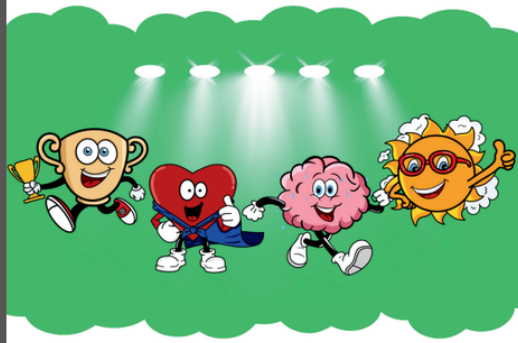


Brain Boost!

MOVEMENT, MINDFULNESS & ME



THIS BRAIN BOOST BOOKLET BELONGS TO



AT A GLANCE

CHALLENGES

- Time to consult with partners
- Cost to print hard copies
- Having the expertise to get the wording right and age appropriate

BENEFITS

- Schools fully engaged
- Staff, children and pupils understand what is happening to their brain
- New partners
- Families more active



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SCHOOL GAMES CASE STUDY

Linking Physical activity to Mental Health

Redcar & Eston SGO Area

CONTEXT

Redcar & Eston are in a low socio economic area of Tees Valley in the North East of England. The schools in the SGO area are fantastic at increasing opportunities for pupils but often physical activity stops at the school gates. In 2023-24 academic year we have had a particular focus on parental engagement. We have implemented a variety of interventions and this case study explores one of those interventions.

All of our parental engagement interventions link to Outcome 5: Advocating the benefits of physical activity. We believe that if more families and parents understood the benefits of taking part in physical activity and how it effects our bodies then they will be more likely to engage.

INTENT

When asked, most people can tell us that physical activity helps with mental health. However, if you dig deeper and ask then 'how?' then this is often unanswered. We wanted to make sure that we explicitly linked physical activity to positive mental health and for this information to be educated in a fun and interactive way with children and their parents and families.

With the increase in mental health issues and the decrease in physical activity levels this became an issue we wanted to tackle, particularly with the KS2 population of pupils where they are young enough to catch and change habits but also old enough to understand.

TARGET GROUP

The target group for this intervention was KS2 pupils across the whole SGO area. We believe this age group are young enough for us to influence but also old enough for them to understand the messages.

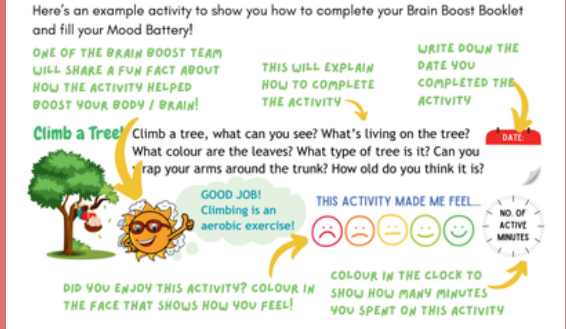
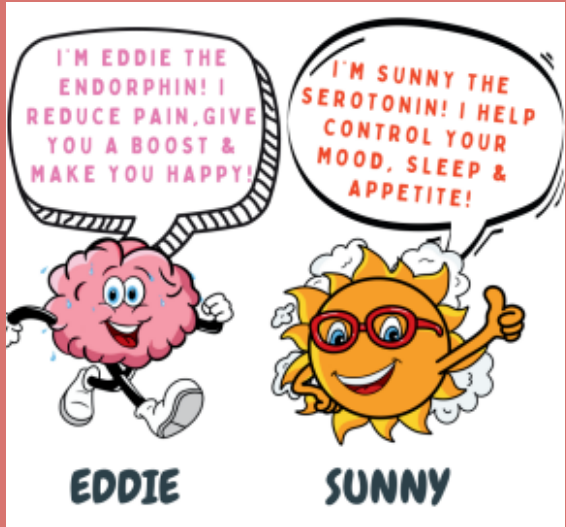
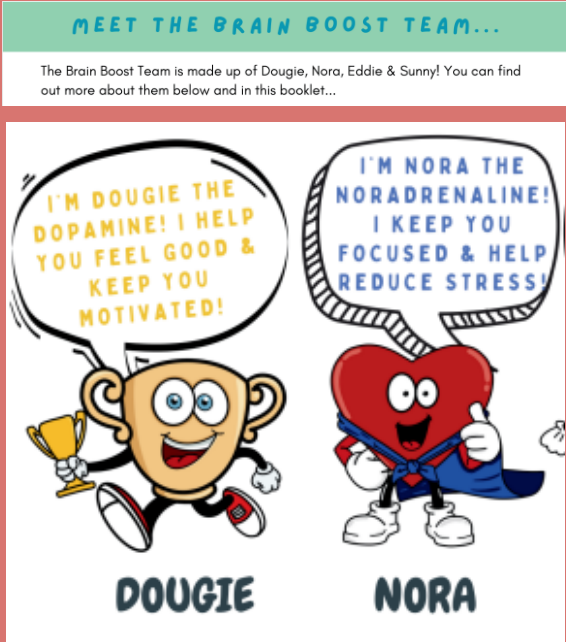
We believe our least deprived schools needed this more than the other schools but felt that rolling this out across the whole SGO area did not involve any more work, time or effort.

