



Learning how to fail is a vital skill that our pupils are not developing – leaving them vulnerable to life’s ups and downs.

Dr Pooky Knightsmith explains and advises

An important skill that our children need if they are to successfully ride the wave of life’s ups and downs, without finding themselves flailing for air after being hit by an especially nasty rip tide, is the ability to fail.

While I am consistently impressed by the levels of emotional literacy displayed by the younger generations, I am also deeply worried by the degree of perfectionism that is present too.

Whether it is taking 25 selfies and applying half a dozen filters before uploading a picture to Instagram, whether it is consuming endless YouTube tutorials to help them sculpt the perfect body, face or hair, or

whether it is their unwillingness to accept anything other than top marks in their preferred hobbies or studies, this is a generation which is driven by unrelenting standards and which is surrounded by the perfectly airbrushed lives of their social networks – both online and offline.

Being driven by perfection and a fear of failure doesn’t necessarily sound like a bad thing – but it can play out with very negative consequences, either in the shape of a young person who limits their experiences, unwilling to try new things for fear that they might get it wrong, or by a hard fall from a great height when they fail for the first time.

It is important, therefore, that we expose pupils to failure and, if possible, that parents are on board with this too. It is not that hard to do once we reframe failure

a little and recalibrate the conversation. And no, I’m not advocating anything so grand as the flash in the pan “failure weeks” of a few years back, but rather a slight shift in attitude that prepares pupils for the knocks that life will throw at them – while they are still in the safety of the school environment. So, here are some simple steps that we might take.

Reframing failure with pupils and parents

Many of us have told pupils that “fail” stands for “first attempt in learning” but have we really meant it?

If we really embed this philosophy, we end up with a classroom where pupils feel able to apply their existing skills, knowledge and understanding in a new context in the full knowledge that they may not be successful right away, but safe in the understanding that they will learn something in the process that may bring them closer to success next time.

By celebrating innovation, progress and determination as well as success, we support our pupils to become more adventurous learners and also the kind of people who can take their failures on the chin, dusting themselves off ready for another try.

Role-model failure

One of the easiest ways for pupils to learn that it is okay not to succeed first time, every time, is when they see the trusted adults in their lives modelling this.

Teachers and parents can do this by stepping out of our comfort zones and trying new things alongside our pupils – extra-curricular activities can offer a great opportunity for this. It can be hard to step away from the idea that we must always be the expert in the room, but learning with your pupils and letting them see you fluff up occasionally – and having fun along the way – can help to give them permission to give new things a go too.

This is maybe something to think about before you turn down the chance to try willow-weaving, yoga, boxercise or Mandarin on your next school trip.

Create context and explore what if?

It is not uncommon for pupils to become pretty blinkered in their approach to exams and results – whichever set of exams they are currently facing will be the most important ones they have experienced to date, and it can feel like a lot hangs in the balance.

For some, the fear of not living up to expectations looms so large that they feel unable to try, or anxiety prevents them from performing to their best. In this case, it can be helpful to put things in perspective a little and to explore “what if?”

When we understand the genuine ramifications of a worst-case scenario, this can often ease the burden a little. We can also explore what happens if we do well, but not quite as well as we had hoped. It is important to strike a balance, because of course we want pupils to strive for success – but we also need to help them to understand that some days we all fall shy of the standards we set ourselves, but that the world will not stop spinning on its axis, and we will need to find a way forwards.

Ultimately, our pupils need to learn that in life, the true test comes not from never falling, but from our ability to right ourselves after a fall – and the classroom is a great place for this learning to take place. **SecEd**

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It can be daunting when a troubled student chooses to disclose to you. **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** advises how to talk so that young people who need your help will listen

When we're worried about a student, we often want to reach out to them and start a discussion about their mental or emotional wellbeing – but we can sometimes find ourselves

unsure how to start.

A frequent concern is that we might make things worse or push them away in our attempt to draw them closer.

To help you feel more confident starting sensitive conversations, I spoke to students and asked them to reflect on what they had found most helpful.

Focus on listening

“She listened, and I mean really listened. She didn't interrupt me or ask me to explain myself or anything, she just let me talk and talk and talk. I had been unsure about talking to anyone but I knew quite quickly that I'd chosen the right person to talk to and that it would be a turning point.”

It is worth remembering that often we don't need to find the right thing to say, we simply need to provide a safe space, a little time and some non-judgemental listening to enable a student to open up about what's on their mind.

Don't talk too much

“Sometimes it's hard to explain what's going on in my head – it doesn't make a lot of sense and I've kind of gotten used to keeping myself to myself. But just 'cos I'm struggling to find the right words doesn't mean you should help me. Just keep quiet, I'll get there in the end.”

This isn't our story to tell. Let the student tell their own story, in their own words and their own time, even if that feels slow or disjointed. Don't be tempted to fill the blanks – you may get them wrong and you're denying the student the chance to engage in a process which will help to clarify how they're thinking and feeling.

Let the student know they are your number one priority right now

“I knew he was taking me seriously because the first thing he did was to sit me down quietly while he



Talking to troubled students

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called the headteacher to arrange for someone else to teach his next lesson. That sort of scared me but more than that it made me realise that he actually cared about what I was going to tell him and that he really wanted to help.”

It is not always possible to rearrange our plans for a student in need – but we can do small things that send a message to the student that this conversation matters and that it is our sole focus right now. Turn off screens and spell out the fact that you are focused and listening.

Offer support

“I was worried how she'd react, but she just listened then said 'How can I support you?' – no-one had asked me that before and it made me realise that she cared and between us we thought of some really practical things she could do to help me stop self-harming.”

Working with a student to think up some practical steps that could be taken as swiftly as possible to help make their day feel more manageable can feel very positive for both of you. A good framework for this is to think through a typical day and to explore typical triggers and stressors and discuss how these might be alleviated.

Acknowledge how hard it is to discuss these issues

“Talking about my bingeing for the first time was the hardest thing I ever did. When I was done talking he looked me in the eye and said 'That must have been really tough' – he was right, it was, but it meant so much that he realised what a big deal it was for me.”

Remember that however difficult this conversation feels for you, it is probably 10 times harder for your student. This might be the first time they have opened up about their issues.

That takes real bravery and also shows a great degree of trust in you – acknowledging that can help them understand that you don't underestimate the significance and challenges of this conversation.

Persevere

“I think she thought I would never open up. It was probably after she'd outstretched a hand of support about eight times that I finally began to talk, falteringly. If she hadn't have kept trying and trying I'd probably still be sitting in that deep pit of depression now.”

A student may not be ready to talk the first time

you offer to listen – telling them that you are happy to listen when they are ready is helpful, but it can be hard for students to take that step and ask for your help. They are far more likely to open up to you if you proactively offer support. Alternatively, you could also ask if there is anyone else they would feel comfortable talking to and facilitate that conversation.

Conclusion

These are not easy conversations to have – but they can make the world of difference to a student who is suffering so I hope these ideas give you a little more confidence in reaching out to students in need of support.

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Further advice

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Mental health and wellbeing expert **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** advises teachers and school staff on what not to do if they are worried that a child is self-harming or if a student discloses to them

School staff often ask me what they should and shouldn't say if a pupil talks to them about their self-harm. There is often a concern that in saying or doing the wrong thing we might make things worse. As such, I have listed some common pitfalls to avoid and outlined some more positive approaches.

Don't judge

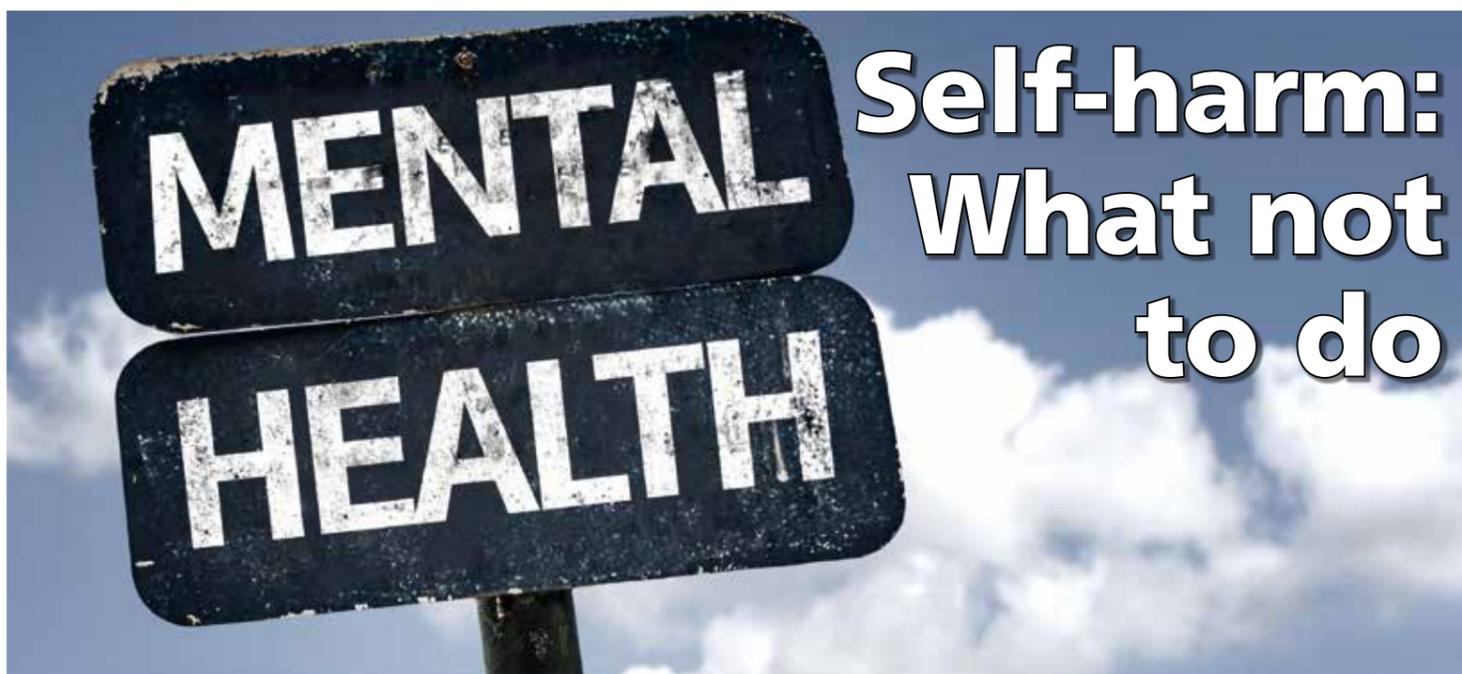
Many young people don't open up about their self-harming behaviours because they're worried that they will be judged as crazy or attention-seeking. This fear of judgement can act as a huge barrier to help-seeking and problem-sharing and being met with a judgemental attitude will result in the conversation being cut short. Instead, give the pupil the opportunity to explain their thoughts, feelings and behaviours while you listen without assumptions or judgement.

Don't tell them to stop

Stopping the cycle of self-harm usually takes some time and can only happen once a young person has learnt to manage their thoughts and feelings in a different way.

Asking them to stop may make the pupil feel misunderstood, or drive them to hide their behaviour in future.

Instead of asking the pupil to stop outright, acknowledge that this will take a little time and won't be easy, and offer your help in finding the support and strategies they need in order to develop healthier means of coping.



Don't panic

Learning that a young person has been harming themselves can be very distressing, but the most helpful thing you can do is to stay calm and listen. This can take your very best acting skills as you may be upset, angry or scared.

But remember, this is about the pupil not about you – and a calm, measured, supportive response sets the tone for the difficult next steps the pupil will take in beginning to address their issues.

Don't be dismissive

The severity of self-harm does not necessarily indicate the severity of the accompanying emotional distress. If a young person has trusted you enough to share their injuries with you, no matter how superficial, their concerns warrant your attention.

Look past the injuries and encourage them to open up by asking open questions and giving them plenty of time and space to share their thoughts and feelings.

Don't make assumptions

No matter how well you think you know a pupil and their situation, never assume that you understand the reasons behind their self-harm. Let them tell their own story, in their own time.

This might not happen coherently, quickly or in your first conversation – but only by giving a pupil the space and time to explain their thoughts, feelings and behaviours can we begin to genuinely understand what is going on with them, and how best they might be supported.

Conclusion

If a pupil chooses to confide in you, it says a lot about how much they respect and trust you. Calm, quiet listening with a few questions to prompt them, before discussing next steps in order to ensure they are appropriately supported is ideal. And for the record, these conversations never feel easy, especially if it is with a pupil you have grown to know.

If for any reason you feel unable to support, taking

the pupil to another member of staff who feels better able to support is the next best thing. **SecEd**

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Self-harm

Dr Pooky Knightsmith's recent book, *Can I tell you about self-harm?*, is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishing. Visit www.jkp.com/uk/can-i-tell-you-about-self-harm-1.html

Mental health advice

Dr Pooky Knightsmith provides regular support and advice in *SecEd*. To read her previous articles, go to <http://bit.ly/2daU4zs>. If there are specific issues you would like to see addressed, email pooky@cwmt.org or tweet @PookyH

Six steps to sustainable recovery

We can sometimes be too quick to think that a young person is recovered from a mental health problem.

Dr Pooky Knightsmith offers six steps to supporting sustainable recovery from mental health issues

One of the easiest mistakes to make when supporting a young person who has been struggling with mental ill health, is to take our foot off the pedal too soon.

When weight is restored, scars are healed or dependence on drugs or alcohol has ceased, we can be forgiven for thinking our work here is done. In truth though, this can be the hardest time of all; in the early stages of recovery we are often having to learn new ways of thinking and behaving, we're fighting the urge to return to unhealthy coping mechanisms and our sense of self can be pretty fragile if we've been labelled by our illness for some time.

To support sustainable recovery and prevent relapse, there are some simple steps we can take.

Recognise that the body and brain recover at different rates

If a young person lost or gained a lot of weight during the course of their mental illness or have, for example, visible injuries or hair loss, the return to the norm of their physical appearance can lull us into thinking everything is okay. It's not. The body can heal relatively quickly but it can take far longer to address the underlying emotional wellbeing or mental health issues and it's vital that we recognise this and continue to support pupils long after they appear more healthy.

Have realistic expectations

Ideally we should work with the pupil, their parents and their teachers to ensure that we are setting shared realistic expectations. These expectations will vary

from child to child but might be around academic attainment, attendance, sporting performance or participation in class. A transition phase can often be helpful with clear short and medium-term goals being set, supported and revisited by a team around the child.

Accept that recovery is never perfect

Our expectations around recovery also need to be realistic. No matter how mentally well they are, nobody has a good day every day, and the same is true for those of us in recovery from a mental illness. There will be bumps in the road. We need to acknowledge and prepare for this likelihood and recognise blips in recovery for what they are – small hurdles to overcome along the journey rather than a return to the start line.

