

FIVE WAYS FOR FIVE DAYS FOR WELLBEING

Issue 8: July 2020



With the hope of warm weather ahead, this month's issues explores some great ideas to get outside. For those colder days, read the 'Keep Learning' section to build connection through reading...

Get out and about this Summer...

There are some great ideas to do things locally. If you do choose to go out and about, please stay safe!

Our thanks to Specialist Leader for Wellbeing, Faiy Rushton, for this month's articles.

Take Notice...

Being present with our children can be one of the easiest ways to help everyone in a family unit feel heard, understood and valued, which in the changing times we are living in is more important than ever.

Drawing on your own presence in your relationship with your children may seem entirely impossible when you are in the grittiness of everyday life. When there are 101 things being asked of you and you are being pushed to your limits, it may not seem like an easy option to be present with them. Ironically, it is these gritty moments of parenting that are precisely the time when tapping into your own sense of presence may offer you and your child another option for how you are relating to each other.

Presence is the capacity to be present with yourself and with whomever you are relating to. Being present means that you are available to what is going on in that moment, without being distracted by thoughts about the past or the future or even with what you want to be happening in that moment, rather than what actually is.

It is when you can turn down the mental noise and in spite of whatever emotion is grabbing your attention, you can pause enough so you can first connect with yourself, and then with whomever you are relating to so that they experience you as really seeing them and listening to them.

The science of presence shows us that when we pause, connect with ourselves and whomever we are relating to, our brain biology and physiology works in such a way that we feel more grounded and the person we are relating to also begins to feel more grounded and connected and this reciprocal feedback loop continues to regulate both people. It literally can be the gift that keeps on giving.

Being present, or 'showing up' for our children in any moment is singularly one of the most important gifts that we can offer in our relationships with our children. As the American psychiatrist, Dr Dan Siegel says 'Parenting isn't easy, but showing up is. Your greatest impact begins right where you are'.

How we can we be more present with our children?

Pause to connect with your body - Try to anchor your pause by paying attention to something in your body: your breath, feeling your feet connect to the floor. Find what physical anchor works for you. This helps to literally embody our intention to stop: when we connect to our bodies, we feel more grounded. Even just for a split second, because often that's all it takes.

Remembering the Choice Point: Conflict or Connection? - We always have choice points in our interactions with others. If we pause we can choose to either continue as we are going, or open up to another path — one that creates connection rather than conflict.

Presence recognises presence - When you are looking to connect with your child, but you are finding it hard to 'see' and 'hear' them through high emotion, it can be helpful to remember that whatever sense of calm you are connecting to within yourself is also present in your child. It may be almost unrecognisable at that moment, but it is there.

Communication soothes - Using language to name children's experiences helps the brain to harmonise more, leading to more regulation ('to name it is to tame it'). Also, we can soothe in the way we communicate through tone of voice, facial expressions, how we use our eyes and body position.

Practise, practise, practise - Whether it is hiking up a mountain, listening to music, reading, or simply sitting and watching a robin hop from branch to branch on a tree, the more we practise quietening our minds and falling into a flow state, the more likely that we are to be simply present, with ourselves, with others, with each moment. And you may find that it becomes easier to show up for your children in those really testing moments — when they most need your presence and calm approach.



Click on the links below for ideas to get out and about

<https://www.meetup.com/cities/gb/northamptonshire/hobbies-crafts/>

<https://www.experiencebedfordshire.co.uk/things-to-do>

FIVE WAYS FOR FIVE DAYS FOR WELLBEING



You might want to keep learning to achieve but you might also just want to keep learning for its own sake

Stay Active...

Outdoor fitness classes are a great alternative to exercising at home alone or, as we are still unable to go the gym or attend indoor exercise classes as part of lockdown restrictions, a good way of exercising with guidance from a teacher and with other people. More and more teachers who have been offering Zoom teaching are now, as the weather gets better and we are able to be outside at a distance, taking their classes outside.

Aerobics and dance - Many of these classes will be the sort of outdoor fitness we will all be familiar with: aerobics style group workouts. These are good for a number of reasons and can be by far the best option for fitness beginners as you will perform routines of exercise which work your cardiovascular (CV) system and will help you gain flexibility. They can also be fairly advanced and sometimes make use of outdoor apparatus like stairs to allow for strenuous strength building exercises such as lunges. They may also include fun dance elements to get the heart pumping.

Circuit training - A very useful advantage of taking your workout into the open air is that, with more space, the classes can incorporate a lot of things that would be impossible in a gym. A lot of classes are circuit-style interval training where participants do sprints or even set up mini assault courses to train on. This provides a great CV workout and focuses on agility which is hard to achieve in the confines of a gym. More intense ones may include dragging or moving weights, making for a great all body workout.

