



DULWICH COLLEGE

Mental Health Awareness

Connections

Week 2022



This week is Mental Health Awareness Week - one of the biggest awareness weeks across the UK. Mental Health Awareness Week is organised and hosted by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) www.mentalhealth.org.uk – a charity focused on mental health prevention and helping people to understand, protect and sustain their mental health. The Week offers an opportunity for people to talk about all aspects of mental health, with a focus on providing ways that we can support our own and each other's mental health and wellbeing.

This year's MHF theme is loneliness so we are going to spend this week at Dulwich College thinking about ways that we connect and in building **connections**.

Connections with Ourselves: sometimes we may feel uncomfortable or disconnected with who we are. When we are feeling this way, we may be experiencing emotional loneliness. This is something we may all feel at points in our lives – it can take time to learn and develop what makes you, you. When experiencing emotional loneliness, finding ways to connect with ourselves can be helpful. It is important to remember to be kind to ourselves when we are feeling disconnected from who we are. It can be useful to think about how we would talk and support a friend who was feeling like this.

It can also be useful to think about things you enjoy - places, music, books, sports, food or people – as a reminder of the different parts of ourselves and what matters to us. **Have a look at the programme of ideas for ways to take part in some of the things that you enjoy at school and how our College campus and environment is full of ways to help you connect with yourself and others.**

The Wellbeing Team
Ms Whittington, Ms Parker, Mr Wickstead, Mr Flower and Ms Miller



Thinking about Connections

Connection within ourselves? Connection with others? How do the many different parts of us form connections to each other?

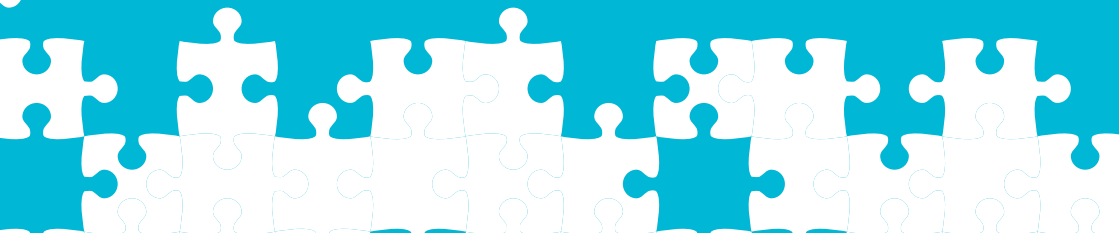
What happens with this continuous evolution, the ebb and flow of our many aspects of ourselves connecting, disconnecting, and reconnecting. Like waves in the natural flow of the oceans and seas, they have tidal trends, stormy times, sometimes we may be beseeched by calm.

Do we need a sense of connection within ourselves to be able to connect with others? What happens in the ebb and flow of these relationships? In the changeable weather of other people. Can these connections withstand the tides and storms? Will they stick around during the calms? Can we repair the ruptures, in our relationships with others, brought about by life if we don't give value to the connections within ourselves with self-compassion and self-healing?

'Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow - a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them. We can only love others as much as we love ourselves.' - Brené Brown, *The Gift of Imperfection*

Let's try and use this week – and beyond - to grow and value these connections within ourselves and our relationships with others.

