

# Children's Wellbeing

Aberdeenshire Council Educational Psychology Service July 2021

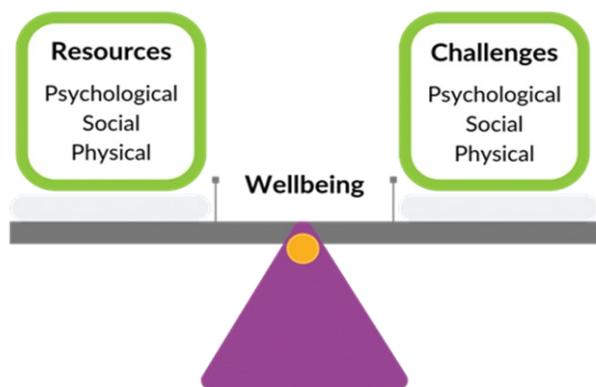
## What is Wellbeing?

Even children and young people can struggle with their mental health and wellbeing from time to time. Feelings like anxiety, anger, sadness and upset are all completely normal, but sometimes these feelings last a long time and can begin to have an impact on many areas of a child's life like their education, social interactions and physical health too. Luckily there are lots of things we can do to foster good wellbeing. It might be helpful to think about wellbeing as a see – saw where we need resources like good friendships, exercise, or someone to talk to help us overcome, or balance out, the challenges we may face in our lives. When talking to younger children an easy way to describe wellbeing is to say it is 'feeling good and doing good'.



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Since we face a range of different challenges at different times throughout our lives our wellbeing see-saw is often at danger of becoming unbalanced or disrupted. This leaflet looks at some helpful things you can do to support positive mental wellbeing in your children. Some helpful information on Mental Health and Wellbeing can be found on the Parent Club website [here](#).

## Five ways to Wellbeing

[BBC Bitesize](#) have highlighted 5 ways to wellbeing for children which include:

### 1. Keep Moving

It's important for our physical and mental health to get exercise and to keep active. The brain releases feel good chemicals when we engage in physical activity and some ideas to get moving include:

- ◆ Host a home disco. Play the family's favourite dance songs and have a boogie for ten minutes.
- ◆ Blow up a balloon. Once you've tied it, see how long you can keep it up in the air while passing it between you.
- ◆ Do some exercise videos like [BBC Super Movers](#) and [Mr Motivator](#)

### 2. Refuel

Take time to refuel and recharge as a family. This could be spending some time together curled up on the sofa watching a film or some cartoons and then talking about your favourite parts. Reading books and telling stories together are great for children losing themselves in a wonderful fictional world. You can find online books at the Aberdeenshire Library Service [here](#).

**Mental health problems are very common. In fact, by the time they're 16, three children in every classroom will have experienced a mental health problem.**

### 3. Take in the good stuff

Doing some fun activities that focus on enhancing children's wellbeing can help provide a healthy balance of emotions in the day. Some activity suggestions include:

- ◆ Make a 'Top Times' scrapbook. Help your child to create a scrapbook of memories, with printed out photos, drawn pictures, saved tickets and other bits and pieces stuck in to help them remember. These don't have to mark occasions; they can capture smaller moments of joy, like throwing a ball for a dog or seeing a rainbow. Once you've built a collection of pages (and maybe several scrapbooks), you can enjoy looking through them together.
- ◆ Create a gratitude jar. Another way to take in the good stuff is to write down a little note when something's gone well and keep it in a jar or box. Younger children may prefer telling you what to write so you can record the experiences for them. As they get older, they may want to write their own notes. You can encourage them by doing this alongside them. The great thing about a gratitude jar is you can revisit it on days when you need a little boost to remind everyone of the things you've been grateful for.
- ◆ Building gratitude habits doesn't mean we diminish the struggles that children (and we) experience. It's really important to talk about these difficult moments too. But, having a time in the day when you focus on the positive can be useful in helping children to keep their thoughts balanced.





## Wellbeing activities for children up to 7 years old

### Be Active

Sing "heads, shoulders, knees and toes" or another action song.

### Feel Calm

Lie down on the floor with an adult, close your eyes and let the adult describe a happy time that you have shared together.

### Spend time outside

Pretend to blow out the candles on your birthday cake 5 times and breathe fresh air in and out.

### Eat well

Make a fruit kebab by putting an assortment of fruit on a stick.



### Enjoy special time

Share a goodnight cuddle while an adult reads you a story in your bed.

### Enjoy routine

Introduce some music time into your day. Stream a new or old song you love.

### Digital detox

Challenge yourself to have a whole weekend day without any electronics.



### Pamper yourself

Ask an adult to run you a bubble bath, bring all the water-safe toys you have, play with these together and have fun with the bubbles.

