



GORSEY
BANK

PRIMARY SCHOOL

KS2 Wellbeing Toolkit

Tool kit

Introduction

- Resiliency is a key skill that cannot be overlooked. In fact, it can be a skill set that is the difference between surviving and *thriving*. For children and young people living in poverty, those who have barriers to learning, or experiencing stress and trauma, it may be the skill that makes *all* the difference.
- Effective stress management and, specifically, using relaxation strategies can be highly effective for many children. This is the rationale for including a range of strategies and techniques in this recovery curriculum toolkit. It is vital that all adults can and do model these to the children they nurture.

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Self –Regulate for Wellbeing

The following activities include a range of mindfulness strategies alongside various ideas and developing tools for developing self-regulation.

Research has proven that benefits of incorporating mindfulness into the classroom curriculum has been staggering. Teaching mindfulness to children can:

- Decrease feelings of stress and anxiety
- Improve focus and concentration
- Help with impulsivity
- Improve self-regulation
- Develop empathy
- Reduce aggression
- Improve sleep

Straw painting

Create straw painting masterpieces with your year group. All you need to do is place some watered-down paints on a piece of paper and ask each child to spread the paint around by blowing air through a paper drinking straw. It is simple, fun and effective in getting children to calm down and concentrate.

Mindful Walks

Children and young people will love to do a 'noticing walk'. We can walk along noticing things we haven't seen before. It can be expanded into a 'safari walk' by asking them to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, as they can. This will turn a normal walk into an exciting adventure.

Mindful game: Pennies game

Collect one penny for each player and a basket. Everyone gets a penny and a minute to study it in details. The pennies are then placed in the basket. Each player must pick their penny out of all the pennies and say how they knew it was theirs. This game can be played with different objects.

Mindful game: Simon Says

Designate one child to be 'Simon' and ask them to give commands to the others – stand still, sit down, clap your hands three times etc. Remember, you are only allowed to act when the leader says 'Simon says' before the instruction. We tend to act without thinking, and this game demonstrates just that. Simon says is a fun way to practice mindfulness by paying attention to outer experiences.

Mindful smelling

Gather a handful of household items for your group to smell. Citrus, a candle, honey, fresh herbs. Encourage them to think about how they feel as they breathe in each one. (“The mint makes me feel energetic.” “The vanilla makes me feel relaxed.” “The chocolate makes me feel hungry!”)

Mindful Music Playlist

Ask the group to identify each the piece of music that helps them to relax best and makes them feel calm and destressed. Make a play list of all the pieces of music and then play each one at the end of the day.

Mindful Labyrinths

Mazes are highly effective in helping children calm down and focus when emotions are high. Collect some finger labyrinth/mazes which can be reproduced on the copier and completed with a pencil. You can use them to set-up calming stations within the classroom.

My favourite places

Take a blank page and create an image of your favourite or most special place. Think about somewhere that you would choose to go to, to relax. This place can be imaginary or real, inside or outside. Make sure you fill your special place with all the things you would like to help you relax. You could draw your favourite place, take a photograph and annotate it to make a collage from pictures and colours in magazines and newspapers as well as using crayons, paints and other materials.

Best breathing

Find a comfortable place to sit, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight. Focus your attention on your breathing. When a thought or emotion pops into your head accept it, but allow it to float on by (imagine you are pinning them to a cloud or onto a leaf floating down the river). Focus your attention on the rise and fall of your chest, the feeling of the air entering and leaving your body.

Mindful colouring

Using your non-dominant hand, attempt to colour a picture as accurately as you would if you were using your 'normal' or stronger hand. Whilst colouring, try to be mindful of how much concentration it takes! You may wish to think about what feelings you are experiencing in your arms and hands, does it affect your shoulders, neck and head? What about the way you are sitting?

As an extension, you could try and write the alphabet, a sentence from a book, or your name.

Mindful listening

Introduction: We are going to recognise memories and negative thoughts as we all have them. We notice these thoughts and become aware that we do not need to hold onto these thoughts. They are simply thoughts. We can notice them and let them go. By focusing our attention on bodily sensations, such as our hearing, we can develop memories and thoughts. We can practice focusing our sense of hearing and use this to practice letting go of memories or negative thoughts coming into our mind. We are going to do a listening meditation.

