

Children's Mental Health Matters!

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS



If your child is in crisis, call
1-800-422-0009
for 24/7 help, your local
Emergency Room or 911

It's easy to know your child needs help dealing with a fever or a broken bone, but mental health problems can be harder to identify. The tricky part of parenting is knowing the kinds of behaviors and moods that are usual for the stage of development your child is in and when your child has gone beyond the norm and needs help.

$\frac{1}{2}$ of all mental health disorders begin by age 14 and 75% begin by age 24.

Early identification and intervention is essential for a child's current and future mental wellbeing!

HOW DO I KNOW THAT IT'S TIME TO TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH?



- You've noticed something just doesn't seem right, but aren't sure why
- Your child's behaviors seem different than others in peer group
- Your child is starting to have difficulties at home, school or with friends
- You've noticed some of the signs and symptoms below for more than a few weeks:

Problems with focusing, memory or thinking

Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, worthless

Loss of appetite or overeating

Sensitivity to sound, sight, smell or touch

Changes in sleep patterns or energy levels

Feeling overly worried

Loss of interest in things they used to like to do

Not being able to do school work

Irritability or restlessness

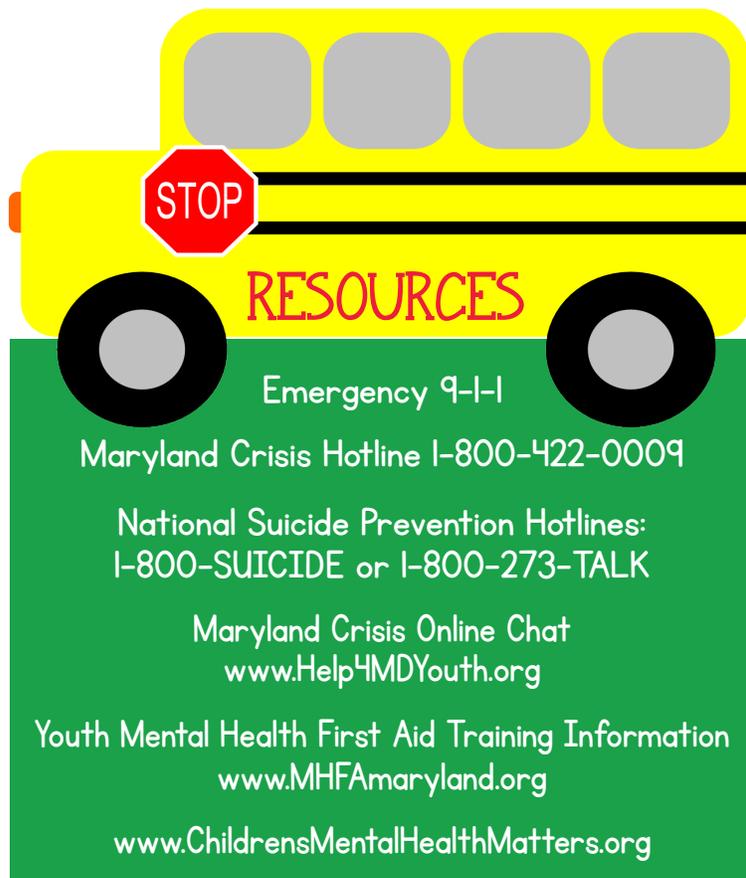
YOU SHOULD SEEK ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CHILD IS:

- Having thoughts or making plans to kill or hurt themselves or another person
- Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else does
- Experiencing unexplainable changes in thinking, speech or writing
- Being overly suspicious or fearful
- Showing drastic and sudden decline in school performance
- Having sudden personality changes that are bizarre

We need to treat a young person's mental health like we do their physical health, by giving it thought and attention and when needed, professional help.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- Choose a good time, make space to be together without an agenda or pressure
- Consider bringing up the topic of mental health while doing another activity
- Be aware of changes in your child's willingness to participate. If they are preoccupied or having a bad day, revisit the conversation another time
- Remind them that mental health disorders are common and treatable
- In a non-judgmental way, let your child know that you've noticed:
 - They don't seem to be hanging out or talking to their friends as much as usual
 - Their school work seems to be suffering. Offer extra help if they are having difficulty with the subject
 - Their mood seems to have "darkened." For example, they may talk about death or giving away their personal belongings



Emergency 9-1-1

Maryland Crisis Hotline 1-800-422-0009

National Suicide Prevention Hotlines:
1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK

Maryland Crisis Online Chat
www.Help4MDYouth.org

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training Information
www.MHFAmaryland.org

www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

WHEN A CHILD TALKS TO YOU ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

Do

- Listen and actively pay attention to the child speaking
- Ask if they've thought about what they may need to get better. Offer to support & talk it out with them
- Learn as much as possible about the child's condition
- Keep things confidential, unless it is life threatening
- Assure the child that having a mental health issue is common and that they can get better
- Don't allow fear to rule your behavior. As an adult it is important to confront stigma directly
- Prepare to be an advocate. Finding the right mental health treatment takes time and effort to make sure that they are getting the best care

Don't

- Minimize how they are feeling or tell them "you shouldn't think that way." Sometimes it's difficult for a young person to start the conversation
- Let your emotions rule your response, especially if you're angry. Negativity can prevent a child from opening up. Don't feel guilty or blame yourself
- Use the word "crazy"
- Tell the child what they should do, instead ask what they want you to help them with
- Delay action, especially if the child shares that they have bizarre thoughts or asks about strange sounds. Acting early can change the path of their lives
- Make excuses or blame others
- Compare the child to other children



The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with over 250 partners and schools across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health.