



Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better

Skills for Recovery: Staff Resource



Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service & Health and Wellbeing Development Team
July 2020

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Introduction

- These materials incorporate key ideas from the series of resources produced by Renfrewshire's Nurturing Relationships Approach (RNRA), 'Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better'. You can find these resources in full [here](#).
- These materials include some key psychological theories which can help people to cope with difficult events and contribute to improved wellbeing.
- This resource uses language and ideas consistent with the Living Life to the Full for Young People (LLTF) curricular lessons which many of the pupils in your school will be introduced to in PSE lessons. To reinforce the shared language and ideas, the LLTF posters should be prominently displayed around the school.

Who is this resource for?

- Although this resource has been developed principally for use by secondary school staff, education staff from all sectors may find the 'staff' sections help them to reflect on key messages from the 'Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better' resources and offer practical ways to put these resources into action in their settings.
- **All staff** should use part or all of this resource (you will find essential information for all staff in the 'key messages' and 'what can staff do?' sections of each week).

How to use this resource

- 'Skills for recovery' is available on the health and wellbeing blog.
- The resource is laid out in 6 weekly themes, with 'week 1' starting at the return to school following the summer break.
- The themes for the weeks have been carefully considered to communicate what it is that we want adults and children to hear and feel from their school environment in the weeks following their transition back from lockdown. These themes have been developed on the basis of psychological theory and logical sequences of learning.
- Each theme includes:
 - What do staff need to know?
 - Key messages: Essential reading for **all staff in the school** (supported by the weekly video)
 - Additional Information/Resources: Builds on the key messages and includes a direct link to one nurture principle section of the extended 'Nurturing Wellbeing to build Back better' resource each week. Can be used by all staff but may be most relevant to **pastoral/PSE teachers**
 - What can staff do?
 - Practical ideas for **all staff** to consider how they can translate the weekly theme into actions.
 - This section contains ideas 'for ourselves' and 'for others'. Staff wellbeing is key to recovery in the school community. We hope you will find some ideas and resources in these sections which offer you some support.
 - A 5-10 minute video for each theme:
 - Explains some of the key learning points for that theme in a practical way.

- Infographics:
 - Visual reinforcement of the weekly theme which can be displayed in classrooms, staff rooms, offices.

Source materials

In addition to RNRA resources and LLTF, this resource has drawn upon a range of sources including:

- *Anna Freud Centre materials*
- *Beacon House materials*
- *Caring Compassionate Classroom Curricular resource (Education Scotland)*
- *Centre for Clinical Interventions (Australia)*
- *Dr Karen Treisman*
- *Dr Pooky Knightsmith*
- *Dr Tina Bryson & Dr Dan Siegel 'The Whole Brain Child'*
- *NHS Education Scotland*
- *Place2Be – we'll meet again*

Weekly plans

Week 1: Welcome Back, We've Missed You... Reconnecting

What do Staff need to know?

Key messages

- Strong relationships are key to making a difference to the mental health and wellbeing of everyone. A regulated and caring adult can calm a dysregulated young person.
- It is helpful to understand that our thoughts, feelings, physical reactions and behaviours can alter in response to other people and situations (known as 'The 5 areas' in LLTF).
- We cannot change the people/ situations (known as 'the cards that life deals you' in LLTF), but we can change any one of the other 4 areas and we can change outcomes.

Additional information/resources

- [Barnardo's 'It's all about relationships'](#)
- The 'Skills for recovery' structure follows the '[3 R's sequence of engagement](#)' developed by Dr Bruce Perry: 'regulate, relate and reason'. Through this sequence, we are reminded to connect before we correct, and offer compassion, empathy and comfort.
- [Staff Wellbeing \(Anna Freud Centre\)](#)
- [Summary of Louise Bomber's 'Sofa Time' series](#)
- [Trauma Informed schools UK -Advice about supporting young people who have difficulty separating from their parents](#) (refers to key workers children but the principles apply to all)
- [Bereavement information](#)
- [Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: The environment offers a safe base](#)

