

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health exists on a spectrum — everyone's experience is unique.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

### MENTAL HEALTH IS:

- An important part of overall health and well-being.
- Something everyone has, at all stages of life.
- Influenced by thoughts, feelings, experiences, and environment.
- Not always visible to others.
- A valid and real part of the human experience.

### WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE:

*Signs your child may be struggling:*

- Big reactions or frequent mood changes.
- Withdrawal from family, friends, or activities.
- Changes in sleep or appetite.
- Difficulty concentrating or completing tasks.
- Increased worries, fears, or irritability.
- Physical complaints with no clear medical cause (stomachaches, headaches).
- Avoiding school or social situations.
- Saying negative things about themselves.

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW:

*Mental health challenges in children:*

- Are not caused by bad parenting and are not attention-seeking behavior.
- May look different at different ages.
- Can improve with understanding, support, and early care.
- Are more common than many people think.
- Do not define your child's worth, potential, or future.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Let them talk and just listen.
- Validate feelings. "I see this is really hard for you" goes a long way.
- Stay calm during big emotions.
- Keep routines predictable. Structure creates safety.
- Teach coping skills (deep breathing, breaks, movement, creative outlets).
- Watch your language. Avoid shaming.
- Model healthy emotional expression.
- Seek help early. Pediatricians, school counselors, and therapists are supports.

### WHEN TO SEEK HELP:

- Difficulties last more than a few weeks.
- Your child is having academic or behavioral struggles.
- Your child is struggling with peers, friendships, family relations and isolation.
- Your child talks about hopelessness, self-harm or suicide.
- Decrease in self esteem or self worth.
- Change in hygiene, appearance and routines.
- You feel overwhelmed or unsure how to help.

\*For further assistance contact CMSU and ask to speak with the Family Navigator 570-275-4962.

**\*If there is an immediate safety concern, call CMSU crisis 1-800-222-9016 or go to your local Emergency room.**

