

Happy May everyone! We hope everyone is enjoying the spring and the very much needed sunshine. This month we are celebrating Mental Health Week and we also have some tips to managing exam stress.

Mental Health Awareness Week

Mental Health Awareness Week is taking place from **9-15 May 2022**. This year's theme is **'loneliness'**.

We know that loneliness is a normal part of life, with most of us feeling lonely at some point and experiencing how it can gnaw away at our sense of self-worth and belonging. Loneliness is not about the number of friends we have, the time we spend on our own or something that happens when we reach a certain age. Loneliness is the feeling we experience when there is a mismatch between the social connections we have and those that we need or want. That means it can be different for all of us.

Loneliness is a significant public health issue. It remains one of the key indicators of poor mental health, our own reports have shown that being connected to other people in a way that helps us feel valued is absolutely fundamental to protecting our mental health.

Research has found that almost **10% of young people** said they were **'often' lonely**, so it is important to find ways to look after ourselves when we feel lonely, and outside of those times too. It's important to recognise when we are feeling lonely, our thoughts and feelings, and identify the supportive connections we have. When we feel lonely, we may experience low mood, low-self-esteem, and worrying thoughts. We can feel that way even when we are with other people, especially if we don't feel like we belong.

Sometimes, it can be helpful to find meaningful connections with ourselves, others and the world around us, to reduce feelings of loneliness

Here are some ways in which we can connect with others:

- Call or text a friend to see how they are doing.
- Offer a hug to someone you care for - a friend or family member.
- Do an activity with a friend or family member - play a game, bake a cake, watch a movie.
- Join a new club or activity for something you enjoy, this may be a space where you can meet people with similar interests.
- Speak to a trusted adult.



Exam Period

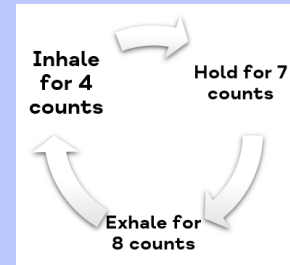
As GCSEs and SATs are approaching it is absolutely normal to find that time nerve-wracking and stressful. Even though you might feel like you need to prioritise revising it is also crucial to find some time in the day to relax and unwind. There are many ways in which you can manage stress and pressure in the moment and on the long term.

Strategies to cope with long term pressure will help to protect your body from the effects of stress, and maintain emotional balance and optimism. It's important to embed those strategies in your daily life so they can be easily accessed during stressful times. Some of those strategies include:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Taking regular exercise
- Getting enough sleep
- Spending time with your friends and family

To cope with stress in the current moment one of the very helpful techniques can be the **4-7-8 breathing strategy** which is shown to decrease levels of anxiety and stress in a short period of time.

To do this exercise find a comfortable position and take a breath in on a count of four. Breathe in through your nose. Try to engage your chest and your stomach. Hold your breath for seven counts and breathe out counting to eight. Use your mouth to exhale. Repeat few times.



Good luck with your exams!

Meet Our Team corner



In this issue I am happy to introduce to you **Neelam**, who is our **Educational Mental Health Practitioner**.

Meet Neelam

I always knew I wanted to work in mental health and more specifically with children. I completed my undergraduate Psychology degree at Queen Mary University of London and since worked with children in various roles.

After a while I wanted to work more therapeutically so decided to complete the training as a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner at UCL. Doing this training made me realise that my passion does lie working with children; as a result, I took my chances and applied for my current role at BWWM – which I will add, I absolutely love!

I am a big advocate for tackling stigma around mental health difficulties and I wish by working together we can make a big difference in children and young people's lives and get them the help they both need and want.

A few things Neelam likes:

I love baking and trying new recipes. The best bit about this is getting to eat all the baked goods after! I enjoy spending time outdoors in the sun, going to the park and going for long walks with good company. I enjoy drawing and love a bit of mandala style art. This can be so calming and therapeutic. I have recently started to get back into reading and have been enjoying this thoroughly over the last few months.

Neelam's perfect day:

My perfect day would start by having something sweet of course – maybe some pancakes drizzled with Nutella, or a hot cookie dough! This would be followed by binge watching Grey's Anatomy - If you haven't watched it already, it's great! I would then go for a walk with some friends, a bit of sightseeing and grab some yummy food. I would then spend some quality time with my little nephews who are all such a great laugh!



Thank you Neelam for sharing this with us!