



## Tips for Nourishing Your Teen's Mental Health

The World Health Organization reports that issues of mental health now affect one in four people – including children.



As parents, it's our job to make sure our children are growing up into healthy adults. This means providing financially for them, keeping a roof over their head, and making sure they're well fed. It also means guiding them and ensuring that we're nourishing their mental health.

### 1. Open the Lines of Communication

Communication is essential for happy, successful relationships. That includes the relationship between parent and child. If your child is struggling with their mental health they need to know that they can come to you.

Ask them open-ended questions. This will encourage them to speak their mind and will give you a better idea of their thoughts and opinions.

Give them your undivided attention and be respectful to their feelings.

### 2. Spend Quality Family Time Together

Spending quality time together as a family is important for maintaining good mental health. Planning weekend outings, having picnics, playing cards, playing games and talking together strengthens the family unit and creates a sense of stability and love in the household.

Many families also choose to regularly sit down for meals together. This is a great opportunity to talk, laugh, and bond as a family. Plus, studies show talking during meals promotes a child's development.

### 3. Maintain Your Marriage

One of the biggest parenting tips when it comes to your child's mental health is to make your marriage a priority. Studies show that children function better when their parents take care of their marriage. Why? Because the peace of the marriage plays an important role in maintaining a safe and loving environment at home.

Statistics show that children of divorce are more likely to have ADD, to suffer from emotional turmoil, and to be held back a grade.

Spending time with your partner and making quality couple's time a priority will have a positive effect on your child.

#### **4. Give Unconditional Love**

As with all parents, there will be times when your children do things that you don't approve of. It's important to give them discipline and structure during their youth to guide them, but be careful that your discipline isn't so harsh that your child begins to question your love for them.

#### **5. Encourage Positive Friendships**

Research confirms the age-old adage "monkey see-monkey do". Basically, children learn from observing those around them. If they are surrounded by positive people who have goals and treat people kindly, they are more likely to put an emphasis on these things. Similarly, if children surround themselves with negative people who have bad habits, they are more likely to emulate this behavior.

One of the best parenting tips to help nourish your child's mental health is to help your child build emotionally beneficial friendships.

#### **6. Build Positive Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem has a lot to do with mental health. Don't be afraid to praise your child for their good deeds. This may mean complimenting them for their grades, the way they treat people, their devotion to exercise or healthy eating, and the list goes on. This will help encourage them to continue positive, healthy behaviors.

#### **7. Create Safe Surroundings**

One way you can nourish your teen's mental health is by creating a home environment that is positive and safe.

The home front should be a teen's safety zone where their parents are their protectors. When they come through the front door, they should know that their home is filled with love, nutritious food, support, and respect. It should be somewhere they can relax and let go of their worries.

## Teachable Moments for Parents and Teens from TV & Movies

Being a parent is about teaching, nurturing and guiding as we help our children grow in confidence to make independent positive decisions. There are certainly times for scheduled “big talks” on life issues, expectations and current challenges, however, the organic conversations can be very powerful when in the context of something viewed when watching television or a movie together.



Media, in the forms of television and movies, can reflect what a teenager might think is accepted behavior. With the inclusion of violence, drinking, sex, treatment of people and many other topics, it is the perfect time to pause to discuss perception vs. reality. When viewing subjects that might include socially unacceptable behaviors, it provides the perfect opportunity for a parent to discuss values, expectations and behaviors that would be more appropriate.

***Watching a show or movie together can be a powerful and engaging way to generate important dialogue.***

It is a way to listen to their perspective on how what they are seeing is forming opinions and/or understandings.

Shows and movies can be created to be unrealistic or supernatural so it is important to be able to identify what is “real,” and what is for creative freedom and entertainment value. By guiding your child in what they are seeing and the messages that are being expressed, you are helping them to think critically, and evaluate what they are viewing within a foundation of values.

By having these conversations we are establishing behaviors we want for our children, and opening the door for conversations about topics that are important.

