

Mental Health Newsletter Summer 2024

Date	Weekly Information on the Newsletter
19/4/24	<p>April is Stress Awareness month and this year the key message is how even the <i>smallest</i> steps taken each day towards self-care and stress reduction can yield significant improvements in mental health over time.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 10px; background-color: #f0e6f8;"> <div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <h3 style="text-align: center; color: purple;">Small Actions To Make Big Changes</h3> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>CONNECT WITH SOMEONE</p> <p>Are they okay? · Are you okay? · Check in with your support network · Connect with someone new · A sense of belonging and community can help reduce feelings of loneliness.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>PRIORITISE SLEEP</p> <p>Take small steps to improve your bedtime routine. Wind down before bed by minimizing your screen time · Make your bedroom a 'tech-free' zone · Create a clean and restful sleep environment · Jot down what's on your mind and set it aside for tomorrow · Avoid caffeine after 4pm.</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>MOVE IN YOUR OWN WAY</p> <p>Get moving the way you want to. This could be walking, running, yoga, stretches, doing some gardening. Move in a way you'll enjoy, get those endorphins flowing and let off some steam.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>SPEND TIME IN NATURE</p> <p>Take some time out of your day to step outside, get some fresh air and spend time in nature. This could be eating your lunch outside, or taking a short work after work. Simulate your senses and look at the beauty of nature</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>BREATHE DEEP</p> <p>Your breath is a powerful tool to help with stress reduction and relaxation. Short, shallow breaths can heighten anxiety so being conscious and taking time to breathe deep helps us shift into a relaxation mode.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>PRACTICE MINDFULNESS</p> <p>Practicing mindfulness allows you to focus on the here and now. It aids self-awareness, helps you practice emotional regulation and control. You can actively practice during a designated mindfulness session or be mindful of your all five of your sense whilst participating in an activity, such as a nature walk.</p>  </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: purple; margin-top: 10px;">#LittleByLittle</p> </div> </div>

If you need further support with stress here are further ideas.
<https://www.stress.org.uk/home-3/reduce-stress-in-7-days/>

26/4/24



Place to Be, a national mental health charity supporting children, has a great website **Parenting Smart**, which has 52 short videos and information about a whole range of useful topics including; school refusal, anxiety, healthy gaming habits, supporting homework, co-parenting after separation, sleep, meals and separation. The link for this website is below but is also on our website along with many other useful websites and apps when you have concerns about your child.

<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>

3/5/24

Exams - Year 6 will be starting Key Stage 2 tests known as SATs on the week starting 13/5/24 and you may also have older siblings sitting GCSEs or A levels. This can be a stressful time for many young people, so here are a few top tips to help manage those feelings of anxiety.

5 tips to reduce TEST ANXIETY in CHILDREN

Big Life Journal



1 PUT TESTS INTO PERSPECTIVE

- Encourage children to do their best, but remind them that one test won't make or break their future.
- Tell them they will be **loved and valued** no matter what test score they earn.
- Explain this test will provide **helpful information** about what they're great at and what they still need to practice.



2 HELP THEM PRACTICE

- If your child is nervous, start by **asking why** they feel nervous.
- Consider **finding practice tests** online you can discuss together.
- **Don't push your child** to study for the test; these tests are meant to measure what your child already knows.



3 PROVIDE USEFUL TEST-TAKING TIPS

- Answer the **easiest questions first**, mark difficult questions and return to them later
- Use **process of elimination**, crossing out the answer choices you know are wrong
- Make an **educated guess** when needed
- **Read** all the answer choices before choosing one
- If penalized for incorrect answers, don't guess **unless** you can eliminate some answer choices
- If aren't penalized for incorrect answers, **don't leave any questions blank**. If time is about to run out, bubble something for each unanswered question



4 TEACH CALMING STRATEGIES

- Experiment with **calming strategies** to find some go-to techniques.
- **Remind** them you won't know every single answer on the test, and that's okay.
- Give them a **plan** for what they will do if they don't know an answer.
- Equip your child with a few strategies that effectively calm them. Spend some time **practicing these strategies** before test day.



5 PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT

- If your child voices a negative statement, like, "I know I'm going to fail," **acknowledge your child's feelings**: "I know you're feeling nervous about the test. Tests can be scary."
- Counter with a **positive and encouraging** statement: "You've practiced really hard and learned a lot this year. You might know a lot of the answers and get a higher score than you're expecting."
- You can also leave your child **encouraging messages** in a backpack or on the mirror with dry-erase markers.