### Be creative

Using your recycling waste to create something new for 2021.

### Mindful time

Tell an adult:  
5 things you can see  
4 things you can touch/feel  
3 things you can hear  
2 things you can taste  
1 thing that you can smell.

### Sleep well

Make a dreaming den with a blanket, a pillow and a teddy and have a nap.



### Positive touch

Enjoy a hug while an adult watches your favourite TV programme with you.

## Wellbeing activities for children up to 11 years old

### Thank you

Make a poster of all the people you are thankful for. For example your teacher, the postman or the person that delivers your weekly food shop. Display in your window!

### Be kind

List seven kind things you can do for someone else. Do one from your list each day.

### Move your body

Try out Joe Wicks' [exercise classes](#) (you could add it to your diary!)

### Get active

Make a weekly exercise diary. Include step count or distance walked if you have a tracker.

### Feel the beat



Make a playlist of your favourite feel-good music. Spend some time dancing to music

### Thirsty work

Are you staying hydrated? Research the benefits of drinking water and track how much you drink a week.

### Clear your mind

Explore the power of meditation. Try some of [these ideas](#) and find what works best for you.

### Enjoy routine

Pick an activity that you enjoy and do it every day. For example riding your bike, playing football or dancing.



### Treat yourself

Try making your very own smoothie—[here are some ideas](#) to start you off.



### Dance off

Arrange a video call with friends and dance together to each other's playlists.

### Relax

Create a [healthy sleeping poster](#) and include some tips for a good night's sleep that you can try.





## Five ways to Wellbeing continued

### 4. Learn something new

Having more time at home and when our normal routines are disrupted can give us the opportunity to learn something new, or practice something your child wants to get better at. These could be things like learning to tie their shoelaces or button up their coats. Some children may also be able to help more at home and could help wash up or put clothes away. When children feel they are contributing to the family, this can enhance their sense of belonging.

Whatever the learning goals, it can be helpful if children understand they can improve their skills and abilities. This is often referred to as a 'growth mindset' since it's about realising we all have the ability to change the way we think and do things. So, whether it's tying shoelaces, learning to spell, or even how to hop on one leg, the way adults talk to children about the learning will influence those children's beliefs. More information and tips about developing a growth mindset can be found in our leaflet [here](#). 



### 5. Take care of yourself

Being able to support your child's wellbeing also involves taking care of yourself. As a starting point, try and eat nutritious healthy food; it's a great idea to turn cooking into an activity the whole family takes part in. Life can often feel very busy and parents give themselves a hard time about being unable to do everything perfectly. Remember, though, there are no 'perfect parents'.

We all get things wrong, we all have days when we struggle. And while it may be true that you might not have done everything 'perfectly', you've probably done more things to support your child's wellbeing than you realise. So, try and focus on what you're doing well – it's not you being boastful, it's actually really helpful for your child to do this. Children can learn a lot from hearing adults respond kindly to themselves when things don't work out - and then from seeing the grown-ups try again. Notice how you speak to yourself about your mistakes. If you can cultivate kindness towards yourself, your child is more likely to practise this when they get things wrong too.

Wellbeing is influenced by children's individual experiences and changing needs as they grow.

It might also be useful to take a moment and think about the activities, people and places that help you to feel brighter and refuelled. Even if you can't do these things at the moment, perhaps there are new ways that you can connect with the things that matter to you, like chatting with friends on the phone instead of meeting up. No matter how busy you are, try and squeeze in a little time for yourself. It's likely to help you with the many joys and challenges that parenting can bring.





## Healthy Eating

Having a healthy balanced diet can improve mood, increase energy and help children sleep better.

If you have any worries about your child's eating habits, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor.

Some meal planning ideas, recipes and more can be found on the Parent Club website [here](#).

## Relaxation

Relaxation exercises help children to manage their reactions to stress, anxiety and worry. Doing some relaxation exercises can be a good distraction from worrying thoughts and to recognise and reduce tension in the body. Our [relaxation and mindfulness leaflet](#) has lots of information on how to practice this. Some other resources to support relaxation are [Relax like a cat](#) and check out the child friendly Monster Meditation videos on YouTube by Sesame Street [here](#). There are 6 in total.

**Using relaxation methods help children regulate their emotions which improves their behaviour and allows them to be happier and more successful in life**

## Sleep

Children's sleep can have a significant impact on their mental wellbeing. Sleep is also important for helping us concentrate and pay attention which we need for learning and it enables our muscles, and bones to grow and skin to repair. Here are some top tips to support your children to get the sleep they need:

- Have a bedtime routine that includes a bath, some gentle/quiet play, cuddles and a story
- If you have a toddler that still naps, it might be time to review the length of these or if they even still need one
- Your child may be more willing to go to bed if they have chosen their own bedding and it includes a favourite character
- Make sure they get some fresh air during the day, maybe by going for a walk or to the park where they can expel excess energy running around, climbing and jumping.
- Talk to your child about the bedtime routine around the dinner table so they know what is coming up next

[Click here to view our Guide to supporting sleep leaflet](#)

The [Sleep Scotland](#) website has information to support a good night's sleep.





