

# PARENT/CARER NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the first edition of the parent newsletter from MK MHST! We hope you find this newsletter useful, we are also keen to hear your feedback and do let us know if you want to contribute!!

## 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.

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2024

## 13TH - 19TH MAY

The focus this year is **movement** and moving for our mental health!

Any amount of physical exercise is good for us, we don't have to go and run a marathon to enjoy the benefits of it. This Mental Health Awareness week is a good opportunity to focus on fitting more physical activity in to your life, finding a new hobby or maybe restarting an old one.

Remember to move at your own pace, find activities that fit with you and your lifestyle!

Ideas to try:

- family yoga
- A walk in nature
- Increasing steps (can you get 100 more than yesterday?)
- Playing outside together
- A family dance off in the living room

This could be an opportunity to make exercise a regular part of your life, put in on the family calendar and make it a commitment to enjoy being active together.

For more information and ideas the NHS have a great website with top tips for getting more active for your mental health: [click here!](#)

On our website you can find ideas for ways to move more this May! <https://tinyurl.com/yc3p5yy3>

### Did you know?

Moving our bodies and enjoying physical activity has proven benefits for our mental health as well as our physical health. Exercise releases feel-good hormones that can reduce anxiety, improve stress and help with sleep. There are lots of benefits to exercise including; improving self-esteem and confidence, developing new skills, increasing motivation and meeting new people.

## SPOTLIGHT - HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH FEAR AND WORRIES

One intervention offered by the MHST is "Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries". This is a parent-led intervention for primary ages children that are struggling with fears and worries. This intervention is often delivered in groups, this allows peer support from other families and gives parents a chance to build connections with others going through similar difficulties.

This group might be right for you if your child is struggling with separation anxiety, simple phobias (not blood, sick or needles) or more persistent general fears and worries.

The group runs over six weeks and each week you will be asked to try out some of the techniques that have been discussed and then share (if you feel comfortable) with the rest of the group. This helps to build consistency and motivation and the group can help with overcoming any problems you have may have encountered.

If you think that a group like this would be helpful for you and your child you can speak with your child's class teacher or the mental health lead in their school and they can complete a referral to the MHST on your behalf. Only children that attend a school that is linked to an MHST can be referred.

**The next group start date is June 2024 (online).**

A skill we develop in the group is using "what" and "why" questions. These can be helpful to understand the difficulties your child is experiencing. Being curious can help your child to open up and explain how they feel.

Once you have established their fears you can help them to look for evidence about whether their fear is likely to happen. You can then help them think of ways they can cope in the situation.

# TOOLBOX - STRESS BUCKET

As we go into the Summer Term the focus moves to exams for many of our young people. The MHST offers support in schools in the form of workshops and groups around stress and anxious thoughts about exams. As parents and carers it can be a tough time, one way of thinking about stress and how we manage it is the stress bucket. It is normal to feel stressed, some stress can be helpful as it can motivate us to study and try hard, but too much can leave us feeling anxious or depressed and have an impact on our sleep, eating and general wellbeing.

Completing a stress bucket exercise is a good visual way of thinking about stress and communicating what is causing the stresses and how they might need help.

Above your bucket are taps, each of these are causes of stress that fill up your bucket. Some might pour a large amount of water in to your bucket, some might pour just a little, but together they fill your bucket.

At the bottom of the bucket there are taps to let out your water and to help stop your bucket overflowing. If we don't release the water we will then see the symptoms of stress affecting our mood and wellbeing.

Things that could help are:

- Talking to friends
- Exercising
- Self-care
- Mindfulness
- Being Creative
- Completing puzzles or playing games
- Spending time with family or friends
- Resting
- Planning and eating healthy meals or snacks
- Taking study breaks
- Journaling
- Listening to music
- Spending time with pets



## Stress bucket

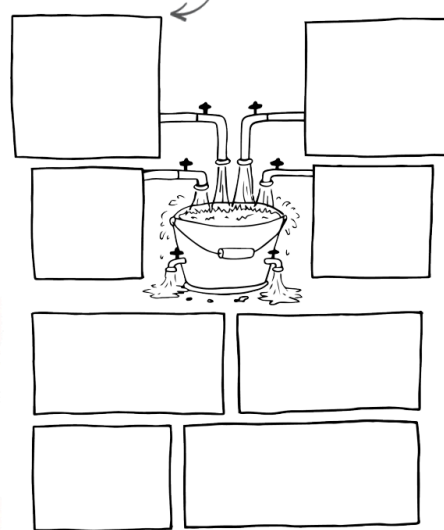
It is normal to feel stress at times. Some stress can be good, but too much can cause you to feel anxious or depressed, which might affect your sleeping, eating habits and general wellbeing.

When you feel worried, the stress bucket is a visual way for you to communicate this, and this can help the adults in your life best support your needs.

### Instructions:

1. Above the bucket are taps and the things that cause you stress. Using the boxes, draw or write the things that are making you worry. It might be too much homework, friendship issues, back-to-school anxiety.
2. The below taps are the things that help you release stress. Using these boxes, write or draw the things that help you manage this feeling. It could be talking to friends, exercise or spending time with pets.
3. You might find it helpful to discuss your stress bucket and the things that help you.

This is making me feel stressed...



But this is what helps me... YOUNGMINDS

By thinking about your child's taps with them you can look at how we manage or reduce the stress going into the bucket and also supporting them with releasing the stress. You can find a free printable resource from Young Minds that you can complete together [here](#)

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.

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