

## **Building Blocks of Good Mental Health & Wellbeing**

### **Small daily habits → Big impact**

Mental health and wellbeing are not just about how we feel in the moment, they are shaped by the everyday choices we make. Developing healthy habits across key areas of life can help young people feel more balanced, cope with challenges, and perform at their best both at school and at home. By focusing on a few core building blocks, students and families can work together to support stronger mental health and overall wellbeing.

### **Sleep: Recharge and Restore**

Sleep plays a vital role in both physical and mental health. It is during sleep that the brain processes information, supports learning, and helps regulate emotions. Teenagers typically need around nine hours of sleep each night, yet many are not getting enough.

When sleep is limited, students may find it harder to concentrate, manage stress, and regulate their emotions. Over time, this can impact mood, relationships, and academic performance.

Establishing consistent sleep routines can make a big difference. Going to bed and waking up at similar times each day, limiting screen use before bed, and creating a calm, quiet sleep environment can all support better quality sleep.

### **Nutrition: Fuel for Body and Brain**

What young people eat has a direct impact on how they feel, think, and function. A balanced diet supports brain development, stabilises energy levels, and can even reduce the risk of low mood and anxiety.

Eating a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein, helps provide the nutrients the brain needs to work effectively. On the other hand, diets high in sugar, processed foods, and caffeine can lead to energy crashes, irritability, and difficulties with sleep.

Encouraging regular meals, especially breakfast, staying hydrated, and making small healthy swaps can support both physical health and emotional wellbeing.

### **Exercise: Movement for Mental Health**

Physical activity is one of the most effective and accessible ways to support mental wellbeing. Regular movement helps release chemicals in the brain that improve mood, reduce stress, and boost overall resilience.

For teenagers, aiming for at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day is recommended. This does not have to be structured exercise. Walking, dancing, playing sport, or even being active with friends all count.

Exercise also supports better sleep, increases confidence, and provides opportunities for social connection, all of which are important for mental health.

## **Screen Time: Creating Healthy Boundaries**

Technology is an important part of everyday life, but too much screen time can impact sleep, concentration, and mood. Excessive use, particularly before bed, can interfere with the body's natural sleep rhythms and reduce the quality of rest.

Social media can also influence self-esteem and increase feelings of comparison or pressure for some young people.

Setting clear and consistent boundaries around screen use can help create a healthier balance. This might include screen-free times (such as during meals or before bed), taking regular breaks, and encouraging offline activities like hobbies, outdoor time, or socialising face-to-face.

## **Emotional Regulation: Understanding and Managing Feelings**

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage emotions in a healthy way. This is a skill that develops over time and is essential for building resilience, maintaining relationships, and coping with challenges.

Supporting young people to talk about their feelings, practise positive self-talk, and use simple coping strategies such as deep breathing or taking a break, can make a meaningful difference.

It is also important to remind students that seeking help is a strength. Talking to a trusted adult, teacher, or friend can provide support and perspective during difficult times.

## **Supporting Wellbeing at Home**

Parents and carers play a crucial role in supporting their child's mental health and wellbeing. Young people thrive when they feel connected, supported, and understood.

Simple, everyday actions can have a big impact. Checking in regularly, listening without judgement, and showing encouragement helps build trust and confidence. Establishing routines around sleep, meals, and study can create a sense of stability and reduce stress.

Modelling healthy habits is also powerful. When young people see adults prioritising sleep, managing stress, and maintaining balance, they are more likely to adopt these behaviours themselves.

## **Bringing It All Together**

Wellbeing is built through consistent, everyday habits. Paying attention to sleep, nutrition, movement, screen time, and emotional skills can help young people feel more in control, more connected, and better equipped to handle life's challenges.

Small changes over time can lead to meaningful improvements in both mental health and overall wellbeing.

Strong minds are built through small, consistent choices.  
You don't have to do it alone—reach out, stay connected, and support one another.