

Calming Techniques For SATS Week

This week is SATS week for all Year 6 Students so I thought it would be supportive to provide calming techniques for SATS week to support your little ones manage the days ahead.

The main aim during the week is to encourage and provide a calm energy whatever your child throws at you. The calm energy you emit will be absorbed by your child and assist their system in resetting.

Remember: **FACES**



Fun – after school focus on fun, allow your young one to play in the park, climb a tree, play tennis, sing, dance whatever is their thing. This allows the mind to reset and file the activities of the day without having to verbalise the activities of the day. They will talk when they are ready.

Affection – hugs without expectation are very powerful. Whatever happened in school your young one will find the safety and security of your affection re-centering, even if they think they are too old already!

Calm – your calmness rubs off. If your young one has struggled during the day and needs to verbally or physically let this out, your emotional calmness will support the reset quicker. Boundaries of behaviour are always key for yours and

your child's safety, the deep breath programme will support all around you. Try this exercise:

Find a quiet corner (anywhere, corner of the playground, park). Ask your child to look at you: both breath in completely bursting to the count of three through the nose...hold for a count of three...breath out completely for the count of three. Repeat 5 times, on the last one breath out the the move quick and fast.

Energy – energy comes from good nutrition. Help your child have great brain power through the week with well planned meals, including packed lunch, omit high sugar, too many carbohydrates and if possible include omega3 and 6 during meals that can be found in fish and seeds.

Sleep – ensure your child is sleeping well throughout the week with a clear calling bedtime routine, a warm sleep helping drink such as decaf tea, peppermint tea, warm milk, time with your full attention reading or telling a story, listening to them release their day if they choose. Remove blue-light (screens, TV etc) distraction if possible.

Before School:

Wake with time to have a solid breakfast, walk to school if possible, especially whilst the weather is so sunny, the movement wakes up the system and integrates the brain allowing calmness and rational to kick in for self-regulation. Provide unconditional support on leaving your child in the morning.

Remember your child is AMAZING, look what they have achieved so far in their lives whatever challenges they have faced, they are still pushing forward, learning every moment, let them know how amazing that makes them.

The Kids Will Be Alright – Won't They?

Today my guest blog is written by Sarah England a passionate advocate of children's voices in divorce and separation. Here she provides a useful insight into how we can think about children within the divorce process.



Sarah is passionate about supporting families through one of their most challenging times. Her view is that for the majority of separating families there is a better, less stressful and more cost effective way forward; that divorce is stressful enough and should not cost families their life savings. She is particularly passionate about co-mediation which is the preferred model of The Family Mediation Association and is rarely available outside her own service without an additional cost. Sarah is particularly passionate about child contact disputes being viewed through the eyes of the child and considering matters of child development and long term emotional well-being and not treating a child as an asset to be divided.

Sarah is the co-founder of Green Light Mediation which began in May 2012 and was a winner of Dacorum's Den in 2013. Green Light Mediation was invited by MP Simon Hughes to be involved in the task force considering the future of mediation within

the Family Law Reforms of 2014. The Business opened new premises in 2015.

The Kids Will Be Alright – Won't They?



Family breakdown is a tough place for all concerned. For the adults there is often much pain and grief with emotions running high, and that is before subjects such as whether the family home needs to be sold or pensions should be subject to a sharing order are even considered. This love you thought would be forever suddenly isn't. The kids will be alright – won't they?

Family for most, is the cornerstone of our emotional security. The breakdown can affect our self-confidence and even evoke feelings of worthlessness or depression. Is it surprising therefore that young people's emotional needs can get lost in the midst of this? They need security and parental support more than ever and their parents resources are running on empty at precisely the same time. Parents in "survival mode" may fight over assets and children can become another battle ground with one or both looking to "share" them out fairly; but they are not assets.

Children's reactions to family breakdown can vary for a myriad of reasons, not least their age and understanding. The good news is that research shows that divorce doesn't damage

children/young people – it is conflict.

What can we do to try and get it right at this time for our children and young people?

