

# Mindfulness Monthly



Issue 26: January 2026

Happy New Year, and welcome to January's edition of 'Mindfulness Monthly'! January brings fresh routines, new subjects, and the inevitable bumps in the road. One of the most valuable skills young people can build is resilience; the ability to bounce back after setbacks, adapt under pressure, and keep going when things feel hard. Resilience isn't an inborn trait; it's a set of behaviours and mindsets that develop through experience, encouragement, and support. This month, we're focusing on practical ways families can help students grow their resilience at home and in school. From simple daily habits to conversation starters, you'll find ideas in the newsletter that are designed to be realistic, reassuring, and doable - even in busy households. Let's start 2026 strong, together.

## Starting the year strong: Helping teens set healthy goals

January is a natural time for reflection and fresh starts. For teenagers, setting goals can be a powerful way to build confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose. But how can parents and carers support this process without adding pressure?

### Why goal-setting matters:

Goals give young people direction and help them focus on what's important. They also teach valuable skills like planning, perseverance, and adaptability. When goals are realistic and positive, they can boost self-esteem and motivation.

### Tips for healthy goal-setting

- **Keep it SMART:** Encourage goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. For example, 'I'll read for 15 minutes before bed three times a week' is more effective than 'I'll read more'.
- **Balance is key:** Goals shouldn't just be academic. Include hobbies, friendships, and self-care. A mix of personal and school-related goals helps maintain well-being.
- **Focus on effort, not perfection:** Remind your young person that progress matters more than flawless results. Celebrate small wins along the way.
- **Stay flexible:** Life changes, and so can goals. Help your teen see adjustments as part of the process, not failure.

Be a supportive sounding board. Ask open questions like, 'What's something you'd like to try this term?'. Avoid imposing your own goals - ownership is crucial for motivation.

## Supporting your young person's mood during darker months

January can feel challenging after the excitement of the festive season. Shorter days, colder weather, and the return to routine often lead to the 'January Blues'. It's normal for both adults and young people to feel a dip in energy or motivation during this time, but small, intentional changes can make a big difference.

One of the most effective ways to boost mood is to seek daylight and stay active. Even a short walk outdoors can improve energy and sleep, while gentle exercise like yoga or dancing releases feel-good endorphins. Pair this with balanced meals rich in fruit, vegetables, and Vitamin D to help maintain steady energy levels. Prioritising sleep (7–9 hours) and reducing screen time before bed also supports emotional well-being.

Encouraging positive habits can help your teen feel more resilient. Strategies like trying a new hobby, starting the day with an uplifting thought or practicing gratitude can build confidence and reduce stress. Cosy family routines, such as shared meals or movie nights, provide comfort and connection during the darker months.

If you notice persistent changes in your child's mood, sleep, or appetite, or if they seem withdrawn or irritable, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Early intervention can make a real difference.

# Resilience and why it matters

This month we will be having a big push on the importance of resilience in school, as it is a life skill that is so important for everyone. Resilience is more than ‘toughing it out’. It’s about coping, learning, and adapting when life is unpredictable (tackling missed grades, friendship issues, changing routines, or in later life, health worries). Students who strengthen resilience are more likely to;

- **Manage stress and disappointment** without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Persist with learning**, even when work is challenging.
- **Ask for help** and make constructive plans.
- **Build confidence** through effort and practice rather than perfection.

Think of resilience as a muscle. It grows when children have **safe opportunities to struggle**, receive **non-judgemental support**, and are praised for **effort, strategies, and reflection**, not just outcomes. For example: if a student gets a lower mark than expected, you might say, ‘I can see you put time into this. Let’s look at the feedback together and plan what you’ll try next’. This approach shifts attention from the setback to **next steps**, which is at the heart of resilience. Resilience does not mean never feeling upset. It means noticing feelings, using coping tools, and taking one small step forward.

## How to foster resilience at home

There are many ways you can help to support resilience at home. The strategies that follow may be useful;

### Encourage problem-solving (without jumping in too fast):

Try: ‘What are two ideas you could try first?’ or ‘Who might be a good person to ask?’. This builds independence and confidence. If your young person is stuck on home learning, ask them to set a **10-minute micro-goal** (for example, ‘complete question 1 and underline key words’) and then check in.

### Model positive self-talk:

Let children overhear you manage setbacks: ‘I missed that appointment - frustrating! I’ll put a reminder in my phone and email to reschedule’. When adults show **calm language** and **simple plans**, children learn that mistakes can be addressed without panic or shame.

### Create a safe space for failure:

Normalise effort and experimentation. For example: ‘We’re trying a new recipe; it might be great - or not! We’ll learn either way’. Praise **process** (focus, strategies, asking for help, trying again) more than results.

### Teach coping tools to help maintain focus and re-centre:

- **Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)**: Inhale for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4 - repeat three times.
- **Pause-Plan-Proceed**: Notice feelings → choose one helpful action → take a small step.
- **Movement and fresh air**: A 15-20 minute walk can reset your mood and energy before home learning.

### Build Predictable Routines

Consistency reduces stress. A **‘ready-for-tomorrow’** routine (bag packed, bottle filled, uniform laid out, tech on charge) reduces morning pressure and helps students arrive feeling prepared.

## Resilience in action

A good way of developing resilience is by giving your young person a ‘Challenge of the Month’. One example for how this could work could be to ‘try one new thing’. You could challenge your young person to choose one of the following; join a lunchtime club, ask a question in class, try a new skill (coding, cooking, sketching), or volunteer to help a teacher. Afterwards, use this reflection:

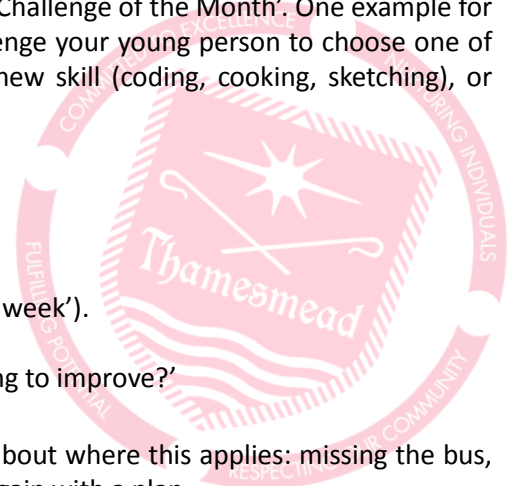
- *What went better than expected?*
- *What was harder than expected?*
- *What would I try differently next time?*

### Quick Wins for Confidence

- Set a **tiny target** (for example, ‘answer one question in science this week’).
- Celebrate **effort**: track tries and not just outcomes.
- Ask for **specific feedback**: ‘What’s one thing I did well, and one thing to improve?’

### Quote to Inspire

“Fall seven times, stand up eight” (Japanese Proverb). Talk together about where this applies: missing the bus, losing a match, or stumbling on a test. Resilience means standing up again with a plan.



# Practical strategies for parents and carers

When developing resilience in young people, it is important to build a routine. The strategies below may help;

## Routine reset

- Agree a **consistent home learning slot** (for example, 5:00–5:45pm, then a break).
- Keep **bedtimes** as regular as possible, especially on weeknights.
- Sunday **'reset'**: check timetables, pack PE kit, organize Food ingredients, and scan the week for busy days.

## Sleep and nutrition

- Aim for **regular sleep windows** appropriate to your child's age.
- Encourage balanced meals and **slow-release snacks** (nuts\*, yoghurt, fruit, wholegrain toast) to support concentration and mood. \*Please remember that Thamesmead is a nut-free school.
- Hydration matters: keep a bottle handy; a glass of water before home learning often helps.

## Digital balance

- Try a **tech-free hour** before bed for better sleep quality.
- Keep devices (if possible) **outside bedrooms** overnight.
- Discuss **purposeful tech use**: 'What are you using your phone for right now - chatting, learning, relaxing? How long feels helpful?'

## When stress spikes

Use **'Name it to tame it'** - label the feeling ('I'm anxious about tomorrow's test') and make a **micro-plan** ('I'll review the key terms for 15 minutes, then do two practice questions').

# Recommended resources

## Books

- The Resilience Workbook for Teens (Cheryl M. Bradshaw): Practical exercises and guided reflections for secondary students.
- Mindset (Carol Dweck): Accessible discussion of growth mindset for parents and older students.

## Podcasts

- The Happiness Lab: Episodes on habits, mindset, and coping strategies.
- On Purpose with Jay Shetty: Thoughtful conversations about motivation, routine, and wellbeing.

## Apps

- **Headspace** or **Calm**: Short guided breathing and sleep stories.
- **Forest**: Gamified focus sessions that encourage phone-free study time.

Resilience grows through **small, consistent steps**; a calm word, a tiny target, a moment of encouragement. As we begin the new term, let's keep the focus on **progress over perfection**, effort over outcomes, and **plans over panic**. Here's to a strong, steady start to 2026.

# Digital well-being: Helping teens manage screen time

January is a great time to reset habits, and screen time is one area that often needs attention, particularly as electronic devices can often be given as Christmas gifts. Excessive use of phones, gaming, or social media can impact sleep, mood, and concentration. Supporting healthy digital habits doesn't mean banning devices - it's about balance.

- **Set clear boundaries**: Agree on screen-free times, such as during meals or an hour before bed.
- **Model healthy use**: Show your child that you also take breaks from screens (maybe even model a family 'tech-free evening' once a week).
- **Encourage offline activities**: Suggest hobbies, sports, or creative projects to reduce reliance on devices.
- **Talk about online well-being**: Discuss how social media can affect mood and self-esteem, and remind them it's okay to take breaks.

## Well-Being Quote:

**"Do not judge me by my success. Judge me by how many times I fell and got back up again."**

**Nelson Mandela**

# Happier January 2026



MONDAY



5 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths

TUESDAY



6 Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe

WEDNESDAY



7 Learn something new and share it with others

THURSDAY

1 Find three things to look forward to this year

FRIDAY

2 Make time today to do something kind for yourself

SATURDAY

3 Do a kind act for someone else to help brighten their day

SUNDAY

4 Write a list of things you feel grateful for and why

5 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths

12 Connect with someone near you - share a smile or chat

19 Focus on what's good, even if today feels tough

26 Choose one of your strengths and find a way to use it today

6 Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe

13 Take a different route today and see what you notice

20 Go to bed in good time and allow yourself to recharge

27 Challenge your negative thoughts and look for the upside

7 Learn something new and share it with others

14 Eat healthy food which really nourishes you today

21 Try out something new to get out of your comfort zone

28 Ask other people about things they've enjoyed recently

8 Say positive things to the people you meet today

15 Get outside and notice five things that are beautiful

22 Plan something fun and invite others to join you

29 Say hello to a neighbour and get to know them better

9 Get moving. Do something active (ideally outdoors)

16 Contribute positively to your local community

23 Put away digital devices and focus on being in the moment

30 See how many people you can smile at today

10 Thank someone you're grateful to and tell them why

17 Be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes

24 Take a small step towards an important goal

31 Write down your hopes or plans for the future

11 Switch off all your tech at least an hour before bedtime

18 Get back in contact with an old friend

25 Decide to lift people up rather than put them down



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together