Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service & Health and Wellbeing Development Team

July 2020



**Nurturing Wellbeing to Build Back Better**

**Skills for Recovery: Parent resource**

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# Introduction

* We hope that all parents will find this weekly resource a helpful support for their own wellbeing in the transition out of lockdown.
* The ‘Skills for Recovery’ parent resource is also intended to help parents to understand what their P6-S6 child may be learning about in school through the corresponding [pupil resource](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshirehwb/pupils/), and to give parents ideas about how they can support their child’s transition back to school.
* Talking to your child about what you are both learning can help them to understand and use some of these important skills.
* 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](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshireedpsych/nurturing-wellbeing-to-build-back-better/).
* 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 (LLTTF) curricular lessons which many young people will be introduced to in PSE lessons. Parents can access the free online LLTTF course for adults [here](https://llttf.com/home/living-life-to-the-full-series/llttf-adults/).

## How to use this resource

* ‘Skills for recovery’ for parents and for pupils is available on the health and wellbeing blog.
* Renfrewshire’s Health and Wellbeing Education team and Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service will be sharing inforgraphics and short messages that tie in with the Skills for Recovery Course over the 6 week period. You can follow our accounts on twitter [@RenfrewshireEPS](https://twitter.com/RenfrewshireEPS) and [@RenEdHWB](https://twitter.com/RenEdHWB)
* The resource is laid out in 6 weekly themes, with ‘week 1’ starting at the return to school following the summer break.
* Parents are encouraged to work through the resource one week at a time. Trying to do too much at once can be overwhelming and counterproductive for your wellbeing.
* 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 community in the weeks following their transition back from lockdown.
* Each theme includes:
	+ What do parents need to know?
		- A summary of what their child is learning about that week, which also incorporates some of the key psychological principles from the staff resource.
	+ What can parents do?
		- Practical ideas for parents to consider how they can translate the weekly theme into actions.
	+ A 5-10 minute video for each theme:
		- Explains some of the key learning points for that theme in a practical way.

# **Weekly plans**

## Week 1: Welcome Back, We’ve Missed You… *Reconnecting*

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| What do Parents need to know?* Our education establishments are planning a welcome back and curriculum that focuses on the wellbeing of your children.
* It is important that we give time to rebuilding relationships, trust and friendships.
* Positive relationships are key to making a difference to the mental health and wellbeing of everyone.
* The wellbeing of the adults in our community is important too – we need to look after ourselves so we can look after our young people to the best of our ability.
* Some young people will be anxious about coming out of lockdown and that is normal but there are things that you can do to help – we will talk about these over the next 5 weeks.
 | What can Parents do?* Try to be open to the things suggested to help – give things a go and support your child to do the same. Keep trying even if they don’t seem to immediately help. Our brains and bodies can take time to get used to different ways of doing things.
* Have a look the [NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing](#_NHS:_5_steps). Do you see any areas you could make changes in that might improve how you feel?
* Talk to your child about things that worked well for them during lockdown. Encourage them to share these with their teachers.

**Try this!** * [Breathing with your diaphragm](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Ftv%2FCAN2n3sApyz%2F%3Futm_source%3Dig_web_button_share_sheet&amp;data=02%7C01%7Csandra.menary%40renfrewshire.gov.uk%7C7902f05420114935c8cc08d81d10f2dd%7Cca2953361aa64486b2b2cf7669625305%7C0%7C0%7C637291305911539472&amp;sdata=9NUJtt%2FdOw5ajND67rFI%2FPRXspykAaLdunKveSCWD4c%3D&amp;reserved=0) (Breathpod, instagram)
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## Week 2: How are we coping with change? …*Belonging*

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| What do Parents need to know?* It is normal to feel worried or anxious when activities and supportive relationships end during times of change and uncertainty. Everyone will have their good days and bad days.
* How we think affects how we feel and how we behave.
* Change produces uncertainty, triggering our brains to respond to ‘threat’. This can lead to feelings of anxiety, mood swings, increase in negative emotions (including irritability, distractibility, sadness), lower levels of trust and disconnecting from other people.
* There are lots of things we can do to change these difficult thoughts and feelings, which we will find out more about next week.
 | What can Parents do?* Seek help when you need it, perhaps from a trusted friend or family member or your GP. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has a helpful website for adults to think about taking care of our mental wellbeing during these challenging times. You can find it [here](http://www.headsup.scot/coivd-19-and-your-mental-wellbeing/).
* A predictable routine and structure can help ease anxiety about transitions, because it helps us to know what to expect. Consistent morning and bedtime routines can help young people cope with change in other parts of the day.

**Try this!** [60 second meditation](https://www.pixelthoughts.co/) (pixelthought) |

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

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| What do Parents need to know?* When our brains feel that we are under threat we can’t think straight and it’s hard to reason with us. We have ‘[Flipped our lids’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTnCMxEnnv8&vl=en).
* When we flip our lids, regulating techniques help us to calm and reconnect to the ‘thinking part’ of our brains. By doing something different we can change how we feel.
* Regulating strategies include: breathing exercises, mindfulness, moving around (walking, dancing, running, skipping…) or checking in with someone you trust. This [self care strategies bank](https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/) can give you lots more ideas of things to try.
 | What can Parents do?* It’s helpful to try some different regulating strategies together to find what works best for you or your child. You can find links to these in the pupil section of Skills for Recovery.
* Try to notice how your body feels when you are anxious and what kind of activities help you to feel calmer. Share this with your child so they can see that these skills are something it helps everyone to learn.
* This sheet from Living Life to the Full can help you think about which things you would like to do more of: [’10 things you can do to feel happier straight away’](https://llttf.com/wp-content/uploads/10-things_LLTTF-Adult-UK-1.pdf)

