



Visit **Mentally
Healthy Schools**
for more resources



★ USING MENTALLY HEALTHY SCHOOLS RESOURCES

Guidance for parents

Some of our Mentally Healthy Schools resources are suitable to be used by parents, with the support of the school. Learn how to use the resources on Mentally Healthy Schools with your child by following our simple guidance.

It's important to remember that the activities and resources on Mentally Healthy Schools are intended to support children to develop life skills and coping strategies, and are not intended to be a replacement for therapeutic support.

They may not be suitable for all children, so particular care should be taken for children who have experienced particularly difficult circumstances or emotions, for example those who have been through a life-changing experience (such as bereavement), may be experiencing severe mental health problems or may have a history of trauma. Please seek further support from your school and your GP, if you are concerned.

Activities that focus on emotions can increase our sense of awareness of our thoughts and feelings, so it is important to remind children of the support systems that are available, in and out of school, if they need to speak about something.

Follow our dos and don'ts to help you feel confident working with your child on our activities.



Dos



Think about the physical space where the activity is taking place. If this is at school or at home, we would suggest that the environment is kept as calm as possible, with minimal distraction. For example, there could be relaxing music playing in the background. Try and ensure that the space is as undisturbed, quiet and comfortable as possible and that you are paying attention to the child as you are delivering the activity.



Encourage your child to share as much as feels OK. We never force a child to take part in an activity, close their eyes or speak about an activity if it does not feel emotionally safe to do so.



Make sure that there is enough time allocated to completing the activity and a space for discussion around this, in case the child would like to speak about what came up for them.



Be familiar with the activities (as this makes it easier and more comfortable to deliver them), maybe try them out for yourself before using with your child.



Model speaking about your emotions in a positive way. This can help you keep the process fun and will also help you to put yourself in your child's place and feel compassion for them.



Help children to begin to name and recognise their emotions, both within the activities and around it. Talk about feelings out of the context of these activities, for example when reading about a character in a book or while watching a TV show.





Tone and pace of your voice is important. Children have told us that when the activities are presented in a calm and soft manner, this makes a difference to how they engage. Try to deliver the activities when you too are feeling calm and engaged.



The activities should be framed in a positive and destigmatising way to help normalise that we all have mental health and emotions and that talking about it is important for us all.



Remind children that there is no “wrong” or “right” way to feel and that some of the activities may take time and practice. It is not about getting the activities right, but about immersing themselves into the experience.]



Try and make the activities as fun as you can and encourage involvement from the children too!

Don'ts



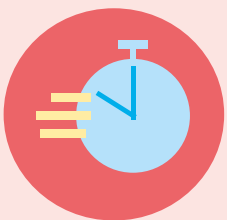
The activities should not be used as a punishment.



Do not force a child to take part in the activity if this causes them too much anxiety – we do not want to do more emotional harm than good. They may have their defences in place for a reason! You may encourage them to observe rather than take part or take part “as much as is possible” for them. They do not need to complete the activity sheets themselves, you can talk about the activity together with you making notes if needed.



You don't need to continue the activity if your child is agitated, disengaged or not responding calmly. It's normal your child will not like all the activities and is likely to respond better to some than to others.



Don't worry if it takes time for you or your child to get used to a new concept. Be patient. Pace yourself and build up the length of the exercises gradually if you need to.