



# CHS NEWSLETTER

**ISSUE 4 - April 2023**

**CALL the HELPLINE on 02 648 40 14 or  
Book an Appointment on 02 647 67 80**

Welcome to the CHS Spring 2023 Newsletter.

It is customary at this time of the year for us to finalize our annual accounts for the previous financial year. Although these are still subject to change, the overall picture is clear. 2022 saw a long-awaited return to near normal. Even though the COVID pandemic was still with us for much of the year, it seems as though people have learned to live with it. The impact of this on our daily life at CHS has reduced the burden of having to clean rooms after each use, and it is nice to be able to walk around the CHS building without having to wear a mask.

Our levels of activity were broadly consistent with 2021 and we are anticipating a small surplus this year of around €10,000. In common with many organizations and households, we saw a significant increase in our energy bills following the increases in gas and electricity prices, so to still be able to report a surplus is good news.

Just to comment on one aspect of the CHS business, the CHS Helpline had a busy year and we ended 2022 with the highest number of volunteers we have had at any time over at least the past five years. Our volunteers spent over 1,000 hours taking over 5,300 calls from the general public. Roughly 20% of those calls came from overseas telephone numbers, which could indicate that CHS provides more than a local service.

We continued to see an increase in the number of suicide-related calls to the Helpline, a trend that started during the COVID pandemic, but which seems to be accelerating. To some extent, this increase may be a result of Google having elevated the profile of the CHS Helpline when people use suicide-related search criteria. But from everything else we see in all aspects of mental health space, the underlying trend is increasing.

It is a tribute to all our Helpline volunteers that they have continued to support not only the English-speaking community here in Belgium, but possibly also a number of callers from outside the country. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the CHS Office on [office@chsbelgium.org](mailto:office@chsbelgium.org).

*Jeremy Jennings.*

# 'Situated Breaks'

## *How to deal with frustrations in children with ADHD and/or ASD using 'Situated Breaks'.*

Children who are diagnosed with ADHD and/or ASD sometimes struggle to regulate their emotions, especially when frustrated. At other times, they struggle or manage situations that cause them feelings of frustration.

It seems as though they may be 'intolerant' to little frustrations that they in the environment, be it in social, learning or home situations.

Often, when faced with frustrations they may display 'unadapted' behaviours such as meltdowns, self-harm, anger etc.

## *Why do some children get frustrated?*

Engaging in a pleasant (or obligatory) activity that involves several elements such as thinking, feeling, talking, doing, managing more than one person, etc., may cause rapid mental exhaustion and be emotionally overwhelming in neurodiverse children diagnosed with ASD/ADHD compared to their peers. Children may experience RAPID mental or emotional exhaustion and can quickly feel overwhelmed.

In my clinical experience, one of the core reasons is that they may sometimes have a limited awareness about their own internal limits whilst engaged in activities. They are unable to recognise when IT ALL GETS TOO MUCH! That is why they may act out their frustrations.

## *How can we help when a child gets frustrated?*

It is possible to provide strategic support to children experiencing 'Frustration Intolerance' that could not only help them manage the situation that may be causing the frustration but also enable them to develop 'Frustration Management Skills', so that they can manage future frustrations in an adapted way.

## *What are situated breaks, and how can they help?*

Situated breaks are pauses carefully and strategically placed between on-going activities within a specific situation. By imposing situated breaks within pleasurable and mandatory activities we can avoid or reduce frustrations.

## *Examples of situated breaks could include:*

- Short physical exercise such as walking up and down stairs, along corridors, or to the end of the road and back.
- Drinking small amounts of

glucose liquids, eg fruit juice (natural sugars are fine), or having a snack

- Reading a page in a book (for those who like reading).
- Listening to a favourite song.

It is important to time these situated breaks and physical action to between 5 and 15 minutes.

You must NOT overstretch breaks as the child may struggle to get back into the ongoing task if the break is too long.

## *What are the advantages of situated breaks?*

- Enable flexible thinking
- Stimulate decision making
- Allow children to obtain a new perspective on situations
- Reduce mental/emotional fatigue

In conclusion, situated breaks make a real difference in reducing and in most cases preventing high levels of frustration in children with ASD/ADHD. They also enable better communication with the child. Importantly, they prevent UNADAPTED behaviours due to frustration.

*By Kwan-Yin Bruhl*

# A Volunteer Writes

When I left the corporate world, I had a whole list of things I wanted to do – things that had been put on hold while I was working long hours and travelling a lot.

Due to the Covid pandemic, almost everything I had in mind was delayed or postponed. I did manage, via mostly online means, to study for and pass 3 levels of wine exams, but it would have much more enjoyable to have done this in a classroom set up with other people (tasting alone is not so much fun!).

The list of what I wanted to do included setting aside some time for volunteer activities. I identified a few organisations I wished to contact such as the Red Cross and Serve The City as they

offered activity-based ad-hoc engagement opportunities where I could be active at times I chose and contribute in ways I thought could be useful for the organisations. Then, after a discussion at an event one evening, I learnt that CHS needed volunteers.

I had heard of CHS but had never had any contact with the organisation. Some of my friends had and spoke highly of CHS. I worked out I could commit a day a week to work in the office and some other time from home.

I did not really have a clear idea of what I would actually be doing but just wanted to help where I could.

I was asked to take on co-ordinating the requests for appointments received from

adults, which involves supporting the clinical team in the task of allocating appointments or referring requests to somewhere appropriate.

It is mostly administrative work, which was new to me, but I have learnt on the job. I find it rewarding knowing that in some small way I am contributing to the wellbeing of those who contact the office. It is not glamorous, some calls we take can be distressing and there is a lot to do but I very much appreciate all the wonderful, impressive people with whom I work. I would highly recommend volunteering here if you have some free time – you will be giving but you will get a lot back from it too.

## *CHS is regularly looking for volunteers*

*If you, or someone you know, have time available (e.g. retired, "trailing spouse" or between jobs), CHS is regularly looking for volunteers to work either in our Mental Health Services Centre or on our Helpline team. More information is available on the CHS website: <https://www.chsbelgium.org/en/how-you-can-help/volunteer>*

# CHS Affiliated Members

Among our affiliated members is Gabriella Fitterer who provides courses in Meditation and Mindfulness.

The latter is described as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique; leading to helping people avoid destructive or automatic habits and responses by learning to observe their thoughts, emotions, and other present moment experiences without judging or reacting to them.

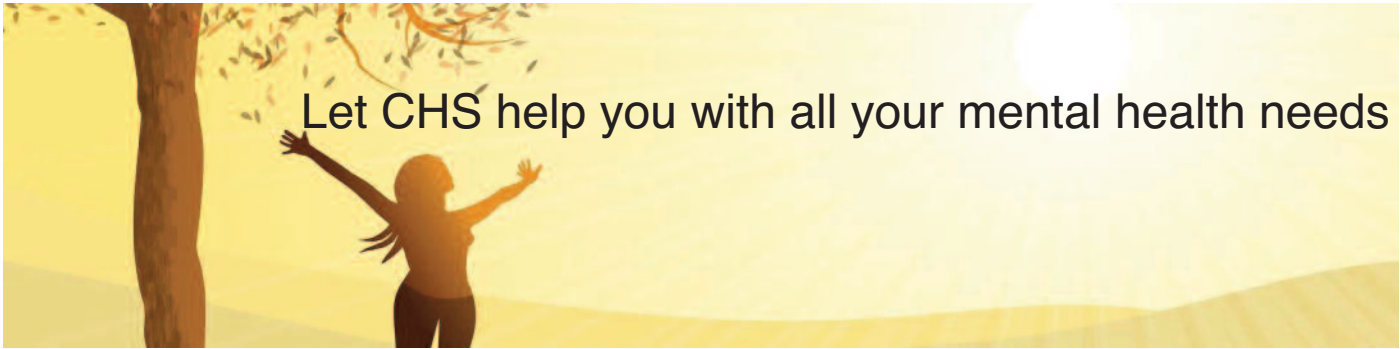


*Comments from a participant.*

*"I can't even begin to say how much this helped me recover from a troubled year, perhaps even a troubled decade. I got the opportunity to learn some precious lessons thanks to mindfulness, combined with traditional therapy and a loving community, as well as a certain degree of luck of course. My problems finally make sense to me, which is a privilege not all women in their 30s can access. What's even better is that I discovered a sense of "soul", or voice, or inner child, or body wisdom, or however we choose to call it... I can now trust myself more and, for a person with OCD, it's simply amazing."*

*From the Editor:*

*I attended one class, a series is needed really but as someone who went through Mindfulness Training some years ago I can say that this is a useful skill and a well taught class.*



Let CHS help you with all your mental health needs



Anonymous and Confidential support from our trained Helpline volunteers

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Materials or Presentation to support your organisation or school

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Therapy with our diverse clinical team

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Psycho-educational Assessments for children

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