

Educational Psychology Service

Wellbeing and Recovery Secondary



June 2020



Returning to settings/school following Covid-19



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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,



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 student 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 students 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 students 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:

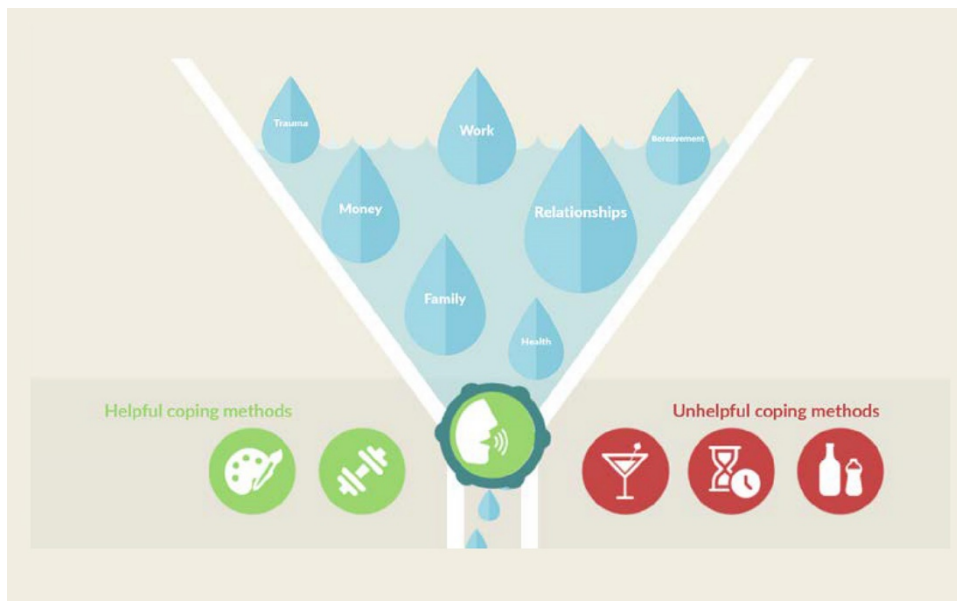
- Students who have experienced significant loss or bereavement.
- Students who have been shielding during the pandemic as a result of underlying health conditions, and siblings of those who have been shielding, whose experience of lockdown will have been even more restricted.
- Students with ASD.
- Students with other known special educational needs or disabilities.
- 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 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.

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 students 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 has 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 mostly people will 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...

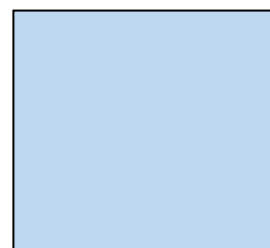
- I was wondering how you would be today after....
- I think that might be a little hard. Do you want to try first or...?
- I am aware we've only got 10 minutes left/one week left so I was thinking...
- I'll go with you the first time until you....

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... 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 well-being plan**

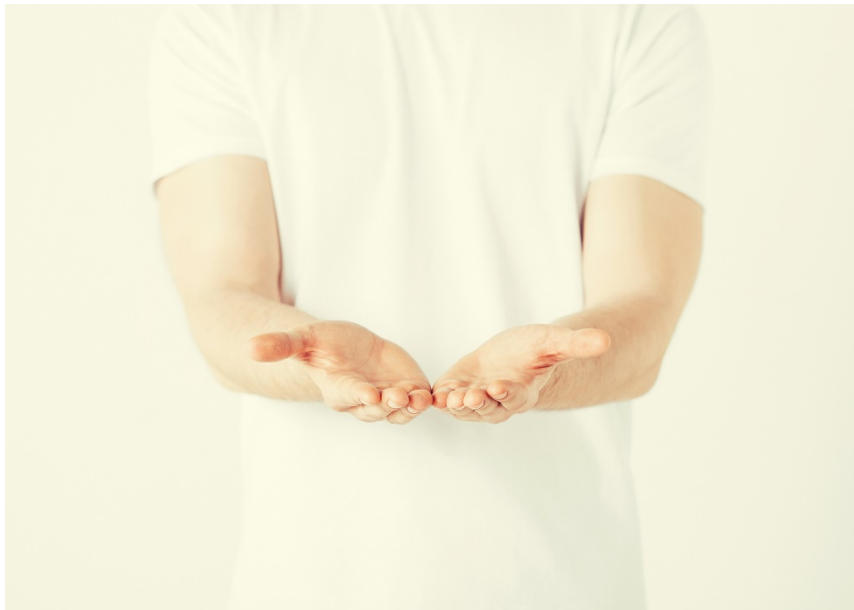
Support system:

- 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 well-being:**

- 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/>

Wellbeing for Children and Young People

1. **Write to Heal** – an opportunity to write about how they have feel, including their emotions and thoughts. Write continuously for 20 minutes. Don't worry about spelling. This is only for the student to read, not to be handed in. Give an opportunity to talk to someone if they need it.
2. **Mind your 5** – help students come up with different activities for each section and encourage daily practise.

Healthy Practice - This reminds you to look after your body in order to look after your brain. For example, it helps to practice a regular sleep routine or to eat a balanced diet.

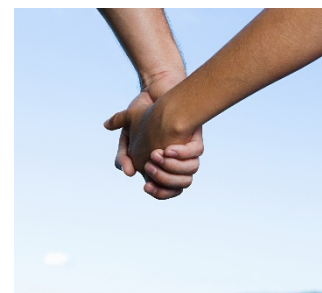
Activity - Activities are very helpful for brain health. These include most sporty and physical activities, creative activities (e.g. art), calming/soothing activities (e.g. mindfulness/having a massage), and exciting activities (e.g. a new game).



Positive Thinking - How we think will influence our emotions and our actions. Some thoughts are positive and uplifting and others are negative. Negative thoughts can make us feel unhappy or anxious. The way we think is unique to each of us. Learning to manage our thoughts and get a good balance between negative and positive is very helpful.

Positive Emotions - Knowing what you feel and being able to express and manage emotions is very helpful. For example, when you watch a movie, observe what emotions this brings about in you. Talk with someone else who has also watched it and share what you experienced. See what you have in common and how you differ.

Your Connections - Friends, family and relationships are really important to help us feel happy. Leaving some time every day to spend a little face to face time with some or all of them can be very good for positive mental health. Tip: Connections are not only about being with others. Try and connect to nature every day – go for a walk or do some work in the garden instead of in your room.



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

First have the young person trace their hand on a sheet of paper.

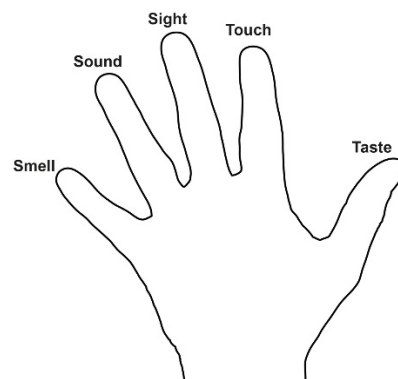
The person then thinks of a positive memory that would help them feel safe and calm to remember even in the midst of stressful and triggering situations.

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

The young person will draw and / or write about the memory in the palm of the hand.

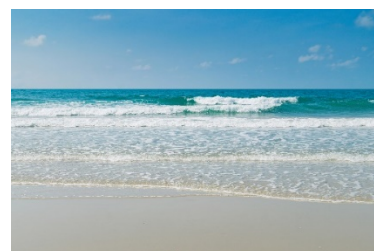
Encourage the individual to identify how the memory is experienced using each of the five senses on each finger and write or draw a picture for each.

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.



4. **Take Notice** - Create a 'calm' poster using magazine cut outs, drawings and words that make you feel calm and put it on your wall

5. **Give** - Send a note or draw a picture for someone who has helped you as a way of saying thank you.



6. **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.



7. **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.

References:

- 'Writing to Heal' by James W Pennebaker
- www.Stem4.org
- kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com

Transitions

The following activities are suggested to support with the range of transitions that may be experienced by young people as restrictions ease. These transitions may include from one school to another (i.e. year 6 to year 7), across phase stages or planned school changes (due to other factors), for example. However, all young people 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.

