

FAMILY TIMES

Teen Edition

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Moore Public Schools
Mental Health Team

Humans are designed for **connection**. We are not meant to go through life alone.

Connection can create a sense of belonging and makes us feel loved and valued. When we are connected we feel safer. When we feel safe with others we are open to learning, and we can better handle correction and feedback. If kids struggle with feedback at home or in the classroom focus on connection to help bring positive changes.



Teen Connection

 by Jeanette Henson, M.Ed., LPC

Being a parent can be challenging. Being a parent of a teenager can be even more challenging. It has been said that teenagers are some of the most misunderstood people on the planet. They are treated like children yet expected to act like adults. Teens are trying to explore their individual identities while enduring the social pressure of deciding where they fit in and how to prepare for their futures. Their emotions run high and low. Teens are trying to become independent while still depending on healthy relationships with family and peers. Building and maintaining connection with teenagers can help ensure they feel seen, heard, and valued.

Here are some simple ways to connect with your teenager that can be valuable in creating and maintaining trusting relationships.

Have open communication. Speak to help, not to lecture. Be an active listener and listen to understand.

Show interest in their hobbies. Whatever their interests, show that you are interested and want to learn more. You will be more aware of their likes and dislikes, and they will feel that you are invested in them. 10 minutes of uninterrupted time with a child each day has many benefits.

Respect their privacy while maintaining healthy boundaries. Provide structure and be willing to compromise. Consistency is key to maintaining confidence in each role of parent and child.

Be accepting of their differences of opinions and ideas. Remember they are exploring to find their identity, where they fit in, and establishing their beliefs. They should be treated respectfully, even if parents do not agree with everything they believe or feel.

Offer support. Often, teenagers struggle with mental health, but they are not sure how to express their needs. If they tell you they are struggling with mental health or you see changes in their daily function, please do not take it lightly. Mental health counseling may be an appropriate resource for your child and/or the family.

Just because teenagers are becoming more independent does not mean parents have to lose connection with them. Connection takes time and sincere effort. Be patient and real with your kids, and you may discover that parenting teenagers is not as scary as it seems.

Sleep Speak

by Deanna Wasson, LMSW U/S

"I'm so tired." We can all relate, and for teens, it is especially important. The teenage years are an important time for physical, mental, and emotional development, and sleep plays a vital role. Research shows that teens need 8-10 hours of sleep each night, but most teens report 7 hours or less per night during the school week.

Why is sleep so hard?

-Natural rhythms: Teens have slower sleep drives, which means they don't feel tired until later in the day. Their bodies also wait longer to produce melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep.

-Activities: Whether it's studying, sports, jobs, or time with friends, teens have a lot going on. Sleep seems like a waste of time, rather than an important part of the daily schedule.

-Electronics: Lights and notifications keep us awake by changing our hormones and routines.

What can we do to help?

-Time Budget: Encourage your teen to include sleep in their schedule. Sleep is important to refresh and save important information in the brain. It also helps the body fight illness and provides energy for daily tasks and activities.

-Routine: Help establish a bedtime routine to tell the brain and body it is time to rest.

-Reduce caffeine: Caffeine interrupts our ability to fall and stay asleep. Encourage your teen to limit caffeine or energy drinks in the evenings.

-Reduce electronics: Light from screens slows melatonin. Limit use 30 minutes before bed.

-Relax the environment: Create a calm or quiet space for sleep, along with comfortable items.

-Relax the brain: Bedtime can allow space for the brain to race and think about things to do or worries we have. Encourage your teen to acknowledge those thoughts and let them pass, rather than fighting or dwelling on them. With sleep, they can trust that they have the strength to overcome any challenges that worry them.

Inhale



Exhale

COPING CORNER

Regulation Skill: Belly Breathing

by Candace Ladd, MHR, LPC

Self-regulation is a skill that we need to develop in order to navigate our emotions and behaviors, as well as to meet our needs. One helpful way to self-regulate is to practice deep breathing. Deep breathing helps us focus on being in the present moment and not distracted by our emotions and struggles. As we begin to regulate or calm ourselves, we are able to utilize our thinking brains to take next steps or make decisions. The following is a regulation skill called Belly Breathing.

