

College

Newsletter



MacKillop

St Mary MacKillop College Canberra



Volume *Eleven*

1 September 2023

Coming

Up

TUE	0	5	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Year 12 AST Breakfast• AST Session 1 & 2
WED	0	6	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AST Session 3
FRI	0	8	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Silver Jubilee and MacKillop Day Celebrations
FRI	1	5	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spring Zing
MON	1	8	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greece and Italy Tour Departs• Year 10 Work Studies Work Experience Week
WED	2	0	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College and Portfolio Captain Elections• Year 9 Building Bridges
THU	2	1	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variety Night
FRI	2	2	S	E	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Term 3 Concludes
MON	0	9	O	C	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Term 4 Begins



Principal's Letter

Principal's Prayer

Lord, we give thanks for 25 years of St Mary MacKillop College, and all those that have contributed to its foundation, growth and success. Amen.



Dear parents/carers, teachers and students,

The Order of Australia Association Student Citizenship Awards

Last week a ceremony for the Order of Australia Association (ACT Branch) Student Citizenship Awards were held, recognising voluntary community service and outstanding citizenship amongst students across the ACT. Award recipients are determined by an independent selection panel. These are awards of great significance and I congratulate the MacKillop students who had their service and effort acknowledged:

- **Phoebe Vassallo** (Year 10) – The Association Plaque Award for exceptional community service and leadership

This was in recognition of Phoebe's ongoing contribution to St Mary MacKillop College including her demonstration of leadership in facilitating the Year 11 Walk for Life Community event.

- **MacKillop Year 12 Class of 2023** – The Association Plaque Award for exceptional community service

For support of the ACT Cancer Council through participating in the Relay for Life and raising over \$74,000. The Award was accepted on behalf of Year 12 by the College Captains.

Catholic Education Staff Awards

The Catholic Education Faith in Excellence Awards honour exceptional contributions to the mission of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn.

Over 100 nominations were received from across the Archdiocese for 11 categories of awards, with MacKillop staff successful in three categories:

- School Office Staff Award – **Janine Hickson**
- Leadership Award – Middle Leader – **Kate Goolagong**
- Leadership Award – School Leader – **Maria O'Donnell**

These awards are a credit to the leadership, service and contribution of Janine, Kate and Maria, each across many years at MacKillop. It is also an acknowledgment of the high-quality staff we are fortunate to have working within our community, across all support staff areas and in providing high quality teaching, learning and pastoral care at the College. Not surprisingly, MacKillop was the most represented school among the award recipients and the only ACT Secondary school.

MacKillop Day – Silver Jubilee Celebrations

Next Friday, 8 September, St Mary MacKillop College is holding a Silver Jubilee Assembly to celebrate the Feast Day of the College and our 25 year anniversary. This will be a momentous event for the College – we have never before held an Assembly for the whole College community, Years 7 to 12.

The Assembly will include a liturgy, reflections on the first 25 years of MacKillop including insights from each of the past Principals, special presentations, and student performances.

College alumni, past staff members, parents/carers, and members of the broader College community are invited to join us in celebrating 25 years of MacKillop. The assembly will commence at 9.25am at the Tuggeranong Basketball Stadium.

Following the assembly, students and staff will return to the St Peter's Campus for an afternoon of Feast Day activities.

'Tell them from Me' Parent Surveys

Thank you to the 383 parents and carers who completed the parent survey in Term 2. The data has been reviewed by the College Executive and the feedback indicates that MacKillop is a rich place of learning and experience. There were a diverse range of comments and these provided both affirmation and valuable critiques that will be considered in the strategic planning of the College into the future.

Year 12 AST Examinations

Next week our Year 12 students will be sitting the AST exams. These tests are taken by all students in the ACT who are seeking an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank and facilitates the scaling of course scores across the Territory. The students have been well prepared over the past 18 months, led by Senior Studies Coordinator, Mr Colby Cruwys. Over two days the students will have over 7 hours of testing consisting of short-response, multiple choice, and writing task. Best wishes to our Year 12 students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lachlan McNicol'.