It is important to remember that accessing a school environment will bring about social, sensory, academic and a range of other experiences for young people which they will need to re-accustom themselves to. Simply being around a large number of other young people 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 young people 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 young people to gain closure on their previous experiences. Activities to support this may include:

- When circumstances allow, **invite students back for an event to celebrate experiences and achievements**, and to offer an opportunity for goodbyes. This should include students 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. afternoon tea party, celebration evening). Plans may also be made for this to happen virtually if needed.
- It will be important to **provide opportunities for specific goodbyes** between young people and key adults supporting them. For example, young people 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 students 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 young people to contribute towards a year book/memory book.** Students 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
- **Create a memory tree** whereby young people are invited to write on a tag a memory of school life that they will carry with them as they move on. Invite them to place this tag on a tree (or similar) in a prominent position within the school, thus enabling students to feel a sense of connection to their former educational setting.

2. Preparing for a new setting

As young people 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 students 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, young people can still be encouraged to take preparatory steps such as planning and practicing their new walk or cycle to school. Schools might also, for example, provide documents such as sample lesson timetables, canteen menus, uniform policies and so on, with practical activities or challenges for students to carry out to support them in preparing to join. For example, sequencing activities to help with planning a morning routine upon return to school.
- **Hold induction and information events creatively.** Consider how such planned events could be moved online. Students 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 students** by creating buddy systems whereby young people in year 7 are directly involved in welcoming incoming year 6s, for example. This could take the form of online video conferencing question and answer sessions, as well as more specific connections between young people.
- **Respond to worries and concerns.** First of all, you will need a system for capturing these (e.g. a school email address where concerns can be directed or an agreed communication route through parents). 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.
- Prepare to **establish consistent boundaries and routines.** Whilst young people 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 students to feel safe and settled. Think about activities to communicate these expectations with students, 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 students follow rules and routines, and give time for students to resettle to more formal structures after a period out of school.

3. Children and young people who are vulnerable

For some children and young people, 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:

- **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 young people to visit the school site, to have a look around, and to meet with key staff (subject to Government guidance). This will provide young people with a more concrete understanding of their new school.
- **Social stories or photobooks** can be a useful resource for young people 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 young people to access and come back to at their leisure, in order that they may familiarise themselves.

- Even if returning to the same setting, some young people will need **additional support to reconnect with adults or to build new relationships**. For these students, 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, email, 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 young people 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 young person (e.g. using the symbol system the young person is familiar with).



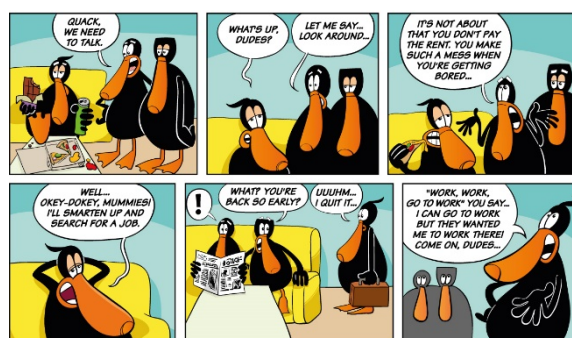
Whether transitioning to a new school, or supporting a young person with additional needs to return to school, it will be important to plan for a longer transition period than might normally be factored in. During this time, provide opportunities for the young person to get to know their school setting, 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 young people 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>

Sharing Experiences

1. **Poetry competition** – create a poetry competition within schools asking children to write about their experiences of staying at home and express their feelings in relation to this.
2. **Coronavirus comic strip** – creative outlets for children to put their experiences of corona virus into pictures/words.



3. **Time capsules** – booklets including a range of activities for children to document their own experiences of coronavirus in a fun and creative way
4. **Shared experiences tree**
 - Ask students to write down one reason why they are pleased to come back to school and one thing they might miss about being at home.
 - Do this on post it notes or pieces of paper than can then be stuck/hung on a tree (e.g. drawing of a tree on the board with post it notes stuck around it)
 - Talk with students about what things they will miss about being at home and why, and what things they can do to make coming back to school easier for themselves and their families, friends and classmates.
 - E.g. if one of the things they said they will miss about being at home is being able to have a lie in ask them to think about what things will help them to get into a better sleep routine/get up on time and also focus on the positives of doing this).



5. **Achievements** - Work with students to focus on the achievements they have made throughout lockdown and what things they have learnt that they might not have done in school. Some questions to think about include:
- A new skill I learned was...
 - Something I did which I don't always have time for was...
 - Something I enjoyed was...
 - Something I have learned from this is...
 - Something I will continue to do is...
 - Something I will remember is...
6. **Ripples** - Draw a series of circles like ripples when you drop something into water. The inner circle is you, the middle circle is your friends and family, the outside circle is your school or community. Draw ways in which the current situation has affected your life. It is important to reflect how problems affect you personally and how they affect others.
- How have you shown resilience to these changes? Who and what has helped you?
 - Think about another person's perspective – do the ripple effect again for a family member or friend.



7. **WORDLES** – 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.
8. **Photograph Montage** – Create a photograph montage of lockdown experiences.
9. **Thank you** - Get creative and have students making artwork to show who they are grateful to through the C19 pandemic. (Could be NHS, police, food industry workers, bin men, neighbour or relative).



10. **Respond to Imagery** - Look at images of thank you messages to key workers. Think about:

- What are your first thoughts when you see images like these?
- Why do you think people wrote these messages?
- How do you think seeing these messages make people feel?
- Does it matter who wrote the messages?
- Does it matter if the message is not directed at you?
- How do messages like this show kindness?

For more information/resources:

Poetry Competition - <https://www.potentialplusuk.org/index.php/2020/04/07/covid-19-creative-challenge-penned-in-poetry-competition/>

Comic Strip -

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

Time Capsules - https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/32470/covid-19_time_capsule

Emotion Coaching

Emotion Coaching (EC) is a whole school approach to supporting sustainable emotional well-being in young people. Drawing upon psychological theory and recent developments in neuroscience, EC should be integrated within the interactions that take place between adults and young people (rather than being a discrete intervention). It teaches young people 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 young people may have experienced different and potentially difficult feelings at times. EC is a useful approach that may be employed in supporting young people 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 young person's feelings
2. Labelling and validating the young person'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 young person's feelings

- It is important to truly understand and take on board the young person'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 young person is feeling.
- Be careful not to confuse empathy with sympathy.

2. Labelling and validating the young person's feelings

- Having understood the young person'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 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 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 young person about what is/is not acceptable behaviour within the situation and in response to their feelings.
- Seek to retain the young person’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 student 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 young person in thinking about the different outcomes these might have led to.
- Support the 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 young people

Using the PACE approach (Dan Hughes) can also help us in supporting young people in understanding and responding their emotions, and 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 young person's behaviour.

Acceptance: take time to understand the emotions of the young person, 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 young person'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 young person is thinking and feeling.

Empathy: understand and genuinely accept the young person'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 young people.

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

- Support 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 jacks, press-ups, singing, colouring, swinging, drumming, and 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, practice a particular balance, or place a cool cloth on their face.
- **Use scripts to support the young person 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 young people in learning about their emotions:

- Using a blank outline of the body (various templates available online), invite the young person to **label the physical sensations they experience in relation to different emotions**. For example, feeling that they have a hot/red face when embarrassed. They might use a different colour for different emotions.
- **Emotion-check in systems** may be used, perhaps within the classroom or for individual young people through a session with a mentor. The check-in system could be based on the Incredible 5-Point Scale*. In a whole class scenario, students and staff members may 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. Young people may volunteer to explain their ratings too. Individually, young people may go into more depth with exploring their ratings, feelings and options for responding.

- Encourage young people to **look out for certain emotions depicted in television programmes or videos**. Soap operas often provide many opportunities for this! Ask them to think about how they knew the feeling that was being experienced (through the character's body language or facial expression), what the factors were that might have induced this feeling, and what the options were for that character. Encourage young people to bring in clip to share.
- Provide young people 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 young people 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 young people 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. **Keeping a journal** may be an alternative approach.
- Encourage young people to **create their 'tool kit' of coping strategies and self-care activities**. Provide guidance around possible options (the Anna Freud website has lots of great ideas, link below) and support young people to develop a plan about how they might try different options and capture the things that are most effective for them.
- See website: <https://www.5pointscale.com/>

References:

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

<https://www.elsanetwork.org/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

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.

For more information:

See 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?

- 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
- Mindfulness helps us steady ourselves, make choices and deal skilfully with difficulty with an attitude of kindness, curiosity and openness
- Mindfulness increases our potential to turn towards more positive, healthy peaceful, nourishing experiences
- Mindfulness 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.
- Mindfulness is Endorsed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Mindfulness Activities

- 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-Se000>
 - *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
- 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.
 - **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.

5. Mindful Walking - Take students on a mindful walk offering them a few simple instructions.

- Everyone should walk slowly and in silence.
- Tell them to pay attention to what they see, hear, feel, and smell.
- You may offer some examples.
- As you lead the walk, you may pause to encourage them to notice a specific bird chirping, the feeling of the wind blowing, or any other experience.