Script: "sit on a chair. Sit up straight. You can close your eyes or focus the gaze of your eyes on the floor in front of your [PAUSE]

Begin by focusing your attention on the sounds around you...Take a couple of minutes to notice the different sounds around you. You are sitting in the present moment. [PAUSE] Become more and more aware of the sounds you are hearing. If you notice your mind begin to wander and you become aware of thoughts, acknowledge those thoughts and then gently bring your attention back to the sounds you can hear.

Really use your hearing. Start to try and focus on sounds...what qualities do these sounds have? Gentle? Fast? Comforting? Heavy?

Now try and focus on the sounds separate to the object making the sounds.

Are you noticing any thoughts? Let them go and gently bring your focus back to the sounds you are hearing. [PAUSE]

To conclude move your attention to focus on any sounds you can hear in your body. Can you hear your breath? Your heart beating? Buzzing or other sounds in your ears? [PAUSE] Now finish by bringing your attention back to your breathing. What sounds do you notice with your breath?

Now... When you are ready...Open your eyes."

Imagine...

Picture yourself:

- Gathering emotions, scrunching them up, and putting them into a box.
- Walking, swimming, biking, or jogging away from painful feelings.
- Imagining your thoughts as a song or TV programme you dislike, changing the channel or turning down the volume – they're still there, but you don't have to listen to them.

Get Moving Mentally and Physically for Wellbeing

- Helping children become aware of the ways in which thoughts can influence emotions and behaviour is one of the most valuable lessons we can bequeath. Cognitive-behavioural therapy can help children reframe how they identify, interpret and evaluate their emotional and behavioural reactions to negative experiences.
- The following activities include a range of mental and physical wellbeing strategies alongside ideas and tools for developing positive responses to stress and anxiety including tools from Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Mindful movement script

Start by standing up, straighten your back. Be aware of how your body feels when you stand up. [PAUSE] Now, begin to take your focus down to the soles of your feet. What do you notice? What sensations are you aware of as your feet are in contact with the ground. What does the ground feel like? Do you notice stability? Roughness? Other textures? As you focus on yourself standing on the ground...notice...has your mind wandered? If it had wandered, gently bring it back to the soles of your feet and stand tall.

Now stretch and reach your arms upwards...notice the different bodily sensations as you do. Now, slowly and carefully bringing your arms back towards your sides, letting your hands hang...[PAUSE]

Now begin to walk carefully, slowly, gently around the space. You walk very often but, as you walk now, you are aware of the sensations in your feet. Take your attention to your feet as they step...[PAUSE]...which part of your feet touches the ground first as you take a step? What happens to your foot as you step on the ground and then lift it? [PAUSE]

It is normal for your mind to wander. If you notice this, just gently bring your focus back to your feet as you are walking. [PAUSE]

As you keep walking move your attention from your feet to exploring the sensations in your legs. Notice your knees as you walk. Do they feel tense? Relaxed? What do you notice as you take each step? Take your attention to the shifting of your weight with each step. [PAUSE] Really notice the sensations. [PAUSE]

Now begin to move your attention to your back and your spine. [PAUSE] Without judgement, notice how your back and spine feel...explore the sensation...is there tension? What do you notice? If you feel your mind wandering, gently bring it back to your spine. [PAUSE]

Now take your attention to your whole body at the same time. In the moment. As you walk. Taking each careful step and sensing your body as a whole. [PAUSE] Notice your breathing and how this impacts your whole body. [PAUSE]

When you are ready begin to slow down and stop. Stand still, straight and tall. [PAUSE] You may want to look at the ground or close your eyes. [PAUSE] As you stand, still notice the sense of your whole body. When you are ready, open your eyes or look up.

Testing out thoughts using experiments

One of the most helpful strategies for challenging these negative automatic thoughts or NATS is to **test the evidence**.

You can work through and answer the following questions:

- What is the evidence for this thought.
- What is the evidence against this thought?
- What would my best friend say if they heard my thought?
- What would my teacher say if they heard my thought?
- What would my parents say if they heard my thought?
- What would I say to my best friend if he/she had this same thought?
- Am I making mistake? For example, blowing it up, forgetting my strengths or good points, self-blaming or predicting failure or thinking that I can mind read what others are thinking?

This kind of strategy is particularly useful in terms of reinforcing the need to gather accurate evidence. What we believe about ourselves is not always true. It is often not how others always see us and we need to challenge these kinds of beliefs.

Orange segments activity

Draw an outline of ten orange segments. Write down one thing you do now to stay healthy (physically and mentally) in five of the segments. Use different coloured pencils to then record five things in the remaining segments that you would like to do (and which are realistic) to stay physically and mentally healthy, but which you don't do now.

