

Mindfulness Monthly

Issue 27: February 2026

Welcome to the February's 'Mindfulness Monthly'; we hope the start of 2026 has treated you well. In this edition of Mindfulness Monthly we will share some tips for talking to teens about their emotions, learn about one of our new colleagues in the well-being team, and offer some strategies that may be useful for Year 10 and 11 students on the approach to the February mock examinations. We'll also look at this month's 'Action For Happiness' calendar.

Winter well-being boosters

February can be a particularly challenging month for young people. The excitement of the new year has faded, the mornings are still dark, and schoolwork is picking up pace. Many teens report feeling tired, flat or less motivated at this time of year, and that's completely normal. The good news is that even small changes can help boost energy and mood.

Encouraging your young person to get exposure to daylight, even for a few minutes, can make a real difference to their body clock and alertness. Movement also helps lift mood, but it doesn't need to be a workout - kicking a ball around, stretching, dancing to music or going for a short walk are all helpful. Teens often benefit from 'micro-joys': small, comforting moments like listening to music they love, having something warm to drink, or taking a short creative break.

This time of year can also be draining for adults. Taking just ten minutes for yourself (whether that's reading, having a quiet drink, or simply resting) models healthy coping and shows your young person that well-being matters at every age. It's also absolutely okay to lower the bar with meals, chores or routines when needed; doing 'good enough' is more than enough during the winter stretch.

February is a time to prioritise gentle routines, small pleasures and manageable steps — for you and your young person.

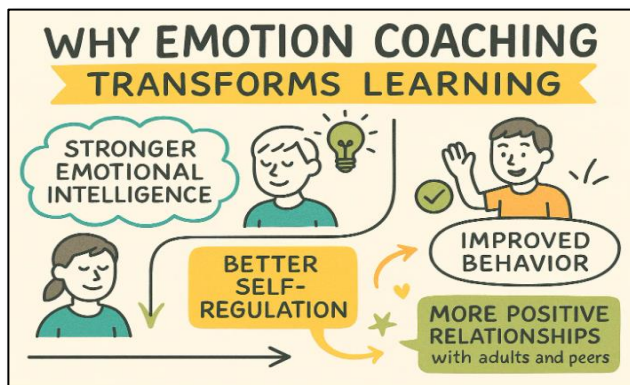
Emotion coaching

Teenagers feel emotions intensely, but often lack the skills to express or manage them calmly. Emotion coaching is a simple way for parents and carers to support young people during big feelings, helping them feel understood while also teaching them healthier ways to cope.

The first step is noticing the emotion behind the behaviour; frustration, embarrassment, sadness, or anxiety often show up as withdrawal, outbursts or eye-rolling. Naming the feeling ('It seems like you're frustrated') can help your teen make sense of what's going on. Validation is key: phrases like 'That makes sense' or 'I get why that would upset you' help lower their stress levels and signal that you're on their side.

Only once your young person is calm should you move into problem-solving together. You might ask, 'Do you want help figuring out next steps, or should we think about it later?' Teens respond better when they feel they have agency in the situation. And sometimes, all they need is a listening ear rather than a solution.

Emotion coaching doesn't mean letting go of boundaries - it simply anchors them in empathy. It encourages communication and strengthens trust, both of which support your teen to handle future challenges more confidently.



Conversation starters for teens who don't talk

It's very common for young people to become quieter at home as they navigate adolescence. They're juggling friendships, school pressures, changes in identity and growing independence, often making home feel like the place they want to unwind rather than explain. Creating low-pressure opportunities for conversation is far more effective than trying to force big discussions.

Teens tend to open up more during side-by-side activities, such as car journeys, cooking, tidying or walking. These moments feel less intense than a direct conversation and allow thoughts to flow more naturally (direct eye contact can feel quite overwhelming for teens). Sharing a bit about your own day first can also encourage them to talk.

Gentle prompts like 'What's one good moment from today?', 'What made you laugh this week?' or 'What's your comfort show right now?' can help get conversations started without feeling overwhelming. You can also ask whether they want advice, listening, or distraction – this gives them control over the interaction.

The key is consistency rather than depth. Short, relaxed check-ins build connection over time, showing your young person that you're there whenever they're ready to talk.

