



What is Mental Wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing describes your mental state – how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life.

Our mental wellbeing is dynamic. It can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month or year to year.

However, mental wellbeing involves several different things including:

- ➔ **How we feel about ourselves, our bodies, and our lives** – this does not mean we have to like these things all of the time. If you have good mental wellbeing you may feel relatively confident in yourself and your abilities and may feel that you have positive self-esteem.

- ➔ **Mental wellbeing also involves our ability to deal with the ups and downs that life throws at us** – knowing that it's ok to not feel happy all of the time. When we have good mental wellbeing we're able to adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty – and we know that just because things aren't quite working out right now it doesn't mean that it's always going to be that way.

- ➔ **Understanding how to be a good friend to ourselves and others**
- when we have good mental wellbeing we're able to build and maintain good relationships with others and feel engaged with the world around us.

- ➔ It can also involve knowing when we need to get some extra help and support. [Further information and support given at the end of the handout.]



In times of crisis it is more important than ever to prioritise self-care and mental wellbeing.

Isn't it selfish to put myself first?

Looking after yourself is not selfish; far from it. When we practise good self-care, we are acting as role models to the children in our care. Furthermore, when we look after ourselves well, we better enable ourselves to look after others – which is about as selfless as you can get.

If we do not take time to look after ourselves, it always catches up with us in the end – especially those of us who give ourselves so freely in supporting others.

In the end, we physically or mentally burn out, at best leaving us unable to be our best selves at home and work, and at worst forcing us to completely withdraw.

You are a role model

Ask yourself what lesson you are teaching to your child through your actions. You can work as hard as you like to encourage your child to look after themselves; but if you don't practise what you preach, these lessons will often ring hollow.

If you truly believe in the recommendations you are making to your child and they can see you living by those beliefs and ideas, they're more likely to listen.

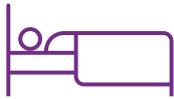
The learning we impart to children goes far beyond timetabled teaching in the classroom – prioritising your own self-care is one way to encourage children to do the same for themselves.

Sleep Hygiene

Impact of increased stress and anxiety on sleep

In times of high stress or [anxiety](#), we might feel agitated and struggle to concentrate. However, it is also common to experience problems sleeping – with difficulties in falling asleep and staying asleep. This is because stress can cause hyperarousal, which disrupts the balance between sleep and wakefulness.

Sleep issues and anxiety accompany one another. Lack of sleep can make us feel anxious, while anxiety can also lead to a lack of sleep.



Currently, many of us are experiencing stress in lots of different ways. This stress can cause our bodies to experience an adrenaline rush, which makes it incredibly difficult to sleep. You may also feel that your mind is racing, and you cannot stop your thoughts.

According to a [survey](#) produced by the Sleep Council, The Sleep Charity, and Sleepstation a couple of months ago more people in the UK are admitting that they're unhappy with the quality of their sleep at the moment and the effect it is having on their ability to function daily.

Impact of disrupted routines on sleep

Sleep is maintained by biological, social, and environmental factors. They include things like:

- the light we are exposed to
- amount of exercise we get
- interaction with others
- time-of-the-day we eat our meals



Many of our normal patterns and routines have been thrown up in the air and we've some of these natural cues.

As the factors in our lives are changing, our sleep can become disrupted. This might even mean we are going to bed and getting out of bed at widely different times during the week.

Why Is Sleep Important?

We all know we feel better after a good night's sleep, but you may not realise just how important sleep is for both our physical and mental health.

Here are some reasons why sleep is so important:

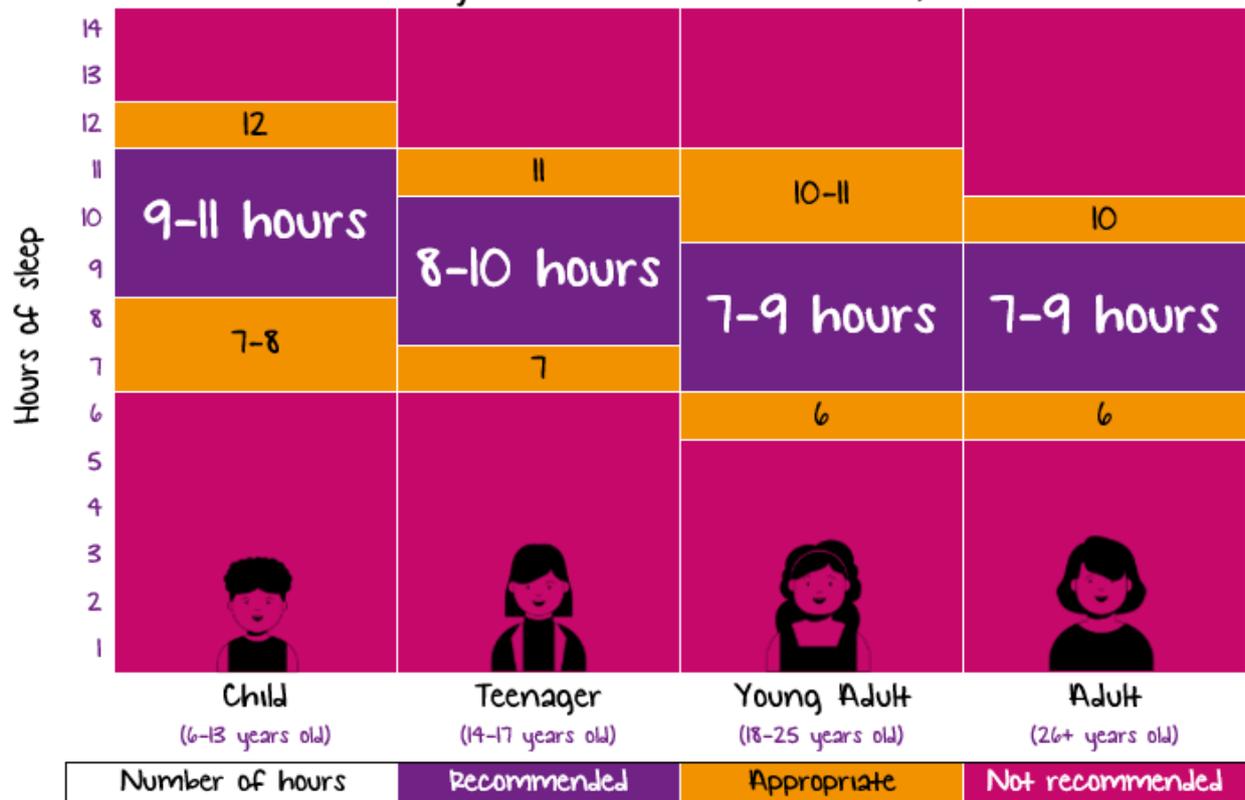


We do not all need the exact same amount of sleep. Many factors including our genes, our metabolism and our lifestyle can impact on how much sleep we need.

If you exercise a lot, or are working a lot, you might need more sleep than usual to recover, or process the information you have been handling.

Some people will have longer or shorter nights, but if you are far away from 7-9 hours, it is worth checking that you are neither under sleeping nor oversleeping!

How many hours of sleep should we get?



Too little sleep can lead to:

- Difficulty paying attention and remembering things
- Feeling irritable or downright different
- Slower reaction times and a reduced ability to judge situations well
- Reduced physical coordination

Similarly **too much** sleep can lead to:

- Headaches
- Anxiety, low mood and grogginess

What Can We Do During The Day To Help Our Sleep?

1. When you wake up

Try not to check your phone for the first **5 minutes** of the day, this can create anticipatory anxiety, and lead your body to automatically increase your stress levels.

2. After a bad sleep



1. Try not to sleep in. Your circadian rhythm needs regularity, and this would push back your sleep schedule.
2. Try not to go to bed much earlier than usual.
3. Try not to nap, especially late in the afternoon.

3. Light on and off

Your brain and body need light to keep the daytime/ night-time schedule.

Try to get sunlight for **20 minutes** in the morning. If it is not possible for you to go outside, open a window to get some fresh air and sunlight in the morning.

8. Your bed – haven of sleep

Try to keep your bed for sleeping and move other activities away from your bed.

It can be tempting to work in bed or watch movies in bed, but this will make your brain associate work and entertainment to your bed, instead of calm and sleep.

4. Exercise and sleep

Doing exercise regularly, helps improve the quality and quantity of your sleep. It is best to avoid exercise right before bed. Good sleep helps you perform well, and have the motivation to exercise.



7. Reduce stress

Reduce stressors:

- Avoid reading news updates, or other stressful information (i.e. schoolwork) right before bed.
- Make a worry list and look at it the next day with fresh eyes and someone else to discuss it with.

