

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

When young children suffer from low mood or depression, it is often triggered by difficult life events or their circumstances. For example, bereavement or family difficulties, but also abuse or parental mental ill health. It is always important to liaise with the DSL if a child is showing signs of persistent low mood.

Young children are more likely to show changes in behaviour, such as being irritable or grumpy all the time, interacting less with family and friends, having changes in appetite, or not engaging with play as they used to, instead seeming lethargic.

1 Play Side-by-Side

Children will often give clues about what is bothering them through their play. Young children are more likely to express themselves through play than with words. Simply observing their play might provide indications of ways to support them.

It can also be useful to get down on their level and play side by side. You could make comments on the child's play, such as 'there's a lot of fighting' and they might choose to open up...but don't push for a conversation. Just being there next to them can be a comfort and in turn make the child feel comfortable with you.

2 Healthy Habits

When a child is struggling with low mood or depression, it can be easy to think the things you've been doing 'just aren't working'. On the contrary, persisting with and reinforcing healthy habits are even more important when a child has low mood.

Regular routines, encouraging healthy eating, breathing and muscle relaxation exercises, mindfulness exercises, grounding techniques... these aren't like a 'vaccine' ensuring that a child will never struggle; they are the tools that a child will need even more when they are struggling, so be consistent and persistent with these tools.

3 Positive Attention

Often, the behavioural signs of low mood in children can be challenging... so, take the chance to give positive attention whenever you can. This can be in the form of side-by-side play as mentioned above, or by asking for their help with small things (we all need to feel like we can make a contribution), or simply by giving them your full attention when they talk and letting them know you see them and hear them.

Praise them every time you see them trying at something and praise qualities such as effort, kindness, thoughtfulness, or patience every time you see them.

