

RECONNECTION IN SCHOOLS

Developing emotional safety, focusing on relationship,
celebrating community

As schools return after a prolonged period of lockdown teachers will be busy with many new protocols to ensure physical safety. The emotional wellbeing of children will also be high on the agenda. This is a brief guide to practices that help to establish an environment where compassion and kindness are an intrinsic part of the school day. Some suggestions can be implemented immediately while others are longer term. The focus is on primary schools but many of the ideas are applicable to secondary schools. I am a qualified child counsellor, former teacher and wellbeing consultant. You can [find out more](#) here.

CREATING TOGETHERNESS AND COMMUNITY

- Helping children to regulate their feelings through joyful and fun activities - a school in Denmark reported success with using a bubble machine at the school gates
- Developing a sense of identity with music, movement and dance, creating comforting routines and rituals
- Creating structure and predictability - visual timetables, explaining processes, patience and care if children need reassurance



Playfulness
Movement
Predictability

STAFF WELLBEING AS A PRIORITY



Slow down
Regulate emotions
Focus on relationships

- Recognising the key role that adults play in helping children to feel calm and safe
- Mental health checklist for staff and designated time to check-in with colleagues
- Working in collaboration
- Attention to the physical environment eg staff rooms, meditation/ quiet room
- Practising emotional regulation as a team - daily sessions
- Reduce 'busy-ness' and slow down

CHILD CENTRED CURRICULUM

- Notice and celebrate what children already know, including anything unusual they have learnt at home
- Suspend the formal curriculum temporarily
- Focus on the learning process - show curiosity about different ways of learning
- Acknowledge and accept that there will be gaps in learning
- Create regular sensory breaks
- Provide grounding activities such as gardening and baking



Celebrate
Accept
Show curiosity

DEVELOPING A FELT SENSE OF SAFETY

- Developing a relational approach rather than behavioural (amending behaviour policies)
- Using welcoming gestures, facial expressions, body language
- Mental health checklist for all children
- Work closely with parents to monitor mental health and develop healthy transitions
- Check that consistent and familiar adults are available
- Work in small groups with plenty of time for interaction eg playing games, singing, music
- Focus on experience rather than end product, let go of the need to be perfect!
- Adopt a slower pace with reduced movement around the school
- Develop trauma aware practices



Mental health awareness
Familiar adults
Creative ways to interact

ACKNOWLEDGING EMOTIONS

- Be creative about finding ways to provide Circle Times, Golden Times and listening systems
- Provide a calm box and/ or mindfulness tasks
- Provide specific support to year groups who will be leaving the school
- Set up discussion groups for children from BAME families
- Opportunities to tell open ended stories and use of the arts
- Practice gratitude and conscious acts of kindness
- Help children to process sadness and loss - develop collective grieving practices. Ask mental health professionals such as school counsellors for support with this
- Over time some children may need specific small group support or counselling



Mindfulness
Gratitude
Processing sadness

FURTHER SUPPORT



- Please check my [website](#) for training, reflection webinars, free lesson plans and resources
- Louise Bomber's book, 'Know me to teach me'
- An interesting [think piece](#)
- Free [resources](#) from the Anna Freud Centre