SUPPORTING
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

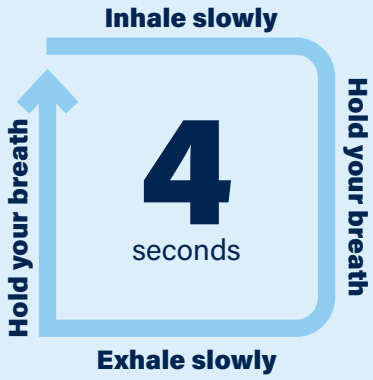
A child's mental health involves how they think, cope with feelings, and act. A mental health condition can cause delays or disruptions in their thoughts, actions, emotions and social skills. Like staying hydrated and getting enough sleep, finding healthy ways to deal with stress improves daily functioning. And just like fixing a cavity or a broken bone, getting mental health care as soon as possible will help a child feel better and limit further harm. Practicing wellness, recognizing mental health warning signs, and asking for help when needed are all ways to support a child's mental and overall health.

SUPPORTING MENTAL WELLNESS FOR A CHILD OR TEEN

Talk about it. Ask regularly about how they're doing and how things are going in their life. Talk openly while holding back judgment. Don't interrupt, and help them affirm and accept all feelings. Ask them if they want you to help problem solve or if they just want you to listen.

Practice healthy coping skills. This helps build resilience to stress and improves mood. Make a list of people, places and things that help them feel better when they're stressed or overwhelmed.

Try box breathing.



Box breathing instructions:

1) Inhale while you count to 4 slowly.
2) Hold your breath, without effort, while you count to 4 slowly.
3) Exhale while you count to 4 slowly.
4) Hold your breath, without effort, while you count to 4 slowly.
5) Repeat 3 times or more.

Optional: Trace the "box" on your hand, leg or chest while you inhale, hold, exhale and hold.

Ways families can practice wellness together:

- Plan weekly activities like cooking, game night, or being in nature.
- Establish healthy and predictable daily routines.
- Reflect on what you are thankful for.
- Limit screen time.
- Connect with other families.
- Let child lead one-on-one play time.

WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

Department of Health and Human Services
Behavioral Health Division

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

Fears and changes in mood and behavior are expected as kids grow. If a child shows big changes that cause issues at home, school or with friends, it may be a warning sign. Symptoms can include:

Extreme feelings of **fear, guilt or worry**

Feeling **very sad and avoiding** friends, family and activities

Explosive **anger**, unusually **irritable, and big mood swings**

Trouble with **focus, memory, organization and impulsiveness**

Trouble sleeping or scary **nightmares**

Risky and **harmful behavior**, like using drugs and alcohol, stealing, and self-harm

Frequent pains, headaches, upset stomach, dizziness and fainting

Changes in eating habits and weight

Did you know? One in five children experiences a mental health condition. Eighty percent of ongoing mental health conditions start in childhood.

IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

There is hope and help available in our community and beyond for mental health support.

Mental Health Resources for Children and Youth

Contact your doctor or insurance provider for treatment options. If you do not have health insurance coverage, have low income or need help finding options, please call our Behavioral Health Support Team at 503-846-4528.

FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL HELP AVAILABLE 24/7

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE
Call or text 9-8-8

YouthLine
Trained teens available daily from 4-10 p.m. PST
(adults are available by phone at all other times)

Washington County Crisis Line
503-291-9111

THE TREVOR PROJECT
For Young LGBTQ+ Lives
866-488-7386
or text 678678

CALL BLACKLINE
1 (800) 604-5841
Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

To request this information in another format or language, call 503-846-4528 or email BH_Prevention@washingtoncountyor.gov.

WCHHS.3.2025