



## FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING: BEING FINE

Issue 10: October 2020



In 2017 the Mental Health Foundation found that the average adult will say 'I'm fine' 14 times a week, though only 19% mean it. As a society we have, unfortunately, trained our children to do the same.

### To consider...

In the years prior to lockdown the mental health of our children was becoming a concern. The 2004 NHS survey found that 1 in 10 children between 5-15 had a mental health disorder. In the 2017 survey that had increased to 1 in 9. In August 2020 the annual Good Childhood Report found, with data gathered prior to lockdown, that UK Children have the lowest levels of life satisfaction across Europe. Data by the Children's Society backed up these findings quoting a lack of a sense of purpose as a main driver. In July, during lockdown, a survey also by the Children's Society found that nearly 1 in 5 children aged 10-17 in the UK – the equivalent of 1.1 million, reported being unhappy with their lives.

It is, however, not just our children that could be suffering. A report in The Guardian as recently as September 2020 found that anxiety has trebled amongst young adults since 2008. A poll conducted by YouGov in August found that 44% of adults were anxious about returning to work

During our reintegration to work we must not forget lessons learned in lockdown and we must focus on looking after ourselves and others before we worry about productivity and output.



# School Staff



Following the reopening of schools we have begun to see some of the impact of the trauma of lockdown on students. We are currently beginning to deal with a range of needs. Some students are dealing with increased stress and anxiety, this is especially the case with students that have upcoming exams as well as children and young people who have experienced bereavement. On the other hand some students have really enjoyed lockdown and are finding it difficult to return to school and leave parents and families after such a long period at home.

Some of us, as staff, may also be struggling with the return to work and with anxiety caused by separation from family, concerns about covid transmission at school and readjusting to the pace expected of a workday after so long at home. A lot of us are increasingly tired and are struggling with the demands of balancing our own needs with the needs of others and the needs of our children in schools.



During this time of readjustment and reframing it is vital to remember a couple of the wellbeing basics, for the children and for ourselves. Potentially the most important consideration at this time is connection.



Some of us will be suffering from some separation anxiety and missing time with our families. Others may be desperately seeking connections with friends, colleagues or teachers again after months of being isolated and lonely. Connection with each other helps everyone. Try to give your students individual time to talk and reconnect with you as well as finding time for them to reengage and connect with each other.

Make an effort to connect with colleagues too. Feelings of isolation and worry at work will be more common than you think. Try to have open conversations with colleagues about how you are and how you are feeling about returning to work. Your openness may allow others to do the same. Sometimes knowing you are not alone in your struggle is enough.

Also try to remember to be present for your family when you get home, they will have missed you and it is important that you are there to reassure each other through the transition. Limiting screen time could help here and encouraging any children to do the same. There really is no substitute for talking and laughing as much as possible.



# Parents & Carers

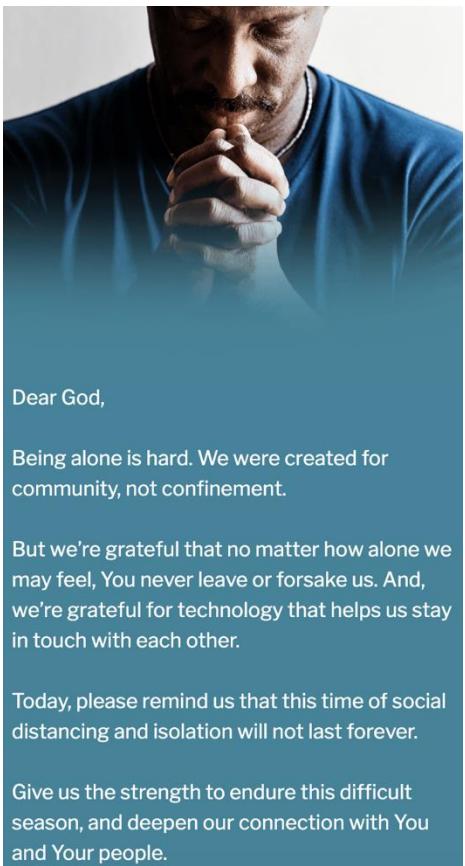


Your children have now had a few weeks back at school and you may have returned to work. All of you will be adjusting to a new routine and you all may be out of practice! A lot of parents around the country are struggling with the idea of letting their children out of the bubble of family which was safe and easy to control into school and travel, which seems anything but. Some parents are also missing spending so much time with their children and the family time that, for many, was one of the biggest benefits of lockdown. It is important that, as we return to a more normal routine, we do not lose the reconnection and family time that some of us were able to enjoy in lockdown.

Ensuring a meaningful connection with our children can be difficult, especially as they enter their teenage years. Distractions and technology often detract from quality time and it is sometimes difficult to find time and to sit down just to talk.

In 2017 the Mental Health Foundation found that the average adult will say 'I'm fine' 14 times a week, though only 19% mean it. As a society we have, unfortunately trained our children to do the same. It is often an easy way to avoid having to be vulnerable. It is almost strange and frowned upon when anyone answers your casual query about their wellbeing with any other phrase! The hidden effect of the 'fine' cycle is that it becomes a barrier to real connection. Connection with your family is vital to ensure that you can identify when someone needs help and they can see when you might need some.

## Some practical tips to retain or rebuild connection



- ✓ **Ask open-ended questions.** Instead of asking 'did you have a good day?' which can be answered with one word, try to ask a question which stimulates a discussion like 'what was the best thing that happened to you today?'
- ✓ **Remove distractions.** Take time to fully engage with your child during conversations and, most importantly, listen to them. That means turn off the television, cell phone and tablets, and give full eye contact. If the phone rings, let it wait until after your conversation. Giving your child your full attention demonstrates that you respect them and what they have to say is important to you.
- ✓ **Make it a habit.** Take time every day to have a conversation with your kids. For some, the prime opportunity is on the journey to and from school. Others converse best as a family at the dinner table. Some families even go around the table and give everyone five minutes to talk about their day. Doing this everyday will create a habit in which communication is valued and you will find out much more about your children and them about you. My particular habit is that I will have a half-hour 'honesty' session every couple of days with my daughter in which we can both ask the other any questions we like. This helps to have conversations, although sometimes difficult, that develop stronger connection.

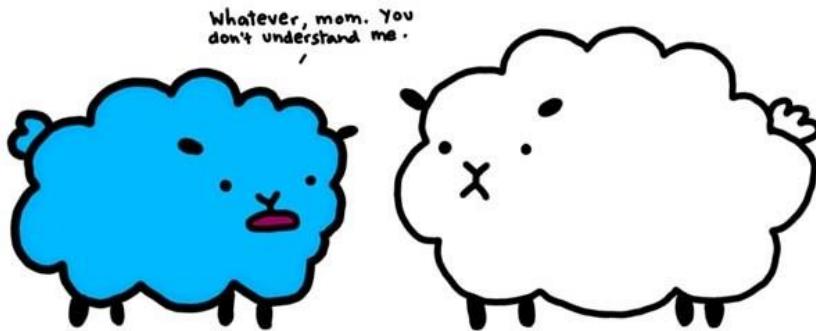
# Students

You will be remembered as the first ever generation to be affected by a Global pandemic. Your normal routine was destroyed and the news stories got pretty scary! You were locked down for 6 months and had to adapt to live without school and friends, being told every day that being around people was dangerous. You may have fallen out of good habits, started sleeping more, eating more, getting less exercise.

Now you are being told that you have to return to school, to classrooms and the stress and pressure of having to complete work and maybe even prepare for exams. You may feel like everyone expects you to return to normal.... They honestly don't! Try to remember that most adults are feeling the same way. Everyone feels overwhelmed with the pandemic and with going back to work or school. It is absolutely ok not to feel ok about it.

## Some things to think about...

- ✓ Try to be more open with your friends, teachers and parents about any struggles that you are having. You may be amazed how many people will be struggling with the same things!



- ✓ Try to break the habit of saying you are fine when you aren't. The conversations that follow may well make you feel so much better.

- ✓ Sometimes it is easy to think that your parents or carers won't understand you. Try to remember that they had to be young too and went through very similar feelings than you may be. Also remember

that they have watched you grow up... who understands you more than that!

- ✓ If you are finding things really difficult with learning, or anything else, please talk to a trusted adult. If that is difficult, click on the links below to access help or advice.



# Supporting learning and wellbeing together



## Connect

Connect with others to support special needs...

<https://chatterpack.net/pages/send-information-a-z-directory>

Connect with STEM support for primary and secondary students...

<https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning>

Connect with the world of educational practice informed by research...

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/support-resources-to-share-with-parents/>



## Take notice

Consider how to notice a genius in the home...

<https://www.potentialplusuk.org/index.php/introducing-potential-plus-uk/>

Consider how to notice anxiety in learners...

<https://www.anxiety.org/causes-and-symptoms-of-anxiety-in-children>

Consider how to notice anxiety and depression in teenagers...

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/worried-about-your-teenager/>



## Keep learning

Learn about how to keep your child safe online...

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Learn how to support teenagers to develop positive study skills...

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/how-to-help-your-teen-develop-good-study-habits>

Learn the math's methods often used today...

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/9-new-math-problems-and-methods>



## Be active

Put your energy into organising the learning environment...

<https://www.theschoolrun.com/home-education-step-by-step>

Be active in using outdoor spaces for learning...

<https://www.ltl.org.uk/parents/>

Fitness for learners who don't like sports...

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hate-sports.html>



## Give

Giving rhythms and routines for young children...

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-03-17-how-to-keep-school-rhythm-and-routines-for-young-children-at-home>

Give yourself a study break...

<https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/how-have-productive-study-break>

Give yourself, and your child, the opportunity to be still...

<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>