

Sandbank and Valley Nursery Schools Federation

Staff Mental Health



September 2024

Staff Mental Health Policy

At Sandbank and Valley Nursery School's Federation we support staff's positive mental health. Mental health refers to a person's well-being:

Socially: how we act, how we respond with others.

Emotionally: how we feel respond to stress.

Psychologically: How we think, how we make decisions.

Mental health refers to one's ability to deal and cope with the ups and downs of everyday life. Mental ill health is common. One in four people in the UK will have a mental problem at some point in their lives, according to the Department of Health.

Trauma, divorce/separation, genes, physical illness, brain chemistry, abuse, lack of work/life balance, financial insecurity/ poverty, lack of confidence/self -esteem, family history of mental health problems

Signs of Mental Health Problems you may see in one or more of these in a staff member:

- Having little or no energy
- Feeling upset or worried
- Feeling angry
- Not participating in activities in a normal way
- Not caring, as though nothing matters
- Eating too little or too much
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Complaining of unexplained aches and pains
- Drinking and/or smoking more than usual
- Not coping at work

Understanding stress

Staff can be stressed by factors at home, or stressed by factors in the workplace. Stress can work both positively and negatively, depending on the person and the type of stress. For example, some people like deadlines and find them helpful, for others they create stress.

If stress is affecting everyday functioning, then support may be needed. Stress can affect feelings and behaviour. Let's examine the

Physical symptoms: headaches, aches and pains, dizziness and chest pain.

Mental symptoms: worry and anxiety, poor decision making, forgetfulness, poor concentration, feelings of loss of control.

Behaviour changes: smoking, or drinking more than usual, avoiding certain situations, over, or under eating, lack of patience, being snappy.

Understanding Anxiety

Physical Symptoms: headaches/dizziness, chest pains, loss of appetite, more noticeable heartbeat, shortness of breath.

Mental Symptoms: the inability to relax, feeling tearful, poor sleeping, worry, feeling of tension.

Behaviour Changes: poor concentration, inability to enjoy, inability to connect with others.

Stress is a response to a certain situation. Anxiety is a reaction to stress.

A panic attack can be very frightening and is a sudden occurrence of:

Feeling sickly, sweating, shaking, intense stress and anxiety, sudden loss of control, shortness of breath, or quick breathing.

A panic attack usually lasts anything between 5 and 30 minutes, it's not dangerous and should not harm a person.

Dealing with a panic attack

Recognising the panic attack, suggesting they close their eyes, asking the person to sit down, asking the person to take deep breaths.

Understanding low mood and sadness

Most people feel low at some time in their life.

This feeling often improves after days, or weeks.

A low mood can cause: Low confidence, anxiety, frustration, tiredness, poor sleep, panic, low self-esteem.

Understanding Depression

A low mood that lasts for more than 2 weeks can indicate depression.

Depression refers to persistently feeling down and sad for weeks and months.

Depression is a real illness with symptoms.

Depression is not something that can be controlled by 'just snapping out of it.'

Depression can be helped with correct treatment and support.

Psychological symptoms

- Feeling of guilt
- Low self esteem
- Lack of tolerance
- No motivation
- Suicidal thoughts

Physical symptoms

- Changes in weight
- Change in appetite
- Lack of energy
- Speaking/moving more slowly
- Disturbed sleep

Social symptoms

- Avoiding friends
- Avoiding social situations
- Not doing well at work
- Difficulties at work and at home

Types of depression.

SAD Seasonal Affective disorder is also called 'winter depression' and refers to depression that is seasonally related.

Postnatal depression after giving birth.

Bipolar depression –Manic depression. With this type of depression, a person's mood can swing from depression to high mood. These high moods can be harmful as they may include bouts of behaviour, such as gambling, or spending sprees.

Depression is described on three levels:

Mild depression it can impact to some extent on a person's daily life.

Moderate depression impacts significantly on daily life.

Severe depression impacts in a way that makes daily life impossible.

Difference between grief and depression.

Grief: Is a natural reaction to loss

Causes feeling of sadness to come and go

Still allows people to look forward to the future.

Depression: Is an illness

Makes a person feel constantly sad

Makes it difficult to look forward to the future

Understanding Anger

Anger is an emotion responsible and felt by most people at some point in their lives.

Anger is shown through aggressive behaviour towards others.

Some people show anger, whilst others hide it and eventually 'explode.' Sometimes, those hiding it can take it out on themselves.'

If anger is affecting a person's life, at home or work, then support is required.

Physical Symptoms: Clenching fists, faster heartbeat, chest tightness, feeling hot, tense muscles.

Mental Symptoms: Inability to relax, feeling irritated, feelings of resentment, feeling humiliated, feeling tense.

Behaviour changes: starting fights, breaking/throwing things, self-harming, Sulking/ignoring people, shouting.

Bullying and Harassment

Both are unacceptable forms of behaviour which make someone feel intimidated and offended.

Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Bullying itself, is not against the law, but harassment is. Bullying and harassment in the workplace can include:

- Unfair treatment
- Constant criticism
- Spreading malicious rumours

Mental well-being refers to a person's mental state of happiness, healthiness, control of the day to day, understanding of life purposes and a general feeling of contentment.

