

HEAD STRONG

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A YOUTH LEADER WELLBEING

What even is wellbeing?

So what exactly is wellbeing and why do we need to know about it as youth leaders? It's a term that's bandied about all over the place these days from adverts for deodorants and relaxing bath products, through to breathing apps and relaxation colouring books BUT wellbeing is much more than just being happy and the ability to chill out after a tough day.

For ourselves and the young people we support, our wellbeing helps us cope with how we manage life from day to day, especially how we navigate and bounce back from the challenges that come along. Wellbeing also has a huge impact on how we not only view ourselves (impacting our self-esteem), but also how we see others and the world around us.

When a young person develops a positive and robust level of wellbeing, they have the ability to express and communicate emotions rather than bury them, connect with others and build friendships, feel empathy, manage stressful events and better deal with the challenges of adolescence and the transition to adulthood. They can also bounce back from adversity quicker and learn from their experiences. So wellbeing is something as youth leaders we need to promote and help grow in the young people we see week to week.



Things that can negatively impact our wellbeing:

- Stress
- Difficult relationships
- Conflict at home
- No secure attachment growing up
- Pressure at school
- Bullying
- Trauma
- Our physical health- long term illness/mental health issues
- Loneliness and isolation
- Financial difficulties

HEAD STRONG

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A YOUTH LEADER WELLBEING

What does poor wellbeing look like and when should we be concerned?

- Withdrawal from social settings and friendships
- Inability to cope with everyday stress and challenge
- Excessive fears or worries
- Alcohol or drug dependence
- Inability to empathise with or understand others
- Extreme mood changes
- Constant low mood



Ways to build wellbeing

Building emotional literacy:

Helping young people talk about their emotions as part of everyday life is a key skill in helping them not only recognise the emotions they are feeling but also express them and have techniques in place to release them if need be. There's lots of great resources out there that you can use but check out the Youthscape dice or Talking about Emotions playing cards as a start.

Getting enough sleep:

Sleep is so important for us in maintaining wellbeing, putting things in place to help improve our sleep can be key to establishing a good sleep routine and getting the amount of rest we need to. So, things like getting into a good pattern of when you go to bed, making sure you wind down properly in the hours leading up to bedtime and switching off screens an hour or to before we head to bed can all help.

Relaxing and releasing stress

Having a 'tool box' of ideas and methods young people can use to unwind and relax when they are feeling stressed can be essential in preventing them feel overwhelmed at times of pressure such as exams. Everything from playlists to relaxation techniques, exercise to painting- what works for one person wont work for all so helping them identify what helps them is key.

Exercise and diet

Activity is so good for our bodies and it has a knock on effect on our wellbeing and mental health. Exercising releases chemicals that make us feel good about ourselves, build self-esteem and it can also help us sleep better. Also reducing caffeine levels and swapping sugary drinks for water can make us feel less anxious, better hydrated and help us sleep better.

HEAD STRONG

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A YOUTH LEADER WELLBEING

Relationships- building positive connections with others:

Friendships with others gives us value and a sense of belonging. It helps us to feel heard and part of something bigger than ourselves and also helps other people feel the same. Encourage the young people you support to value their friendships and spend time growing them and putting themselves out there to create new ones, doing things in real time, talking to, encouraging each other.

Learning :

Learning new skills is great for building self-esteem and making us feel more confident about ourselves. It's also a great way to meet new people, connecting with others from different ages and can practically help us to have time away from the pressures of social media and help us release stress from other areas of our life.

Also setting ourself achievable goals can be brilliant for self-esteem and wellbeing as we build a sense of achievement.

Spending time outside:

It sounds like a cliché but nature, fresh air and sunshine really does have lots of mental health benefits. Connecting with nature (even in the form of pets or potted plants inside!) can improve your mood and help you switch off.

