

PARENT/CARER NEWSLETTER

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The summer term has been buzzing with activity in schools! We've been busy running groups, working closely with young people, and delivering engaging assemblies. Here are some of our highlights.

WHO ARE THE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM? WHAT CAN THEY OFFER? HOW CAN WE ACCESS SUPPORT?



In this newsletter you will read about supporting your young person, things we offer like groups and webinars as well as sign-posting to other services. MHSTs are a joint initiative between the Department of Education and NHS England they hope to improve access to psychological therapies for children and young people with emerging mental health and wellbeing concerns.

The MHST is commissioned to work in schools in three different ways:

1. Offering interventions to young people and parents, these could be groups, one-to-one or psychoeducation workshops. These are evidence based short-term interventions for mild to moderate mental health difficulties.
2. Supporting the Senior Mental Health Lead in each school or college which we work with to develop whole setting approaches to emotional wellbeing.
3. Giving advice in a timely way to school staff and signposting and speaking to other specialists to get the right support for your young person.

We are a NHS team to which your child may be referred. The referral and subsequent appointments will be recorded on your child's electronic health care record.

We support children and young people experiencing difficulties with:

- Anxiety
- Unhelpful thinking styles
- Low mood
- Behavioural difficulties (primary aged)
- Emotional dysregulation
- Sleep difficulties

We offer a safe and confidential space where parents and young people can talk about their difficulties and learn low-intensity CBT informed approaches. We hope to help individuals to learn new skills and manage their difficulties.

Anyone attending an MHST school or college can be considered for support using the referral form. If our service is not the most suitable for you we will signpost you to a more appropriate source of support.

In Primary Schools we use a parent-led approach, we often offer support for behavioural difficulties, anxiety or emotional dysregulation. Further information about the upcoming groups we are running can be found further along in this newsletter.

WORKSHOP SUCCESSES

We've had fantastic experiences running workshops on Transition and SATS in primary schools. This period of change can be challenging for young people, and these workshops aim to equip them with the tools to navigate it successfully.



STAY CONNECTED



If you'd like to know more about the groups offered at your child's school, please reach out to your school's mental health lead. They can provide more information and help you get involved.

EXCITING NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER

In September, we are thrilled to welcome two new teams to the Mental Health Support Team (MHST). This expansion will allow us to cover more areas and support even more young people. We are excited to bring in new colleagues and continue growing our efforts to promote mental health and well-being. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to another successful term!

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE COPE WITH CHANGE

As the six-week summer break approaches, it's crucial to think about how to help your young person handle the changes in routine. We've gathered feedback from young people about our groups, and here's what they had to say:

- "The bubble breathing helped me stop stressing."
- "I found the finger breathing helpful."
- "(I liked) all the games and the positivity."
- "Nothing (could be improved). This group is amazing."
- "The practitioners were always there to support us."

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE COPE WITH CHANGE

In September, we'll be running parent-led anxiety and behaviour groups for primary-aged children. These groups will meet regularly on Zoom for six sessions. If you think you could benefit from this support, please reach out to your school's mental health lead to discuss the possibility of a referral to our team.

YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT FROM THE MHST

The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) is dedicated to providing support 52 weeks a year, offering virtual sessions or in-person meetings at select secondary schools even when schools are closed. While we can't offer our usual range of assemblies and workshops during the summer, we focus on one-to-one sessions and preparing resources for the upcoming term.

WELCOMING NEW YEAR 7 STUDENTS

We're excited to welcome the new Year 7 students to our secondary schools this September! Our approach will vary by school, but we'll be introducing ourselves through assemblies or workshops at some locations. Recognizing that starting secondary school can be challenging for some, we'll work closely with schools to identify students who may need additional support from our team.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and we look forward to a productive and supportive new term!

SPOTLIGHT - EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotional regulation is the ability to understand and control your emotions. It's all about recognizing how different factors—like what's happening around us, our thoughts, and our actions—affect our feelings and then managing those emotions in a healthy way. Ever notice how people react differently to the same situation? What makes one person happy might leave another feeling worried or confused. That's emotional regulation at play!