6. Mindful Colouring - You don't have to get a special mindful colouring book to practice this. Just find some colouring sheets and ask your students to be silent and present while colouring. You don't need deep instruction; just ask them to pay attention to what they're doing.

7. Guided Meditations - Guide students in a gentle mindful breathing exercise. "Sit in a comfortable posture, with your spine upright and your shoulders rolled down and back. Close your eyes, if that feels comfortable for you, and just allow your breath to be natural...."

As best you can, bring your attention to your breath, noticing when you are breathing in...and when you are breathing out....

See if you can notice what your breath feels like in your nose, as the air goes in your nose, and then comes out over the lips.... (pause)....

See if you can notice what your breath feels like in your chest, perhaps sensing the gentle expansion of the chest on the inhale, and the fall of the chest on the exhale.... (pause)....

You may find yourself thinking about breathing but see if you can focus on the actual physical sensations of breathing.... What does it feel like, right now, in your body as you breathe?

If you'd like, see if you can notice what your breath feels like in your belly, noticing how the belly expands as you inhale, and softens as you exhale.... (pause)....

You may also be able to notice the sensations of the breath elsewhere in your body....

For a few more moments, just try to let your attention rest on your breath, wherever YOU notice it most....

When you're ready, you can open your eyes."



8. Mindfulness Bingo - Select a task from the mindfulness bingo sheet and challenge students 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?

10. Mindful Breathing - with this exercise, you focus your attention on breathing.

You want to pay attention to your breath in an easy way — on purpose, but not forced.

- Sit up in a comfortable way. Close your eyes.
- Notice your breathing as you inhale and exhale normally. Just pay attention to your breath as it goes in and out. Can you feel the place where the air tickles your nostrils?

- Pay attention to how the breath gently moves your body. Can you notice your belly or your chest moving as you breathe?
- Sit for a few minutes, just paying attention to your gentle breathing. See how relaxed you can feel just sitting, breathing in and out.
- When your mind starts to wander and think about something else, gently guide your attention back to your breathing.



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>

References:

Teens Health - <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/mindful-exercises.html>

For more information/resources go to:

Mindfulness for Teens - <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/resources/>

The Free Mindfulness Project <https://www.free.mindfulness.org/apps> is offering access to a range of apps for free.

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

For information on introducing mindfulness to schools go to:

www.mindfulnessinschools.org - Courses include Begin – an 8 week online introduction to mindfulness course for school staff.

For the next few weeks *Mindful Schools* will be offering free live mindfulness classes for children. 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>.

Guided Imagery

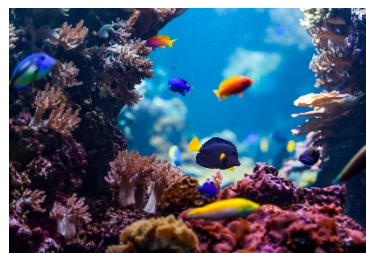
Guided Imagery could be described as a visualisation and relaxation tool. It can be used flexibly in school within the whole class or group setting. Young people can be inside or outside, on the floor in the drama studio, sitting under a tree or the chair in their classroom. They just need to feel comfortable and trust that they are not being watched and judged by peers. Many 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 or group quiet and still whether they are visualising or not.

These activities can simply be for relaxation but can also prompt discussion, art, drama or creative writing.

- 1. 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 stress that you had in your body. The white light pours into your stomach 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.
- 2. 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 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 and a submarine 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.



- 3. The Circles 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 circle expanding from your feet, and another one, and another one. The circles get larger and larger and you notice that you are in the circles and they are radiating from your feet and keeping your body safe. They are the circles of strength and power. You notice some of your worries and fears are on the outside of the circles and the circles of power are bouncing those worries and fears away. You notice how they disintegrate as they bounce away from you. Inside the circles 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 circle – you might watch your fears and worries be repelled; you might watch your hopes and dreams enter the circles. 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 circles of power at any time. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

References:

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

Physical Activities

1. **Yoga** - The Teen Yoga Foundation can be accessed here:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW56cm0SXozQzVH3GNn6t8A?view_as=subscriber

Or, you could try Yoga with Adriene: www.yogawithadriene.com



2. **Movement Break** - Roll a dice or spell your name for a brain break:
http://www.yourtherapysource.com/files/Roll_Some_Fun_Freebie2.pdf
3. **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 Faces - 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.
 - Mini Pushes - Desk push up, chair push up, and wall push off, all help to energize, 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 - 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 - 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.

