



JOURNAL

Knowing Me, Knowing You
Looking after ourselves and the young people we support

FLOURISH
CREATIVE COUNSELLING & WELLBEING

Aims of the Workshops



- Enhance understanding and support of young people by exploring the social and emotional pressures they face.
- Access bitesize psychoeducation to better understand trauma and its impact on children and young people.
- Boost overall wellbeing and emotional resilience through engaging activities, learning, and peer connections.
- Discover simple, effective wellbeing practices that can be integrated into daily routines to support young people and themselves.

What we'll cover



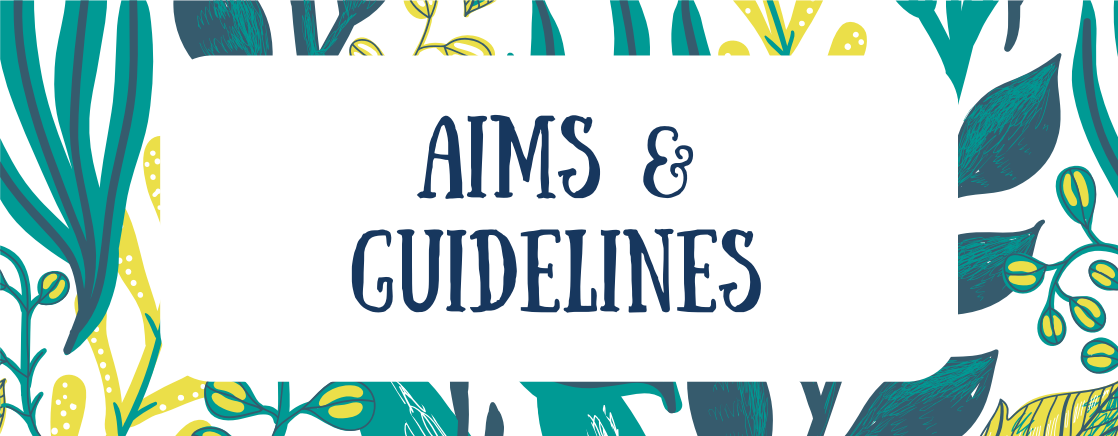
Knowing Me	Knowing You
<p>Aims and Guidelines</p> <p>Gratitude, Appreciation and Thankfulness</p> <p>Extraordinary Achievements</p> <p>Signature Strengths</p> <p>Mental Time Travelling</p> <p>Stop, Start, Continue</p> <p>Finding Happiness</p> <p>Guided Relaxation</p> <p>Counting Kindnesses</p> <p>Parting Gifts</p>	<p>ACES</p> <p>Attachment Styles</p> <p>Window of Tolerance</p> <p>The Vagus Nerve</p> <p>Happiness Chemicals – D.O.S.E</p>

Workshop Outline



- 1000 – 1630
- Breaks AM, Lunch, PM
- Opening and Closing Activities
- Bitesize Learning
- Sharing opportunities and challenges
- Adding to your wellbeing journal





AIMS & GUIDELINES

Aims of the Workshop	Personal Aims
Provide opportunities to share best practice	
Increase overall wellbeing through activities, learning and connection	
Gain greater satisfaction working with each other and our Young People	

The Keys to getting the most out of a workshop or training are:	Self-assessment (score out of 10)
Participation	
Experimentation	
Reflection	
Contribution	

WORKSHOP GUIDELINES

- Although breaks are provided throughout the day, please feel free to take care of your own personal needs when required.
- Be as open as you can be but remember you have a right to your privacy and to pass when you choose.
- This is an opportunity to get to know each other a little better in a safe space.
- Please respect what you hear and do not repeat outside our group.

GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION

“Expressing gratitude, for example, thanking someone who has done something for you, is scientifically proven to increase our own happiness”

What do we need?

- Pens
- Paper
- Cards
- Pebbles*

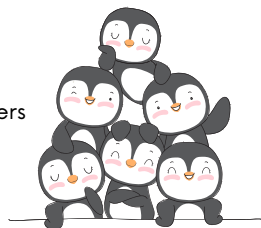
After

- How did it feel writing the letter?
- What did you learn from it?
- Who else could you write to?
- Are you going to send or deliver it?



