

This week is

“Children’s **Mental Health** and **Well-Being**”

Week at Merridale.

What is mental health?

- We all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.
- We all have small feelings every day—these sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.
- Sometimes we experience big feelings—these feel strong and overwhelming for a long time. They stop us doing what we want to in our lives.

Tips for talking for parents and carers:

- Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life: - anywhere is a good place to talk: in the car, walking the dog or cooking together. Model everyday talk about feelings such as by talking about a TV character’s feelings.
- Give your full attention - we all know it’s horrible to be half listened to. Keep eye contact, focus on the child and ignore distractions.
- Check your body language—try to keep it open and relaxed and make sure you come down to the child’s level
- Take it seriously—don’t downplay what the child is saying or tell them they’re “just being silly”. Resist the urge to reassure them that everything is fine.
- Ask open questions, such as, “How did your day go today?” This will help to extend the conversation.
- Calmly stay with the feelings that arise—it can be our automatic reaction to steer away from difficult emotions.
- Offer empathy rather than solutions—Show that you accept what they are telling you but don’t try to solve the problem.
- Remember we are all different—Respect and value the child’s feelings, even though they may be different to yours.
- Look for clues about feelings—Listen to the child’s words, tone of voice and body language.
- Some ways to start a conversation about feelings might be: “How are you feeling at the moment?” “You don’t seem your usual self. Do you want to talk about it?” “Do you fancy a chat?” “I’m happy to listen if you need a chat.”