

# Promoting Positive Emotional Wellbeing across School Communities



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We might all be facing a storm right now, but we must stop pretending we're in the same boat.

Some people are faring this storm in a **cruise ship liner**. They're safe and dry and are enjoying the in-house entertainment. They're binge watching Netflix and getting into baking and relishing the opportunity to exercise. Life feels good at a slower pace. They can feel the water rocking the boat, but their boat is sturdy and they're willing to ride it out for as long as it takes. Sometimes, they admit, it's easy to forget they're even in a storm at all.

Others are in a **rowing boat**. It feels frightening and dangerous and hard work. They can't help but think about the storm all the time; water is pouring in faster than they can get it out and they're worried about staying afloat. Many are rowing with one hand, and teaching, cooking, cleaning, working and trying to make ends meet with the other. Some are rowing on their own, and it feels like a very lonely journey with no end in sight. They're being told to be positive and productive and to make the most of this time, but it feels impossible when the storm is all-consuming. Surviving is enough of a job for now.

Then there are the people on **rescue boats**. They are exposed to the worst of the elements and bearing the brunt of this storm. They don't feel safe in their boat because it isn't fit for purpose. Some of the rescuers have life vests on but many do not. Instead they have been offered a badge to keep up morale. They are risking their lives in a storm that feels never ending and exhausting. They are making decisions about who they should save because they have had to accept that they are unable to save them all.

It's nobody's fault, the boat that they're in, but we must be mindful that they're not the same.

# Staff Emotional Wellbeing

## Why is this important for staff?

Many of us find that we put the wellbeing of others before our own. Whether that be the students we teach, our spouses, our children, other family members or our friends. However sometimes we need to take a step back and look at how we are managing our own wellbeing and remember, we can't pour from an empty cup.

We experience so many different emotions throughout the day, we might wake up feeling positive and by the end of the day, we may feel completely different – it is part of being human. All the emotions we feel throughout the day play a role in our wellbeing.

In the current climate, emotions are heightened so we may be experiencing many more throughout the day and at a much faster pace. Some days we might feel superhuman for getting through all our emails before 9am, other days just getting up and dressed can be our biggest achievement. It's balance and it's more important than ever to be kind to yourself and appreciate that you are doing all you can. This is something we have never experienced before – there is no manual on the right way to cope with COVID-19, so be kind to yourself and be kind to others.

There are numerous reasons as to why we might be experiencing intense emotions and they're all completely valid. We aren't used to spending so much time with the people we live with, or if you are isolating alone, we aren't used to being on our own quite so much. We may also find that our coping strategies aren't readily available, such as going to the gym, seeing our friends or extended family members or even doing our weekly shop (without the one-way system!) so we may feel like we're experiencing more stress with less outlets.

A great way to visualise this is through a stress container. We all have a stress container, it varies in size depending on the person and their resilience but nevertheless, we all have one! Our stress container is filled with stressors, such as COVID-19, family members, financial pressures, workload etc. Stress is a natural physical response and it is designed to keep us safe but at times like this, we may feel that we have more stressors which is causing us to feel overwhelmed. We need to release this stress through coping strategies but in the current situation, this may involve innovative and creative thinking to do that. If you enjoy exercise classes, many are streaming online so you could set up a zoom with a friend and do this together; or you might even want to take up that hobby you've also told yourself you wanted to do!

Later in the document, we have added a stress container for you to complete if you wish.

# Emotional Wellbeing Resources

## Further Resources

- ◆ [The Blurt Foundation](#)—are a social enterprise dedicated to those affected by depression and have lots of useful resources on their website. They've also written a '[Definitive Guide to Home Working](#)' This really useful article home as they are an organisation who have always been home-based yet focussed on wellbeing and mental health.
- ◆ [This BBC article](#) discusses the impact on energy levels of video calls and remote working
- ◆ [Education Support Partnership](#) have provided specific guidance for managers supporting staff amidst the current situation
- ◆ [The Good Grief Trust](#) (helpline opposite) have a specific advice page for bereavements during Covid-19
- ◆ [Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust](#) have a fantastic resource page with signposting for individuals of all ages with their mental health.
- ◆ [Meaningful May](#): Action for Happiness provide a daily calendar giving individuals actions to respond to this situation with a sense of purpose and meaning.
- ◆ [Kooth](#) has many resources on their website for young people aged 11-25 including discussion boards and online support.
- ◆ [Childline](#) (number across): is also a useful source of information for children up to age 19

## Useful Phone Numbers



**Oldham Council Emergency Need Helpline**  
for emergency food, medicine and essential items.  
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Sat 11am-2pm  
**0161 770 7007**



**Good Grief Trust**  
National Covid-19 Bereavement Helpline  
Every Day 8am-8pm  
**0800 2600 400**



**Childline**  
24 Hour Helpline for Children up to age 19  
**0800 1111**



**Young Minds Parent Helpline**  
Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm  
**0808 802 5544**



**StarLine Home Learning Helpline**  
offering expert information & advice to parents  
**0330 313 9162**



**Education Support Partnership**  
24 hour helpline for all education staff  
**08000 562 561**



**Pennine Care Mental Health Helpline**  
24 hour helpline for all ages including parents/carers  
**0333 200 4339**

# Advice for Parents & Carers Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing

This is an unsettling and fast changing situation which may be confusing to children and young people.

It is likely that some children and young people may experience greater feelings of anxiety at this time, particularly related to concerns about:

- ⇒ The virus and risks to the health of themselves and others.
- ⇒ Change and uncertainty.
- ⇒ Loss of social opportunities.
- ⇒ Missed learning and transitions (e.g. exams and moving from school to college).

## Key Messages:

- ◆ Remember it is ok (and normal) for children and young people to feel anxious and want lots of reassurance at the moment.
- ◆ Try and understand any specific anxieties/worries through listening and talking. There are also online resources that your child may find helpful in understanding and managing their worries:
  - \* [The Healthy Young Minds website](#) links to apps and websites supporting children and young people to manage feelings of anxiety
  - \* [The Anna Freud Centre](#) has a page on strategies with young people themselves have found useful when feeling anxious
  - \* [BBC Bitesize](#) have a web-page dedicated to mental health and online 'wellbeing lessons'
- ◆ Manage the information that is available to your child (e.g. reduce access to news channels and social media).
- ◆ Keep a routine and provide structure to the day (but retain flexibility and be realistic about what is achievable).
- ◆ Keep your child busy and active with a wide range of activities (including physical activity).
- ◆ Help them to stay connected to friends and family (such as video calling and writing letters).
- ◆ Consider relaxation activities; the following links and resources may be helpful:
  - \* [Bedtime stories and mindfulness and relaxation audio stories](#) for children of all ages:
  - \* [Yoga and mindfulness videos:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness app for children and young people and adults:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness colouring:](#)
  - \* [Mindfulness games cards:](#)
- ◆ Talk about the things we can and cannot control at the moment and make sure they are able to control some elements of their day (Please see the circle of control over the page).

If you would like further information about supporting your child while schools are closed, you can find a [more detailed advice booklet here](#)

