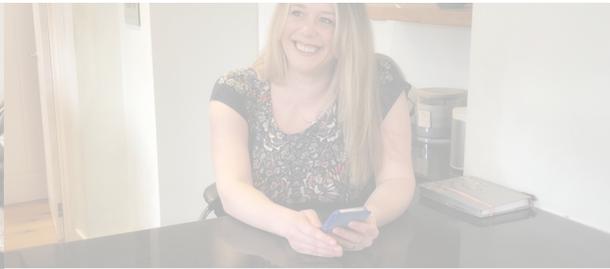
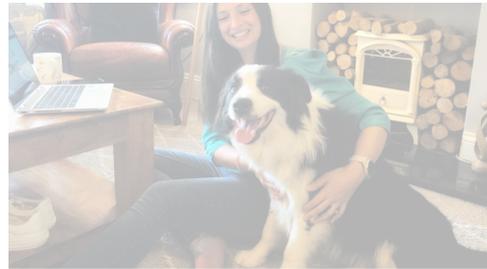
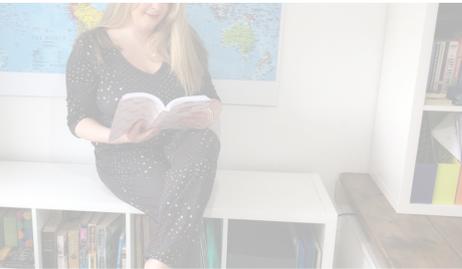


# Dragonfly Connect



2021/22 RESOURCE  
PACK 3/3



# SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



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DRAGONFLY: IMPACT  
EDUCATION



# **A DRAGONFLY: IMPACT EDUCATION RESOURCE**

Welcome to the final support packs included in your *Connect* membership for this academic year. Don't worry...they'll return in the new school year!

Best wishes,  
*Claire & Rachael,*  
*Co-founders*

# CONTENTS

## PART 1

### SAFE SPACES

When children or young people struggle to regulate their emotions, having a safe space to go to can help. In this part you'll find ideas for these spaces.

## PART 2

### HOW TO BE HAPPY

What we think of as 'happiness' isn't the same as long term 'happy'. Here we explore what it means to be happy and give some tips for nurturing this.

## PART 3

### SUPPORTING SIBLINGS

When a child in a family has autism, it affects the whole family. This resource can be shared with families to support siblings of children with autism.

## PART 4

### BODY AND MIND

A useful handout for children to begin to understand the connection between body and mind and how we can look after our health - both mental and physical.

## PART 5

### MENTAL HEALTH CHECK

This handy tool can help to track mood over a day or a week. The important thing is that it raises awareness of what we can do to shift our mood.

# SAFE SPACES

In our work with schools, we've seen some amazing examples of how safe spaces can help move children from states of heightened emotion back to a place of calm. And the best thing is, they provide the structure within the environment to help children and young people make this shift for themselves...essentially scaffolding as they learn how to self-regulate. Over the next couple of pages, we provide some ideas for how to create these spaces in both primary and secondary settings.

## How to Use the Calming Corner

1. Decide how you feel.
2. Set the timer for 5 minutes.
3. Choose a strategy.
4. Try the strategy.
5. When the 5 minutes is up join the class feeling refreshed.



## Calm Down Corner Rules

1. Set Timer for 3 minutes.
2. Choose:  
- Read a book  
- Use a Calm Down Kit  
- Listen to music  
- Hug a stuffed animal
3. Talk to Ms. [Teacher Name] or go back to work.

## BREAK spot

### TAKE A BREAK spot



# PRIMARY - CALM CORNERS

## Calm Corners

- The physical nature of a corner feels safe as we have an evolutionary need to be able to protect ourselves from the back.
- To ensure calm corners work, it's important to have some guidelines for their use and some children may need to practise using them and reflect afterwards on the transition to and from.
- It is important to make sure that other students are not able to stare or giggle at the child in the calm corner as this can reinforce negative behaviours.
- Rules need to be clear for everyone (other children should keep working; give the person privacy and space; not enter the calm corner).

