Hard Moments with Teens
Conversations with a psychologist

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..I think my child may have anxiety or depression?

Oh My Goodness
What do I do when...

Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
Your response goes here.
These conversations shouldn’t be...

Long Monologues
Start with “We need to talk about something.”
Emotionally intense

Instead, they SHOULD be...

Intentional
Conversational
Supportive
Fewer words than you think
Brief Reminder...
What does anxiety and depression look like?

Hard Moment #1

You are questioning if the symptoms you are seeing might be anxiety or depression and you want to talk to your teen about it.

- Start from a place of curiosity. NOT shame or judgment.
- Share what you have seen + what you are concerned about.
- Share your own struggles with anxiety and depression in the past.

★ Check your bias.
★ Use behaviors you have noticed.
★ Don’t overshare, but normalize.
Hard Moment #1

Hey, so I have noticed that you seem sorta distant lately.

Last night, your reaction seemed like it was coming from a place of anxiety or depression, not necessarily about your chores.

I have been thinking about you lately, and it seems like you are more down or nervous. Is there something you want to chat about?

Is there anything I might be missing about what's going on at school? I've noticed that last couple of days you haven't really been yourself.

I went to this webinar last week about teen anxiety and depression. And I don't want you to feel bad, but there was some of it that reminded me of some of the things you are struggling with, too. Have you ever thought about anxiety or depression?

Hard Moment #2

You just received a phone call from the school that your child is acting out in some way (e.g., cutting, not turning in assignments, social problems, etc.) that you know are related to their symptoms of anxiety or depression.

- Calm yourself first. Identify shame triggers.
- Share what the school told you. In a calm, empathetic tone.
- Remind them that they are not in trouble.
- Find the BEST time to talk about it. AVOID the worst times to talk.

★ WAIT & Breathe first.
★ Practice tone for sure.
★ Don't punish them for mental health struggles that impede their behavior.
Hard Moment #2

- I got a call from the school and they are worried about you. They said you haven’t turned anything in. I know you work hard, so I wanted to hear your side of things.
- One of the school staff called (DON'T say principal!) and mentioned they have noticed a change in your demeanor (DON'T say attitude). How have you been feeling about school lately?
- Yesterday, the school called and told me they were worried about your relationship with your friends. I mentioned I would talk with you about it. I didn’t know you were struggling. Could you share a little bit about what’s going on so I can help you?
- I spoke with your school yesterday and they shared your grades haven’t been great. I know you have been struggling. Let’s talk about a plan where we can work together to get you back on track.

Hard Moment #3

You know they are anxious or depressed and they need treatment and you need to talk to them about going to therapy.

- Calm yourself first. Identify shame triggers and stigma.
- Do the insurance legwork first. Let them look at the options with you.
- Remind yourself that their struggle is NOT your failure.
- Decide whether you are going to make it an option or not.
- Share with them that you will go with them, will be as involved as they want you to be, and that it is a path toward reducing their suffering.

★ WAIT & Breathe first.
★ This isn’t about you.
★ Set the tone for it being an option. Or a requirement.
★ Remember that a good therapist will get them to talk.
Hard Moment #3

- This has been something I've been thinking about for a while now. I've noticed how hard things have been and I think it's time for us to get additional help together.

- We've talked about this before. How your depression makes it hard for you to do things you would normally do. We've tried everything we know how to do and now we need more support.

- Anxiety and depression are no different from medical illnesses. If you had strep throat, we would see a doctor. It's the same idea here. Your anxiety needs a doctor, so we will find a good doctor to help.

- You may not want to go initially, but I don't know how to help you the way your brain needs help. So we are going to go see a therapist who can help us both so you can get out of this rut.

- Therapy doesn't mean there is something wrong with you. It means we are being brave enough to learn new ways of handling really hard situations.

Questions?

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