

Southampton MHST

Newsletter – Secondary

February 2023



Welcome to the February 2023 edition of the Southampton Mental Health in Schools Team Newsletter!

We really hope you're doing well and enjoying the increasing sunshine and warmth as well as looking ahead to summer and the holidays over the horizon.

In this edition, we'll be putting the focus on phobias and how they affect people, as well as what can be done to help overcome phobia and fears.

We'll also be recognising the recent Childrens Mental Health Week which took place in the UK this month. The theme this year was 'Let's Connect', focusing on the impact of meaningful connections with others on our mental health and wellbeing.



We are the Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST). We provide targeted support for anxiety, low mood and/or behavioural difficulties. In Secondary Schools we primarily provide 1:1 support with young people using evidenced-based interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). If you feel you (or your child or pupil) would benefit from support from our service, you can speak to your school who will discuss with you and send a referral into our service.

Contact us:

If you have any questions or queries for the
Southampton MHST

Tel: 0300 1236689

Email: SouthamptonMHST@Solent.nhs.uk

Focus on Phobia

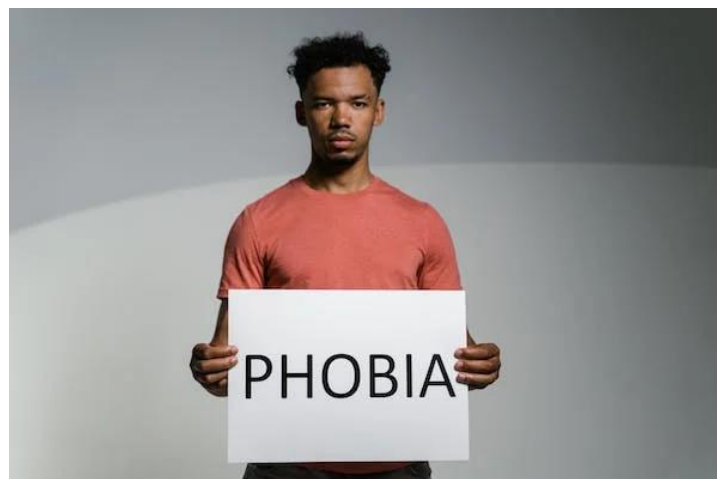
A phobia is an intense and excessive fear of an object, animal, situation or place. Phobias form the most common anxiety disorder, with an estimated 10 million people in the UK affected.

Phobias are categorised into 2 types: simple, which we are exploring today, and complex, which includes social phobia (also known as social anxiety disorder). **Simple phobia** is a fear of something specific and often starts in childhood. Here are some common examples:



How much of an impact a phobia has on someone's life can relate to how often they come across the source of their phobia. For example, it might be easier for someone in the UK to live with a fear of snakes as we don't usually see them, while we are much more likely to encounter spiders. However, for some people, just thinking about the source of their phobia can be distressing.

Phobias can impact on how people live their lives, often because they avoid things they would like or need to do. For example, someone might find it difficult to get the medical treatment they need if they have a needle phobia, or it might be hard for them to eat certain foods if they have a fear of being sick.



Focus on Phobia

The fear response generated from phobia can cause some uncomfortable physical symptoms, including:



These ways that our body responds to fear are completely normal, even though they can feel uncomfortable. They can sometimes make people worry more, but it can be useful to remember that they are just our body's way of responding to adrenaline and doesn't usually mean that anything is wrong with us.



Focus on Phobia

It is easy to understand why, if someone has a phobia of something they would want to avoid it – if I’m afraid of spiders I would probably rather not be near one! Running away from that spider might make the fear go away in the moment and those physical feelings calm down.



So, **avoiding** the thing we fear might feel helpful in the moment. But, what about the long term?

The trouble is, by avoiding the thing we fear, we aren’t facing it. Importantly, this means that we don’t get to learn whether it would have been as bad as we thought (“would the spider bite me?”) or whether we would have coped better than we expected (“would I really have had a panic attack?”)

