



Brain

Winter Newsletter

March 2022, Volume 2, Issue 2

In this issue of the e-BRAIN Newsletter you will find:

Page 1-2

What have we been up to? Mental health workshops!

Page 3

Bettering our mental wellbeing through diet and exercise

Page 4

A huge welcome to our new Masters Placement Student, Lucy!

Page 5

Test your knowledge on our bodies and food: Food quiz!

Page 6

An inspiring piece by Stephanie Sackey, one of our participants

Page 7

Our Teacher Champion, Mollie, on collaborating with eBRAIN



XUEMEI



SVENJA



PAOLA



HRITIKA



LUCY



MARYAM



ALICE



BECKY



CORENTIN

Dear reader,

We are so excited to share our sixth edition of the eBRAIN newsletter with you! We hope it will give you an idea of what we have been up to over the last few months, how we can better our mental wellbeing through what we eat and how we move, and introduce Lucy, our new MSc placement student. We also wanted to share a reflective piece from one of our participants, Stephanie (who has completed all 3 of her study visits) and a testimonial from our teacher champion, Mollie. You can also test your knowledge about our bodies and food in a food quiz! As you know, the focus of eBRAIN is mental wellbeing for everyone, so make sure you look after your physical and mental wellbeing during these times, practicing kindness to yourself and others.

Well wishes and solidarity, wherever you may be.

The e-BRAIN team

What have we been up to? Mental health workshops!

Over the last few months, we have been delivering various **engagement sessions and mental health workshops** at some of our collaborating schools in London! We really love coming into schools to speak to young people about such important topics, hearing their perspectives and having valuable discussions.

We have collected anonymous feedback from some of the students who participated in these sessions to hear about how to **improve** our presentations. It is also really helpful to see which parts young people find **most helpful or interesting!**



For example, in November last year we held a workshop at **Canary Wharf College Crossharbour** exploring mental health, anxiety and what it feels like, why we experience stress and how we can manage it. We had **a great discussion** and explored techniques that can help us feel less anxious. Here is the students' feedback...



Did you enjoy the session?



4

0

0

0

0

Strongly Agree

Agree

Don't Know

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



Was the session helpful?



2

2

0

0

0

Strongly Agree

Agree

Don't Know

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



Is there anything you found particularly helpful or interesting?



I found using the stress bucket helpful

The destressing techniques



What have we been up to? Mental health workshops!

In early February this year, we were at **Ark All Saints Academy**, with Year 7 and Year 9 scholars (students). We explored mental health, anxiety and what it feels like, why we experience stress and how to manage it, for example with **breathing exercises, the "stress bucket", worry time/diary and mindfulness**. Here is the students' feedback...



Did you enjoy the session?



6

8

2

0

0

Strongly Agree

Agree

Don't Know

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



Was the session helpful?



5

10

1

0

0

Strongly Agree

Agree

Don't Know

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Is there anything we could improve?



Do some more physical things

Not really, it was amazing

Any other comments?

Very good session, I would do it again

I really liked this session

I learnt so much more about mental health and anxiety

Is there anything you found particularly helpful or interesting?



How anxiety is with your body

Learning about the brain

Ways on how to calm yourself in different situations

How to destress

The breathing exercise when you have anxiety

Everything



It's great to see such positive comments and feedback from the scholars. We're really glad the workshops are so impactful! With their **suggestion for improvement**, we are now introducing more physical elements to the workshops and we're already brainstorming on how to implement this effectively in our future engagement sessions!

How can we improve our mental wellbeing through diet and exercise?

Healthier Families, formerly known as Change4Life, have plenty of great resources (food facts, activities and recipes) to help you and your family **eat better and move more!**

h e a l t h y

www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/

Eating well!

Eating well – with many vegetables and nutrients – can **improve your sense of wellbeing and your mood**. What can we do? Here are some tips!

Eat regularly – reduces tiredness and irritability

Stay hydrated – improves mood, energy level and ability to concentrate

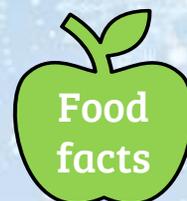
Eat the right balance of fats – your brain needs healthy fats (olive oil, nuts, avocados, seeds) to keep working well!

Include wholegrains, fruits and vegetables in your diet – chock-full of vitamins and minerals!

Include some protein with every meal - they contain amino acids that your brain uses to help regulate your mood

Look after your gut health – your gut likes fruit, vegetables, beans and probiotics!

