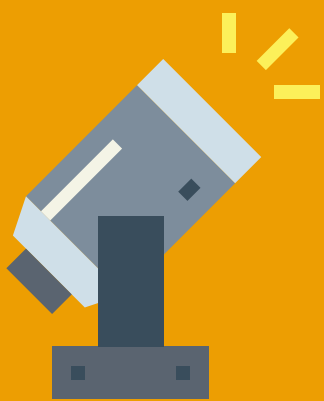


CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

1st - 7th February 2021



Tips and activities for children in and out of school and the staff who support them.



At The Beck, we have put together ideas for schools to use with children and staff throughout children's mental health week 2021, as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on mental health, and how expressing ourselves can have a positive effect on our wellbeing

The Feelings Bottle

**Why is it important to express our feelings?
What happens if we keep everything inside?**

As an introduction to expressing feelings, using the metaphor of bubbly lemonade can help explain to children what can happen when we keep things inside, and why talking to others, drawing feelings and other forms of expression are important. Then brainstorm ways we can express ourselves safely, to let our feelings out, and feel better.

"We all have thoughts and feelings that we can't see. We could think of these as bubbles. Every day we have these thoughts and feelings filling up our invisible feelings bottle, almost like little bubbles in lemonade. These might be big worries or just small thoughts, but every day our bottle gets filled with more bubbles and gets fuller and fuller.

Now, imagine if we didn't express these thoughts and feelings, or let them out by telling people. Our bottle would get really full of feelings... and imagine the lemonade started shaking about inside... all the bubbles would come firing out of the top like a big explosive feelings volcano!! This happens to us all from time to time.
Has this ever happened to you?

So, to stop all our feelings and worries getting too much and spilling out the top of our bottle, we need to find ways to let them out slowly, every day. Lets think of some ways we can do this"

Read more about ways to help children express themselves



Self Expression Art Activities

How's the weather?

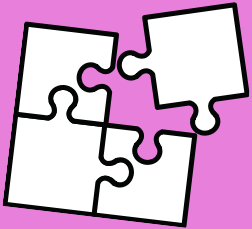
If your feelings right now were weather, what kind of weather would it be? Sunny and clear? Rainy and cloudy? Perhaps a snow storm is coming through or a rainbow is on its way.

This activity allows children to express their current feelings without the need for words, and allow for normalising emotions, and discussion around feelings as visitors, which can change as often as the weather.





This quick and simple art project can bring a school together even through these times of separation and allow for a celebration of differences.



Children each decorate a paper jigsaw shape in any way to express themselves. They might fill it with words that describe them, draw a picture of their favourite things, or anything that makes them who they are. In the end these all get brought together at the end of the week for a celebratory wall display.

Paper bag puppets

Young people can create an inside outside puppet, with the outside representing who they show to the world- what others see, what they know about us, how we express ourselves.



Written inside the bag (or acknowledged inside the mind if this feels more comfortable) can be things that maybe we keep hidden such as interests, talents and qualities.



What stops us from expressing these things to others? What might happen if we did?



Focus on your senses



At times of overwhelm as adults, we can ground ourselves by pausing and thinking of 5 things we can see, 5 things we can hear and 5 things we can smell.

To introduce this for children, try a mindful walk in your outside space and ask them to take in what they notice in their senses.

When the walk is finished, talk to the class about how you all experienced your walk.

What differences are there?

Was it easy just to focus on your senses and not think about other things?

How do you feel now?

Introduce this as a way to calm ourselves when we feel our minds getting busy. This could become a regular classroom activity to promote mindfulness.

Happy Thoughts

Practicing a little gratitude has big rewards. Gratitude brings happiness, improved sleep, releases oxytocin and soothes the threat system. Studies show children are more generous when they are feeling grateful, and it can improve resilience and life satisfaction in teenagers.



Create a Gratitude tree, or wall in the classroom. Encourage the children to write down 3 good things that have happened in the last 24 hours, 3 small victories and 1 thing you are grateful for yourself. Home schoolers can also get involved in this.

By the end of Children's mental health week you can reflect on all the positive expressions, and if this has had an effect on wellbeing.

Feel The Music



Follow My Leader

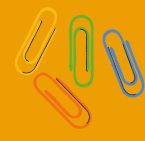
We can communicate through making music.

Play follow my leader by asking the children to play at the same pace as you. Take it in turns to be leader, with the class following the rhythm of the leader. How did it feel to be heard in this way?



Play different types of music while you work. What emotions may the artists have been expressing?

Mental Health Week Ideas For Staff



This year more than ever, school staff need to support their own mental health too. As the saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup.

Create a **gratitude display** for staff to post positive comments and messages of thanks using the starter ideas below;

I feel supported when....
Thank you to.....
I am grateful for.....
It makes my day when.....



Staff Feelings Tree

Encourage the team to anonymously write how they are feeling on the branches of the tree. Knowing others share feelings and experiences can promote connection and reduce feelings of isolation during difficult times and can be used to start open discussions during wellbeing meetings.

SELF - CARE

♥ Visualisation-

Think of a place or situation that you find relaxing; a beach, walking in nature etc. Use your imagination to visualise every small detail of this calming place, and explore it through every sense. What can you hear? What are the scents? Allow your body to relax as if you are really there.

IS IMPORTANT

♥ **Relaxation** - It might be a relaxing bath, listening to your favourite music, going for a walk. Make time for yourself and treat yourself kindly.

♥ **Be your own best friend** - Take a minute to notice perfectionism and how you talk to yourself. Would you speak to your best friend this way? Be aware of negative self talk and treat yourself as you would others.

♥ Get re-acquainted with your inner child

Think back to being a child and the carefree things you used to love to do. Bring some of that innocent playfulness back into your life by jumping into puddles with your wellies, putting on your favourite music and dancing, writing a story without worrying what anyone will think of it or going back a hobby that you left behind

♥ Take a 2 minute boost...

Breathe in through your nose whilst counting to 5, then let it flow out through your mouth 7 seconds. Repeat.

Adopt the superhero pose with a straight torso and hands on your hips - **You've got this.**

