

# Mindfulness Monthly



Issue 17: April 2025

Welcome to the Easter edition of 'Mindfulness Monthly'. – it is hard to believe that we are about to enter the final term of the school year already! This month we will be looking at the adolescent brain whilst also learning more about some of our fantastic Thamesmead colleagues.

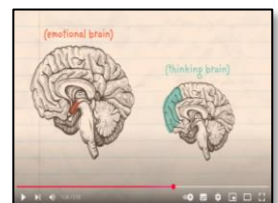
## 'Understanding the Adolescent Brain'

Parenting a teenager can often feel like navigating a maze! It's filled with unexpected turns, emotional roller coasters, and occasional dead ends. As your teen moves through the challenging years of adolescence, their behaviour may sometimes seem confusing or even frustrating. However, much of what's happening is rooted in the profound changes taking place inside their brain. Adolescence is a time of rapid brain development, and understanding this process can help parents navigate the challenges that come with it.

During adolescence, the brain is undergoing significant changes, including **synaptic pruning**, where unused connections are eliminated, and others are strengthened. The **prefrontal cortex**, responsible for decision-making and impulse control, is still maturing, which explains why teens often struggle with planning and making decisions. Meanwhile, the **limbic system**, which governs emotions and rewards, is more active, leading to heightened emotional intensity and a greater desire for rewards, sometimes resulting in risky behaviour. This development can explain why teens may seem moody or impulsive. Their brains are wired to prioritise emotional experiences and social connections, making them particularly sensitive to peer influence. Risk-taking behaviour is common, as their brains are more attuned to rewards than to potential consequences. Their **decision-making** may be more driven by emotions than logic, and their need for independence can lead to conflicts with authority.

As parents, there are several ways to support your teen through these changes. Encouraging **open communication** helps your teen feel heard, while setting **realistic expectations** allows them to make mistakes while learning. Promoting **healthy habits** like good nutrition, sleep, and exercise is crucial for brain development. It's also important to be patient with impulsivity, as these behaviours are part of their brain's development, not intentional disrespect. Technology also plays a significant role in their brain development. Balancing screen time with offline activities helps support emotional and cognitive well-being.

While adolescence can be tough, understanding the brain's development can make it easier to provide the right support, helping your teen grow into a well-adjusted adult. The video hyperlinked opposite (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvk4sqNPa4M>) gives a quick overview on the development of the adolescent brain. Further videos can be found on YouTube. Should you wish to research the biology of the adolescent brain in more detail, you may find Dr Andrew Curran's videos particularly helpful.

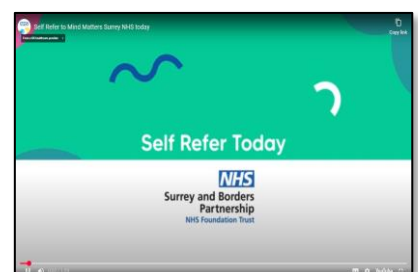


## Website recommendation of the month

### Mind Matters

(<https://www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk/>)

Mind Matters are a local NHS provider offering free and confidential talking therapies to people aged 17+ who are registered with a Surrey GP. They are essentially the adult branch of Mindworks – the service we can refer young people to. Mind Matters offer individual therapies, guided self-help online and group courses to help treat a wide range of mental health issues.



## Thamesmead staff profiles

As with previous editions, every month we learn more about some of our colleagues in school. This month we'll learn more about the fantastic Miss Wickham and Ms Williams;

### What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am the Pastoral Manager for Year 9.

### How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

I have worked at Thamesmead for nearly 3 years.

### Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

Yes, I have. I started my career as a florist. I re-trained to work in offices working as a Personal Assistant to Directors, then re-trained again as an Early Years Practitioner in a children's nursery.

### What do you do to support with your own mental health?

I love walking and nature. I walk most mornings early before I come into work. During the weekends I enjoy visiting parks with my family. It helps me to take time out for myself and relax with my family.



Mrs Smith



Mrs Jones

### What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am the Subject Lead for Design and Technology.

### How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

I have worked at the school for nearly eight years.

### Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

I have had a few different jobs. I was an optical retail assistant, Ministry of Defence engineer, a designer for an engineering company, an accounts clerk, and part of the kitchen staff in fast food restaurant.

### What do you do to support with your own mental health?

I like to speak to friends, family and colleagues, watch comedies, eat chocolate and take a walk.

## Self-care over the holidays

The holidays can sometimes magnify underlying stress or mental health concerns in young people. As a result of this it is important for parents and carers to be mindful of changes in behaviour that may indicate that their teen is struggling. There are several signs to look out for, including; changes in sleep patterns, withdrawal from activities or social interactions, irritability, sudden changes in appetite, or increased feelings of sadness or worry. If these signs persist, it may be helpful to seek guidance from one of the services listed below, or you can of course contact school and a member of staff will come back to you at the start of the new term.

With that being said, parenting through the holidays can also be stressful, and your well-being is just as important as your teen's. Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your teen and helps you better support them. Make time for activities that recharge you, whether it's reading, exercising, or having quiet moments to reflect. Don't forget to ask for help when needed and share responsibilities with others in the family.

We hope you have a lovely Easter, but if you do have any concerns over the break, the following services may be useful;

- **Mindworks** (a 24/7 mental health crisis line is available on (0800) 915 4644
- **Kooth.com** is a free, anonymous and confidential online wellbeing service for young people aged 11-18.
- **Childline** is a free, confidential service for young people. The phone service (0800) 1111 operates between 9am and midnight.

### Well-Being Quote:

**"Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher."**

**Oprah Winfrey**



**Mindworks**  
Surrey

**Mindworks Surrey is the children and young people's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service in Surrey.**

**It is delivered by a group made up of NHS, national and local voluntary sector organisations all working together.**

**For more information visit our website:**

**[www.mindworks-surrey.org](http://www.mindworks-surrey.org)**



**Worried about exams? Watch our short video on exam stress. It can help you with effective study strategies and relaxation techniques:**



**Believe in children**  
Barnardo's

 **National Autistic Society**



**NHS**  
Surrey and Borders Partnership  
NHS Foundation Trust  
The Tavistock and Portman  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Active April 2025

MONDAY



1 Commit to being more active this month, starting today

7 Get natural light early in the day. Dim the lights in the evening

8 Give your body a boost by laughing or making someone laugh

14 Relax your body & mind with yoga, tai chi or meditation

15 Get active by singing today (even if you think you can't sing!)

21 Regularly pause to stretch and breathe during the day

22 Enjoy moving to your favourite music. Really go for it

28 Meet a friend outside for a walk and a chat

29 Become an activist for a cause you really believe in

TUESDAY

2 Spend as much time as possible outdoors today

9 Turn your homework or chores into a fun form of exercise

16 Go exploring around your local area and notice new things

23 Go out and do an errand for a loved one or neighbour

30 Make time to run, swim, dance, cycle or stretch today

WEDNESDAY

3 Listen to your body and be grateful for what it can do

10 Have a day with less screen time and more movement

17 Be active outside. Plant some seeds and encourage growth

24 Get active in nature. Feed the birds or go wildlife-spotting



THURSDAY

4 Eat healthy and natural food today and drink lots of water

11 Set yourself an exercise goal or sign up to an activity challenge

18 Try out a new exercise, activity or dance class

25 Have a 'no screens' night and take time to recharge yourself



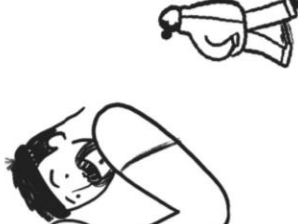
FRIDAY

5 Turn a regular activity into a playful game today

12 Move as much as possible, even if you're stuck inside

19 Spend less time sitting today. Get up and move more often

26 Take an extra break in your day and walk outside for 15 minutes



SATURDAY

6 Do a body-scan meditation and really notice how your body feels

13 Make sleep a priority and go to bed in good time

20 Focus on 'eating a rainbow' of multi-coloured vegetables today

27 Find a fun exercise to do while waiting for the kettle to boil



SUNDAY



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together