Understand the importance of blips

Not only are blips inevitable, they're important. Being able to prepare for and overcome setbacks in the recovery process while in a supportive environment can help the pupil become more self-aware and more able to manage subsequent difficulties. In future they may face similar struggles when they no longer have the immediate support of school, family or friends and it's important that they can recognise warning signs early and learn to respond positively in order to maintain their wellbeing long-term.

Plan ahead in times of calm

Don't wait for blips to happen – actively plan for them. When we are in a heightened state of anxiety, or our motivation is lacking as depression takes grip, it can be very difficult to think our way out of the current situation. This can lead to blips taking hold and

developing into full blown relapse. If, instead, we plan ahead with the pupil and any relevant others about what to do if they hit a difficult patch, this removes the need to troubleshoot on the hop and results in better, quicker decision-making that can be enacted quickly.

It is also helpful to specifically plan ahead and consider times that are likely to prove more difficult for the pupil – for example loss of routine in the holidays, transition between year groups, or exams are the types of typical life event that can pose difficulties for all pupils and should be specifically planned for with pupils with a known history of ill mental health or who are considered otherwise vulnerable.

Be aware of warning signs

Working with the young person to identify the warning signs that might indicate that their recovery is slipping is a hugely helpful thing to do – again this should be done at a time when things are going relatively well and the pupil is motivated in their recovery.

By working together we can identify signs, specific to them, that can act as an early warning system. The easiest way to do this is to look backwards – you might all have missed the warning signs in the past, but retrospectively they can be fairly easy to identify and this can be a simple way to help safeguard against future difficulties.

Typical warning signs might include a change in academic performance, absenteeism or lateness, becoming more isolated or changes in eating and sleeping patterns.

Wellbeing Action Plan

If you're working with a pupil who is in the early stages of recovery, a positive exercise can be to complete a wellbeing action plan with them. Inspired by an evidence-based practice developed by Dr Mary Ellen Copeland for adults in the US, wellbeing action plans (see below) are a simple way for you and your pupil to walk through warning signs, triggers, healthy coping strategies and sources of support.

This approach can be used either as a preventative or a supportive tool and provides a tangible framework in a physical booklet that the pupil can keep for future reference.

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Wellbeing Action Plan

You can download copies of a Wellbeing Action Plan free resource at <http://wp.me/p4vTpm-1ro> or order free physical copies from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust via www.cwmt.org.uk/resources

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Dr Pooky Knightsmith offers us five tangible ways to ensure our schools are a safe space for vulnerable young people

Is your school a safe place?

Everyone feels welcome

Adults and children alike feel that they are welcome in school – frontline staff are friendly and helpful and an exploratory rather than punitive response is taken in the first instance to lateness.

A warm welcome helps even latecomers get off to a positive start at school, while questioning lateness before punishing it can quickly flag up difficulties that we need to be aware of and may be able to support with.

They can see 'kids like me' on the walls

Efforts are taken to create displays that reflect the diverse make-up of the student body, both in terms

Sources of support have faces & names

Pupils know how and who to ask for help. Sources of support for common issues are signposted in a range of ways – for example on walls and toilet doors, the school website, in pupil planners and verbally in assemblies and lessons.

Named staff welcome pupils to discuss specific difficulties they may be facing. The make-up of this team should be driven by a needs analysis of your student body, and would include named staff who can support pupils who are LGBTQ, looked-after or struggling with mental health issues.

All staff, including non-teaching staff, should feel confident handling disclosures and pupils should feel

In addition this approach can prevent those who are not currently academic high-flyers from disengaging completely. This is taken further by some schools who support pupils in accessing a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities – giving pupils the chance to try, fail and try again in a range of safe situations which broaden their horizons, boost their confidence and self-esteem, and help them to find their niche.

Conclusion

Next time you walk through the gates at your school, put yourself in the shoes of one of your most vulnerable learners and try to see things through their eyes.

Does your school feel welcoming and safe? If not, ask yourself – or the relevant pupils – what small but tangible changes you could make to rectify this, because providing a safe space for all learners will give our most vulnerable learners both an emotional and an academic boost.

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For some young people, school represents the one constant in their life; it can be a safe haven for our most vulnerable young people. As they walk through the school gates, they can shrug off adult worries and responsibilities and become a child for a few hours enabling them the opportunity to thrive and flourish alongside their peers.

In this short article, I have explored the good practice I have observed around the country that makes schools feel like a safe space for those who need it most – some of these ideas and strategies might work in your school too.

Children know what to expect

Rules and consistency are the bedrock in helping to make life feel safe and predictable for children. We can feel that we are being kind and supportive when we flex and bend these rules for vulnerable youngsters, but in doing this we unwittingly make school feel unpredictable.

Ideally, there are shared expectations between home and school, but as a minimum, ensuring that pupils and staff have a shared understanding of what is expected and the consequences if pupils do not meet these standards, makes for a safe base from which pupils feel safe to engage.

“ We can feel that we are being kind and supportive when we flex and bend these rules for vulnerable youngsters, but in doing this we unwittingly make school feel unpredictable ”

of physical appearance and also in terms of academic ability.

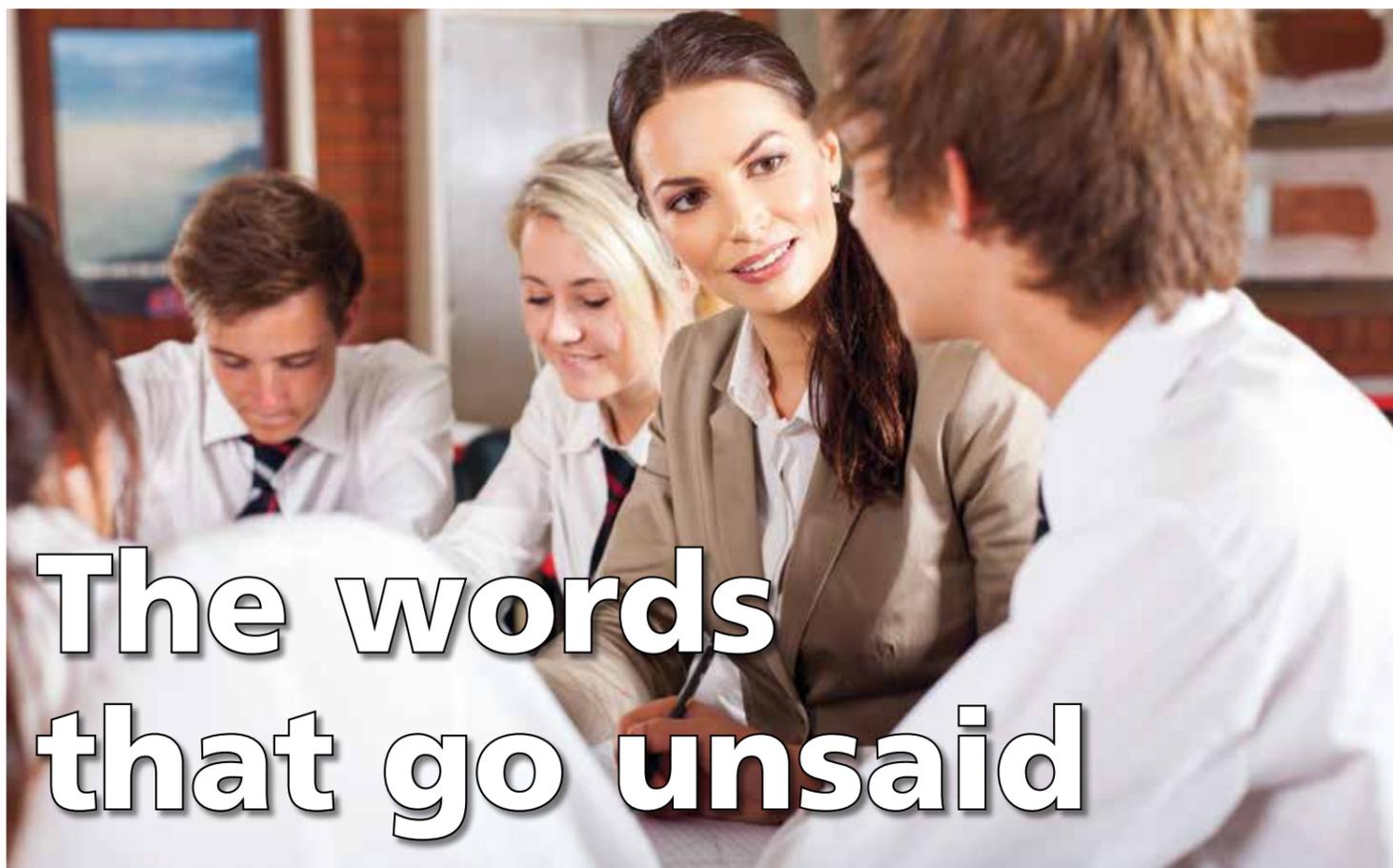
This helps children to feel included and can be extended by exploring different cultures and ethnicities where it is fitting as part of the richer learning journey. A culture where difference is celebrated rather than ridiculed makes for a safe and supportive environment where children dare to be themselves.

that they will be listened to without judgement if they choose to confide in a trusted adult at your school.

Not just academic achievement

Schools where effort as well as achievement is celebrated and where success across a realm of different activities is highlighted can feel more inclusive and welcoming to children whose primary successes are not academic.

Picking up on changes in our pupils can help teachers and school staff to spot emerging mental health or wellbeing issues. **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** advises



The words that go unsaid

How can we tell when a pupil needs our support? It's a simple question and the most obvious answer is if they ask for our help. However, often the voice which most needs to be heard is the quietest.

These are the children who keep me awake at night, these are the children who slide through life so quietly that we might not pick up on their needs.

At worst, they are the children who make headlines when they take their lives for no apparent reason; at best they are children who continue to just about manage and find a way to safely navigate their issues or a means of accessing support eventually.

The easiest analogy is to physical health – I remember learning on a St John's first aid course when I was in primary school that if we found ourselves at the scene of an accident that some people would be shouting for our help, others would be quiet. Go to the quiet ones, the trainer taught us, those are the ones who need your help most urgently. It felt counter-intuitive to my six-year-old brain, but of course the most severely injured casualties may be unconscious and therefore unable to cry for help.

Similarly, in our classrooms, sometimes it is those pupils most heavily hampered by difficult thoughts, feelings or experiences who might find it the hardest to make their voice heard.

So how do we spot them? How do we pick up on the child who is quietly breaking inside and how do we distinguish them from their peer who may be introverted but happily so?

I could write lists that run to reams of warning signs you might look out for, but when it comes down to it, you need to look out for one thing – and that is change. As school staff, we are fortunate to get to know pupils over a number of terms so we're well-placed to notice even subtle changes.

I often find that staff under-appreciate their own ability in this regard and that given the space and time to think, they can pick out a handful of pupils that are a cause for concern because something has changed. Changes might include (but are not limited to):

- Weight – an unusual increase, decrease or fluctuation in weight.
- Alertness – becoming demotivated or lethargic or full of anxious energy.
- Academic performance – a fall in grades, or an obsession with perfection.

- Attendance – worsening attendance/punctuality – or sometimes the reverse if school is a safe haven.
- Appearance – neglecting self-care or spending more time on their appearance.
- Popularity – withdrawing from friends, or socialising a lot more or with different people.

It's harder to spot these changes in pupils who slip under the radar each day – a good way to try and prevent this from happening is to make a time to stop and reflect on pupil emotional wellbeing – perhaps as part of regular departmental or pastoral team meetings.

The key thing here is to ensure that every child gets considered regularly, even for a moment or two; just long enough to consider whether things have stayed the same for them, or if perhaps there are subtle changes which may flag the need for further investigation.

As well as the quiet pupils, there are others who may not vocalise their need for help, sometimes the difficulties that a child is facing is beyond what they feel willing or able to vocalise, or sometimes they are too scared to speak up.

But we'll often find that even without speaking they ask for our help – though it's not uncommon for these asks to go misunderstood.

Three common ways pupils might show us they need our support are physical ailments, difficult behaviour, and self-harm.

Physical ailments

Young people who are unable to vocalise and work through difficult issues will often begin to display physical symptoms of illness – this might take a range of forms, for example headaches, stomach aches or nausea. If a child is frequently unwell and there is no clear physical cause, it may be that their ailments are stress or anxiety playing out in physical form and that the pupil may need supportive listening if they are to overcome their physical symptoms.

Repeated injuries/self-harm

Alternatively, a young person may repeatedly present with injuries or self-harm. The injuries may appear minor and might be dismissed as attention-seeking, but a key question here should be why might this young person need my attention. It's important to note that many young people feel more comfortable seeking help for a physical injury than emotional distress.

Difficult behaviour

A child who is uncharacteristically poorly behaved, seems irritable, dismissive or rude may be struggling with their emotional regulation because they have issues that need recognising and addressing. They may also be specifically seeking attention.

My rule of thumb with this type of behaviour is

to recognise two things. First, we have a disciplinary procedure to follow and young people, especially vulnerable young people, need the consistency, boundaries and safety that rules bring. Second, we need to wonder why this child is attention-seeking – do they need attention or support, and why?

Conclusion

If we can find a fair compromise between punitive and supportive responses to unusual, difficult behaviour, we can often quickly find out what's really going on. So, keep an eye out for changes in your pupils and, vitally, don't let the quiet ones get forgotten

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Mental Health Advice

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Preparing for the summer

A recent webinar hosted by mental health and wellbeing expert **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** focused on how we can help to prepare vulnerable children and young people for the school holidays....

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS can be difficult for some young people, particularly those with mental health issues, but there are steps you can take to help them prepare.

What's on their mind?

The first step is to get the young person talking and thinking about the holidays. Depending on the issues they are facing, they might have all sorts of different worries. Ask them to think about any specific concerns around the holidays. For example, we're currently approaching the summer holidays and they may have particular concerns about events coming up. A family holiday, for instance, might be difficult for children with anxiety, for those who struggle meeting new people, or who worry about travelling, eating unfamiliar foods or engaging in new activities.

Other things they might be concerned about are homework or coursework, making the transition to the next school year, or a particular role at home they're worried about fulfilling – for example, young carers may feel stressed if they are expected to take on more during the holidays.

Listening/problem-solving

In getting a young person to talk about their worries, our main role is to listen. It is also important not to dismiss anything they say – for instance, if a young person thinks they're going to fail a piece of coursework and you know the chances of this are slim because they have worked hard, it is vital to recognise it is very real for them and can cause significant anxiety.

We need to understand how it feels from their perspective and work with them to problem-solve. For example, if their anxieties are about coursework, we might help them to think about how they both get enough rest and put the appropriate amount of time into their academic activities; when would be the best time, the most conducive setting and so on?

If they are worried about a caring role, we might help them think about what is expected of them, what is not expected, where the boundaries are and who can support them.

It is important to remember that this is about the two of you working in tandem: you can't solve the problem for them but you can explore different suggestions, ideas and solutions together.

Support: People

The next thing to ask the young person is whether anyone is currently aware of their issues. For some, the circle of people who know may be small and it might be that their friends, or people at home, don't know. It's good to talk about who will know about their issues when they are at home in the holidays and to think about who can help. Bear in mind that these two groups may not be the same.

It is important to identify those people who fit into both groups as they will form the core of the young person's support network. Think about who can move from the "who can help" category into the "who knows" category, to increase the support available.

It may help to do this visually, putting names on a Venn diagram. Once the people have been identified, write an action plan for letting them know: I need to tell my best friend, I'm going to do it

do an online search and end up in some difficult places.

Some sites may seem supportive at first because there are people who feel the way they do. However, they may find themselves drawn into sites which are pro their condition and then feel unable to stop their anorexia, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or obsessive exercise because others on the site value that behaviour.

Support: Helplines

These are particularly important as the young person needs to consider what they will do when none of their other support sources are available. It is always useful to ask what they would do if they suddenly felt unable to manage at 2am. The Samaritans, although not specifically marketed at young people, will always take a call from them and Childline will deal with calls from "older" young people as well as younger children.

with their mental health, they have somewhere they have to be every day, a reason to get up, get dressed and get out; it stops them falling into the non-routine of just spending their days in bed, which often feels like the safest, easiest thing to do.

Ideally, we want them to have some sort of process they are going through each day, to think about achievable goals, things they want to try and do on a daily basis. Making small commitments can be really significant and could include trying to get up by at least 10am, getting out for at least 10 minutes, and being in bed by 11pm.

The reason this is really important is because the less we do, the lower our mood becomes, so if we start to fall into the habit of not doing anything, our mood gets lower and lower and our world gets smaller and smaller. This, in turn, means that if a young person's behaviour is left unchecked over the holiday and they are allowed to stop leaving the house, their confidence may diminish and they may have difficulty re-engaging with school.

Another thing to guard against is becoming nocturnal. Being around other people may feel really difficult and the young person may find themselves sleeping during the day and waking up at night, when they might behave relatively normally and get on with things they might usually have done during the day. However, this is not healthy and is something to highlight with young people for whom you feel this might happen.

Changes in diet or sleep are key warning signs to look out for that someone may be becoming depressed so, if possible, planning three healthy meals a day and sleeping at regular times is very important.

Wellbeing toolbox

It is good to get the young person thinking about their healthy coping mechanisms. What's in their wellbeing toolbox? You might consider doing this in a very practical way and literally making a box full of things the young person can go through in times of crisis.

They might want to include photos of people they care about, favourite books, reminders to listen to a favourite playlist, walking the dog or watching something funny, a letter from themselves or

someone else, scented candles, an adult colouring book – it's good to draw on all five senses.

In helping a young person put together their toolbox, you might ask: what makes you feel happy? What stops you feeling bad? What helps you relax or feel calm? What can act as a distraction? What's worked well before? What would you like to try? What have others suggested?

Writing a plan

The next, crucial, step is to put all these ideas and solutions into a written action plan. It is really important to think in advance about the issues that might arise, ideally at a time of calm, and to write something down. It is empowering and gives the young person something to fall back on when times are harder. Giving them something to take away that you've agreed together can be very helpful.

There are some really simple ways to do this. A visual daily plan which splits the day into clear chunks can be invaluable in helping a young person manage their day. Next, you could break each day of the week into morning, afternoon and evening periods. Another possibility would be to set daily aims – small achievable tasks that the young person can write down, with the aim of trying to achieve a minimum number each day.

Other resources, such as the Wellbeing Action Plan from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, may also be helpful.

Look after yourself

Finally, even though you really care about your students, you need a break too. Help them plan, and talk to their care-givers too if necessary, but remember they cease to be your responsibility over the summer. You need to know you have done your best and then go and have a holiday. **SecEd**

• This article has been adapted from a webinar hosted by Dr Pooky Knightsmith, director of the Children, Young People and Schools Programme at the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, a charity that provides fully funded mental health training to schools. Visit www.inourhands.com/cwmt/ or email training@cwmt.org. For more information on the charity, visit www.cwmt.org.uk

It is important to look ahead when considering web-based support: if you just tell a young person that there's lots of good support online, they may simply do an online search and end up in some difficult places

by writing a letter and sharing it with him after school, I'm going to give him practical ideas on how he might help me, such as going for a walk and having a chat.

Support: Online

It is really important to discuss this with the young person and to highlight safe sources of online support. There is a lot of very good general support online, largely through charities, including the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust and Young Minds. There are also specialist charities dealing with specific issues.

It is important to look ahead when considering web-based support: if you just tell a young person that there's lots of good support online, they may simply

It is a good idea for a young person to carry a helpline number with them. It is also good for them to talk in advance to those they live with – parents, carers, siblings – and let them know that they may need support at night time. It's usually a relief for the person supporting to know that the young person will ask for support when it is needed.

Thinking about a routine

The next thing to think about is what a typical day is going to look like over the holidays. One of the key protective factors for positive mental health and against depression and anxiety is having a routine – one of the great things about school is that, even if the young person is really struggling

When to worry and what to do

Many students seem to be struggling with anxiety. **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** discusses how to recognise which students need support and what you can most helpfully do

First things first – we need to understand that anxiety is a perfectly natural response of our bodies and minds that can keep us safe and help us perform at our best.

If we needed to run from a grizzly bear, or over-power an attacker, or win a race, or perform to our best through an entire three-hour exam, we'd struggle without a good dose of anxiety. But sometimes you can have too much of a good thing, and this is something that many pupils are struggling with.

Anxiety can take many forms – you may find pupils becoming more isolated, becoming disproportionately sensitive to feedback or seeming on edge. Less obvious, but common, signs are tiredness (it takes a lot of energy to be anxious for extended periods), irritability (we're less well able to emotionally regulate when our brain is overrun with anxious thoughts), and a change in attendance or time-keeping.

Where you spot these signs, have an exploratory conversation with the child, or pass your concern on to the relevant member of staff.

The key things that tell us that this has tipped over from manageable, healthy anxiety into something that needs some form of support or intervention are impact and longevity. If a child's anxiety is having a negative impact on their ability to engage, enjoy and achieve in their normal daily life and if this has been happening for a period of weeks or more then it's time to intervene.

Depending on the severity of the issue you may want to involve parents, GPs or external agencies such as CAMHS right away, but it is worth recognising that there are many things that a child and their supporting adults can do to improve things too.

In all that you do, it is important not to provide solutions for the child, but rather to work with

them to understand the issues and to co-create suggested ways forwards – this will help the child to feel more in control of the issue and will help them develop the skills they need for their on-going wellbeing.

First steps: triage

First, work with the pupil to recognise any immediate triggers or stressors which are weighing heavily on them and making each day more of a struggle than it needs to be.

Consider whether there is anything that can be practically done to relieve some of these stresses. Sometimes something as simple as a homework extension, or being allowed to spend breaktime somewhere quiet can help a pupil to manage.

In the first instance, we are trying to help the pupil feel more calm and in control of the situation as well as realising this is not something that they have to tackle alone.

Working out who and what their support network consists of is helpful at this stage – and thinking about who it is helpful to talk to about the issue. Parents, friends and teachers will often feature highly on this list.

It can help to tell these people both what the issue is and specifically how they can help as this can make things feel less daunting for everyone and most people will do their best to help when given clear instructions.