6. Caffeine & Diet

Avoid caffeine 6 hours before you go to bed. This includes coffee, tea and chocolate.

Avoid a heavy meal right before bed, especially with spicy or sugary foods.

5. Sleep loves routine

Maintaining your routine helps your sleep maintain its routine:

- Keep your morning and bedtime routines (shower, reading, getting ready for the next day)
- Try to stick to your normal wake and sleep time (or close to these)
- Try to limit how much you sleep-in at the weekend
- Make a daily timetable of what you will be doing

What Can We Do At Night To Prepare Our Bodies For Sleep?



Apps Designed To Help You Relax And Sleep



Stop Breathe & Think is free for teachers. On their Stop, Breathe & Think All Ages and Kids apps you have access to over 100 premium activities.



Sleep Cycle is an intelligent alarm clock that analyses your sleep and wakes you in the lightest sleep phase.



Calm hosts a variety of sleep stories, sleep meditations, nature sounds, and more.



Pzizz is recommended by the NHS. It uses "dreamscapes" – a mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects designed using the latest clinical research.

Mindful Moments In Difficult Times

Why is mindfulness helpful?

During difficult and unsettling times, it can feel as if our minds are in a whirlwind. It might seem as if there is so much to keep track of, with routines changing and priorities shifting, that we feel there is no space to clear our thoughts.

Finding time and space each day to allow our mind to focus on whatever we are doing, rather than multitasking or listing all that we need to do next, can help us gain some much-needed clarity. This is where mindfulness can help.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is essentially a form of attention training, although the practice is more involved and expansive than simply learning to focus.

It is about training our minds to dwell in the present moment, rather than being drawn away by thoughts, analysis, rumination, and stress.

Research shows that practicing mindfulness can:

- Help people manage stress, anxiety and depression
- Help people manage chronic pain
- Improve focus, concentration, and creativity
- Enhance communication skills and make people more empathetic

How can we be mindful when there is so much going on?

Choose an activity to do mindfully throughout the day for one, two, or five minutes. This activity can be something you would do normally, such as drinking a cup of tea, walking, or even washing the dishes. Try to really focus on what you are doing.

Whatever you choose to do, be in that moment, in the present. See, hear, smell, touch, feel, and breathe in the moment.

Notice whenever other thoughts or sensations come to mind, acknowledge them, and let them go. Then, refocus on your chosen mindful activity.

Be patient and compassionate with yourself.

Some of the **activities listed below** will work well for you; some may be better suited to others.

- ➔ Place your hands on your stomach, close your eyes, and focus on your breathing for two minutes.

Simply notice the rise and fall of your stomach as you breathe in and out.



- ➔ Take your pencil or pen for a walk on the page for one minute.

Move it slowly around the page, randomly. Focus on the shapes you are creating the whole time.

Do not let the pencil or pen leave the page until the time is up.



- ➔ Sit comfortably on the floor with your legs crossed in front of you.

Imagine there is a big balloon in your stomach. Place your hands over your stomach.

Sit up straight, take a big, deep breath in, and make your stomach puff out as if it were a balloon filling up with air.

Then exhale slowly, like you are letting the air out of a balloon a little at a time. As you let the air out, gently roll your shoulders and bend forwards. Repeat.



- ➔ Sit on the floor in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take some long slow, deep breaths in and out.

Picture a bright, shining sun smiling at you. Feel the sun on your face.

Breathe slowly and let the sun warm your face. Imagine the sun warming your shoulders and back. Imagine the sun warming your arms.

Continue to breathe in and out, slowly.

Imagine the sun's warmth spreading to your legs. Finally, feel the warmth all the way to your fingers and toes. Slowly, stretch your arms overhead and your legs and feet out in front of you.

Take a deep breath in and bend out towards your feet. Exhale slowly, and sit back up. Take one more deep breath in and out then slowly open your eyes.



Self-care – what can we control?

