



Orchard Mead
Academy

The Pastoral Press!

Your fortnightly wellbeing news

Issue 3

Children's Mental Health Week

This year, Children's Mental Health Week takes place between 1-7th February. This is an important annual event hosted by the children's charity Place2Be which focuses on ensuring that we take care of our mental health and that children grow up mentally healthy. With many of us currently separated from our friends and family as a result of the pandemic, our wellbeing is more important than ever.

This year's theme for Children's Mental Health Week is '**Express Yourself**'. Expressing yourself is important for positive mental health. Expressing yourself is vital because it means having the ability to share your feelings and to talk about the things that are important to you, helping you to work things out. Expressing yourself is also important in terms of discovering who you are, finding out about the world and how your own ideas fit in and ensuring that you feel good about yourself.

The Duchess of Cambridge is supporting this year's Children's mental Health Week. She has sent a message to explain that she feels that it is important to find creative ways to express yourself, such as through art, music, dance, writing, photography or poetry. Using your creativity to get your feelings out is a great way of expressing yourself and, therefore, staying mentally healthy.



Place2Be have organised a number of events to highlight the importance of looking after our wellbeing during the week. As well as watching the Duchess of Cambridge, look out for a World Record attempt for the 'biggest sing' as well as a Creativity Conference, Creativity sessions, and a virtual assembly hosted by BAFTA kids. You can find out more here:

www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk

Talk!

One of the most important things, and one of the most difficult, is to talk about mental health and wellbeing. You can support a friend in the following ways:

- Choose the right place—choose somewhere private and somewhere that you know your friend feels comfortable
- Start the conversation by saying that you have noticed that they don't seem themselves
- If your friend doesn't want to talk, let them know that the door is open when they are ready. You could encourage them to write it down instead
- Remove the stigma—let them know that there is nothing to be ashamed of
- Encourage them to get help

Express yourself...

There are lots of ways that you can Express Yourself during Children's Mental Health Week and beyond. Finding creative ways in which to express your thoughts, feelings and ideas helps you to process how you are feeling and to work out solutions to any problems that you may have.

We all have the ability to be creative and to express our emotions so have a look at some of these ideas below:

Writing

Writing things down is a great way to 'get things off your chest' - this means getting thoughts that may be bothering you down on paper to help you to voice your thoughts and also to look at ways in which you can deal with them. There's loads of psychological research which proves that using writing is really good for us—it can improve mood, reduce stress and even lower our blood pressure! Try keeping a dia-

ry, writing a letter (you don't have to send it!) or turning your thoughts or experiences into a story or a poem. You can choose to keep your writing private or share it with others. Teachers are always keen to read your creative efforts.

Art

Researchers in Germany have found that creating art actually increased connectivity in a person's brain, improving someone's 'psychological resilience' - in other words their ability to cope with difficult situations.

You don't need lots of fancy equipment to get creative with art, just use what you have to hand. Try some of these ideas—design a postcard for someone, make a sock puppet, make a scribble drawing or even do some finger painting. See the back page for more ideas.

Music

Researchers have proved

that music releases dopamine, a 'feel good' chemical in your brain. Listening to music or creating your own can help you to relax and reduce feelings of stress or anxiety. Listen to your favourite tunes when you need to unwind or consider downloading an app which contains specially created meditative music, especially designed to sooth you. If you are feeling especially creative then try creating your own music—you don't even need any instruments to do this as you can use items you find at home or technology—check out websites which can help you to be your own music maestro!

Dance

Turn up the tunes and free yourself. Dancing can really lift your mood, as well as improve your physical health. Many people find that expressing themselves through dance rather than words is easier. You don't need to be an expert, just feel the music and go!

Fun things to do at home!

Host a family game

Create a general knowledge quiz and pit your wits against each other. Another fun game to copy at home is 'Mr and Mrs' (check out an old episode on YouTube!) - basically the idea is to correctly answer questions about someone else in your family in order to win points.

Make a quarantine time capsule

Although its hard to imagine right now, one day we will look back on lockdown in the same way that we look back on other areas of history. A time capsule will be an excellent way in which to remember this period of history that you are living through. You could add photos, notes about your feelings/what you were doing, cuttings from newspapers or from the internet. You should then hide your time capsule or bury it for future generations to find!

Great Lockdown Bake-off

Create some friendly competition amongst family or friends with your own bake-off. Have a theme such as 'Bread Week', 'Biscuits' or 'Desserts' and challenge each other to create a 'show stopper'. The best bit is that you can eat the entries!

