



Wellbeing Newsletter

Top Tips for Feeling Good



This issue of the wellbeing newsletter focuses on feeling good. This includes spotting signs that your child might be feeling sad or upset and learning ways to help them.

All children (and adults) feel sad from time to time

In fact, by trying to be happy all the time, we can end up feeling sadder.

Happiness myth busting...

Happiness Myth 1: Happiness is the natural state for human beings.

Human emotions are constantly changing; they're a bit like the weather in the UK! Everyone has days when they feel more happy or more sad.

Happiness Myth 2: Happiness means feeling good all the time.

Leading a happy life involves experiencing the whole range of emotions, such as:

Excitement, anxiety, joy, fear, anticipation, stress, anger, embarrassment

Often the things that make us happiest also lead to difficult emotions too, and that's OK! For example, your children will make you feel happiness, joy and fulfilment, but they will also make you feel anxious, guilty and frustrated!

Happiness Myth 3: If you're not happy, there's something wrong with you.

If you're not happy, then that's normal because life is difficult and challenging. That is why it's so important to teach our children strategies that will help them to manage when they feel sad.

Key message to give to our children

We all feel sad sometimes. This is normal.
It's important to let adults know when we feel sad so that they can help us to feel better.

How can I tell if my child is sad?

Before children are able to let us know that they feel sad they need to 1) understand their emotions and 2) be able to express them – this can be tough, especially for younger children.

Here are some common signs for you to look out for:

- Withdrawing from activities/spending time with others.
- Changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual).
- Changes in sleep (difficulty sleeping or sleeping more than usual).
- Loss of interest and enjoyment in things.
- Low energy and a lack of motivation.
- Tearfulness
- Physical symptoms – headaches, tummy aches.

When sadness is in hiding

Sometimes sadness hides underneath anger.

In fact, anger can hide lots of feelings. If you notice your child is angrier or more irritable than usual, talk to them about what feelings might be hiding underneath!

If you are concerned that your child is experiencing the symptoms described above, then there's lots of support available in Hackney.

You can speak to your GP or make a self-referral to *First Steps* by calling 0207 014 7135. First Steps offer help to children aged 0-18 and their families with mild to moderate concerns relating to emotions or behaviour.

It is also important to speak to Mrs Adamsdale (SENCo) so that support can be offered in school too.

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We are all different

It is important to help your child to find what works for them. To find what works you have to try lots of ideas, each time you try one, think of it as an experiment. If it works for your child, great! If it doesn't, it doesn't mean you or your child has failed. It means you've learned what doesn't work, which is helpful.

Keep going until you find what helps them to feel good and remember that you have to try some activities a few times before they start to work.

Get up and go when you're feeling low!

When children are sad they can lose interest, motivation and energy, so it can be tough to get them to get up and go! However, by missing out on things they enjoy they are likely to continue feeling sad and may even end up feeling sadder.

Encourage your child to do things they enjoy.

Most children enjoy one-to-one time with adults – just 10 minutes a day doing an activity of your child's choosing can be really helpful in improving their mood and behaviour.

Remember the good things

Often we find it easier to remember things that have gone wrong than all the things that have gone well. Encourage your child to draw things they are happy about or make a list of things they enjoyed in the past week.

Sometimes sadness causes us to feel negative about our selves too. If you notice your child saying things like "I'm so stupid", then help them to remember all the things they are good at.

You can also help them to gently challenge their self-critical thoughts. For instance:

Self critical thought = "I'm so stupid"

More helpful thought = "I'm finding this piece of homework tough, but that's OK. Other children will find it tough too, plus there are lots of other things that I find easy, like basketball!"

Talk to someone

It's important to talk to children about their feelings (this includes positive feelings as well as negative ones).

If your child has been upset, wait until they are calm and relaxed before talking to them about it. When they are calm and relaxed try to find out how they were feeling, what caused them to feel this way, and what you can do to help next time?

Lots of children find it difficult to talk about feelings. If this is the case, then you will need to get creative. For instance, encourage your child to draw how they feel, create their feelings using Play-Doh, use toys to role play talking about feelings or check out www.littleparachutes.com to find books about feelings that you can read with your child.

Top tip: Consider your child's interests and how you might link these with talking about their feelings.

Find ways to relax

Encourage your child to do regular physical exercise. For example, star jumps, running in the garden, skipping or playing a game such as football or dodgeball.

Slow deep breathing

1. Take a slow deep breath
2. Hold it for 5 seconds
3. Very slowly breath out

Relaxing your body

Sit or lie somewhere quiet and comfortable.

1. Stretch out your arms and make a fist, then relax.
2. Push your legs out, wiggle your toes, then relax.
3. Shut your eyes tight and pull a scrunched up face, and then relax.

Think of calming images - Imagine somewhere you feel safe and happy, such as a beach or a park. Imagine the sun on your face and the wind in your hair.

Relax by reading a book, watching TV, listening to music, gardening, going for a walk, taking a bubble bath, colouring, drawing or stroking a pet.

Use your senses - When you're out for a walk, use your five senses to relax – notice what you can see, hear, feel, smell and taste.

Mindfulness - You can find mindfulness activities on these free apps: SmilingMind; HeadSpace; Breath, Think, Do with Sesame; Three Good Things: A Happiness Journal.

When your child finds a relaxing activity that works, encourage them to teach it to the whole family, this will boost their confidence!