- **Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.**
- **Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of a four, making sure your belly is expanding and not your chest.**
- **Exhale through your mouth for a count of four.**
- **Continue this breathing cycle.**
- **Feel the stress leave your body while your mind becomes calm.**

Self-Care Isn't Selfish

by Tammy Mayer, M.E.d., LPC

Between work and life, most of us are juggling a lot. When our to-do list is demanding, taking care of ourselves often drops to last priority. Pushing on for days or weeks or even months on end without checking in with yourself could lead to burnout. If you're not taking care of yourself — physically and emotionally — everything around you can suffer. That's why self-care includes eating healthy and exercising regularly.

What Is Self-Care?

Self-care is doing something that nurtures or honors yourself, It can include physical activities, such as exercise, dance, and yoga, as well as relaxing outlets, such as reading or taking a warm bath.

Here are some reasons why self-care is so important:

- Self-care helps you perform at your best
- It supports overall well-being
- Self-care can help maintain self-confidence and self-esteem
- It makes us more aware of our personal needs
- Self-care allows us to be resilient
- It can help you feel well-rested and energized
- Self-care doesn't take a ton of time
- It can be a social activity

Self-Care Tip of the Month:

Journaling is a great way to express yourself, as is writing or drawing how you are feeling. People who journal feel better after they have released what they are dealing with daily. Writing down things that you are grateful for can also bring a new perspective on life if you are feeling down.



“As parents become more aware and emotionally healthy, their children reap the rewards and move toward health as well. That means that integrating and cultivating your own brain is one of the most loving and generous gifts you can give your children.”

Daniel J. Siegel *The Whole Brain Child*

Tech Takeover

by Lori Stuart-Worth, MSW, LCSW

Technology provides a lot of benefits and simplifies many aspects of our lives, yet we've heard the criticism technology can negatively affect us. We may wonder if our kids spend too much time on screens, if they are too dependent, or if it is impacting their self-esteem and mental health. Experts recommend a balanced approach to screens, similar to the concept of a balanced diet. The use of technology to connect with others, laugh while watching TikTok, and access information is undoubtedly beneficial. However, we might ask if we're noticing a trend of sacrificing off screen time like face-to-face conversations, time outdoors, or creative and physical activities for mindlessly zoning out on screens. Technology draws parents in as much as it does our kids, and we may need to examine our own use of technology to act as a role model and set screen limits for our family. Are there moments your family can set aside as screen free time such as in the car or during meals? Could a family walk or game night help create face to face connection? Consider ways to encourage time off screen and check in with your teen regularly to see how they feel about the time they spend on screens.

Source: NY Times and Very Well Mind





SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

By Courtney Folsom, MSHR, LPC, CRC

The term suicide can bring up intense feelings, specifically fears for most of us. As parents and caregivers, it can feel like an especially daunting topic to approach.

Having open conversations with your teens about tough topics can be helpful. Openly discussing topics including mental health, suicide, depression, anxiety, and relationships can help prevent these topics from feeling taboo while also helping to prevent feelings of shame and secrecy. We want to encourage an open line of communication. Let's aim to listen more than we talk. If you are worried about your teen, ask them. When in doubt, it is best to be direct. While many of us typically desire to shy away from difficult topics like suicide, as mental health professionals we recommend a straightforward approach. Ask your child directly.

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

"Are you having thoughts of self-harm?"

"Have you been having thoughts about killing yourself?"

If the answer is yes, help is available. It is recommended that you stay calm and contact a crisis resource, dial 9-8-8, or go to your closest emergency room. Lock up or remove any weapons, medications, or other potentially dangerous items. Lastly, try not to take it personal. It is not your fault. It is not a failure as a parent that your child may be experiencing a mental health crisis.

Crisis Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Text or call 988

Crisis Text Line: Text talk to 741741

Trevor Lifeline: 866-488-7396 or

Text START to 678678

OK Youth Crisis Line: 833-885-CARE

Teenline Text: Text TEEN to 839863



FREE SMARTPHONE/TABLET APPS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Apps are a great resource for you and your child to support your overall mental health. They can serve as reminder to check in with yourself and give you new tools and tips.

Anxiety or Stress:

- Unwinding Anxiety
- Mindshift
- Anxiety Reliever
- FearTools
- Take a Break

Mindfulness, Relaxation, or Breathing:

- Insight Timer
- Calm
- Headspace
- Mindfulness Coach
- Stop, Breath, & Think
- Breathe2Relax



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