

Monmouthshire Educational Psychology Service

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Transition, recovery and learning in the aftermath of a pandemic. A resource for nursery and primary schools



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1. Transition and Recovery – key ideas^{1,2}

Disasters and emergencies throw light on the world as it is. Some thinkers who study disasters frame crises not just in terms of what is lost but also what might be gained – seeing glimmers of possibility. Every disaster is different and it's never just one or the other: loss and gain always coexist.

Rebecca Solnit (2009) used case studies of disasters to argue that emergencies aren't 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.”



¹ With reference to: *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* Rebecca Solnit 2009

² https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/31/how-will-the-world-emerge-from-the-coronavirus-crisis?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

³ Illustration from *My Hero is You* A book written for children around the world affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. IASC, 2020.

2. What can teachers do to help themselves?⁴

Knowing your children and young people is what makes your school a place that the community will turn to as a key support for children and young people, and in whom the community is placing their trust to aid children and youth in their recovery.

It's a big responsibility, especially when we acknowledge that many adults in the school community will also be experiencing a similar range of emotions and reactions as the children, young people and their families. Experiences of bereavement and loss, caring for someone shielding, living with a frontline NHS worker or carer, coping with additional stressors, worry and anxiety will be shared and lived experiences for many.

However, we also know that resilience research frequently cites teachers as trusted significant adults and positive role models for children and young people. Teachers have the skills needed to support children and young people through difficult times, to help inspire their resiliency and hope and to help them recover their wholeness and find comfort in their community.

Now is the time that the work you have done previously with the children and young people in your class and school will help them in their response to the challenges that the transition and recovery period will present. And, as always, we can continue to 'top up' resilience in the way we teach, interact with and model positive behaviour. This doesn't mean we pretend that nothing is different or that we haven't found the pandemic scary, difficult or sad. What it means is we show that people can endure such challenges and are especially able to withstand such hard times when those around them are supportive and caring. It is important to acknowledge that everyone will have their good and bad days and that there are things that we can do that will help us to feel less distressed. Remember:

"Those who live through terrible times will often be able to help others....and some may go on to do something to make the world a better place. Even terrible things can teach some good things – like understanding, caring, courage... and how to be okay during difficult times"⁵

Before we can help others, we need to help ourselves

As teachers we need to be seen to be practising what we are encouraging children and young people to do. Congruence between our actions and our expectations is vital for trusting relationships.

During the transition period after lockdown you will most likely be exposed to stories and information that are distressing to hear. This can result in stress and distress. Taking time to firstly recognise this and then to adopt strategies that provide psychological resilience and reduce stress is not only important, but professionally responsible.

⁴ With reference to materials developed by Australia Child & Adolescent Trauma Loss & Grief Network

⁵ Marge Heegaard (1991) 'When Something Terrible Happens' Woodland Press.

Managing your own stress⁶

Try to:

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, rest, relax and eat regularly and healthily
- Talk to people you trust and allow yourself to be comforted. You don't have to tell everyone everything, but not saying anything to anyone is often unhelpful
- Reduce outside demands and avoid taking on additional responsibilities
- Spend time in a place where you feel safe and calm to go over what's happened over the course of the day/week. Don't force yourself to do this if the feelings are too strong or intense at the time
- Try to reduce your access to the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Try scheduling 'digital power off' times.
- Use relaxation strategies e.g. slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, self-talk
- Build in opportunities for recognising hope and positive strength
- Allow yourself experiences of sadness and grief

Try to avoid:

- Bottling up feelings. Consider whether it would be helpful to talk about them with someone you trust
- Feeling embarrassed by your thoughts, feelings or those of others. These are normal reactions to a stressful event and period of time
- Isolating yourself from those you trust and feel safe around



What might be helpful during the transition period?

- Think about having a buddy in school, so you can check in with each other at various times if needed. It might also be helpful to have someone on hand to help you think through any questions that might come up in class and work through them together.
- Don't put any pressure on yourself to do any activities or have any discussions you don't feel up to, that is absolutely fine.
- Talk to each other, support each other- the staffroom can become a real sanctuary at times when things are feeling difficult. It never hurts to bring in a few snacks and treats to share or to try and come together for a quick catch-up at break time.
- Mindfulness based activities- having strategies you can use in the moment to support you to stop.....clear your mind for a few seconds....focus on your breath....carry on again.
- The British Psychological Society has written guidance surrounding Teacher Resilience during coronavirus school closures. Research suggests that belonging, help-seeking

⁶ Adapted from Advice from NHS Guidance for Coping with Stress Following a Major Incident

behaviour and learning are central to promoting resilience. The guidance suggests ways to achieve each of these. This advice will be useful to teachers and to senior leaders in schools who want to know how to promote and foster teachers' resilience. Further information can be found [here](#) or see Additional Resources (p.25) for web address.

