

Talking with Family About a Mental Health Hold

Children often notice more than adults realize. Clear, honest and age appropriate conversations help reduce fear, confusion and self-blame and help children feel safe and supported.

Core Messages to Share No matter the child's age

- This is about safety and care, not punishment.
- Mental health challenges are not anyone's fault.
- Children did not cause this and are not responsible for fixing it.
- Questions and feelings are always okay.

Sample Scripts/Responses Younger Children (ages 4-8 yo)

I want to talk to you about something important. Your brother/sister is having a really hard time right now with their feelings. Sometimes feelings can get so big that a person's body and brain need extra help.

Right now, they are staying at a place where doctors and helpers know how to keep people safe and help those big feelings calm down.

They are not in trouble. They didn't do anything wrong.

This is kind of like when someone goes to the hospital because their body is sick — this is help for their feelings and their brain.

You didn't cause this, and there is nothing you could have done to stop it.

Our job right now is to make sure everyone is safe and to keep loving each other.

School age Children (8-11 yo)

Your sibling was feeling unsafe with their thoughts and emotions, so adults decided they needed extra medical help right now.

It's okay to feel worried, confused, mad, or sad. All of those feelings make sense.

You can ask questions now or later — even the same question more than once.

_____ is not in trouble, they needed extra medical help right now to keep them safe.

Responding to Common Questions

Is it my fault?

No. This is not because of anything you said or did.

Are they going to die?

They are in a place meant to keep them safe. The reason they're there is because adults want to protect them.

When are they coming home?

We don't know exactly yet. We'll share updates when we do.

* It is okay to say, "I don't know yet."



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