

Mindfulness Monthly

Issue 30: May 2026

Welcome to May's 'Mindfulness Monthly'. In this edition we'll look at how to support young people with the challenges of the final term, from the end of year exams through to the transitions that they may soon be facing.

Understanding emotional tiredness in teenagers

By May, many young people appear outwardly 'fine' but feel emotionally drained. This kind of tiredness isn't always solved by an early night; it often comes from sustained pressure, constant thinking, and rarely switching off. School demands, friendships, revision, and social expectations all take energy, even when things are going well. Parents can support emotionally tired teens by noticing changes in mood, patience, or motivation, rather than waiting for a crisis. Encouraging small moments of rest (such as time without screens, quiet routines, or simply a break from conversation) can help restore emotional energy. Reassure your young person that needing rest doesn't mean they're failing; it simply means their brain and body need time to recharge.

Helping teens build confidence from the inside

Confidence in young people is often misunderstood as being outgoing, assertive, or visibly successful. In reality, real confidence is quieter. It looks like trusting yourself to try, coping with disappointment, and keeping going after mistakes. Parents and carers play a central role in building internal confidence by focusing on effort rather than outcomes. Noticing dedication, kindness, and perseverance sends the message that worth is not performance-based. Sharing your own moments of self-doubt (and how you manage them) also helps normalise uncertainty. When teenagers learn that confidence grows through experience rather than perfection, they feel safer to take healthy risks.

When being busy becomes too much

Many young people feel pressure to stay busy - academically, socially, and digitally. A full schedule can quickly become overwhelming when there's little time to rest or process experiences. Teens often push through exhaustion because they don't want to fall behind or let others down. This is where healthy boundaries matter. Supporting teens to say 'I need a break' or 'I can't manage that right now' is not about lowering expectations, but about protecting well-being. Families can help by modelling boundary-setting themselves and reassuring young people that rest is part of functioning well, not something to earn afterwards.

Supporting effort over outcome

As we enter the month of May, exam season begins. Year 11 have their first GCSE and BTEC exams in the first week, with Year 10 completing their GCSE RPE exams and Key Stage 3 completing their end of year assessments in the first two weeks after half-term. As these exams approach, it's natural for young people to worry about results.

While achievement matters, focusing solely on outcomes can increase anxiety and undermine confidence. Effort-focused support helps young people feel valued regardless of the final grade. Parents and carers can ask questions such as 'How did that feel?' or 'What did you learn from it?' instead of just 'How did you do?'. This reinforces the idea that progress includes persistence, learning, and growth. Young people who feel supported for their effort are often more resilient when things don't go to plan.

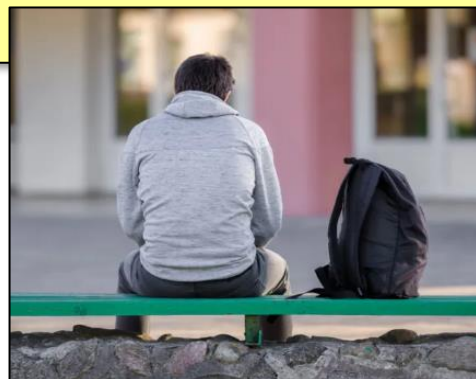


Preparing emotionally for the end of the school year

As summer approaches, many young people begin thinking ahead - exams, transitions, and change. Even positive change can feel unsettling. Some teens become restless or distracted without fully understanding why. Talking openly about upcoming changes can reduce anxiety. Encourage your young person to focus on what they can control now, while acknowledging that uncertainty is normal. Helping them reflect on how they've grown this year (emotionally as well as academically) builds reassurance and emotional readiness for what comes next.

Friendships change, and that's okay

Friendships can shift throughout the school year, and May is often a time when social changes become more noticeable. Teens may feel left out, drift away from friends, or reassess relationships. These experiences can be upsetting, even if they're a normal part of growing up. Parents and carers can help by listening without judgement or immediate solutions. Avoid minimising feelings, even if the situation seems minor. Reassuring teens that friendships evolve (and that feeling unsettled doesn't mean something is 'wrong') helps them navigate social challenges with confidence and emotional awareness.



Supporting independence while staying connected

Teenagers naturally seek more independence as confidence grows. For parents and carers, this can feel like a tricky balance; knowing when to step back and when to step in. Gradual independence works best when young people feel trusted but also supported.

Encourage your teen to take responsibility for manageable decisions while remaining emotionally available. Letting them try, adjust, and learn from mistakes sends a powerful message of trust. Maintaining regular check-ins (even brief ones) reminds them that independence doesn't mean being alone.

When things don't go as planned

As the school year progresses, it's common for young people to experience setbacks; a result that disappoints them, a revision plan that doesn't quite work, or a social situation that feels difficult. These moments can knock confidence, especially when teenagers feel pressure to 'get things right'. Parents and carers can help by normalising disappointment rather than trying to remove it. Let your young person know that setbacks are part of learning, not signs of failure. Encourage reflection with gentle questions such as 'What might you do differently next time?' or 'What did you learn from this?'. When teens understand that one outcome doesn't define them, they're better able to recover and move forward with resilience.

Why motivation comes and goes

Many parents and carers worry when their teenager's motivation seems to dip, particularly at this stage of the school year. In reality, motivation naturally fluctuates. Mental load, tiredness, stress, and emotional factors all affect how driven a young person feels from day to day. Rather than pushing harder, it often helps to reduce pressure. Supporting routines, breaking tasks into smaller chunks, and (as mentioned previously) celebrating effort instead of productivity can help motivation return more naturally. Reassure your teen that a lack of motivation doesn't mean they don't care; it often means their energy needs rebalancing.

Well-being skills that last beyond this school year

Mental health isn't about quick fixes; it's about developing skills that grow over time. May is a good point to reflect on which strategies have helped your young person cope this year, whether that's routine, movement, talking things through, or creative outlets. Encouraging teens to recognise what works for them builds long-term resilience. These skills don't disappear when the school year ends - they travel with them into future challenges. Supporting this awareness helps young people feel capable, prepared, and more in control of their well-being.

Learning to feel 'good enough'

Many young people feel they should always be improving, achieving, or doing more. While ambition can be positive, constant self-evaluation can take a toll on well-being. Learning to feel 'good enough' is a vital mental health skill. Parents and carers can support this by avoiding comparisons (with siblings, friends, or past performance) and instead focusing on personal progress and values. Praising effort, kindness, persistence, and honesty helps teens see their worth beyond grades or outcomes. Feeling 'enough' isn't about giving up; it's about recognising value without constant pressure.

Supporting emotions without trying to fix them

When young people are emotional, many parents and carers instinctively want to solve the problem. However, teens often benefit more from being heard than from having solutions offered straight away. Sometimes, they need space to process feelings before they're ready to talk or act. You can support emotional regulation by listening calmly, reflecting their feelings, and reassuring them that emotions are temporary. Simple responses such as 'That sounds really hard' or 'I'm here when you want to talk' can be more powerful than advice. Learning to sit with emotions, rather than rush to fix them, builds long-term emotional resilience.

Comparing less, coping more

Comparison can quietly undermine a young person's well-being. Teens may compare themselves academically, socially, or emotionally, often based on limited or unrealistic information. This can increase anxiety and damage self-esteem. This is particularly common during the exam season, when young people compare their ability to answer questions (or their actual test results) with their friends. Parents and carers can help by gently challenging comparison thoughts. Remind young people that everyone's journey looks different and that what they see of others is rarely the full picture. Encouraging teens to focus on their own goals, values, and progress helps them build self-worth that isn't dependent on others.