Mental health and well-being support experts

In previous editions of 'Mindfulness Monthly' we have looked at the colleagues that come into school to provide mental health support for our students. In this edition we're going to learn about a new member of the team;



The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) offer a school-based service which supports the mental health of children and young people in schools across Surrey. They offer support and advice around the child or young person to enable them to identify any concerns, understand what has happened for that child or young person and support any developing mental health needs.

How long have you been working in the mental health team?

I have been working for the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) for 1½ years.

How many days a week are you based at Thamesmead?

I am based in Thamesmead one day a week, currently on a Wednesday. However, I may come in at other times for meetings and assemblies. I can also see Thamesmead students outside of school at our base in Chertsey.

What are the best parts of your work?

My favourite part of my work is my sessions with young people. I enjoy it when I can support young people in applying strategies to address their difficulties and help them manage situations.

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

I enjoy taking time for myself every day to do something that makes me happy. This could mean spending time with friends or family, relaxing in front of the TV, reading, or going for a walk. I also do mindfulness activities to help keep my mind and body calm.



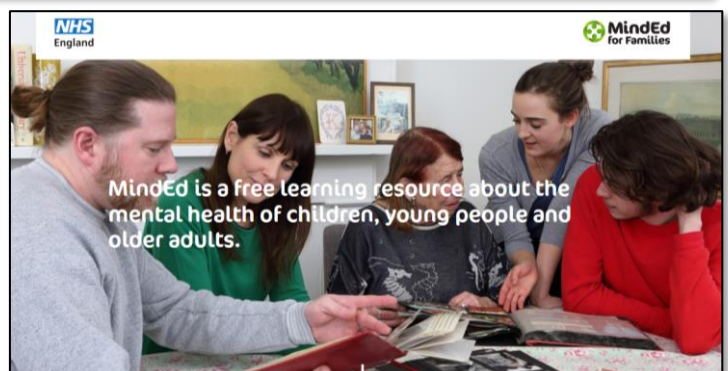
Amy
Nesbitt

Website recommendation of the month

MindEd for Families

(www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk)

MindEd is a free learning resource developed by health professionals to help parents and carers understand and support their young person's mental health. The website covers a wide range of topics, from low mood and anxiety to bullying, eating disorders to trauma, in a clear, user-friendly and compassionate way.



Digital balance without battles

Technology is a huge part of teenage life. Phones help young people connect, relax, learn and express themselves. However, without healthy boundaries, they can also contribute to stress, disrupted sleep and social pressure. Rather than trying to remove screens entirely, aiming for balance tends to produce far better results.

One of the most effective strategies is involving your teen in setting limits. Asking 'What do you think a fair evening routine looks like?' encourages responsibility rather than resistance. Creating anchor points, like device-free meals or switching to offline activities shortly before bed, can also help establish predictable habits. Encouraging 'swaps' instead of hard bans often works well. Suggesting switching scrolling for a podcast or downloaded show, or moving intense conversations to earlier in the evening, allows your young person to stay connected without becoming overwhelmed. And using tech positively (timers, music for walks, apps that support well-being) reinforces that phones can help as well as hinder.

Most importantly, keep conversations calm and collaborative. Emphasising that you're not trying to 'catch them out' but support their well-being helps preserve trust and encourages healthier choices over time.

Healthy relationships and friendship red flags

Teenage friendships and early relationships can be incredibly meaningful for young people, offering connection, support and a sense of belonging. But these relationships can also be confusing, emotional, and sometimes overwhelming. Teens are still learning how to communicate, manage conflict and understand their own boundaries, so it's natural for there to be ups and downs. What matters most is whether a friendship or relationship helps them feel safe, respected and valued, even when disagreements happen.

A healthy friendship or relationship usually has balance. Both young people feel heard, boundaries are respected, and mistakes can be repaired with honest communication. Your child should feel able to say 'no' without fear of losing the friendship or upsetting the other person. They should feel comfortable being themselves, making other plans, and maintaining interests outside the relationship. A good friend or partner celebrates their successes, supports them during challenges, and doesn't pressure them into doing things they're not ready for. In order to support students with this, our Personal Development curriculum helps students to navigate this.