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- Discuss your own needs with your line manager.
- Consider if you need to work with your line manager to develop a plan to support your own wellbeing, for example using the [Wellness Action Plan](#)
- Familiarise yourself with the [NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing](#).
- Use [the planner](#) to write down a few ideas from the 5 steps that you are committing to try out over the next 6 weeks.
- Ask a friend, family member or colleague to check in with you once a week to find out how you are doing with your plan. We tend to do better at making new habits when we have support.
- **Try this!**
 - [Breathing with your diaphragm](#) (Breathpod, instagram)

For Others

- Plan a [welcome back](#) and curriculum that focuses on wellbeing.
 - Allow time for the rebuilding of relationships, trust and friendships.
 - Plan time for young people and staff to share and celebrate things they did and achieved while staying at home.
- Build on the good contact and relationships with young people and parents that have been established through remote learning. Refer to 'what worked' during lock down and think of ways you might keep some of those things going.
- Create a physical environment that promotes a sense of belonging:
 - Involve the whole establishment community in re-creating their environment, for example, prominently display pictures of staff and young

people, perhaps what they did in lockdown, what they are looking forward to now and the good things about lockdown that they would like to try and keep.

- Display pictures/photos of people who have helped the local community.
- Have a way of remembering the people who have sadly died.
- Some young people will have real anxieties about separating from parents/carers:
 - Using the ideas from the Trauma Informed Schools UK [video](#), consider how to plan the support these young people need.

Week 2: How are we coping with change? ...*Belonging*

What do Staff need to know?

Key messages

- Continuous change puts us in a constant state of alert. We remain “off balance” much of the time. There’s always a part of our brain that’s vigilant in case the next cycle of change brings threat. Most people feel this as a sense of unease. Change produces uncertainty, triggering the brain’s threat response system, which can result in feelings of anxiety, mood swings, increase in negative emotions (including irritability, distractibility, sadness), lower levels of trust and disconnecting from other people.
- When our brains perceive threat and we enter a fight, flight or freeze response, we are operating from the more primitive parts of our brain. We can’t think straight and it’s hard to reason with us. We have ‘[Flipped our lids](#)’. This may be much more easily triggered in young people who have experienced previous trauma.
- Evidence tells us that relationships are key to supporting the wellbeing of ourselves, colleagues and young people, particularly in the face of such strange, confusing and rapidly changing times. ‘Every Interaction is an Intervention’ (Treisman, 2017)

Additional resources/information

- [Season's for Growth website](#)
- [Season's for Growth 'Adapting after lockdown/Coping with Change'](#)
- [Managing unexpected endings and transitions](#) (Anna Freud Centre)
- Dr Karen Treisman explains her quote '[Every interaction is an intervention](#)'
- ['Key messages about Feelings' infographic](#) (Safe Hands, Thinking Minds)
- [Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: Transitions are important in children's lives](#)

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- Seek help when you need it.
- Remind yourself that you are doing your best.
- Consider asking a colleague to be your ‘buddy’ – make an agreement to be available to each other if you need to talk about how you are finding the return to school.
- Try completing '[the Cards Life Deals You](#)' sheet (from LLTF), to help you to reflect on some of the ways that change may be affecting how you think, feel and behave just now.
- '[Dealing with Negative Thinking](#)' (from LLTF) might help you to think about how you can reduce the impact of unhelpful thoughts on your feelings and behaviours.
- **Try this!**
 - [60 second meditation](#) (pixelthought)

For Others

- View all staff, children and young people as new starts.
- Be open and available:
 - Demonstrate that you are available to talk but without forcing the conversation at a particular time.
 - Consider ways to listen and respond to staff and children and young peoples’ worries (e.g. discussion time during class, drop in office hours, agenda in team meeting).
- Many children and young people will have missed out on experiences and important transitions in their lives, such as school trips, moving from primary to secondary schools, sitting formal exams, proms, etc.

- Show empathy,
 - acknowledge this loss and associated feelings, such as anger, sadness and the unfairness of what has happened.
 - Plan alternatives to mark 'rites of passage.'
 - A predictable routine and structure can help ease anxiety about transitions, because it helps us to know what to expect.
 - Communicate information about school routines – model routines via video/ communication friendly resources (e.g. social stories).
 - Keep COVID-19 related rules to a small number. State these simply and positively, use limited language and reinforce with visuals.
- Renfrewshire's Inclusive Communication Environment team (RICE) has developed a wide range of resources to support this. Contact your Educational Psychologist for more information.

