



Very soon we will be returning to school . We have had an extra long time away from school and as we all know, sometimes that can make it more difficult to return- with some carefully thought out adjustments we hope to make your return to school as easy, safe and supported as possible.

This information has been sent to you and your parent/ carer because we felt that you may find that the information in here helps you to prepare yourself for the return.

Firstly: Good respiratory and hand hygiene.

In order to help keep everyone as safe as possible we all need to be responsible for how we conduct ourselves. There will be plenty of hand sanitiser available around school and opportunities to wash your hands. You are welcome to bring your own sanitiser in for your own use. Coughs and sneezes should be caught in a tissue, popped into the bin and hands sanitised immediately afterwards. If you are feeling unwell at school - tell someone immediately- we will look after you.



There will be further guidance about one way systems for movement around school on your return.

We will all work together as a team to keep everyone safe and happy at school.

Managing emotions

Throughout the Lockdown period we have continued to work alongside outside agencies to ensure that services have continued to be available.

Some of these vital services have provided ideas and strategies that you may be able to use before we return to ease the return—particularly if there is some anxiety at the thought of the return to school.

In the next few pages there are some ideas to try at home—there are also some web addresses that you may find useful to look at if you feel that you need more. You may think that when reading these they would be difficult, embarrassing or even silly things to try but these are proven methods to help with relaxation, reduce anxiety and help you to feel emotionally better - go on give them a try!

Services involved are

- The Educational Psychology Service
- The Social Communication and outreach service
- CAMHS



Activity Outlines - Relaxation and Recovery

Title: Visualisation

Visualisation is creating a mental image to induce a feeling or relaxation. There has been research suggesting that the brain does not know the difference between imagining something and actually doing it. So, you can imagine you are lying on a beach relaxing and your brain will respond accordingly. Many sportsmen and athletes use visualisations to increase their success.

Aims of Visualisation:

- To encourage children to use and develop their imagination to create a positive state of mind
- To help children learn how to use their mind to relax the body
- To support children to centre, listen and concentrate

Notes on Reading out Visualisations

Play music softly and allow the children a few moments of rest. Read the visualisation in a soft and gentle voice. Be aware of the children's attention span and concentration, and speed up and slow down as necessary, to hold their attention. Leave plenty of pauses between sentences, to allow children to deepen their imaginative experiences. At the very end of the visualisation session, allow children to get into their favourite sleeping position and allow them to rest there for a few moments longer.

To encourage children to enjoy being alone and just thinking about themselves, get them to imagine they are in a bubble. If their bubble touches another bubble it will burst. In this bubble they can't see anyone, or talk to anyone, or touch anyone. If a child is not co-operating, try the bubble then look at them directly as you read the visualisation. If this still doesn't work, sit closer to them as you read the visualisation and gently touch their arm.

Example Visualisations

Relaxing on the beach

Close your eyes. Be very still and imagine you are lying down on the beach. Feel the warm sand under your body. You can hear the waves of the sea. Now, very gently, you are going to relax each part of your body. Start with your feet. Let your toes completely relax and become soft. Squeeze your legs and gently let them go. Feel all the tension in your legs releasing as they become relaxed and soft. Squeeze the muscles in your tummy and let go completely. Stretch your back as long as you can. And relax. Can you feel your back sinking into the sand? Now, squeeze your shoulders up to

your ears and let them relax and become soft. Let all the tension melt away. Squeeze your arms as tight as you can and let them go. Allow your arms to feel heavy as they sink into the sand. Squeeze your fingers into a tight fist and now uncurl them slowly and rest them softly on the golden sand. Scrunch your face into a tiny ball. Squeeze and squeeze and let go. And relax. Let your head completely relax. Relax your eyes. Relax your ears. Relax your cheeks. Relax your forehead. Become completely still and relaxed. Feel the warm sun on your face and body as you sink down further into the powdery sand. As you lie there, listen to the waves and see if you can breathe in and out like the waves. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Stay there for as long as you like. Enjoying the feeling of being completely relaxed.

Breathing

Ways to Teach Children to Breathe

The diaphragm is a big sheet of muscle that separates the lower part of our tummies and our chest. When we breathe in, our diaphragm presses down-making space for our lungs to fill up with air. Please note, in all breathing exercises, we breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth unless otherwise state. The slower the outbreath the more relaxed children will feel.

