

WELLNESS

WELLNESS

magazine

SUMMER 2025

WELLNESS

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HEALTHIER MIND

HEALTHIER FOOD

HEALTHIER BODY

HEALTHIER WORLD

WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF OUR WELLNESS MAGAZINE!



As the days grow longer and the sun shines brighter, summer offers the perfect opportunity to slow down, reconnect and nourish our whole selves.

In this edition, we explore what it means to live well across our four pillars of wellness: **healthier food, healthier mind, healthier body and healthier world.**

We're delighted to feature a guest article from The Burnt Chef Project, shedding light on mental health in the hospitality industry and reminding us that wellbeing must start with compassion—especially in the workplace.

You'll also find inspiration in **Mindful Moments in Nature**, practical hydration tips for the whole family, and a refreshing perspective on unstructured play—because sometimes, boredom really is brilliant. If you're heading outdoors, we've got you covered with guides to festival fitness and hiking. For those planning to get away, our advice on holidays that are kinder to the environment shows that travelling well can also mean treading lightly, minimising our impact while maximising connection with the places we visit.

Wherever summer takes you, we hope this issue helps you press pause, breathe deeply and invest in your wellbeing—inside and out.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanette McNaughton".

Jeanette McNaughton
Business Director - ESS

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EAT THE RAINBOW THIS SUMMER:

A COLOURFUL WAY TO YOUR FIVE A DAY

When the sun's shining and summer produce is at its best, it's the perfect excuse to pile your plate with colourful fruit and veg.

Eating the rainbow is one of the simplest ways to get a diverse mix of nutrients that support good health, boost energy and help you feel your best all summer long.

Each colour group brings its own unique package of vitamins, minerals, and plant compounds that play vital roles in everything from supporting immune defences and skin health to aiding digestion and reducing tiredness.

Plus, eating a vibrant mix of fruit and veg in the warmer months helps keep you healthy and better prepared to fight off colds during the winter months.

Here's a quick guide to what each colour group contains and how it supports your health:

- **Red** (e.g. tomatoes, strawberries): Contains lycopene and vitamin C, which help reduce inflammation and support skin health.
- **Orange/Yellow** (e.g. carrots, peppers, mango): Provide beta-carotene, converted to vitamin A, essential for vision and immune function.
- **Green** (e.g. broccoli, spinach, cucumber): A source of folate, iron, magnesium and vitamin K, all vital for energy, bones and blood health.
- **Blue/Purple** (e.g. blueberries, plums, aubergine): Contain anthocyanins, linked to improved brain and heart health.
- **White/Brown** (e.g. onions, mushrooms, cauliflower): A source of potassium, supporting immune function and heart health.

By mixing colours across meals, you're feeding your body a broader spectrum of vitamins, minerals, fibre and protective plant compounds.



Despite government guidelines, most of us aren't hitting the mark:

- **Only 33% of UK adults** regularly eat five portions of fruit and veg a day.
- **Just 12% of 11–18 year olds** meet the 5 A Day target.
- On **average**, adults consume around **4 portions per day**, while teens manage just **2.5**.¹

This shortfall can contribute to nutrient deficiencies and raise long-term risks of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.

What counts as one portion of your 5 A Day?

- **Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and veg:** 80g (about a handful).
- **Dried fruit:** 30g (e.g. 1 tbsp of raisins). Best eaten with meals.
- **Beans and pulses:** 80g (around 3 heaped tbsp). Only counts once a day.
- **Fruit juice or smoothies:** 150ml. Only counts once, no matter how much you drink.
- **Salad:** 1 cereal bowl of mixed leaves or chopped veg.

Variety is key—mix it up to get a range of nutrients.

Potatoes, yams and cassava don't count (they're classed as starchy carbs).²



Summer-smart, budget-friendly tips

Healthy eating doesn't need to be expensive or complicated. Here's how to eat a rainbow without draining your wallet:

Go frozen

Frozen berries, spinach, peas and mixed veg are nutrient-rich and cost-effective. Perfect for smoothies, stir fries or soups.

Tinned counts

Look for fruit in juice and veg in water. They're ideal for pasta sauces, curries or BBQ side dishes.

Seasonal = smart

Summer brings affordable UK-grown produce—strawberries, courgettes, broad beans, cherries, lettuce and tomatoes are in season and at their best.

Batch cook

Rainbow veggie chilli or soup can stretch across several meals. Add lentils or beans for extra protein and fibre.

Snack clever

Keep chopped peppers, carrots and cucumber in the fridge—great with houmous or a light dip.

Eating the rainbow isn't about ticking five boxes every single day, it's about building variety over the week in a way that fits your lifestyle. Life's busy, plans change, and some days you might only manage a banana and a few frozen peas—and that's okay!

Think of your 5 A Day as a weekly goal, not just a daily checklist.

The key is to make colourful, plant-rich choices whenever you can

For example:

- A quick summer salad tossed with tomatoes, sweetcorn and cucumber
- A handful of frozen berries stirred into your yoghurt
- Veg skewers on the BBQ, with peppers, mushrooms and courgette
- Chopped carrots and houmous as an afternoon snack
- A big veggie-packed chilli made once and eaten twice



If you miss out one day, you can balance it across the week. Maybe Monday's salad had four colours, Tuesday was beige, but by Thursday, you're blending berries and spinach into a smoothie. It all adds up.

By mixing it up through the week, you're not only giving your body the nutrients it needs, you're also making healthy eating more enjoyable, flexible and sustainable.

**More colour
More nutrients
More support for
your health**

Every colour adds its own superpower, from immune supporting vitamin C to fibre that's great for digestion and antioxidants that help fight inflammation. The more colours on your plate, the more support you're giving your body to feel energised, resilient and ready to make the most of the summer season.

So don't worry about being perfect—just keep it playful, colourful and seasonal. A little effort spread across the week goes a long way.



Nicola Harper-Bennett,
Group Executive Chef - Hestia 5 (Wales & West Midlands)

Two of Nicola's salad recipes are provided below for a little inspiration.

ORANGE COUS COUS SALAD

Serves 4, Time: 15 minutes

Equipment:

- Grater
- Bowl
- Baking tray
- Chopping
- Knife
- Measuring Jug

Ingredients:

- 180g cous cous
- 375ml hot vegetable stock
- 1 medium carrot
- ½ red or orange bell pepper
- 100g roasted sweet potato
- 100g roasted butternut squash
- 1 orange (peel and juice)
- A handful of fresh mint (include stalks)
- 10ml olive oil

Method:

- 1 Place cous cous in a large bowl. Pour over the 375ml vegetable stock and leave for 5 minutes.
- 2 Grate the carrot and chop the pepper into small dice size squares.
- 3 Fluff the cous cous up with a fork.
- 4 Add roasted sweet potato, pepper, carrot and butternut squash to the cous cous.
- 5 Squeeze over the orange juice, add olive oil and stir well.
- 6 Finely chop mint including the stalks.
- 7 Finish with the handful of mint and again stir well.

MEDITERRANEAN STYLE VEGETABLE TRAYBAKE WITH HERBY YOGHURT AND ORZO PASTA

Serves 4

Time: 45 minutes

Equipment:

- 1 red onion, sliced into wedges
- Chopping board
- Baking tray
- Bowl for the dressing
- Bowl for the yoghurt
- Saucepan
- Knife
- Teaspoon
- Tablespoon
- Weighing scales
- Whisk or fork

Ingredients:

- 1 red onion, sliced into wedges
- 1 carrot, cut into chunks
- 1 yellow pepper, cut into wedges

- ½ courgette, cut into thick chunks
- 100g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 aubergine, diced
- 1 tin chickpeas, drained
- 20ml olive oil
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp garlic granules
- 1 tsp onion granules
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 tsp harissa paste
- 200g orzo pasta

For the dressing:

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp honey

Yoghurt dressing:

- 100g natural yoghurt
- Handful of herbs, chopped coriander, chopped parsley, chopped dill
- 20g garlic
- Squeeze of lemon juice

Method:

- 1 Preheat oven to 200°C.
- 2 Mix all the vegetables, chickpeas and spices together. Make sure all ingredients are covered with the spices.
- 3 Spread on a baking tray and roast for 30 minutes.
- 4 Meanwhile, cook the orzo pasta in a pan, following the packet instructions. Drain once cooked.
- 5 Mix the yoghurt dressing ingredients together and drizzle some over the tray bake once cooked.
- 6 Whisk together the dressing ingredients (olive oil, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, honey).
- 7 Mix the roasted vegetables and chickpeas into the orzo pasta.
- 8 Pour the dressing into the orzo and vegetable mix and stir well.