Finally, talk about this with friends and family and see who can support you.

Digital Issues

Take some time to think about how you use social media and be honest with yourself. Is using your phone making you happy or anxious? Do you need to take a digital detox and timetable your screen time so that it is more balanced with the rest of your world? Don't forget that used in the right way, social media can help you. You can keep in touch with friends, post things to make others feel better about themselves and share good advice.

Create a 'kind messages WhatsApp group' or use 'The daily calm app (a 10 minute meditation every day) to reduce anxiety.

Key to self-esteem

Boosting positive emotions – **ACT!**

There are many ways of managing emotions and boosting wellbeing and self-esteem.

These can be placed under three headings:

Active ones – running, swimming, singing

Calming ones – mindfulness and relaxation

Thinking ones – challenging negative thoughts

What do you do now for each one? What could you do more of?

Make a list of what you do now and try and think about how many times each week you do these to boost positive feelings and emotions. Keep an ACT diary for a week so you can see what worked when and what did not work quite so well for you.

Negative thinking

Identifying a negative thought you have and then ask the following questions: “Am I making a mistake with this negative thought?” For example am I:

- Blowing this situation up?
- Forgetting my strengths or good points?
- Blaming myself for things that aren't my fault?
- Imagining that I will fail before I do?
- Thinking that I can read other people's minds?

Calm it down

How do you stop yourself from blowing things out of proportion?
What can you say to yourself? Make a list of questions and a script that you can use when you know that you are beginning to get things out of proportion. Make this include some calming-down messages.

My NAT diary

Providing evidence against negative thoughts is enormously powerful in accepting that they may not be true. Keeping a physical record can help you to think things through rather than just accepting the automatic thought. In turn, this may lead to thinking alternative thoughts which will help you to feel better and influence your actions in a positive way. It is a proven strategy to help you cope with different situations. Design and keep a diary of negative automatic thoughts. This will help you to take more notice of your thoughts and challenge them.

My positive challenge

Set yourself a challenge to increase your positive thinking over a one-week period. Try to identify and record ten positive thoughts daily.

Reframing negative thoughts

Negative automatic thoughts (NATs) can be turned into more positive, balanced and realistic ones through reframing. For example, 'I am just fat' could be reframed as 'I need to lose some weight and tone up a bit but my overall shape isn't that bad', or 'I always get the maths work wrong' could be reframed as 'Some of these sums are difficult but I know I can do the basics – I just need to work hard and find help in order to improve my skills.' Have a go at this!

Distraction

You can sometimes control your negative thoughts by thinking of something else.

- You can describe in detail what you see around you to feel calmer. You could attempt to name all of your favourite bands.
- You can use self-talk techniques and repeat a positive coping message until the negative automatic thought has gone.
- You can 'bin' the thoughts by writing them down and then screwing the paper up and putting it in the bin – symbolically eradicating the negative thoughts.
- You can also keep a positive diary in order to record positive automatic thoughts (PATs) that occur during the day and engage in realistic goal setting which involves practice.

What do you do?

Positive Diary time

To help you to focus on all the evidence that your current situation is positive, rather than just noticing challenging or threatening problems and worrying thoughts or images, start to keep a Positive Daily Diary.

This is a brief note – on paper, your phone, tablet or computer – of anything you notice each day that appears ‘positive’: enriching, pleasing, a reminder of nature, happy warm, loving and so on.

Connect for Wellbeing

Connection with others is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. It is clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people all ages.

Ultimately connections matter. Strong ties with family, and the community provide us with happiness, security, support and a sense of purpose. Being connected to others is important for our mental and physical wellbeing and can be a protective factor against anxiety and depression.

The following activities include a range of positive psychology strategies including various ideas and tools for developing positive connections which reduce stress and anxiety. You may feel you want to adapt them for younger children.

Relationship circles activity

Think about the people in your life – family, friends acquaintances – and write their names in a series of concentric circles. Firstly, draw out a series of 4 circles one inside the other – the smallest in the middle and the largest on the outside.

Instructions might be as follows:

1. Put the name of those you are closest to in circle 1, usually family, sometimes described as people you live with or people you like to hug (people who love you the most)
2. Your very best friends in circle 2 but not quite as close as circle 1.
3. Your wider friend circle 3, maybe people in groups, scouts or a team.
4. Place those who are paid to help you in circle 4, these include people like doctors and teachers and mental health professionals such as the school councellers or the mental health lead.

