



THE Spark NEWSLETTER

THE SPARK CAST

We have a podcast! Each week the team will be sitting down with guests to talk about mental health and key events that have happened in the week. Covering topics from LGBTQ+, Men's Mental Health, and Sport, we have got a topic that fits everyone.

New episodes will be up on Spotify, iTunes, and other streaming services every Friday, starting from Friday 24th September.

QUOTE OF THE HALF-TERM

"EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE WORLD, A PASSPORT TO FREEDOM." – OPRAH

"YOU MUST DO THE THINGS YOU THINK YOU CANNOT DO." – ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

BY BRIDIE DOWNING

After a fun, disappointing or thoroughly meh summer, we all have to face the dreaded back to school. Some will be prepared for this adventure or some may be totally unfazed by this change and for the rest of us, it may not be a change at all.

Everyone will find going back in September weird, be it so that covid restrictions have died down so now we have to change into PE kit instead of just wearing a comfy hoodie all day (gosh darn blazers), it could be a massive change to the timetable or disruption to social areas that will throw you off BUT we bring you hope. October half term is only 6 (depending on your school and when you read this) weeks away...

A piece of advice we offer you on this long journey is that it's best to not have any expectations for the remaining year, take it at your own pace. We're surviving a pandemic so these typical high-school-Disney-like expectations may not reflect reality...

Have a tolerable first half term of the year.

SLEEP

BY JOSEPH CARTER

Believe it or not, having a consistent sleeping pattern is a very important self-care act. Everyone knows what it feels like to be over-tired; it doesn't just affect energy levels but as a result, mood as well. A lack of sleep can also create stress which prevents the peace of mind, needed to get to sleep. This is something I'm sure we can all relate to and recognise as important, but why does it have such a monumental influence on our day-to-day mood and mental wellbeing? One reason is that REM Sleep (Rapid Eye Movement, typically known as dreaming) allows us to selectively forget and process events that have happened in our past. As a result, our brains are more suited to processing less significant events in our day-to-day life.

In sleep, our rational reasoning brain activity decreases and our emotional brain activity increases. This means that our dreams are vivid and random, creating unrealistic possibilities and circumstances so that our brains can test and experiment with ideas in a world without logic. This further helps to process our waking thoughts and memories.

Did you know...? Only people you have seen or know in real life will appear in your dreams.

So remember sleep is important and your body needs it but don't stress, a day without the 8 hours is fine. Set a consistent sleeping pattern and try to stick to it the best you can; the benefits are countless

THE NEWS CAN BE STRESSFUL

BY JOSEPH CARTER

Whoever you are, news headlines have an effect on the way we feel. More often than not they are overwhelming and frightening. From climate change, to terrorism, to war, discrimination, or frustrating politics, the majority of headlines and news stories can be negative, to an extent that it can start to impact on our mental health and the way we feel. Whether this inspires us to fight with activism, or makes us feel frightened and anxious, whatever our personal response is, it is normal.

As teenagers we sometimes feel like we don't have the same voice or power that an adult has, so we are restricted in what

we can do to make a positive impact on the world..... despite us knowing the world needs to change.

So what can we do for our own mental health in regards to reading heavy news headlines?

One way is to speak to other people. Although it might not seem like it, most people are feeling the same way you do when they read these depressing or frustrating headlines. By the nature of these stories, they are consequential and often supposed to make you feel something, but however distressing they can be for you, they will likely have the same effect on everyone. So talk.

Another way is to research and discover positive news stories. There are so many funny, happy and hopeful stories on the internet that you just wouldn't see as they are deemed less important than serious topics. However they are more important and beneficial for your mental health as they help to give perspective and scale to main headlines. Just a few Instagram accounts to follow for positivity are, **@goodnews_movement**, **@upworthy**, **@thehappynewspaper**, **@goodgoodgoodco**.

These are just a few to balance your news intake. Research your own happy news and share with other people, trust me they'll thank you!!!

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY

BY BRIDIE DOWNING

This September 7th is Youth Mental Health Day, this is an awareness day founded by stem4 (a young persons mental health charity). The day aims to get young people talking about how to improve mental health and encourage discussion/awareness about experiences and issues facing our youth.

As many are aware, mental health problems are a secret pandemic that without proper support/help can turn deadly particularly in teenagers. 20% of teenagers may experience a mental health problem in any given year and this statistic is only growing; since 2004 there has been a rise in the number of school-aged children with a mental health issue - from 1 in 10 to the current 1 in 6. Furthermore, the waiting lists and demand for help rises as well (rather unexpectedly), at the moment we face an average 10-year delay between young people displaying the first signs of a mental health issue and subsequently getting the appropriate help they need.

So on Youth Mental Health Day, we wanted to reflect on young people's experiences and what they wanted as support.

Here are some of the responses we got...

"I wish that people just asked how I was once in a while. I know that it sounds cliché but just having hope that there's someone out there who cared about me really went a long way to help me think clearly"

"Being invited out to just have a chat really helped, knowing I was important to someone made me feel safe"

"what I wanted as support was someone to be there, just a support person, just a person to relay your problems to - they don't even need to give advice just to listen and understand."

"loving friends, friends that just care"

"Music helped me get through it, helped express my emotions and gave me good outlet"

"distractions"

"Ironically, I found it comforting for someone to come to me with their issues as it made me feel valued and gave me a break from focusing on my own problems"

Thank you to everyone who submitted a response.

#StrideForward

Sources - www.mentalhealth.org.uk
<https://stem4.org.uk/youthmentalhealthday/>

ANIMAL FACT

Dogs' sense of smell is about 100, 000 times stronger than humans'. However, they have only one-sixth our number of taste buds.



@sparkteens



Spark UK



sparkuk20@gmail.com



www.sparkuk.co.uk

WRITTEN BY THE SPARK TEAM
WITH HELP FROM BLUE ELEPHANT CHILDCARE

Spark UK

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