

Educational Psychology Service

Wellbeing and Recovery

Primary and Early Years



Activity Booklet

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

June 2020

Dear Parent and Carers,

Covid-19 has been a unique experience in our history which has significantly impacted on how we go about our daily lives. This document and the accompanying PowerPoint presentation are aimed to support you to support the child/children in your family/care.

These activities are drawn from a Guidance Document that was sent out to educational settings by West Berkshire Educational Psychology Service. It aimed to bring together a range of information and resources that would be helpful for staff as children and young people began returning to nurseries, schools, and other settings.

Some of the ideas and resources from the Guidance Document have now been adapted for use by parents and carers and are included here for your consideration and use.

Our hope is that these practical suggestions will make it easier for you to keep a focus on both your own wellbeing, and that of your family's, during this unprecedented time.

Wishing your child a happy and safe transition back to school,

Michelle

Dr Michelle Sancho

Service Manager: Social & Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing and Principal Educational Psychologist

Promoting Wellbeing and Recovery Activity Booklet

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

Wellbeing for Parents

As they say on planes 'Put your own oxygen mask on first' – it's essential that parents/carers make sure they look after their own wellbeing so that they then have the capacity to help and support the wellbeing of their children.

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 Parents

Personal Wellbeing:

- I maintain a healthy, balanced diet and ensure I drink plenty of fluids.
- I aim to keep a regular sleep pattern
- I have thought about how to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- 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
- 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 discuss and share the tasks at home so that I am not doing everything (and probably feeling like I'm not doing anything well)
- 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, meditation, learning, gardening etc.). What can you be grateful for today? What small act of kindness can you do for someone else today? This week? Who or what inspires you? What can you do for amusement today? How can you achieve a moment of calm? Who do you feel love for? How can that inform your behaviour today? What experience/activity/food/drink can you savour today? Do you have a pet you can spend time with? |
| Engagement | What absorbs you? What are your strengths? How can you use one or more of your strengths today? What can you achieve today through the exercise of one or more of your strengths? What can you explore with curiosity today? What gives you enjoyment? |
| Relationships | Who can you connect with today (in reality, over the telephone, online)? In what way could you make a small, positive difference to someone else? How can you show interest in another person or their work/hobbies/family etc.? How can you show kindness to, or simply be with, an animal? |
| Meaning | What do you see as your purpose? (This doesn't always come readily to mind for people, so don't worry if it doesn't!) How can you pursue this purpose today? What small part can you play in contributing towards something bigger (e.g. community)? What is the one thing that you can do today that the world needs? What are your values (e.g. kindness, consideration, honesty, respect, contribution)? What goals can you set for today that are informed by your values? |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Accomplishment | What goal or goals, no matter how small, can you achieve today? What challenge can you take on today? How can you invest in your development today? How might you go about it? What possible options can you think of? What will you do? |
|-----------------------|--|

4. Create a wellbeing plan

Create a support system:

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

Next steps...

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

5. 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.



WELLBEING and RECOVERY

6. Sensory Strategies

Think about how you can use your senses to ground yourself in the present moment:

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

Sound: calming music or noises.

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

Smell: e.g. essential oils.

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

References:

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

Wellbeing for children

1. Breathing activity - Strawberry Cake

Breathe in through the nose (smell the strawberries) and out through the mouth (blow out the candles).

Saying the phrase in your head, '*smell the strawberries and blow out the candles*', will help you to take slow, controlled breaths.

Now, try breathing out slowly and gently so that the candles flicker.



2. Tummy buddies

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



3. Stress ball

This exercise releases muscle tension and massages your hands. Make your own stress ball(s) by filling balloons with dry lentils or rice.

- Take the ball(s) in one or both hands and squeeze and release.
- Experiment with squeezing the ball.

Find ways that are right for you, adjusting the speed, pressure and timing of your squeezes to whatever way you like.



4. Squish, Squash, Relax

Take your shoes off and sit or lie down so you are comfortable. Close your eyes. Squish and Squash your toes and feet. Relax. Squish and Squash your leg muscles. Relax. Squish and Squash your bottom muscles. Relax. Squish and Squash your tummy muscles. Relax. Squish and squash your chest muscles. Relax. Squish and squash your hands. Relax. Squish and

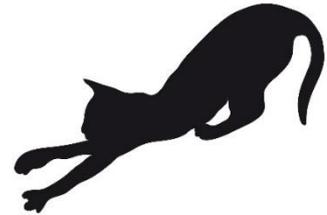
squash arm muscles. Relax. Squish and squash shoulders. Relax. Squish and squash your face muscles. Relax. Squish and squash your body. Relax.

5. Releasing muscle tension

There are a number of different ways to do this:

Lazy Cat

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



Feather/Statue

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

Turtle

- Pretend you are a turtle going for a slow, relaxed turtle walk.
- Oh no, it's started to rain!
- Curl tight under your shell for about ten seconds.
- The sun is out again, so come out of your shell and return to your relaxing walk.
- Repeat a few times, making sure to finish with a walk so that your body is relaxed.
- Repeat, making sure to finish with a walk.



Lemon

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



6. Building connections

Encourage children to draw a support tree that shows all the people they can reach out to – they could be family members or friends or neighbours. Even if they can only get in touch with them by phone or video messaging at the moment, that still counts!

- Put extra pictures up of everyone they care about as a reminder of the important people in their life – they could print out some photos or draw their own pictures of them!



7. Be Active

Try some simple movements

- Sit on an upright chair and then stand up and sit down 20 times.
- Stand with your feet as wide as your shoulder, stand on tiptoe then squat down to your heels and stand up again 15 times.
- Walk 200 paces every day.
- Stand with feet together then lunge forward with right leg bent, left leg straight behind you 20 times. Repeat 20 times with left leg bent, right leg straight.
- Hop 15 times on each leg.
- Squat down with hands on the floor and jump as high you can 10 times.



8. Yoga for children

Introducing yoga to young children at an early age, through playful activities, is a great way to boost healthy living, helping them to become calmer and better able to concentrate and focus.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/YOGA-for-kids-An-EYLF-Resource-Pack-3756043>

9. Find ways to laugh

Laughter releases tension and eases stress, both for you and your children. At home, encourage playfulness and laughter - watch a favourite show with your child, pull funny faces, tell jokes or tickle each other.



10. Take Notice

Create a 'calm' poster with your child, using magazine cut outs, drawings and words that make them feel calm and put it up on the wall

11. Give

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

12. Provide positive feedback to children

Daily doses of upbeat talk and cheerful remarks will give children the positive energy they need to cope with stress. When you model acceptance of unexpected nuisances (spilled juice, a clogged sink), children will see how to handle stressful situations with grace and good humour.

13. Cook and Talk – Fruit Salad Activity

Suggested Ingredients

Strawberries
Seedless grapes
Banana
Melon
Apple
Kiwi
Orange juice



Preparation jobs:

Wipe down the table.
Get the food waste bin ready
Wash your hands – often!
Get your equipment

Equipment:

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

Introductory script

As we make our fruit salad we're going to think about the last few months, may be what's been hard for us, what we've enjoyed and what we've learnt.

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

References:

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

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

Sharing experiences

How to Talk to Children about Covid-19

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

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



Key phrases

It can be hard to find the right words to describe what is going on. It's important to be clear and honest but hopeful using age appropriate language. Included are a few ideas you can adapt to get you started but you know your child best so tailor it to them.

Nobody wants their child to feel scared, lonely or sad but these are all normal emotions that children and young adults will inevitably experience during their lives. It's important that children know however they are feeling they can share that with their parent/carer who will help them to process and to cope and will help keep them feeling safe. Try to have these conversations during the day so that there's plenty of time to process and to do other things so that it's not the last thing they are left holding at the end of the day.

Clear understanding of the Virus

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

Giving bad news – words and phrases to adapt

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

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

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

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

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

Comments that help children feel held in mind

- I was thinking about what you said the other day.....
- I was wondering how you'd be today after....
- I'm just going to do X, then I'll come and see how you're getting on/then we can do Y
- I'm really looking forward to (hearing you read/playing X with you), we can do it as soon as we've had our lunch.



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

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

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

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

Activities to support children to share experiences:

1. Use familiar toys to encourage nurture

Nurturing dolls and stuffed animals are a good way for children to unwind and practise caring behaviour. Set up a toy crib where your children can put their “babies” to bed, and water tables where they can bathe their dolls.

2. Care for plants and animals together

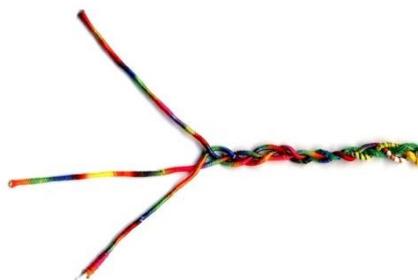
Tending to bird feeders, pets, and indoor and outdoor gardens can divert children’s attention from daily stressors and fill them with wonder. Digging and planting can both energize and calm children as they work together, and caring for animals can boost children’s happiness as they learn responsibility.

3. Make link chains

Children can write thoughts, reflections, and feelings on the chain.



4. Make friendship bracelets



5. Model building with Lego

6. Journaling: there are lots of ways to use a journal to cope or feel better:

- a. **Let your feelings out**
Writing about how you're feeling can be a great way to express yourself
- b. **Learn about what makes you feel down or upset**
Writing a little every day about what's happened to make you upset can help you to spot patterns and understand your feelings
- c. **Remind you of things to be proud of**
Try writing down one thing you're glad about each day and record how you feel about it. Writing down when things go well as well, even really small things, can help to remind you of things to be proud of
- d. **Keep track of new things you try**
Any time you try something new to cope or feel better, you can write down how you feel before and after to see whether it's helped

7. Audio Books

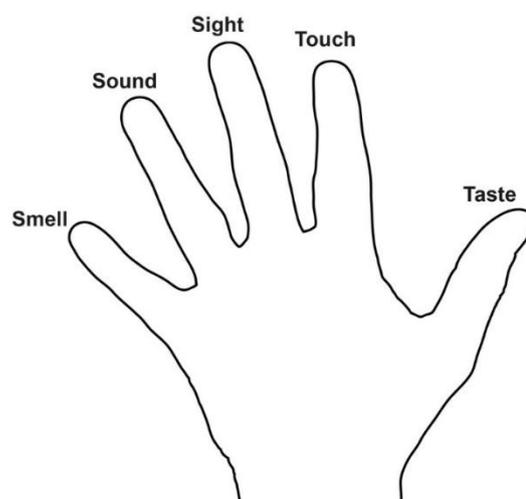
Free audio version of Dawn Heubner's book 'Something Bad Happened: A Kid's Guide to Coping with Events in the News (aimed at ages 6-12)
<https://www.dawnhuebnerphd.com/>

8. People who care for me

Draw around the child's hand and get them to write on each finger the people they can talk to about their thoughts and feelings. Draw their family or friends involved in an activity or doing something fun, or something fun they are looking forward to doing with their family/ friends in the future.

9. Positive Memory in the palm of your hand

Draw around the child's hand and get them to write a positive memory for each of the 5 senses (1 per finger) to help them feel safe and calm wherever they are.



WELLBEING and RECOVERY

Talking about emotions

1. Meet Love Monster from Cbeebies

Help your child to understand the link between their thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/love-monster>

2. 1:1 time

Try to spend some one-on-one time with your child daily, even if it is in short bursts. When you're playing or doing a task together, you can try 'sideways listening' by having a relaxed chat whilst completing another activity such as drawing or building a Lego tower.

3. Key vocabulary

Young children need the vocabulary to talk about complex emotions. Teach them words like proud, worried, excited, frustrated, and amazed, and talk about these words during group times. Take opportunities to **talk out loud about feelings** about your own emotions acknowledging both negative and positive feelings, since every emotion shared develops connection and understanding.

4. Ask open questions

Try asking your child to describe how they are feeling, and follow up with open questions about what's happened to make them feel this way. For example; 'Tell me about how you are feeling?' or 'What has happened to make you feel like this?' Actively listen to your child by removing distractions, getting down to their level, and making eye contact. Acknowledge what they say.

5. Label emotions

Once your child has described how they are feeling help them name the emotion. Are they feeling angry? Worried? Scared? Frustrated? Happy? Doing this will help increase their vocabulary, and make it easier to recognise the emotion the next time they experience it. Encourage children to recognise different feelings. Draw faces that express different emotions or call out different emotions and encourage children to pull a facial expression that depicts that feeling using a mirror.

6. Bodily sensations

Talk about what is happening to their body such as smiling, butterflies in tummy, feeling hot etc.. You can also help children recognise feelings in characters in the books they are reading or programs they are watching and asking them how they know what the character is feeling, this will develop links to non-verbal cues.

7. It is OK not to be OK

Make sure your child knows that it is OK to feel this way, even if it does not feel nice. Everyone experiences these feelings and they are normal. Explain times when you have felt that way and that it is good to talk about how we are feeling.

8. Expressing emotions

Create helpful ways for children to share their emotions such as by using a Rainbow mood tracker

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/rainbow-mood-tracker/>



When displaying negative emotions:

- **Remember how scary the world often felt** when you were a young child? Take an empathetic approach when a child quakes at thunderstorms or fears being abandoned by a trusted parent or caregiver. Even if the child's fears seem unrealistic or exaggerated to you, approaching him or her with kind understanding will help alleviate stress.
- **Stay with your child during difficult feelings:** Young children often have upset feelings (anger, hurt, sadness, fear) that are too difficult to manage on their own. When your child has an intense feeling, stay with her/him until the feeling has been worked through. Your child will be learning basic trust: "Someone is here with me when I am in difficulty and pain," and "I can count on a good outcome to follow a difficult experience."
- **Remember STOP, THINK, DO** - As adults, we have a wider range of coping skills than are available to children and young people and we know that we can survive adversity. A child or young person that has difficulty regulating emotions may frequently engage in behaviours that appear impulsive and that are challenging to manage. The strategy of 'Stop, Think, Do' is a good mantra to use:
 - Stop and think about what the behaviour might be communicating, were these patterns of behaviour evident previously or could they be a reaction to recent events and a result of painful memories being stirred up?
 - Engage in mindfulness based activities- having strategies you can use in the moment to support you to stop.....clear your mind for a few seconds....focus on your breath....carry on again
 - Do respond calmly and clearly. Children and young people need to be aware that their behaviour has consequences; however, they require patience, reminders and clear boundaries and expectations that are repeatedly explained in different ways and enforced

consistently. Respond to the underlying emotions rather than the behaviour.

- **Use puppets and dolls to play out emotionally fuelled situations** that have occurred, encouraging children to reflect on the different feelings the various characters might have, and how these feelings may have been brought about. Act out different solution scenarios and think about what the impact of different actions might be.



References:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z7xmmfr>

Sensory Activities

Deep pressure activities



1. 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.

2. Massage

Massage is very relaxing. At school children 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.

3. Monster Face

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



4. Push ups

Table push up, chair push up, and wall push off - all help to energise, focus and calm. Do them fast to alert and increase focus, or do them slow to calm and steady.

5. Theraputty or Playdough

Provide the child with something that can be squeezed hard e.g. play dough or stress balls, which offer finger and hand resistance. This provides deep pressure and something for the child to fiddle with when needing to focus.



6. At home

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

Thank you to Dr Plum Hutton, Educational Psychologist

Replacing Physical Touch

Prior to the current pandemic, many schools and educational settings will have routinely used physical comfort and touch to support their pupils. This is particularly the case in Early Years settings. The absence of physical comfort will be one of the many changes that children will need to adjust to, upon their return to school. The following activities are suggested to support with managing this. These activities can also be used for children missing physical contact with family members (eg. grandparents) and friends.

Ideas for replacing physical touch

1. Give and receive virtual hugs

When a child indicates (perhaps through an agreed signal) that they need comfort, the grandparent, friend, teacher and child simultaneously hug themselves.

2. Give a cuddly toy a squeeze

Children take to school a (washable) favourite cuddly toy from home, having access to give it a big cuddle when needed.



3. Teach children to use hand massage:

- Use the thumb to rub small, gentle circles around the opposite wrist, and then rub small circles between the bones on the top of the hand.
- Take each finger in turn, using the thumb to rub small circles along the finger from the base to the tip.
- Gently pull each finger by the tip.
- Clasp hands together, entwining fingers and move hands and wrists back and forth, left to right and in soft circular motions.
- Turn the hand over and repeat the same motions focussing on the palm side of the hand this time.
- Repeat on the other hand.
- Encourage children to practice with different levels of pressure to find out what they prefer – or perhaps massaging an arm instead.

4. Draw or Paint a Hug

Children might draw or paint a hug on a sheet of paper, giving this to someone they care about. Similar could be done with handprints.

5. Social Stories

Use a **social story** to talk to children about social distancing and why things might have changed when they return to school.

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

<http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>.

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.

Mindfulness activities may be helpful at this time. In order to promote mindfulness it will be important for parents to understand and be able to manage their own stress and to know what to try to avoid (Put your own oxygen mask on first).

Go to Psychological First Aid and 5 Ways to WellBeing:

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

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

How will mindfulness activities help?

1. Using the breath to train the Mind.

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

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

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

2. Learning to be in the Present Moment

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

- Stop Breathe and Think Kids: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>
- Writing a daily Gratitude Journal

3. Grounding Ourselves when we Wobble

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

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

4. Dealing with Difficulties

Sometimes the way we think can make us **wobble** or **react**. We start to over think, get caught up in the story telling mind and start to worry. Mindfulness allows us to pause and be and see our thoughts clearly. Thoughts are NOT facts – this can be very helpful. When we observe our thoughts we can choose not to get caught up in them or pulled away by them. If we feel ourselves pulled off balance we can use our mindfulness practice and focus on something that is here right now, such as our breath, to steady ourselves, notice what is happening and make a choice. Thereby *responding* rather than *reacting*.

Apps /audio:

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

Links:

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

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

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

Mindfulness ... ideas to try

1. Square Breath

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

Here's what to do:

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



2. Darth Vader Breath

This fun breathing exercise will keep children engaged and interested.

Follow these steps to give it a try:

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



3. Go cloud-spotting

Stay as still as you can and watch the clouds go by. Watch and see if you can spot any shapes in the clouds.



4. Mindful or Unmindful

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

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

5. Build a Stress Ball

If you're feeling brave, and are prepared to clean up the mess...find some balloons, flour and funnels to build your own stress balls (double-layer the balloons!) Other fillings to try – rice, beads, small bits of paper



6. Make a glitter jar

Glitter jars can be used as a calming activity to support self-regulation.

There are lots of variations (see <https://preschoolinspirations.com/glitter-jars/>)

You will need:

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



Instructions:

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

7. The Body Squeezing Exercise

Have children sit or lie down in a comfortable position and ask them to squeeze and relax each of the muscles in their body one-by-one. They should hold each squeeze for about five seconds. After releasing the squeeze, ask them to pay attention to how it feels when they relax. Children understand this exercise better if you help them visualize how they can squeeze a particular muscle using imagery, such as the following:

- Curl your toes tight as if you are picking up a pencil with your feet.
- Tense your legs by pretending that you are standing on your tippy-toes, trying to look over a fence.
- Suck in your stomach as if you are trying to slide through a narrow opening.
- Make fists with your hands and pretend that you are trying to squeeze all of the juice out of an orange.

- Pretend a bug has landed on your nose, and you're trying to get it off without using your hands. Try to scrunch your face and move your jaw to make it fly away!

8. Five senses exercise

Use all your senses to focus on the present moment. Engaging our senses helps us focus on the present moment. Notice how you and your child are feeling as you begin. Then, together with your child:

- Notice five things that you can see. Look around you. Notice and name five things that you can see.
- Notice four things that you can feel. Tune in to your sense of touch. Notice and describe the texture of four things you can touch.
- Notice three things you can hear. Listen carefully. Notice and name three sounds you hear in your environment.
- Notice two things you can smell. Notice and name two smells you recognise.
- Notice one thing you can taste. Focus and name one thing that you can taste right now. You can take a sip or bite of something, or simply notice the current taste in your mouth. How are you and/or your child feeling now? Do you feel more connected to your surroundings and the present moment?

9. Mindful Walking

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

Guide children through these four easy steps:

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



10. Mindful Colouring

You do not have to get a special mindful colouring book to practice this. Just find some colouring sheets and ask children to be quiet and present while

colouring. You do not need deep instruction; just ask them to pay attention to what they're doing.

11. Mindful eating

Take a small food item (like a cracker or a raisin) and ask the child to use their senses to experience it – what do they see when they look at it, what does it smell like, what does it feel like in their mouth, what does it taste like and is there any sound when they bite it?

12. Mindful Word

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



References:

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

For more information/resources go to:

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

Apps:

• Calm: <https://www.calm.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>

Guided Imagery

Guided Imagery could be described as a visualisation and relaxation tool. Children and young people can be inside or outside, on the floor in the living room, in their room, under a tree in the garden or park. Most children and young people respond to it immediately and others do so over time, of course, there are some who find it a bit awkward or embarrassing so struggle to give it a go.

Waterfall of Light

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



An Undersea Adventure

Get into a comfortable position where you are. Close or lower your eyes and focus your attention on your breath. (Pause). Breathe in and breathe out. (Pause) Now imagine that you are walking down the beach. It is a beautiful, sunny day, and you enjoy the sound of the sea. You feel the warmth of the sand under your feet and notice that your body starts to relax. As you walk along the beach you spot a small door partly hidden in the sand, you brush the sand away with your foot and open



the door. You notice a winding staircase leading down under the sand. You walk down the stairway, feeling perfectly safe, and find yourself in a tunnel with a bright, sparkly light shining in from the tunnel's end. You walk along the tunnel until you reach a glass room with a huge bubble window. You realise that you are in a glass room under the sea. Brightly coloured fish are swimming by, you see a turtle in the distance. You notice a comfy chair if you want to sit and watch and in the corner there's a diving suit if you want to venture out. You now have a minute of clock time equal to all the time you need to enjoy and explore the sea.

