


AT THE 
OF FAMILY LIFE

JANUARY 2021

ni4kids

MAGAZINE



FAMILY LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

Keeping Relationships Rosy



MAGIC & MINDFULNESS

With Joel M



PARENTS' OPINION

Transfer Test Trauma

WIN

An RSPB NI Big Garden
Birdwatch bird feeder hamper,
an Elave Derma Skincare Kit,
Children's A-Z Nutrition Flash
Cards and more...

FOSTER CARERS URGENTLY NEEDED IN NORTHERN IRELAND

ACTION FOR CHILDREN HAVE MADE AN URGENT CALL FOR POTENTIAL FOSTER CARERS TO COME FORWARD IN NORTHERN IRELAND.



Avery Bowser, children's services manager, explained: "The need is very great in Northern Ireland at the moment but the numbers coming forward have been too small. We know that there are lots of people who have the space in their home to foster but they are often put off by myths about fostering. They think it's only for certain types of people. We need people from different backgrounds and communities to become foster carers because our children are all so different. At Action for Children we provide foster families that have the warmth and stability that enable children to cope with the changes that life brings them. We do that by recruiting ordinary people, from all walks of life, who do something extraordinary – become a foster carer."

Avery is asking readers to think about fostering or encourage someone else who could foster. "All kinds of people can foster. You have to be over 21, have a spare room, the ability to work with children and have the time in your life to give. So please give our friendly fostering team a call. The need in Belfast is very urgent and I am appealing for your help."

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer or would like to find out more, please contact Action for Children's fostering team on 028 90460500 or email fostercareni@actionforchildren.org.uk

Room for more

Start your fostering journey with us



Contact our friendly Fostering Team today:
028 9046 0500 fostercareni@actionforchildren.org.uk
[actionforchildren.org.uk/fostering](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/fostering) @AFCNIFostercare 

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I think it's safe to say – mimicking a famous quote from Star Wars – “This isn't the year we are looking for”... so far. As our series of unfortunate events continues into 2021, unfortunately no amount of Jedi mind tricks are going to fool us into thinking that these next few weeks, perhaps months, are going to be easy. However, another quote from one of my favourite movies, Batman: The Dark Knight reminds us, “The night is darkest just before the dawn”. It feels really tough right now I know, so the entire raison d'être of this issue of Ni4kids (been practising French from my school days once again with my eldest while he's remote learning) is to help you and your family live your best life in lockdown. On page 8 Matt Hood is on hand to offer some expert advice to guide you through your temporary takeover of your child's education; Relate NI counsellor Ali Templeton shares her suggestions for maintaining healthy relationships through lockdown on page 10 and if you're in search of some assistance to help with home learning, ideas for exercise or just awesome activities for the kids to enjoy indoors then you'll find all you need in our Essential Resources List on pages 18 & 19.

The one thing we can all agree on is that

THIS ISSUE

ON THE COVER

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- 11 ► COFFEE & CATCH-UP



the pandemic has been a huge disruption to our children's education and that has now continued into this new year with the news that the planned transfer tests will now no longer take place this January. In our parents' opinion piece on pages 6 & 7, we find out how local parents and P7 pupils are feeling as the curse of COVID continues to impact our children. But one ray of sunshine for me this month was chatting to the charming Joel M (page 11) who is not only championing the depression charity AWARE's exciting new children's campaign 'Express Yourself' but just wants to bring a little magic into all our lives.

Stay safe x

Nadia X

Get in touch: Email me at editor@ni4kids.com

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**POWER UP YOUR
BUSINESS**
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ni4kids

160,000 adults reached across print,
digital and third party platforms are
waiting to hear your message!

Kantar Millward Brown June 2018
Read/Interacted Last 4 Weeks

Wellington College Belfast

www.wellingtoncollegebelfast.org

Tel: (028) 9064 2539



Welcome to Wellington College Belfast, a naturally integrated grammar school where academic challenge is underpinned by exceptional pastoral care.

Accepting applications through both the AQE and PPTC testing routes, a Wellington education supports each pupil to find their own pathway to success. We work in partnership, engaging as learners, growing as leaders, and preparing for life. Together.

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100%
5 A*-C
Including
English & Maths

A Level
93%
3 A*-C

86%
of Year 14
students
proceed to
University

*Life in my bubble has been nothing but brilliant.
Every single day.*

Year 8 Student - 2020



Engage | Educate | Empower



Wellington College has a well-deserved reputation as a caring school with a strong pastoral and academic ethos. The College emphasises individual fulfilment and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of education and holds high expectations of all pupils in terms of behaviour and schoolwork.

The College offers a rich and varied extra-curricular programme catering for artistic and dramatic talents as well as sporting prowess and more cerebral pursuits. In addition, pupils have the opportunity to broaden their horizons through a range of trips and visits in a variety of local, national and international settings including sporting trips, language trips and the annual ski trip.

The College believes that to prepare all students for the challenges they face in the future, its job is to present them with as many opportunities as possible in which they can adapt, compete and develop into successful citizens of the future.



THE SUNSHINE SHADE - BRIGHTEN UP DULL DAYS

From bottom clockwise: Kids Yellow Wellies, £15, RNLI Shop | Geoff the Giraffe Storage Bookcase, £129, Red Candy | Kids Knitted Thermal Cap, £5.90, Uniqlo | Showerproof Rubber Coat (ages 1-6), £39.95, Joules | Kids Room Posters (Set of 2) Digital Download, £10.20, Etsy | Sunny Day Cushion, £28, Red Candy | Bean Bag Chair, £33.99, Wayfair | Winnie The Pooh Towel Range, From £6, George at Asda | Giant 32cm Yellow Rubber Duck, £14.99, Gift and Gadget | Harry Potter™ Cotton House Sweatshirt (6-16 Yrs), £18, M&S | Yellow Babygro, Was £17 Now £8.50, Alex and Alexa

5 Hours

The amount of time parents have spent a week playing video games with their kids in recent months – as a way to stay connected.

Everybody's Talking About

NEWS | PRODUCTS | PEOPLE | PLACES

45%

The number of parents who say they'll miss spending so much time with their kids once they go back to school

Children's Mental Health During COVID-19

More than 50 per cent of parents feel that this year's lockdowns have had a detrimental effect on their children's mental wellbeing, according to new research. More than four in 10 said that since the outbreak of Covid-19, they have seen their children display behaviours that suggest they are experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety. A third said their children have shown a lack of energy and enthusiasm since last March, and one in five are concerned they are no longer sleeping very well. Perhaps most worryingly, a quarter said they don't think they would be able to identify if their child was struggling with mental health. Almost half (48 per cent) of the 1,000 parents of four-12-year-olds who took part in the research said they felt that Covid-19 had also "negatively impacted" on their children's friendships. The research was commissioned by Tangle Teezer, which is working with top TV child psychologist Dr Sam Wass from the award-winning Channel 4 series 'The Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds', on a campaign to help parents get their children to open



up to them during haircare time. Dr Wass, said: "The last few months have been a massively stressful time for everyone, but for children, who tend to live much more 'in the moment' it has been a particularly tough few months. It's natural that we as parents want to support our children through this difficult period, but getting them to open up can be hard."

Dr Wass has provided the following tips for 'detangling the day' with children:

- Face-to-face isn't always best – a lot of the best, most relaxed conversations happen while you're both facing forwards.
- Physical touch is relaxing – like touching on the head, which is a particularly trusting form of touch.
- Start with some of their favourite topics – if you've a particular question that you want to ask, don't come straight to it.
- Use open-ended questions and be patient – avoid questions with a yes/no answer.
- Don't deny their feelings, and don't try to 'fix' things - it's tempting, particularly with our children, to tell them what they should (or shouldn't) be feeling.
- Show your vulnerable side – we're used to being the strong ones – but it can help to say that you're having a difficult time too.

Free Online Safety Talks For Parents

With the recent closure of most schools in Northern Ireland many parents will be facing, once again, the challenges of home schooling while working from home themselves. This, together with the advice to stay at home as much as possible, will inevitably mean that children will be spending much more time online. NSPCC NI are delivering free 30 minute webinars for parents, grandparents and carers which can be adapted to add content relevant to the particular age group and concerns of the parents attending. They are free to join and are presented by experienced NSPCC staff, who provide advice, tips, and signposting to free resources and extra support. Topics include: Why children enjoy using the internet and how it can help them, as well as the risks and concerns that families might have about their child's use of the internet, exploring how families can navigate the digital landscape together safely. If you'd like to organise one of the webinars for yourself or on behalf of a group (community group, staff team or school), email parentworkshops@nspcc.org.uk for advice on keeping your children safe online visit Net-Aware.org.uk

Significant Investment To Support Remote Learning

Education Minister Peter Weir has outlined the significant investment of £7million that has been provided this year to support remote learning. The Minister welcomed that to date, up to 24,000 devices have been made available to support pupils to engage with remote learning, with up to 10,000 further devices being purchased for learners as a matter of urgency. This includes the provision of laptops for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. The Minister said: "Undoubtedly, face-to-face learning is the optimal approach for children and young people. However, as a system, we are now significantly better prepared and equipped to deliver remote learning than we were last March. Additional funding has been provided to the Education Authority to continue to improve services available, including a number of additional learning applications and upgraded bandwidth. The Minister's update comes as schools move to providing remote education due to the current public health situation. Primary and post-primary pupils, except for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, will learn remotely until the February half-term. Concluding, the Minister said: "I am committed to continue to do all I can to support those who need access to technology that supports their learning at this time."

WIN A SET OF A-Z NUTRITION FLASH CARDS

Designed by Clare Hegarty – nutritionist and fussy eating expert to help you raise healthy, happy eaters – the 26 brightly-coloured, laminated flash cards are designed to help kids enjoy the journey to great nutrition and teach them about food in a simple, yet fun, way. Packed with fun and interesting facts about a variety of different fruits and vegetables, there are also delicious and easy-to-follow breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack recipes on the back.

Getting kids involved in the kitchen at an early age and letting them experiment is a very important step in helping them develop a positive relationship with food. Whether you want to improve your child's diet, encourage picky eaters to try more foods or to educate your little ones about nutrition and have some fun along the way, these cards are the perfect teaching tool and an ideal size for little hands to hold.

We have three sets to give away, so to be in with a chance to win go to ni4kids.com/competitions and answer this question:

Q) WHEN TEACHING CHILDREN THE ALPHABET, THE LETTER A IS USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH WHICH FRUIT? A) APPLE B) APRICOTS OR C) AVOCADO

Find out more about Clare and her work at clarehegartynutrition.com



T&Cs: The closing date for this competition is Friday 12 February 2021. Editor's decision is final. Usual Ni4kids T&Cs apply. Visit ni4kids.com/competitions for details.



Transfer Test Trauma

Alongside health, education has dominated headlines from the very start of the Covid-19 crisis – from school and college closures to home schooling during periods of lockdown, and from concerns around the virus spreading on packed school buses to cancelled exams, the long-term impact of the pandemic on a whole generation of children is still yet unknown. At the start of what should have been the first week of a new term for the majority of schoolchildren, two shock announcements came on the same day (Tuesday 5 January) that pupils would not be returning to the classroom until after the half term break in mid-February and that and in light of this decision to close schools, the planned AQE and GL assessment tests in January would no longer go ahead.

Later on the same day, in a statement by the board of AQE, it was confirmed that although their three assessment sessions on the planned dates of 9, 16 and 23 January 2021 could no longer take place, the assessment would be reduced to a single paper on Saturday 27 February, provided 'public health conditions allowed'. The statement went on to explain the reasons for a 'rescheduling' rather than a complete 'scrapping' of the test which included that it is the view of the member schools that academic selection represents the fairest way of allocating grammar school places rather than by random criteria such as family ties, geographical proximity to a school or some form of lottery for places and that while information was available from post-primary schools to provide grades in GCSEs, A levels and BTec qualifications in 2020, AQE does not have access to alternative information from primary schools which could be used to match pupils to schools. After so many disruptions already to their final two years at primary school, we wanted to know if parents and P7 children registered to take the tests wanted them to go ahead, or be cancelled

completely, and took to our social channels to find out.

Academic selection has always been an extremely emotive issue in Northern Ireland and there was an overwhelming response to the question we posed on whether the tests should take place at all this year with hundreds of comments pouring in. Many parents whose child was due to sit the test felt strongly that if at all possible they absolutely should, saying after one postponement already this year (the tests were rescheduled from the original November and December dates to January) it would be cruel to cancel now after all the hard work that children had put in to prepare. Mum **Ricci McCoy** said, "My son is not stressed now but cancelling at this late stage would cause him stress", **Katie McLaughlin** agreed adding, "My son has worked hard for over a year for these tests including over his Christmas holidays – by choice! To cancel now would be cruel", **Judith Dane** believes, "There is no doubt that this year has posed problems for all schoolchildren but to cancel tests now will further affect their mental health and, with no viable alternative, will bring chaos to

the whole transfer process. I am fully satisfied that the test centre where my son is enrolled at is a safe environment" and **Lynne Simpson** thought there would be "astronomical mental health repercussions if they are cancelled at this extremely late stage." Many parents were extremely fearful that if the tests did not go ahead their child stood little chance of getting a place in the school that they had set their heart on if other selection criteria was used instead of the test score. **Sara Gilpin** wrote, 'If exams are cancelled we wouldn't stand a chance of getting into the school my son wants to attend' and this was also a concern for mum **Clare Morton** who shared with us a little about how the entire family were feeling at the thought of the tests being cancelled permanently. She commented, "It has been exhausting. We have been stressed, gutted, terrified and relieved again." Clare also expressed her opinion that she, 'really wished they could change the location of the tests back to the primary schools where children could remain in their own class bubbles.' And teacher **Samantha McMullan** emailed in to say that she felt 'frustrated' and



her son was 'completely fed up' adding, "As the parent of an only child I know from personal experience, only children and eldest siblings of families who do not get government support, find it much harder to be assigned a place in schools as they are usually much further down the criteria list than most." Returning the location of the test centres to the child's own primary school has been the aim of the #BringItBackToPrimary campaign by Bangor mum **Naomi McBurney** who has added over 7,000 signatures to her petition so far. She commented, "Our P7 children have endured so much this year and it is crucial they come first in all further decisions around post primary transfer tests. Minister Weir has already indicated his support for #BringItBackToPrimary and I would therefore urge all stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions to make this happen. The Education Minister must provide absolute clarity to primary school principals

and their Boards of Governors on what hosting unregulated tests means and what it doesn't mean. Nothing replaces the security a child feels in their home primary school. Our children deserve better. If tests continue after this year, #BringItBackToPrimary is better for every child wishing to gain a place in a selective grammar school. They should be supported at every turn if they wish to take part in this integral system." However, despite huge numbers of parents and children wanting the tests to go ahead this year, there was also a large swell of support for the conviction that they should definitely not. One commenter, **Rhonda Murdock**, expressed shock that some parents still wanted the tests to proceed stating, "I cannot believe parents are willing to risk the health of their child/children, teachers, families and other members of the public for a transfer test. My son is due to sit these tests and wants to go to the grammar school. He has worked hard but his health is so much more important." **Joanne Elder**, added, "These are unprecedented times and we're in the midst of a global pandemic with a recent upsurge in a new and very highly

transmissible strain of covid-19. I think common sense has to prevail. Is mass testing of our children at this current time therefore absolutely necessary?" **Marco Borghesi** agreed that the health of the greater public should be at the centre of the decision and said, "There is a significant risk not only to the health of the children and their family, but more in general to public health. Testing centres may be taking their own precautions, but I am not convinced that having 200 children from multiple schools sitting together in a room during a lockdown at the height of a pandemic can be safe." Echoing these sentiments, mum, **Emma Marley**, said: "Taking away the debate of whether academic selection is right or wrong, the main issue here is health and safety. I do want my son to be given the chance to sit the exams he has worked so hard for, but at what cost?" While **Kate Devlin** described hospitals as being 'on their knees' adding, "The health and wellbeing of my children, my family and the community is surely more important?"

One dad, **Eamon Graham**, said, "Cancel them. My daughter has worked hard but safety should be the priority at this stage. Any social setting is unsafe at present." Seventeen post-primary schools across Northern Ireland had already announced that they would not be using AQE and/or GL Assessment results to select pupils for 2021 admissions by the first week in January. The issue was also at the forefront of the government agenda with tense talks at Stormont. Sinn Féin, SDLP and Alliance ministers argued the planned single test run by the AQE on 27 February should not go ahead due to the Covid-19 crisis, however it was agreed that Education Minister Peter Weir would present a paper on the issue at a future meeting. Then, just at the time of publishing this issue, the drama surrounding the controversial topic continued. In a statement the AQE board said: "Due to the ongoing uncertainty about the potential for an extended period of lockdown, the Board of AQE Limited has decided to recommend to our grammar schools that there should be no assessment offered by AQE in this academic year. The health and safety of the children due to sit the exams is our top priority." Following the announcement **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Koulla Yiasouma**, said: "Children, parents and schools have worked hard to prepare for this test and I understand that many will be disappointed it has now been cancelled. This, albeit too late in the day and following rollercoaster decision making, is the right decision for our children. It is not in the best interests of children to sit this external test, especially considering the current infection

rate, lost classroom time, differences in quality of remote learning and the impact of all of this on their mental health. No one can predict what the situation will be like on 27 February and it would have been unfair to continue to leave children and parents with this uncertainty until that time. It is unfortunate that we are in this situation, I called for discussions on alternative arrangements to begin last spring like they did for GCSEs and A Levels. It is disgraceful they did not. It is my expectation the relevant authorities will now undertake work to make sure children and parents have confidence in the transfer from primary to post primary schools for all children." The Minister of Education said: "I am disappointed that AQE will not be operating a test this year on the grounds of public health. This will also be very disappointing for many pupils and parents. It is clear that public health and the wider Covid-19 situation has prevented the transfer test taking place this year. Transfer tests have never been compulsory for any school nor any student, but what they have provided for many has been parental choice and opportunity for children to gain a place at a post-primary school of their choosing. Today's announcement diminishes that choice significantly. In view of the ongoing public health situation, I had recommended to Boards of Governors that they should prepare contingency criteria in the event the transfer tests did not go ahead. These criteria should be finalised soon by schools and will be published by the Education Authority on 2 February. However, in light of the changes today, we are extending the date for schools to submit final admissions criteria to the Education Authority, until 22 January. My officials will issue further correspondence to schools."

ni4kids' View

As parents all we ever want is the best for our children, and we will always do our utmost to ensure that happens, particularly when it comes to their education. We teach our children that if they work hard in school that they will be rewarded, and it's completely understandable that many parents and children who elected to take the transfer tests this year wanted them to take place if at all possible. It is also equally important to recognise that through no fault of their own, many children would have been disadvantaged by all the disruptions to their education this year and of course that in the current situation, public health concerns must take priority. Unfortunately, the ultimate end to this saga of transfer trauma 20/21 is bound to leave thousands of children feeling disappointed, let down and possibly living with the repercussions of it all for many years to come.

A LITTLE HELPING HAND WITH HOME LEARNING



Supporting your children with home learning can be a daunting prospect for many parents. This is especially true for those working from home – or supporting more than one child at a time – so we asked Matt Hood, principal of online learning resource hub Oak National Academy, to offer some expert advice to guide you through your temporary takeover of your child's education...

For many of us, it's been a fair few years since we've polished up our poetry skills or recalled the equation to measure a change in thermal energy, so suddenly being the adult supporting a child in their learning can feel overwhelming. This is such a difficult time for everyone, but I hope these top tips for parents and guardians will help you in some small way conquer the challenges of the coming weeks.

1. Follow the advice of your child's school Your child's school will be developing a clear plan for what your child should learn, and when. They're also experts in how children learn, so listen to their advice and follow their plan as closely as your situation allows. Given how quickly the changes were announced, be patient. Teachers will be working hard to create new plans and communicate these as quickly as possible to parents. Many schools will make use of online platforms allowing your child's teachers to assess work, provide 1-2-1 support and advice as well as teach the vulnerable and key worker children who will still attend school.

2. Establish a clear routine Children are creatures of habit and routine and applying themselves to learning at home in the same way they do at school will take some time to fall into place. You should also work up a clear structure to your 'school' day. For younger children in particular, it can be really beneficial to write a timetable up together and display it somewhere they can clearly see it. If you have the space, set a clear area for learning to take place – somewhere well-lit is ideal – and remove any distractions before the lessons begin. Make sure to have a clear start and end to the day so children's wellbeing is prioritised as well.



3. Build time for other things into your day Times are challenging for all of us, not least children, and a child's physical and mental wellbeing is as vitally important to look after as their learning. Building in time for cooking, daily exercise, puzzles or reading for pleasure is a great way to break up learning into manageable periods and help with any difficulties with focus or screen fatigue children might experience.

4. Don't try to replace the teacher The vast majority of parents embarking on supporting home learning during national restrictions will not be trained teachers. Luckily, no one is expecting you to be! It's okay to tell your child if you're unsure of a topic or skill they are learning. In fact, it can be a really powerful and rewarding experience to approach the learning of something new to you both together. Learning alongside them can be really encouraging for a child – getting frustrated that you don't know all the answers is not good for either of you so embark on the learning journey together!

5. Recognise their effort and stay positive! We've heard the word 'unprecedented' enough times now – we know we're living through unusual times and challenges that none of us expected to face. Keep your child's motivation up by keeping positive and encouraging their efforts.



Chances are they are worried, confused, missing their friends and navigating a brand-new way of learning. And if they have a tough day when it's not going to plan... that's fine, start afresh tomorrow.

Oak National Academy is an online classroom and resource hub created by teachers during the first lockdown in April 2020 and provides free access to nearly 10,000 high-quality video lessons and resources for every year group from reception through to GCSE. There are also lessons for SEND children. Lessons can be accessed for free via their online classroom.

Run, have fun & take steps to stronger health – Sign up for the Red Dress Run

Four years, four Red Dress Runs, two full marathons and a multitude of half marathons later, 39-year-old Graham Ross from Whitehead is taking to the streets, the airwaves and online to help inspire families across the country to run, have fun and take steps to stronger health by signing up to Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke's annual Red Dress Run.

Sadly, the pandemic has impacted hugely on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of many people and Graham is hoping to inspire and encourage local families to take steps to stay healthy by taking part in the charity's Virtual Red Dress Run, sponsored by MACE, on Sunday 21 February. Graham feels passionately about raising awareness and funds for the charity and has spent the last few years running many miles in memory of his dad, Cameron Ross who tragically died on 4 June 2016 from a massive stroke. Speaking about why he runs, Graham said: "I lost my dad to a massive stroke in 2016 and for the last four years I've been running the Red Dress Run in memory of him. With every step I take, I get to raise money and remember him. I think he'd be proud of

the steps I'm taking to keep my family and I healthy. I also run for my little daughter, Eva who's 5 years old. Being fit and healthy for my family means everything to me and I hope I can inspire other local families to get out and take positive steps to keep well mentally and physically, especially during the pandemic. By supporting NI Chest Heart and Stroke, step by step, we can work together to keep local hearts healthy and help rebuild healthy lives for people with chest, heart and stroke conditions and remember the loved ones we've lost to them like my dad."

Dressed as superhero The Flash, Graham and his family will be doing their 5K on the 21st February, but don't worry if you can't take part on the day – you can run or walk your 5K within your local area



or from your home, at a time that best suits you. By taking part in the event as part of National Heart Month in February, runners will be helping NI Chest Heart and Stroke to rebuild thousands of lives across Northern Ireland. Signing up and taking part in the Red Dress Run, together – step by step – will help get local people fit, healthy and back on their feet. Sign up now and receive your fundraising pack – visit: nichs.org.uk/RedDressRun or call Tel 028 9032 0184

Event information: **Virtual Red Dress Run**
(Supported by **MACE**)

Date: Sunday 21 Feb 2021, 11am

Location: In your local area

Distance: 5K run or walk

Entry: £10 (Under 14s – FREE)

Suggested
sponsorship
Target: £50

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

STEP by STEP

We will help get you back on your feet.

Re-building Lives across
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Find out more at www.nichs.org.uk

Chest
Heart &
Stroke



Navigating The New Lockdown

In the coming weeks many of us will have returned to working and learning from home. Without the structure that schools and workplaces provide, it can be difficult for parents to manage the competing demands on us from our jobs, our children's education and our home life. To help you find a strategy that works for your family, Relate NI counsellor and head of Clinical Service Ali Templeton shares her suggestions for maintaining healthy relationships through lockdown...

Set Routine & Rewards

This can be difficult, but it is important and allows both of you to focus time to complete work as well as time to relax and rejuvenate. Set clear boundaries and know when to hold your children accountable, but also when to let things slide. Rewards systems may help motivate your children and create a sense of accomplishment.

Prioritise Materials & Subjects

Concentrate on the things you know your kids enjoy and what you have at your disposal. If you live close to a park or woodland, you could take a nature walk and do a lesson about local biodiversity. Get your children involved in preparing meals and teach them about nutrition.

Prepare for Phone Calls

If you have a scheduled meeting, prepare an activity to occupy your children in advance. Try putting on an age-appropriate documentary or game that they do not need much help with. If you are interrupted during an important online meeting, try to remember that children may not

grasp that they are interrupting, chances are your employers will understand and may be experiencing similar issues.

Exercise

Try and do some exercise such as walking, running or dancing every day. A short walk can easily turn into an outdoor lesson by visiting nearby landmarks or hunting for different tree or animal species.

Answering your Children's Questions

"Is this ever going to end?" is a question that parents and guardians around the globe are hearing from their children on a regular basis. Try and be honest with your children, answering any questions and addressing the uncertainty and fear surrounding the pandemic as best you can. Be realistic with your children and keep it as an ongoing conversation rather than making promises we may not be able to keep. Children know that something big is happening and keeping them informed through regular communication prevents them worrying more than they need too. It also gives you the opportunity to share facts and clear up frightening misinformation they may have heard elsewhere. Try to focus on positive developments such as the roll out of the vaccine. Restrictions are very unsettling for children, their routine, school and home life have been completely turned upside down. Encourage them to tell you how they are feeling and make sure to validate their feelings or concerns whatever they may be. It may also be useful to explain to them that you sometimes feel worried or angry and share with them the ways in which you deal with those emotions.

Relationships

The uncertainty around the pandemic is naturally adding pressure to our lives and our relationships. Emotions may be heightened so try and be extra patient and



understanding, not only with each other but also with ourselves. Some ways in which you can nurture healthy relationships over lockdown are:

Schedule Time - If you have set time aside for an activity, try your best to follow through and make this happen so as not to add to further uncertainty for children. Likewise, create time to be rest and relax alone. In order to care for others, we must first care for ourselves. Our relationship with our selves is the most important one we have.

Communicate to Connect - Include children and young People in decisions as much as possible. Listen to their hopes and wishes and be respectful of their feelings. Encourage young people to be active participants in setting boundaries. They will see that their opinions matter and be more likely to honour the guidelines set.

Give Way - Try to move away from always needing to be 'right' because that means the other person has to be 'wrong.' Explore how you can both have your needs met and how compromising can create mutually supportive solutions.

Remember that whilst there will be challenges, there are also great opportunities. We can get to know our children and partners better, learn new things and spend quality time together as a family. If we practice self-care and connect with people around us, our families can come out of this with greater personal strength and stronger relationship connections.

Relate NI continue to offer family counselling services at this time utilising phone and video calling and may be able to offer face-to-face sessions for those who cannot access a phone or webcam. To find out more about how you or your children may benefit from talking to a Relate NI therapist, or to download Relate NI's digital resources to help you cope with the pressures facing your relationships, go to relateni.org/relieve_the_pressure or Tel 028 9032 3454.



COFFEE & CATCH-UP

At just 23 years old, this Bangor-born magician and social media sensation is one of the most famous people in Northern Ireland right now, spellbinding seven million followers on TikTok and starring in his own show on BBC One 'Life is Magic'. His passion for good mental health, and the practice of mindfulness, has now led him to be confirmed as the face of the depression charity AWARE's exciting new children's campaign 'Express Yourself' which hopes to start many conversations on mental health in classrooms and at home, so that our children can grow up knowing that they can talk freely about what is going on inside their minds at all times. Good or bad. Ni4kids caught up (virtually) with the enchanting Joel M to find out more...

INTERVIEW BY NADIA DUNCAN

Q) Describe yourself in only five words?

Always trying to create wonder!

Q) Many children are fascinated by magic but what inspired you to pursue it as a career?

My Grandfather was a big fan of Paul Daniels and one year we went on a family summer holiday to Florida where we discovered a shop that sold magic tricks and ended up spending most of our time there. My Grandfather bought me a few and it was down the rabbit hole from there on. I was about six years old when I performed my first trick so it's been 17 years now. The one I get asked to do the most is unlocking people's mobile phones but when I'm on stage my favourite one involves a piano – I can't explain it without spoiling the surprise so you'll have to come see it live once the theatres open again.

Q) How did you achieve your success, and what's it like knowing that you have such a huge number of people following you?

I was really lucky in that I had the complete support of my parents as they saw how hard I worked at achieving my goals. As long as I worked hard at school and got the grades they encouraged me with my passion for magic. I never set out to be a social media personality – that happened completely by accident. My ambition was just to do magic but the way things are at the moment with the COVID crisis there is a huge audience on social media platforms, and it's wonderful to get their instant response, but to be honest I always think of myself as a magician first. The numbers of followers really started to grow during lockdown

as people searched for ways to be entertained at home, but you do have to remember that each of those numbers is a living, breathing person not just a 'like'. It's awesome and the best part is reading through the comments and seeing that people are engaging and saying good things – mostly. That said, I'm really looking forward to being able to get out and about in the public once again when the pandemic is over.

"What other people think of you who don't know you has nothing to do you – it says more about them than you."

Q) One of the biggest concerns that parents have about their children using social media is that they are letting people that they don't know into their life and therefore the potential for online bullying or abuse is always a reality. How do you cope with that and what is your advice on this for children and parents?

Personally, I'm glad that I didn't have such a big presence on social media when I was younger as I think I'm better at handling everything that comes with it now I'm a bit older. If you have concerns you can either prevent the comments from coming in, or fix your privacy settings, but for me the best way to manage it is your mindset on it. With every hate comment I remember that the person who left it is probably in a far worse place than I am in their head to leave it. It's taken a

bit of time to get used to, but I can now look at those comments and not feel anything either way. But if you look and don't care about negative comments, you also shouldn't have your ego boosted too much by the positive ones as that could be just as dangerous and make you put too much pressure on yourself. What other people think of you who don't know you has nothing to do you – it says more about them than you.

Q) You are a huge advocate of prioritising mental health in young people. Why is this so important right now and particularly as we start another lockdown?

At the moment we aren't getting to see friends and family in the same capacity and we have to keep making the effort to have real conversations on platforms like Zoom. You can be in group chat all you want but it's good to have as much human connection as we can right now. I can't imagine how we would have coped if this had happened years ago when we didn't have the technology to keep in touch. We're also on our phones way too much scrolling through social. We can be sitting in the same room as our family members yet not speaking or being aware of them as we stare at our smartphones. As good as social media is, I think we should all, including me, try and get offline more and remember it's not real life. One

thing I do every day which I have found really helps me is gratitude practice. I write down five things every day that I feel grateful for that day – it could even be as simple as a good cup of coffee. It's amazing how thinking about the little things that bring you joy can get your day off to a much more positive start.

Q) You've now teamed up with Aware to launch an incredible competition launching for Children's Mental Health Week in February aimed at primary 6 & 7 pupils, so how do kids get involved?

It's an amazing idea and anything that we can do to encourage children to express themselves at this time is fantastic. Sometimes it can be hard for any of us to discuss the emotions we feel so we are asking children in this age group to write a poem and give them freedom to de-brief on life during a pandemic – and I'll be judging! I loved English at school so I'm hoping kids keep me busy with lots of homework, reading all the entries, and that through creativity we can encourage the topic of mental health to be normalised among our country's children! The lucky winners will appear on my socials in front of millions of people while I teach them some tricks, and the winning schools are in for a magical performance at their own assembly. Kids could even win one of the hoodies that I'm wearing in this photo!



School principals or teachers of P6 & P7 students can enter or register their interest by emailing poems@aware-ni.org Visit aware-ni.org/express-yourself for more information!

AWARE
OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.

GRAB MORE GREENS

Former teacher and Australian Masterchef contestant Alice Zaslavsky's modern, accessible approach to cooking has been honed through a career that spans champion Australian food critic, writer, television host and food literacy advocate. Alice is also the creator of Phenomenom, a digital toolbox that helps teachers slip more serves of veg into the teaching curriculum. Hailed by Nigella Lawson as 'a force of nature' Alice's new cookbook is a wonderful veg-forward bible to help us ponder our protein choices, help the environment and make room for more veggies on our plate...



Alice cites the inspiration for her online platform **Phenomenon** as her time spent as a teacher before her MasterChef stint, and therefore understands the power of introducing new ideas – like loving vegetables – via the classroom, because it's where kids are spongy and ready to learn, adding, "I also know that teachers are always on the hunt for great new resources, so I thought if I could make them freely accessible, engaging and meaningful for teaching all sorts of subjects, from Maths to English to Science, then they'd get used. The growers of fresh produce here in Australia have supported the programme, along with funds from the federal government, so it's all completely free, which removes the natural barrier of cost that often means these sorts of tools don't reach the people who need them most. Over time, we've added more resources specifically for families and the home, like the podcast, which is designed to be listened to on the way to or from school, so that parents can get in on the learning and change the conversation and language we use around veg. It's my hope that it will help support big changes to the way we think and talk about vegetables with kids. And isn't it about time?" Currently Phenomenon is unique

to Australia, but is it still a useful resource to teachers and parents here in the UK and Ireland? Alice says, "Absolutely! The resources, videos, lesson plans, podcast episodes – even a fun physical activity wheel with fruit and veg inspiring the shapes – are all freely available via phenomenom.com.au and even though they're aligned to the Australian national curriculum, there are plenty of lessons that can be used anywhere in the world. We're also in contact with likeminded thinkers and programme creators – like the Taste Ed team from the UK and elsewhere. It's a positive approach to health and wellbeing as well as learning about food by cultivating curiosity rather than listing off nutrients, which I certainly do hope to see more of in the world." Many of the recipes in Alice's new cookbook *In Praise of Veg* are centred around a primary vegetable and divided by colour. Explaining why she comments, "Many people are keen to eat more veg and so might buy them without necessarily

knowing what to do – or even what they're called! I've organised my book by colour so that even if you don't know what the vegetable's called, you can find it in the book, as well as inspiration for what to do with it. It's also really easy to refer to the colour on the page edges to find what you're looking for quickly, which is extra handy for busy families looking for a

midweek meal." Getting our kids to eat what's good for them is a constant struggle – so what's her top tip? "Stop talking about what's good for them! Kids are naturally curious and want to learn about their world. They'll be far more likely to try new things and expand their eating if you take the pressure off. I find share plates are the best way to give them the opportunity to try new foods without feeling attached to what they actually eat. Try including

two things you know they'll eat and a third that might include a new vegetable or a different flavour that they're used to. Eat with them at the table when you can, and when they see you enjoying those foods, they'll be more likely to want to taste what they're missing out on."

"Stop talking about what's good for them! They'll be far more likely to try new things and expand their eating if you take the pressure off."

ONE PAN ROMESCO SOUP

Hailing from Catalonia, romesco is traditionally a vivid red sauce served alongside fish. Considering the hero ingredients, tomatoes and capsicums, were both introduced to the region by merchants and sailors returning from the Americas, this would once have been quite a decadent dish. It can be as much of a soup as a sauce, with the simple addition of some extra stock, a little crispy crouton action and an entirely incongruous but delicious ball of burrata – a fresh Italian mozzarella-style cheese that should have no place here, but totally works.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F). In a large casserole dish or roasting tin, combine the capsicum, garlic and all the tomatoes. Sprinkle with the paprika and cayenne pepper. Pour in the stock, olive oil and vinegar, scatter with the almonds and give it all a stir. Cover with a lid or foil and bake for 45 minutes, or until all the ingredients are softened. Remove the lid or foil and increase the oven temperature to 210°C (410°F). Bake for a further 15–20 minutes, or until the almonds are slightly toasted. Meanwhile, for the garlicky croutons, pop all the ingredients in a bowl and mix to coat evenly. Transfer to a baking tray and roast near the top of the oven for the last 15 minutes of baking. Remove from the oven and stand until required. In quarter batches, transfer the contents of your roasting vessel to a blender and whiz until smooth, transferring each batch to a soup pot. (Alternatively, transfer the whole lot to a soup pot and purée with a stick blender.) Bring the soup to a simmer and season to taste. Ladle into bowls and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with a pinch of paprika and scatter the croutons over. If using the burrata, add one ball to each bowl and use a knife to pierce the skin to let the cheesy goodness escape into the soup. Serve immediately.

TIP This soup also makes for a killer chicken parmigiana sauce – it's pretty thick already, so there's no need to reduce it down, either.



Serves 4-6: 4 red capsicums (peppers), quartered, seeds removed / 1 garlic clove, bruised / 250 g (9 oz) cherry tomatoes, on the vine / 400 g (14 oz) tinned whole peeled tomatoes / 1 teaspoon smoked paprika, plus extra to serve / ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper / 2 cups (500 ml) vegetable stock (see tip) / ½ cup (125 ml) extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve / 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar / ½ cup (65 g) slivered almonds / 4 small balls of burrata (optional) / Garlicky croutons / 350 g (12 oz) sourdough bread, cut into croutons / 2 garlic cloves, finely grated / 2 tablespoons olive oil / 50 g (1¾ oz) unsalted butter, melted

BLENDER BEETROOT BROWNIE

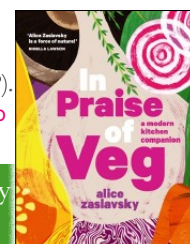
This oozy, gluten-free skillet sweetie takes inspiration from Claudia Roden's world-famous orange-almond cake, where oranges are boiled until completely soft, then used to give both flavour and moisture to an almond meal base. Except I've brownie-fied this with the addition of dark chocolate and whizzed it into a wintry wonderland with beetroot. I'm especially enamoured with the colour – a kind of deep burgundy that could almost be red-velvet – and the flavour of chocolate Jaffas. I like to keep this brownie quite gooey in the middle (like a lava cake), but if you'd prefer to slice and be more sensible, bake it for a little longer.

Boil the whole orange and beetroot together in a saucepan, topping up with boiling water regularly to keep them covered. Cook for about 1 hour, until both are soft, and you can put a skewer through them. Line a 20 cm x 30 cm (8 x 12 inch) brownie tin or skillet with baking paper. When the beetroot is cool enough to handle (but still warm), use some paper towel or a teaspoon to create some friction and help slip the skin off. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F). Pop the warm beet in a blender or food processor, along with the orange, butter and the 200 g (7 oz) chocolate. Blitz to combine, keeping the machine whirring until a smooth purée forms. Add the eggs, sugar and vanilla and blitz until incorporated. In a bowl, mix together the almond meal, flour, cocoa, walnuts and baking powder, then add these to your blitz-machine and give it a few pulses, until the lumps of flour have mostly incorporated – but not too much, lest you bake a brick! Pour the batter into the brownie tin or skillet, then dot with the extra chocolate and beetroot slices and sprinkle with salt flakes. Bake for 40–45 minutes, until the brownie is fudgy and still moist. Don't bother doing the skewer test ... it'll lead you astray. Allow to cool slightly before digging in. Serve warm with yoghurt as a decadent pudding, or cut into small slices for lunchboxes and mid-afternoon snacking. Store in an airtight container in the fridge, where it'll happily keep for at least 1 week (but who are we kidding here?).

TIP I use a mandoline to thinly slice the beetroot for garnishing, but you can also peel it into strips using a vegetable peeler.

In Praise of Veg: A Modern Kitchen Companion by Alice Zaslavsky is out now (£25, Murdoch Books). Photography by Ben Dearnley.

Serves 6-8: 1 orange (preferably organic) / 1 beetroot (beet) of a similar size to the orange, plus 1 small finely sliced beetroot / 200 g (7 oz) butter, melted / 200 g (7 oz) dark chocolate, melted, plus 50 g (1¾ oz) extra, chopped for the top / 3 eggs / 1 cup (220 g) caster (superfine) sugar / 1 teaspoon natural vanilla extract or paste / 2 cups (200 g) almond meal / ½ cup (75 g) plain (all-purpose) gluten-free flour / ½ cup (55 g) unsweetened cocoa powder / ½ cup (70 g) walnuts / 1 teaspoon baking powder / ¼ teaspoon salt flakes / yoghurt, to serve



MAKE 2021 THE HAPPIEST NEW YEAR

Words by Elizabeth McGivern

In a recent survey by YouGov nearly a quarter of people in the UK who made a resolution for 2020 failed to keep any of their promises. In a year like no other it's hard to blame them, but if you want to make a lasting change for happiness in your day-to-day family life for the year ahead, then we're here to help. Forget fad diets, crazy work-out routines or learning three new languages in your free time, we've come up with some achievable activities to introduce to your family which you can all enjoy together and get behind.



FAMILY GRATITUDE

It's well documented that the practice of gratitude can do wonders for setting you up with a positive mindset for your day. Why not make it a family event by each member saying what they're grateful for at breakfast. Starting the day with a gratitude practise around the breakfast table can help raise your children's self-esteem and increase your connection with them by giving you all a few minutes to pause and reflect, instead of simply rushing around to get the day started. The more you practise being grateful, the more you find to be grateful for! Soon you will be on the lookout for things throughout your day to be grateful for which you can share with your family.

SCREEN-FREE NIGHT

In a recent report by OfCom, it showed a startling surge in screen time during the UK's first lockdown at the start of last year. It found that people had spent 40 per cent of their day watching TV and online video services. Concern over children having excessive screen-time is not a new hot topic, but with the latest lockdown measures in place it's more important than ever to make sure that kids aren't spending too much time in front of electronic screens. With that in mind, why not make the effort to set aside one evening a week after dinner to step away from phones, tablets, televisions and game consoles – kids and adults alike – and have a screen-free evening. It could evolve into a weekly game night (think retro board games and cards) or even quizzes – if you haven't had enough of them on Zoom over the last year.

MAKE A MEAL OF IT

Kids are much more likely to try new dishes for dinner if they're involved with the cooking. Why not set aside one night where you can all choose a new meal to try and prepare together? You never know, you could have a couple of pint-sized Jamie Oliver's at home or let them channel their inner Heston Blumenthal to really think outside the box to come up with a wacky recipe for you all to try.

Cooking together is a great sensory experience for children, and it will help your child explore other senses besides taste and build positive associations with food. It's also a great way to teach kids skills such as maths and science while they have fun. They'll be naturally using numeracy through counting and measuring the ingredients and discovering how the ingredients change and transform from their raw form to the meal they sit down to eat. It will also help build their confidence in the kitchen and give them a great sense of accomplishment to finish something as important as the family's main evening meal, just make sure you're there to supervise the whole way through.

MAKE TIME TO READ

Commit to a certain time each day for 'story time' and help your children see the world through another's eyes. Reading, even to young babies, is extremely important to help with your child's development and as they get older you can even turn the tables so they read chapters of their favourite books to you. Setting this short time aside each day is a sure way to demonstrate that you want to spend quality time together and often helps children relax so they can open up and talk to you about how they're feeling. You could introduce them to some of your favourite children's books that you enjoyed at their age and relive your own happy memories with the classics.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Resolve to cut down your family's single-use plastic consumption throughout the year and work together to create a better world for your children to grow up in. Start small with cutting out plastic drink bottles in your shopping and get the kids to choose their own reusable bottle and go from there. You could even draw up a 'green' contract and note how you can each find ways to make your home and way of life more environmentally friendly. It may even result in you taking up gardening together to help grow your own veggies!

STYLE COUNSEL

JANUARY COLLECTION

WITH STEPHANIE BERKELEY



Happy New Year... or is that Happy New Tier?

Here we are, a few days into 2021 and straight into another national lockdown. With no sign of an end to restrictions, is there even any point in talking about shopping and what will the trends of 2021 be? Absolutely! But maybe shopping for spring dresses and party outfits can take a back seat at the minute while we focus on investing in things that bring you joy... For example, I ordered a Mindfulness kit from White Ivy Flowers, an independent florist I saw featured in Vogue. The package was delivered at the weekend and is intended to be an experience to help you get ready for the year to come. Flowers have such wonderful connotations, and each kit is filled with a strong sense of meaning and comes with a candle, herbal tea and a full run down on the selected blooms and what they symbolise. I chose "Revive" as I feel 2021 is a new start and I need space, tranquility and all the positivity I can get ... don't we all?



