

# Transitioning back to schools and settings as lockdown lifts

50+ practical ideas for  
secondary schools

Educational Psychology &  
Schools Emotional Wellbeing Service  
June 2020



ENFIELD  
THRIVES TOGETHER



# Welcome!

This practical, activity-based booklet is designed to complement the guidance produced by the Educational Psychology Service 'Transitioning back as lockdown lifts.'

The five principles shared in that document are evidence-informed, drawn from what research can tell us about how to support communities to recover from trauma. Here, we share ideas about how to bring those principles to life in your classrooms, playgrounds, and virtual learning environments. We want this to be supportive, not prescriptive. We know you have a lot to process and plan- take what's helpful, and leave the rest.

Enfield Professional Learning are working closely with the Educational Psychology Service and other services including the Secondary Behaviour Support Service and the Mental Health Support Teams/CAMHS to offer a professional learning program to schools for September. This will bring to life through online twilight sessions, how to understand and embed the recovery curriculum to improving wellbeing and learning. We will be sharing more details soon, in the meantime, please email enquiries to [anna.vaughan@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:anna.vaughan@enfield.gov.uk)

We want to acknowledge that lots of fantastic materials are being generously shared during the pandemic, both by Educational Psychology Services and other services and organisations. Many of the ideas here have been drawn from or influenced by the things that we have read and seen as a service.

If you'd like to share your other ideas, or inspire other schools with how these activities have worked for you on the Enfield Professional Learning virtual learning environment, we'd love to hear from you. Please email [eps-sewse@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:eps-sewse@enfield.gov.uk) to collaborate on a brief blog post or video.

Thank you for everything you have done and are doing, to ensure the safety, learning and happiness of Enfield's children and young people.

We stand with you.

## Educational Psychology Service

# CREATING A SENSE OF SAFETY

Young people and their parents need to know that we are doing everything we can to ensure their physical safety. Running alongside this is a deep need for psychological safety.



## EXPLICITLY DISCUSS THE CHANGES TO YOUR SCHOOL

Make sure that you address explicitly and regularly talk about what is different in school, and why this is happening



## REVISIT AN EXPLANATION OF CORONAVIRUS

While we may feel that young people have 'got it' by now, it is striking that a clear explanation of the virus, its risks, its impact and how to stay safe is near the top of young people's wishlists.



## CREATE 'SAFE AT SCHOOL' POSTERS

Ask pupils to work- individually or in groups- to design posters with the information about how to keep ourselves and others safe e.g. a handwashing poster; a social distancing poster. These can be displayed around the school, and on the school website, as well as being shared with parents.

## NORMALISE FACE MASKS

As these are becoming compulsory on public transport, it might be helpful to explore and normalise these. You could do this by talking about images of people wearing masks in different contexts (e.g. in an operating theatre; on a train). Be curious about young people's thoughts and feelings about people wearing masks, and about wearing a mask themselves.



## TAKE VIRTUAL TEMPERATURES

Regularly ask pupils to let you know how safe they feel, what is helping them to feel safe, and what is undermining their safety. Mentimeter is a great way to electronically gather the views of lots of people. Pull together their views, take action, and feed back about what pupils said, and how you have taken action in response.

## BUILD PARENTS' CONFIDENCE

Regularly share this safety work with parents and carers, so that they feel confident that their children are safe at school. Their explicit and implicit messages will have a huge impact on how safe their children feel.

## **WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE A SAFETY TOUR OF THE ROOM OR SCHOOL**

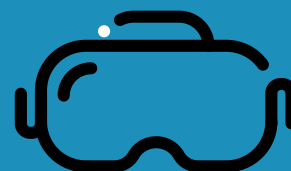
How would the group allay the worries of a pupil who has not yet come back to school (or their parents)? You could collaboratively produce a script which explains all the safety features and precautions being taken, and ask young people to record themselves explaining and demonstrating these. You could edit the film together to share with the school community.

