

## How to Help When a Family Member Is Struggling

You love your family. You want them to be healthy and happy. So what do you do when a family member is experiencing challenges with their mental health and emotional well-being?

That's a question many of us will have to answer at some point in our lives. Mental health disorders are prevalent and can happen to anyone. [Nearly 1 in 5 people](#) in the United States struggle with their mental health. A [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) survey](#) about mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation suggests that this number doubled during the early months of the pandemic.

If you have a child, teen, partner, or other adult family member experiencing mental, behavioral, or emotional distress, there are things you can do to support them in their mental health journey.



### Meet Julie, dedicated mother and IT support technician.

Check out Julie's toolkit for self-care parenting resources, available on the Lyra mobile app. After registering, navigate to the Essentials tab and scroll to the Topics section. There you'll find Parenting Support resources including articles, videos, and more.



# Mental health for kids and teens

Whether children are experiencing mental health issues on the milder end of the spectrum—such as stress and trouble concentrating—or more severe symptoms like self-harm or suicidal ideation, parents can benefit from recognizing signs of distress and following up in a way that is effective in addressing their kid’s mental health needs.

The most effective thing you can do to safeguard your child’s mental health is pay attention. Children and teens may not tell you they’re experiencing difficulty, but you can stay ahead of the game by observing their typical behavior and noticing major changes. [Refer to the chart below](#) for common symptoms to watch for.

If you suspect your youngster or teen is going through a particularly difficult time, talk to your family’s pediatrician. They can help you decide if your child would benefit from seeing a mental health provider, such as those accessible via your Lyra Health offering.\*

**You may not be able to treat your child’s mental health condition by yourself, but there are things you can do to offer support.**

If your young child is showing signs of emotional distress, talk to their teachers, coaches, and other caregivers to get a full picture of their behavior. Involve these trusted adults by making them aware of the recommendations made by your child’s mental health provider.

## Common warning signs in children and teens

### Children

- Irritability
- Bringing up fears or worries often
- Frequent headaches or nausea with no obvious cause
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Struggling with friendships
- Falling behind in school

### Teens

- Unusually emotional outbursts
- Withdrawal from enjoyable activities and social relationships
- Constant defiance
- Low energy
- Under-eating or unexplained weight loss
- Falling behind in school

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#### Sources:

- “Improving access to children’s mental health care.” CDC, April 27, 2022, Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/access.html> on May 10, 2022.
- “What is children’s mental health?” CDC, April 19, 2022, Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html> on May 10, 2022.
- “Children and mental health: Is this just a stage?” National Institute of Mental Health, Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/children-and-mental-health> on May 10, 2022.

And don't forget the power of listening. Be available to hear your child's concerns, and allow them to express their feelings. Teenagers, on the other hand, have a unique set of needs. Your teen may place a high value on peer relationships, so supporting their friendships will go a long way toward establishing emotional wellness.

Your teen is also old enough to hear more about your own mental health journey. Be honest about your struggles while reassuring your teen that you are okay, and model healthy ways to respond to mental health obstacles. Make time for positive and fun activities with your teen, and be prepared to listen when they're ready to open up about their problems.

Keep in mind that adolescence is a time of physical and mental change and can pose new challenges to both teens and parents. Changes in your teen's mood, sleep cycle, and temperament are normal and expected. However, distinct swings in emotions and behaviors that cause concern and persist over weeks or months could indicate the need for professional, expert guidance.

## Mental health for adult family members

It may be hard to know how to support an adult family member, such as a partner or parent, because adults must make their own choices about physical and mental health care. Still, you can show up for your loved one in important ways.

If they are willing, suggest a visit to the family medical provider to discuss their mental health concerns. Help your loved one write down their symptoms and any questions they have before the medical visit. Their provider can determine if a mental health specialist is needed or if other issues, such as medication, may be influencing their mood or behavior.

### Common warning signs in adults

- Major changes in typical mood
- Feeling angry, irritable, sad, hopeless, or emotionally "flat"
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Restlessness and trouble concentrating
- More worries or stress than usual
- Excessive substance use
- Thoughts of hurting oneself or others

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#### Sources:

- "Men and mental health." National Institute of Mental Health, Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/men-and-mental-health> on May 10, 2022.
- "Caring for your mental health." National Institute of Mental Health, Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health> on May 10, 2022.
- "Mental illness." National Institute of Mental Health, Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness> on May 10, 2022.

It's also important to lend a listening ear. Although you can't replace the care of a trained medical expert, you can ease your loved one's burden by giving them space to air their feelings.

Finally, help your loved one do some self-care. This might include gentle exercise, healthy eating, adequate sleep, connection with others, a gratitude practice, or carving out time for hobbies.

**If distress escalates and you observe that your family member is experiencing a suicidal crisis, call or text 988 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

## What if I'm a new parent?

Whether you're welcoming your first child or a new sibling into the family, the pregnancy and postpartum months can cause changes to mental health for both women and men. In the United States, [more than 1 in 8 women](#) experience depression after giving birth. The rate of depression for male partners does not lag far behind; [nearly 1 in 10 men](#) report developing depression between the first trimester of their partner's pregnancy and one year postpartum.

[Postpartum depression symptoms in mothers](#) can include traditional depression symptoms like sadness and hopelessness, feelings of guilt, and loss of energy, but they can also include symptoms like anger, feeling distant from your baby, or thoughts of hurting yourself or the newborn.

In men, perinatal depression and anxiety symptoms may be masked as anger, addiction, or withdrawal. It's important to recognize that many men also struggle to reimagine fatherhood beyond how they were raised, especially if they were taught to value traditional masculinity instead of expressing emotions or participating in parenting.



**Nearly 1 in 10 men report developing depression between the first trimester of their partner's pregnancy and one year postpartum.**

Keep in mind that postpartum depression is not the same thing as "the baby blues." Most new mothers experience a temporary period of fatigue or feeling overwhelmed in the early weeks of motherhood. Postpartum depression, however, continues to persist and can include more extreme symptoms, such as thoughts of self-harm.

Some women are at greater risk for developing a perinatal mood disorder based on what else is going on in their lives. Financial stress, a recent move, lack of support from a partner, medical issues such as diabetes, or a family history of depression and anxiety are just some of the risk factors.

If you think you or your partner is suffering from depression during the pregnancy or postpartum period, it's important to reach out for expert guidance. Postpartum depression is treatable, often through a combination of counseling and medication.

Caring for the mental health of parents is important to the health of the new baby and the family as a whole. [The CDC suggests](#) that partners and friends of parents experiencing depression can provide support by listening openly to concerns, offering company during medical appointments, and playing an active role in a follow-up care plan.

## Remember that your mental health matters, too

Being a caregiver requires a balance of maintaining your own health as well as the health of the loved ones you are caring for. Neglecting your own well-being can lead to caregiver strain, which presents as emotions ranging from overwhelm to depression.

In many cases, the guidance of a mental health expert is the best way to relieve the symptoms of emotional distress and feel better again. As you seek to comfort your family, remember that your mental health matters, too.

## When we face struggles, we don't have to face them on our own.

Lyra's support is always available for you and your benefits-eligible dependents.\*

Visit [care.lyrahealth.com](https://care.lyrahealth.com) to get connected to expert support.

\*Some exclusions may apply. While most partners, spouses, and dependents have access to your Lyra Health benefits, visit [care.lyrahealth.com](https://care.lyrahealth.com) to confirm their eligibility.