

Stockham Primary School

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Stockham Primary School Well-being Newsletter

Supporting the Emotional Well-being and Mental Health of Our School Community

If you have any worries or concerns about your child's emotional behaviour or well-being, then please let school know. There will be things we can do to help further and support you.

If your child asks about their mental health, you can tell them that it is about our feelings, our thinking, emotions and our moods. Explain to them that looking after our mental health is important. Tell them that we all have small feelings every day; these can sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long.

Sometimes we experience big feelings; these feel strong and can feel overwhelming.

Tips for talking to your child about their Mental Health

1. Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life: Anywhere is a good place to talk – in the car, walking the dog or cooking together. Model everyday talk about feelings such as by talking about a TV character's feelings.
2. Give your full attention: We all know it's not helpful to be half listened to. 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 'brush off' their concerns, or to instantly reassure them that everything is fine without discussion.
5. Ask open questions: Such as "How did your day go today?" This will help to extend the conversation.
6. Calmly stay with the feelings that arise: It can be our automatic reaction 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 the problem.
8. Remember we are all different: Respect and value the child's feelings, even though they may be different to yours.



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9. Look for clues about feelings: Listen to the child's words, tone of voice and body language.

10. Some ways to start a conversation about feelings might be: "How are you feeling at the moment?" "You don't seem your usual self. Do you want to talk about it?" "Do you fancy a chat?" "I'm happy to listen if you need a chat."



Let them know that it's okay to feel however they feel, whether that's sad, angry, worried or something else, and that you can work together to find new ways of managing these feelings.

Books to support talking about mental health with children & young people.



Breathing exercises to help children with anxiety

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Breathing exercises are a good way to relax, reduce tension, and relieve stress.

Bumble Bee Breathing

Breathe in through the nose. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound like that of the bumble bee. The humming sound should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of the breath out



Below are two mindful breathing exercises that you can also do with your child:



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Fiver Finger Breathing - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2U3iBJonmU>

Rainbow Breathing - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrLZ528nQBw>

Other ideas ...

Place an emphasis on resilience and strength Focus on your child's skills, in terms of their daily life. Help them see they have many strengths to help them cope if feeling anxious or upset. Looking after your feelings If your child is feeling anxious try getting them to think about good things that make them happy. You can always get them to keep a diary and write down or draw about how they are feeling.

Drawing

First draw a square, star and a triangle on a piece of paper.



SQUARE - follow the sides of the square, breathing in for 4 counts on one side and out on the next side for 4 counts again. Continue round the square.

STAR - use your finger to follow the sides of the star. Breathe in. Hold your breath on the tip and breathe out on the other side. Continue until you have been all the way around the star.

TRIANGLE - take a deep breath for 3 counts on side one. Hold your breath for 3 counts on the next side and finally out for 3 counts on the final side. Do these for a few minutes at a time.

Yoga

Yoga is a fantastic, fun exercise that improves posture, flexibility, strength and balance. It can also help children to relax and encourage positive thinking. Why not try it out? Grab a mat, blanket, or towel find some loose clothing to wear and click on one of the following links.

For children:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-BS87NTV5I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ImHIWzP49M>

Things to say to your anxious child

1. I am here for you. You are safe.



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2. Do you want to do some dancing or running to get rid of that nervous energy?
3. Tell me about it.
4. What would you like to say to your worry? What might your worry say back?
5. Let us draw your worry.
6. What does it feel like in your body? Where is your worry? How big is it?
7. Match your breath to mine.
8. Let us think up some endings for what could happen.
9. What is something we could do to make you feel better?

Places to go for help and support

This website from the NHS offers expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your child's mental health and wellbeing as well as the rest of the family.



<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

The NSPCC are offering support and advice if you feel your child is struggling with their mental health and anxiety.

More information and advice can be found on their website:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk>

Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Expressing Feelings

Why is it important to express feelings? Expressing our different feelings helps us to recognise and manage them. It helps us recognise when we might need help with our feelings. Expressing feelings can help stop strong or intense feelings from taking over our minds and bodies.



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Ways for your child to express their feelings

- Writing – diaries, poems, stories, blogs
- Talking to others
- Acting, dancing and singing
- Music



Mindfulness Links for Children's Well-being

Take time to reflect (celebrating resilience)

Make time each day for your child and the rest of your family to reflect on what went well. It is important to recognise your successes and the things you are grateful for, no matter how small. You can ask your child to start a diary where they write two or three things they have been proud about or are grateful for that day. Mindful techniques can also help you focus on the present rather than dwelling on negative thoughts. Children of all ages can benefit from mindfulness, the simple practice of bringing a gentle, accepting attitude to the present moment. It can help you support your child by promoting happiness and relieving stress.



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