



## INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTHCARE NEWS

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## **‘Talk to Tweens’ Emotional Wellness Program from Intermountain Primary Children’s Hospital Now Available to Support Parents and Teachers**

A specially designed program developed by Intermountain Primary Children’s Hospital to support young teens’ emotional wellbeing is now available to parents and schoolteachers.

The free “Talk to Tweens” program, which is part of Intermountain Primary Children’s “Hold On To Dear Life” child safety initiative, provides a variety of tips and tools for teachers and parents to nurture in middle-school-aged children as they grow into adolescents.

These tools include conversation starters, the Feelings Wheel and tips on how to use it, the Hacking Emotional Health workbook, and [videos](#) voiced by Jocelyn Osmond, Utah’s Miss Outstanding Teen and host of KSL Podcast, “Teen Talk.”

These free, downloadable resources are available at [TalkToTweens.org](https://TalkToTweens.org) and in Spanish at [hableconsusjovenes.org](https://hableconsusjovenes.org).

“We know that mental health of children has been compromised over the pandemic, and that many parents are not sure how address this at home,” said Jessica Strong, director of community health at Primary Children’s Hospital. “The Talk to Tweens program gives parents and teachers tools on how to start conversations about mental health with tweens, and help kids identify, express, and manage their feelings in healthy ways.”

Data has shown that Utah children struggle as they transition into their teenage years. They want trusted, informed help — and they are most likely to seek that from a parent.

“Talk to Tweens gives parents and teachers action-oriented tools they can use to promote mental, emotional, and social health within their families and school communities,” Strong said.

“Just like you helped your child learn to tie their shoes, there are things you can do to teach emotional wellbeing to your young teenager.”

Here are some tips for parents and teachers to support tweens:

### **1) Start a Helpful Conversation**

- **Identify:** Look for cues that your child is experiencing emotions, and use the opportunity to help them name the feeling. [The Feelings Wheel](#) provides more than 50 emotions as a starting point for discussion. Allow the child to define their own feelings, while you listen quietly and offer suggestions – but only if they get stuck.

- **Accept:** Don't try to shield or rush your child through uncomfortable feelings. It's important to allow kids to sit with an uncomfortable feeling to help prepare them for the next time the feeling occurs. Understanding and accepting that all feelings are valuable will help children accept emotions as natural — and take their first step to managing the effects of their feelings.

- **Validate:** Acknowledge your child's experience and feelings without judgement, even if you disagree with their views. Helping the tween feel heard and understood will help create open dialogue. Consider your tween's experiences and how it may contribute to the feelings they are having. Create a safe space for them to open up about their emotions, to unburden their mind, and be supportive as they figure out their next step.

### **2) Promote Social Health**

Talk with your tween about what makes a healthy relationship, including mutual respect, trust, honesty, compromise and communication. Continue building your own relationship with your tween through family time, which is critical, even as peers become more important to your tween.

Encourage your tween to have face-to-face communication with others to build positive social skills. Coach active listening skills such as eye contact, putting down devices, and polite disagreement. When a relationship is ending, help your tween practice ways to disagree appropriately, manage emotions, and work toward conflict resolution.

### **3) Getting one-word answers?**

If a tween won't give more than a one-word answer, try these tips:

- Be patient and comfortable with silence.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Consider timing when kids are relaxed, such as mealtime or in the car.
- Start questions with “tell me” or “describe” instead of “how.”
- Use humor when appropriate.
- Be supportive and remind them that disappointment is normal and okay.

For more information about the program, go to [TalkToTweens.org](http://TalkToTweens.org).

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