



WELTBLEIBUNG.

Spring 2024

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In our latest edition, we focus on how to deal with anxiety and stress, especially around exams, and how having a growth mindset is the key to success. We hope you enjoy reading and if you wish to contribute to a future issue, please let us know.

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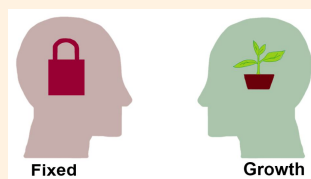
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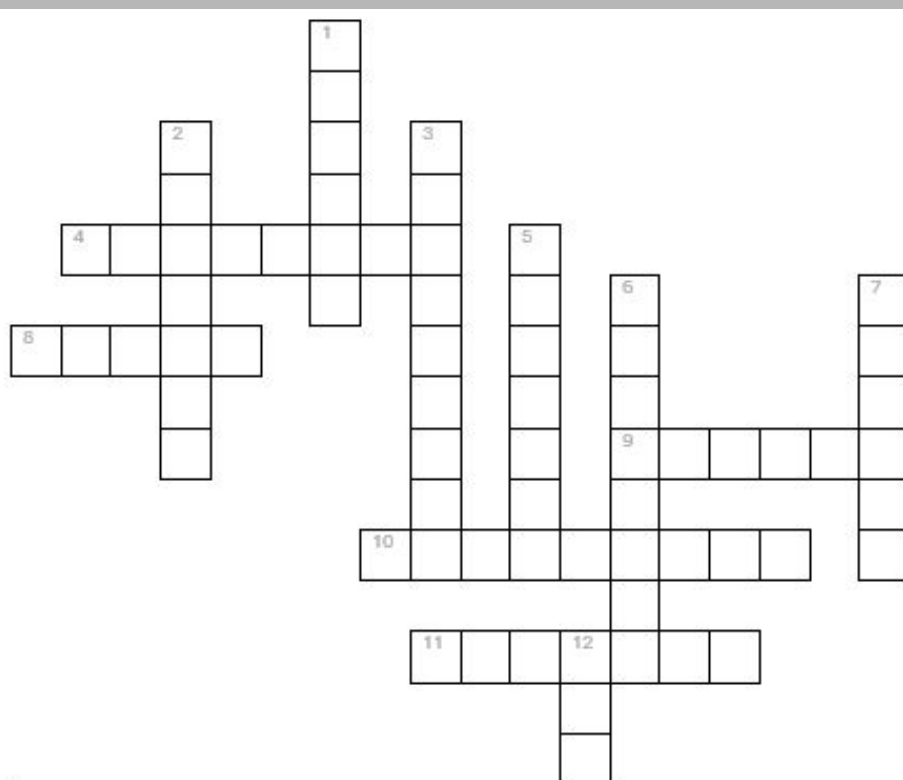
Page 10: Reviews

by Aadarsh, Mr Brown and Mrs Webber



Editing and graphic design: Bharanie, Jiaen and Ms Banner

Crossword - All the answers can be found in this edition of *Wellbeing*. Submit your completed crossword to Ms Banner by 30th April to gain House points and be entered into a Prize draw!



Across

- 4. Small clusters near the base of the brain that assess danger (8)
- 8. Mrs Webber's book recommendation about the reign of James I is titled 'The King's ...' (5)
- 9. Jim Carrey plays the title character in which 1990s film about a man whose whole life was televised? (6)
- 10. Maddie is our Child ...Practitioner (9)
- 11. Is yours 'fixed' or 'growth'? (7)

Down

- 1. Who said 'All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit in a quiet room alone.'? (6)
- 2. Where did Toni end his 30-day mediation trial? (4,3)
- 3. The App that Aadarsh reviewed. (9)
- 5. Dame Kelly Holmes was given what Honorary army rank in 2019? (7)
- 6. Another name for 'good stress' (7)
- 7. What colour badge do the Year 13 mentors wear? (6)
- 12. Elizabeth... hosts the podcast 'How to Fail'? (3)



Meet: Maddie

Child Wellbeing Practitioner

How would you describe your role?