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

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

The Bubbles of Power

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



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

Adventures in the Wood

Get comfortable and close or lower your eyes. Now focus on your breath, breathe in and breathe out (pause). As you breathe in, you breathe in feelings of calm and as you breathe out, you breathe out any worries. Breathe in and out.

(Pause). Now imagine that you are sitting outside in the sunshine, you feel the warmth on your face and body. You can hear the birds, and feel the breeze and enjoy the grass and the flowers. All of a sudden you see a little person in front of you, climbing up a twig. This little person turns to you and motions you to follow. You notice that you have shrunk and are small yourself. Now you have two minutes of clock time equal to all the time you need to have an adventure in the wood. You might follow the little person, you might go exploring on your own.



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

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

Breathing

1. Balloon Breath

Imagine a balloon above your head as you fill your lungs with air and slowly let it out. In this practice, use deep breathing and movement together to calm your mind and body. Show how to do it and have your child copy you.

- You can sit or stand up.
- Place both hands on top of your head.
- Begin to breathe in and out slowly. As you inhale, raise your arms above your head, like you are blowing up a balloon. When your lungs are full of air, your arms should look like a big, round balloon on top of your head.
- As you exhale, slowly bring your hands toward your head. Do your best to match the timing of your inhale with raising your arms up and the timing of your exhale with bringing your arms back down.
- Try to deepen your breath with each inhale as you're able.
- Continue with this breath and arm movement 2-4 more times.
- On the last breath, press your lips together and blow the air out, making a silly sound like a horse.

2. Starfish breathing

Help them trace their hand as a guide to deep breathing.

- Choose a hand to be your starfish. Extend this hand, palm out, with fingers spread like a starfish.
- Use the index finger from your other hand to trace the starfish as you breathe. Start at your thumb, and as you breathe in, trace up your thumb to the top. Do this carefully, so your movement matches your inhale.
- Now, with your out breath, trace down the inside of your thumb. Again, move slowly paying attention to keeping the breath and movement together.
- Continue breathing up and down each finger, matching your movement with your breath. As you breathe and trace, notice the sensations of movement in your body – your chest and belly moving in and out and your finger moving up and down.
- When you come to the base of your wrist below your little finger, rest for a moment. Check in with yourself. Notice how you are feeling without overthinking or judging.
- Try this again with your other hand.



References:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2663-mindfulness-in-early-childhood-settings>

Creative Activities

Art activities can provide children with a powerful outlet for their feelings. Art can help children process dark emotions—a child worried about his father’s illness might draw an ambulance and cover it with brown scribbles that represent his fears. Art can also be a way to express and amplify joy, as children work with bits of bright paper, glitter, stickers, and gloopy paint in vivid colors. In young children, fine motor skills are developed with actions such as simple art activities like drawing, painting and cutting. Artistic play and music, dance and movement allows a positive way for children to express their feelings and therefore helps promote emotional well-being.



1. Make a coat of arms

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

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



2. Make a glitter jar

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

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



Instructions:

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

3. Make a calm box

Decide with your pupils, what they would like access to in a calm box/area:

<https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2016/04/what-to-put-in-a-calm-down-kit-for-kids.html>

4. Rock Painting

Collect pebbles, clean them, and paint them. You could ask the children to decorate them with a theme in mind (E.g. protecting the environment, animals). They could design them for friends and family and give them as gifts as a way of keeping them in mind.



5. 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/>

6. Make your own instruments using recycling

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

7. Create a memory jar

Keep memories safe by collecting treasures in a glass jar. Label the outside (or draw a picture) and collect special objects and put them in the jar for safe-keeping. These could be messages, drawings, pebbles or stones from daily walks, pressed flowers, autumn leaves or even cake toppers from a birthday party. Once the jar is full talk about the special memories and stick them into a memories book, so that the jar is free to be filled again.

8. Mail a hug

Create a special message and virtual hug to send to loved ones or those who you do not see often. Children lie on the floor with their arms out-stretched, trace around their head, arms, and upper torso onto the paper. Decorate first with paints, pens, fabrics, bric a brac and then cut out. Print or write out the message below to accompany the hug. Fold it all up, put in an envelope and mail!

For more information, see <https://www.theleangreenbean.com/mail-a-hug/>

9. Make a hand puppet

All you need are some bits of felt and yarn, scissors, googly eyes and glue. There are lots of kits out there that make crafting puppets or you can gather the supplies on your own and let your children use odd socks. Show the children how to 'put on a show' using the new characters – create voices and/or movements to tell a story. Enlist others in the class or teddies to act as the audience.

10. Paper Plate Dream Catchers

Equipment

Paper plates

Hole punch

Crayons, markers, paint

Yarn

Feathers, beads, puff balls

1. Cut centre of plate out and save for another craft if desired.
2. Use hole punch to put at least 8 holes around centre area.
3. Make a hole where top should be along outer edge of plate.
4. Along outer edge of plate opposite the hole just made make three more holes positioned similar to in picture.
5. Allow kids to colour and decorate the plate.
6. String should be tied in first hole, then strung across plate at angles to make a web pattern (always pull string thru from back of plate to make neater.).
7. Tie feathers to ends of pieces of yarn and then string through the three bottom holes.
8. Tie piece of yarn to top hole to be used for hanging.