## Ideas for Calming Strategies

- Blank body and thought bubble to label feelings/Velcro cards to stick on or dry wipe pen to write.
- Tangible things like a glitter bottle or stress ball or bubble wrap.
- Suggestions of actions (that have previously been taught) such as breathing, stretching or yoga.
- Colouring sheets and journaling paper.

## How to Create a Calm Corner

- Choose a good spot –not too isolated, but also not too close to things.
- Children need space to calm and refocus, but also have an interest in returning to class. An adult will need good visibility of the space.
- If there is little wall space, use a file or folder and laminate resources to hang on the wall.

## When in the Calm Corner

- Do a feelings check –‘Right now I feel...’
- Set a timer – 3 to 5 minutes.
- Use a calming strategy – ‘To help myself feel better I can...’
- Do a feelings check –‘Now I feel...’
- Use a different calming strategy.
- Go back to work or talk to the teacher.

## Returning to the Classroom

- It may be useful to have re-entry activities that are simple and frustration-free.
- The aim is to have a return that is calm and quick.



# SECONDARY - WELLBEING SPACES

## Wellbeing Spaces



- The choice of space is very important as it needs to be somewhere that the young person feels safe.
- It's important to have some guidelines for their use. Some young people may need to practise using them and reflect afterwards on the transition to and from.
- It is important to make sure that other students are not able to act inappropriately in the space as this can reinforce negative behaviours. Rules need to be clear for everyone.



## How to Create a Wellbeing Space

- Choose a good spot; an adult will need good visibility of the space.
- Young people need space to calm and refocus, but also have an interest in returning to their learning.
- Think about the colours (if you're on a budget you may not have a choice, but if you do blues, greens, some shades of purple and yellow are calming colours).



## Ideas for Calming Strategies

- Blank body and thought bubble sheets to label feelings.
- Tangible things like a stress ball or Rubik's Cube etc.
- Suggestions of actions (that have previously been taught) such as breathing, stretching or yoga.
- Zen colouring sheets and journaling paper or gratitude diary sheets.
- Listen to some music.



## When in the Wellbeing Space

- Shelf-help: this is the perfect space to have a library of resources that students can look through –self help books, leaflets, prompt questions, inspiring quotes or images.
- Do a feelings check –‘Right now I feel...’
- Set a timer – 3 to 5 minutes.
- Use a calming strategy – ‘To help myself feel better I can...’
- Do a feelings check –‘Now I feel...’
- If needed, use a different calming strategy.
- Go back to work or talk to an adult.



## Returning to the Classroom

- It may be useful to have re-entry activities that are simple and frustration-free
- The aim is to have a return that is calm and quick.





'Happiness isn't something we should expect to feel all the time. When we talk about 'long-term happy', what we really mean is a lasting feeling of peace and contentment. This comes from a sense of purpose and feeling that we make a difference in the world.'

## PART 2 - HOW TO BE HAPPY

# WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

The 'World Happiness Report' is usually released in the springtime each year, and ranks 156 countries according to how happy people report themselves to be. The UK currently ranks 15th –so, could be better, but not too shabby! But what is happiness anyway? And where does it come from?

What we think of as 'happiness' actually isn't the same as long term 'happy'. When we think of happiness, we normally think of the temporary high we get from an external 'fix'—be it chocolate or a bit of extra time on the Xbox. True 'happy' is a lasting state of contentment.

Lasting contentment comes from having a sense of purpose: feeling that what you do matters and seeing that your efforts make a difference. Small children quite naturally have this sense of purpose: their mission is to explore, to learn and to create. As they grow however, this purpose seems to dilute into the many distractions and general busy-ness of life. After a while, it can begin to feel like a full-on mission to try and get them motivated by anything other than the PlayStation or latest YouTube videos. This resource offers a few ideas about how we can help them keep this sense of purpose and hang on to their long term happy!