I don't know about you but I suspected that those who hoped when the clock struck midnight on 31 December that everything would go back to normal were severely disappointed. I won't lie, I was one of those who held out hope that 2021 would signify a return to normality. Well, that has happened in a way – we have returned to the normality of homeschooling and working from home in an attempt to curb the further spread of this awful virus. Like many, back in March/April I loved setting my alarm to a slightly later time, thanks to my new 'commute' to my home office being much shorter than my previous trek (*have to admit - I still love this*). Then, I learned to enjoy spending all day in my leggings or shorts as summer arrived. I quickly realised that getting up, dressed and out of your scruffs is actually the first step to success. It makes me feel like I'm going to work, gives structure to my day and I've always enjoyed getting dressed up, so why give it up?

Choosing my WFH outfits is something I still think about, and, although my co-workers (Tara, Star, my fridge and the Nespresso machine) won't judge me, I still enjoy dressing how I would if I were in the office. Okay, this being said, some days I do get showered just to put on my soft touch jogging trousers and cardy from Zara, but I try to make an effort to feel a sense of normality. When you get dressed in "real clothes," it makes you feel more alert and productive. It also helps when your boss asks you to hop on a last minute Zoom call.



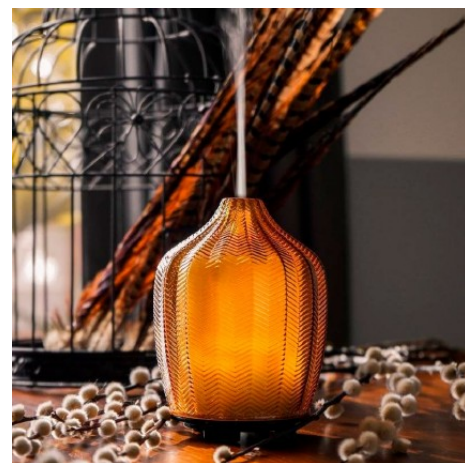
So, with my January shopping list consisting of stylish loungewear from The White Company, COS and of course High Street faves Zara and M&S, working from home may allow us to dress more comfortably but should never mean that we let our standards slip!

And what about the end of the working day? When you have finished homeschooling or working, binge watched the latest series on Netflix and found yourself bored at 9.30pm do you retire to a sanctuary of serenity and Zen? If this lockdown has taught us anything, it's that our homes affect our moods and our moods affect almost every single aspect of our lives. Where you wake up in the morning can impact how your day goes and what you come back to should ignite feelings of calm, tranquility and pleasure so maybe it should be something to direct your shopping skills to.

I have found myself getting excited about thread counts and natural fibres. I've also discovered that investing in good quality bedlinen from



Bedeck, Sanderson and V&A is well worth the extra few pounds. As well as supporting a local manufacturer, you are getting bedlinen of the highest quality that lasts, offers a sense of luxury and is actually cheaper in the long run. If you don't want to splash out too much, the Francis Brennan and Paul Costello ranges from **Dunnes Stores** are also well worth exploring.



Another key find for me has been essential oils and particularly the lotions and potions of **Rebecca Tracey**. Rebecca worked with internationally acclaimed award-winning master perfumer Nicholas Jennings before setting up her own business using only 100% natural, pure and organic handmade ingredients. Her fragrance creations include Lavender & Geranium, Patchouli & Lemongrass and one called Florence which she created during lockdown to help support the work of the NHS, all of which can be enjoyed in lotions, sprays, candles, natural reed diffusers and aromatherapy room fragrances. So this pandemic has been, and continues to be, a challenging time for all of us. It's amazing to see how much life can drastically change, and how quickly. I didn't get a proper holiday in 2020 but I've survived. I didn't get to celebrate my birthday but I've survived and I haven't had Christmas parties and social engagements but guess what? I've survived! We can get through this. We can enjoy the simple things in life and we can put our own mental wellbeing before that of others – after all, as my Mum would say, you can't pour from an empty cup!

Keep calm, take care and stay safe

Stephanie x

Follow Stephanie on Instagram - Bladonbabe

this issue we are loving...



NO MORE KNOTS

No tears, no tangles and all smiles for your child with this Vegan Society and PETA certified **Everyday Detangling Spray** for kids (£6) from **tangleteezer.com**. Formulated as a lightweight spray with a fresh and fruity scent, it helps to moisturise children's hair making it much more manageable to brush or comb through without weighing the hair down. Suitable for ages 3+.

FREE ONLINE STRESS CONTROL CLASSES

Over 94,000 people took the opportunity to learn skills to help support them in dealing with the effects of the pandemic on their mental and emotional wellbeing between June and December last year. The Public Health Agency has now announced three further courses, which will be available from 11 January through to March this year at to meet further interest and demand. Topics covered include an overview of what stress is, controlling your body and your thoughts, controlling your actions, and techniques to get a good night's sleep. The digital approach is one of the ways that services are adapting to deliver support in innovative ways during the pandemic. Participants do not have to register or log in to view the course – they simply click on the link for the course and watch the streamed classes twice a week for six weeks. The classes can be watched in the morning or evening at **ni.stresscontrol.org** and last for 90 minutes. Each course will run for three weeks and comprises of six sessions. A new session is made available at 9am on Mondays and Thursdays and that can be watched 24 hours a day until it is taken down (at 11pm the night before the next session). Support booklets and self-assessment, relaxation and mindfulness tool are also available in the 'Free zone'.



CALLING ALL PARENTS!

Do you, or your child, suffer from eczema? Take part in an anonymous, five-minute survey and you could be in with a chance of winning a beautiful hamper of Elave Skincare goodies worth £100. Enter now at **surveymonkey.com/r/SXJFCS**



BAGGING A BARGAIN

The longest month of the year is upon us and the only way to beat those January blues is to splash some cash on the fabulous January Sales at Gordons Chemists! Enjoy a post-Christmas cleanse with the Garnier Skinactive Micellar Rose Water for only £3.25 or get the Simple Cleansing Facial Wipes for just £2.99! Start the New Year fresh with Oral-B 3D White Luxe Perfection 75ml for HALF PRICE! We know life isn't perfect, but your hair can be with Head & Shoulders Classic Clean 250ml for an outstanding £1.79! 2021 will be the year of both health and hygiene so why not stock your cupboards with all of the cleaning supplies, toiletries and everyday essentials you could ever need? Keep your Omega 3, 6 & 9, along with your Vitamins D & E, topped up to the max with Paradox Omega Capsules 60pk for HALF PRICE at £4.99. Keep up to date with FABULOUS weekly offers, competitions and exciting product launches on

Facebook. All stores remain open however if you want to avoid the crowds catch the outstanding deals online at **gordonsdirect.com**

PODCASTS FOR PARENTS

Following on from the success of her breastfeeding support website **boobingit.com**, Belfast mum-of-two Ruth Maguire has now hit the record button and launched the UK's first-ever breastfeeding podcast. At a time when new mums are struggling to find their feet and breastfeed in a pandemic, breastfeeding advocate Ruth is keen to offer them a place to find out more about breastfeeding, chatting to a mum or breastfeeding expert in each episode with the aim to lift the lid on breastfeeding. Ruth has recorded a handful of episodes already and each one can be found on **boobingit.com** and all podcast platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts.



WINTER SKINCARE SAVIOURS

Switch up your skincare routine and protect your delicate dermis from bitter winds and drying central heating with these wonderful winter skincare tips from award-winning Irish beauty brand Elave...

- 1) Don't put away the sunscreen - while there is less UVB around in winter, levels of UVA are still significant enough to age your skin.
- 2) Keep hydrated – skin becomes drier with colder weather and central heating. Try swapping your coffee for green tea which has great anti-oxidant effects.
- 3) Gentle cleansing is a must! Avoid harsh exfoliators in favour of something like glycolic acid, which exfoliates while stimulating collagen production.
- 4) Avoid 'lick eczema' and chapping by using an effective salve to seal your lips.
- 5) Hands risk becoming chapped and sore, especially for mums who constantly have their hands in water. Use a soap substitute, rubber gloves and moisturise well.
- 6) Banish make-up wipes – these dry your skin out tenfold thanks to harsh chemicals or synthetic materials. Use a gentle foaming cleanser instead.
- 7) Drink more water, at least eight glasses a day, to help boost hydration, plump up the skin and rid the body of toxins.
- 8) Make sleep a priority... when we sleep, skin cells renew and produce collagen, which promotes elasticity in the skin to retain a fresh and youthful appearance.
- 9) Eczema and dry, sensitive skin conditions can worsen in winter months. Reduce flare-ups by keeping your skincare regime going every day.
- 10) Medical research shows that using certified natural products with no nasty chemicals, preservatives, colours and fragrances is the best way to keep your skin in tip-top condition. Elave Skincare's range of dermatologically-approved free-from natural products is available at **gardinerfamilyapothecary.com** with delivery to your doorstep.



We have three fabulous Elave Derma Skincare Kits up for grabs so to be in with a chance of winning visit **ni4kids.com/competitions** and answer this question:

Q) WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS TOP BEAUTY BRAND?

