

Mental health and physical health — connecting minds and bodies



Place2Be is a national children's mental health charity, providing vital emotional wellbeing support for pupils, families and staff in UK schools.

Last year, Place2Be worked with 700 schools supporting school communities of over 380,000 children and young people.

As your class, school or social bubble gets ready to participate in England does The Daily Mile, it's a great opportunity to get pupils thinking about their mental health as well as their physical health.

Our friends at children's mental health charity Place2Be have shared some top tips and ideas below to get you started...

Free Mental Health Training for UK teachers and school staff

If you'd like to learn more, Place2Be is offering its Mental Health Champions — Foundation programme for free to all UK school-based staff. This online training course enhances teaching professionals' understanding of children's mental health, and introduces approaches that promote positive wellbeing in schools and communities.

Don't miss out — join the 45,000 who have already started the course. Places are limited.

Find out more and sign up at place2be.org.uk/foundation

Start by talking to pupils about the fact that our bodies and minds are very closely linked, and often activities that improve our physical wellbeing can help our mental wellbeing too. These activities can help us to feel better in ourselves, focus on what we want to do, and even deal with difficult times.



Looking after your mind and body — discussion points and activity ideas



1. Have a class discussion about what being healthy means. Talk about different ways that people can look after their bodies and minds. But remind them that there's no such thing as a perfect body or mind — and no one is perfectly healthy.

Pupils might be tempted to compare themselves to their classmates but it's important to remember that everyone's bodies and minds are different — and that's something to celebrate.

3. Getting out into the playground. Encourage children to share their favourite playground games. Ask how these games make them feel. Are they happy? Excited? Full of energy? Point out that lots of these games involve moving around as part of a group. Explain that children around the world enjoy playing games like this too!

Look at a playground game from a different culture and if appropriate, play it as a group. You could draw on the cultural diversity in your school, or try this example from China: Catch the Dragon's Tail, page 10. tinyurl.com/ycywzdpm

Remember to ask how it makes them feel! Suggest that moving around helps us look after our minds as well as our bodies.

5. Try a gratitude walk. Did you know that even in the most challenging times, finding things to be thankful for is important for wellbeing and can lead to physical and psychological benefits?

On a 'gratitude walk' around your school or neighbourhood, try to observe using all of the senses, for example; what can we hear, see, smell, and feel. Try to think of the things we might take for granted or not typically notice or appreciate. In the classroom write some of the things they noticed on cardboard 'petals' which can be linked together to make a flower display.

2. Challenge yourself and your colleagues to try something new to improve your own health.

For example, walking instead of driving. Sharing what you do to stay healthy with your class can set a good example — but don't be afraid to admit it if you're struggling! It's important for children to keep trying, even when things are difficult.

4. Warming up. Ask three volunteers in the group how they feel out of ten— ten being really happy, one being really sad. Keep note of their answers.

Next do a physical warm-up as a group — e.g. wiggle arms and legs, do stretches or yoga moves, make up 'freestyle' dances. If appropriate, you could put on some music.

Ask how they feel again and get them to compare the numbers. Has their mood improved? Why? Suggest that moving around helps us look after our minds as well as our bodies.

Talk about easy ways to stay active. E.g. walking to school, doing star jumps during playtime, dancing to music. Is there something you can 'pledge' to do regularly as a group/class? How will it help your bodies and minds?