Be aware of how **tea and coffee** can affect your **mood** – can increase irritability, anxiety and cause sleep problems



Download the free NHS Food Scanner app

You can use it to **scan your family's favorite products** and find **healthier swaps** for next time you shop!

Moving more!

Physical activity can improve your mental wellbeing. Being physically active means moving your body and working your muscles: for example, by walking, running, dancing, swimming, doing gardening. **Being active releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good** - boosting your self-esteem and helping you concentrate as well as sleeping well and feeling better. Not bad for something we can do for free! Other benefits include...

Less tension, stress and mental fatigue

More focus and motivation

A natural energy boost

Feeling less angry or frustrated

A sense of achievement

Having fun!

A healthy appetite

A huge welcome to our new Masters Placement Student, Lucy!

Lucy is a **Developmental Psychology and Psychopathology MSc** (Master of Science) student at King's College London. We are so excited that she is undertaking her placement with the eBRAIN study!

Hi! I'm Lucy and I've just joined the e-BRAIN team as **part of my placement** for my Master's degree. Everyone in the team has been **so lovely and welcoming** so far, so I'm super excited to spend more time working alongside them.



So far, I've enjoyed working on all parts of the study, especially **talking to participants** and sitting in on **MRI scans**. I can't wait to learn more about how the study works and get involved with different things within the team, as well as **learn some new skills and develop my ability as a researcher**.



I'm currently doing my Master's in **Developmental Psychology and Psychopathology**. I love all aspects of psychology but I'm particularly passionate about **adolescent mental health** and how difficulties might develop. A lot of my degree is focused on **how early life experiences can affect brain development** and put us more at risk of certain mental health issues, so working on e-BRAIN will really allow me to understand this more!

In my spare time, I love **baking and photography**. I also really enjoy **traveling and being outdoors**, so I do a lot of walking, hiking, and running. I was stuck in Switzerland during lockdown so was able to do lots of these – sometimes it's harder in rainy England!





1. Which organ absorbs most of the nutrients in food?

- a. Stomach
- b. Small intestine
- c. Large intestine



2. Which food substance helps move waste through the body?

- a. Protein
- b. Fibre
- c. Fat

3. Which mineral is good for bones and teeth?

- a. Iron
- b. Zinc
- c. Calcium

4. The nervous system benefits most from:

- a. Vitamin A
- b. Vitamin B
- c. Vitamin C



5. Which fatty acid is found in many fish and has a major health benefit?

- a. Omega – 3 fatty acids
- b. Omega – 6 fatty acids
- c. Saturated fatty acids



6. Which statement is **not** included in a daily healthy diet?

- a. At least five portions of fruit and vegetables
- b. Wholegrain starchy foods
- c. Dairy foods
- d. Processed meats



Give this quiz a go and find out more about our bodies and food!

Find the answers on the last page of the newsletter!

How many points did you get out of 6?

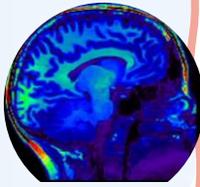


Our participant, Stephanie, having completed all 3 eBRAIN study visits, reflects on her eBRAIN journey

Sadly, **a large eBRAIN titled chapter of my life has come to an end**, and after a whopping 4 years, I don't know how to feel. I initially took part in the study with the hope of missing some school and earning some vouchers. But after actually taking part in the study and taking time to experience and learn about MRI scans, interviews and questionnaires, I now see how the eBRAIN study helped make psychology a **real and substantial aspect of my life** and not just this intangible, obscure subject scientists talk about.



It's helped me learn about myself and often **ask myself things that I've avoided confronting**. Not to mention doing an MRI was definitely a strange but interesting experience that left me not only slightly insecure about my head shape but intrigued as to how the green and blue cauliflower looking images of my brain **related to each of my daily functions, emotions, and overall mental health**. Now, after getting an 8 in GCSE psychology and studying it as an A-Level, I can confidently tell you: the frontal lobe controls thinking and planning, the occipital lobe contains the visual area, and I can outline the aim, method, and evaluation of Milgram's shock experiment. But what I can also tell you, is **how much I've enjoyed being a part of this study**. From my very first MRI, where I had to undergo the loudest appointment I'd ever experienced, whilst performing a series of cognitive exercises, to my very last interview where I shocked myself at the amount I had shared. I think it would be more effective if I were to **break the study down into its three main components**.



