

# Southampton Mental Health Support Team

## Primary Schools Wellbeing Newsletter

**This week's theme - Anxiety**

**20<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Welcome to this week's Southampton MHST newsletter, our theme this week is anxiety.

We hope that you are enjoying the new MHST Newsletters. In order to help us continue to improve, we would be grateful if you could find the time to complete this short survey. It should only take 3 minutes. - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6C3BF16> We also welcome any questions or feedback to our email – [SouthamptonMHST@Solent.nhs.uk](mailto:SouthamptonMHST@Solent.nhs.uk)

As we hear the news that the lockdown is to be extended, albeit with a little more freedom to see loved ones in a socially distanced way, we are mentally preparing for more weeks at home. This will be a relief to some and will be causing anxiety in others. For some of us, we may have mixed feelings about being able to get out more, maybe return to work, but wanting to be safe. This week's newsletter will focus on anxiety; Professor Wellbrain is paying us another visit to help us understand why we have our unpleasant anxious feelings and we will also be thinking about what we can do to manage them and help our children with their anxieties, too. It is really important to remember that anxiety is a normal part of life. Our anxiety is there for a reason and can be helpful at times, for example making us more motivated or prepared and even perform better. In strange times like these that we are living through at the moment, it is even more likely that we will experience some uncertainty and worry. However, when it becomes overwhelming for us and interrupts our lives we may need to think about how we can manage and where to go for support for ourselves and our children if we need it.

## Parents Top Tips

COVID-19 has changed our lives in unimaginable ways; discussions about the virus dominates the news and social media, schools and many businesses are closed, concerts and sports events are cancelled – it is not surprising that many of us are feeling more stressed and anxious at this present time. Below are some tips you can follow to ease anxiety for yourself and your child/ren.

- Model calm yourself – many parents are understandably experiencing anxiety themselves dealing with COVID-19 and this anxiety may be inadvertently passed onto children by worried parents. As parents, we need to model to our child/ren how to react in stressful times by dealing with anxiety in healthy ways. The more relaxed you are, the easier it is to soothe their worries and concerns.
- Keep children in the loop – but keep it simple – talking to your child/ren in a clear, concise way about the current situation is the best way to help them understand. It is important to remember that, unless they specifically ask, children don't need to know every little detail as too much information might increase their anxiety.

# Parents Top Tips continued

- Being informed, but not overexposed – knowing the facts can reduce anxiety, but take a break if consuming media is increasing your anxiety.
- Focus on the here and now – remind yourself and your child/ren that you are doing your part to minimise the risks by washing your hands and keeping your home clean and practicing social distancing and staying at home.
- Be aware if you notice your thoughts are becoming more about the “what ifs” – it can help to set aside some time to practice ‘mindfulness’- this is a relaxation tool which can help you to maintain an awareness of your thoughts and feelings in the present moment and not become consumed with the future or the past. You can practice mindfulness on your own or with your child/ren <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsy2L9VvX90>
- Structure the day – your previous routine may not be possible and a new routine may need to be established. Building a routine that involves exercise, regular healthy meals and adequate sleep (getting up and going to bed at normal times) is essential to regulating ones mood and worries. Children benefit, especially during times of stress, from structure and routine of knowing what is going to happen and when.
- Periodically check in with your child/ren, when things are calm and undistracted, by gently asking how they are feeling and responding in a comforting way. Anxiety could appear as reassurance seeking behaviour, reluctance to separate from parents, physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches, moodiness and irritability, tantrums or meltdowns and/or trouble sleeping.
- For younger children, a feeling chart could be used, which is a tool which can help children to communicate how they are feeling

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/c4/01/86/c4018608c3c985bb60f0a918f62f6167--reading-response-journals-writing-journals.jpg>

- You could also use a traffic light chart to help your child to share how intense his/her feelings are – a red light indicates they are feeling overwhelmed, amber light is medium and green light means he/she is ok [https://images-eu.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/81J250dyuvL.\\_AC\\_SY300\\_QL70\\_ML2\\_.jpg](https://images-eu.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/81J250dyuvL._AC_SY300_QL70_ML2_.jpg)
- It can be helpful to have a dedicated worry time for your child or you could make a ‘worry box’ with them (any box will do – an old shoe box is ideal, which your child can decorate, make a slot in it so that your child can post their worries into it - ensuring the lid can be removed to empty the box) whereby they could put their worries in a special place so that they can be relieved of those worries outside of dedicated worry time.
- Look for the positives – many families are spending lots of time together, playing games, laughing together, communicating with one another. During these difficult times, there are also many silver linings!

# Professor Wellbrain

Professor Wellbrain has flown by with some science about why we experience anxiety and worry and what this might feel like in the body.

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that we all experience at times, it is often used to describe when we feel 'irritable', 'nervous' or tense. It is completely normal for children, young people and adults to feel anxiety and worry about situations.