I work with young people who are experiencing low mood and anxiety and provide guided self-help over 6-8 sessions. The young person does some work and we are there to help, coach and support as they go through that process. You might see me around school doing workshops and assemblies too.

Why might someone benefit from seeing you?

It feels rubbish to be experiencing feelings of low mood or worries that stay in your head. We get them out of your head and provide some strategies and support to manage them.

What is the biggest misconception people have about guided self-help?

That we need your life story from beginning to end, that you have to be super honest and open and that we are going to be nosey and expect you to tell us everything. But actually, we want to work with you and you lead the way and decide what to talk about or not.

Would you ever have to speak to a teacher about what we discuss?

In certain circumstances yes, if we are worried about your or someone else's safety. We do our best to help you understand when and why it would happen and have your say in the process. Otherwise, it a confidential service.

If you want to know more, please speak to your form tutor.

Year 13 mentors

The year 13 mentors are trained to listen to you and offer drop-in sessions most days. You will see them sitting outside the Wellbeing Centre (next to the Library) and if you want to talk to them they will take you inside the Wellbeing Centre where you can arrange a more private chat. They all wear an orange badge so you can always stop them at any time if you see them around school.

A teacher may pair you up to have regular one-one sessions with a mentor if they think this would be helpful to you. If you would like us to organise this for you, please ask your form tutor.

WELCOMING



WELL-KEPT SECRET



WELLBEING



MENTOR DROP IN • EVERY LUNCHTIME
MENTORS STATIONED OUTSIDE LIBRARY
BUT SESSIONS IN THE WELLBEING CENTRE

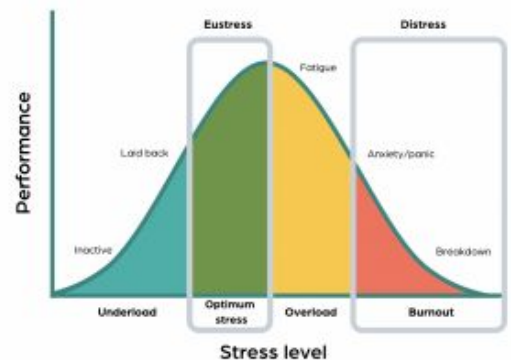
Exam Stress by Ms Banner

Year 11 and Year 10 both heard from CWP Maddie in Assemblies this term about how to cope with exam stress. Here are some important facts to know, tips on how to organise your revision, and why a positive mindset is important for what happens next.

Stress is a normal part of the human experience and is needed to motivate us in achieving our goals. Your job or studies, your relationships, and even finding food can be considered sources of stress – it's present in some form or another in every facet of our lives. Although having a 'stress-free' life might seem like the ideal, removing stress altogether can actually have a negative impact on our minds and bodies. In a study by Penn State University, participants who didn't experience any stress scored considerably lower in cognition tests than other participants, equating to "the cognitive decline that would occur in approximately 8 years of ageing."