To serve:

Place the orzo onto a plate alongside your protein choice and drizzle over the yoghurt. I think pan-fried sea bass works perfectly.

VEGAN EXPLORERS:

MAKING PLANT-BASED EATING FUN FOR KIDS

As the weather warms up and children start breaking up for the summer holidays, families gather in parks and back gardens for picnics and barbecues.

This can be the perfect opportunity to introduce kids to exciting new foods—especially plant-based ones. It is important to make sure children are getting enough fibre and wholegrains, as well as eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day as part of a balanced diet.

But how can we get young tastebuds interested in vegetables, fruits, beans and grains? The secret lies in fun, exploration and a bit of creativity. It's all about helping them discover that plant-based meals can be enjoyable, flavourful and satisfying. Have a look at the following ideas and see if you can make plant-based meals something kids look forward to!

Children eat more food when they prepare it themselves,¹ so let's get them involved this summer!

Make it a food adventure

Children love stories, games and discovery. Instead of offering a plate of houmous and carrots, turn lunch into an adventure. Maybe cherry tomatoes are 'power poppers' and kale chips are 'dragon crisps'. Create a taste explorer map where they can try different colours, textures and flavours to earn points or stickers for each one. You can also let the kids be chefs—try a 'rainbow wrap station' where they can pick colourful vegetables to build their own lunch. When children build their own food, they're far more likely to try it.

Colour is king

Plant-based foods are bursting with colours, which is a big plus for attracting children. Bright red strawberries, green peas, golden corn and deep purple grapes are healthy and fun to look at. Try a taste the rainbow picnic platter—line up fruits and vegetables by colour

and challenge children to eat something from every colour group. You can add in dips like guacamole, salsa or houmous to make it even more fun. The more playful and colourful the presentation, the more likely little ones are to get involved.

Keep textures in mind

Some children like crunch, others prefer smooth, so offer a variety of textures. Crunchy vegetable sticks go well with houmous and soft roasted sweet potato cubes pair well with crispy chickpea snacks. Let them mix and match and don't be surprised if your picky eater becomes a 'Texture Tester', giving each combination a score out of ten.

Mini sized magic

Big portions can feel overwhelming, but mini versions are much more approachable and less daunting. Use cookie cutters to make fun shapes out of watermelon, cucumber slices or sandwich wraps. Create mini fruit kebabs with toothpicks or use muffin tins to serve mini servings of different foods. Giving children a sample of different foods helps to keep them interested and less likely to refuse a whole plate of food.

Get hands-on with growing or prepping

Giving kids the ability to get involved in the kitchen can help them be more interested in the food they're eating. Even a tiny herb pot on a balcony or windowsill can make a difference. Letting children pick their own basil leaves or wash cherry tomatoes connects them to the food on their plate. At a picnic or garden party, set up a mini chop and toss station (with adult supervision), where they can tear lettuce, sprinkle seeds or stir a dressing. Being a part of the process allows them to feel proud and even more excited to taste the result.

Make it a game

Turn trying new plant-based foods into a guessing game. Cover small bowls with mystery bits inside and offer them to children to guess what it is by taste, smell or touch. Possible foods to use could be a slice of mango, roasted chickpeas or a bit of olive tapenade. Why not offer out titles like 'Super Taster' or 'Flavour Detective' when they get it right? It's about making the experience joyful, not forced.

Sweet endings with nature's candy

Kids love desserts, and there's always an opportunity to enjoy ice cream—especially in summer. However, fruit-based sweet treats can be just as popular. Blend frozen berries and a banana into a soft-serve style ice cream. Freeze grapes or banana slices or let them build their own parfaits with plant-based yoghurt and granola. They get their pudding, and you know you're giving them a healthier option.

In 2022, only 19% of children aged between five and fifteen reported eating five or more portions of fruit and veg each day.²

Easy plant-based picnic ideas:

- Rainbow wraps
- Homemade baked falafel and dips
- Vegetable pasta salad
- Carrots, cucumber or sugar snap peas with houmous
- Roasted chickpeas
- Fruit kebabs

¹ Children eat more food when they prepare it themselves - PMC

² Children's health and health-related behaviours - NHS England Digital

HYDRATION FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

WAYS TO KEEP EVERYONE TOPPED UP WITH WATER

Whether it's a hot summer's day, a busy day at school or just part of the daily routine, staying well hydrated is vital for every member of the family—from toddlers to grandparents.

Getting enough water isn't always easy, especially for children who may not feel thirsty until they're already mildly dehydrated. So how can families make hydration a fun, accessible and daily habit?

Water makes up around 60% of the human body and it's essential for regulating temperature, aiding digestion, transporting nutrients, maintaining concentration and supporting mood. Even mild dehydration (as little as 1–2% loss of body water) can cause fatigue, headaches and irritability, particularly in children.¹

Hydration status in children is closely linked to cognitive function, including memory and attention.² Similarly, the NHS Eatwell Guide reminds us that fluids are a key part of a healthy diet and recommends to drink six to eight glasses of fluid per day—more during hot weather or physical activity.^{3,4}

For older adults, maintaining hydration can help reduce the risk of urinary tract infections, constipation and confusion. For children, staying hydrated supports physical performance, mental sharpness and overall wellbeing.^{3,4}

Did you know?

Children are more vulnerable to dehydration because they have a higher surface-area-to-body-weight ratio and often rely on adults to prompt fluid intake.

How much water do we really need?

While individual needs vary by age, weight, climate and activity level, general guidance from the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) suggests:

- **Children (4–13 years):** 1.1–1.6 litres per day
- **Teenagers (14–18 years):** Around 1.6–2.0 litres per day
- **Adults:** 2.0–2.5 litres per day

This includes all fluids, not just plain water—juices, milk, herbal teas and water-rich foods all count. However, water remains the best choice for hydration as it contains no sugar, calories or additives.

Creative ways to boost water intake

Plain water isn't always appealing, especially for younger family members. Below are some fun, healthy and hydrating options that encourage everyone to sip a bit more.

Fruit-infused water

Jazz up a jug of tap water with:

- Strawberries and mint
- Cucumber and lemon
- Orange and blueberries

Let it steep in the fridge for 30 minutes to enhance the flavour naturally—no added sugar required.

DIY healthy ice lollies

Blend water with fresh fruit, pour into moulds and freeze for a refreshing summer treat. Try:

- Watermelon and lime
- Mango and coconut water
- Cucumber with mint and lemon

These are a hit with kids and sneak in hydration during snack time.

Hydrating foods

Foods can account for **20–30% of daily fluid intake**. Great water-rich options include:

- Cucumber (96% water)
- Watermelon (92%)
- Strawberries (91%)
- Oranges (86%)
- Yoghurt (85%)

Add these to lunchboxes or picnics for an extra fluid boost.

Hydration stations at home

Set up a child-friendly hydration station with:

- A small jug of water or a dispenser
- Colourful reusable cups
- Fun reward charts for regular water drinking

This encourages autonomy and makes drinking water part of the routine.

1. Natural Hydration Council (2021). Hydration and Health: The Science. <https://www.naturalhydrationcouncil.org.uk>

2. Almkali, J. A., Knight, S. N., Poulos, S. P., Stanfield, D. L., Killen, L. G., Waldman, H. S., & O'Neal, E. K. (2022). Hydration and Cognitive Task Performance in Children: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement*, 6(4), 519–530.

3. British Nutrition Foundation (2024). Fluid Needs. <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthy-sustainable-diets/hydration/>

4. NHS Eatwell Guide (2023). Your Guide to a Balanced Diet. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

What about juice and squash?

While diluted fruit juice and sugar-free squash can help reluctant drinkers increase fluid intake, the **NHS recommends limiting juice to 150ml per day** due to its sugar content, even if natural. Encourage plain water or milk as the main drinks, especially for younger children.



Hydration tips for all ages

Age group	Hydration tips
Toddlers	Offer small sips often. Use fun straws or cups. Keep water visible and accessible.
Children	Create water challenges. Let them help infuse water or choose their 'hydration buddy'.
Teens	Link hydration to sports, skin health and energy. Let them choose a cool water bottle.
Adults	Carry a reusable bottle. Set reminders. Add a slice of lemon or mint for flavour.
Older Adults	Monitor intake throughout the day. Offer herbal teas or soups as alternatives.



