The
Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.



'Journey With Joy': Leadership and connection in Mental Health Month

Mrs Victoria Rennie
Deputy Headmistress

Week 2 has been another wonderfully busy and purposeful week across both the Senior and Junior School, with a particular focus on leadership, character, connection and wellbeing.

Our Year 5 girls took part in an outstanding Leadership Day in the Junior School, participating in workshops that invited them to explore their own qualities, values and character strengths as they prepare to move into Year 6. A particularly important message was that leadership extends well beyond a badge or title – we can all be everyday leaders. Leadership is a choice expressed through how we use our strengths to serve and support others, solve problems, contribute to a team and make a positive difference.

My sincere thanks to Mr Justin Owens, the Year 5 team and all those who contributed to the Year 5 Leadership Day. A great deal of thought, planning and work goes into creating days such as these, both in the preparation and behind the scenes on the day itself. We are very grateful for the care and commitment that made this such a valuable experience for our girls.

These ideas resonate strongly with Mental Health Month and its theme, 'A little connection goes a long way'. This week our Senior School Prefect Executive led a meaningful Wellbeing Assembly, encouraging the girls to think about practical ways to manage stress, care for their wellbeing and look out for one another.

I would also like to thank Mrs Liz Cannon, Director of Wellbeing and Counselling, for the considerable thought and planning that went into the assembly, and our Year 12 Prefect Executive 2026-2027 for presenting it so thoughtfully to the Senior School. I also warmly commend Mrs Cannon for her article in this week's newsletter, *Wellbeing Matters: Mental Health Month and Optimistic October.* Mrs Cannon reminds us that connection does not need to involve grand gestures. Small moments of kindness, gratitude, empathy and genuine connection can have a significant impact on how people feel.

Whether we are talking about leadership or wellbeing, the message is remarkably similar: our everyday choices matter. Each of us has the capacity to notice, connect, encourage, support and serve, and in doing so, to strengthen the community around us.







Wellbeing matters: Mental Health Month and Optimistic October

Mrs Liz Cannon
Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

This October is both Mental Health Month and 'Optimistic October', a wonderful way to start Term 4 with a huge focus on wellbeing.

Mental Health Month not only gives us the opportunity to think about our mental health and wellbeing but is also a chance to focus on activities and ideas that can have a positive impact on our daily lives and the lives of others. More importantly, it encourages us to be connected and seek help when needed. This year's Mental Health Month theme, **'A little connection goes a long way'**, reminds us that the small moments of connection in our daily lives can have a positive impact on our mental wellbeing.

For our girls, connection might look like asking a new girl to sit with them at lunchtime, checking in on a classmate, joining a club or team, talking to a trusted teacher or simply sharing a smile with someone who may be having a tough day. These everyday interactions help build a sense of belonging, support and community.

Connection is not only about relationships with others. It can also mean taking time to reconnect with yourself through activities that bring joy, calm and confidence, such as reading, playing sport, listening to music, being creative, spending time in nature or reflecting quietly. Being grateful and kind can have a very positive impact on wellbeing. We focus on this connection in our K-12 Wellbeing Program – The Resilience Project (TRP) and the framework of GEM (Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness). **The Resilience Project | Wellbeing Programs and Resources**

Parents also play an important role in fostering connection. Simple moments such as sharing over a meal 'what went well in the day', going for a walk together, asking about your daughter's day or taking time to listen without judgement can strengthen relationships and support wellbeing.

The key message is that connection does not need to be big or complicated. Whether it's reaching out to others or taking time to nurture ourselves, small acts of connection can make a meaningful difference to mental health and help us all feel supported, valued and understood.

Please **click here** to read more about Mental Health Month.

Optimistic October – let's make every day an optimistic day

We all know that an optimistic outlook helps us to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. Working on helping ourselves and our girls build and maintain optimism is really important. We need to help our girls consolidate and continue using these positive strategies, especially when things become difficult or stressful.

There are many ways to build optimism – including self-care (exercising, eating and sleeping well, green time and downtime), reframing a negative or challenging situation and finding a positive side to it, showing gratitude, love, kindness, joy, hope and awe.





