



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING NEWSLETTER

We hope you enjoy reading our second Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter of 2025-26. 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

Teddy Bear Belly Breathing

A mindful practice to help children learn focusing skills, calm down and figure out that paying attention to their bodies helps them to relax. Deep belly-breathing signals the nervous system to relax, which then lowers stress and reduces the heart rate and blood pressure.

- Ask your child to lie comfortably and place their hands on their belly (or hold a soft toy on top of their belly)
- As you count to three, ask your child to inhale deeply through their nose. Tell them to fill their belly with air. It should get bigger and bigger and they may see their soft toy rise up.
- Ask your child to exhale to a slow count of four. Tell them they might see their toy fall as they feel their belly shrinking.
- Do five rounds of belly-breathing and when ready, ask your child how it felt. Do they feel different now? How did it feel to release their breath?



Weekly Signposting...?

Mrs. Andrews receives regular updates from professional organisations locally about the support they can provide children and families. Each week she sends a 'signposting email' to parents who have signed up to the mailing list. If you would like to subscribe to this weekly email, please get in touch by emailing Mrs. Andrews at senco@ashwell.herts.sch.uk or dropping by the school office.

The Sandbox

<https://sandbox.mindler.co.uk/>

The Sandbox is an NHS-funded service to support children and young people in Hertfordshire with their mental health and well-being. In addition to providing NHS-funded support, The Sandbox is a central place for resources about common mental health issues, with information on how to access additional support or emergency services.



Anna Freud is a world-leading mental health charity for children and families. They work in collaboration with children and young people, their families and communities and mental health professionals to transform children and families mental health. Their website provides advice and guidance for parents and carers to help them support a child or young person experiencing poor mental health or wellbeing. Attached to the bottom of this newsletter is their leaflet on how to talk about mental health with your young child. <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/resources-for-families/>

'The Most Wonderful Time of the Year',

is what we constantly hear at Christmas, but in reality the festive period can be a really difficult time for some families who are experiencing, loss, separation or financial difficulty. Just because it's Christmas, it doesn't mean caring for your mental health has to be put on hold. You're allowed to take breaks, and do things that perhaps don't involve the whole family. Mental health and physical health are equally important. At the bottom of this newsletter we've attached an A-Z of a more relaxed Christmas. The following websites might also be useful <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/christmas-and-mental-health/christmas-coping-tips/> <https://nopanic.org.uk/mental-health-at-christmas/> www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/family-life/christmas-on-a-budget



The A to Z of a more Relaxed Christmas.

The holiday season is often painted as a time of **unblemished perfection**, yet the reality for many parents is often one of immense pressure. From meticulously staged social media feeds showcasing extravagant decorations and enormous gift piles, to the latest family photo ops and the never-ending 'naughty' scenarios orchestrated by a certain **Pesky Shelf Elf**, the demands can be overwhelming.

Compounding this, children are constantly bombarded with targeted advertising for the "must-have" gadgets and toys. Young children, especially, may not grasp the financial reality, leading to high expectations that can be tough to manage. To help you navigate these pressures and achieve a **more relaxed and meaningful Christmas** for everyone, here is an updated A-Z guide.



