

Adolescent Mental Health and Well Being

We all experience changes in our mental health over time, just like we do with our physical health. In the same way that we sometimes feel run down physically with a cold we can also feel anxiety or pressure building up on us. We can, at other times, feel really happy and confident. For young people it is important that we talk about the complete range of mental health, not just illness. It is also important that we talk about how we can work to improve our mental health and well being.

1 in every 4 adults in the UK has a diagnosed mental health issue, it is much more common than most of us realise. 50% of adult mental health problems start before the person is 15 and 75% of them can be seen before they are 18.

Mental health is affected by a wide range of factors but these can be split into three key areas:

Individual – self-esteem or factors that affect someone personally (like a disability)

Family – what is happening in our family life, relationships with people at home and any history of mental health issues in the family.

Environment - external factors like friendship group, financial issues, pressure to do well in school.

The key to improving mental health and well being is developing what are known as protective factors, the main areas to consider are:

Resilience – the ability to bounce back, have a go, respond to problems and conflicts

Support networks – at home, from peers and at school

Communication skills – the ability to say what is affecting them and to ask for help.

Confidence to ask for help – this is very difficult if young people feel they will be judged or cause disappointment

Resilience, sometimes called grit or character, can be learned or developed by helping a young person explore solutions to problems and issues, helping them to master and overcome stressful events and helping them develop a range of experience to draw on.

If you are concerned about the mental health or well being of your child please contact the appropriate Student Support Manager/Head of Year. Serious concerns, that pose a physical health risk, should be taken to the GP or hospital as appropriate.

For more information on mental health and well being please follow the links below:

www.minded.org.uk/families

www.rscpsych.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk