

# How to Talk to Your Child's School About Brain Health

Brain Health and Wellness | A Parent's Guide from We R H.O.P.E.

A 2024 Action for Healthy Kids national survey found that nearly two-thirds of parents want training and tools to better support their child's mental health — but most don't know how to start the conversation with the school.

**You are not asking for a favor. You are advocating for your child.**

## PART ONE — WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT



### How do I start the conversation?

Email or call the school counselor. Say: 'I've noticed some changes and I want to make sure we're working together. Can we find 15 minutes?' You don't need all the answers first.

**The neuroscience:** *Early parental engagement in school mental health is one of the strongest protective factors for child outcomes. Starting before crisis is the most effective time to act.*

Source: Christenson & Reschly, Handbook of School-Family Partnerships, 2010; NAMI Parents and Teachers as Allies, 2024.



### What if I don't know what to ask for?

Start with observation: 'My child seems more anxious lately. What support is available in this building?' The school's job is to tell you what exists. Your job is to ask.

**The neuroscience:** *Parental advocacy increases the likelihood a child receives appropriate support by a factor of three. You don't need expertise — you need persistence.*

Source: Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, Teachers College Record, 1997; Action for Healthy Kids, 2024.



### What is a Brain Health and Wellness Coach and how is it different from a counselor?

A BHWC provides daily non-clinical coaching five days a week — building skills, not treating disorders. The counselor manages caseloads. The coach is the daily relationship layer.

**The neuroscience:** *Research consistently shows that daily therapeutic frequency produces stronger outcomes than weekly or as-needed contact. Consistency is the mechanism of neural change.*

Source: Lambert & Barley, Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, 2001; Perry Whole Person Method outcomes data, 2024.



### What if the school says my child is fine?

You know your child. 'I understand the school day may look different. I'm seeing changes at home and want us to stay connected. Can we check back in two weeks?'

**The neuroscience:** *Parents detect early-onset anxiety and depression earlier than school staff in the majority of cases. Trust your observation — it has neurological validity.*

Source: Briggs-Gowan et al., Journal of Child Psychology, 2003; Achenbach et al., 2008.

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## PART TWO — EXACT LANGUAGE YOU CAN USE

### WHEN YOU ARE CONCERNED BUT NOT IN CRISIS

*"I wanted to reach out because I've noticed [child's name] seems to be carrying more stress than usual. I'm not sure if you're seeing anything at school, but I wanted to flag it early. Can we find a few minutes to connect so we're on the same page?"*

### WHEN YOU WANT TO ASK ABOUT BRAIN HEALTH COACHING

*"I've heard that some schools have Brain Health and Wellness Coaches embedded in the building. Is that something available here? I'd love to understand what proactive, daily brain health support exists beyond the counselor's office."*

### WHEN YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING AND YOU NEED ACTION

*"My child is really struggling right now and I need us to put a plan together. Who is checking in on them daily? What support is in place? And how do I stay informed about what's happening at school?"*

### WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A SCHOOL WITH A BRAIN HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH

A coach who knows your child by name and shows up every single day.

Small group sessions five days a week — not a waitlist, not a monthly check-in.

Pre and post assessment data using validated instruments so you can see measurable impact.

A clear non-clinical scope: coaches build skills and refer to clinical care when needed.

A partner who bridges the gap between what you see at home and what the school sees.

**You are not asking the school to do more with less.  
You are asking them to do something different.**