

Nurture is essential for wellbeing

What is this nurture principle about?

This principle helps us to consider and plan how we use nurturing relationships to support the development of resilience in our children, young people, families and colleagues. Staff wellbeing should be a fundamental consideration in the plan to nurture the wellbeing of our children and families. A dysregulated adult cannot calm a dysregulated child. Good organisational structures and processes to promote and protect staff wellbeing are essential.

When planning for interventions to promote resilience, it can be helpful to think about three key features of resilience (see figure 3) (Gilligan, 1997).

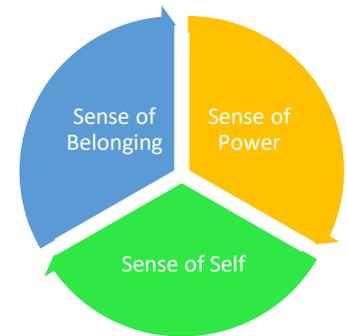


Figure 1: Key features of resilience

Why is this important for COVID-19 recovery planning?

Individual resilience, alongside the supportive relationships that we foster within a nurturing establishment, acts as a buffer for traumatic experiences. This lowers the experience of stress and in turn contributes to more positive outcomes and improved wellbeing. During the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery process, personal resilience and a network of nurturing relationships will support all of us to cope with the stress of disruption to our routines and in some cases with the experience of distress and trauma during this time.

What I can do:

- **Be open and available:**
 - Demonstrate that you are available to talk but without forcing the conversation at a particular time (see also: Language principle).
 - Children and young people and staff may be experiencing fear and anxiety from a range of sources and they may express this in a variety of ways (see also: Development principle).
 - Talk about what is happening in a child-friendly and age appropriate way and help children and young people to find positive ways of expressing their fears (e.g. A creative activity) can help reduce fears in younger children.
Avoiding talking about the current situation can add to their fears.
- **Start a conversation with your whole establishment community about what really matters to them (person centred planning approaches could provide a useful framework for this):**
 - Are we the same or have we changed?
 - What matters most to us now?
 - How do we translate that into how we go about our lives?

- **When they return to establishments, children and young people will need opportunities to explore:**
 - What has been difficult for them (*it is important to accept and acknowledge difficult feelings about missed opportunities, disappointments and specific challenges they have faced*).
 - What they have learned about their own ways of coping with challenge (*Encourage, children and young people to record what they learned and think about how they could use these at home and in establishments when they need to*).
 - What they feel hopeful about for the future (*The message about hope for the future is important to all of us*). (See also: Transitions principle).
- **The questions above could also be used with staff groups**, along with opening a dialogue to try to identify what promotes or prevents the meeting of their professional, social and psychological needs in the workplace. The following prompts may help this dialogue with staff:
 - What makes you proud to work here?
 - What matters to you in your work?
 - When we are at our best, what does that look like?
 - What gets in the way of a good day?
- **Provide a sense of agency** (agency can help build our sense of power and control, which is particularly important when we feel anxious or uncertain).
 - Encourage problem solving rather than always simply offering reassurance. E.g. *'I know you are worried about getting sick, but what are the things you are doing to keep yourself safe?'*
 - Give children and young people the opportunity to talk about what has been going well and what has not gone so well.
 - Guiding children and young people through imagining themselves as confident and successful in a stressful situation can help them feel the same in real life.
 - Feelings of having choice and autonomy make important contributions to adult wellbeing too. Consider the following:
 - Do staff feel like they have some choice in how they do their job?
 - Do they have voice in the way things are done?
 - Are they a part of decisions on processes, changes, and improvements that affect them?
- **Model positive ways of managing anxiety**
 - Exploring ideas about 'what helps me to feel calm?' will help children to come up with what works best for them. Breathing exercises are a good place to start.
 - Encourage and support parents and carers to model these at home.
 - For staff members and parents, the NHS recommend '5 ways to wellbeing'.
 - Adults, children and young people can benefit from short regulation breaks throughout the day (1-2 minutes can be enough!). E.g. breathing exercises, mindfulness, movement or checking in with a trusted person. (See also: Trauma section and REPS blog for wellbeing resources).

Find out more:

- '7 ways to support children and young people who are worried' Anna Freud Centre
<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11453/7waysanxiety.pdf>
- 'Developmental relationships framework' SEARCH institute: <https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/ideas-building-developmental-relationships/>
- Dr Bruce Perry discusses a range of regulatory techniques to support staff wellbeing which can be built into the school day. (Listen for the '6 R's – key elements of a positive workplace near the end!):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcDTXJpCMiY&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>
- '10 steps to staff wellbeing' Anna Freud Centre:
<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/resources-for-schools/ten-steps-towards-school-staff-wellbeing/>
- A summary of Louise Bomber's YouTube 'Sofa Times', focussing on 'recovery in the community':
<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/public/renfrewshireedpsych/uploads/sites/2916/2020/05/14134533/Louise-Bomers-Youtube-Sofa-Time-Summary.pdf>
- Renfrewshire EPS wellbeing resources
<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshireedpsych/wellbeing/>
- Mind UK, Wellness Action Plan:
<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/>

Contact your Educational Psychologist for further information about:

- Resilience
- Mindfulness
- Living Life to the Full (LLTFF): Secondary school resource
- Person centred planning (PCP)

