

Building Mental Fitness - Covid19 Support guide for parents

Hello and thank you for getting in touch. We hope you are ok at this challenging time and we are here to support you however we can.

What is Building Mental Fitness?

- Proactive self-care strategies to keep your brain and emotional health in great shape and help prevent mental health issues from escalating, alongside a differentiated yoga program.

What you need to know at this challenging time?

- Firstly remember that **'It is ok to not be ok'** for you and your children.
- Everybody struggles from time to time, particularly at this challenging time so try and shift your mindset from they are mentally struggling to where is your child today?
- How they will feel will depend on their situation & circumstances.
- At the moment, life is a real rollercoaster of ups and downs for everyone so hang on in there and things will get better for all of you.
- Some days you will thrive as a family, others will be a real struggle.
- The more you take proactive action to protect and build you and your child's mental fitness the better you will all feel and it is a great opportunity to become closer as a family.
- Put your oxygen mask on first – **make time for your own health** – you will be able to look after your loved ones much more effectively if you do.
- If you or your child is struggling in multiple situations on a daily basis then please take them to the doctors.

The 6 best things you can do to support your children:

1. **Encourage regular physical activity. Aim for 60 minutes per day but anything is better than nothing.**
 - Have a wander around & stretch between online lessons.
 - Try and get your child outside for 3 x 30 minutes of Physical Activity in daylight for maximum health benefits.
 - We have included a physical activity menu at the end of this support sheet that they can choose from whatever their confidence level.



- 2. Routines are really important, we need them to give us certainty when there is so much uncertainty, so try and aim for your child to get 8-10 hours of sleep per night by going to bed and getting up at the same time.**
 - Make their room as dark and comfortable as possible.
 - Get them to avoid electronics 2 hours before bed time.
 - Get them a red light if they need a lamp.
 - Get them to practise deep breathing to enable their brain to calm down.
- 3. Encourage your child to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day minimum.**
 - Have they got a water bottle on hand throughout the day?
 - Encourage your child to take regular sips from it.
 - Get them to check the colour of their urine, the clearer the better.
 - It will help their body to function more effectively and reduce the chances of headaches.
- 4. Practise mindfulness activities (Body scanning, journaling, gratitude tasks, being kind to others)**
 - Sit around the dinner table and explain 5 things you are each grateful for today to focus on the positives and not just the negatives.
 - Practise deep breathing to relax – breathe in for 3 seconds, hold for 4 seconds then breathe out for 5 seconds. Do this for 2 minutes at a time and then build up aiming for 5 minutes.
 - It will help calm their brain stem which stimulates the fight, flight, fright response and enables them to use the higher parts of their brain that controls their emotions, thoughts, and feelings.
- 5. Limit social media & screen time particularly at night.**
 - Social media is designed to addict us and can lead to loneliness, low self-esteem, isolation, anxiety and depression.
 - Explain to your child that social media is not real life, people do not post about the bad things in their life usually, just the good.
 - Encourage your child to turn off their notifications.
 - Watch the ‘Social dilemma’ documentary as a family and discuss what you thought of it.
 - If they have to be on screens can you get them some blue light glasses to protect their eyes, encourage them to take regular breaks every 20 minutes, and get them to explain what the purpose is of going on the phone.
 - If they have a good reason fine but if they are just scrolling for the sake of it, it could be a good time to put it down and go for a walk.
- 6. Reduce their junk food where you can and help them eat 5 or more fruit and vegetables.**
 - Set them the challenge of eating the rainbow colours every day in the fruit and vegetables they consume.

Building your child's confidence

At the foundation of the mental fitness pyramid is self-confidence. Sit down with your child and write down the answers to these questions:

- [1] What are the things they feel they are good at?
- [2] Where have they had personal success before?
- [3] What do people give them compliments for?
- [4] Write down 5 things you love about your child?.



Encourage your child to think of these on a regular basis and to hold on to these if they feel low in confidence.

The four happiness chemicals - Get your daily D.O.S.E

There are 4 chemicals that our bodies produce that increase our happiness, they are:

- Dopamine (makes us feel rewarded)
- Oxytocin (makes us feel loved)
- Serotonin (stabilises our mood)
- Endorphin (reduces feelings of pain)



If your child is feeling any of these emotions, get them to select an activity from the menu below.

Unmotivated	Unloved	Low in confidence & mood	In pain
Complete a task like painting a picture or reading a book	Play with a pet such as a dog	Take part in exercise such as a run, swim, yoga or cycle	Take part in exercise
Do a self-care activity like painting your nails or having a relaxing bath	Hug a family member	Meditate or complete some mindfulness activities	Eat dark chocolate
Celebrate little wins like completing a to-do list	Listen to their favourite music	Get outside in the sunshine	Laugh with friends
Take part in exercise	Do something nice for someone like giving them a compliment	Take a walk in nature	Watch a comedy

Physical Activity Menu

Pick any activity from the tasty menu below, remember anything is better than nothing and there is something for everyone's tastes:

(1) Body coach circuit training with Jo Wicks- click on the link below and complete this circuit daily. Record your repetitions for each station and look to beat your score each session to apply progressive overload to get stronger and fitter. He has more videos on youtube if you fancy trying a different work out.

<https://youtu.be/oiTaFviEt74>

(2) If Dance is your passion, click on the just dance link below, pick a character and go for it. Work up a sweat as you have a great time, then pick your next favourite song and go again. Record how many songs you dance to in one session then try and beat it the next day.

https://youtu.be/gCzgc_RelBA

(3) Give Yoga a try if you want to develop your mental health, strength and flexibility. Go to youtube and search for the following depending on what you are looking for:

Yoga with Adriene – General target: Teenage girls and ladies

Man Flow Yoga – General target: Teenage boys and men

Cosmic Kids Yoga – General target: Primary age children

(4) If you've got a skipping rope or a hula hoop at home have a quick blast on that to get your physical activity levels up and smash the 60 minute challenge. Record how many minutes you work for then beat it the next day.

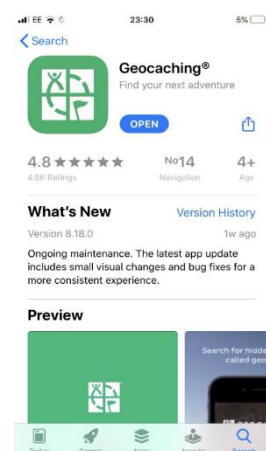
(5) Alternatively, you could go for a walk with your dog, a jog with your friends or a bike ride. We have got some beautiful parks, woodlands and beaches in Norfolk so get out there and explore and get some fresh air in your lungs. Record how many minutes you are out for then beat it the next day.

(6) If Outdoor Adventure Activity is your thing then download the Geocaching app for free and go on an adventure as a family to find the clues.

Handy tip:

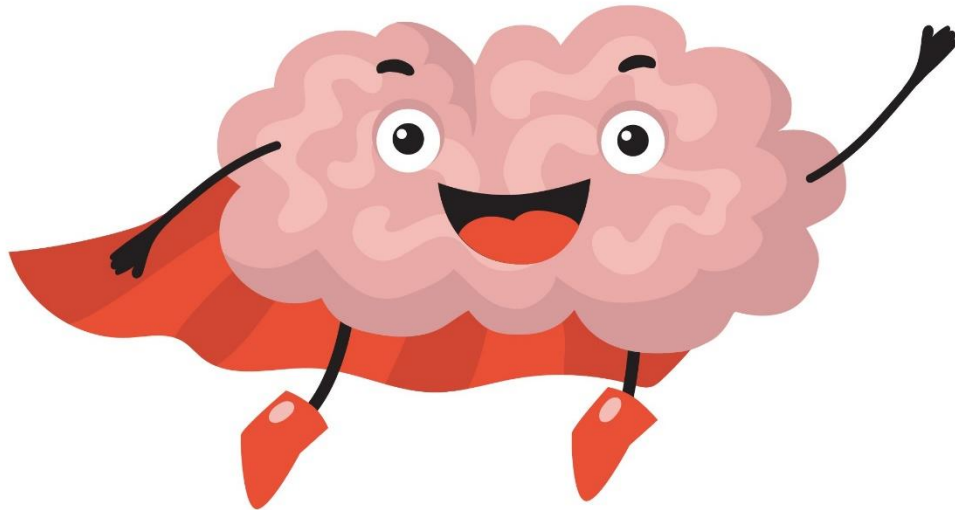
Try and do a bit more each day so you apply the principle of progressive overload to get stronger and fitter.

Good luck, remember to wash your hands thoroughly, practise social distancing and regularly drink water to give yourself the best chance of remaining healthy.



Next steps:

- We hope you found this support guide useful during this challenging time.
- Please get in contact with us with your feedback.
- Please let your child's teachers know about us so that more young people and their teachers can benefit from our 'Building Mental Fitness' course.
- We have got a secondary school course available at the moment and a primary course being launched at the end of February 2021 starring Bobby the Brain who will take your child on their mental health journey.



In the course your child will learn about:

The mental health continuum and how they can check in with where they are at each day, body scanning, journaling, building confidence and kindness, using worries as a positive, creating a vision of their dream life, healthy & unhealthy habits and how to access the 4 happiness chemicals for improved mental health.

- Alternatively subscribe to our website and receive our complimentary monthly newsletter to find out our latest tips on transforming the life chances of our young people.
- Our January newsletter contains some fascinating videos into the effects of light on health among other items, you can view this in our blog section at www.futureaction.co.uk

We wish you and your family well, stay safe and best wishes.

Love from all the team at Future Action