



# Be Safe: Emotional Wellbeing

As a parent, you coach your young child on the skills needed to walk, talk, eat, and grow. As your child grows, new skills are needed to navigate feelings and emotions. In the last 15 years, the rates of young people who report feeling persistent sadness and hopelessness has increased by more than 40%.

**Emotional health** is the ability to express feelings, adjust to emotional challenges, tolerate frustration, cope with life stressors, and enjoy life. These tips can help you talk about feelings.

## Identify

- Expand your feelings vocabulary, then name your own feelings and help tweens name theirs.
- Role model how to verbalize emotions and needs. Try the phrase “I feel (emotion) because (situation), so I will/need (action).”

## Accept

- All feelings are valuable and fleeting; they come and go.
- Sit with your child when they experience unpleasant feelings, no need to rush through them.

## Validate

- Acknowledge your child's experience without judgement.
- Help your child plan in advance how to handle intense feelings, which should include naming the feeling, identifying healthy ways to manage the feeling (such as breathing, physical activity, talking, or an enjoyable activity), and asking for help when needed.
- Encourage appropriate emotional risks for your tween, such as trying out for a team, sharing disagreement about something, or speaking up about something they find important.



Having frequent conversations with your tween about social and emotional health makes them easier. Start with your child's own experiences, or favorite books, or movies to begin the conversation.





**Social health** is having healthy relationships with friends, family, and the community, and having an interest in or concern for others.

### Connection

- Family time is important, even as peers become more important to your tween.
- Talk about characteristics of healthy relationships such as mutual respect, trust, honesty, compromise, and communication.

### Conversation Tips

If you feel like your tween won't give you more than a one-word answer, try these tips and use open-ended questions.

- Be patient and comfortable with silence.
- Consider timing when they 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 OK.

### Skills

- Interacting effectively with other people requires skills and practice.
- Encouraging face-to-face communication and contact will promote the ability to "read" people.
- Coach active in-person listening skills in a digital world, such as appropriate eye contact, putting down devices, and how to politely disagree.
- Respectfully ending or accepting the end of a relationship require practicing disagreeing appropriately, conflict resolution, and managing emotions.

### Online Activity

The internet is a vast place with a full range of content - everything from the positive and educational to dark and troublesome. Being aware of what your tween is doing online can allow for discussion and skills building. Monitor your tweens social media accounts and talk about the interactions that happen.