Week 3: Doing things that make us feel better straight away...*Regulating*

What do Staff need to know?

Key messages

- We expect emotional outbursts from very young children, but by the time they are adolescents we expect them to be much more controlled and self-managing. It is a big ask...and unrealistic. Emotional maturity takes a long time. The brain only reaches an adult state in a person's early twenties.
- In times of stress, you are more likely to see behaviours that appear to be at a lower emotional than chronological age. You may see a regression to earlier levels of development because of the stressful times we have been living in. Adolescent brains are particularly susceptible to environmental stress. They may need information and support appropriate to a younger age group.
- When we flip our lid, regulating techniques help us to calm and reconnect to the 'thinking part' of our brains. The 5 areas approach (from LLTF) reminds us that by 'doing something different' we can change how we feel.

Additional Information/Resources

- [FACE COVID resource](#) and [video](#)
- 'Tug of war with a monster': [script](#) and [video](#)
- [Centre for Clinical Interventions: What is Mindfulness?](#)
- [Louise Bomber talks through creating a calm box and separation anxiety](#)
- Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: [Learning is understood developmentally](#)

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- Are you breathing properly? Check out this '[Breathing Retraining](#)' resource.
- This LLTF sheet can help you consider which things you would like to do more of: '[10 things you can do to feel happier straight away](#)'
- We can all benefit from short regulation breaks throughout the day. Read the FACE COVID resource or watch the video and think about how you could include some of these ideas in your [personal wellbeing plan](#) to give yourself 1-2 minute breaks to regulate.
- **Try this!**
 - [If in doubt, breathe it out!](#) (Breathpod, Instagram)

For Others

- Recognise that adults are affected by stress and trauma too and you may witness adult behaviour related to stress. Try and use some of the strategies to support one another (see FACE COVID resource).
- For young people needing more support, try to plan:
 - time and space at the beginning of the day to scan their environment,
 - key adult meet and greet,
 - planning for the day, highlighting times that more support may be needed.
 - See this [video](#) from Dr Pooky Knightsmith with ideas to 'start the day right for students who are struggling'.

Week 4: Connecting with our feelings ...*Relating*

What do Staff need to know?

Key Messages

- Fight, Flight and Freeze responses are designed to help us survive, but the threat we are responding to is often imagined. We tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive. This is linked to our survival instincts to be alert to danger in order to stay safe. However, in our daily lives this is not always helpful. When we over focus (become stuck) on the negative then this can affect how we feel about things, making us feel low or angry or anxious and then affect our behaviour and what we do.
- Reflecting on our own responses to situations is important. We have all been affected by the changes brought about by COVID-19. In situations when things escalate (someone flips their lid, enters 'fight' mode), this can cause guilt for everyone.
- Reflecting on the language we use is more pertinent than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery process, as the language we use can help create a sense of belonging and reconnection and help staff, children and young people and families to understand, process and manage their emotions.
 - Naming feelings can help people process what they are feeling and make the connection between emotions and behaviours. It can also help people feel heard and understood. 'Name it to tame it'!

Additional resources/Information

- ['7 ways to support children and young people who are worried'](#) (Anna Freud Centre)
- [SHUSH](#) (Samaritans active listening tips)
- [Inner World resource 'What survival looks like in the secondary school'](#)
- [Dan Siegel explains 'name it to tame it'](#)
- [LLTTF – understanding and coping with panic](#)

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- Remember self-care and self-compassion (treating yourself with care and concern): keep trying the regulating strategies we introduced last week and give [this exercise](#) about self compassion a try.
- Monitor your own emotional reactions: How are you [coping with stress](#)?
- Watch Dr Karen Treisman's [video](#) and use her accompanying [worksheet](#) to consider how you show your stress or dysregulation.
- **Try this!**
 - [Sleep meditation: Starry night](#) (Smiling mind)

For Others

- Listening to others and validating their emotions helps to make people feel heard, valued, safe and secure. *'I understand it's very hard for you when you are worrying about your mum working in the hospital.'*
- Adults providing a running commentary (say what you see) can help young people (and other adults) make sense of situations and understand their feelings. Using phrases such as 'I wonder' and 'I notice' can be a nice way