Did you know we are approximately 2% dehydrated before we feel thirsty?

Staying hydrated is essential for both physical health and mental sharpness, yet dehydration can sneak up on us—most commonly in children and older adults who may not always recognise or respond to early signs of thirst. Recognising the symptoms of dehydration early can prevent more serious issues and support better wellbeing.

In the early stages, dehydration often presents with subtle physical signs. These may include a dry mouth or sticky saliva, a noticeable reduction in urine output, and urine that appears dark yellow or has a strong odour. People may also feel more tired than usual, experience headaches, or notice dizziness, often triggered by standing up quickly. Skin may appear dry or tight and thirst itself becomes more prominent, although it's not always a reliable indicator, as is often the case with children and older adults.

Cognitive and behavioural changes are also common and can be especially telling in children. They may become irritable, have trouble concentrating or seem slower to

respond than usual. You might notice they're not engaging with play or conversation as they typically would. These signs often reflect the impact dehydration has on the brain and even mild fluid loss can affect memory, mood and attention.

Children are particularly susceptible to dehydration due to their higher water needs and the fact that they are often active and easily distracted. They may not pause their play to drink, or they may not recognise they're thirsty. In young children and babies, signs include flushed cheeks, fewer wet nappies, dry nappies over several hours, lack of tears when crying, sunken eyes and excessive drowsiness.

Older adults are also at increased risk because they may have a reduced sense of thirst and may be taking medications that increase fluid loss. Warning signs in this group include dry mouth, cracked lips, reduced urinary output, confusion, sudden drowsiness and unsteadiness. These symptoms can sometimes be mistaken for other conditions, so monitoring hydration is particularly important.

If dehydration is suspected and symptoms persist despite increasing fluid intake—or if it's accompanied by vomiting, diarrhoea or fever—it's important to seek medical help. Serious dehydration in children can present as extreme sleepiness, cold hands and feet, or an inability to urinate. In older adults, confusion and sudden weakness should never be ignored.

To support rehydration, plain water is best, though lightly flavoured water using fruits such as lemon or berries can encourage reluctant drinkers. Hydrating foods like watermelon, cucumber, oranges and soups also contribute to fluid intake. For children, offering ice lollies or letting them suck on ice cubes can be a playful and effective way to boost hydration. During illness or after significant fluid loss, oral rehydration solutions (ORS) may be appropriate and are available over the counter.

Dehydration signs to look out for:

- Dark or strong-smelling urine
- Headaches or dizziness
- Dry lips or mouth
- Tiredness or low mood
- Reduced focus or irritability (in children)

Encouraging small, regular drinks throughout the day helps avoid these symptoms before they begin.

Staying hydrated doesn't need to be boring or a battle. With a little creativity and family involvement, drinking enough water can become a habit that supports mental sharpness, physical health and emotional wellbeing across all generations. Whether it's a splash of fruit in your water or a batch of fruity ice lollies in the freezer, this summer make hydration fun, flavourful and a family affair.



5. Roberts, C. A., Boak, K., McCullogh, N., Haskell-Ramsay, C., James, L. J., Green, B. P., Tempest, G. D., Buce-Martin, C., & Rumbold, P. L. S. (2024). Hydration, mood, and cognition in primary-aged school children in the United Kingdom. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, Published online December 16, 2024.

6. Diez-Ricote, L., et al. (2023). Water intake, hydration status and 2-year changes in cognitive performance: a prospective cohort study. *BMC Medicine*, 21, 82.

MINDFUL MOMENTS IN NATURE

SUNSHINE, SLEEP AND THE POWER OF SLOWING DOWN

In the UK, the arrival of longer, lighter days brings more than just an excuse to enjoy the outdoors—it offers a natural opportunity to reset our routines, reconnect with nature and restore our wellbeing.

Whether you're walking through a local park, watching children play in the garden, or simply pausing by an open window, moments of calm and connection with nature can have a profound impact on both mental and physical health.

Embracing mindful moments, daylight exposure and creating evening routines can help both adults and children feel more grounded, energised and well-rested, despite the busy pace of daily life.

Finding calm in everyday nature

Research by Mind (2024) confirms that green spaces and outdoor time play a powerful role in managing anxiety, boosting mood and enhancing our sense of wellbeing. Nature is one of the most accessible and effective tools for mindfulness. In any setting, from rural countryside to city streets, taking a few minutes to tune in to your surroundings can shift your mindset entirely.¹

Mindfulness doesn't need to mean long meditations or silence. It simply asks us to be present, using our senses to experience what's around us without judgement. For adults, this might mean taking a tech-free walk and noticing how your feet feel against the ground or the sound of wind in the trees. For children, mindfulness might take the form of a sensory scavenger hunt or a listening minute where they sit quietly and describe every sound they hear.

Try this Mindful Moment

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding in Nature

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can feel
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste (if safe)

This simple grounding technique is shown to reduce stress and improve focus. It can be effective across all ages.

The mental health sunshine effect

One of the best-kept secrets of mental wellbeing is sunshine.

Daylight exposure, especially natural morning light, has a significant impact on our mental health. It boosts serotonin, the feel-good hormone, and supports melatonin production at night, helping to regulate sleep patterns. A study by the University of Exeter (2023) found that people who spent two hours a week in nature reported notably higher wellbeing scores.³

Even brief moments outside, like a coffee in the garden or a mindful school run, can deliver benefits. For those working indoors, try taking meetings outside or starting the day with a short walk in the early light.

Safe sun exposure matters

About 10–15 minutes of sun on the face and forearms between April and September is generally enough for vitamin D production. After that, it's important to apply SPF, wear a hat and avoid midday sunburn risks.²

Try this Mindful Moment

The Sun Salute

Stand or sit outdoors facing the sun with eyes closed (never look directly at the sun). Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4 and pause for 4. Repeat three times, focusing on the warmth on your skin and the life around you.

This mindful breathing, combined with natural light, helps regulate stress and supports a positive mood—perfect for both adults and children during active summer days.

Evening routines that restore

As evenings stay lighter for longer, bedtime can feel challenging because children often find it harder to settle down, associating sunshine with play rather than getting ready for bed.

Yet, even in the height of summer, a consistent evening routine can create a calm, restful transition from day to night.

Mindful Moment for bedtime

Body Scan with a Glow

Lying in bed, ask children to imagine a soft light starting at their toes and slowly travelling up the body, relaxing each part it touches. For adults, bring attention to each part of the body while breathing slowly, releasing tension on every exhale.

Evening Mindful Moment

- **Dim the lights at least an hour before bed** to signal to the body it's time to wind down. Use blackout curtains to block late summer light.
- **Unplug from screens 60 minutes** before sleep, as blue light disrupts melatonin. Try a bedtime story, a warm bath or some mindful colouring instead.
- **Create sensory cues** such as soft lighting, soothing scents (like lavender) and gentle music which can all help the brain associate the environment with rest.
- **Add movement** with gentle yoga, stretching or a quiet body scan to help release physical tension and prepare the mind for sleep.

Bringing together daylight, movement and mindfulness doesn't need to be complicated—it's about building little rituals into the everyday. These Mindful Moments invite us to notice more, slow down and reconnect with what matters most: our health, our loved ones and the natural world around us.

By taking mindful steps throughout the day—from soaking up safe sunlight to winding down with purpose—we create a foundation for better sleep, brighter moods and deeper wellbeing.

BOREDOM IS BRILLIANT

WHY CHILDREN NEED UNSTRUCTURED TIME TO THRIVE

In a world buzzing with screens, schedules and stimulation, 'boredom' has become a bit of a negative word.

Brilliantly bored

What if, instead of fearing it, we embraced it? Far from being a problem, boredom can be a powerful catalyst for creativity, problem-solving and emotional resilience in children.

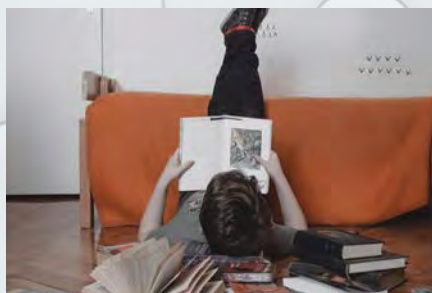
Unstructured time, those quiet, unscheduled pockets in a child's day, can be incredibly valuable. It's when children are left to their own devices (the non-digital kind!) that their imaginations come alive. They invent games, build dens, draw dream worlds, or simply sit and think. This kind of self-directed play builds executive function, self-regulation and curiosity—skills that underpin both academic achievement and mental wellbeing.



It is advised that children under five should have limited seated screen time: no screen time for children under two years old and no more than one hour per day for 2–4 year olds.¹ For older children, guidance from UK health authorities recommends balanced screen use alongside plenty of physical activity, play and good quality sleep.^{1,2} Many children's lives are packed with structured activities and passive screen time, leaving little room for the fertile, open-ended boredom that fuels imagination.

Recent UK research reflects growing concerns. A significant number of UK children, especially those under the age of 11, are feeling overwhelmed by digital demands and, surprisingly, are choosing to reject smartphones altogether. The report highlighted a quiet rebellion: children opting for basic phones or none at all to regain a sense of freedom and real-world connection.²

This supports earlier findings from the Children's Commissioner for England, who reported that many young people feel social pressure to be constantly online, yet crave time away from devices to explore, think and just be.³



Boredom builds brilliance

Allowing children to be bored now and then creates space for:

- **Creative thinking:** They learn to generate ideas, make up stories and explore their environment. Research suggests that when children are not constantly occupied, they have the opportunity to develop their inner resources and engage in creative activities.^{4,5}
- **Problem-solving:** Without ready-made answers, they figure things out for themselves.⁴ Research indicates that unstructured time allows children to explore their environment and develop problem-solving skills. The same study from the Early Childhood Education Research & Review suggests that boredom encourages children to find their own solutions and engage in divergent thinking.⁵
- **Emotional regulation:** They learn to sit with discomfort and develop patience. Developing the ability to manage emotions, thoughts and behaviour is crucial for children's success in learning and social interactions. Providing opportunities for children to experience boredom can help them learn to cope with discomfort and develop patience.⁶
- **Self-motivation:** They pursue what truly interests them, not just what's presented on a screen. Children are naturally motivated to learn through exploration, and maintaining this motivation requires an environment that encourages self-directed learning.⁷

1. WHO screen time guidance

2. The Channel 4 documentary *Swiped: The School That Banned Smartphones*

3. Gov.UK

4. Kenworthy, S. (2021). Rethinking Boredom in Education: How Unstructured Time Promotes Problem-Solving Skills. *Childhood Education Review*, 56(3), 89–102.

It's not about banning screens altogether—it's about creating a healthy balance that prioritises play, nature, rest and imagination.

In a culture obsessed with productivity and instant gratification, giving children the gift of boredom may feel counterintuitive. However, within those still moments lies the potential for creativity, self-discovery and emotional strength.

With that in mind, the next time your child says, "There's nothing to do," try replying, "Perfect. Let's see what your brain comes up with!" After all, boredom isn't the enemy. It might just be the birthplace of brilliance.

Tips for encouraging healthy boredom

- **Leave white space in the diary:**
Not every hour needs an activity or club
- **Create a boredom box:**
Fill it with open-ended materials—crafts, blocks, old clothes for dress-up
- **Model device-free downtime:**
Let them see you enjoying non-digital moments
- **Let them moan:** "I'm bored" is just the beginning—don't rush to fix it



Leanne King,
Head of Nutrition and Wellbeing - ESS

As my daughter gets older, I am keen for her to play independently and not be dependent on technology or the presence of an adult. This is not because I am a lazy parent, but because I believe that it is good to take time out and do something on your own.

As parents, we feel guilty if we are not entertaining our children. However, as Gwendolyn has grown up and become more independent, I have just left her to it at times. She is increasingly starting to do imaginative play on her own through dolls and a doll's house.

Not only is it lovely to see, but it's also very interesting to notice the things she does and says that she has picked up from Brett (my partner) and I. This is something I recall doing as a child, especially over the summer holidays.



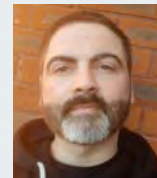
Jennifer McGroarty,
Head of HR - ESS
Energy, Government & Infrastructure

As any busy parent knows, juggling day to day activities can be a real juggling act with a little one! That's why I've come to truly value unstructured play—especially during those moments when I need to focus on making dinner.

One of our household favourites is a simple box of Lego. It's incredible how long it can keep my daughter engaged, completely absorbed in building her own imaginative creations.

What's even better is its portability. Whether on the dining room table or the living room rug, the Lego box travels easily and provides hours of screen-free entertainment.

There's no set goal, no rules—just open-ended play that sparks creativity and builds problem-solving skills, all while giving me a much-needed window of time to get things done!



Andrew Kiefer,
Copywriter

For me and my daughter, boredom is a chance to slow down and get creative together through art. Sometimes we work on structured projects like painting or crafts.

But often, we let the process be loose and exploratory, just seeing where colour, mark-making and imagination take us. With a background in design and education, I've seen how creativity thrives when it's not forced, and it's wonderful to share that with her.

These moments not only keep boredom at bay but also build her confidence to embrace mistakes and try new things—growth mindset in action. It's a gentle reminder that sometimes the best way to handle boredom is simply to sit with it and let creativity do the rest.

5. Smith, L. (2020). The Creative Brain: Boredom as a Catalyst for Innovation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(2), 123-135.

6. Anderson, A. J., & Perone, S. (2024). The kids are bored: Trait boredom in early childhood and links to self-regulation, coping strategies, and parent-child interactions. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 243, 105919.

7. The Foundation Stage Forum (FSF) - Home of Early Years Foundation Stage

FAMILY DIGITAL DETOX DAYS

SIMPLE WAYS TO REDUCE SCREEN TIME OVER THE HOLIDAYS

As the holidays roll in, so does the perfect opportunity to unwind, reset routines and reconnect with each other.

With screens so woven into our lives—from streaming and scrolling to gaming and group chats—stepping away can feel harder than ever. Dedicating screen-free time will support wellbeing, boost connection and help break the habit of mindless scrolling.

The average UK child aged 5–16 now spend between four and six hours a day on screens outside school hours.¹ For adults, it's even more, often upwards of eight hours a day when factoring in work, streaming and social media.² While some screen time can be educational and social, excessive or unbalanced use is linked to:

- Poor sleep quality: Blue light disrupts melatonin, affecting sleep onset and depth.
- Reduced physical activity: Sedentary behaviours are linked to obesity and heart health risks.
- Increased anxiety and low mood: Studies suggest excessive screen use, particularly on social media, may affect emotional wellbeing in children and adolescents.
- Strained family relationships: Constant digital distractions can erode quality time and communication.

A balanced approach to screen use means making sure it doesn't get in the way of sleep, physical activity or family time.³ Regular breaks give the brain a chance to reset. In fact, studies have shown that even small reductions in screen time can improve attention, behaviour and emotional regulation in primary-age children.⁴ Stepping away from tech can also lift mood, boost concentration, spark creativity and imagination, support eye health, and help build stronger social bonds through face-to-face interaction.

Screen-free ideas to reboot family time

Try a tech-free afternoon once a week

Keep it short and manageable at first. Pop devices into a box, set the tone with music, crafts or a family challenge. Build up from there.

Get outside for 20 minutes or more

Time in nature is shown to lower stress, reduce anxiety and improve mood. The Natural England People and Nature Survey shows even a short walk or time in green space increases feelings of wellbeing.

Cook or bake together

Cooking supports maths, language and teamwork—and it's a satisfying way to create something together without a screen in sight.

Rediscover play and creativity

LEGO®, puzzles, crafts, drawing or building a den under the dining table all fire up problem-solving skills and stimulate the imagination.

Create unplugged routines

Make mealtimes or the hour before bed a screen-free zone. This helps sleep, digestion and conversation.

Try a family challenge

Set a shared goal: no screens for one full day or only non-digital entertainment for a weekend. Celebrate small wins!

Role model balance

When adults set limits and take breaks from devices too, kids are more likely to follow suit. Use screen-tracking apps to build awareness and set boundaries.

It's not about banning screens, it's about balance

Digital detox days aren't about guilt or going off-grid completely—they're about resetting, rebalancing and making space for real-life joy and connection. By planning a few screen-free moments over the holidays, you might just find your family more energised, more present and more in sync.