# WHERE CAN THEY FIND IT?

The truth is, you don't 'find' happiness, you grow it. And in a world where increasing numbers of adults have 'lost their happy' and so look for it in external things –their status, their follow count, their possessions, their appearance –how can we help our young people to spot the little seeds of their happiness and nurture them until they bloom?

**'Don't let the dismissive shoulder shrugs put you off – they need to hear it, and it will stay with them.'**

# HOW CAN WE HELP THEM?

Firstly, we can help them to notice the small things. You can do this by pointing out the small things that bring you joy: feeling the sun on the back of your neck, hearing birds in the morning again after the winter, or just being in your dressing gown. Don't let the dismissive shoulder shrugs put you off –they need to hear it, and it will stay with them. The small stuff really does matter, and connecting it to the physical senses fosters mindfulness, which according to the NHS is one of the 5 steps to wellbeing.

Secondly, feeling good at things feels...well, good. Having a sense of purpose and seeing your efforts pay off are both important to our happiness. But first we need to get them to make an effort! This is a bit of a chicken and egg situation because research suggests that we don't need motivation to make an effort, we need to make an effort to become motivated (which is why a bit of initial bribery could be a necessary evil!). More on this on the next page.



# SENSE OF PURPOSE

## Did you know...

 A young person's own expectations of their achievement has the greatest influence on their achievement.

 Young people tend to underestimate what they are able to achieve.

## Getting a child or young person to take the leap...

They might need you to do something with them the first time, if possible, or to hear about when you did something similar.

## Supporting their small successes...

Once you know what their end goal is, help them to plan smaller steps that they can achieve along the way. If they want to start getting up an hour earlier, can they do 15 minutes earlier for a while? Then 30 minutes earlier etc.

We can actually take a lead from one of the many games that seem to have no problem keeping them motivated! In a game like Fortnite, for example:

- What they have to do to succeed is obvious –and success isn't just about reaching 'the end', it's also about lots of individual actions during the game.
- They are engaged in deliberate practice. They are not just aimlessly playing for fun, they use feedback to improve their performance and get better each time.
- There's constant challenge, but also constant feedback about both success and failure. Children don't lose motivation when they repeatedly die in these games, so they won't lose motivation when they're told they've got something wrong, as long as it's balanced so they can see their small successes and their progress along the way.



## PART 2 - HOW TO BE HAPPY

# TOP TIPS



Don't demand 'happy' all the time! People naturally feel a range of emotions and they're all valid. Being allowed to feel how you feel and having that respected is important to that lasting contentment we're after.



Foster their sense of purpose by helping them to achieve their goals. This can be done by supporting them to take small steps towards their goal –whether it's maths homework, basketball or getting out of bed on time, the key is to provide stepping stones to help them move forward.



Help them to see that their efforts make a difference by pointing out their small successes along the way. Praise the progress (however small!). By seeing small successes, they begin to expect more success and their levels of confidence and contentment increase.



Help them to develop their mindfulness by pointing out the small things related to the physical senses (sight/sound/touch/taste/smell) that make you feel happy.



Teach gratitude. Focusing on the things you have to be grateful for has been shown to increase levels of happiness. Encourage children to share one thing from their day, journal or draw a picture of the things from the day that they're grateful for.



# Supporting the siblings of children with autism ~ a guide



# For Parents

First and foremost, it's important to make sure that you have in place the support that you need. Balancing the different needs of siblings is always a challenge, but if one of your children has autism this can be even more demanding. Identify your support network - family, friends, or support groups of other parents who have children with autism. Sometimes these are run by schools or charities such as Contact (<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/listening-ear/>).

Below is a checklist of practical things you can do to support the wellbeing of your child. It's important for children to feel 'heard'. Often they can equate this with feeling loved. A great way to do this is through having special 1:1 time. This can be as simple as going to do the grocery shop just the two of you, or going to get something to eat together. When you have this 1:1 time, ask open questions about how they're feeling and then listen non-judgementally. Don't worry about trying to 'fix' things or what you might say in response. Simply listen and acknowledge what they say and how they feel. You could also ask open questions such as 'what would you like to change about that?' or 'what would make that better for you?'

