

Educational Psychology Service

Wellbeing and Recovery Primary



June 2020



Returning to settings/school following Covid-19



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

WELLBEING and RECOVERY

Returning to School following Covid-19

West Berkshire Educational Psychology Service
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Covid-19 has been a unique experience in our history and continues to have an uncertain road map. This guidance endeavours to bring together information and resources that will be helpful as children and young people begin returning to nurseries, schools, and other settings in a host of ways.

The ideas and resources within this document have been carefully researched and coordinated by the West Berkshire Educational Psychology Service. Our hope is that these practical suggestions will make it easier for staff to keep a focus on wellbeing during this transition period. As dedicated staff you have reached out to and supported hundreds of children, young people, and their families during the most uncertain of times and for this we will always be grateful.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ms Sancho".

Dr Michelle Sancho

Principal Educational Psychologist and SEMH & Wellbeing Service Manager

Key Concepts

Transition

Each person, adult and child, will have their own unique experiences and emotions related to lock-down and Covid-19. The impact the pandemic has on a school community will be different for every setting and we urge you to keep your individual circumstances in mind as you plan to welcome children and young people back in greater numbers. It will be important to view this time as a **transition** period, which we recognise as a process rather than a single event. Research supports what we already know that an individual's experiences of transition can have a powerful and long-lasting effect on academic outcomes (Alexander, Entwisle and Horsey, 1997; Gutman, Sameroff and Cole, 2003) as well as have an impact upon self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. School staff can help to create classroom and school environments that provide reassurance, for example, how they are following the latest government and scientific guidelines, and make expectations clear about how we can all look after ourselves and each other. This may take time and it is important for us to hold on to the idea of a **transition period** as we develop new ways of learning together in the aftermath, rather than rushing or putting unnecessary pressure on ourselves or each other to 'feel or get back to normal'.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back and cope with all the ups and downs of life. It only develops in the face of adversity.

Rebecca Solnit (2009) used case studies of disasters to argue that emergencies are not just moments when bad things get worse, or when people inevitably become more scared, suspicious and self-centred. Instead she described the ways in which disasters open up human reserves of improvisation, solidarity and resolve, pockets of purpose and joy, even in the midst of loss and pain. Solnit's book was not a call to celebrate disaster – but to pay attention to the possibilities it might contain.

“Human beings reset themselves to something altruistic, communitarian, resourceful and imaginative after a disaster, we revert to something we already know how to do.”

Will our children and young people have experienced trauma?

An event in which a person is exposed to actual or **threatened** death, serious injury, or sexual violence has the potential to be traumatic, hence some children and young people will have experienced the Covid-19 pandemic as traumatic, this will, in part, be linked to how much media they have consumed and how the adults around them have responded to the pandemic, for instance, the children of front line key workers will have had a different experience to those whose parent/s have been working at home. Some children and young people will have experienced some negative, uncomfortable or sad times and there will be others who will have enjoyed many aspects of lock-down. Most children and young people, like the adults around them, will have experienced the pandemic with mixed experiences and emotions – they

have not seen their wider family and friends but have perhaps enjoyed a simpler schedule. The broad phases of trauma recovery can offer a useful framework for most children and young people when thinking about what they may need during this transitional period.

1. **Safety and Stabilisation**
2. **Remembrance and Mourning**
3. **Reconnection and Integration**

What can schools do to help children and young people return smoothly to school?

1. **Safety and Stabilisation**

‘The most important thing for a child is to feel safe and secure. If that has been taken away from the child, it is up to the parents and adults to bring them back to being children again’ (Baron, 2004 for Unicef)

Many children will have mixed feelings about leaving the safety and security of home. They may well have received explicit and/or implicit messages that groups of people and leaving the home are dangerous – attending school involves both. Research from Oxford University found that a fifth of primary aged children have felt scared to leave their home during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Weale, 2020)

We must focus on creating a school environment that feels safe and gives children and young people a reason to want to attend:

Welcome

Before, during and after they return. Help children and young people to feel kept in mind, missed and that you’re pleased to see them again.

Connect

Focus on re-connecting and developing relationships.

Time and space to listen and share

Be interested in their point of view and experiences (keep child centred). Ensure they haven’t got misunderstandings linked to ‘fake news’, ‘misheard news’ or differing viewpoints. Talk about it, **normalise** it, help them manage their emotions and return to a state of calm.

Balance the curriculum, the relationships and creative activities

Ensure there is time in the curriculum for play, recreational activities, physical exercise and creative tasks (art, writing, drama, music, DT, investigations, crafting...)

Open and honest communication

...with children and young people and their parents (many who will naturally be highly protective)

Wellbeing and Hope

Actively focus upon principles of wellbeing, promoting hope including healthy eating, sleep, exercise, gratefulness, relaxation, purposeful activity and fun.
(www.actionforhappiness.org)

2. Remembrance and Mourning

When children and young people feel safe (to avoid triggering 'fight or flight') give them the time and space to remember the experiences they have had – good and bad. Allow them to put emotions into words, colours and actions (etc.). Obviously the whole school community or the individual pupil may have an experience of bereavement and loss which will need to be acknowledged and supported.

3. Re-connection and Integration

The need for relatedness is considered a basic human psychological need (Deci and Ryan, 2000) and adequate social support has been found to moderate the impact of stress on health (Dumont and Provost, 1999). Facilitating a sense of connectedness where pupils feel they are genuinely cared about, wanted, listened to and supported can positively impact on their engagement, achievement and emotional wellbeing (Keay, Lang and Frederickson, 2015).

The experiences of the pandemic both good and bad will become part of all our stories. Sharing these experiences with people they trust cannot be underestimated. Teachers hold a unique position in the lives of many children, young people and their families; this can feel like a weighty responsibility the impact of which should not be underestimated. We would urge all staff to: take their own wellbeing seriously and to conceptualise their role as walking alongside children and young people rather than being responsible for 'fixing' them.

How are children going to cope with returning to school?

'The experience of emotional overwhelm is similar to that of a shaken bottle of soda. Inside the bottle is a tremendous amount of pressure. The safest way to release the pressure is to open and close the cap in a slow, cautious and intentional matter so as to prevent an explosion.' (Rothschild, 2010)

All children are different. They have different personalities and different experiences of what school and home mean to them. There are a range of factors which will influence how each and every student will cope with the transition, for instance, their interaction with:

- the change of environment.
- the change of expectations and demands.
- their sense of belonging.
- their sense of control and self-efficacy.
- changes to routine and structure.
- a return to academic challenges (*school will prompt a huge range of feelings – competent, clever, stupid, average, failure, slow, quick, valued*).
- a return to a complex social situation.

For some children school has been their place of safety, where they have friends, are treated with positive regard, where they feel successful and happy. For others school represents bullying or feeling like a failure. However, children and young people previously felt about school most will have experienced more control over the minutia of their lives – going to the toilet without asking, having a snack when hungry. Most will have had more free time and less academic demands; however, they may have also felt a wider loss of control due to the pandemic guidelines and restrictions. Many will have been party to stresses of the adult world via the news or in the home – bereavement, loss of jobs and income.

Inevitably there will be tensions when pupils return – should the school focus upon the lost learning time and making up lost ground or focus on wellbeing? Our hope is that schools can do both but will put wellbeing at their heart.

Some groups to be especially aware of are:

- Pupils who have experienced significant loss or bereavement.
- Pupils who have been shielding during the pandemic as a result of underlying health conditions, and siblings of those who have been shielding, whose experience of lockdown will have been even more restricted.
- Pupils with ASD.
- Pupils with other known special educational needs or disabilities.
- Pupils with existing social, emotional and mental health needs (some might have EHCPs that identify this as an area of special educational need that requires intensive support).

- Pupils who are Looked After, Children in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Pupils who came under Refugee and/or Asylum Seeker status who may have previous experiences of trauma.

Recovery

Recovery means different things to different people in different contexts. For us it involves **hope, acceptance and engagement, connectedness** and **self-determination** (selected from Piat et al 2009). Recovery doesn't mean you are exactly the same at the end as at the beginning. All our experiences change us and recovery means we are able to cope with the ups and downs of life and have some enjoyment along the way.

Look After Yourself



<https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/resources/address-your-stress/stress-container-resource-download.pdf>

Returning to school – a practical overview

- Many children and young people, parents and staff are likely to have heightened anxiety about returning to school – help them feel welcome and safe; listen to their concerns, normalise and reassure.
- Welcome them back – give them a reason to want to return.
- Re-establish relationships and routines.
- Keep a broad view of what ‘learning’ means. Take time to understand what they have been learning at home – how to make a cup of tea, be more independent...
- Aim for informal rather than formal assessments – try to keep it light.
- Give everyone the time and space to share and normalise their experiences – be particularly alert to a host of safeguarding issues exacerbated by lock-down.
- If necessary, take time to mark and celebrate the lives of those who died.
- Be clear if staff have changed jobs or children and young people have moved house.
- Routines are reassuring but try to increase the creativity and fun offering space to reconnect and enjoy school life together.
- Be aware that children and young people may need to feel a heightened sense of control over what is happening to them, shine a light on the many choices and control, no matter how small, they have over themselves and their daily lives
- Keep a focus upon wellbeing of staff and pupils alike.

References:

Information in this guidance has been influenced by:

www.trauma-informed.ca

<https://www.seainclusion.co.uk/post/the-many-problems-of-returning-to-school>

The Adopter Hub – School Transitions Webinar – Dr Georgina Hibbert

https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_23470.html

www.actionforhappiness.org

<https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/resources/>

Transition, Recovery and Learning in the aftermath by Bi-Borough EPCS (April 2020)

Promoting Positive Transitions during and after the Covid-19 crisis by Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service (May 2020)

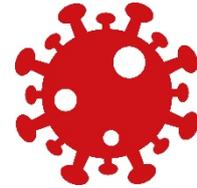
Promoting Wellbeing and Recovery - Resources

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*All these activities should be used in accordance with the current government guidance.
Please see <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>*

Key phrases



Clear understanding of the Virus

Covid-19 is a new type of virus that's been affecting people across the world. It is sometimes called Coronavirus and can affect lungs and airways but it seems to have less effect on children and young people. The symptoms are usually high fever and a cough you have not had before. Most people will recover fully without having to see a doctor. Experts in the UK and around the world are working on treatments and ways to keep everyone safe. We are doing everything we can to make sure we stay safe and well like social distancing. If someone gets ill help is available but most cases are mild and people get better at home.

Giving bad news – words and phrases to adapt

“I have something important to tell you. B is feeling X. The doctors and nurses are working really hard to help her get better and we are hoping she will get well soon.”

“I have something very sad and difficult to tell you. B died. She had X. Nurses and doctors worked hard but the illness became too strong and her body could not get better and she died.”

“Occasionally, someone dies before they are old because of an accident or a serious illness and that is what has been happening for some people with Covid-19. Mostly older people have died but it is not just older people which makes it more frightening. Try to remember people will mostly die once they are very old and also that lots of people who got the Coronavirus got better.”

“Sadly X has died, everyone wishes they had not died and had lived for many more years. However, their body was not able to keep working and they have died.”

“We are healthy and we are going to try and stay that way. That is why we are washing our hands, keeping our distance from people and hardly going out to try and stop ourselves and others from getting the Coronavirus.”

Comments that help children feel held in mind

Remembering and recalling....

- I remember we spoke about that yesterday
- I remember you like.....
- I was thinking about what you said yesterday...
- I know reading isn't your favourite.
- How was the trip/the gaming...
- How is your sister/pet....



Thoughtful comments....

- I was wondering how you would be today after....
- I think that might be a little hard. Do you want to try first or....
- I am aware we've only got 10 minutes left/one week left so I was thinking ...
- I'll go with you the first time until you...

Maintenance, independence, trust

- I'm going to leave you to finish that and I'll come back in 5 minutes
- I'm just going to....I'll come and see how you're getting on when I get back
- I'm just going to help Y I'll come and check on you in X minutes

Wellbeing for Staff

1. **Tense and Release** - Starting from your head and working down your body, tense and release the muscles in different parts of your body. Try to work on just one part at a time and do each part twice before moving on to the next - first, tense the muscles in your neck and shoulders. Squeeze and tense the muscles so that they feel hot and tired (but not so much that they hurt). After a few seconds release the muscles feel them become loose, limp and relaxed. Tense and release the muscles in your neck and shoulders one more time. Now try to keep your neck and shoulders still and relaxed while you work on other parts of your body. In turn, tense and release the muscles in your back and chest, arms and hands, tummy, bottom, legs and finally your feet.
2. **Square breathing** – Find a square to look at or imagine one in your mind. You are going to draw an imaginary line around the square. As you draw along the top of the square, breathe in to a count of 3, as you draw down the side of the square, hold that breath for a count of 3. Along the bottom of the square breathe out to a count of 3 and then hold for 3 as you draw up the last side. Repeat ten times.
3. **Maintaining wellbeing**



Individual Checklist for Staff

Personal Wellbeing:

- I maintain a healthy, balanced diet and ensure I drink plenty of fluids.
- I ensure that I have adequate sleep and enough rest to enable me to complete my work.
- I have thought about how to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- I take regular breaks from work.
- I look after myself (e.g. showering and dressing, cleaning teeth).
- I take normal, healthy precautions following government guidelines.
- I keep active and try and get fresh air when I can.
- I keep in regular contact with friends and family, e.g. playing board games or quizzes.
- I spend time doing positive things/things I enjoy doing.
- I have identified effective coping mechanisms to help manage during times of stress.
- I am aware of simple stress management techniques and can access apps to support with this.
- I have explained the situation to others so they can provide support and I know to reach out for help if needed.
- I take breaks from the news/limit myself to checking news at certain times in the day.

Practical Considerations:

- I use a range of technologies, so I am not always just looking at a screen.
- I try to hand over tasks at home to others so that the impact of these additional stressors can be reduced.
- I have adopted a transition routine to enter/leave the work environment.

PERMA – Questions You Can Ask Yourself to Promote Wellbeing

Positive Emotion	What’s going well at present? What positive/healthy experiences can you plan to do today? (e.g. reading, music, food, games, exercise, mediation, learning, gardening etc.). What can you be grateful for today? What small act of kindness can you do for someone else today? This week? Who or what inspires you? What can you do for amusement today? How can you achieve a moment of calm? Who do you feel love for? How can that inform your behaviour today? What experience/activity/food/drink can you savour today? Do you have a pet you can spend time with?
Engagement	What absorbs you? What are your strengths? How can you use one or more of your strengths today? What can you achieve today through the exercise of one or more of your strengths? What can you explore with curiosity today? What gives you enjoyment?
Relationships	Who can you connect with today (in reality, over the telephone, online)? In what way could you make a small, positive difference to someone else? How can you show interest in another person or their work/hobbies/family etc.? How can you show kindness to, or simply be with, an animal?
Meaning	What do you see as your purpose? (This doesn’t always come readily to mind for people, so don’t worry if it doesn’t!) How can you pursue this purpose today? What small part can you play in contributing towards something bigger (e.g. community)? What is the one thing that you can do today that the world needs? What are your values (e.g. kindness, consideration, honesty, respect, contribution)? What goals can you set for today that are informed by your values?
Accomplishment	What goal or goals, no matter how small, can you achieve today? What challenge can you take on today? How can you invest in your development today? How might you go about it? What possible options can you think of? What will you do?

4. Create a wellbeing plan

Create a support system:

- Who/what is in it?
- Small, medium and large things all count.
- How does work fit in?
- What's healthy? Unhealthy?
- What do you need more of? Who can help you?
- What else needs to be in it?

Next steps...

- Think about setting yourself a short term (a week or two), medium term (a few months) and long term goal (within a year)

5. **Create a buddy network** – each member of staff to have a buddy so that they can ensure they have regular check-ins on wellbeing.



6. **Five Ways to Wellbeing** - the following are evidence-based strategies identified to support wellbeing:

1. **Connect:** Find virtual ways to spend time with family, friends and colleagues.
2. **Be Active:** Plan daily exercise outside or using online videos or other indoor exercise options.
3. **Take Notice:** Practise being mindful of your own body and the environment around you.
4. **Learn:** If you have extra time, use this to try something new or focus learning on your role (e.g. new technology, ways of teaching) or wellbeing.
5. **Give:** This could include practical support as well as offering encouragement, time and expressions of gratitude to others, could be random acts of kindness.



7. **Create a collective culture for wellbeing** – this could include:

- Recognition events
- Staff “wins for the week” notice board
- Coffee break / drop in time
- Openness and listening
- Wellbeing lead / champions
- Physical time out space at school
- Non work related interactions (utilise skills and contacts 😊)
- Creating space and time for supervision
- Thinking about workload and work-life balance
- Staff wellbeing surveys, give feedback
- School staff wellbeing policy – “Compassion Charter”
- Wellbeing on the agenda! Discuss at governor meetings

8. **Sensory Strategies** - Think about how you can use your senses to ground yourself in the present moment:

Sight: looking at something calming (e.g. bubble tube).

Sound: calming music or noises.

Touch/proprioception: deep pressure can often be calming to people.

Smell: e.g. essential oils.

Taste: e.g. having a cup of tea/hot chocolate.

References:

- Support during self-isolation - School planning document to support psychological wellbeing during Covid-19 by Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Services
- <https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>
- www.actionforhappiness.org

Sharing experiences

How to Talk to Children about Covid-19.

It is important to talk to children about what is happening, as not knowing can be worse. Children are also likely to ask questions to you during this time. Here are some tips on how to talk to them about what is happening, along with some resources to help you know what to say:

- If they are reluctant to talk, it may be best to try and **have a chat while doing an activity** (particularly if you can do it when side-by-side), like walking drawing a picture, doing the washing up or making and doing see below for ideas.
- Start by asking them about what they have heard about the virus and the situation. **Ask open** questions (e.g. “What makes you feel that way?”; “What have you heard about the virus?”, “What are your worries about this?”).
- It is important to **listen to their concerns** and **acknowledge them** without minimising them.
- If relevant, you may be able to **correct any misconceptions** that children have about the virus, but don’t say anything if you are unsure about it. Use information from trusted sources.
- **Talk about how they can help themselves** (e.g. washing hands, keeping 2m away from people, cough into tissues/their elbow). Follow government/health guidelines.
- Depending on the age of the child, you may end up having to answer the same questions a number of times. This is also completely normal, **just answer it again**.
- You should try to remember to **keep things positive and give children hope**. For example, tell children that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people. Reassure them that this will pass, you’re there for them, and you will get through this together.
- It can be **helpful to explain to children that anxiety is a normal human emotion**, and a certain level of it can be helpful. You can talk about how it feels in their bodies, as not all children will know this. For example, notice the signs that they feel anxious (e.g. red face, heart beating faster, speaking faster etc.).
- **Sharing your own worries** may be helpful so that you are being open with them – don’t pretend that things are still the same. Make sure you are also clear about how you manage your feelings and try to remain calm in front of them. Don’t expect these same strategies to work for your children though.
- At the end of the discussion, **remind your children that they can have other difficult conversations with you at any time**. Remind them that you care, you’re listening and that you’re available whenever they’re feeling worried.

These links have advice on how to talk to children about Covid-19:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>

<https://krisepsykologi.no/what-can-we-say-to-children-about-coronavirus/>

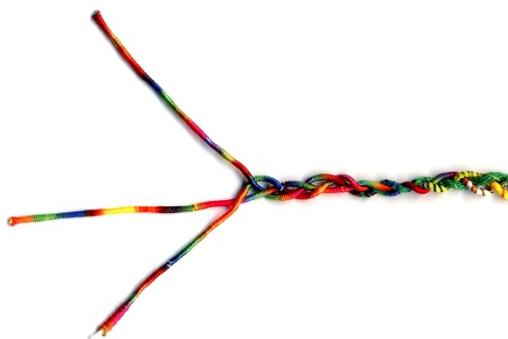
<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Activities to support children to share experiences:

1. Make a fruit salad to share.
2. Make link chains - children can write thoughts, reflections, feelings on the chain.

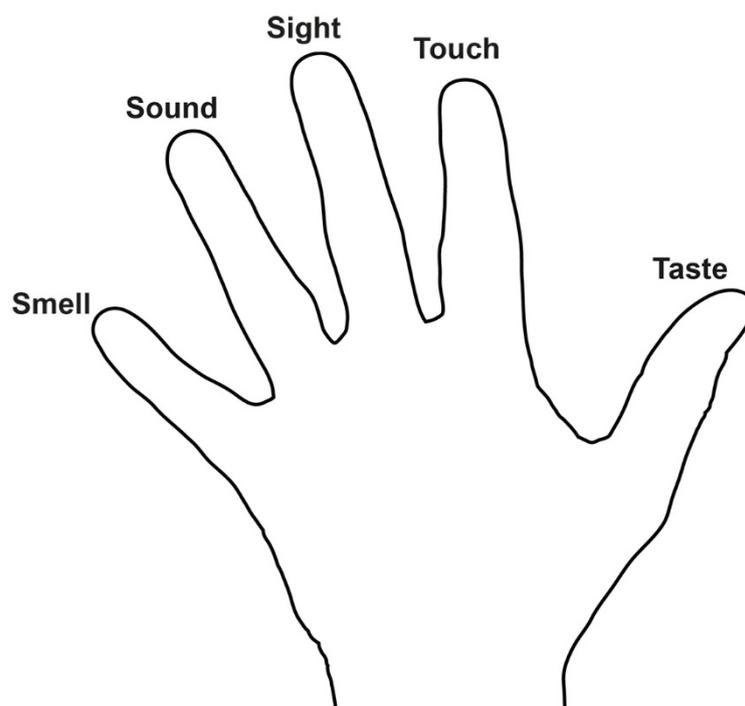


3. Make friendship bracelets



4. Model building with Lego
5. Journaling: there are lots of ways to use a journal to cope or feel better:
 - a. **Let your feelings out**
about how you're feeling can be a great way to express yourself
 - b. **Learn about what makes you feel down or upset**
Writing a little every day about what's happened to make you upset can help you to spot patterns and understand your feelings

- c. **Remind you of things to be proud of**
Try writing down one thing you're glad about each day and record how you feel about it. Writing down when things go well as well, even really small things, can help to remind you of things to be proud of
 - d. **Keep track of new things you try**
Any time you try something new to cope or feel better, you can write down how you feel before and after to see whether it's helped
6. Free audio version of Dawn Heubner's book 'Something Bad Happened: A Kid's Guide to Coping with Events in the News (aimed at ages 6-12):
<https://www.dawnhuebnerphd.com/>
7. **People who care for me.** Draw around the child's hand and get them to write on each finger the people they can talk to about their thoughts and feelings. Draw their family or friends involved in an activity or doing something fun, or something fun they are looking forward to doing with their family/ friends in the future.
8. **Positive Memory in the palm of your hand.** Draw around the child's hand and get them to write a positive memory for each of the 5 senses (1 per finger) to help them feel safe and calm wherever they are.



Wellbeing for children

1. **Breathing activity** – Strawberry cake Breathe in through the nose (smell the strawberries) and out through the mouth (blow out the candles). Saying the phrase in your head, *'smell the strawberries and blow out the candles'*, will help you to take slow, controlled breaths. Now, try breathing out slowly and gently so that the candles flicker.

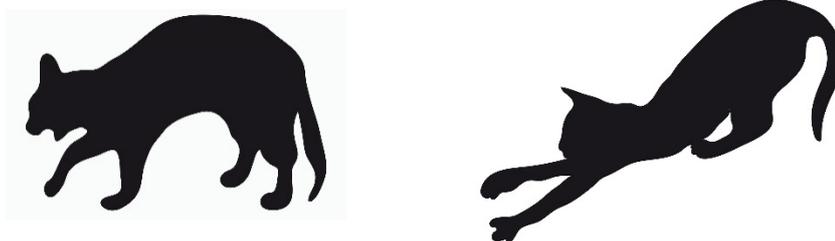


2. **Stress ball** - This exercise releases muscle tension and massages your hands. Make your own stress ball(s) by filling balloons with dry lentils or rice.
 - Take the ball(s) in one or both hands and squeeze and release.
 - Experiment with squeezing the ball. Find way that is right for you, adjusting the speed, pressure and timing of your squeezes to whatever way you like.



3. **Releasing muscle tension** – there are a number of different ways to do this:

Lazy Cat - Pretend you are a lazy cat that just woke up from a lovely, long nap. • Have a big yawn • And a meow • Now stretch out your arms, legs and back – slowly like a cat – and relax.



Feather/Statue - • Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for about ten seconds. • Suddenly you freeze and transform into a statue. Don't move!
• Then slowly relax as you transform back into the floating feather again.
• Repeat, making sure to finish as a floaty feather in a relaxed state.

Turtle - Pretend you are a turtle going for a slow, relaxed turtle walk. • Oh no, it's started to rain! • Curl up tight under your shell for about ten seconds. • The

sun is out again, so come out of your shell and return to your relaxing walk.
• Repeat a few times, making sure to finish with a walk so that your body is relaxed. • Repeat, making sure to finish with a walk.



Lemon - Pretend you have a lemon in your hand.

- Reach up to the tree and pick a lemon with each hand.
- Squeeze the lemons hard to get all the juice out – squeeze, squeeze, squeeze.
- Throw the lemons on the floor and relax your hands.
- Then repeat, until you have enough juice for a glass of lemonade!
- After your last squeeze and throw, shake out your hands to relax!



4. **Building connections** – Encourage pupils to draw a support tree that shows all the people they can reach out to – they could be people in their family or friends or neighbours. Even if they can only get in touch with them by phone or video messaging at the moment, that still counts! • Find out something new about as many people as possible. • Put extra pictures up of everyone they care about as a reminder of the important people in your life – they could print out some photos to bring in or draw their own pictures of them!



5. **Be Active** – Try some simple movements as a class - Sit on an upright chair and then stand up and sit down 20 times. Stand with your feet as wide as your shoulder, stand on tiptoe then squat down to your heels and stand up again 15 times. Walk 200 paces around the class every day. Stand with feet together then lunge forward with right leg bent, left leg straight behind you 20 times. Repeat 20 times with left leg bent, right leg straight. Hop 15 times on

each leg. Squat down with hands on the floor and jump as high you can 10 times.



6. **Take Notice** - Create a 'calm' poster using magazine cut outs, drawings and words that make you feel calm and put it on your wall
7. **Give** - Send a note or draw a picture for someone who has helped you as a way of saying thank you.
8. **Cook and Talk** – Fruit Salad Activity



This recipe is vegan and does not contain any of the 14 major allergens.

Ingredients

Total ingredients needed (for 8)	Ingredients per pair
4 small cups of fresh strawberries	1 small cup of fresh strawberries
4 small cups of green seedless grapes	1 small cup of green seedless grapes
4 firm bananas	1 firm banana
1 cantaloupe melon	2 slices of cantaloupe melon
4 Granny Smith apples	1 Granny Smith apple
4 kiwi fruit	1 kiwi fruit
Fresh Orange juice	1 small cup of orange juice

Preparation

Wipe down the table. Work out how many pairs you have at the table (max 4 pairs) and work out how best to position the following utensils per pair. There should be one adult leader per group. Divide the ingredients between pairs. Cut the melon into slices and give 2 to each pair. 1 large bowl needed for food waste

You will need (per pair)

1 chopping board, 1 sharp knife, 1 peeler, 2 mixing bowls, 1 tablespoon 1 large bowl for food waste, Bowls to serve, spoons to eat with.

Introductory script

Today we are going to learn how to make some salads in pairs at our tables, and at the same time we're going to answer some questions about ways you/we have been coping and staying strong. It's important that we remind ourselves of the courage we have shown and the skills and strengths we have learned this year. We're going to talk to each other about what we have done and what has helped us to do that while we make our salads.

Ask if there are any questions and don't forget to WASH HANDS before starting.

Steps:	Leader script and Questions for pairs:
Cut the top off the strawberries and cut in half. Add to bowl.	Optional script: We all find different ways of coping during difficult times. Q: Tell your partner/ the group one way that you have tried to 'stay strong'.
Cut the grapes in half. Add to bowl.	Optional script: We all have different challenges to overcome. Q: Tell your partner/ the group one of the challenges you have overcome and what has helped.
Peel and slice the banana into small pieces. Add to bowl.	Optional script: It's important to try to find times to relax and have fun even when scary or sad things have happened. Q: Tell your partner/ the group about a time when you were able to relax and have fun.
Cut the melon slices into small pieces. Add to bowl.	Optional script: Sometimes there are opportunities to learn new things during times of crisis. Q: What strengths or new skills have you developed?
Peel and core the apple and cut into small pieces.	Optional script: When scary or sad things happen, the smallest act of kindness can have enormous power. Q: What kindnesses have you noticed and appreciated?
Peel and slice the kiwi fruit.	Optional script: Connecting with other people can help us stay strong. Q: What have other people done to help you?
Combine the fruit. Pour over the orange juice and toss to coat. Enjoy!	Optional script: Learning new things makes us more confident as well as being fun. Q: What new things would you like to learn or try next year?

9. Growing Around Grief Activity (for small groups or whole class)

(Lois Tonkin, 1996)

Equipment: 3 different size jars, small, medium and large. One ping pong ball. Plus one large jar per child or one very large jar for the group/class to use. Lots of strips of coloured paper with coping or restorative questions such as:

A challenge I have overcome.....

A new skill I have learned.....

A kindness I have appreciated.....

Someone who has helped me.....

A time when I had fun.....



Place the ping pong ball in the small jar.

Talk about the ball representing grief or sadness after something terrible has happened and the jar representing someone's life.

Ask the children what they notice?

It feels as if the sadness almost entirely fills our lives for a long time after a tragic event and there isn't much space for anything else.

Children are invited to share their ideas/thoughts at any stage during the activity.

Reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers.

Move the ping pong ball to the medium size jar.

Ask what do you notice now?

Time has passed. The grief and sadness has not gone away or got smaller but our life has started to grow around it. Gradually we start to create space for new and different memories alongside the sad memories.

Use the strips of paper with coping or restorative questions on to help children to reflect on what these new and different memories might be.

Move the ping pong ball to the largest jar.

More time has passed since the tragic event. The grief and sadness has still not gone away but our life has continued to grow around it. Maybe new skills have been learned, new people may have come into our life, new experiences, new places visited.

Ask the children to write or draw on the coloured strips of paper and place into their individual jar or the group/class jar alongside the ping pong ball. The jar can be added to weekly with new and different memories.

10. Carrying a positive sense of calm in the palm of your hand

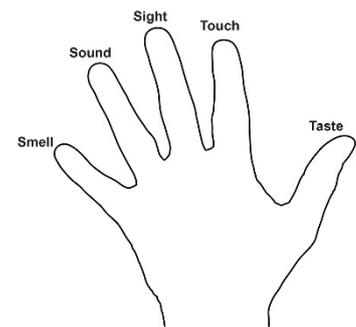
First have the child or young person trace their hand on a sheet of paper. The person then thinks of a positive memory that would help them feel safe and calm to remember even in the midst of stressful and triggering situations.

Write each of the five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling) on each of the five fingers.

The child or adult with them will draw and / or write about the memory in the palm of the hand.

Encourage the individual to identify how the memory is experienced using each of the five senses on each finger and write or draw a picture for each.

Last but not least talk about how thinking of this memory can help the person feel a sense of safety and inner calmness despite outer life circumstances.



References:

- Save the Children US – Stressbusters from their Heart Program
- NHS – #Coping – 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Growing Around Grief - Bi-Borough EPCS based on the Growing around Grief model, Munroe adapted from Tonkin, 1996
- kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com

www.actionforhappiness.org

www.themix.org.uk for young people's mental health/wellbeing

Mindfulness

'You can't stop the waves but you can learn to surf' Jon Kabat Zin

Mindfulness can help children and young people to not only manage difficulties but also to flourish. Mindfulness is about being alive and knowing it.

Teachers, parents and carers will be experiencing a similar range of emotions and responses to the coronavirus pandemic as the children and young people in the school community. Coping with a range of stressors and changes to everyday life will be shared experiences for many.

Mindfulness activities may be helpful at this time. In order to promote mindfulness it will be important for teachers and parents to understand and be able to manage their own stress and to know what to try to avoid.

(Refer to Psychological First Aid and 5 Ways to WellBeing)

<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-forpsychological-recovery>

<https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing>

Mindfulness in Schools Project .b and Paws.b materials

What is Mindfulness (MFN)?

- Practicing stopping and noticing
- Training in attention and awareness - breathing, physical sensations, thoughts, emotions, everyday actions such as walking or eating
- Raised awareness of thoughts, feelings and physical sensations which helps us respond more skilfully to whatever the present moment throws at us – especially relevant during this difficult time
- MFN helps us steady ourselves, make choices and deal skilfully with difficulty with an attitude of kindness, curiosity and openness
- MFN increases our potential to turn towards more positive, healthy peaceful , nourishing experiences
- MFN is an evidence based practice – this is in the early stages but it is encouraging. The Research evidence summary is listed on the Mindfulness in Schools (MISP) website. www.mindfulnessinschools.org. There is a really accessible research summary by Professor Katherine Weare.
- MFN is Endorsed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)

How will mindfulness activities help?

1. Using the breath to train the Mind.

We use the breath to help us be mindful because it is with us wherever we go, like a good friend. The breath is a place to train the mind. Using and training our attention by using the breath, can be likened to training a puppy. When the mind wanders we can bring it back restoring a sense of control and self-efficacy.

Breathing exercises <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxbdX-SeOO0>

Teachstarter Activities: A range of 5/10 minute breathing exercises for all ages: <https://www.teachstarter.com/gb/blog/classroom-mindfulness-activitiesforchildren-gb/>

2. Learning to be in the Present Moment

This is an opportunity to 'Pause and Be' and pay attention to your body breathing and choose where to put your focus. This can be done anywhere and can be useful in many situations e.g. in the dinner line, waiting to go into assembly, lining up in the playground waiting to come into class, before an exam.

- Stop Breathe and Think Kids: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>
- Writing a daily Gratitude Journal
- Approaches based on mindfulness such as Mindup, or Finger Breathing (Mindfulness in Schools **.b materials (11-18 year olds)**) and Tummy Buddies (see appendix for early years and Reception/Year 1)

3. Grounding Ourselves when we Wobble

We all feel wobbly from time to time and more wobbly now perhaps, during this difficult and unusual time. Mindfulness can help us ground ourselves when we wobble. Wobbles can feel very different if we can be friendly to ourselves when we wobble, rather than telling ourselves off or giving ourselves a hard time. There are some mindfulness activities we can do to help ourselves when times are challenging or difficult. (Refer to the 'Mindfulness ... ideas to try' below).

Apps: Smiling Mind <https://www.smilingmind.com./au/>

4. Dealing with Difficulties

Sometimes the way we think can make us **wobble** or **react**. We start to over think, get caught up in the story telling mind and start to worry. Mindfulness allows us to pause and be and see our thoughts clearly. Thoughts are NOT facts – this can be very helpful. When we observe our thoughts we can

choose not to get caught up in them or pulled away by them. If we feel ourselves pulled off balance we can use our mindfulness practice and focus on something that is here right now, such as our breath, to steady ourselves, notice what is happening and make a choice. Thereby *responding* rather than *reacting*.

Apps /audio:

Free audio version of Dawn Heubner’s book ‘Something Bad Happened: A Kid’s Guide to Coping with Events in the News (6-12 year olds)

Links:

Puppy mind is a story to help young children manage their thoughts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd7Cr265zgc>

Headspace <https://www.headspace.com>. Offers a free trial period.

Mindfulness ... ideas to try

1. Square Breath

A square breath is a breath that is even on all sides, and it can be useful as a mindfulness exercise children.

Here’s what to do:

- Breathe in, to the count of four.
- Hold the breath for four seconds.
- Breathe out to the count of four.
- Wait for four seconds before taking in your next breath.
- To help children keep track, show them how to draw a square in the air with their finger, taking four seconds on each side



2. Darth Vader Breath

This fun breathing exercise will keep children engaged and interested.

Follow these steps to give it a try:

- Breathe in deeply through your nose.
- Keep your mouth closed and exhale from the back of your throat, making a “Darth Vader”-style noise as you do.
- Show children how to do it, then practice it with them.
- This simple exercise will help your child focus on their breath and stay fully anchored in the present



3. Mindful or Unmindful

This worksheet is easy to use and provides children with some ideas for ways that they can act more mindfully.

The only instructions are to read the actions and decide which are mindful and which are not. The actions include:

- Leaving your jacket on the floor when you come in from outside.
- Keeping your voice quiet when other people are reading.
- Helping someone that is hurt or scared.
- Crossing the street without looking.
- Letting someone finish talking before answering.
- Practicing a new skill like sports or music until you feel your body improving.

As an added bonus, the worksheet can also be used for colouring, offering children an opportunity to practice even more mindfulness.