BONUS TIP:

HELP THEM FEEL THEIR BEST ON TEST DAY

- Choose movement and exercise
- Get plenty of rest
- Stick to your usual bedtime routine
- Avoiding excessive screen time
- Providing a protein-rich breakfast in the morning, like oatmeal or eggs
- Keeping conversation positive, encouraging, and lighthearted
- Share laughter and sing favorite songs on the way to school, if driving. Listen to our Big Life Journal playlists on Spotify!
- Leave your child with a big hug and words of encouragement

BIG LIFE JOURNAL - BIGLIFEJOURNAL.COM

<https://kienhoc.vn>

If you feel more is required, here is a link to a self care plan from the Anna Freud Centre.

<https://d1uw1dikibnh8j.cloudfront.net/media/18656/my-self-care-plan-primary.pdf>

10/5/24

We all know that parenting children is a stressful role and when your child has additional needs the load on parents/carers is even greater. Therefore it is important to take care of your own well being just as much as that of your child's. Sometimes we need to recognise that we need some extra support and Hertfordshire's

Local Offer has lots of suggestions for local support and websites that can help with a variety of issues.

[Mental health and wellbeing support for parents and carers \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support-for-parents-and-carers)



17/5/24



13-19 MAY 2024

This week is Mental Health

Awareness Week and the theme this year is moving more for our mental health. One of the most important things we can do to help protect our mental health is regular movement. Our bodies and our minds are connected. Looking after ourselves physically also helps us prevent problems with our mental health. Here are some top tips to help fit movement into our days.

https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/MHF_Movement_Tips_2pp_A4.pdf

24/5/24

This week 4 lucky Year 6 children attended the **Children & Young People's Forum at the Stevenage Football club**. As well as a tour of the club, they learnt about strategies to support their wellbeing through transition, about the history of racism and facts about healthy eating. They were also very excited to receive a free goody bag!



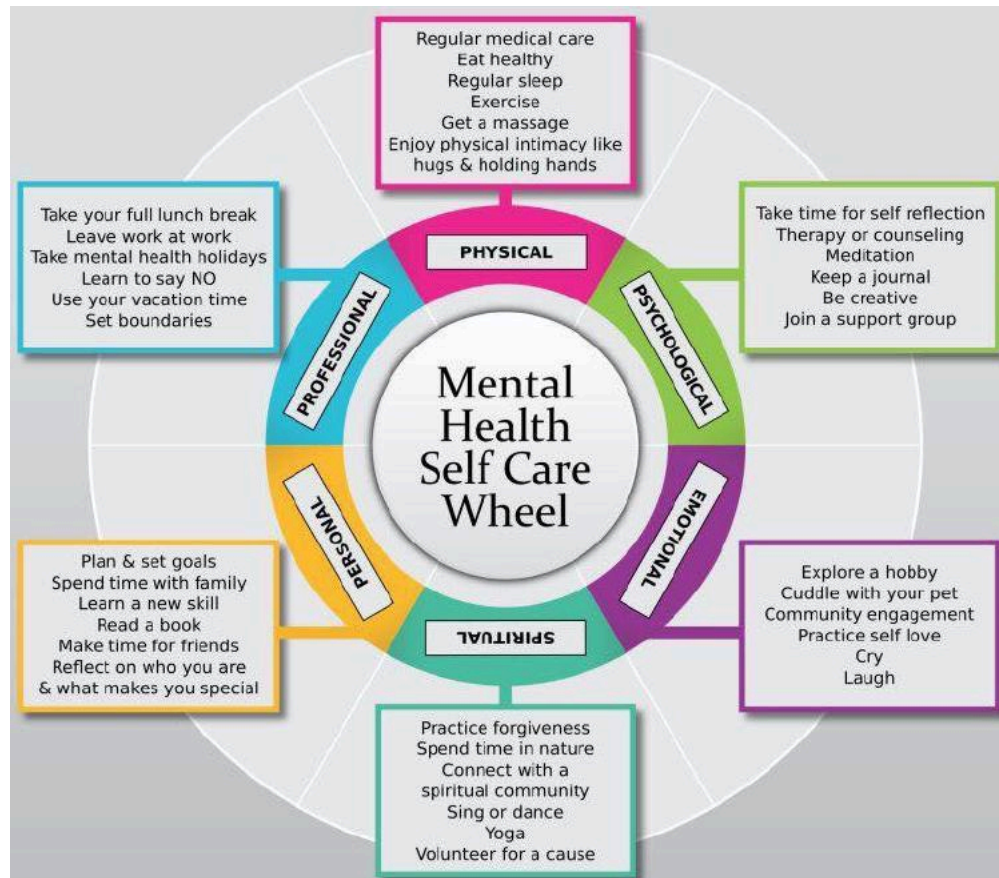
7/6/24

Yesterday, our Mental Health Champions helped to plan, write and deliver an assembly about how we can help ourselves to manage the big emotions that we might feel. They suggested using breathing techniques, meditation, a diary, talking to others, exercise or writing worries down and throwing them away. They have also created posters to help other children remember their ideas. They gave a fantastic presentation after very little rehearsal.



