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978-1-911-62391-5 — A Guide to the Mental Health of Children and Young People

Meinou Simmons

Frontmatter

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A Guide to the Mental Health of Children
and Young People

A Guide to the Mental Health of Children and Young People

Q&A for Parents, Caregivers and Teachers

Dr Meinou Simmons

Oxfordshire CAMHS Outreach Team



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Preface

Why Was This Book Written?

As a practising child and adolescent psychiatrist with a special interest in mental health education, I have noticed a growing general awareness of mental health issues in children and young people. This awareness is important as it is alerting ever more people to the monumental scale of mental health difficulties in the next generation. However, developing awareness of youth mental health is only the first step in giving helpful support to children and young people.

Unfortunately, I have heard from many parents, caregivers and teachers that they don't feel they have the skills, knowledge or training to look after children's and young people's mental health. This contrasts sharply with their confidence in sorting out physical health problems. Yet we know that developing brains and minds need looking after and nurturing in the same way that developing bodies do. This book tries to help bridge the gap of confidence and understanding many of you face when dealing with youth mental health issues.

Although I know there are now many web-based resources bursting with mental health advice, I am aware that it can sometimes be a minefield to find reliable and useful information online. So, this book is meant as a starting point of information and advice. I give links to other reliable information resources including books and websites for those who want to dig deeper. I hope the book will be useful for both those of you dealing with current difficulties as well as those of you who want to develop a more general understanding of the topic.

My aim is to help you to develop an understanding of factors which have an impact on children's and young people's mental health and give you some strategies for offering and accessing support when difficulties arise. I hope it's useful.

How Is This Book Structured?

This book has three sections:

- Part 1 discusses some important factors that affect children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing, including exercise, diet, social relationships and technology.
- Part 2 focuses on how to strengthen your relationships with children and young people and give them useful support.
- Part 3 explains some common mental health difficulties and disorders in young people, how we diagnose and manage them, and how to support children and young people with these issues.

How Can This Book Be Read?

While some people may prefer to read this book cover to cover, you do not need to do so. If you prefer, you can read or consult each sub-section separately.