

**health
HACK**

DITCHING your pyjamas and sleeping in your birthday suit instead will keep you cool and improve the quality and depth of your sleep, according to a study by researchers from the University of Amsterdam.

8-page guide to
wellbeing and fitness

Sun health

BEING a parent today can bring many challenges - including dealing with dyslexia and coping with autism. Luckily, there are a multitude of books on hand that can help.

Here NATASHA HARDING chooses some of the most useful.

BEST BOOKS FOR PARENTS

From Anxiety to Meltdown, by Deborah Lipsky (Jessica Kingsley, £13.99): Anxiety is the root of many difficulties faced by people with autism. It is often caused by a change in routine, or sensory overload. Practical solutions can help to avoid huge meltdowns.



The Dyslexic Advantage by Brock Edie (Hay House, £12.99): Sir Alan Sugar, Jamie Oliver and Holly Willoughby all have dyslexia and it certainly hasn't held them back. This fantastic book explores the unique brain structures of people with dyslexia - and how to use it to a very big advantage.



Sex, Likes and Social Media by Allison Harvey & Deana Puccio (Vermilion, £12.99): Parents are dealing with the uncharted waters of social media and may not know what to do when it all goes wrong. This has tips, statistics and conversation starters on everything from porn to selfies.



Parenting ADHD Now by Elaine Taylor-Klaus Pcc & Diane Dempster MHSA (Althea Press, £12.20): Kids with ADHD need support, help and guidance to reach their full potential. The authors are ADHD coaches and educators and have put together the most useful strategies that make a big difference.



Bullies, Bigmouths and So-called Friends by Jenny Alexander (Hodder Children's, £4.99): Kids need to learn how to navigate the playground, but it's not easy for some. The author offers brilliant tips for children who may be struggling at school when the usual advice of "ignore it" isn't working.



Never too early to talk sex and drugs

DEATH & BEREAVEMENT

SACHA Richardson, Director of Family Services at Winston's Wish, a charity for bereaved children, says: "Be honest with children about death. Say 'died', not 'gone away' or 'lost'. Nothing you say will make it worse - the worst has already happened."

"For very young children, explaining that when a person has died their body doesn't work any more and they can't walk or feel pain can help them understand what being dead means."

"A child's first experience of death may cause them to worry about things they have not considered before. Show them it is OK to feel upset and to grieve."

PORNOGRAPHY

SEX and relationship therapist Nick Turner, from Addaction, advises parents to talk to their children about porn before they access it by accident.

He says: "You wouldn't leave an open bottle of whisky in a child's room without saying anything about it, yet young people walk around with the potential to access porn in their pockets."

"If you find something on their search history, keep calm. Ask about it but don't be accusatory."

"It won't be a single conversation, it's a dialogue that needs to continue. Reiterate that it's not an accurate representation of either sex or relationships."

DIVORCE

ALMOST half of couples who divorce have at least one child under 16, according to the ONS.

Nick Turner says: "Children will be much better served in terms of ongoing mental health if parents can sit down together and explain a relationship breakdown."

"Avoid blame and reiterate it has nothing to do with the children or how much love there is for them."

"Explain that relationships sometimes don't last forever and people can change. When handled well, a split can teach children positive lessons about how relationships can end well."

"Talk to teachers so they can be vigilant for any behaviour change."

SEXUAL HEALTH

NICK TURNER advises: "Pick a situation where the topic arises - when TV adverts use sex to sell products, for instance."

"It will be awkward but emphasise you're only finding out what they know because you want them to be safe."

"Try to find out what their current level of understanding is, what they've covered at school and how it was presented to them."

"Ensure that they are aware of contraception schemes in the area. Make sure you talk about sexually transmitted disease."

"Talking about intimacy and relationships can be really embarrassing but persevere."

WHETHER it's cancer, sex or eating disorders, there are many issues parents find hard to talk about with their kids.

Here, CLARE O'REILLY reveals how to broach tough subjects with age-appropriate chats.

Some of the advice comes from parenting experts and behaviour change charity Addaction, which was formed in 1967 by Mollie Craven, whose son was addicted to heroin.

CYBERBULLYING & INTERNET DANGERS

IT is estimated that 5.43million young people have experienced cyberbullying.

Suzie Hayman, of Bullying UK, says: "Parents need to set boundaries early on regarding screen time and instil a rule that devices are switched off at bedtime. Try to lead by example."

"Vulnerable children can be consumed by negative online comments. It is crucial that a sense of perspective is injected."

"Encourage children to talk openly and without judgment about how their internet use and comments from peers are making them feel."

SELF-HARM

EXPERTS estimate that one in every 12 children self-harm.

Rick Bradley, Head of Addaction's Mind and Body Programme, says: "Understand there will be reasons behind what they are doing, even if they can't really explain them."

"Self-harm is not attention seeking. Self-harm can offer a sense of control for people who feel they lack ownership of their life. Self-harm often comes with feelings of guilt and shame, so don't judge."

"Talking about other ways to reduce anxiety can help."

"Sometimes, professional support is the way to go."

EATING DISORDERS

EVERY year, about 4,600 girls and 336 boys aged 15 to 19 in the UK will develop eating disorders.

Addiction psychotherapist Lou Lebentz says: "It's vital parents practise what they preach. If you scrutinise yourself all the time, your kids will start to do it too."

"Eating disorders are usually a symptom of a bigger emotional issue. Focus on what's underneath the eating disorder without being judgmental."

"Talk about your own experiences. Speak personally. If they see parents as non-judgmental and non-threatening authority figures, they're far more likely to talk to you."

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

NICK HICKMOTT, Early Intervention and Risky Behaviour Lead on Addaction's RiskKit Programme, says: "Experimental behaviour is a part of growing up, so try to empathise with their attitude toward drugs."

"Make use of the resources out there to have accurate information so you are credible. Try to be non-judgmental, supportive and assertive."

And never encourage them to drink alcohol before they turn 18.

Nick says: "Having open conversations can help develop a sensible relationship with alcohol. Consider your own approach to alcohol as it sends a message."

CANCER

EVERY day, around five children and 960 adults are diagnosed with cancer in the UK, according to Cancer Research.

John Newlands, Senior Cancer Information Nurse Specialist at Macmillan Cancer Support, says: "A child's age will play a big part but being straightforward is generally the best approach."

"Drawings and books will help with small children, while open conversations will often be best with teenagers."

"Give all the information you can. Make clear that nothing they did caused the cancer and that, whatever happens, someone will be there to care for them."

MENTAL HEALTH

APPROXIMATELY three children in every class suffer with a mental health condition, according to Young Minds.

Rick Bradley says: "It is normal for young people to sometimes feel sad, angry, hopeless or helpless. It is nothing to be ashamed of and making it a source of embarrassment will often only make things worse."

"Find new ways to talk to your kids - often walking side by side for a chat is easier than across the dinner table. If needed, get support together. The quicker you get the right help, the better."

● For further help go to addaction.org.uk.