## Circle of Control

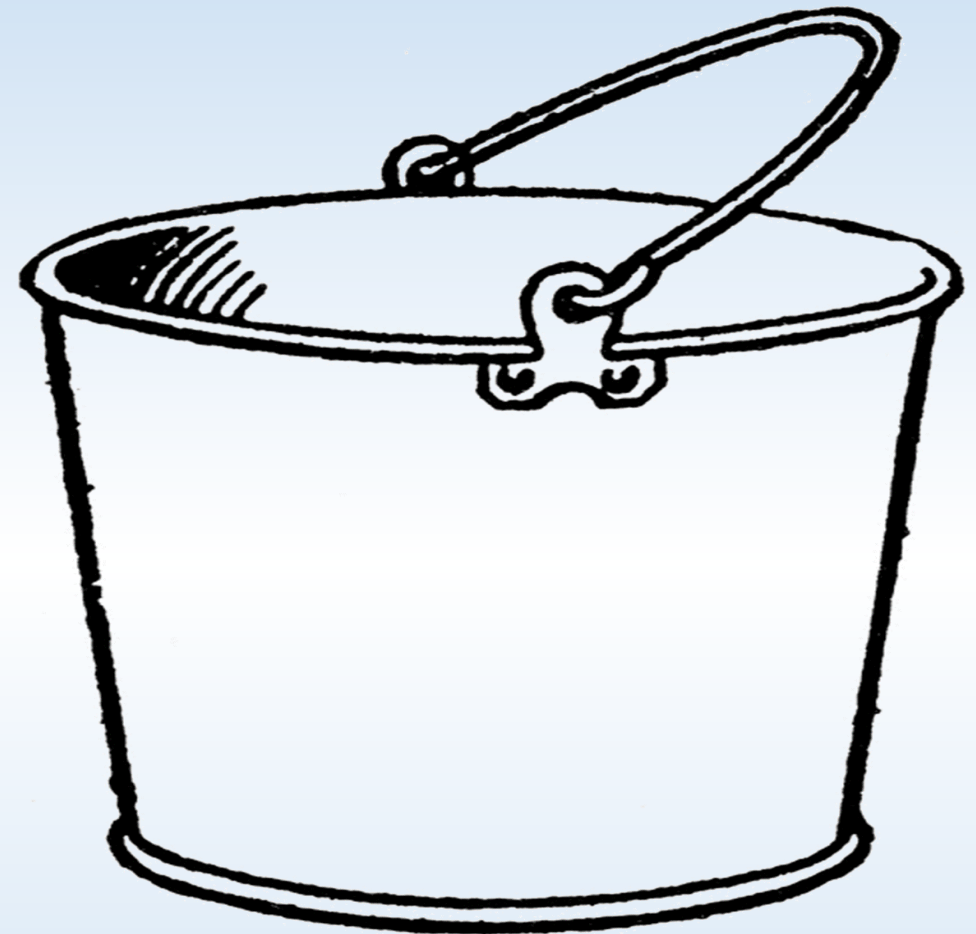


This is a useful model for adults and children alike. We all need to feel in control of some aspects of our days, especially when so much feels beyond our control.

**What options can you give children so they feel in control?**

**Where can you exercise your own choices?**

## Stress Bucket



**What's in your stress bucket?**

Acknowledge what is in your stress bucket, and think about what 'taps' or coping strategies you can still use to prevent it overflowing?

Again this can be useful for adults and children, and can be linked to circles of control as not all stressors can be removed.

# Reframing Unhelpful Thoughts

We can help ourselves to feel better by trying to change the way we think. Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected, and getting stuck in a pattern of unhelpful thoughts can impact negatively on our feelings and behaviours. 'Reframing' is the process of changing our unhelpful thoughts to improve well-being.

[This video](#) produced by the NHS Every Mind Matters campaign provides a helpful introduction.

In order to reframe an unhelpful thought, we need to **Catch it, Check it, Change it.**

**Catch it** Try to spot when you have a thought that isn't helpful.

**Check it** Stop and think about the thought. Is it true? Does it catastrophise the situation? What might other people think about the same situation?

**Change it** Try to substitute the thought for one that is more realistic, positive and/or hopeful.

With practice this does get easier and can have a significant impact on promoting more positive feelings and behaviour.

To get started we have provided some examples for parents, teachers and children below.



# Be Kind - Children & Young People

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I don't want to go back to school, I like being off school	Everyone has to go to school	I used to enjoy school and seeing my friends, and I have the holidays to look forward to
I'm really worried that I have not done all my work at home – I didn't understand it	I have tried to do the work that I can, and I have done lots of other things	My teachers have always helped me with my work, they will help me again
I'm anxious about going back to school, everything will be different	School will be new and different for everybody	I'm looking forward to seeing my friends and teachers again, they will tell me the different things I need to do
I don't want to go back to school and get the virus	People are working hard to ensure the virus does not spread	There are guidelines to help keep everybody safe, school will follow the guidelines. The Drs and nurses are very good at looking after people who are ill
I'm worried I've forgotten everything, and my teacher will tell me off	I've been doing some work	Everyone has been off school, teachers will help me and everyone else to remember what we learned before
I'm worried I won't have any friends, or that my friends have forgotten about me	I have not forgotten about my friends, so they won't have forgotten about me	Everyone has been away from their friends, we will all be looking forward to seeing each other again
I'm worried about my parents/siblings/grandparents in case they get the virus	People are working hard to ensure the virus does not spread	There are guidelines to help keep everybody safe, school will follow the guidelines. The Drs and nurses are very good at looking after people who are ill



## Be Kind - Staff

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I feel guilty that I've been at home while other staff are in school with the children	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	I'm doing the right thing, keeping myself and others safe. I'm still working, just in a different way
I don't know why X can't come in, there's only a few of us in school doing all the work, it's not fair	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	It's tough for everyone at the moment. Everyone is doing what they can in the situation.
I've found it really difficult at home, I've got my own children to look after as well as trying to work a full day	I'm trying to do two full time jobs (or more) at the same time	It's not possible to do everything, I'll try to concentrate on doing a few things well
I'm worried I'll be asked to do a different role, and I might not be able to do it	Things may change when I go back, I'm sure we will all be told in advance	I know everyone will be supporting each other when we go back, it will be the 'new normal'
I'm really worried about going back to school, I don't want to get this virus/ pass it on to someone at home	Advice tells everyone what to do to keep safe	Things will be in place to keep people safe. Risk assessments will be done. There are people I can talk to if I need to
I'm really anxious about going back to school, I feel I've lost all my confidence, and everything will be different	I often feel like this, especially after the summer holiday	I've done this before, and I know what to do to make it work. I have colleagues I can depend on for support
What will happen to my class if I'm ill? It will mean more change for them	People get ill all the time, it won't be my fault	If I'm ill there are other people who know the children well and can support them
So many parents have not done any work with their children – this will reflect on my progress and it's not my fault	Education has changed for everyone	There will be a whole school approach to welcoming the children back to school and settling them in. They may have learned lots of different things we can share together.





## Be Kind - Parents

Catch it	Check it	Change it
I've worked very hard but I don't think my child's learned very much, Teachers will think I'm a bad parent	Why would they think that, I've done my best	I'm a good parent but I'm not a teacher
I feel guilty but I can't wait for the children to be back at school	It's been hard work trying to juggle everything with the lock down	It's good for the children to go to school, and it gives me a chance to do other things
If other parents have not done the home learning will it keep my child back while they catch up?	Children are always at different stages in their learning	The teachers will understand and ensure all children have the best education
I'm worried about my child going back to school and getting the virus, I might keep them off school	I'll check the facts about how people catch the virus especially children	I'm worried about my children catching the virus but I understand that school will be as safe as possible,
I don't think I'll be able to manage if the children are in school at different times	I'll wait and see what happens	I'm sure I can manage, and other people will be understanding
The teachers have just had another extended holiday. They never do any work	Many of the teachers have been working very hard during the lock down	The teachers are probably worried about keeping the children and themselves safe
I really liked the children being at home, I wish it would continue	But their education and going to school is important	I really like the children being at home but I know they enjoy seeing their friends and learning in school



I really like the children being at home, I wish it could continue.

I am a parent, not a teacher, school will understand I've done my best.

Teachers will think I'm a bad parent.

I feel guilty but I can't wait for the children to be back at school

I've worked very hard but I don't think my child's learned very much

This is a difficult time for everyone; going back to school will be positive for my child's and my wellbeing

Parents,  
Be kind to  
yourself

Children are looking forward to going back to school, everyone understands things may be different

I'm worried about my child going back to school and getting the virus.

I don't think I'll be able to manage if the children are in school at different times.