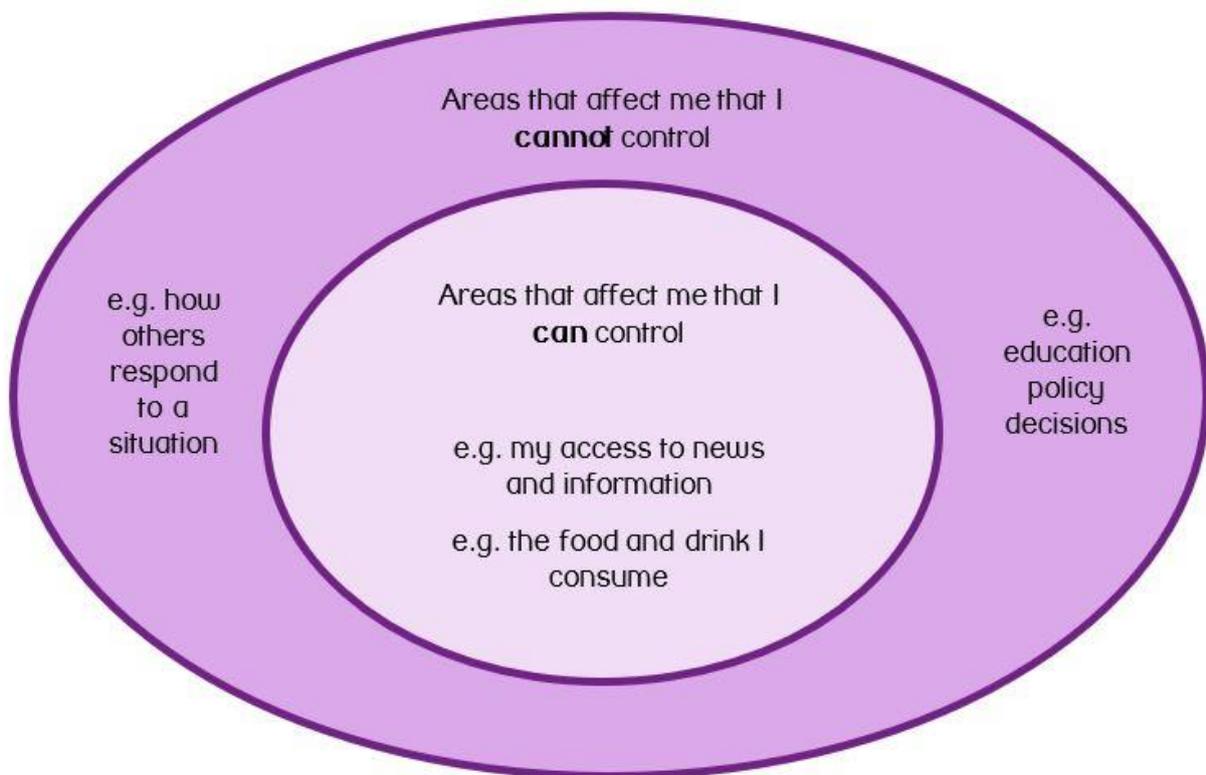
With a rapidly changing world and the sudden shift in how you teach, it can seem like there are more questions than answers. This can cause worry and anxiety. One way to gain perspective is to recognise what is within your control and what is not.

