

FIVE WAYS FOR FIVE DAYS FOR WELLBEING

Issue 7: 1st June 2020



As we prepare for an easing of lockdown and a gradual return to school, we will reduce the frequency of our flyers to a regular monthly issue. We hope that you will continue to ‘pick and mix’ activities daily to support your wellbeing (whether at home or school) throughout each week. What ideas will you pick from this issue?

Thank you to, Specialist Leader, Faiy Rushton for this week’s articles.

Check out the ‘Keep Learning’ article to find ways to support a return to school.

TAKE NOTICE...

During these times of change and uncertainty most of us have found a way of managing and coping but even those of us that have found it relatively easy to adapt have moments of unsteadiness and discomfort. One of the ways we can help ourselves during those times is to cultivate present moment awareness and there are two excellent techniques for doing this, that help us manage times of worry and anxiety better. These are the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding technique and Mindful breathing.

COPING SKILL SPOTLIGHT: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

HOW TO DO IT:

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 - LOOK: Look around for 5 things that you can see and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

3 - LISTEN: Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Say the three things out loud.

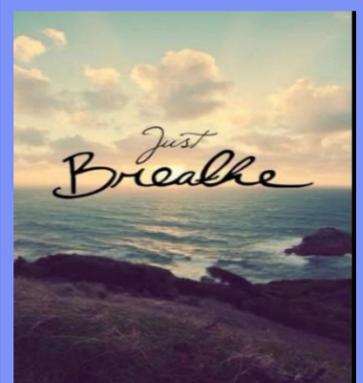
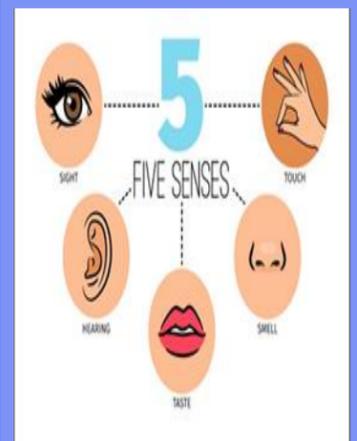
2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you’re allowed to, it’s okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can’t smell anything at the moment or you can’t move, then name your 2 favourite smells.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a drink or food. If you can’t taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

Take another deep belly breath to end.

Mindfulness Exercise: Mindful Breathing

- Find a relaxed, comfortable position. You could be seated on a chair or on the floor on a cushion. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they’re comfortable. Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it’s comfortable.
- Notice and relax your body. Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.
- Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don’t need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your abdomen. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.
- Be kind to your wandering mind. Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It’s very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say “thinking” or “wandering” in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.
- Stay here for five to seven minutes. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you’ll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.
- Check in before you check out. After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.



BE ACTIVE – Let's Dance



How about having a dance a day?

Taking exercise can be a pleasure but many people are so busy it can feel like a chore. How about doing something that doesn't feel like something you have to do but something you look forward to doing; how about dancing your way to a better body and mind while having fun together?

Here are four compelling reasons to dance:

1. Dance is a total-body workout

Dancing combines cardiovascular, strength, balance, and flexibility components within the one activity, so it will complement all forms of activity and exercise. You get aerobic exercise through jumping, swaying, and turning and anaerobic through holding positions such as squats and balancing poses. Dancing incorporates building lean muscle mass as well as calorie burning. This boosts your metabolism.

2. You won't plateau

Once you start exercising regularly, it's easy to plateau. Plateauing is reaching a state of little or no change after a time of activity or progress. It is common in fitness when an exercise stays the same day after day.

However, dance involves constant movement that is never the same. Your body will be challenged every time. There are level changes, from high on your toes to down on the knees, tempo changes, fast, slow, still—and rhythm changes, regular to syncopated. There are infinite combinations that take place, whether it's shaking the hips to spike your heart rate or moving just the waist to work the obliques. Dancing is not like jogging, spinning, or rowing, which targets the same muscles over and over.

3. Dance fosters self-expression

Dance is the only exercise that has an artistic component, which allows it to also serve as a form of therapy. Research shows the healing benefits of self-expression. You will approach a movement sequence in a different way based on your mood, thoughts, and emotions, and make it your own.

This connection, between the way you move and how you are feeling, promotes self-awareness, self-esteem, and a safe space for the expression of feelings. You can boost your mood and instantly feel better! Depending on what you need that day, the movements that are musically driven can energise you, calm you, or release pent-up emotions. Go ahead and exercise while getting rid of all the stress accumulated during the day; feel your worries melt away as you lose yourself in the music.

4. Dance is fun

It's important to look forward to your fitness time and dance is a holistic experience. You are more likely to be present in the moment when you are dancing.

Taking the time to dance can be viewed as the opposite of cramming in a quick workout at the gym. Not only will your body be fitter, but your mind and emotions will be as well. Plus, you'll have fun doing it.

- **How about putting together a playlist of your favourite songs as a family, making sure all of the family gets a turn to have everyone dance to their song and dance around the kitchen.**
- **Or you could take part in Oti Mabuse's Dance Challenge for children, available on YouTube.**
- **Or join in with Sophie Ellis-Bextor and her family in their kitchen disco on a Friday, again available on YouTube or Instagram.**



KEEP LEARNING...

How we cope with things as adults, models behaviour for our children. As we prepare for the gradual reintroduction of our children to school, as adults we set the tone for how they will feel about that return. It is important that we think about the way we talk about returning to school and that we allow space for our children to communicate with us about how they feel about returning and communicate with our children ways to manage the thoughts about being back in a learning environment with their peers. How can we help our children, and ourselves, get ready for the transition back to school and manage that transition well?

Routine

First things first, human beings are creatures of habit and for ourselves and our children many of our normal habits and routines around work and school have gone. Consider restarting the normal routine that would have happened before lockdown as soon as you can. It's very important to support children by re-establishing these routines, even consider doing them over the weekend until everyone gets back into the habit.

Morning

Begin to get back into the habit of doing the normal routine at the same time every day. Encourage the whole family to do this to support the family members returning to school.

- Set an alarm as for normal school/work get up
- Get showered and dressed for a set time
- Have breakfast at a time you would have it on a school day

Evening

- Have dinner at same time every day and with enough time to prepare for the following day
- Shower/bath routine
- Get clothes/equipment/lunch ready for following day
- Wind down 45 minutes before bed time
- Try to keep to set bed times

Communication, steady and reframing

It is important that we give space to our children to allow them to express how they are feeling about returning to school, so that they know it is ok to communicate openly and not feel silly for feeling apprehensive or having anxious thoughts and feelings about returning or having unsettledness when they first begin. It's very important to reassure your child that this is a normal reaction to not knowing how things are going to be and that this is something many people are feeling at the moment.

Teach your child how to recognise how emotions connected with anxiety feel in the body; so when they express worry ask them where they feel sensations in the body that connect with that feeling. For example, you might say 'When I feel worried my tummy feels like it is flipping over...how about you?'

When they learn to recognise the physical signs that connect with anxious feelings then you might encourage them to use these as a cue to try a technique like the 5,4,3,2,1 technique mentioned in the 'Take notice' section of this newsletter or Mindful Breathing. Children often find it helpful to place their hand on the part of the body where they can feel their breath to help them connect with it better.

Another way to help your child if they are having anxious thoughts is to encourage them to consider a different way of looking at their thoughts. Say, for example, they name concern about having a different teacher than the teacher they have had at school so far this year, then you might suggest that they reframe, so think about what might be good about that; experiencing a different style of teaching, being in a smaller group and so being able to have more time with the teacher.

As adults, we can set an example for our children by being careful about how we talk about the return to school, ensuring we name all the things the schools will be doing to make school a safe place for children. Remembering also that when we have anxious thoughts and feelings ourselves, we too can reassure ourselves that this is normal, recognise the physical sensations in the body, use a technique to steady and reframe the thoughts.

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CONNECT.....

During this time we have all found new ways of connecting with each other and many of us have found that, even though we are socially distancing, we have increased our contact with family and friends. Maybe that the quality of that connection is better too, perhaps we are all ‘taking each other for granted’, less. We may have realized how valuable the people that we share our lives with are and how much we need a variety of connections, and the support that they bring. As the lockdown begins to ease, and we move back to a more usual way of life again, perhaps consider what, and who, you have made more time for during this period and consider the good that has come from that and what changes, in connection, you would like to keep.

GIVE....

A small act of kindness may seem very simple and nothing worthy of praise, but it has the power to uplift someone emotionally and in spirit. Kindness knows no boundaries. It is a universal language understood by all, regardless of our race and religion, one where even the deaf can hear and the blind can see. - “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.” ~ Plato

The world we live in already has enough challenge, the world needs people to notice when others are struggling and to take action when we see people in need. Whether it’s through reaching out, lending a helping hand or being a listening ear. Perhaps we all have this superpower called KINDNESS to lift the spirits of others around us, including ourselves.

Start By Being Kind To Yourself - Too often, we overlook the importance of self-kindness, something that we tend to dismiss if we only see value in being kind to others. As much as it has the ability to make others feel better and more loved, it can also be directed toward you with the same positive effects. - “Do unto yourself as you would do unto others” – the reverse golden rule.

Here are ten ways you can go about showing kindness to yourself:

- Accept and be proud of who you are
- Appreciate and recognise your needs
- Forgive yourself and let go of self-blame
- Partake in activities to relieve stress
- Save some alone time for yourself, don’t give it all away
- Seek help whenever necessary
- Stop judging yourself or recognize when you are judging yourself
- Take a break to recharge
- Take care of your health with proper rest, nutrition and exercise
- Treat yourself every now and then



By knowing and practicing self-kindness, not only will you feel happier and more energised, you can set a good example for the people around you.

If You Can Spare Five Minutes To Help Someone, Do It! - Five minutes is insignificant considering it hardly takes up 1% of our total daily time, but it can be tremendously beneficial to others who are on the receiving end. Imagine the limitless ways you can use it to positively impact the lives of others with only a tiny fraction of your time.

Here are some ideas:

- Provide knowledge and expertise
- Introduce two or more individuals that would benefit from connecting to one another via email or text
- Share and comment on positive social media posts to generate engagement
- Share useful resources with people you know might benefit from them

Make Kindness a Part of Your Identity - If you fundamentally believe that kindness is the right thing to do, and you incorporate it as one of your core values in life, it will be deeply engraved into your identity. If you believe that every person (including yourself) deserves kindness, you will subconsciously manifest it through your actions every day.

By making kindness a part of who you are as a person, it will eventually feel effortless for you to do so, especially if you practice kindness day in and day out. You may even feel uncomfortable by not doing so because it goes against your sense of identity.

“Do things for people not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are.” ~ Harold S. Kushner

Random Acts of Kindness ideas for adults and children (with adaptations for current restrictions)

