

Listen. Just listen.

Signs your child needs you to listen

While younger children often approach their parents/caregivers to voice concerns about their emotional wellbeing, parents/caregivers don't always listen.

The following signs may suggest you need to check in with your child and really listen, so that the concerns or emotions they raise are validated.

- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in appetite
- Mood swings
- Changes in sleep
- Irritability
- Changes in behaviour
- Seeming unhappy or sad
- Difficulty sleeping
- Getting in fights
- High risk-taking behaviour to self, others and/or property
- Aggressive behaviour
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Changes at school
- Constant worry or anxiety
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Isolating from family and friends (e.g. spending time in their bedroom and not with their family)
- Sudden reduction in school performance
- Decreased interest in or withdrawal from activities
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Talking about death

It's important to note that these signs on their own may not be cause for concern. If several of these concerns present and persist over time, you may need to seek the advice of a Mental Health Professional. Your GP can support referrals.

Useful conversation starters

1. I've noticed _____ (e.g. you have big black bags under your eyes/you seem tired/quiet/you're not eating much at the moment). Can you tell me what's up?
2. Do you want to talk about what's going on?
3. How can I help with _____?
4. Is there anything I can do with _____?
5. How can I support you?
6. What's the biggest problem you had today?

Remember to reflect back what you're observing and ask for your child's perspective.

Sometimes your child will say they don't want to talk. That is ok, let them talk when they are ready. You could say 'let me know when you're ready and I'll be here'.