4. Build a Stress Ball

If you're feeling brave, and are prepared to clean up a mess, provide the children with balloons, flour, and funnels to build their own stress balls (you may want to double-layer the balloons). Some other filling options include rice, small beads, or the leftover dots from punched paper.



5. The Body Squeezing Exercise

Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position and ask them to squeeze and relax each of the muscles in their body one-by-one. They should

hold each squeeze for about five seconds. After releasing the squeeze, ask the kids to pay attention to how it feels when they relax. Children understand this exercise better if you help them visualize how they can squeeze a particular muscle using imagery, such as the following:

1. Curl your toes tight as if you are picking up a pencil with your feet.
2. Tense your legs by pretending that you are standing on your tippy-toes, trying to look over a fence.
3. Suck in your stomach as if you are trying to slide through a narrow opening.
4. Make fists with your hands and pretend that you are trying to squeeze all of the juice out of an orange.
5. Pretend a bug has landed on your nose, and you're trying to get it off without using your hands. Try to scrunch your face and move your jaw to make it fly away!

6. Mindful Walking

Mindful walks are great ways to practice and maintain mindfulness in everyday life.

Guide children through these four easy steps:

- Pick up one foot and take a slow-motion step forward. Notice what you have to do to stay balanced.
- Walk in slow motion, one step at a time. Pay attention to how your arms, legs, and feet move as you walk.
- Breathe in and out in time with your steps. Stay relaxed but keep your attention focused on your breath and your steps, working in tandem.
- If your mind starts to wander, bring it gently back to your slow-motion walking.



7. Mindful Colouring

You do not have to get a special mindful colouring book to practice this. Just find some colouring sheets and ask children to be silent and present while colouring. You do not need deep instruction; just ask them to pay attention to what they're doing.

8. Mindfulness Bingo

Select a task from the mindfulness bingo sheet and challenge Pupils to complete it throughout the day, for homework or over the weekend.

9. Mindful Word

- Think of a word that seems calm or soothing. This could be a word like "peace" or "love" or "peaceful" or "snowflake" or "sunlight" or "hum" or "calm."
- Think the word to yourself. Say it silently and slowly in your mind. Say your word to yourself with each breath you take, in and out. Keep your attention gently focused on your word.
- When your mind wanders, guide your attention back to your word, and keep saying it gently and slowly while you relax and breathe.
- Can you do this for a whole minute? Can you do it for 5 minutes?



References:

Positive Psychology - <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-kids/>

For more information/resources go to:

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/mindfulness-for-children.pdf>

Calming Activities

Apps:

- Calm: <https://wwwcalm.com>
- Stop Breathe and Think Kids: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>

Links:

- Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm.zone/>
- Movement meditation for children who find it difficult to stay still: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buPuB4SaOzU>
- A short meditation for young children 'Be a Pond' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf5K3pP21UQ>
- Peace Out has short stories that help younger children calm down and relax <https://bedtime.fm/peaceout>

For information on introducing mindfulness to schools visit: www.mindfulnessinschools.org. Courses include .begin – an 8 week online introduction to mindfulness course for school staff

Mindful Schools: these might be helpful anchors to give some shape, routine and structure to the day at home or at school: <https://www.mindfulschools.org/free-online-mindfulness-class-for-kids>

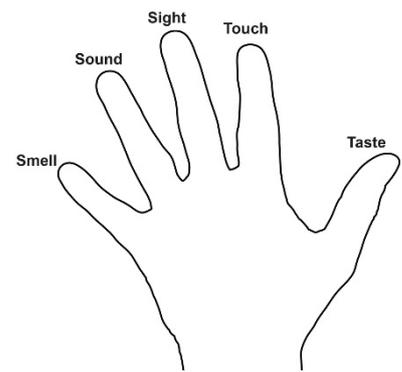
The Free Mindfulness Project: <https://www.free.mindfulness.org/apps> has a range of apps.

The Free Mindfulness Resources as a Response to Covid-19 <https://www.freemindfulness.org/covid19> provides access to recurring live sessions of practice and free mindfulness related resources

Carrying a positive sense of calm in the palm of your hand (kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com)

Kristina Marcelli writes: "I have seen this intervention done before and I have always found it powerful to use with children of all ages. I tweaked it a bit to make sure all the senses were included. This helps make it a more integrated experience and truly helps the brain and body more fully relate to the sense of calm and happiness from the memory".

- 1) First have the child or young person trace their hand on a sheet of paper.
- 2) The person then thinks of a positive memory that would help them feel safe and calm to remember even in the midst of stressful and triggering situations.
- 3) Write each of the five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling) on each of the five fingers.
- 4) The child or adult with them will draw and / or write about the memory in the palm of the hand.
- 5) Encourage the individual to identify how the memory is experienced using each of the five senses on each finger and write or draw a picture for each.
- 6) Last but not least talk about how thinking of this memory can help the person feel a sense of safety and inner calmness despite outer life circumstances.



Tummy Buddies – [#Whole School Happy](#)

1. Choose a soft toy that you can balance on your tummy and ask your teacher to put on some gentle music
2. Take your shoes off and lie down so you are comfortable
3. Put the toy on your belly
4. Breathe in: While your teacher counts to 4 breathe in through your nose so your tummy gets big and your toy goes up in the air
5. Breathe out: While your teacher counts to 4 breathe out through your mouth so your tummy sinks and your toy sinks down
6. Repeat this 10 times, can you rock your tummy buddy to sleep so they feel completely safe, calm and relaxed?

Guided Imagery

Guided Imagery could be described as a visualisation and relaxation tool. It can be used flexibly in school within the whole class or group setting. Children and young people can be inside or outside, on the floor in the hall or sitting in their chair. Most children and young people respond to it immediately and others do so over time, of course, there are some who find it embarrassing/hilarious and are unable to give it a go. The key is to try and keep the class/group quiet and still whether they are visualising or not.

These activities can prompt paired, group or whole class discussion and stimulate art, drama or creative writing.

Waterfall of Light

Get in a comfortable position and close or lower your eyes. Focus on your breath, breathing in and out. With every breath out you become more and more relaxed. You breathe out any fears and worries, you breathe in feelings of safety and calm. Now imagine that a beautiful waterfall of white light is pouring into the top of your head. You feel it's gentle, healing energy throughout your head, pouring over your face, your chin and your neck. The waterfall of white light continues to move through your body, it moves into your chest and shoulders. It moves down your arms and hands and out through your fingertips, taking with it any worries or stresses that you had in your body. The white light pours into your tummy and your back and continues to the top of your legs. It moves down your legs, knees and calves. Now it flows through your ankles and feet and out through your toes taking any stresses or worries with it. Now you are a continuous waterfall of white light (pause). Every part of you is being filled with white light (pause), this gentle energy washes over you filling you with feelings of warmth and safety and washing away any stresses or worries (pause). Enjoy the gentle calm you feel (pause). Now I will count to ten, join with me at the count of six, open your eyes at ten, feeling relaxed, alert and calm. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.



An Undersea Adventure

Get into a comfortable position where you are. Close or lower your eyes and focus your attention on your breath. (Pause). Breathe in and breathe out. (Pause) Now imagine that you are walking down the beach. It is a beautiful, sunny day, and you enjoy the sound of the sea. You feel the warmth of the sand under your feet and notice that your body starts to relax. As you walk along the beach you spot a small door partly hidden in the sand, you brush the sand away with your foot and open the door. You notice a winding staircase leading down under the sand. You walk down the stairway, feeling perfectly safe, and find yourself in a tunnel with a bright, sparkly light shining in from the tunnel's end. You walk along the tunnel until you reach a glass room with a huge bubble window. You realise that you are in a glass room under the sea. Brightly coloured fish are swimming by, you see a turtle in the distance. You notice a comfy chair if you want to sit and watch and in the corner there's a diving suit if you want to venture out. You now have a minute of clock time equal to all the time you need to enjoy and explore the sea.



(After a minute) Now it is time to return. (Pause). You walk back along the tunnel to the stairs and up through the door in the sand. You close the door and know that you can return whenever you want. You leave the beach and become aware of sitting here, fully alert and relax.

I am going to count to ten. Join me at the count of six, opening your eyes at ten, feeling fully awake and alert and able to remember your experiences. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

The Bubbles of Power

Find a comfortable position where you are and close or lower your eyes. Focus on your breathing and notice yourself slowing breathing in and breathing out (pause). Breathing in and breathing out. Start to notice how your feet feel and imagine a bubble coming from your foot, and another one, and another one. The bubbles get bigger and bigger and you notice that you are inside the bubbles and they are all around you keeping your body safe. They are the bubbles of power. You notice some of your worries and fears are on the outside of the bubble and they can't get in. The huge bubble bounces them away. You notice some of your worries break into tiny pieces as they fly away. Inside your bubble you feel safe and calm. Now you have a minute of clock time equal to all the time you need to feel safe in your bubble – you might watch your hopes and dreams enter your bubble while your worries are bounced away.



Now, in a moment, I will count to ten, join me at the count of six. Open your eyes at the count of ten feeling alert, calm and safe. Remember you can access your bubbles of power at any time. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Adventures in the Wood

Get comfortable and close or lower your eyes. Now focus on your breath, breathe in and breathe out (pause). As you breathe in, you breathe in feelings of calm and as you breathe out, you breathe out any worries. Breathe in and out. (Pause). Now imagine that you are sitting outside in the sunshine, you feel the warmth on your face and body. You can hear the birds, and feel the breeze and enjoy the grass and the flowers. All of a sudden you see a little person in front of you, climbing up a twig. This little person turns to you and motions you to follow. You notice that you have shrunk and are small yourself. Now you have two minutes of clock time equal to all the time you need to have an adventure in the wood. You might follow the little person, you might go exploring on your own.

(After two minutes) Now it is time to wind up your adventure and say goodbye to any new friends you've made. I will count to ten, join me at the count of six. Open your eyes at ten feeling alert and full of memories of your adventures. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.



Guided Imagery inspired by Maureen Murdock's book 'Spinning Inward'

Emotion Coaching: Primary

Emotion Coaching (EC) is a whole school approach to supporting sustainable emotional wellbeing in children. Drawing upon psychological theory and recent developments in neuroscience, EC should be integrated within the interactions that take place between adults and children (rather than being a discrete intervention). It teaches children to understand their emotions, and to manage these in more effective ways that they can transfer to other contexts.

Given their possible recent experiences of coronavirus, either directly related to the virus itself, or to the subsequent changes to their day to day lives brought about by the ensuing restrictions, it is likely that children may have experienced different and potentially difficult feelings at times. EC is a useful approach that may be employed in supporting children in managing their emotions as they return to educational settings.

The four key steps of EC in practice are:

1. Responding with empathy to the child's feelings
2. Labelling and validating the child's feelings
3. Setting limits, if needed
4. Supporting with problem solving

Summary descriptions of each of the stages are provided below.

1. Responding with empathy to the child's feelings

- It is important to truly understand and take on board the child's perspective and feelings. You don't need to agree with their view.
- All emotions should be viewed as normal – and not always a matter of choice.
- Behaviour should be viewed as communication of feelings.
- Physical or verbal clues might help you to identify how the child is feeling.
- Be careful not to confuse empathy with sympathy.

2. Labelling and validating the child's feelings

- Having understood the child's perspective, use words to name their feelings and to help them to label these.
- It can be helpful to acknowledge low levels of emotion before they escalate.
- Simple observations may be more helpful than emotion labels; some children and young people might not know the answer and may not be able to confirm their feelings. For example, *"you're frowning and I can see you've clenched your fists"*.
- Soothe and reassure the child or young person by telling them that you understand their situation and don't blame them for their feelings.
- Try using scripts:

"I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It's normal to feel like that."

“I noticed you looking around that the others who are working on their projects. I think that you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be okay. Have I got that right?”

3. Setting limits, if needed

- Be clear in setting positive boundaries with the child about what is/is not acceptable behaviour within the situation and in response to their feelings.
- Seek to retain the child’s dignity at all times.

The following example scripts may be helpful:

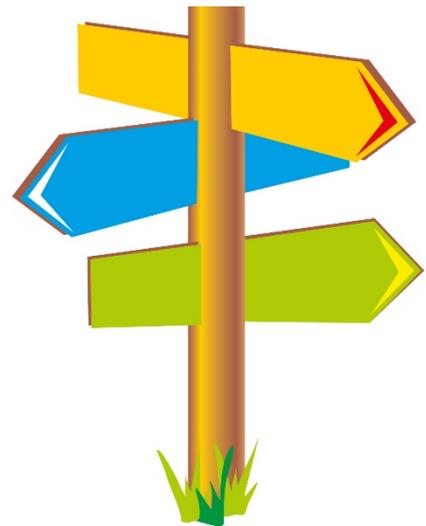
“You are angry that I’ve taken your phone away, but these are the rules that everyone has to follow. I will keep it safe for you.”

“These are the rules that we have to follow. Doing that is not okay.”

“We can’t behave like that even though you are feeling annoyed because it is not safe.”

4. Supporting with problem solving

- When the pupil has returned to a calm state, and is ready to rationally talk through the situation, you can support them to begin to explore the feelings that led to a behaviour/problem/incident.
- Support by scaffolding alternative ideas and actions, and by joining the child in thinking about the different outcomes these might have led to.
- Support the child or young person to recognise the strengths and skills they have that would help them to manage a future situation differently.



Helpful sentence starters might include:

“What does your body feel like now?”

“What feelings are you having?”

“Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings?”

“Let’s decide what you will do next time you feel like this”

Using PACE to support children and young people

Using the PACE approach (Dan Hughes) can also help us in supporting children in understanding and responding their emotions. It has many parallels to EC. The PACE acronym can be understood and enacted as follows:

Playfulness: use a light tone, avoiding sarcasm or anger in your response to a child's behaviour.

Acceptance: take time to understand the emotions of the child, and to accept that these are their feelings at this time (whether or not you agree). Unconditional positive regard is essential.

Curiosity: genuinely explore the child's feelings with them, asking them open questions to try and understand what led to them taking a certain perspective. This involves accepting that the adult doesn't know what the child is thinking and feeling.

Empathy: understand and genuinely accept the child's feelings in response to a situation. Feeling their feelings with them.

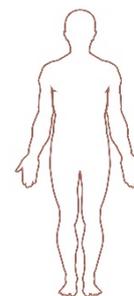
Holding the PACE model in mind can help us in embedding EC in our interactions with children.

Alongside EC and PACE, the following activities may be helpful in supporting children to regulate their feelings:

- Help them to initially regulate the lowest part of their brain through **physical activities that are repetitive, rhythmic, patterned or somatosensory**. Examples include: running, walking, jumping on a trampoline, singing, colouring, swinging, drumming, bouncing on a fitness ball and deep breathing.
- Support them to **ground and calm** themselves, which will help them to remain in the present. For example: count breaths in and out, watch clouds, count backwards, count how many steps they can do with a bean bag on their head, or place a cool cloth on their face.
- Use scripts to **support the child to know they are safe**. For example: "*I can see you and I'm going to stay near you to make sure you stay safe.*"

In addition, the following activities may support children in learning about their emotions:

- Draw the outline of a body on a sheet of flipchart paper (or tape two sheets together and ask for one child to carefully draw roughly around the outline of the other). Invite children to make suggestions about how different emotions might be physically felt in their bodies. Perhaps **name an emotion and label the body with physical reactions** in one colour, moving to a different colour for a different feeling. For example, nervousness might lead to the feeling of a jittery stomach.
- **Use an emotion-check in system** within the classroom. This could be based on the Incredible 5-Point Scale*. Pupils and staff members rate themselves on the scale each day. Staff members will then describe the reasons for their



rating, role modelling making connections between events, feelings and behavioural responses. Pupils may volunteer to explain their ratings too.

- When reading a book as a class, or watching a video, pause at appropriate points, asking children to **reflect upon the feelings demonstrated in the character's words or body language**. Encourage them to comment on the factors that may have led the character to feel that way, extending this by asking children to think about the options the character has for responding to their feelings, and what the outcomes of these responses might be.
- **Make posters or models** (for example, papier-mâché faces/heads, or decorate pebbles) depicting different feelings. Encourage pupils to give a background story about the feeling they have depicted.
- Provide children with opportunities to **write about their feelings**. Dr Pennebaker proposes that, by writing about our experiences and emotions we can begin to process our feelings and feel happier as a result. Provide children with a time and place where they won't be disturbed, ensuring disruptions in the classroom are minimised. Allow roughly twenty minutes (or more, depending on the class) of uninterrupted writing. Reassure children that they should not worry about spelling or grammar, or about their writing being read by others: it is just for them. It is also important to remind them to only write about topics they feel comfortable writing about at this time.



*See website: <https://www.5pointscale.com/>

References:

- <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>
- <https://www.elsanetwork.org/>

Replacing Physical Touch

Prior to the current pandemic, many schools and educational settings will have routinely used physical comfort and touch to support their pupils. This is particularly the case in Early Years settings. The absence of physical comfort will be one of the many changes that children will need to adjust to, upon their return to school. The following principles and activities are suggested to support with managing this.

Promote attuned interactions

Being tuned into, and responsive to emotions displayed, is essential. As well as school staff seeking to attune to children's feelings and the support they might need, children can be taught and encouraged to attune to one another as well. Being attuned involves:

- Being attentive by looking interested and engaged, for example by offering eye contact and by angling one's body towards the other person.
- Give time and space for the child to think, and be curious about how they are feeling.
- Use active listening, which might include affirmative sounds and nods, repeating or reflecting back what the speaker has said, and using pauses and silences to encourage them to build on their thinking. Reciprocate eye contact and offer smiles and warm body language. Use warm and sometimes playful intonation.
- Equal participation in the interaction is important and can be achieved by ensuring both participants take short turns, carry out equal parts of a shared activity, help one another and give each other time to respond.

Please refer to section on Emotion Coaching (which includes details of the PACE Model) for further details on communicating empathy and connecting. Such techniques will create an emotionally supportive environment, enabling children to feel emotionally held, when it is not possible to be held physically.

Children may be encouraged to attune with one another through the following activities:

- **Circle Time activities** to promote understanding and interaction skills.
- **Activities taken from social skills programmes may also be helpful.**
- Carrying out **role play activities** where they take it in turns to rehearse ways of attuning with one another. They might, for example, be given animal based characters to act out whereby one animal is attuning well with the other, whereas an alternative character appears disengaged. Children to feedback on how different interactions feel for them.
- **Create posters identifying positive ways of attuning** with one another: what to look for in an attuned interaction.
- **Develop a small range of signs or signals** that children would like to use with one another and to adults to help them communicate when they need a

little bit more support. These signs could be displayed visually in the school environment to help them become a common language.

Ideas for replacing physical touch

- **Give and receive virtual hugs.** When a child indicates (perhaps through an agreed signal) that they need comfort, the teacher (or other child) and child simultaneously hug themselves. The teacher gives eye contact and communicates, “I’m hugging you tightly, this is to help you feel better” (or similar).
- **Give a cuddly toy a squeeze.** Children could bring in a (washable) favourite cuddly toy from home, having access to give it a big cuddle when needed. This could be role modelled by staff.
- **Teach children to use hand massage:**
 - Use the thumb to rub small, gentle circles around the opposite wrist, and then rub small circles between the bones on the top of the hand.
 - Take each finger in turn, using the thumb to rub small circles along the finger from the base to the tip.
 - Gently pull each finger by the tip.
 - Clasp hands together, entwining fingers and move hands and wrists back and forth, left to right and in soft circular motions.
 - Turn the hand over and repeat the same motions focussing on the palm side of the hand this time.
 - Repeat on the other hand.
 - Encourage children to practice with different levels of pressure to find out what they prefer – or perhaps massaging an arm instead.
- Provide soft brushes or textured fabrics which children might use to **give themselves a soothing stroke** on the arm or over their hands. Children might be encouraged to tickle their own arm, perhaps whilst the staff member tickles their own arm, making the same shapes and patterns. Maintaining eye contact can help create a sense of closeness and connection.
- **Mirror games**, where children copy the action of the staff member (e.g. in an action based or teacher led song) can help create a sense of physical connection. Eye contact again is helpful.
- Create alternative actions to physical comfort: perhaps an action a staff member carries out whilst verbalising the intent, “I’m doing this to make to feel better”. This action, and its meaning will be communicated to and understood by all children.
- **Children might find Theraputty or playdough – or a stress ball – helpful to squeeze and manipulate.** This can give sensory feedback that is similar to that achieved through some physical contact such as hand holding.
- Children might **draw or paint a hug on a sheet of paper**, giving this to another child they care about. Similar could be done with handprints.



- Set up a “self-squish” corner, where children might access, for example, a box lined with soft blankets or cushions. Sitting in the box, they might find comfort in placing an additional bean bag on top, or simply sitting and experiencing being “squished” in the box.
- Some children, particularly those who may have additional needs relating to their sensory processing, may benefit from **using proprioceptive sacks or weighted blankets** to gain access to deeper pressure. Lap pillows or large bean bags may be used to the same effect.

Communicating about the absence of physical contact

- Clear, consistent messages are essential: **create a common language that is used by all school staff.**
- **Frame instructions and language positively** e.g. “remember to keep a safe space between us”. Provide positive feedback to affirm when children are socially distancing appropriately e.g. “Thank you for remembering to keep a safe space between you whilst you were playing, that means you can all carry on playing together”
- **Use visual reminders to set out the new rules around comfort, touch and proximity** e.g. “Ways that we can show each other we care about each other”. Display these clearly around the school site – perhaps encouraging pupils to help create their own visual reminders as well.
- **Ensure that the classroom is experienced as a calm and caring environment**, perhaps by creating special quiet areas, or using posters or visuals that communicate that “in this class/school we care for and look out for one another”.
- **Use a social story** (which fits with the school wider language around Covid-19) to communicate physical distancing information. Ideally this will be available to pupils before they return to school.

For social stories (and lots of other resources) visit:

<http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>. See attached social story which may form a basis for creating a personalised version for your school.

For (temporary) free access to Widgit (symbols for creating visuals):

<https://mailchi.mp/widgit/wo>

Creative Activities

1. Make a coat of arms

Print out a template coat of arms (lots available on the internet) and divide the shield into different spaces. You could ask the child to draw the following into the spaces:

- A person who is special to them
- Their favourite hobby
- Something they are really good at
- An activity they enjoy
- A treasured memory



2. Make a glitter jar

Glitter jars can be used as a calming activity to support self-regulation. There are lots of variations (e.g. see <https://preschoolinspirations.com/glitter-jars/>) You will need:

- A jar or plastic bottle
- A jug of warm water
- 50ml glitter glue
- 3 drops of gel food colouring
- 60g-80g glitter



Instructions:

- Add warm water to your jar until it reaches around a third of the way up
- Add the glitter glue and stir until it combines with the water
- Add 3 drops of food colour and stir
- Pour in the glitter. Stir well until combined with the existing mixture
- Top up the jar with the rest of the warm water, until it is almost full

3. Build a kindness tree

Design a tree (perhaps the height of a wall or adult), and have a bank of leaves/hearts that can be written on. Talk to children about acts of kindness and every time a child is witnessed being kind, add the act of kindness onto the leaf/heart and attach to the tree.

4. Make a calm box

Decide with your pupils, what they would like access to in a calm box/area: <https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2016/04/what-to-put-in-a-calm-down-kit-for-kids.html>

5. Design and make a regulation zone within the classroom

To be used when pupils become overwhelmed or dysregulated, to help them calm. It should include resources and materials that help them to identify and describe their feelings.

It might include:

- Somewhere comfortable to sit e.g. beanbags
- A table and chairs
- Worksheets
- Calming box of activities
- Pictures of different emotions

6. Rock Painting

Collect pebbles, clean them, and paint them. You could ask the children to decorate them with a theme in mind (E.g. protecting the environment, animals). They can then be used to decorate the school garden/ playground, or classmates could be asked to design one for one of their peers, as an act of kindness.



7. Grateful for activity

Think about what you are grateful for today and what went well. This could be something you achieved, something you enjoyed (e.g. the sunshine) or something another person did. It can be nice to look back at these individually or as a group. You can record this in different formats for example, a gratitude diary/journal, a gratitude wall or fridge or a gratitude jar. Information on how to start one is here: <https://coffeepancakesanddreams.com/2019/04/29/how-to-start-a-gratitude-journal-for-kids-families/>

8. Make your own instruments using recycling

<https://www.retradeproject.co.za/bash-the-trash>

9. Paper Plate Dream Catchers

Equipment

1. Paper plates
2. Hole punch
3. Crayons, markers, paint
4. Yarn
5. Feathers, beads, puff balls

1. Cut centre of plate out and save for another craft if desired.
2. Use hole punch to put at least 8 holes around centre area.
3. Make a hole where top should be along outer edge of plate.
4. Along outer edge of plate opposite the hole just made make three more holes positioned similar to in picture.
5. Allow kids to colour and decorate the plate.

6. String should be tied in first hole, then strung across plate at angles to make a web pattern (always pull string thru from back of plate to make neater.).
7. Tie feathers to ends of pieces of yarn and then string through the three bottom holes.
8. Tie piece of yarn to top hole to be used for hanging.



Play

1. Sand Play

Sand play is a fantastic opportunity for the foundations of learning and developing self-confidence and physical development. Scooping, digging, pouring and sifting, teach children how things work, whilst also allowing them to express themselves freely. Talk to children during these activities about what they are thinking feeling and doing.



Examples include:

- Building Sandcastles
- Drawing pictures in the sand
- Using imagination (e.g. build a race track and add toy cars)

2. Water Play

Water play enables children to experiment in a safe environment with basic concepts such as volume. Additionally, water play is great for learning consequences of actions. Use buckets, toys and balls and watch how some things sink and others float. Like sand play, water play allows children to express themselves and is a prime opportunity for showing how they are feeling.

Examples include:

- Paint with water (e.g. children could paint the playground or the walls using water to create pictures)
- Mix coloured water (e.g. using food colouring)
- Float paper boats

3. Play Dough

Play dough has immense potential for learning. Not only does it strengthen fingers in preparation for a lifetime of writing, it teaches fine motor skills, creativity, and hand-eye coordination. Play dough allows children to express their thoughts and feelings and can be helpful when talking to children about their emotions.

Examples include:

- Roll the playdough into balls, snakes and snails
- Poke things in the playdough e.g. spaghetti to make playdough towers
- Use leaves and flowers to make prints in playdough
- Use the play dough to tell stories and act things out.

4. Drawing and Painting

Letting children run wild with paints and drawing tools allows them to experience their world in a sensory way and develop self-expression, whilst also developing pre-writing skills.

Examples include:

- Finger/hand painting
- Make a collage
- Painting rocks



5. Music, Dancing and Singing

Singing and music hugely help to develop language and form the basis of literacy skills, as well as basic mathematical concepts such as counting. Furthermore, they begin to develop rhythm, whilst also refining their listening skills. Dancing helps the child develop strength and coordination, and flexibility.

Examples include:

- Singing nursery rhymes or songs with actions
- Playing games e.g. musical statues



References:

<https://www.sitters.co.uk/blog/the-15-best-activities-for-children-to-help-them-learn-through-play.aspx>

For more information or ideas go to:

<https://artfulparent.com/39-ideas-for-playing-with-playdough/>

<https://www.theempowerededucatoronline.com/2015/04/10-easy-ideas-for-sensory-sand-play.html/>

Nature

1. Bug Hunting

Bugs are amazing creatures. They sting, buzz, fly, leap and even light up. Take some time with children to observe them.

You will need:

- Clear container
- Netting or waxed paper
- Rubber band
- Spoon
- Overripe banana
- Brown sugar
- Magnifying glass



What to do:

1. A good way to attract bugs is to put out something sweet like a banana with brown sugar sprinkled on top.
2. Let the banana mixture sit outside a while, then spread it onto the bark of a tree.
3. Check it regularly to see what new bugs you have attracted.
4. Look through the magnifying glass and draw what you see.
5. If you want to watch a particular bug, put it in your container with a bottle cap of water, a stick, and some green leaves.
6. Cover the container with netting or waxed paper (make sure to poke small holes).
7. Return your bug to the place you found him within twenty-four hours.

2. Rock Art

For this activity take the class out on a rock hunt and then turn the rocks into works of art.

You will need:

- Rocks (you can also use sea shells)
- Sturdy box with lid (such as a shoe box)
- Paints and paint brushes
- Scrap fabric or felt
- Pipe cleaners, eyes, and other decorative items (optional)
- Glue (optional)



What to do:

1. Gather up the class and go for a nature walk at the beach, woods, park or even round the playground. Gather up rocks while you walk looking for different shapes and sizes.

2. Once you get back wash and dry your rocks.
3. Be creative and paint your rocks. You can also glue decorative items such as googly eyes onto your rocks.

3. Nature Wreath

Gather up natural treasures such as flowers, leaves, sand, pebbles and shells, and use them to craft a wreath.

You will need:

- Heavy cardboard
- Large- and medium-sized bowls or pots (to trace your wreath)
- Paintbrush
- Glue
- Summer treasures (flowers, leaves, sand, small pebbles, seashells...)
- Yarn or string
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, and other decorative items

What to do:

1. Trace the circle for your wreath by drawing around the large pot or bowl on the cardboard.
2. Cut out the circle. Then, using the smaller pot, trace another circle inside the one you just made.
3. Carefully cut around the smaller circle you just drew. Now you have the pattern for your wreath.
4. If you'd like, colour or paint the wreath before you add your summer mementos.
5. Using the scissors, poke a small hole in the top of the wreath.
6. Thread several inches of the string or yarn through the hole, tie the ends in a knot, and slide the string so the knot is hidden behind the wreath. This is the "hanger."
7. Using the paintbrush, cover the wreath completely with glue.
8. Dust a layer of sand over the glue so that the entire wreath is covered.
9. Let the wreath dry for about 10 minutes and then gently shake off any sand that hasn't stuck to the glue.
10. Decide where you want to place your treasures and glue each of them to the wreath (make sure one covers the hole at the top.)
11. Let the wreath dry and hang it up to remember your fun.

4. Pressed Flower Place Mats

This art and crafts activity allows children to bring nature in and decorate their tables with their favourite flowers and leaves all year round.

You will need:

- Flowers and leaves
- Clear contact paper
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Ribbon (optional)



What to do:

1. Gather flowers and leaves that you'll use for your place mats.
2. Remove the flower blossoms and leaves from their stems and lay them on the construction paper. You may want to practice arranging the flowers on the paper – once you put the flowers on the contact paper, you won't be able to move them!
3. For each place mat you want to make, cut two pieces of contact paper, approximately 9" x 12".
4. Peel the backing off one piece of contact paper and lay it sticky-side up on the table.
5. Arrange the flowers and leaves on the sticky side of the contact paper.
6. Press the flowers so they lay flat on the contact paper. If you'd like to add more decoration, press ribbon to the edges for a border.
7. Peel the backing off the remaining piece of contact paper. Carefully cover your place mat (sticky-side down) with the contact paper. Do this step slowly and carefully to avoid getting wrinkles in the place mat.
8. Flatten your place mat once more to smooth out any wrinkles or air bubbles, and then use the scissors to trim any uneven edges.

5. Nature Hunt

This nature scavenger hunt challenges children to explore nature and find everything on the list.

You will need:

- One paper bag per player
- One list of natural objects to collect

What to do:

1. Give each player a paper bag and a list of natural objects (a bird's feather, a leaf, a smooth rock, a pine cone, a wildflower, and so on) to collect.
2. You can give the same list to all the players or have each player look for a different group of objects.
3. Challenge the players to find all the objects on their lists. Set a time limit: perhaps twenty minutes to find ten objects.
4. The first player to find all the items on his list is the winner.

6. DIY Bird Feeder

Attract the birds with this DIY bird feeder and watch them as they fly and feed.

You will need:

- Berries, seeds, raisins and apples
- Popped popcorn
- String
- Fabric strips
- Needle
- Thread



What to do:

1. String the popcorn, berries, seeds, raisins, and apple pieces onto a thread. This is done by threading a needle with a two-foot long thread, tying a knot at the bottom, then putting the needle through the foods one at a time.
2. The two-foot-long threads can be tied together once they have the food on them.
3. Go out to a tree and loop the food thread around the branches.
4. Many birds will be attracted to your feeder tree.
5. In springtime, hang coloured string, fabric pieces, and yarns on the tree and watch the birds snatch them up to build their nests.
6. Other things to hang on your tree include: a pine cone smeared with peanut butter, half an orange, a string of whole unshelled peanuts.

7. Magnetic Sea Shells

Use this fun activity for children to be able to keep their mementos they pick up on walks.

You will need:

- Seashells (or natural objects like pebbles)
- Small dried or silk flowers
- Magnetic strips
- Strong glue



What to do:

1. In the opening of the seashells arrange the flowers.
2. Carefully glue the flowers in the shell.
3. Cut the magnetic strip to fit the back of the seashell.
4. Glue the magnetic strip on the back of the seashell.
5. Let the glue dry

8. Make a square!

Use whatever is around in the classroom, the PE store or outside (lolly sticks, rulers, cardboard, skipping ropes, sticks) so that each child is able to 'Make a

square' on the grass – give the children 2 minutes to look carefully inside their square and perhaps to record/draw what they observe inside their square during that time (grass, bugs), it's a simple tool to aid focus. Don't forget to spend time listening to nature whilst you're out there.

The square can be moved to different areas of the playground or field. As a class you could discover the most common flowers, or insects within the school grounds.

References:

Family Education: <https://www.familyeducation.com/fun/nature-activities/10-hands-nature-activities-kids>

Physical activities

1. Yoga

<https://childhood101.com/yoga-for-kids-sun-salutation/>

You might also want to look at

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga> for lessons.



2. Parachute games - Click here for further details on the games:

<https://www.backyard.games/outdoor-kids-games/parachute-games/>



3. Roll a dice or spell your name for a brain break:

<https://www.730sagestreet.com/spell-your-name-workout/>

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Roll-a-Task-Brain-Break-2756625>

4. Deep pressure activities

Self-Squeeze - Fold arms and hug yourself tightly. This can be used almost anywhere, and combined with a Monster Face Squish and a Deep Breath, to help the child regroup after or during an alerting sensory situation. A similar effect can be gained by firmly hugging a soft toy.

Massage - Massage is very relaxing. In class child can massage their own hands or arms, when needing to refocus. At home they may enjoy head massage, back massage etc. when needing to calm down. Ask the child what they prefer - light or heavy massage and for how long.

Monster Face - Raise shoulders and make a monster face. The child can use their hands to squash their cheeks or scalp. This reduces sensory overload and promotes relaxation. Use it in stressful, tight or busy spaces to gain self-regulation.

Desk push up, chair push up, and wall push off - all help to energise, focus and calm. Use them frequently either as a "get ready strategy" or while waiting. Do them fast to alert and increase focus, or do them slow to calm and steady.

Theraputty or Playdough - Provide the child with something that can be squeezed hard e.g. play dough or stress balls, which offer finger and hand resistance. This provides deep pressure and something for the child to fiddle with when required to sit for long periods.

Heavy weight - Using a weighted item e.g. rucksack, lap pillow or a large bean bag toy can be effective in settling children. The weight increase should be no more than 10% of body weight. Use only when needed, as it may become less effective after approx. 20 mins. Don't impose its use if the child dislikes it.

Squish box and Book and Pillow Corner - Provide a quiet corner that the child can go to and 'self-squish'. This could be by snuggling into a box lined with a blanket, an armchair, corner seat or bean bags. Placing a beanbag, cushion or blanket on top of the child adds to the tactile pressure. Allow the child to do a peaceful activity such as looking at books or listening to calming music.

At home: children may also enjoy bear hugs, head massage, back massage. Some children enjoy being wrapped up in a towel like a sausage after a bath and then cuddled.

Thank you to Dr Plum Hutton, Educational Psychologist

5. Animal workouts

<https://hes-extraordinary.com/downloads/7-minute-hiit-poster>

6. Obstacle Course

Set up an obstacle course in the school hall or outside.

7. Movement maze

Pupils follow a pathway that stretches the length of a hallway. You could use floor tape to construct the maze on the floor/walls. Activities could include:

- Jumping on a hopscotch ladder
- Walking on straight or zig zag lines
- Hopping between shapes marked on the floor
- Crab walks
- Wall push up

Separation Anxiety

Children will have spent **a lot of time at home with their parents/carers** due to schools being closed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Feeling safe may have come to be associated with 'staying at home', 'social distancing' and frequent hand washing and so children will need to **learn new ways to continue to feel safe when they return to school**.