'Research shows that optimism is associated with better mental wellbeing, greater resilience during challenges and healthier ageing. People who are more optimistic are more likely to cope effectively with stress and maintain positive emotional health.'
Journal of Psychosomatic Research 2022

Mental Health Month and Optimistic October Assembly

Our new Prefect Executive presented at the Senior School Wellbeing Assembly this week to highlight Mental Health Month. In this engaging student-led assembly, the prefects held a fun quiz with representatives from each year group about ways to manage stress at assessment time and how to connect with others. The prefects outlined wonderful and practical strategies to the girls about how to enhance their wellbeing, look after themselves and reach out when needed. Please have a look at the important tips shared by Dineli, Heli, Nimue, Eve and Margot.

'Hi Everyone! This month is Mental Health Month, so today we are here to talk to you about this year's theme, ***"A little connection goes a long way"****. This theme is all about the difference that having a support network and strong connections can make to wellbeing.*

It includes regularly checking in with your friends, just to make sure they are alright. As well as giving a 'be kind shout-out', this uplifts people daily and spreads positive energy through the community, for example, telling someone they played well at sport.

Sometimes, it's the smallest gestures that can make the biggest difference. Try ending conversations on a positive note by sharing a compliment, reminiscing about a fun memory or talking about something you're both looking forward to. You could also organise a walk or a catch-up with a friend, giving yourselves the time to have a proper conversation and enjoy each other's company.

This year's theme is important because connecting with people goes so much deeper than just these little chats. Make sure to check in on all of your friends regularly. Not just the ones that seem down or less energetic than usual, but the happy friends, the upbeat friends and the friends that usually check in on you. You never know what people are going through in their day-to-day lives, and one smile or one friendly gesture can be the difference between someone's worst day and best day.

A large part of this month's theme is stress-less tips, so now we are going to share some of the recommended stress-less tips with you!

Tip 1 – Do one thing at a time *– We all have such busy lives with so many different activities on at once that it can often feel overwhelming. It's important to slow down and be present in what we are doing, rather than constantly thinking about what we need to do next. By focusing on one thing at a time, we can appreciate the little moments, enjoy our experiences and feel more connected to the people around us.*

Tip 2 – Be active *– Endorphins, which your body creates during activity, have been clinically proven to improve your mood. So, start a new sport or look for ways to introduce more activity into your everyday life. This could be something as simple as going for a run after school or trying a new Saturday sport.*

Tip 3 – Eat healthy *– Eating healthy food and not overdoing the sugar and caffeine can help you feel happy and well. It might seem like a simple step or one that might not have any impact, but eating balanced meals does you so much good. There is increasing information available on how our diet affects not just our bodies but also our minds. So, whether you're looking to improve your mood or prepare for an assessment task this is always a good point to consider.*

Tip 4 – Do more of what is important to you *– In busy weeks, it's all too easy to get caught up in all the little tasks and activities we are expected to complete. Taking time to do activities you enjoy and that are important to you allows you to reenergise and feel more connected with your greater purpose. It's so important to remember that whilst school is the start of our lives, it's still our lives and a time we deserve to enjoy.*

Tip 5 – Take breaks *– We know you hear it a lot, but that is because taking breaks is so effective. It's a great way to decrease your stress levels and increase your productivity. You can take a break by going for a walk, reading a book or even just talking with a friend. Even when academic pressure may feel like a lot, and study is all that is on your mind, looking after yourself is a big part of doing well, so give yourself permission to pause, recharge and take time that's just for you.*

Tip 6 – Celebrate the small wins *– Our final tip is to mark your wins, both big and small. Recognising the joy in both small and large achievements can make us feel better and encourage positive changes in our lives. Whether you finished an assessment task or finally completed that challenge section in your maths homework, practice self-love and be proud of yourself!*



The Resilience Project *– While doing The Resilience Project, you would have learned about GEM, which stands for Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness, all of which are really important for your wellbeing. They can help you 'Journey With Joy' as you take on this final term.*

You can practice GEM by focusing on what you have, rather than what you could have, doing acts of kindness and crafting deeper connections with others, which is perfectly in line with the mental health theme. Mindfulness can look like being fully present in the current moment through practices like meditation or flow state to reduce stress and build resilience.

