Ashwell Primary School

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2 2024

Dear All,

We hope you enjoy reading our second Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter of the year. Our aim is to empower you with valuable insights, practical tips, and resources to navigate the various facets of your child's emotional well-being. As we approach the busy Christmas period, we hope you and your families find some of the information below helpful.

A MINDFUL MOMENT

Whether it is taking a few deep breaths to help regulate when a child's experiencing some big emotions, taking some time to wind down before bed time, to help feel ready for school or just to build some mindful rhythms into your routine, breathing intentionally can really help.

Christmas Tree Breaths
(Mindful shape breathing for children)

Try shape breathing and use a triangle shape to practice your Christmas Tree breaths. Shape breathing is a great way to help kids to learn mindful breathing by focusing on using a shape to follow.
Draw a triangle-shaped Christmas tree and ask children to breathe along one side, pause along the other and breathe out on the final side of the triangle.

Winter can be difficult for many of us, darker nights and a drop in temperature can be hard on our mental health and the rising costs of living are causing emotional strain for many people who might be worrying about their families, their health, jobs and finances. It's normal to feel anxious and if you're worried about the effects on your mental health, you are not alone.

The organisations listed on this website Looking after your mental health and wellbeing are delivering services to support you to look after your mental health and well-being through winter.

Five Ways to Wellbeing

This year Mrs Andrews been reminding children of the NHS's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', with a different focus each half-term.

This term we have looking at how we can **BE ACTIVE** to improve our mental heath and wellbeing.

Being physically active is not only great for our physical health and fitness, but evidence also shows that it can improve our mental wellbeing. It can help you feel good both on the inside and out. It does this by causing chemical changes in your brain, which can help to positively change your mood and can help with:

- Raising your self-esteem
- Setting goals or challenges and achieving them
- Reducing anxiety and stress

Children have shared examples of how they stay active each week and spoken about how it makes them feel.

You can find lots more information on your child's Google Classroom account. Why not take a look!

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Please see page 3 for December's 'Action for Happiness' calendar. It can be hard sometimes to stay hopeful with all the challenges in our lives. We can train our brains to try and look for what's good by creating a habit of taking small positive actions every day.

Children's Wellbeing Practitioners...

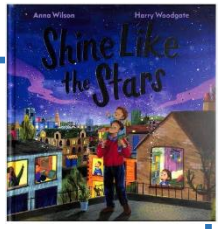
Are you interested in further developing your child's emotional literacy, or supporting their self-esteem and resilience? Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust are hosting two fully funded, online workshops this week, for parents of Primary School aged children to help them understand and support their children, including practical strategies you can try at home.

There are still spaces available. Click on the links below for further information and to book:

Supporting your Child's Self-esteem and Resilience Workshop Tickets, Wed 11 Dec 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite

Developing Your Child's Emotional Literacy Tickets, Thu 12 Dec 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite

Recommended Reads...



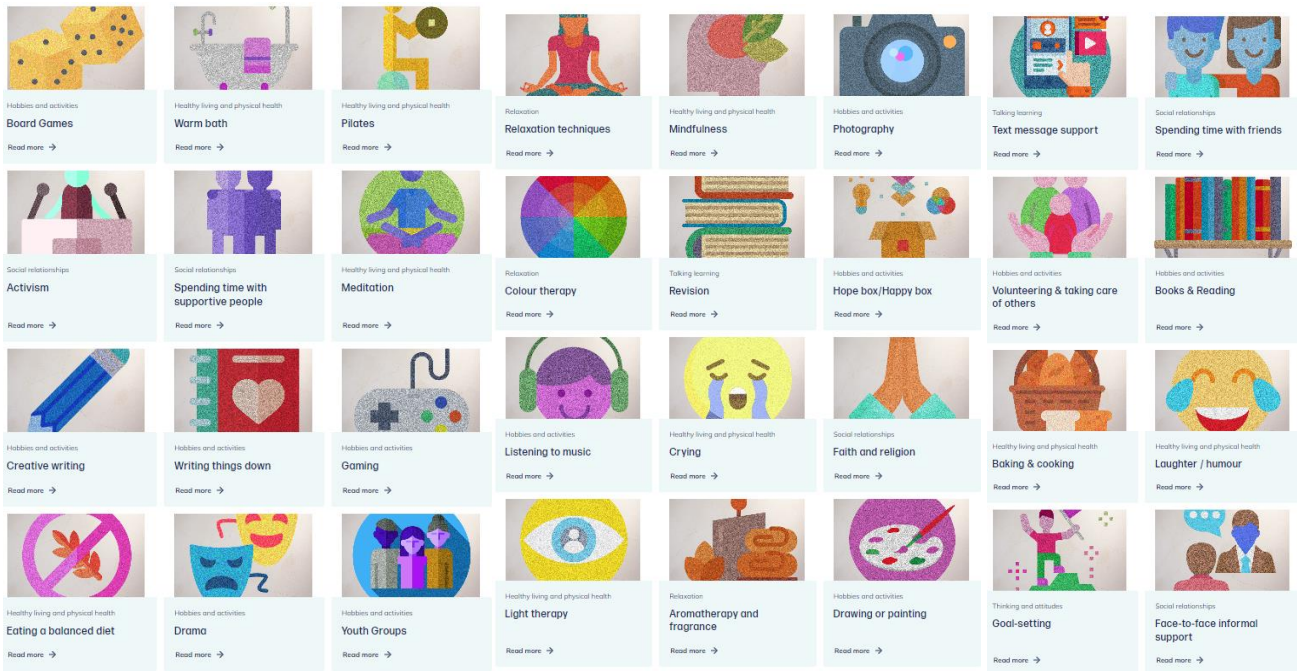
Shine Like the Stars
By Anna Wilson

Beautifully illustrated and perfectly pitched for young children, this picture book invites readers to connect with the natural world and allow its rhythms and patterns to bring peace and harmony into their own lives.

The sound of the ocean, the rise and fall of the tide is shown to be calming, sitting on the seashore or imagining being there a way to ease anxiety or nerves. Elsewhere, the example of a seed slowly growing is a metaphor for children's own growth and a lovely illustration of the importance of patience.

Anna Freud

Anna Freud is a world-leading mental health charity for children and families. Their website has a wealth of information and advice about mental health and wellbeing. They have developed a set of evidence-based self-care resources to support young people in looking after their own mental health. Full information can be found by clicking on one of the images below:



December Kindness 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Spread kindness and share the December calendar with others	2 Contact someone you can't be with to see how they are	3 Offer to help someone who is facing difficulties at the moment	4 Support a charity, cause or campaign you really care about	5 Give a gift to someone who is homeless or feeling lonely	6 Leave a positive message for someone else to find	7 Give kind comments to as many people as possible today
8 Do something helpful for a friend or family member	9 Notice when you're hard on yourself or others and be kind instead	10 Listen wholeheartedly to others without judging them	11 Buy an extra item and donate it to a local food bank	12 Be generous. Feed someone with food, love or kindness today	13 See how many different people you can smile at today	14 Share a happy memory or inspiring thought with a loved one
15 Say hello to your neighbour and brighten up their day	16 Look for something positive to say to everyone you speak to	17 Give thanks. List the kind things others have done for you	18 Ask for help and let someone else discover the joy of giving	19 Contact someone who may be alone or feeling isolated	20 Help others by giving away something that you don't need	21 Appreciate kindness and thank people who do things for you
22 Congratulate someone for an achievement that may go unnoticed	23 Choose to give or receive the gift of forgiveness	24 Bring joy to others. Share something which made you laugh	25 Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!	26 Get outside. Pick up litter or do something kind for nature	27 Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat	28 Be kind to the planet. Eat less meat and use less energy
29 Turn off digital devices and really listen to people	30 Let someone know how much you appreciate them and why	31 Plan some new acts of kindness to do in 2025				

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together

The A to Z of a more Relaxed Christmas.

The pressure on parents to have 'a Perfect Christmas' can be enormous. Social media plays a huge part in this: people posting pictures of how their homes are decorated; huge piles of presents; trips out to see Santa or other Christmas activities; and the recent addition to the pressure, the pesky Elf on the Shelf!

Children are subjected to targeted adverts, in the run up to Christmas, showing the latest 'must have' toys, phones, games etc. and they might expect everything they ask, not realising the costs, especially younger children.

Below is an A-Z of how to try and have a more relaxed Christmas for all of the family.
(adapted from Staincliffe Junior School, Yorks)
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ASK for help. Don't try to do everything yourself, get other members of the family to pitch in

BOUNDARIES! It is an exciting time, especially for little ones, and it's easy to let things slip. Children can try to push against the usual boundaries, but this can then make it difficult for them to regulate their behaviour which can lead to upset for all.

CUDDLES and a cuppa. When you feel pressured and busy, it's easy to forget the calming effect of a cuddle from someone you love can have.

DECIDE what is important for yourself and your family.

ELF on the Shelf. This is a recent addition for some families but the actual stress to thinking of a different 'naughty' thing for the elf to do can be one pressure be too much. While the children might enjoy it, is it necessary?

FAMILY and friends. Often Christmas is a time to spend with family or friends that you might not see often. This can be a pleasure or a stress. If meeting with someone is bad for your mental well-being, then maybe you don't!

GRATITUDE! Sometimes we are so busy thinking about what we want in life, we forget about what we have.

HYDRATE! Make sure you drink enough water, so that your brain and body can function properly.

INDULGE! Christmas is a time for eating and drinking - remember to eat healthier when you can.

JOBS! Delegate some of the tasks to other family members. Don't feel you have to do everything yourself.

KNOW what you are doing and when. Planning your time can reduce the worry of missing something important and is very useful for children who might struggle with the change of routine.

LISTEN to your body. Getting enough rest and down time will keep your energy levels up

MOVE! Getting out in the fresh air can help clear your head, give you thinking time and help you to relax.

NO! Feel able to say no to others who are adding to your pressures. You don't have to go anywhere or meet anyone if this will cause you upset or extra stress.

ORGANISATION! Make lists, reminders on your phone, post it notes stuck around the house, which can all help you to stay on top of things. Knowing what, where and when can make you feel more in control.

PLAY! Children get new toys and games and want to be able to play with them. Allowing them time to play with their toys and not having to be going out all the time is important.

QUIET TIME. Having the time to relax with your feet up occasionally.

ROUTINES. It can be easy to get out of your family routines over the holiday time. Children can struggle with this, so trying to keep some routines such as bath time and bedtime can help them.

SIMPLE. Don't make things harder than they need to be. Don't feel that you can't buy ready prepared food or use paper plates. If this cuts down the stress, then that is perfect.

TRADITIONS! We all have things that we do over the holiday because that is what we have always done. It might be something small like getting a new decoration for the tree or watching a certain film, but other things can cause more pressure. Maybe start a new tradition, one that does not cost money, doesn't cause stress and everyone will enjoy.

UNPLUG. Take time away from social media, if this is a source of stress.

VALUE. What is it about the holidays that you value the most? Some like the hustle and bustle while others enjoy a quieter time.

WORK. Switch off from work- no phone calls, no emails.

(e)**X**PECTATIONS. Be realistic with what you expect from yourself, others, and the holiday. Trying to be perfect can put huge pressure on yourself.

YOU COME FIRST. Remember if you don't take care of your own well-being then you won't be able to help others.

ZZZ. Remember to get enough sleep!