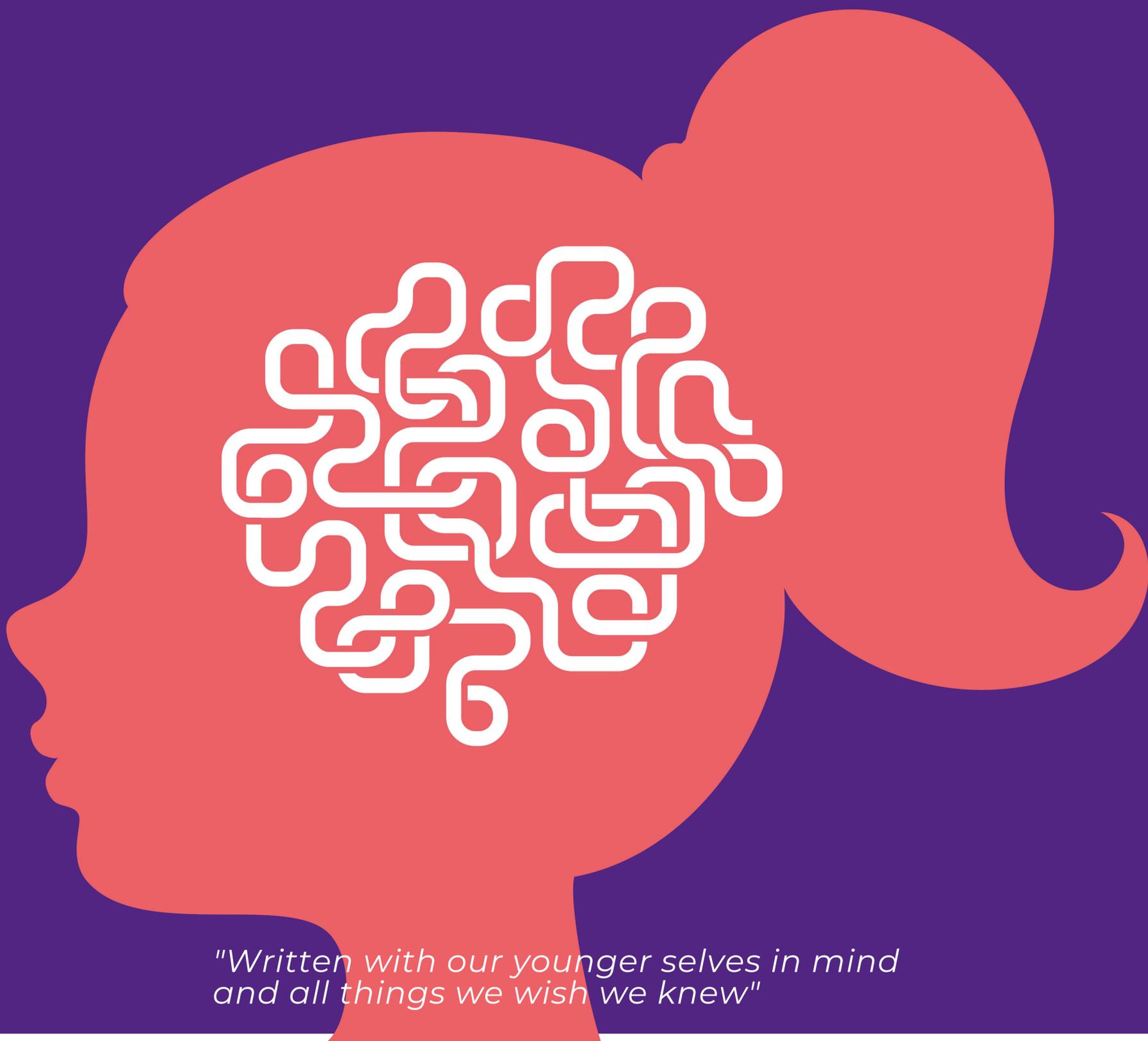


Registered charity number 1194598

Youth Mental & Physical Fitness Handbook

FIRST
EDITION

with THE FUTSAL STARS FOUNDATION



*"Written with our younger selves in mind
and all things we wish we knew"*

Contributions by: Dr Miriam Bouchiba

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FIRST EDITION

Dr. Miriam Bouchiba

"A child's mental health is just as
important as their physical health"

Kate Middleton

Chapter One

Introduction

This handbook has been put together by a team of healthcare professionals, with the main focus of guiding a volunteer or facilitator that works with the Futsal Stars Foundation, when holding workshops on mental and physical well-being for young people.