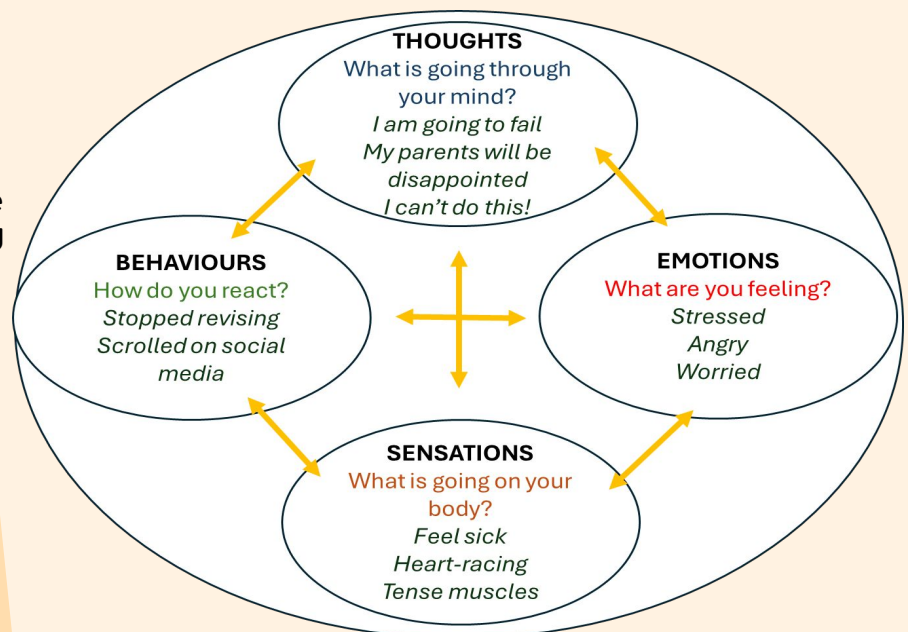
We need stress to make sure we do everyday activities and if we weren't stressed we would never revise for exams. But too much stress is ultimately unhelpful. The stress curve above shows how low stress means we don't get things done. We should aim to be in a state of helpful stress (eustress) to go about our daily lives and be productive. However if we encounter too much, this 'distress' can create problems for us, and ultimately affect our achievements. . We often refer to states of distress as 'anxiety'. We can never banish distress completely, but learning how to cope with it is very important.

The Neuroscience of Stress - Eustress and Distress



What can anxiety feel and look like?

Often negative thoughts take over and this can then have an impact on our emotions and our sensations. We ultimately change our behaviour and avoid tasks.



The science bit

The amygdala are a pair of small, almond-shaped clusters of nuclei near the base of your brain. The function of the amygdala is to assess the emotional significance of things that happen in your environment, and in particular it assesses whether or not something in your environment is a threat to you. We evolved millions of years ago to have this reaction to danger.

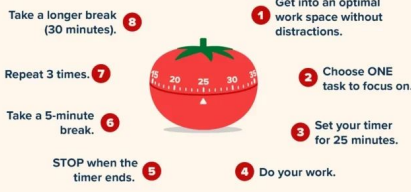


How to revise to avoid stress

It is always helpful to think about what is in our control and what is not. Revision is something we can control and so here are some hints to help avoid stress before exams.

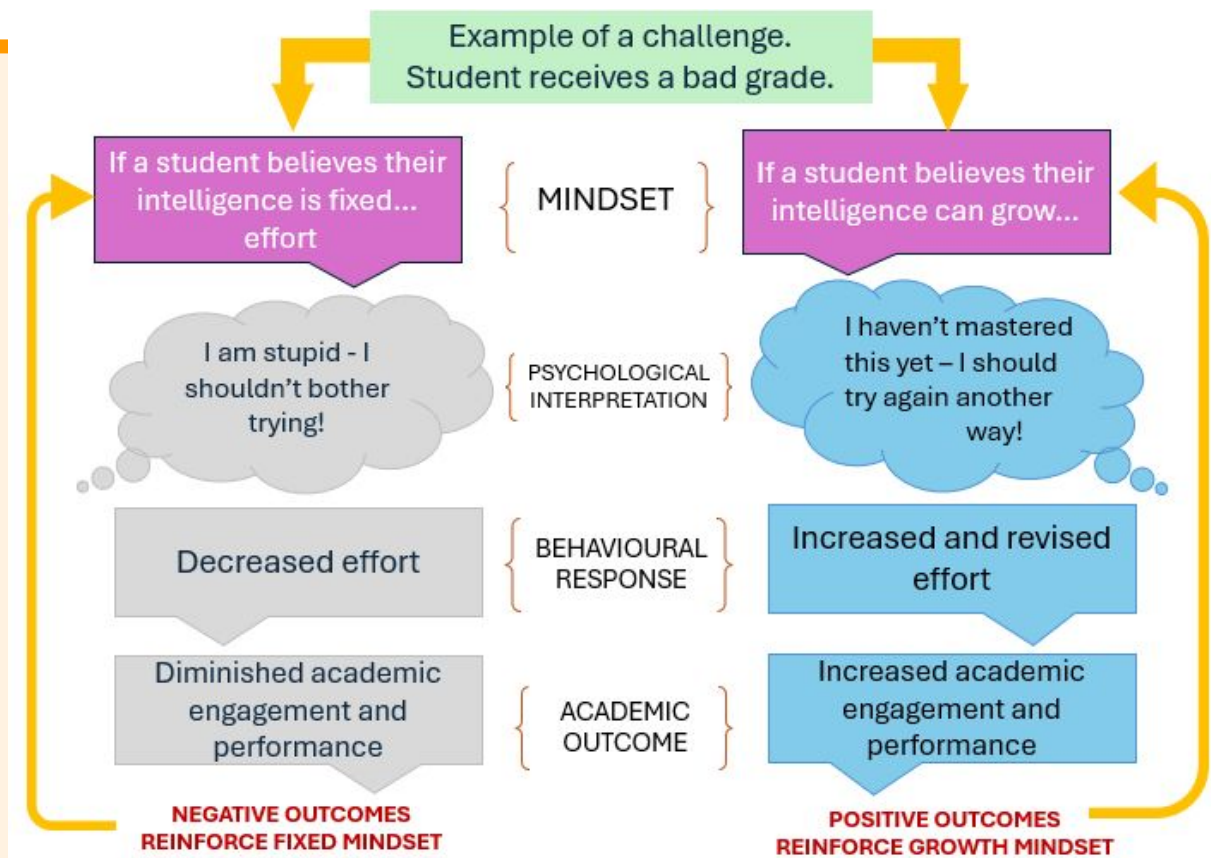
1. Start early - cramming last minute will increase stress.
2. Make a plan. Map everything out, add important dates, prioritise and break topics into smaller chunks.
3. Create a study space that is conducive to good concentration and organisation.
4. Mix it up. Change subjects and topics regularly or change the type of task you are doing.
5. Work out when your brain works best and do the harder tasks then.
6. Take regular and planned breaks,
7. Shut out distractions such as mobile phones.
8. Set a timer for how long you will revise, or how long until you look at your phone.
9. If your thoughts wander, write them down and then focus again.
10. Eat healthily, sleep well and make sure to keep doing things that you enjoy and good for your wellbeing.

How to do your first Pomodoro:



What is a 'growth mindset'?

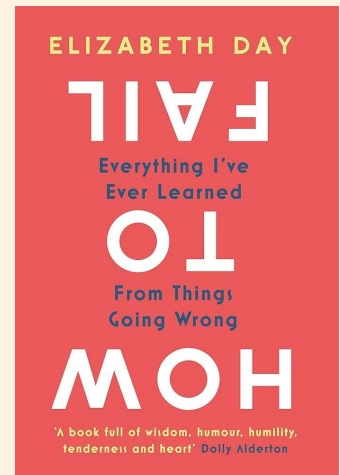
Coined in 2006 by American psychologist Carol Dweck, the term 'growth mindset' is about having a belief you can develop your skills and talent through hard work, good strategies and helpful guidance. Her work explored how an individual's underlying belief about their intelligence and ability to learn could impact their performance. This diagram explains the consequences of negative versus positive thoughts; the negative ones reinforce what you see as failure. But positive ones help you develop and improve.



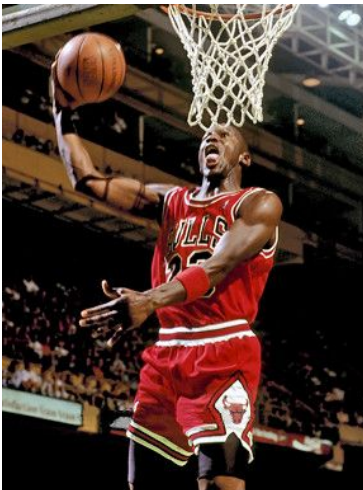
How to Fail by Michael and Bella

How To Fail is a podcast hosted by Elizabeth Day. In each episode she interviews a famous name about their biggest failures and what they have learnt from them. Her guests range from popstars to politicians and the positive lessons that can be learnt from what appear to be failures are comforting and inspirational. She has also written books about all the things she has learnt from these illuminating conversations.

Here Michael and Bella look at two famous sports stars who became the best in their fields after multiple 'failures'.



"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." – Michael Jordan.



Arguably the greatest NBA player of all time and yet Michael Jordan has repeatedly failed. This is a natural part of life we all experience, and we need to learn to accept that. Accepting any failure you experience and putting in the effort to try correcting it will always bring you success in the end. Look at Michael Jordan today – he has won 6 NBA championships and is a 14-time NBA all-star – despite being rejected from his high school varsity basketball team for being too short. He could have given up then after failing but instead he kept on pursuing his goal and attained immense success in the end. So follow in Michael Jordan's footsteps and never let failure impede you on the way to achieving your goals, instead, learn from the mistakes you make and use these to guide your path to success.

"I've been to the lowest point and to the highest point, and everything in between" – Dame Kelly Holmes.

At the age of 16, Dame Kelly Holmes left school with No O-levels and throughout her career, she faced many more failures such as failing her first selection to be a physical training instructor in the army. However, using these failures as motivation to do better and strive for her goals allowed her to reach the success she did, winning the gold medal in both the 800m and 1500m race at the 2004 Olympics, being knighted in 2005 and being made an Honorary Colonel in 2019.



It cannot be denied she has achieved massively in her life despite the challenges she faced. Due to putting too much pressure on herself, she struggled with her mental health which likely impacted her performance at times.

What can we learn from these stories of 'failure'?

We can learn something from both Michael Jordan and Dame Kelly Holmes: don't stress about making failures in the first by placing too much pressure on yourself and if you do fail, learn from it. Both will help you succeed at anything you do. You have an assessment coming up – prepare for it but don't stress over it so much it impacts you and if it goes badly, learn the corrections so you don't repeat those mistakes in the future. As a result, you can succeed and achieve your goals.

Here are the three medalists of the 2008 200m Olympics mens' individual medley. The person in 2nd place (László Cseh) seems significantly less happy than 3rd place (Ryan Lochte). We wouldn't expect this because the silver medal is better: he should be happier than Ryan Lochte. However, this can be explained by reference points: in Ryan Lochte's perspective, he is overjoyed because he almost didn't even make it on the podium. Whereas László Cseh is (understandably) slightly sour that he just missed the gold medal.



So we have the paradox of a man shamed to death because he is only the second pugilist or the second oarsman in the world. That he is able to beat the whole population of the globe minus one is nothing; he has "pitted" himself to beat that one; and as long as he doesn't do that nothing else counts.

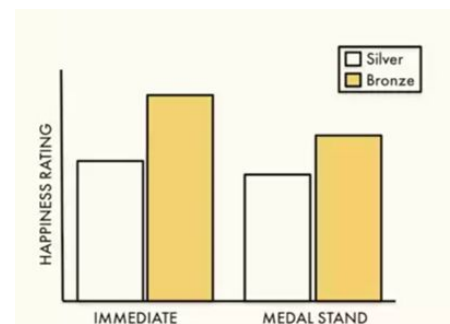
This observation was made by psychologist William James all the way back in 1892. Further research has been undertaken over more recent years to analyse the psychology of winning different colour medals (cited below). Journalist Jason G. Goldman's summary on this research states; "Statistical analyses proved that both immediately after winning, as well as later at the medal ceremony, bronze medalists were visibly happier than the silver medalists" and, even though we aren't Olympic medalists, this can be applied to the rest of us.



For example, when receiving your GCSEs you may think that getting a Grade 7 or an 8 is bad because you were just missed a Grade 9. However, it is important that you remember that an 8 is already a top grade. For example in Maths a grade 8 was only achieved by 5% of the year nationwide in 2019. It is important to put things into perspective and celebrate your successes.