Take the time to have a conversation with your child about sources of stress for them. It might be that they feel the target of their sibling's aggression, they might feel their own grief and worry about their sibling being autistic and what it means for them, perhaps they feel they need to act as an 'extra parent' or feel pushed out or sidelined. Every child is individual, as is their relationship with their sibling, so it's important to not make assumptions about they feel. Connected to this is establishing what their boundaries are. What does feeling respected look like to them? It might mean having a space that's private, even if that's just a corner of a room, or it might mean that not every outing is a family one, for example if they're in a school play and their sibling would struggle to sit through it quietly.

Often, conflicts arise through misunderstanding. Position yourself as an observer in your family. Notice the different ways family members show affection or irritation through their body language, facial expressions or actions. Translate these non-verbal cues to your children. Perhaps they don't realise that their sibling is trying to show affection when they barge into his/her room. Maybe they don't notice that their sibling needs space when they start to close down and become very quiet.

Finally, offer your child some practical coping strategies for when their sibling has a meltdown. Where can they go? Can they watch TV in their room or put headphones in? Reassure them of the steps you take to deal with the situation, as they may not be obvious or visible. Communicate with school to ensure support is in place for your child, particularly if it is a stressful time at home, homework time is interrupted or sleep is interrupted.

- Have special time
- Identify sources of stress
- Establish what their non-negotiable boundaries are
- Support siblings to learn each other's 'language'
- Plan responses to meltdowns
- Communicate with school



# For Younger Children

Sometimes, people with autism might do things that seem strange.

They might scream, or rock backwards and forwards, or flap their hands. Or perhaps they do something else that seems different.

This might be because they are:

- Excited
- Nervous or scared
- There's a lot going on
- They are trying to relax

Did you know...?

1. People are born with autism, and no one has figured out what causes it.
2. Autism means that your brother or sister learns or behaves differently than you and your friends do.
3. You can't "catch" autism like a cold or the flu.

What's something your brother/sister does that you don't understand?

I think he/she does this because

Now, ask your parents! They can help you to understand

It can be hard when it feels as if your brother or sister doesn't have the same rules as you do, or if they do or say something that upsets you. Make a plan for times when you feel mad or sad - what things make you feel better? Can you ask your mum or dad for some special time?

# For Teens

## Your relationship

It can feel hard not to have the same relationship with your sibling that your friends seem to have with their brothers or sisters.

Remember though, every relationship is different, just like every person is different.

Often, people with autism have a special interest - something they're really passionate about. Could you share in that interest with them? Or find another interest that you could share, for example if you both enjoy the same kind of music, you could spend time together listening to your favorite singers or bands, or maybe you both love cars or football. Whatever it is, try and do things together around that interest. Even if it's something you'd never do with your friends, it's worth giving it a go. If you enjoy it, you could broaden your own horizons as well as having something special to share that's just for the two of you.

## Talking to parents

If you find yourself feeling resentful about your parents not seeming to have time for you, it's important to say something. It can be tricky to have this kind of conversation, so here are some tips:

1. Decide what you're going to say - maybe even write it down beforehand. This can help you to explain yourself in a calm way.
2. Stick to the point. Be really clear about what's bothering you and try not to get sidetracked.
3. Think about what your parents might say in response. Think about how you might respond to their feelings.
4. Know what you want to change - what do you want to get out of the conversation? How can your parents help you to feel better?
5. Listen - remember your parents might have ideas about things that could help too, so keep an open mind.

## Boundaries

It's important to feel like you have a safe space in your home, where you won't be disturbed or have someone messing with your things.

If your brother or sister invade your space, they might not be doing it do deliberately upset you. Try these ideas:

1. Explain clearly which spaces and things are yours.
2. You might need to explain boundaries several times to get your sibling to understand what you mean.
3. Calmly explain it as many times as necessary, without shouting or getting angry.
4. If you still feel your brother or sister is overstepping boundaries, talk to your parents. Maybe you can install a a lock on your door, or find a safe place for things you don't want your sibling to touch.