Avoiding the thing we fear, even though understandable, is usually what maintains the phobia. Every time we come into contact with our feared thing, that same fear response returns. It may even get stronger over time if we begin to think that the only reason nothing bad happened is *because* we avoided it.

The good news is that mental health professionals have a simple way of helping people overcome phobias which has lots of evidence for how well it can work - **graded exposure**. Graded exposure is all about doing the opposite to avoidance and gradually being around the thing you fear more.

We are not suggesting the answer is to jump in a bath full of spiders! Instead, it’s about gently exposing yourself to your fear, like staying in the room when a spider is still on the wall, or even looking at pictures of spiders. It can feel uncomfortable at first but given the chance that fear will usually reduce and allow you to try more and more challenging things. Your body and mind have the chance to learn that you were OK, and next time it won’t be so bad. This is the key to overcoming fears.

Graded exposure is a method that anyone could use, but often people find it helpful to get the support of a mental health professional. The MHST can offer this help, so if you think your affected by a phobia that is stopping you living life the way you want, why not speak to a teacher or parent and see if the MHST could help?





Childrens Mental Health Week 2023

Childrens Mental Health Week 2023 took place in the UK in February between 6-12th. The event was launched in 2015 by the charity Place2Be, which is a childrens mental health charity which works to provide mental health support and training in UK schools.

The theme of the event this year was **'Let's Connect'**. The central message was encouraging people to make healthy, rewarding and meaningful connections with others.



It is recognised that a lack of meaningful connections is a key driver in loneliness and anxiety. This highlights how important it is that young people (and all of us) have the opportunities to establish friendships which can allow them to support one another.

We can all find it difficult to go outside our comfort zone and make new connections with those around us, and this can be especially hard if we are having difficulties with our mental health. We might be feeling more anxious and worry how people will react to us, or we might find it difficult to get the motivation. Despite this though, there is lots of evidence that finding our own ways, in our own time, to connect more with other people can have a really positive impact on our own wellbeing and how we feel about ourselves. The chances are that however you're feeling, someone else feels the same or has in the past. Connecting with other people when we're having a tough time can not only help us feel better, but can also be an opportunity for you to get support and for you to support someone else who understands.



Reflections from our team

On the topic of connection, one of our team wanted to write something, from them to any young people reading, of their own personal thoughts and experiences. They are an EMHP in Southampton – an education mental health practitioner working with young people across the city right now.

“When asked, the young people I work with generally agree that they would enjoy spending time with a friend or friends outside of school. Often however, there appears to be a real reluctance among those same young people to be the ‘one’ who ‘instigates’ the activity. Often, they assume their friend would not want to meet up as they are too busy, or they would not be interested. The predictable result of this seems to be a lot of young people sat at home, unaware that many of their peers are stuck in the exact same boat, waiting for somebody to ask them to go out and connect!

Yes, putting yourself out there by suggesting to a friend(s) that they meet up can be scary and sometimes difficult to arrange, but humans are intensely social creatures, and the truth is the benefits of social interaction with good friends in person vastly outweighs the disappointment that is experienced if the friend is unavailable.

Connecting with others helps build relationships, fosters a sense of belonging, improves mental health, helps to develop problem solving skills and as psychologist Susan Pinker states “Face-to-face contact releases a whole cascade of neurotransmitters and, like a vaccine, they protect you now, in the present, and well into the future, so simply [...] shaking hands, giving somebody a high-five is enough to release [oxytocin](#), which increases your level of trust, and it lowers your cortisol levels, so it lowers your stress.”

I’m not saying spending time on your own is wrong or bad... I mean, having probably just spent 7 hours in school with teachers, noise, and a constant stream of instructions to follow, a break and some alone time has been well earned!

And of course, if you are feeling anxious or low in mood, the thought of sending a text to someone asking them to meet up can feel hard, but if you can overcome that anxiety and concentrate your efforts on being more social, even just a little bit, then the benefits can start impacting your life in a positive way very quickly.