Breathing Exercises

(Repeat each exercise 2 -3 times)

Underwater breathing-You are going to hold your breath under water. Breathe in, hold your nose, puff out your cheeks, and hold for a count of three. Blow out very slowly and smoothly. Repeat this exercise 2 or 3 times.

Train breathing-Take in a deep breath and as you breathe out make a chugging noise like a train.

Birthday candles-Imagine you are blowing out candles on your birthday cake. Take in a deep breath and blow out the candles with little sharp breaths-one breath for each candle. See if you notice the muscles just above your tummy moving as you blow out.

Long breaths-Take in a deep breath, put your lips together to make a small O, and let out a soft, slow and steady breath. See if you can blow out all the old air in your lungs. Now take in a deep breath, filling your lungs with new, fresh air.

Balloon blowing-Imagine you are blowing up a balloon. Take in a deep breath, and steadily and slowly blow up your huge balloon. See the balloon getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Now close your eyes and imagine the balloon floating into the air. As you stand there, feel yourself becoming very quiet and peaceful. You can blow up the balloon, fill it with cross thoughts, put it on the floor and stamp on it. Now take in a

deep breath and imagine you are letting the balloon go. Hiss all the air out of the balloon.

Enormous sighs-Take in a deep breath, and let out a big sigh as you let the air out. See how noisy you can make your sighs. See who can make the noisiest sigh.

Bags of air-Imagine your lungs are two bags. Take in a slow breath and imagine you are filling the bags with fresh, clean air. Hold your breath for a count of three, and see if you can keep you air bags full. Now breathe out very slowly.

Squeeze and relax-Take in a deep breath, and as you breathe in, squeeze all the muscles in your body. Now breathe out and relax all the muscles in your body (good for when the children are lying down).

Feathers-Imagine you are blowing feathers into the room. Take in a deep breath, and as you breathe out, blow feathers softly into the air. Enjoy playing with the feathers as they dance in the air. See how high and far you can blow the feathers. See if you can make the feathers dance in the air with your breath.

Paper cut-outs-Adults or children can cut out paper shapes (leaf, heart, star, butterfly). They can be placed on the children's stomach as they breathe in and out. You could also make tissue paper butterflies and let children blow on them.

Alternate nostril breathing-Hold one side of your nose and breathe in and out from the other side. Alternate sides. Place your thumb on your right nostril and fourth finger on left nostril. Close the right and breathe through the left. Close the left and breathe out through the right.

Deep breaths-Take in a deep breath. Breathe in for a count of four, hold for a count of four and breathe out for a count of eight. Repeat this 4 times.

Tummy breaths-Imagine you are breathing into your tummy. Lie down and put your hand on your tummy, and as you take in a deep breath, feel your tummy rising upwards. As you breathe out, feel your tummy falling. Continue with tummy breaths and notice how you feel more and more relaxed and peaceful.

Farm animal breaths-Take in a big breath, and breathe out saying, "moo", "bahh", "neigh".²²

Dragon breathing-Take in a deep breath and blow out slowly like a fiery dragon.

Snake breaths-Take in a big breath, and as you breathe out, make a long hiss like a snake. How long can you make your hiss?

Bee breaths-Take in a big breath, and as you breathe out, put your lips together and very softly buzz like a bee.

Rocking the teddy-Lie on your back and place a teddy on your tummy. As you breathe in

and out, watch the teddy rock from side to side.

Five finger breathing-Hold up your left hand. Using your right index finger, trace up the outside of your left little finger. Breathe in whilst you do this. When you get to the top of your little finger, trace down the inside and breathe out. Repeat this with each finger in turn until you have traced up and down each one, taking five big, deep breaths.

