



Archbishop Cranmer C of E Primary Academy Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter

February 2021 – Spring Term 1

Children's Mental Health Week Special Edition



Welcome to the fourth edition of our Mental Health and Wellbeing newsletter in support of Children's Mental Health Week (1st – 7th February 2021). We wanted to create a space to share some of the amazing resources that are available to support the mental wealth of our school community.



The theme of this year's Children's Mental Health Week is **Express Yourself!**

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas through creativity. This could be through art, music, writing and poetry, dance and drama, photography and film, and doing activities that make you feel good!

★ Look out for our **Pupil Parliament's daily videos** where Evie and Lena will be sharing ideas and activities for keeping our bodies mentally fit and healthy. These will be published on our Video Resource Centre here: <https://archbishop-cranmer.primarysite.media/playlist/whole-school>



Encouraging Children to Express Themselves!

Being able to express yourself is not about being the best at something or putting on a performance for others. It is about finding a way to show who you are, and how you see the world, that can help you to feel good about yourself. Here are a few simple ways that you can encourage your child to express themselves:

1. Could you build on existing interests or passions? Think about what has helped them get through the past year. A love of dancing? Baking? Drawing? Fashion? Encourage your child by noticing their unique interests and praising their efforts.
2. Trying new things can be a great way to find a new creative outlet. There are lots of online tutorials and video demos that you and your child could be inspired by... could you try out something new together? Or perhaps ask someone you know to share their creative hobbies and give them a go.
3. Some children may not think of themselves as being creative. Try to focus on the importance of the process and the way it can make them feel, rather than the end result. Try not to judge their efforts and remember to give encouragement for trying rather than for doing something well.
4. Listening carefully can help children feel more comfortable and confident when expressing themselves. Try to minimise distractions and give your child your full attention when you're spending time together, being aware of your own body language and eye contact. You might want to try summarising what they've shared and acknowledging their feelings.
5. Children are expressing themselves all the time but not necessarily with words. 'Listen' to everything they are trying to tell you with their behaviour, or with their play and creativity or with their silence. It's all self-expression.
6. Remember – you don't need a lot of expensive equipment to get creative at home. Recyclable materials or older items you no longer have a use for can provide amazing inspiration, and of course there's no limit to your imagination!

Let your child know that if they are worried about something, they should always talk to an adult that they trust. This could be you, someone in your family, a teacher or someone else in school.

BBC Teach Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources

The BBC have pulled together a wealth of video resources in support of Children's Mental Health Week. Why not visit their website here to find out more: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/childrens-mental-health-week/zk37bdm>

Draw Your Feelings Activity


Drawing is a way in which we can express ourselves creatively. Why not have a go at this activity designed to help children to think about how they are feeling and represent this through colours, shapes and words.


Watch the video here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STDJ_80RyE&feature=youtu.be




8 Ways to Help Children Struggling During Lockdown

- **1 Know how to spot the signs**


If you notice your child is becoming withdrawn, that there's been a change in sleeping or eating habits, if they seem to lack confidence or get upset, it might be a sign they're struggling.
- **2 Talk to your child**

If you spot signs your child might be struggling, it's important to talk to them. Keep talking and trying to communicate in any way you can – hugging, listening to them, texting them.
- **3 Create structure and routine**

Try introducing a rota or loose timetable that includes fun things you're doing during the week. This can help to create a feeling of stability, which can alleviate anxiety.
- **4 Give children a sense of control through information**

Look online with your children to find useful information and resources that help children feel they have control.
- **5 Keep children learning**

Using fun and creative ways at home to learn alongside continued access to educational opportunities will support your children's development.
- **6 Limit screen time and mix up activities**

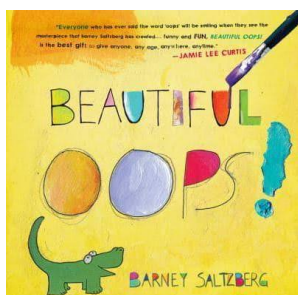
As most socialising moves online, it's important to have conversations on how an increase in screen time can have an impact on everyone's mental health and self-esteem.
- **7 Help your child manage stress**

If you spot signs your child might be struggling, it's important to talk to them. Keep talking and trying to communicate in any way you can – hugging, listening to them, texting them, etc.
- **8 Expressing feelings doesn't have to be face-to-face**

Children might find it easier writing their thoughts down, so the whole family could do this and put them in a 'feelings box' and then talk about their good, sad or difficult feelings at the end of the day.