• Medvec VH, Madey SF, & Gilovich T (1995). *When less is more: counterfactual thinking and satisfaction among Olympic medalists.* *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69 (4), 603-10

• Matsumoto D, & Willingham B (2006). *The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat: spontaneous expressions of medal winners of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.* *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 91 (3), 568-81



Meditation: a 30-day trial by Toni

'All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit in a quiet room alone.' Even though it wasn't the first time I had come across this quote from French mathematician Blaise Pascal, something about seeing it on a TikTok (that could have easily been the thousandth one I had seen that day) during another session of mindless scrolling made me wonder how I would cope with that same task. I had already been looking into meditation as part of the school's Wellbeing Team, but this was the moment when I decided to commit to a thirty day challenge to see how it could impact my life - and although it did not solve 'all of humanity's problems', it certainly did have some benefits.

Despite Pascal's quote coming from the 1600s, it is perhaps more relevant than ever in today's society - and 'sitting in a quiet room alone' encapsulates the essence of meditation. The practice, although it is often presented as such in the media, does not have to be difficult. It is a common misconception that to meditate is to completely empty your mind of all thoughts - try this right now and you'll notice its almost impossible. Instead, meditation is a practice of awareness. The most common way to cultivate this awareness is not to eradicate all thoughts, but to simply focus on your breath- *in, out, in, out* - and when a thought inevitably arises, to acknowledge it, let it pass, and refocus on your breath. This was the method of meditation that I began with at the start of my practice. Using the app Medito as my guide, I aimed to sit down for at least 10 minutes a day and just focus on my breath.



However, I quickly found that meditation was not limited to the focus-refocus method, and that there was a variety to explore. As explained earlier, the purpose of meditation is to cultivate awareness, which means it is possible to 'meditate' on anything: the sound of the clock ticking in your bedroom, or the way your footsteps fall on the ground as you walk to school, or the sensations in different parts of your body as you sit or lie down to meditate. The most immersive experience, in my opinion, is to meditate on the sounds of nature, whether that is as you sit on the bench at Mellows Park or as you stand in your back garden. The one thing all of these methods have in common is that when doing each one thoughts will naturally pop up, but it is important to let these thoughts pass without judgement. Something I found that helped me to let thoughts pass was to visualise them as clouds that constantly move, or as objects getting carried away by a flowing river, so as not to dwell on them but simply observe them.

Continued over the page

As the thirty days of meditation I had originally set out to were coming to an end during the Christmas break, I reflected on my experience for the last month. I had come across many studies which boasted enhanced cognitive abilities as a result of daily meditation, and although I personally could not attest to this, what I could confirm was the role meditation played in offering an escape from the chaotic routine of life. Meditation served as a much needed way to 'unplug' from society and experience the present moment without getting too caught up in things to come or things that had already happened. Although it might not be as grandiose as the final meditation of my thirty day challenge, meditating at Llyn Cau on the way up Cadair Idris in Wales, I continue to incorporate short daily meditations to ground myself and focus on my breath whenever I can - often as I wait for trains on the way to school. I would strongly encourage everyone to try and *'sit in a quiet room alone'* and implement meditation into your routines, as even the smallest amount can have a profound impact.



HOW TO MEDITATE

- FIND A QUIET SPOT**

 Pick any place and time where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes.
- SIT COMFORTABLY**

 Maintain straight but relaxed back. Relax shoulders, arms, legs. Sit cross-legged on the floor if preferred.
- FOCUS ON BREATH**

 Focus on breath by paying attention here (at the nose), or here (at the mouth), or here (at the chest).
- FEEL THE BREATH GOING IN & OUT**

 Inhale (air rises), Exhale (air falls).
- NOTICE THOUGHTS THAT ARISE**

 It's natural for the mind to be full of thoughts. Do not fight them. Instead, observe them.
- GENTLY RETURN TO THE BREATH**

 Thoughts: PASS. Calmly let the thoughts pass and come back to the present by focusing on the breath.
- AIM FOR 5 MINUTES**
 If that's too much, start with one minute.

 A timer prevents the need to check a clock or watch.
- PRACTICE EVERYDAY**

 Be more concerned with making this a habit as opposed to the quality of the session.
- MAKE PROGRESS PATIENTLY**

 Try longer sessions. All there is to do is notice what you notice and relax in the present, unburdened by thoughts.

