

# February 2024 - Looking After Your Wellbeing

Welcome to the first 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! Please see below our **10 Conversation Starters for Parents/Carers** which may help! The purpose of these sheets however is NOT just about our students well-being, it is about each and every member of the Dormston Communities Well-being, so 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](mailto:kotton@dormston.dudley.sch.uk).

## February's Mental Health Message

We know that the dark mornings and nights may seem endless at this moment in time. This message is to remind you that there are only 49 sleeps (as the children would say) before we get to Spring! We have already had the shortest day and the nights are already starting to get lighter. We should congratulate ourselves on getting through these long months and still pinning smiles on our faces!

Apparently, this time of year is great for decluttering. So, if there is something you haven't used for twelve months and you don't love it or find it incredibly useful, then get rid! By physically decluttering this can also help to declutter our minds at the same time! Remember, looking after our well-being is just as vital as looking after our physical being. School are only a message away if you need support or if you have any concerns about your child. It's time to look for the little green buds appearing on the trees and then we know that spring will soon be on its way.

Take lots of care of each other.

*Mrs Elliot*

## Friendly February 2024 Calendar

Please see our **Friendly February 2024 Calendar** which is based on the key of 'Relating'. If you want to know more why not take a look at this video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygn3NyeuA\\_I&t=33s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygn3NyeuA_I&t=33s)

### Top 3 Tips for a Friendly February 2024

- increase the tiny micro moments of connection with people we don't know – i.e. a chat in the shop, smiling at somebody;
- silently sending wishes for people to be happy. Noticing something positive about somebody;
- responding to good news somebody tells you with interest and curious questions.

Friendly February 2024

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
							
							
							
							
							
							

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together



# SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

## 10 Conversation Starters for Parents

Talking about mental health to children is sometimes hard. To the point that we can put off raising the subject, not wanting to unearth problems or raise overwhelming subjects that we perceive our child is too young or not ready for. But rather than keeping children in the dark, this guide is designed to help you confidently talk about mental health, so they feel comfortable talking about their own worries and end any stigma before it begins.



### 1 LISTEN

This sounds obvious, but it is not something we are always great at. Active listening is where we listen without interrupting or making judgements and shows interest in what is being said. If your child feels listened to in the 'smallest of problems' they will become confident that you will listen when the 'biggest of problems' arise.



### 2 ASK TWICE

The campaign from time to change is great. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/support-ask-twice-campaign>. Be tenacious about your child's wellbeing. Children instinctively know when your questions and support come from a place of wanting to help and care.



### 6 TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH NATURALLY

Speak about mental health as part of everyday life, so that talking about our feelings and those of others is normalised. If the usual 'are you ok?' is not creating an opportunity for dialogue then say something like 'I know when something like that has happened to me I felt like this... is that how you are feeling or are you feeling something else?'

### 7 EMPATHISE

'It makes sense that you would feel this way, it is understandable'. Children often worry about things that we, as adults, might see as trivial or silly. However, for them at their age and stage it is a big concern and they need our kindness and care when they show their vulnerability and share their worries.



### 3 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION

This advice also relates to the first point. If your child can ask you any questions about the smallest of things and you listen and answer without shaming or belittling, then they will have more confidence to ask the biggest of questions.



### 8 HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL SAFE

Teens particularly feel that by talking about their worries or concerns that this will make things worse. Reassure your child that you will discuss a plan of action together and what may or may not need to happen next. If they are a younger child, it is likely you will need to lead the conversation and explain next steps.



### 4 BE OPEN AND HONEST

Children appreciate honesty, particularly if you are having to share information or talk about a difficult subject. For example, you may be talking about death or loss; 'It's very sad that Nana has died' or 'I feel sad that Nana has died'. How you talk about a subject will differ depending on their age and developmental maturity. Talking about death to a younger child for example will be different to that of an older teen, as their experience and understanding of death is different.

### 9 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Be mindful of the language you use at home to describe and talk about mental health. Stigma often arises from misconceptions and a choice of language which is harmful. Using the word 'mental', 'man-up' or other such words in a derogatory way won't encourage your child to talk about their mental health for fear of being belittled.



### 5 KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Assess the severity of the mental health difficulty you are noticing. Is the difficulty making it hard for your child to function regularly throughout everyday life? How frequently is your child affected, how long does it last and how persistent is it? Are they having problems controlling the difficulty? Talk to your child about your concerns and that it is likely they will need further support beyond family and friends.



### 10 IT IS OK TO SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT'

Adults do not have all the answers but often children think they do. It is ok to acknowledge that what your child is experiencing is not something you have come across before or know anything about, but that you will work it out together and seek help together.



## Meet our expert

This guide has been written by Anna Bateman. Anna is passionate about placing prevention at the heart of every school, integrating mental wellbeing within the curriculum, school culture and systems. She is also a member of the advisory group for the Department of Education, advising them on their mental health green paper.



## Sources of Information and Support

- Your GP
- Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/v>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
- <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/parenting-tips/2016/november/a-simple-guide-to-active-listening-for-parents/>
- <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>

