

6 steps to break the stigma: A mental health checklist for parents

If you feel like you're still learning about what mental health is and what it looks like, that's completely normal — the lack of education and open conversation about mental health challenges is one of the big reasons it continues to be such a taboo topic! Not sure where to start? Check out 6 recommendations from one of Brightline's expert behavioral therapists for creating a positive mental health environment for your family:

- Examine your own relationship with mental health**
Think about the messages you received growing up, and consider getting expert help if you find yourself struggling you haven't sought out support.
- Create open lines of communication with your kids**
Identify a regular time to check in with your child about their day, and ask them about any highs or lows of their day. Share yours with them too!
- Hold a safe space for your child's mistakes**
Shaming statements like "How could you," or "I thought you would do better," might not seem like a big deal at the time, but they imply to your child that they have to be perfect all the time or they've failed you. To increase the likelihood that they'll continue to come to you when big stuff happens, practice listening without problem solving.
- Normalize big feelings, especially during tough moments**
When your kid is angry about something, reflect their words back to them without judgment, and don't invalidate or minimize their feelings. You could say something like, "It's okay you're mad."
- Be aware of and counteract negative messages in society**
Repeat the values you've taught them any time you can model acceptance and openness instead of judgment.
- Get expert help if you need it**
You probably won't always know what to say to your child — that's okay! Chatting with an expert therapist or behavioral health coach can give you the tools you need to navigate these challenges as a family.