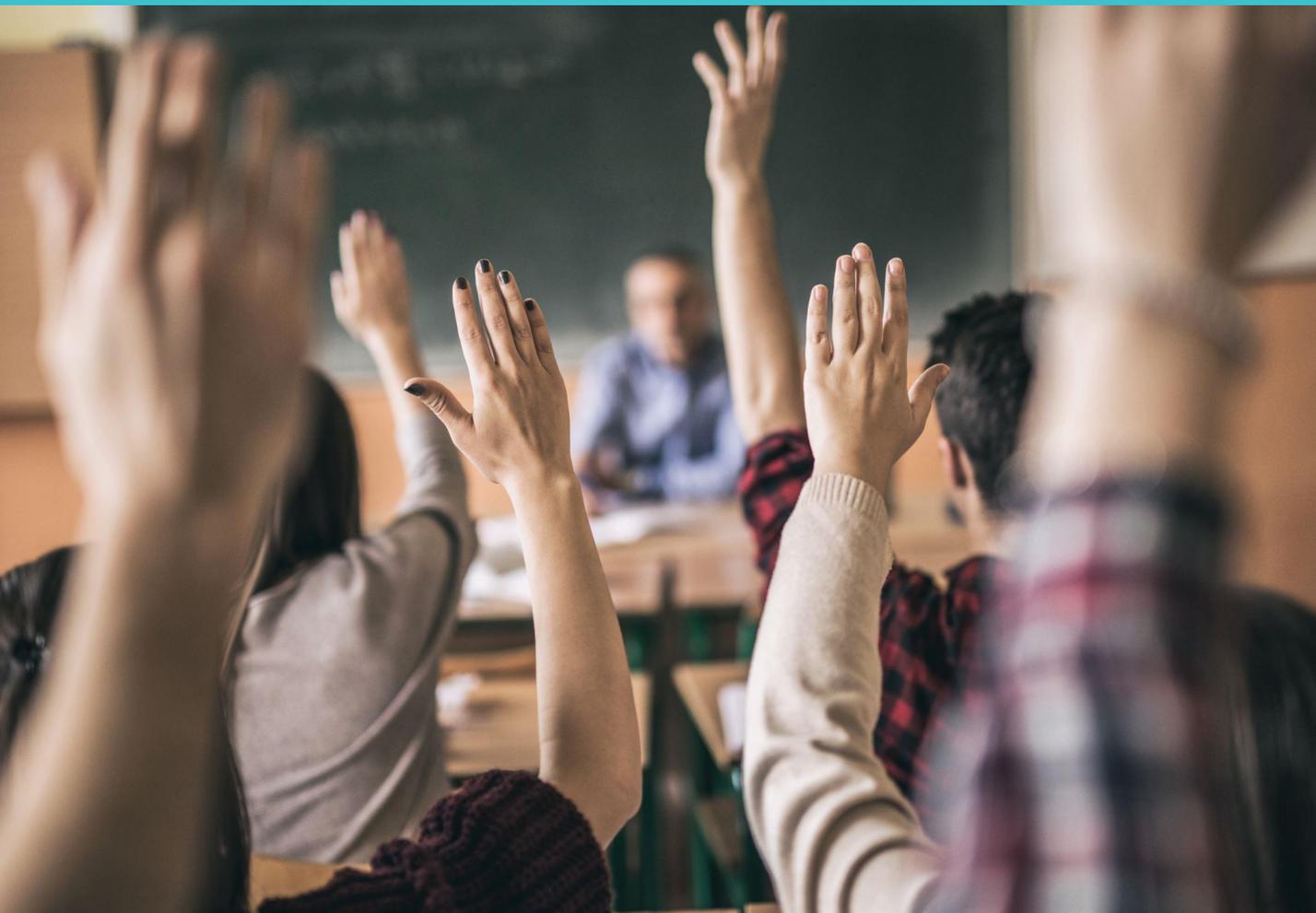


Back to School...



Supporting your children & young people's
mental health & wellbeing

A guide for parents & carers



huddl
Support for the parenting journey

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

We all have mental health just as we have physical health. Being mentally healthy means that we feel good about ourselves, make and keep positive relationships with others, and can feel and manage the full range of emotions. These include happiness, excitement and curiosity through to less comfortable feelings such as anger, fear or sadness. Good mental health allows us to cope with life's ups and downs, to feel in control of our lives, and ask for help from others when we need support.

THE MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM

Mental health and mental illness are part of a spectrum just as physical health and illness are. Throughout our lives, many different things can lead us to move up and down the spectrum such as the start or end of relationships, changes in physical health and good news or worries about those we are close to. It is important to remember that recovery is possible, even from severe mental ill health, and that people with a mental ill-health diagnosis may be managing their condition well and still experience high levels of wellbeing.

FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY WELLBEING

During this time of huge change and uncertainty it is helpful to have a framework for looking after our wellbeing. [Dr Hazel Harrison](#) in her Huddl Parent Talk on Family Wellbeing talked us through Dr Seligman's PERMA model to happiness. At this time we think it is helpful to reflect on this and use this model to check in with the whole family's wellbeing.

The PERMA model was designed by Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, with five core elements of psychological wellbeing and happiness. Seligman believes that these five elements can help people reach a life of fulfilment, happiness and meaning. We hope that this framework and all our ideas help you and your family in some way over this time.



Family Wellbeing

based on the PERMA model & put together by Huddl advisor Dr Hazel Harrison

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

We need a healthy balance of emotions in our day.

We need a healthy balance of emotions to enable us to build connections with others and enhance our resilience. Positive emotions include love, awe, hope, gratitude, inspiration, joy, optimism and amusement.

ENGAGEMENT

We need to do things we enjoy, that challenge us and use our strengths.

Engagement (or flow) is the feeling you get when you are completely absorbed in what you're doing. Developing our strengths and enhancing our ability to be mindful are great ways to increase engagement.

RELATIONSHIPS

We need to connect with other people.

Our interactions with others: including friends, family, colleagues, children and / or community, impacts on our wellbeing. When we feel loved, supported and valued by others this promotes wellbeing.

MEANING

We need to feel like we belong and have a sense of purpose.

Being part of something bigger than ourselves. Having a reason to get out of bed each morning or experiencing a strong sense of belonging.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We need to believe we can improve our abilities and succeed.

Having a sense of accomplishment means working towards goals and experiencing mastery over endeavours. Believing it is possible to improve our abilities with hard work, help and feedback from others. This builds our resilience and keeps us motivated.





HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH?

Our everyday habits are important to our mental health, just as they are for our physical health. Here are some ideas for how you can support your child day to day at this time.

THINK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY'S FRAMEWORK FOR WELLBEING.

Can you think of things you can encourage them to do, or do together, each day? Print off the previous page as a helpful reference.

TALK OPENLY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Just as you might encourage them to eat fruit and veg to keep their bodies healthy (and model this behaviour yourself), talk openly about, for example, staying connected with others or being physically active in order to take care of our minds.

MODEL GOOD HABITS

Children often learn from copying what they see around them. If you are taking care of your own mental health, it's easier for them to see what good habits look like.

THINK ABOUT PHONE USAGE - BOTH THEIRS & YOURS

We don't fully understand the impact of social media on our mental health but using phones and laptops can impact on our sleep, which is important to our mental health. We're also more likely to listen to one another if we're not distracted by technology.

NOTICE ANY CHANGES IN YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

Young people tell us how they're feeling in many ways, but not always verbally. Learning what is normal for your child makes it easier to notice when things change, and if this might be a sign that they're struggling.



WHEN TIMES ARE HARD...

Sometimes you might worry about your child's mental health. Whilst you might need to speak to a member of school staff or your GP for advice, here are a few things you can do if you're worried.



LET YOUR CHILD KNOW YOU'RE CONCERNED

Explain why you feel that way, for example if you've noticed they haven't been interested in activities they usually enjoy.



LET THEM KNOW THAT STRUGGLING SOMETIMES IS NORMAL AND NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF

Tell them about the mental health spectrum and that we all, including you, go up and down the scale throughout our lives. Reassure them that talking about difficult feelings with the people we trust is a brave thing to do.



USE ACTIVITIES THAT YOU DO TOGETHER TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HOW THEY ARE DOING

Talking whilst doing something together, side-by-side, such as cooking or going for a walk, can help them to share their feelings more easily than a face-to-face conversation.



LISTEN AND EMPATHISE

Often the first step to feeling better is feeling connected and knowing that someone is alongside you. Empathy involves acknowledging what your child is feeling, trying to understand things from their point of view and avoiding judgement. Empathy is usually more helpful than giving advice or trying to "fix" their problem.



IF YOU'RE STILL WORRIED

Talk to a trusted member of school staff or your GP who can point you towards sources of help.

FIND OUT MORE...

Below are some trustworthy resources that can help you find out more about how you can best support your children and young people's mental health and wellbeing at this time.

- **Huddl** – support for the parenting journey.
 - [Activities and ideas to boost your family's wellbeing](#)
 - [Understanding the impact and effect of Covid-19 on children and young peoples wellbeing](#)
 - [Advice on supporting children and young people during Covid-19 crisis](#)
- **Child Mind Institute** - an independent, national non-profit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health.
 - [Back to school resources for families and educators](#)
- **Anna Freud Centre** – National centre for children and families
 - [Coronavirus – support for parents and carers](#)
- **YoungMinds** – Mental health support for young people and their families
 - [Supporting your child during the Coronavirus pandemic](#)
- **The British Psychological Society** – promoting excellence in psychology
 - [Coronavirus resources for public](#)

For more general advice on children's mental health see:

- [Mind](#), they have whole range of information and support for children and parents.
- [Mind Ed for Families](#), is a site developed by Health Education England and the Department of Education to help families understand and support their children



REFERENCES

- Dr Hazel Harrison
 - www.thinkavellana.com
- Mariana Pascha Psychologist BSc
 - www.positivepsychology.com/perma-model/
- British psychological society
 - www.bps.org.uk/
- Mental Health Foundation
 - www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- Alicia Drummond
 - www.teentips.co.uk
- Anna Freud Centre
 - www.annafreud.org/



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