References:

<https://www.theleangreenbean.com/at-home-activities-for-children/>

<https://theimaginationtree.com/keepsake-memory-jar-tradition/>

<https://kinderart.com/art-lessons/seasons/5-creative-activities-children-can/>

Play

1. Sand Play

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



Examples include:

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

2. Water Play

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

Examples include:

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

3. Play Dough

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

Examples include:

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

4. Drawing and Painting

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

Examples include:

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



5. Music, Dancing and Singing

Examples include:

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



References:

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

For more information or ideas go to:

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

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

Nature

1. Bug Hunting

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

You will need:

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



What to do:

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

2. Rock Art

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

You will need:

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



What to do:

1. Go for a nature walk at the beach, woods or park. Gather up rocks while you walk looking for different shapes and sizes.
2. Once you get back wash and dry your rocks.

3. Be creative and paint your rocks. You can also glue decorative items such as googly eyes onto your rocks.

3. Nature Wreath

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

You will need:

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

What to do:

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

4. Pressed Flower Place Mats

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

You will need:

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



What to do:

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

5. Nature Hunt

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

You will need:

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

What to do:

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

6. DIY Bird Feeder

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

You will need:

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



What to do:

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

7. Keep it simple

Play 'I spy' (keep it simple, "I spy something blue", "I spy something that moves"), collect rocks or leaves, then sort them by size, colour, and shape or dig in the dirt (don't forget buckets, bowls, measuring cups, spoons, gardening tools, whatever you have!) Run, roll down hills, jump like kangaroos, or lie back and look at the clouds. Ensure that hands are washed thoroughly after returning home from any outdoor play

8. Pooh Sticks

You need to be on a bridge over flowing water. At the same time as each other, drop sticks into the water at one side of the bridge. Run to the other side and see which twig comes out first. You could read the Winnie the Pooh story about pooh sticks at home before or after playing the game.

9. Magnetic Sea Shells

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

You will need:

- Seashells (or natural objects like pebbles)
- Small dried or silk flowers

- Magnetic strips
- Strong glue

What to do:

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



References:

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

Home Start: <https://www.home-start.org.uk/activities-for-families>

Physical activities

The NHS advises at least an hour of exercise a day for children between five and 18 years old, and three hours for a child under five. Children with high activity needs can feel stressed if they lack opportunities to let off steam. Find creative ways for high-energy children to move vigorously throughout the day.

1. Yoga

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

You might also want to look at

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



2. Roll a dice or spell your name for a brain break

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

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

3. Rough 'n' tumble

In the home environment, play-fighting and tickling are important ways that children not only learn about their bodies but also social and emotional skills.

4. Walk like an animal

Can you hop like a frog, walk like a bear, shuffle like a gorilla and jump like a starfish? Put some music on and spend a few minutes seeing who can do the best impression of each animal! Alternatively, complete a 7 minute high intensity interval training (HIIT) workout, spending 15 seconds on each 'walk' followed by a 15 second rest: <https://hes-extraordinary.com/downloads/7-minute-hiit-poster>

5. Hold a fun sports day

Arrange a range of fun activities for all the family, including a **Humpty Dumpty** egg and spoon race, where the boiled egg could be replaced by a potato or small ball, **Gingerbread Man sprint** and **Doctor Foster** welly wanging; take turns to throw the welly as far as they can etc.. Discuss the

changes in their bodies when they run. How do their legs feel when jumping? What do they need to keep healthy and strong?

Use everyday items to create a fun course. Indoors could include jumping onto cushions, crawling under tables, wriggling through duvet covered tunnels, picking up cotton balls with tweezers, throwing bean bags into a bucket and balancing along a low bench. Whilst outdoors it could include hopscotch, running around cones, cycling from A to B, jumping through a hoop and climbing up a climbing frame. Anything goes as long as it's safe! Ensure to include a range of alerting, organising and calming activities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vLvoEXLApA&feature=youtu.be>

6. Make skittles using plastic bottles

They can be left empty or weighted down with pasta, rice or sand. Find a soft ball or make one using a pair of socks or scrunched up paper to roll or throw at the bottles. Stand the bottles up and roll or throw the ball to knock the skittles down. There are many ways to vary this activity, try writing each letter of your child's name onto a separate piece of paper, stick one on to each bottle and stand them up in the right order before knocking them down again.

7. Dance

This is a great way to relax tensions and unwind the body! Try slow skating waltzes or lively, stomping music. Let your children twirl dreamily or jump and leap to powerful beats. Watch tension flow out of their bodies as they move to the music.

8. Movement maze

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

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

References:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/things-to-do-with-your-child/>

<https://www.teachearlyyears.com/learning-and-development/view/early-years-topic-sport>

Separation Anxiety

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

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

- It is likely that a number of children will have worries about returning to school after such a long period of absence therefore it is important to **validate and normalise** these worries.
- Some children may be feeling anxious at the thought of **leaving home** again; especially if they have an **underlying health condition** or are **living with someone who is shielding.**
- Some children who **previously** had difficulty coming into school and leaving their parent or carer may find the return to school particularly challenging.

The following strategies and activities may help support children that are experiencing these difficulties:



- **Create a plan** of what is going to be put in place. Set short- and long-term **targets/weekly goals.** Very important to **celebrate the achievements** and progress – regardless of how small these may be!



- Agree a **goodbye ritual/script** (e.g. a hug and two kisses). Try and avoid prolonged goodbyes which then increases the child's anxiety, create **predictability and consistency** around school drop off.



