

PARENTS, CAREGIVERS & FAMILY

CHILDREN: WHY IS THIS THEME SO IMPORTANT?

- When children have what they need to develop well in the early years, they can thrive and be healthy now and throughout their lives. Babies start developing good mental health and wellbeing from birth.
- When adults respond to, chat to and interact with babies and children, they help them develop important skills like the ability to cope with emotions and stress now and in the future.
- Supportive relationships with parents and whether one's family gets along are strongly associated with mental health outcomes. More parental support and family harmony are related to substantially higher happiness and life satisfaction and fewer cases of prolonged sadness or depression or stress.
- But not every family has what they need for positive development. It's important parents, families, caregivers feel supported too - we understand everyone is doing their best with what they have, often in challenging environments, however there is always room for better self-care, reflection, adopting more effective strategies for improvements in any setting.



IDEAS: WHAT CAN YOU DO IN MENTAL HEALTH WEEK?

- Get involved in a local community event or host one yourself to raise awareness - mentalhealthweek.org.au
- Share a photo on Instagram showing how you already look after your mental wellbeing and how you positively engage with your children #MHW2021 @MentalHealthWeekWA
- Print out the Mental Health Week 2021 poster and display it at home or in your community group, workplace or school
- Participate in some of the events, activities, including the dance and drawing challenges
- Browse through the resources on the MHW website including recommended reading, helpful Apps and websites
- Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok and help spread the word
- Print off the post cards from our website and share tips or a supportive message with someone you know
- Talk to your kids about why looking after their mental health is important and it's normal to express a range of different feelings.



QUICK TIPS FOR BETTER MENTAL WELLBEING

- Connect meaningfully with your children, have fun, play, enjoy games with them, talk and listen, be an active part of your community.
- Positive wording helps your kids to think and act positively, and to feel capable in a wide range of situations. They will imagine success and talk themselves through to good outcomes. Our encouraging words stay with them for life.
- Babies and small children of course need their basic requirements met (to be fed, warmed and cleaned) but human contact and affection is also essential for optimal health and development.
- Essential engagements can include: Frequent hugs (skin-to-skin contact); movement of a gentle but robust kind, such as carrying around, bouncing on a knee, dancing etc; eye contact, smiling, talking at their face level; offering a colourful lively environment and healthy home; sharing sounds together such as singing, talking, reading out loud, and general daily chit chat.
- We all need to be recognised, noticed and given sincere praise - children are no different.
- Children feel respected, heard and valued when they are included in conversations - positive reassurance does wonders.
- Ask your kids about their interests, hobbies and things they like to discuss. Talk to them, not down to them.
- Doing things together - don't expect to achieve anything to your usual standard if you are bringing children along for the task ride - settle for some progress of the actual job you are doing together and mainly have fun and genuinely engage together.
- Self-care is important - if you feel good children will pick on that energy and also soak up your renewed interest in them.
- Enjoy parenthood - time with kids is never wasted - remember they can make you feel young at heart!
- **Don't lose your sense of humour!** If tension rises, try to keep perspective and see the lighter side of the situation.
- Keep it simple: family bike rides, playing, drawing, dancing, reading books, or writing together can be all that's needed in the moment.
- For older children, journaling and /or talking with a trusted friend or family member is important to maintain good mental wellbeing. Sharing how you feel helps to filter our thoughts and reflections; and harness our hopes, dreams, goals, and plans.
- Being in the fresh air in nature and enjoying water play can always seem to diffuse, distract and delight people of any age!
- Get outdoors on the grass, head to the park, jump in puddles, run up the beach, soak up the sand pit, visit your local swimming pool - or even something as simple as an untimely bath or shower could do the trick- get some buckets and toys and have some fun!
- Singing is just as therapeutic and satisfying as shouting to release tension and keep frustrations at bay. Next time you are impatiently waiting for your kids to listen or you want something done - give those vocal chords a stretch and try singing it out!
- Encourage kids to draw, colour, write, and get creative with crafts.
- Music and dancing fuel the soul and can help to shake out negative feelings and renew hope and optimism.
- Movement matters - support and create opportunities for exercise, sport or physical activities.