Jo Ray – College Counsellor



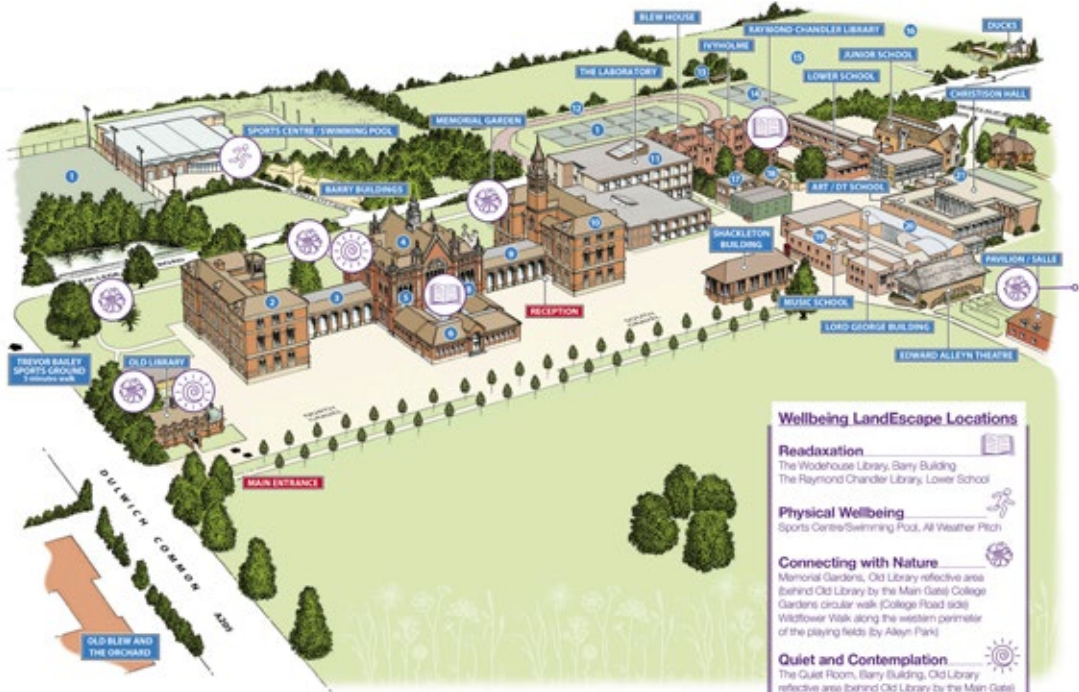


Connections on Benches

As well as the new addition of the pat ball courts around campus, please use this week to take notice and use an old, regular feature of our College campus – the benches. There are a number of benches dotted around from Ducks to Junior School to the Senior School. Take a moment to sit down on these benches and connect through a conversation.

Connections around Campus

Have a look at our College LandEspace Map to see the other Wellbeing-inspiring





Connections through Eating

Table Teasers and Table Talkers

'The act of nutrition is not a purely physiological event - the meal is a formality that cultivates in us a capacity for sharing, generosity, thoughtfulness, a talent for civilized conversation.'

-Francine Du Plessix Gray

Connecting during a meal time is invaluable. Although our school day is busy, please embrace time for lunchtime to be a social event. During the week there will be Table Teasers for Junior School and Senior School pupils and staff to work through together with your fellow diners – look out for these on the tables around the dining hall. Answers will be revealed on Friday!

Ducks will have Table Talkers for conversations to start with your friends.

Connections through colouring

The Wodehouse Library are also hosting a mindfulness colouring station in the periodicals room. So go along and join with others for some calming, inspiring colouring.



Connections through reading

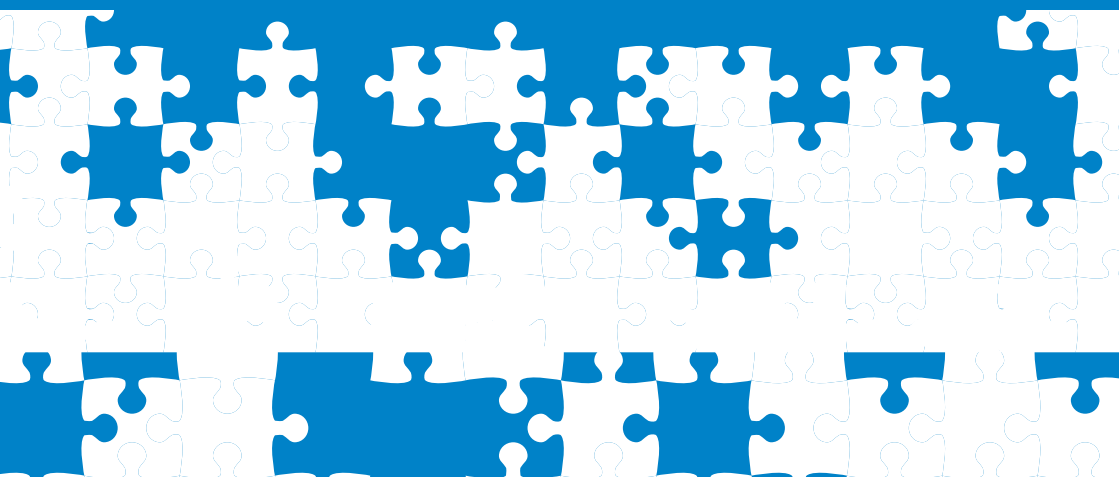
The library is a perfect place to forge connections - either through the insight and empathy provided by reading, or by offering a perfect place to sit and read or work with a friend in a low-stress environment. The library is a place where everyone is always welcome. Reading is a way to feel less alone, seeing your own experiences and emotions reflected in stories. In addition, studies have linked reading to higher levels of mental wellbeing in young people, and reading as little as 6 minutes a day can help to reduce stress.

