

Supporting student wellbeing by encouraging them to use the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (while staying at home!)

Shelly Masters

What's the idea?

The idea behind 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' is that wellbeing can be achieved in different ways and these five evidence-based actions can help your students feel better. They are simple, free things to do and the aim is to prompt students to consider what they can do to improve their wellbeing, rather than focus on the things they can't do in the current situation.

The suggestions within the Five Ways to Wellbeing are typically actions that pupils would be encouraged to do/experience in school normally, but there are ways teachers can promote or encourage these while pupils are learning at home, too.

What does the research say?

There has been a huge amount of research into the Five Ways to Wellbeing across many different countries. They were developed in 2008 based on a Government Office for Science report. They are:

- connect with other people
- be physically active
- keep learning
- give to others
- take notice/pay attention to the present moment.

How does this work in practice?

Listed here are some ideas for encouraging pupils to engage with the Five Ways to Wellbeing while learning at home.

Connect with other people. Encourage your pupils to take time to video or voice call with their friends, as well as doing learning activities. They could arrange a FaceTime or WhatsApp call with their friends or encourage parents to organise this for them. Social friendships are key for everyone's development and wellbeing. You can also build collaboration opportunities into learning activities, of course!

Be physically active. There are lots of activities pupils can do indoors, without needing much space. For example, Joe Wicks' 'PE with Joe' daily class at 9am is a live activity, and lots of other home workout activities can be found online, from circuits to Pilates.

Keep learning. Learning is a key part of wellbeing – as well as any specific learning activities you may be asking them to do, you could also encourage pupils to choose some learning of their own, such as a FutureLearn MOOC for older children, or learning a new language through Duolingo or other similar applications and websites.

Give to others. We are seeing amazing examples of this in many ways at the moment, but there are simple actions

we can encourage children to do too – from helping to make a meal at home, to volunteering to shop for neighbours who may need to isolate (assuming they are safe, well and able to do so). You could also ask your class to write a letter, story or draw a picture to send to a care home – this could be sent by email if post is not possible.

Take notice/pay attention to the present moment.

While being sensitive to the challenges many pupils are facing, think about how you can encourage them to focus on the present moment. This could be by asking them to note down three things they are grateful for before bed or at lunchtime.

Top tips

- Some of these ideas can be suggested to parents or pupils; others are tasks you could set for homework or send out students using email or your virtual learning environment.
- Consider setting one challenge a day – pupils will have a lot going on and we need to avoid overwhelming them, but helping them to focus on at least one of the Five Ways to Wellbeing is a good start.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Government Office for Science (2008) Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292450/mental-capital-wellbeing-report.pdf (Accessed 26 March 2020).
- New Economics Foundation (2008) Five Ways To Wellbeing. Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing> (Accessed 26 March 2020).
- What Works Wellbeing (2020) Five Ways To Wellbeing In The UK - What Works Wellbeing. Available at: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/five-ways-to-wellbeing-in-the-uk/> (Accessed 26 March 2020).