



GUIDE: Healthy Habits

Lead by Example: Modeling Positive Mental Health

Modeling healthy emotional well-being habits for your young person is a powerful way to prepare them for life's challenges. Research from the National Institutes of Health shows that children of parents with strong mental health are more likely to experience lower levels of distress and have greater emotional well-being throughout their lives.



The longer and more consistent the positive mental health support from parents, the stronger the long-term benefits for their children. In other words, when you show up with intention, honesty, and care, even in imperfect moments, you're helping your young person learn how to care for themselves, too.

5 strategies for parents to model positive mental health and well-being habits

1. Practice and prioritize self-care

When children see parents making time for rest, nutrition, movement, and personal enjoyment, they learn that taking care of one's mind and body is important, not selfish.

- **Example:** "I'm going to take a walk to clear my head. Want to come with me?"

2. Name and normalize emotions

Talking openly about feelings helps young people see that emotions are normal and manageable.

- **Example:** "I'm feeling really stressed today, so I'm going to take a few deep breaths before we keep talking."

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3. Set and respect healthy boundaries

Modeling boundaries teaches children how to protect their time, energy, and well-being.

- **Example:** “I need a few minutes of quiet right now, and then I’d love to hear what you want to talk about.”

4. Ask for help when you need it

Showing that it’s okay to seek support, whether from a therapist, family member, or friend, breaks down stigma about mental health.

- **Example:** “I’ve been feeling overwhelmed, so I scheduled a session with my counselor to talk it through.”

5. Apologize and repair after conflict

Mistakes happen in every relationship. Modeling accountability and repair helps build trust and emotional safety.

- **Example:** “I’m sorry I raised my voice earlier. That wasn’t okay, and I want to do better. Can we talk about what happened?”



Learn More: [Healthy Habits Mini Workbook](#)

Learn how to prioritize emotional well-being and embed beneficial mental health habits into daily life, and set a strong example for your young person. This workbook is part of ***Built to Thrive***, an interactive workbook created by The Steve Fund.

[Explore the Built to Thrive workbook.](#)

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