Empathy – Empathy for your young person's situation is key. If there is no physical or emotional harm involved children will usually want to have a relationship with both parents. Supporting that isn't always easy if the other parent is hurting you. A helpful tip to remember is that you do love your child more than you dislike the behaviour of your ex partner. When the going feels tough at least you can console yourself with being the bigger person. Additionally, the more loving and healthy family relationships your child has, the better for their self-esteem and confidence, and that is something we all wish for our children isn't it?

Author, psychologist, speaker and child of divorce Penelope Leach includes a number of direct quotes from children in her book about family breakdown. She kindly allows us to quote her work and they can really open our eyes.

Boy now aged 16

"I haven't seen my dad since I was 13. For the longest time – like years-I went on being thrilled when he turned up and believing his excuses when he didn't. My mum was really good about that. But then there was a birthday when he didn't even send a card, then another birthday, and then I sort of realised he'd gone. I wish I knew where he's gone because I really need to ask him what I did to make him just not care about me."

It breaks your heart doesn't it? Sadly, it happens and "loving it better" isn't easy with this kind of pain. It is a tough place to support. If the other parent isn't willing or able to prioritise a child who desperately needs their love and support it falls to you to be both. There may also be a time that your young person needs some additional support, some

parents offer NLP, mindfulness or therapy to their young person. Aiming to encourage other relationships within the family of the gender of the missing parent can help, alternatively a god parent or close family friend whom you believe will be there for life. Pick good confidence building role models!

The Practical Stuff...

Empathy also relates to practical arrangements. Sometimes both parents are desperately trying to be fair to each other with all the very best intentions when it comes to children's arrangements but they forget the young person:

Boy aged 10

" All school sports things are on Saturday and now I'm in year 5 I'm in the teams. Football now, cricket in the summer. When they said about going to my dad at weekends I did try to say about it but they didn't really take much notice. Dad said he'd drive me to school on Saturdays but we only did it once cause he said it was too far. I asked mum if I could just go to dad's on Saturday afternoon after the matches are over but she said that wouldn't be fair, as dad would only have me for one night. I think this way is unfair on me."

The above quote really sums up how, despite our attempts to get it right we can accidentally get it wrong for our children. The tip here is to hear what is important to them and support their hobbies and social times. These things keep life "normal" and help us avoid accidentally leaving our young people feeling powerless or frustrated.

Teenagers, to an even greater extent need the freedom to develop their own identities and socialise with their peers. Growing up can feel complicated enough without a challenging family situation. We all remember our intense, self-conscious teenage years so our tip is try not to make it feel any harder to fit in whether its making sure they can go to their best friends' party, play football with the team or keep up at

school.

It can be difficult for parents to remember that their young people's weekends will be about more than just family time. Approval from peers is often an overriding aim at this point. However, teens need a secure and loving sense of family demonstrating a good moral compass and lots of unconditional love.

Fun times with their family members and extended family also build on that experience. The behaviour modelled is likely to be mirrored back, whether that is a generous spirit, kindness, selfishness, or a lack of consideration. The teenage version tends to be amplified though.

As parents we will never be perfect, whatever our relationship status but unconditional love, fair and consistent boundaries and empathy with a few practical tips can get our young people and ourselves through. Did you know that the victor in the recent Bear Grylls celebrity challenge was from a single parent background. She had more tenacity, resourcefulness and inner strength than all the rest. Your young person can do better than survive he or she can thrive.

If you are struggling with child contact or co-parenting www.greenlightmediation.co.uk offer family mediation/parenting plan work and will be producing their first parenting to protect from divorce course so please email to express an interest info@greenlightmediation.co.uk

Additionally, if your young person is struggling there is lots of great support out there including www.thetherapyplace.co.uk

Please call Green Light Mediation on 01442 500059 for more details.

Mental Health Support – Choosing the right fit for my child?

Part 1 – What Is the Difference in the Professions?

I am very privileged to do the work I do and I come into contact with such courageous and inspiring individuals and their families within the child mental health support sector. One of the key questions that arises during initial parent consultations is 'how do I know what is the right type of support for my child? I do not know who does what and how this will affect my child.' So I thought that today I would provide an overview of the support currently available and in part two which will follow later this week, I will discuss how to choose the right support for your child.

