



WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Mental Health Awareness Week
- How to help improve Well-being and Anxiety in Children

Spotlight on Safeguarding

Dear Parents / Carers

Welcome to our May edition of our Safeguarding Newsletter. May is Mental Health Awareness month and so this issue of the safeguarding newsletter will focus on mental health and anxiety in children and how we can work together to support them. Studies show that children and teens are more stressed today than ever before. This is particularly relevant when we consider that the Y6 SATs are almost upon us, end of year assessments will soon be happening throughout the school and all of the children will be moving on to new classes or schools in a few short weeks. From 13th-19th May we celebrate Mental Health Week. This year the theme is 'Moving for our mental health.' Being active is so important for our mental health, and to recognise this the children will be taking part in a range of activities across the week to get them moving.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

We all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important. We all have 'small' feelings every day. These are sometimes strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long. Sometimes we experience 'big' feelings which are strong and overwhelming for a longer period of time. They stop us doing what we want to in our lives.

How can I help my child's mental health?

1. **Make conversations about mental health a part of normal life.** Anywhere is a good place to talk. Model every day talk about this for example by talking about a TV or book character's feelings.
2. **Give your full attention.** Keep eye contact, focus on the child and ignore distractions.
3. **Check your body language.** Try to keep it open and relaxed and make sure you come down to the child's level.
4. **Take it seriously.** Don't downplay what the child is saying or tell them they're 'just being silly'. Resist the urge to reassure them that 'everything is/will be fine'.
5. **Ask open questions.** These will help extend the conversation.
6. **Calmly stay with the feelings that arise.** Try not to steer away from difficult emotions.
7. **Offer empathy rather than solutions.** Show that you accept what they are telling you but don't try to solve every problem.
8. **Remember we are all different.** Respect and value the child's feelings, even though they may be different from yours.
9. **Look for clues about feelings.** Listen to the child's words, tone of voice and body language.

Step 1 - Connect. Connecting with others help us feel close to people and valued for who we are.

Step 2 - Get active. Many people find that physical activity helps them maintain positive mental health.

Step 3 - Take notice. Reminding yourself to take notice can help you to be aware of how you're feeling. It can help you understand what triggers your feelings of stress or anxiety.

Step 4 - Keep learning. We're always learning new things – often without realising it. Feeling like you're learning and developing can boost your self-esteem.

Step 5 - Give. There's been lots of research about the effects of participating in social and community life. Studies have shown that people who help others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

5 Ways to Well-Being



Ideas on how to help anxious children

Quiet Hugs: Help your child feel safe by reassuring them that you are there and willing to help. Words can sometimes exacerbate anxiety so sitting quietly with lots of cuddles and empathising can often work better.



See your calm space: Remember a time when you were happy, calm and peaceful. See it in your mind with as much detail as possible. Always use the same calm place to enhance the effect.

5x5 Grounding: See 5 things, hear 4 things, touch 3 things, smell 2 things and taste 1 thing.



Draw your anxiety: Draw a picture of what you are worried about.

Blow bubbles: Research has shown that taking 10 deep breaths resets the automatic nervous system and helps to calm the amygdala in the brain. Blowing bubbles is a great way to get a child to blow deep breaths. Party blowers or a straw and balled up paper offer other ways to do the same.

Pet a furry friend: Research has shown that petting an animal reduces the heart rate and calms the body. Sitting for 10-15 minutes petting a furry friend is a wonderful way to relieve anxiety and bring some smiles to a child.

Jumping Jacks: Anxiety often causes shallow breathing. Asking your child to do an exercise forces them to take deep breaths that can reset the anxious feelings.

Remember past success: Encourage your child to think about the last time they overcame their anxiety. Remind them that they can do this, even though it may be hard.

Problem solve the fear: Help your child talk through what solutions could be used if their fear were to come to fruition. Knowing they can handle the worst, can help calm the fear.

Destroy the worry: Have your child write their anxiety on a piece of paper, then tear it up and throw it away.

Useful links:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70j3xyu7OGw> (thought bubbles)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLoK5rOl8Qk> (body scan)

