

# Children and Young People's Newsletter

Brent, Wandsworth and Westminster

Welcome to our newsletter. We have now approached October, during which we celebrate the World Mental Health Day and we believe this is a great opportunity to discuss this topic more. It is especially important to talk about it during such challenging times as the pandemic.



## PARENT SECTION

### Why should we talk about mental health with children?

Did you know that 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year? The research also states that 50% of mental health problems are established by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 24. Additionally, statistics show that 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) experienced a mental health difficulty, yet 70% of them have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age. The Children's society 'Good childhood report' showed that during the last decade there has been a significant decrease in happiness with life as a whole across children.



We think this data sounds alarming and therefore mental health should be something that young people and children learn about as well as are aware of how they can prevent themselves from developing mental health difficulties. Additionally we want to make sure that young people know how to access support when they need it and as a Children and Young People's service we want to get to those who show first signs of anxiety and low mood so we can support them at the early stage.

### How can you talk to your child about mental health?

It might be worth speaking to your child about the importance of looking after one's health overall. It might be helpful to explain to your child that we have mental health the same way as we have physical health and therefore we need to look after both.

If we catch a cold, we need to go to the GP, take medication for cough or sore throat, rest and drink loads of fluids and the same way we need to do certain things when we develop mental health difficulties. Similarly to avoid catching cold we would look after ourselves by wearing warm clothes in the winter, eating healthy nutritious food and washing our hands. In a similar way, we can do many things to prevent ourselves from developing mental health difficulties.

You can explain to your child that even the things like their hobbies help them to stay emotionally well, seeing family and friends, being active or spending time on fresh air - all of those can have a positive impact on our mental health.



### What should I do if I think that my child is showing signs of emotional difficulties?

Try to speak to your child and show that you are listening. No matter how small you might think their worries or concerns are, be understanding and non-judgemental. We are all different and we have different triggers for our anxieties and worries. Communicate with your child and check on them but stay respectful of their space. Try to make sure your child has a good sleep and diet, that they have time for their hobbies and some exercise during their day. If you feel like their low mood or anxiety has been lasting for a longer period of time or has been disrupting their daily life, speak to your GP or school for further support and they will be able to assist you.



## 5 ways to wellbeing

The World Mental Health Day is celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October and we want this to be a reminder for us to look after our mental health and wellbeing. This is particularly important in the very difficult period of a pandemic. We think it is also a great opportunity to learn how we can look after our mental health. We wanted to show you a very easy and effective way of boosting our wellbeing by doing these 5 things on a daily basis. A lot of research had shown that if they are repeated daily, they can significantly improve our emotional health.

### 1. Connect



There is strong evidence which indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection:

- Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Put five minutes aside and speak to someone you usually don't talk in your class
- Give your friend a compliment

### 2. Be active



Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being. World Health Organisation claims that children ought to exercise for 60 minutes a day. You will probably be able to do some physical activity at school but it is also worth to think of doing something active in your free time too.

Here are a few ideas:

- Go for a walk to your local park
- Have a kick-about in a local park
- Get off the bus one stop earlier than usual and walk the final part of your journey to school
- Organise a family physical activity
- Do an online exercise class (yoga, aerobics)

### 3. Take notice

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances our well-being. Savouring 'the moment' can make us feel happier too. Most of the time we do things automatically and think of the past and the future whereas being in the present moment is what will benefit our wellbeing.

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you.

Here are a few ideas:

- Have a 'clear the clutter' day
- Take notice of how your surroundings change on a daily basis, depending on seasons (trees, grass, flowers)
- Take a different route on your journey to or from school
- Go to the park to watch the sunset
- Do some mindful colouring



### 4. Give

Individuals who show interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Why not to give it a go and try to do something kind everyday, such as:

- Smile at someone
- Tell someone that you appreciate them
- Donate something to the local charity
- Treat yourself with a hot, relaxing bath

### 5. Keep learning

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

The practice of setting goals, which is related to earning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Again, you possibly learn something new at school every day but here's few ideas of trying other things:

- Find out something about your friend
- Read the news or a book
- Set up a book club
- Do a crossword or Sudoku
- Research something you've always wondered about
- Learn a new language on Duolingo app



Mental Health Support Team

