

13 May 2024

A third of parents extremely concerned about their kid's mental health, new survey finds.

New Beyond Blue data reveals that 60% of parents with primary-school aged children are seriously concerned about their child's mental health, with 1 in 3 extremely concerned.

A new community survey commissioned by Beyond Blue found parents identified bullying and screen time as the main issues impacting kids, followed by social media and the stresses of learning.

Parents are also facing their own mental health challenges, with 1 in 3 parents reporting they are unsettled or struggling.

The survey* found:

- More than half of parents are moderately or extremely concerned about their child's mental health (60%). Nearly 1 in 3 parents are extremely concerned (30%).
- Nearly 1 in 3 parents are also reporting poor mental health – either unsettled (22%) or struggling (8%).
- Over half of parents say bullying (54%) and screen time (51%) are the main issues impacting their kids.
- Over a third (39%) of parents also worried about social media and the stresses of learning.
- Cost-of-living pressures are the number one stress factor for parents (68%).
- Half of parents also said lack of time was a stress factor for them (50%). A third listed work demands as a key issue (33%).
- 1 in 3 parents aren't satisfied with the amount of time they get to practice self-care (33%).
- More positively, most parents (over 80%) are confident they can recognise the signs of concern in their child and know where to go for support.

Clinical psychologist and Senior Adviser for Beyond Blue Dr. Luke Martin said today's parents are facing many challenges when it comes to their children's mental wellbeing.

"We know that things like a sense of safety, positive connections with others and meaningful activities have a positive impact on kids' mental health," said Dr Martin.

"Unfortunately, bullying is very common – one in four kids are affected by it. Bullying can lead to kids feeling unsafe, isolated, sad or hopeless, which can have a huge impact on their mental health.

"When it comes to screen time, we know it's OK in moderation, but excessive screen time means our kids aren't spending time doing other things that are good for their mental health, like imaginative play with friends and spending time outdoors.

"Parents are also feeling the pinch with the cost-of-living crisis. Many parents are under significant strain, juggling demands to stay afloat. They are worried their kids are missing out on activities, opportunities and even the basics. And they can feel guilty about how available they are for their kids. We also know there's a link between financial distress and mental health concerns that can impact the entire family.

"The good news is support is available, and parents can do things to help their kids, and themselves, navigate these challenges in ways that protect their mental health."

Contact: media@beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue
GPO Box 1883 Melbourne VIC 3001
Beyond Blue Support Service 1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au

Dr Martin joined parenting author and educator Maggie Dent and pediatrician Professor Harriet Hiscock from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute at a recent Beyond Blue parenting webinar **Caring for kids' mental health in a challenging world.**

The webinar discussed the issues parents are facing, and ways to support their children to navigate life's ups and downs and help them identify early warning signs of mental health distress.

Despite the many challenges, Maggie Dent urges parents to stay hopeful. "There are lots of little things parents can do to have a big impact on their child's mental health and emotional wellbeing," said Ms Dent.

"Encourage connection – especially in real life not on screens. Safe, consistent, and secure relationships with family and friends are an essential protective factor for our kids.

"Support your child to understand and manage their emotions. Get them to put a name to their feelings, and then teach them strategies to calm themselves, like deep breathing or cuddling a family pet.

"Of course, seek professional help if you're concerned about your child's mental health."

Professor Harriet Hiscock said that the earlier parents can notice concerns with their child's mental health, the better the outcome will be.

"We know around half of mental health conditions begin in childhood, before the age of 14 and for many children, mental health issues can emerge around the age of five. So it's important that parents recognise the signs early - and if you're feeling worried, reach out to get support for your child, find some trusted resources online – don't wait," said Professor Hiscock.

"We know that getting support early can make a big difference in reducing the impact of a mental health condition on a child's life."

Newcastle dad of two and Beyond Blue speaker Craig Killian, who is also part of the webinar, says it's vital for parents to look after their own mental health as well as that of their children.

"Parenting can be challenging when you are close to running on empty. It's about finding those little things that can refill you and making plans to protect that. And, when you need it, reaching out and asking for help from your support structure or a professional," said Mr Killian.

"Your wellbeing is tied to your family's wellbeing so the best thing you can do for them is get the support you need".

*The Ipsos Community Sentiment Poll surveyed a representative sample of 1,000 parents in April.

Beyond Blue Support Service: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

-ENDS-

Available for interviews: Beyond Blue Senior Adviser Dr Luke Martin, Beyond Blue speaker Craig Killian

Contact Beyond Blue Communications Manager Sarah Farnsworth 0428 645 457 or email media@beyondblue.org.au