## Playtime

Engaging in 15 minutes of mindful, focused play with your child brings demonstrable physical and neurological benefits for both of you. When we connect with our children, in an authentic and meaningful manner, our emotional right brain is reaching out and connecting with their emotional right brain. This is a moment of meeting between you and your child that allows them to feel felt and get gotten by you. This supports the development of healthy attachment and creates foundations for positive mental health as they grow and develop.



There are different types of play that children benefit from such as:

**Role play:** this lets children practice different scenarios so they can experiment with different scenarios or process different scenarios in a safe make-believe space

**Physical play:** lets children who are very active or impulsive to release their energy and gain a sense of physical mastery.

**Peer play:** develops children's social skills and can be supported by an adult

**Rough and tumble play:** can help build a sense of one's own power, especially physical power and can help with understanding personal space and boundaries

**Silly play:** is just good fun! It makes us laugh, releases positive hormones and can discharge stress

Some great play ideas can be found here [Play Scotland](#), [Parent Club](#) and [BBC Tiny Happy People](#)

**Children can  
feel anxious  
about different  
things at  
different ages.  
Many of these  
worries are a  
normal part of  
growing up.  
Anxiety  
becomes a  
problem for  
children when it  
starts to get in  
the way of their  
everyday life.**

## Dealing with worries

While it is normal for all children to have worries and fears, for some, these can start to affect their day-to-day lives. Anxiety can be triggered by both big life changes and by smaller daily pressures like managing homework, so it's important to keep an eye out for any signs that they may be struggling. Read our tips below for how to spot anxiety in your child, and some ideas for ways to help if you're worried about your little one.

Some of the symptoms of anxiety can include problems concentrating, excessive worrying, loss of confidence, as well as sleep problems, such as bedwetting and bad dreams.

To encourage your child to share what they are worried about they could start a worry diary or worry box where they write down anything that is bothering them. You can then take some time to talk through these worries together, sometimes just listening and validating these worries is enough, or you may need to help them problem solve things that they could do to help make them a little bit better.



[When I Worry About Things](#) is a collection of animated films that use personal testimony to explore mental health issues from the perspective of children. They look at bullying, OCD and depression, anorexia and panic attacks and are suitable for use with children aged 8-13.



## Connection activities for children up to 7 years old

### Texture hunt

Find things you like to feel of around your house. What don't you like? Try it blind folded!

### Mud and puddles

Pop on your wellies and enjoy jumping and squelching around.

### Zoom Pictionary!

Connect with loved ones and ask them to guess what you have drawn. Take turns to share your masterpieces.

### Wave and smile

Sit at your window and wave and smile at all the people you see. How many wave and smile back?

### Record the weather

Over the course of a week, how many different weather systems can you see from your window?



### Create a special greeting

Think of a new way to greet people in person or on video calls.

### Feel-good experience

Make a child-friendly [face mask!](#)

### Special meal 'in'

Create a 'restaurant at home'. Get dressed up and pretend you're going out. Takeaway or home-cooked, you choose—enjoy!

### Share the day

At bedtime, share something that made you happy during the day. Parents-role model this for your children.

### Think of others

Draw a bright spring picture and send to your local care home to cheer up the staff and the residents.



### Say 'thank you'

Make and send a card to your local GP or vaccination centre to say thank you for keeping us safe.

### Spring walk

Spring is coming! How many signs can you see that this is true? Look for bulbs, flowers and buds on trees.



## Connection activities for children up to 11 years old

### Connect through STEM

Connect with your inner scientist, engineer and mathematician in [these exciting STEM activities!](#)



### Connect to my future

[Create a Goals Ladder](#), breaking down goals you want to achieve in the future.

### Connect with nature

Sign up to the [RSPB's Wild Challenge.](#)

### Connect with animals

Research your local animal shelter and find out how you can provide help e.g. give a donation or help with a sponsored event.

### Connect with myself

Keep a 7 day diary of the things that bring you joy.

### Connect with the plant

How much does your household reduce, reuse and recycle? [Make a plan](#) to help your family do their bit for the planet.

### Connect with friends

Set up a video chat with your friends and play some online games



### Connect with the past

Reflect back on how your year has been. What parts have you enjoyed? Write them down so you have a record to look back on.