Boot camp - More and more outdoor fitness sessions are moving to highly intense "boot camp" style workouts. These army inspired classes offer participants the chance to get fighting fit and consist of unforgiving, short but extremely high impact programmes which use traditional stretches and exercises like push-ups, jumping jacks and lunges to heavily work your body. Offering an old-school form of workout, with little use of expensive equipment, they provide a full body workout, combining CV exercises with strength and core building movements. Boot camp workouts effectively amount to interval training as you work frenetically, take a short break before resuming and often ramp up and drop the intensity at various stages.

Yoga and Pilates classes – there is nothing like stretching and breathing in the outdoors and both of these classes offer a gentler approach to strengthening muscles and improving fitness.

With such variety among the classes you need to make sure that you do your research so that you get a class that is right for you and suits your fitness needs.

We would recommend either going online or enquiring at your local gym (who will often be responsible for running the classes) and enquiring about the sessions. There really are loads to choose from so you shouldn't be stuck for inspiration. Alternatively, contact your regular teacher if you normally attend an indoor class to see if they are offering outdoor options.

Outdoor fitness classes – quick pros and cons

Pros

- * More sociable than being on your own at home
- * Led by teachers so more direction
- * Outdoor environment means more space to train in fun ways
- * Out in the sun and fresh air

Cons

- * Time restricted, you can't really do them in the dark and training in the midday sun is not advisable
- * May be pricey
- * Weather can be unkind!



Outdoor summer games ideas for children (socially distanced)

Do as I say - Simon Says is an oldie but a 'goodie' that makes a great outdoor game. Position the children at least 1m apart, and get an adult or older child to play 'Simon'. The rules are simple - the leader tells the players to do something, clap their hands, or touch their toes for instance. If they say 'Simon says touch your toes', the players carry out the instruction. If the leader doesn't say 'Simon' says, and simply states, 'touch your toes' they must stay still. Anyone who doesn't is out of the game.

Give us a clue - This is a nice game to play if the weather is warm and you want everyone to chill out for a while. One person has to act out a book, film, song, TV show or play that they have chosen, and everyone else has to guess the title. Remember, you draw a square in the air for TV, wind an old-fashioned camera for film, mime curtains opening for play, mime opening a book or pretend to sing for a song. Hold up fingers to show how many words, show the number of fingers resting on your arm for syllables. The person who guesses correctly takes the next go at miming.

Quick on the draw - If you have never played Rock, Paper, Scissors with a few seven-year-old boys you have never discovered just how competitive this game can get. Hold your hand out flat for paper, a fist for rock and two-fingers for scissors. Scissors beats paper, rock beats scissors, paper beats rock. Hold a tournament; best of three, and then the winners go into the final. Dig out some sweets or chocolates as a prize.

I'll race you! - Make sure that you have plenty of space or divide the children into sets of two if you have a smaller space. This will ensure they are running the races 1m apart. Mark out the lane with skipping ropes, twigs, or whatever, to make it clear. If you want something more interesting than just running races (especially if you have one child who is really fast and wins everything!) elect a 'coach' who will shout out different instructions throughout the race - such as hop, jump, walk backwards etc. If the children are on bikes, see if they can win a slow bicycle race. The aim is to cycle as slowly as possible without falling off - the last one over the finish line wins!

The beautiful game - Football games can be very safe, as long as the children only touch the ball with their feet. They can set up some passing games, keeping 1m apart. Then make it more challenging by adding in some keepie-uppies before passing the ball back - i.e. the ball doesn't touch the ground).

