



Checking In with My Kids: A Parent's Guide

As kids grow up, they often face stressors. Stress can come from school (grades, classmates), home (family disagreements) or other life events (COVID-19, moving, etc.). Stress that builds up over time can start to get in the way of how your child is doing day to day. This can start to hurt their mental health and they may start to experience sadness, irritability, worry, inattention, behavior problems or more. As a parent, you can check in with your children to see how they are doing and to provide support.

Tips for Talking with Children

- Allow a judgement-free space for your child to talk about how they feel and what is on their mind
- Model the normal experience of stress and emotions by calmly talking about your own feelings with your children
- Avoid statements like "Don't worry." or "Everything will be fine." that may make your child feel unheard or bad for having an emotional experience
- Do validate your child with statements like:
 - "That must be so hard."
 - "What can I do to help you?"
 - "It makes a lot of sense that you are feeling so stressed/scared during this time."
 - "It sounds like it is so frustrating to not be able to go hang out with your friends like you usually do."
- Check in with your child and ask how they been feeling in the last week or two and notice changes in mood, energy, sleep or appetite
- If you have safety concerns, be direct with your child and ask, "Have you been thinking of taking your own life?"
- Do not hesitate to reach out and establish care with a mental health provider to give your child additional support: contact Children's National at 202-729-3300.



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