### Connect with the environment

How many signs can you see that spring/summer/autumn/winter is on its way? Write down or draw what you notice.

### Connect with family

Interview an older relative or family friend about what life was like when they were your age.

### Connect with classmates

Get to know your classmates better and take it in turns to play ['Two truths and a Lie'](#)

### Connect with my locality

Connect with your neighbours and community by writing positive messages in chalk on the pavement or making window signs.





## Emotion Coaching

The emotion coaching approach helps children understand emotions and deal with them more effectively. More information about this can be found in our [Guide to Emotion Coaching Leaflet here](#). The NHS website also has some information on talking with your child about their emotions [here](#).

Another way to help children begin to recognise and regulate their emotions is to do regular emotional check-ins. Some more information on this can be found on our leaflet [here](#). 

## Building Resilience

Resilience is the ability to keep going, or bounce back, when things don't go as we hoped they would. Building resilience is a great lifelong skill to help our children, and us, overcome life's obstacles we may meet as we grow older to ensure that we are able to take care of our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

The Resilience Alphabet toolkit, found [here](#), is designed to help children build inner strength and wellbeing in order to build their personal resilience. It provides activities from A-Z of things your child can do to help build resilience.

# THE EMOTIONAL CUP

Imagine that every child has a cup that needs to be filled -- with affection, love, security, and attention. Some seem to have a full cup most of the time, or know good ways to get a refill. But most children get a little nervous when their cup gets near empty.

### Some ways that children deal with having an empty cup:

- steal from other people's cups
- misbehave to get your attention and show that they need a refill
- seem to have bottomless cups, or need constant 'topping off'
- can't sit still for refills or actively refuse them
- bounce off the walls when they approach 'empty'
- think they have to fight or compete for every refill

### What fills a child's cup:

- play
- friendship
- one-on-one time
- love and affection
- connection
- succeeding
- doing what they love to do or what they choose to do



### What empties the cup:

- stress and strain
- rejection by peers
- loneliness and isolation
- yelling and punishment
- failing
- fatigue
- doing what they're forced to do or they hate to do

## Aberdeenshire Council

**Educational Psychology Service**  
**Woodhill House**  
**Westburn Road**  
**Aberdeen**

Phone: 01569 690542  
Email: [eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)  
Website:  
<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/>

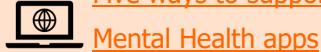
 Twitter@aberdeenshireEP

We value your feedback, please complete our short survey by scanning the QR code.



## Further information and resources

### Five ways to support children's mental health



[Mental Health apps](#)

[Anxiety in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Thrive wellbeing activities](#)

[Eat Better Feel Better](#)

[Sleep Scotland](#)

[Play Scotland](#)

[Parent Club](#)

[BBC Tiny Happy People](#)

[NHS Talking to your child about feelings](#)

[Resilience Alphabet](#)

[Wellbeing & Mental Health | Parent Club](#)



[Growth Mindset Leaflet](#)

[Relaxation and Mindfulness Leaflet](#)

[Guide to supporting sleep leaflet](#)

[Aberdeenshire Library Service](#)

[Relax Like a Cat](#)

[Emotional Check-ins](#)



[When I Worry About Things](#)

[BBC Super Movers](#)

[Mr Motivator](#)

[Sesame Street Monster Meditation](#)

## 10 ACTIVITIES TO USE WITH STUDENTS WHEN RETURNING TO SCHOOL TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

### STRENGTHS



Work with your students to identify a list of their top 5 strengths and think about how they can use them each week

### MANAGING WORRY



Help students to learn how to effectively problem solve to deal with practical worries.

### MOOD JAR



Help your students identify activities they could engage in that will help if they feel anxious or low. Write them down on a piece of a paper and put in a jar

### 3 GOOD THINGS



At the end of the school day help students write down 3 good things they have achieved from their day. Help students to think about what those 3 good things say about them as a person

### IMAGERY



Spend 5 minutes at the beginning of a lesson and encourage students to imagine themselves in a happy, calm and safe place

### TIME TO TALK



Schedule a time each week where students can talk openly about what they are feeling and thinking.

### SELF CARE DIARY



Support students to identify activities they can do each week which will provide them with a sense of pleasure, achievement and connectedness

### MINDFULNESS



Encourage students to stay present by connecting all their senses to an activity which they can engage in

### POSITIVE EMOTIONS



Tap into positive emotions by helping students identify moments in the last 4 or 5 months when they have coped well with stress or adversity

### SELF SOOTHE BOX



Encourage students to find items or activities which they can put in a small box which will soothe each of their 5 senses. E.g. a picture to look at which is relaxing, a relaxing scented candle, some calming music



 @BELIEVEPHQ