

**ARE YOU WONDERING OR
CONCERNED ABOUT
A YOUNG PERSON'S
MENTAL AND
EMOTIONAL
WELLBEING?**

**RIGHT
HERE**

**A SUPPORT GUIDE FOR
PARENTS AND CARERS
IN WEST SUSSEX**

**COMMUNICATION
DO'S AND DON'TS**
- PAGE 04

**WHAT TO SAY
(AND WHAT NOT TO SAY)**
- PAGE 08

COMMUNICATION

**STARTING A
CONVERSATION**
- PAGE 06

**COMMUNICATION
TIPS**
- PAGE 13

FINDING HELP
- PAGE 15

SECTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**SUPPORT FOR
YOUR CHILD**
- PAGE 11

**SUPPORT FOR
PARENTS &
CARERS**
- PAGE 17

SIGNPOSTING AND SUPPORT

**LOOKING AFTER
YOURSELF**
- PAGE 25

**GLOSSARY OF
USEFUL TERMS**
- PAGE 28

This guide was designed by young people aged 16-25 from the **Right Here Brighton and Hove** project. It was informed by **local parents and carers** who gave their time to talk to us about their experiences of supporting their children through mental and emotional challenges.

You will also find **quotes and tips** from young people we spoke to - we felt it was important we included both sides of the parent-young person relationship.

We've included a pull-out section in the middle pages, which we encourage you to give to a young person who may benefit.

Many of the parents and carers we met spoke of feeling **isolated**, **embarrassed** and **ashamed** by the challenges they were facing. They also reported that when they had taken the step to seek professional help, they had sometimes come up against barriers in the form of not being taken seriously, being dealt with

insensitively and being bounced between services.

So, this guide is a way of drawing all those experiences together, positive and negative, and helping other parents and carers who are trying to support young people across our city.

Who are we?

Right Here Brighton and Hove is a youth-led award-winning project promoting the **emotional and mental wellbeing** of young people aged 16 to 25.

We made this guide because we identified that there was a lack of support for parents whose children had experienced mental health issues. Even though our project is run by 16-25 year olds, we decided that the guide should be for parents and carers of children who are younger than 16. In fact, we hope it will be useful to **any** parents and carers.

What you're holding is the second version of this guide. The first version was designed for parents and carers in Brighton and Hove. This second version has been adapted for those living in West Sussex and has been commissioned by West Sussex County Council.



RUN BY YMCA DOWNSLINK GROUP



COMMUNICATION



SOME THINGS TO TRY:

- Listen, *really listen*, with your full attention.
- Understand that what they're feeling is acceptable, even if it feels bad to them at that time.
- Accept your child for who they are and how they think. (Remember that teens think and perceive things differently to adults - and that's scientifically proven!)
- Give them opportunities to speak, but acknowledge they might not want to until they feel ready.
- Repeat back their words to show understanding. For example "Am I right in hearing that you're angry at John because he did XYZ?"
- Give them a choice about the words you use. For example, if they have a diagnosis of bipolar, say "what do you want me to call it?"
- Be honest with them about how *you* are feeling.

Very little can happen without communication. These lists were compiled from numerous conversations with parents, carers and young people.

We know that a lot of this is easier said than done, especially at times when emotions or tempers are high, but if you try to be mindful of these ideas, they might just help.

...AND TRY TO AVOID:

- Patronising your child or belittling what they say.
- Judging them, no matter what they say.
- Bombarding with questions, a two-way chat is much better.
- Using a tone (or volume) that could be perceived as aggressive.
- Reacting in a way that causes your child to shut down.
- Interrupting, at all costs: instead, give them time to say what they need to say.
- Dismissing what they're feeling, for example "You shouldn't feel / say that."



STARTING A CONVERSATION

In our focus groups, we asked parents about their experiences of starting conversations with their children. They gave us some interesting (and inventive) techniques. These ideas won't work for everyone but one or two might work for you and your child.

Being **in a car together** can help initiate conversation, but be aware that emotions can distract you from your driving, and you may have to pull over.

Try chatting over a **shared, calming or creative activity** like cooking, walking, decorating a room, watching a film, or something that uses your hands like drawing or painting.

