

## The children say:

” Dont be afraid to talk about it, not talkin about it doesn't make it better”

” It's okay that everyone is sad sometimes. We don't have to tip-toe around it. You're allowed to say that everything is rubbish right now. I noticed when my mother had tears in her eyes, and that made me even sadder. It's better to be sad together than to be sad alone.”

” I needed to learn a lot more about it. I don't think I realised that you could have an illness in your head”

” The difficult topics will become easier to talk about if you all agree from the beginning that it's just something that you do. Better to talk too much about it than too little, but make sure it's in a defined space and time, so it doesn't dominate everything”

” You can't protect your children by not including them, as the worst-case scenarios will play out in their heads anyway. And then children can google their way to the most extreme cases”

” Children with a parent suffering from mental illness may as well be told at an early age, we pay attention, after all”

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NATIONALT KOMPETENCECENTER FOR BØRN OG UNGE  
I FAMILIER MED PSYKISK SYGDOM

# Dear Parents

This is a call-to-action from children in families with challenges at home, for instance when a parent is suffering from mental illness, stress, or other life crises.

## What can you do to help me?

### 1) Pay attention

... to the signs I give you.

Maybe I'm quieter than usual? I  
might get tired or angry more easily?

### 2) Ask

... how I'm doing and what's going  
on in my life.

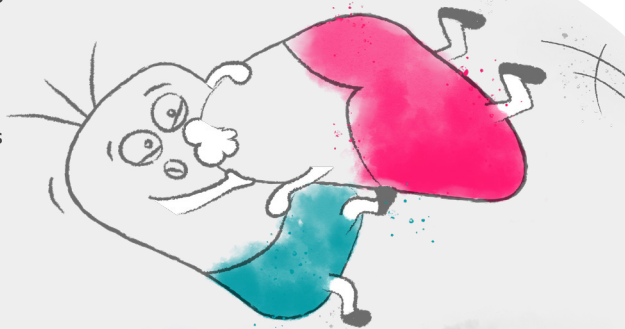
### 3) Ask again

... because I may say everything is  
okay as it's difficult for me to talk  
about what is going on at home.

### 4) Agree

... on plans that can support me.

What do you do, what do I do, and  
what do other people do?



## Dear Parents,

You are the most important people in the world to me. That's why I really notice how you are feeling. I notice it when something feels different or when something is wrong. But I can't always work out what is the matter, or why things are happening in the family that I don't understand. When things are like this, I think about it all the time – at times also at school – and I imagine the worst things possible. I sometimes think that maybe it's my fault, and that it's something I have said or done

But I don't want to make you worried or trouble you. So, I don't ask you directly and I do my best to make sure we always have the best possible time together. It means that I spend a lot of time and energy trying to sense how you are, and what I need to do. If I continue to do it for a long time without realising it, I can forget about my own needs and in the end, I maybe no longer know what my own needs are.

Maybe some things start to become difficult for me at school because I worry about the situation at home. I might get angry or rude or withdraw completely.

It helps a lot when you take the lead and explain what is going on. I need you to tell me, so that I don't have to try to find explanations myself – because when I do, they are often much worse than reality and often have something to do with me. Pay attention to how I'm doing and ask me. Communicate what you've noticed – about me as well as the family and ask if I've noticed the same or if it feels differently to me. Respect my boundaries if I don't want to talk about it but ask me again at another time. As a child, it can be difficult to explain how you feel. You can try to guess and then I can say if you're right or wrong. If you listen carefully, it shows me that you're truly interested, and it may encourage me to talk more.

**Love, your child**

## So please remember!

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... to the signs I give you.  
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might get tired or angry more easily?

### 2) Ask

...how I'm doing and what's going on  
in my life.

### 3) Ask again

... because I may say everything is  
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