

MINDAPPLES INSIGHTS

Merseyside Youth Association

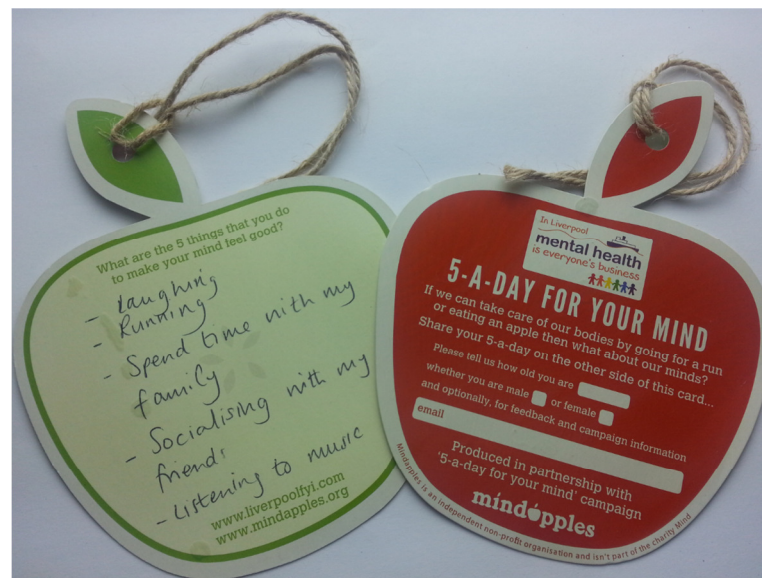
2015

Context

The Liverpool Children and Young Peoples Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Partnership (CAMHS) uses the 5-a-day for your mind concept as part of their Mental Health Promotion Project "Making Mental Health Everyone's Business". The aims of the project are:

- To raise awareness that Mental Health is everyone's business
- To increase the knowledge and skills of children and young people's workforce in this area
- To promote mental health
- To enable the children and young people's workforce to respond more effectively to the mental health needs of their service users.
- To promote Self Care through the use of MindApples
- To build Resilience

The main beneficiaries are staff who work with children and young people in Liverpool. This would include teachers, social care professionals, GP's, NHS staff and Voluntary and Community Organisations. The 'mindapples' analysed in this report, as written on the apple-shaped cards, are mostly from these beneficiaries but also from the young people with whom they work. In addition, the report includes the results of a related survey in schools where the students were given a list from which to choose the top 5 things that they do to help them feel good.



Summary of key findings

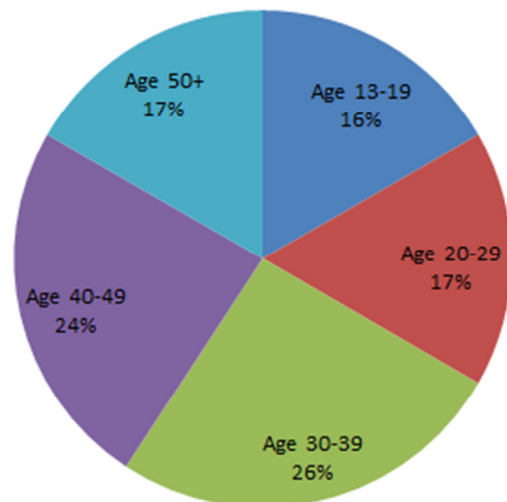
- **264 people** filled in Mindapples cards, generally with five mindapples on each, occasionally six, and occasionally a mixture of respondents on one card.

Social contact is the most popular category of responses, appearing on 84% of respondents' applegards. This category usually appears first and the percentage mentioning it puts it up in the top range compared with other surveys. The other common popular choice, **physical activity**, featured for 70% of the respondents. This is also in the top range compared with other surveys. Overall, the top five categories match, and are in the same order, as the top five in the 2013 report: social contact; physical activity; leisure activities and active mind; self-care and relaxation; food and drink.

82 of these applegards included the question "Is this the first time you've thought about what's good for your mind?" 30 respondents replied, with 70% of these answering no and 30% yes. This is slightly above baseline expectations which suggests that the "Making Mental Health Everyone's Business" is having an effect and also reflects the general growing awareness of the value of looking after mental wellbeing.

Data on age and gender was requested on the 138 Liverpool logo applegards and was filled in on 56. Within these, the gender split was 75% female and 25% male.

The age split is shown here.



The following areas are particularly popular in the findings and indicate areas where further organisational support and backing could be considered to encourage both maintenance and improvements in the wellbeing and resilience of staff.

1 SOCIAL CONTACT

84% of respondents included at least one mindapple relating to social contact.

Social integration is directly related to positive mental wellbeing and physical health, including lower mortality. Social emotional support is associated with better physical and mental health and acts as a buffer for stressful life events and physical injury. Having an intimate and confiding relationship, such as a spouse or partner, provides the strongest social support, followed by friends and relatives (Thoits 1995).

The importance of social interactions in our everyday lives is highlighted by the number of mindapples referring to friends and family. Mindapples mentioning various family members are overall the most frequent with friends coming second. Further analysis of the answers shows that a number of respondents are particularly aware of the quality of their contact with others; they use phrases such as 'spending time with' (54%) and talking (18%).

Social situations associated with positive experiences, such as 'out with family', appeared regularly as well. Laughing is mentioned by 10% of respondents which is similar to the level in other surveys.

Responses included:

- 124 occurrences of family / husband / wife / partner / children
- 118 occurrences of friends / mates
- 57 occurrences of talk / chat / communicate / conversation
- 54 occurrences of time with
- 34 occurrences of laugh / play with / fun
- 16 occurrences of smile

Example mindapples:

1. Spend time with good friends and family
2. Having fun with my kids
3. Talk to friends, family and colleagues
4. Have special times with members of my family
5. Catch up with friends regularly to socialise

2 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

70% of respondents included at least one mindapple relating to physical activity.

Research shows many benefits of physical activity for mental wellbeing. Physical activity and exercise have strong associations with positive mood and emotion, as well as a causal link between exercise and decreased depression (Biddle, Fox & Boutcher, 2000). Studies have also shown that exercise can reduce anxiety and stress as well.

As in the previous report, the link between mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing appears well-known to these groups. Being physically active features at least once, for over two thirds of the respondents. This is at the high end of other groups surveyed.

General references to 'exercise' and 'physical activity' are most frequent, with walking the most popular named form of exercise. Running/jogging, gym and swimming all coming in at around 8%.

Responses included:

- 59 occurrences of *exercise / physical activity*
- 57 occurrences of *walk / walking / hiking*
- 24 occurrences to *run / running / jog / jogging*
- 22 occurrences of *gym*
- 19 occurrences of *swim / swimming*

Example mindapples:

1. A daily exercise bike ride
2. Gym/boxercise
3. Going for a walk in the woods
4. Keeping active, exercise
5. Swimming, dancing

3 LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND ACTIVE MIND

64% of respondents included at least one mindapple relating to leisure activities.

People who engage more in enjoyable activities report better psychological and physical wellbeing (Pressman et al 2009). They experience more positive emotions, greater life satisfaction and lower depression scores. They also show lower blood pressure and cortisol levels, and better physical function. Leisure activities act as "breathers" and "restorers", which are beneficial for maintaining mental wellbeing. Spending time on complex mental activities, such as solving puzzles or learning new skills, has shown benefits for delaying the onset of Alzheimer's and dementia in older age (Valenzuela et al 2008). However, while brain training and brain games for improving memory and intelligence become increasingly popular, research studies have yet to find any significant benefits (Reddick et al 2012).

As in the previous report, mindapples mentioning activities involving leisure time, hobbies and mental activities are in the third most frequent category. Films and TV had the most mentions at 26%, with reading not far behind at 23% and music at 17%. Interestingly, respondents mentioning one of these tended not to mention the others. Without further questioning it is not possible to be certain why this is and if it has any significance.

16% of respondents' activities were connecting with keeping their minds active. For around three quarters of those it was through learning, with college mentioned several times. The others were through crosswords, Sudoku and trying something new.

Activities relating to creativity, hobbies and other interests were mentioned by 42% of respondents, with singing appearing more frequently than usually seen – on 9% of appcards.

Responses included:

- 63 occurrences of *reading / read*
- 45 occurrences of *music / listen to music*
- 31 references to watching TV / films / movies
- 23 occurrences of *sing / singing*

Example mindapples:

1. Going to college - achieving something
2. Favourite music live/recorded
3. Watching a TV series/listening to the radio
4. Playing drums
5. Sing! - with the radio - in the car - in the house

4 SELF-CARE AND RELAXATION

52% of respondents included at least one mindapple relating to self-care, self-management or relaxation.

Sleep is essential for mental alertness and wellbeing. Even short-term sleep deprivation impairs the ability to perform simple as well as complex tasks such as creative and flexible thinking, planning and decision-making (Thomas et al 2000). Commonly experienced levels of sleep deprivation (17-18 hours of wakefulness) decreases performance on attention and vigilance tasks to a level equivalent to that produced by alcohol intoxication of at least a BAC of 0.05% (Williamson & Fayer, 2000). Taking breaks, time for oneself and taking part in relaxing activities also act as "breathers" and "restorers" which are beneficial for both psychological and physical wellbeing (Pressman et al 2009).

The group showed a good understanding of the importance of self-care and relaxation, with sleep appearing for 14% of respondents – often with emphasis on getting enough sleep/a good night's sleep - and relaxing appearing for 11% of respondents. Generally, relaxation mindapples refer to solitary actions, signifying the need for spending time alone, however a few instances for relaxation included company, such as "*Relaxing with friends*".

Responses that could be categorised as self-management or self-care were given by nearly a quarter of respondents, with 8% referring to thinking or reflecting. These ranged from "Don't overthink my choices" and "Think of others, but don't forget about yourself" to "Reflection - recognising what I can change and accepting what I can't" and "Take time to reflect and think". There were few references to work/life balance which may reflect the importance that respondents place on the work they do and also that some respondents were volunteers or students.

Responses included:

- 37 occurrences of *sleep / sleeping*
- 30 occurrences of *relax / relaxing*
- 21 references to *thinking / reflecting*
- 14 references to *being positive / thinking positively*
- 10 references to *mindfulness / meditation*

Example mindapples:

1. Switch off sometimes/relax
2. Meditate in the shower
3. Treat myself for hard work
4. Carry on my list of 5 positives/helpful things at the end of every day
5. Taking 10 minutes a day to do something for me

5 FOOD AND DRINK

38% of respondents included at least one mindapple relating to food or drink.

What we eat and drink can have a considerable effect on our mental states. Consuming different types of food and drink is a common strategy for managing moods (Larsen, 2000). Healthy diets can sustain our energy levels in a more balanced way and recent research shows that eating 7 portions of fruit and vegetables a day has a positive effect on mood and wellbeing (Blanchflower et al 2013).

The overall percentage of mindapples referring to food and drink is similar to others that we have seen with just under two in five respondents mentioning food, drink or eating. Of those, nearly one third are in relation to eating healthily, eating well, or eating good food. Several just say "Food". Enjoying food and 'nice food' appear but there are few references to indulgence food such as cake or chocolate. Alcohol gets a mention for nearly 20% of those with a mindapple in the Food and drink category (7% overall).

The social and leisure aspects of food and drink are less popular than we might usually expect with just a few responses such as: "Sharing a healthy meal"; "Enjoy regular family meals"; "Having a nice meal with company".

Responses included:

- 29 occurrences of *eating well, eating healthily, good food*
- 22 references to *cook / cooking / bake / baking*
- 19 references to alcohol

Example mindapples:

1. Eating healthy and chocolate
2. Have a Friday takeaway and drink
3. Eat well
4. Cooking, especially Bake Off recipes
5. Enjoy family, food, drink and entertainment

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

nef's Five Ways to Wellbeing

Take notice: *Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.*

Appreciating beauty/nature, choosing to be outside, and taking notice of surroundings featured on at least 10% of applegards, which is comparable with other groups.

Give: *Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.*

References to volunteering, helping, supporting or mentoring others were on around 9% of the applegards which is higher than often seen but comparable with other third sector organisations.

And...

Here are a few mindapple suggestions that we particularly liked:

- Have hobby, books, crosswords, sudoku
- Read something inspirational every morning to take with me during the day
- Sit in my dad's house
- Stroke bulldogs
- Go on an adventure
- Appreciating beauty in nature
- Shredding paper
- Eat marshmallows
- Give hugs and kiss to all my children

ADDITIONAL DATA

In the related survey in schools, students were given the list shown on the right and asked to choose the top 5 things that they do to help them feel good.