- Arrange for your child to **meet a friend** at the start of the day (eg. On the walk to school).



- **A transitional object** for the child to keep with them at school: small felt hearts with comforting scent, small family photo etc.



- Provide the child with lots of **positive encouragement** following successful separations.

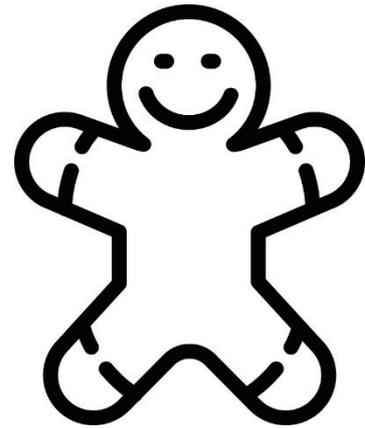


- Books can be used to support children experiencing separation anxiety
 - The Invisible String
 - The Kissing Hand
 - What to Do When You Worry Too Much
 - The Huge Bag of Worries
 - What to Do When you Don't Want to Be Apart

Anxiety

1. Understanding Physiological symptoms of Anxiety

Draw a gingerbread person and give it a name. Get children to draw/write on the person all the physical things they notice about what happens when they are worried/anxious.



2. Grounding exercise

Look around and identify and name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste:

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

3. 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.



4. Blow your worries away (Dr Michele Borba)

Teach young children to blow their worries away by pretending to blow up a balloon in their tummy as you slowly count to three and then let it out with an exaggerated “ahhh” sound like they use at the doctors. Place your child’s hands on their stomach for them to feel their breaths. Children can often try to take quick, fast breaths from their chest instead of their stomach. To help them explain that “taking a slow deep breath is an easy way to let your worries out.” They can practise using a bubble blower until they get the right “feel.” Young children like to pretend that the bubbles are their worries blowing away.



5. Special Place

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

6. Breathing activity

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. Stress ball

This exercise releases muscle tension and massages your hands. Make your own stress ball(s) by filling balloons with dry lentils or rice.

- Take the ball(s) in one or both hands and squeeze and release.
- Experiment with squeezing the ball. Find way that is right the speed, pressure and timing of your squeezes to whatever way you like.



8. Story time

Use story time as an opportunity to share stories about confidence, worries and emotions:

- *Little Boat* by Taro Gomi. A book aimed at the under threes. A little boat must stay calm even when the seas are choppy. A positive message to encourage confidence.
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henks. A book aimed at 4-6-year-olds about anxiety and worry.

- *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas. A book aimed at 4 to 8-year-olds, which can be used to explore young children's feelings. A pop-up version and a colour monster activity book are also available.
- *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain: Explores feelings and a helpful way to talk about emotions with young children.
- *How are you Peeling? Foods with Moods* by Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers: Explores how emotions look through pictures of foods. A good way to talk about emotions with young children.

References and additional resources:

<https://micheleborba.com/michele-borba-blog-kid-stress-busters-i-shared-on-today-show-945am/>

A guide to parents about how developing children experience anxiety and fear. <https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-in-children-after-world-trauma/> and <https://www.heysigmund.com/age-by-age-guide-to-fears>

Save the Children US – Stressbusters from their Heart Program

NHS – #Coping – 5 Ways to Wellbeing

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 being alone with their thoughts.



At any age children and young people may grieve in short bursts, moving in and out of the grief spiral or puddle jumping.

Shelley Gilbert (2004): www.griefencounter.org.uk

Immediate Bereavement Reactions

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

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

The Developing Concept of Death

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

Although we cannot rescue them from their feelings and experiences of grief we want them to feel as safe and secure as possible hence we would usually want to

emphasize that most people die when they are very old and most people who get ill recover, we don't want children frightened anytime someone is off school or described as ill.

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

The typical developmental sequence:

Below 2 years old

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

Between 2 – 5 years

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

Between 5 – 10 years

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

Between 10 – 12 years

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

Adolescence

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

Normal Grief Reactions

Normal bereavement can involve a wide range of responses:

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

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

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

What children and young people might want from you:

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

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

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

Coping with grief in isolation

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

The Funeral

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

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

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

Alternative goodbyes

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

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

What can I do?

Encourage the child or young person to:

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

When it is feasible:

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

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

safe and well like social distancing. If someone gets ill help is available but most cases are mild and get better at home.

Activities to support children:

1. Create a **photo album** of the person who has died; make special borders and frames for the pictures with the person's favourite things on them or decorate them with pictures of what the child liked doing with that person.



2. Create a **memory box**; this could include photos, special objects and, for younger children, could include hand-drawn pictures of the person who has died.

3. Make a **friendship bracelet**; choose 4 or 5 people that the child can talk to and represent them with different coloured threads, plait them together to make the bracelet and tie it around the child's wrist. This can be a visual reminder for the child that they have people who love and care for them and to whom they can talk.

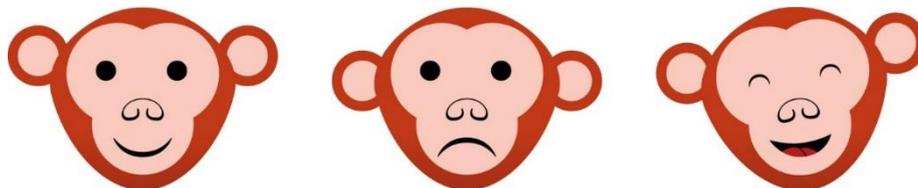


4. Play the '**Matching Game**' (for ages 4-6); the child needs to play this game with an adult. Read the sentence, supplying a feeling word. Read the possible action words. Ask the child to choose actions that match the feeling. Discuss whether, or not, the chosen actions help the child get his or her needs met.

