

Friday, 14 October 2016

## Mental health and our kids: How can parents help?

**This Mental Health Week, Parentline is reminding parents and carers there is a lot they can do to help children and young people to grow up to be resilient healthy adults.**

Around 10% of all contacts to **yourtown's** Queensland and Northern Territory Parentline service each year are about the mental and emotional health of a child. This can include concerns about changes in a child's behaviour, ways of interacting with others or related to issues such as grief, loneliness, eating disorders, psychosis, self-harm, suicide, depression and/or anxiety symptoms.

In addition, mental and emotional health concerns are the number one reason children and young people reach out to **yourtown's** national Kids Helpline (KHL) service for counselling.

According to Parentline/KHL Centre Manager Tony FitzGerald, while professional counselling can be important to ensuring the wellbeing of some children and young people, parents and carers can play a significant part in strengthening the mental and emotional health of children by helping them develop a resilience they can take into their adult life.

"Research shows that young people who are resilient tend to be more hopeful, confident and possess higher self-worth when times get tough," Mr FitzGerald said.

"Resilience is the ability to adapt to events and changes and build a capacity to cope with future life events and hardships. Some call it the ability to 'bounce back'.

"It's not a personality trait we are born with, rather, most children living in supportive families and communities learn ways to adapt under normal circumstances, just as they learn ways to be resilient when times are difficult.

"Children learn this from a very young age engaging in a range of resources available to them to help them cope. This includes their environment as well as through their own personal attributes.

"Critical to creating this resilience is their relationships with family, other caring adults and their peers. Other factors include their experiences at school and in the community, beliefs and values, successes and other social activities.

"Parents and carers can assist children to be resilient by being conscious of these factors and actively developing their resilient capabilities."

Mr FitzGerald said typical ways to help encourage resilience might include:

- creating and acknowledging experiences of success with a child to enhance their sense of achievement
- developing their strengths
- talking with a child about supports available, such as a parent/carer, teachers and neighbours, so that they can be ready should a stressful event occur
- helping a child moderate emotional upset by working on relaxation and self-talk that assists to settle their reactions, like breathing and other techniques.

There are many other things parents and carers can do. For more 'Tips & Info' on resilience check out tips for parents at [www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au) or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au).

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or [www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au). The telephone and email service operates between 8am-10pm, seven days a week.

Web counselling is available from 11am-2pm, Tuesday and Thursday. The service is funded by the Queensland and Northern Territory Governments. For information about other State/Territory Parentline services see our website.

Children and young people looking for support or counselling can contact Kids Helpline 24/7 - free call **1800 55 1800** or [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au).

KHL is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. It is a service of **yourtown** (formerly BoysTown) and is 72% funded by the **yourtown** Art Union, donations and corporate support. Federal and State Governments fund 28%.

Linke, P. (2010). Promoting resilience in young children. *Educating Young Children: Learning and Teaching in the Early childhood Years*, 16 (2), pp35-38

## ENDS

## INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Tony Fitzgerald, Parentline/Kids Helpline Centre Manager
- John Dalglish, **yourtown** Head of Strategy and Research
- Brendan Bourke, **yourtown** Head of Client Services
- Counsellors
- VNR footage available of Parentline/Kids Helpline call centre

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