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29th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Your Children's Mental Health and well-being matters to us at Eastry CEP School

During week commencing **1st February**, the world celebrates 'Children's Mental Health Day 2021'. This year's theme is 'Express Yourself'. To help celebrate this we would like the children at home and in school to **dress up on Thursday 4th February**. Children can dress to expresses their personality and self. Children in school will need to dress warmly. If they have PE on this day please wear clothes which will still allow them to access their PE lesson safely.

Mental health remains a much talked about subject, even more so due to the current circumstances at the moment. We hear the numbers of people (both children and adults) affected on the news and wonder how we can better support those that are suffering. Some sufferers are closer to home than we are aware of and the more support networks there are, the more likely help will reach those that need it. There are lots of people struggling with their mental health but one of the main barriers is speaking out so they suffer, with others blissfully unaware. I wonder whether as a school community we can further build relationships so that we have a support network of our own to best support ours and our children's mental health. I know that lots of our parents already have their support networks with other parents and it must feel excellent, having that sense of togetherness through all the challenges that you face.

I just have a handful of things for you to think about, both as an adult or a child.

I wonder when the last time was that you asked someone how they were, or someone asked you? Did you have the time to listen/explain or did you fall into the trap of saying, "I'm okay thanks, you?" and lose that moment to open up and have a conversation.

I wonder when you last had some time to reflect on things that you are grateful or thankful for? There are lots of frustrating regulations at the moment, but encouraging ourselves to think of the positives is important.

I wonder when the last time was that you took a picture that captured happiness with family, friends or others that you care about?

I wonder when you were last able to take a moment to yourself?

With life the way it is, there is always something on everyone's mind. When will I fit that in? How can I support my children with their home learning? How am I going to get them there on time? When am I going to see my friends again? What will we do next weekend? It is easy to keep looking into the future, forward planning, I know I am definitely someone who falls for this. I am challenging myself this year to think more about the here and now. I wonder what target you could set yourselves.

I would like to challenge everyone to thinking about **5 strategies to controlling your mental health** taken straight from the NHS website (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/):

1. Connect with people
2. Be physically active
3. Learn new skills
4. Give to others
5. Pay attention to the present

Our children

Now, to something that we all hold at the highest importance, the health and well-being of our/your children. Giving credit to the children, some have come into school with lots of regulations and restrictions, but have taken them all in their stride. Others of you have had to adapt to a new learning style at home. What incredible young individuals we have at Eastry school, taking it all in their stride! We have children aspiring to achieve their best, showing excellent perseverance and above all thoroughly engaging in the curriculum again with their resilience being challenged from time to time.

Opportunities to do things that they would have done normally (school trips, gathering for collective worship, extra-curricular clubs), have had to take a back seat but this has enabled the development of new opportunities (virtual gatherings, outdoor learning on our doorstep), showcased on our website and dojo with smiles! Please remember that it is better for us all if we concentrate on the many positives in our everyday lives and push the negatives to one side.

For week commencing 1st February your teachers will send out some activities to support your child. As a community we will be participating in bringing awareness to children's mental health. If you would like to access any of the free resources before the 1st February the link is: https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/

Look after yourselves.

Look after each other.

Miss Ward
Year 5 Class Teacher

P.S. Just to remind you that our Family Liaison Officer, Tracy Inglis, is in school on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If you feel that you need a 'listening ear', then please do not hesitate to contact her. You can telephone her of send her a private message on class dojo.

Top tips to support children and young people

Be there to listen

Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it. Find out how to create a space where they will open up.

How to start a conversation with your child

Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour, and try to help them work through difficulties. It's not always easy when faced with challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why.

Help with difficult behaviour and emotions

Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and the things important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.

Encourage their interests

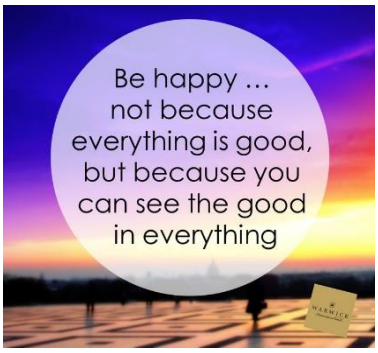
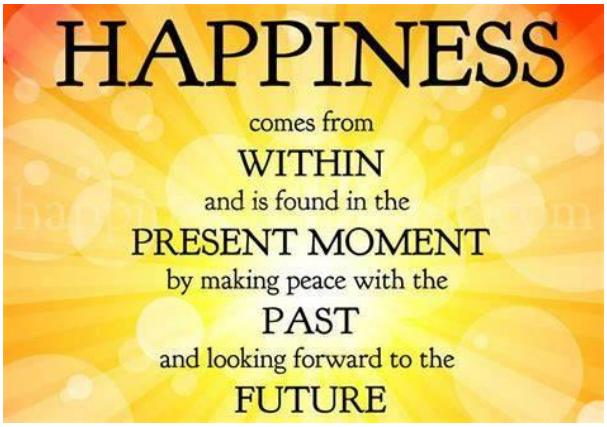
Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team help connect us with others and are important ways we can all help our mental health. Support and encourage them to explore their interests, whatever they are.

Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them process and work through their emotions in a more constructive way.

The Anna Freud Centre support guide

Build positive routines

We know it has not been easy recently, but try to reintroduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important – try to get them back into routines that fit with school or college.

Sleep tips for children