



A parent's guide to
children's mental health
and wellbeing



What is mental health and wellbeing?

We all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods.

Looking after our mental health is important. We all have small feelings everyday: these sometimes feel strong and overwhelming, whether happy or sad, but they go away before too long. Sometimes we experience big feelings.

These can feel strong and overwhelming for a long time.



At Langley First School we have adopted the World Health Organisation definition of mental health.

“Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with mental stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

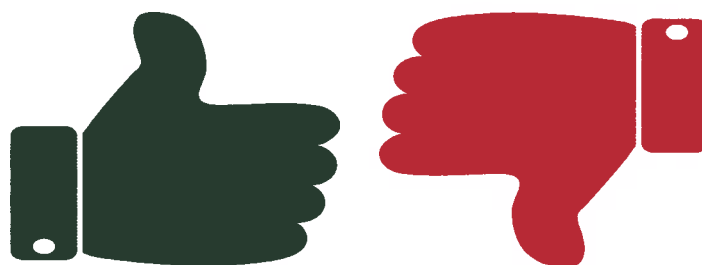
What we do

We aim to give all pupils the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe. These skills are taught as part of our PSHE curriculum through Jigsaw, which promotes age appropriate discussions.

We encourage children to talk about their feelings and emotions, to know that all feelings are okay and that there are no good or bad feelings. We also provide a caring and supportive environment where pupils feel confident to seek help as needed for themselves and others.

10 things parents can do to nourish their child's mental health and wellbeing

1. No feelings are bad feelings: Let your children know that all feelings they experience are okay. Some feelings are helpful and some are unhelpful. It is what we choose to do with our feelings that counts.



We can choose 'thumbs up' helpful actions or 'thumbs down' unhelpful actions.

2. Make time to talk: Talk openly with your children about mental health. Make time to talk to your children about their worries, hopes, dreams and achievements.



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

4. Notice changes: Children and young people tell us how they are feeling in many ways, not always verbal. Learning what is normal for your child makes it easier to notice when things change, and if this might be a sign that they are struggling.

5. Spend quality time together and be present.



6. Encourage exercise: Exercise is a great way to reduce stress and boost mood.
7. Help to build strong social relationships: Children gain further positive experiences through spending quality time with their friends.
8. Make time to improve well being: There are many great apps that encourage mindfulness and meditation. Why not try Headspace, Calm or Yoga.
9. Teach your children emotional vocabulary: Children who are more able to explain how they feel are less likely to experience anxiety, stress and depression.
10. When needed, ask for help and seek advice from professionals.

Supporting wellbeing

At Langley First school we encourage children to look after their wellbeing. We build daily physical activities into our curriculum encouraging children to be active. We encourage children to be mindful of their surroundings both in and out of school.



Here are some ideas to help you get started

Touch

Something to touch is a good distraction for your hands. Playdough, fidget cubes or spinners are great for this. They are fun to play with and it can encourage your muscles to relax, which helps to reduce feelings of worry.



Memories

Keep a few photos of people or places that make you smile and feel positive. These can remind you of all the different parts of your life, not just the feeling you are finding difficult at that time. If you do not have photos, then you can find an item which has positive memories attached to it such as a teddy, a book or a postcard.



Music

Do you have a favourite song? You could create a calming playlist with relaxing music to help you slow down and steady your breathing.



Water

Drinking water is such an important way to reduce feelings of worry and panic. Take a sip, feel the coolness of the water and listen to your breath. By taking regular sips you can keep a steady rhythm to your breathing.



Colour

Drawing and colouring are such simple tasks and having something that you have made can make you feel proud. Express how you are feeling through art.



Online Support

There is a huge amount of support available online. Here are some useful websites.

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

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

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

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

<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/>

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



BREATHE.

As I zoom my attention to my breathing, I will take extra long out-breaths.

Squeeze a stress ball or use another teacher-approved fidget.



Imagine a peaceful and calming place.



Roll my neck and shoulders.

Think of at least 3 things I am grateful for.



Tell my teacher I would like to help or take on a classroom responsibility.



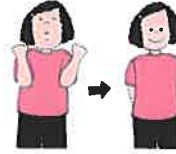
Ask to deliver books to the library or another class.



Ask my teacher for help if I feel upset or overwhelmed.



Count to 10 and back in coordination with my breath.



Squeeze my fists together as hard as I can...hold...then relax my hands.

Invent a secret hand signal with my teacher that communicates I need help.



Push against the wall as hard as I can and then relax my body.



Doodle, draw, or color.



Ask to work with a buddy.

Use 'I-statements' to express how I am feeling, what I need, or what I hope for.



Move away from the distraction or person who is bothering me.



Write down my thoughts or questions if my teacher can't address them right away.



When I feel upset, sad, or unfocused at school I can:

Stretch.



Devise a secret code word or signal with my teacher that means time to get back on track.



Tell my teacher I need help with the assignment or lesson.



Ask permission to take a short walk down the hallway or up & down the stairs. And then return.



Drink water.

Give myself an arm and hand massage.



Go outside during recess and notice the sky, trees & sounds from nature.



Rest my head on the desk for a moment or two.



Tell myself a positive affirmation or mantra.



Think of or write a list of 3 positive things in my life.



Talk with my school counselor.



Help a classmate or my teacher.



Listen to calming music with headphones.



Remind myself it's ok to make a mistake.



Visualize a person who supports me and cheers me on.



Zoom in on my senses: noticing 5 things I see, 4 things I feel, 3 things I hear, 2 things I smell & 1 thing I taste.



Ask if I can do my work standing up.



Cross my arms in front of me and do the arm pretzel.



Read in a quiet spot.



Take a 3-5 minute break in the designated classroom peace corner.



Slowly trace my hand with my finger, breathing in, as I trace my fingers going up...breathing out, as I trace my fingers going down.



Do an act of kindness.



Give myself or a stuffed animal a great big hug.



Journal or write a letter.



Eat a healthy snack or tell my teacher I am hungry.



Push my palms together.



Ask my teacher to break down the assignment into smaller chunks so it's not so overwhelming.



Use a 'break card' to let my teacher know I need a break and then use a timer to remind me when to return.



Rub or tap my temples.



Smile or laugh, even if I have to fake it.