Mr Lachlan McNicol • College Principal (Acting)





Book Week 2023

CBCA Book Week is always a highlight on the College calendar. The Padua and St Peter's Learning Commons teams challenged both staff and students to a number of reading and book related activities, culminating in the hotly contested Dress-Up day. Pastoral Classes were invited to complete a challenge a day, with the top performing classes being 8F2, 9A2 and 10A1, which was the top-performing PC group of the week – gaining 100% on multiple challenges. On Friday we had our main celebration and there was a sense of festivity in the air for the entire day. On the St Peter's Campus this included a BBQ during lunchtime, with proceeds going towards a book donation to MacKillop House.

The staff prize was hotly contested, with 294 students and staff voting for the best dressed. Congratulations to the Science Faculty who took out the top place for the St Peter's Campus with nearly 40% of the vote for their detailed version of The Magic School Bus, and the Learning Commons team on the Padua campus, dressed as Mario, Luigi, and Princess Peach.

Year 12 selected a theme based on the many picture books titled "When I Grow Up". The best dressed student prize went to Ava and Mary for their costumes inspired by the novel "Good Omens" written by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, with a runner-up prize awarded to Cameron for his detailed handmade costume of an Inferni from the "Shadow and Bone" series by Leigh Bardugo. On the Padua campus, best dressed prizes went to Stella, as The Joker, Hayley, as Cruella de Vil, and Lachlan who was a very dedicated Avenger's Apprentice.

Thank you to everyone who got involved with the celebrations during the week, and a particular thank you to Toby, the Communications Captain, who put a lot of work into assisting with the planning of PC Challenges and promotion of the day. Overall, it was a great celebration of the power of reading, and we look forward to continuing the tradition in 2024!

Sara Vassallo & Amanda Knott • Learning Commons Coordinators





Science Week 2023

National Science Week is Australia's annual celebration of science and technology and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Australian scientists to the world of knowledge. It also aims to encourage an interest in science pursuits and to encourage younger people to be fascinated by the world we live in.

The school theme for National Science Week in 2023 was ***Innovation: Powering Future Industries***. The theme incorporates the advancement in technology in all industries, especially using artificial intelligence (AI).

We celebrated Science Week at MacKillop with a number of activities and challenges. During PC, students were able to complete the daily PC Challenge. Activities included science trivia and name the discovery or invention. Congratulations to 7F2, 8F4, 9E1, 10A1, 11AF and 12E2 who had the highest scores in each year group. At lunch time, students were able to participate in an escape room themed around hydrogen power and featuring artificial intelligence! They worked in teams to solve puzzles set up around the laboratories. It was wonderful to see students working together and so engaged in the activities. Students also had the opportunity to explore the world of virtual reality by using specially designed headsets that worked with their phones.

Congratulations to all students who participated and thank you to the science staff who assisted during the week.

Dr Melissa Pert & Kate Goolagong • Science Coordinators



The National Dinosaur Museum

The National Dinosaur Museum offered a comprehensive tour distinguishing between the various time periods, the classification of prehistoric species, and a range of interesting and important features of different dinosaurs. The information was very intriguing, exhibits well-designed, and the tour guide was informative and differentiated information for different learners and levels of understanding.

It was a very enjoyable and valuable excursion, with information relevant for our upcoming assessment task in our palaeontology unit. It was a ROOOARRING success.

Alexander Brooks, Samuel Braun and Luke Withington
Year 8 Archaeology/Palaeontology Course



Year 9 STEM

On Tuesday 15 August, Dr Webb spoke with students on the electromagnetic spectrum, radars and transmitting and receiving signals. It was an engaging presentation that allowed students to gain a deeper understanding of the theory they would need to design their antenna. On Tuesday 22 August, students from Year 9 Radio and Radio Astronomy went on an excursion to the St Peter's Campus, where we got the exciting opportunity to observe the moon, Saturn, and alpha centori through different types of optical telescopes (refracting and reflecting) and binoculars. A big thank you to Mr Henry and the students of the Astronomy Club for hosting us.