4. **Classroom activities** - Movement activities that can be done in the classroom can be accessed for free at <https://www.gonoodle.com/>.

Or Derbyshire has an active breaks programme. Choose the activities for your classroom:

https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjwz8S86K3pAhX9RBUIHX03DS0QFjABegQIAxA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dchs.nhs.uk%2Fourservices%2Ffind_services_by_topic%2Fcyph%2Fdownload%3Fnid%3D823%26did%3D23253&usq=AOvVaw1LdUTjOmBJs9q_x3YFP_xA

Acknowledgements:

Deep pressure activities - thank you to Dr Plum Hutton, Educational Psychologist.

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 student 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. **Rock Painting** - Collect pebbles, clean them, and paint them. You could ask the students to decorate them with a theme in mind (e.g. protecting the environment, animals, and inspirational messages).



3. **Origami** - Go to <https://origami.me/> for lots of ideas.



4. **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/>

5. **Watch performances online** - For example, National Theatre are streaming performances:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUDq1XzCY0NIOYVJvEMQjgw>

6. **Safety activities** - Ask students to draw around their hand and on each finger write a different area in school where they feel safe. On their palm, ask them to write the names of adults and friends that they feel safe with.

7. **Setting goals** - Ask students to think about improving their belonging to school:
 - List one club you would like to go to
 - List one way you could help out at school
 - List how you could get more out of your tutor group
 - List one sport you would like to take up
 - List one group you would like to be part of or would like to join

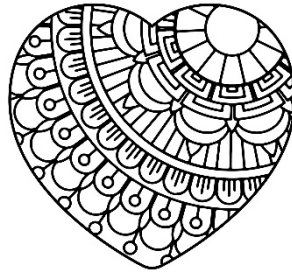
8. **Gardening** - Make a recycled self-watering device:
 - Remove the lid from an empty plastic bottle.
 - Make a hole in the lid using sharp scissors or a palm drill (an adult may need to do this).
 - Cut strips of dishwashing, absorbent cloth.
 - Push one end of the cloth strip into the hole in the lid, pull half the material through.
 - Cut the bottle in half (an adult may need to do this).
 - Put the lid back on, coil the excess material into the 'top' half.
 - Fill the 'top' half with multipurpose compost, covering the dishcloth material.
 - Stand the up-turned, cut-off 'top' into the 'bottom' half of the bottle.
 - Water the compost well.
 - Make a hole in the centre of the compost and place your chosen plant in, press in extra compost to make it feel firm.
 - Pour water into the lower part of the bottle and make sure that the absorbent cloth can reach it.

For more Resources:

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk>

Play

1. **Mindfulness colouring** - Colouring is an easy way to give students some time out from the busy reality of returning to school. Mindfulness colouring allows students to take some time for themselves to relax, express themselves and tune into their emotions.



2. **Games** - Games are a great way for reconnecting with students and create a fun and engaged mood in the classroom.

Some examples include:

- Pictionary
- Charades
- Taboo
- Twenty objects
- Categories
- Hang man



3. **Get Creative** - allow students the opportunity to express themselves and have some fun by getting creative.
 - Painting and drawing
 - Collages and mosaics
 - Natural art work
 - Make some music
 - Photography
 - Poetry
4. **Get Active** - Get students active and expressing themselves through sports, drama and dance:
 - Rounders
 - Bench Ball

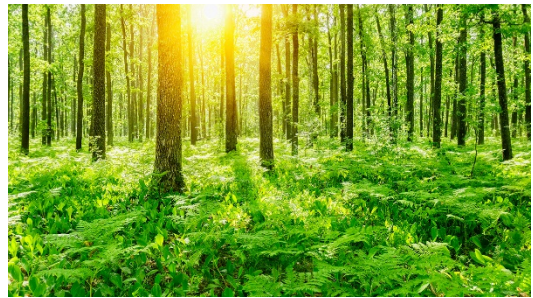
- Put on a show
- Write a show/play and then perform to the class
- Make up a dance
- Play musical games e.g. musical statues
- Have a class talent show



Nature

1. **Wandering and Exploring** - Get students out and exploring the school grounds, local woods or parks. All you need is an accessible landscape and a bit of curiosity. Ask students to imagine they have been given a mission to learn this landscape and find all the best hiding spots, camping locations, biggest trees, waterways, etc. Some questions to think about:

- How are you going to learn this landscape?
- Where are you curious to explore?
- What parts of the land have you visited?
- What parts are still a mystery to you?
- What happens if you follow the creek upstream?
- Where might you be able to find a new berry patch to harvest?