14/6/24

This week our Mental Health Senior Practitioner delivered a well being session for parents and talked about among other things the importance of self care. Here are the reminders that she gave to parents.



If you were unable to attend but want support the link below is for an NHS webinar about **Managing difficult emotions and building resilience** on 3/7/24 at 7pm.

<https://events.hertfordshire.gov.uk/local-offer/nhs-talking-therapies-care-for-parent-carers-webinar-copy>

21/6/24



Just Talk has embarked on its summer campaign, children, young people, parents and carers and schools are encouraged to get involved and experience the benefits of movement in their everyday lives. The campaign stems from the Young Person's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2023, which revealed that 23.8% of young people express concerns about their physical health and 26.9% had not engaged in more than an

hour of physical activity in the past week. Just Talk aims to address this by encouraging children and young people to try accessible physical activities that benefit both body and mind.

Running from 17th June to 8th July, the campaign will spotlight the power of physical activity: how movement boosts mood, promotes inclusivity, positively impacts brain chemistry, fosters social connection and the variety of opportunities to engage in physical activities across Hertfordshire.

If you want to know more visit [Just move it \(justtalkherts.org\)](http://justtalkherts.org) or @[JustTalkHerts](https://www.instagram.com/JustTalkHerts), to find lots of tips and information about accessible activities in Stevenage.

28/6/24



This week it is World Wellbeing Week and lots of businesses are implementing strategies to support their employees and help raise awareness about how we can all look after our wellbeing. Even if your employer is not offering this support, the Stevenage Healthy Hub can provide advice, information and support to help improve everyone's health and wellbeing. They have a team of professionals who can provide lifestyle support for you and your family covering subjects such as mental health, physical activity, weight management, breast feeding, parenting, coping with cancer, working as a carer, smoking cessation and so much more. To find out more

<https://www.everyoneactive.com/centre/stevenage-arts-leisure-centre/healthy-hub/>

Opening Times Monday - Friday: 09:00 - 17:00

01438 579390 stevenagehealthyhub@everyoneactive.com

Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre, Lytton Way, Stevenage, SG1 1LZ

5/7/24



This time of year can be an anxious time for many children, especially those that do not like change. What can we do to support them?

- Don't avoid it - draw pictures and tell stories about what might happen to make it fun and more familiar.
- Talk about feelings - describe what happens when you have different feelings, including worry. Do you have butterflies in your tummy? Are you tense? Explain that nerves can help us focus and get ready.
- Look back - chat about how you've coped with changes in the past, like moving house or having a baby. You can do it again!
- Practise how to stay calm - this could include taking slow, deep breaths together.
- Try to find out what your child is worried about and talk to them about what might make things better.
- Your child will be reassured by your calming responses and a reminder that you and school can support them in managing the changes.

You can contact the SENCO or class teacher and explore and agree a plan of support.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/2odjktz/top-ten-tips-for-parents.pdf>

<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/article/my-child-struggles-with-changes-and-endings>

<https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/article/my-child-is-anxious>

12/7/24



	<p>This is Herts one stop shop for online support around children's mental health. It gives access to children's instant messaging service, the online groups and individual support, plus access to advice for parents and carers and adult provisions. It also has information about the Stevenage Haven Cafe and Lumi Nova. If you or your child are struggling with mental health over the holiday, please click on the link below for further advice and support.</p> <p>https://www.withyouth.org/</p>
19/7/24	<p>Online Gaming - We all know that over the holiday children will have more free time and many of them will want to play games on computers, Playstations, Xboxes and tablets. However, parents need to be mindful of the positives and risks involved in such activities and how to support children to make this a fun, healthy activity and not expose their children to the mental health risks of in-game bullying, online grooming or in some extreme cases gaming addiction. A few things parents can do to support their children are;</p> <p>Set digital boundaries -Use a family agreement to set rules on what they can play, when and how long for to help them strike a healthy balance between gaming and other activities they can do.</p> <p>Use reviews and sites to pick age appropriate games -Read parents and expert reviews of games they are interested in to help you choose the right games for them to play.</p> <p>Encourage them to play in shared spaces -This is a simple way to stay engaged in what they are doing while gaming and step in if you feel something's not quite right.</p> <p>Set privacy settings and learn how to report in-game abuse - Make it a habit to review their privacy settings on their account and make sure they remember where to report in-game abuse so they can take action if they feel concerned.</p> <p>Gen-up on the lingo - Get up to speed on how players communicate while gaming to spot the signs of cyberbullying or negative behaviour.</p> <p>Make gaming a family affair - Trying out new games with children makes it easier to relate and can give you a better sense of what the game is about and prompt conversation or safety</p>

measures to help them stay safe.

If you want to know more please visit this website -

[https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice/
online-gaming-the-risks/#risks](https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice/online-gaming-the-risks/#risks)