

Meet an Instructor

Donna Davis



Donna has been a Massage in Schools Programme (MISP) instructor since 2007, using the programme of positive touch and clothed peer massage for children 4 - 12 years. More recently in 2012, Donna trained as an instructor for the IMPACT Wellbeing Programme, a relaxation programme with a mindfulness-based approach for use by young people and adults of all ages.

What inspired you to train as a MISP instructor and then as an IMPACT Wellbeing instructor?

I worked as an administrator in a primary School for 10 years and during that time I became acutely aware of the how stressed many of the children were, and how many children have low self esteem. I was aware that respect for others and self respect seemed to have become eroded in recent years.

How have you used the programmes and what have been the benefits?

As an independent instructor I have been fortunate to have implemented or supported the MISP in over 30 schools in Worcestershire and the West Midlands. I have witnessed firsthand the benefits that MISP and IMPACT claim, in calming children down and helping them to work effectively and focus. To see primary school children really caring for each other, engendering respect and self respect and using kind words is wonderful.

I have had very positive responses from the students whilst working with 6th forms using IMPACT Wellbeing. Students confirmed that the techniques were really valuable in helping them to manage the numerous stresses that young people face in this crucial stage of education and life.

On a personal level I have learned so much from the children, students and staff I work with. I gain tremendous satisfaction in knowing that I am helping the children and young people learn a life skill that can make a real difference to their emotional wellbeing as they grow and face challenges.

What have you most enjoyed about using the programmes?



I have enjoyed seeing the ongoing differences the MISP and IMPACT Wellbeing makes to groups and the achievement of those involved when I have finished introducing the Programmes. I love seeing the apprehensive faces of some teachers at an initial staff meeting and then winning them round as they see the benefits once the Programme is established! I enjoy the diversity as no two schools and no two classes are ever the same and I also enjoy meeting new people and finding new opportunities. Some schools are really inspiring.

What difficulties have you had to overcome?

It's always a challenge to get work! It needs tenacity, time and commitment especially when you are starting out. Time has to be spent with the Headteacher or Senior Management teams explaining why they should invest their stretched budgets and their valuable teaching time on introducing and sustaining the Programmes.

What would you say are your greatest achievements and how do you wish to develop your work in the future?

I am pleased with the number of schools I have worked with and therefore the number of young people that have benefited from the Programmes.

I am delighted to be awarded the 2013 Award of Excellence for Research by the Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT) for the research work I have done with the Massage in Schools Programme. This included a project funded by the Massage in Schools Association (MISA) and the Tudor Trust; '[An evaluation of the effectiveness of peer massage in one primary school](#)'. The implementation of peer massage at a primary school in Kidderminster had a very positive outcome and the resulting study was accredited by Edge Hill University.

I am proud that a group of 6th form students took the time after I had finished the IMPACT Wellbeing sessions to seek me out at lunchtime to thank me again for the difference they had found using the techniques we had introduced whilst revising for their International Baccalaureate exams.

And finally.....I am thrilled to have been a Pudsey Bear for a day! In 2012, as part of Children In Need Fundraising, I organised 10 Worcestershire schools (approximately 2000 children) in their school halls to simultaneously make massage circles and do the Weather massage for charity. Great fun was had by all! Lots of money was raised, lots of parents involved and yes, of course, we were able to organise Pudsey Bear to visit many of the schools. Everyone should have the chance to be Pudsey for a day...its priceless!



In addition to her work in schools and colleges, Donna has also presented the IMPACT Wellbeing Programme and provided workshops at the UK Stroke Club Conference 2012 and Bromsgrove Stroke Support Group. "With these relaxation techniques people in hospital, hospices, having rehabilitation and using support settings can experience a reduction in stress and the nurturing effects of massage," Donna explains. "And the beauty of this type of therapy is that all you need to deliver the programme is a chair."

Donna is now beginning to use IMPACT Wellbeing in the corporate sector and for staff wellbeing.

To find out more about Donna's work visit www.gowellbeing.co.uk

Massage in schools Association (MISA) www.misa.org.uk