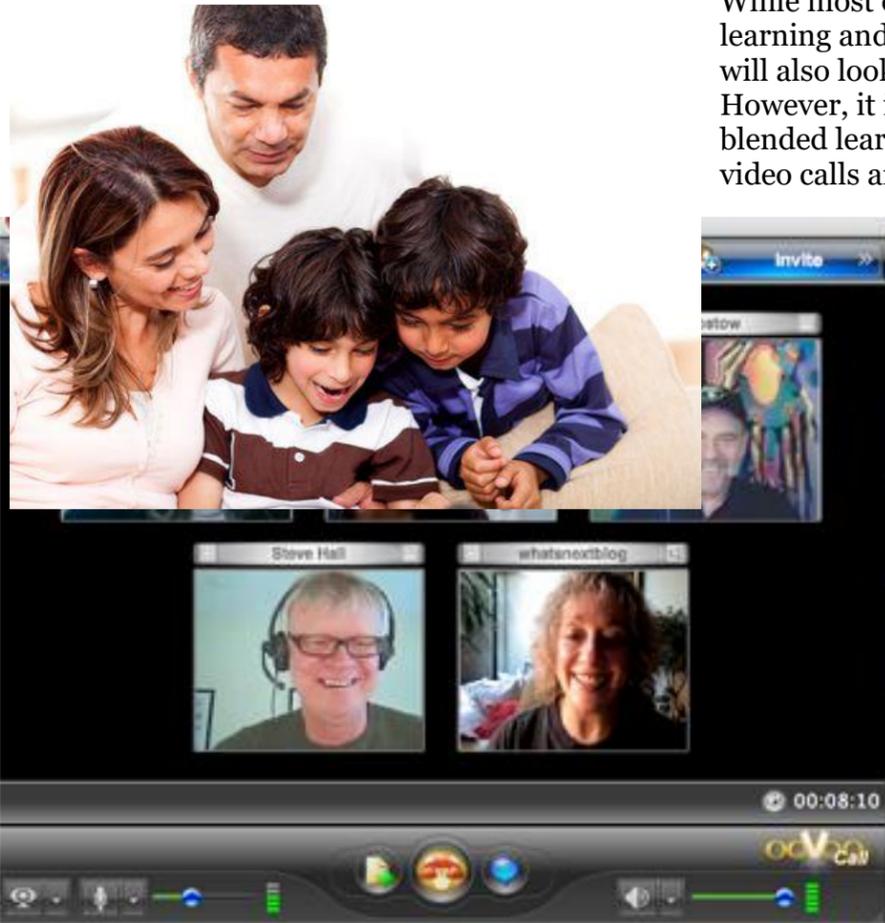
Freeze punk! - Usually played at parties, musical statues is easily adapted for outdoors. Just use a phone to play some music; make sure you're not close enough to annoy anyone else enjoying the fresh air. Each player must stand at least 1m apart where the 'judge' can see them. Choose an adult or older child or teen to take on this role. As the music plays they must dance - get them to dance on the spot for added safety. Award points for the craziest and most creative dances. When the music stops, everyone must freeze. If the 'judge' sees a player move after the music stops, that player is out of the game.

It's a draw - Give each child some chalk and let them have some fun drawing on the path or pavement (away from others of course). Older children could chalk a hopscotch or sensory path that everyone could have a go at. A sensory path is a course that has, for instance, a curly line to follow and circles to hop on. You can write instructions next to each part, to make sure everyone knows what they have to do.

Bowls night - If you have some skittles, fabulous, if not, make some by half-filling some large water bottles with water. Instead of rolling balls, which would mean handling them, the children can kick a ball to knock over the 'skittles'. Nominate an adult or older child to reset the bottles to avoid lots of people handling them.

All aboard! - Pirate Ships is a great game beloved of Beavers and Brownies. Ordinarily, if you are indoors, you would assign a wall to North, South, East and West, but as this will encourage kids to get too close we'll leave that out. Choose a captain to shout out instructions, and then space the children at 1m distances. Instructions include: Scrub the Decks – get on your knees and pretend to scrub the floor; Climb the Rigging – pretend to climb the ropes; Captain's Crook – pretend to be sick; Captain Aboard – salute and shout "Aye Aye Captain"; and Peg Leg Jim – hop on one leg.

Connect...



While most of us have been grateful that we have been able to carry on with learning and working through Zoom or Teams or other video platforms, many of us will also look forward to having more 'in person' contact as the lockdown eases. However, it is likely that for the next year or so we may have episodes where blended learning and working will be the norm... so how can we cope better with video calls and alleviate Zoom fatigue?

Experts suggest limiting video calls to those that are necessary. Turning on the camera should be optional and in general there should be more understanding that cameras do not always have to be on throughout each meeting. Perhaps opting to hide self-view. Having your screen off to the side, instead of straight ahead, could also help your concentration, particularly in group meetings. It makes you feel like you're in an adjoining room, so may be less tiring.

In some cases it's worth considering if video chats are really the most efficient option. When it comes to work, it is suggested that shared files with clear notes can be a better option that avoids information overload and taking time during meetings to catch up before diving into business, spend some time to actually check into people's wellbeing. It's a way to reconnect us with our humanity.

Building transition periods in between video meetings can also help to refresh us – try stretching, having a drink or doing a bit of exercise, experts say. Boundaries and transitions are important; we need to create buffers which allow us to put one identity aside and then go to another as we move between work/school and private personas.

Keep Learning...

Reading used to be a social activity, not something that we did silently to ourselves. For thousands of years, we have shared the news of the day around a crowded dinner table and stories were told aloud after tea and chores. Perhaps now is a good time to revive the art of reading aloud, not just for the youngest members of the family but for everyone.

You are more likely to remember something if you read it out loud, a study from the University of Waterloo has found. The study found that speaking text aloud helps to get words into long-term memory. Dubbed the "production effect," the study determined that it is the dual action of speaking and hearing oneself that has the most beneficial impact on memory.

