

MINDCRAFT: Teacher's Notes

Introduction

Over the last year and a half, COVID-19 has had a huge impact on children's mental health. The government's COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report, updated in May 2021, found that for the majority of children, their **life satisfaction had reduced compared to pre-COVID**. The report also found **increased rates of anxiety and loneliness** but **lower rates of access to mental health services**.

This is why, in honour of **World Mental Health Day 2021**, Corn Exchange Newbury are launching a competition for the primary classroom to **raise awareness of mental health and promote mentally healthy brains**.

What is a mentally healthy brain?

Wellbeing is:

- The state of being comfortable, healthy and happy
- Simply 'how are you doing?'. How you are coping with life?
- Both physical and mental health combined
- How well we overcome difficulties and recover from setbacks
- Our enjoyment of our lives
- A sense of meaning or purpose
- An ability to handle stress
- An ability to meet the demands of everyday life and function in society

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as: a state of well-being in which the individual **realizes his or her own abilities**, can **cope with the normal stresses** of life, can work **productively and fruitfully**, and is able to make a **contribution to his, her or their community**.

If you have good mental wellbeing you are able to:

- feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self-esteem
- feel and express a range of emotions
- build and maintain good relationships with others
- feel engaged with the world around you
- live and work productively
- cope with the stresses of daily life
- adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty

NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing

The NHS recommends 5 ways for children and adults to support and improve their mental health- Connect, Be Active, Give, Keep Learning and Take Notice.

The following guidance is taken from the NHS website and is aimed at adults but is easily adaptable for children.

1. Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

There are lots of things you could try to help build stronger and closer relationships:

Do

- if possible, take time each day to be with your family, for example, try arranging a fixed time to eat dinner together
- arrange a day out with friends you have not seen for a while
- try switching off the TV to talk or play a game with your children, friends or family
- have lunch with a colleague
- visit a friend or family member who needs support or company
- volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group. Find out how to volunteer on the GOV.UK website
- make the most of technology to stay in touch with friends and family. Video-chat apps like Skype and FaceTime are useful, especially if you live far apart
- search and download online community apps on the NHS apps library

Don't

- do not rely on technology or social media alone to build relationships. It's easy to get into the habit of only ever texting, messaging or emailing people

2. Be physically active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- raising your self-esteem
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them

- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood

Find out more about getting active

Do

- find free activities to help you get fit
- if you have a disability or long-term health condition, find out about getting active with a disability
- start running with our couch to 5k podcasts
- find out how to start swimming, cycling or dancing
- find out about getting started with exercise

Don't

- do not feel that you have to spend hours in a gym. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life

3. Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others

Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

Some of the things you could try include:

Do

- try learning to cook something new. Find out about healthy eating and cooking tips
- try taking on a new responsibility at work, such as mentoring a junior staff member or improving your presentation skills
- work on a DIY project, such as fixing a broken bike, garden gate or something bigger. There are lots of free video tutorials online
- consider signing up for a course at a local college. You could try learning a new language or a practical skill such as plumbing
- try new hobbies that challenge you, such as writing a blog, taking up a new sport or learning to paint

Don't

- do not feel you have to learn new qualifications or sit exams if this does not interest you. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life

4. Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- helping you connect with other people

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

Some examples of the things you could try include:

- saying thank you to someone for something they have done for you
- asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer
- spending time with friends or relatives who need support or company
- offering to help someone you know with DIY or a work project
- volunteering in your community, such as helping at a school, hospital or care home

5. Take notice of the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Read more about mindfulness, including steps you can take to be more mindful in your everyday life.

Logistics of **MINDCRAFT**

The winner of our **MINDCRAFT** competition will win a free 1-hour Creative Arts for Wellbeing workshop for their class.

The workshop will take place **in-school** with one of our theatre and education professionals, scheduled in partnership with the winner's class teacher at a mutually convenient time during the Autumn term 2021.

The workshop will consist of **creative, interactive music, drama and art activities** designed to **get your pupils active, boost their mood, improve confidence and educate them about sustaining their health and happiness!**

You can download a **MINDCRAFT** brain template and entry form from our website at:

www.cornexchangenew.co.uk/minecraft

The deadline for entry is midday on **Friday 1 October 2021**. The winners will be decided by the Corn Exchange **Wellbeing Group** and announced on our website and social media on World Mental Health Day, **Sunday 10 October**.

Please submit your entry by email to: **getinvolved@cornexchangenew.co.uk**

If you are submitting multiple entries, for example a class of 30 children, you only need to complete one entry form and please save their entries as one PDF document.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of our Learning and Participation team on: 01635 582 666 (option 3)