work collaboratively with teacher.