3. Psychological First Aid

What can teachers do to help each other?⁷

Psychological first aid refers to the actions that can be taken by people without formal psychological or counselling training to provide emotional support for people following an emergency or critical incident.

The following may be useful for staff when providing psychological first aid for each other:

- Ask simple questions to ascertain what help may be needed.
- Emphasise the support available.
- Initiate contact only after you have observed and appraised the situation. It is important to make sure that contact will not be seen as intrusive or disruptive.
- Review the situation and emphasise the positive actions taken by colleagues in managing the situation.
- Listen with compassion.
- Offer to make them a cup of tea/coffee.
- Reflect the words of the person. Don't judge the statements a person makes.
- Ask non-intrusive questions (e.g. "Where were you during...?")
- Keep the discussion based on what happened. Avoid "What if...?" or "I should have..." statements. If your colleague takes this line, bring the talk back to real events.
- In some instances staff members may have an intense and lasting response and need professional psychological help. However, your interventions as a line manager or a colleague can do much to reduce or even remove the need for counselling.
- Follow-up should be at a level appropriate to the relationship between the person and helper. In some instances it may be as simple as asking "How are you now?"
- Remember that psychological first aid is about reducing distress, assisting with the current needs of colleagues and making sure that colleagues are offered the support to allow them to function within their professional setting. It is not about revisiting traumatic experiences.

⁷ Government of Western Australia Department of Education Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan Nov 2011

4. Recognising the impact of thoughts and feelings on behaviour - an Attachment Aware Approach⁸

For many schools one of the key challenges will be working out how to uphold boundaries and school rules during any transition period following lockdown; particularly for those students who are vulnerable and may have experienced lockdown as a frightening and distressing time. We know that consistent boundaries help students feel safer, and that school needs to feel as predictable a place as it can be, after experiencing something that has been so unpredictable. However, knowing how to balance this with the need, for some students, to access more intensive support can feel challenging.

What do adults need to be aware of?

Whole school behaviour policies often work for the majority of students, however they are not successful with all. This is especially true for those who have experienced **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** (*traumatic life experiences that occur before the age of 18*) and could also be true for those young people who have experienced high levels of anxiety, trauma or bereavement as a result of the pandemic. Young people respond to adversity in a range of ways, including changes in their capacity for learning and physical and psychological wellbeing. These behavioural changes may indicate confusion and uncertainty, or underlying, ongoing distress.

Some young people might display observable and active 'acting out' behaviours that communicate a clear emotional need. Others might become withdrawn or appear unusually needy. We can try to notice our tendency to make judgements around behaviour (e.g. 'mad'/'bad') and remind ourselves to view all behaviour as an indicator of emotions to which we can respond in an empathic and caring manner. This can be particularly hard to do when a young person acts in a way that hurts or frightens others.

Some groups to be especially aware of are:

- Students who have experienced significant loss or bereavement.
- Students 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.
- Students 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).
- Students with other known special educational needs or disabilities.
- Students who are Looked After, Children in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Students who came under Refugee and/or Asylum Seeker status who may have previous experiences of trauma.

For these students, approaches that tend to focus mainly on behaviour can have further negative effects and tend not to provide opportunities for young people to learn to express their emotions in a more socially acceptable way.

⁸ With reference to i) materials developed by Australia Child & Adolescent Trauma Loss & Grief Network and ii) Developing an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy: Guidance for Brighton and Hove Schools.

What might help?

- The general principle of providing a safe environment, high in nurture and structure, with adults responding in a consistent manner, maintaining clear boundaries and expectations around behaviour is still important, most particularly, when other areas of a student's life may not feel as structured. This consistency is containing for young people. (see section 5 *Tips for creating a resilient and well-being focused classroom*).
- Trust your instincts in knowing when ignoring low level behaviour is needed. Reflecting on whether students would typically exhibit these types of behaviours, or whether it is “out of character” will help to make informed judgements. Hold on to the importance of **flexibility** for these students.
- Discuss the relationship between behaviour, thoughts and feelings with students, and how we often use our behaviour to communicate our feelings, particularly when we are unable to label the emotion.
- The use of an **‘authoritative’ versus ‘authoritarian’ approach** where adults are ‘in control’ versus ‘controlling’ can be very powerful. We know that fostering **connection, inclusion, respect and value** for all members of the school community supports students to feel a sense of belonging, being heard, understood and cared about, and provides a context in which they can start to express their emotions in a more socially acceptable way.

