

Mindfulness Monthly

Issue 24: November 2025

Welcome to November's edition of 'Mindfulness Monthly'. As the nights draw in and the weather turns colder, November can be a challenging month for many young people. The excitement of the new school year has settled, routines are in place, and academic pressures begin to build. At the same time, darker days and less sunlight can affect mood and motivation. This month, our focus in the newsletter is to look at how to help maintain balance, build resilience, and prepare for the months ahead.

Parent and carer self-care

As we settle into the rhythm of the autumn term, November offers a valuable opportunity to reflect on how we support our own mental health and well-being. The changing season, darker evenings, and busy school schedules can all have an impact - not just on our young people, but on us as adults too. Supporting your child's mental health starts with looking after your own. This month, we're sharing a simple grounding technique that can help during moments of stress or overwhelm:

The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Take a deep breath and name:

- *5 things you can see*
- *4 things you can touch*
- *3 things you can hear*
- *2 things you can smell*
- *1 thing you can taste*

This exercise helps bring your attention back to the present moment and can be a useful tool for both adults and children.

Talking about stress before it builds

Stress and anxiety can creep in gradually, especially as students start thinking about exams or assessments. It's helpful to talk about stress before it becomes overwhelming. Let your young person know that it's normal to feel pressure and that stress can be managed with small, steady steps such as planning ahead, taking regular breaks, and staying active. Try asking open-ended questions such as, 'What's been on your mind lately?' or 'What part of school feels most challenging right now?' Listening without immediately jumping in with solutions often helps teenagers feel heard and supported. Sometimes the simplest changes in how we start a conversation can make the biggest difference. Instead of the classic 'How was your day?', try something like:

- "What's something that made you smile today?"
- "Was there a part of your day that felt tricky?"
- "Who made you laugh this week?"

Parents can help by creating a calm study environment and acknowledging the effort students are putting in, not just the outcomes. Simple reassurance such as "I can see you're working hard, and I'm proud of your effort" goes a long way.

Balancing school, social life, and self-care

By mid-term, many students begin to feel the weight of coursework, upcoming mock exams, and extra-curricular commitments. It's important to remind them (and ourselves) that balance is key. Young people need time to rest, connect with friends, and enjoy hobbies outside of schoolwork. Encouraging good sleep hygiene, healthy eating, and screen-free time before bed can have a big impact on both focus and mood.

Thamesmead staff profiles

This month we will be looking at how two more of our fantastic colleagues support their own mental health;

What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am a Science teacher with responsibility for GCSE Triple Science.

How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

I have worked at the school for 14 years.

Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

I had part-time jobs when I was younger. I worked at Budgens as a cashier and in food and beverage at Sheffield Arena. Most enjoyably I worked at Thorpe Park one summer strapping in the visitors and sending them off on the rollercoasters. It was so much fun!

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

I am a keen runner and try to get out twice a week. I am part of a running club and love the social aspect of this. It is great bringing together a group of people with the same passion, and the support and encouragement you get from one another is great. I always run outside and find the fresh air does wonders for my mood - even in the depths of winter. I have made so many friends through this group and really do value each of them.



Miss Shillabeer

What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am the new Pastoral Manager for Year 10.

How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

At the time of writing, this is my third week at Thamesmead!

Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

I have been a prison officer for young offenders, a TA/LSA, a DDSL and Pastoral Support Manager at another school.

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

I like to create things, including making cakes and customising trainers. Being creative really helps my mental health. Making something beautiful out of nothing helps me feel lighter and that there is beauty in even the smallest moments. I try and smile at least 5 times a day, even if its at something silly. Sleep is really important to maintaining good mental health, so I make sure I go to bed at a good time and have stopped going on my phone at night to make sure that I relax. All of these things help, but some days are darker than others and on those days, I turn to my best friend as she always finds the light in my dark days. A half hour phone call with her, laughing about absolutely nothing helps a lot!



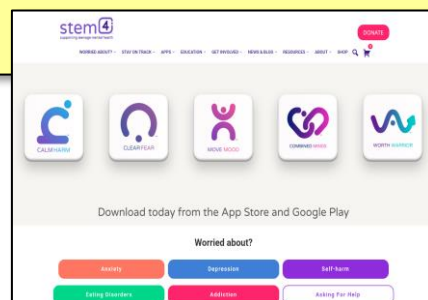
Miss Elliott

Website recommendation of the month

stem4 (<https://www.stem4.org.uk>)

This month's recommended website is stem4, a brilliant UK-based charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers. The site offers free, evidence-based resources, videos, and advice for young people, parents, and schools on topics such as anxiety, low mood, stress, and resilience.

stem4 is a fantastic go-to for both practical guidance and emotional support. Their resources are written in a way that's easy for young people to understand, and equally useful for parents who want to feel more confident supporting their child's mental health. stem4 also provides several free mental health apps designed for young people (including: 'Clear Fear' which helps manage anxiety, 'Move Mood' which supports low mood, and 'Combined Minds' which offers guidance for friends and families supporting others). Whether you're looking for quick tips, deeper understanding, or something to share with your teenager, stem4 is a reliable, accessible, and supportive place to start.



Mental health assemblies


At the end of the first half-term, Mr Todd (Student Personal Development and Mental Health Lead) delivered assemblies to all year groups which focused on coping strategies when you find things overwhelming. Copies of some of the PowerPoint slides from the assembly can be seen below;

Setting the scene

Imagine you're walking into school and someone doesn't say hi back.

- You feel ignored.
- You start thinking (or overthinking)...
- Did I do something wrong?
- Are they mad at me?

Now pause.
What if... **you just let them?**




'Let them'

The 'Let Them' philosophy is essentially letting go of what you can't control. Trying to control others' actions or reactions creates stress.

Instead, focus on what you **CAN** control - your response, your breathing, your mindset.

Imagine carrying a backpack full of other people's problems, moods, and choices. Heavy, right? What if you could just take it off?



Other coping strategies

Catching the negative

CBT is a way of understanding how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected. If we change one, we can change the others.

Imagine you fail a test. You might think 'I'm stupid'. But that thought makes you feel anxious or sad, and maybe you stop trying.

But what if you thought 'I didn't prepare enough this time, but I can do better next time'?


That thought leads to motivation and action.

Other coping strategies

Catching the negative

Catch It: Notice the negative thought.
Check It: Ask is this thought true? is it helpful?
Change It: Replace it with a more balanced thought.

Catch the thought:
No-one waved back. Everyone hates me.
Check the thought:
Is that really true? Or did one person just ignore me?
Change the thought:
Maybe they were distracted. I have friends who care about me.




Other coping strategies

Breathing techniques

Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)
Breathe in for 4... Hold for 4... Breathe out for 4... Hold for 4. Repeat. This method calms your nervous system.

Blowing out the candle
Imagine you have a birthday cake candle in front of you. Breathe in through your nose and slowly breathe out through your mouth to slowly blow out the candle.

Being in the moment
Feet flat, eyes soft or closed.
Let's breathe in... Hold... Out... Hold...




Other coping strategies

Other suggestions

'Name it to tame it'
When you feel overwhelmed, name the feeling: I feel anxious. This simple act helps your brain regulate emotion. If you are anxious, it doesn't mean you have anxiety.

'Control the controllables'
You can't control the weather, but you can bring an umbrella. Don't let others dampen your shine.



If you would like to receive a copy of the assembly so that you can see the presentation in full, please do email Mr Todd on d.todd@thamesmead.surrey.sch.uk. Please could we ask that you encourage your young person to talk about some of the coping strategies that were discussed in the assembly in order to promote them.

Five ways to support your teen's well-being this month

As mentioned previously, November is a time for slowing down, taking stock, and finding light in small moments - whether it's a cosy evening together, a chat over a hot chocolate, or a walk through crunchy autumn leaves. Let's remind our young people (and ourselves) that it's okay to pause, rest, and recharge. Together, we can help our students build the resilience and self-awareness they need to thrive - even when the days grow shorter. With this in mind, it may be useful to trial one of the following;

Five ways to support your teen's well-being this month

- 1. Encourage outdoor time:** Even a short walk or time in natural light boosts mood and energy.
- 2. Keep routines steady:** Regular sleep and mealtimes help the body and mind stay balanced.
- 3. Talk regularly:** Check in through casual chats during dinner, car rides, or walks.
- 4. Model self-care:** Show that you also make time to unwind and talk about your feelings.
- 5. Create calm spaces:** Support screen-free moments, especially before bedtime.

Preparing for the festive season

As we move towards the holidays, it's worth remembering that this time of year can bring both excitement and stress. For some families, it's a joyful time; for others, it can highlight pressures around money, family dynamics, or social expectations. Encouraging rest, realistic expectations, and quality time together can make the season feel calmer and more meaningful. Try planning simple, low-cost family activities like movie nights, baking together, or volunteering in your community.

Well-Being Quote:

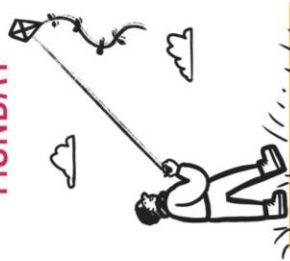
"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop"

Confucius

New Ways November 2025



MONDAY



3 Get outside and observe the changes in nature around you

TUESDAY



4 Sign up to join a new course, activity or online community

WEDNESDAY



5 Change your normal routine today and notice how you feel

THURSDAY



6 Try out a new way of being physically active

FRIDAY



7 Be creative. Cook, draw, write, paint, make or inspire

SATURDAY

1 Make a list of new things you want to do this month

SUNDAY

2 Respond to a difficult situation in a different way

8 Plan a new activity or idea you want to try out this week

9 When you feel you can't do something, add the word "yet"

10 Be curious. Learn about a new topic or an inspiring idea

11 Choose a different route and see what you notice on the way

12 Find out something new about someone you care about

13 Do something playful outdoors - walk, run, explore, relax

14 Find a new way to help or support a cause you care about

15 Build on new ideas by thinking "Yes, and what if..."

16 Look at life through someone else's eyes and see their perspective

17 Try a new way to practice self-care and be kind to yourself

18 Connect with someone from a different generation

19 Broaden your perspective: read a different paper, magazine or site

20 Make a meal using a recipe or ingredient you've not tried before

21 Learn a new skill from a friend or share one of yours with them

22 Find a new way to tell someone you appreciate them

23 Set aside a regular time to pursue an activity you love

24 Share with a friend something helpful you learned recently

25 Use one of your strengths in a new or creative way

26 Try out a different radio station or new TV show

27 Join a friend doing their hobby and find out why they love it

28 Discover your artistic side. Design a friendly greeting card

29 Enjoy new music today. Play, sing, dance or listen

30 Look for new reasons to be hopeful, even in tough times



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together