"When I feel _____ I can _____ to take care of myself."

Feeling words – sad, happy, mad, scared, lonely...

Action words/phrases – laugh, cry, ask for a hug, run really fast, kick a football, hit my pillow, hit my friend, act grumpy, talk to someone who loves me, go to my room, hide under my bed, annoy my best friend, ask to leave my light on at night, play outside, draw a picture, tell somebody, listen to music/dance, play with a friend.



Useful resources and contacts

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

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

Transitions

The following activities are suggested to support with the range of transitions that may be experienced by children as restrictions ease. These transitions may be going from one school to another, such as moving from primary school to secondary school. However, all children will experience a transition, having moved from 'normal' schooling to home education and back into school again, albeit with their new school life likely to look and feel different for some time. Whilst transitions may be a time of excitement and opportunity children and young people can also experience:

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

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

Helping children prepare for going back to school/nursery

Create a sense of connection and belonging

- Encourage children to write a letter or do a drawing of the things they have been doing at home to take with them to school, nursery or their new school to show their new teachers and class mates.
- Talk with children about how things are likely to be a bit different when they return to school, nursery or start their new school. Social stories are a great way of doing this and additional ideas for sharing books at home can be found at <http://www.loveybooks.co.uk/3-5-years>

Re-establish routines to prepare for going back to nursery/school

- Children are less likely to feel anxious when routines and patterns are predictable. Encourage positive routines by getting up and going to bed at the same time each day, having regular meal times and bedtime routines to encourage calm.
- Acknowledge that children may feel overwhelmed by another change of routine and be flexible.
- Build learning into everyday activities through everyday conversations, make-believe play, games with numbers or letters, reading together and involving

children in household activities and chores. Educational resources and apps from the Department for Education can be found at [Hungry Little Minds](#).

Saying goodbye

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

Activities to support this may include:

- **Offer an opportunity for goodbyes.** If circumstances allow, children may be invited back into school or nursery to celebrate their achievements and say goodbye to their teachers and classmates. This could take a variety of formats (e.g. a leavers' disco or celebratory picnic). Plans may also be made for this to happen virtually if needed.
- It will be important to **provide opportunities for specific goodbyes** between children and key adults supporting them. For example, support children to write cards or letters to their teachers/key adults sharing positive memories about the time spent together at school. This could also be done between friendship groups/peers.
- **Wordles** are a popular way of capturing feelings and emotions: simply type in thoughts and feelings (e.g. about school life, moving on, or missing out on goodbyes) and the software creates an image containing all the inputted words that can prompt reflection as well as capturing thoughts. www.wordle.net/create
- **Plan a creative activity** whereby children may express their feelings of moving schools and remember the positive memories created through their time at school.



Helping children prepare for the transition to a new school

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

- **Providing practical information and encouraging preparations.**

Whilst restrictions are in place, children can still be encouraged to take preparatory steps, with parental support such as planning and practising their new morning routine or walk/cycle to school.

- Prepare to **establish consistent boundaries and routines**. Whilst children will need flexibility as they adjust to their new setting, it is important to be clear about boundaries and routines from the beginning. This will help children to feel safe and settled. Anticipate that children will take time to adjust to these new routines and use nurturing language to communicate change.
- Use **games and activities to develop key skills** and prepare children for school:
 - Turn everyday chores into **colour/shape matching games** e.g. matching socks from the washing basket, sorting which clothes / shoes / hats or scarves belong to which family member. This can lead to a dressing up activity.
 - **Encourage name recognition by hiding** something with your child's name written on it (use a capital for the first letter of **their name** and then lower case letters). Use a stop watch on your phone, cooking or games timer, or see if they can find it before you count to 20.
 - **Play 'Simon Says' to encourage listening and attention skills**. Develop the game by adding new vocabulary and/or swapping roles so that your child has the chance to give the instructions.
 - **Where's the object?** Whilst playing with toy cars, dolls or soft toys with your child, place one object under a chair, table or other piece of furniture and another object on top. Ask your child which object is 'under' and which is 'on top'. Do the same with a box or bag to develop the concept of 'in' and 'out'. Or use a shelf unit for 'high' and 'low'.
 - Play traditional games such as 'Snakes and Ladders' to encourage **turn-taking and mathematical skills**.
 - Help your child develop self-care (**toileting, washing hands, dressing, cutlery use**). Additional ideas can be found at <https://www.home-start.org.uk/keeping-clean>
 - Read familiar stories about starting school. Talk about going to school and complete the activities together. Recommended books can be found at <http://www.lovelybooks.co.uk/special-days-3>

Helping vulnerable children

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

- **Social stories or photobooks** can be a useful resource for children who are more vulnerable. Photos and information should be provided alongside a

narrative regarding what is going to happen. This resource should be available to children to access and come back to at their leisure, in order that they may familiarise themselves. See <http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>

- **Some children may benefit from having a transitional object from home** with them in school to help manage any anxiety they have about leaving home. This could include a photo of a parent or pet, or a small special item given to them by a family member.
- **Provide visual support and reminders** about new routines, locations, and structures. Ensure these are appropriately differentiated according to the needs of the child (e.g. using the symbol system the child is familiar with).



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

Further reading:

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

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/bhbf-fun-and-games>

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/Pages/Category/big-hopes-big-future>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/collections/starting-primary-school/1>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrynnrd>