

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child's health class is currently studying the topic of mental and emotional health. We are defining good **mental and emotional health** as *your ability to accept yourself and others, adapt to and cope with emotions, and deal with the problems and challenges you meet in life*. People with good mental health have a positive outlook on life and are happy and active most of the time. They set realistic goals for themselves and have a genuine concern for others. A person's emotional health depends on satisfying three basic needs—the need to love and be loved, the need to belong, and the need to feel worthwhile.

In exploring the various aspects of mental and emotional health, your teenager will consider some important questions, such as: *How can my thoughts and behavior affect the way I feel about myself? How can I express my emotions in healthy ways? How can I use refusal skills to avoid high-risk behavior? What can I do to manage stress in my life? How do I know if my problems are serious enough to ask for help? Who can help me if they are?* and many others.

Such questions about mental and emotional health are challenging for anyone, but they are especially challenging for teenagers. These questions are best asked and answered, however, during the sometimes tumultuous teenage years. It is during this time that young people confront a wide variety of difficult emotional issues for the first time.

It is also at this time that the mental health habits of a lifetime are forming.

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 teenager:

- Volunteer with your child to help a group or individual in need. Point out that volunteering helps meet the basic emotional need of feeling worthwhile.
- Play a “stress/de-stress” game with your teenager. Take turns identifying stressors and ways to cope with or minimize them.
- Make a map of your teenager's “support network.” Identify the family members, friends, clergy, and others to whom your teenager can turn in times of distress.
- Ask your teenager what it means to be a good friend. Discuss with him or her occasions when going against a friend's wishes can be in the best interests of the friend.

As always, please feel free to engage in any other activities you believe will support our classroom discussions. Your support of our learning about mental and emotional health is critical. By working together, I am confident we can help your teenager continue to develop good mental and emotional health habits.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher