



Welcome

To the March edition of our wellbeing newsletter

This month we lead with the fantastic news that all primary school children will be able to return to the classroom on the 8th March. We are so happy and excited to be able to welcome all our amazing pupils back; we really cannot wait to see all those smiling faces we have missed so much over the past couple of months.

It is natural after such an extended period away that there will be nerves and anxieties around coming back from both parents and children so in this edition of our newsletter, we will look at some of the ways in which you can support your child to return to school.

How to support your child's return to school

The coronavirus outbreak has caused major disruptions to daily life and children are feeling these changes deeply. While the return to school will not only be welcome but exciting for many pupils, others will be feeling anxious or frightened. Here are tips to help your children navigate some of the complicated emotions they may be facing with going back to school:

- 1) It is perfectly natural for children to feel nervous about returning to school, especially after such a significant time away. They could be worried about if they will be safe from the virus at school, will their friends still be their friends when they have not seen them for so long and they may be worried about leaving parents or caregivers when you have spent so much time together. Whatever the worry, the key to helping is to have an open conversation about what is worrying them. Try not to tell them not to worry as they may think you don't take their fear seriously but rather acknowledge how they are feeling and thinking and talk them through the situation. For example, if your child is worried about coming back to school and catching the virus, you could explain to them that we already have lots of different measures in place to make sure children and adults are as safe in school as possible. You can ask them to think back to what they did before such as extra handwashing, different zones in the playground, staff wiping down desks. Reassure them that they already know all the rules so they've got this! Staff will go through everything again with the children when they come back to school.
- 2) It is important to be calm and proactive in your conversations with children – check in with them to see how they are doing. Their emotions will change regularly and you need to reassure them that that is ok. If you find your child doesn't like to talk about their feelings too much, try some creative drawing or playing - drawing especially can sometimes give children a much-needed outlet to express and communicate any negative feelings they may be experiencing in a safe and supportive environment. This helps children find positive ways of expressing their emotions such as anger, fear or sadness. Children will often take their emotional cues from the adults around them so it is important that as adults we also manage our own emotions well and remain calm, listen to children's concerns, speak kindly and reassure them. Remember there is no such thing as a silly fear or concern; if your child is feeling or thinking it, while we might feel it's really nothing to worry about, to them it's a big deal and needs to be treated as such by us the adults.
- 3) In addition to checking in on your child's physical health and learning when they go back to school, keep an extra eye out for signs of stress and anxiety. COVID 19 and everything that has transpired because of the pandemic could be impacting on your child's mental health and wellbeing, and it's important to demonstrate that it's ok and normal to feel overwhelmed at times. When in doubt, empathy and support are the way to go; sometimes it's enough just for a child to know they have been heard and understood with their worries and anxiety. If you feel the stress and anxiety continues after the first few weeks of their return to school, then please feel free to talk to your child's class teacher as an additional method of support.
- 4) If your child shows signs of separation anxiety on their return to school, reassure them this is perfectly ok and normal; after all you have spent the past two and a bit months together all the time - remind them that even though they aren't with you, you are still thinking about them and once the school/work day is done, you will be back together again. It might help to add a little note in their lunch bag or draw a little heart on their hands for reassurance.
- 5) And finally, lots of love and hugs (and maybe the occasional hot chocolate) can do absolute wonders in reducing any worries or concerns a child might have as they will feel safe, secure and loved.

National Awareness days

1-31 March: The Great Daffodil Appeal

1-31 March: Veggie Month

2nd March: National Doodle Day

20th March: First Day of spring (YAY)

21st March: World Forestry Day

24th March: WPS will celebrate World Book Day today (more details in the first week back)



NHS Approved Apps for looking after Mental Health and Wellbeing

I'm always looking for new ways and ideas to support mental health and wellbeing and I've recently discovered that the NHS website has listed their approved apps for use so I thought I would share a few with you here. You can find the full list of apps by following this link: [Mental health apps - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)



Free - Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression. This app will teach you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing.



Free - Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with Chill Panda. The app measures your heart rate and suggests tasks to suit your state of mind. Tasks include simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries.



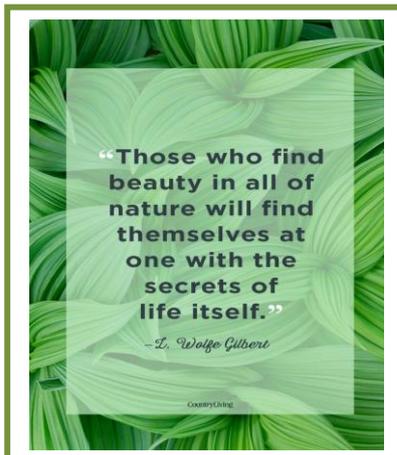
Free - ThinkNinja is a mental health app designed for 10 to 18 year olds. Using a variety of content and tools, it allows young people to learn about mental health and emotional wellbeing and develop skills they can use to build resilience and stay well.



Free with in App Purchases - Stress & Anxiety Companion helps you handle stress and anxiety on-the-go. Using breathing exercises, relaxing music and games designed to calm the mind, the app helps you change negative thoughts to help you better cope with life's ups and downs.

Wellbeing Activity

The Safari exercise is a great way to help **kids** learn mindfulness. This **activity** turns an average, everyday walk into an exciting new adventure. Tell your **kids** that you will be going on a safari: their goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as they can. Maybe there could even be a prize for the one who spots the most!!



Useful websites for mental health and wellbeing

www.nhs.uk

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.cruse.org.uk (bereavement)