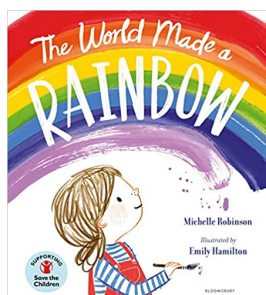
Wellbeing Book Recommendations

Click on the images to watch the stories being read:



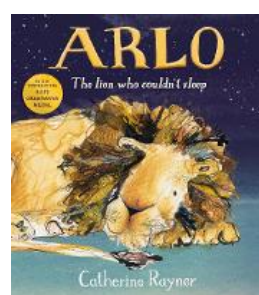
Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg

A picture book to illustrate self-expression, with the simple message of: it's okay to make a mistake!



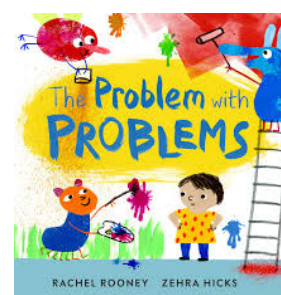
The World Made a Rainbow by Michelle Robinson

A beautiful story with a hopeful message of staying connected to the people we love.



Arlo The Lion Who Couldn't Sleep by Catherine Rayner

A story with a gentle mindfulness message, ideal for bedtime and those who have trouble getting to sleep.



The Problem with Problems by Rachel Rooney

A gently rhyming text which suggests ways to deal with a problem, and that sharing a problem is a way to help dispose of it.

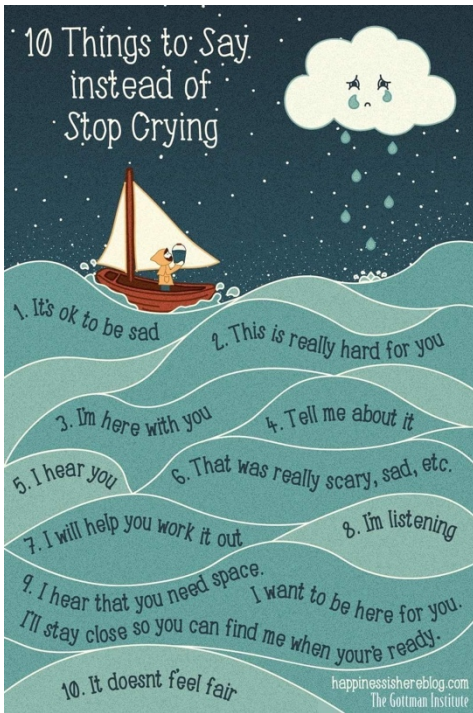
For more book recommendations, including those for older children, please visit:

<https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/blog/collections/anxiety-wellbeing-helping-young-ones-cope-6083>

Place2Be Wellbeing Ideas for Families

Children's Mental Health charity 'Place2Be', and creators of Children's Mental Health Week, have pulled together a list of recommended resources for families from their trusted partner organisations, designed to help start conversations, keep children entertained and inspired, and encourage quality family time.

Visit their website here to explore: <https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/coronavirus-wellbeing-activity-ideas-for-families/>



10 Things to Say Instead of 'Stop Crying'

When your child cries if can feel over-whelming, particularly when you're feeling emotional or stressed yourself, and the temptation to make it stop is high – we've all been there! However, dismissing or minimising children's feelings will rarely make them stop, and it will be more likely to result in them needing more support from you in the future, rather than less.

To support children's resilience, emotional intelligence and wellbeing, we need to show them that crying is okay. It's a healthy and necessary way for children, and adults, to express their feelings. Telling them to 'stop crying' sends the message that their feelings are not important or valid, or that they are silly and annoying. We want our children to learn how to regulate their emotions, and to trust us with their problems and feelings, so we shouldn't be dismissive of them when they are trying to do this.