### **CREATE A SAFE RETREAT**

Invite young people to create a safe space in their minds, using a guided visualisation. This can be somewhere they have been before, have dreamed about going to, have seen a picture of, or have created in their imaginations. Talk through a script (freely available online) asking them to imagine every aspect of their safe space. Make space in each day for everyone to visit their safe space in their minds. Young people might want to share their safe spaces, by drawing, modelling or discussing them.

### **READ THE NEWS WITH 'SAFETY GOGGLES'**

If young people are listening to, watching or reading the news, invite them to put on their imaginary 'safety goggles' to help them spot every action or plan being made to help people stay safe. Discuss these observations as a group.



# CREATING A SENSE OF CALM



Feeling stressed, unsettled and worried at the moment is very normal. We are all experiencing the pandemic differently and we know that our pupils have huge capacity to adapt, accept and show resilience, and we can create a sense of calm which helps them to tap into these strengths.

## BE PRESENT



Talk young people through the 'five things' exercise, to notice five things they can see, four things they can hear, three things they can smell, two things they can touch, and one thing they can taste.

Make handwashing a mindful moment - smell the soap, notice the temperature of the water, feel the touch of your two hands rubbing together, watch the soap forming bubbles and the water pouring.



## TALK ABOUT IT

Set up a way for children to identify and share how they are feeling e.g. a scale which ranges from calm to very anxious. Invite adults to use the scale too, showing children that our emotions come and go throughout the day. ***The incredible five point scale*** and the ***Blob guide to social distancing*** (both books for sale) are helpful resources here.

## DROP AN ANCHOR

As a group, practise grounding yourselves into the here and now by pushing your feet into the floor, feeling the chair supporting your back, and starting to notice what you can see and hear around you. You can find 'drop the anchor' scripts online to read out to the group.

## MODEL COPING

Notice your own wide ranging emotions, and speak these out loud saying "I'm feeling calm and hopeful this morning" or "This afternoon I'm feeling a bit stressed and worried." Model taking time to attend to your feelings e.g. by taking a deep breath, having a drink of water, taking a walk at lunchtime, or talking to a friend.

## 'BREATHE DEEPLY AND OFTEN

Lead the group through an exercise of 7-11 breathing, which lowers anxiety in a physical way by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system (the system responsible for 'rest and digest' rather than 'fight or flight'). Ask everyone to breathe in for a count of seven, and out for a count of 11. Encourage breathing from the diaphragm (which pushes our stomachs) out rather than the lungs (which pushes our chest out).



## TEACH ABOUT ANXIETY

Use psychoeducational resources to help pupils understand how anxiety manifests in our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and bodily sensations, and its evolutionary purpose. Russ Harris' YouTube video about the evolution of the human mind is helpful.

### PLAY MUSIC

Play calming music at a low volume. Invite pupils to share music which they find calming, and play it to the group. Ask pupils to notice what effects different music has on their emotions. Show pupils how to use the Cove app to capture their mood and express how they feel, choosing music to reflect their emotions and storing it in a personal journal.

### YOGA

Invite pupils to participate in a daily group session involving poses, stretches and relaxation, using a YouTube video. Encourage adults to participate too. Try this at a transition point, such as settling back in after break or lunch. If movement is restricted, try seated yoga.

### TRY MUSCLE RELAXATION

With scripts freely available online, this exercise invites children to tense and then relax the various sets of muscles in their body. Try it together, and then ask them to discuss how it made them feel, both physically and emotionally.

### KEEP MEMORY IN MIND

When we are preoccupied and worried, our working memory capacity reduces. Try giving shorter instructions, chunking information, and displaying information visually using drawings, symbols and now and next boards.



### TRY INTENSE EXERCISE

If your group seems very unsettled or restless, try intense exercise to 'reset' everyone. Ask everyone to run on the spot as fast as they can for three minutes, or do 100 jumping jacks together.



