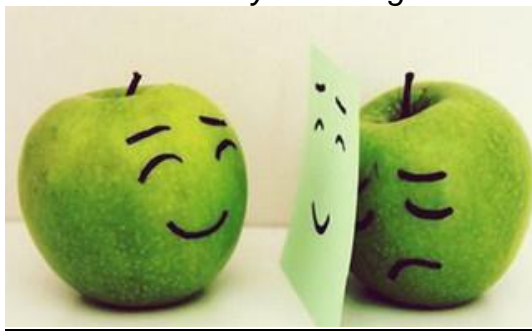


St Barnabas CE Primary School Parents and Carers Wellbeing Newsletter:
May 22nd 2020

How are you feeling?



“There is no health without mental health.” (World Health Organization, 2009)

Our emotional and physical health can be severely compromised during these unsettling times. **Self-care** is very important, as we are often the last person we think about and look after.

It's particularly important at this time to enable us to be as resilient as possible for ourselves, and also to manage and alleviate our children's worries, and to provide them with re-assurance.

With this in mind, as we move towards schools re-opening, we wanted to outline our guiding principles for how to move forward through this transition as smoothly as possible.

We think the following imagery and acronym is useful:



With huge thanks and credit to Dr Pooky Knightsmith from Creative Education.

Safe

We want you and your child to feel safe, calm and re-assured, and to know that it will be okay to come back to school. So we are already working on creating an environment that is and feels physically and emotionally safe for all of us. We want to build up predictability and consistency around hygiene and other safety rules which school staff will role-model noticeably, and praise your child for following accordingly. We will support any child through

any misunderstandings and refer to the benefits of what we are doing. We want to invite suggestions from you and work in partnership so that you have a genuine voice in building this new normal for your children.

We want you to feel involved and invested, and to start to re-inforce these rules and messages at home in advance of the children's return.

Miss Connolly is currently creating a FAQ sheet to try and anticipate some of your concerns; detailed guidance and regulations will follow.

We hope to involve the children to some extent in co-creating rules surrounding playtimes; if we work with them, they will have a sense of ownership and the rules would have more meaning for them.

Welcoming

When the children return, we want them to feel excited and happy coming into school and we want them to know that we are genuinely delighted to have them back and to be able to see them again. We have sincerely missed them. They will need to know that they belong, and feel a part of things and we will do everything we can to enable this. Our St Barnabas values of Courage, Compassion and Creativity will be ever-present and more needed now than ever.

All Togetherness

So, how can we create these warm, welcoming feelings of care and nurture when we can't touch and need to keep a safe distance? We need to create a truly inclusive environment in which the children feel surrounded by support, and know that they can rely on all the adults around them and that we are all reinforcing the same messages and sense of togetherness.

Nurturing

Recent research conducted at Reading University highlights the importance of allowing the children time and space to play and to re-connect socially with their peers. A key point is to play the long game here, and not rush ahead with trying to make up for lost time or to add intense academic pressure and stress to the children, some of whom are already in a high alert state.

We will focus primarily on settling your children in, on meeting their social and emotional needs first and foremost, and on their readiness to learn skills. The general expert consensus is that we should be laying the foundations for them in terms of nurture first and foremost, not solely teaching them in the plain, traditional sense.

This Covid generation of children are going to be unique, and we want to enable them to flourish which will not be an overnight job. We have the potential to do a lot of good here, and to repair the significant rupture that this virus has caused and to prepare our children to be strong adults in the future as well as happy and resilient children in their present.

Anticipating their concerns

It's important to recognise that each child is unique, and that they may have had very different experiences of Home Learning and staying at home, even within the same family. Many children will naturally have mixed feelings and attitudes about coming back to school.

A tip is to be alert and attuned to how your child is feeling as they might have a particular worry about returning to school that can be addressed. With younger children (3-7), playing together may be your best way of identifying what their concerns are. They often play and draw what they are thinking about, sometimes repeatedly. With older children talking can be easier through a shared activity like walking the dog or baking a cake.

Thank you for everything that you are doing to support your child at home. It is appreciated. Take care.

Karen Boardman, Headteacher

Evidence based approaches for enhancing well-being:

The 4 pillar plan – how to relax, eat, move and sleep your way to better health:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Pillar-Plan-Relax-Longer-Healthier/dp/0241303559>

5 Steps to Well-being : <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx>:

If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.

- **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships. Learn more in [Connect for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. Learn more in [Get active for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike? Find out more in [Learn for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks. Learn more in [Give for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Learn more in [Mindfulness for mental wellbeing](#).

Some hopefully helpful links are detailed below:

Mental Wellbeing audio guides- from NHS Every Mind Matters

Understanding anxiety - colourful guide from the Priory Group

A free app for sleep, anxiety and stress- from Insight Timer

e-learning: staying mentally well through Covid19 - from Pooky Knightsmith

Working from home wellbeing action plan - from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust