

Mindfulness Monthly



Issue 34: September 2026

Welcome to the September edition of 'Mindfulness Monthly'. Whether you are a regular reader or discovering the newsletter for the first time, our aim is simple - to provide practical ideas, trusted resources, and gentle guidance to help support the mental health and well-being of both young people and their families. As we begin a new academic year, this edition focuses on routines, confidence, friendships, and positive habits that can help young people settle back into school life successfully.

Starting strong, without putting pressure on yourself

The start of a new academic year often brings a sense of possibility and optimism. Many young people set high expectations for themselves, promising that this will be the year they become more organised, achieve better grades, make new friends, or approach school differently. While ambition can be positive, placing too much pressure on ourselves can quickly turn excitement into stress.

It can be helpful to remind young people that a successful start to the school year is not about being perfect from day one. Adjusting to new teachers, routines, subjects, and expectations takes time. Most students need several weeks to properly settle into the rhythm of school life, and this is completely normal.

Parents and carers can support by focusing on effort rather than outcomes. Encourage your young person to take things one step at a time, celebrate small successes, and remember that progress is often gradual. A positive school year is not built in a single week; it develops through consistent effort, resilience, and self-belief over time.

Another helpful reminder for young people is that everyone settles into a new school year at a different pace. Some students appear confident and organised from the very beginning, while others need a little longer to find their rhythm. Comparing themselves to others can often make the adjustment feel more difficult than it really is. Encouraging young people to focus on their own progress, rather than measuring themselves against those around them, can help reduce pressure and build a healthier sense of confidence.

Why routines support positive mental health

After the flexibility of the summer holidays, returning to routines can sometimes feel restrictive. However, routines play an important role in supporting positive mental health. Knowing what to expect each day helps young people feel secure, organised, and more in control of their lives.

Simple routines such as consistent bedtimes, regular mealtimes, planned homework/home learning periods, and opportunities for relaxation can reduce uncertainty and make daily life feel more manageable. When young people know what is coming next, they often have more mental energy available to focus on learning, relationships, and personal development.

It is important to remember that routines do not need to be rigid. The aim is simply to create some structure and predictability. Families might find it helpful to gradually reintroduce routines and involve young people in the process so that expectations feel realistic and achievable.

Routines can also help reduce decision fatigue, which is the feeling of becoming mentally tired from making lots of choices throughout the day. When certain parts of the day are predictable, such as getting ready for school, mealtimes, or bedtime, young people have more mental energy available for learning, problem-solving, and managing emotions. Consistency does not mean every day has to be exactly the same, but having a few reliable routines can create a strong sense of stability during what is often a busy and demanding time of year.

Reconnecting with friends and building new relationships

Returning to school after a long break can bring a mixture of excitement and nervousness, particularly when it comes to friendships. Some young people look forward to seeing their friends again, while others may worry about changes in friendship groups, meeting new people, or fitting in. Students new to the school can find this particularly challenging, especially if they do not know any of their classmates.

These concerns are extremely common and often affect even the most confident students. It can help to remind young people that many of their peers are likely to be experiencing similar feelings. Social confidence often takes a little time to rebuild after a long break, and friendships naturally change as young people grow and develop.

Parents and carers can support by listening without judgement and encouraging opportunities for connection. Joining clubs, participating in activities, or simply starting small conversations can help young people rebuild relationships and feel part of the school community. Strong friendships are one of the most important protective factors for positive mental well-being.

Helping young people manage worry

The beginning of a new school year can bring uncertainty, even when things appear to be going well. Some young people worry about academic expectations, friendship groups, new routines, or simply the unknowns that come with change.

When a young person shares a worry, it can be tempting to reassure them immediately or solve the problem on their behalf. However, one of the most valuable things adults can do is listen calmly and acknowledge their feelings. Statements such as 'that sounds difficult' or 'I can understand why you feel that way' can help young people feel heard and understood.

Encouraging young people to focus on what they can control, rather than everything that might happen, can also be helpful. Worry often becomes smaller and more manageable when broken down into practical next steps. Over time, learning to tolerate uncertainty helps build resilience and confidence.

Small habits, big difference

When young people think about improving their well-being, they often imagine making major changes. In reality, positive mental health is usually strengthened through small, everyday habits that are repeated consistently.

Simple actions such as drinking enough water, spending time outdoors, maintaining a regular sleep routine, and speaking kindly to themselves can all have a positive impact on mood and well-being. These habits may seem insignificant on their own, but they build a strong foundation for both physical and emotional health and should be encouraged.

One useful approach is to encourage young people to choose just one habit to focus on during September, such as making sure they drink enough water every day. Success is far more likely when goals are specific, manageable, and realistic. Small changes often grow into long-lasting habits that continue to support wellbeing throughout the year.

Confidence grows through action

Many young people believe that confidence is something you either have or you don't. In reality, confidence is often the result of taking action rather than the cause of it. Most people feel uncertain before trying something new, whether that's answering a question in class, joining a club, or meeting new people.

Every time a young person steps slightly outside their comfort zone, they gather evidence that they are capable of coping with challenges. Over time, these experiences create genuine confidence because it is based on experience rather than assumptions.

Parents and carers can support by celebrating bravery rather than perfection. Acknowledging the effort it takes to try something new sends the message that courage is valuable, regardless of the outcome. Confidence rarely appears overnight, but it grows through repeated experiences of taking small, positive risks.

When your young person says ‘school was fine’

Many parents and carers are familiar with the challenge of asking about school and receiving a one-word response. While this can feel frustrating, it is often a normal part of adolescence. After a busy school day, young people may need time to process what has happened before they feel ready to talk about it. Rather than asking broad questions such as ‘how was school?’, it can help to use more specific prompts. Questions like ‘what made you laugh today?’, ‘what was the best part of your day?’ or ‘what challenged you today?’ often encourage more meaningful responses.

The timing of conversations can also make a difference. Some young people talk more easily while walking, travelling in the car, or doing an activity together, where there is less pressure to maintain eye contact. Keeping communication relaxed and low-pressure helps create an environment where young people feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

Technique of the month: ‘The Three Good Things’ exercise

One simple way to support positive well-being is through a technique called ‘The Three Good Things Exercise’. At the end of each day, encourage your young person to think about three positive things that happened, no matter how small they may seem. These could include;

- Having a good conversation with a friend
- Enjoying a lesson
- Completing a task they had been putting off
- Seeing something funny online
- Spending time outdoors

The purpose of this exercise is not to ignore challenges or pretend everything is perfect. Instead, it helps train the brain to notice positive experiences alongside everyday difficulties. Research suggests that regularly reflecting on positive moments can boost well-being, increase optimism, and strengthen resilience. Families might even choose to share their ‘The Three Good Things Exercise’ together as part of an evening routine, creating an opportunity for positive reflection and connection.

Being kind to yourself during times of change

The start of a new school year can be exciting, but it can also feel challenging. Young people may compare themselves to others, worry about making mistakes, or feel frustrated if they don't settle in as quickly as they hoped. During times of change, it is important to remember that adjusting takes time. Encouraging young people to treat themselves with the same kindness they would offer a friend can make a real difference to their well-being. Instead of focusing on what went wrong, they can learn to ask themselves questions such as: ‘what did I do well today?’ or ‘what would I say to a friend in this situation?’. These small shifts in thinking can help reduce self-criticism and build resilience.

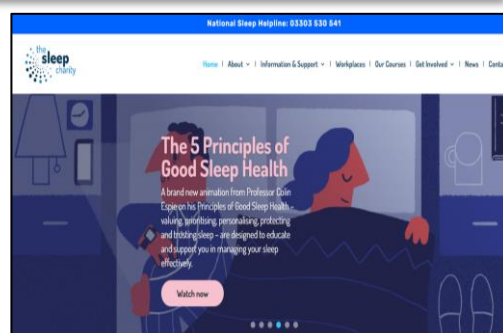
Parents and carers can support this by modelling self-compassion themselves. Hearing trusted adults speak kindly about their own mistakes and challenges helps young people understand that nobody gets everything right all the time. A positive start to the year isn't about being perfect; it's about learning, growing, and being patient with yourself along the way.

Website recommendation of the month

The Sleep Charity

(<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/>)

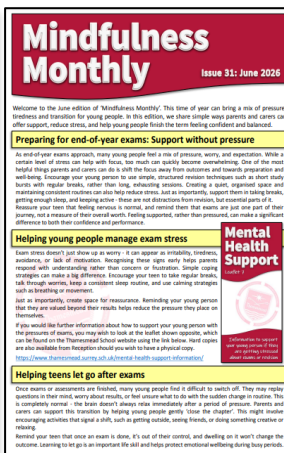
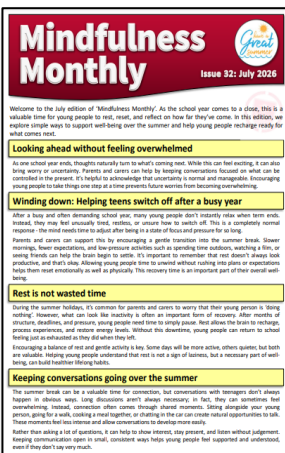
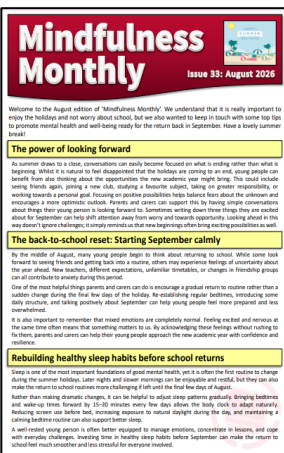
One area that often has a significant impact on a young person's wellbeing, mood, and ability to learn is sleep. The Sleep Charity provides expert, evidence-based advice to help children, young people, and adults improve their sleep. With information on bedtime routines, sleep and mental health, screen use, and common sleep difficulties, it is an excellent resource for families looking to establish healthy habits at the start of the new school year.



Previous editions of 'Mindfulness Monthly'

If you are new to the 'Mindfulness Monthly' newsletter and you would like to see earlier editions, they are available on the school website by clicking on/typing the following link; <https://www.thamesmead.surrey.sch.uk/mindfulness-monthly/>

Additionally, if you would like any previous editions emailed to you directly, please email Dave Todd (Student Personal Development and Mental Health Lead) on; d.todd@thamesmead.surrey.sch.uk



Well-being support at Thamesmead

With mental health being such an important focal point for schools, we thought it might be useful to share with you what we do in Thamesmead to support your children. For regular readers of 'Mindfulness Monthly' you may recall these points being flagged before, but for new parents and carers we thought you might like to know. Please note that any mental health support given is triaged in school by the Inclusion and Pastoral Teams (which allows us to ensure that the support we offer is appropriate for the student). We cannot refer directly to any agencies without this meeting taking place first as specific criteria must be met in order to meet the threshold of these services;

ELSA

ELSA support is an individualised support programme designed to meet the emotional needs of children and young people. The principle is that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. At Thamesmead, ELSA (which stands for Emotional Literacy Support and Advice) is often offered to students who are struggling with managing their feelings, or having difficulties within their friendship group, but they can also support in other ways.

'East to West'

East to West is a charitable organisation which offers support for a wide range of needs being faced by young people. Relational support workers and counsellors work alongside young people to understand their situations, grow their confidence and help them thrive. Often, their work takes places in 1-1 and group sessions, listening to and caring for students over several weeks. More information about East to West can be found on their website (www.easttowest.org.uk)

The Mindworks Mental Health Support Team offer a school-based service which supports the mental health of children and young people in schools across Surrey. They offer support and advice to key people (teachers, parents/carers) 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. Referrals can be completed to enable members of the team to work one-one-one with students. More information about the work of the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) can be found on their website (<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/our-services/school-based-needs/MHST>).

For parents and carers, we also offer a range of information leaflets about a range of mental health and well-being issues. Leaflets currently available include; 'Supporting your young person at home', 'Mental health support that we offer in school', 'Supporting students who are at risk of emotionally based school non-attendance', 'Guidance if you are worried that your child may have an eating disorder', 'Guidance if you are worried that your child may be self-harming', 'Guidance if your child appears withdrawn or worried', 'Dealing with exam stress', 'Supporting students who identify as LGBTQIA+', 'Supporting students who are dealing with a bereavement', 'Online behaviour and its impact on mental health', 'Transitions: From primary school to secondary', 'Transitions: Coping with the demands of GCSEs' and 'Supporting parents and carers with their own mental health'. Hard copies of the leaflets are available from Reception, with electronic versions available on the following link - <https://www.thamesmead.surrey.sch.uk/mental-health-support-information/>.

The new pastoral team in school

As is often the case in schools, a new academic year brings with it changes to teams. With this in mind, please find information below about the pastoral team in school for this academic year;

Year 7 tutors	Year 8 tutors	Year 9 tutors	Year 10 tutors	Year 11 tutors
7CGO Mrs Goddard	8HVA Mrs Vallianatos	9NRI Mrs Ripoché	10FHE Mrs Hencharld-Emeto	11RSI Mr Singh
7HJO Mrs Jones	8ACA Miss Catcheside	9AWI Miss Wickham	10MPI Mrs Philips and Mrs McCarthy	11TSC Mr Scrivener
7TAN Miss Ananthalingam	8JHA Miss Hayes and Ms Gadd	9EHA Miss Harper	10BHO Mrs Holmes	11CAZ Mrs Azoulay and Mrs Savvari
7AGE Mrs George	8AKH Mrs Khalid	9AGO Miss Gooderham	10BCA Mr Cambridge	11JLA Mr Lawson
7AAH Mr Ahmed	8LBU Mrs Burton and Ms Gadd	9RMA Mr MacDonald	10NBO Mrs Boyle and Ms Stock	11RHA Miss Harris and Mrs Mazhar
7EWA Mrs Ward and Mrs Barry	8SWE Miss Weeks	9HLO Mrs Long	10CDE Mrs Dewar	11JBO Mrs Rosethorne
7IMO Miss Moran	8HLE Miss Lewis	9TMO Mr Moses	10CWU Ms Wu	11PLI Mr Liyanage

Heads of Year and Pastoral Managers

 Head of Year 7 Mr Smith	 Head of Year 8 Mr Patel	 Head of Year 9 Miss Brackenbury	 Head of Year 10 Mr Cowley	 Head of Year 11 Mr Tabron
 Assistant Head of Year 7 Ms Sharief	 Pastoral Manager for Year 8 Mrs Bell	 Pastoral Manager for Year 9 Mrs Newling-Ward	 Pastoral Manager for Year 10 Mrs Harman	 Pastoral Manager for Year 11 Miss Elliott

Well-Being Quote:

“You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just the first step”

Martin Luther King Jr

Self-Care September 2026

MONDAY

TUESDAY

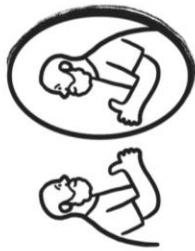
WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY



1 Find time for self-care. It's not selfish, it's essential

2 Notice the things you do well, however small

3 Let go of self-criticism and speak to yourself kindly

4 Plan a fun or relaxing activity and make time for it

5 Forgive yourself when things go wrong. Everyone makes mistakes

6 Focus on the basics: eat well, exercise and go to bed on time

7 Give yourself permission to say 'no'

8 Be willing to share how you feel and ask for help when needed

9 Aim to be good enough, rather than perfect

10 When you find things hard, remember it's ok not to be ok

11 Make time to do something you really enjoy

12 Get active outside and give your mind and body a natural boost

13 Be as kind to yourself as you would to a loved one

14 If you're busy, allow yourself to pause and take a break

15 Find a caring, calming phrase to use when you feel low

16 Leave positive messages for yourself to see regularly

17 No plans day. Make time to slow down and be kind to yourself

18 Ask a trusted friend to tell you what strengths they see in you

19 Notice what you are feeling, without any judgement

20 Enjoy photos from a time with happy memories

21 Don't compare how you feel inside to how others appear outside

22 Take your time. Make space to just breathe and be still

23 Let go of other people's expectations of you

24 Accept yourself and remember that you are worthy of love

25 Avoid saying 'I should' and make time to do nothing

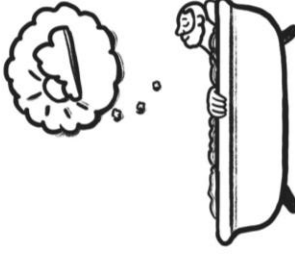
26 Find a new way to use one of your strengths or talents

27 Free up time by cancelling any unnecessary plans



29 Write down three things you appreciate about yourself

30 Remind yourself that you are enough, just as you are



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together