### OFFER SENSORY SOOTHING

Encourage students to set up their own calming kit which they can keep with them during the school day. They might like to include things they can smell (e.g. lavender; vanilla); look at (a picture of nature, or a photo of loved ones), hear (soothing tracks on their phone); touch (soft materials) and taste (a mint to suck).

### COLOURING

Experiment with colouring as a calming activity. Print out colouring sheets aligned to pupils' interests, or try some mandala patterns. Have these available at transition points, when people are moving around and the group can become unsettled.



# CREATING A SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS AND BELONGING

As lockdown eases, we need to reconnect our pupils into our school communities, and help them to stay connected with their families and friends at a time when previous ways of connecting may not be possible.



## LINK UP YOUR BUBBLES

Similar to the idea of 'twinning' towns, pair your bubble with another bubble which is in school at the same time, or with a neighbouring school with a same-age bubble. Link up via live video for a shared activity, or send weekly videos with your news and highlights, with the other bubble sending a reply.

## SHARE HUMANITY

Let young people know that they are not alone in their feelings and experiences, with a game which invites them to 'touch your head/wave your arms/stand up/lift up one leg' if... "You feel a bit nervous to be back/quite excited to be back' etc. Make sure the adults join in, modelling the whole range of thoughts and feelings.

## SHOW YOUR LOVE

Watch the wonderful video 'While we can't hug' together, and talk as a group about all the ways in which we can share our love with our friends, teachers and family, during this period when physical touch is limited.



## DEVELOP A HANDLESS HANDSHAKE

As a group, come up with a unique series of actions you can use to say hello and goodbye to each other during the school day. Good hellos and goodbyes are especially important at the moment, after the shock of the sudden 'goodbye' in March.

## PLAY TOGETHER

Think creatively about non-contact sports and games, and hold a weekly game (e.g. with pupils on one team and staff on another).



## COLLABORATE IN LEARNING

Look for opportunities for group activities and projects, such as group reading sessions, or working together on an online project. Make a whole school video, by editing together contributions from each class bubble.



### CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

Ask each pupil to map out their supportive relationships with themselves in the middle and a series of concentric circles, where they can put the people they are closest to in the circle closest to them, and continue until they reach the circle for acquaintances who enrich their lives in some way.

### DON'T DROP THE BALL

Create a "pass the ball" video, with film of each person catching and then throwing a ball, then edit the clips together to include the whole bubble or school. You could invite pupils not currently attending school to send film in too. Tiktok has lots of similar ideas.



### SHOW YOU CARE

You could link up with a local care home, sending letters and drawings to be safely displayed in the home.



### MARK ENDINGS

Think with pupils about how to recreate traditions for how to recreate some of the lost rituals, such as a 'virtual leavers' assembly, or working together on a digital memory book of their time at school.

### SING TOGETHER

Can your pupils think of a song which captures how you want to feel, and what you want to stand for, as a community? Could you learn this song within your bubbles, and sing it together as a whole school each day? You might not be able to gather together in one room, but could open all the doors and sing at the tops of your voices to try to make sure the other classes can hear you.



### CREATE A GROUP ART INSTALLATION

Ask each pupil to decorate a hand print/stone. You could include young people who aren't currently in school. Create a group display from the art in the school entrance or corridors, or install the rocks in the playground. Use chalks in the playground to create rainbows or spirals which other class bubbles can add to. Talk about how together we are more than the sum of our parts.

### CENTRE CIRCLE TIME

Take time each day to check in and connect as a group. Invite pupils to share something they like or admire about the person next to them, or something they have enjoyed doing with them. Try collaborative story building, where each pupil contributes an idea.





# PROMOTING A SENSE OF CONTROL



At a time when so much is beyond our control, young people need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them, and believe that their actions and those of the groups they belong to (family, class and school) will lead to positive outcomes.

## OFFER CHOICES

Ask the class to make decisions about which resources you'll use, or how you'll do an activity. Offer individual pupils choices about how they do things, or the order in which they do things.

