



HEADTEACHER
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The following is advice and strategies to help you and your child with positive mental health during this difficult time.

As mental Health Lead I will also be available for any parents who are either struggling themselves or are worried about their children's mental health. You can contact me on the following email Monday to Friday between 9 - 3 and I will aim to reply to you the same day. We all need support during this time and I am happy to support or signpost you to further support if I can. Please title your email "support" p3@balmorallearningtrust.co.uk

It is easy to stress about your children missing education or worrying you aren't doing enough or doing it right while home-schooling. Please remember the need to also focus on mental health, both your own and your children's.

Although currently the focus is understandably on physical health with people on high alert for symptoms - it is times like this when our mental health and our children's mental health can suffer the most. Huge changes in routine, not seeing family and friends, not being able to go out and not going to school are significant factors that may affect mental health.

There are some simple steps that you can take to support your mental well-being and your child's at this worrying time of uncertainty and change.

Using some of these techniques will help you and your children with the tools you need to build resilience and promote the importance of good mental health and wellbeing.

It is important that children have some kind of routine, this doesn't mean having to home-school for long periods of time but having a structure in your day so children know what to expect. It is a good idea to try and make your weekends slightly different so they still feel like a weekend and different to your Monday to Friday.

You could loosely structure your day around the five ways to mental wellbeing, these are five ways that support your mental health and boost wellbeing and are recommended by



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the NHS



Below are some details about the Five ways to wellbeing and ideas of how to incorporate them into your current daily life.

1 Connect

Ensure you and your children stay connected with friends and family and other familiar people in their lives. Whether that's face timing school friends or family, a gaming platform, or on the telephone - stay connected with friends or family. It is vital to keep up those connections to your lives before isolation and keep relationships alive for when this is all over. It will be over, much as it feels like it won't at the moment, life will return to normal.

2 Be active

Put time aside to be active every day. Joe Wicks does a live 30-minute workout at 9am every morning, it is brilliant and a perfect way for the whole family to keep fit. There is also Cosmic Kids Yoga on YouTube which is good fun. Try to get outside, in the garden and get active. It is vital to have fresh air and sunlight and to get some Vitamin D for good health. Eat well, lots of fruit and vegetables and drink lots of water. Movement helps our bodies to produce endorphins which are the feel good hormones, it really does help to override negative, anxious feelings that some of us may be feeling at the moment.



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3 Take notice

Be present, this can be hard when we are feeling worried and anxious ourselves or are trying to work from home. Chat to your children about their feelings and emotions. Talk to someone about your feelings, validate them and then use some strategies to move to a more positive mind-set. Remember you and your child are allowed to have bad days, that is normal. There's a lot of uncertainty going on around the world, in your life and in their little lives. Talk about those, but keep perspective and take information only from reliable sources - government and public health, not social media and rumours.

4 Keep learning

You've got time with your children - something you may never get again - why not learn a new hobby, learn a new instrument, read together, read alone, bake, what have you always wanted to do but never had the time? Anything that helps to help stimulate the brain and give focus and a sense of achievement.

5 Give

Encourage kindness and encourage children to share - give time at the end of each day to reflect and learn the art of appreciation and gratitude. There has been so much kindness and selflessness shown in our communities, county and around the world lately. Small acts of kindness can be huge to others at the moment, write a letter and post it to someone you love, put rainbows in your window, get outside each Thursday and clap for our NHS, the sense of community was fantastic and very emotional and did lift spirits.

The following are some ideas of specific activities that are proven to support mental health and wellbeing. You can do them yourself and also make them a little simpler for your child.

Breathing

Focusing on correct breathing can have a huge impact on anxiety levels and is scientifically proven to calm the nervous system.

These cards are printable and can be used to support breathing for relaxation and calm.