Getting back to nature....

The effects of nature on our wellbeing are widely known. The calming influence of being outside, feeling the fresh air and interacting with nature means that just being amongst nature can really make us feel much better.

Even though we are in a lockdown situation, we are still allowed to get outside each day. Get outside and walk amongst nature in the parks, open spaces, fields or near water. Remember to be careful and stick to the guidelines.

Try some of these suggestions below and see if nature can have a positive influence on your mental health and wellbeing.

Be creative:

In line with Children's Mental Health Week, get creative in nature. You could photograph interesting aspects of nature or enjoyable views, you could gather items to use in an art project, such as leaves or cones or you could even record the sounds of nature and create your own mindfulness sound track.

Bring nature inside:

Create a montage or arrangement of natural things which you can have inside, in your bedroom for example. Collect leaves, stones, feathers,, flowers and pine cones for example. Arrange these on a tray or plate and place them somewhere you can see easily. You can also save old

jam jars and make a terrarium. A terrarium is a mini garden—put some soil in the bottom and add pebbles, plants, shells or similar objects in any way you'd like.

Grow something:

You might be lucky enough to be able to ask for a small area in your garden but if not you can use plant pots or other old containers to try to grow a plant, flowers, fruit or vegetables. You can buy seeds for less than £1 in many supermarkets.

Star gaze:

You can use a stargazing website to help you to recognise different stars or you can simply enjoy the night sky for the beauty that it is. Don't forget that it will take around 20 minutes for your eyes to full adjust so take your time. You'll also see better if you avoid any unnatural light so choose an area without street lights and turn off your torch. Remember to stay safe at all times.

Build an animal habitat:

You can encourage more wildlife into your garden by making it an animal friendly environment. If you look on the internet you will find instructions on how to build simple animal habitats, such as

Hedgehog houses.

Take part in a wildlife survey:

At the moment the RSPB are collecting data on the number and types of birds found in the UK. They are asking people to record what they see in their gardens over a set period of time. You can join in by downloading a pack from their website. You can also take part in the Bumblebee Conservation Trust or Big Butterfly Count.

Pick litter:

Take a rubbish bag and gloves (or even better, a litter picker) with you when you are out on your walk. Check the hedges and verges for litter and pick this up. Remember to think about hygiene and keep yourself safe.

Hang a bird feeder:

You can create a simple birdfeeder easily at home. Check out the internet for instructions on creating easy feeders which you can then hang outside from a tree or windowsill. This will encourage a variety of birds into your garden.

Eat outdoors:

As the weather gets warmer (hopefully!) you can enjoy eating outside. Have a picnic in the park or garden with members of your household.

Creative ideas to #Express Yourself

Pablo Picasso, a famous artist, once said "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life". This sums up how many people use creative means to make themselves feel better and to deal with the stresses and strains of the day.

The theme for this year's Children's Mental Health Week is 'Express Yourself' and we are being encouraged to find creative ways in which to express our emotions and work through our problems.

This Children's Mental Health Week, you could try some of the ideas below to express yourself:

- **Paint your heart** - Draw a large heart on a piece of paper. Fill your heart with images of the different emotions you are feeling, ideas you are considering or thoughts that you are having. Decorate and paint your heart in your own individual style.
- **Attach a drawing, message or poem to a balloon** - You can use this technique in a number of ways. You could send away negative feelings by getting these down on paper, tying them to your balloon and setting it free. Alternatively, you could spread positivity by getting down a positive thoughts and expressions, tying these to your balloon and letting it go, spreading your positive messages around. Finally, you could write a note to a loved one you have lost or that you miss and then send it to the sky via your balloon.
- **Make a Stress Painting** - Choose colours that represent your emotions then you can dab, scribble and jab your stress away.
- **Design an Emotion Wheel** - Create a wheel by drawing a circle, with spokes inside, like a bicycle wheel. Fill each section with shades of colour to represent your changing emotions.
- **Try a Scribble Drawing** - Get a plain piece of paper and scribble all over it in any direction you like. Colour each section that you create in order to end up with a lovely, colourful pattern.
- **Create your future self** - Draw, paint or list out how you see yourself in the future. This visualisation technique is also great for helping you to picture your goals more clearly
- **Create a collage of worries** - Cut pictures from magazines or the internet to represent the things that you are worried about. From each picture, mind map positive ways to deal with or manage your worries.

