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Coronavirus

Supporting emotional wellbeing for children and staff

In this unprecedented time, we are going to experience a range of emotions, sometimes confusion, numbness or even no clearly identifiable feelings. This is all normal. There are some key things that we can do to look after our children's and our own emotional health.

BE ACCESSIBLE

Give some time to talk and process what is happening, with children and as a staff group too. But also make sure that Coronavirus is not the only thing being talked about. Some people may wish to talk a lot about this, and others may not.

Always be open and validate the range of emotions children will be experiencing and if they have difficulties expressing their feelings, model to them what feelings you think they could be experiencing.

Consider asking about what children have heard about the virus and the situation so that you can correct possible misconceptions and reassure them. It is ok to say you don't know - at the moment, there are questions we don't have answers to about Coronavirus.

Remember to keep things positive and give children hope. For example, tell children that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people.

Remember that people react differently to significant events. Some people – children and staff – may feel worried, some excited, some nothing much at all. Or we may have a mixture or range of emotions. Reassure pupils and staff that this is all normal and okay.

BE MINDFUL

Staff will need to model calmness, but it is also important to talk honestly and not pretend that things are not different and worrying for some.

Try to keep discussions about possible changes to school routines, each other's health and worries away from children if appropriate or try and explain the facts of the situation in words and language appropriate to the child/young person. Be as honest and truthful as you can. Children can easily pick up on adult anxieties and stress.

Keep to daily school routines as much as possible. Well-known routines in everyday life provide security and stability. Given that schools are to close, consider how to communicate this change of routine to all

children. For the most vulnerable consider if they will need a social story/script/visual timetable of new school learning remotely?

Remember to ask people how they are more than once. They will usually tell you how they really feel after being asked a second time and this can be a great opportunity to discuss feelings openly and connect with each other. Feeling listened to and connected to others can help with our emotional health.

Identify children whose emotional wellbeing may be more at risk. For example, those who may have relatives with health conditions, or recent bereavements, and some SEN groups such as those prone to anxiety, those with learning difficulties and those with Autism. If needed, seek advice from the Educational Psychology Service on 0208 583 4188.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Avoid being too immersed in media coverage. Be mindful of the amount and the content of the things you are reading and watching, including social media – as this may add to worry and anxiety. Consider a few updates every day from trusted sources.

Take care of yourself. Make sure you have breaks, time to relax, and ask for help from others if you need, whether at home or in school. If you are at home, music, breathing and relaxation exercises, distraction (such as watching something funny), pets and exercise can all help.

Some useful links:

Advice for educational settings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

NHS Advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

The British Psychological Society Advice:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Talking%20to%20children%20about%20coronavirus.pdf>

How to talk to your child about coronavirus, by Unicef:

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

Child-friendly explanation of Coronavirus for Primary age students:

https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf

Information video on Coronavirus for Primary age children (KS2), by Brainpop:

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

Information video on Coronavirus for older children/adults, by WHO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

Anxiety and world news

Talking about world trauma with kids

Managing anxiety age by age

<https://www.heysigmund.com/age-by-age-guide-to-fears/>

<https://gozen.com/allprograms/>

Mindfulness for kids

Smiling Mind <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Coronavirus and your wellbeing, by Mind UK:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

5 ways to wellbeing, by Mindkit:

<https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Note: as the situation and sources of information are developing, the above tips and links may be updated.