Top Tips for implementing an Attachment Aware Approach⁹

Recognise behaviour as a form of communication - the behaviour might be a very normal response to adverse life experiences

Promote a positive approach - offer specific and descriptive praise or discrete non-verbal feedback

Differentiate expectations - set the expectations so that children and young people aren't set up to fail

Differentiate response - express disapproval of the behaviour and not the person

Relationships first - ‘Engage, don't Enrage’ - empathy comes before problem-solving around the behaviour

Small actions can make a big difference - smiling at/greeting a CYP on their way into school can really add to their sense of belonging

Don't expect immediate results or returns - a CYP might be dismissive of you but this doesn't mean that your actions weren't valued

Expect sabotage from some CYP and name it, where appropriate - ‘Name it to tame it’. Dan Siegel¹⁰

Recognise that what you feel is a likely indication of how the CYP feels

⁹ Adapted from Sarah Ahmed 2017 *Developing an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy: Guidance for Brighton and Hove Schools*.

¹⁰ *The Whole-Brain Child* 2011 Siegel and Bryson

5. Tips for creating a resilient and well-being focused classroom¹¹

As much as returning to school may feel like a relief, or even feel exciting for some children and young people, it is also likely to be a time when many children and young people feel anxious, particularly those who have underlying health conditions or who live with someone who is shielding. Feeling safe may have come to be associated with 'staying at home', 'social distancing' and frequent handwashing and so we all need to learn new ways to continue to feel safe whilst connecting with our friends and peers and learning together back in our school setting. Teachers can help to create classroom 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'.

- **Look after your own emotional needs**

Many of you within the school community could be experiencing a similar range of reactions and feelings in response to the pandemic and lockdown period as the children and young people in your classes. This can make it particularly difficult to focus on the needs of the others. As adults, we have a wider range of coping skills than are available to children and young people and know that we can survive adversity. Children and young people often haven't yet learnt through experience that they too have these coping capacities.

Working with children and young people who have had a particularly stressful and frightening experience of the pandemic could be challenging, and it is possible that in hearing their stories you may also experience stress symptoms. It is not uncommon for teachers to feel some of the anxiety, helplessness and anger that their children and young people feel.

- **Create a safe classroom and school environment**

For children and young people to feel as safe as possible, schools and classroom environments need to be high in both nurture and structure, and to be predictable and organised, with clearly stated, reasonable expectations. Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible together can be co-constructed with groups and classes, with reviews planned to allow for changes and adaptations in response to new developments. New routines and boundaries can be discussed and agreed to provide reassurance to allow children and young people to negotiate their day with confidence.

- **Help children to regulate their emotions so that they can learn**

Children and young people respond to adversity in a range of ways, including changes in their capacity for learning and physical and psychological wellbeing. These behavioural changes may indicate confusion and uncertainty, or underlying, ongoing distress.

¹¹ With reference to materials developed by Australia Child & Adolescent Trauma Loss & Grief Network

Some groups to be especially aware of are:

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- Students 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.
- Students 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).
- Students with other known special educational needs or disabilities.
- Students who are Looked After, Children in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Students who came under Refugee and/or Asylum Seeker status who may have previous experiences of trauma.

In addition to having a calm classroom, teaching children and young people strategies to self-calm is useful and conducive to creating a positive learning atmosphere. Sometimes for there to be calmness there needs to be opportunity for movement and the expenditure of energy. Children and young people who seem to be particularly jumpy, anxious, nervous or on edge may find that a game that allows for running around or even being able to get out of their seat and hand out sheets for a class task allows them to resetttle.



Talking about feelings, having posters around the classroom that provide words for feelings and emotions and cueing children and young people into their feelings are all strategies that develop emotional literacy and help children and young people to understand their own and others' feelings. If they seem particularly upset, distressed or angry, it is important to first let them calm down before helping them to identify their feelings.

- **Believe that the child or young person can achieve academic success**

The temptation to expect less from children or young people after frightening events is common. Although the capacity for concentration may be affected it can be re-developed through good teaching strategies, support and time. Make all expectations clear, break tasks down to subsets and provide supportive and clear feedback during and after each subtask to check that they are on task and have understood the task correctly. Scaffold the task and the skills required to achieve learning. Acknowledge successes and provide explicit feedback on what has been achieved.

- **Restore a sense of control and personal efficacy**

Provide a place to calm down such as a 'peaceful corner', where children or young people take time out in a quiet place to regain composure and reduce stimulation. Sometimes having a large cuddly soft toy, a range of picture books with a focus on wellbeing, music or a jigsaw puzzle or even plasticine where agitated hands can work are calming activities. For older children, spending time in

libraries, beanbag areas to chill out with music, or creative arts are all strategies that young people have found useful.

- **Build strengths and capacity**

Every child and young person has strengths, aspirations, hopes and dreams. Use solution focused conversations to find out about these. (Asking with interest, *‘what are you good at? And what else?’* and if possible deepening the conversation *‘When you are at your best what are you pleased and proud to notice about yourself? What does this tell you about what you might be capable of?’*) Promote opportunities for the child or young person to experience success and help them to work out ways they can put these skills to use in other areas of their learning and life. Sometimes they will need help to make the connections and generalise the skills.



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Social scientists tell us that everyone possesses all 24 of the above character strengths in different degrees, and these are universal across cultures and nations. Ask young people to identify their top five strengths (and do the same for yourself!) Discuss other strengths you and they have noticed and build in opportunities to remind them of these. Planning actions and activities to help children and young people to be their best helps to bring a sense of personal control and achievement to the day-to-day life.

- **Understand the connection between emotion and behavior**

A child or young person that has difficulty regulating emotions may frequently engage in behaviours that appear impulsive and that are challenging to manage. The strategy of ‘Stop, Think, Do’ is a good mantra for teachers. Stop and think about what the behaviour might be communicating, were these patterns of behaviour evident previously or could they be a reaction to recent events and a result of painful memories being stirred up? Respond calmly and clearly. These children and young people need to be aware that their behaviour has consequences however they require patient teaching, reminders and clear boundaries and expectations that are repeatedly explained in different ways and enforced consistently. Respond to the underlying emotions rather than the behaviour. Talk to

¹² Values in Action Character Strengths

children and young people about how they can support their own sense of well-being by building positive actions into their daily life such as '*Keeping active, connecting with others, taking notice, giving and keeping learning.*'¹³

- **Be hopeful and optimistic**

Some children may experience a loss of trust in the world after a global pandemic; they may believe that because a terrifying thing has happened, they can no longer dare to hope that life can be happy and safe again. Modelling optimism and encouraging them to see the strengths and coping skills



they have and encouraging them to notice acts of courage and kindness will help develop a sense of personal efficacy and future. It is not uncommon for children and young people to have a less optimistic view of the future after events such as these. Reminding them of their strengths and providing opportunities for setting goals and achieving them will help them to take a positive view of their lives. Remember optimism can be taught and that it is contagious.

- **Engagement, social connection and trusting relationships that are built on respect and positive regard**

Communities and societies provide resources which are key to facilitating resilience - being part of a social group is protective and can help people overcome adverse events. However, after events that are frightening such as a global pandemic and social distancing, communities and school communities can change. School provides a community of care for children and young people and it is through the relationships that they have with friends and teachers that they can begin to recover from and make sense of the events.

Some children and young people (and staff) come to school for normality. They don't want to have to talk or think about sad or frightening things that have happened as a result of the pandemic but would rather have a normal school day of learning and play. Being sad and dealing with the emotions and consequences takes a lot of energy and head space. Not talking about what happened doesn't mean that the child or young person isn't thinking about it or is being unusually avoidant. It's important to take our cues from the child or young person and for them to know there is no one right reaction. It's okay to ask them quietly what their preference is.

¹³ *Five Ways to Wellbeing* New economics foundation. Centre for Well-being. 2008



For some children and young people, their teacher is an adult in whom they can confide and ask difficult questions. Many children and young people express the view that they don't want to upset their parents or further stress them by asking questions or saying that they are struggling. This is when a trusted relationship with an adult at school will allow the child or young person to gain the help and support they need.

