

## **Top tips for a healthy body and better emotional and mental health.**

### **1. Sleep**

Sleep is crucial to mental health and wellbeing. In years seven and eight you should be getting an absolute minimum of ten hours whilst teenagers need a minimum of nine hours sleep every night. Lack of sleep can lead to low mood and poor concentration and make it difficult to be resilient and cope well with problems. Turn off any technology an hour before bedtime and read a book instead as the light on screens interferes with the production of melatonin, a chemical needed for sleep. Leave your phone on charge downstairs.

### **2. Don't skip breakfast!**

You cannot function properly without fuelling your body when your tummy has been empty all night. Eating breakfast helps you do better in school. Examples of healthy breakfasts are; cereal with banana and low-fat milk, brown toast with peanut butter or eggs, yogurt with fruit. Choose healthy snacks, too. A balanced diet includes foods from a variety of food groups, avoiding too much fat or sugar and having treats in moderation. Low blood sugar can affect your mood so do eat regularly.

### **3. Drink plenty of water!**

Even mild dehydration has been proven to have a negative impact on your mood, memory or brain performance and can cause headaches. About two litres of water a day is the recommended amount for young people aged 13 and over.

### **4. Move!**

Take every opportunity to keep active for at least 30 minutes every day. Walk, cycle, or even run to school! Take activity breaks for every hour that you do homework or watch TV. You will look and feel much better as a result of more vigorous activity. Do 20 minutes of aerobic activity, for example jogging or dancing. You could also try doing exercises or lifting weights. Don't forget to cool-down by stretching and deep breathing.

### **4. Personal hygiene matters...**

Keeping clean and smelling sweet is important for good health, particularly when your body is changing physically! Wash your hands after using the toilet and ensure you take a daily bath or shower. Change your clothes regularly and use an anti-perspirant/deodorant. Cleaning your teeth regularly will not only help keep them strong and healthy but will help you to feel more confident, too.

### **5. Cut down the time you spend on tv and computer games**

Try something different and get your friends to leave the X-box and join in! How about boxing, yoga, street dance or surfing? A maximum of two hours of any screen time is recommended per day.

### **6. Take a break from social networking**

Although it can have good points, there is lots of evidence that social networking has a very negative impact on mental wellbeing. Having a lot of virtual friends does not have the same benefits as interacting with real ones and it can make us feel isolated and affect our self esteem as we compare ourselves negatively with others.

### **7. Make the right choices**

Drinking alcohol or taking substances can make you feel depressed and anxious. It can also increase risk taking behaviours which bring other dangers Remember to make your own decisions about what is right for you rather than giving in to peer pressure.

### **8. Communicate**

Talking about your worries or problems will help get them off your chest and help you to manage them better. If you find talking difficult, you may prefer to express yourself through doing something creative, such as painting, drawing or writing songs. This can help you distract yourself, too, and avoid over-thinking. Try to do something sociable, such as volunteering or joining a club, rather than spending too much time alone.

### **9. Ask for help**

Try to seek support from others whom you trust. There are plenty of people to choose from; your friends and family, your tutor, head of year or any member of staff. Kirsty our Student Support Worker holds a drop-in service or you can approach the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors through the Bully boxes or by email. 'Treads' in town runs support groups for young people. Lots of reputable online organisations also provide advice -try 'Childline', 'Chat Health', 'Where's Your Head At', for example.

### **10. Relax!**

Find and do things that you enjoy or which help you to switch off from anything that is worrying you. Playing or listening to music, a warm bubble bath or shower, a milky drink, chatting to friends, walking the dog, watching your favourite film or comedian – all of these can be calming activities. You could also try downloading and practising meditation or mindfulness apps.

### **11. Focus on the good points**

Don't give yourself a hard time. It is easy to criticise yourself when you are feeling down. Remember that even though other people may look confident it doesn't mean that they aren't wobbly on the inside at times, too. Remind yourself about what you do well and what is good in your life.