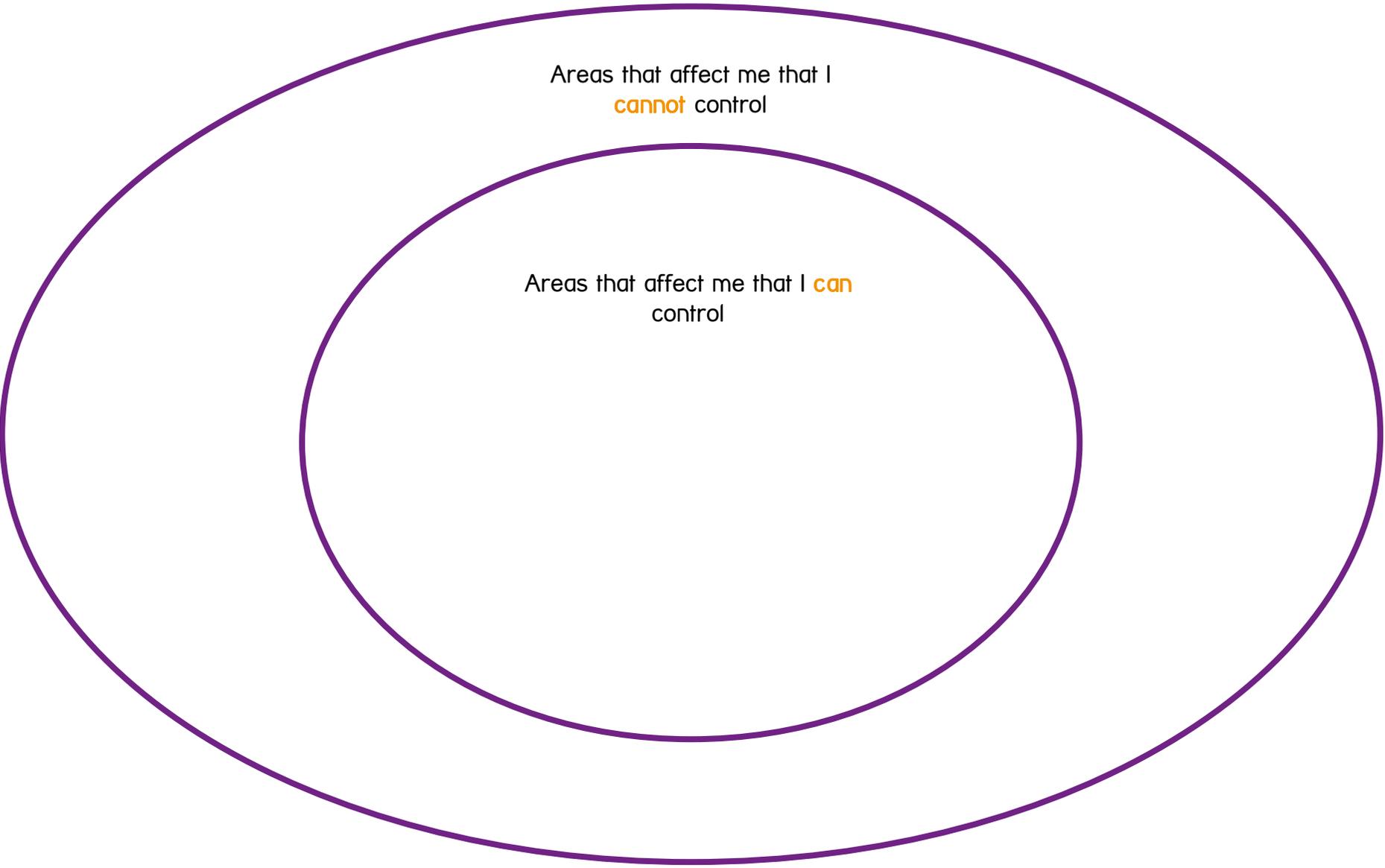
We often experience the feeling of happiness (or contentedness) when our expectations and reality match. If our expectations are unrealistically high, or unrealistically high expectations are put on us, it can lead us to feeling disappointed and unsatisfied with the experience or ourselves. This prevents us from feeling content or happy.

Part of being realistic with our expectations is recognising the areas in our life which we have control. And acknowledging the things we do not have control over, even though we may worry about the outcome.

Recognising these different areas can help us to put less pressure on ourselves to set unrealistic expectations and increase our feelings of happiness and contentedness.

An example is shown below along with an empty template that you can populate with your own thoughts and feelings.





Areas that affect me that I
cannot control

Areas that affect me that I **can**
control

Self-Care - Positive Coping Mechanisms

There have been so many changes to navigate due to COVID-19. It is understandable if you feel overwhelmed.

As parent/carer, you may need a reminder that practising self-care is essential to your well-being, especially during times of uncertainty and transition. You may be looking for ideas on how to practice self-care.

To support this, we are sharing some positive coping mechanisms that have been shared by other.

Reflect on your feelings and needs

It is important to recognise and name your emotions. When you are aware of a new feeling, take a moment to reflect:

- Name the feeling and why you may be feeling that way
- Think about what you might need at that moment and in the future

For example, you might say, "I'm feeling overwhelmed because there is a lot of new information about how school has changed. I need a five-minute break. Then, I need to write down my questions and identify a person who I can problem-solve with."

Support

Talking about a stressful event with a supportive person can be an effective way to manage stress. Right now, it is an incredibly important outlet.

Seeking external support instead of self-isolating and internalising the effects of difficult situations can greatly reduce the negative effects and feelings that come out of these situations.

This does not immediately need to be professional support – never underestimate the power of a 15/20 minute catch up with a friend/family/colleague.



Problem solving

Problem solving is a positive coping mechanism to use during this time. This coping mechanism involves identifying a problem that is causing you stress and then putting into action some potential solutions for effective management.

This may include:

- booking some time in with your line manager to develop a plan
- bullet journaling and calendar management
- developing a work plan for yourself with manageable targets for the next two weeks to tackle priorities.