DIGITAL DETOX



Leanne King,
Head of Nutrition and
Wellbeing - ESS

Before our daughter Gwendolyn was born, my husband and I had a lot of conversations about how we wanted to approach technology. We didn't want her to grow up glued to a screen, but we also didn't want to hold her back in a world where tech is such an integral part of everyday life. It was all about finding the right balance.

These days, Gwendolyn does have access to a tablet where she can play games and watch programmes, but we keep a close eye on what she's using it for and when. We've set clear boundaries, like no screens at the dining table—whether we're at home or out—and we've made a conscious decision not to hand her our phones when she's in the pram, even if she asks after seeing others doing the same.

Instead, we gently encourage her to look around and take in her surroundings. As she's grown, we've turned journeys on public transport or in the car into fun, screen-free games—spotting colours, shapes or letters and chatting about what we see. It's become a lovely way to keep her engaged and support her learning, without relying on screens.



Jennifer McGroarty,
Head of HR - ESS
Energy, Government &
Infrastructure

We love staying active as a family and one of our newest routines has been a big hit—my daughter cycles while I run alongside her. It's a simple yet effective way for both of us to enjoy exercise, spend time together and explore our local area—all without a screen in sight.

The best part? On sunny days, we sometimes go a little further and treat ourselves to an ice cream as a reward. It adds an extra bit of fun and makes the outing feel like a mini adventure.

It's a great reminder that staying active doesn't have to be complicated—it can be as easy as a bike, a pair of trainers and a shared goal!



THE BURNT CHEF
PROJECT

IN THE HEAT OF SERVICE

HOW CHEFS CAN PROTECT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH THIS SUMMER

We're pleased to feature this guest article by The Burnt Chef

Summer, for most, is a season of holidays, garden parties and sun-drenched afternoons. For chefs, it's double shifts, a kitchen that feels like the inside of an oven, and a nagging sense that you're missing out on life outside service.

At The Burnt Chef Project, we hear this every year. The isolation. The exhaustion. The burnout creeping in with every rising degree. That's why it's crucial, now more than ever, to protect your mental health.

Here are five hard earned, straight-talking tips for getting through the summer without losing your head, your energy or your love for the job.

You can't pour from an empty prep jug

Let's be honest, hydration isn't just for the stockpot. Dehydration messes with your mood, energy and focus. Keep a cold bottle of water on-hand and set a timer if you need to. It's not just a health tip, it's a performance strategy.

Schedule sanity, not just shifts

Everyone else is booking festivals and weekends away. That can sting. But you deserve time off too, even if it's just a Tuesday morning. Book it, protect it and use it for you: rest, friends and fresh air. Even short windows of joy can take the edge off a relentless season.

Don't pretend you're fine if you're not

High-pressure environments breed silence. But talking saves lives—literally. If you're struggling, speak to someone: a teammate, a friend, us. The Burnt Chef Project offers free, confidential support for anyone in hospitality. You're not weak for feeling the strain, you're human.

Sunshine envy is real, so reframe it

Watching the world enjoy summer while you plate up indoors? It hurts. But here's the thing: you're part of someone else's best memory. That table of six laughing over your food? That's joy. And you made it happen. It's not nothing.



Check in with your crew

You're not the only one feeling it. Ask your team how they're doing. Really ask. Mental health thrives on connection; small moments of kindness can shift the culture from "just get on with it," to "we've got each other." Utilise an end-of-service checklist to decompress post shift and switch to home time.

This summer, don't just survive, find small ways to thrive

The summer rush doesn't have to break you. With boundaries, support and a bit of planning, you can get through it and even find moments of light. Remember, you're not alone in this industry. And you never have to be.

Need support? We've got your back. Visit www.theburntchefproject.com to access free resources, therapy and 24/7 support.

UPCOMING WELLNESS WEBINARS

Looking to increase your nutrition and wellbeing knowledge?

Attending our wellness webinars can help improve your knowledge and awareness of lots of different health and wellbeing topics. Previous topics covered include: heart health, plastic freedom and sleep and shift work.

Please join us for the below webinars coming up over the next few months:

HEALTHY EATING FOR SUMMER

Wednesday 2nd JULY:
2pm – 2.30pm



PREPARING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL/ WORK

Wednesday 6th AUGUST:
2pm – 2.30pm



Send us an email at ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk if you wish to get the links to the webinar directly in your inbox each month.

If you've missed any of our webinars and want to watch them back, check out our YouTube channel @WeAreESS.

MOVE TOGETHER

FUN FAMILY AND FRIENDS FITNESS IDEAS

In a world where screens and packed schedules often pull us apart, movement has the power to bring us back together during the long, light-filled days of summer.

The school holidays offer a perfect window to slow down, step outside and reconnect. Instead of defaulting to a trip to the pub or a sit-down meal, what if our time together looked a little different? More active, more inclusive and often completely free.

Physical activity doesn't need to mean structured workouts or gym memberships. Some of the most meaningful moments happen outside the gym—dancing barefoot in the garden, exploring a woodland trail or simply kicking a ball around at the park. Be it a family walk, a kitchen disco or a spontaneous game in the sunshine, summer is the season to move more together and make memories in motion.

Garden games for all ages

From a simple game of rounders to a hula hoop challenge, a water balloon toss or hide and seek, garden games are a brilliant way to get everyone moving. They're ideal for families with younger children and offer a nostalgic boost for adults too. All you need is a bit of space and a few props (or just your imagination).

Discover local trails and green spaces

The UK is home to thousands of accessible walking and cycling routes. Explore your nearest National Trust site, local Woodland Trust trails or simply wander in your community's green spaces. Apps like Go Jauntly and Komoot are great for discovering nearby walks suited for all fitness levels.

Walking and talking go hand in hand—the simple act of walking together can strengthen bonds and boost both mood and physical wellbeing.

Dance it out

Whether it's a kitchen disco, a spontaneous dance-off or a 'Strictly'-inspired living room session, dancing is an energy booster and joy generator. It's also a wonderful way to include friends who might not enjoy traditional sports. Why not create a family or flatmate playlist and rotate DJ duties? No judgement—just movement and music.

Active meet-ups (that aren't at the pub)

Meeting up with friends doesn't have to revolve around food or drink. Suggest an outdoor meet-up: a walk around the local lake, a game of frisbee in the park or a Saturday morning stroll followed by a flask of tea on a bench.

According to Sport England, informal social activity is on the rise, helping people build healthy habits that stick.

Celebrate the free outdoors

Outdoor movement isn't just good for your body, it's essential for mental health too.³ Engaging in physical activity outdoors not only brings the well-known benefits of movement, but also adds the powerful and proven advantages of being in nature. Spending time outdoors can significantly improve mood and self-esteem, as well as helping to reduce feelings of stress and anger. Exposure to natural light increases vitamin D levels, which supports both physical and mental health. Perhaps most importantly, outdoor activity fosters a sense of connection—not only with the natural world, but also with the people around us.

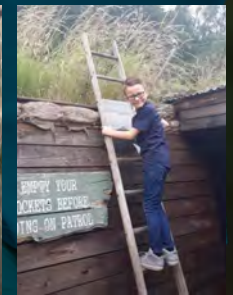
And the best part? It doesn't cost a thing. So, step outside, grab a loved one and move together. Your body, brain and increased connections will thank you for it!

Top tips to get you started:

- Keep a ball, frisbee or skipping rope by the door for easy access and more spontaneous play.
- Set a weekly movement goal as a family or friend group, not steps or miles, but experiences.
- Don't wait for perfect weather. Invest in waterproofs and embrace the elements!

UK physical activity guidelines by age

- **Children & young people (5–18)**
 - At least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity
 - Include muscle and bone strengthening activities 3 days a week
 - Break up long periods of sitting
- **Children with disabilities**
 - Aim for 20 minutes each day (this can be broken into chunks)
 - Include strength and balance activities 3 days a week
- **Adults (19–64)**
 - 150 minutes each week of moderate activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity
 - Strength exercises on 2+ days per week
 - Move daily and minimise sitting
- **Older adults (65+ years)**
 - Same as adults 150 mins per week or more
 - Add balance and co-ordination exercises 2+ days each week
 - Reduce time spent inactive.^{1,2}



An active family's favourite ways to move together



Jennie Moseley,
Site Catering &
Accommodation Manager
- ESS

Finding fun things to do with the kids during the school holidays is a stretch, especially as these days a cinema outing or trip to the bowling alley can set you back £40–£60 for a family of four before even considering food! And why should we as parents always sit through awful reboot films and endless sequels (looking at you, Minions #120)?