Many of us do not even think about mental health unless it directly impacts our lives in some way and when we have a child that is struggling knowing where to look for support can be daunting and clear guidelines are often hard to find.

There are a range of different types of professionals that can support your child depending on their age and the concerns they have. Each profession have specialists in different areas, providing a simple overview sometimes is a great place to start so below are my umbrella definitions and how I explain the different professions to my potential clients:

- *a **therapist** explores your past experiences and how this affects your thoughts, emotions and reactions today*
- *a **counsellor** listens to your anxieties about your*

experiences

- a **mentor** shares their own experiences hoping you will take something from this
- a **coach** asks you open questions to let you discover how to manage your experiences by yourself

It is important to add that when we are talking about the mental health of our young people finding registered professionals is a high priority and each profession has a regularity body and code of conduct which I have linked to next, which helps maintain an understanding and collaboration to ensure the health and safeguarding of our young.



Links to the most renowned associations:

[British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy](#)

[UK Council for Psychotherapy](#)

[National Counselling Society](#)

[Mentoring and Befriending Foundation](#)

[Association for Coaching](#)

[BACP for Coaching](#)

[Association for Child Psychotherapists](#)

The challenge parents currently have is that within the therapeutic world there are a range of disciplines from talking therapies to internal work therapies, creative therapies, analytical therapies amongst others. I will discuss in Part 2 the fundamentals of the different approaches.

What is being found through research and development within the industry is that all of the above professions play key roles in supporting individuals and families and it is becoming more commonplace to have one individual who can support in a multi-discipline way so that a family unit can have a more secure support structure. Because of this some professionals choose not to affiliate with an association, this does not necessarily mean they are not professional or not able to support your family unit in a professional way.

This is where I recommend looking deeper into an individual's experience, testimonials, credentials and affiliations with like-minded professionals, I know this sounds like a lot of work, however, it pays off to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your child. Call them and they will be happy to provide you with any background information you require and many will provide a free telephone consultation and a face to face guardian consultation before meeting a child if you wish.

In Part 2 I will advise on the process of getting support and how to choose the right approach for your child.

Top 10 Anxiety Reducing Tips

for Tweens

When anxiety hits it can be so sudden and everything goes blank. Individuals respond in different ways, some struggle to move, some struggle to verbally communicate, some get so overloaded they explode or implode. Mix this with the development going on at this age and our young person can become confused, embarrassed on top of being anxious. Below are the top 10 anxiety reducing tips for tweens to enable individuals to move forward.

1. Stop Talking

When our system is under pressure excess stimulation fills an already filled space more extending the recovery time. Allow the individual verbal space and possibly a quiet area to go and be.

2. Touch

Touch can be very comforting, even if it is holding the hand or shoulder. The touch is a connection to your calm energy.

3. Breath

When we are highly anxious our system can forget to breath and this leads to shallow breathing. The system needs deeper breathing to provide new oxygen to allow thought to be moving. Old fashioned remedy of 'paper bag' may sound silly nowadays, however it is successful at controlling the breathing and providing focus, the same can be achieved by blowing into a loose fist.

4. Be Present

Get the individual to draw or write or talk about what is happening 'right now'. Keeping the young person in the present stops the mind from wondering to an uncomfortable and often irrational thought.



5. Question

Get your young person to question their mind. ' I cannot go to the party because nobody likes me!' Question: 'Is that really true?, I know I played with 'J' yesterday and they are going to the party'

Help your young person to trick their mind out of the negative thought through questioning.

6. Move

Get up/out of the current location and find an activity, be this craft sport, agility, dog walking anything that removes them from the current location. Movement stimulates the brain hemispheres to integrate and start talking to each other allowing balance to re-enter the system.

7. Laugh

Laughter lifts the endorphin hormone levels. It leaves the system on a natural high and this allows new thought patterns to enter the system.

8. Speak to the Feelings

Get the young person to name the feelings and speak to them as though they were just energy, nothing else. Ask them to pick each feeling and ask it where it wants to go? What is stopping it?" If child is stuck ask them to guess. Ask the child to follow the energy to where it wants to go and then release it.