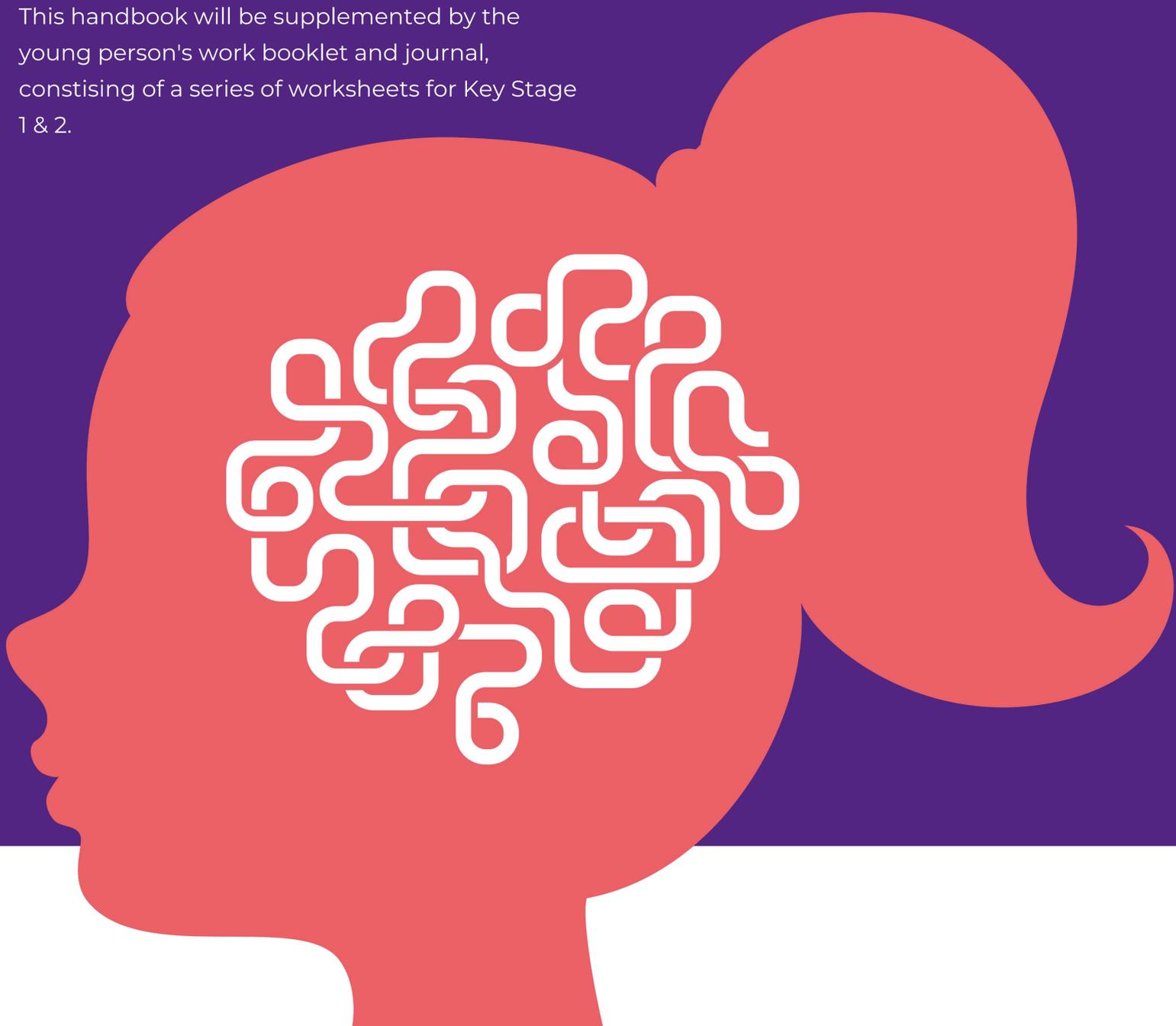
This handbook has been written from the perspective of those in the foundation, with lived experience of the matters we discuss; none of these topics are alien to us. It has been written in such a way that it will help the reader better understand why we founded the foundation and just how much our work means to us.

This handbook will be supplemented by the young person's work booklet and journal, consisting of a series of worksheets for Key Stage 1 & 2.

Using this handbook we will provide an overview of the key areas we want to educate the young people we work with on.

These areas include:

1. The importance of exercise and types of exercise
2. Diet and Nutrition
3. What is mental well-being?
4. Daily Living Habits
5. Screen-time hygiene
6. What make me anxious?
7. How to tackle my anxiety
8. How to build friendships



What makes me anxious?

"Worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere"- **English proverb**

In certain situations, anxiety injects a boost of adrenaline that can prove life-saving, in a fight or flight scenario.

However, some people do not experience anxiety occasionally; instead, it is a constant or heightened level of anxiety that causes incessant rumination and fear. These individuals may be suffering from a condition such as: Phobias - Panic attacks-Post-traumatic stress disorder- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) - Depression.

Women are generally more anxious than men, in part due to hormonal differences (and sometimes influenced by the hormonal ups and downs of the menstrual cycle). Meanwhile, men are less likely to feel anxiety (or at least less likely to admit to feeling anxiety) and tend to feel anxious about things like their health. Social pressures and expectations on gender performance may be part of these perceived differences.

Things that happen in a child's life can be stressful and difficult to cope with. Loss, serious illness, death of a loved one, violence, or abuse can lead some kids to become anxious. Growing up in a family where others are fearful or anxious also can "teach" a child to be afraid too; these are learned behaviours. As young people start to use social media at a ever decreasing age, anxiety is increasingly being caused by cognitive distortions that they may develop.

A cognitive distortion is when our mind plays tricks on us and leads a young person to believe something about themselves that is false. For example, in the case of social media, as a young person looks upon images, that leads them to believe "I am not as pretty or intelligent as my peers." The emotional intelligence needed to tell oneself this is false, often comes with age.

Burns, a psychologist, writes three questions or prompts for you to read, ponder and answer when trying to establish your belief as a cognitive distortion. These questions/prompts are:

Think of a time when you felt anxious or worried. What was happening at the time? Were you nervous about an important test? A one-on-one conversation with a new friend? Perhaps you were worried about your health or a loved one. Describe the situation that made you feel nervous.

Next, try to identify your negative thoughts. What were you telling yourself? What were you thinking? Perhaps you were thinking that something bad was going to happen or were worrying about what other people would think of you. Record your negative thoughts here.

As an example, Annie felt anxious about her first day back at school. She believed she wouldn't make any new friends this term. Can you identify the cognitive distortion?

The distortions include:

- A. Labeling
- B. Disqualifying the positive / Jumping to conclusions
- C. Fortune-telling**
- D. Magnification
- E. Mind reading

Screen-Time Hygiene

"We don't have a choice whether we DO social media, the question is how well we DO it" - **Erik Qualman**

Teens who spend over three hours a day on social media are more likely to internalize their problems, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, and the recent phenomenon of fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) (Genomind).

Our aim is to help young people develop a more positive self-image, recognize their anxious thoughts, and develop some tools for dealing with the day-to-day challenges of anxiety caused by social media use. We want young people to start to think more consciously about their use of social media as opposed to blindly following trends.

Social media is very difficult to avoid in modern day society. Many of the leading role models for young people today are bloggers or social media stars. We do not want to teach young people that social media is "bad" or "toxic" as indeed it has many incredible uses that include providing access to a wealth of knowledge and information. However, it is important that we help young people understand the best ways in which to use it so as to avoid the following:

Increased anxiety and depression: Social media use can often exacerbate or cause cognitive distortions. The increasing pressure to portray the best versions of our life and to depict our lives as exciting and fun puts young people at an increased risk of developing mental health problems.

Disordered sleep: Children who use their phone during the night time or before their bedtime are less likely to relax, fall asleep or stay asleep. This poor quality and lack of sleep puts children at risk of mental health issues again and can lead to poor performance at school; their cognitive function is at risk.

Phone addiction: Questions we can put forward to the young people we work with: Do they believe they are addicted to their smartphone? How many hours a day usage would mean they are addicted? How long can they go for without their smartphone? What do they think makes them addicted to their smartphone? At what age is it appropriate to give a young person access to a smartphone?

Cyber bullying: Due to access to phones and computers at home, this allows young people to fall victim to bullying every minute of the day. This can cause young people to have poor self-esteem, have a low confidence, and motivation and even lead to suicidal thoughts. We need to teach and reinforce that social media has not been designed as a place to troll others and also teach young people to report any cases of online abuse. They must know they are protected and that measures are in place at home and at school to protect them.