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Think of emotional regulation as a skill you build over time, like learning to ride a bike. Babies and toddlers often react intensely to situations that older children handle more calmly. For example, a toddler might fall and cry even if they aren't hurt, while an older child is more likely to dust themselves off and keep playing.

KEY ASPECTS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION

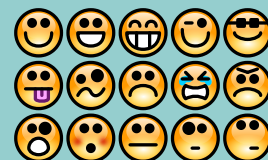


Self Awareness

It's crucial to understand your own emotions and how your reactions can impact your child. Your mood can shape their day!

Emotional Literacy

Boost emotional understanding by naming and discussing your own emotions. Make it a game—spotting and naming emotions in characters while watching movies or shows together can be both fun and educational.











CO-REGULATION

Younger children and those in tough situations often need a little extra help to manage their emotions. This is where co-regulation comes in. Think of it as teamwork! Co-regulation is when an adult helps a child recognize and manage their emotions, making them feel heard and understood. This support is essential for teaching kids how to handle their feelings effectively.

So, next time emotions run high, remember that guiding kids through their feelings helps them build the skills they need to navigate life's ups and downs!

STEPS TO CO-REGULATION (ADAPTED FROM RDASH NHS TRUST)

<p>Regulate Yourself</p>  <p>Check in with yourself and use a calming technique to regulate your emotions</p>	<p>Get Close</p>  <p>Be near to your child so that they feel connection and attention</p>	<p>Make Eye Contact</p>  <p>Making eye contact ensures you have your child's attention and they can see they have yours</p>	<p>Listen</p>  <p>Allow your child to speak and listen to whatever they are sharing</p>
<p>Be Curious</p>  <p>Seek to understand, ask open questions and try to understand how your child is feeling.</p>	<p>Show Empathy</p>  <p>Use empathetic words that show you understand your child and validate their experience "I can see this is very hard for you"</p>	<p>Listen Again</p>  <p>Give your child the time to say anything in response, show them you are listening by repeating their words to them</p>	<p>Offer Warm Affection</p>  <p>Offer affection, this can be regulating for a child. But ensure they give consent to this, they may prefer cuddling a toy or playing a game.</p>

WHY IS EMOTIONAL REGULATION IMPORTANT?

Emotional regulation is essential because our emotions are closely linked to how we think and act. When we can control our emotions, we're better able to handle situations rationally and make thoughtful choices, rather than acting impulsively. Impulsive reactions often lead to upset and poor behaviour choices, while a regulated response helps children feel more in control and boosts their self-esteem.

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR CHILD IS EMOTIONALLY REGULATED?

To gauge if your child is emotionally regulated, consider their reactions to situations that trigger strong emotions. A child with good emotional regulation can use coping strategies to calm down quickly. Conversely, if they overreact or resort to poor coping strategies like throwing things, shouting, or running away, they may need additional support to improve their emotional regulation.

WHAT AFFECTS OUR ABILITY TO REGULATE?

Several factors can influence our ability to regulate emotions. If a child is ill, experiencing life changes, or under stress, emotional regulation can become more challenging. Some children are naturally more sensitive and may struggle more with regulation, including neurodivergent children. Everyone has moments of difficulty with emotional regulation, which is when co-regulation becomes crucial.

CALMING TECHNIQUES



Deep Breathing

Teach your child to take slow, deep breaths to calm their mind and body.

Visualization

Encourage them to imagine a peaceful place or happy memory.

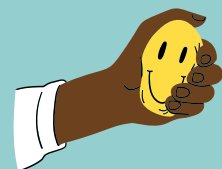


Physical Activity

Simple exercises or a walk can help release built-up tension.

Sensory Tools

Use items like stress balls, fidget spinners, or soft fabrics to provide sensory input that can help soothe emotions.



Mindfulness Activities

Engage in activities like yoga or meditation to help them stay present and manage stress.

By incorporating these strategies, you can help your child develop better emotional regulation skills, leading to more positive outcomes in their daily lives.

Calming Techniques

One of these techniques can be used to help manage when needed

ABC Game

Choose a topic and take it in turns to name items that start with that letter, try foods or jobs!