9. STOP the Thoughts.

Tricking our mind is a key ingredient to changing thought patterns. Our thoughts are often automatic and we sometimes have to be very fine and controlling to engage the mind to listen. Try closing the eyes. Visualize a STOP sign big and bold. When that appears say STOP out loud with full belief. When you fully believe the word you said. Turn to focus on your breathing fully, breath in for the count of three and breath out for the count of three. Do this 5 times and then go and get a drink and change activity.

10. Be Patient

Anxiety can reoccur at any time. Each episode is completely separate from the last and if treated this way will never become a bigger concern. Make sure once the system is reset, get on with your joyful activity and focus on that. If another concern comes in, choose a tip to try, something different may help this time as this is a completely different episode.

Realization...How It Hurts



Over the past six weeks I have been really sick... not that I tell you this for sympathy, well maybe a little, but as a reason for you to stop and look at yourself. I started with a terrible ongoing headache which was singularly located and progressed to complete tiredness in all areas, lack of appetite and no ability to focus or concentrate, yes we were worried there for a time and I am still going through tests, just to be sure, however during this period of

time I have been forced to STOP. I have been forced to QUESTION and I have been forced to give myself some ANSWERS, and the realization...How It Hurts.

Firstly, am I being the best person I can be for myself?

Am I giving my family all I can give them?

Am I giving my clients the best possible service?

The answers to all of these questions was NO...this realization was upsetting and hurt.

I was not being the best person to myself because I was over-working which I had promised myself many years ago never to visit again, so questioning what draws me to this over-work need? I can hear you all screaming at me... fear, failure, not good enough.... mmmmm

Second because of this over-working what was I not doing? Spending quality time with my family, 'I just need to...', 'I have a presentation in the morning...' you name it, so many reasons to be in the office and not with my family, where is the balance I promised myself?

Thirdly, my clients. How can I possibly be giving my clients the best parts of me when I am still in the room with the visitor before or thinking about the next visitor, not making enough time to think about each of their personal needs so I can best support them during their time with me.

All of these realisations are painful, hurt my head more and have been slow to materialise as has the energy to make a transition.

This time has allowed me to also see a number of things.... How wonderfully lucky I am to have such an awesome vocation as helping young people, as I passionately love what I do and know I am on the right path finally after many years. How awesomely lucky I am to have the family I have that fully

understand the work I do, how taxing it can be and how fabulous my visitors feel when they have left me so they are behind me 100% when I am studying, when I am working and when I run away and hide whilst walking my lovely dogs! And how amazing my clients are who supported me all the way with concern and worry when I had to stop everything without huge explanations except, I am sick and need to rest. They were all there to support and enquire how I was which boosted my confidence and steadfastly helped me on the road to recovery and get back to further support them.

I am so grateful for this time, although being unwell is not pleasant, I have seen a side of myself that I was concealing and trying hard not to look at, thinking I can support and understand and help without being true to myself. This is not genuine and not whole.

It has opened my eyes to my fears and shown me what I am, how I move forward from here will be with my eyes open and questioning, it is a little scary and is never full-proof which life is not; being open to my fears, difficulties and challenges shows all I come into contact with that I am human, that's all any of us can ask for.

**Self Harm Awareness. Am I
self harming if I**



I am sitting at my desk this afternoon and have been reading about self harm awareness day, which is today, so I thought it would be open to talk about experiences with self harm and observations within the workplace.

10% of young adolescents will self harm. This may sound low but when we think about it that is 2 people in each classroom that have or are self harming. Our individual relationships with mental health are very personal and our ways of expressing worry, concern, anxiousness is also very personal. We may be surprised to know that self-harm forms many faces and the feelings and emotions that are connected to each incident are different, every time.

The definition of self harm is:

Any behaviour that that causes harm or injury to someone as a way to deal with difficult emotions can be seen as self harm.

I have come across young people who goad, push, threaten, to receive the same in return, would we classed this as self-harm? I have come across young people who eat without stop buttons or restrict food is this self-harm? How about ongoing negative thoughts or self-talk? How about the more common, releasing through cutting?, what about biting the skin around the nails excessively? All of these can come under the spectrum of self-harm and all need acknowledgement and ongoing support. When faced with turmoil inside it can be so hard to clear a path for something to change as our mind and bodies become consumed with the turmoil. Opportunities for change seem very far away, unreachable, untouchable.

Self harm is not an attention seeking exercise nor is it a suicide attempt, it is a cry for help and a clear sign of internal turmoil.

Whenever I walk into a session whether this be an educational,

private or voluntary I have no idea the mindset of my young ward on that day and at that moment. Some days I am privileged to be entrusted with a personal struggle or worry and on other days, the doors are shut and non-verbal approaches are our friend, listening, watching, emotionally being completely present. I question myself daily about the right approaches for support, sometimes, I go home and have to release the emotion just as my wards do and I have healthy and non-healthy ways of doing that. I acknowledge these personal challenges and continuously work on them as I have to remember, I was a young person once too and our child grows up with us, is part of us and wants to be acknowledged, supported, assisted and nurtured just as it did when it was younger. I remember this every time I come across a young person or adult who is struggling and openly listen and be present for their needs at that time.

The mental health foundation has provided a useful download for [Self Harm Awareness Day](#) a useful tool to have I believe.

photo credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42621850@N00/4929766695> "WORRY" (I told my good friend, one day, that I was fearful and worried. I had just been laid off and money was the issue or so I thought. She told me to "Paint 'worry' and see what she has to tell you" and so I did and she "TOLD ME" plenty! via <http://photopin.com> <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/> (license)

What Parents Say



Clients ask what we do and how our approaches work. Please find below some messages from parents who have been through the support process.

Finding all round support for a child with problems is very hard as we found out. I would highly recommend Jacqueline to any other parents, who like us, were at the end of their tether trying to find support for their child. We can't thank Jacqueline enough for the help and support she gave to our son. She has supported him for nearly a year through a very difficult period. He was dealing with a lot of issues including bereavement and medical problems. Jacqueline took a fun and creative approach to each issue which really helped him. He said he loved going to see her as she helped and it was fun. She also has some fantastic approaches to dealing with long term problems such as helpful CD's which can be used at home in conjunction with the support she provides at each session. Jacqueline has also taught 'D' a lot of life skills which I know he can use to help him in the future.

Jacqueline has been supporting my daughter for a while now and is amazing. She has been the only person who has been able to get her to verbalise her feelings and to be able to help me help her

Jacqueline has been brilliant at helping to support our child (and us parents!) through some tricky (and changing) behavioural issues we've had. Many of her approaches are fun and engaging and she explains the theory behind the practical really well so that you know why you're doing what you're doing. Her follow-up help has also been fantastic with suggestions for longer-term projects to continue the support and practice for during school holidays.

I would totally recommend Jacqueline to anyone considering support in this way (and have done so already).

I hired Jacqueline Dennaforde in 2014 to assist my eldest son, who was struggling with anxiety, worry and enuresis.

Following a thorough assessment Jacqueline set out a programme of support to include developmental reflex exercises and Emotional, Social and Communication Development sessions to support my son in change.

My son had his 10 week review in late January. Prior to his review Jacqueline sent us a detailed questionnaire about changes that we had noticed since his sessions had started. It was startlingly to myself and my husband as we began to think about areas in which we had noticed changes, and the speed in which these changes had occurred. Within the 10 week period my son diligently worked on the primitive reflex exercises that Jacqueline had outlined for him as well as worked with Jacqueline in weekly sessions. By the time he had his 10 week review he had become more comfortable within his own skin and appeared more relaxed in his behavior around the home. Prior to the sessions he always seemed anxious, and he admitted that he hated being alone in any rooms in the house, he also found enclosed spaces like cars or lifts distressing and would become very anxious with physical symptoms if he had to travel in a lift. Recently when we

travelled in a lift together he appeared very relaxed, when I asked him about going in the lift later on that day he said that he had used some of the visualization techniques that Jacqueline had taught him. My son previously found it difficult to initiate play in the playground at school. This was upsetting for him as he always felt that he was on the fringes at playtime and struggled to join in. There has been an improvement with this and he is a lot happier at playtime. His sense of humour has really developed too and he now really enjoys having a giggle and a laugh, where previously he was unable to understand when and where it was okay to relax and have fun and therefore approached every situation with anxiety and seriousness.

