

Mindfulness Monthly

Issue 28: March 2026

Welcome to the March's 'Mindfulness Monthly'. In this edition of Mindfulness Monthly we will share some tips about understanding the teenage brain, how to engage young people in conversations, even if they appear not to want to talk, as well as how to navigate the minefield that is managing devices. There will also be some tips about how you as parents and carers can be kind to yourself!

Understanding the adolescent brain

Why teens think and feel the way they do? Teenagers aren't just 'being difficult'; their brains are going through one of the biggest periods of change they will ever experience. During adolescence, the emotional centre of the brain develops faster than the part responsible for planning, calm thinking, and risk assessment. This means teens often **feel things intensely** and may struggle to step back and see the bigger picture. Parents and carers can support their teen by;

- **Staying calm when emotions run high.** Teens rely on adults to help regulate their feelings.
- **Explaining decisions.** Teens respond better when they understand the 'why'.
- **Using collaborative problem-solving.** Ask, 'How can we tackle this together?'
- **Praising effort, not outcome.** This helps build resilience and confidence.

Understanding the science behind teenage behaviour doesn't mean excusing poor choices, but it does help create more empathy, patience, and connection at home.

Sleep and the teen brain: Why it matters more than you think

Sleep is crucial for emotional regulation, learning, memory, focus, and overall well-being, but many teenagers don't get the rest they need. Changes in the teenage body clock mean they naturally feel sleepy later at night and struggle to wake early for school. The following approaches may help regulate effective sleeping patterns;

- A consistent sleep routine, even on weekends
- Reducing screen time for at least 30 minutes before bed
- Morning light exposure to reset the body clock
- Avoiding long after-school naps (which make night-time sleep harder)
- Creating a calm, tech-free sleep space
- Well-rested teens are more able to manage emotions, concentrate in lessons, and cope with challenges.

Spotting burnout in teenagers (and what helps)

Teen burnout is becoming increasingly common as academic expectations rise and extra-curricular commitments build. Burnout is not just stress - it is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged pressure. Recognising the signs early allows parents and carers to intervene before it escalates.

You may notice withdrawal from activities, reduced motivation, irritability, or difficulty concentrating. Teens might express feeling overwhelmed or detached. Support begins with validation - letting them talk without judgment. Offering structure through manageable study chunks, promoting restorative breaks, and reinforcing healthy sleep patterns are key strategies. Maintaining balance rather than pushing productivity helps young people recover and build resilience. If a young person is experiencing burnout, it is important not to simply stop work or activities, it's about helping with the management of tasks and support young people to be able to cope with them.

Five conversation starters that actually work with teens

Many parents and carers can find it challenging to create meaningful conversations with their teen. Generic questions often lead to one-word answers, but specific prompts encourage reflection and sharing. The goal is to open space without making the young person feel interrogated. Useful prompts ask about emotions, daily challenges, or personal perspectives. For example, discussing what took the most energy in their day helps teens articulate stressors. Asking what surprised them invites curiosity, while questions about social interactions or hopes for the week promote positivity. Consistent, gentle check-ins, without pressure, build trust over time.

When your teen says 'I'm fine': Helping them to open up

Teens often hide how they really feel to avoid worrying others, appearing weak, or starting a conversation they don't know how to have. When "I'm fine" becomes their default response, it's important for parents and carers to build trust slowly and consistently. It might be worth trying the following;

- Talking side-by-side (car journeys, walking) - it feels less intense
- Reflecting feelings gently: "You seem a bit quieter today - I'm here if you want to talk."
- Asking open questions rather than yes/no ones
- Accepting silence - it often means your teen is processing
- Showing warmth and interest without pressure
- Small, regular moments of connection help build openness over time.

Anxiety vs normal worry: How to tell the difference

It's normal for children and teens to experience stress; exams, friendships, and changes in routine all bring natural worries. With this being said, sometimes anxiety becomes more persistent and starts affecting daily life.

Signs it may be more than everyday worry include:

- Avoiding school or activities they normally enjoy
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, shakiness, or rapid breathing
- Trouble sleeping or constant tiredness
- Excessive need for reassurance
- Difficulty making decisions due to fear of 'getting things wrong'

How parents and carers can help:

- Validate feelings: *'It makes sense you feel worried - let's look at this together'*
- Break challenges down into small, manageable steps
- Encourage calming activities (breathing exercises, walking, stretching, time away from screens...)
- Model coping strategies by talking through how you manage your own stress
- If anxiety starts to interfere with school, friendships or health, speak with the school pastoral team

March mental health micro-habits for families

Small daily actions can significantly improve emotional well-being for both parents, carers and young people. Micro-habits are easy to implement and build consistency. Morning light exposure boosts mood regulation; hydration supports energy and concentration; and short bursts of movement reduce stress. A simple one-minute mood check-in helps teens recognise emotions, while a brief evening reset of personal space promotes a calmer bedtime routine. These habits take only moments but contribute to a more positive, structured, and supportive home environment throughout March.

Healthy Routines That Support Mental Well-being"

We often think of mental health as something separate from day-to-day life, but small lifestyle habits can make a big difference. Teens benefit from routines that balance schoolwork, rest, and personal interests. Consider supporting your teen to:

- Establish regular meal and sleep times
- Balance homework with breaks, and keep school materials organised to reduce stress
- Spend some time outside daily
- Include enjoyable activities that help them switch off

Predictability creates a sense of safety - something young people increasingly rely on during periods of change.

Helping teens build a healthier relationship with their phone

This is a theme that has featured several times in Mindfulness Monthly over the years, but it is important. Digital devices play a central role in teenage life, offering connection and entertainment but also contributing to stress, disrupted sleep, and constant comparison. Instead of strict bans, a collaborative approach helps teens build balanced digital habits that support mental health.

Parents and carers can promote tech-free wind-down routines, encourage mindful use, and involve teens in setting family boundaries. Removing non-essential apps from the home screen reduces impulsive checking, while discussing the impact of screen time on mood builds awareness. Focusing on balance, not restriction, empowers teens to use technology in healthier, more intentional ways.

Building body confidence in a social media world

Teenagers today grow up surrounded by filtered images, unrealistic beauty standards, and constant comparison - all of which can affect their self-esteem and body confidence. Parents and carers can play a powerful protective role by:

- Encouraging conversations about how social media is curated and edited
- Focusing on what bodies *can do*, rather than what they look like
- Avoiding negative self-talk about their own appearance
- Praising strengths, kindness, effort, and personality
- Helping their teen follow accounts that promote diversity and positivity
- Reminding your young person that bodies come in all shapes and sizes and that worth is never measured by appearance.

Reducing parent guilt: Why looking after yourself helps your teen too!

Parents and carers frequently put their own needs aside, believing that they must always be available. With this being said, sustained stress without rest can lead to emotional exhaustion, frustration, and reduced patience. Research suggests that when parents and carers care for themselves, they model healthy emotional regulation and teach teens that it is okay to prioritise well-being.

Self-care does not need to be time-consuming. Simple daily habits, such as a short walk, quiet time, or mindful breathing can significantly reduce stress. Naming personal limits helps young people learn to manage their own boundaries. Sharing coping strategies openly shows teens how adults navigate difficult emotions in healthy ways, strengthening family well-being.

Website recommendation of the month

The Charlie Waller Trust

(<https://charliewaller.org/>)

The Charlie Waller Trust is a leading UK mental health charity dedicated to helping young people achieve and maintain positive mental health. Their website provides free, evidence-based resources for parents and carers on a wide range of topics related to children's mental well-being, along with practical strategies grounded in the latest research. They also offer fully funded training and workshops, including specialist support for parents caring for a child with an eating disorder and resources designed to help families and communities better understand and respond to mental health challenges.

Home Mental Health Resources Training & Support Get Involved About us Get help Donate

We put young people at the heart of what we do: helping them achieve and sustain better mental health. We do this by equipping those closest to young people - families, friends, educators, communities and employers - with strategies and support based on the best available evidence.

About Charlie
In September 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie tragically died by suicide. He was suffering from depression and felt he no longer had the strength to carry on. Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.

Support for parents and carers
We provide evidence-based resources for parents and carers, on a range of topics relating to supporting the mental health of children and young people.

Support for educators
We provide evidence-based training and resources for schools, colleges and universities on a range of mental health topics to help them support young people's mental health.

Well-Being Quote:

"There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't"

John Green

Mindful March 2026

SUNDAY

1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness

8 Eat mindfully. Appreciate the taste, texture and smell of your food

15 Stop. Breathe. Notice. Repeat regularly

22 Notice something that is going well, even if today feels difficult

29 Choose a different route today and see what you notice

MONDAY

2 Notice three things you find beautiful in the outside world

9 Take a full breath in and out before you reply to others

16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity

23 Tune into your feelings, without judging or trying to change them

30 Mentally scan your body and notice what it is feeling

TUESDAY

3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive

10 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face

17 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant

24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do

31 Discover the joy in the simple things of life

WEDNESDAY

4 Notice how you speak to yourself and choose to use kind words

11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee

18 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels

25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted



THURSDAY

5 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them

12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying

19 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today

26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today



FRIDAY

6 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down

13 Pause to watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today

20 Focus on what makes you and others happy today

27 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are



SATURDAY

7 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day

14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that you do

21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else

28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together