

PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER PULL-OUT

Please remove this centrefold carefully to avoid damaging the staples!



This short guide is designed to give parents/guardians/carers a brief introduction to the *Wired for Well-Being* programme and help them to support adolescents as they complete the programme.

Research shows that having a high level of well-being is the greatest predictor of happiness and success in life for both adults and young people.

However, our young people face ever-increasing challenges and demands as they grow into adulthood. There is a vital need to equip them with the skills and strategies that will help them to flourish and thrive despite these challenges. The *Wired for Well-Being* programme aims to introduce adolescents to these evidence-based skills, drawn from the fields of Positive Psychology and Neuroscience, in order to develop positive well-being habits for life. It is a multi-year programme with eight lessons per year level.

The programme has been created to equip young people with the skills they need to become resilient and to thrive in life.

Background to the Programme Concepts

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is the science of well-being. It was founded by Professor Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania in 1998. He called for more research to be conducted into the components of well-being and flourishing. Positive Psychology is therefore the study of well-being, resilience and optimal human functioning. It is founded on the concept of identifying and developing personal strengths and competencies, as opposed to correcting weaknesses. Positive Psychology uses evidence-based interventions that help individuals not only to cope, but to thrive and engage with life on an optimal level, whenever possible.

Neuroscience and Neuroplasticity

Neuroscience is the study of the brain and nervous system. Neuroplasticity is the concept that the structure of the brain is continuously changing throughout life, through our habits, thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Adolescence is a critical period for neuroplasticity as there is still a lot of scope for the brain to develop and grow. By educating students about this process they can make the most of these opportunities and steer this process in a positive direction.

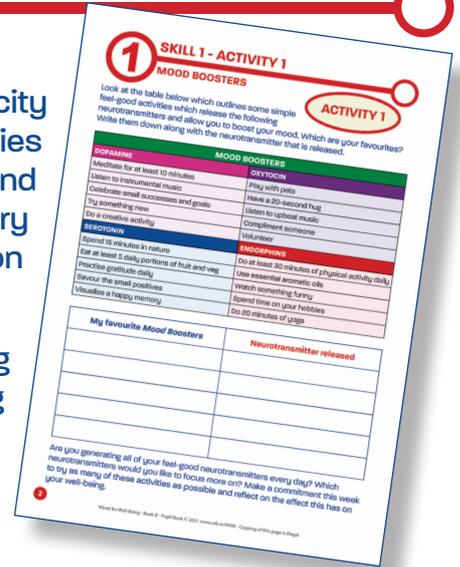
Structure of the Programme

This programme is skills-based, so each lesson introduces your child to a new skill which they use for the week. For homework, they keep track of their use of the skill in their Pupil Book. Well-being programmes work best when there is parent/guardian/carer encouragement and involvement. It would be very beneficial for you to discuss each skill with your child and comment and sign the Parent/Guardian/Carer Comment Box at the end of each lesson. At the end of the programme, the pupils are encouraged to keep using the skills that they found useful. They are also encouraged to create and use their own Well-Being Journal during the programme.

1 SKILL 1
GET GOOD AT WELL-BEING

The student learns about what well-being and neuroplasticity means. They learn about a variety of mood-boosting activities and the neurotransmitters: serotonin, endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin - released by each of them. For homework, they carry out at least 2 mood boosters each day and monitor the effect on their well-being.

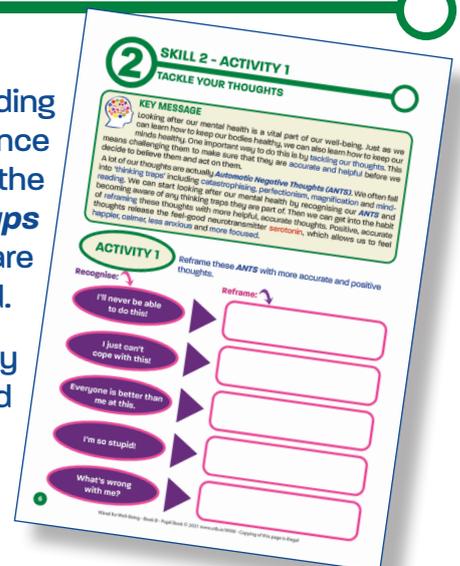
As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by talking to them about their mood boosting activities and encouraging them to do at least one of them every day!