Noa Zisman and Helen Pynadath • Year 9

Assessment Guidelines/Absences, AI Information Update & AST Examinations



AI Information Update

By this time of term, all students in all subjects should have undertaken some formal assessment tasks in the lead up to the Semester 2 Progress Reports and have experienced MacKillop's new processes around ensuring academic integrity through AI robust assessment task processes. The way in which they have approached, understood, and accepted these changes has been commendable. As has been explained to them, we appreciate that they, alongside their teachers, have been impacted by these adjustments that were put in place to ensure they could still undertake a range of assessment task types – including take home tasks – and that we will be seeking their feedback to improve our processes going forward.

One thing that Year 11 and 12 students need to be mindful of is that assessment validation tasks fall under the College Assessment Policy. Students are encouraged to refer to the information 'Assessment Task Submission' and 'Possible Penalties Relate to Assessment' in the [11-12 Assessment Policy Agreement](#).

The issues above were discussed at the [Parent/Carer Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence Information Night](#). The way that the audience participated in the Q&A process shows how engaged our community is with our commitment to excellence in education. On the night, the question of 'using' AI for Education was raised. We are currently waiting on the National AI in Schools Framework to be released which will guide schools on the safe and ethical use of AI. However, staff are using and undertaking professional learning in Educational AI use, and some small pilot AI activities have been run, so that we will be ready when the time is right. Recent research has also shown that time is a critical factor in ensuring benefits from AI use in education. Beginners using AI for a task don't fully understand the output, can't integrate the results properly and get de-motivated to perform. However, experts can use AI to enhance their work and understanding and thrive. Thus, we are mindful that

we will need to carefully implement the right type of AI, in the right way, at the right time on the student's academic journey to ensure they are getting educational benefit.

AST Examinations

Semester 2 is a big semester for all Year 12 students coming to the end of their high school journey and next week (Tue-Wed 5-6 September) there is an important milestone coming up for students on a T package – the AST. This set of three tests is used to scale MacKillop's course scores against other Colleges in the ACT and is part of the calculation that determines a student's ATAR. To celebrate their educational journey together, all Year 12 students and teachers are invited to the annual 'Year 12 Breakfast' at the St Peter's canteen at 7:15am on the morning of Tuesday 5 September. Our Year 12 students have been well prepared by their teachers, and through the regular AST workshops run by Mr Cruwys, and we have every confidence in their success.

NOTE: Cooma Bus Tuesday 5 September

Students must be in the AST Exam Hall by 8:15am on Tuesday 5 September. To ensure all Year 12 students can be there on time – and have the opportunity to attend the Year 12 Breakfast (and return home again if the AST exams finish later than expected), a special bus has been chartered to:

- Leave Cooma at 6:00am (from Centennial Park) for MacKillop
- Depart MacKillop at 3:50pm for Cooma

This bus is in addition to the regular school bus service to and from Cooma.


Tristan Burg • Assistant Principal Academic Care (acting)

Using Grammarly and Upholding Academic Integrity

Grammarly is an online writing assistant. While it can be a helpful tool for identifying grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure issues, some of its features can place your academic integrity at risk.

- If your writing is substantially altered through Grammarly's edits, this can detract from your writing style and tone. This could lead to your writing being detected as AI generated through Turnitin.
- Using GrammarlyGO to produce original text that you use for an assessment task is academic misconduct and there is a high chance that your assessment task will be detected as being AI generated through Turnitin.

The table below presents the key features provided by Grammarly. It categorises them based on their potential risk level when used for creating written content for assessments that may result in academic integrity concerns. The higher the risk, the higher the likelihood of your written content being identified as AI-generated.

