

Strategies for Healthy Habits & Self-Care

Here are some helpful tips to support your teen:

Emotional Regulation

- Help teens label emotions; it's more than just "happy, sad, mad, worried" (*see Mood Meter)
- Model and share ways that you cope with various feelings
- Talk with your child about what strategies they use
- Engage kids in the process of problem-solving; if there's an age-appropriate family issue you can share with them, ask them how they would handle it
- Practice gratitude (family gratitude jar or sign)
- Don't feel pressure to "fix" things – sit with feelings (*doing* versus *being*)
- Validate and reflect feelings

Self-Care

- Middle schoolers should get 9-10 hours of sleep
- Make the bedroom a "screen free zone" and avoid doing things in bed other than sleeping
- Facilitate healthy eating habits allowing child to take the lead; avoid labeling foods as "healthy" versus "unhealthy"
- Shoot for 30-60 minutes at least of physical exercise most days
- Help kids to recognize signs that they are not caring for themselves (irritability, lack of focus, etc.)

Connection/Sense of Self

- Consider new ways that kids can connect to peers (apps to watch a movie together, online book clubs, "just hanging out" while having a friend on FaceTime)
- Engage kids in exploring small projects they can work on (tending to a garden, yardwork, home improvement, art, etc.)
- If plans are cancelled, create new things to look forward to (no matter how small)
- Encourage kids to share their ideas

Mood Meter

