

LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

Your guide in wellness and mental health

6 Steps to Consider When Parenting Kids with Depression and Anxiety

“I wish parenting came with a handbook.” How often have you heard these words? Or even said them yourself? There’s a chance that a handbook might make parenthood easier to navigate.

However, it’s likely that even if one did exist, we would have to adapt that handbook to our own, precious child. This is especially the case when parenting a child who experiences any range of mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. The Center for Disease Control reports that anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems in children, ages 3-17.

Anxiety and depression often show up physically and emotionally, which can lead to many challenges for our kids. As parents, we want the best for our children. So, when we see them struggling, we want nothing more than to be able to help them back to a happy, healthy place. Educating yourself so that you can support and understand your child is incredibly important. Symptoms will vary for each child, however, there are common signs that you can keep an eye out for. Some of those may include: **physical symptoms** like trouble sleeping, constant stomach pains, headaches, changes in appetite, fatigue, and dizziness; **emotional symptoms** such as excessive worry, irritability, mood swings, specific phobias, and low mood; and **social symptoms** including self-isolation, trouble maintaining or building friendships, avoidance, and loss of interest in activities.



Steps to Take to Support Your Child

Although we can’t always solve our children’s mental health challenges, supporting our children in navigating their challenges can be incredibly impactful. But where do you start? Some of the following steps may help:

1. Check in with your child’s physician regarding physical and emotional symptoms to rule out any medical conditions.
2. Chat with your child to see if they are having social or academic problems at school.
3. Consider what their exposure to social media looks like. Delaying exposure until a later age (16+) is ideal. If your child is already using social media, note that more than an hour a day can be harmful.
4. Take note of their daily routines. Are they active, eating well, getting enough sleep (many kids need 9 hours or more), etc.?
5. Collaborate in active problem-solving. Taking note of concerns like academic or social problems, social media exposure, and daily habits can help you better understand your child and take active steps toward solving existing concerns.
6. Seek support. If the challenges feel beyond your scope or you’re just not sure where to turn, consider seeking out support through in-person therapy or through digital online platforms, like Learn to Live.

Getting Started

Children ages 13 and older can utilize the many programs and evidence-based tools that Learn to Live has to offer. There is also a **quick 5-minute assessment** available so you and your child can learn about their mental health. This quick screening can give them an overview of their mental well-being and set them on a path to leaning the tools and skills to overcome future stressors and build resilience. Scan the QR code below or visit learntolive.com/partners and enter access code **MIIA**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

