Did you know that May 1 through May 7, 2019 is Children's Mental Health Awareness week? The start of many mental health conditions most often occurs in adolescence. Half of individuals living with mental illness experience onset by the age of 14. One in five youth live with a mental health condition, but less than half of these individuals receive needed services. Undiagnosed, untreated or inadequately treated mental health conditions can affect a student's ability to learn, grow and develop.

The job of any parent is to prepare our children for the world as best we can. One important way to prepare our children is to teach them how to handle the stresses and pressures of life. We need to address their mental health, because if we do not do so now, we may put them at more risk later in life.

Once we look past the stigma of the term "mental health" we can start to think about it in terms of the whole. The soundness of mind and body cannot be overlooked. Just as we teach children to eat a nutritious diet, exercise, and practice good hygiene to keep their bodies healthy, we need to teach them how to keep their minds healthy, as well.

WAYS TO FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH AT HOME

Listen to your child

Encourage your child

Focus on their strengths

Teach your children words to express their emotions

Model healthy behaviors

Teach your child conflict management skills

Allow your children to have ways to express themselves

Read age appropriate mental health focused books and talk about them

Teaching a child about mental health is not setting the table for them to go on and have mental health difficulties. Teaching them is simply giving the student another tool in the box to help them best navigate the increasingly cluttered world in which they are growing up in.