

Pupil Wellbeing Conversations

It can feel difficult to know how to start a conversation with a pupil about their wellbeing. Sometimes this is because you don't feel equipped with the information you think you need, or you don't feel confident enough to open up the conversation. This guide shows you what action to take and how to handle a mental health disclosure.

1. NURTURE WARM, TRUSTED, KIND RELATIONSHIPS

When pupils have a consistent, emotionally available adult who shows they care and who 'holds them in mind', they thrive. They are also more willing to open up about their wellbeing and seek your support.



2. CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Provide a classroom environment which is free from belittling and shame-based behaviour management. This will help pupils feel they can share worries, talk about their feelings, know they are listened to and difficulties are acted upon.



3. LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING

To be able to help pupils with their wellbeing, the adults around them need to be regulated and calm. It is so important that you know what helps you manage and make time for wellbeing in your life.



4. KEEP CALM, EVEN IF YOU'RE WORRIED

In situations where pupils disclose mental health difficulties, keep calm whilst expressing concern for their wellbeing. Reacting with panic will create more alarm and raise a pupil's level of anxiety.



5. BE OPEN & CLEAR ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

If you invite a young person to tell you about their wellbeing, make sure you know what you will do with the information, and remember that you cannot promise to keep it to yourself.



6. HAVE SIDE-BY-SIDE CONVERSATIONS

Some pupils find safety in side-by-side conversations such as a walk and talk, whilst tidying the classroom together or perhaps during a lunchtime club.



7. PROVIDE A QUIET ROOM FOR CONVERSATIONS

If a child discloses a mental health difficulty, invite them to talk in a safer, more private environment, and if appropriate, talk to your designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for advice about how the situation can be managed.



HELPFUL OPENERS

- You don't seem your usual self today. Would you like to talk about anything?
- You look sad/worried today. Do you want to have a chat about it/Is there anything I can do to help?
- You said something interesting in circle time/at lunchtime about how you felt when... How do you feel about it now?

Taken from Mentally Healthy Schools:
<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/1611/tips-for-having-a-conversation-with-a-child-about-mental-health.pdf>

The National College

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