Encouraging young people to place a higher value on the importance of connecting with others and then seeing the subsequent improvements in mood and wellbeing is one of the best things about my job. If you are a young person reading this and you want to be more social but are not sure how, then think small to start with. Maybe a walk to the shops with a friend or arrange to spend time with someone after school. If you can, keep a note of how spending time with others affects your mood and try and spend time with people you enjoy being around.”



Good news story

And finally, this edition's good news story is about the inspiring story of a group of high school seniors in an American school who decided that their 80-year-old janitor had earned the right to a comfortable retirement after caring for them and their school for many years.

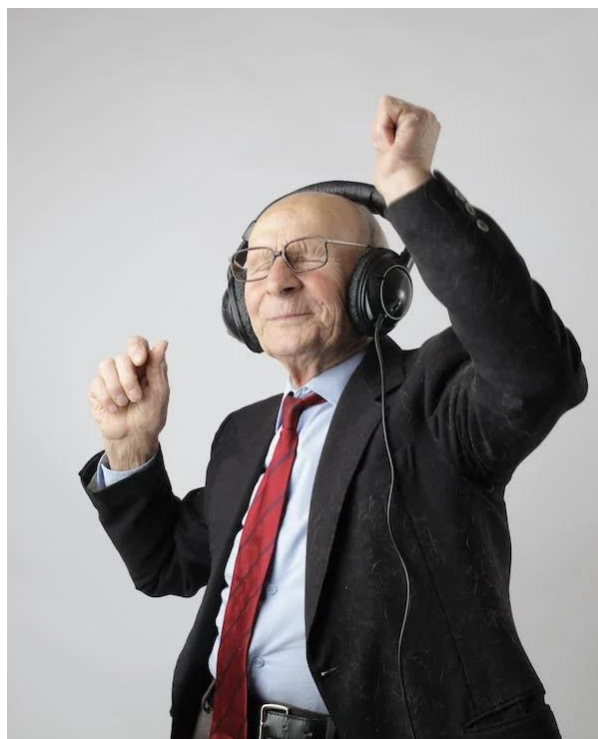
They knew that the man wanted to retire and explore his passions in but couldn't because he couldn't afford to stop working. So, a group of the students decided that this was the least he deserved and wanted to do something to make it happen, even though the janitor was not the sort to ever ask for help.

The students created a plan to start a funding page online towards a retirement fund, aiming for a goal of \$10,000 for the older gent. This money was raised in only 12 hours, almost all coming from students and their families.



What happened next blew everyone away. Through a single TikTok video which went viral promoting the fund, they quickly raised over a quarter of a million dollars (\$270,000)! The fund was closed down so the janitor could make use of the money and retire more than comfortably, being able to take the break he deserved and have the opportunity to help others in the local community.

This is an amazing story to me about the power young people have to make a difference to others, and how worthwhile it is to recognise and celebrate those that make the quiet difference in our lives.



Useful services and websites for parents and young people

Please see the details of the following services that may also be able to offer you and your child advice and support. Please note that during this unprecedented time services have had to change the way they work and offer support, so please contact the service directly to find out what is currently on offer.

THE SOLENT WEST CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE (CAMHS):

If your child is currently receiving a service from CAMHS, a duty line for advice in the event of deterioration in your child / young person's mental health is available. Please request to speak to the duty worker on 0300 123 6661. You are also able to contact the Behaviour Helpline for advice and strategies with managing challenging behaviour on 0300 123 6661, your contact details will be taken and a Behaviour Advisor will return your call within 1 week.

Please be aware that in the current situation there may be a slight delay in responding to duty calls

The Public Health Nursing (PHN) Service offers support to children, young people and their families who live in Southampton. The team is made up of Nurses, Emotional Health and Wellbeing workers and PHN Assistants; who can offer support for a wide range of health issues such as growth concerns, support with long term conditions, sleep problems, continence issues, general anxiety and much more. They have a confidential text messaging service called Solent Pulse where you can text any health questions and have them answered by a nurse. They are currently offering support through telephone calls, emails, text messages and video calling to comply with social distancing rules. If you would like to contact PHN for support please use one of the methods below:

Phone: 0300 123 6661 Solent Pulse: 07491 163278

Website: <https://what0-18.nhs.uk/solent/school-nursing>

Email: snhs.publichealthnursingsouthampton@nhs.net

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Southampton Multi-Agency Support Hub: 02380 833336

(Safeguarding advice & parenting support).

