

The Good Mental Health Handbook

A guide for parents and carers



Being the parent/carer of a child who is struggling with their mental health can be utterly heart-breaking and extremely challenging. No one likes to see someone they love in so much pain.

The impact can be far reaching, effecting family dynamics, our ability to work, changing relationships with friends and impacting our own mental and physical wellbeing.

Our worlds can become very small as we focus our time and energy on helping our child, fighting for the right support, and trying to find any strategies or helpful advice we can.

Frustratingly, there is not one answer or solution. Our children and our families are all individual, needing individual approaches and intervention.

The Good Mental Health Handbook has been developed by Hampshire CAMHS and parents/carers. Within its pages it contains information, short videos, and workshops to support our children's mental health challenges.

YOU CAN ACCESS THE ENTIRE HANDBOOK ON OUR SCHOOL WEBSITE

The handbook also contains information on parental wellbeing. Remember the airplane analogy: *In an emergency, we are told to put our own mask on first, so that we are able to help others.*

It can feel like yet another 'thing' we must do and finding the time or energy to care for ourselves can feel impossible. However, even learning how to breathe in tricky moments helps to bring control. Managing our own emotional regulation not only helps us to cope but our children also begin to recognise how effective such strategies can be.

The guide gives instant access to information, short videos and workshops. Parents and Carers want strategies, ideas, suggestions, helpful hints, top tips, a guide or anything to try to help their child—a toolkit of information that they can look through when they have the time and energy.

The Good Mental Health Handbook is that toolkit.

<https://www.marchwood-jun.hants.sch.uk/page/?title=Support&pid=76>



MJS Supporting Families PARENTS AND CARERS

It can be difficult to describe the true experience and vulnerability of being a mother, father or caregiver. Many parents will advocate that being a parent can be one of the most rewarding experiences in one's life, however the responsibility of nurturing, pro-

- Self-care is an important part of children's mental health recovery. By prioritising self-care as parents and carers, you are communicating to your child that this is important and showing them how to do it.
- Secondly, regular self-care will make it easier to remain calm and undisturbed in stressful situations.
- Thirdly, it is highly emotional and distressing as a parent seeing your child suffering. It is completely understandable and normal that would impact your own wellbeing and mental health.

STOPP

Stop - wait a minute before responding to a situation with emotion.

Take a breath - Notice your breathing, in and out. You can control your breathing through a variety of breathing exercises such as square breathing, where you breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breath out through your mouth for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds. By controlling our breathing, we can control our heart rate and the flight, fight or freeze response.

Observe - What are you thinking, what are you reacting to, what sensations can you notice in your body. It can be helpful to attempt to label some of these thoughts.

Pull back - Try and put the situation into perspective. Is there another way of looking at the situation or another way to respond? What might a friend's advice be right now? How important is this now and how important will it be a year from now?

Practice what works and proceed - what is the best thing I can do? What is going to be effective and appropriate whilst aligning with my values?

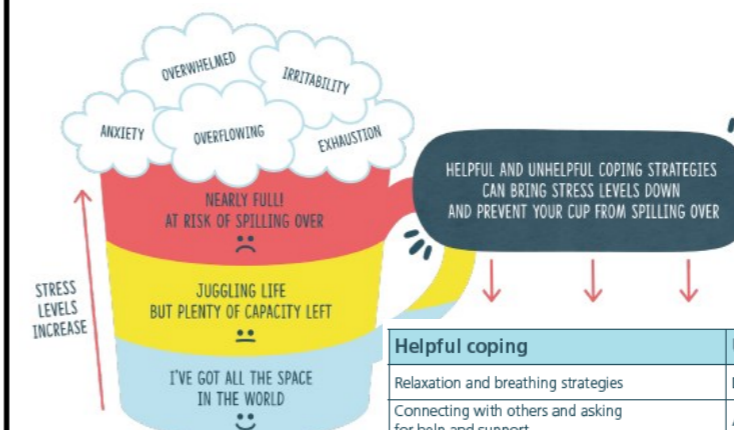
BREATH IN FOR 4 SECONDS

BREATH OUT FOR 4 SECONDS

BREATH IN FOR 4 SECONDS

BREATH OUT FOR 4 SECONDS

It is important to highlight that sometimes as a parent in high stress situations with your child or family you might need to step away from the situation for a few minutes to use the STOPP skill and regulate your emotions. This will then help you to manage your emotions in the moment, so you can think clearer, respond calmly and deescalate the situation. As long as it feels safe to do so, it is absolutely ok to step away from the situation to do this. If you are not regulating your own emotions, it is really hard to regulate your child's.



The stress cup analogy created by the BBC to promote parent wellbeing can be a helpful way to think about stress, how it can build and spill out making you irritable, anxious, overwhelmed and exhausted.

Helpful coping	Unhelpful coping
Relaxation and breathing strategies	Drugs and alcohol
Connecting with others and asking for help and support	Avoidance
Problem solving	Sleeping too little or too much
Exercise	Blaming yourself and self-criticism
Gratitude and self-sooth strategies	Denial
Prioritising basic needs e.g. sleep, eating, medication	Procrastination
Self-regulation techniques	Overeating or undereating
Acceptance	Losing your temper

The NHS 5 Steps to mental wellbeing: bit.ly/3roRzop



A short film explaining the 5 ways to wellbeing: bit.ly/447q68u



The basics of parent self-care a short film explaining the basics to parent self-care: bit.ly/44KNKIB



Awareness of emotions and triggers - a short video explaining how to improve awareness of emotions and triggers as a parent or carer: bit.ly/3Ydw4mY



Emotion regulation - a short video about the importance of emotion regulation as a parent or carer and emotion regulation strategies: bit.ly/3qfu5BI



Small Pleasures - a short video on the finding small pleasures as a parent or carer: bit.ly/44LaOHr



A workshop on getting good sleep: bit.ly/45vAmc9



Hampshire CAMHS sleep help and guidance: bit.ly/3etqTMZ



A workshop on getting good sleep: bit.ly/45vAmc9



What's Up? The mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours: bit.ly/3YagJ6y



Daylio Journal is an app that can be used to track emotions and triggers: daylio.net



BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: bbc.in/46HyBtb



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: bit.ly/3QXWEuU



A short video on how to pace as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing, whilst managing day to day tasks and challenges: bit.ly/3NOCWIJ



BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: bbc.in/46HyBtb



The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation - how much we can and can't cope with: bit.ly/3dC5KQn



STOPP - skill resource on get self help, the CBT therapy and self-help resources website: bit.ly/3rG4d2i



A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: bit.ly/3UyD3Vk



Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video: bit.ly/3R2EdsB



Parent thinking traps - a short video on how to identify common thinking traps for parents and carers. The video will also provide strategies to overcome these common thinking traps as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing: bit.ly/44QUV2s



A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: bit.ly/3fcoINN



A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: bit.ly/3lBwUp7



Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use: bit.ly/43Joi5d



Stress and coping - a short video explaining how to cope with stress as a parent and carer: bit.ly/3DzxoHI