Next steps: healthy coping strategies

Next, the pupil needs to develop healthy coping strategies to enable them manage their anxiety on a daily (or sometimes minute by minute) basis. This may be done with your support or the support of a specialist depending on the severity of the issue, but key things



that may help are:

- A regular routine that acknowledges trigger points.
- A member of staff they can refer to if needed.
- A range of strategies for calming themselves.
- Time limits on homework.
- An emphasis on reinstating regular sleep, exercise and eating patterns.
- Questioning negative thought patterns.

It can take a little while to develop and embed these new habits, but they are habits for life and will tend only to be truly effective if a young person feels in control of them. While a pupil will find this difficult to manage alone, staff, parents, professionals and friends should take a mentoring or facilitative role in supporting the pupil rather than a guiding one if the pupil is to successfully manage their anxiety in the longer term.

For a wide range of resources about managing anxiety and for a text and information line, visit the Anxiety UK website.

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Mental Health Advice

Dr Pooky Knightsmith provides regular support and advice in *SecEd*. Her next article is due to appear on April 27. To read the previous articles in this series, go to <http://bit.ly/2daU4zs>. If there are specific issues you would like to see addressed, email pooky@cwmt.org or tweet @PookyH

Further information

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Asking the right questions...

Tackling mental health problems does not have to mean expensive new products or interventions. Perhaps we just need to ask more questions, says **Dr Pooky Knightsmith**

Mental health and emotional wellbeing have come to dominate headlines in the past couple of years – a fact that has not escaped the business-minded among our communities who have looked to develop interventions that will “solve the problem” for us.

It is easy to be lured by the shiny things – the big promises and slick styling making it hard to say no. But we should. Or we should at least say only a tentative “maybe”.

When we buy into products that are not evidence-informed we are, at best, potentially wasting money, and, at worst, putting our pupils at risk of harm. Easy for me to say with my research PhD, but how are you, a hard-working teacher who is already expected to be a font of academic knowledge, a pseudo-parent and therapist, supposed to take on the role of scientist too?

Well to be honest, it is not quite as hard as it seems. We just need to ask a few more questions. We need to channel our inner three-year-old and repeatedly ask the question “why?”

When we are told we will replace detention with meditation, we should ask “why?”. When we are told we will have a puppy room available to pupils before

exams, we should ask “why?”. When we are told all of our pupils are going to do a healthy coping skills workshop we should ask “why?”.

Sometimes, we’ll get an acceptable answer, one that shows that this is not just a random intervention but one that has been thought-through and is being carefully implemented and measured. Sometimes we will find that we need to do a little more exploration.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not against trying new things – I’m all for it, but I think that we should always have clear reasons for trying something, clear outcomes we are aiming for, and clear ways of knowing whether or not we have achieved our aim. But how?

Finding new things that might work

On the whole, the shiny things that come through your door in the form of a salesman, a glossy leaflet or a compelling email are likely not the best things you could be trying.

This will not always hold true and it’s great if they get you wondering about what you might try next to improve your pupils’ wellbeing – but before you pick up and run with the shiny thing, ask these questions:

- Can you put me in touch with a colleague who’s had success with this in another school like mine?
- Please can you explain the evidence that underpins the approach?
- What are the costs – short-term and long-term? (There are often hidden costs for things like user licences, maintenance, or individual access to or analysis of questionnaires.)
- What do young people say about the intervention?
- How will I know if it’s working?
- Can you reassure me this will not do harm?

You need to be a critical consumer in just the way you teach your pupils to be – who created this product and what’s in it for them? Are they likely to be a reliable resource (universities, healthcare providers and charities might fall into this bracket) or are they simply looking to turn a profit?

Keep in touch with local universities who might have new resources and research programmes for which they are looking for participants, and be prepared to

scrutinise whether participating in these kinds of trials will be of benefit to your school – sometimes even if participation is free, the commitments in terms of time or staff are costly.

York’s Institute for Effective Education is a great place to check out what’s up and coming in evidence-based education interventions (and not just mental health ones).

Have clear objectives and measure impact

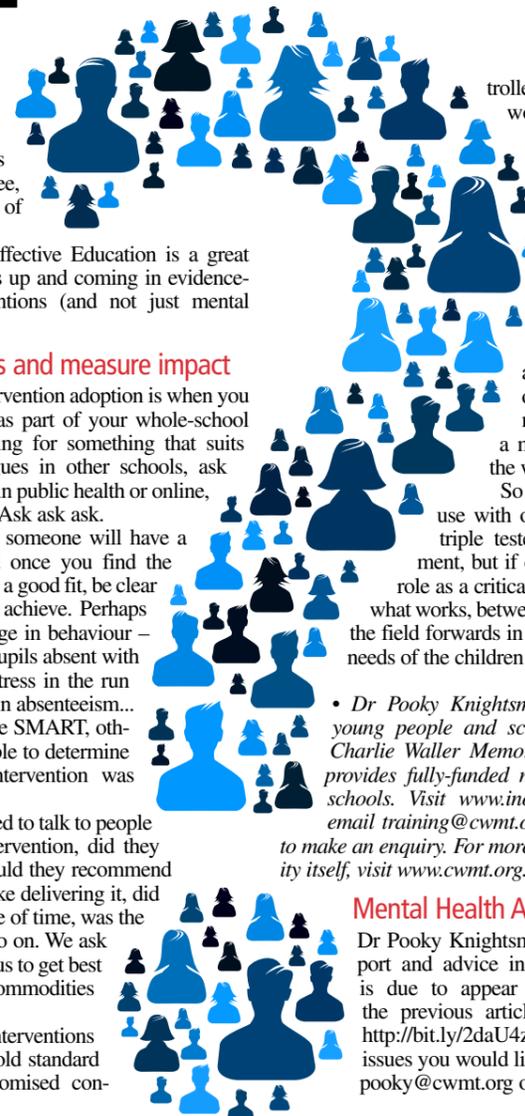
The best pathway for intervention adoption is when you have recognised a need as part of your whole-school planning and gone looking for something that suits your needs. Ask colleagues in other schools, ask CAMHS, ask colleagues in public health or online, ask your local university. Ask ask ask.

More likely than not, someone will have a suggestion for you. And once you find the intervention that feels like a good fit, be clear in what you hope it will achieve. Perhaps you expect to see a change in behaviour – more help-seeking, less pupils absent with anxiety, lower reported stress in the run up to exams, a reduction in absenteeism...

Your targets need to be SMART, otherwise it will be impossible to determine whether or not your intervention was effective.

That said, you also need to talk to people – did pupils like the intervention, did they feel it had an impact, would they recommend it to peers, did teachers like delivering it, did they feel it was a good use of time, was the training sufficient? And so on. We ask these questions to enable us to get best value for our precious commodities of time and money.

There are very few interventions out there that meet the gold standard of RCTs (that’s a randomised con-



trolled trial in case you were wondering, basically a group of people get to try the shiny new thing, another group of people don’t, all other variables are controlled for and you see if there is a difference between the two). These are very hard to deliver in a school environment and are costly both in terms of time and money so we need to learn to live with a more realistic standard on the whole.

So not everything you ever use with our pupils will have been triple tested in a lab-like environment, but if each of us takes an active role as a critical consumer and in sharing what works, between us we can help to move the field forwards in a way that best meets the needs of the children we work with. **SecEd**

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Mental Health Advice

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We can change a child's course without even knowing – and it might only take a moment, says **Dr Pooky Knightsmith**

Make a moment's difference

can make in just a few minutes, as you go about your usual teaching day.