Minimal Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Correctness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, spelling and punctuation • Consistency in spelling and punctuation [P] • English fluency [P] 		Generative AI assistance (GrammarlyGO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideate • Compose • Reply • Rewrite • Personalise 
Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conciseness • Formatting [P] 	Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-sentence rewrites [P] 	
Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice [P] • Word and sentence variety [P] 		
Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone detection 	Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone suggestions [P] 	

[P] = Premium Subscription

Remember: When using Grammarly that the use of this or any other text AI-generative or assistive tools is not considered a valid defence if your work is flagged as AI-generated.

Trent Wilson • Digital Learning Coordinator



Baroque Workshop

On Friday 25 August, students from the Senior Music class took part in a Baroque Workshop with Apeiron Baroque performers John Ma (violin) and Marie Searles (harpsichord). Students learned about Baroque improvisation and ornamentation and were able to take part in improvisation sessions with the performers.

It was a lovely afternoon for everyone involved. A particular highlight was getting to play a Flemish harpsichord!

Faith Life

Walking Together *Youth Ministry Retreat*

On Monday 31 July the Year 9/10 CYSMA classes participated in a retreat day. The day was full of valuable lessons that we can take away with us - with the main focus of the day 'Walking Together'. We were able to take part in a range of activities that helped us to challenge the theme and connect with the messages being delivered. We played ice-breaker games which encouraged us to work together, built newspaper towers in small groups to hopefully withstand a range of stability testing, walked on the MacKillop Walk talking with a partner about the differences others have made in our lives and how we can do the same. These activities were followed by valuable presentations made by youth ministers. To finish the day we were given time for personal reflection and we were provided with an opportunity to go into confession with Father James.

The CYSMA retreat was a great day which gave us a chance to reflect leading into the new term. There were a lot of main takeaways from the day which we can remember and use in all aspects of our lives. The day encouraged us to reflect on our relationships with each other and God. We are all very much looking forward to the next retreat to extend our knowledge on these key ideas!

Lucy Pope and Millie Terracini • Year 10

Pastoral Program Term 3

The students have been focussing on the theme of Relationships this term. Each cohort has been concentrating on different topics within this broad topic. The aim is to continue to build skill sets in the students to deal with a variety of aspects of relationships that will keep them safe and support them in the future.

The Pastoral Program lessons that have been organised across the College over the next fortnight are:

Year 7	Class Activity: Developing and applying resilience in relationships
Year 8	Rock and Water Program: Confidence and resilience in dealing with conflict
Year 9	Class Activity: A broad look at the concept of consent
Year 10	Back Program: Black Dog Institute: Relationship with Self
Year 11	College Counsellor Presentation: Respectful Relationships and Consent
Year 12	Australian Federal Police: Safe in the City Presentation

Paul Durham • Assistant Principal, Pastoral Care

Lowes Schoolwear Price Increase

The College has been informed that Lowes Schoolwear will be increasing prices for uniform items in the fourth term this year. This is due to the current economic climate which has resulted in rising costs for raw materials, production, and transportation. Lowes is committed to exploring alternative production methods to offer cost-saving solutions. To minimise the impact on families, Lowes has capped the increases for SMMC's distinctive garments and will continue to offer 20% off during our sale days. The College will promote these via the newsletter throughout the year.

Status Awards

Congratulations to the following students who have been presented Status Awards at the Padua Campus Assembly:

Bronze Status

Alex Beath 7A3, Ainslie Bignell 7W3, Nadeen Jameel 7E4, Oliver Morgan 7E2, George Padayattil Mathew 7E3, Mana Robinson 7E2, Liam Saxon 7F3, June Tattam 7A3, Zoe Van Oosten 7E4, Kristen Young 7F4

Youth Awareness Mental Health Program

From Weeks 3 to 5, Year 9 students attended the Youth Awareness Mental Health program at the school. Students spent time in their Pastoral Care Classes to learn more about mental health and how to support one another. YAMH was a really good experience as students were able to connect with the instructors and our classmates to discuss and learn more about mental health. Many people, including myself, were able to take things away from the sessions and put them into our daily routine. I really liked it and thought that it was worthwhile because it gave me a chance to connect and feel free to talk about mental health.

