

ASPIRE's

Parent/Carer Wellbeing Newsletter



10th October 2023

World Mental Health Day special edition

It's the first newsletter of the new academic year 2023/24... and it's a special World Mental Health Day edition!

For all of our new parents and carers joining us this year, this is our ASPIRE termly Parent/Carer Wellbeing Newsletter.

The newsletter aims to bring you guidance, information and links to support all things Wellbeing and Mental Health, which we hope you may find useful. This newsletter has a particular focus on Mental Health this time and this year's World theme is 'Mental Health is a universal human right'.



Each term we try to cover a range of areas within our newsletter, so there is hopefully 'something for everyone', from support for your family, to self-care hints and tips... but, if you don't see something that you think would be useful, please don't hesitate to let us know so we can add it!

World Mental Health Day is about raising awareness of mental health and driving positive change for everyone's mental health. It's also a chance to talk about mental health, how we need to look after it, and how important it is to get help if you are struggling.

Some of your local village communities may be coming together this World Mental Health Day, by holding a Tea & Talk! Look out for those local events nearby to you.

ITV's Ant and Dec, together with Young Minds and Mind, are also recognising World Mental Health Day by 'Britain get talking' and #helloyellow. The link below is an interesting video showing them interviewing Mo Farah on Saturday Night Takeaway entirely by texting... it might be a good one to watch with your children, especially if you're worried they're losing sight of talking to each other for a phone screen... There are also some top tips on how to encourage everyone to get talking.

<https://www.itv.com/britaingettalking/the-better-we-talk-the-better-we-feel.html>



Support for you and your family

We know that the rise in the cost of living is still something that we've all noticed over the last few months, even though BBC reports suggest they've seen a very small decrease.

If you need support with the above, unfortunately Kent's Cost of Living Voucher scheme has now closed, but there is a wealth of other support available in and around Kent - please see the link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/cost-of-living-support>

You can also access cost of living support via the government website, using the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living>

On this, we've also added the link for the 'Free School Meal' application, which you may want to access... don't worry that school has already started, as applications can be filled out throughout the year. You can also check to see if you qualify with the eligibility tool.

Please always feel free to ask your school office if you need help with this.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals>

Mental Health can also affect those who may not be able to tell us they are struggling, or find it difficult to communicate their thoughts. This could be for those children who have a special educational need. Below is a link for Kent's Wellbeing and mental health support for children with SEND, which you may find useful.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/health-and-wellbeing-for-send-children-and-young-people>

Maidstone Borough Council has a lot of support groups within the community. They have a directory so you can access an array of support if needed - the directory is alphabetical or you can also search for location and/or need to narrow down the results.

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/community-support/tier-2-primary-areas/community-groups/community-groups/support-groups>

Caring for a child with SEND can also be a challenging, yet rewarding role and we understand that some of our parents and carers may need support too to ensure they're being cared for, so they can continue to support and care for their child. Below is a link for you as an adult if you care for your child/ren with a special educational need, from mental health support and guidance to financial support.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/support-services-to-help-families-with-send-children>

We've also added the link for an array of training courses for parents and carers with children with SEND through KCC, where a lot of them are free to access.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/support-services-to-help-families-with-send-children/training-for-parents>

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



Young minds are supporting World Mental Health day and on the homepage there is a drop-down menu for 'Mental Health support' at the top of the page, where you can access support and guidance depending on if you are a parent or a young person.

Another useful resource if you have young people/adults in your family is Kooth. Kooth is an online service that anyone from the age of 11-25 can sign up to. Nationally recognised and regulated, Kooth allows children and young people to access help, guidance and support anonymously through online message boards, helpful articles and opportunities to chat to professionals. It's completely free to access. With safeguarding regulations in place, as well as DBS checks, there is also a 'parent FAQs' page for you to check out beforehand if you think it's something your teenage child might find useful, especially if they are experiencing any emotional or wellbeing needs.

<https://www.kooth.com/>



Your mental health and self-care

It's so important to ensure that you are looking after yourself, especially when you have to look after your family and everyone else... easier said than done, we know! But finding the time to take some time for yourself, even if it's only 5-10 minutes daily will mean that you are recouping and recharging your battery to have the energy to look after everyone else. It could even just be stepping outside for some fresh air and taking a moment to breath,,,

Better Health - Every Mind Matters by NHS - has some great tips from how to get a better night's sleep to meditation for beginners.

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

The Mental health organisation also has some great advice on how to look after your own mental health before looking after others. It offers an understanding of what Mental Health is and where and how to gain support if needed - it's also another website which gives an array of information and guidance - from top tips for men, to help and support for teachers.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/looking-after-your-mental-health>

There's also an a-z topic list on how to prevent poor mental health, by focusing on eating well, to advice on mindfulness. It also looks at supporting those who have good mental health - helping to keep and maintain it.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/prevention-and-mental-health>

If you need professional support, Talking Therapies on the NHS will be able to provide support. The link below helps you to find your local service and goes through how to refer.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/nhs-talking-therapies/>

Supporting our little ones

Cosmic Kids is a firm favourite when we're teaching the children mindful techniques - especially the art of yoga - obviously for beginners! But teaching the little ones to take a moment to concentrate on something - namely the body - allows their mind to settle and be calm from lots of thoughts, worries and emotions.