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| <p>BALLOON BREATHING</p>  <p>Sitting in a comfortable position, place your hands around your mouth as if you were about to blow up a balloon. Take a deep breath in through the nose and, as you slowly exhale through your mouth, start to spread your hands out as if you are blowing up a great big balloon. Hold your hand position as you inhale again and then spread your hands further as you exhale. Once your balloon is as big as it can be, gently sway from side to side as you release your balloon up into the sky.</p> | <p>SHOULDER ROLL BREATHING</p>  <p>Choose a comfortable sitting position. As you take a slow deep breath in through your nose raise your shoulders up towards your ears. Breathe slowly out through your mouth, lowering your shoulders as you exhale. Repeat slowly, rolling your shoulders up and down in time with your breath.</p> | <p>BACK TO BACK BREATHING</p>  <p>Find a partner and sit on the floor back to back. Sit tall and close your eyes if you want to. Decide who will start - that person begins by inhaling deeply and then exhaling slowly, and then continues to breathe slowly and deeply. Their partner should feel the expansion in their partner's back each time they breathe in and then try to sync their own breathing so that both partners are breathing in time together.</p> | <p>TUMMY BREATHING</p>  <p>Lie on the floor and place a small stuffed animal on your stomach. Breathe in deeply through your nose and feel the stuffed animal rise, and then feel it lower as you slowly exhale through your mouth. Rock the stuffed animal to sleep using the rise and fall of your stomach.</p> |
| <p>TAKE 5 BREATHING</p>  <p>Sit comfortably, resting one hand in front of you with fingers outstretched like a star and the pointer finger of your other hand ready to trace your hand. Starting at the base of your thumb on the outside of your hand, breathe in slowly through your nose as you slide your pointer finger up to the top of your thumb. Breathe out slowly and slide your pointer finger down the inside of your thumb. Breathe in as you slide your finger up the next finger and out as you slide down. Continue breathing in and out as you trace your whole hand.</p> | <p>BUMBLEBEE BREATHING</p>  <p>Sitting comfortably, gently place the tips of your pointer fingers in your ears and close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and then hum quietly as you slowly breathe out.</p> | <p>ELEPHANT BREATHING</p>  <p>Stand with your feet wide apart and your arms dangling in front of your body like an elephant's trunk. As you breathe in deeply through your nose, raise your arms up high above your head. Then slowly swing your arms down again as you breathe out through your mouth.</p> | <p>BUBBLE BREATHING</p>  <p>Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Begin by imagining you are holding a bubble wand. Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you are blowing bubbles into the room. Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful, happy feeling. As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.</p> |

<https://childhood101.com/download/28744/>

Journalling

Writing a journal about the things you are grateful for allows you and your child to focus on the positives in their current daily lives. It is looking for different things than you both might have looked for a few weeks ago. It is finding the extraordinary in the simple things and in your much smaller world. They could decorate a notebook and every night write down three things you are both grateful for.



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Gratitude Journal Prompts

1. What was the best thing that happened today?
 2. Who makes you feel loved and why?
 3. Name something that makes you happy.
 4. What is your favorite outdoor activity?
 5. Name someone that helps you.
 6. Name someone that is nice to you.
 7. What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?
 8. Name something that you are grateful to have.
 9. What do you like to do with your family and why?
 10. Where is your favorite place to go?
 11. Name someone that makes you smile.
 12. Who is your best friend and why?
 13. What do you like most about your school or job?
 14. What do you like most about your favorite subject?
 15. Who was the last person to give you something?
 16. What is the best gift that you have ever received?
 17. Name the best thing that has ever happened to you.
 18. What is your favorite game or sport and why?
 19. Where is your favorite place to play or relax?
 20. What do you like most about your family?
 21. Name an animal that you feel thankful for.
 22. What is your favorite thing to do at home?
 23. Name a person that you love and why?
 24. What is your favorite hobby and why?
 25. Who do you like to spend time with?
 26. Name someone that your feel grateful for.
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Vision Boards

This is a fun activity again to focus on the positives. Using magazines, drawings and pictures printed off the internet the children, and you, can cut out things you would like to try or do - this can include anything - their favourite foods, baking, games, crafts, people they love, favourite tv programme, their pets etc. You can also put pictures of the things you enjoy doing everyday. It's a lovely way to display all the things that you love in your lives and again focusing on the positives.



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Meditation

Research shows that meditation has a physical impact on the mind and body, it reduces stress and anxiety and improves wellbeing. It is a great activity to try, start with a really short period of time and build it up gradually. It's a great activity to do before bedtime. Below is a link which explains this further.

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/12-benefits-of-meditation>

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information on anything mentioned in this document.

Mrs Davison
Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead



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Links to support children's mental health at this time

This website is dedicated to supporting children's mental health, the link will take you to specific guidance on supporting your children through feelings of worry and anxiety around the Coronavirus and this time of change in their lives.

<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/>

Below is a podcast about helping your child with mental health and the Coronavirus

<https://www.acamh.org/podcasts/dr-jon-goldin-on-the-coronavirus-and-child-mental-health/>

Heads together charity, links to support mental health and wellbeing

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/coronavirus-resources-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Story time each day with David Walliams

<https://www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/elevenses/>

Cosmic Kids Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Joe Wicks

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>

Headspace meditation

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

Calm app - meditation and mindfulness

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



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