Now we ask, what are the warning signs that a child is being negatively impacted by social media? This could range from spending more time online than with friends, a lack of motivation to perform activities they once enjoyed, performance at school is compromised, lack of sleep indicated by moody swings, easily agitated, eating less or more i.e. eating habits change dramatically, and also we must not forget to ask our child questions, such as is everything ok at school, are there any issues with bullying or matters they would like to discuss. We must encourage young people to speak to whoever they feel most comfortable speaking to and to not develop the habit of bottling up their emotions to the point at which they can become destructive.

How to tackle my anxiety

"I just give myself permission to suck...I find this hugely liberating!" - **John Green, Author of *The Fault in Our Stars***

I headed into Waterstone's last week; I was trying to research the different books available for adults, young adults and children surrounding mental health. There were tons of books to choose from, it's become quite a hot-topic as of late, with high profile celebrities detailing their experience with mental health and even, sadly, cases of suicide such as that of the TV presenter, Caroline Flack. Flicking through a lot of the books it was evident that a lot focused on a continual need to be "happy", "be positive"; the typical "always look on the brightside" rhetoric.

Firstly, what does it look like to be "happy" or mean? Secondly, how is it humanly possible? Humans are complex beings and at the best of times, we cannot often make sense of our feelings. What makes us human is to experience emotions of sadness, joy, grief and yes, happiness. At the foundation, we don't want to convey humans are robotic creatures that are expected to feel "happy" all the time. This puts a lot of pressure on an individual. We want young people to appreciate that sometimes there are ups and downs in life, a continual wave! They should not feel abnormal or as if they have failed at life because they feel sad sometimes or anxious about certain areas of their life. Understanding this can help develop a child's emotional intelligence (EI).

However, we do want to educate these young people on:

1. Know that it is ok to be anxious and sad sometimes
2. Try to develop skills necessary to avoid dwelling on matters that make us sad
3. How to identify the areas that make us anxious or sad
4. Understand the differences between what is within our control and what is not
5. Where matters are in our control, how we can avoid what makes us anxious or sad
6. How to be open and honest with others around them when they experience emotions of sadness
7. What is a healthy and proportionate response to anxiety and sadness

If you're struggling with a specific anxiety or phobia, use this visualization technique to slowly shrink your fear.

Sit or lie in a comfortable position and close your eyes.

Visualize the scenario or what you are anxious about in your mind. See it clearly, every small detail.

When you can see it clearly, begin to shrink it. Watch it get smaller and smaller, little by little. Continue shrinking it until it's so small, it can fit into a thimble.

Repeat this process.

Diet & Nutrition

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" -
Hippocrates

I had been a healthy child, with zero childhood illnesses to mention. This would soon change however in later years.

With three sisters, it must have been tough for my mother feeding four girls, with different food preferences. But she did a great job, making sure we all had a well-balanced diet. But then those tricky years arise, when you become a teenager with autonomy and absolute freedom over your diet. The walk-home from school was past the local chippie or newsagents. These are the years when it becomes difficult for a parent/guardian to regulate a young person's diet. At the foundation, we want to equip young people with all the necessary information so they are able to make better decisions when it comes to their diet.

I remember at school being spoken to about what constitutes a balanced diet and the rules on 5-a-day. However, when I was eventually diagnosed with an autoimmune disease due to poor diet and stress, I can safely say it finally hit home about just how important a healthy diet and nutrition is. Being on life-long medication and the symptoms of an autoimmune disease is no fun, I mean, you get on with it but not willingly.

At the foundation, we want to reinforce the importance of diet and nutrition at an early age, so that it becomes habitual to choose fruit and vegetable over processed foods. We do not want young people to develop obsessive habits concerning food but instead just develop a natural predilection for healthy foods and drinks.

At camps and workshops, we can split our teaching of diet and nutrition into 4 categories:

1. FOOD FOR SPORT: There are 6 essential nutrients that are needed in order for the body to function well in daily life and during sport, reduce the risk of injury and morbidity and encourage rapid recovery after exercise. When encouraging a healthy, balanced diet we must also take into consideration factors such as autism, which can also affect healthy food choices and avoidance of certain foods, so advice should always be tailored.