## COLLABORATE ON YOUR TIMETABLES

Invite pupils to shape their week by having a postbox (or virtual equivalent) where they can suggest things they'd like to do. Pick one at random each day or week, and incorporate this into your timetable. Even if the pupils' actual wishes (e.g. 'hang out with my friends at the park!') can't be implemented, you could creatively follow the spirit of the wish (e.g. creating space in the day for everyone to connect with a friend or loved one).

## LISTEN TO PUPILS VOICES

If you have a pupil council, connect them together remotely for regular meetings. Support them to think of ways to ask other pupils (including those still at home) how they are feeling and what their priorities are. Meet more frequently with your council to hear their views, and include them in planning. Support them to feed back their involvement and decisions to their peers.

## GIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Delegate jobs as much as you can do within the public health guidelines. This could include some of the additional responsibilities relating to hygiene and cleanliness (with supervision to ensure they are carried out).

## APPEAL TO THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Think together about what a difference it makes if everyone at school follows the hygiene and social distancing rules. Talk about which of our actions help to protect ourselves, and which help to protect others who are vulnerable.

### SET A PROJECT

Give pupils a self-directed learning opportunity (e.g. working towards compiling a video or other digital outcome) which they can access at school and home, and can keep forever.



### JOURNAL

Teach about the mass observation archive at Sussex University, which has collected information about everyday life in Britain through this and other major events such as the second world war. Encourage pupils to keep a sentence a day journal during this unique time, or decide as a class or community to take part as a group (in a range of formats).

### CHOOSE A CAUSE

Talk together about causes which really matter to pupils at the moment. The Black Lives Matter movement and the climate change campaigns are both very relevant at the moment. Think together as a group about how we can influence our local, national and international communities, and plan concrete action. This might include starting or signing a petition, starting a conversation about these issues with a peer or adult, or writing to an adult in power about the action we'd like them to take. Talk about how together, our actions can give us power to change things.



### CIRCLES OF CONCERN AND INFLUENCE

Individually or as a group, think about what is currently in your circle of concern. Everything you place inside the circle matters to you; everything outside the circle does not. Next, think about which of the issues in your circle of concern is within your circle of influence. Challenge pupils to think about how things may be indirectly within their influence, even where they feel powerless. Encourage pupils to focus their energy on the things which are within their influence, and to ask for the help they need with the things which they cannot control.

### USE PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING



Teach young people to plan their projects and free time, and to set goals for their days and weeks. Support them to follow through with taking action to work towards their goals. Help them to record these goals so that they get a sense of achievement and control from ticking off the items on their plan or list.

### GET ORGANISED!

Use visual resources and written lists to help pupils to continue to develop their independence and organisational skills. We all feel more in control when we're confident that we have everything we need for our day.



# CREATING A SENSE OF HOPE

Whilst life may feel difficult now for some people, it is important that adults, young people and young people think that things will get better and work out in the future.



## CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Celebrate the reopening of your school, and the formation of your class bubble. Reunite with pupils you were already connected to, and welcome those who are new to your bubble. Plan time each day and week for celebrating strengths and progress, both individually and within the community, country and world.

## EXPRESS GRATITUDE

Write messages, cards, or letters, or make videos to thank people who have looked after us and kept us safe. This could be to parents and carers, school staff, or key workers in the community such as in health settings or local shops. Contribute to local or national campaigns to recognise services and individuals whose actions have been extraordinary.

## CREATE A TIME CAPSULE

Put together a capsule for young people to find in the future. How would pupils explain this very unusual time, and what life has been like for them? How would they capture what they have learnt that will help them in the future?

## FIND THE TREASURE

Think together about what has been the hidden treasure in the midst of this difficult time. Not having to get up so early in the morning? More time for gaming?! There may also be 'collective' treasure, such as all the people in Enfield who volunteered to help the vulnerable, and acts of kindness, generosity and bravery. Invite young people to share the hidden treasure, perhaps using a tool like mentimeter so that they can share anonymously. Notice and celebrate these hidden treasures together.

## CHASE RAINBOWS...

Young people could draw or create rainbows using mixed media or IT, and display these with messages of hope e.g. on the school website or around the school.

You could hold a rainbow day of hope where each person or 'bubble' wears an item of a particular colour, to make a rainbow photograph.

Talking together about how rainbows occur, and reading stories of rainbows, with the message that rainbows need both rainfall and sunshine. What is the rainfall and sunshine in your pupils' lives at the moment?



## LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPE

As a group, find out more about hope: what inspires and encourages it, how to hold onto it, and how to harness it for the collective good:  
<https://ideas.ted.com/how-to-be-more-hopeful/>

## KEEP AN 'AFTER THE VIRUS' WISHLIST

Keep a running list of activities, events and moments which you and your pupils are looking forward to experiencing once the virus no longer restricts us. This could be done individually or with a class 'jar' or list kept on the computer. This is a good way to reframe sadness and regret ("Yes, it is really sad that we can't have sports day. Shall we add that to our list of things we're looking forward to once we're back to normal?")

## THREE GOOD THINGS

As a ritual to start or end your days together, invite each pupil to share three good things they have noticed or experienced (or are looking forward to) that day. Make sure the adults take part too. This might feel tricky at first, but people will soon start paying more attention to positive experiences, so they can share them in the discussion.

## FIND GOOD NEWS

Ask pupils to find (or share with them, depending on their developmental stage) the good news stories locally, nationally, and internationally. Talk about these together. Depending on young people's ages and abilities, you could think critically together about press and the news cycle (e.g. the news cycle relying on anxiety and repeated checking; ownership and freedom of speech; what drives people to consume news, and what kinds of news they seek).

## BREATHE WITH THE PLANET

Learn together about the impact on the planet of reduced travel and production, in terms of air quality, wildlife, and other effects. Bring this to life using videos, art and science. Talk together about what we can do, individually and collectively, to ensure that we maintain this progress as time goes on. What changes can we each make in our own lives?

## GROW TREES OF LIFE

Support pupils to see themselves, their families, their strengths and resources beyond this moment of crisis. Use the tree of life intervention to invite pupils to reflect on their roots (family history, and where they come from), their ground (their life and activities now), trunk (their strengths and positive attributes) and branches (their hopes, dreams and wishes for their lives).

## HOOK INTO HISTORY

Depending on young people's ages and abilities, revisit historical periods when communities have experienced great crises (e.g. the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic; the second world war; recent wars and natural disasters) and survived. Think together about what helped them to survive, and find testimonies of hope and resilience from people who lived through these experiences. Humankind: A hopeful history (Rutger Bregman) is helpful here.

## GIVE HOPE TO OTHERS

As a group, think about what helps us to feel hopeful when we are sad, lonely, or feel worried that things won't be ok. Write poetry and stories, and create drawings and artwork, with these messages of hope. Create a group pinterst board where pupils can pin inspiring images and quotations. Share them within your school community and with your local communities (e.g. care homes; shops; parks).

# LINKS TO RESOURCES



## **The Incredible Five Point Scale**

<https://www.5pointscale.com/books.html>

## **The blob guide to social distancing**

<https://loggerheadpublishing.co.uk/product/blob-guide-to-social-distancing-download/>

## **Russ Harris YouTube video (up to 1min 24 secs)**

<https://thehappinesstrap.com/evolution-of-the-human-mind/>

## **Cove app**

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/cove/>

## **Human Kind book**

<https://www.rutgerbregman.com/books>



## **7-11 breathing**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F9CuWE3UCg>

## **Drop an anchor**

<https://youtu.be/ggMu6kFfQcE>

## **Safe space**

<https://youtu.be/G1bxxiiXc48>

## **Seated yoga**

<https://youtu.be/tAUf7aajBWE>