- [Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: Language is a vital means of communication](#)

to do this. E.g. *'I notice that you seem a little upset, I wonder if that is because you're missing being at home with your family.'*

- 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?'*
- Demonstrate empathy and acceptance of the young person's thoughts and feelings:
 - *'Your feelings are okay with me.'*
 - *'I know how difficult it must be to come back to school after all that time off- I'm really tired too!'*
- [Dr Karen Treisman's cut out and use graphic](#) can be used to offer a visual way of inviting others to show you what they need.

Week 5: Supporting Ourselves and Others ...*Responding*

What do Staff need to know?

Key messages

- Young people can be a great source of help to each other, and they often turn to friends for support before talking to an adult. Looking after each other, being kind to those friends, can help us all to feel better in an unknown situation. It's important to emphasize the importance of being positive with each other.
- Remember that behaviour is always telling us something. Respond to the **hidden need** rather than to the **behaviour** you see. For example, if a child or young person is displaying controlling behaviour, it may mean they feel the world around them is out of control, which is very understandable given COVID-19 circumstances.
- Attunement to other people is an important way we can support each other. This is about using the foundations of communication and interaction to respond to the heightened emotions you see in others.

Additional information/resources

- [Looking after each other and ourselves](#) (Anna Freud Centre)
- [Principles of attunement](#) (AVIG UK)
- [Heather Geddes' Learning Triangles](#) (via Ed Psych Insight)
- [Beacon house 'What we say'](#)
- [Brene Brown's video on empathy vs sympathy](#)
- [Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: All Behaviour is Communication.](#)
- Contact your Educational Psychologist for more information about developing your understanding and skill in using attunement principles through Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) groups.

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- To manage stress, it can be helpful to identify the stressors. Once we clearly identify the thing or things making us feel stressed, we can focus our energies on how to problem solve and manage the situation:
 - Think about what [flips your lid](#): when something hits on your values, that's what pushes your buttons. It's important to realize what pushes your buttons so you can begin to feel in control in these situations.
 - Try using the LLTF resource [here](#) to reflect on what your 'buttons' are
 - Look for supporters to help you to plan for how you might use some of the regulation strategies to keep yourself from entering fight mode (you may find it helpful to use the LLTF sheet '[123 breathe](#)' to structure this plan).
- Try this!**
 - Sarah Philp's [Loving Kindness meditation](#) (scroll to bottom of page to find this)

For Others

- Try offering choice or giving a role to allow young people to feel more in control.
- 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. Try this [visualization exercise and accompanying worksheet](#)
- Model respectful ways of dealing with challenging circumstances by considering and responding to the thoughts and feelings that underlie the behaviours that you see.
- You can use [attunement principles](#) by remembering to be attentive, giving eye contact, using a warm expression and a soothing voice. The more you can do this when you are also feeling heightened, the more you will also be able to stay calm.

Week 6: Looking Forward with Signposts for Help...*Hoping*

What do Staff need to know?

Key messages

- Difficult times can be transformative. Through hardship we can learn a lot about ourselves, learn new skills and make new connections. How can we hold onto these things?
- It is important to be open and honest about the future, but we can also encourage pupils to look to the future positively, whilst avoiding making unrealistic promises about when activities will resume or what the future will hold. Optimism and hope that things will get better are important for promoting a positive outlook and managing worries and anxieties.
- One way to counteract the negativity bias is to become aware of the things we can be grateful for. But this can sound easier than it is. However, when we find things we are grateful for, no matter how small, this can help to change our focus and promote wellbeing. Paying attention to what you are grateful for becomes easier the more you practice it.

Additional information/Resources

- [Hands on Scotland: Gratitude](#)
- [PERMA model](#)
- [The science of gratitude \(video\)](#)
- [Action for happiness calendars](#)
- [Nurturing wellbeing to build back better: Nurture is essential for wellbeing](#)

What can staff do?