Why not try some the suggestions outlined on the adjacent infographic, the next time your child is upset. Read more ideas here:

<https://happinesshereblog.com/10-things-say-instead-stop-crying/>

Turning Point - The Nottinghamshire Mental Health Helpline

Turning Point offer access to support for people who need emotional support or information about their mental health. When you call the helpline, you will speak to an experienced, trained worker who will listen and support you to find solutions or options to help you move forward with what is happening in your life. It is often a relief to speak openly to someone you don't know in confidence. The helpline worker will also be able to guide you to other organisations that may be of help to you.

The helpline is delivered by Turning Point, a national social enterprise, which has provided specialist mental health services on behalf of the NHS in Nottingham for over 30 years including a residential crisis service and also transitional residential support for people following a stay on a mental health ward.



You talk, we listen, we help.

**Turning Point Nottinghamshire
Mental Health Helpline**

0300 555 0730

9am - 11pm, 7 days a week

www.turning-point.co.uk/nottingham-helpline

NHS
Nottinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

TURNING POINT
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
MENTAL HEALTH
HELPLINE

Mindfulness Breaks – a Research Project

During the Autumn Term, Mrs Hodgson engaged in an action research project as part of her National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination at Nottingham Trent University. The aim of this research project was to explore the impact of timetabled mindfulness breaks on the mental health and wellbeing of our vulnerable learners. As part of this project, pupils across school took part in at least 9 weeks of short mindfulness breaks twice daily, and final analysis considered the impact on the areas of resilience and emotional awareness on pupils transitioning from key stage 1 to key stage 2. As detailed in the ethics protocol and research letter, please find attached a copy of the research findings poster, sharing the outcomes and findings of the research. Thank you for your support.

For more information, please contact Mrs Hodgson via the school office.

For more links, resources and support, please see our school website:

<https://www.archbishopcranmer.co.uk/covid-19-useful-links/>

If you come across any useful links, resources or organisations which could feature on our future newsletters, please contact Mrs Hodgson via the school office. Thank you.

What impact do timetabled mindfulness breaks have on the mental health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable pupils transitioning from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2?



Context:

Given the increased risk of mental health problems for the most vulnerable pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (DoH, DfE, 2017) and the growing concerns of low mental health and wellbeing within children across the country (DfE, 2020), coupled with recent changes made to OfSTED's curriculum requirements under the new framework, our school is looking to re-shape and re-define our curriculum to ensure barriers to learning that link to the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils are a priority for school development. With this in mind, in my role as SENCo and Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, I chose to focus on how we could introduce simple, evidence-based strategies into whole-school timetabling to support pupil wellbeing. Research was conducted within a smaller-than-average village primary school with 165 pupils on roll.

Why Mindfulness?

In order to implement effective change across school as a leader, I wanted to utilise simple, short and manageable evidence-based strategies which would fit into already busy timetables across school. Similar research (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010; Flook, *et al.* 2010) explored ways in which short, 5-10 minute mindfulness breaks impacted emotional regulation and boosts resilience (Bethune, 2018). Mindfulness-based activities were also requested by parents within recent school feedback opportunities, supporting further exploration into embedding this provision as part of our commitment to support the mental health and wellbeing of our school community.

Why pupils transitioning from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2?

Research by Galton, *et al.* (2003) suggests increased vulnerability for pupils transitioning between KS1 and KS2, resulting in what is referred to as the 'Year 3 dip'. Given these findings, alongside having lost around 6 months of learning time due to school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, careful transition needed to be considered to ensure that pupil needs were met effectively. This research sought to discover how mindfulness breaks, supported by the 'Recovery Curriculum' would impact these learners' mental health and wellbeing during the first term of Year 3.

This research analysed wellbeing survey data and sought the views of 10 vulnerable pupils, which included those on the SEN register and in receipt of FSM.

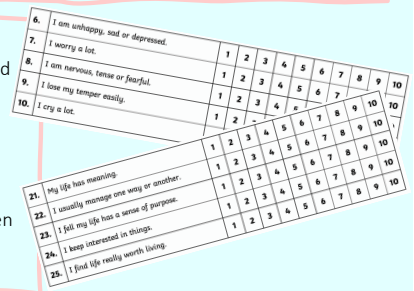
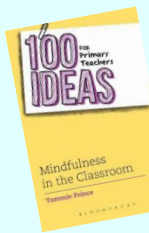
Ethical Considerations:

In line with BERA (2018) guidelines, full consent was obtained from all participants and all data was kept anonymous and confidential. Copies of the Ethics Protocol were shared with all staff members and parents prior to research. This information was shared with the pupils in an age-appropriate way, where the right to withdraw was communicated clearly.