2 SKILL 2
TACKLE YOUR THOUGHTS

The student learns about some common thinking traps including catastrophising and perfectionism. They learn about the importance of challenging these types of thoughts and learn how to use the **Recognise and Reframe** method of dealing with **Thinking Traps** and **ANTS** (Automatic Negative Thoughts). For homework, they are encouraged to use a series of questions to support this method.

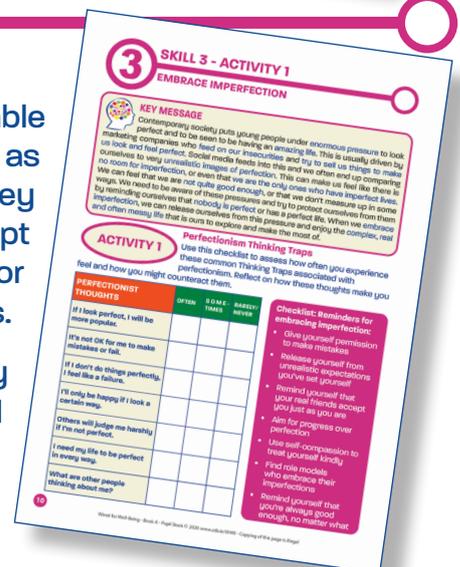
As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by encouraging them to use the **Recognise and Reframe** method and by using it yourself too.



3 SKILL 3
EMBRACE IMPERFECTION

The student learns the importance of challenging the unattainable images of perfection that popular culture bombards them with, as well as questioning unrealistic expectations and pressures. They are reminded that nobody is perfect and to embrace the concept of being 'good enough' rather than perfect or amazing. For homework, they are encouraged to use helpful self-talk phrases.

As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by discussing this topic with them and helping them to use helpful self-talk to remind them that they are always good enough.

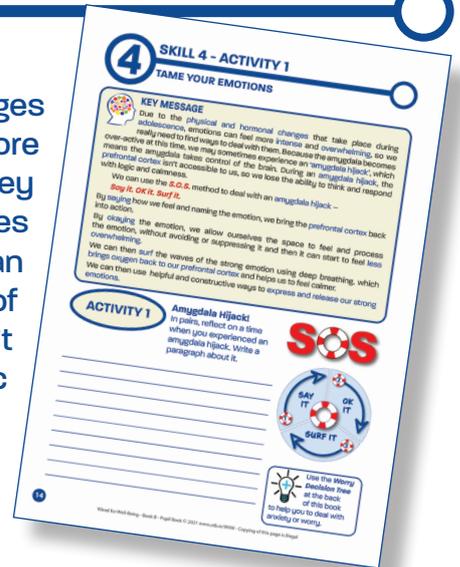


4 SKILL 4 TAME YOUR EMOTIONS

The student learns that due to the physical and hormonal changes that take place during adolescence, emotions can feel more intense and overwhelming at times. It is really important that they find ways to deal with them. Because the amygdala becomes over-active at this time, they may sometimes experience an 'amygdala hijack', which means the amygdala takes control of the brain. During an amygdala hijack, the prefrontal cortex isn't accessible, so we lose the ability to think and respond with logic and calmness.

Children learn the **S.O.S.** method to deal with an amygdala hijack – **Say it. OK it. Surf it.**

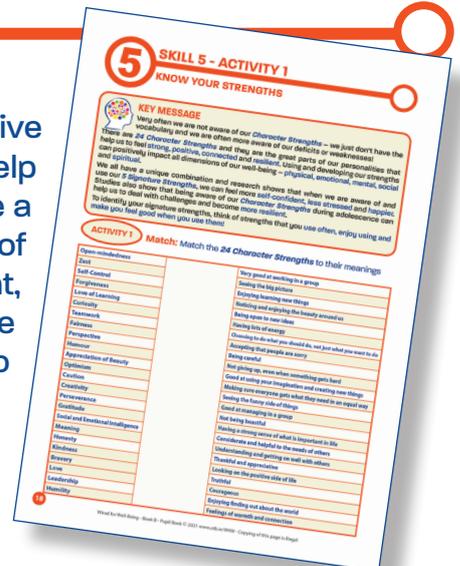
As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by talking about constructive ways to regulate intense emotions and by supporting them as they do this.