2. HEALTHY SNACKS: The word 'snack' can have a bad connotation, but some snacks can be healthy and fun at the same time, such as nuts (vitamin E, magnesium), bananas (potassium, vitamin B6 and C), fruit salads, hard boiled eggs (vitamin B, vitamin D), popcorn and rice cakes.

3. HEALTHY FOOD HABITS: The Mediterranean diet is often cited as the healthiest of diets. However, Nicola Tordoff-Sohne, Group Head of Wellbeing at JCT600 and registered nutritional therapist, explains that what is also important is the way in which food is eaten, as a family or as a community. This experience of food is just as important as what is on the plate; as we slow down whilst eating and chatting simultaneously, we chew better and savour the meal more. Eating in a group setting also encourages us to keep each other accountable for what is on our plate.

4. HYDRATION: The key sources of water throughout the day are, drinking water, fruit and vegetables, semi-skimmed milk and eggs.

Sport & Nutrition

"A diet that is bad for your overall health cannot be good for your overall performance " - **Kobe Bryant**

We are now aware of the importance of a healthy diet for young people, but if your child or teenager participates in sports on a regular basis, you may have additional concerns about their nutrition and dietary needs:

Is there a recommended diet for young athletes?

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' plan when it comes to nutrition. Individual nutrient needs vary by sport, type, and intensity of the activity, age, body size, goals and training volume. Generally speaking, the more intense the activity and the more hours they train, the higher the carbohydrate and overall calorie needs will be.

Is there a certain amount of protein that young athletes should be eating per day?

Depending on their goals, training status and type of activity, athletes need anywhere from 1/2 to 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight. They can meet their daily protein needs by making sure to include a source of lean protein such as eggs, milk, yogurt, nuts, nut butter, beans, lentils, tofu, chicken or fish at each meal and snack.

How can eating a healthy diet help athletes lower their risk of injury and perform better?

Eating a healthy diet ensures that an athlete is getting all the nutrients their body needs to produce energy and create new muscle tissue, enzymes and other cellular structures involved in energy metabolism. Proper nutrition can also help repair damage from training as well as everyday wear and tear, and keeps the body's muscles, bones, joints, tendons and organs functioning optimally.

Young athletes should be eating five or six balanced meals and snacks each day, and should be eating every three hours. Each meal should include a balance of complex carbs, lean protein, healthy fat, fruits and vegetables. Each snack should include a combination of all three macronutrients: complex carbs, lean proteins and healthy fats.

Are there certain foods that young athletes should be specifically eating?

Whole grains and other complex carbohydrates (oats, brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat bread, whole grain breakfast cereals, sweet potatoes, squash and beans)

Fruits (2 to 4 servings per day)

Vegetables (3 to 5 servings per day)

Lean proteins (chicken, fish, beans/lentils, tofu, eggs, yogurt and milk)

Healthy fats (nuts, nut butter, seeds, olive oil and avocado)

To encourage these healthy eating habits:

Have regular family meals

Serve a variety of healthy foods and snacks

As a parent/guardian, be a role model by eating healthy yourself

Avoid battles over food

Involve kids in the process

Daily Living Habits

"You'll never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine" - **John C Maxwell**

Creating a healthy daily routine is a simple yet effective way to build consistency when it comes to a young person's health. Not only does daily routine impact overall health, but it also has a direct impact on stress levels, sleep habits and eating patterns. Everything from what you do first thing in the morning to what you do last thing at night plays a role in your overall health. Although it can be tempting to change everything at once, focusing on small habits and doing them on a daily basis is the best way to make a healthy daily routine and healthy daily habits last for the long-term.

Change in a child's life can provide a great opportunity for learning and character-building. However, when changes are rapid and on a grand scale, this can be alarming and mentally disturbing for some children. Children tend to thrive in environments where they feel a strong sense of stability and security.

- Wake Up Early
- Drink Water Before Anything Else
- Make Time for Movement
- Spend Time Outside
- Eat Sitting Down
- Go For a Walk
- Take Time to Cook
- Eat a Vegetable
- Put your phone away:
- Read something
- Go to bed early

Why are these habits important for a child?

They allow the body-clock to set and function consistently, creates a calmer household where the child's expectations are consistently met and they know what to expect, it allows young people to bond better with the family as they understand clearly what everyone's role is in the household. Children who have a daily routine are reported to be more confident, independent and perform better at school.

