

Trigger Publishing Resources on Emotional Education

Emotional education helps children to make sense of the feelings inside them – what they are, how to deal with them and, most importantly, that it's absolutely okay to feel each of them. Whether it's anger, sadness, excitement or happiness, a fuzzy confused head or butterflies in the tummy – each feeling is valid. Children's lives can be as much of an emotional rollercoaster as an adult, full of highs and lows, smiles and tears, so talking and making sense of them all is so necessary.

Similarly powerful is the injection of mindfulness into a child's daily or weekly life. In schedules that are often overstimulating and busy, mindfulness generates peace and quiet, pauses in the present moment, finds stillness, and sprinkles everyday tasks with care and calm. It pulls children away from screens, noise and their far-too-full list of things-to-do.

Emotional awareness and mindful practice are lessons for life. Once learnt, they will serve a person for years and years to come. It's no understatement to say that learning about these (super)powers at a young age is vital.

This year Trigger Publishing, a leading mental health and wellbeing publisher, launched a brand-new list of children's titles called Upside Down Books. This new imprint aims to offer young readers comforting, nurturing, playful and humorous books that also spark thought and conversation around their feelings and emotions. Each book published features a note to parents from Clinical Psychologist, Lauren Callaghan, who ensures that every title is developmentally accurate and appropriate.

Lauren says, 'At Upside Down, we have the opportunity to help children achieve better mental health by identifying their feelings and emotions, while embracing values that are consistent with mental wellbeing.'

With a range of titles that cover topics such as mindfulness, emotions, grief, anxiety and even boredom, the list of books publishing in 2020 will offer plenty of choice for parents looking to help their children explore and learn about their own mental health.

Children as young as two can benefit from learning about emotions. In our book the ABC of Feelings, the author Bonnie Lui depicts a different emotion for each letter of the alphabet, and the easy-to-read explanation of what it means to feel that way will allow children to develop the vocabulary they need to vocalise how they are feeling. Being able to describe how you feel is something that even adults can struggle to do, so it's essential that we include this sort of education from a young age. This way, children will grow up with the tools to explore how they are feeling and, hopefully, cope with those emotions better.

In Breathe Like a Bear, by Kira Willey and Anni Betts children aged four to eight can learn simple mindfulness techniques in a fun and engaging way. For example, readers are encouraged to practice deep breathing by pretending to blow out a candle, or to take a restful minute to imagine being a cloud in the sky. By taking basic mindfulness principles and putting them into simple, child friendly activities, this book gives children the tools they need to cope with overwhelming situations (and parents a technique to try when they're struggling to get their children to calm down!).

However old your children are, it's never a bad time to start talking about mental health and

wellbeing. Whether you choose to do this by sharing stories, talking face to face, or even over text message, a little can go a long way when it comes to preparing them for the future.

Our top tips for boosting your child's mental wellbeing:

- Try to establish a bedtime routine to help with good sleep. Sleep is the theme of Mental Health Awareness Week this year, due to the enormous impact good sleep can have on mental wellbeing, and this starts in childhood. Building in time for a bedtime story will give you some quality time with your children and help them wind down before bed.
- Make time to check in with your child each day about how they're feeling. If you encourage them to think about their mental state regularly, they'll learn to take notice if they feel something is wrong.
- Help your children to build the vocabulary they need to talk about how they are feeling so that they can talk things through when they are struggling. Books such as ABC of Feelings by Bonnie Lui can be helpful.
- Make time for outdoor play. Exercise and fresh air are proven to improve mental health, and have benefits to physical health as well (plus time away from their screens is always a bonus!).

A few downloadable pages from Chill Out Mindfulness Activity Book illustrated by Josephine Dellow.

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