Don't get me wrong, we did all of those things, but when the kids were younger we found a real balance of cost vs experience when we joined English Heritage and the National Trust. The kids would treat these visits as full-on adventures: Livi in her latest Disney

Princess dress and Alex in his little plastic set of armour and foam sword. We explored Roman fortresses, Tudor mansions and gardens. They climbed the crumbling towers of medieval castles, played in the parks and rolled down the hills.

You won't find many 'do not touch' signs, and children are encouraged to be curious, playful and engaged with their surroundings. Many sites even offer treasure hunts, activity trails and seasonal events specially designed with young visitors in mind.

And best of all—they encourage picnicking! Most grounds have plenty of benches or deckchairs, and if you are flush, most of them have a small restaurant and souvenir shop.

A family membership comes in at just under £14 a month, giving you unlimited

access to hundreds of inspiring places across the UK. Free parking, discounted entry to events and a host of member perks make this one of the most affordable ways to keep your weekends full of fun and adventure.

Choose your adventure:

- **National Trust** offers a wonderful mix of countryside walks, stately homes and beautiful gardens—perfect for those who love nature and history hand in hand.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- **English Heritage** is heaven for castle-lovers and young historians, with dramatic ruins, battlefield re-enactments, and stories of kings, queens and warriors.
www.english-heritage.org.uk

FESTIVAL-FIT AND TRAVEL-SMART

WELLBEING HACKS FOR FESTIVALS AND TRAVEL—HOW TO STAY ACTIVE, EAT WELL AND REST ON THE GO

Regular festival-goer James has spent years navigating everything from the sprawling grounds of Glastonbury to smaller, grassroots events, and he's learned a thing or two along the way.

Though the music and atmosphere never disappoint, it's the hidden toll on your body that often catches people out. In this personal account, James shares his top wellbeing hacks for surviving (and thriving) through multi-day festivals, from staying hydrated to eating better and walking smarter, so you can enjoy the event or festival without burning out by day three.



James Cook,
Digital Marketing
Manager - ESS

I've been going to festivals for years now—from Glastonbury to smaller local events—and while the music, the atmosphere and the chaos are always incredible, I've learned the hard way that if you don't look after yourself, it will catch up with you. It's important to take your health and wellbeing seriously when you're spending five days in a tent, surrounded by tens of thousands of people, walking about 20,000 steps a day.

Priority no.1: hydration

At my first Glastonbury, I barely drank any water during the day. It was a big mistake. By day three, I had a pounding headache and felt absolutely wiped out. Since then, I don't go anywhere without my reusable bottle. Nearly every major UK festival has refill points, and I make sure I top up whenever I pass one. Whether it's sunny or not, I aim to get at least two litres a day. It makes the experience so much better: better energy, better mood and no hangovers from just existing in the heat.

Food: you don't have to live off chips

Sometimes there isn't anything better than a paper tray of chips, especially after a long night. But eating that three times a day takes a toll by the end of the weekend. It's important to mix it up—one 'greasy' meal then one that's vaguely nutritious. Most festivals have decent veggie and vegan options now, which are often lighter. You can get anything from falafel wraps to oat bowls with fruit, and it can make the difference in avoiding that sluggish, bloated feeling. Plus, you'll stay energised and less likely to crash halfway through the set.



Walking: it's a workout in disguise

If you've ever been to Glastonbury, or any major festival, you know the size of the sites can be vast. I've had days where I've clocked over 25,000 steps without even realising. Your legs are going to feel it, especially if you're dancing on top of all the walking. Good footwear is non-negotiable, make sure you have well broken-in shoes with proper support.

Final thoughts

Festivals can be amazing, but they put your body to the test more than you may first realise. Keeping hydrated and eating balanced meals helps you last the whole weekend and avoid burning out halfway through. Stay hydrated, eat something green once in a while and pace yourself. Your future festival self will thank you.



Top nutritionist tips to eat well (even when options are limited)

Balance your meals

Aim for a mix of slow-release carbs, protein and healthy fats. Many street food stalls now offer more balanced choices: look for dishes with veg, beans, lean meat or grilled options rather than fried.

Pack smart snacks

Keep your bag stocked with:

- Nuts and seeds
- Oat bars or protein balls
- Fresh or dried fruit
- Wholegrain crackers with nut butter

These help you stay fuelled between meals without relying on sugary or greasy options.

Hydration is your festival superpower

Dehydration can sap your energy and mood fast. Take a refillable water bottle and consider natural electrolyte boosts like coconut water or an electrolyte tablet if it's hot or you're very active.

Rest and reset

Prioritise sleep

Use earplugs, an eye mask and a neck pillow to maximise rest—whether camping, on a train or squeezing in naps between events.

Schedule breaks

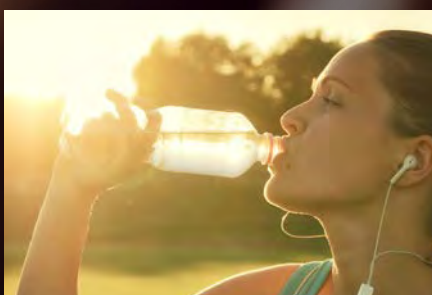
Find quiet spots throughout the day (a shady tree, a chill-out tent or café) to decompress. Just 10–15 minutes of stillness can help reduce sensory overload.

Support your body clock

Try to keep some rhythm to your eating, daylight exposure and wind-down time, even if your bedtime isn't consistent. Natural light in the morning and screen-free time in the evening help regulate your sleep cycle.

Bonus tips for travel and festival wellbeing

- Hand sanitiser and wipes—stay hygienic on the go
- Breathable layers—comfort is key, whatever the weather
- A little indulgence is OK—balance is better than restriction



HIKING

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AS HARD AS IT SOUNDS!



Stephanie Wright,
Sales & Promotions
Manager - ESS

The Oxford English Dictionary defines hiking as 'going for a long walk or walking tour'. If I took that as the *only* definition, I probably never would have started hiking—and I'm no fitness fanatic, but I like to stay healthy and enjoy the outdoors. For me, hiking is 'the activity of walking (long or short), choosing an area that suits you and your ability, and getting outdoors to take a breath from the noise of modern life'.

Now, that sounds really 'fluffy' and a bit cliché, but taking time out for yourself and/or your family is invaluable. It doesn't have to be hours spent trekking across challenging terrain or heights; it can be as simple as a walk around a local or country park. It's getting outdoors that really matters.

My family and I started walking around Chasewater Country Park in Staffordshire, which is mostly flat terrain, but getting two typical teenagers away from their screens and out into the fresh air was more of a challenge. Apparently, going for a walk with mum and dad is really not cool, and our children worry, "What if someone sees us?" But once we were outside, all of that disappeared!

However, the same scenery and route soon got boring, so we switched to some fairly flat, simple walking routes in Cannock Chase—26 square miles of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which we're fortunate to have right on our doorstep.

We then started going further afield to Shropshire (Long Mynd and Carding Mill Valley), Worcestershire (Malvern Hills), and the Peak District. After a few years—what people might now call being a 'seasoned hiker' (though I'm not a member of the Ramblers'

Association yet!)—my newfound love for hiking led me to accept a challenge with a group of friends to hike Mount Snowdon. I do like a challenge—but that's just me. It's certainly not for everyone.

It turned out to be one of the most emotionally and physically challenging yet exhilarating experiences I've ever had. Starting in the very early dark to see the sunrise at the summit was worth every sip of energy drink, bite of protein bar and breath of mountain fresh air. Just glorious! And to do it with my best mates was just the best.

Whether with family or friends, the biggest advantage of hiking isn't just physical, it's a kind of walking therapy. Out of the chair and into natural surroundings—you'd be surprised how people open up and air their thoughts and worries. I find it gives a freedom that can't be exchanged for anything material—and that's precious. Plus, it's totally free!