I can highly recommend Jacqueline for individual intervention therapeutic support. My son has made many positive life long changes with Jacqueline's support. She has a calm and nurturing manner and a welcoming space in which she works. My son always looked forward to visiting Jacqueline for his sessions and felt very comfortable in her company.

Start The Conversation

Adolescent Depression – Start The Conversation

Reading this morning an article by [Bekah Miles](#) who recently opened up about living with depression, my heart went out to her as she clearly expressed the struggles she has with talking about depression not only with living with the

constant pressure it places on her life. When working with young people who struggle with mental pressure it is easy to forget that as a society we still do not discuss mental illness openly with the words; 'embarrassed', 'humiliated', 'worried', 'guilty', 'different' often entering my ears. I wonder how many young people would raise their hands if asked 'is life a struggle?'



When we break down depression into the daily struggles of the individual we can start to clearly see how it individually affects every aspect of life from getting up/not getting up to going through the whole wardrobe just to look right, eating/not eating, achieving/not achieving, going out/not going out, crying for no particular reason/shouting for no particular reason, the list can go on.

Some individuals are able to forge a life around depression, some with outside help and some by themselves, this does not mean everything fine, it means that on that day the individual is managing. Helping individuals communicate this part of their lives without fear of judgement and finding other individuals who understand what they are going through is a huge part of the change process. The only way to find other people with this experience is to 'start talking about it'. So I take my hat off to Bekah for talking about who she is to the outside world and I thank her for her courage and bravery and hope this is the beginning of a long a fruitful journey of

discovery for her.

You can find Bekah's article below:

(Dear mom and dad, please don't kill me over this permanent choice. I want you to hear me out.)

Today, I am coming out with something that only few of you know. I am ready to have a conversation about my mental illness.

Last year, I was diagnosed with depression. And in all honesty, I believe it was a problem for quite a while before that, but I think it just got worse to the point of hardly functioning.

So today, I got this tattoo. I feel that my leg was the best place for the meaning behind it. When everyone else sees it, they see "I'm fine," but from my viewpoint, it reads "save me." To me, it means that others see this person that seems okay, but, in reality, is not okay at all. It reminds me that people who may appear happy, may be at battle with themselves.

To me, depression is the days that I feel sad for no reason. Depression is the mornings that I don't feel capable of getting out of bed.

Depression is the sleeping too much, or sleeping too little.

Depression is the homework that I never completed, simply because I didn't feel like I was capable.

Depression is the break downs I have over absolutely nothing.

Depression is the eating too much, or eating too little.

Depression is the nights I begin to cry because I feel so overwhelmed, even though everything is going right.

Depression is the 50 pounds I carry in my chest at all times.

Depression is the need to constantly be distracted (being on social media, playing video games, watching movies or shows, or working all the time) because I can't trust myself with my thoughts for longer than 3 minutes.

Depression is the friendships that have suffered because of my

inability to function.

Depression is the hurtful thoughts and actions I have towards myself.

Depression is the tears I have because I don't know why I feel so worthless, when I know I should feel happy.

This is one of the most difficult things to open up about because it's extremely hard for me to feel vulnerable...but this needs to be talked about. Mental illness is serious, but so shamed in our society. We care so much for our physical health, but hardly a thing about our mental state. And that is seriously messed up. Mental illness is not a choice and will likely hit everyone at some point in their life. If it's such a huge issue, why aren't we having this conversation about it?

That's why I got this tattoo; they are great conversation starters. This forces me to talk about my own struggle, and why the awareness of it is important. You'd be surprised by how many people YOU know that struggle with depression, anxiety, or other mental illness. I may only be one person, but one can save another...and that's all I could really ask for.

Maybe this is part of why I am so interested in psychology. I want to help people who feel the way I have—and still do—because it's hell. And I don't wish that upon anyone.

“I think the saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it's like to feel absolutely worthless and they don't want anyone else to feel like that.”

—Robin Williams

Also, THANK YOU to the ones who have helped me in this battle. I would not be where I am without you.