Interestingly, perhaps because of the vast span of historical time when reading also meant experiencing sound, even when we are reading silently to ourselves it turns out that we're still "hearing." When we are settled into our favourite book, auditory processing areas light up in our brains.

While there is evidence that reading aloud improves comprehension and memory, it is simply a wonderful opportunity to share a love of reading with friends and family.

How Reading Aloud Can Improve Connection and Learning Together

1. Start small

Books of short fiction, poetry, and essays are great for reading aloud. You might start with a two-person reading practice, one-on-one with a partner. Depending on the person, it could be a lovely nighttime wind-down ritual. Take turns reading, so that you can spend time with the experience of being read to as well as the way that reading the words out loud makes you feel and see images differently.

2. Encourage others

In our modern book clubs, we all commit to reading the same book together—yet we do the reading part alone. If you're already part of a book club, you might suggest reading the first few chapters of the next book together, even if you meet virtually. Encourage people to take notes about their favorite passages or ideas as someone reads, or to close their eyes and simply take it in. When the chapter is over, if you've found a particularly beautiful or insightful line, have someone repeat it.

3. Share enjoyable pieces of writing with the family

There is no better way to share the enjoyment of what you have read than in reading it out loud to the family. Encourage the younger members of the family to do the same.

4. Read aloud alone

Reading aloud can also be a way to spend some quality time alone connecting with the voice and mind of a favourite author, rather than scrolling through social media feeds. Pick a favourite book, a favourite speech, monologue, lesson, essay, or poem. Can you feel the voice of the author or character as you read aloud? Does it help you connect to them in a different way?

5. Reading to children

This might be the most common way many of us will read out loud today; it connects us with our children and provides shared reading every day. If possible, prolong this for as long as possible into your child's life.



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Give...

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” ~Winston Churchill

There is a huge benefit to being involved in community service and involving young people in community service. For those children and young people, as they move into adulthood community service will come naturally. There are many benefits that come from giving of yourself. Anyone can volunteer. It can be very rewarding and is a great way to:

- meet new people
- gain new or use existing skills
- get experience
- make a big difference to your community

There are lots of easy ways to give your time to help others – from having a cup of tea with an elderly neighbour, to helping out in your local area or making a regular commitment to volunteer with a charity or community group. Among other things, if you get involved in clubs, teams, and community service activities, you will have the opportunity to meet and interact with people who you would otherwise not get to know.

You can also use volunteering time to spend more time with your family and friends if you arrange to volunteer together.

Volunteering is proven to be good for your health and your happiness. Studies have shown that people who volunteer live longer.

Volunteering is also a great tool in the fight against depression because it's easier to temporarily forget about your own problems when you shift your focus to helping others.

Following your passion is key but do not do too much, too fast. It is easy to get 'caught up' and soon find yourself in over your head in terms of the type of work you are doing or the time commitment. If you volunteer for too many things, or give too much time - too soon, the endeavor will have backfired for you and for the organisations that you are helping.



Those organisations are always looking for help and it's up to you to tell them where you need to draw the line. Remember: you can always add more time as you get used to making time for these activities in your schedule.

Making a commitment may be the best way to make volunteering a part of your busy schedule. Otherwise, you're likely to say, "I would love to, but I'm too busy."

It's easier than ever to find ways to be of service to others.

- If you are a member of a church, synagogue, or other religious organization, ask there.
- Ask your friends what they do.

There are several organisations that can help you find a way to volunteer that suits you.

Do-it.org is a database of UK volunteering opportunities. You can search more than a million volunteering opportunities by interest, activity or location and then apply online.

You can also contact Volunteering England or Volunteering Matters to find opportunities in your area.

Join-in runs volunteering projects as a legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Contact them to find out about how to get involved with local sporting and community projects.

Why not volunteer as a family? It could prove a fun activity for everyone.

It is always worth asking a charity you are interested in if they offer opportunities for whole families to get involved, many do. There are several organisations that regularly offer family friendly volunteering activities, events and holidays.

Alternatively, send the children volunteering while you put your feet up - they can have fun, and also learn new skills.

You could be more than a taxi driver and volunteer where your children are 'hanging out' anyway, such as a sports or youth club, or you could get involved with volunteering at your child's school.

If you are interested in general volunteering with children there are a number of organisations across the UK with lots of opportunities.

Family friendly

The Conservation Volunteers (www.tcv.org.uk)

The National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

The RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk)

Volunteering for children 14+

Vinspired (vinspired.com)

Volunteering alongside your children

Girl Guiding (www.girlguiding.org.uk)

Join In (www.joininuk.org)

The Scouts (scouts.org.uk)

Young people

Young people can also volunteer either at school or in their own time. If you're aged 16 or 17 you can take part in the [National Citizen Service \(NCS\)](http://National Citizen Service (NCS))