7. Activities promoting connectedness and resilience

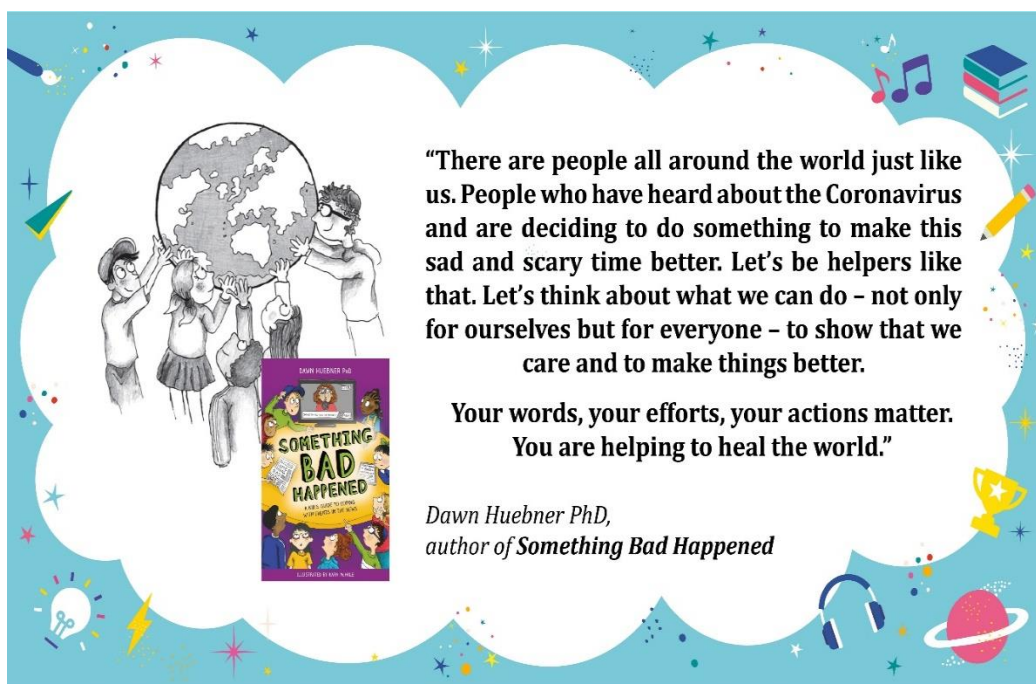
Some activities within this booklet may need to be adapted, to meet current guidance regarding social distancing and safe practices in schools

During disasters and emergencies, alongside the stories of loss and grief, we also hear extraordinary stories of how different individuals, families and communities come together and act with kindness, courage and initiative. We can encourage children and young people to share their stories about ways in which their community helped each other. For example, neighbourhood delivery networks springing up to provide medicines or shopping to people who couldn't get out. We can reflect on what might have changed possibly for the better or what has been brought into sharper focus for us. For example, stories about the impact on the climate such as reduced industrial activity, road traffic and expanded bike lanes leading to air pollution plummeting and birdsong returning to neighbourhoods.

Many events plant seeds, imperceptible at the time, that bear fruit long afterward.¹⁴

Reading Well - Books on Prescription! A survey by the Reading Agency (April 2020) indicated that 31% of people in Wales are reading more during lockdown, and 9 out of 10 parents of children aged 4-11 years agree that reading is a useful tool to open up conversations about feelings. **Reading Well for children** provides quality-assured information, stories and advice to support children's mental health and wellbeing. The booklist is targeted at children in Key Stage 2 (aged 7-11), but includes titles aimed at a wide range of reading levels to support less confident readers. <https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/children#health-minds>

¹⁴ *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* Rebecca Solnit 2009



Depending on the age of the children and young people, activities listed below may be helpful in promoting connectedness and resilience. Teachers should work together with colleagues to agree which of the activities would be most relevant and appropriate for their class. Be aware of individuals who may not want to take part and provide alternative meaningful activities for those who do not want to participate without them feeling 'different' or less relevant in any way.

- **Collaborative group or class activity such as Tree of Life¹⁵**, prayer flags, tree of hope using handprints, planting seeds etc. (*doing something active can help children and young people who seem very restless or have lots of 'unspent' energy*).



- **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

¹⁵ See Appendix 1 for information re Tree of Life intervention

doing with their family/ friends in the future. *See also Caring Circles and Friendship bracelets activities in 'Things That Can Help' activity booklets available from the EPCS.*¹⁶

- **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. *See Appendix 2 for Positive Memory activity sheet*
- **Growing around Grief Jar or class memory book** where children can complete sentence strings about their experiences. Have more than one caring adult in the room to be available for additional support or work with children and young people in small groups. *See Appendix 3 for Growing Around Grief activity sheet.*

The hardest thing for me was/is....

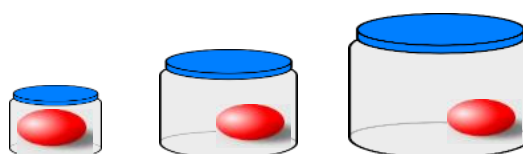
A challenge I have overcome....

A new skill I have learned...

Right now I feel...

What I hope for in the future...

Things I have appreciated most about my family/friends....



- **Cook & Talk activities** Groups of 8 children with 2 adults come together to make a fruit salad. The table leader gives step by step cooking instructions and at each step the leader reads out a scripted question for the pairs or groups to discuss. For example, '**It's important to try to find times to relax and have fun even when scary or sad things have happened. Talk about a time when you were able to relax and have fun.**' *See Appendix 4 for a Cook & Talk Fruit Salad activity sheet.*

What challenges have you had to overcome?



We have all had to find ways to cope and to try to stay strong and carry on this year.

- **Ways to Wellbeing activities.** Plan curriculum activities throughout the day/week linked to the 5 ways to wellbeing: **Connect, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Keep Active and Give.**

¹⁶ *Things That Can Help. See Appendix 6.*



- **Calming activities** for example, approaches based on mindfulness such as MindUp, or Finger Breathing (.B materials) and Tummy Buddies. *See Appendix 5 for Tummy Buddies Activity sheet*
- **ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants)**. Activities such as circle time activities and worry boxes may be helpful. There are lots of lovely creative ideas on the ELSA Network website. Most of our schools in Monmouthshire have at least one trained ELSA. Monmouthshire Psychology Educational Service will be running further ELSA training. Please contact us if you require further information regarding this.

Older Children and Young People

For older children and young people team projects can develop a sense of shared experience and togetherness. Activities can focus on the positive gains made. Topics that can be used in discussions, digital media and projects may include:

- The role of the individual, family and community. Thinking about how different communities came together through this time. For example, #Viralkindness, COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK, Community Choirs, Clap for Carers, 5k for Heroes.
- Reflecting on what might have changed for the better. For example, impact on the climate, opportunities to pursue a new interest, appreciation of loved ones.
- Local heroes – family and friends who are carers or keyworkers, work for the NHS, leaders in the local community etc.
- Strategies and approaches that have really helped when things have felt tough, this could include mindfulness for example, or sharing stories about social activities that stand out for them.
- Sharing the creative ways that children, young people and families have expressed themselves over the lockdown period - by drawing, painting, writing, or through music, drama, dance, Tik-Tok challenges etc.
- **Writing to Heal (Pennebaker)** Research suggests that expressive writing can be a route to healing. Writing to Heal is an activity that involves people writing down deepest feelings about an emotional upheaval in their life for 15 to 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days. *See Appendix 6 for a Writing to Heal activity handout.*

- **WORDLES** can be helpful in allowing young people to explore the feelings and thoughts they are experiencing - using

online tools, children can generate word clouds from the text that they input. The Wordle gives more prominence to words that appear more frequently in the inputted text.



- **Cook and Talk**

activities (described above) are also appropriate for older children and young people. See *Appendix 4 for a Cook and Talk Fruit Salad activity worksheet.*



Guidelines for supporting children and young people during these activities:

- Acknowledge losses, fears and other emotions when present.
- Provide reassurance that the thoughts, feelings and reactions are a normal part of recovering from the losses associated with the pandemic, even though they may be upsetting, and that they will lessen in intensity over time.
- Help children and young people to feel safe in their contributions.
- Celebrate strengths and progress.
- Have supportive and trusted adults available to help in case children and young people become overwhelmed by their feelings and reactions.
- Remind children and young people of their coping strategies through your genuine observations and knowledge of them.
- Focusing any discussions around group collaborative, practical activities or tasks can be helpful with additional adults to support.



Appendix 1: Tree of Life

Tree of Life

(Adapted by Jill Olver from Ncube-Mlilo, 2006.)