IMPLEMENTATION

This intervention took longer than we anticipated because we wanted to co-design the project. Initially we took the issue of increased mental health issues and a lack of physical activity levels to our half termly Primary PE Subject Leader meeting. We created 5 working groups and asked each group to come up with ideas on how we could educate parents and children about the link between mental health and physical activity. They came up with the following ideas:

- A booklet of things to do in the summer holidays (similar to the National Trust 50 things to do before 11 3/4).
- Develop some characters linked to the chemicals released from our brain when we take part in physical activity. So they understand this.

Examples of things in the booklet:



IMPLEMENTATION CONT..

- Link it to the 60 active minutes message.
- Talk about boosting our brain.

We then wanted to make sure we were using the correct terminology about mental health and use age appropriate language so we linked in to the local Children's Mental Health Team working across schools to educate children – Head Start.

One of the initiatives developed from this was our Brain Boost activity booklet. This is an A5 booklet developed to print a hard copy for every child across the SGO Area in KS2. The booklet includes an introduction to the characters:

- Eddie Endorphin
- Sunny Serotonin
- Nora Noradrenaline
- Dougie Dopamine

Explaining who they are and how they make us feel once released.

The characters talk about why we should take part in 60 active minutes and introduce the children and their families to 60 activities to take part in to boost their brain.

The Head Start staff gave us pointers on language and also checked over our draft versions of the end product. They asked if they could include their logo too, to firstly show a joined up approach but so they could use the resources in their own delivery within schools too.

To launch the project we sent over some slides to the schools so they could introduce the booklet and how it works to their children and young people before they took the booklets home. We have also introduced the characters to families using our social media channels.

IMPACT

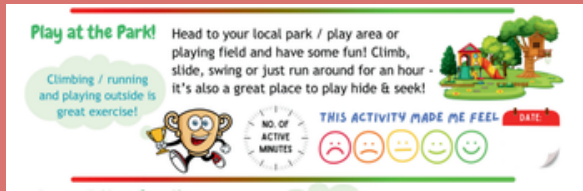
The schools have been very positive about the booklets. It helped that they felt part of the project and helped to design what the project looked like. This has helped each school to become fully engaged and made sure that children were introduced to the project fully before they took a booklet home.

Head Start being fully on board for the project has been great to help use their experience and expertise, but also means they will be indirectly promoting physical activity to more children and young people because they are using the booklets too. This has worked well because once again they were involved in the design of the project and feel fully engaged.

Feedback from the children and young people is excellent. Following a very quick introduction to the characters the children we trialled the booklet with could quickly talk about the chemicals released when they take part in physical activity and why this would be good for their mental health.

We have also tested the booklet with a sample of parents/carers and they are keen to get started with the 60 activities, giving them a focus and new ideas to encourage the whole family to be active together.

Full engagement of the project is rolling out over the school summer holidays. We will be asking for instant feedback via social media posts and hope we will get interaction with that with photos and videos of families taking part.



IMPACT CONT..

We have asked schools to instruct their children to bring back completed booklets in Autumn term so we can track if children took part in the activities and see what other impact we have made through this project.

The un-intended impact is that we have fully engaged all schools in another project and they are associating this with our slogan of 'More Than Sport' and have already spoken to us about the great job we are doing to support them and their outcomes. We have also engaged a new stakeholder and one that will now be promoting physical activity for us.

CHALLENGES

The only challenge was time. To engage other partners takes time but the time invested means the partners become fully onboard with the project and that the project ends up being exactly what is needed and is designed so much better for the children and young people.

As an SGO we don't have money available to print the booklet for the children and young people. We managed to secure a small grant from the Active Partnership (Tees Valley Sport). Tees Valley Sport enable each SGO in the county to apply for a small grant to 'test and learn' new projects linked to the School Games.

SUSTAINABILITY

The booklet is now complete and is now available via PDF for future years. Head Start, Tees Valley Sport, neighbouring SGOs are all keen to use the booklets in the future too.

Moving forward, we will not print booklets for the children. We hope schools will see the benefit of the booklets and expect them to take on the printing costs in the future.

We will also screen shot activities to go on social media so that we can encourage families to take part in activities and they do not need to be part of the booklet.

The main sustainability of the project is the development of the characters and educating children what happens to their bodies when they take part in physical activity and why it improves their mood. School staff said it has explained it in a much simpler way to them too so they can use it as a guide in the future.

TOP TIPS

- Take your challenge/issue to your partner schools and ask them to help shape your new project or idea. This helps to generate better ideas but also helps school engagement and their continued support for this project.
- Involve other stakeholders/partners. Use their expertise.
- Be willing to share ideas, work together and don't feel that you own something that others can also use to engage children and young people in physical activity - Share!
- Be creative.
- Connect to your Active Partnership.

SHARING

If you would like a PDF then please contact: info@ressp.co.uk



During exercise & physical activity your brain releases 'feel-good' hormones called Endorphins and increases chemicals Serotonin, Dopamine & Noradrenaline.



Endorphins are natural chemicals produced by the body and released by the brain to help fight to reduce pain and boost happiness. They are released during exercise / physical activity, and can also be boosted through laughter and excitement! The release of endorphins helps to reduce feelings of stress, improving your mood and well-being.

Serotonin, also known as the 'happy hormone', is a chemical released by the brain that sends messages to the rest of your body. These messages help keep the body regulated (normal) - making you feel happy and content! The brain releases Serotonin through exercise, telling the body how to work, controlling happiness, memory, sleep, appetite & digestion and overall wellbeing.



Dopamine, also known as the 'feel-good' hormone, is released by the brain during exercise & physical activity. The release of this hormone creates a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction which gives you more motivation. When your body releases Dopamine you're happy and motivated which leaves you feeling less tired, you sleep better and have fewer mood swings!

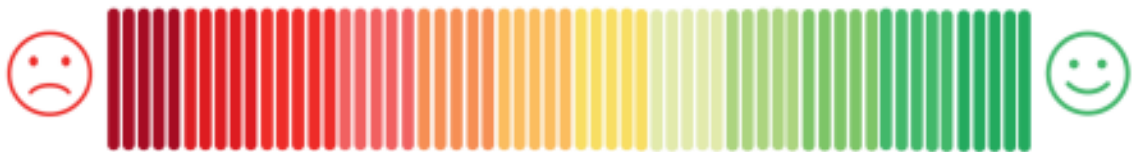
Noradrenaline is a chemical that helps you to stay focused and alert - this increased focus helps reduce stress & anxiety! The release of noradrenaline by the brain during exercise & physical activity helps you to concentrate, improving your attention span and improves your memory. It produces energy and increases your heart rate, helping to control the body during exercise / physical activity.



60 WAYS TO ACHIEVE YOUR 60 ACTIVE MINUTES!



To help you achieve your 60 active minutes, the Brain Boost Team have come up with 60 different activities and games / challenges for you to try! Every time you complete an activity you earn 1 'Brain Boost' – add your Brain Boosters to your mood battery and watch your mood improve, the more you move your body!



Here's an example activity to show you how to complete your Brain Boost Booklet and fill your Mood Battery!

ONE OF THE BRAIN BOOST TEAM WILL SHARE A FUN FACT ABOUT HOW THE ACTIVITY HELPED BOOST YOUR BODY / BRAIN!

THIS WILL EXPLAIN HOW TO COMPLETE THE ACTIVITY

WRITE DOWN THE DATE YOU COMPLETED THE ACTIVITY

Climb a Tree!

Climb a tree, what can you see? What's living on the tree? What colour are the leaves? What type of tree is it? Can you rap your arms around the trunk? How old do you think it is?

DATE:



GOOD JOB!
Climbing is an aerobic exercise!

THIS ACTIVITY MADE ME FEEL...



DID YOU ENJOY THIS ACTIVITY? COLOUR IN THE FACE THAT SHOWS HOW YOU FEEL!

COLOUR IN THE CLOCK TO SHOW HOW MANY MINUTES YOU SPENT ON THIS ACTIVITY

1 Completed Activity = 1 Brain Boost

Every time you complete a challenge and earn 1 Brain Boost, colour in 1 bar of your Mood Battery on Page 19!

