

Mental Health and Wellbeing

In the same way that everyone has physical health, which is about our bodies, everyone also has mental health, which is about our mind, our emotions and feelings.

It can include how we feel about ourselves, our relationships and how we deal with challenges and difficulties.

Physical and mental health are connected. Being fit and well physically, helps us to be fit and well mentally and vice versa.

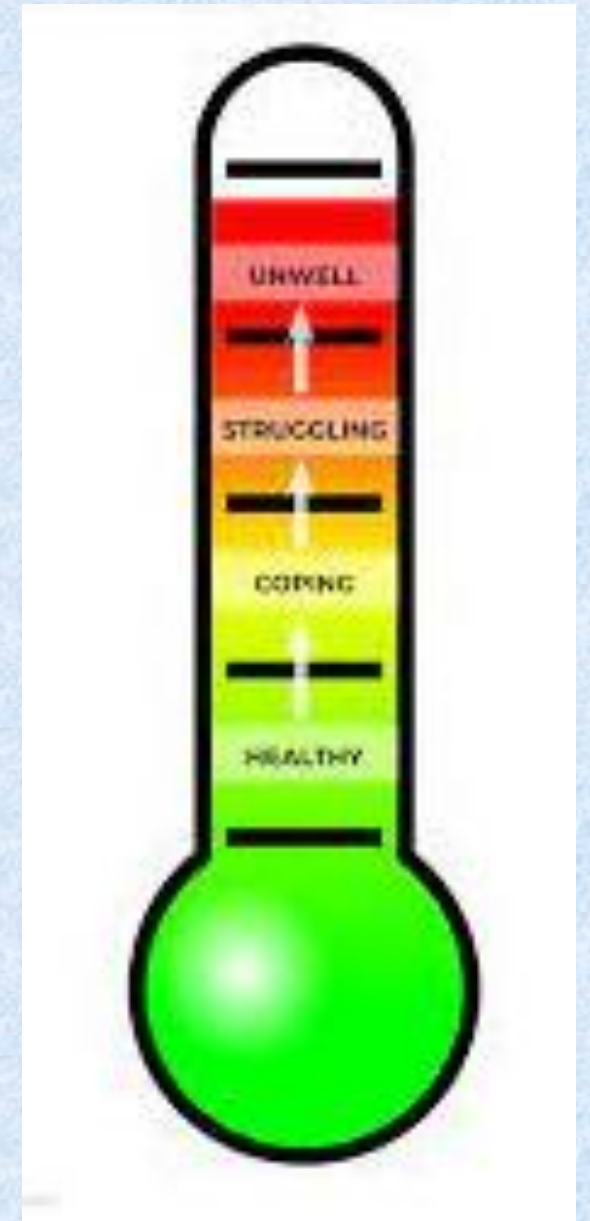
NHS England describes mental health as "How we think, feel and behave."

Mental Health Thermometer

Mental health can be thought of as being on a scale that can move up and down, a bit like a thermometer that shows between "being healthy" and "unwell".

We can all move along the scale at any time but there are things that we can do to support us to stay in the "healthy and coping" areas.

Sometimes we may go into the "struggling or unwell" areas. To support us with our mental health, we can put things in place to help us feel better and move out of these areas.



The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

1. Be active
2. Keep Learning
3. Give
4. Take notice/Be mindful
5. Connect



Click for further information from [Mind](#) and the [NHS](#).

Place2Be Mental Health Week



Each year a different theme is focused on.
In 2022 - the theme is Kindness.

For further ideas and support for parents and carers, click on the icon.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The following images have been taken from CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) NHS Highlands Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/HighlandCAMHS/>

The posts have been shared and are providing some useful to support children and adults during periods of isolation or when children are being educated remotely.

All text that accompanies the images has been written by CAMHS NHS Highland.

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If you notice your child is becoming withdrawn, that there's been a change in sleeping or eating habits, if they seem to lack confidence or get upset, it might be a sign they're struggling.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



8 WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN STRUGGLING DURING LOCKDOWN

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.



10 Things to Say instead of Stop Crying



1. It's ok to be sad

2. This is really hard for you

3. I'm here with you

4. Tell me about it

5. I hear you

6. That was really scary, sad, etc.

7. I will help you work it out

8. I'm listening

9. I hear that you need space.

I want to be here for you.

I'll stay close so you can find me when you're ready.

10. It doesn't feel fair

Children's emotions can seem big and unpredictable at times. Although these can be natural parts of a developing mind, it's easy for us to be drawn into a "fixer" role and want to make the crying stop.

Here are 10 different ways to acknowledge and validate their emotions, while also giving them the words to make sense of what they are feeling.