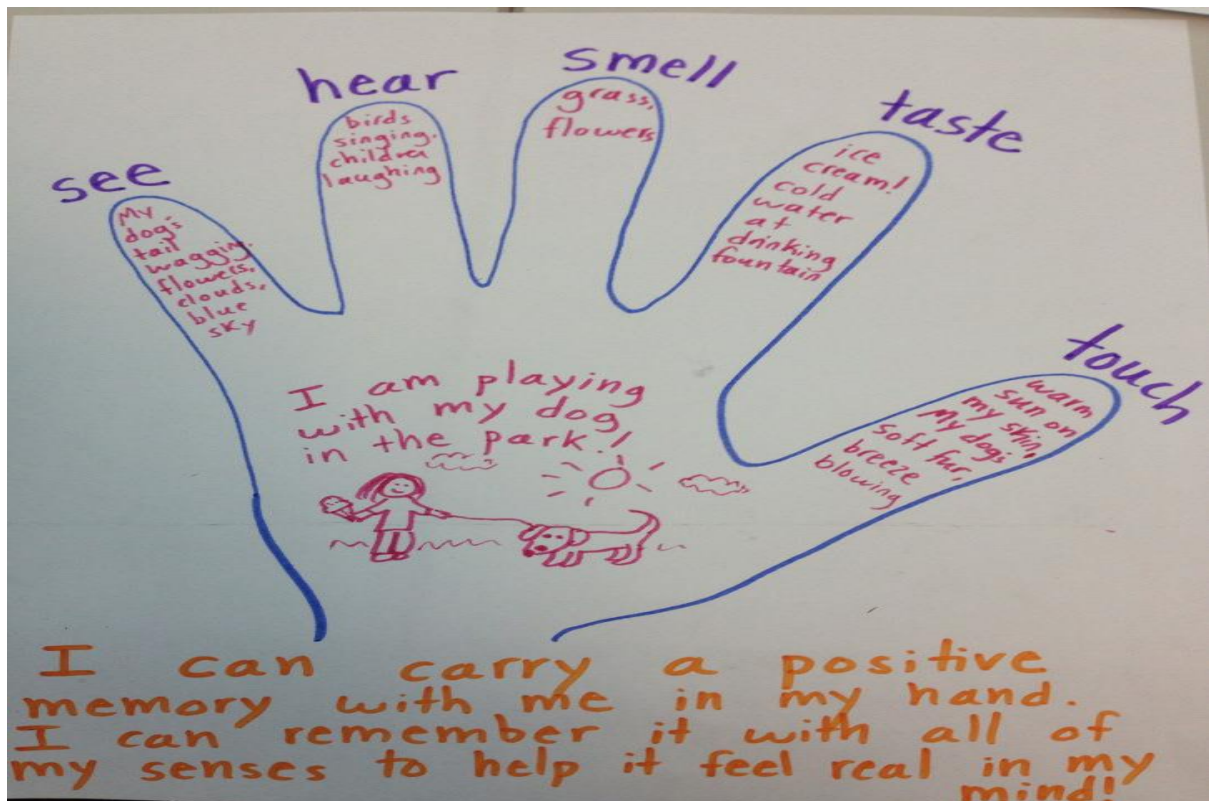


This exercise helps children to cope with trauma or loss and move on with their life. Its aim is to highlight for children their existing strengths, encourage an alternative storyline to a ‘problem saturated’ narrative and increase a sense of connectedness with family and community. This exercise can also be particularly useful when exploring issues of culture and diversity.

The exercise involves encouraging the child to build a picture of their life through the representation of a tree. Encourage the child to build their tree from the ground up, talking along the way about each of the elements that make up their tree.

You can use what you know about the child to help them (e.g. you may know that the child’s grandmother was a very important person who taught the child how to stick up for themselves). This is normally carried out over several sessions, in groups, so that children can share their story and understand each other’s. Other children in the group may also be called upon e.g. to help name each other’s qualities, skills and knowledge in ‘the trunk’.

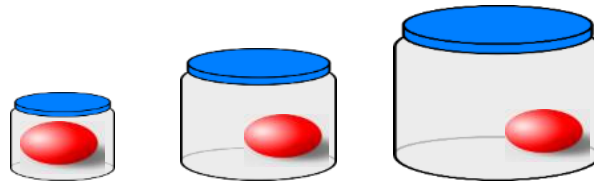
Appendix 2: Carrying a positive sense of calm in the palm of your hand kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com



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.

Appendix 3: Growing Around Grief activity for small groups or whole class¹⁷



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.

¹⁷ An activity devised by Bi-Borough EPCS based on the Growing around Grief model Munroe adapted from Tonkin 1996
20 | Transition, Recovery and Learning in the aftermath of a pandemic. These materials were adapted by Monmouthshire EPS from work developed by the Bi-Borough Educational Psychology Consultation Service (covering the London Boroughs of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea, 2020)

Appendix 4: Cook & Talk - Fruit Salad Activity¹⁸



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.

¹⁸ Adapted by Jane Roller Senior Educational Psychologist ©Bi-Borough EPCS with thanks to Localwelcome.org

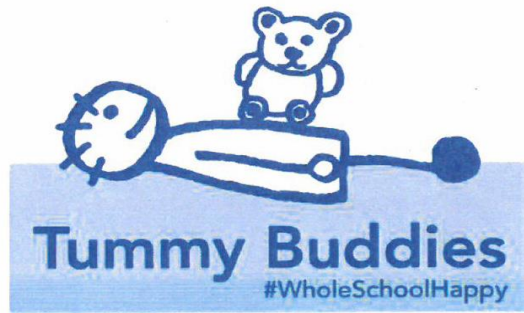
Introductory script

Today we're 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:
1. 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'.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?

Appendix 5 : Tummy Buddies



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 three, 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 breath 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?



Appendix 6: Writing to Heal¹⁹

Dr. Pennebaker's Basic Writing Assignment

Over the next four days, write about your deepest emotions and thoughts about the emotional upheaval that has been influencing your life the most. In your writing, really let go and explore the event and how it has affected you. You might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. Write continuously for 20 minutes.

Tips for Writing to Heal

- Find a time and place where you won't be disturbed
- Write continuously for at least 20 minutes
- Don't worry about spelling or grammar
- Write only for yourself
- Write about something extremely personal and important for you
- Deal only with events or situations you can handle now

"People who engage in expressive writing report feeling happier and less negative than before writing. Similarly, reports of depressive symptoms, rumination, and general anxiety tend to drop in the weeks and months after writing about emotional upheavals."

From "Writing to Heal"
by James W. Pennebaker

¹⁹ Reference Vive Griffith Children and War Foundation Childrenandwar.org.uk

Appendix 7: An Introduction to MAPs

Making Action Plans or Mapping Alternative Pathways



“There are times when life’s changes call for new responses and it is good to re-tell and focus people’s stories in order to affirm their gifts, clarify what is necessary for those gifts to be well received, and make action agreements that will lead to better opportunities.”²⁰

MAPs is a person centred, creative, futures planning tool that can be used to facilitate an organisation in thinking around a challenge or issue.²¹ MAPs uses both process and graphic facilitation to create a shared vision of a positive future and to make a start on working out what the group need to do together to move towards that vision. The MAPs session will be led by two trained facilitators – a process facilitator who guides people through the stages and ensures that the focus person is at the centre throughout, and a graphic facilitator who creates a large graphic record of each of the steps in the MAP.

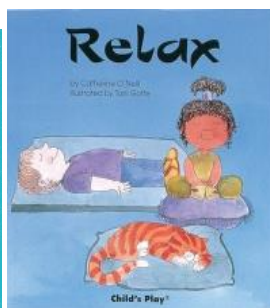
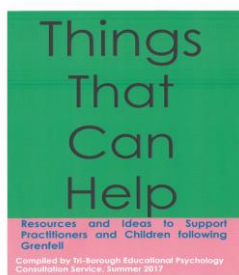
Please contact Monmouthshire Educational Psychology Service or your School link EP if you wish to find out more about anything detailed here, or for any additional support or advice.

²⁰ O'Brien, Pearpoint and Kahn, 2010

²¹ Developed by Forest, Pearpoint and O'Brien in 1980s

Appendix 8: Additional Resources

1. Coronavirus related resources to support children and young people
<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/aln-covid-19/>
2. Gwent Five Ways to Wellbeing - <https://www.monfis.org.uk/support-services/gwent-five-ways-wellbeing-network>
3. THINGS THAT CAN HELP. Resources and ideas to support practitioners following Grenfell. Early years, primary and secondary editions.
4. SLEEP during the Coronavirus Pandemic.
5. SWIRL ZINE An uncomplicated, empowering guide for young people to help manage worry and rumination. Andy Walton. The Swirl project.
6. RELAX. Catherine O'Neill. Child's Play.



7. WINSTON'S WISH Coronavirus related Bereavement materials for schools: How schools can support children and young people; How to tell a child or young person that someone has died from coronavirus; How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible
<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-schools-support-children-young-people/>

Winston's Wish are currently running FREE online training for school staff on 'Childhood Bereavement : an introduction' & 'What you can do to help'.

8. GRIEF ENCOUNTER - Support for bereaved children and their families:
<https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/> and CRUSE: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>
9. TEEN BREATHE – monthly magazine available from newsagents and supermarkets.
10. WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS. Marge Heegaard Woodland Press. For younger children up to 11 years.
11. WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS. 'One Education' Education Psychology Team. For older children and young people.
12. *The EPS has a Bereavement Pack - contact your school EP for further information.*
13. *The Nurture Group has published a document to support talking about death, grief and bereavement.*

14. Web address for BPS document regarding Teacher Resilience during Coronavirus:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Member%20Networks/Divisions/DECP/Teacher%20resilience%20during%20coronavirus%20school%20closures.pdf>