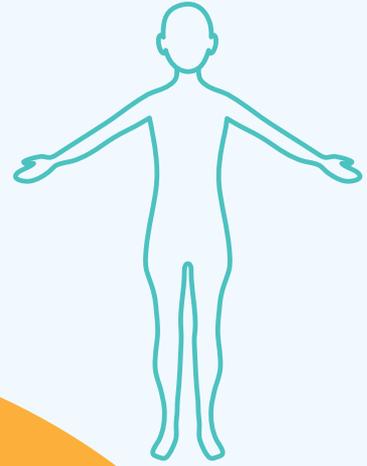


'Looking after our minds is just as important as looking after our bodies. However, although we teach children how to look after their physical health, we're only just starting to realise we need to teach them how to look after their mental health too.'

Feeling fit and well;  
sleeping well; having  
energy.



**Body**



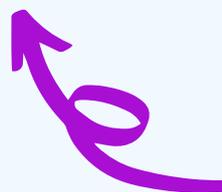
# Our Health

Being healthy means:

- Feeling fit and well
- Feeling like we can deal with challenges
- Knowing how to help ourselves if we feel angry or upset
- Having good friendships
- Enjoying the activities that we usually like
- Being able to help others or make a difference

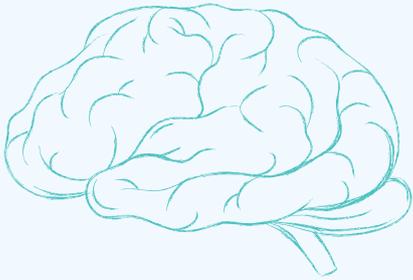


**Mind**



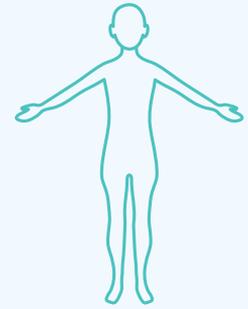
Having thoughts that  
help us; sleeping well;  
enjoying things.

# Looking After Our Health



## Mind

The health of our body affects the health of our mind and the health of our mind affects the health of our body



## Body

- **Connect** - make time to be with friends or family without technology. Watch a film together, or play a board game for example.
  - **Be active** - move your body, maybe dance or play a sport.
  - **Notice** - concentrate on what you can see, hear, smell, touch or taste. Really notice the little things around you.
  - **Give to others** - try to do something small to help someone every day. Even if it's just smiling at them, or helping them carry something.
  - **Keep learning** - find out about the things that interest you or make you feel curious.
- 
- **Sleep well** - go to bed at a sensible time. Even if you find it hard to drop off, rest in bed. Wake up at the same time every day - even weekends!
  - **Be active** - move your body, maybe dance or play a sport.
  - **Drink water** - or unsweetened juice. These are much better for you than fizzy drinks.
  - **Wash everyday** - treat your body like your favourite thing and look after it. Brush your teeth twice a day and wash every morning and night.
  - **Eat well** - eat a rainbow diet - include as many colours as you can. Try new foods - remember it takes time for our taste buds to get used to new flavours!

# Mental Health Spot Check

You might choose to use this tool each day for a week, or use it to track your mood at different points in the same day. The important thing is to reflect on what you are doing at the time/what you were doing that day.

A vertical scale of five mood icons (purple sad, orange sad, yellow neutral, teal happy, green very happy) with a corresponding color-coded bar below each row, ranging from - to +.

- What can you remember about the times when you felt good? What were you doing? Who were you with? Where were you?
- What is one thing you are going to build into your days going forward to boost your mood?

- What can you remember about the times when you felt low? What were you doing? Who were you with? Where were you?
- What boundaries do you want to create to limit these things?



We hope you've found this resource pack useful.



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