5 SKILL 5 KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

The student learns about the **24 Character Strengths** of Positive Psychology, which are the great parts of our personalities that help us to feel strong, positive, connected and resilient. We all have a unique combination and research shows that when we are aware of and use our **5 Signature Strengths**, we can feel more self-confident, less stressed and happier. Studies also show that being aware of **Character Strengths** during adolescence can help teens to deal with challenges and become more resilient.

As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by discussing the strengths and helping to identify their top 5 strengths. Notice and praise your child when they display these strengths and remind them that they can use them whenever they need to.



SELF-CARE for Parent/Guardian/Carer

'Self-care is not selfish, you cannot serve from an empty vessel'

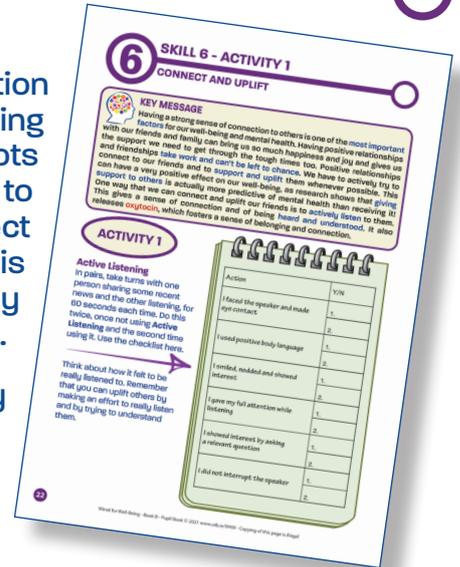
- Eleanor Brown

Raising adolescents is a challenging and demanding task. One of the best ways you can support your child's well-being is to prioritise your own well-being and self-care, so that you have the energy and inner resources to cope with the challenges. It's also a great way to show that you value well-being and you become a positive role model for your child. Consider using the skills of the programme yourself and try to carve out time for your own self-care. Treating yourself with self-compassion is vital – aim to be a 'good-enough' parent rather than striving for perfection!

6 SKILL 6
CONNECT AND UPLIFT

The student is reminded that having a strong sense of connection to others is one of the most important factors for our well-being and mental health. They learn that positive relationships take lots of effort and can't be left to chance. They have to actively try to connect to and uplift others. This can have a very positive effect on well-being, as research shows that giving support to others is actually more predictive of mental health than receiving it. They learn how to use active listening to build positive relationships.

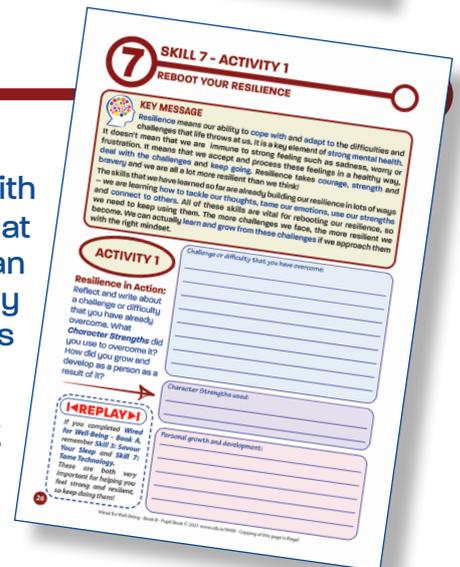
As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them this week by helping them to tune into their self-talk and noticing if they're being very hard on themselves. Remind them that their best is good enough and that nobody is perfect. Take time to really listen to your child and empathise with them.



7 SKILL 7
REBOOT YOUR RESILIENCE

The student learns that resilience means the ability to cope with and adapt to the difficulties and challenges that life throws at them. It is a key element of strong mental health. It doesn't mean that they are immune to strong feelings such as sadness, worry or frustration, it means accepting and processing these feelings in a healthy way and dealing with the challenges.

As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by discussing the behaviours of resilient people with them and using them yourself too.



8 SKILL 8
BECOME WIRED FOR WELL-BEING!

The student reviews all of the skills and reflects on the ones they found most useful. For homework, they are encouraged to use their skills and keep track of the effect they are having on their mood and well-being.

As a Parent/Guardian/Carer you can support them by discussing with them, the skills they have learned and encourage them to keep using the ones they find particularly effective.