Temeka Swanston • Year 9



SRC Report

Last week, the College celebrated the Annual Book Week, which was a great success across both campuses. Each day on the St Peter's Campus, Pastoral Care Class challenges were sent out to be completed each morning. This was a great way to get students and staff member's brains working in a fun Book Week related way. There were numerous Book Week activities run in both libraries, and it was great to see students getting involved. The week was topped off with the dress up day on Friday. On Friday, there was a dress up competition at recess, and a barbecue at lunch time on the St Peter's Campus. The proceeds of the BBQ went to our House Charity of MacKillop House. These donations will be used to purchase reading gifts (such as books or magazines). The week was lots of fun and was a great success all round.

Last week we also had our third House Charity Week: Gurabang! All funds from this week went to MacKillop House. Gurabang kicked things off on Wednesday with Goodberry's at the St Peter's Campus and a Student vs Staff Oztag at the Padua Campus. Thursday saw a uniform variation of puffer jackets or vests, and on Friday the Campus activities swapped with Padua enjoying Goodberry's and the St Peter's staff stealing the Oztag crown. All these events were a great success, and we can't wait to see what Mindygari has in store next in Week 9.

Toby Barber • Communications and Connections Captains





Bush Tucker

On Tuesday 22 August the College welcomed Cameron Ribbons from Ribanas Catering to the St Peter's Campus to run some cooking with Bush Tucker sessions.

Students from the MacKillop Mob, Sustainability Club, Hospitality and Staff made burgers and chips using fresh ingredients and incorporating indigenous elements. Thank you to Cameron for coming in and making each session enjoyable for all who participated.



ADFA's Musical 'Freaky Friday'

Defence Excursion

On Friday 11 August, 29 Year 7 and 8 Defence students joined Mrs Van Doorn and myself in attending ADFA's Musical 'Freaky Friday'. Students got to enjoy a quality performance by the ADFA Cadets and also catch up with Defence students from across Canberra.

The students were extremely excited at the opportunity to meet the whole cast, in particular the character of 'Fletcher', who was the hands down favourite with the students.

It was a well-produced production and the ADFA Cadets should all be very proud of their performance. The students were already saying 'they are looking forward to attending next year'.

Justin Kain • Defence Student Mentor



Kiarma Ramalli

Elite Athlete Spotlight

What is your sport?

Netball

What is the highest level you have competed at?

ACT Representative level

What is your most memorable sporting moment/achievement?

Playing for ACT School Girls Netball Nationals in Perth this year

Who is your sporting idol and why?

Steph Wood because she plays the same position as me (GA) and I like the style she plays. Steph also plays for the Australian diamonds.

What is your next competition?

Trialling for U17 ACT Netball and trialling for U17/U19 Tuggeranong Netball.

What do you hope to achieve in your sport?

I hope to play at an Australian level and play netball in other countries.

What has your sport taught you?

How to play as a team, and what it's like to experience playing netball against other states.



7/8 and 9/10 Girls ASC Basketball Champions

On Monday 28 August, MacKillop completed in the ASC Basketball championships. It was a day filled with high spirits, well-versed basketball and teamwork. After a lot of hard work both teams finished the day as Champions! Thank you to all the parents and supporters who came along on the day to help us out.

Student Achievements

Ainslie Bignell (Year 7) has been selected in the U12s ACT School Sport Girls Netball Team and will be travelling to Perth to compete at the National Netball Championships in September.

Kiarma Ramalli (Year 9) represented the ACT School Sport in Netball at their Championships in Perth.

Tiana Boots (Year 12) will be representing the ACT in the U18 School Sports Girls Soccer Team in September.

Grace Lyons (Year 12) has been selected for the Meteors Cricket team.

