



Wellbeing and your child's success

A parent's guide



Home Tuition
SEN Consulting
Academic Assessments
Mocks & Workshops
Student Support Services

What does success look like for your child?

At Mentor, we have a great track record of helping children to raise their game, get into leading independent schools and achieve outstanding exam results.

But when we talk to parents, they don't simply want their child to improve their grades or pass specific exams. Overwhelmingly, the message we hear from parents is that they want their children to be happy, confident learners with the self-belief to explore their talents fully and express themselves.

Parents share our philosophy that success is far more than achieving a string of A* results.

We believe that success isn't a destination; it's woven into every step of your child's journey. It's when they face failure and have the determination to try again. When they think on their feet and learn from past experiences. When they draw on the strengths and creativity of the people around them. When they know when to listen, when to talk and how to get their message across.

We're changing the narrative. Instead of focusing on success as an end goal, we're working to equip young people with the crucial life skills that they will need as they tackle the challenges of school, university and the workplace.

Wellbeing is at the heart of our approach. Experience has shown us that children are more successful at school when they are academically confident, emotionally resilient, physically healthy and socially skilled.

Here we share some of the techniques that can support your child's all-round wellbeing. If you'd like to know more about how we can help your child to fulfil their potential, please get in touch.

Mary Lonsdale,

Founder, Mentor Education



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The four dimensions of health and wellbeing

Studies show that children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social and physical wellbeing have higher levels of academic achievement, and are better prepared for the demands of today's fast-changing workplace.

With this in mind, here are the four key areas that we believe should be nurtured throughout a child's education in order for them to make the most of their natural skills and ability.

The four components are:

Academic wellbeing:

With the right mindset and training, children can become more confident in their abilities and more open to learning. Academic wellbeing is important in order for children to focus, concentrate and cope with new challenges, as well as for the development of intellectual rigour, flexibility and creativity.

Emotional wellbeing:

Children's emotional state and mental health have a direct impact on their ability to learn. Emotional wellbeing is crucial in order for them to be resilient, motivated and self-confident. It also plays an important role in helping children to develop good coping mechanisms and a positive inner critic.

Social wellbeing:

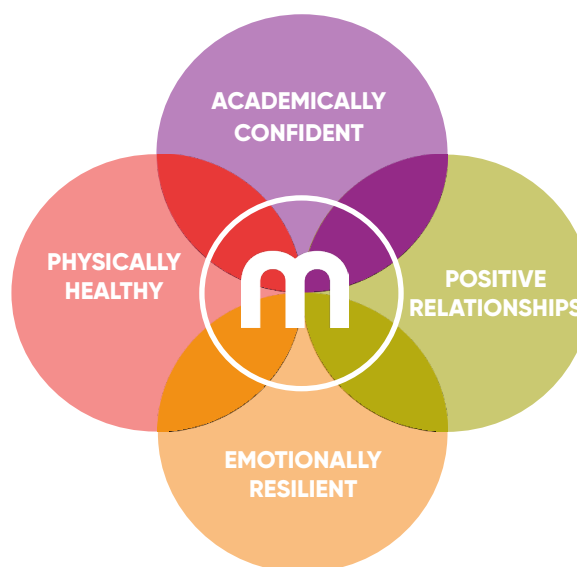
Social wellbeing refers to children's ability to make and maintain meaningful positive relationships with others. This is important in order for young people to develop and share ideas with their peers, and to learn about empathy, self-awareness, self-presentation and leadership.

Physical wellbeing:

When children are physically fit, they are better equipped mentally to deal with academic challenges. Physical exercise increases their energy levels and helps them cope with stress and anxiety, as well as giving them confidence in their ability to achieve goals and deal with setbacks.