Samaritans: Free phone 116 123

Parentline (24-hour advice): 0808 800 2222

Child line: 0800 1111

NHS direct: 111 – non emergency helpline

SANE mental health help line (every day 16.30-22.30) 0300 304 7000

Young Minds help line (Mon-Fri 9.30-4pm) 0808 802 5544

USEFUL WEBSITES – UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOMS, ADVICE AND SELF-HELP:

- <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/> - This covers numerous 'symptoms' of developmental disorders and mental health conditions. It also has a lot of helpful advice ranging from 'online safety' to 'getting children to eat greens'. Mixture of articles and short videos.
- www.youngminds.org.uk – information and advice for young people, parents and professionals, includes a telephone advice line and videos. This website covers emotional health, mental health conditions and neurodevelopmental disorders e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- http://www.sane.org.uk/resources/mental_health_conditions/ - information and advice, includes resources and useful leaflets to manage symptoms of many mental health symptoms. It also has online forums and a telephone advice line (above).
- www.getselfhelp.co.uk – this website is an invaluable resource containing free downloadable activities and videos for you to support your child to manage their emotional and mental health.
- <http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/> - Similar to 'getselfhelp'.
- Selected mobile phone 'apps' to help manage symptoms can be viewed here, although please consider age appropriateness: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-health-apps.aspx> (Or type 'Apps for Mental Health – NHS Choices into an internet search engine.)

Useful services continued

NO LIMITS ADVICE PROJECT <https://nolimitshelp.org.uk/> Contact Phone: 02380 224 224 – 13 The High Street, Southampton, SO17 1XN Email: enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk

Please contact the service via telephone, email or 'drop-in' to the advice centre.

The No Limits service offer advice and support to young people under the age of 26 years on many issues, including: housing, employment, money management advice, social support, symptoms of mental health, counselling for emotional ill-health, sexual health guidance, drug and alcohol support, victims and perpetrators of crime, plus much more.

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL PARENTING ADVICE AND SUPPORT

<http://sid.southampton.gov.uk/kb5/southampton/directory/results.action?familychannel=8-7-1>

Please access this website to view a range of parenting support courses in Southampton. Or go into Southampton City Council's website and type 'families' into the search bar.

Please also contact the Southampton City Council MASH Team on the telephone number above for further advice around services and parenting support.

RE:MINDS

A parent-led support group for families of children with autism or mental health issues.

<https://www.reminds.org.uk/> With a closed Facebook group of over 600 members -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/reminds>

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Buzz Network - a group for Southampton parents/carers of children with disabilities/special needs. It is open to children with any disability from ADHD to visual impairments, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. <http://sid.southampton.gov.uk> – type 'Buzz Network' into the search engine for contact details.

CHILDREN WITH SUSPECTED AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS <https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/>

Autism Hampshire: Information, Advice, 'Needs Assessment' and support. Community Access, Southampton Office –1648 Parkway, Whiteley, PO15 7AH, Tel: 02380 766162 Email:

communityaccess@autismhampshire.org.uk

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- <http://www.theredlipstickfoundation.org/> The Red Lipstick Foundation are here to offer services to families in Hampshire who have been bereaved by suicide or immediate family members following a person's sudden death.

- <http://www.simonsays.org.uk/> Tel: 08453 055 744 - Bereavement service for Children.

- <http://www.cruse.org.uk/?gclid=CMmGptiMktMCFYWRGwoduCOEiw> National Bereavement Service.

DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES

- <https://www.hamptontrust.org.uk/our-programmes/> support projects for those who have perpetrated domestic abuse, and, adults and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

- <https://www.yellowdoor.org.uk/> Telephone: 023 8063 6313 - support project for adults and young people who have experienced physical and or sexual abuse.