

# Infant mental health

## Helping children thrive

Mental health problems affect about one in 10 children and young people. They can include self-harm, eating disorders, depression, anxiety and conduct disorder and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives. The emotional well-being of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

### Things that can help to maintain wellness include:

- Being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise.
- Having the time and freedom to play, indoors and outdoors.
- Being part of a family that gets along well most of the time.
- Going to a school that looks after the well-being of all its pupils.
- Taking part in local activities.
- Feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe.
- Being able to learn and having opportunities to succeed.
- Accepting who they are and recognising what they are good at.
- Feeling they have some control over their own life.
- Having the strength to cope when something is wrong (resilience) and the ability to solve problems.

### When to seek professional help

Children's negative feelings usually pass but if your child is distressed for a long time; if their negative feelings are stopping them from getting on with their lives; their distress is disrupting family life; or they are repeatedly behaving in ways you would not expect at their age, it is important to seek professional help.

Additional information about mental health problems can be found at [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

**1**

If children have a warm, open relationship with their parents, children will usually feel able to tell them if they are troubled.

**2**

One of the most important ways parents can help is to listen to their children and take their feelings seriously.

**3**

Your child may want a hug, they may want you to help them change something or they may want practical help.

Source: Mental Health Foundation