T&Cs: The closing date for this competition is Friday 12 February 2021. Editor's decision is final. Usual Ni4kids T&Cs apply. Visit **ni4kids.com/competitions** for details.

Ask the Pharmacist Coronavirus Staying Healthy

Richard Dunn is a community pharmacist with Gordons Chemists.

It is clear that the restrictions imposed due to coronavirus are causing anxiety, distress and financial hardship to many. If you are having trouble coping, you are not alone. The following advice is for anyone who is feeling heightened levels of stress and/or anxiety at this time:

Stay Connected Stay in touch with people you like and trust. When you're physically distancing, or if you have to self-isolate, reach out by phone, email, text message or video call. Social media can be an excellent way to keep in touch with your loved ones. However, as with news coverage, you should be mindful of your use of social media. Use it to have positive interactions and put your device away if it starts to negatively affect your mood.

Stay Calm Limit the time you watch the news or look online for information about the virus. The near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Seek information updates at specific times, once or twice a day.

Healthy Behaviours

Plan your days, structure your time and keep a routine. It can be helpful to organise a daily routine that involves a balance between activities that:

- Give you a sense of achievement and make you feel productive
- Help you feel close and connected with others
- You do just for pleasure – this is important!
- Include fresh air and nature – If you don't have a garden then try to get out once a day.

Stay physically active as far as you can. Look for online exercise plans and videos on YouTube and maintain a healthy diet. Getting a good night's

sleep is also crucial for feeling emotionally healthy the next day. Think about creating a consistent routine to ensure you get the amount of sleep you need, but also about ensuring your bedroom is quiet, dark and a relaxing environment to sleep in.

Mental Health Try some free apps such as Headspace®, Calm®, Virtual Hope Box® or Happify®. How we breathe can make a big difference to how we feel. There's a short, simple technique you can try at nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/ Both physical and mental self-help guides can be found at NHS Inform nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides

Don't Be Afraid To Ask For Help - If you need to, make contact with local services and use the professional support you might already have in place. There are many great organisations across the country who can help with your mental health and wellbeing – directories of which can be found by clicking [here](#). Everyone should be aware of exactly what to do if they develop COVID-19 symptoms but if you notice any new signs or symptoms of non-COVID related illness, you must still seek medical attention. There is a real and growing concern that people have developed chest pain, acute abdominal pain, stroke symptoms or red-flag symptoms of cancer in the past six weeks but who have not reported them to a health professional. Such conditions can be life threatening and you should not hesitate seek help immediately.

Gordons Chemists is the largest independently owned retail pharmacy chain in Northern Ireland. Established in 1980, Gordons Chemists now has 61 pharmacies on the high street and in shopping centres across Northern Ireland and Scotland. Products described are available at most pharmacies and Gordons Chemists does not endorse any individual product. Always consult your pharmacist in relation to your individual symptoms.

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1.25



3.25
HALF PRICE



4.99
HALF PRICE
60PK



2.99
500ML



1.79
250ML



3.25
HALF PRICE
100ML

2.99



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FAMILY LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

Essential Resources List

With entertainers and educators all scrambling to adjust to family life at home 24/7 once again, you're possibly feeling a little overwhelmed with the vast variety of online resources available – and wondering which ones are actually worth checking out – particularly if you're juggling the roles of working from home and teacher right now. But parents please do not panic! On your behalf we've searched and scored out of 10 to create the Ni4kids' Essential Resources List.

EAGER TO EDUCATE

BBC Bitesize

BBC TV is set to help children keep up with their studies during the latest lockdown by broadcasting lessons online as well as CBBC for primary pupils and on BBC Two for post-primary students from 11 January. Bitesize Daily will also air every day on the red button as well as episodes being available on demand on iPlayer. *Format: TV, website & iPlayer*



Libraries NI eServices

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Northern Ireland can sign up for this free eBooks, audiobooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers service to download thousands of titles on demand. *Format: website*



Image © Thomas P. Peschak

Natgeo Family

A one-stop shop to entertain and engage families. Working closely with a number of incredible National Geographic Explorers, the online hub brings the 'wow' and 'wonder' of Nat Geo into the home to keep families connected to the natural world and the science behind it. *Format: website*

Topmarks.co.uk

A leading independent educational website for children aged five to 14 giving kids the opportunity to learn online through safe, fun and engaging games and activities. *Format: website*

Let's Go Live

A live family science show on YouTube hosted by Maddie Moate and Greg Foot. Packed with videos about animals, plants, travel and technology, there's always something new to learn and explore! Join them live at 11am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays or catch up anytime and choose from over 60+ shows spanning topics such as our bodies, dinosaurs, oceans, space and more! *Format: Online streamed video*

ENGAGING EXERCISE

PE With Joe

The self-proclaimed PE teacher to the nation, Joe Wicks, is back to help keep kids fit throughout another lockdown. Head to his YouTube channel, The Body Coach TV, at 9am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. If you don't make it in time for the live broadcast, all sessions will be available on the channel to watch later. *Format: Online streamed video*

Sustrans Outside In

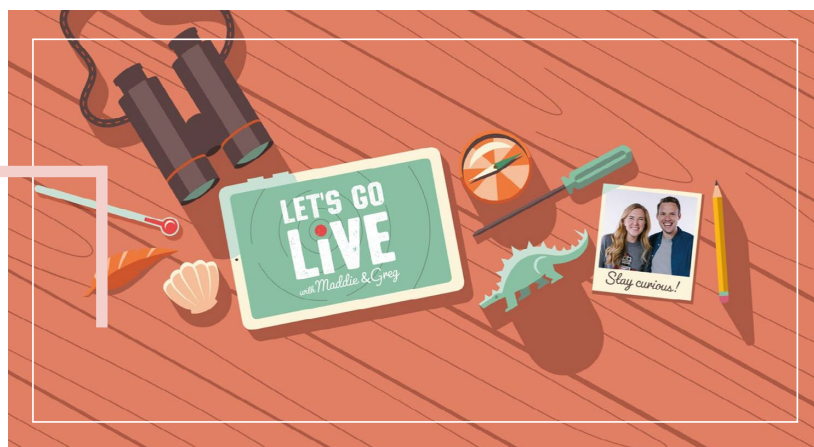
Sign up for four weeks of activities including videos, games, weekly challenges, themed activities and more. Designed by their knowledgeable, experienced and fun-loving Schools Officers, their activity pack is full of cycling, walking and scooting themed fun. *Format: website*

Oti Mabusse's Lockdown Warriors Dance Classes

Strictly's reigning champion, Oti Mabusse, is back with her lockdown dance classes. Along with her husband, the couple will be hosting live streamed classes from their living room on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 11am. You can tune in via her Facebook page or YouTube channel. *Format: Online Streamed Video*

Rising Stars Activities

If you have football fans at home, the team at Rising Stars Activities have a full library of 30-minute kids' footie sessions on their YouTube channel. Filmed over the last year there's plenty of videos to choose from and there's separate sessions for younger children to get involved. *Format: Online Streamed Video*





Keeping Kids Calm

Check out the new yoga for kids series Superhero Kids Yoga in Space from **Cosmic Kids Yoga**. For the price of a single monthly yoga class, get instant access to every Cosmic Kids video. You can also download yoga and mindfulness videos within the app so your kids can view them when you're offline. Available on multiple devices.

Named as the 'world's happiest app' **Calm** is the #1 app for sleep, meditation and relaxation, with over 50 million downloads. The hugely popular sleep stories for all ages are soothing tales that mix music and incredible voice talent from stars such as Matthew McConaughey to Idris Elba to help you drift into dreamland.

Barnardo's NI's online emotional wellbeing service '**See, Hear, Respond**', works directly with children and young people, offering practical and therapeutic support. It also offers advice and guidance to any adult who is concerned about a child's mental health. Free helpline 0800 157 7015.



Kitchen Disco with Sophie Ellis-Bextor.

Disco Queen and multiplatinum selling artist Sophie Ellis-Bextor has been keeping the nation dancing during lockdown with her hugely popular online kitchen discos at 6.30pm on Fridays. Follow the dancing diva on Instagram for future dates and the next one is scheduled for 22 January. *Format: Live on Instagram*



ENCHANTING ENTERTAINMENT

Harry Potter Club

Over the first lockdown the team at Pottermore were on hand to entertain the nation's children and keep the magic alive with the world's most famous wizard. Although Harry Potter at Home has finished, the website is still full of craft tutorials, quizzes, puzzles and family-friendly activities for all ages. Enthusiastic fans can sign up to the official Harry Potter Fan Club to get all the latest updates before the rest of us muggles. *Format: website*

Draw with Rob

Children's author and illustrator Rob Biddulph has been running online drawing lessons for kids since March, and has been creating an amazing community for children and parents to share their art. All of his previous lessons are available on his website and YouTube channel. Spark your child's creativity with weekly drawing tutorials. *Format: Online streamed video*

Dublin Zoo Webcam

Watch the Dublin Zoo animals live, wherever you are. Catch a glimpse of the giraffes, zebras and rhinos on the African Savanna, get a birds-eye view of the penguins or watch the wondrous herd of Asian elephants bathe and chomp on their lunch with their live animal cams. *Format: Live-streamed video*

Get Kids Cooking with Jamie Oliver

Make mealtime fun with Jamie Oliver, who has dedicated part of his website to child-friendly

recipes. Under your watchful eye, kids can whip up speedy snacks from scratch, make their own fish fingers, flavour their own frozen yoghurt, and much more.

