

# How To:

## Talk to your Muslim teenager about Mental Health

myh muslim  
YOUTH  
helpline



## **1. UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN CHILDREN.**

- Mental health conditions present differently in children vs. adults
- Stay informed of conditions and symptoms to understand if your child is displaying worrying signs
- Intervene as early as possible to support your child.

## **2. SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH.**

- De-stigmatising mental health early on
- Young people may keep their feelings pent up for fear of rejection, judgement, or a lack of understanding from their parents
- Having conversations early can help your child with their emotions, and helps strengthen a healthy bond between parent and child.

## **3. SPEAK TO A GP OR A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL**

- If you are worried about your child, discussing their symptoms or Behaviours with their consent with a GP can help
- This allows you to gain a better understanding of whether the symptoms are part of a condition
- You can also find out what next steps you can take to help

# STAGE 1:

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## SIGNS AND WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Children are always changing and can have both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ days. But when do these ‘bad’ days become a mental health concern?

As a parent, paying attention to your child and taking steps to better their mental health can be daunting, but it will allow you to build a stronger relationship with your child while ensuring they are doing well mentally.



SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE —————



## STAGE 2:

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# HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION

### UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD'S LIMITS.

Don't overload when speaking with your child or pry for information they may not yet be prepared to share. They have limits, just like you, and it may take some time for them to begin sharing those parts with you.

### DON'T DIMINISH THEIR EXPERIENCES OR FEELINGS.

You may feel like you can quickly solve your child's problems, or that their concerns are not 'big'. To fully be there for them, we have to understand that even though the problem may not seem big to you, it is to your child. It's also important to remember that your child may have different ways of dealing with their problems, and it is important to validate their experiences

### LEAVE EXPECTATIONS AND JUDGEMENTS AT THE DOOR.

One's mental health can sometimes be the most private thing about them. You may expect your child to share their thoughts and struggles with you as soon as you ask. It's important to remember that they may only share when they are ready or may share parts at a time. They may also reject your offer the first few times if they're not ready. Remember not to be disheartened, and try again – they will at least feel like someone cares.

MORE WAYS TO PREPARE

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# HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION?

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## BE OPTIMISTIC

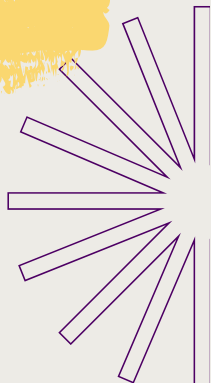
Even if the conversation is unexpected, be optimistic if your child is willing to share anything. If not, be confident that next time, they may say yes. It's important to keep trying and remain a positive source for your child.

## INTRODUCE ISLAM AS A HEALING METHOD

Many young people may hear they are not a 'good enough Muslim' while they are dealing with mental health concerns. It's important to utilise Islam as a healing method by sharing Ayahs from the Quran or Hadith, which your child can relate to and use as a source of hope.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF MENTAL HEALTH.

With social media, children are experiencing difficulties we may not have faced until much later in life. Children may be facing different types of addictions, body image issues, or exposure to violent media. When asking them to open up, it is important to understand what your child may be exposed to and not shaming or instilling fear.



# STAGE 3:

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## THE CONVERSATION

### **Remove Shame From the Conversation**

Removing shame from the conversation is important for your child to feel fully comfortable opening up to you. Try opening up about your experiences so they understand it can happen to anyone.

### **Use Terminology They Will Understand**

Your child must fully understand what is happening even when having big and important conversations. Use language they are comfortable with rather than using medical terminology. Be prepared to use descriptive language when your child does not fully understand an emotion.

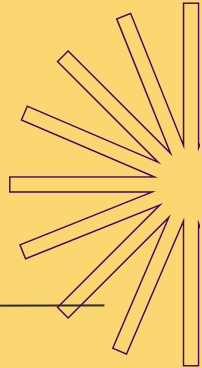
### **Be a Source of Hope.**

You may be scared by what your child shares with you, and you may want to shield or protect them. While this is an important instinct, you should also not show fear or negativity about what your child shares. This may worry them further or cause them to hide their emotions for fear of burdening you. Provide hope, and use this as an opportunity to learn and grow together.



# THE CONVERSATION

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## USE PHRASES LIKE:

- "You seem a bit down lately. What's going on?"
- "I know you may not want to speak, but know I am there whenever you're ready."
- "I noticed you've been in your room a lot lately. Is there something you want to talk about?"
- "There's no issue you're facing that's too small to discuss."

# STAGE 4:

## WHAT IF THEY DON'T WANT TO SPEAK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS?

### Be an open door

Just because your child doesn't want to talk the first time doesn't mean they won't need your support at a later time. Let your child know you are available for them. Having regular conversations with them can be a way for them to open up about their feelings. Open the door to a conversation, and then let them come to you.

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### Use other methods

If your child isn't ready to speak with you, provide them with other sources they can use. There are many stories from the Prophets (as) that can give hope if your child is going through a tough time. There are also many resources online your child can use, such as Muslim Youth Helpline.



### Introduce them to healthy coping mechanisms

Your child may negatively express emotions without the proper outlets, such as withdrawal or tantrums. Give them outlets they can use, such as exercise, art, or relaxation techniques to help manage their feelings.

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### Reassure them

Let your child know that even though their feelings may feel bad, it won't last forever. Let them know you are there for them whenever they are ready, and you are ready to support them. It may be that they just need your company from time to time. Go at their pace, and let them know they will always have a support system.



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### Help your child understand different emotions

Your child may not fully understand their feelings, so asking them to share these confusing feelings may not sound appealing to them. Using descriptive language, asking them to draw how they feel, or sharing scenarios and asking and exploring their reactions can help you gain a better understanding of what your child is experiencing.



# STAGE 5:



## YOUR CHILD IS ASKING FOR HELP: WHAT TO DO NEXT?

### Encourage Them To Open Up

Words of encouragement for your child can indicate a safe space with you. Sometimes encouraging them to speak can give them the confidence and opportunity to express themselves when they may have held themselves back.

### Validate Their Feelings

Use gestures and cues to show them that what they say matters to you and that you actively listen to them.

Validating them also makes your child feel accepted for whatever they are going through.

## 6 KEY ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS



# YOUR CHILD IS ASKING FOR HELP; WHAT TO DO NEXT?

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## **Decide Some Of The Best Next Steps To Take**

By doing this together, you show your child that

1. They aren't alone
2. You value their input and decision-making. It's easy to want to go into protection mode and try and solve the situation alone, but it's essential to give your child the space, resources, and confidence to decide on the next steps.

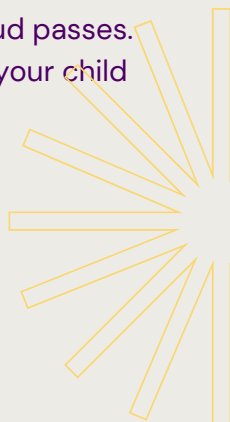
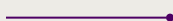
## **Let Them Know They Are Not Alone**

In some instances, before your child has approached you about how they feel, they've harbored these feelings alone, so the simplest gesture of telling them they aren't alone can be the most transformative.

## **Use Faith To Support Them**

Our faith guides us to live a better and brighter life and gives us a guidebook on overcoming situations. Faith can take us out of despair and teach us that every cloud passes. Use faith and the promise of better days to guide your child out of their pain.

MORE WAYS TO HELP





# YOUR CHILD IS ASKING FOR HELP; WHAT TO DO NEXT?

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## **Don't Assume Particular Behaviour Is Due To Something; Let Your Child Explain Why They Feel The Way They Feel**

When your child opens up to you, don't use the opportunity to assume why they are feeling how they are and let them explain their feelings.

## **Be optimistic about the future and their future**

Your child may feel discouraged about the future, so use this opportunity to paint them a positive, optimistic picture. Let them know they aren't alone and that with the right support things are going to get better. Give them reasons to want to get better and get the support required.



# STAGE 6:

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## RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS:

### Now That You Have Started The Conversation Don't End It

Keep up the momentum through check-ins, conversations, and sharing your thoughts and feelings.

## RESOURCES:

### GP Support

Speaking to your GP can be the first step to getting the right support. They can help direct you to the right help once they've identified and understood the symptoms your child may be experiencing.

### CAMHS

An NHS support service helping young people get specialist support. Your GP usually does a referral to CAMHS.



## RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS:

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**Accept That You May Not Be The Right Person To Talk To**  
But you can connect them with a family member, friend, or mentor.

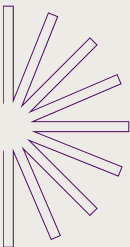
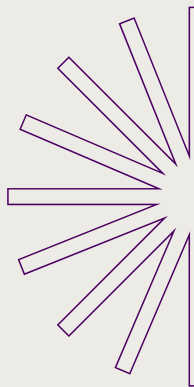
## RESOURCES:

### **Schools & Universities**

There may be support available from within your child's educational institute. The benefit of this is that the familiarity can be encouraging and less frightening for your child.

### **Faith Sensitive Support** (imams, helplines, therapists)

A faith and culturally sensitive support provides a more holistic approach. It be found at your local mosque or community group.





# STAGE 7:

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## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

Help & Support Are Out There



### There's Nothing To Be Ashamed Of

Take on board the similar words of confidence given to your child. Your child has asked for help, and you're both on the right path to get it. Think positively and be confident.

### Support Is For Parents, Too

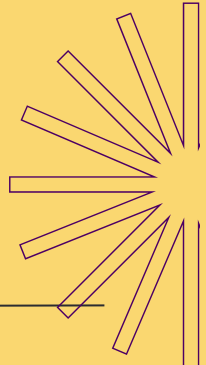
Many national helplines and local support groups are available, so you don't have to feel alone.

### Talk To Other Parents

Sometimes, it's easier to talk about how you feel and what's going on without breaking your child's trust.

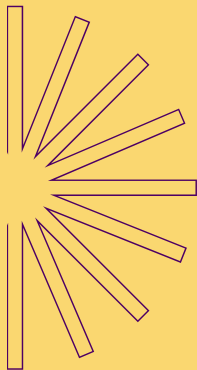
## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

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### SUPPORT AVAILABLE:

- YOUNG MINDS
- MIND
- PLACE2BE
- NHS












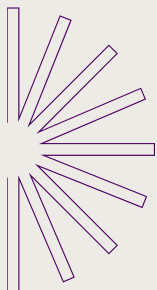


## STAGE 8:

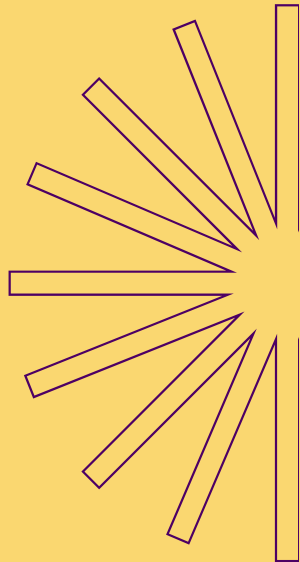
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### DO's AND DON'Ts OF TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

-  Use words that label others
-  Use words of acceptance
-  Minimise what they are going through
-  Validate their feelings through positive words
-  Give them space and be present
-  Share your feelings
-  Assume why they are feeling the way they are
-  Force them to admit something
-  Expect them to have the tools to discuss their mental health







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