This Mental Health Awareness Week, come and explore our in-person displays in the Chandler and Wodehouse Libraries, or browse our reading lists:

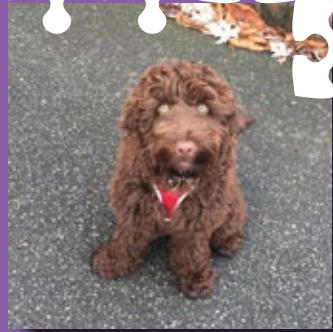
You can also visit our **pop-up library** on **Friday 15 May!** We'll be in the Lower Hall at break and Christison Hall at lunch with a selection of great fiction and nonfiction mental health reads.

For all of our offerings, check out the library's Mental Health Awareness Week page.

DUCKS pupils will use *The Big Bright Feelings* 7 Book collection by Tom Percival - he recently joined us for a zoom assembly. Pupils will also explore *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas as their focus text.



Connections through our pets



The Mental Health Foundation has identified the value of pets in supporting our mental health, particularly in combating loneliness. We will use the week to celebrate our pets. Please upload an image of your pet to our College community of pets gallery.

**Here are a few of the Mental Health Foundation's findings into pets and our mental health:
Caring for a pet can help our mental health in many ways, including:**

Increasing your physical activity. Dog owners are likely to take their pet out every day for a walk or run. This can be a fun way to fit exercise into your routine

Providing companionship. Pets can give you a sense of security and someone to share the day with. Caring for them can help you feel wanted and needed. This can be especially valuable for older people or those who live alone

Reducing anxiety. The companionship of a pet can help to ease your anxiety

Boosting self-confidence. Pets can be great listeners, offer unconditional love and won't criticise you. This can help your self-confidence, especially if you feel isolated or misunderstood

Helping you meet new people. Dog owners often stop and chat to each other on walks. But other pets can be a way to meet people too: in pet shops, training classes or online groups, for example

Adding structure to your day. Having to feed, exercise and care for a pet can help you keep to a daily routine, which can help you feel more grounded and focused. It can give your day purpose and a sense of achievement.

**And if you don't have a pet yourself, here are a few suggestions
of how you could still connect with animals:**

The simplest option may be spending time with friends' pets, whether that's walking their dogs, stroking their cats or cuddling their guinea pigs. They might be glad to have someone to pet sit for them while they're on holiday. You can also consider signing up as a housesitter: you look after someone's home, garden and pets in return for free accommodation.

If you're missing having a dog in your life, you could sign up with Borrow My Doggy. They connect dog owners to local people who would love to walk or play with a dog. The Cinnamon Trust also needs volunteer dog walkers to help out older people or those with a health condition or disability that means they can't walk their dog as easily anymore. They also need people to foster pets while their owners are in hospital.

Contact a rescue centre near you to see what volunteering opportunities they may have. They may need volunteers to exercise, care for and socialise their pets. You could consider fostering an animal if you're able to have a pet on a short-term basis but can't commit to one long-term. Some shy or scared animals need the peace and quiet of a home while waiting to be adopted.

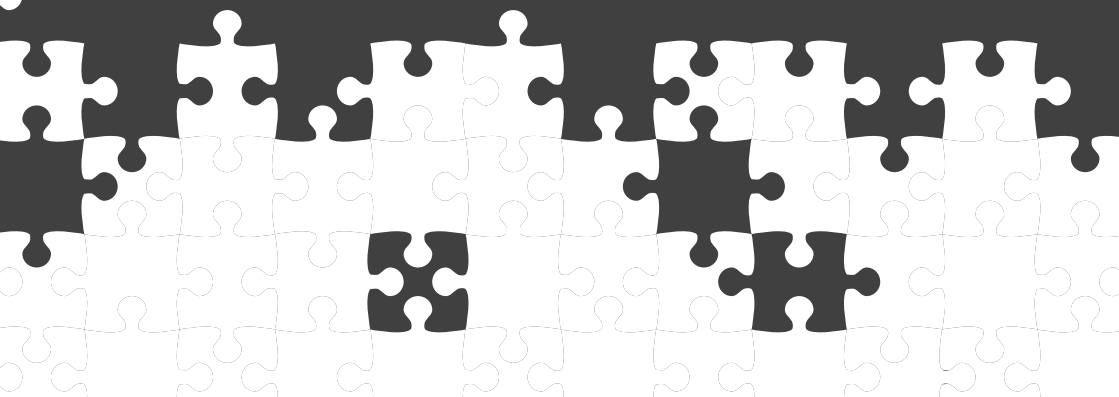
Cats Protection and Dogs Trust both need people to provide temporary foster care for pets belonging to people fleeing domestic violence, who may not be able to take their pets into a refuge with them.



Connections through music

Whilst scholars do not quite agree on the exact origins of music, most see it as synonymous with the birth of language. Whilst musical instruments have been found that are around 40,000 years old, music is thought to be much older. Music is inherently human and closely linked to our evolution as a species. It is thus unsurprising that studies have shown that listening to music that you like has a profoundly positive impact on our wellbeing. Researchers from the McGill University, Montreal, have found that music releases dopamine, a chemical in the brain that has a key role in setting good moods. Dopamine is our bodies' reward system and is released when we eat tasty food or even when we are in love. It affects many parts of our behaviour and is important for promoting learning, motivation, sleep and happiness, amongst many other things. Listening to music can be a fantastic way to unwind and be present in a busy world. Some people like to put it on whilst out for a walk, others like to really concentrate on it and focus in on what each instrument is doing. It is also something that can be shared.

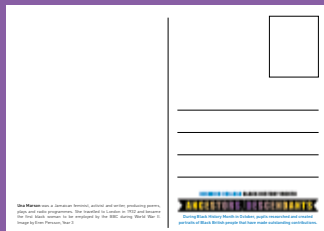
A good idea is to make a collaborative playlist on Spotify or Soundcloud and add songs with your friends or tutor group. Every person's taste in music will be slightly different and that adds to the magic! We encourage you to create connection playlists during Mental Health Awareness week.



Connections through postcards and writing to each other

Whilst scholars do not quite agree on the exact origins of music, most see it as synonymous with the birth of language. Whilst musical instruments have been found that are around 40,000 years old, music is thought to be much older. Music is inherently human and closely linked to our evolution as a species. It is thus unsurprising that studies have shown that listening to music that you like has a profoundly positive impact on our wellbeing. Researchers from the McGill University, Montreal, have found that music releases dopamine, a chemical in the brain that has a key role in setting good moods. Dopamine is our bodies' reward system and is released when we eat tasty food or even when we are in love. It affects many parts of our behaviour and is important for promoting learning, motivation, sleep and happiness, amongst many other things. Listening to music can be a fantastic way to unwind and be present in a busy world. Some people like to put it on whilst out for a walk, others like to really concentrate on it and focus in on what each instrument is doing. It is also something that can be shared.

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Connections through Mindful Yoga in the Junior School

The pupils in Year 3 and 5 will have the opportunity to partake in a Mindful Yoga session on Tuesday 10th May. It is essential to spend quality time with yourself in order to connect with your intuition, and Yoga is the perfect way to develop a deeper connection with your inner self. In the session, the pupils will learn poses and techniques that can help this connection take place so they can bring clarity to their minds.



Connections through clubs and societies

To live out the theme of connection, it is hoped that societies would think about formally inviting another society to their events during the next few weeks of this half term (and particularly during w/c 9th May) - a way to foster 'connections' between pupils and societies. The possibility of collaborative talks would also be a great way to exemplify connections. So make sure that you are reaching out to other societies and formally inviting them to join your discussions and events!

Connections through Play

Join in with playing a board game. There will be various locations around College during the week that will be hosting board game fun. These include in the Junior School in 4W which is located on the 1st floor near to the JS Library during morning and/or lunch break time; and in the Raymond Chandler Library at lunchtimes in the Lower School.

PLAY CAN:

Relieve stress. Play is fun and can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of wellbeing and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Improve brain function. Playing chess, completing puzzles, or pursuing other fun activities that challenge the brain can help prevent memory problems and improve brain function. The social interaction of playing with family and friends can also help ward off stress and depression.

Stimulate the mind and boost creativity. You'll learn a new task better when it's fun and you're in a relaxed and playful mood. Play can also stimulate your imagination, helping you adapt and problem solve.

Improve relationships and your connection to others. Sharing laughter and fun can foster empathy, compassion, trust, and intimacy with others. Play doesn't have to be a specific activity; it can also be a state of mind. Developing a playful nature can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers, make new friends, and form new relationships.

Keep you feeling young and energetic. In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."