Plan of Action

The tool on the next page can be used to identify specific areas that are causing you concern – and mapping out a plan of action. It can help you track your worries and identify which worries you can do something about.

➔ Decide who you will speak to about your concern, and when.

➔ Decide whether the concern feels resolved or whether it will be reviewed

➔ If it is to be reviewed, ensure you timetable this as well.

Every concern you have is both valid and important. Schools are running in a way they never have before so a concern you have may be something that has not been considered. Due to the new way in which schools are being run, it is important to regularly review these concerns.

An example is provided in the table along with space to populate your own experiences.

| Concern | Who Will I Talk To? | When Will I Discuss This? | Conclusion | Review or Resolved? | Review Date (If Needed) | Review Conclusion | Review or Resolved? |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| e.g. I'm worried about my child's learning | Class teacher | I have emailed the teacher about my concerns. | The teacher reassured me that other parents are feeling similarly. Teachers are doing their best to support the children in their learning and wellbeing. | Review. Speak to other parents | Tomorrow | I have spoken to other parents about our concerns. It was nice to voice how I feel. | Resolved. |
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Wellbeing Action Plans

You will get the most from your wellbeing action plan if you spend a little time on it when you're feeling relatively calm; think of it as planning ahead for stormy weather whilst the sun is shining.

This does not need to be perfect; often the first ideas that come to mind are the best ones. Over time you might choose to add to and update it; it is not designed to be cast in stone, but rather a starting point for staying well and seeking help when needed.



Use this space to record as wide a range of ideas as you can think of that help to keep you well. Add to it over time. It can be anything from going for a run, having a cup of tea, drawing, listening to music, chatting to a friend etc.



What are the things you should commit to doing every day to keep well? You might think here about the basics of sleep, food and exercise as well as considering what you can do each day to spark a little joy.



On the flip side, what are the things you want to commit to not doing, in order to maintain your wellbeing?



Are there any early warning signs that you might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health? For example, changes in appetite, unanswered text messages, sleep disruption.

➔ Are there any early warning signs that your family/friends/colleagues might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health? For example, changes in normal working patterns or withdrawing.



➔ If you spot your warning signs, what are your next steps? Who can you talk to? What can you do to look after yourself?



Resources For Relaxation

- ➔ Relaxation and Relaxation Exercises from the **Trauma Center**

(includes progressive muscle relaxation, meditation on the breath, and guided imagery)

http://www.traumacenter.org/resources/pdf_files/relaxation_exercises.pdf

- ➔ Downloadable relaxation exercises from **MoodCafe**

<https://www.moodcafe.co.uk/download-relaxation-exercises.aspx>

- ➔ Everyday relaxation exercises from **Mind**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-exercises/>

- ➔ Breathe bubble from **Calm**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DqTuWve9t8>

- ➔ 1-minute meditation from **Calm**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7PxEy5lyV4>

- ➔ Progressive Muscle Relaxation with music by **HelpGuide**

<https://www.helpguide.org/meditations/progressive-muscle-relaxation-meditation.htm>

MyMindTV

Want to watch videos related to some of the topics covered today? Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow Mind have developed a video site where you can find useful content on mental health and emotional wellbeing topics.

Below are links to some suggested videos.

We all have mental health



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/KTMKulQ82D4v?programme=ba843811-50be-4bcb-9048-d2bb089550aa&redirect=4FE8761D-BCB5-BA8D-08ED-72550DDCE4C4>

The zones of regulation



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/KTMKulQ82D4v?programme=5744be22-9999-455e-9d2d-19b61933095d&redirect=7CB8A87A-B55B-3FC7-19AD-EE8ADCA2F280>

54321 grounding technique



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/LFaQGSQRizLv?programme=b883d45c-88ca-40ca-8f8b-d4bbed4a6990&redirect=C1D43834-238F-1E88-7E2E-8864FE792C3E>

Providing emotional support to your child



<https://my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/EAdkJW4aKVUo?programme=41a3f16e-e1c0-4517-a6ee-ba31acf8a9e0&redirect=ADD19986-2BAB-10F4-4B7E-2C6F17781B3E>

Signposting and Further Support

If you are concerned about your or your child/children's mental health, please speak to your GP

For Yourself

IAPT Services through NHS choices: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/>

To find a private therapist:

