



In a world where you can be anything,  
*Choose to be kind*



#### At Dartford Primary Academy...

Wellbeing is at the heart of what we do. It is important that children are encouraged and supported to look after their mental health every day. This guide offers suggestions for how you can help your child do this as well as advice for what you can do if you are worried about your child's mental health.

#### What is mental health?

We all have mental health, just like we have physical health. Being mentally healthy means that we feel good about ourselves, make positive relationships with others and can feel and manage our emotions. Good mental health allows us to cope with everyday ups and downs and to feel in control of our lives, asking for help when we need support.

Mental health is a spectrum, just like physical health and illness. Throughout our lives, many different things can mean that we move up or down the spectrum such as the start or end of a relationship, a new job, moving house or changes in physical health.

## The five ways to wellbeing

One way that we can nourish our mental health and wellbeing is to remember 'the five ways to wellbeing' which have been found in research to improve mental wellbeing in children and adults.

**Connect** - Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, peers and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

**Give** - Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, as well as your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

**Be Active** - Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

**Take Notice** - Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to school, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

**Keep Learning** - Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

You can find out more about the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' on the NHS website:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>



## Help and further information

There are a collection of websites that can offer great advice and guidance but if you are concerned about your child's mental health and wellbeing, contact your GP.

### Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

### Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk/shop/publications/c-23/c-70/>

### NHS website

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/youth-mental-health/Pages/Youth-mental-health-help.aspx>

### Mind Ed for Families

<https://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/>

### Mental Health Foundation

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

## Top tips for supporting your child's mental health

Below are some suggestions for how you can support your child and where you can find further information.

**Developing good habits that are practiced every day are important to our mental health, just as they are to our physical health. Try these to help your child develop good habits:**

- Talk about the five ways to wellbeing - are the things you can encourage them to do, or do together, every day?
- Talk openly about mental health and feelings
- Just as you might discuss physical health (eating fruits and vegetables for example) talk about staying connected with others or being physically active to take care of our minds.
- Model good habits - children often learn by observing and copying behaviour. Model looking after your own mental health. One way to do this is to verbalise your thoughts, for example "I'm going to make a cup of tea and relax for five minutes."
- Think about phone usage and how this can impact sleep - which is important to our mental health. Putting technology away for periods of time allows us to feel connected with each other and talk about what is important to us.

**Ways you can spot changes in mental health at home:**

- Notice changes in your child's behaviour - children may not always tell us something is wrong verbally.
- Let your child know if you are concerned - explain why you feel that way and what change you've noticed in them, for example, a disinterest in activities they normally enjoy.
- Use joint activities to have conversations about how they're doing. Often, talking whilst doing something together, such as cooking, can help ease your child into sharing their feelings rather than a face to face conversation.
- Let them know that struggling sometimes is normal and nothing to be ashamed of. Talk about the mental health spectrum and that talking about difficult feelings, with people we trust, is a brave thing to do.
- Listen and empathise - let them know you are there for them by acknowledging your child's feelings, trying to understand from their point of view and avoiding judgement.

## What does wellbeing look like at DPA?

At Dartford Primary Academy, wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do. The children have mindful moments throughout their school day where staff will check in and see how they are feeling, chances to reflect on their day and opportunities to share success.

During assemblies, the children are taught different breathing techniques to help them feel calm and focused and to provide them with a tool for when they need to use it. Each classroom has a worry box and we encourage children to talk, with a trusted person, about how they are feeling or what is on their mind.

We use the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' to remind children how they can take ownership of their mental health and find ways to feel good, both mentally and physically. Our Personal, Social, Health Education and Physical Education curriculums provide opportunities to learn how to be physically healthy and how to make positive relationships with others as well as many other opportunities to promote and support mental health and wellbeing.

**Here at DPA, we are incredibly fortunate to have a member of the Emotional Wellbeing Team associated with our school.**

This was a trailblazer scheme launched by the NHS to support schools with areas of mental health and wellbeing and to provide workshops, lessons, staff training and individual support for our school community. Parents are able to refer themselves to the Emotional Wellbeing Team by asking for a referral form at the school office.