Ask them to **play music** that expresses how they feel. Make playlists together that help them feel better or reflect their feelings.

Be **active** yourself (see page 26) and promote activity to them, to build self-esteem and to have some common ground.

Help them build on an **interest** they have, bearing in mind this could well be different to what they used to love. And be creative: if they like animals for example, help them find out if they could walk your neighbours' dogs or volunteer at a local animal shelter.

A **light touch** on their arm or shoulder can say a lot to them, or, if they react well to physical touch, give them a **hug**.

Try **chatting online** using facebook or instant chat, even between rooms in the same house - it might be a way of communicating they're more familiar and comfortable with.

Bring out an old **photo album**.

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

Be really **aware** if we are asking for help: we might not spell it out.

Respect our wishes: if we want to be left alone, please leave us alone.

Do things with us that we love to do and go to places we love to go. If you don't know what these are, **ask us**.

Knowing there is just someone there to talk to is **reassuring**.

My mum asked if I'd prefer to write it in a letter or draw it out rather than talk. This **made me feel like she really cared** about what I was going through, as she seemed determined to help me.



WHAT TO SAY (AND WHAT NOT TO SAY)

Communication with your child is vital, which makes the way you word things crucial so they don't feel threatened, judged, or isolated from you. Here are some phrases that parents have told us were helpful in getting their children to open up to them, and some of our own ideas too.

"What would be helpful for you?"

"If you don't want to talk to me, let's find somebody you feel happy to chat to."

"How can I support you?"

"What do you need me to understand?"

"What can I do to help you?"

"I'm here to listen, when you feel ready to talk."

"I understand you're feeling [use their words here.] It must be tough for you."

"I love you, no matter what."

And if you don't know what to say or do, just acknowledge that out loud. Your child is likely to appreciate your honesty, and the fact that you're a human being, accepting your limits.

We love this comic strip, it really says it all:



© www.etsy.com/shop/Moosekleenex

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

Whatever you do, **please don't ever say** "calm down", "chill out" or "cheer up."

Please don't tell us that we're "going through a phase". This isn't a phase; we need your **help and support**.

Try not to **patronise** us as we generally don't respond well to that and it could stop us from telling you how we feel in the future.

Try not to **shout**, or question us constantly.

Understand that mental health issues often go hand in hand with **fatigue**, and so we may not want to do the activities that we once enjoyed, or see people very often.

Be patient with us. It's daunting telling people how you really feel.



WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

My parents offered to look into therapy with me. This helped me feel less alone and made me feel that they actively wanted to be a part of my healing process.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR YOUNG PERSON'S WELLBEING GUIDE?
FIND ONE AT YOUR GP SURGERY, SCHOOL, OR DOWNLOAD IT AT WWW.RIGHT-HERE-BRIGHTONANDHOVE.ORG.UK/WELLBEING



SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD

We've included pull-out pages for young people overleaf, including lots of places your child can find support in West Sussex and online, but here are some things you should know, as parents and carers, about what is out there for them.

Your child's **DOCTOR** should be able to help. Before their appointment, suggest they visit www.docready.org where they can build a checklist to help them prepare what to say. You might want to do this with them, if they are comfortable. They could also watch the short film at www.howcanifilm.com so they are clear about their rights.

If your doctor's surgery is closed, you can get medical advice from the GP Out Of Hours Service by calling **111**.

DIALOGUE COUNSELLING

provides free counselling for 13-25 year olds in Bognor Regis, Burgess Hill, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Lancing, Littlehampton, Shoreham-by-Sea and Worthing.

Call or text **07739 893707** or email community.counselling@ymcadlg.org

YOUR SPACE is a website full of advice and information for 13-25 year olds. www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk

Until they're 18, your child can ask to be referred to **CAMHS** (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), or the GP may decide to refer them. Your child might want to meet different CAMHS professionals until they find one they feel comfortable working with. Adult Mental Health Services are for people aged 18 and over. The direct numbers for CAMHS in West Sussex are as follows:

- Chichester – 01243 813405
- Worthing – 01903 286754
- Horsham – 01403 223344

Continued overleaf...

FIND IT OUT CENTRES are all over West Sussex, and are safe places where 13-25 year olds can talk about: apprenticeships, jobs, counselling, housing, sexual health, families and relationships, substance misuse and more. **www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk/finditout**

FIND GET GIVE is a new online guide to young people's mental health support services **www.findgetgive.com**

MIND offers support and information about mental health and wellbeing. **www.coastalwestsussexmind.org** or **www.mindcharity.co.uk**

CRl SUBSTANCE MISUSE provides support for 10-17 years olds. 0300 303 8677 option 1 01903 230600 **www.cri.org.uk**

SUSSEX MENTAL HEALTH LINE gives support and information to over 18s Mon-Fri overnight 5pm-9am, and 24 hours at weekends. 0300 500 0101

WEST SUSSEX YOUNG CARERS supports young people who look after others such as family members. Email youngcarers@westsussex.gov.uk or visit **www.westsussex.gov.uk/youngcarers** or Shine groups: **www.carerssupport.org.uk/yac**

WORTH ADVISORS support people 7 days a week who are affected by domestic violence. 0330 222 8181 / 07834 968539 **www.worthservices.org**

SATURN CENTRE offers support for anyone over 14 who has been raped or sexually assaulted. 01293 600649 or visit **www.saturncentre.org**

ALLSORTS (based in Brighton) supports and empowers LGBTU young people. **www.allsortsyouth.org.uk**

BMEYPP (based in Brighton) is the Black and Minority Ethnic Young People's Project. **www.bmeypp.org.uk**

HOW TO GET YOUR PARENTS/CARERS TO COMMUNICATE BETTER WITH YOU

These pages are from a mini-booklet written by 16-25 year olds.

We are trying to help parents and carers to support their children and young people more, but conversations work much better if they are two-way. We've given parents loads of tips to improve *their* communication in the rest of the booklet, but these are some ideas for you. We hope they help.

Any comments or to get involved, contact us via **www.right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk** or tweet us **@RightHereBH**

A FEW KEY TIPS:

- If you want to be heard, it sounds strange but try to *speak softly*. Most people find it harder to hear - or listen - if you shout.
- If you find it hard talking about how you're feeling, it could help to learn some new words (**www.right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk/vocab**) or build a checklist at **www.docready.org**
- Think about the phrases you use: we've included some suggestions on the next page.
- If talking feels too awkward right now, maybe write a letter to your parent/carer instead, or to someone who you feel could support you.

THE NEXT 4 PAGES ARE A PULL-OUT SECTION.
PLEASE GIVE THEM TO A YOUNG PERSON WHO MIGHT FIND THEM USEFUL.

Here are some things we've found get a better response from our parents, and seem to help them to understand us a bit better:

INSTEAD OF...	TRY SAYING...
I can't be bothered	I don't have the energy
You don't understand	It feels like you're not understanding me right now
Leave me alone	I need some space
You never listen to me	Please listen to me / I need you to listen to me / This is important to me
Saying nothing	I don't want to talk right now

STARTING 'THAT' CONVERSATION

If you can regularly tick one or more of these boxes, we really suggest you talk to someone: a parent, carer or other relative, a friend, teacher, youth worker, doctor... really it can be anyone at all.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling tearful | <input type="checkbox"/> avoiding being with other people | <input type="checkbox"/> mood swings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> difficulty concentrating | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling overtired | <input type="checkbox"/> overeating or not eating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling agitated or panicky | <input type="checkbox"/> using alcohol or drugs to cope with your feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> self-harming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> negative thoughts | | <input type="checkbox"/> suicidal thoughts |

Starting is often the hardest bit. You could try saying *"I'm finding (...) really hard right now."* or *"Can we have a chat about (...)?"* or *"If you've got a moment I could really do with a chat."*

And check out www.docready.org: it was designed by young people to help prepare you to talk to your doctor, but it could be useful to start any conversation about how you're feeling.

NEED SOME SUPPORT?

There is loads of support for young people online. Here are some of the best sites we've found, so you don't have to spend ages looking for them:

- www.mindfull.org provides support, information and advice for 11-17 year olds about mental health and emotional wellbeing, helping you overcome life's ups and downs and feel confident and happy about who you are.
- www.thesite.org is 'your guide to the real world' and it contains true stories, videos and articles about sex, relationships, your body, drugs, mental health, money and lots more.
- www.youngminds.org.uk is the voice of young people and you'll find lots of information, advice and true stories.
- www.time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople is a great no-nonsense website where you'll find loads of support about mental health (they're also at www.facebook.com/timetochange)
- www.findgetgive.com is a brand new online guide to young people's mental health support services

IF YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT...

- ...alcohol or drugs: www.talktofrank.com or www.cri.org.uk
- ...caring for someone else: www.westsussex.gov.uk/youngcarers
- ...finding work / training: www.yourspacesussex.co.uk/finditout
- ...gender or sexuality: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk (in Brighton)
- ...black and minority ethnic project: www.bmeypp.org.uk (in Brighton)
- ...things to do: www.yourspacesussex.co.uk/things_to_do.aspx
- ...mental health: www.coastalwestsussexmind.org
- ...sexual assault: www.saturncentre.org
- ...domestic violence: www.worthservices.org
- ...how you're feeling: [anywhere above or on the next page...](#)

PULL-OUT
SECTION FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

PLACES YOU CAN TALK TO SOMEONE

You don't have to go through anything on your own. There might be someone you feel you can talk to at home or where you study, and here are some other places you will find someone to listen. If you prefer, you can take a friend or family member with you to any of these places.

FIND IT OUT CENTRES

are located all over West Sussex, and are safe places where 13-25 year olds can talk to someone about almost anything! Including: apprenticeships, training and jobs, counselling, housing, sexual health, families and relationships, substance misuse and more.

www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk/finditout

DIALOGUE COUNSELLING

provides free counselling for 13-25 year olds in Bognor Regis, Burgess Hill, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Lancing, Littlehampton, Shoreham-by-Sea and Worthing.

Call or text **07739 893707**

Email community.counselling@ymcadlg.org

DOCREADY

DOCTOR DOCTOR

You can about talk to your **doctor (GP)** about how you're feeling and about your **mental health** - they're not just there to help you with your physical health.

Before your appointment, watch the short film (made by young people) at www.howcanifilm.com to learn your rights. And so you're prepared with what you want to say, you could build a checklist to print or download at www.docready.org.

They might feel you'd be better off talking to someone more specialised from **CAMHS** (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or you can ask them to refer you to CAMHS if you want. **You have a choice about your treatment**, so ask questions, and say if you're not happy with any decisions.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

There is a lot of support for parents, carers and families, both locally and online, but it can be difficult to know where to start. On these pages we list the services local parents and carers have told us they found useful: some offer training and some are specific counselling services, but at all of them you'll find support from other parents and the opportunity to share ideas and gain confidence.

LOCAL SUPPORT

CARERS SUPPORT WEST SUSSEX offers support for people who are looking after someone including a **helpline** to provide practical information and support (finding alternative care, your rights as a carer, taking a break, looking after yourself and planning for the future), a **newsletter**, local carers **support groups**, social, training and information **events**, and **support workers** who can offer practical and emotional support to help you in your caring role, who are experienced in working with:

- mental health issues
- drugs and alcohol issues
- learning disability issues
- autism and Asperger syndrome issues
- parents who are carers
- young adults (aged 16-25 years) who are carers
- carers of people with dementia.

Find more information at www.carerssupport.org.uk

WEST SUSSEX PARENT CARER FORUM supports parents and carers of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. 01903 726188
www.wspcf.co.uk

Continued overleaf...

WEST SUSSEX PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE provides impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. 0845 075 1008 or email parent.partnership@westsussex.gov.uk
www.westsussex.local-offer.org/services/7-parent-partnership-service

SINGLE PARENTS SUPPORT IN WEST SUSSEX several groups are dedicated to helping single parents. Find their contact details on the NetMums Forum: www.netmums.com/westsussex/local/index/support-groups/single-parents

GROUP FOR PARENTS OF LGBTU YOUNG PEOPLE Research has shown that sexual orientation and gender identity can have implications for emotional and mental health. The Allsorts project (based in Brighton) runs a group for parents/carers of LGBTU (see page 28) young people, to share experiences and support one another. Email parents@allsortsyouth.org.uk, or call the parent facilitator on 07982 316017. www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

ONLINE SUPPORT

The internet can be a great source of support for parents and carers, especially if you find it's difficult to travel or to find time to get away from the house. Here are some sites parents have told us are useful:



- **YOUNGMINDS** has an excellent Parents Support Guide and provides a helpline **0808 802 5544** (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm) which parents told us is very supportive. www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents
- **RELATE** offers free instant online chat with counsellors; you can talk about any aspect of parenting that's affecting you and it's a great first step to tackling your family issues. www.parentingtroubledteenagers.relate.org.uk/talk-to-someone
- **TIME TO CHANGE** is the UK's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination, and does loads of good with young people. www.time-to-change.org.uk
- **FAMILY LIVES** is a national charity providing support 24/7 through our website, online chat, helpline 0808 800 2222 and parenting classes. www.familylives.org.uk
- **PEACEFUL PARENT** includes a thoughtful, understanding newsletter you can sign up for. www.peacefulparent.com
- **RETHINK** has been running since 1972 and provides support for anyone affected by mental health issues. www.rethink.org/carers-family-friends
- **TED TALKS** are great for inspiration on any topic. www.ted.com



WHAT HAVE I LEARNT FROM MY TEENAGE SON?

ONE MOTHER'S VOICE

“The main thing he has taught me is that as parents today, we simply cannot apply the parenting we experienced. Kids today are more informed, more savvy, they have a voice. Our job is to listen to that voice. If we don't, their voices either get louder, or disappear.

Just think: “What can I learn here? What is my child trying to communicate to me?”

No matter how strong their anger or words, they are trying to communicate difficult feelings. Our job is to decipher them. And validate them. Then help them and guide them to a more peaceful inner self.

Acceptance is key: acceptance of our child exactly as they are, and of our own limits.

The lessons from my 15 year old son in the last eight months have been terrifying, bewildering and a true awakening. I thank him for that.”



EATING DISORDERS

It can be hard to notice an eating disorder as symptoms are often quite subtle but if you have noticed a change in your child's eating habits or are even slightly concerned, you can use these services for advice:

BEAT www.b-eat.org.uk

Parent hotline: 0845 634 1414 or help@b-eat.co.uk

Youth hotline: 0845 634 7650 or fyp@b-eat.co.uk

To Be Honest (Anorexia, Bulimia Care) www.tobehonest.org.uk

Hotline 03000 11 12 13 or email mail@anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk

Men Get Eating Disorders Too www.mengetedstoo.co.uk

Email sam@mengetedstoo.co.uk

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

It's not uncommon for teenagers to experiment with substances, but if you feel like your child is losing control, here are some numbers and websites to give both of you some support:

Addaction is the UK's leading drug and alcohol charity, helping people to rebuild relationships and go on to live fulfilling and meaningful lives. www.addaction.org.uk

CRI offers drop-in appointments across Sussex and non-judgemental support. www.cri.org.uk

Email westsussex.contact@cri.org.uk or call 0300 303 8677

Your children (and you) can find honest information about drugs and alcohol at **Talk To Frank**: www.talktofrank.com or via text, email, online messenger and a free hotline 0300 123 6600.

SELF HARM

It can be really difficult for someone to open up and talk about if they are self-harming. The best thing is not to panic. You could try to find out why they self-harm (it's important to focus on the reasons and not the injuries) and listen to them. Be prepared that the young person may not understand why they self harm, and may not be able to answer this question. Here are some reliable sites where you'll find support and advice:

Right Here self harm support guide: www.right-here-brightonandhove.org.uk/selfharm

Two great websites: www.nshn.co.uk and www.lifesigns.org.uk

Royal College of Psychiatrists factsheet: www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/parentscarers/self-harm.aspx

Do's & Don'ts: www.adolescentselfinjuryfoundation.com/page7

SEXUAL HEALTH

Young people can feel embarrassed or shy talking about sex, but if you are comfortable, they are more likely to also feel that way, and to come to you with their questions. Giving reassurance and honest answers, and signposting to places they can get support with their sexual health can help.

West Sussex Sexual Health offers a range of free services including condoms, contraception, testing, treatment and advice for STIs. They run drop-in and appointment clinics across the county. www.sexualhealthwestsussex.nhs.uk

Your Space West Sussex also has lots of information for young people about sexual health: www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk/advice_and_info/sexual_health.aspx

Brook also offers free and confidential sexual health info for under 25s. Call 0808 802 1234 or visit www.brook.org.uk

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

At times, your child might experience dark or suicidal thoughts, which could be very scary for them especially if they have no one to talk to about them. As a parent or carer, you might not notice any signs that they're feeling this way - even if you do, it could be difficult to talk about, and they may not even want to talk to you about it.

If you do suspect your child is having suicidal thoughts, reading this may help you understand what they might be experiencing: www.metanoia.org/suicide. It's more important than ever to *listen without judging or advising*, and to gently reassure them you are there and that you love them. Acknowledge their feelings and signpost them to support as soon as possible. You'll find support here:

- **Your family GP** can help, and your child can take a friend (or you) with them if they want to. Encourage them to go urgently, and to use www.docready.org before they go.
- **Grassroots Suicide Prevention** is a Brighton and Hove project doing lots of good work in this area. Their excellent resource page is: www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/find_help.html
- **Papyrus** offers confidential suicide prevention advice for young people. Visit www.papyrus-uk.org or call their HOPELineUK 0800 068 4141, text 07786 209697 or email pat@papyrus-uk.org
- **Samaritans** are there 24/7 for anonymous confidential support for *anyone* going through a crisis. Call **08457 90 90 90** (lines are open 24 hours a day), text 07725 90 90 90 or email jo@samaritans.org

FOR URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION

Go with your child to **A&E** or call **999** for an ambulance. And keep listening to how they're feeling, without question or judgement.



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

You don't need us to tell you how important it is for you to take (or make) time to look after yourself: keeping yourself emotionally strong means you'll be in a better place to support children or young people in your care.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Talk as openly and as often as possible to other parents and friends who **really understand or are in similar situations** (face-to-face or on online forums - see pages 17-18 for ideas). This will help reduce isolation and the potential co-dependency between you and your child.

It can be hard to talk to old friends who don't understand - you may feel you have to justify your child or feel judged as a parent.

We all need extra help sometimes - **don't be afraid to ask.**

Continued overleaf...

STAY ACTIVE

Listen to music (great for releasing emotions and calming nerves)

Take classes or practice alone or with a friend: yoga, pilates, meditation or mindfulness... and singing!

Go jogging, walk the dog, and dance (out or in the kitchen!)

To find out more about being active in West Sussex visit

www.westsussexwellbeing.org.uk/topics/being-active

or www.activesussex.org

BACK TO BASICS

Eat healthily - easier said than done, but worth a bit of thought as food really does affect mood.

Carry on working, if you want to.

Focus on one positive thing each day, however small.

Have a long hot soak in a bubble bath.

Get enough sleep - and allow yourself to have a lie-in.

Reduce your own stress by giving your child a choice about their daily life (within reason) for example: *"How would you like me to wake you up in the morning?"*

LET IT GO

You're **only human** - and your child needs a human response. Be yourself, and no one else.

You can't get it right all the time - **everyone makes mistakes**, so feel your way and know your limits.

It's ok to lose your temper, but if you do, just **apologise**: this lets your child know it's ok to make mistakes too.

Try not to judge yourself if things don't go the way you plan them.

Pick your battles - sometimes the best thing is to walk away.

**DON'T BLAME
YOUR CHILD...
OR YOURSELF.**

BE PREPARED

- Even your family and closest friends may not understand. Excuse their ignorance, and avoid holding grudges. Accept that what some people consider as helpful ("Why don't you...?" "You should...") may sound judgemental to you. That's nobody's fault. Ask them to listen or hug you instead, and find someone who **does** understand - there are lots of people who do.
- Learning your child's triggers can prepare you for more difficult times - and help you anticipate when those might be.
- You might come across the attitude (from professionals, friends or acquaintances) that your child's behaviour is your fault. If you're feeling like this, you are not alone. Your child's behaviour is not your responsibility.
- Your child may well become angry or aggressive. It may be hard but try not to take their insults personally.
- Consider the idea of seeking counselling yourself, as your child's behaviour may trigger old traumas from your own past, and affect the way you cope with life - and with your child.
- Accept that it's likely that you may not be the best person to help your child, and your role could be more to signpost. Often parents are so involved that their judgement can become clouded. You may need to find an alternative role model or someone else they can talk to.
- Respect that everyone has their own timescale for processing and recovery. Some things take time and you might need to find new levels of patience.



