

Supporting your deaf child's mental and emotional health



Deaf children are sometimes more likely than hearing children to experience depression, anxiety and other challenges affecting their mental health.

There are lots of reasons for this:

Deaf young people sometimes face daily challenges to communicate and make sure they are understood, even by their own family. This can lead to isolation and loneliness, with some deaf children even blaming themselves for being deaf.



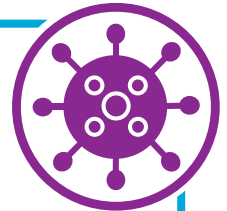
Because deaf young people often do not have the same access to language as hearing young people, some struggle to express themselves and their emotions. This can cause huge frustration and also anger.



Sometimes a deaf child is bullied or experiences stigma, or is excluded and treated differently because they are deaf. This can happen in school, in the community but also in the home. This can lead to a deaf child feeling cut off from key everyday life experiences.



In stressful situations like the Coronavirus pandemic, many deaf children become anxious because people do not explain what is going on to them. Big changes to routine, without communicating what is happening, can create anxiety and worry.



Because a deaf child is often the only deaf person in their community and in their family, they may not know others who have gone through the same situations or experiences as them.



Many deaf children experience situations like this, and they can all have a big impact on how a deaf child feels and acts.

What can you do to support your deaf child's mental health?

Make sure your child understands any big changes that are happening, like the Coronavirus pandemic. If this means they have to use the internet more, for accessing school work or communicating with their friends, make sure this isn't negatively affecting their mental health or behaviour.



Make sure you always communicate with your deaf child – even if you do not know sign language. Try to learn more signs, use gestures, drawings or write things down. Never give up or say “never mind” or “I will tell you later”.



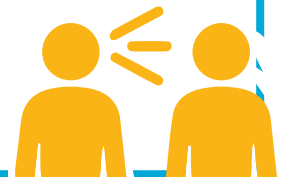
Talk to your child about how they feel and allow them to express their own opinions and feelings. Listening to your child and being patient with them are both very important.



Always try to understand what your deaf child is saying. Even if communication is difficult, don't ignore them.



Be alert for signs of bullying or abuse. If you are concerned, talk to your deaf child about any concerns you may have.



Play for the sake of playing – Make some time to enjoy a visual game with your child. Don't worry about learning language or vocabulary all the time, sometimes just enjoy spending time together.



Include your deaf child – in conversations, in play, in household chores and responsibilities, in learning, and in family events so everyone can feel part of the family or group.



Don't let deafness be an excuse - with the right support, deaf children can do all the same things as their hearing siblings or friends. Setting the same expectations for your deaf child as you would for a hearing child will help to boost their self-esteem.



Build your deaf child's confidence and independence from an early age by giving them some level of responsibility and praising them for their efforts and achievements. Even if this is something small like getting washed and dressed by themselves or helping you with simple chores around the home.