" We believe that a holistic approach to learning will make a significant difference, and have a powerful lifelong effect. "

Mentor Education



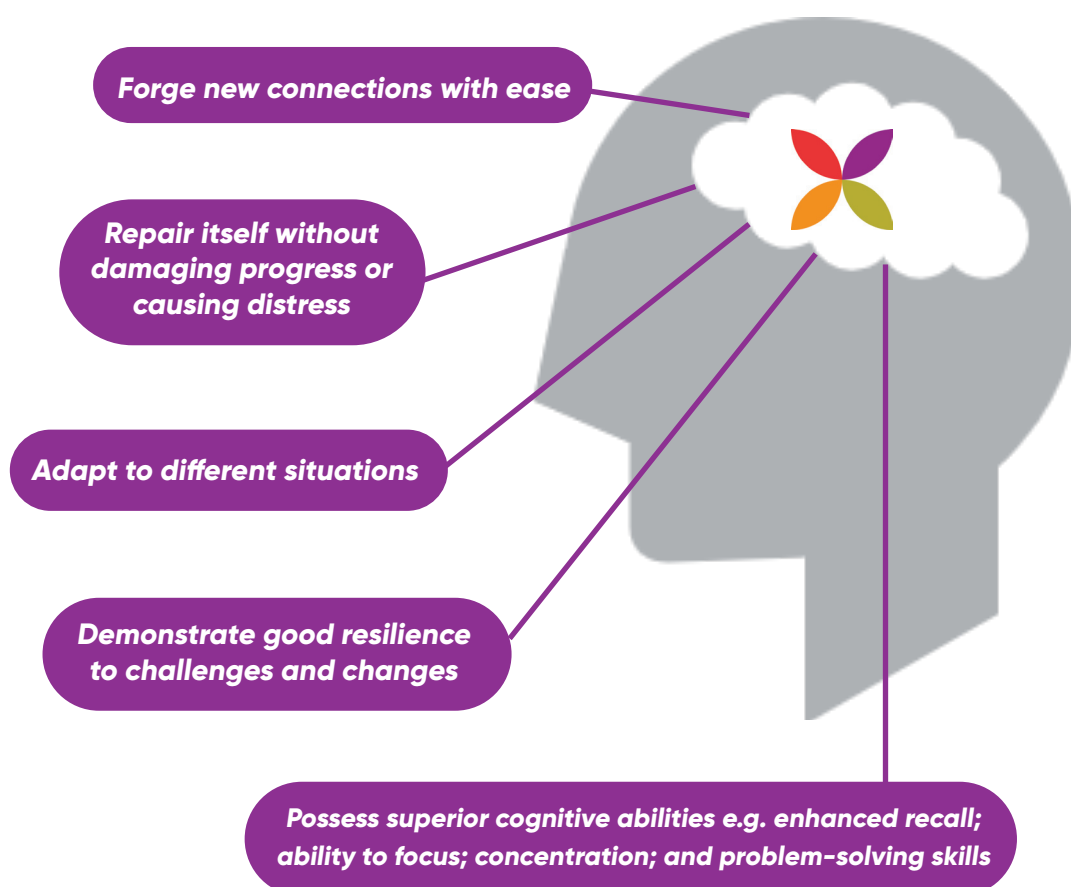
Academic wellbeing: why it's important

Academic wellbeing is important because it helps children to evaluate new ideas, find creative solutions, focus, manage their workload and approach academic assignments with confidence.

Children's brains are constantly developing throughout their school years. Therefore, the more a child is exposed to different ideas, experiences and activities, the more their brain will develop and enable them to take on new and different challenges.

However, children's brains develop in diverse ways and at different paces. Our experience at Mentor has shown us that it is vital to discover the best approach for each individual child, to help them develop their memory skills, as well as their ability to focus and concentrate, make good decisions, and plan and organise their studies. With the right support, every child can make the most of their academic potential and maintain a high level of performance.

Like heart health, brain health must be cultivated and nurtured.



Academic wellbeing: how to help your child succeed

There are several ways in which we can create a sense of academic wellbeing and support overall brain health. Like a muscle, the brain can be stimulated with innovative and unexpected mental activities which can encourage cell generation and neuro plasticity.

Learning styles should also be considered, as every child is different. An effective educational programme will take different forms of learning into account, such as whether a child is highly attuned to visual stimuli, or responds more to auditory, written or tactile prompts. This approach is especially powerful for children with additional educational needs. At Mentor Education, we have tutors who are specialists in bespoke learning strategies that ensure that SEN students receive the kind of educational support that best suits their needs.

Of course, teachers and tutors aren't the only people who influence a child's academic wellbeing. Parents also have a vital role to play. Studies show that the earlier parents take an active interest in supporting their child's education, the greater the effect on the child's development.

Here are a few simple but effective ways that parents can help children to boost their brain function and their sense of academic wellbeing.

"Education in the truest sense of the word, is about bringing out the best in children and giving them the self belief to soar"

Mentor Education

Try brain training.

Tap into your child's passions.

Read together.

Help your child to plan ahead.



Try brain training.

In the early 2000s, after a prolonged period of research, Japanese neuroscientist Ryuta Kawashima discovered that 'stimulating the frontal cortex clearly improves memory and brainpower'. This discovery led him to publish a series of best-selling books entitled 'Train Your Brain', which have now inspired a range of video games.

The benefits of exercising the brain are now well-established. Carrying out brain-training tasks can improve concentration, patience and reasoning/problem-solving skills. Best of all, playing brain games is fun! And you don't have to spend vast amounts on fancy video games or equipment. In fact, traditional games such as Lego, Scrabble and chess are often the most effective as they exercise both the visual and analytical sides of the brain.

Brain training is particularly effective for children with learning disabilities or behavioural problems, like ADHD. Studies show that, for these types of learners, cognitive exercises can greatly improve focus and reasoning skills.

Tap into your child's passions.

Encourage your child to train their brain by tapping into activities that they love. If they're a bookworm, help them improve their memory skills by asking them to summarise a plot or describe a character to you. If your child enjoys music, encourage them to take up an instrument. Playing an instrument is a great all-round brain workout that can improve their mathematical and spatial reasoning as well as boosting their IQ.

If your child has difficulty in concentrating on the task at hand, try thinking outside the box. Is there a way to introduce a tactile, visual or auditory element? Working with Lego, for example, has been shown to help children with ADHD to engage, focus and learn life skills. You could also inspire your child by encouraging them to draw on an existing passion to ignite a new interest. The 'Sport and Literacy' programmes run by The Literacy Trust have proved a huge success, helping thousands of sport-obsessed kids to discover a love of reading by using the power of sport as motivation.



Read together.

Studies have shown that reading for pleasure can have a huge impact on brain function and academic success. Children whose parents read to them are more likely to enjoy reading as they get older, and regular access to books between the ages of 10 and 16 not only boosts pupils' vocabulary and spelling skills, but also drives up their achievements in maths.



Help your child to plan ahead.

Whether your child is dealing with regular coursework or an upcoming exam, their ability to plan ahead is an important element of their academic wellbeing.

When children learn how to plan their time effectively, they benefit from vital life skills, such as good time-keeping and communication, as well as honing their ability to make decisions, accept responsibility and develop a good work ethic.

Help your child to achieve their goals by developing an easy-to-understand schedule that provides them with a clear view of what they are expected to do each day.

Having a structure in place is particularly important in the lead-up to exams such as the 7+, 11+, 13+, GCSEs and A Levels. By marking the calendar with the relevant dates and planning your child's activities for the days ahead, you can help reduce their stress and anxiety and make the prospect of sitting an important exam more manageable.

This is also a good time to review past papers and go over problem areas with your child, or to pencil in time for sessions with an experienced private tutor. A professional Mentor Education tutor will



Emotional wellbeing: why it is important

Children today are feeling increasingly overloaded. They are dealing with academic pressures such as schoolwork and exams, as well as the social pressures of making friends, fitting in and coping with social media. On top of that, many are concerned with world events and news, and changes or difficulties within the family.

Poor emotional health makes it hard for children to learn and flourish at school, and it's also linked to poor outcomes such as lower academic achievement and reduced employment prospects. It is therefore vital for educators and families to recognise the importance of emotional wellbeing.