Method:

Taking inspiration from similar research (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010), wellbeing surveys adapted from EduKit Insight were used at both baseline and end-of-research points to gather and analyse data around pupil mental health and wellbeing, focusing on resilience and emotional state. Semi-structured interviews with both teaching staff and pupils were also used to collate data not accessible through quantitative data, and unpick results from the surveys.

Following baseline assessment of pupil wellbeing, pupils across school took part in up to **2, short, 5-10 minute daily mindfulness breaks for a 9 week period**, implemented by staff who utilised resources taken and adapted from Prince's (2017) 'Mindfulness in the Classroom', such as 'deep breathing', 'playful breathing' and 'mindful listening'.



"They let my body free. I felt worried before but they make me feel better."
Pupil 10

"I used to always feel angry every day and now I feel peaceful and calm"
Pupil 5

"It's nice to know that you can stop being stressed out – I will use it if I feel stressed."
Pupil 9

"It's a really nice way to transition in and out [of lessons]. It's important [for the children] to be mindfully aware – prepare them to be global citizens and for the future when things like work are stressful, to regulate what is important."
Teacher 5

Research Findings:

From analysing wellbeing survey data, average pupil scores for both resilience and emotional state were considered to show that pupil **resilience scores mostly improved**, where eight out of the ten pupils' scores were increased or sustained, with the two lower scores being within 1 point different to their baseline (shown below).

Average Score Ideal = 10	10	10	4.6	8.8	7	8.8	4.6	6.2	10	10	9	8	9.2	9	10	10	5	8.2	8.4	8.4
Difference	0		+4.2		+1.8		+1.6		0		-1		-0.2		0		+3.2		0	

Where pupil survey scores suggested a lower emotional state for six out of the ten participants, a good level of positive emotional state was sustained for nine of the pupil participants. Responses from semi-structured interviews with the pupils, suggested **increased emotional awareness**, something which was also backed up by staff feedback at the interview stage of research.

All ten pupils said that they would like the mindfulness breaks to continue following the research as part of their daily timetable, referring to them as "soothing" and "helping everyone not to be stressed out", suggesting reason to continue, considering pupil voice in whole-school systems. Most staff members were open to continuing the mindfulness breaks when asked, noting the impact they had on pupil resilience and successful transitions within the day. However, Bethune (2018) argues that for such practices to be successful, and as just five out of the seven staff questioned expressed interest in continuing the breaks, further action points need to be implemented to support staff in managing this change to further consider how pupil resilience and emotional awareness can be improved with sustained and embedded practice.

Recommendations and Further Actions:

From a leadership perspective, to solidify findings that mindfulness practices which are built in regularly as part of whole-school timetabling and to support staff in embedding such activities within daily routines to have a positive, sustained impact on pupil resilience and emotional awareness, particularly for the most vulnerable, further evidence is required. To achieve this I aim to look at how staff can be supported in this at a whole-school level, as well as considering the impact on a larger sample size to improve validity.

Overall, the positive impressions that the breaks had on the pupils is the clearest highlight of this research, and prompts me to explore how mindfulness can become embedded within our curriculum.

References:

- Bethune, A., 2018. *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom. A practical guide to teaching happiness.* Oxford: Bloomsbury.
- BERA, 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research.* London: BERA.
- Department for Education (DfE), 2020. *State of the nation 2020: children and young people's wellbeing.* London: DfE.
- Department of Health (DoH), Department for Education (DfE), 2017. *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper.* London: DoH, DfE.
- Galton, M., *et al.*, 2003. *Transfer and Transitions in the Middle Years of Schooling (7-14): Continuities and Discontinuities in Learning.* London: DfES.
- Flook, L., *et al.*, 2010. Effects of mindful awareness practice on executive functions in elementary school children. *Journal of Applied School Psychology.* 26, pp. 70-95
- Schonert-Reichl, K.A. and Lawlor, M.S., 2010. The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents' well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness.* 1, pp. 137-151.