For this reason, we have attached a weekly planner in the worksheets section that children and parents/ guardians can use. If completed together, this can be a great bonding technique for the child and their parent on a weekly basis. It will allow a young person to voice their needs and whether or not they enjoy certain tasks, allowing them to feel heard. It will also help develop skills of time management in the young person. It is important to emphasise to the child that sometimes the plans may change and the weekly planner is not set in concrete; this will avoid them feeling alarmed if changes do occur.

How to build friendships

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” - **Nelson Mandela**

Ask yourself, what is a friendship and why do we even need them?

Growing up, I had 3 older sisters. We were all pretty similar in age. Jamila being the eldest, then Leila, then Nadia then little me. We all had quite similar personalities but would often clash; you know, the usual arguments over clothes, how long someone is taking in the bathroom. However, besides from the arguments, it was an essential part of growing up and my development to have life-long friends in my sisters. I remember my first days at school, thinking what would I do without my sisters/my friends by my side, without realising I would go on to make plenty of new friends at school.

Friendships are vital in early childhood, adolescence and adult life. Friends form a support system that teach us in early childhood:

How to be sensitive to the viewpoint of others
How to use standard rules of conversation
What constitutes age-appropriate behaviour

Child psychologists find early childhood friendships contribute to children's quality of life and ability to adjust to changes within their environments as well.

How can we support children on how to forge lasting friendships?

1. **Be a role model by displaying good friendship skills:** do not gossip about others when around children, do not talk down to others
2. **Support a child's friendship:** help to facilitate the growth of their friendship, by timetabling when they can meet up even if they go to different schools
3. **Respect a child's personality:** it is important to not compare a child's friendship or their chosen interests to that of their siblings. All children are unique and wonderfully so.
4. **Listen:** lend an ear when a child wishes to discuss their friendships and offer gentle advice on how to navigate them. Of course, sometimes children can lose or fall out with their friends. This can seem like the end of the world to them. I remember it did when I realised all my primary school friends were heading to different schools and that I may never see them again. It is important we teach children about the ever changing nature of life and not to be scared by changes. That as we grow emotionally, physically and cognitively, we change as people and develop new interests and we then make new friends whose interests match ours.; this does not mean there is something suddenly wrong with us.

The importance of exercise and types of exercise

""Life gets better when health becomes your priority" -
Maxime Lagace

Is it undoubtable that exercise is good for a young person's physical and mental health. How much exercise should children be doing? For children aged 5 – 18 years old, it is recommended they partake in aerobic exercise for at least 1 hour a day; this will help strengthen their muscles and bones. The level of intensity of the activity needs to be appropriate, if they work too hard within that hour this can put them off exercising, increase the risk of getting injured, or cause them to lose confidence if they don't achieved what they set out to do because it was too difficult.

We should be trying to reduce the time children are sedentary, watching TV, playing video games, sitting in a pushchair, eating unhealthy foods. Exercising for children is different than adults, children can complete their daily amount of exercise needed by playing games and running at lunch time, taking part in extracurricular activities, PE lessons, swimming, running, walking/cycling to school, all of these are good and easy ways of making sure your child is active whilst still having a good time.

Children should be doing exercise that is fun, if the activity they are taking part in is fun and enjoyable , then they are more likely to take part again.

There is an exhaustive list of reasons as to why exercise is essential to physical and mental well-being. Here are all but a few:

- Help strengthen their bones and muscles
- Increases children's confidence and self-esteem
- Teaches them the importance of exercise
- Helps keep their mental state of mind healthy
- Your child will be less likely to become overweight
- Exercise will reduce the risk of your child developing type 2 diabetes
- Children will have better outlook on life
- Making new friends
- leadership skills
- Positive behaviour
- Trying out new sports and activities
- Learning new skills
- Positive attitude

Types of exercise:

Aerobic: During aerobic exercise your body is using oxygen. It usually involves low intensity exercises such as jogging, brisk walking or steady paced cycling.

Anaerobic exercise: During anaerobic exercise your body doesn't use oxygen. This form of exercise is shorter and more strenuous. It includes sprinting, weight lifting and other high intensity forms of training.

Strength training: Strength training improves bone health and increases muscle mass. Increased muscle mass increases an individuals metabolism (muscle burns more calories than fat).

Flexibility training: Works hand in hand with strength training. Improved flexibility of joints and muscles means you are less prone to injuries and can enhance sports performance. Improved flexibilty can also improve posture and balance.

Balance training: Single limb exercises enhances brain function and co-ordination.