

# Nurturing Children's Mental Health

A child's mental health affects his or her daily life and future. Schoolwork, relationships, and physical health can be affected by mental health. Caring for and protecting a child's mental health is a major part of helping that child grow to become the best he or she can be.

Use the following tips to help promote your child's emotional well-being:

- Set clear and consistent expectations for your child.
- Be aware of stages in child development so you do not expect too much or too little from your child.
- Encourage your child to express his or her feelings; respect those feelings.
- Promote mutual respect and trust. Keep communication channels open.
- Listen to your child. Use words and examples your child can understand. Encourage questions.
- Provide comfort and assurance. Focus on the positives.
- Look at your own problem-solving and coping skills. Are you setting a good example?
- Encourage your child's talents and accept his or her limitations.
- Set goals based on your child's abilities and interests—not someone else's expectations.
- Foster your child's independence and self-worth.
- Show confidence in your child's ability to handle problems and tackle new experiences.
- Discipline constructively, fairly, and consistently. Help your child learn from mistakes.
- Love unconditionally. Teach the value of apologies, cooperation, patience, forgiveness, and consideration for others.
- Do not expect to be perfect; parenting is a difficult job.

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