Anxiety is a natural response caused by the “fight or flight” hormone called Adrenaline, it is released from the Adrenal Glands positioned just above the kidneys. Fight or flight is an evolutionary, physiological reaction which prepares your body and mind to protect ourselves and manage situations where we perceive a threat. When we have encountered a specific situation before we remember how we managed it and are more likely to repeat the response. However during these uncertain times, we may be encountering new situations and not have a known response for dealing with it, thus increasing the level of anxiety or worry felt.

The fight or flight response is what our body automatically does to prepare to take action:

- Fight (face the danger)
- Flight (run away)



The list below contains some of the things that might be noticed in the body, when preparing for fight or flight:

- Heart beating faster
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness or light headed
- Feeling sick or “butterflies” in tummy
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Breathing fast
- Tensed muscles
- Dry mouth

Sometimes these physical feelings might exacerbate the level of worry felt, however it is important to remember that these physical feelings are a normal part of the fight or flight response.

The NHS has put together some information about anxiety in children, how parents can help and when it might be helpful to seek further support. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety-disorders-in-children/>

# Good News Story

New Banksy artwork has appeared at Southampton General Hospital providing a moral boost and giving people a chance to pause and reflect when appreciating the work. It shows a young boy playing with his new hero, a NHS nurse.

Banksy left a note for hospital workers and volunteers reading;

“Thanks for all you’re doing. I hope this brightens the place up a bit, even if it’s only black and white”. In the autumn the painting is going to be auctioned to raise money for the NHS.



## Activity of the Week

### Thumb and finger pressing technique

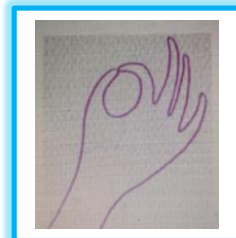
Turn hands over with palms facing upwards  
– example shows left hand.

Complete the sequence on both hands.

Begin with one hand then swap to the other hand.

When you become confident try doing both hands together.

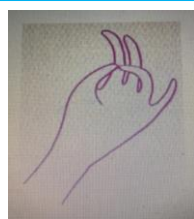
Once you gain the sequence of finger to thumb pressing try adding a saying such as ‘my name is’ then add your name for the last finger.



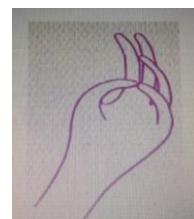
**1. Thumb to pointer finger – say ‘my’**



**2. Thumb to middle finger – say ‘my name’**



**3. Thumb to ring finger – say ‘my name is’**



**4. Thumb to little finger – say ‘my name is ,**

Repeat the sequence using both hands at the same time for 6 rounds.  
You can say the words out loud, whisper or silently in your head.

You can practice this when you are feeling worried, upset or any time you want to.  
Maybe as a family you could set a time in the day to practice together.

# Keeping Active

## Banana Posture

Stand up tall, pull your tummy in and put your arms above your head moving slowly from side to side, pulling your tummy in as you move. This posture will straighten and stretch the whole body.

Stretching relaxes the muscles, this is a good posture to do in the morning to wake you up and before bed to release and let go of any tension.



## Candle Posture

Lie on the floor on your back making sure your bottom is up against the wall. With legs up and against the wall, you can either have our arms alongside your body or rest your hands on your belly. Do whichever is the most relaxing. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Hang there for 5-10 minutes to calm you mind.



If you get fizzy feeling in your feet reduce the time with legs up the wall.

This posture allows the body and mind to relax, reduces anxiety, relieves stress and tension. Lying in this posture your heart gets a rest, it doesn't have to pump blood around your body so hard. This means our heart rate slows down. Practising this posture before bed can help us fall asleep and stay asleep. Practice regularly and you will see some benefits.

## Tree Posture

Standing tall with feet facing forward, place left heel of foot against right ankle with toes touching the floor. Lift your arms up towards the sky and press the hands together above the head. If you can pull your tummy muscles in this will help you balance.

See if you can count to 10 whilst holding your posture.

Repeat this with the right foot.

The more you practice this try holding it for longer.

Don't worry if you wobble, tree branches sway when it's windy.

This is a great posture to improve balance, coordination and strengthening ankles and feet. If you are finding it hard to focus or feel motivated then this posture will help to improve these.



## Contact us

If you have any questions or queries for the  
Southampton MHST Team please email us at;  
**[SouthamptonMHST@Solent.nhs.uk](mailto:SouthamptonMHST@Solent.nhs.uk)**



# Useful Services and Websites for Parents and Young People

Please see the details of the following services that may also be able to offer you and your child advice and support. Please note that during this unprecedented time services have had to change the way they work and offer support, so please contact the service directly to find out what is currently on offer.

## THE SOLENT WEST CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE (CAMHS):

If your child is currently receiving a service from CAMHS, a duty line for advice in the event of deterioration in your child / young person's mental health is available. Please request to speak to the duty worker on 0300 123 6661. You are also able to contact the Behaviour Helpline for advice and strategies with managing challenging behaviour on 0300 123 6661, your contact details will be taken and a Behaviour Advisor will return your call within 1 week. **Please be aware that in the current situation there may be a slight delay in responding to duty calls.**

**The Public Health Nursing (PHN) Service** offers support to children, young people and their families who live in Southampton. The team is made up of Nurses, Emotional Health and Wellbeing workers and PHN Assistants; who can offer support for a wide range of health issues such as growth concerns, support with long term conditions, sleep problems, continence issues, general anxiety and much more. They have a confidential text messaging service called Solent Pulse where you can text any health questions and have them answered by a nurse. They are currently offering support through telephone calls, emails, text messages and video calling to comply with social distancing rules. If you would like to contact PHN for support please use one of the methods below:

Phone: 0300 123 6661 Solent Pulse: 07491 163278

Website: <https://what0-18.nhs.uk/solent/school-nursing>

Email: [snhs.publichealthnursingsouthampton@nhs.net](mailto:snhs.publichealthnursingsouthampton@nhs.net)

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

**Southampton Multi-Agency Support Hub:** 02380 833336  
(Safeguarding advice & parenting support).

**Samaritans:** Free phone 116 123

**Parentline (24 hour advice):** 0808 800 2222

**Child line:** 0800 1111

**NHS direct:** 111 – non emergency helpline

**SANE mental health help line (every day 16.30-22.30)** 0300 304 7000

**Young Minds help line (Mon-Fri 9.30-4pm)** 0808 802 5544

## USEFUL WEBSITES – UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOMS, ADVICE AND SELF-HELP:

- <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/> - This covers numerous 'symptoms' of developmental disorders and mental health conditions. It also has a lot of helpful advice ranging from 'online safety' to 'getting children to eat greens'. Mixture of articles and short videos.
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) – information and advice for young people, parents and professionals, includes a telephone advice line and videos. This website covers emotional health, mental health conditions and neurodevelopmental disorders e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- [http://www.sane.org.uk/resources/mental\\_health\\_conditions/](http://www.sane.org.uk/resources/mental_health_conditions/) - information and advice, includes resources and useful leaflets to manage symptoms of many mental health symptoms. It also has online forums and a telephone advice line (above).
- [www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk) – this website is an invaluable resource containing free downloadable activities and videos for you to support your child to manage their emotional and mental health.
- <http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/> - Similar to 'getselfhelp'.
- **Selected mobile phone 'apps'** to help manage symptoms can be viewed here, although please consider age appropriateness: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-health-apps.aspx> (Or type 'Apps for Mental Health – NHS Choices into an internet search engine.)

# Useful Services continued

**NO LIMITS ADVICE PROJECT** – <https://nolimitshelp.org.uk/> Contact Phone: 02380 224 224 – 13 The High Street, Southampton, SO17 1XN Email: [enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk)

**Please contact the service via telephone, email or ‘drop-in’ to the advice centre.**

The No Limits service offer advice and support to young people under the age of 26 years on many issues, including: housing, employment, money management advice, social support, symptoms of mental health, counselling for emotional ill-health, sexual health guidance, drug and alcohol support, victims and perpetrators of crime, plus much more.

## **SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL PARENTING ADVICE AND SUPPORT:**

<http://sid.southampton.gov.uk/kb5/southampton/directory/results.action?familychannel=8-7-1> – Please access this website to view a range of parenting support courses in Southampton. Or go into Southampton City Council’s website and type ‘families’ into the search bar.

Please also contact the Southampton City Council MASH Team on the telephone number above for further advice around services and parenting support.

## **RE:MINDS:**

A parent-led support group for families of children with autism or mental health issues.

<https://www.reminds.org.uk/> With a closed Facebook group of over 600 members -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/reminds>

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:**

[The Buzz Network](#) - a group for Southampton parents/carers of children with disabilities/special needs. It is open to children with any disability from ADHD to visual impairments, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

<http://sid.southampton.gov.uk> – type ‘Buzz Network’ into the search engine for contact details.

## **CHILDREN WITH SUSPECTED AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS** <https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/> -

Autism Hampshire: Information, Advice, ‘Needs Assessment’ and support. Community Access, Southampton Office -1648 Parkway, Whiteley, PO15 7AH, Tel: 02380 766162 Email:

[communityaccess@autismhampshire.org.uk](mailto:communityaccess@autismhampshire.org.uk)

## **BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES:**

- <http://www.theredlipstickfoundation.org/> - The Red Lipstick Foundation are here to offer services to families in Hampshire who have been bereaved by suicide or immediate family members following a person’s sudden death.
- <http://www.simonsays.org.uk/> - Tel: 08453 055 744 - Bereavement service for Children.
- <http://www.cruse.org.uk/?gclid=CMmGptiMktMCFYWRGwoduC0Ejw> - National Bereavement Service.

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES:**

- <https://www.hamptontrust.org.uk/our-programmes/> - support projects for those who have perpetrated domestic abuse, and, adults and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.
- <https://www.yellowdoor.org.uk/> - Telephone: 023 8063 6313 - support project for adults and young people who have experienced physical and or sexual abuse.