A strong sense of emotional wellbeing helps children to:

- **Develop a positive relationship with learning.**
- **Resist peer pressure.**
- **Increase their self-awareness, which is important for building relationships, understanding what makes them happy and setting goals.**
- **Build resilience, so they're able to cope with challenges and adapt to changes such as moving to a new school and making new friends.**
- **Cope with strong feelings and manage their behaviour.**
- **Develop a positive, loving relationship with themselves.**
- **Improve their communication skills.**



Emotional wellbeing: how to help your child succeed

Your child's emotional wellbeing depends on a wide variety of factors, many of which are out of your control. However, parents have a significant role to play in modelling behaviour that enhances their child's ability to cope with the stresses of everyday life. For example, you can carry out activities together that help your child to take a step back, take a measured view of problems and use different strategies to develop a calm and balanced approach to life.

Here are some ideas for parents that we think are particularly helpful.

Practise mindfulness.



Mindfulness has increasingly come to the fore in recent years, and it can have powerful effects. Regular mindfulness practice helps children develop coping mechanisms, such as the ability to self-regulate. For example, if they're experiencing negative emotions and starting to lose control, it helps them to be able to stop, think and reset. Studies also show that mindfulness can improve focus and socialisation skills, and reduce stress and anxiety.

There are lots of different mindfulness techniques to try, from reciting mantras, to counting breaths, to meditating.

The aim is to help your child feel calm, present and fully connected to their body. For example, if you're out together, you could ask your child to focus on their senses and describe what they can see, smell, touch, hear or smell. You could also take a mindful walk in nature or try mindful eating, where you eat lunch or even just a piece of fruit slowly.

Try breathing exercises.

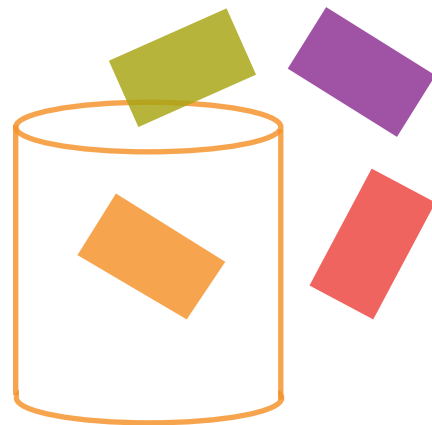
When we experience something unexpected or shocking, our body goes into fight or flight mode. Our heart rate increases, our digestion stops, and our breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Children can find this physical state frightening, which then exacerbates their negative emotional state. Therefore it's important for adults to show children how to reset to a calmer state by taking deep breaths.

Deep breathing not only helps to get more oxygen into the bloodstream – an instant positive health benefit – but also calms the body in a real, grounded way, instantly relieving stress and tension. Help your child to practise deep breathing by blowing bubbles slowly, or ask them to lie on their back with a stuffed animal on their stomach, and take deep breaths in and out to make the toy move slowly up and down.

Create a happiness jar.

Help your child to focus on the positive things in their life by showing them how to create a happiness jar. First, find an empty jar. Encourage your child to think about a few happy moments from the week, talk about them together and ask your child to write briefly about each moment on a piece of paper. Put the pieces of paper in the jar. Try to get your child into the habit of writing positive things down as they happen or at the end of each day. In addition, collect nice things that people have written or said about your child: feedback from a teacher or tutor, a social media comment, an email or even a text.

Just the act of remembering these positive moments can be really beneficial for your child's self-esteem. They will have a greater understanding of how much they have to be grateful for, as well as remembering how much other people value them. Best of all, the jar is always there. If your child is ever feeling down, the two of you can look through some of comments, which are sure to boost your child's mood.



Switch off.

The increasing popularity of social media, coupled with the ease of access to the internet, means that children are constantly bombarded with information. While there are upsides to being connected with friends, it's important to encourage your child to take breaks from digital devices. Too much time spent staring at a screen can be bad for their emotional health and overall sense of wellbeing.

