

Supporting Young People's Mental Health Tuesday 28th March 5-7pm

For our parent information evening at Fitzharrys School, we were joined by a host of speakers and organisations to discuss some of the mental health challenges our young people face and how best we can support them.

Here are some of the key learning points:

Louise Aukland, researcher at University of Oxford, author and trainer

- Teenage brains are still developing until the age of 25. Learning through experience is a fundamental part of adolescence; encourage *safe* risk taking and self-expression.
- A trusted adult can make a huge difference to a teenager's development and it doesn't always have to be the parent. Consider which adults your child has a good relationship with, both in and outside of school.
- Sleep is hugely important in adolescence. Talk with your child about how they can improve their quantity and quality of sleep.

Gary Hibbins, CEO of the Abingdon Bridge and psychotherapist

- Stress is something we all experience. Help your child to focus on what can be controlled (e.g., exam preparation), rather than what can't (exam results).
- Help your child to be aware of their inner critic and to let go of unhealthy expectations of yourself.
- What healthy coping strategies can we model for our young people as a means of dealing with stress?

Alice Palmer and Patrick Regan, The Charlie Waller Trust

- The Charlie Waller Trust has a resourceful website, with information on how to support a young person's mental health - <https://charliewaller.org/parents-and-carers/>
- Transitions and change can be challenging experiences for young people.
- Listen without judgement wherever possible and aim to regulate your own emotions before having a tricky conversation.
- Lead with empathy and encourage discussion about emotions and failure.

Susanna Patricio, clinical psychologist for Just Mind

- It is important to identify the signs of anxiety and depression for an early intervention and support.
- What can help to manage anxiety? Identifying and managing triggers, controlled breathing, mindfulness, social support, regular sleep, balanced nutrition, physical exercise, pleasurable activities, reframing negative thoughts (through specialist CBT).

Charlotte Stephens, CAMHS School in Reach team

- Oxford Health CAMHS Single Point of Access: 01865 902 515
- If the referral is urgent, it should be initiated by phone so that CAMHS can advise of best next steps.
- Before making the referral, have a clear idea of the mental health concerns including the impact of the difficulties.
- You must also be able to provide evidence to CAMHS about what intervention and support has been offered to the young person by services and the impact of this.
- What you can do whilst waiting – guided self-help, attend school in reach parent sessions, update CAMHS with any developments, encourage meaningful activities and connect with others.
- How to support your child: Listen, reassure, let them know their feelings are valid, spend time with them - actions speak louder than words.
- Make sure that you get support for yourself.

Further support and information:

Charlie Waller Trust - charliewaller.org/parents-and-carers/

Oxfordshire Mind - www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/

CAMHS Oxfordshire - www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/oxon/

The Abingdon Bridge - www.theabingdonbridge.org.uk/

Papyrus - www.papyrus-uk.org/

Mental Health Natters - www.mhm.org.uk/

Just Mind - www.justmind.co.uk/

