

March 2024 - Looking After Your Wellbeing

Welcome to the 2nd of our 'Mental Health & Well-Being for All' sheets which we hope to share with you on a monthly basis. The aim of these sheets is to help sign-post and look at strategies for managing our mental health and well-being. If you can take the time to read through this sheet with your child each month that would be great! The purpose of these sheets however is NOT just about our student's well-being, it is about each and every member of the Dormston Communities Well-being. If you come across anything that you think may be useful to share or have found any really good mental health strategies or signposts please feel free to email kotton@dormston.dudley.sch.uk. We are not Mental Health experts, but hopefully by learning and working together on this subject we could really make a difference to the Dormston Community!

Our NEW Mental Health Ambassadors

We are currently in the process of appointing some dedicated **Staff & Student Mental Health Ambassadors** who will help us champion Mental Health across the school. The Monthly **Action for Happiness Calendar** will now hold a regular spot on the Weekly PowerPoint and our student Mental Health Ambassadors will help promote and lead on discussions around this during form time. This will hopefully enable some honest and open discussions about the ways we can all help ourselves in order to support our own Mental Health.

Our Student Mental Health Ambassadors had their first meeting recently in order to discuss their role and how they can potentially support the well-being of pupils in their form groups. We look forward to telling you more about them over the coming months!

Mindful March 2024 Calendar

Please see our **Mindful March 2024 Calendar**. If you want to know more why not take a look at this video [How can we be fully present? Mindful March with Vanessa King \(youtube.com\)](#)

Top 3 Tips for a Mindful 2024

- Set an activity and a timer for 5 - 10 minutes turning off all other devices/notifications and fully focus on what you are doing for those 5 - 10 minutes;
- Try and notice new things;
- 'Match your count to movement exercise' – Take a deep breath, turn your head slowly to one side whilst counting to 5 and then return to the centre, do the same again only turn your head in the other direction whilst again counting to 5 then return to centre. Repeat.

Mindful March 2024

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
 4 Notice how you speak to yourself and choose to use kind words	 5 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them	 6 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down	 7 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day	1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness	2 Notice three things you find beautiful in the outside world	3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive
11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee	12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying	13 Pause to watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today	14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that you do	8 Eat mindfully. Appreciate the taste, texture and smell of your food	9 Take a full breath in and out before you reply to others	10 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face
18 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels	19 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today	20 Focus on what makes you and others happy today <small>dayofhappiness.net</small>	21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else	15 Stop. Breathe. Notice. Repeat regularly	16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity	17 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant
25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted	26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today	27 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are	28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible	22 Notice something that is going well, even if today feels difficult	23 Tune into your feelings, without judging or trying to change them	24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do
 25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted	26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today	27 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are	28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible	29 Choose a different route today and see what you notice	30 Mentally scan your body and notice what it is feeling	31 Discover the joy in the simple things of life

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together



March's Mental Health Message

Mental Health Matters - Conversations

In times when we are being told that mental health issues are on the rise for any number of reasons it can be difficult to know what to do, what to look for and who to turn to for help. Action for Children state that 1 in 6 children aged 5 - 16 are likely to have mental health problems. This has gone up by 50% in the last 3 years. The economic situation that we find ourselves in, COVID-19 and the world news have all played a part in affecting children's mental health, not to mention our own!

The NHS has a number of ways that you as parents/carers can help support your child with their mental health. As parents/carers and educators of young people we understand that sometimes it can be difficult to navigate the mind of a secondary school young person.

Be there to listen. Sometimes easier said than done in the busy lives we all lead. Between getting them to school, going to work and making sure they have dinner in the evening (to name but a few things we as parents/carers do) it can be really difficult to find those precious few moments to stop and listen. It can be a minefield of grunts and moans from young people when we try to ask them how their day went. How frequently has "what have you learnt today?" been met with "nothing much" or "I don't want to talk about it". It can be tough to get our children to open up especially when the lure of the Xbox or other gadgets is so strong. Learning to be there when it is needed is one of the most difficult things for us as parents/carers because we want our children to talk to us, we want them to open up and when they don't we can feel like we've failed.

So how to get them to talk – distract them! Young people can find it easier to talk while doing an activity. Don't make it a 'big chat'. The conversation is more easily started if they are doing an activity, pauses and silences are less uncomfortable and they don't have to sit still/make eye contact. Giving 20 minutes to an activity can help start those awkward conversations.

What can you do in 20 minutes?

- ✓ Bake or cook. Find a favourite food and cook it together.
- ✓ Create something - lego, paint by numbers, colouring, design a t-shirt/trainers.
- ✓ Get active - have a kick about, play catch or simply go for a walk.
- ✓ Listen to music – share your interests and theirs. Create playlists together.
- ✓ Yoga. Have a quick search on youtube for beginner videos. Who knows you both might enjoy it, and even if it's not a success have a giggle over the poses or talk about how impossible some of them are!

Some longer activities – and some even use technology.

- ✓ Get gripped by a TV series. Talk about it before the next episode – what's going to happen? What about the plot? Where you think the story is going?
- ✓ Read a book and share them. You read their favourite book, they read yours (not necessarily all the way through) before long you'll be talking about characters, plots, plot twists, endings.
- ✓ Games night – board games, video games basically any games that you can play together.
- ✓ Coffee and a cake... or pop and cake. Go out and have a 'coffee shop date' – maybe arrange to meet between shopping errands. Choose your location carefully though – is it possible you could run into their friends?

Young Minds have more activities these are just a few that they have suggested. There are short and longer activities for younger children as well. Young minds also have suggestions for conversation starters if you/they get stuck. <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/how-to-talk-to-your-child-about-mental-health/> <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/childrens-mental-health/>

Remember these are just suggestions, you know your child best. They may not be receptive to some of the suggestions in which case don't despair, suggest something else. We all know that we are all individuals. What works for one person may not work for the next person, and it can take time to find what works.

If you are worried about your child's mental health there are a number of services that you can access.

<https://www.kooth.com/> your child can sign up for free. It is non-judgemental, can provide strategies that they can use or provide another person that they can talk to. It is also accredited by the British Association for counselling and psychology.

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/help-and-advice-resources/> have a range of downloadable resources as well as audio versions – they deal with most mental health issues and have some resources on exam stress, anxiety, coping strategies, bereavement and self-harm. They have resources for parents as well.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/helplines-listening-services/> This particular web site link is for people in crisis. There are more external services listed here for anyone in crisis. If your child is in crisis you may wish to consider contacting the NHS immediately or going to A&E to see the crisis team.

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline> The NHS **urgent** health helpline. Offers 24-hour advice and support for you, your child, your parent or someone you care for. You have to go online and answer a couple of questions so that they can find the right helpline for you.

Next time – Building positive routines including relaxation sleep tips for young people.

Best wishes

Mrs Keen

Staff Mental Health Ambassador

Five ways to Well-being

Don't forget the simple Five Ways to Well-being.