This one is all about 'Squish the Fish'...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhYtcadR9nw>

Just taking a moment to breathe also helps us to settle the mind and our heart rate... these fun breathing techniques are always a good way to help them learn a strategy they can literally take anywhere! Shapes and animals are always a good way to teach deep breathing - stars, squares and snakes help them breathe in... and out... in and...

Here's a list of different breathing techniques; drawing around a star or square with your finger whilst breathing in and out also works too! And... they don't have to be just for the little ones ha ha!

Snake Breathing

Breathe in through the nose, pause briefly, then breathe out slowly while you make a hissing sound for as long as you can through your mouth. Then repeat.



Smelling Flowers

Tell your little one to imagine they are smelling a flower, breathing in deeply through the nose and out through the mouth. Smelling flowers is one of the easiest breathing exercises to master, and a good starting point for your child.



The Bunny Breath

Just like a little bunny in the garden, encourage your child to take three quick sniffs in through the nose, and one long exhale out through the mouth.



Blow Out Candle

Have your child blow out the candles on a make-believe birthday cake, drawing a deep breath in through the mouth, and blowing it out strongly through the mouth as well.

Blowing Bubbles

Remind your child how softly they need to blow to get a nice big bubble. Encourage them to take a deep breath in and blow it out soft and long.



Smell The Flower And Blow Out The Candle

Have your child pretend that he/she has a flower in one hand and a candle in the other. The first step is smelling the flower, taking a deep breath in through the nose, and filling the lungs with air. Next, have your child exhale and blow out the candle in the other hand.

BumbleBee Breath



Have your child sit comfortably and inhale through their nose, keeping their mouth closed. Next, with their mouth still closed, have them make a humming or buzzing noise (like a bumblebee) as they exhale. Your child can also cup their hands around their ears to amplify the buzzing sound.

Deep Belly Breath

Have your child place one hand on their belly and one hand on their chest. Let them take a deep breath in for four counts and then exhale slowly (through their nose) for four counts. Remind them to pay attention to the rise and fall of their chest and belly as they complete the exercise.



Tumble Dryer

Have your child sit cross-legged and get comfortable. Have them point their index fingers toward each other in front of their mouth. After your child inhales deeply through the

nose, have them exhale through their mouth and swirl their fingers around as they do so (like a tumble dryer). The fun part of this is the swishy noise they'll hear as they exhale.

Dragon Fire Breaths



Have your child interlace their fingers under their chin, and as they inhale, have them raise their elbows as high as they can around their neck and face. On the exhale, have them lower their elbows back down.



Hot Air Balloon Breath

For the hot air balloon breath, have your child sit comfortably and cup their hands around their mouth. Have them inhale deeply, and on the exhale (through their mouth), prompt them to expand their hands outward, as if they are blowing up a giant hot air balloon.

Shoulder Roll Breath

Shoulder roll breaths are a great breathing exercise for children. They have the added benefit of releasing tight muscles and tension. Have your child sit comfortably. As they take a deep breath in, encourage them to roll their shoulders up toward their ears. Have them drop their shoulders back down on the exhale.

Half Term local events

With 1/2 term just around the corner, we've kept our usual list of activities in and around the local area which you may like to check out over the half term break... we've even added some places to visit for free too!

<https://www.visitkent.co.uk/visit-kent-blog/october-half-term-in-kent-2023/>

<https://kent.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/october-half-term-guide-kids-kent/>

<https://mytunbridgewells.com/half-term-halloween-events-in-kent/>

https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attractions-g186310-Activities-zft11292-Kent_England.html

And lastly - all four schools have been awarded the Kent School's Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Award for the third year running! Well done to all! Well done to those pupils from Kingswood who's logos were chosen as the winners for the Kent School's new logo award!



We hope we've covered a lot of useful information and guidance in this term's email and you have found it useful.

Don't forget you can get in touch with your school regarding any support you may need via your school's office, or via our dedicated wellbeing email:

Kingswood - 01622 842674

Ulcombe - 01622 842903

Leeds & Broomfield - 01622 861398

Platts Heath - 01622 850316

We also have a dedicated Wellbeing email if you need any wellbeing advice, guidance or support - Please do not hesitate to contact us!

Email:

wellbeing@aspire-kent.org.uk

We also now have an audio version of the newsletter in two parts:

<https://audiomass.co/?local=wtmw8v> - part 1

<https://audiomass.co/?local=zvtyf> - part 2

Take care,

The ASPIRE Wellbeing, Mental Health and Resilience Team