

CONVERSATION STARTERS

It is common for our youth to face emotional “ups and downs” and even more common for them to keep their anxieties and struggles to themselves. You are your child’s most important resource and support as they cope with mental health challenges. Be aware this may be your child’s first time experiencing the overwhelming stresses of life. It is important to send the message that mental health challenges are common, and people can work through them and live a fulfilling life – sometimes it just takes a little extra help or support. Talking about mental health challenges is not something to fear, and we hope this resource can help you have that conversation today or in the future.

Consider reading the letter below aloud to your child. You can also find conversation starters on the back.

Many people struggle with challenges in life – you are not alone. Some of these challenges affect your thoughts, feelings, and emotions – or “mental health.” These types of things are common in youth and adults, and nothing to feel embarrassed or guilty about. If these challenges don’t get talked about, they can become overwhelming and may cause you to look for unhealthy ways to make these feelings stop.

Most people feel better after asking for help or finding someone supportive to speak with. I want to take time today to sit down with you and have these conversations. Let’s talk about mental health. Let’s talk about ways to feel mentally strong, solve problems, and learn to reach out to others. If you have any other topics you want to talk about, I’m here for you.

It’s very important for anyone who is feeling sad or is struggling to reach out for support – whether that’s you, a friend, or a classmate. Asking for help is a strong and brave thing to do – it is never a weakness. The SafeUT app is one resource you can use, which lets you chat with a mental health counselor about how you’re feeling any time, day or night. You can also use the app to talk about a friend or classmate you may be concerned with and how to help them.

There are so many other resources and places you can go to for help. You never have to go through any tough times alone. The most important thing I want you to remember is that I care about you, and I’m always here for you. If you ever need to talk, I will be here to listen.

I love you.

Mental Health

“What do you think it means to have a mental health condition?”

- Mental health conditions can impact moods, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Symptoms can cause enough distress to affect school work, relationships, and hobbies.
- Is there anything stressing you out right now that I can help you with?
- Is anything missing in our relationship that would make a difference?

Positive Coping Skills

“What are positive ways you cope with your stress?”

- Counseling or medication can help us manage overwhelming feelings.
- There are things we can do here at home to help:

Exercising • Art • Deep Breathing • Talking About Feelings • Hobbies • Problem-Solving • Good Sleep • Staying Hydrated • A Healthy & Well-Balanced Diet

Conflict-Resolution

“What happens when you find yourself in conflict with another person? Do you know some healthy strategies to resolve the problem?”

- Keep calm, focus on the problem (not the person), practice active listening, set boundaries and agree to disagree.

Reaching Out to Others

“How can you help a friend that is going through a difficult time?”

- If you have friends that seem to be struggling, or talk about suicide, it is very important you talk to me about it so we can get them help.
- You can always use the SafeUT app to submit a tip and share your concern about something you saw or heard. Mental health counselors are there 24/7/365 to help keep you and your friends safe.

If your child is struggling with self-harm

Speak in calm and comforting tones; validate your child’s feelings.

- “Are you harming yourself?”
- “How do you feel before you self-injure?”
- “How do you feel after you self-injure?”
- “I want you to know I am here for you when you are ready to talk.”

Avoid

- ✗ “I know how you feel.” This can make problems seem trivialized.
- ✗ “How can you be so crazy to do this to yourself?” Leads to feelings of embarrassment or guilt and less likely to ask for help.
- ✗ “You are doing this to make me feel guilty.” Focuses impact of their behavior on others, instead of seeking to understand why they are displaying the behavior.



SafeUT is available as a resource for parents 24/7/365. If you need help, support, or ideas on how to navigate these conversations, please know we are always here for you!

Download the app to start a chat or call **833-3SAFEUT** to connect with a licensed crisis counselor.

Visit **SafeUT.org** for more information.

If you or someone you love is in need of suicide prevention support, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255**.

You can also **text TALK to 741741**.

Visit them on the web: **suicidepreventionlifeline.org**

For local support, please call the Utah CrisisLine at **801-587-3000**.

Find additional resources at **liveonutah.org**

If you have an emergency, call 911.