**Try this!** [If in doubt, breathe it out!](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Ftv%2FCBQzCyZAA64%2F%3Futm_source%3Dig_web_button_share_sheet&amp;data=02%7C01%7Csandra.menary%40renfrewshire.gov.uk%7C1eab221868914582f8fb08d81d1046fe%7Cca2953361aa64486b2b2cf7669625305%7C0%7C0%7C637291303029190299&amp;sdata=vEQRaGU9iOZf8qsJF3BlNmUp3Qp512vnKaF8Eczh8IE%3D&amp;reserved=0) (Breathpod, Instagram) |

## Week 4: Connecting with our feelings …*Relating*

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| What do Parents need to know?* When our brain feels threat, we tend to see the negative rather than the positive. This is linked to our survival instincts to be alert to danger to keep us safe. However, in our daily lives this is not always helpful.
* Often our brains feel we are under threat, but actually our lives are not at risk. When we get stuck on negatives 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.
* Naming feelings (e.g. “I noticed you are very quiet. I wonder if you are feeling worried about…?”) can help people understand what they are feeling and make the connection between emotions and behaviours. It can also help people feel heard and understood. Try ‘[Name it to tame it’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcDLzppD4Jc)! (from ‘The Whole Brain Child’, by Bryson & Siegel).
* If we don’t get enough sleep, it can really affect how we feel and our ability to concentrate. The change to your usual routine during lockdown probably meant that you stayed up later at night and maybe weren’t as active as usual during the day. These things can affect how easy you find it to get to sleep and the quality of your sleep.
 | What can Parents do?* Remember self-care and self-compassion (treating yourself with care and concern): keep trying the regulating strategies from last week and give [this exercise](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWrnP8-s_P8) about self compassion a try.
* These phrases can be helpful to remember when you want to try ‘name it to tame it’:
	+ Acknowledge feelings (say what you see):
		- *“I can see…”*
		- *“I can hear…”*
		- *“It’s really ok for you to feel like this.”*
		- *“No wonder you are feeling…”*
	+ Offer compassion, empathy and comfort:
		- *“I’m so sorry it’s so hard for you right now.”*
		- *“It must be so difficult to have such big worries about…”*
* Think about how what you or your child does in the day may be affecting how you or your child sleep at night. Perhaps it would help to make a sleep plan? You can find more information about sleep at [Sleep Scotland: Teen Zone](https://www.sleepscotland.org/education/teen-zone/#1565276210259-c145af49-a15b)

**Try this!**  [Sleep meditation: Starry night](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DScEC_UKKc) (Smiling mind) |

## Week 5: Supporting Ourselves and Others …*Responding*

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| What do Parents need to know?* 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 emphasise the importance of being positive with each other.
* We expect emotional outbursts from very young children, but by the time they are teenagers 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 your child acting as though they are much younger. Teenage brains are particularly susceptible to environmental stress. You may need to change how you are talking to them and think first about how to help them to calm.
 | What can Parents do?* Together with your child, have a look at this advice about [‘how to help someone else’](https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/helping-someone-else/)
* It might be helpful to talk through a few scenarios with you child about what they might say and do if their friends were having a difficult time. You may find it helpful to talk about this statement:
	+ *Helping someone is important but rushing in when another person is upset and solving the person’s problem might not be as helpful as letting the person know you are there for them to listen, and that you care.*
* Talk about when they might need to seek help from an adult in order to help their friend.
* Remind your child about the regulating strategies they learned about in week 3. These take practice!

**Try this!**  Sarah Philp’s [Loving Kindness meditation](https://www.sarahphilpcoaching.com/guidedrelaxation) (scroll to bottom of page to find this) |

## Week 6: Looking Forward with Signposts for Help…*Hoping*

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| What do Parents need to know?* Difficult times can lead to positive changes – like a rainbow after a storm. Through hardship we can learn a lot about ourselves, learn new skills and make new connections. How can we hold onto these things?
* One way to counteract the negativity bias that we learned about in week 4 is to become aware of the things we can be grateful for. When we find things that 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.
* It is important to be open and honest about the future, but we can also encourage our children to look to the future positively, whilst avoiding making unrealistic promises about 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.
 | What can Parents do?* Think about your [‘Happy List’](https://llttf.com/wp-content/uploads/My-Happy-List_LLTTF-Adult-UK.pdf) – write down the things that you’ve enjoyed, thought were jobs well done or have helped you feel close to someone else.
* [Music can quickly change how we feel](https://youtu.be/FQoqEtbysoY) (video from Dr Pooky Knightsmith), help us relax and give us a new perspective on life. Try creating a ‘Hope playlist’ full of optimistic songs that make you feel good about the future. Share them with your child or make the playlist together!
* Write a letter to your child or to your future self. Write about the things you have learned during lockdown, how you got through ups and downs and what skills and strengths you drew on, and how you will use them in the future.
* Talk to your child about what you have both learned over the last 6 weeks. Is there anything you want to learn more about or keep trying?

**Try this!**  [**‘**I Am Hopeful’ guided meditation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bmO6Dw-C8o) |

## Source materials

*In addition to RNRA resources and LLTTF, 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 Seigel ‘The Whole Brain Child’*
* *NHS Education Scotland*
* *Place2Be – we’ll meet again*

# NHS: 5 steps to Mental Wellbeing (adapted by REPS)

For staff members and parents, the NHS [recommend 5 steps to wellbeing.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-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](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/connect-for-mental-wellbeing/).
* **Be active** – 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](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-benefits-of-exercise/).
* **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](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/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](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/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](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/).