

OPEN ARMS SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

An occupational therapy newsletter for schools, colleges, parents and carers



Thank you so much for the feedback, queries and suggestions that we received from our first edition of the **OPEN ARMS SUPPORT NEWSLETTER**. We really appreciate people taking the time to read the newsletter and get in touch with us.

This edition is going to focus on wellness, as it seems fitting for this time of year.

Wherever we go at the moment we see adverts for self improvement; gyms, dieting clubs, spas etc and coupled with social expectations to make new year resolutions and the long winter nights without the excitement of Christmas lights, we think it's pretty easy to feel disheartened. So, we want to focus on self-compassion, wellness and self-care.

From

The OASS team



ASK AN OT...

What is self-esteem? Is it different from self-compassion? Self-esteem involves positively evaluating yourself and so often requires a degree of external feedback eg: being told you tried hard at school today leads you to conclude that you did try hard, allowing you to praise yourself and boost your self-esteem. Self-compassion is treating yourself kindly, recognising your shared humanity and being mindful when considering trickier aspects of yourself. It does not require self-evaluation or comparisons with others. It is a kind, connected and clear-sighted way of relating to our self, even in instances of failure, perceived inadequacy and imperfection.

My child's school run mindfulness sessions where they seem to eat a lot of chocolate, is that right? Yes. Mindfulness is about being in the present and becoming aware of what is. Eating is

one of many everyday activities that can be completed mindfully, and a fun and motivating way to encourage kids to be mindful. Alternatively, you could try: mindful walking, washing up, colouring, breathing and bubble blowing. With younger children, try using activities such as finger breathing or noticing 5 things they can see, 4 things they can hear, 3 things they can touch, 2 things that can smell and 1 thing they could taste.

My child has waaaay too much energy for mindfulness and meditation, how can I encourage them? Research shows that regular mindfulness and meditation practice for people who are easily distracted and impulsive, can improve focus, so it's a good thing to try to get into the habit of doing it. If you struggle to regulate your energy levels.

Try:

- Building meditation and mindfulness into routine;
- Practice slowing down by having slow races;
- Focus on breathing;
- Be mindful during activity such as walking, cooking or eating.

OASS can now offer Yoga in Schools

Available through:

- One-to-one
- Small groups
- Online

Adapted for
Complex
Needs

Yoga for improving
concentration and
focus!



Contact us to book or
enquire on:-

Tel: 01603 767498



FUN FACT!

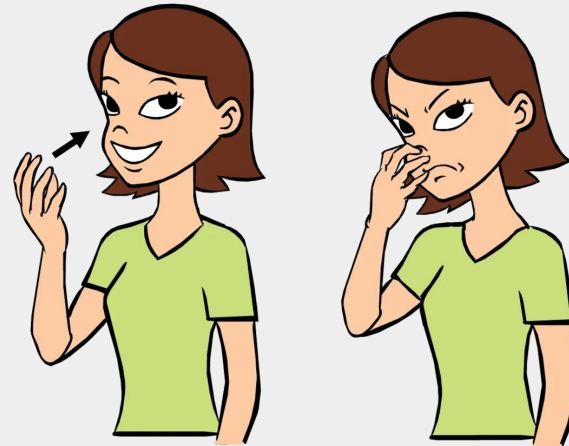
Epigenetics is the study of how our experiences affects the expression of our genes, potentially answering the nature vs nurture debate. It also means that our genetic future is not set in stone. Research is showing that exercise is not only effective for managing depression and anxiety, and boosting memory and learning, it also has long term, positive effects rooted in molecular regulatory mechanisms, affecting the expression of genes (Fernandes et al; 2018). Take away message: we really need exercise!



TIME TO SIGN.... 'Angry'

An important part of wellness is noticing, acknowledging and communicating those feelings that are uncomfortable to experience. Anger can often be a secondary emotion which means we display anger but other feelings such as sadness, shame, embarrassment etc are attached or hidden underneath it.

To sign anger, make your dominant hand into a claw and bring it to your mouth. Use an angry facial expression whilst making the movement with your hand.





Don't Worry. We've Got Anxiety Covered



Everyone feels anxious at some point and at low levels for short periods of time, it can help spur us on, increase alertness levels and motivate us to solve problems. However, over longer periods of time or when experienced intensely, such as during a panic attack, it can be terrifying and stop us from doing things. We experience cognitive, behavioural and physiological symptoms that are often disproportionate to the trigger and in some situations, can be linked to historic events that we found distressing and struggled to cope with. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health needs in the general population (Chand & Marwaha; 2022), so how do we cope with it?

When panic is rising:

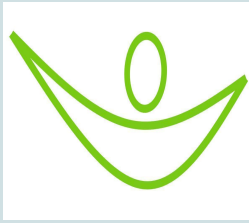
- Take deep breaths: this counteracts the fast and shallow breathing that happens naturally when we start to panic.
- Ground yourself: this helps you to refocus on the present moment: touch something, move, count things around you, list your favourite things.
- Use a coping mantra: tell yourself over and over that you've got this and it's ok.
- Look at nature or a picture of a calming natural scene:
- Take yourself out of the situation and go for a walk.
- Keep a calming smell on some tissue and deeply breathe it in.

Adopt an anti-anxiety lifestyle:

- Engage in daily mindful meditation: research shows consistent practise helps emotional regulation.
- Exercise: triggers the release of feel-good neurochemicals.
- Eat anti-anxiety rich foods: about 95% of serotonin receptors are in the gut and research is showing that certain vitamins and minerals may help reduce anxiety.
- Sleep well: this is hard when anxious. Go to our website for tips on good sleep hygiene.
- Spend time in nature: has positive effects on the physiological aspects of anxiety.
- Practice self-compassion.

Useful websites:

- www.kooth.com : A free NHS online mental wellbeing community
- www.headspace.com : Provides information and tips about mental health and well-being
- www.mind.org.uk : Provides mindfulness exercises
- www.healthline.com : Provides mindfulness exercises
- www.samaritans.org : A listening service



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope you have found the information useful and it helps to make a difference for the children and young people that you're working with and looking after.

Please do get in contact with us; we would love to hear feedback and any ideas that you would like to see in our next newsletter. Or, you may be interested in talking with one of us about how we can help support the children and young people in your provision.

Newsletter feedback and enquiries – please contact Ash Stokoe at a.stokoe@openarmsupport.co.uk

Enquiries on how we can provide support to children and schools you can:

- Contact Maria Cook, Business Manager, at m.cook@openarmsupport.co.uk
- Visit our website for more information on our service at www.openarmsupport.co.uk
 - Complete a contact form at www.openarmsupport.co.uk/contact