

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Set **clear expectations** with patient and parents.
It is typical to first talk 1-on-1 with the child, then 1-on-1 with the parents, and bring them all together at the end.
- Review **confidentiality** and encourage participation.
“Everything will be confidential between us meaning I can’t share any information you don’t want me to EXCEPT the following reasons: (1) you are at risk of harming yourself, (2) someone is harming you, or (3) you are at risk of harming someone else.”

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO BUILD RAPPORT

- Invite patient to describe **chief concern** and discuss **history of present illness**.
- Consider using the **HEADS framework** to build rapport and obtain relevant psychosocial history.



Home Life: “Who lives with you?” / “How do you get along with your mom and/or dad?” / “How do they get along?” / “How is your relationship with your siblings?” / “What things do you do together?”



Education: “Are you in school?” / “Which grade are you in?” / “How do you spend time in recess?” / “Do you have anyone in school whom you consider as a friend?” / “What is your favorite subject?” / “How do you feel about your report card?” / “What do you want to do when you finish school?”



Eating: “What do you usually have for breakfast, lunch and dinner?” / “Do you have fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins every meal?” / “Do you have any food restrictions?” / “What does a healthy diet look like to you?”



Activities: “What do you do for fun?” / “How do you spend your free time?” / “Are you in any sports or activities?” / “How do you get along with other people?”



Drug / Substance Use: “Many young people experiment with drugs, alcohol or cigarettes. Have you ever tried them to relax or get high? What have you tried?” / “Do any of your friends take drugs?” / “Are there any drugs at your school?”



Depression - Ask all patients about their mood: “On most days, how do you feel?” / “How often do you feel this way?” / “When did this feeling begin?” / “How long have you had this feeling?”



Suicidality & Safety: “Do you have any dark thoughts about harming yourself or suicide?” / “Do you want to disappear or run away?” / “How long have you had these thoughts?” / “Have those thoughts ever gotten so bad that you acted on them?” / “Do you have any plan to harm yourself or others?”



Sexuality: “How do you describe your sexual orientation?” / “How do you identify your gender?” / “Are you or have you been involved in a relationship?” / “How was the relationship?” / “Have you been sexually active?”

- Remember other **social or behavioral factors** may also contribute to the chief concern (e.g., employment, exercise, spirituality, housing status).
- The Canadian Pediatric Society website (www.cps.ca) has a list of validated screening tools and rating scales for suspected mental health conditions.