*Pebbling

Adélie and Gentoo penguins are known to present smooth pebbles used for nest-building to their partner as part of their courtship display. Recently the term Pebbling has grown in popularity and refers to sending partners, friends, and family members, small gifts, or performing small deeds to let them know you are thinking of them, helping to build social connection.



Sharing:

- Think of someone who has personally been kind to you, or has been very generous with your family or even a group of people.
- How have you felt when someone has been appreciative of your time and generosity?
- Draft a personal letter of gratitude to an individual of your choice. It's best if it's personal, detailed and spontaneous rather than formal.
- Take time using the cards available to write it up
- You can choose to post or personally deliver to the person being thanked.

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WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences are any frightening, shocking or overwhelming experiences which happen in a child's life before the age of 18.

A child can experience these events as out of their control and terrifying. They might not feel that they can process the traumatic sensations in their bodies, hearts and minds with anyone in their life, so all too often adverse experiences remain unsaid.

Studies from across the world show that interpersonal traumas such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse can shatter a child's sense of safety. Other areas that may impact them include:

- Abuse –Physical, emotional and sexual
- Neglect –physical and emotional
- Household adversity –mental illness, domestic violence, substance misuse, separation or having a parent or loved one serving time
- Bullying
- Racism
- Death or long term illness of a parent or sibling
- Exposure to community violence or war
- Living with extreme adverse economic conditions

People with 6+ ACEs may die 20YRS

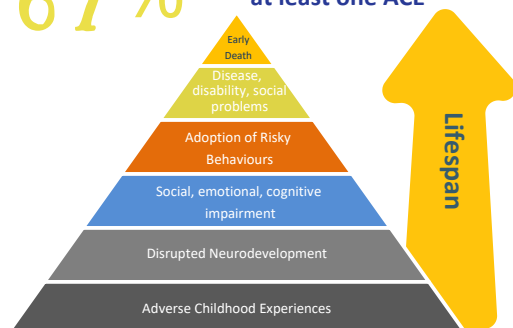
earlier than those who have none



1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs

67%

of the population have at least one ACE



4 OR MORE ACEs

3 X the levels of lung disease and adult smoking



14 X the number of suicide attempts

4.5 X

more likely to develop depression



11 X the level of intravenous drug abuse

4 X



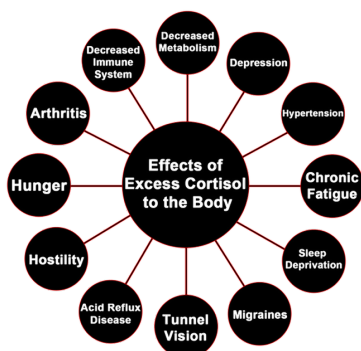
as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15

2 X

the level of liver disease

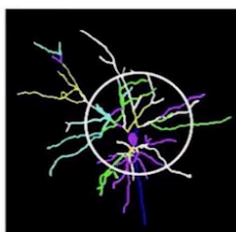


WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

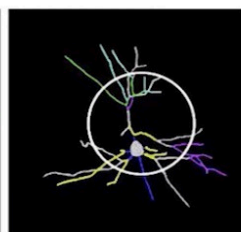


Cortisol - The Stress Hormone

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC STRESS ON THE BRAIN



Typical neuron: many connections



Neuron damaged by toxic stress: fewer connections

CREATE-CONNECT-CALM

Understanding brain development that has experienced trauma allows us to understand children affected by it. Through safe, supportive and creative relationships, healing from Childhood Adverse experiences can begin to take place. Adults who can connect with a child's difficult feelings and experiences and listen with empathy can validate their experience of the world and create a safe relationship based on trust and curiosity.

The long-term impact of ACES may lead to challenging behaviours when threatened such as:

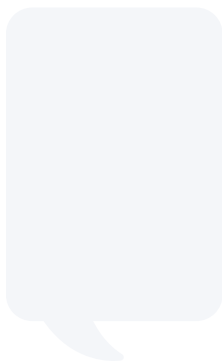
- Hyperarousal –“I don't care” Fight or Flight, disruptive, overwhelmed, struggle to regulate.
- Hypoarousal–“I give up” Freeze, lacking energy and curiosity, no focus, tired.
- Hypervigilance –Eager to please, poor sense of self, reactive to new experiences or change.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

We can all provide protective factors for the children we work and create with. Some of these include, but are not limited to:

- Adults who believe in them
- Having clear and fair rules
- Creative expression
- Adults who listen
- Agency and opportunities to collaborate in their learning
- Emotionally available adults
- Playing games/having fun
- Inspiration and hope
- People who help their parents too

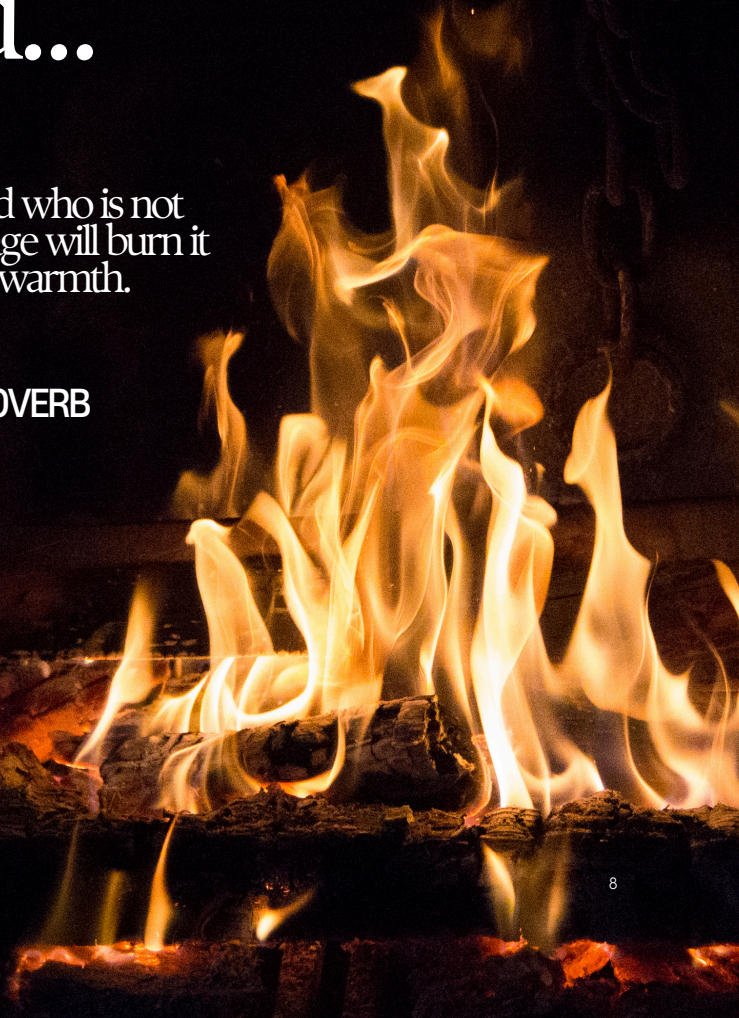
I WISH THEY KNEW...



It takes a
village to
raise a
child...

...however, the child who is not
embraced by the village will burn it
down to feel its warmth.

AFRICAN PROVERB



FINDING YOUR HAPPINESS

What do we need?

- This list
- Pens, paper

Sharing

- On your own or in a group pick three things from the list opposite
- Try to come up with three answers for each of the questions you chose.
- If in a group, try to find things that you'd all enjoy.