BACP: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>

UKCP: <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/>

Mind Info Line: provides an information and signposting service. Open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays) 0300 123 3393. Ask about:

- mental health problems
- where to get help near you
- treatment options
- advocacy services

Samaritans: Free phonenumber: 116 123, alternatively you can email at jo@samaritans.org

YoungMinds Parent Line: detailed advice, emotional support and signposting about a child or young person up to the age of 25. Call for free on 0808 802 5544 from 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. <https://youngminds.org.uk>

Anxiety UK Infoline: Helpline 03444 775 774 is available from 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday, or you can email support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Helplines Partnership: For more options, visit the Helplines Partnership website for a directory of UK helplines <https://helplines.org/helplines/>

For Your Child

Anxiety UK Infoline: Helpline is available from 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday, 03444 775 774 or you can email support@anxietyuk.org.uk

BEAT: eating disorder charity. Information on types of eating disorders, recovery information, support information including helplines & downloadable resources. www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk Helpline: 0808 801 0677, Studentline: 0808 801 0811, Youthline: 0808 801 0711

CAMHS: is the name for the NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. Most local CAMHS teams have a website where you can look up how to get access to their service.

Hope Again: support for children and young people experiencing grief and bereavement. Helpline. www.hopeagain.org.uk, 0808 808 1677

Kooth: free online counselling support for under 25s. www.kooth.com or download the Kooth app

Mind: A-Z information for mental health, including treatment options, self-care, information for family & friends, & useful contacts www.mind.org.uk

The Mix: information & support about mental health for under 25s. Professional and young person blogs and advice over a wide range of topics. Helpline, crisis messenger, 121 chat, email. www.themix.org.uk, 0808 808 4994

NSPCC: charity fighting to end child abuse. Information, resources and further support, stories. www.nspcc.org.uk, 0808 800 5000

No Panic: offers advice, support, recovery programs and help for people living with phobias, OCD and any other anxiety-based disorders. <https://nopanic.org.uk>, 0844 967 4848

Papyrus: charity to prevent and help young people thinking about suicide. Information & support, hopeline for under 35s. www.papyrus-uk.org/hopelineuk, 0800 068 4141

Samaritans: 24/7, free helpline for anyone. 116 123, www.samaritans.org.uk

YoungMinds: mental health charity for children and young people. Information and resources for young people & parents, including parents helpline and young people crisis messenger and helpline. <https://youngminds.org.uk>, Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.

Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Support In Primary Schools

What support can we provide?

- 1:1 support for parents/carers of children who are feeling anxious or showing challenging behaviour
- Whole class workshops for children supporting emotion regulation
- Drop-in service for parents/carers
- Psychoeducation workshops for parents and carers

Aims of 1:1 support for parents/carers

- Education Mental Health Practitioner's (EMHP's) provide guided self-help for parents/carers. Guided self-help aims to **empower** parents/carers to develop the **tools and skills** necessary to help tackle the difficulties their child is experiencing as a family
- EMHPs **work together** with parents/carers to develop **coping strategies** to manage their child's distressing thoughts and **increase resilience** to future problems
- Parents/carers will play an active part; reading materials before each session, **practice strategies** at home and **problem-solve** with the EMHPs support
- If you're interested in a referral to the MHST for 1:1 parenting support, please speak to a member of staff in your child's school

Drop-in telephone service

- We are providing drop-in telephone sessions to help parents and carers with concerns around their child's mental wellbeing
- Each phone call lasts for up to 20 minutes – please note this is not a counselling service
- Language Line Telephone Interpreting Services are available
- Please speak to a member of school staff for information on how to access our drop in service

Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Support In Secondary Schools & Colleges

What support can we provide?

- 1:1 support for children and young people who are feeling anxious or low in mood
- Targeted group work for students
- Drop-in service for parents/carers
- Psychoeducation workshops for parents/carers and students

Aims of 1:1 support for children and young people

- Education Mental Health Practitioner's (EMHP's) provide guided self-help for children and young people. Guided self-help aims to **empower** children and young people to gain the **tools and skills** necessary to tackle difficulties themselves
- EMHPs work together with children and young people to **develop coping strategies** to manage distressing thoughts and **increase resilience** to future problems
- Children and young people will play an active part; reading materials before each session, **practice strategies** at home and **problem-solve** with the EMHPs support
- If you're interested in a referral to the MHST for 1:1 support for your child, please speak to a member of staff in your child's school

Drop-in telephone service

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