



Welcome



to the April edition of our wellbeing newsletter



This year, the 1st April falls during our School Easter Holidays.

I know we haven't been back at school long but I think all the children are finding the return to full days at school tiring so now is the perfect time for a break. Once again, I have been amazed at the resilience of the children on their return to school. They have all settled back into our routines amazingly well and I've seen so many happy, smiling faces; it's been truly wonderful to have everybody back. During the Easter break, I hope you all take the opportunity to enjoy the emerging signs of spring, the lighter nights and of course, lots of chocolate!

How to practise mindfulness

Mindfulness and being aware and present in the moment is an amazing skill to learn and practise: it helps us to focus on how we are feeling, it helps to calm us when we feel anxious or upset and it helps to calm our minds from the constant internal chatter that we all have. The NHS website describes mindfulness as '*mindfulness meditation involves sitting silently and paying attention to thoughts, sounds, the sensations of breathing or parts of the body then bringing your attention back whenever the mind starts to wander*'.

At first mindfulness is best practised sitting or lying down but once you get the hang of it, you can practise mindfulness anywhere; whilst out walking, in the supermarket, whilst sitting in a traffic jam or whilst washing the pots.

The reason I have included mindfulness in this edition of our newsletter is because I think spring and summer are some of the best months to start your practice. There are so many different smells, sounds and sensations you can experience in the warmer months. If mindfulness is something you would like to try then here is how to start:

1. **Set aside some time** - You don't need any sort of special equipment to practise mindfulness. In fact, at first all you need is a quiet space and some time even if it is just five or ten minutes.
2. **Observe the present moment as it is** - The aim of mindfulness is not to quieten the mind (that's impossible) but rather the goal is just to pay attention to the present moment. For example, you could sit in a chair in your garden, close your eyes and think about how your body feels sitting on the chair. For example, what sounds can you hear, (birds, traffic, children playing, dogs barking, the wind in the trees) what sensation you can feel (the sun on your skin, the breeze in your hair) focusing on the calming sensation of your breathing.
3. **Return to observing the present moment** - Our minds are very rarely still and silent and we often function on automatic pilot while our minds are full of our thoughts. For example, have you ever arrived at a destination whilst driving but had no idea of the journey even though you negotiated traffic lights, junctions, and roundabouts? Was it because you were thinking of what to make for tea or when the car needed taxing or what you'd done at work that day? In mindfulness, just return your attention to the present moment again and again.
4. **Be kind to your wandering mind** - I have had countless people tell me that mindfulness doesn't work for them because they can't stop thinking: remember that the aim isn't to stop your thoughts but to return your mind to the present moment to be 'in the moment' so don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practise recognising when your thoughts have wandered off and gently bring yourself back to focusing on right now.

We are going to start practising mindfulness in the classroom so ask your children for hints and tips. When COVID restrictions are lifted, I may also run a mindfulness workshop for parents so keep your eyes peeled for that.

National Awareness days

1-31 April: Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

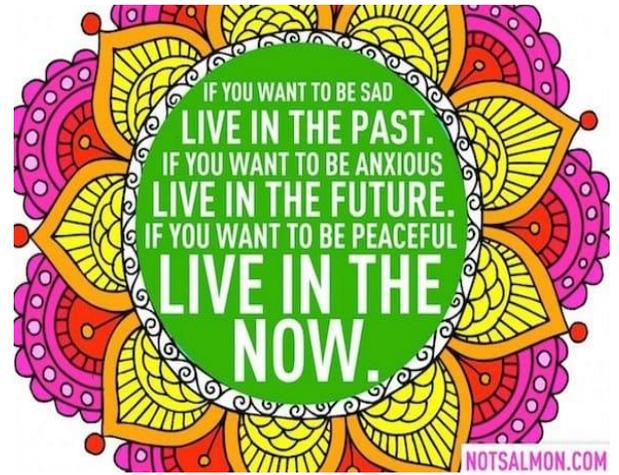
1-31 April: National Pet Month

4th April: Easter Sunday

5th – 12th April: Bee Active. Bee Healthy, Bee Happy Week (the running Bee Foundation)

23rd April: National Skipping Day

24th April: Scream Day!



Easy Easter Bun Recipe

This fun easy bake activity will keep everybody busy over Easter and provide yummy treats.

Ingredients

100g milk chocolate, broken up
50g dark chocolate, broken up
100g butter
4 tbsp golden syrup
100g rice pops (we used Rice Krispies)

To decorate

50g milk chocolate, melted
sprinkles, mini marshmallows, nuts, Smarties, dried fruit or white chocolate buttons

Method

STEP 1

Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl with the butter and golden syrup and gently melt in 10-second bursts in the microwave or melt it over a pan of simmering water making sure the bowl doesn't touch the water. Stir until smooth, then take off the heat and stir in the rice pops coating them gently with the chocolate until they are all completely covered.

STEP 2

Divide the mixture between nine cupcakes or 12 fairy cake paper cases – it's easier if you slide these into a muffin tin as it will help them hold their shape. Leave to set. If you want them to set faster, put in the fridge for 1 hr.

STEP 3

Drizzle with a little melted chocolate and decorate with sweets, dried fruit or nuts while they are still wet enough to stick them on. Will keep in an airtight container for five days.

Wellbeing Activity

Make a Bird Feeder.

What you'll need: Bird-friendly food cut into chunks: Apples, raisins, bread, hard cheese, floral wire ([Hobbycraft, £1](https://www.hobbycraft.co.uk))

What to do:

1. Thread each piece of food onto the wire – just like a kebab.
2. Bend the ends into little hooks
3. Join the two hooks to make a circle
4. Use a new piece of wire to hang the kebab somewhere birds can come and feed from it
5. Watch out for birds flocking to feast on your kebab

Now it's time to listen and keep your eyes peeled for any feathered friends

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)