Mental health is built in everyday moments

Mental health is often associated with big emotions or crises, but it's also shaped by ordinary daily habits. Small routines (such as regular meals, sleep, moments of downtime, and feeling listened to) quietly protect well-being over time. Parents and carers can reinforce this by prioritising consistent routines and modelling self-care themselves. Checking in, sharing meals, or creating calm moments together may seem small, but they build emotional security. Looking after mental health doesn't always require action plans - sometimes it's about maintaining the basics.

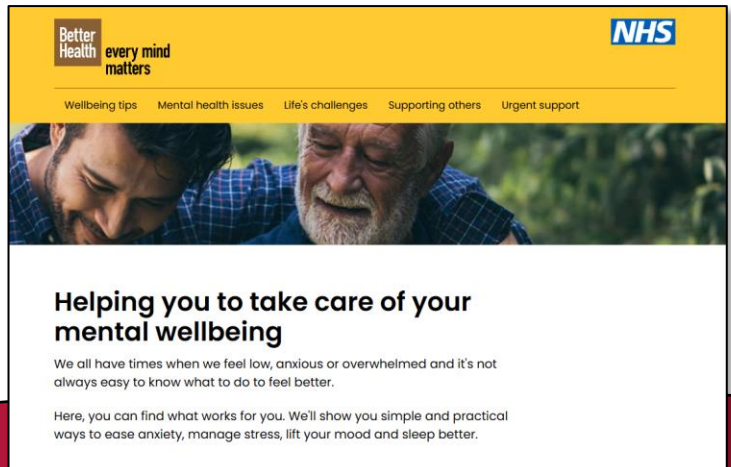
Website recommendation of the month

NHS: Every Mind Matters

(<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>)

'Every Mind Matters' is part of the NHS and offers reliable, evidence-based advice on mental well-being for children, young people and families.

The youth mental health section includes practical tips, videos, and guidance on managing feelings such as stress, worry and low mood. It's a helpful, trusted resource for families who value NHS-approved information.



Better Health every mind matters **NHS**

Wellbeing tips Mental health issues Life's challenges Supporting others Urgent support

Helping you to take care of your mental wellbeing

We all have times when we feel low, anxious or overwhelmed and it's not always easy to know what to do to feel better.

Here, you can find what works for you. We'll show you simple and practical ways to ease anxiety, manage stress, lift your mood and sleep better.

Well-Being Quote:

"Nothing diminishes anxiety faster than action"

Walter Anderson

Meaningful May 2026

MONDAY



4 Send your friend a photo from a time you enjoyed together

TUESDAY



5 Let someone know how much they mean to you and why

WEDNESDAY



6 Look for people doing good and reasons to be cheerful

THURSDAY



7 Make a list of what matters most to you and why

FRIDAY

1 Do something kind for someone you really care about

8 Set yourself a kindness mission to help others today

SATURDAY

2 Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't do

9 What values are important to you? Find ways to use them today

SUNDAY

3 Take a step towards an important goal, however small

10 Be grateful for the little things, even in difficult times

11 Look around for things that bring you a sense of awe and wonder

12 Listen to a favourite piece of music and remember what it means to you

13 Find out about the values or traditions of another culture

14 Get outside and notice the beauty in nature

15 Do something to contribute to your local community

16 Show your gratitude to people who are helping to make things better

17 Find a way to make what you do today meaningful

18 Send a handwritten note to someone you care about

19 Reflect on what makes you feel valued and purposeful

20 Share photos of 3 things you find meaningful or memorable

21 Look up at the sky. Remember we are all part of something bigger

22 Find a way to help a project or charity you care about

23 Recall three things you've done that you are proud of

24 Make choices that have a positive impact for others today

25 Ask someone else what matters most to them and why

26 Remember an event in your life that was really meaningful

27 Focus on how your actions make a difference for others

28 Do something special and revisit it in your memory tonight

29 Today do something to care for the natural world

30 Share a quote you find inspiring to give others a boost

31 Find three reasons to be hopeful about the future



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together