2. **Have a picnic outside** - Encourage students to have their lunch outside or even organise a walk out to a local park or woods for lunch.



3. **Photographic scavenger hunt** - Get students out and about on a scavenger hunt and encourage creativity where the most innovative photo for each theme wins. For examples: <https://www.ltl.org.uk/resources/photographic-scavenger-hunt/>



4. **Nature bingo** - An easy and fun outdoor game which will engage young people while also teaching them about the species of plants and animals in their local area. All you need is a list of plants and animal species that can be found in your area. Get students exploring the school grounds either taking pictures or collecting samples of the items on the bingo sheet.

5. **Bio Blitz** - A bio blitz is similar to a scavenger hunt except rather than starting from a specific list, your goal is simply to find as many local plant and animal species as possible. Set students the goal of exploring the school grounds and collecting/photographing as many different plant and animal species as possible.

6. **Sense Meditation** - Get students outside and consciously focussing their attention on each of the five senses. First, spend a few minutes really listening deeply to all the sounds like bird calls, squirrels, wind in the trees, even insect noises and highway sounds. Then move on to the senses of touch, sight, smell, and even taste... relaxing all the way through and allowing the mind to become calm and quiet. Start by focussing on each sense individually, then gradually putting them altogether until the entire awareness is completely open and receptive.



7. **Gardening and Planting** - Gardening is a great way for students to immerse themselves in nature. Get students planting herbs, flowers and vegetables or help maintain the school gardens or allotment while learning about the bio diversity of the local area.



8. **Natural Art Work** - For more artistic students, sometimes being creative is a great way to immerse themselves in nature. Get students using natural materials to build things like medicine wheels, fairy houses and natural sculptures. Art is a great way to bypass the analytical and judgmental parts of the brain to simply allow people the freedom to connect.



References:

Learning through Landscapes - <https://www.ltl.org.uk/secondary-schools-outdoors/>

Nature Mentoring - <https://nature-mentor.com/nature-connection-activities/>

Mass Audubon - <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/young-explorers/explore-a-sanctuary/nature-bingo>

Separation Anxiety

Young people 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 young people will need to **learn new ways to continue to feel safe when they return to school**.

Young people 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 young people 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 young people 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 young people who **previously** had difficulty coming into school and leaving their parent or carer may find the return to school particularly challenging.
- Some young people 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 a young person 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 young person 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 young people 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 a young person that is experiencing these difficulties:



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



2. In collaboration with the young person, make them aware of the expectations of the school day, provide them with **predictability and consistency**, e.g. Red, amber, green (RAG) rated timetable.



3. 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.



4. A **comforting object** for the child to keep with them at school: small photo of parent/carer, bracelet for the child/adult to swap.



5. The young person may be able to **'check-in' with their parent/carer** at agreed times of the day.



6. Very important for there to be a positive interaction when the young person first gets to school, the initial interactions and experiences they have when they first transition are crucial.



7. Start the day with a **low pressure or soothing activity** which they can do alone, with a member of staff or a friend e.g. (breathing, mindfulness, colouring in, time to talk) This is so they don't have to go into a situation of high expectation or pressure.



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



9. Support the young person to **manage their worry/anxiety** (please refer to the anxiety activities resource for idea/activities). It can be helpful to support them to project the anxiety onto something else (metaphorically). Is the young person able to draw the anxiety out?



10. Work with the young person to identify and understand push/pull factors. Activities and guidance can be found at: https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/478-working-with-others-this-includes-child-parent-carers-and-school-staff



11. Books can be used as part of a toolkit to support children experiencing separation anxiety (or loss and grief) and to manage worries/anxiety. For example:

- What to Do When You Worry Too Much
- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: CBT Workbook

Top tips

- Work in collaboration with the young person and the family.
- Take time to explore the young person's anxieties and worries.
- The initial transition is the most difficult; therefore, make sure there is a positive interaction with a key adult/friend at the start of the day and enjoyable/relaxing activity for the young person to engage in when the first transition.