DUCKS Events

Mindful Monday:

- Assembly on being Mindful and the importance of healthy mind & connecting with our family & friends
- 6pm Bedtime Zoom story with Mrs Norris

Togetherness Tuesday:

- Reception together visit Brockett Farm for a day out
- Year 1 visit Nursery and come together
- Year 2 send a postcard to a reception buddy
- 6pm Bedtime Zoom story with Mrs Parker

Wellbeing Wednesday:

- Heron class have a stay & play session with parents & carers
- All children participate in slow looking. Using A vase with Flowers artwork by Jan Van Huysum
- 6pm Bedtime Zoom story with Mrs Dipre

Thoughtfulness Thursday:

- DUCKS children think about 'self-care' and what they do for themselves... what do they enjoy doing at home? They will share ideas with each other
- DUCKS Staff participate in an after-school art session with Sue Mullholland
- 6pm Bedtime Zoom story with Mrs Shaw

Fun Friday:

- DUCKS Children come together for Parachute games, circle games and a carousel of fun activities
- DUCKS Parent & Carer coffee morning
- 6pm Bedtime Zoom Story with Sally



Resources for you

Focus text:

Charlie Mackesy's *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*

Enter the world of four unlikely friends, discover their story and their most poignant life lessons. The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse are four friends who share a deep, unshakable bond. Through a series of brief but profound conversations, Mackesy teases universal truths and rich wisdom from the mouths of his characters, celebrating warmth and empathy in all its myriad forms. Exploring kindness through exquisite, sensitive artwork and delicate calligraphy, *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* is a moving study in friendship. A book to bring people together. Charlie Mackesy's inspirational paintings and delicate calligraphic text are a celebration of kindness, compassion and understanding, conveying an essential message for our time.

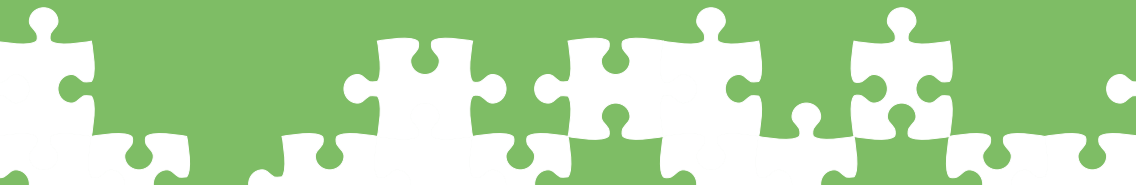


Love, friendship and kindness - this book speaks a universal language. - Bear Grylls

Connections in our current context – Acts of Service

www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0016h3z

In this BBC Radio 4 programme, Douglas Alexander examines whether recent crises - from Covid to the Ukraine war - have helped bring people together or driven them apart. He also explores how often helping others and our acts of service are invaluable ways of connecting with others. In the more digital, hybrid world many of us have now glimpsed, will we have more time and more friends, or are we fated to feel that, in the real world, we are living among strangers? As we emerge into a post pandemic world already being shaped by a European conflict and the refugee and cost-of-living crises, it has brought in its wake, Douglas asks what we are learning about what really matters most in life. He visits the Cyrenians, Edinburgh's homelessness charity, and meets individuals who have opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees. And he talks to leading thinkers including social geographer Danny Dorling, anthropologist Robin Dunbar, economist Minouche Shafik and Emily Morrison of the Institute of Community Studies. Douglas Alexander is a senior fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and was member of the Cabinets of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.



Looking After Your Mental Health: Signposting Support

There is lots of support in school through your tutors, teachers, Heads of Year and Heads of School, our Counselling team and the Yelcho Room, and the Chaplain.

Here are some external support agencies and charities in case you need to reach out:

SHOUT

<https://giveusashout.org>

A text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Text 'shout' to 85258

PAPYRUS

www.papyrus-uk.org

HOPELINEUK is a confidential support and advice service for Children and Young People under the age of 35. Call 0800 068 4141

SAMARITANS

www.samaritans.org

Confidential, emotional support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

CHILDLINE

www.childline.org.uk

Children and young people can contact ChildLine about anything – no problem is too big or too small. Childline is free and does not show up on the phone bill. Call 0800 1111

YOUNGMINDS

www.youngminds.org.uk

Whether you need a reassuring conversation, specialist mental health support, or simply the knowledge that you are not alone in how you are feeling, YoungMinds will make sure you get support that you need as quickly as possible.

THE MIX

www.themix.org.uk

The Mix provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile.

KOOTH

www.kooth.com

Digital mental health care. Available to all.

THE NEST

www.thenestsouthwark.org.uk

The Nest is a face to face drop-in service for young people. No appointment is needed! You can come by for a one-time chat with the team:

Drop-in's:

Tuesdays 15:30 - 17:30

Thursdays 15:30 - 17:30

Saturdays 10:00 - 14:30

Or give us a call on:

020 8138 1805 to arrange a time to speak with someone from the team

Or send an email to:

thenest@groundwork.org.uk

Staff MHA Week Activities

There will also be a range of activities and events for staff during the week.