Research shows that an increase in the amount of time on devices has been connected to speech delays in children. For teenagers, pressure to be always available on their devices has been linked to poor sleep quality and a range of mental health issues. Whilst it's hard to measure the effects of a rise in screen time, this is very likely to have contributed to the current rise in mental health problems in children.

The best way to help your children relax and switch off is to lead by example. Put your own device away and insist on 'digital blackouts' for the whole family at various times during the evening – when you're having your evening meal, for example. The 'one screen rule' can be successful. When you're watching television or a film, no handheld



Social wellbeing: why it's important

Even if a child has a happy, stable home and a supportive family, their time at school will be marked by huge change and upheaval. It will involve moving from primary to secondary school, making new friends, learning new skills, and finding different ways to engage with the world around them.

A child needs good social skills in order to cope with these transitions. Studies have shown that children who are socially competent tend to perform better across the board. Not only do they excel academically, as they're able to embrace different kinds of learning and environments with confidence, they are also better able to deal with change, conflict and diversity.

Social competency also supports children in their relationships beyond school, including relationships with their family, local community and the people they meet at extra-curricular activities.

Good social skills enable children to:

- **Communicate well and understand how others communicate.**
- **Make friends and cope with peer pressure.**
- **Make responsible, healthy decisions by weighing the consequences for themselves and others.**
- **Develop empathy and recognise social cues.**
- **Increase their self-awareness and reflect on how their behaviour affects other people.**
- **Build their self-discipline and learn how to control their impulses.**
- **Resolve conflict.**



How to help your child succeed

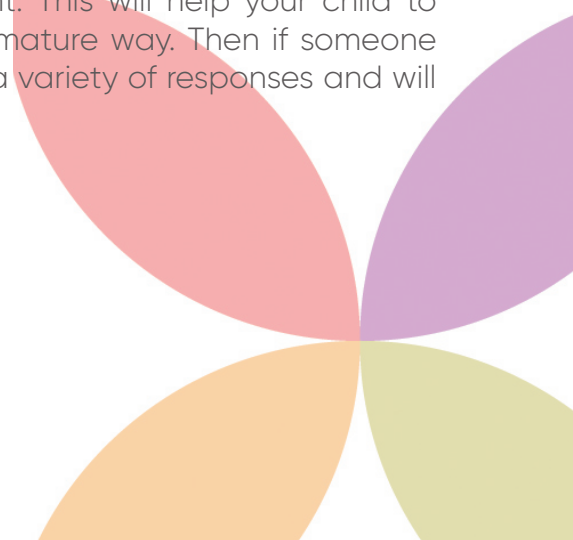
Life can be complicated for children. The memories of an argument with a friend or of being told off by teachers or parents can linger for a long time. They can struggle with a longing to be accepted and it can be difficult to form meaningful relationships. Meanwhile, access to a vast online world means that adult concepts are often introduced well before a child is emotionally or socially equipped to handle them. Within this shifting landscape, it becomes hard for children to know how to interact appropriately with others.

Learning to navigate a fast-moving social world is no easy feat, yet it's incredibly important, not least in an academic context. There are strong links between students' social relationships and academic achievement. Studies have shown that children who enjoy school at age 11 perform better in their Key Stage 3 examinations, and that children who are bullied during primary school often go on to attain lower grades in secondary school.

Here's how you can help your child improve their sense of social wellbeing and forge strong connections with their friends and peers.

- ➔ **Listen.** Listening to your child is vital, but it's not easy to do well, particularly if you're busy or stressed. Simply giving advice or instructions without listening or fully discussing the situation doesn't provide an opportunity for your child to learn good social skills. They may well pick up on your habit of not listening. Instead, practise active listening by giving your child eye contact, nodding and asking for more details (e.g. "Tell me more" or "How do you feel about that?").
- ➔ **Practise different social situations.** Help your child to learn how to deal with difficult situations by rehearsing different ways of dealing with conflict with them. Encourage your child to stop, think and question. For example, you might ask your child to stop and think if they describe someone to you in an unkind way or tell a friend: "You're so selfish!" Ask them to consider what they're saying and suggest an alternative. You could say: "You sound cross with Millie, but it could be hurtful for her to hear that you think she's selfish. Can you tell her what you'd like her to do instead?"