Children may respond to the return to school in **different** ways. The return to school may feel like a relief, or even exciting for some. However:

- It is likely that a number of children will have worries about coming to school after such a long period of absence therefore it is important to **validate and normalise** these worries.
- Some children may be feeling anxious at the thought of **leaving home** again; especially if they have an **underlying health condition** or are **living with someone who is shielding**.
- Some children who **previously** had difficulty coming into school and leaving their parent or carer may find the return to school particularly challenging.
- Some children may have experienced difficulties attending school (school non-attenders) prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, therefore the extended school closure and possible emotional consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak may **exacerbate their difficulties attending school**.

It will be important to identify obvious risks that may make it difficult for children to leave their parent/carer and attend school; for example: family member who was/is in hospital, family member who is having to shield, previous difficulties attending school etc. This will help you proactively put support in place before the child returns to school.

Parents/carers may be anxious about their child returning to school; therefore, it is important to work with families to support them to navigate these difficulties and provide reassurances and clarity of information.

For some children the anxiety will be overwhelming and the thought of leaving their parents(s)/carer(s) may result in difficulties attending school or emotionally based school avoidance. The following strategies and activities may help support children that are experiencing these difficulties:



- **Create a plan** of what is going to be put in place, ideally this should be produced in collaboration with the parents /carers and the child. Set short- and long-term **targets/weekly goals**. Very important to **celebrate the achievements** and progress – regardless of how small these may be!



- In collaboration with the child's parents/carers, agree a **goodbye ritual/script** (e.g. a hug and two kisses). Try and avoid prolonged goodbyes which then increases the child's anxiety, create **predictability and consistency** around school drop off.
- Make sure a **key/trusting adult** is able to meet the child at the beginning of the day. Or have a friend meet them at the start of the day to engage in an enjoyable activity together.



- **A transitional object** for the child to keep with them at school: small felt hearts with comforting scent, small photo of parent/carer, bracelet for the child/adult to swap, comforter (teddy/blanket).



- Provide the child with lots of **positive encouragement** following successful separations. Very important for there to be a positive interaction when the child first gets to school.



- Start the day with a **low pressure or soothing activities** (breathing, mindfulness, 'toast club', a meaningful 'special' job. for the child to do when the first come into school. This is so they don't have to go into a situation of high expectation or pressure.



- Graded exposure works by carefully **exposing the child to separation** in small, controlled steps. This increases the child's capacity to manage distance from the parent/carer, helping to reduce their worry over time. This should be collaborative work with the school, child and parent/carer.



- Support the child to **manage their worry/anxiety** (please refer to the anxiety activities resource for idea/activities). It can be helpful to support the child to project the anxiety onto something else (metaphorically). Is the child able to draw the anxiety out? Work with the child to understand push/pull factors.



- This separation may also be **difficult for the parent/carer**, so it is important that they also use a strategy that helps them feel better e.g. have a coffee/phone a friend.



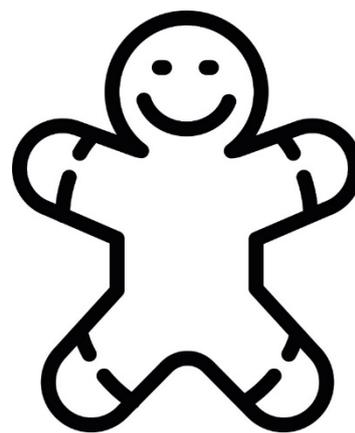
- Books can be used as part of a toolkit to support children experiencing separation anxiety (or loss and grief)
 - [The Invisible String](#)
 - [The Kissing Hand](#)
 - [What to Do When You Worry Too Much](#)
 - [The Huge Bag of Worries](#)
 - [What to Do When you Don't Want to Be Apart](#)

Top tips

- Work in collaboration with the child and the family
- Take time to explore the child's anxieties and worries
- Celebrate progress, regardless of how small!
- The initial transition is the most difficult; therefore, make sure there is a positive interaction with a key adult and enjoyable/relaxing activity for the child to engage in when the first come to school.

Anxiety

1. **Understanding Physiological symptoms of Anxiety** – draw a gingerbread person and give it a name. Get the pupils to draw/write on the person all the physical things they notice about what happens when they are worried/anxious.



2. **Grounding exercise** – look around and identify and name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/54321-Grounding-TechniqueCoping-Skill-Classroom-Poster-Student-Reference-4122777>

3. **Further grounding exercise ideas:**

<http://www.tothegrowlery.com/blog/2017/4/18/six-different-types-of-grounding-exercises-for-anxiety-intense-emotions>

4. **Square breathing** – Find a square to look at or imagine one in your mind. You are going to draw an imaginary line around the square. As you draw along the top of the square, breathe in to a count of 3, as you draw down the side of the square, hold that breath for a count of 3. Along the bottom of the square breathe out to a count of 3 and then hold for 3 as you draw up the last side. Repeat ten times.



5. **Special Place** – encourage children to think of their own special place if they can. The following is for a seaside special place but can be adapted as required.

Close your eyes and imagine you are standing in front of some wide stone steps that lead down to a beautiful beach. From the top of the steps you can see the sea stretching out into the distance and you stay here for a moment listening to the sounds of the waves lapping against the shore. Start to walk slowly down the steps towards the sandy beach. As you go, take some deep breaths and smell the salty air. Listen to the sounds of the sea and the seagulls calling to one another. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. When you reach the bottom of the steps, take off your shoes and feel the soft sand filling the spaces between your toes. Walk along the beach until you find a spot that is just perfect for you. Sit down on the sand and stay for a while. What can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you feel? Spend some time enjoying your surroundings; feel calm and relaxed.

When you are ready to leave this special place, take one more deep and open your eyes.



6. **Further calming strategies** - Children can be taught to choose a strategy, practice it in the lesson and trial it next time they become upset, angry or anxious. Posters made and displayed by the class can be used to share favourite techniques – with adults as well as children! Children may come up with their own original strategies but it should be noted that research suggests that punching cushions, shouting loudly and similar aggressive techniques tend to add to, rather than diminish, stressful feelings.

- Tense and relax of hands
- Breathing 5s – breathe in to the count of 5, hold for 5, breathe out to the count of 5, hold for 5
- Turtle technique – child tucks their head into their arms like a turtle pulling into their shell and reflects on the way forward
- Positive self-talk – e.g. ‘I can stay calm, I can stay calm....’
- Counting – in 5s, 10s or back from 100 in 7s
- Shield – child imagines an invisible force field protecting them from any trigger
- Special place – a thinking seat to reflect quietly without disturbance for their age in minutes
- Special person – someone to go to (e.g. Midday supervisor, TA) who can offer targeted support (prompts etc.)
- Visualisation of a special place or scene e.g. beach, trees, meadow
- Deep breathing – in through the nose, out through the mouth (smell the strawberry, blow out the candle)
- Gentle strokes on hands or arms

7. Breathing activity – Strawberry cake Breathe in through the nose (smell the strawberries) and out through the mouth (blow out the candles). Saying the phrase in your head, ‘*smell the strawberries and blow out the candles*’, will help you to take slow, controlled breaths. Now, try breathing out slowly and gently so that the candles flicker.



8. Stress ball - This exercise releases muscle tension and massages your hands. Make your own stress ball(s) by filling balloons with dry lentils or rice.
- Take the ball(s) in one or both hands and squeeze and release.
 - Experiment with squeezing the ball. Find way that is right for you, adjusting the speed, pressure and timing of your squeezes to whatever way you like.



9. Releasing muscle tension – there are a number of different ways to do this:
- Lazy Cat** - Pretend you are a lazy cat that just woke up from a lovely, long nap. • Have a big yawn. • And a meow. • Now stretch out your arms, legs and back – slowly like a cat – and relax.
- Feather/Statue** - Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for ten seconds. • Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for about ten seconds. • Suddenly you freeze and transform into a statue. Don't move! • Then slowly relax as you transform back into the floating feather again. • Repeat, making sure to finish as a floaty feather in a relaxed state.
- Turtle** - Pretend you are a turtle going for a slow, relaxed turtle walk. • Oh no, it's started to rain! • Curl up tight under your shell for about ten seconds. • The sun's out again, so come out of your shell and return to your relaxing walk. • Repeat a few times, making sure to finish with a walk so that your body is relaxed. • Repeat, making sure to finish with a walk.
- Lemon** - Pretend you have a lemon in your hand. • Reach up to the tree and pick a lemon with each hand. • Squeeze the lemons hard to get all the juice out – squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. • Throw the lemons on the floor and relax your hands. • Then repeat, until you have enough juice for a glass of lemonade! • After your last squeeze and throw, shake out your hands to relax!
10. Building connections – Encourage pupils to draw a support tree that shows all the people they can reach out to – they could be people in their family or friends or neighbours. Even if they can only get in touch with them by phone or video messaging at the moment, that still counts! • Find out something new about as many people as possible. • Put extra pictures up of everyone they care about as a reminder of the important people in your life – they could print out some photos to bring in or draw their own pictures of them! (see Connect Tree attached)

References:

Save the Children US – Stressbusters from their Heart Program

NHS – #Coping – 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Bereavement for Children and Young People

'Grief is not an illness. It is a normal and inevitable part of human existence.'
(Monroe in Rowling, 2003)

1 in 29 pupils aged 5 – 16 years has been bereaved of a parent or sibling
(Child Bereavement UK)

We should help to prevent children and young people from feeling lonely and being alone with their thoughts.



At any age children and young people may grieve in short bursts, moving in and out of the grief spiral or puddle jumping.
Shelley Gilbert (2004): www.griefencounter.org.uk

Immediate Bereavement Reactions

Children and young people will react differently, although common reactions are:

- shock and disbelief
- dismay and protest
- apathy and being stunned
- continuation of usual activities

The Developing Concept of Death

A child's understanding of death develops in line with cognitive skills but regardless of age always talk in straightforward age appropriate language without euphemisms. Their loved one has died and is not coming back. We would recommend the words death, died, dead rather than passed, lost, sleeping etc. We want to avoid misconceptions and hence would advise against phrases such as the dead person is a star in the sky watching over them etc. Some children may take this literally and it can be confusing and disconcerting e.g. always being watched.

Although we cannot rescue them from their feelings and experiences of grief we want them to feel as safe and secure as possible hence we would usually want to emphasize that most people die when they are very old and most people who get ill

recover, we don't want children frightened anytime someone is off school or described as ill.

Children and young people of all ages may blame themselves for the death of the person so try to be explicit that it is not their fault.

The typical developmental sequence:

Below 2 years old

- The concept of death is not fully developed and yet infants can react strongly.
- Death is like a temporary loss or separation.
- Children can respond with protest, pining, despair and detachment.
- Children might repeatedly mention what has happened 'Nana die'.
- At this age and older children may say the words but not really understand what they mean.

Between 2 – 5 years

- Children are concrete thinkers so abstract explanations can add to their confusion.
- There is little concept of the permanence of death – 'When's Mummy coming back?'
- Children may cry and seek the dead person; show anger, sadness or despair.
- They may be more concerned with the bodily functions after death.
- A tendency to repeatedly ask functional questions as they try to make sense of it - 'Will Daddy get hungry in the ground?'
- May believe they caused the death by bad behaviour and if they are good they will return.

Between 5 – 10 years

- Children gradually understand death is final.
- Children come to understand that death is universal and irreversible but not necessarily comprehending it is for them too.
- Magical thinking and a mixture of fact and fantasy may occur e.g. ghosts, skeletons and monsters.
- Denial is common and they often need concrete expressions of grief.
- They may believe they caused the death by wishing it or arguing.
- Little awareness of the impact on others.
- Genders may show their emotions differently in line with cultural expectations.

Between 10 – 12 years

- Understanding of death becomes more abstract.
- They recognise their immortality which can be frightening.
- Some magical thinking may remain.

- Children cope better with factual, detailed information about the death.
- Often fearful they will forget the dead person (pictures and keepsakes can help).
- May understand the impact of the loss on others and postpone own grief to support them.
- With parental death may assume adult roles/responsibilities.
- Role of peers may be more important for support.

Adolescence

- Teenagers grieve more like adults (crying, sadness, anger, depression) and have a mature concept of death.
- They are influenced by the attitudes of their peer group but can feel isolated from them.
- Factual information remains vital.
- They may like to be more private and need more encouragement and time to express themselves.
- Increased vulnerability to high risk taking.