For Ourselves

- Think about your '[Happy List](#)' – write down the things that you've enjoyed, thought were jobs well done or have helped you feel close to someone else.
- To remind yourself to pay attention to what you are grateful for, try this:
 - Find a rock or other small object that you like
 - Carry it around in your pocket or leave it on your desk where you will see it throughout the day
 - Whenever you see or touch it, pause to think about at least one thing you are grateful for (this could be as small as the sun shining outside!)
 - When you take it out of your pocket at the end of the day, take a minute to remember all the things that you were grateful for throughout the day.
 - When you put it in your pocket again in the morning, remember what you were grateful for yesterday.
- Review your [personal wellbeing plan](#).
- Use the [PERMA model](#) to think about ways your personal wellbeing plan could be further developed.
- **Try this!**
 - ['I Am Hopeful' guided meditation](#)

For Others

- Despite all support you have been offering, many of the young people in your class may still be finding things hard to cope with. Try using simple phrases and questions that communicate hope that things will get better and gently remind them to use the skills we have been practicing over the last 6 weeks, e.g.
 - *'How you feel right now won't last forever'*
 - *'When do you think you'll feel better?'*

- *'So, when you feel like that is there anything you can do to make yourself feel better?'*
- *'Are there any times when you don't feel this way, or even feel just a little better?'*
- *'Remember when you..... (share a positive example of the young person coping)'*
- Start a conversation with your class:
 - 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?
- 'I hope' display – staff and pupils could be invited to add 'I hope' cards to a whole school display.
- Think about how you can continue to support your colleagues and pupils to practice some of the skills they have learned. Are there any themes that could be revisited?

NHS: 5 steps to Mental Wellbeing

For staff members and parents, the NHS [recommend 5 steps to wellbeing.](#)

- **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships. Use the staff room on your break if you can, or arrange to check in with a colleague at the start or end of the day. We have all experienced some kind of isolation as a result of the pandemic, but we also found ourselves connecting with friends and family in new and inventive ways. Try to hold on to the positive habits you developed in this time. Learn more in [Connect for mental wellbeing.](#)
- **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling, do some yoga or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. Lots of us took up a new kind of physical activity during lockdown, as our usual gyms and pools were closed. Did you find something you enjoyed doing? How can you keep it up? Learn more in [Get active for mental wellbeing.](#)
- **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not learn to cook a favourite dish that you've never made at home, take on a new responsibility at work, or figure out how to fix your bike? There are lots of DIY tutorials online! Maybe you found time during lockdown to do more of these things: how can you keep making time in your life for learning? Find out more in [Learn for mental wellbeing.](#)
- **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Ask a colleague how they are and really listen to the answer. Larger acts, such as volunteering to a mentoring project such as Aberlour, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks. Can you pass on any of your new 'lockdown skills' to colleagues? Maybe you could set time aside once a week at a break to share what you have been doing differently over the last few months. Learn more in [Give for mental wellbeing.](#)
- **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can be helpful to pick a regular time to practice this (e.g. when you are eating breakfast or when you are brushing your teeth). It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. You may have found yourself practicing mindfulness without realising it during the lockdown period. Spending so much more time in our homes has allowed many people to pay attention to the things that usually pass us by, like the wildlife or plants outside our windows, or the enjoyment in the small moments with our children. How can you plan to keep being present? Learn more in [Mindfulness for mental wellbeing.](#)

Personal Wellbeing Plan

Reflect – How are things just now?

Date:

How would you rate your current level of emotional wellbeing?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Low

High

What level would you be happy with?

Plan – What area(s) of the 5 steps to wellbeing could you pay more attention to in order to move yourself one point up the scale?



What are you going to do differently/more of to achieve this?

How will you know you are on track?

Who can help you achieve this (your supporter)?

What will they notice about you if your changes are going to plan?

Do – After a couple of weeks, think about how your plan has been going...

Did you do what you planned?

If not, what got in the way?

Do you need to tweak your plan? Note the changes here if so:

Study – Towards the end of the 6 weeks, use this space to think about your wellbeing now

Date:

How would you rate your current level of emotional wellbeing now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Low

High

Has this improved since you started your plan?

Has your supporter noticed a change? What did they notice?

Act

If your plan has been working, how will you continue to keep it going?

If your plan hasn't worked or you didn't put it into action, what would work better for you?