Anxiety

1. **Toothbrush thought** - If you give yourself a chance to think positively about yourself, you will start to behave positively. Then just sit back and notice the positive results that come from this. Take one positive thought about yourself and think about this when you brush your teeth in the morning.

For example, “I am likeable”

“Tessa told me I am a good listener”

“Robbie said I was his friend”

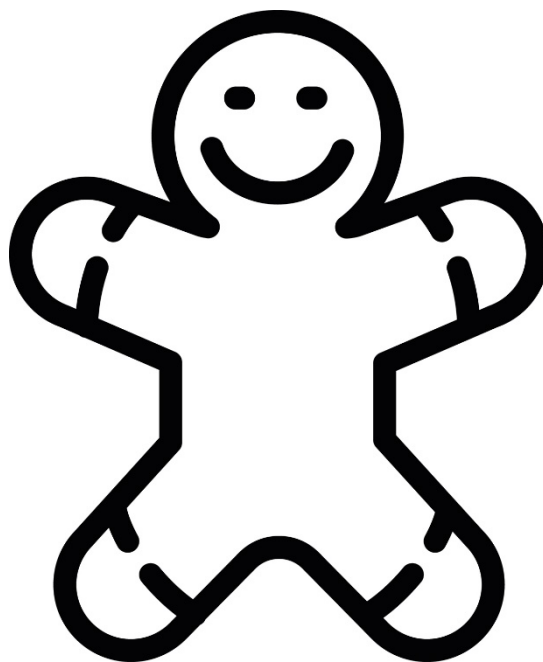
“The old lady on the bus smiled at me”

Test this thought throughout the day. When you brush your teeth at the end of the day, think of the results you’ve had from testing it.

“It’s true – people do like me”



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



3. **Introduce 'clear fear' app.** Within this you can create your own Safety Net which you can do without the app. How to create a Safety Net – Write down things you can do and think using the strengths that you have to keep yourself safe (for e.g. – listen to music as I know it relaxes me). Write down the people who you can contact who you know will support you (this can include GP/medical contact and some emergency contacts).
4. **Grit box** - from the 'clear fear' app – people who have 'grit' tend to stick to their goals despite facing problems and failures. They have courage and determination. Create a Grit box which will have in it 'Inspirational people', 'Inspirational Statements and Quotes' and 'My Positive Thoughts'.



5. **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.
6. **Practise identifying whether worry is 'real problem' worry, or 'hypothetical worry'** - If you're experiencing lots of hypothetical worry, then it's important to remind yourself that your mind is not focusing on a problem that you can solve right now, and then to find ways to let the worry go and focus on something else. You might also use this tool with children if they are struggling to cope. (See the Worry Tree: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/the-worry-tree/>).

References:

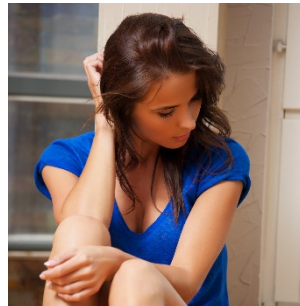
The Growlery - <http://www.tothegrowlery.com/>

Bereavement and Loss

'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 alone in their thoughts and in their class.



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 emphasise that most people die when they are very old and most people who get ill recover, we do not 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's 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's 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/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

Many children and young people will find a new way of being with their normal support networks. If needed grief counselling would not be recommended when they're in they are feeling the initial shock, disbelief and numbness – generally not before 3 – 6 months.

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 is 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/videos if there is a reason the children and young people cannot attend; there is only one chance to be part of the funeral.

How can children and young people 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 keepsakes from the service, a flower or leaf to be pressed, a pebble from outside etc.
- 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. This could include:

- Visiting the grave
- Visiting a place with special memories or where you often went
- Creating your own special place
- Having your own small ceremony with music, poems, tributes
- Having a picnic with the dead person's favourite food
- Preparing something to leave in a special place, flowers, poem, a toy
- Lighting a candle

What can I do?

Encourage the 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 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 get better at home.

Useful resources and contacts

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.daisysdream.org.uk

www.childbereavementuk.org

For young people: www.help2makesense.org

www.hopeagain.org.uk (young people's website by Cruse)

www.actionforhappiness.org

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