Make sure that you know who to turn to if you are having a bad day or feel very worried about something. Never be afraid to ask for help. It is a sign of strength – not weakness!

Who helps me?

Make a list of all the people in your life who help you to think positively and support you to engage in effective thinking. Who challenges you when you are being negative? Who provides you with constructive and helpful feedback? How can you thank them and increase the time you spend with them?

10 keys to happier living

1. GIVING – Do things for others
2. RELATING – Connect with people
3. EXERCISING – Take care of your body
4. APPRECIATING – Notice the world around you
5. TRYING OUT – Keep learning new things
6. DIRECTION - Have goals to look forward to
7. RESILIENCE – Find ways to bounce back
8. EMOTION – Take a positive approach
9. ACCEPTANCE – Be comfortable with who you are
10. MEANING – Be part of something bigger

Stop and think! How do you use each of these keys? It is worth trying to make a list of ways that you give to others and ways that you look after yourself. Can you think of other things you might do?

The 5 key elements to emotional wellbeing

1. **CONNECT** – This is to be social and make an effort to connect with someone each day. Call or meet up with someone who makes you feel good.
2. **BE ACTIVE** – 30 minutes of activity each day is said to keep your emotional wellbeing protected.
3. **KEEP LEARNING** – Reflect each day on one thing you learned that day. It may be about any topic. Did you learn a key fact in History? Did you learn about a chemical reaction? Did you learn what is important to a friend? What do you know today that you did not know yesterday?
4. **GIVE** – This keeps happy hormones active in our minds and bodies. Try it, think of ways you can give and who to. It may be giving your time to read with a younger sibling, giving help to an older person, or a gift to a friend.
5. **BE MINDFUL** – Being mindful is about enjoying the time here and now, not wishing you were somewhere else or thinking about what is for dinner! We know that appreciating the senses present in the moment, encourages our bodies to work better.

Think about what you do for each of these. How can you timetable these into your daily routine?

Climb the mountain

Write or draw all of your goals/things you would like to do on a piece of paper. Cut them out and then arrange them on a picture of a mountain. Place the ones that seem easiest to achieve at the bottom, the most difficult at the top and the slightly easier ones in the middle. Next – start with the first and easiest task – when you have achieved it , climb a little further up the mountain and try the next one. Remember – take small steps to reach the top! Make sure you identify who can help you to reach the top and what they can do to support you. How will you connect with them? How will you support them too.

My Positive Scroll

Make yourself a positive scroll. Sometimes we forget to think about the positive things that happen – not good! Every evening think of one thing (at least) that has happened that made you feel good. Record these on your positive scroll. At the end of the week look at the list – now you know that positive things really do happen to you!

Three-kind-acts-a-day pledge

Make a pledge to do three kind acts each day. Plan and write them out daily and see what a difference you can make to other people in your life. What will you do today? Where will you record your pledge and who will you share it with?

Help a friend

Think about your friends and the things that they may need help with – for instance homework, going out to socialise, feeling good, seeing the positive. How can you help each one. What would you say and do in order to support and provide what psychologists call ‘social buffering’.

Wonderful wall

Design a wonderful wall of bricks which you record happy thoughts, ideas mantras etc. each day. Use happy colours and designs to make this special and add images you have collected from the media.

Family and friends scripts

With a partner choose one family member each who you sometimes find difficult. Workout together a script or a few phrases that you could try out over the next week to manage this relationship better

Examples of scripts:

- It is helpful when you listen to me, thankyou.
- I do not like it when you ignore me. Please don't.
- I feel good when you take time to do an activity with me.
- I feel stressed when you stand too close to me.
- When you make decisions for me I feel unhappy and out of control.

Prioritising

Prioritising is a crucial skill. It allows us to develop balance in our lives and helps us to keep stressors in perspective.

Have a go! Create lists as follows:

- Important things that must be done.
- Important things which I can wait to do.
- Things which are not particularly important.

Ask a friend to help you and discuss what works best in this process.

Pleasurable activities planner

Pleasure can reverse the negative feelings and make us more resilient to them. Try out activities that calm the soul, like hiking, taking a warm bath, listening to music, eating a nice meal, playing games and being with friends. We can also get pleasure through challenging activities like sports, music, art, dancing and volunteering. Make a plan for your week!