THE EMOTIONAL CUP

Some ways that children deal with having an empty cup:

- Steal from other people's cups
- Misbehave to get your attention and show that they need a refill
- Seem to have bottomless cups, or need constant 'topping off'
- Can't sit still for refills or actively refuse them
- Bounce off the walls when they approach 'empty'
- Think they have to fight or compete for every refill

What fills a child's cup:

- Play
- Friendship
- One-on-one time
- Love and affection
- Connection
- Succeeding
- Doing what they love



What empties a child's cup:

- Stress and strain
- Rejection by peers
- Loneliness and isolation
- Yelling and punishment
- Failing
- Fatigue
- Doing what they hate



So much of what we do in our daily interactions can fill a child's "emotional cup" - greeting them warmly, sharing a funny story, giving them time to talk about their interests, appreciating their efforts & conveying empathy for their feelings

The emotional cup is a helpful way to explain to your child why it's important for them to identify how they're feeling, to come to you if they're running on empty, and what they can do to ensure their cup is always full. Emphasise the importance of always taking care of themselves and their mental health.

Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

Often when we picture anxiety, we picture the "typical" symptoms — worrying, overthinking, panic attacks etc. However, anxiety can present itself in a lot of different ways.

It's important for us to recognise that anxiety is often more than just worrying. A child who appears to be oppositional or aggressive may be reacting to anxiety - anxiety they may not be able to articulate effectively, or not even fully recognise their feelings.

THE STRESS RELIEF GIRAFFE



OUT OF CONTROL	<u>WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calm breathing exercises• Use visualisation meditation techniques
SCARED OF LOSING CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body tightening exercises (progressive muscle relaxation)• Sigh to become fully present in the moment• Practice music therapy
NERVOUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change location / surroundings• Use a stress ball / fidget toy• Give themselves a 10-second hug to boost their mood
UNSURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colour, draw, write, craft, etc.• Practice positive self-talk / words of affirmation• Exercise• Go outside
CALM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play• Hydrate with water

The Stress Relief Giraffe offers a clear visual for young people to describe their level of stress as well as some tips for coping.



Comforting at a distance

When we can't give physical comfort, we can still do a lot:

Use **comforting language** and tone of voice - reinforce school is a **safe and happy place**

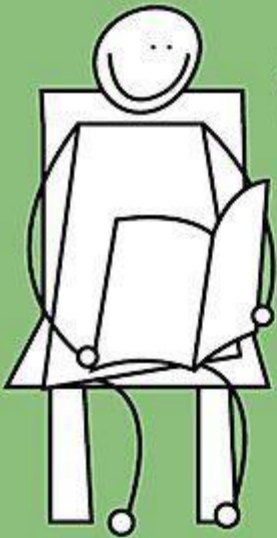
Use **positive and open gestures** with lots of smiles

Validate their feelings – **reassure** and let them know it's **ok to have worries**

Use **play** to stimulate and re-establish friendships

Share a **virtual tour** so families know what is different... and what stays the same!

Remember: small things = big difference



Helping your child back to school

Plan ahead **together** - try using pictures...

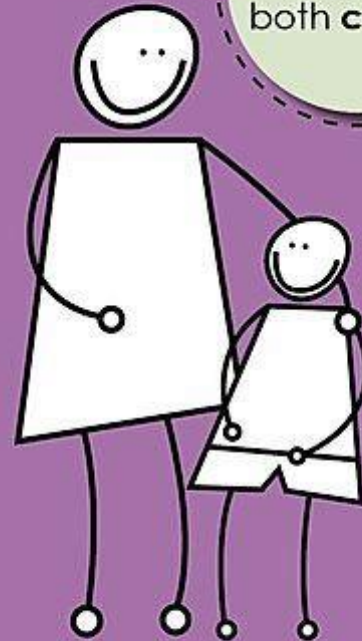
...the **morning routine**, their **uniform**, the **journey to school**

Focus on what you both **can do**

Not everything will be different - the staff, building and some routines will still be familiar

Give praise when they talk about a worry

It's OK to feel worried about change - let them know that!



STRUCTURE & ROUTINE

When things are uncertain, this leads to anxiety. Young people with Speech, Language & Communication in particular require a more concrete and predictable world to feel secure. You can decrease the uncertainty and increase the feeling of security by creating structure and routine for them.



BUILD STRUCTURE INTO DAILY ROUTINE

You want your daily routine to be as structured and predictable as possible. This reduces anxiety. Regular routines that are already in place such as bed times should be continued.



USE A VISUAL SCHEDULE

Try to use visual schedules so they can see what's coming up next. These plot a route through the day for them, creating predictability.



KEEP ROUTINE HABITS THE SAME

Keep your familiar routines consistent between days. For example, going for a walk at the same time each day, or following the same route on the walk.



MANAGE TRANSITIONS

Switching from one activity to the next can be challenging. Make it easier by giving reminders that things are coming to an end and others are beginning. You can use a Now/Next board, or a timer to help prepare for the change.

Great resource targeting those with speech and language difficulties.



Support your child's wellbeing while schools are closed

With schools closing across the UK, most children will be at home full time. As parents/carers you will inevitably be concerned about the effect this may have on your child's development, their physical and mental health, as well as your family's wellbeing.

- 1 Establish a daily routine.** Routines provide reassuring structure and purpose. Include a mix of learning, creative, physical, relaxation and 'electronics' time. Help your child make a visual timetable so everyone understands the plan.
- 2 Make time for physical activity.** Encourage your child outside and rediscover garden games. If you can't get outside, suggest your child makes an indoor obstacle course. There are lots of resources available on the BBC, ITV and YouTube.
- 3 Work on personal care skills.** Identify self-care tasks that your child would like to do more independently, for example tying shoelaces or getting dressed.
- 4 Develop life skills.** Help your child learn how to prepare their lunch, use a washing machine or change their bedsheets. Older children could complete an online First Aid course or start to learn another language.
- 5 Create a suitable study space.** Ideally your child should have an appropriately sized chair and table, but if they must use adult furniture ensure they can sit with feet firmly planted and their shoulders relaxed.
- 6 Teach your child to type.** Typing is a valuable skill for education, social communication and for the workplace.
- 7 Rediscover creative activities** such as playdough, junk modelling, Lego and origami.
- 8 Spend social time together as a family.** Play board games, watch a film or make a cake. Schedule mealtimes together and commit to them.
- 9 Keep in touch.** Arrange for your child to spend time each day talking to friends or family members on the phone or on social media (with adult supervision where appropriate).
- 10 Look after yourself.** Being a full-time parent/carer with household duties and work is challenging. Make sure you eat and sleep well, and include time for your own rest and leisure in your daily routine.

During times of isolation it's really important that you look after your mental and emotional wellbeing as well as your physical health.

Depending on circumstances, children and young people may now be spending their days at home away from their usual routine, friends and activities, due to periods of isolation and when year groups are being taught remotely.

This can create worry about the effect this may have on your child's development, physical and mental health, as well as your family's wellbeing.

Here are some tips on how to support your young person's wellbeing:

ONLINE RESOURCES

A list of websites & apps that are helpful for managing mental health

NHS Every Mind Matters

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

This website offers a range of mental health advice as well as an interactive quiz that's designed to help you feel more in control of your emotional/mental wellbeing.

Kooth

www.kooth.com

This site contains free mental health support with their online counsellors. It is a free sign up service that has resources such as discussion boards, helpful tips/articles written by young people and an option for them to write mood journals & set positive goals.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

A mental health charity for children & young people that has a wide variety of helpful videos, games and articles. They have a free telephone helpline (0800 1111) and message boards where young people are encouraged to share experiences and support each other in a positive way.

Papyrus

www.papyrus-uk.org

A mental health charity dedicated to preventing young suicide by providing support and resources for young people and their families. They have their "Hopeline" (Call: 0800 068 4141 / Text: 078600 39967 / Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org) for children and young people who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, or for anyone concerned for a young person that could be thinking about suicide.

Calm Harm

An app to help teenagers manage/resist the urge to self harm by providing a wide range of distraction techniques.

Combined Minds

This app contains psycho-education for parents, families & friends with practical advice on how to provide mental health support to children & young people.

Cove

A relaxing musical app that helps people try to capture their mood and express it by making music within the program and capturing it in a journal format. Note: you do not need to know how to play an instrument to use this app.

Stem4

www.stem4.org.uk

A charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers as well as encouraging them to build resilience and manage difficult emotions via online resources.

YoungMinds

www.youngminds.org.uk

A mental health charity that gives help and advice for young people, as well as encouraging them to get involved in fundraising/campaigning to raise awareness for children & young people's mental health.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

A charity that offers mental health support & information online for everyone. Their helpline is free and available to all ages. Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org 24/7.

Child Bereavement UK

www.childbereavementuk.org/young-people

A site which has resources for young people who are grieving, as well as providing information & advice to families/professionals on how to best support a young person who is bereaved. A helpline is also available on 0800 028840.

Clear Fear

An app to help children & teenagers manage anxiety through distraction & helpful activities.

Calm

A mindfulness app that includes various relaxing sounds to listen to as well as "sleep stories" & some guided meditations.

Headspace

A mindfulness app that has more of a "podcast feel" to it with various talks, guided meditations and helpful videos available.

Here is a list of some mental health support for young people that can be accessed online.

TYPES OF SELF-CARE



PHYSICAL

- Sleep
- Stretching
- Walking
- Physical release
- Healthy food
- Yoga
- Rest



EMOTIONAL

- Stress management
- Emotional maturity
- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Kindness



SOCIAL

- Boundaries
- Support systems
- Positive social media
- Communication
- Time together
- Ask for help



SPIRITUAL

- Time alone
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Connection
- Nature
- Journaling
- Sacred space

31 DAYS OF MENTAL HEALTH!



Some ideas that are specifically for adults - although they may be tricky to do.