

# MAY NEWSLETTER

## Contextual Wellbeing



Growing Strong Minds [Character Strength posters](#) on display throughout Westmead Public School.

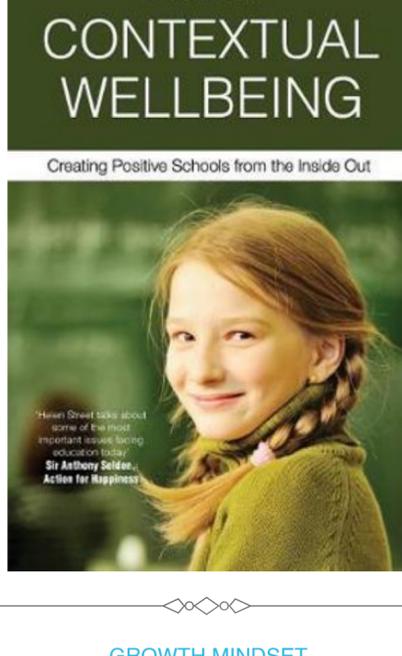
### ALTERNATIVES TO REWARDS

Dr Helen Street's Contextual Wellbeing text is a must read for any school interested in implementing Positive Education. She states that if we want engaged flourishing students then we need to create equitable, inclusive, cohesive school environments. Dr Street states that this includes:

- Removing rewards. Rewards do increase short term compliance but they also encourage the focus to be on the external reward rather than on the process of learning, which decreases intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning.
- Instead of rewards we can aim to develop healthy cohesive schools where students feel they belong and are connected to others. This increases mental health, intrinsic motivation, participation, pro-social behaviour, academic success and an equitable system.

So how do we build cohesion?

1. Allow students and staff to set the class rules. Do this by asking students what their class goals are. The rules then become a path to attain the goals. This helps to make desired behaviours the norm. Ensure students sign the rules - this sense of ownership supports compliance.
2. Prior to setting rules teachers need to develop positive relationships with all their students. Suggestions include: learn students names (provide name tags for ease); ask students how they are, how their weekend was, what their hobbies are; introduce yourself - tell students your name and a little about your life outside of school so as students can see you as an actual person; introduce non-competitive games and humour; allow students to develop a sense of ownership over their class through choice and control - choosing how to decorate the room, arrange the desks, rules, choice over pair, individual or small group work. The more autonomy and ownership students have the more engaged they are in their learning.
3. Wellbeing is about 'show' far more than 'tell'. Therefore it is crucial to invest in staff wellbeing. Ideally this means a manageable workload, autonomy, respect, good communication channels and opportunities to build relationships. This may be a long term goal! In the short term the following strategies for managing stress can be implemented:
  - Pause and take 10 slow deep breaths, whilst relaxing your body.
  - Incorporate moments of mindfulness in your day, pause and notice your surroundings, walk mindfully, eat mindfully.
  - Allow yourself 2 hours/week to do something you really enjoy, despite how busy you are.
  - Decrease some chores and time with people who drain you.
  - Be kind to yourself - "Accept that life can be busy and challenging and that you don't have to be perfect." Nurture yourself - have a bath, massage, eat well, exercise, go to bed early.



### GROWTH MINDSET

I have been looking for a book to recommend to replace Mind Your Mind (given that it is currently unavailable). In my search I came across this teachers fabulous post of the Head Hassler and the Mind Master (click on the image below). A really helpful way to explain to children how our thoughts impact our feelings and behaviour. The only change I would suggest is to avoid using the words 'negative' and 'positive' (as uncomfortable thoughts can also be useful) and replace with 'helpful' and 'unhelpful.'

When my children are catastrophising I often tell them "It sounds like the Head Hassler is talking to you, flick him off your shoulder. What would the Mind Master say?"



### EXPLORING CHARACTER STRENGTHS

We are excited to announce our newly NESA approved 3 hour workshop - Exploring Character Strengths. This is recommended for all Strong Minds schools as a means to embed character strengths post workshop 1. Get in touch ASAP for further information or to make a booking

[Book Now](#)

### GROWING MENTALLY TOUGH TEENS

Do you know any secondary schools interested in enhancing wellbeing? We can highly recommend the recently published 'Growing Mentally Tough Teens' Mental Toughness Curriculum for 14-16 year olds.

It was created by University lecturers Daniela Falecki (from [Teacher Wellbeing](#)) and Dr Suzy Green (from [The Positivity Institute](#)), and is a comprehensive user friendly resource.



[Learn More](#)



Need to enhance the wellbeing of your school? After an evidence-based approach that enhances wellbeing for all staff, students and families? Then check our Strong Minds whole school wellbeing package.

[More Info](#)

Warmest wishes,  
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