According to Child Bereavement UK **most** children and young people will find a new way of being with a supportive response from existing networks, **some** will need 1-2-1 support from family, peers, ELSAs etc. and **a few** will need to be referred on for specialist grief counselling. As a general rule counselling would not be recommended when they're feeling the initial shock, disbelief and numbness – generally not before 3 – 6 months, however, every person is different and most of the bereavement charities with helplines will be happy to talk it through with you or the family if unsure.

Normal Grief Reactions

Normal bereavement can involve a wide range of responses:

distress, numbness, anxiety,
guilt, sadness and longing, vivid memories,
anger and acting out, confusion, withdrawal, fear, apathy,
panic, preoccupation with loss, difficulties sleeping,
intrusive thoughts, loss of concentration, loss of appetite

Changes in behaviour patterns are common. Children may react with regression, clinging, attention needing, bedwetting, tantrums, aggression and poor peer relationships.

A range of these reactions are commonly seen up to 2 years after a bereavement but also beyond, however, the expectation is that these reactions would gradually lessen.

What children and young people might want from you:

- Answer my questions honestly
- Help me understand what's happened
- Let me take part in saying goodbye
- Reassure me
- Let me alone
- Let me talk
- Help me remember
- Help me get back to a routine
- Be there for me
- Help me find other sources of help

Dealing with a bereavement through lock-down will have its own challenges including:

- less opportunity to say goodbye
- social isolation
- media saturation with other Covid-19 deaths
- increased fear/anger – who else is going to get the virus; why isn't there enough PPE
- lack of routine

Coping with grief in isolation

- Stay connected with friends and family
- Feel connected to nature
- Capture memories (memory box, email family and friends – silliest, kindest memory, favourite TV show)
- Express gratitude – say thanks to someone or perhaps write to the person who has died
- Prioritise self-care – exercise, eat, sleep

The Funeral

The funeral is an opportunity for a formal farewell and a concrete ritual which can help make the death a reality – funerals are unlikely to be taking their usual format during lock-down and children are much less likely to attend. Generally speaking we would encourage children and young people to be part of the funeral as long as it has been explained to them (what it's for, what might happen, who might attend, how people might behave), build in support for them if the main carer/s feel unable to give them the support they might need. Take photos and videos if there is a reason the child or young person cannot attend – there's only one chance to be part of the funeral.

How can the child or young person still feel involved in saying goodbye if they cannot attend the funeral during Covid-19?

- Follow the Order of Service at home
- Ask for photos and or video of the service (Is a live stream possible?)
- Zoom together with other family/friends unable to attend
- Ask for keep sakes from the service, a flower or leaf to be pressed, a pebble from outside
- Write or draw something to be placed by the coffin
- Be involved with choices within the ceremony – music, poem, flowers
- Write some words that an attendee can read out

Alternative goodbyes

It is never too late to hold a memorial (perhaps linked to an important date) and this might become an important ritual as the child matures

- Visit the grave
- Visit a place with special memories or where you often went
- Create your own special place
- Have your own small ceremony with music, poems, tributes
- Have a picnic with the dead person's favourite food
- Prepare something to leave in a special place, flowers, poem, a toy
- Light a candle

What can I do?

Encourage the child or young person to:

- Take a break from the news
- Have clear routines – eating and sleeping routines help us feel safe
- Plan activities so they know what they are doing that day
- Be creative, try to have fun (it's OK)
- Be healthy

When it is feasible:

- Acknowledge the loss
- Listen and re-assure, whatever's on their mind you're there to listen
- Be open, honest and realistic
- Give a clear understanding of the virus

Covid-19 is a new type of virus that has been affecting people across the world. It's sometimes called Coronavirus and can affect lungs and airways but it seems to have less effect on children and young people. The symptoms are usually high fever and a cough you have not had before. Most people will recover fully without having to see a doctor. Experts in the UK and around the world are working on treatments and ways to keep everyone safe. We are doing everything we can to make sure we stay safe and well like social distancing. If someone gets ill help is available but most cases are mild and get better at home.

Useful resources and contacts

www.winstonswish.org.uk
www.daisysdream.org.uk
www.childbereavementuk.org

Child/young person specific websites:
www.help2makesense.org
www.hopeagain.org.uk (by Cruse)

Growing Around Grief Activity (for small groups or whole class)

Lois Tonkin 1996

Equipment: 3 different size jars, small, medium and large. One ping pong ball. Plus one large jar per child or one very large jar for the group/class to use. Lots of strips of coloured paper with coping or restorative questions such as:



A challenge I have overcome.....
A new skill I have learned.....
A kindness I have appreciated.....
Someone who has helped me.....
A time when I had fun.....

Place the ping pong ball in the small jar.

Talk about the ball representing grief or sadness after something terrible has happened and the jar representing someone's life.

Ask the children what they notice?

It feels as if the sadness almost entirely fills our lives for a long time after a tragic event and there isn't much space for anything else.

Children are invited to share their ideas/thoughts at any stage during the activity.

Reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers.

Move the ping pong ball to the medium size jar.

Ask what do you notice now?

Time has passed. The grief and sadness has not gone away or got smaller but our life has started to grow around it. Gradually we start to create space for new and different memories alongside the sad memories.

Use the strips of paper with coping or restorative questions on to help children to reflect on what these new and different memories might be.

Move the ping pong ball to the largest jar.

More time has passed since the tragic event. The grief and sadness has still not gone away but our life has continued to grow around it. Maybe new skills have been learned, new people may have come into our life, new experiences, new places visited.

Ask the children to write or draw on the coloured strips of paper and place into their individual jar or the group/class jar alongside the ping pong ball. The jar can be added to weekly with new and different memories.

Transitions

The following activities are suggested to support with the range of transitions that may be experienced by children as restrictions ease. These transitions may include from one school to another (i.e. infant school to junior school), across phase stages or planned school changes (due to other factors), for example. However, all children will experience a transition, having moved from 'normal' schooling to home education and back into school again, albeit with their new school life likely to look and feel different for some time. Whilst transitions may be a time of excitement and opportunity children and young people can also experience:

- A loss of attachment to familiar people, friends, objects and environments.
- Role and identity uncertainty.
- Entry into a less predictable environment, a step into the 'unknown'.
- A perceived loss of control and perhaps status.
- A feeling of being de-skilled and less valued.
- Uncertainty about the future.

It is important to remember that accessing a school environment will bring about social, sensory, academic and a range of other experiences for children which they will need to re-acustom themselves to. Simply being around a large number of other children and adults outside of their family home will initially take time to get used to again after the restrictions that have been in place. The activities below may be modified accordingly.

1. Saying goodbye

The speed with which restrictions were put in place meant that many children left school abruptly, missing out on opportunities to carry out end of school activities that might be considered rites of passage, and without a proper opportunity to say goodbye. In transitioning to a new setting, it is therefore important to build in time for goodbyes and for opportunities for children to gain closure on their previous experiences.

Activities to support this may include:

- When circumstances allow, **invite pupils back for an event to celebrate experiences and achievements**, and to offer an opportunity for goodbyes. This should include pupils transitioning outside of normal transition points, and staff members who may have left whilst schools were closed. This could take a variety of formats (e.g. a leavers' disco or celebratory picnic). Plans may also be made for this to happen virtually if needed.
- It will be important to **provide opportunities for specific goodbyes** between children and key adults supporting them. For example, children



may have had a different relationship with their form tutor, or perhaps with pastoral members of staff (such as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant). It may be that staff write personalised letters, meet with pupils via video conferencing platforms, or meet face to face (subject to Government advice). Sharing memories and positives about time spent together will be key.

- **Invite children to contribute towards a year book/memory book.** Pupils might share special memories or photos of something they have enjoyed in school (e.g. a special school trip, funny memories about a school event) or about things they liked about school life.
- **Wordles** are a popular way of capturing feelings and emotions: simply type in thoughts and feelings (e.g. about school life, moving on, or missing out on goodbyes) and the software creates an image containing all the inputted words that can prompt reflection as well as capturing thoughts. www.wordle.net/create
- **Plan a creative activity** whereby children may contribute towards a large piece of art for the school hall or playground. Invite children to create an aspect of the art reflecting the things they liked about school or a special memory. For example, children might make individual tiles to contribute to a mosaic or patches as part of a wall hanging.

2. Preparing for a new setting

As children begin to move on, they will no doubt have questions and concerns about what their new setting or class might be like. Our support for these pupils to prepare for a new setting after restrictions ease should have many parallels with the support we might provide in 'ordinary' circumstances.

Activities might include:

- **Providing practical information and encouraging preparations.** Whilst restrictions are in place, children can still be encouraged to take preparatory steps, with parental support such as planning and practicing their new walk or cycle to school. Schools might also, for example, provide information about what lessons are like, key events in the school year and house systems. Children may undertake practical activities or mini-projects linked to starting at their new school, or new subjects they might learn.
- **Hold induction and information events creatively.** Consider how such planned events could be moved online. Pupils and parents could attend online events such as video conferences for questions and answers, recorded sample lessons, and introductory video conferences with key staff members. Virtual tours of the school site could be offered. Warm, interested welcomes are essential.

- **Foster connections between current and new pupils** by creating buddy systems whereby children already attending the schools are directly involved in welcoming incoming pupils, for example. This could take the form of online video conferencing question and answer sessions or pen pal arrangements, for example.
- **Respond to worries and concerns.** First of all, you will need a system for capturing these (e.g. information for parents regarding how to support children to voice any worries they have at home, so that these can be fed back to school. This may be through the use of worry dolls or monsters, for example). Responses should then be given generally (if the issue is universal) or to the specific individual (as required). Concerns may be directed to pastoral or academic staff, or to buddies within the school.
- In school, **provide safe spaces** that can be accessed by young people if they are feeling overwhelmed or finding it hard to adjust. These spaces could feature activities that might distract young people from uncomfortable thoughts, or calming activities.
- When young people join their new setting, **offer small group check-ins each week** with a key staff member, giving the opportunity for young people to gain further support if needed.
- Prepare to **establish consistent boundaries and routines.** Whilst children will need flexibility as they adjust to their new setting, it is important to be clear about boundaries and routines from the beginning. This will help pupils to feel safe and settled. Think about activities to communicate these expectations with pupils, whether this involves making use of online technology, through displays, or through interactive exercises in school. Focus on the behaviours you would like to see, framing reminders positively (e.g. “do....” rather than “don’t...”). Role model expectations, give positive feedback as pupils follow rules and routines, and give time for pupils to resettle to more formal structures after a period out of school.

3. Children who are vulnerable

For some children, such as those who experience autism or special educational needs, or who are growing up in care, transitions may be more challenging. Additional support may be needed to support a true understanding and anticipation of the new setting. Activities may include:

- Work with former settings to **identify young people who might find transition more challenging than their peers.** Further planning will be needed to support these young people. They may, for example, need a phased start to school. Extend the transition process if needed.

- **Visits during the summer holiday periods.** Many schools will be open for at least part of the summer holiday (even if just for maintenance and teacher access), which provides an opportunity for children to visit the school site, to have a look around, and to meet with key staff (subject to Government guidance). This will provide children with a more concrete understanding of their new school.
- **Social stories or photobooks** can be a useful resource for children who are more vulnerable. Photos and information should be provided alongside a narrative regarding what is going to happen. This resource should be available to children to access and come back to at their leisure, in order that they may familiarise themselves.
- Even if returning to the same setting, some children will need **additional support to reconnect with adults or to build new relationships**. For these pupils, for whom relationships with adults are even more important, distance from formerly close adults, or introductions to new adults, will be more keenly felt. Opportunities for regular phone or video conferencing contact should be planned (subject to school policies regarding e-safety). When possible to do so, it is suggested that quality time to engage in activities individually or as part of a small group is planned for.
- **Some children may benefit from having a transitional object from home** with them in school to help manage any anxiety they have about leaving home. This could include a photo of a parent or pet, or a small special item given to them by a family member.
- **Provide visual support and reminders** about new routines, locations, and structures. Ensure these are appropriately differentiated according to the needs of the child (e.g. using the symbol system the child is familiar with).



Whether transitioning to a new school, or supporting a child with additional needs to return to school, it will be important to plan for a longer transition period than might normally be factored in. During this time, provide opportunities for the child to get to know their school setting, and to ease themselves back in to routines once more. It will be important that young people feel safe, settled and supported in their school setting before academic expectations can increase.

It is recommended that these activities are considered alongside other suggestions, for example, in terms of how to support children with managing anxiety and wellbeing.

Further reading:

The National Autistic Society – Supporting Young People with Transitions:
<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/transition/starting-or-switching.aspx>