It can be helpful to keep an eye out for warning signs that something might not be right. These may include your child seeming constantly anxious about responding to messages, withdrawing from other friendships, or being controlled through guilt, silent treatment or 'jokes' that feel hurtful. Sudden isolation, changes in mood, or pressure to share passwords or location can also be indicators that the dynamic isn't healthy.

Your support makes a bigger difference than you might realise. Staying curious rather than critical helps your young person open up. Asking questions like 'What do you enjoy about this friendship?' or 'What feels tricky at the moment?' can encourage honest conversation. Rather than telling them what to do, you can offer to practise what they might say, help them think through options, or simply listen. Modelling healthy communication and boundaries at home also teaches powerful lessons about self-respect and resilience.

Seven-day sleep reset

Sleep plays a huge role in your young person's mood, memory, energy levels and overall well-being. During adolescence, natural changes in the body clock make teens feel tired later at night, yet school still requires early starts. This can lead to a sleep deficit that builds up over time. A gentle one-week reset can help them get back into a healthier rhythm. Start by setting a consistent wake-up time. Even keeping weekends within half an hour of this helps stabilise the body clock. Morning light (opening curtains immediately or stepping outside briefly) acts like a natural 'reset button' for alertness. Creating a calming evening routine sends a clear signal that bedtime is approaching; dim lights, warm showers and quiet activities can all help.

It can also help to shift stimulating evening activities earlier. Gaming, intense messaging or long scrolling sessions close to bedtime can keep the brain alert for longer. Reducing caffeine in the afternoon and giving the bedroom a quick tidy or refresh can further promote better sleep. Ending the week with light preparation for Monday (such as packing bags, laying out clothes, etc...) reduces morning stress and supports a calmer start. A sleep reset doesn't need to be perfect to be effective. Gentle changes, done consistently, can make a noticeable difference.

Support with preparing for exams

In February Year 11 will be completing their final round of mock examinations before the GCSE exam season starts in the summer. Year 10 will also have their final mock RPE exam before they take this formal GCSE in the summer term. The preparation for these exams should begin now, so the information below may offer some top tips for efficient revision.

The more students are familiar with exam conditions, the types of questions they need to answer, and the expectations placed upon them, the more confident and capable they will feel when it's time to tackle their assessments. Students *should* feel some anxiety when completing exams – nerves are important when you have to perform so normalising this is very important. The most important thing to consider is that not all students are comfortable under pressure, so mock exam preparation support should encompass academic and well-being strategies. The website 'Academy 21' offers the following strategies when it comes to preparing for exams;

Use past papers and mark schemes

One of the most traditional but effective ways to prepare students for mock exams is by using past papers and mark schemes. These resources offer invaluable insights into the exam format, question types, and marking criteria. Encourage students to work up to practising with these papers under timed conditions, without referring to notes, to simulate the real exam environment.

Set realistic study goals

Setting realistic study goals is crucial for maintaining motivation and avoiding burnout. Encourage students to break down their revision into manageable chunks, focusing on specific topics or subjects each day. This approach not only makes the task less daunting but also helps in retaining information more effectively. Creating a revision timetable that balances study with rest and leisure activities is important. Emphasise the importance of regular breaks and a healthy lifestyle, including adequate sleep and nutrition, to ensure students are mentally and physically prepared for their exams.

Speak to teachers

Teachers are a valuable resource when it comes to exam preparation. Encourage students to reach out to their teachers for guidance and clarification on topics they find challenging. Regular communication with teachers can also boost students' confidence, as they feel supported and guided in their revision journey. Remind students that teachers are there to help and that seeking assistance is a proactive step towards success.

Identify what works for you

Every student has a unique learning approach, and it's important for them to identify what works best for them. Encourage students to experiment with different revision techniques, such as videos, flashcards, mind maps, or recording themselves as voice notes to play back to reinforce new vocabulary and definitions.

Work with a friend or family member

Collaborative learning can be a powerful tool in exam preparation. Encourage students to work with a friend or family member to test one another on key concepts and topics. This interaction can help reinforce knowledge, clarify doubts, and provide new perspectives on challenging material. Students can quiz each other on terminology or explain complex theories to one another, to deepen understanding. Studying with others also adds a social element to revision, making it more enjoyable and less isolating. It can also boost motivation and accountability, as students are more likely to stay on track when they have a study partner.

Supporting students post-exams is also important. Awaiting exam results can be just as stressful as preparing or undertaking the exam itself. To reduce exam result anxiety, encourage your young people to engage in relaxing activities, and try to keep a healthy routine by incorporating hobbies, exercise and family time into their daily activities. Remind your teen that nothing is lost, even if they feel like they underperformed or are not happy with the results. The mock exams are there to highlight to students where they still have gaps in their knowledge, which enables them to revise these topics in advance of the exam itself.

Well-Being Quote:

"Sometimes the worst place you can be is in your own head"

Timothy Ferriss

EMOTION COACHING

Scripts

helping children understand their feelings and manage their emotions by co-regulation

1
Emotional first aid is needed to create a safe haven, a place of trust and acceptance. Recognising that all emotions are natural and normal.

Recognise and Empathise



Connect before Correct

This first step does not require physical action, but it's the process of 'tuning in' to the situation, looking for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt. Bear witness to what is happening, gather your evidence. What is the child feeling and why?

2
Helping the child to label the emotion, encourages the regulatory process to engage and reconnect the thinking brain with the limbic system.

Validate and Label



Name it to Tame it.

3
Setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour ensures the safety of the child and those around them. It's important not to make the child feel shame. Be mindful of retaining the child's self-dignity.

Limit Setting



PIP and RIP

4
Helping the child to believe they can overcome difficulties and manage feelings and behaviour is empowering.

Problem solve



Restore and repair

You seem angry as you're clenching your fists and shouting

It's normal to feel angry about that, I would feel that way too

I can see that something's not quite right - can you tell me about it?

I can see that you get frustrated when that happens

I'm sorry that happened to you, you must feel very

I can see that you're frowning and you're kicking the wall and expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn't want to do something

... it's not OK to behave like that

We don't deal with our emotions by hurting others

... the rules are that we do not...

We don't throw things, it's not safe

... these are the rules that we all have to follow

... it's OK to feel like that but it's not OK to behave like that

EXPLORING

How were you feeling when that happened?

What were you trying to achieve by ...

Have you felt that way before?

PROBLEMATISING

Let's think of what you could do instead

I can help you think of a different way to cope

Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings?

Let's decide what you will do next time you feel like this

SOLUTIONS

Do you think that... would be more helpful?

Try and do this next time you feel like this

Emotional

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Name it to Tame it.

Setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour ensures the safety of the child and those around them. It's important not to make the child feel shame. Be mindful of retaining the child's self-dignity.

PIP and RIP

Helping the child to believe they can overcome difficulties and manage feelings and behaviour is empowering.

Restore and repair



scared



worried



angry



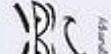
happy



emotionless



surprised



grimacing



gloomy



ashamed



silly



embarrassed



anxious



shy



delighted



cheerful



mad



glad



confused

Friendly February 2026



MONDAY



2 Ask a friend how they have been feeling recently

TUESDAY



3 Do an act of kindness to make life easier for someone

WEDNESDAY



4 Invite a friend over for a 'tea break' (in person or virtual)

THURSDAY



5 Make time to have a friendly chat with a neighbour

FRIDAY



6 Get back in touch with an old friend you've not seen for a while

SATURDAY



7 Show an active interest by asking questions when talking to others

SUNDAY

1 Send a message to let someone know you're thinking of them

8 Share what you're feeling with someone you really trust

9 Thank someone and tell them how they made a difference for you

10 Look for good in others, particularly when you feel frustrated with them

11 Send an encouraging note to someone who needs a boost

12 Focus on being kind rather than being right

13 Smile at the people you see and brighten their day

14 Tell a loved one or friend why they are special to you

15 Support a local business with a positive online review or friendly message

16 Check in on someone who may be struggling and offer to help

17 Appreciate the good qualities of someone in your life

18 Respond kindly to everyone you talk to today, including yourself

19 Share something you find inspiring, helpful or amusing

20 Make a plan to connect with others and do something fun

21 Really listen to what people say, without judging them

22 Give sincere compliments to people you talk to today

23 Be gentle with someone who you feel inclined to criticise

24 Tell a loved one about the strengths that you see in them

25 Thank three people you feel grateful to and tell them why

26 Make uninterrupted time for your loved ones

27 Call a friend to catch up and really listen to them

28 Give positive comments to as many people as possible today