Mikah Ramirez de Arellano, Archie Aldred (Year 10) and George Stergiou (Year 11) will represent the ACT School Boys Soccer at Nationals here in Canberra in two weeks.

VARIETY NIGHT

Thursday 21 September • 6pm

**Moira Najdecki Theatre
Padua Campus, Wanniassa**

**Performances, audience
participation, games and prizes!**

Tickets \$10
www.mackillop.act.edu.au/qkr

Student Enrolments 2024

If families know that their student will be withdrawing from MacKillop at the end of this school year, please notify the College at enrolments@mackillop.act.edu.au at your earliest convenience. This will help with planning and staffing for 2024.

The Enrolments Team

Second Hand Uniform Shop

The change to the summer uniform is on its way. Below you will see price comparisons for some of the summer uniform items and the financial savings you will make by buying rehomed uniform items from the SHUS.

	Lowes	SHUS		Lowes	SHUS
Girls Uniform	\$	\$	Boys Uniform	\$	\$
Tartan Skirt	79.95	36	Grey Shorts x2	95.90	40
Blouse x2	89.90	40	Short Sleeved Blue Shirt x2	89.90	40
Junior Dress x2	147.90	66	Short Sleeved White Shirt x2	69.90	40
Jumper	95.95	35	Jumper	95.95	35
Sports Shorts	35.95	15	Sports Shorts	35.95	15
Sports Polo	39.95	15	Sports Polo	39.95	15

The SHUS gratefully accepts washed and saleable SMMC uniform items. Please deliver these to the front office on either campus. Remember to collect your \$5 canteen voucher in return.

The SHUS is open on a Thursday by appointment, unless otherwise advised. Please note, the SHUS will be closed on Thursday 21 September. The SHUS will open on the second week of the school holidays (from 2 October) to meet your uniform needs. **To make an appointment** please text/call Judy on 0427 089 370 or send an email to uniforms@mackillop.act.edu.au.

Judy • SHUS Coordinator

Fees

Fees for Term 3 should now be finalised unless paying by Direct Debit or other approved arrangement. **Any outstanding fees should be paid immediately.**

It is most important that you notify the College regarding any changes to your email address as this is our primary form of communication. If you require more information regarding Direct Debit arrangements or other approved payment methods or are experiencing difficulty paying the fees please contact the Fees Office.

Michelle Predovan • Fees Manager

Community News

Futsal Mania

Are you interested in playing futsal? EOI is open for teams and individual players at Futsal Mania. **Futsal starts in October** for kids under 6 to 14+ years of age at the PCYC in Queanbeyan. Term 4 regos are open now! Email: futsalmaniansw@gmail.com or visit: [Futsal Mania](#)

National Photographic Competition

Entries for the 2023 Your Health Link National Photographic Competition **close on Sunday 8 October**. Capture images that promote 'Healthy Life Healthy You'. More information at: [Your Health Photography Comp](#)

Holiday Happenings

The next Holiday Happenings edition is now available online. Visit [here](#) to see the programs, activities and events happening these holidays.

Junior Indoor Soccer

Weston Indoor Sports welcomes players aged 5-20 years, and of all skill levels, to participate in their 2023-24 summer season. For more details visit their [website](#), or contact Weston Indoor Sports on 62880444 or email: soccer@westonis.com.au

Tuggeranong Valley Junior Cricket

Wanting to play cricket? Registrations for Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club are now open for kids aged 5-17 years. Register online [here](#). Email: mailto:jvp@tvcc.org.au



MacKillop
St Mary MacKillop College Canberra

Contact details



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**PO Box 1211
Tuggeranong ACT 2901**



Mackinnon Street, **Wanniassa** (Years 7-9)
Ellerston Avenue, **Isabella Plains** (Years 10-12)



Absentee SMS Line
0429 131 463

Socials



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We Need to Talk About Parent Wellbeing

Mental Health is on everyone's lips. With 44% of Australian adults having experienced a mental disorder over the course of their lives, and 1 in 5 having experienced symptoms of a mental disorder over the last 12 months, it's no surprise that Google searches for mental health queries reached an all-time high in 2021.