So, if you are thinking of hiking, here's a few hints and tips:

- Trainers or walking boots? Trainers are great on the flat, but if you are feeling more adventurous on uneven terrain, a pair of walking boots will make it seem a lot less tasking and give your feet and ankles good support.
- Choose an area suited to your fitness ability (don't bite off more than you can chew). It doesn't have to be a challenge—we aren't trying to compete with Bear Grylls!
- Stay safe. Always map out your walk and research if it's hilly or flat beforehand.
- Be realistic. How long do you want to hike for? Pick a walk that matches your time and energy. Check the route's estimated duration, and remember: three hours on steep trails feels longer than three hours on the flat.
- The UK is known for its variable weather. As you get more adventurous, a clear morning can quickly turn into a rainy afternoon. Hikers should be prepared with waterproof clothing, good boots, layered clothing and a reliable map or GPS.
- Take plenty of water and snacks. Whatever the season, the weather can change quickly so just take a few supplies in case you need them—you don't need to lug around a huge, heavy rucksack.
- Starting out with loop routes are always great as you often start and end at the car park.
- Local pubs and tearooms are a vital part of the hiking experience in the UK. Many trails are punctuated by cosy stops where you can enjoy hearty meals, locally brewed ales or a traditional cream tea—a welcome respite after a day's exertion.

Final thoughts

Hiking in the UK is more than just a physical activity—it's a cultural and spiritual experience. From misty mountains to sunlit valleys, each trail offers a story waiting to be discovered. If you're seeking challenge, solitude or inspiration, the British countryside welcomes you with open arms and miles of unforgettable paths.



SUSTAINABLE SUMMER CHALLENGES FOR KIDS

With school out for the summer, it's the perfect time to get children active, outdoors and connected to the natural world.

Beyond the traditional holiday fun, there's a growing movement to use the summer break as a meaningful opportunity to nurture environmental responsibility in children. Increasingly, families and educators are turning downtime into a season of eco-learning—encouraging playful, purposeful activities that build a sense of care for the planet.

Recent UK initiatives such as Eco-Schools¹ and educational campaigns tied to the United Nations Global Goals² have placed young people at the heart of sustainable development. These programmes empower children to recognise their role in protecting the environment and making responsible choices. Research supports this hands-on approach: activities that connect children directly with nature can foster pro-environmental behaviour, boost emotional wellbeing and help cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the natural world.

81% of children reported feeling happier after spending time outdoors.³ Similarly, the Eco-Schools England programme demonstrates that active engagement with environmental topics increases both student participation and ecological understanding. Further evidence shows that unstructured, hands-on experiences, like outdoor challenges, can support the development of emotional regulation, creativity and resilience in young children.⁴

So why do sustainable summer activities matter? First, they help boost environmental awareness by allowing children to explore real-world issues like waste, biodiversity and climate change in ways that are tangible and age-appropriate. Second, they offer proven mental health and wellbeing benefits—reducing stress, enhancing mood and promoting creativity through nature-based play. Finally, they help build positive eco-habits, laying the foundation for responsible behaviours and values like patience, curiosity and empathy.

Why not give some of the following sustainable summer activities a go to help entertain the kids this summer? These activities offer children the chance to have fun, learn new skills and make a positive difference—all while enjoying the great outdoors. Each activity is underpinned by two key educational frameworks. The first is Eco-Schools UK, a Department for Education-recognised programme that encourages pupils to engage with ten environmental topics including litter, transport, biodiversity and waste. The second is the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—a global roadmap for building a fairer, greener future.

Key goals that align with children's eco-challenges include:

- **Goal 3:** Good Health and Wellbeing
- **Goal 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production
- **Goal 13:** Climate Action
- **Goal 15:** Life on Land

Sustainable summer challenges for kids

Be a litter-pick hero

Organise a mini clean-up in your local park, beach or street. All you need is a bag, gloves and some enthusiasm. This will help improve public spaces and teach social responsibility.

Eco-Schools Link: Litter

Global Goals:

11 Sustainable Communities, 15 Life on Land

Tip: Join a community litter-picking group like Keep Britain Tidy's Litter Heroes.⁵

Make recycled art

Create a collage, sculpture or costume from clean household waste—think cereal boxes, bottle tops and yoghurt pots. This will encourage creativity and reduce landfill.

Eco-Schools Link: Waste

Global Goals:

12 Responsible Consumption, 13 Climate Action

Tip: Hold a recycled art show at home and invite friends and family to vote.

1. Natural England (2023). Children and Nature Survey: How and why children engage with nature. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-and-nature-survey>

2. Eco-Schools England (Keep Britain Tidy). Eco-Schools Programme Information. <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk>

3. United Nations (2015). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

4. Anderson, A. J., & Perone, S. (2024). The kids are bored: Trait boredom in early childhood and links to self-regulation, coping strategies, and parent-child interactions. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 243, 105919.

Bike, walk or scoot week

Swap the car for cycling or walking on short trips—especially to local parks, shops or holiday clubs. Not only will this help to reduce emissions, but it also improves fitness and builds independence.

Eco-Schools Link: Transport

Global Goals: 3 Wellbeing, 13 Climate Action

Tip: Use the free Modeshift Stars Education resources to plan safe active travel routes.⁶

Grow your own snack

Plant quick-grow veggies like radishes, lettuce or cherry tomatoes. Kids will enjoy watching them grow—and eating them!

Eco-Schools Link: Healthy Living, School Grounds

Global Goals: 12 Sustainable Production, 2 Zero Hunger

Tip: Try the Grow Your Own Potatoes or Rocket Gardens summer packs for child-friendly kits.⁸

Eco-story time

Choose nature-themed books like Somebody Swallowed Stanley or The Last Tree. Follow up with a drawing or a conversation about what they learned.

Eco-Schools Link: Marine, Global Citizenship

Global Goals: 4 Education, 14 Life Below Water

Tip: Many local libraries run summer reading challenges with eco-themed sections.¹⁰

Plant a pollinator patch

Help boost biodiversity by planting bee-friendly flowers such as lavender, marigold, thyme or foxglove. Even a few pots on a balcony count!

Eco-Schools Link: Biodiversity

Global Goals: 15 Life on Land

Tip: Use RHS Plants for Pollinators to choose flowers that support wildlife.⁷



Water saving challenge

Turn off the tap while brushing teeth, collect rainwater for plants or time your showers.

Eco-Schools Link: Water

Global Goals: 6 Clean Water, 13 Climate Action

Tip: Use Thames Water's online water-saving calculator for kids.⁹

Top tips for parents

Let kids lead

Offer choices and allow them to shape their own challenge goals.

Use a summer eco-challenge tracker

Keep a fun chart or journal of completed challenges.

Celebrate progress

Give certificates, badges or even a homemade 'Green Hero' medal.

Sustainability isn't just for adults—children can be powerful change-makers when given the tools, time and encouragement to explore their world.

These summer challenges are more than just fun—they build habits of curiosity, care and climate-conscious living that can last a lifetime.



Jennifer McGroarty,
Head of HR - ESS
Energy, Government &
Infrastructure

Make a difference on the way home

Our walk home from nursery has turned into a meaningful part of our day. At least once a week, we bring along a bag and pick up litter we spot along the way. It's our way of supporting the Keep Scotland Beautiful campaign and helping to care for our local environment.



This has become part of our routine which we both enjoy as it adds purpose to our journey. It sparks conversations about nature and responsibility, and gives my daughter a sense of pride in making a positive impact.

It's a small act, but one that teaches big lessons—and it makes our time together even more rewarding!

5. Keep Britain Tidy. Litter Heroes Campaigns and Resources. <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org>

6. Modeshift STARS. Travel planning tools for schools and families. <https://www.modeshiftstars.org>

7. Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Plants for Pollinators. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators>

8. Thames Water. Water-saving tips and challenges for children. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/water-saving>

9. Rocket Gardens. Grow Your Own Kits for Kids. <https://www.rocketgardens.co.uk>

10. The Reading Agency (2024). Summer Reading Challenge - Eco-themed reading. <https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk>

MINDFUL HOLIDAYING

LOW-IMPACT TRAVEL TIPS

Holidays are a chance to unwind, reconnect and reset. But more and more, travellers are asking: can we take a break without taking a toll on the planet?

The answer is yes—and it starts with a mindset shift.



Mindful holidaying means thinking about where, how and why we travel. It's about choosing experiences that benefit not just ourselves, but also the places and people we visit.

In line with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Sustainable Tourism Goals, mindful holidaying encourages us to reduce our environmental footprint, support local economies and engage with culture in a more meaningful way.

Whether you're planning a weekend retreat or a longer adventure, there are plenty of ways to explore more consciously and still return feeling refreshed.