GLOSSARY

There's a lot of jargon around these days. Here we help to clear up the meaning of some words you might come across in this guide, or as you go on a journey with your child.

ADD (INCLUDING ADHD): behavioural symptoms that include hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

ANOREXIA: an eating disorder characterized by immoderate food restriction and irrational fear of gaining weight, as well as a distorted body self-perception.

ANXIETY DISORDERS: range from feelings of uneasiness to immobilising bouts of terror, including panic attacks. If a person cannot shake their worries, or if the feelings are affecting their everyday activities, talking to someone would be the first step.

BIPOLAR DISORDER: aka manic depression, often with extreme mood swings with recurrent episodes of depression and mania (being high or up).

BME: Black and Minority Ethnic.

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

CBT: Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, a talking therapy that can help someone manage problems by altering the way they think and therefore behave.

COUNSELLOR: someone who provides advice and support to another person or persons.

DEPRESSION: a mood disorder characterized by intense feelings of sadness that persist beyond a few weeks. It is associated with many physical symptoms such as disturbance of sleep, appetite, and concentration. Often associated with anxiety.

CPN: Community Practice Nurse.

DUAL DIAGNOSIS: a term used to describe patients with both mental health issues and substance misuse

EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, a therapy to try and reduce your reaction to memories and triggers, often related to a traumatic event.

HEALTHWATCH: the best way to give your feedback about any health service you have received: www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

LGBTU: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans* and Unsure of sexual orientation and/ or gender identity.

OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, which can cause severe anxiety in those affected.

PANIC ATTACK: a period of intense fear or apprehension that can happen suddenly and last minutes or hours.

PERSONALITY DISORDERS: a group of conditions characterised by an inability to get on with other people and learn from experience. People with a personality disorder may find that their beliefs and attitudes are different from those of most other people. Others may find their behaviour unusual, unexpected or perhaps offensive.

PRIMARY CARE: health service provided by your GP (General Practitioner).

PSYCHIATRIST: someone who diagnoses mental health problems and prescribes medication.

PSYCHOLOGIST: someone who deals with the way the mind works and helps people to cope more effectively with their mental health issues.

PSYCHOSIS: a mental health issue that may stop a person from telling the difference between reality and their imagination.

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a type of anxiety caused by stressful, frightening or distressing event or events.

RESILIENCE: the ability to recover quickly from difficulties or problems.

SCHIZOPHRENIA: a disorder that can make people experience things that may not be real, there are many different types of schizophrenia and one person's experiences may be different from others.

SELF HARM: a way in which someone might express distress or choose to communicate. There are many different forms, for example scratching, cutting or hitting.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS: a thought about ending your own life, possibly including making plans.

SECONDARY CARE: medical care provided by a specialist or facility, usually through a referral from a GP.

STIGMA: judging something negatively before you fully understand it.

WELLBEING: someone's mental state, how they feel and how well they can cope day to day. Our wellbeing can change from day to day, month to month or year to year.

THANK YOU

It wouldn't have been possible to create this guide without the help of the parents and carers and young people who shared their experiences at our focus groups or on our online surveys, and the professionals who offered their expertise. Special thank yous to Rachele Howard and Sophie Larsen for their time and thoughtful insight and to Kelly Bastow (aka moosekleenex.tumblr.com) for allowing us to use her perceptive cartoons.

In this Right Here guide you'll find real-life experiences of parents and carers who have supported their children with mental and emotional challenges. You'll also see what young people have to say about the support they have (or haven't) received from their parents.

If you are worried about your teenage child or a young person you know, picking up this guide could be the first step to opening up one of the most important conversations of their lives.



RUN BY YMCA DOWNLINK GROUP



This guide was produced by Right Here Brighton and Hove, working in partnership with West Sussex County Council, NHS Coastal West Sussex CCG, NHS Crawley CCG and NHS Horsham and Mid Sussex CCG

If you have any comments or want to know more about our work, contact us via:

WWW.RIGHT-HERE-BRIGHTONANDHOVE.ORG.UK