Format: website



Little Folk- Music for Babies, Toddlers & Young Children

Little folk is an early years' music class for children aged 3 months - 5 years featuring 45 minutes of live music. Classes explore rhythm, tempo and movement featuring original and traditional children's music. Every Monday and Thursday at 10am. *Format: Facebook Live*

The Great Indoors with Scouts UK

Scouts UK has pulled together some inspired indoor activity ideas to keep kids learning new skills and having fun (and avoid hearing 'I'm bored' every 30 seconds) all in #TheGreatIndoors. *Format: website*

CRAFTY KIDS: MAKE AN APPLE FEEDER

RSPB NI are asking for your help to take part in this year's Big Garden Birdwatch which takes place on 29, 30 and 31 January. Register online at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch and spend an hour counting the birds you see in your garden, from your balcony or in your local park. To help encourage more birds to your patch ahead of this year's Big Garden Birdwatch, get the kids involved in making this great craft activity – a quick and easy apple feeder!



YOU WILL NEED

- An apple
- An apple corer
- Sunflower seeds
- Three thin sticks
- Some string

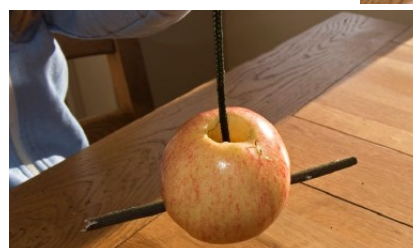
For your FREE Big Garden Birdwatch guide, which includes a bird identification chart, top tips for your birdwatch, RSPB shop voucher, plus advice on how to help you attract wildlife to your garden, text BIRD to 70030 or visit rspb.org.uk/birdwatch

1 Carefully remove the core from the apple by using an apple corer.



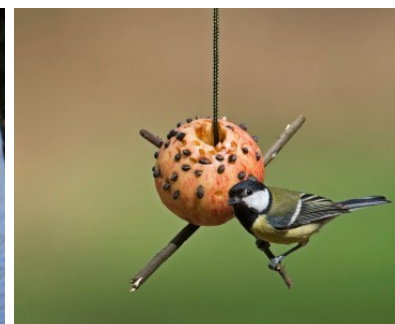
2 Push the sunflower seeds into the top half of the apple for the birds to eat.

3 Make perches for your birds by pushing one stick into either side of the apple, near the bottom.



4 Tie the string around the last stick and thread it through the core of the apple.

5 Once you have made your apple bird feeder, tie it onto a branch in your garden or outside space, and wait for the birds to descend!



WIN

We've teamed up with RSPB NI to offer one lucky family the chance to win an RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch bumper bird feed hamper to take care of our feathered friends. It includes two bird feeders and a bumper selection of bird food which will help attract more birds to the lucky winner's outside space.

The Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest garden wildlife survey, with hundreds of thousands of people volunteering each year. This year's event takes place on Friday 29, Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 January. RSPB NI are asking people to spend just one hour counting the birds in their garden or local green space and then submit their results online at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch. As well as being a fantastic activity for all the family, the results give an amazing amount of insight into how the UK's wildlife is faring. The top five birds spotted across Northern Ireland last year were house sparrows, starlings, goldfinches, chaffinches and blue tits. What will you see? To be in with a chance to win simply go to ni4kids.com/competitions and answer this question:

Q: ON WHICH THREE DATES IN JANUARY WILL THE RSPB BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH TAKE PLACE?

You can keep up with the latest from RSPB NI on Facebook or Twitter @RSPBNI.

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The Reading Corner

New year, new adventures – brilliant books for your little bookworm...

AGE 3+

The World Made a Rainbow by Michelle Robinson PB £6.99, published by Bloomsbury Children's Books

Light can't shine without dark. Rainbows can't colour the sky without rain. And the world is always full of hope and possibility, even when we feel lost and alone. Inspired by the rainbows that children across the world have been creating and displaying in their windows, this is a beautiful story with a hopeful message of staying connected to the people we love, and a proportion of proceeds will be donated to Save the Children UK.

AGE 7+

How To Be A Hero by Cat Weldon PB £6.99, published by Pan Macmillan

When failing trainee valkyrie Lotta mistakes an unconscious viking thief, Whetstone, for a fallen hero and takes him triumphantly to Valhalla, things are definitely not turning out to be epic or glorious. The first in a hilarious and fast-paced trilogy about how to be brave, what it means to be a hero and just how confusing the Norse Gods *really* are. Perfect for fans of *How to Train Your Dragon*.

AGE 8+

Blended by Sharon M. Draper PB £7.99, published by Atheneum Books For Young Readers

A thoughtful story about divorce and racial identity from the award-winning and New York Times bestselling author of *Out of My Mind*. Eleven-year-old Isabella has always felt pulled between two worlds, if you're only seen as half of this and half of that, how can you ever feel whole? And now that her parents are divorced, she feels even more stuck in the middle, split and divided between them than ever. It seems like nothing can bring Isabella's family together again – until the worst happens.

AGE 8+

Uma and the Answer to Absolutely Everything by Sam Copeland PB £6.99, published by Puffin

A hilarious and moving new novel for children aged 9-11, from the best-selling author of *Charlie Changes into a Chicken*. Uma Gnuersonn has a world full of questions, but since her Mum died life has been short on answers. When she discovers a top-secret earpiece with an all-knowing Artificial Intelligence called Athena, she's determined to use it to save her family. A laugh-out-loud adventure about the limits of technology, the power of friendship and dealing with grief.

AGE 10+

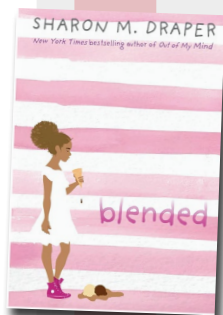
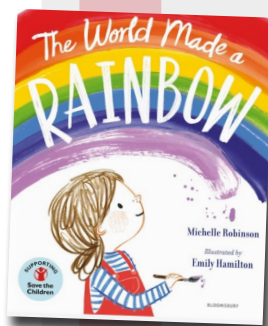
This Wonderful Thing by Adam Baron PB £7.99, published by Harper Collins Children's Books

Jessica is playing at the river when she finds a dirty, bedraggled teddy bear in the water. Meanwhile, Cymbeline comes home from school to find that his mum's house has been broken into – and the thieves seemed oddly focused on his toys. Soon, Jessica and Cymbeline find themselves swept up in a mystery that spans decades, threatens their families, and turns their lives upside down. But sometimes, just maybe, a new life can be a really wonderful thing..

AGE 10+

Vega Jane and the Secrets Of Sorcery by David Baldacci PB £7.99, published by Pan Macmillan

Vega Jane is 14 when she is secretly given a map that reveals a mysterious world and dangerous creatures beyond the walls of Wormwood, a place no one has ever left – or wanted to. Until now. The map makes her question everything she has ever been told about the place she calls home. Trapped by secrets and lies, she wants freedom and truth. An epic new adventure series full of monsters, magic, danger and mystery.



WIN A COPY OF THE WORRIES: SOHAL FINDS A FRIEND BY JION SHEIBANI

A charming, timely and heartfelt story, **THE WORRIES: SOHAL FINDS A FRIEND** balances hugely fun, child-focused storytelling with a gently important message about not letting your worries get the better of you. Just over a quarter of children say they feel anxious frequently or all of the time, and this increased by 8 per cent between 2019 and 2020*, making stories about helping children to deal with their anxieties even more important than ever.

Sohal worries about a lot of things - the dark, mutant sheep, not having any friends - you name it, he worries. about it! So, one night he draws his worries to make himself feel better - and somehow they look a lot less worrying once he's scribbled them down... Imagine Sohal's surprise when he wakes up the next morning and finds a set of funny furry friends at the end of his bed! His worries have come to life, and it's not long before Hurt, Fail, Anger, Big and Alone have turned his world upside down. Perfect for children aged 5-8, as well as for families to read together.

WE HAVE FIVE COPIES OF THIS FABULOUS NEW TITLE TO GIVE AWAY SO TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE TO WIN, SIMPLY VISIT [NI4KIDS.COM/](http://ni4kids.com/)

COMPETITIONS AND ANSWER THIS QUESTION! **Q) NAME ONE OF SOHAL'S WORRIES?**

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Northern Ireland
Executive

**DON'T SPREAD
CORONAVIRUS**
**LIMIT YOUR CONTACT
WITH OTHERS**

**WE ALL
MUST DO IT
TO GET
THROUGH IT**



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CONTACTS



KEEP
DISTANCE



WEAR FACE
COVERING



WASH
HANDS



COVID SYMPTOMS?
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BOOK TEST



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