These moments won't happen every day. The child might not acknowledge them, neither of you may be aware of the magic that's happened until a long time later, but it is possible to help a child to cross the line from feeling unheard, unsupported and uncared for without investing hours of your time. Some tips to help you create transformative moments:

Follow your gut

If you know a child relatively well and you feel that things aren't quite right with them, try to find a quiet moment when you can let them know you're worried about them and that you care and want them to be okay.

Stop and listen

Even if you only have a few minutes to listen, listen mindfully – keep the child who is talking at the very centre of your attention with all other interruptions gone. For just a few moments, let that child feel at the centre of your world. It might be the first time this has ever happened for them.

Be clear about time boundaries

If you only have a limited amount of time, let the child know. A lot can be covered in a short time, and five minutes is long enough so long as the child knows from the outset that five minutes is all you have right now.

Care out loud

If you've been thinking about a child, tell them. If you care about them, let them know. If you want to support them or feel sad that they feel this way, say those words aloud. Children are poor mind-readers and anyone of any age who suffers with low self-esteem is unlikely to assume that others are having kind thoughts about them, so spelling them out can be a real boost.

Hold a child in mind

Every child deserves to be held in mind and cared about by at least one good adult in their lives. For many children, this comes from home – but consider whether there are any in your class for whom this may not be the case and make a conscious effort to hold them in mind – and let them know.

A shortage of time is one of the reasons most often cited by school staff as to why they cannot do all that they would hope to do when it comes to young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Conversely, when I talk to young people who have worked through their difficulties and are reflecting on the good and bad times during early adulthood, the pivotal moments they point to as making a real difference to them are often the work of just a few minutes. These transformative moments often pass without us even noticing, I am sure. But their ripples are felt for weeks, months or years for the young person we reached out too. It is remarkable to think that we might change a child's course without knowing we have done it, but we do. Often.

"I felt alone, unloved and uncared for. I was one of those kids who just quietly got on with it at the back of the class. I tried to keep out of people's way. I remember one time the teacher asked the class to work in pairs; instead of letting us choose, she chose them. She put me with a girl who became my best friend. I don't know if she planned it but I didn't feel alone after that."

"I was literally walking past him in the corridor and he pulled me to one side. I thought I was going to be in trouble, I usually was, but he looked me in the eyes and said 'You've been on my mind. If you're ever not feeling okay I'd be happy to listen'. Each time I saw him he'd give me this little nod and a smile and it was like a little boost that helped me manage."

"It was a five-minute chat, but it was the first time I ever felt like I mattered to someone because she stopped everything she was doing and just listened and I realised she cared..."

I could cite hundreds more of these transformative moments which demonstrate the difference that you



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Let them tell their story

When a child talks, listen. Do not guess what they will say next or the reasons why they feel the way they do. Forget all that you knew and allow them to paint on a blank canvas, then between you think about the next steps.

Check in

Remind a pupil that you care about them by asking "how are you?" and meaning it when you see them, or simply look for their face among the crowd as you go about your day and give them a nod and a smile. These tiny reminders that they matter, that someone cares, can help them to manage on more difficult days.

Conclusion

You will have created many of these moments without even realising it, and will go on to create many more.

Even when time is short, never underestimate the power of a moment or two when you really listen, or really care. It makes more difference than you may ever know. **SecEd**

• *Dr Pooky Knightsmith directs the children, young people and schools programme at the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, a charity that provides funded mental health training to schools. Visit www.inourhands.com/cwmt, email training@cwmt.org or call 01635 869754. For more on the charity itself, visit www.cwmt.org.uk*

Mental health advice

Dr Pooky Knightsmith provides regular advice in *SecEd*. Her next article is due to appear on February 2. To read the previous articles, go to <http://bit.ly/2daU4zs>. If there are specific issues you would like to see addressed, email pooky@cwmt.org or tweet @PookyH

Has our culture of academic achievement at all costs begun to infect even the extra-curricular and hobby pursuits of our young people? **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** underlines the importance of doing things ‘just for fun’

As pupils work their way through secondary school, there can be a tendency for even their leisure pursuits to be viewed as something in which they should be achieving. The dance and music classes they once ran to, light-footed every week become about exams and grades and endless practice; the societies and team sports they participate in are seen as a gateway to UCAS and the world of work. It is no terrible thing, if the pursuit that brings a pupil pleasure can also complement their academic CV and help to open doors for them, but what about when those things become joyless as the pupil strives to achieve ever higher standards?

“I used to get lost in pieces, although it wasn’t perfect, the music felt so beautiful and it made me happy. It’s not like that now. I have to play the same piece repeatedly until I can play it perfectly. Once I’ve got my grade 8, I don’t think I’ll ever want to look at a piano again.”

It seems to be an assumption among pupils, their parents and their teachers, that as they get older they will take their hobbies more seriously and look to pass exams, gain accreditation or win awards to prove their merit, but I’d like to moot that there is a lot of value in at least some of a pupil’s hobbies simply remaining hobbies. The benefits they gain from less formal, less pressured leisure activities are manifold.

A break from academic pressure

Being able to have some down time from the pressure of school and home study can contribute greatly to a child’s wellbeing, and their attainment too. It’s simply not possible to study effectively for hours and hours on end, so a pupil who stops to have a proper break and enjoy an alternative activity for a little while will return physically, emotionally and academically refreshed. It is like pressing the restart button on your computer when it’s going a little too slowly.

An additional group of friends

The friends that pupils make through their extra-curricular activities are often different to the ones they spend most of their school day with. This exposure to a wider range of opinions and experiences can help to broaden hearts and minds.

When we hang around with the same people all the time, life can become a bit of an echo-chamber where our opinions are rarely tested.

Beyond their comfort zone

We learn a lot from trying new things and this is especially true of young people still very much finding their way in the world. When extra-curricular activities become something at which one must always compete, it limits the opportunities for pupils to have a go for fun and try something new.

Secondary school could be a great time of experimentation with hobbies and activities for all pupils – imagine the fun they’d have, how much they’d learn about themselves and the different skills and friendships they’d pick up along the way.

The space to try and fail

One of the important elements of building a young person’s resilience is that they need the opportunity to fail in a safe environment and to learn that with hard work it is possible to try again, to learn from the failure and to improve another time. This kind of trying and failing is more likely to happen in a less formal environment where the stakes are not too high.

A way to express themselves

Finally, many extra-curricular activities can help pupils to find a language and a means to express themselves or to work through difficult big feelings they might not otherwise have the capacity to manage.

What might schools do?

While some of the benefits above might still be felt by some pupils participating more seriously, they will occur more naturally when the environment is less

Just for fun?



Image: Adobe Stock

competitive or less formal. I worry that, especially as the arts have an ever-decreasing place in our curriculum, it would be beneficial for their wellbeing for every child in every class to have access to at least some activities which have no pressure placed upon them.

- You could help your school to achieve this by:
- Hosting a wide range of different activities on-site.
 - Working with cluster schools to make more niche activities viable.
 - Inviting local providers in to talk about the activities they offer at an after-school fair.
 - Asking pupils to share with peers information about activities they do outside school.
 - Negotiating cheap taster sessions for pupils at external activities providers.
 - Sharing information about a wide range of activities available locally on your website.
- But most importantly, you can role-model it –

what do you do just for fun and what do you think are the benefits to you? Why don’t you try talking to your pupils about your hobbies and get their creative juices flowing – just for fun.