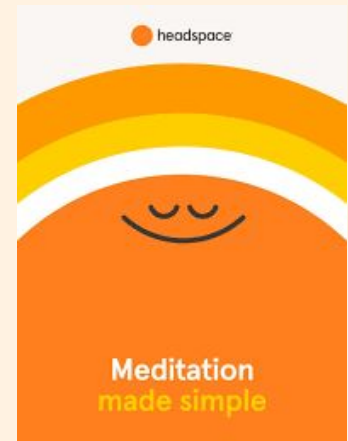
Would you like to try meditation?

Toni will host a 'have-a-go' meditation session in the Wellbeing centre after the Easter Break. Keep your eyes peeled for further notices.



Toni used the free App medita - which is also great place to start at home.

App Review: Headspace



If you had asked me a year ago whether I would have been able to sit down and take in a moment without having the immediate urge to grab my phone and send a text, or a Snap, or whatever else, I would have laughed. Our lives and our experiences today are often fast paced, instantaneous, momentary - possessing the quality to completely empty your mind of all thoughts and reflect is truly very rare these days, particularly with the rise of digital attention span-devouring titans like TikTok and Instagram.

Headspace is an app that looks to reverse this change - a 'rehab' for most of us with our minds brimming with thoughts, worries and reminders. As you open the app, it instantly greets you with scenarios, reminding you to:

"Breathe in, breathe out."

A phrase like that seems almost outlandish in today's fast paced society, but for me it has been vital in restoring a sense of order in my mind ever since I installed the app and started using it. Headspace has a myriad of features that also include tools to help you wind down and sleep, as well as personalised lessons and activities to do on a daily basis at various times a day to help nullify the many thoughts pounding inside your brain even as you read this.

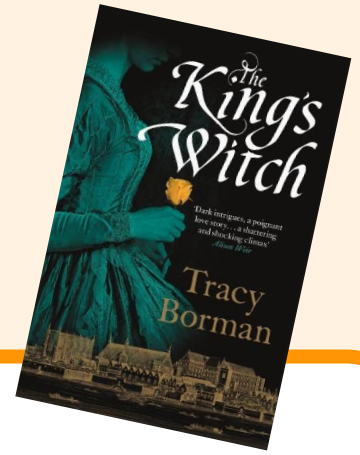
To conclude, Headspace has undoubtedly been instrumental in improving my, and 70 million other users', mental wellbeing and it has helped me to disconnect from every thought in my mind once in a while - something almost impossible in this day and age made trivial by a simple app that took me seconds to install on a random Friday afternoon last year.

by Aadarsh

If you use an App that helps with your wellbeing and you would like to write a review for a future edition, let us know.

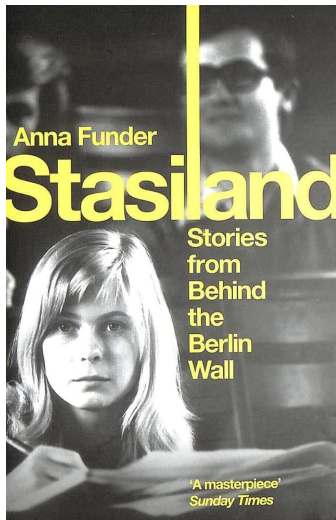
Reviews

The King's Witch and Stasiland by Mrs Webber



Mrs Webber is an avid reader. Here she reviews some of the books she has enjoyed recently.

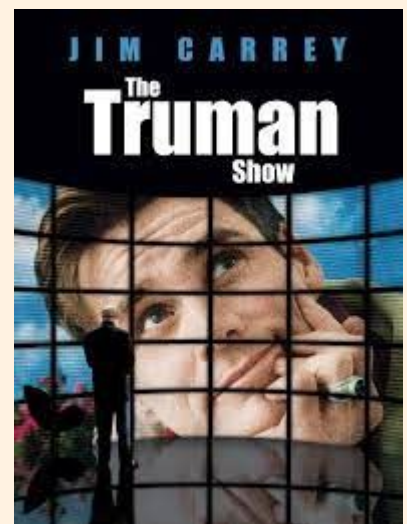
I have been enjoying reading the three-part historical fiction series by Tracey Borman about the reign of James I and the ongoing impact of the Reformation on England. Her novels are well researched and create a vivid picture of how instable and changeable life in the royal court was with lots of scheming and plots. The first one is called **The King's Witch** about the gunpowder plot. I think historical fiction can build historical imagination and a sense of the past in an enjoyable and engaging way.