After

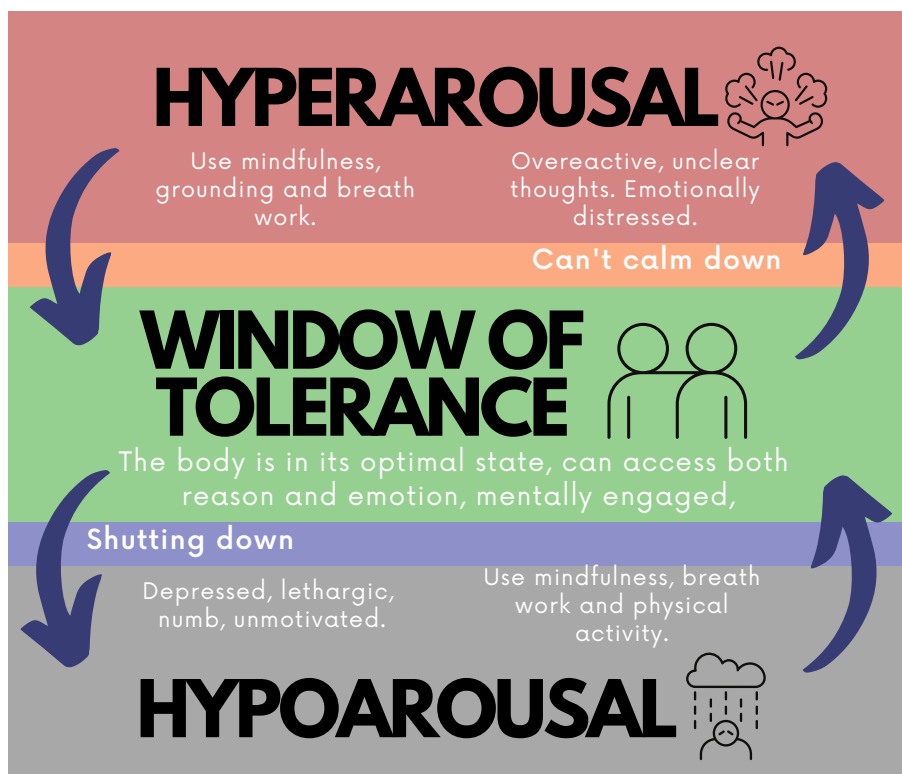
- You've just made your own resource - how will you use it?
- Think about the rest of these questions in your own time and add notes to your journal.
- What could you add to it?

- 1.What could you do for an afternoon that you'd find fun or satisfying? What could you do for an hour?
- 2.What could you do for 15 mins?
- 3.What could you plan to do next weekend?
- 4.What could you do right now that doesn't need any planning?
- 5.What can you do that costs money?
- 6.What can you do that doesn't cost anything?
- 7.What can you do that will stimulate your mind and get you thinking
- 8.What would give you a sense of accomplishment?
- 9.Which course or evening class would find interesting?
- 10.What practical skill would you like to learn?
- 11.What physical activity would you like to try?
- 12.If a friend were visiting, what would you suggest you do together?
- 13.What could you do that would enable you to meet new people?
- 14.What could you do that would enable you to make new friends?
- 15.What enjoyable activity could you do on your own?
- 16.What enjoyable activity could you do as a group?
- 17.What could you do at home?
- 18.Where would you like to go?
- 19.What could you do that you've never done before?
- 20.What have you enjoyed doing in the past?
- 21.What interesting activities and events are listed locally?
- 22.Where else could you get ideas of local activities/events?
- 23.Where else could you look for inspiration?
- 24.What could you volunteer to do?

[illegible]

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WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



POLYVAGAL LADDER

Sympathetic Nervous System

Parasympathetic Nervous System

Sympathetic nervous system activated

I'm feeling under threat and my body is telling me to fight or run

Ventral Vagal

I'm feeling safe and can engage

Dorsal Vagal activated

I'm feeling overwhelmed, frozen, disconnected and numb

HYPERAROUSAL

Use mindfulness, grounding and breath work.

Overreactive, unclear thoughts. Emotionally distressed.

Can't calm down

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The body is in its optimal state, can access both reason and emotion, mentally engaged,

Resilience

Shutting down

Depressed, lethargic, numb, unmotivated.

Use mindfulness, breath work and physical activity.

HYPOAROUSAL

I don't care

I give up

TRAUMA RESPONSES

Feelings

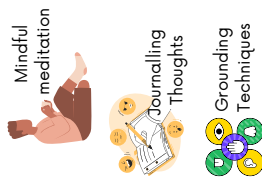
Angry
Offended
Upset
Stressed
Irritated
Tense

Actions

Bullying
Controlling
Narcissistic
Explosive
Aggressive
Defensive

Coping Strategies

Deep breathing exercises
Positive self talk



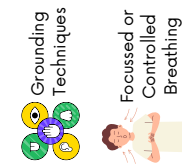
Anxious
Panicked
Scared
Distracted
Zoned out
Trapped

Over thinking
Fidgety
Avoids Conflict
Perfectionist
Workaholic
Hypervigilant



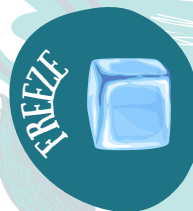
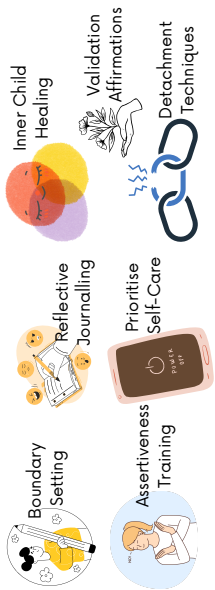
Numb
Empty
Bored
Lacking Focus
Scared
Shame

Disassociated
Depressed
Seeks solitude
Avoids people
Daydreaming
Indecisiveness



Overwhelmed
Scared
Disconnected
Responsible
Burnt out
Inauthentic

People pleasing
Co-dependency
Can't say no
Easily manipulated
No boundaries
Overly apologetic



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EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS



Name an extraordinary achievement in your life to date.

Name something extraordinary you would like to achieve...



USING YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS

<https://posproject.org/character-strength-survey-adults/>

- What were your top 3 character strengths from the survey?
- Were there any surprises?

Take one of your top 5 strengths and use it in a new way three times in the next week. Then pick another and do the same the following week.

Take note of what you notice.

- How did it feel?
- Was it awkward or natural?
- What other ways can you introduce your strengths while at work and at home?

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MENTAL TIME TRAVELLING

What do we need?

- Pens
- Paper

After

- Share your experience
- What did you learn from it?
- How did it make you feel to go back to that happy place?

Sharing:

- Make a list of your most positive memories
- These could include for example
 - Holidays
 - A season
 - A film or programme
 - Celebrations
 - Family and Friends
- Pick one from the list and lets explore it...



WHO WERE YOU



WHAT WAS SAID?



WHAT WERE YOU
FEELING?



WHAT WERE YOU
DOING?



WHAT SEASON?



WHERE
WERE YOU?



WHAT WERE YOU
WEARING?

[illegible]

I am loved



THE SOUL (VAGUS) NERVE

“Take responsibility for yourself, because no one’s going to take responsibility for you”

Tyra Banks

Excerpts from Chapter 10, *My Grandmothers Hands* by Resmaa Menakem

Most human behaviour involves a part of the body that not many people know about - the soul nerve. The soul nerve is the unifying organ of the entire nervous system. Health professionals call it the Vagus Nerve, but I call it the **soul nerve** - a much stickier and more descriptive term.

A highly complex and sensitive organ that communicates through vibes and sensations. This communication occurs not only between different parts of the body, but also from one person to the other. It reaches into most of your body, including your throat, heart, lungs, stomach, liver, spleen, pancreas and kidney. It is the largest organ in the body’s autonomic nervous system, regulating all your bodies basic function.

The largest part of your soul nerve goes through your gut, which has about 100 million neurons, more than your spinal cord. This is why we sense so many things in our belly - and why some biologists call the gut our “second brain”.

One of the organs your soul nerve does not connect to is your thinking brain. It connects directly to your brainstem - your lizard brain.

We know that the soul nerve is where we experience a felt sense of love, compassion, fear, grief, dread, sadness, loneliness, hope, empathy, anxiety, caring, disgust, despair and many other things that make us human. When your body has an emotional response, such as when your stomach clenches, your voice catches, your pulse races, your shoulders tighten, your breathing quickens, your body braces for impact or you have a sense that danger is lurking, that’s your soul nerve at work. When you feel your heart opening or closing down; when you you feel anxious in the pit of your stomach; when you sense that something wonderful or terrible is about to happen; when something feels right or wrong in your gut; when your heart sinks; when your spirit soars; or when your stomach turns in nausea - all of these involve your soul nerve. When your body feels relaxed, open, settled and in sync with others, that’s your soul nerve functioning.

Your soul serve is vital to your health and wellbeing. It regulates your breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. It helps prevent inflammation and it can reduce pain, improve your mood, and help you manage fear.

**Resmaa Menakem - My Grandmother’s Hands is about our human bodies; about how trauma affects them; about how that trauma is passed down through the generations; and about how resilience and trauma interact.*

THE SOUL (VAGUS) NERVE

Connecting with your Soul Nerve

Belly Breathing

Focus your attention on the centre of your tummy, behind your belly button. Breathe in and out, deeply and slowly, a few times. Pull the air all the way down into your belly.

Keep breathing, deeply and slowly. Follow your breath as it flows in through your nose, down through your throat, into and through your lungs, and into your belly. Keep following it as it flows back out again. (You won't actually pull air into your belly, but it will feel that way.)

Continue breathing this way for four to five minutes. Stop and notice what you experience in your body.

Twenties

Sometimes trauma energy can get stuck in the joints. These rotations help to release that energy.

Get comfortable. Slowly rotate your foot and ankle twenty times in either direction. If you like, move it one direction: pause for 10 seconds; then rotate it in the opposite direction. Do this with each ankle, one at a time, pausing for ten seconds between each set of rotations.

Then do the same for each knee; for your hips; for each wrist; for each elbow; and each shoulder. Pause for ten seconds after each set of rotations.

Breathe, Ground and Resource

Take a few deep breaths. Let your body relax as much as it wants to.

Think of a person, an animal or a place that makes you feel safe and secure. Then imagine that, right now, this person or animal is beside you, or that you are in that safe place.

Breathing naturally, simply let yourself experience that safety and security for one to two minutes.

Afterward, notice how and what you experience in your body. Slowly look around, including directly behind you and locate yourself in the here and now.

You can do this standing, sitting, or lying down, with your eyes either open or closed.





A GUIDED RELAXATION

“AN ANXIOUS MIND CANNOT EXIST IN A RELAXED BODY”

Dr Edmond Jacobson

Make yourself comfortable, you may want to loosen clothes or take off your shoes. You can relax into this while sitting on a chair or you may wish to lie on the floor. Do whatever you need to do to get comfortable.

Close your eyes and spend a minute or two becoming more aware of your breathing. You may find your breathing will start to gradually slow down and become a little deeper. And you should start to feel your body relax a little.

Now become aware of your feet. Press down on the floor and tense your toes. Hold this for about five seconds and then release the muscles in your feet into a relaxed state for about 10 seconds. Enjoy the fact that the muscles in your feet are no longer tensed.

Now move your attention to your legs and tense your calf and thigh muscles and count slowly to five, then release into a relaxed state and count slowly for ten seconds enjoying the freedom from tension in these muscles.

Proceed the same way around the main groups of muscles in your body:

- Stomach
- Chest
- Hands and Arms
- Shoulders and Neck
- Face, including your mouth and tongue

Once you've completed this, savour the thought that you've checked all your major muscle groups and you know that you have relaxed the tension in each one.

Enjoy the feeling of release from tension. Focus your attention again on your breathing and breathe slowly and deeply into your whole body and into each of your muscle groups. Savour the feeling of release and relaxation. Take time to enjoy your body free of tension.

Notice how this exercise made you feel, you may prefer to try this in the comfort of your own home. Add notes to your journal. If you enjoyed it, maybe share it with a loved one.

[illegible]

I am kind

COUNTING KINDNESSES

What do we need?

- Pens
- Paper

After

- Were you surprised by the number of kind actions shared?
- Take notice of kind moments you experience over the next 24 hours, 3 days, week... Add these to your journal

Sharing

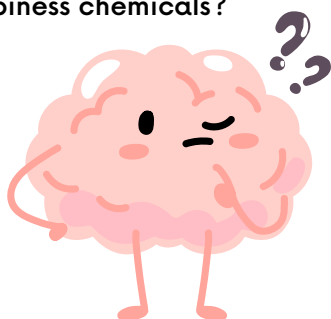
- Think about all the kindnesses we experience in a day. This includes the small, seemingly insignificant moments we may take for granted,
- Jot down as many examples of kind acts you have witnessed or even done your self.



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HAPPINESS CHEMICALS D.O.S.E

What are
happiness chemicals?



Dopamine

- Enables learning, motivation and pleasure
- Gives you determination to accomplish goals, desires and needs

Oxytocin

- Gives feeling of trust, motivates you to build and sustain relationships
- Known as the “cuddle or love hormone”, helps bonding

Serotonin

- Feeling significant or important among peers
- Accepting yourself and the people around you

Endorphin

- Releases a brief euphoria to mask pain
- Response to pain and stress to alleviate anxiety and depression

What deficiencies look like and how to increase your Daily D.O.S.E

- procrastination
- low self-esteem
- lack of motivation
- low energy/fatigue
- inability to focus
- feeling anxious
- feeling hopeless
- mood swings

Dopamine

- meditation
- daily to do list
- long term goals
- food rich in L-Tyrosine
- exercise
- creativity: art, music, writing etc.

- feeling lonely
- stressed
- lack of motivation
- low energy/fatigue
- disconnect of relationships
- feeling anxious
- insomnia

Oxytocin

- physical touch
- socialising
- massage
- acupuncture
- music
- exercise
- cold shower
- meditation

- low self-esteem
- feeling hopeless
- anxiety/panic attacks
- mood swings
- feeling hopeless
- social phobias
- obsession/compulsion
- insomnia

Serotonin

- exercise
- cold showers
- sunlight
- massage

- anxiety
- depression
- mood swings
- aches and pains
- insomnia
- impulsive behaviour

Endorphin

- laughter/crying
- creating music/art
- eat dark chocolate
- eat spicy foods
- exercise/stretching
- massage
- meditation

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PARTING GIFTS

What do we need?

- Pens
- Paper

After

- How did it feel receiving these gifts?
- What did you learn from it?



Sharing:

- Split into groups with people you have worked with before on other activities
- As a gift you are going to write and share with the people in your group using the following headings:
 - What I appreciate about you
 - What you have given me in the workshops
 - A piece of advice for the future
- When receiving your gifts, please do not speak, simply acknowledge the words and let them wash over you.
- These gifts are not triggers for discussion, but could be the catalyst for meeting up after the workshop.

“Vocalising gratitude and saying thanks towards others helps them understand what they are doing well and gives them confidence in what they are doing. It also makes others aware, that you see them, and are grateful for it, so that they feel recognised and heard, which is a powerful feeling.”

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**“They may forget what you
said but they will not forget
how you made them feel.”**

Carl Beuchner





STOP, START, CONTINUE

Thinking about what you've learned so far, consider what you are going to stop, start and continue?

STOP

One thing I'm going to stop doing (or do less of):

START

One thing I'm going to start doing (or do more of):

CONTINUE

One thing I'm going to carry on doing because it works for me:

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MORE INFORMATION & REFERENCES

More Information:

Aces

- Nadine Burke Harris Ted Talk
- The ACES Study
- Health Scotland –Overview of ACES

Window of Tolerance

- Research Dan Siegel

Attachment Styles

- Research Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby
- www.attachmentproject.com

Vagus Nerve

- Book: Simple Exercises to Stimulate the Vagus Nerve: An Illustrated Guide to Help Beat Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Pain and Digestive Problems by L Lienhard, U Schmid-Fetzer, E Cobb
- Research Vagus Nerve information and further exercises
- Research Polyvegal Theory - Stephen Porges

References:

101 Activities for Happiness Workshops - T Bournier, B Grenville-Cleave, A Rospigliosi

My Grandmother's Hands - R Menakem

The Positivity Project - Character Strengths Online

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

Nicolette and Abi are Therapeutic Wellbeing Practitioners and Creative Arts Counsellors, who met and trained together at the Institute of Arts in Therapy and Education, IATE.

They both work directly with young people, within the community and with organisations, focused on developing holistic health and wellbeing in creative ways. They are passionately committed to helping address the mental health needs of children and young people, as well as supporting their parents and care-givers.

Nicolette's expertise includes working with children and young people in Secondary Alternative Provision, Primary Schools, and Community Arts programmes, understanding the unique challenges young people face and how they present to teachers and adults who support them. She founded Bumble Creatives, a Community Interest Company focussed on providing Creative Wellbeing Workshops and activities for Young People, their families and the Bicester Community through the expansion of free and affordable Holistic Health and Wellbeing services.

Abi has extensive experience working with children, young people and families within medical, community & school settings. In 2024, she received a Spelthorne council startup award for 'Unplugged Clubs'. Encouraging young people to swap screen time for green time. She specialises in medical trauma, grief and bereavement having spent the past 5 years working for hospices and with charities supporting children and young people with complex medical needs and their families.

Flourish Oxford specialises in delivering counselling, wellbeing workshops and training on vital topics such as Trauma (ACEs), Polyvagal Theory, Attachment Theory, and the Window of Tolerance. Using creative, relational, and developmentally appropriate activities, we apply contextual and trauma-informed practices to foster connection and calm.

By collaborating closely with young people and their trusted adults, developing wellbeing and psychoeducation, we empower all to find a voice in multidisciplinary environments.



Knowing Me, Knowing you is part of a CPDL programme supporting teachers and Art Partners to teach emotional literacy through their work. This is part of the Story Exchange Project, generously funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Teacher Development Fund, partnering with The Story Museum and 7 Oxfordshire schools.