All these aspects contribute to good, positive mental health.

A person's feeling of general well-being can change over different periods of time; minute to minute, hour to hour, day to day, or month to month.

Effects of good, positive mental health allows staff to:

- Confidently make decisions
- Cope with stress
- Work effectively and to their own full potential
- Be reliable
- Enjoy enthusiasm

All staff can feel pressured at some time whilst working in school setting.

Supporting Staff Mental Health

- On Inset day's staff had training on positive mental health and laughter therapy etc.
- Lunches are paid for when we have inset days at different venues.
- Mindfulness helps staff to think positively and think of positive ways to solve their problems.
- Mindfulness is all about being aware of your thoughts, emotions and body, in the present moment.
- Mindfulness can improve mental well-being, as it can help a person understand themselves and the world around them more.
- It allows thinking time when a person can understand that thoughts can be controlled mental processes.
- How often can you feel you are over thinking, or just caught up in your own thoughts?
- Mindfulness can help by making thoughts more positive and productive.
- How to be mindful?
- Take a moment out of your everyday behaviour to focus on something, however small.
- In that moment, think about all you are experiencing in that moment:

Feel, hear, smell, see and touch.

Good relationships supporting mental health.

Good relationships in and out of the workplace are important and contribute to positive mental well-being. Through good relationships, a person can:

- Feel a sense of self worth
- Share life experiences
- Give emotional support to other people
- Receive emotional support
- Feel a sense of belonging. All these contribute to a sense of well-being.

Helping recovery

Mental health problems can improve through processes which:

- Change choices to create more purpose
- Improve health and wellness
- Provide a safe and stable home life
- Offer ongoing support through relationships

Helping stress and anxiety

Whether you are an owner, manager or early years' practitioner, understanding the need for supporting good mental health in your environment, is vital.

- Set small, achievable targets for yourself and others.
- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Do not spend time focusing on things that can't be changed.
- Allow time to focus on yourself.
- Time management
- Make a list for the day you need to complete.
- A list creates a timetable and plan for the day.
- Tick them off as soon as you have completed a task. This can give a feeling of satisfaction.
- Early years practitioner should focus on the quality of each task, not the number of tasks.
- Remember, less can be more!

Break times are important for positive well-being because they:

- Provide time away from young children
- Refresh and relax
- Provide time for adult conversations
- A positive environment – sometimes people with mental health problems can feel reluctant to talk about their issues, afraid of possible shame and discrimination.
- They may find it difficult to get the correct responses of others.
- Creating an environment where staff can talk and feel relaxed, can help people to talk about mental health issues, although decisions to talk are often not easily made.

- Build Colleague relationships
- Working within a supportive team contributes greatly to good mental health.
- Sometimes you may have to work with someone you do not like, or get on with. This can cause tension and difficulties, which is not good, if relationships are strained in front of children.

An Employers Duty of Care

The Health and Safety Work Act 1947 states an employer must ensure an employee's well-being by looking after their health and safety.

An employer must ensure:

- A safe working environment
- Times and areas for breaks
- Staff are not discriminated, bullied or harassed
- No excessive working hours
- Procedures to allow staff to voice concerns.

Supporting Staff with Positive Mental Health

All staff are given a code of conduct policy every year which they have to adhere to.

- Rebecca Moorhouse and Tom Andrews are trained mental health first aiders at the Nursery and they can sign post staff and parents.
- Understand mental health and connect with others!
- Talk about mental health and keep learning!
- Improve mental health and make a difference!
- Support mental and see the difference!

Anonymous employee assistance programme for all the staff:

For Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) webinars, please visit the [Care first Lifestyle website](#)

Log in details to access the Care first website:

<https://carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk/>

Username: Walsallschools

Password: employee (case sensitive)

***The Five Ways to Wellbeing - boosting mental wellbeing – YouTube link**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJ5V525Sck>

***Positive Mind set- Click on the link to read about the ways to achieve positive mental health.** <https://positivepsychology.com/positive-mindset/>

***Mindfulness App-** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

***Mental Wellbeing** - 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

***Yoga** -An article that talks about benefits of yoga <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/guide-to-yoga/>

***Links to lots of Mental health charities** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/> ***Spread the happiness** by Shonette Bason-Wood <https://www.facebook.com/SpreadTheHappinessPage/videos/happiness-and-home-schooling-/245940893225826/>

***The benefits of Sleep** - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

7 Health Benefits of Sleep



IMPROVE MEMORY

Sleep helps strengthen memories



IMPROVE CREATIVITY

People strengthen emotional components of imagination



LOWER STRESS

Sleep can reduce stress levels



HAVE A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Sleep & metabolism are controlled by the same parts of the brain



SHARPEN ATTENTION

Lack of sleep can result in lack of attention in kids



STAY HEALTHY

Risk of heart attack is higher in people who sleep 6 or less hours



LIVE BETTER

With better sleep comes a longer, happier life

SLEEP SANA™

ALL NATURAL SLEEP