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Mental Health Advice

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Staff wellbeing

Our regular mental health expert **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** turns her attention from pupils to staff and offers some simple steps to promoting staff wellbeing

Increasingly I'm asked about how schools can support the wellbeing and mental health of their staff. The fact that people even care enough to ask this question has me silently rejoicing, but of course, wanting to have an impact and know exactly what to do are two very different things, so I have pulled together some of the practical steps you could take in your school in order to have a meaningful impact on the wellbeing of the whole staff team.

Break down taboos

Working in a school is an undoubtedly stressful job and we need to be able to talk about and tackle those stresses head-on without fear of being seen as weak or needy. We need to be able to share our anxieties and stressors and the impact our job is having on our wellbeing with our colleagues and line managers. Being able to be honest and upfront can help to ensure appropriate, timely support and prevent issues escalating. This type of change in culture and ethos can take time, but making an active effort to discuss mental health and wellbeing more openly as part of daily school life can quickly make a difference.

Twitter users might like to join in the #Teacher5aDay conversation which is a continuous discussion around teacher wellbeing and a great way to find like-minds.

Triggering issues

There are some issues which we should address as part of our PSHE curriculum in order to fulfil our

safeguarding responsibilities to our pupils. This includes issues like self-harm, eating disorders and abuse.

These lessons are very valuable to pupils but can also be incredibly difficult to teach, especially for staff with personal experience of the topics. The climate of silence in many staffrooms will make many staff feel they can't or shouldn't make personal disclosures about their current or past situations or experiences, so in many cases those staff who may find content triggering will feel unable to ask to withdraw for this reason.

However, we can ensure that all staff receive the appropriate guidance and training needed to tackle difficult issues confidently and sensitively and in a manner that will keep not only their pupils safe but themselves as well.

Signpost sources of support

Many schools have excellent sources of support that can be accessed by staff who are struggling with their mental health, but staff are often aware of these avenues of support already. Often there are remote or face-to-face counselling services that staff have a right to access but are completely unaware of. If your staff are entitled to support with their wellbeing make sure that they understand:

- What support is available.
- When they are entitled to it.
- How to access it.
- What they should expect when they do.

It is also helpful to share details of local and national support that is available – a poster in your staffroom or a page on your intranet will take relatively little time to put together but could make all the difference to a staff member in need of help and guidance.

Know what to look for

We are getting far better at picking up the early warning signs of mental health issues in our students, but how often do we look out for those signs in colleagues? You should be every bit as worried about a colleague who is suddenly eating/sleeping more or less or who is becoming increasingly socially withdrawn as you should be about a student in the same situation...

Say something!

...and if we spot those warning signs, we need to



bring up the subject with our colleague and help them to access support if it is needed. We are often terrified about having "the conversation", but while it might feel initially awkward, it can be a huge relief to both you and your colleague once the topic is broached. The worst thing to say is nothing.

Supportive return to work

It is not uncommon for school and college staff to be absent from work due to mental health issues. The way in which the return to work is handled in these instances can be crucial to a full and lasting recovery. Line managers should be trained and supported in managing the return to work appropriately and sensitively.

Promote their own wellbeing

There are tried and tested ways of promoting our own wellbeing which many of our staff may be unaware of. An hour spent during an INSET sharing the evidence-based *Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing* (2008) can provide a solid basis for making small but meaningful changes. It can also help to highlight simple ways to enable staff to better look after their physical health (which always underpins good mental health).

There may be steps you can take as a school to support staff in promoting their physical and emotional wellbeing. Past schools I have worked with have supported staff wellbeing by:

- Providing staff with access to healthy meals.

- Making it easy for staff to participate in enjoyable physical activities.
- Having a good social secretary and a social events budget.
- Providing guidance on reasonable working hours and expectations.
- Teaching staff the basics of getting good sleep.

I hope you find some food for thought here and feel able to bring the conversation at your school about how best to promote staff wellbeing. Doing so has an impact not only on staff, but inevitably on pupils too. **SecEd**

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Reference

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Pupil wellbeing: When to worry

In a new series for *SecEd*, mental health expert **Dr Pooky Knightsmith** will be offering practical advice to teachers and school staff to help them safeguard their pupils' wellbeing

"Cutting is so widespread in our school that we couldn't possibly provide effective support for every affected pupil – but I wonder, in any case, whether we need to? Some of them just seem to try it once or twice, then move on. But how can I tell which are the kids I should be prioritising? Which are the ones that actually need our help?"

A question I am regularly asked when training staff about pupil mental health and wellbeing is: "When should I be worried?" In particular this question comes up with regards to eating, exercise and self-harm.

Equally, with under-eating or over-exercising it can be difficult to tell the difference between diet and disorder, between health and obsession.

Of course, each case is different and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, as someone who works with staff up and down the country each week, I am not in a position to take each case on its individual merits and so I have come up with a couple of rules of thumb that you might find helpful.

Essentially, it boils down to two questions you can ask yourself which will help you decide whether this is a pupil you need to follow up with.

First, what's the big picture? If you weren't aware of the specific behaviour that is causing concern would you still be concerned about the pupil's welfare?

For example, is your concern based solely on an observation of self-harm, changed eating or exercise or are there further factors involved? You might consider:

- Do they seem generally fit, healthy and happy?
- Have you noticed a change in behaviour?
- Has there been a change in their attendance or attainment?
- Have they said or done anything which indicates feelings of failure or hopelessness?
- Have friends or family expressed concerns?

"It's a good question – and yes, I am more generally worried about him. He seems generally down, he can't find a good thing to say about himself. His grades are slipping and he's spending very little time with his friends, preferring to be at the gym."

Second, can the pupil take a break from the behaviour causing concern? For example, is this an occasional behaviour or one that the pupil feels compelled to complete every single day? As self-harm and eating disordered behaviours become more entrenched, it can feel more like the behaviour is controlling the pupil rather than the pupil controlling the behaviour.

So the pupil who won't take a break from their diet in order to have a slice of their birthday cake, or whose first consideration when going on holiday is how they are going to complete their exercise routine is a cause for concern.

If a pupil is disproportionately harsh on themselves, if they do compromise on their diet or exercise – perhaps making value-laden judgements considering themselves "worthless" or a "failure", then this is a further indication that the pupil is in need of our support.

So what next?

If you are worried about a pupil, the most important thing you can do for them is to listen or to ask a colleague to do so, to enable them to begin to explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This will enable you to jointly think about what support or next steps might be helpful. These conversations work well when you are:

- Patient and quiet – allowing the young person time to order their thoughts.



Image: Adobe Stock

- Non-judgemental – allowing the young person to tell their story without fear that their thoughts or behaviour will be judged.
- Flexible – some young people struggle discussing emotional issues face-to-face. You could encourage them to try writing or drawing about their issues or have a conversation over email or instant messenger instead of face-to-face.

If you are interested to explore this topic in more depth, join our free webinar on September 20 – see below for the details.

SecEd

- *Dr Pooky Knightsmith directs the children, young people and schools programme at the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, a charity that provides fully funded*

mental health training to schools. Visit www.cwmt.org.uk and www.inourhands.com/cwmt

Mental Health Advice

Dr Pooky Knightsmith will be providing regular support and advice in *SecEd*. Her next article is due to appear on October 6. If there are specific issues you would like to see addressed, email pooky@cwmt.org or tweet @PookyH

Free Webinar

The free webinar, "When Should We Be Worried? Warning signs and what to do next" is being run by the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust and takes place at 6pm on September 20. Visit <http://bit.ly/2c2S5jI>