I always read some history alongside fiction and am currently enjoying **Stasiland** by Anna Funder. In each chapter she describes an interview or encounter with someone who either worked for the Stasi or had their life impacted by them in East Germany. The small individual stories create an engaging read as she unpicks the horror, shock and even humour of widespread citizen surveillance and state control. I enjoy reading because I enjoy learning about things I don't know about, being exposed to ideas and themes I may not have encountered otherwise and learning to empathise with experiences different from my own. It is a wonderful way to relax at the end of a busy day and I often listen to audiobooks on my commute.

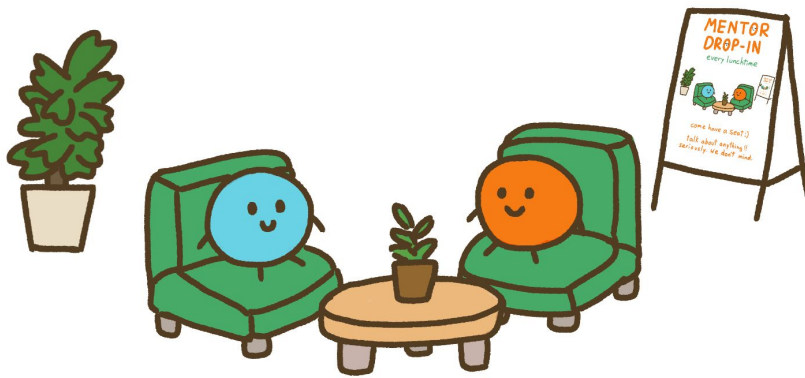
The Truman Show by Mr Brown

A 1990s Hollywood movie about a man who lives in a bubble, cut off from the world. As played by the wonderful Jim Carrey, the plot sees Truman Burbank surrounded by actors with his every move dogged by cameras. Truman stares at a stage set and believes it is real. Directed by Peter Weir, a concept so cleverly conceived and brilliantly executed that it almost seems like a fresh thought, even if it is slightly Orwellian! The film is political, provocative, and preposterous all at once. Even if it doesn't intrigue you, it forms the basis of a very witty exercise.



MENTOR DROP-IN

every lunchtime

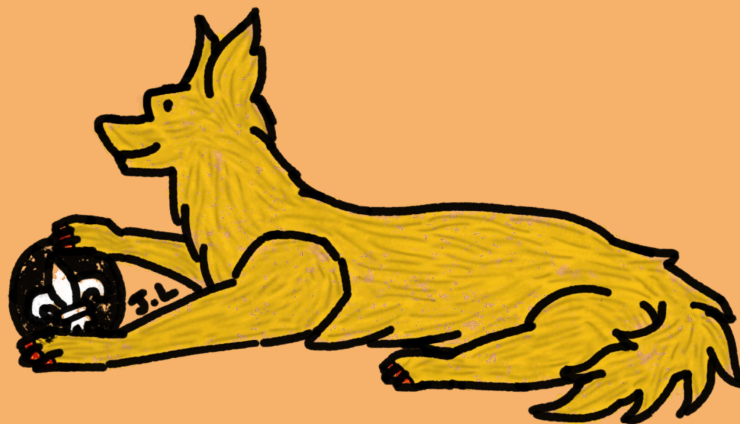


come have a seat:)

talk about anything!!
seriously. we don't mind.



non sibi sed omnibus



If you have ideas for items that could be included in a future Wellbeing Update, including recommendations of books, apps, tips or activities, please speak to or e-mail Ms Banner. srb@wilsonsschool.sutton.sch.uk or the Wellbeing prefect Ewan fergusine@wilsonsschool.sutton.sch.uk