LET'S TALK

A Boy's Guide to MENTAL HEALTH

Adam Carpenter

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Let's Talk: A Boy's Guide to Mental Health.*

Wait, what is mental health, exactly?

Ah, good question. Let's cut to the chase here. Mental health relates to how you are feeling mentally, i.e. what is going on in your mind. In the same way that your physical health relates to how you are feeling physically, in your body.

Examples of physical health issues are: a broken arm, a twisted ankle, catching a cold or the flu.

Examples of mental health issues are: depression, anxiety, stress.

Don't worry if some of these words are a little unfamiliar, because this book will help you understand the different types of mental health issues and offer advice on coping with any you may encounter.

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Primarily, though, the aim of this book is to equip you with ways to make sure you stay in good mental health by talking openly about your feelings and being aware of your emotional needs. In your teens, if not before, you will likely face some difficult times – such as worrying about exams or school work, or maybe friendship or relationship problems – but you will get through them and the advice in this book will help.

"BUT I DON'T WANT TO TALK!"

I HEAR YOU SAY!

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OK, let's address this title thing.

Talking DOESN'T have to involve talking to another person, although this will certainly be something that can really help people process any issues regarding mental health. First and foremost, the conversation you should be having is with...

YOURSELF!

Think of it like an inner voice you have before you take a test at school, play a football or basketball game or perform a song on your guitar.

Whatever it is, you mentally prepare by saying things like...



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Even reading this book is a form of conversation, and hopefully I will be able to share a lot of positive tips to help keep your mind and mental health in tip-top condition.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I would recommend reading this book from beginning to end to gain a real understanding of your mental health and recognize when others might need support too. There's also cool stuff about how the brain works and ways to open a conversation around mental health if you do want to talk about it with someone else.

You will learn techniques and actionable tips to keep yourself in good mental health. These are skills that will help throughout your life, not just your teens.

The contents page will, of course, signpost you toward specific mental health conditions if you already know the one you want advice on.

And if you don't quite know what might be wrong, we have put together a simple quiz in Chapter 1 to pinpoint what support you (or someone you know) might need.



This is something my teenage son might say.

But I think he would also be astute enough to hang on to a book like this. Not because it is written by his dad but more because he'd recognize that even though he might be feeling good in his mind one day, on another day he might feel sad, anxious or stressed.

What do you do when you don't feel very good in yourself? Who do you tell? How can you feel happy again?

The answer to all those questions begins with the very thing that you are holding in your hands. Clue: it isn't the Xbox controller, it's this book! And it's here whenever you feel you need some help or support.

TIP: GIVE YOUR MIND A BREAK FROM THE SCREEN

Fact: One in three internet users across the globe is UNDER 18!

I am hoping there will be nothing in this book that I mention or advise that I wouldn't do myself. To this end, I started writing the first draft by hand because I recognize how much easier it is to focus my mind away from all the alerts and notifications and temptations of going on YouTube that sitting at a computer or being on a smartphone or tablet can bring.

Even though I will have used Google to find out the above fact (thanks to the worldwide children's agency UNICEF), anything you can do to decrease your number of screen hours or minutes in a day will really help to keep your mind in good shape.

Another fact: Some research suggests screen time can have a negative impact on kids, while other research finds no evidence that it does.

So, don't worry about what the science says and instead listen to your own mind and body. If you are on a screen feeling groggy or lethargic, then step away from it. Go and read a comic or a book or go outside if you can. If you can't get outside, stand up and stretch, jiggle about, put your hands above your head and swoosh your arms down to your sides as if you are making a snow angel standing up! Any movement will help you take in some oxygen and even make you smile if you feel silly doing it.