

Chapter**4****Parent Letter and Activities**

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 *the 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 can understand and cope with their feelings. They can motivate themselves to achieve goals and have a healthy sense of humor. A person's emotional health depends on satisfying three basic emotional needs—the need to feel worthwhile, the need to love and be loved, and the need to belong.

In exploring the various aspects of mental and emotional health, your teen will consider some important questions, such as: *How can my thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes affect the way I feel about myself? How can I express my emotions in healthy ways? What are mental and emotional problems? How do I know if I need professional help for a mental or emotional problem? What kinds of professionals help people with mental health problems? What are strategies for dealing with loss?*

Such questions about mental and emotional health are challenging for anyone, but they are especially challenging for teens. These questions are best asked and answered, however, during the sometimes tumultuous teen 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 teen:

- Volunteer with your child to help a group or individual in need. Point out that volunteering helps meet the basic emotional need to feel worthwhile.
- Watch a movie or television program with your teen. Pay close attention to the emotions expressed by the main characters. Then discuss with your teen whether the characters expressed their emotions in healthy or unhealthy ways.
- Ask your teen what it means to be a good friend. Discuss the occasions when going against a friend's wishes can be in the best interest 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 teen continue to develop good mental and emotional health habits.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher