

Hello!

This PDF contains a short summary of the **Livsviktiga snack** initiative.

Even more information and additional exercises are available in Swedish at livsviktigasnack.se.

From there, you can also order the full Livsviktiga snack book in Swedish. All free of charge!

While this text is intended for people with children between the ages of 9 and 12, it can be helpful to anyone who has a close relationship with a child. It is about the importance of teaching children to express their feelings. Research shows that children who learn to talk about their feelings are better protected against everything from school absence and substance abuse to depression and even suicide later in life.

In this text, you will find tips, facts and practical exercises on how to get started. Read it!

Warm regards, Suicide Zero

THE BAD NEWS FIRST



Let's start with the bad news. Every year, more than 5,000 boys and girls try to take their own lives. This results in three suicide deaths a week. In fact, suicide is the number one cause of death in Sweden among young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Teens are actually more likely to hurt themselves than be hurt by others. Alcohol, drugs, self-harm and sex are some examples of ways they may do this.



NOW THE GOOD NEWS

Research shows very clearly that the ability to express how you feel, together with a good relationship with a close adult, is one of the most important protective factors in life. If a child has this, and also gets to practise problem-solving with an adult, it actually reduces the risk not only of suicide and depression, but also of the child turning to crime or substance abuse when they get older. And by teaching your child to put feelings into words, you'll be doing more than just giving them one of the best protections in life – you will hopefully also develop a better relationship and have more fun together.

Body and brain in a state of change

As children begin their journey through adolescence, their bodies and brains change, as do the demands from the world around them. Many begin to brood more and more, and doubts about their own abilities may arise. Your child's mood can go up and down erratically, and friends take on a more important role in their life. All of these changes are normal, but as a parent it can be hard to keep up. At livsviktigasnack.se, you can read more about what happens in the body and brain during this period, and what you can do to support your child (in Swedish).



NOW FOR THE PRACTICAL STUFF – PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE

Think about how often we try to teach our children to be nice to their friends, how to brush their teeth or how to safely cross the street. We should practise talking about feelings just as often. Statistics show, for example, that suicide is seven times more common than fatal traffic accidents.

But learning to talk about feelings can take time for both children and adults, so a good tip is to do it a little every day. Some children are keen to talk at bedtime, others while having a bath or choosing their clothes in the morning. Think about when your child's talk time tends to be and seize the moments that arise in daily life.

And don't forget to listen! When children talk about their problems, we adults often want to offer explanations and suggestions. Don't! Instead, let your child say their piece. By actively listening to your child, you show them that what they tell you is important, and it gives them a chance to find their own solutions to the problem.



EXERCISES

In addition to patience and timing, it can help to have practical exercises to get the conversation started. *The Conversation Starter* and *The Emoji Test* are two fun everyday exercises that you and your child can do together.

Exercise 1

The CONVERSATION STARTER

Children between the ages of 9 and 12 are usually perfectly happy to do things with their parents, like playing games. Write one question on each piece of paper (or make up your own), put them in a bowl, and then take turns drawing one at a time.

- WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE FILM?
- HOW ARE WE ALIKE?
- WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRAVEL?
- IF A GENIE GRANTED YOU THREE WISHES, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?
- IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ONE THING TO BE REALLY GOOD AT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
- WHAT MAKES A PERSON A GOOD FRIEND?
- WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE SAD?

Exercise 2

The EMOJI TEST

Naturally, there are different ways to communicate feelings. In this exercise, you and your child will use emojis to talk about your feelings.

The exercise is simple – here's how it works: You ask a question, and your child answers by pointing to an emoji. Of course, you can also answer the question! Feel free to talk further about any thoughts and concerns that may have arisen.



HOW WAS YOUR DAY?

HOW DOES IT FEEL
IN YOUR BODY WHEN
YOU'RE HAPPY?

HOW DOES IT FEEL IN YOUR
BODY WHEN YOU'RE SAD?

HOW DO YOU FEEL
WHEN IT'S TIME TO
GO TO SCHOOL?

HOW DO YOU FEEL
WHEN YOU HANG OUT
WITH YOUR FRIENDS?

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN
YOU TRY NEW THINGS?

HOW DOES IT FEEL
WHEN SOMEONE
SAYS SOMETHING
MEAN TO YOU?



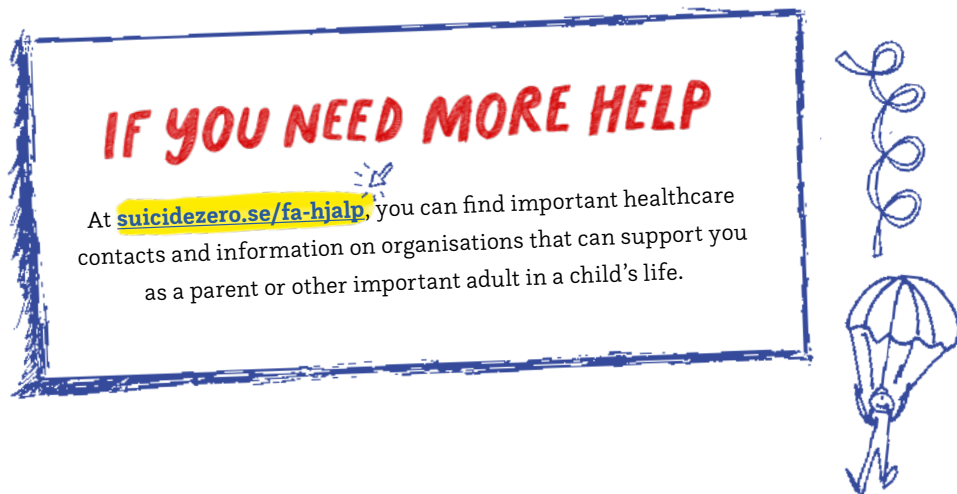
FÖRÄLDRAPEPP

(Parenting boost!)

Being a parent can be really wonderful – and really tough. And when parenthood feels especially tough, you may need a little extra boost. At livsviktigasnack.se, you can find the text Extra föräldrapepp (Extra parenting boost). The text is in Swedish and contains simple thought exercises and methods that can help you deal with the worries and emotions that may bubble up.

Out of the ordinary

For many children, the years between age 9 and 12 is a fairly carefree period, but the first signs of anxiety disorder and depression, for example, may appear now. It is perfectly normal for your child to feel anxious at times or in the face of specific situations. But if the feelings grow or do not go away, and you are worried about your child, we recommend that you contact a school nurse, your vårdcentral (healthcare centre) or 1177 Vårdguiden.



SUICIDE ZERO

This text has been published by Suicide Zero. We are an organisation actively working to prevent suicide. If you would like to read more about what we do, please visit suicidezero.se

Thank you for reading this!