

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In your teen's health class, we are currently studying mental and emotional health. We are defining *mental health* as the ability to deal in a reasonable way with the stresses and changes of everyday life. Students begin by learning about appropriate ways to develop good mental health habits. We will then explore the benefits and importance of high self-esteem. Our exploration will include learning about methods of managing stress. Finally, students will take a look at mental disorders and sources of help for mental and emotional problems.

In studying various aspects of mental and emotional health, your teen will consider some important questions, such as: *How can I tell if I am in good mental health? Why do I feel the way I do about myself? What circumstances in my life might be causing me stress, and how can I cope with it? How can I tell if an emotional problem is serious? What causes mental illness? How do I know when to ask for help? What responsibility do I have for friends who are in trouble?*

These challenging questions are best explored during the sometimes stormy teen years. Young people confront a variety of difficult emotional issues for the first time during adolescence. It is also during this time that mental health habits of a lifetime are formed.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teen:

- Explore your home together. Do you have a place where family members can relax and unwind? If not, work together to create such a place.
- Ask your teen and other family members to name a person they admire. Then ask them what qualities they think that person has that make him or her attractive. Talk about someone of whom you think highly and the qualities that you admire in that person.
- Discuss situations with your teen that each of you finds stressful. Share positive coping tips with one another.
- Adolescence is often a time of mental and emotional stress. Encourage your teen to share and discuss emotional problems with you. Be prepared to offer support and encouragement and the benefit of once having been an adolescent yourself.

Please feel free to engage in any other activities that you believe will encourage your teen to develop lifelong habits that promote good mental and emotional health. As always, do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher