

Parent/Carer Engagement
Supporting Emotional and Mental Wellbeing
in our Young People

Monday 29th January 2024

Diana Mason

PTC Support, Linlithgow Academy – 7 years

PT Guidance Craigie High, Dundee – 14 years

Mum (two girls) – 18 years!

Children's Mental Health Week 2024



5th–11th February 2024
'My Voice Matters'

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A riddle

I can cause distress and make
you feel low, But taking deep
breaths can help me go. What
am I?

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Answer

Stress

It happens to us all.

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Another riddle

I am a maze of worries and doubts,
spinning around in never-ending bouts.
I keep you awake in the dead of night,
but with self-compassion, you can find
respite. What am I?

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Answer

Overthinking

We all do it.

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What are your hopes for this
session?

Please note on the whiteboard
and turn this over for later.

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Session Aims

- Your hopes
- Did you know?
- What young people want from school
- Support available in school
- Most frequent concerns raised in school
- How to support these concerns
- What young people want from parents/carers
- Sources of support
- Back to your hopes and questions

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On the other side of your whiteboard, note the following:

1. What you think are the most common mental health issues in young people.
2. What you think are the best ways to support your young person.

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Did you know?

- 1 in 6 children and young people now have a diagnosable mental health condition
- Half of mental health issues develop by age 14
- Children and young people with mental health difficulties go an average of 10 years between becoming unwell and getting help
- Almost a million children and young people accessed mental health services in 2021–22
- The most common mental health problems among young people are emotional disorders, including anxiety and depression

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Did you know?

There is a strong link between routine and mental health.

- Routines can help reduce the build-up of stress.
- They can provide a sense of structure and rhythm.
- Eating, exercise, sleep – Not just two year olds that tantrums as a result of this!
- Family time – safe times to talk.
- Avoiding routine might tell you something is wrong.

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Did you know?

There is a strong link between education and mental health. Compared to those unlikely to have a mental health condition, children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition are:

- 45% less likely to feel they can be themselves at school
- 27% less likely to enjoy their learning
- 20% less likely to have at least one friend at school.

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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their school?

1. We want mental health to be talked about more in school to remove the taboo around it– not just one-off assemblies or **PSHE** lessons.
2. We want you to acknowledge our mental health. Sometimes we say we're stressed with homework and it seems like all our teachers care about is the deadline, not how we're feeling.
3. If you're talking about mental health, make it clear that mental health isn't a bad thing.

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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their school?

4. Language like ‘you have to tell someone’ puts pressure on us, and can put us off – even if you don’t mean to.
5. Make our assemblies or lessons on mental health more interactive – let us ask more questions, do a quiz, role play – then we’ll want to engage more.
6. Give us opportunities to lead lessons on mental health ourselves. We have lots of ideas, and might know more than you think – we also have lots of advice to give.

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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their school?

7. Stop making out like social media is responsible for all of our problems. We know there are challenges with social media, but when we use it carefully it can help us connect with friends and find advice and support when we're struggling.
8. If we're being bullied or having issues with friends, don't just focus on punishing the other person or fixing it. Make the time to talk about our feelings.

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What support is there in school?

- Any trusted adult
- Pastoral Support Worker (non-teaching)
- House Head
- Mental Health First Aiders – staff with purple lanyards
- **SMILE** Counsellor
- Health & Wellbeing Champs
- Mentors in Violence Prevention
- LYPP Anxiety group/mentoring
- Friends

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What concerns are raised most frequently in school?

- Anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Stress
- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts

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How can we support Anxiety?



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How can we support Anxiety & Feeling Overwhelmed?

- 7/11 Breathing
- 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique
- Talk about it – identify source of anxiety
- Journal/Diary
- Mindfulness
- Cut out stimulants

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How can we support Stress?

- Sleep hygiene
- Exercise
- Talking – avoid comparisons
- Make time away from school studies/exam pressure
- Get outside
- Journal/Diary
- Mindfulness

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How can we support Self-harm? What is it?

- Cutting
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Not eating, over-eating, or forcing yourself to throw up
- Spending all your time on addictive behaviours e.g. gaming, social media, gambling
- Over-exercising and/or exercising when you are injured
- Biting, hitting or burning yourself
- Hitting walls
- Getting into situations on purpose where you risk getting hurt, including fights or risky sexual behaviour

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Why do young people do this?

- Expression of feelings
- To reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- Gaining a sense of control
- Punishment for feelings or experiences
- Expression of suicidal feelings or thoughts

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Case Study – Charlotte, 22, self-harmed for 8 years:

- “It began as a kind of anxious habit to calm me down. I never intended to hurt myself.
- I was doing it for the sense of relief – I felt like the only way I could function if I had that release.
- I was so ashamed that I did it and didn’t want others to see my skin, or my scars. It was hell.
- One day my father walked in on me when I was self-harming, he sat next to me, calmed me down and told me to be safe. He then got me scar oil – which was so thoughtful.
- I haven’t self-harmed for over a year. I have no desire to harm myself in any way, I don’t even drink or smoke any more.”

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From young people's perspective:



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How can we support Self-harm?

- **Communication is key** – this will be tough for everyone. Be patient.
- **Acknowledge their emotions** – answers are not needed.
- **Focus on the now** – avoid questions. Focus on moving forward.
- **Explore alternative coping strategies** – self-harm is a way of coping.
- **Reinforce stability** – remind them you are there for them – no matter what.
- **Maintain normality** – this will help your child feel secure and in control.
- **Create a ‘Safety Plan’** – be practical.
- **Access additional support** – school, GP, online support.

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How can we support Self-harm? – Safety Plan

1. Recognise triggers – acknowledge and act on warning signs
2. Distraction techniques – exercise, talking, ice cubes, flicking hairband, shouting etc.
3. Coping strategies – mindfulness, breathing exercises, 5,4,3,2,1, positive affirmations
4. Support system – who are their trusted people?
5. What to do if self-harm occurs? Tell, clean, support. No judgement.
6. Limit access to harm – medication, alcohol, sharp items etc.

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How can we support Suicidal Thoughts?

- Take their feelings seriously
- Let them know you are glad they told you
- Make sure they are safe
- Try to react calmly
- Listen and empathise with just how bad things feel

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How can we support Suicidal Thoughts?

- Don't try to fix
- Think together about what's making them feel this way
- Try to get a sense of what their thoughts are like
- Reassure you are there
- Create a safety plan
- Access support – school, counselling, GP, A&E

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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their parents/carers?

1. While I won't admit this freely, I want routine and time with you.
2. We don't need to have 'one-off conversations about our mental health' – sometimes a chat on a journey or at bedtime is enough.
3. Please don't worry about trying to fix things for me – I often just need to know you are there for me and understand what I am going through.
4. If you are open with me about your feelings, this can help me to be more open about mine.

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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their parents/carers?

5. I need to know it's okay to talk to you about any and all of my feelings. Please hear what I have to say, without interrupting me.
6. Sometimes I don't want to talk. Please trust that I will come to you (or another grown-up or someone my own age) when I'm ready. Sometimes it's easier for me to talk to someone nearer my own age – because they 'get it'.
7. Please listen to me carefully and acknowledge how I am feeling – it might seem silly to you but what I am going through is important to me.

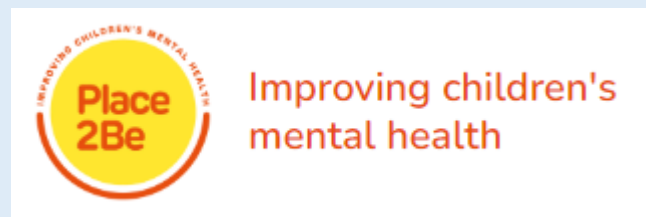
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What do **YOUNG PEOPLE** want from their parents/carers?

8. Playing with pets can make me feel better. Same with playing football, basketball or whatever type of sport I am into.
9. Sometimes a hug is all it takes to make me feel supported.
10. Don't compare my experiences to your own when you were a child.
11. Sometimes I just need you to listen and hear what I'm saying – I don't always need answers (or lectures).
12. I know that this may upset or hurt you too, please understand that I don't mean it.

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Sources of Support



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Sources of Support

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://young.scot/>

<https://www.childrenshealthscotland.org/>

<https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://breathingspace.scot/>

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Back to the start ...

- What were your hopes for this session?
- Answered?
- Discussion points?
- Any further questions?

Supporting Emotional & Mental
Wellbeing - January 25th 2024



Children's Mental Health Week 2024



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'My Voice Matters'