Additionally, across Australia there are 102 days dedicated every year to raising awareness of important mental health and wellbeing related topics, including *Neurodiversity Week* in March, *World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day* in May, and *R U OK? Day* in September. A growing number of Australian states and territories are also promoting *Mental Health Month* in October.

With all the talk about mental health and wellbeing, it's valuable to understand that mental illness and mental health are actually different things. On the one hand, we have mental illness. Low mental illness means you aren't experiencing symptoms of mental illness (such as depression and anxiety), high mental illness means you are. And on the other hand, we have mental health. If you have high mental health, you have a generally positive mood and outlook on life and are functionally optimally. You are said to be 'flourishing'. If you have low mental health, you may feel hollow or empty, and have a generally low mood. You are said to be 'languishing'.

For most people experiencing mental illness, interventions such as therapy and medications are both valuable and necessary. However, to improve mental health and lead a flourishing life, there are simple changes that anyone can make even if they are struggling with mental illness.

Let me ask you a simple question.

What makes life most worth living for you?

The simplest way to experience improved mental health and wellbeing is to identify the answer to that question and then find a way to do a little more of those things each day. Let me outline a few things science points us to that can help:

1. Sleep

This might be the most boring thing I can put on the list of ideas to bolster wellbeing (for you and your kids). But it might also be the most valuable item on the list.

Have you noticed what a difference it makes when you feel well rested? Have you noticed how much better you behave (not to mention the kids) when you've had a full night's sleep? It's no surprise that sleep loss is

associated with negative moods and impacts emotional regulation. Sleep makes you a better parent. It makes you a better partner, employee... it makes you a better person. Prioritising a solid 8 hours of sleep per night is just about the best thing you can do to be happier.

2. Build Connection

Relationships are at the core of our wellbeing. Find ways that you and your children can connect with one another and with others regularly and in healthy, positive ways. Simple ways to build connection are smiling at each other (even fake smiles can amplify and initiate feelings of happiness), spending quality time together, and telling the people around you that you love them.

3. Get Active

A recent study from the University of South Australia found that exercise is 1.5 times more effective than counselling or the leading medications at improving symptoms of depression, anxiety, and distress. Physical activity also keeps our brains healthy, increases positive mood and increases self-esteem, as well as reducing the risk of heart disease, cancer, and increasing bone health. The World Health Organisation recommends that children and adults aim for about 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity daily, but if you're just starting out, replacing sedentary time with physical activity of any intensity will offer health benefits.

4. Slow Down and Smell the Roses

Nature is fuel for the soul. Spending time interacting with nature has a long list of benefits (including improved academic and task performance, stress reduction, reduced violence, increased inspiration, and improved mood), which can be achieved in as little as 120 minutes a week. You can boost your nature time by shifting the route of your walk to go through your nearest green space, taking your lunch break outside, or planning a weekly family trip to the forest, beach, or Botanic Gardens.

5. Have Fun

It might seem like a simple thing, but having a once-a-week family adventure can build connection, encourage physical activity, and get us out into nature, plus it is fun! Having fun can be free: take the soccer ball to the park, do a scavenger hunt, or take a bucket and spade to the beach.

On the road to flourishing

Work, school, homework, cleaning the house, finances... these are all important things, but they're not the things that make life worth living. If we want to get on the road to flourishing, we may need to re-prioritise our time, making sure that we build in opportunities for sleep, connection, movement, nature, and fun. Simple swaps are all it takes to bring greater positivity into your life.



AUTHOR

Dr Justin Coulson

Dr Justin Coulson is a dad to 6 daughters. He is the parenting expert and co-host of Channel Nine's Parental Guidance, and he and his wife host Australia's #1 podcast for parents and family: The Happy Families Podcast. He has written 9 books about families and parenting. For further details visit happyfamilies.com.au.