One of the easiest ways to travel more mindfully is by reducing the environmental impact of how we get from A to B. Swapping short-haul flights for trains, coaches or car shares is a great start—rail travel, for example, produces a fraction of the carbon emissions of flying.

Once you're there, walking, cycling or using public transport not only lowers your footprint but often allows you to experience a place more intimately.

Packing light also helps reduce fuel consumption: the less weight you carry, the less fuel is needed. Reusable items—like water bottles, bamboo cutlery and solid toiletries—can reduce waste on the go, while choosing eco-certified accommodation ensures your stay is energy-efficient and responsibly managed. For those times when flying is unavoidable, carbon offsetting is an option.



Not every great escape requires a plane ticket. Staycations can offer just as much joy and variety, often with less stress and a smaller environmental impact.

Whether it's a weekend cabin stay, a digital detox in the countryside or a wild swim at your nearest lake, there's something powerful about discovering beauty closer to home. Local getaways can also support wellbeing in more grounded ways: shorter travel times, less packing pressure and more flexibility to tune into what you really need—sleep, nature, fresh air or quiet.

Exploring your local area with a tourist's curiosity can reveal hidden gems, while your spending directly supports nearby businesses, which is something that's increasingly important in building local economic resilience.



Another growing trend within mindful holidaying is community-based tourism where travellers are invited into experiences designed and led by local people. These might include homestays, cultural workshops, eco-tours or volunteering projects.

The key difference is that local communities are active participants, not passive backdrops. This kind of travel promotes cultural understanding, supports livelihoods and empowers people to share their own stories on their own terms.

It also aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including decent work and economic growth, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities.



Wherever you go, the most powerful question to ask might be: how can I give more than I take? Mindful travellers don't need to be perfect, but they are intentional. That could mean choosing a locally owned guesthouse instead of a multinational hotel chain or simply learning a few words of the local language out of respect. It could mean limiting single-use plastics, leaving natural spaces better than you found them or choosing tour providers who prioritise conservation and ethical practices.

In the end, a mindful holiday isn't about sacrificing comfort or joy—it's about enriching your experience while contributing to something greater. Travel has the potential to heal, connect and inspire. When done with care, it becomes a powerful force for wellbeing, not only for ourselves but for the world around us.



A mindful holiday checklist

Before booking your next break, ask:

- How far do I need to go to feel recharged?
- Can I travel in a lower-carbon way?
- Will my visit benefit local people directly?
- Am I respecting the culture and environment I'm entering?

Even small choices—like opting for locally owned accommodation or bringing your own water bottle—can support the UN's goals of sustainable, inclusive and responsible tourism.

FOUR SUMMERS OF SOIL, SUNSHINE AND SUSTAINABILITY!

Greetings from the Defence Academy Organic Market Garden.



Janet Thomas
Head Gardener - ESS

I hope that you are all enjoying some lovely summer sunshine and getting to spend plenty of time outside in nature. As I sit in the garden shed on a rainy day in late spring, I realise that this will be our fourth summer in the garden since it started in April 2022, back when the site was just an acre plot of grass kindly given to us by the camp, along with two newly erected polytunnels.

Over the last three years, Lily and I have transformed the plot into a vibrant and productive Soil Association Certified Organic Market Garden. We established a large outdoor growing area to use alongside the indoor space in the polytunnels and greenhouse, using sustainable gardening practices to grow veg, salad, herbs and flowers. All were grown in a way that encourages biodiversity in the garden and ensures good crop yield—helped along by residents of our five honey bee hives in the apiary.

The Market Garden serves many functions. It's a peaceful space for our visitors to stroll and unwind, while

also showcasing sustainable practices, like rainwater collection, homemade compost, no-dig gardening and biodiverse planting. We regularly welcome visitors from within our organisation, the MOD and the local community—many of whom leave inspired to grow their own. In fact, we often hear people say, "We've just popped by to see what you're growing now."

While we love welcoming visitors to the garden, our core focus is always to grow seasonal vegetables, salad and fruit to supply our on-site healthy options restaurant, Grass Roots. We grow a huge variety of crops and over the summer months, our poly tunnels are packed with vibrant produce like tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, aubergines and French beans.

Outside in the beds, we grow onions, new potatoes, courgettes, butternut squash, beetroot and sweetcorn—to name but a few. We are able to grow some overwintering crops and supply fresh salad leaves to the restaurant all year round along with early spring cabbage, broccoli, spring onions and cauliflower. We also supply the restaurant with its annual Brussels sprouts for Christmas lunch.



We produce a diverse mix of super-healthy fresh leaves, from varieties of lettuce to chard, spinach, rocket, pak choi and mustard, as well as many herbs. In the summer months, the salad bar is literally brimming with fresh, organically certified produce, prepared by the amazing chefs in Grass Roots. It travels less than half a mile from garden to kitchen—you can't get fresher than that!

I hope reading about our journey has inspired you to try growing some of your own vegetables—or perhaps to cook some dishes using seasonal veg from your local supermarket, farmers' market or market gardener. To give you a little inspiration, our executive chef Pete Smith has created a beautiful recipe showcasing this summer's garden crops. We hope you enjoy them. Happy gardening (and cooking)!

MARKET GARDEN ROASTED BEETROOT & FETA NICOISE SALAD WITH RUBY DRESSING

Serves 4



Peter Smith,
Executive Chef - ESS



Equipment:

- Tin foil
- Baking tray
- Sauce pan
- Knife
- Chopping board
- Bowl
- Whisk

Ingredients:

- 2 medium raw whole beetroot
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- 2 sprigs of rosemary
- 2 garlic cloves
- 20 ml olive oil
- 200g feta cheese
- 160g tomatoes
- 150g cucumbers
- 270g new potatoes
- 150g mixed salad leaves
- 120g French beans
- 1 tspn Dijon mustard
- 1 tbspn red wine vinegar
- 1 tspn honey

Method:

- 1 Wash the raw beetroot, then place into tin foil with half the oil, garlic and herbs. Fold foil into a parcel ensuring beetroot is completely wrapped up.
- 2 Place foil parcel onto baking tray and bake in the oven at 180°C for 30–40mins. Then, remove from oven and leave to cool in the foil.
- 3 Wash the new potatoes. Boil in water for 15 minutes.
- 4 Top and tail the beans. Cut tomato into medium dice. Slice cucumber in half and remove seeds with teaspoon. Next, slice cucumber, wash salad leaves and dry.
- 5 Add the prepped green beans to the boiling new potatoes for 2 mins before the potatoes are cooked. After that, refresh the bean and potatoes under cold running water until cold.
- 6 Cut the potatoes into 6 and half the green beans.
- 7 Remove the cooled beetroot from foil, peel the beetroot and cut into wedges. Keep the beetroot juices for dressing. Discard the herbs and garlic.
- 8 Blend or whisk together the rest of the oil, Dijon mustard, vinegar, honey and beetroot juices.
- 9 Place all the ingredients into large bowl and mix together, leaving the feta and beetroot out.
- 10 Evenly share the salad mix between 4 bowls. Place beetroot wedges on top of salad. Crumble feta over salad. Then finish with dressing.



What's a Soil Association Certificate?

When something is Soil Association Certified, it means it meets tough organic standards. That covers everything from how food is grown and animals are cared for, to how products are processed and packaged.

To earn the certification, farms and producers must:

- Not use synthetic pesticides and fertilisers
- Use sustainable practices like crop rotation and nurturing healthy soil
- Avoid genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- Keep high animal welfare standards
- Undergo regular inspections by the Soil Association

For a garden like ours, it means growing fresh, healthy food the natural way—good for the earth and for us.



GRASS ROOTS

GRASS ROOTS

In a time when sustainability and wellbeing are at the forefront of our food choices, Grass Roots restaurant is setting a great example.

Grass Roots restaurant serves freshly cooked meals and vibrant salads made using produce straight from our thriving Organic Market Garden.

A highlight of the restaurant's menu is its creative use of freshly grown Koppert Cress microgreens, cut daily from the temperature-controlled growing units.

These flavour-packed, nutrient-rich shoots elevate both the taste and presentation of each meal, highlighting the care and attention given to every ingredient.

Renowned for their culinary finesse and health benefits, these microgreens are delicately incorporated into salads, soups and even main courses, adding a fresh twist to wholesome ingredients.



WELLNESS

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Drop us an email and
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