Mapping the options against the categories used above produces the following as a comparison:

	Schools survey		Applecards*	
Leisure activities	42%	8 options		
Leisure activities and active mind			20%	open options
Social contact	30%	5 options	33%	open options
Exercise	11%	3 options	16%	open options
Self-care and relaxation	5%	5 options	12%	open options
Food and drink	4%	4 options	9%	open options
Outdoors/take notice	3%	1 option	2%	open options
Pets	3%	1 option	2%	open options
Shopping	2%	1 option	0%	open options
Helping/being useful/needed			2%	open options
Work related			1%	open options
Religion/faith			1%	open options
Time off/holidays			1%	open options

- Listening to music
- Sport
- Spending time with friends
- Social media
- Art
- Photography
- Outdoor activities
- Interacting with your pet/s
- Smoking
- Spending time with your family
- Meeting someone for a drink
- Drinking alcohol
- Using drugs
- Dancing
- Reading
- Gaming
- Watching movies
- Going to the theatre
- Shopping
- Walking
- Eating health food
- Eating junk food
- Having a make-over
- Laughing
- Eating my favorite food
- Writing
- Sleeping
- Going to a day spa
- Other

This is not a direct comparison by any means as the school survey data was weighted and the students were choosing from a list which had more options falling in some categories than others. Also, some of the mapping is open to interpretation/debate e.g. for this comparison *drinking alcohol* and *using drugs* have been interpreted as methods of attempting to manage themselves/their feelings.

However the comparison above does give an indication that the pattern is similar between the two groups, especially as one might expect students to have more time for leisure activities than a group made up mostly of adults.

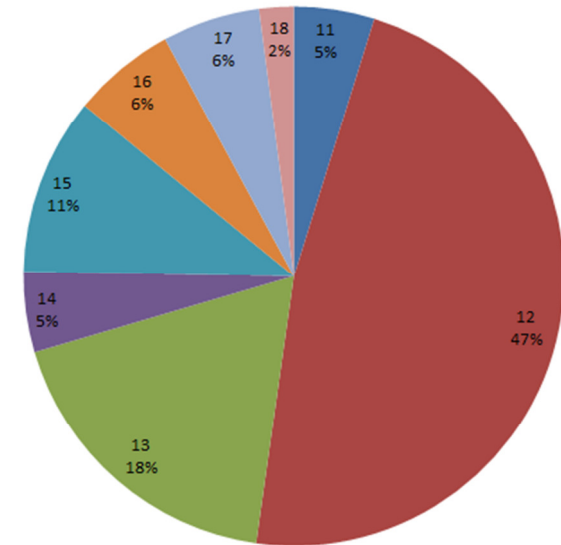
* The percentages on the prior summary pages refer to the number of respondents who include one or more mindapples from a particular category whereas the percentages on this page are for individual mindapples as that makes them more comparable with the school survey.

The weighted list for the 285 students is:

Listening to music	970
Spending time with friends	634
Sport	360
Social media	280
Spending time with your family	258
Gaming	180
Art	172
Interacting with your pet/s	144
Sleeping	136
Laughing	129
Outdoor activities	128
Watching movies	122
Shopping	98
Dancing	95
Reading	91
Eating junk food	63
Other	63
Drinking alcohol	53
Eating my favorite food	47
Photography	37
Walking	27
Using drugs	25
Smoking	24
Writing	23
Having a make-over	18
Eating health food	16
Meeting someone for a drink	16
Going to the theatre	10
Going to a day spa	9

With age profile:

11	5%
12	47%
13	18%
14	5%
15	11%
16	6%
17	6%
18	2%
19	0%



And gender split:

36%	Male
62%	Female
1%	Rather not say

Should the opportunity arise in the future it would interesting to include options for learning and for helping others to see if these were taken up.

The weighted list for one set of junior school students who used a different list is:

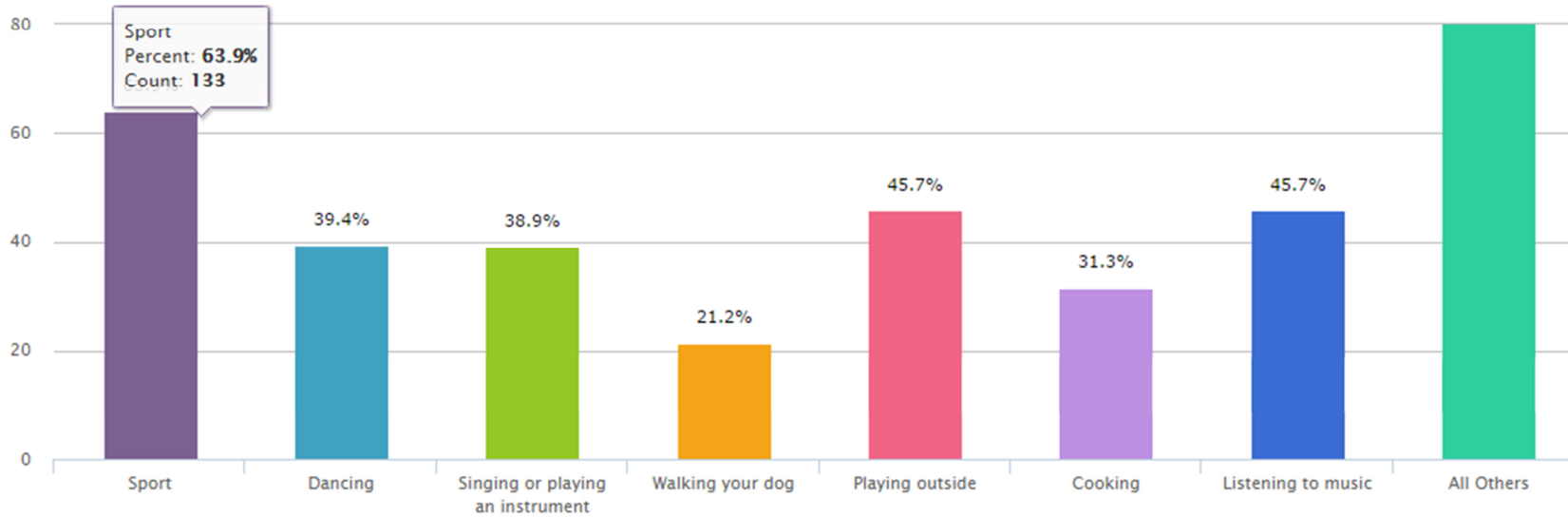
Sport	206
Singing or playing an instrument	129
Playing with your friends	114
Listening to music	101
Dancing	98
Reading	82
Swimming	76
Playing outside	69
Cooking	66
Walking your dog	52
Playing on your computer	49
Riding your bike	39
Watching TV	36
Talking to a parent or another adult	31
Drawing or making something	19
Something else	8
Imaginary play	5
Having a bath	4

It still follows a similar pattern:

Leisure activities	42%	7 options
Social contact	30%	2 options
Exercise	11%	4 options
Self-care and relaxation	5%	1 option
Food and drink	4%	1 option
Outdoors/take notice	3%	1 option
Pets	3%	1 option

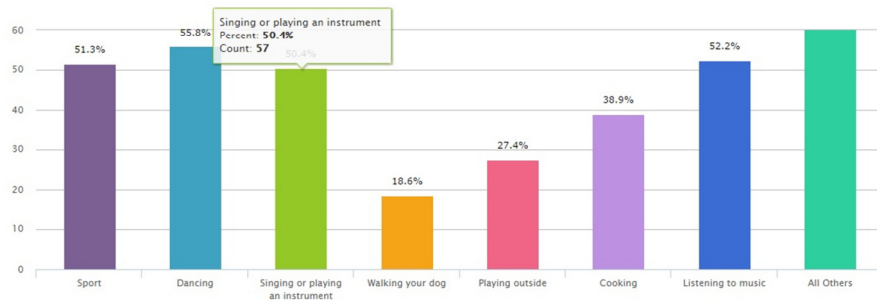
Some further data from another junior school survey is in the form of graphs:

12. What are five things that you do to make you feel good about yourself, please tick the five:



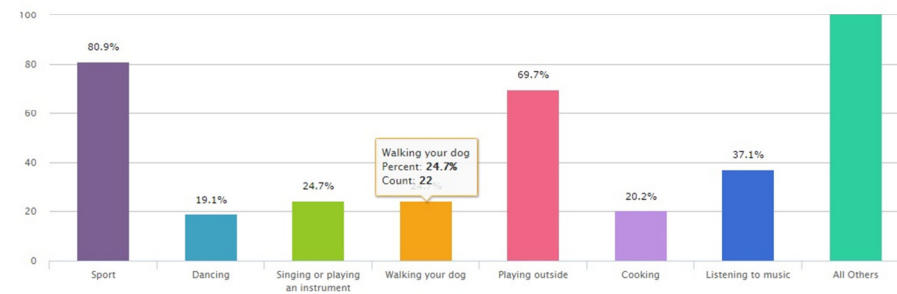
Females only

12. What are five things that you do to make you feel good about yourself, please tick the five:



Males only

12. What are five things that you do to make you feel good about yourself, please tick the five:



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