If your child tells you about a situation that has upset them, you could talk through the possible outcomes and responses together, and try roleplaying the scenario as if it's occurring in that moment. This will help your child to respond to challenging situations in a socially mature way. Then if someone teases or insults them, they will have practised a variety of responses and will feel more secure as a result.



Identify and acknowledge emotions.

As well as being critical to a child's emotional development and overall wellbeing, the ability to identify emotions and express them in a healthy way is a skill that will serve them well throughout their lives. Many children struggle to name what they're feeling – and this makes it harder for them to manage and navigate their emotions in a healthy, non-combative way. There are some easy, effective ways that you can work on this with your child.

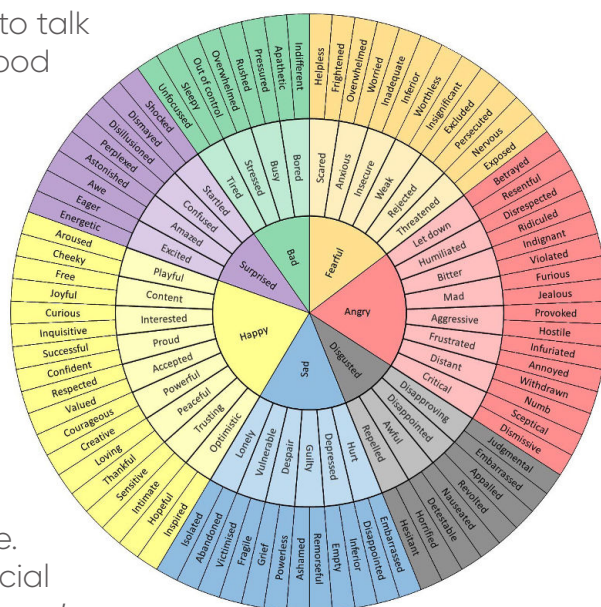
You can read books together that discuss feelings, talk about the meaning of song lyrics, or play games. One of our favourites is 'Identify the Emotion', which can be acted out or communicated via artwork, depending on your child's preference. Refer to the 'Emotional and Feeling Wheel' diagram below and use it to write down a list of emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear or joy. Then ask your child either to draw the corresponding face or to pull the face that goes with this emotion! As well as being fun, this game helps children to think about what they're feeling and develop an emotional vocabulary to match. When they've got the hang of the task, you can begin to delve further into more nuanced emotions, again referring to the wheel. For example, ask them: what's the difference between suffering and sadness, between rage and exasperation, or between feeling nervous and feeling horrified?

Make it clear to your child that they are free to talk about their emotions with you, and model good behaviour with them. If something happens that makes you feel a particular emotion, make a point of saying how it makes you feel, and encourage them to do the same.

Teach social skills in everyday settings.

Things that adults take for granted in social situations can be difficult for children to understand and emulate. Take the time to teach your child to make eye contact, say please and thank you, shake hands and smile. Help them understand how to get along in social situations by being friendly and helpful when you're out and about, and be relaxed and confident when talking to people. This way, your child will learn that meeting new people is nothing to fear.

Learning how to pick up on social cues and respond appropriately is a valuable skill, not least because it will help your child blend seamlessly into a variety of social situations. Bullies often prey on those who they think don't 'fit in', as this can be a sign of vulnerability. By showing your child how to navigate different social scenarios, you will help instil a sense of confidence that is hard to undermine.



Physical wellbeing: why it is important

The link between body and mind is well documented. Simply put, good physical health leads to a better quality of life, increased social and academic engagement, and enhanced productivity. Regular exercise develops brain function, builds self-confidence and improves children's work ethic. In addition, it's been proved that children who exercise regularly, eat well and sleep the recommended amount are not only more likely to attend and actively participate in school – they're likely to perform at a higher level, too.