October Mental Health calendar *– You may have noticed on the plasma screens that this month we have been given mental health calendars with small acts that you can do every day this month to help improve your wellbeing. The tips are very similar to some of the ideas you heard from the girls in the game today, so it doesn't take long to participate. We will have some of these calendars at SAO and around the School in your year group areas if you would like some.*

Thank you for listening to our presentation. Mental Health Month is so important, and this year's theme of 'A little connection goes a long way' is such a wonderful reminder for us to look out for each other. Asking someone how they're really doing can mean more than you will ever know. Even a simple smile or wave can change someone's day. So, look out for each other and remember that you are never alone.'

Chaplain

Meaningful connections

Rev Sarah Hobba
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

Our Junior School screens have been highlighting Paul's encouragement to the Christians in Galatia: '*Let us not become weary in doing good*' (Galatians 6:9).

In Chapel, Mrs Gale reminded us that the heartbeat of the way we live is to love God and love others (ba-dum). We often think that making a difference requires grand gestures, but Jesus consistently pointed to the significance of small acts. He praised a widow's gift of two small coins, spoke of the value of offering a cup of water to someone in need, and used a boy's simple lunch to feed a crowd of thousands. Again and again, Jesus showed that God can work through ordinary acts of generosity and care. Ultimately, Jesus demonstrated his love for us through the cross, as it says in 1 John 4:19, '*We love because he [Jesus] first loved us*.'

As October is Mental Health Month and the theme is 'A little connection goes a long way', this message feels especially relevant. A word of encouragement, a listening ear, an invitation to sit together, a smile at the right moment, or a simple act of kindness can have a greater impact than we realise.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable about the importance of giving a drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, welcoming the stranger and caring for the sick and those in need. These are not meant to be dramatic acts performed for recognition (which Jesus warns against in Matthew 6), but rather simple expressions of love and attention.

We may never fully know how much our actions affect others, and perhaps the smallest act of compassion and kindness may be the very thing that reminds someone that they are seen, valued and loved (by others and God).

1 John 4:11

11 *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*



Upcoming events

WHOLE SCHOOL

Parent Wellbeing Hive – parent wellbeing resources	Available to all parents on the Parent Portal	**Click here** to visit
The Event of a Thread exhibition	Saturday 3 to Saturday 24 October	Grace Cossington Smith Gallery
After Namatjira Richard Dunn Exhibition	Saturday 31 October to Saturday 28 November	Grace Cossington Smith Gallery
Music Instrumental Festival	Wednesday 4 November	PDCH, Senior Campus

JUNIOR SCHOOL

IPSHA Debating gala day	Monday 26 October	Various locations
Year 2 Gibberagong excursion	Monday 26 October	Gibberagong
Year 2 Celebration of Learning	Wednesday 28 October 8.30-10.45 am	Year 2 classrooms
Year 5 Surf Education excursion	Monday 2 November	Manly Beach
Year 6 Surf Education excursion	Tuesday 3 November	Manly Beach

SENIOR SCHOOL

Saturday sport	Saturday 24 October	**Click here** for times and locations
HSC examinations	Thursday 13 October to Friday 6 November	
Year 9 assessment week	Monday 26 to Friday 30 October	Various locations
Year 10 assessment week	Monday 26 October to Tuesday 3 November	Various locations
Science of Learning parent evening	Tuesday 27 October 6-7.30 pm	PDCH
Year 9 Languages incursions	Wednesday 4 November	Various locations
Year 10 Semi-Formal	Thursday 5 November 6-10.30 pm	Hornsby RSL
Year 12 Prefect afternoon tea	Friday 6 November 4-6 pm	Year 12 Common Room and Marian Clarke Plaza
Sports Awards Evening	Friday 6 November 5-8 pm	PDCH