An A-Z for a Calmer Christmas

- ASK** for Support Ask family members to pitch in. Don't feel like the entire holiday has to rest on your shoulders. Delegate tasks—it's a family holiday, after all.
- BOUNDARIES** This is an exciting time, but maintaining basic rules and routines is vital. When children's usual limits are pushed too far, it can lead to emotional overload and meltdowns.
- CONNECTION** Pause your to-do list for a moment. The simple, calming effect of a heartfelt hug or sharing a quiet hot drink with a loved one can instantly lower stress.
- DEFINE** What Matters Decide on your family's core values for the season. Is it being together? Giving? Rest? Let go of activities that don't align with what you truly value.
- EASE** Up on the Elf The Elf on the Shelf can become a significant source of stress. If inventing 25 new 'naughty' scenes is adding pressure, is it truly necessary for a happy holiday? Give yourself permission to retire the elf.
- FRIENDS & Family** Gatherings can be a joy, but sometimes they are draining. Remember that "No" is a complete sentence. Prioritize meeting with people who genuinely lift your spirits and protect your mental well-being.
- GRATITUDE** Shift the focus from what you *want* to what you already have. Taking a moment to be truly thankful can reduce materialistic pressure for both adults and children.
- HYDRATE** Amidst the holiday treats, remember to drink plenty of water. Proper hydration helps keep your energy up and your brain functioning clearly, reducing that 'fuzzy' feeling.
- INDULGE** Intentionally Enjoy the treats. It's the holidays! But balance the excess. Keep healthy, easy-to-grab snacks available to maintain stable energy levels and support your well-being.
- JOBS/Juggling** Write down all the tasks and actively delegate them. This is a crucial step to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Share the responsibility, share the joy!
- KNOW** Your Plan Planning reduces anxiety. Use a shared family calendar or visual schedule. This helps you stay on track and is incredibly beneficial for children who thrive on predictability.
- LISTEN** to Your Body Schedule downtime and rest. Pushing through exhaustion leads to burnout. A refreshed parent is a more patient and present parent.
- MOVE** Get outside for a walk or some fresh air. Physical activity is a proven stress reliever that can clear your head and boost your mood.

NO	Practice saying 'No' to commitments that add little joy but lots of stress. You do not have to accept every invitation or meet every external expectation.
ORGANIZE Simply	Use digital lists, phone reminders, or simple Post-it notes. Being one step ahead with tasks and purchases gives you a feeling of control over the chaos.
PLAY Time	Allow children the freedom to simply play with their new gifts and toys. Over-scheduling outings can diminish the simple fun of the holiday break.
QUIET Time	Intentionally schedule a period of calm and rest for yourself each day, even if it's just 15 minutes with a book or a cup of tea.
ROUTINES (Keep Core Ones)	While holiday schedules change, try to keep core routines like bath time and bedtime consistent. This helps children feel secure and regulate their sleep.
SCREEN TIME Boundaries	The holidays are for real-life connection . Set clear, realistic limits on phones, tablets, and gaming to encourage family interaction, play, and presence.
TIME-SAVING & Simplify	Take shortcuts! Don't make things harder than they need to be. Store-bought desserts, paper plates, or ready-prepped food are perfect if they cut down on your stress.
UNPLUG	Take a deliberate break from social media. If pictures of 'perfect' families are increasing your stress or comparison fatigue, put the phone down and be present.
VALUE Alignment	Focus your energy on what you and your family value most—whether that is quiet connection, giving back, or enjoying festive hustle. Everything else is secondary.
WORK-Life Boundary	Unless absolutely essential, switch off all work notifications and emails. Give yourself and your family a true break.
eXPECTATIONS (Realistic)	Be realistic about what one person can achieve, what your budget allows, and how smoothly things <i>will</i> actually run. Perfection is the enemy of happiness.
YOU Come First	Your well-being is the foundation for the family's happiness. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritize your own rest and peace.
ZZZ's (Sleep!)	Don't underestimate the power of sleep. Getting enough rest is the best defence against short tempers and low energy during this busy season.

You're not alone this *Festive Season*



giveusashout.org

mind.org.uk

nopanice.org.uk

thecalmzone.net

**NATIONAL
DEBTLINE**

0808 808 4000
nationaldebtline.org

SAMARITANS

116 123
samaritans.org

 Cruse
Bereavement
Care
Someone to turn to when someone dies

0808 808 1677
cruse.org.uk

4 TIPS ON HOW TO FEEL A LITTLE LESS LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS:

Limit your social
media usage

Volunteer in your
local area

Consider scheduling a call
with family or friends

Have a look at what places
are open near you

For more support organisations, you can find the Everymind Mental
Health Support Directory on www.everymindatwork.com.

Don't suffer in silence.