There are several key reasons for this:

- **Physical exertion can help to enlarge the basal ganglia – the part of the brain that controls our ability to concentrate and focus.**
- **Physical activity enhances concentration and attention, and leads to improved classroom behaviour.**
- **A combination of good diet and exercise improves children's quality of sleep, which is vital during their formative years.**
- **Regular exercise has been proven to lower stress levels and help combat anxiety.**
- **Physical activity – particularly when combined with mental activity and socialisation, such as playing a team game or sport – stimulates the release of 'feel-good' chemicals like serotonin, which boosts mood and energy levels in children.**



Physical wellbeing: how to help your child succeed

Be a role model and mentor.

By making regular exercise and a healthy diet part of your lifestyle, you'll be setting a great example to your children. In addition, you have the power to not only supervise but also encourage your children to adopt healthy behaviours. You will need to monitor what they eat, how much exercise they get, and how much time they spend watching TV or being sedentary, too. While you want them to learn how to make healthy decisions for themselves, during their younger years they will rely on your guidance and support.

Think carefully about diet.

Make eating together as a family a cornerstone of your day, and encourage your children to help you prepare meals when they're old enough. Help them learn about food and how to make good choices, and encourage them to eat slowly and savour every bite. Promote healthy foods dense in nutrients (like healthy fats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins), and restrict processed, sugary and fast foods (make these an occasional treat, not a dietary staple).

Change up their exercise routine.

The easiest way to get children to take more physical activity is to make it fun. Encourage them to try a wide range of activities – and to keep trying new ones – until they find something they like. If they aren't keen on team sports, perhaps swimming, dancing or even climbing trees. You can help them discover a love of sport by providing active toys like bikes, skipping ropes, skateboards or a bat and ball. Support their participation in activities like ballet or football, and find out about the community facilities near you. Incorporate exercise daily by cycling or walking to places with your children rather than driving.



Go at their pace.

If your child is very inactive, don't panic. It's important not to push them too hard, too fast. Build activity into their routine gradually, increasing the duration and intensity of activity each week. This will help prevent them getting overwhelmed or injured, or becoming discouraged. Remember, too, that all children – even differently-abled ones – will benefit from being physically active. Activity can be particularly beneficial for children who struggle with their weight, or those with disabilities, special educational needs, or mental health problems, as it has been proven to have considerable psychological and physiological benefits. Comparisons are never helpful, so don't measure their progress or abilities against those of other children, and avoid making judgemental comments. Focus instead on praising and celebrating your child's achievements and successes, however small, and making the process as fun and engaging as possible.

Set your child on the road to success

We hope that the tips and information we've shared here will give you some new insights into how all-round wellbeing can help your child reach their full potential.

We're here to help

If you're looking for additional support for your child, please get in touch with us for a friendly chat. We'd love to discuss how we can help your child to develop a greater sense of self-belief and a love of learning.

Our highly experienced professional tutors are extremely skilled in helping children to overcome barriers to learning with fun, creative, supportive sessions that set children on a new path. They are passionate about discovering what truly motivates children, and helping each individual child to progress and achieve their goals.

Overcoming obstacles

Where we really excel is in providing support for unforeseen challenges, and quickly adapting our strategies to suit any given situation. As well as expert tutoring, we offer advice on finding the right school for your child, online exam coaching and mentoring for teens, student counselling, and specialist SEN support.

Exam support that reflects the latest changes

We offer a full portfolio of academic support tools, which are continually updated in line with industry best practice and educational changes. They include mock exams and workshops, interview practice sessions and coaching, and practice papers for students to try at home.

Help your child achieve success – on their own terms

When a child is academically confident, emotionally resilient, socially skilled and physically healthy, they are ideally placed to learn and thrive at school. Contact us today to start a transformative educational journey for your child with Mentor Education.

"It was important to find someone who would fit in with our family's ethos, which is to be as relaxed as possible, while getting the best possible results."

Parent of Mentor student.





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