Senses Game

Five things you can see
Four things you can touch
Three things you can hear
Two things you can smell
One thing you can taste

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Occupy Your Brain

Name all the objects you can see
Count back from 100 by 4
Describe how to do an activity you know well, think of all the steps
Read a page in a book backwards



Body Awareness

Take some deep breaths
Scrunch your feet, notice the sensations
Clench and release your fists
Rub your hands together and notice the warmth
Do some big stretches
Finish with some more deep breaths



Shopping Game

Take in turns, the first person starts with "I went to the supermarket and I bought..." the next person says a new item and the items of the person before them. You can try doing it alphabetically!



Calming Breaths

Count backwards from 10, breathe in on every number and out on the spaces between the numbers. Breathe out for longer than you breathe in.



If this is something you feel your child may need more support with the MHST-run interventions on emotional regulation and distress tolerance. Please talk to your school's mental health lead for further information.

PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH OVER THE SUMMER

With summer holidays fast approaching, it's the perfect time to think about how this season affects the well-being of young people and their families. Let's dive into the common summer challenges and explore ways to keep everyone's spirits high.

Why do many children and young people face mental health difficulties over the summer?

During the school year, kids benefit from a structured routine filled with mood-boosting activities like regular exercise, outdoor time, and social interactions. But when summer rolls around, that structure often disappears, which can lead to low mood, lack of motivation, and increased anxiety about the upcoming school year.



STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Flexible Scheduling

Without the regular school schedule, it's easy for kids to lose motivation. Encourage a loose yet consistent schedule that balances relaxation with fun activities and personal interests. This helps maintain a sense of purpose and stability.



Sleep

While occasional lie-ins can be refreshing, too much sleep can harm mental health or signal underlying issues. Aim for regular bedtimes and wake-up times to support good mental and physical health, even if they're not as strict as during the school year.

Keep it Moving

Activity levels often drop during the summer, leading to more time indoors. Encourage outdoor activities like bike rides, family walks, park visits, or garden play. These can significantly boost mood and overall well-being.

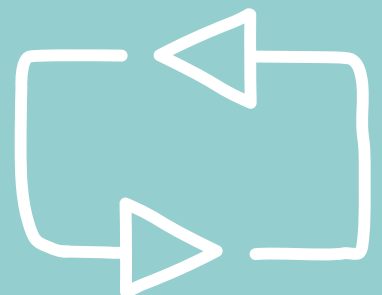


Time with Others

Social interactions can dwindle over the summer, making the return to school more daunting. Arrange meet-ups with friends or family activities like cooking, crafting, or playing games. Local events, often free, provide great opportunities for shared experiences. Check local listings or search "things to do in Milton Keynes" for ideas.

Managing Anxieties Around Change

Transitions to new school years or schools can be nerve-wracking. Help your kids by encouraging them to talk about their worries. Remind them that feeling anxious is normal and highlight past times when they've successfully adapted to change.



SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS

Summer can be tough on parents and carers too, especially with the pressure of perfect summer adventures plastered all over social media. Financial constraints, work obligations, or other circumstances often limit what families can do. Focus on what's doable and fun for your family:

- Plan a couple of activities each week.
- Embrace relaxed days at home.
- Cook meals together.
- Enjoy family walks.

Remember, adults also benefit from routine, staying active, spending time outdoors, and socializing. Be kind to yourself, and don't hesitate to seek help if needed. Many agencies offer support for those facing difficulties.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS

- Local Council Websites: For information on local events and activities.
- Community Centers: Offering various programs and support groups.
- Mental Health Charities: Providing resources and helplines for mental health support.
- Healthcare Providers: For professional advice and support.

Creating a balanced routine, encouraging physical activity, fostering social connections, managing anxieties about change, and supporting both kids and adults are key to promoting positive mental health during the summer. Enjoy the season and take care of each other!

The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) is an NHS service. A referral to the team will result in a mental health episode of care being opened in your/ the child's shared NHS electronic records and may include an assessment of need and subsequent clinical documentation being saved there.