The **MRI scan was definitely my favourite part of the process**, simply because I was fascinated by how magnetic fields and radio waves could produce such an **intricate picture of my brain** and help scientists understand what exactly was going on up there. My next "favourite" part was the Interviews. Over the course of 4 odd years, I have found myself becoming **increasingly comfortable** with the research team (shout-out to Becky who I met very early on in my eBRAIN journey!) and less inclined to lie or omit the truth. The Interviews were always conducted in a way which ensured I felt as **comfortable and relaxed as possible**. Lastly was the biological samples; whilst I didn't particularly enjoy spitting in a tube or urinating in a cup, with the help of the eBRAIN newsletter, I am able to **understand the importance** they have in the study, and **what they are able to tell the scientists** about me and how I may have changed over time.



Finally, I believe that it is **essential to recognise the importance of taking part in studies** like the eBRAIN study, helping scientists and health professionals understand and gain more insight into the human body and mind, especially when dealing with such important unknowns surrounding mental health. **I'm grateful to have been a part of this and eager for the findings to be published**, so I'm able to understand how my scans, interviews and biosamples aided in the grand scheme of things. All in all, I've thoroughly enjoyed my research experience. I've gained more scientific knowledge and learned about myself during the process. I also want to thank every single member of the eBRAIN team, especially Becky and Maryam, for making this **a fun and informative journey, and I look forward to continuing working with them in the future**.

Written by **Stephanie Sackey**

Our Teacher Champion, Mollie, on collaborating with eBRAIN

Working with eBRAIN has been an absolute pleasure as well as **hugely impactful in our school**. We have had the team in to deliver assemblies to all of our Key Stage 3 scholars to learn more about their own brains and the ways they can be involved in the eBRAIN project. This led to lots of **interesting questions and thoughts about their own wellbeing and mental health**.

We also had the privilege of hosting eBRAIN for some Mental Health and Wellbeing sessions with our Year 7 and Year 9 scholars. These were different workshops with small groups – thinking about **coping strategies for anxiety and stress and positive ways of looking after our mental health**. We were so lucky to have these sessions – it gave our young people the chance to really **reflect on their own stresses and anxieties**. Through the sessions they were able to build up their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing and **build their resilience**.

They left the sessions with a tool kit of coping strategies and increased awareness of mental health and wellbeing.

The staff have been amazing, and we are really excited for collaborations in the future!

Ms Mollie Hodge
Lead Behaviour and Wellbeing Coordinator
Ark All Saints Academy

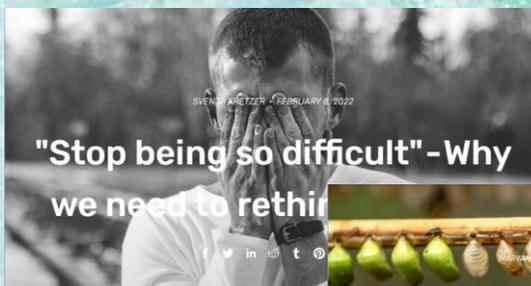


Our Children's Mental Health Week blogs!

Children's Mental Health Week took place between the 7th and 13th of February 2022 and the theme this year was 'Growing Together'. As eBRAIN is a study exploring adolescent mental health and brain development, we had the wonderful opportunity to publish some relevant blogs on [InSPiRe the Mind](#), the digital magazine bringing together everything you've always wanted to know about the worlds of mental health, art, and science.

You can find all of the blogs published by the eBRAIN team here: www.ebrainstudy.com/blog

["Stop being so difficult" - Why we need to rethink puberty](#) by **Svenja Kretzer**



[Being the Change You Want to See - Growing Together for Children's Mental Health Week](#) by **Maryam Matter**



Dear reader,

Thank you for reading our Newsletter. We hope you enjoyed it!

If you'd like to get involved with the study, find out more or ask any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch! You can find our contact details and social media accounts below. We look forward to hearing from you! Bye for now!

The e-BRAIN team

This newsletter was created by Maryam Matter with lots of help from the eBRAIN team!



Food Quiz Answers:

1. Which organ absorbs most of the nutrients in food?
b. Small intestine
2. Which food substance helps move waste through the body?
b. Fibre
3. Which mineral is good for bones and teeth?
c. Calcium
4. The nervous system benefits most from:
b. Vitamin B
5. Which fatty acid is found in many fish and has a major health benefit?
a. Omega – 3 fatty acids
6. Which statement is not included in a daily healthy diet?
d. Processed meats

If you missed our last newsletter or would like to view our previous newsletters, you can find them here:

<https://www.ebrainstudy.com/blog>

Want more? Why not check out our [website](#) for more eBRAIN content, including blogs, mental health resources, challenges and more! 😊



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