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SAFEGUARDING SOLUTIONS



MENTAL HEALTH

There are many risk factors that may challenge or undermine children and young people's mental health.

Before you read on, have a think, how many examples of risk factors can you think of?

- Lifestyle factors, including body image, internet and social media and puberty
- School-based risk factors, including bullying, peer pressure, exam stress and relationships and belonging
- Home-based risk factors, including domestic abuse, poor parental mental health and abuse and neglect
- Risk factors for vulnerable children and young people, including exploitation, disability, neurodiversity and gender identity

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Social and emotional skills can support a child or young person's ability to cope and negotiate their way through difficult situations.

Can you think of some examples of social and emotional skills?

Social and emotional skills include being able to:-

- identify and manage their feelings and their behaviour, and reach out for help where necessary
- build and manage healthy relationships
- have self-control
- resolve conflict
- be self-aware
- handle and overcome difficulties
- make good decisions
- build resilience, self-esteem and confidence
- think positively about themselves and how they perceive the world around them
- recognise and prevent poor mental health
- grow into well-rounded and healthy adults

Below is one example of how we can support children and young people to have a growth mindset, by helping them to re-phrase their thoughts and feelings.





OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Remember that we all have mental health; mental health is an individual's cognitive, behavioural and emotional wellbeing (Mind 2020).

We use the term 'mental health issues' to refer to mental health problems, conditions and mental illnesses. These issues may or may not be medically diagnosed.



Keeping Children Safe In Education states that in schools 'education staff are well placed to observe children day to day and identify those whose behaviour suggests they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk from developing one.'

So what are the signs and indicators that a child or young person may be struggling with their mental health?

SIGNS AND INDICATORS

Common warning signs include:-

- sudden mood and behaviour change
- self-harm
- unexplained physical changes, such as weight gain or loss
- a decline in academic performance
- sleeping problems
- social withdrawal and/or avoidance of contact with family and peers

RESPONDING

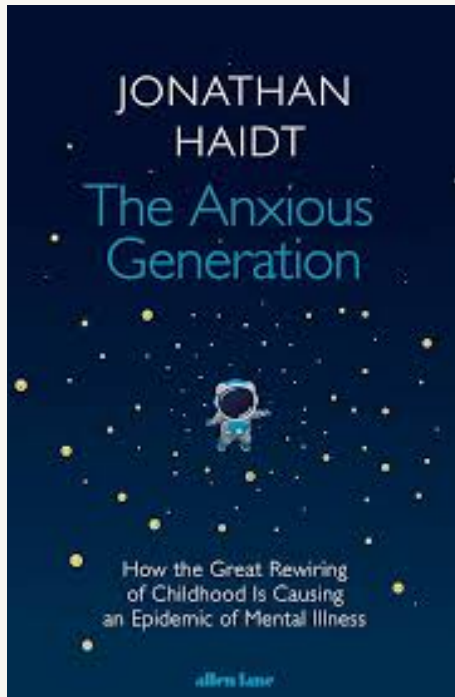
If you have a concern about a child or young person speak to a member of your school safeguarding team, as soon as possible. You can also regularly remind the children and young people you work alongside about the importance of speaking out and telling someone if they are struggling with their mental health. All children and young people should have someone they can talk to, whatever they are going through, regardless of whether they have a mental health condition.

And remember, only appropriately trained professionals should be diagnosing mental health conditions.

Guidance taken from the Anna Freud Mentally Healthy Schools website and the NSPCC learning website.



WORTH A READ



I would thoroughly recommend this book, if you haven't already come across it. The author Jonathan Haidt puts forward evidence from a number of studies looking at the impact of the internet and mobile devices on children's mental-health. Well worth a read! Very thought-provoking!