Useful links for relaxation

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>

<https://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/bee-linda-bee-mindfulness-story/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/mindfulness-rainbow-walk/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/happy-visualisation/>

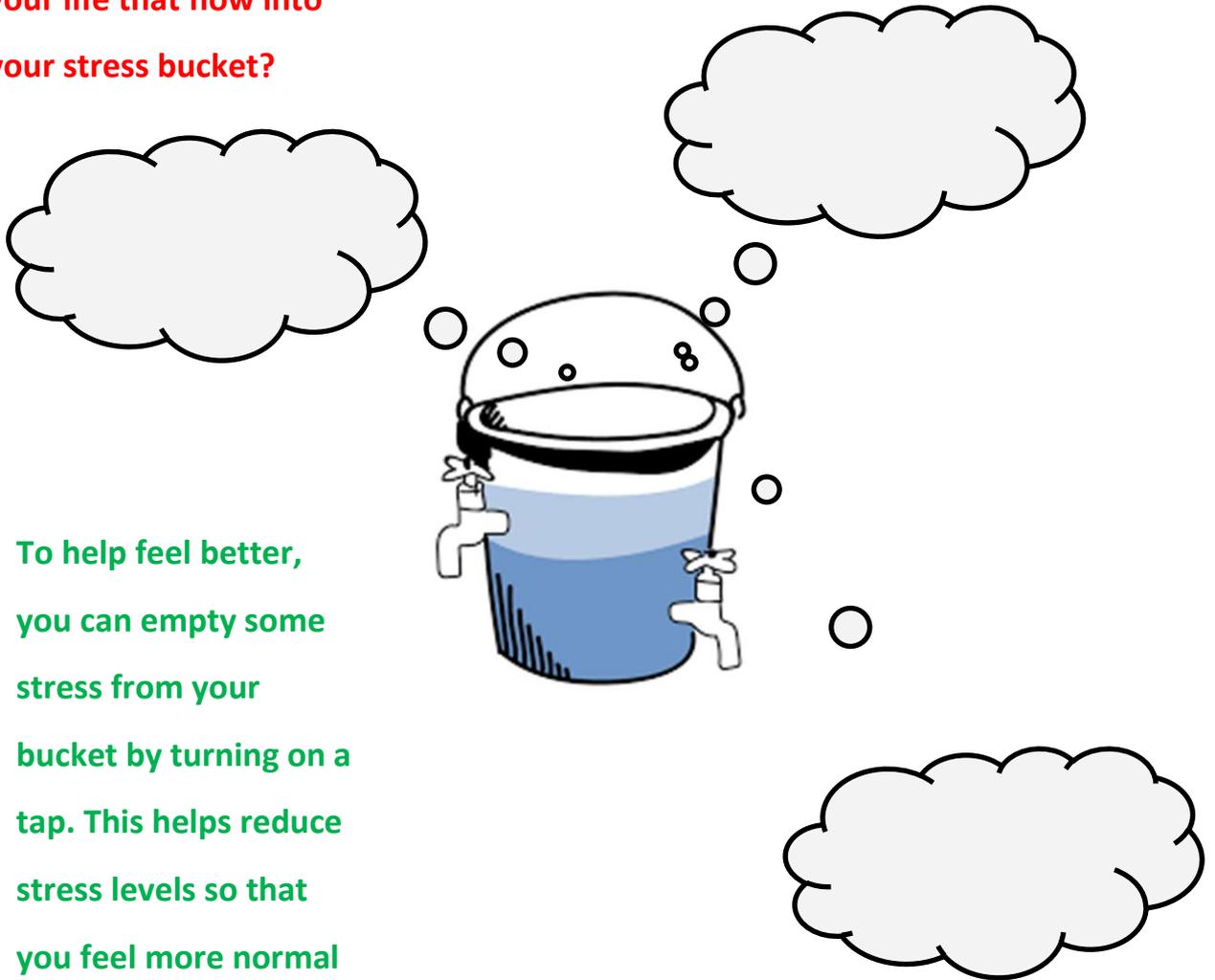
<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/goals-giant-mindful-colouring-poster/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/relaxationcalming-activities-children/>

Stress Bucket

We all experience stress in our lives but it can become difficult if we don't know how to manage this stress and that's when problems can start to happen.

What are the stresses in your life that flow into your stress bucket?



To help feel better, you can empty some stress from your bucket by turning on a tap. This helps reduce stress levels so that you feel more normal and relaxed.

Some of the ways you can turn on your taps to reduce your stress?

Plan time for things I enjoy

Talk to friends/family

Download a mindfulness app

Do a yoga class

Use a diary to manage my time

better

Have a bubble bath

Get a good night's sleep

Watch a movie I enjoy

Go for a walk or do some exercise

Make some healthy snacks



Childline – online counselling and advice on every possible worry you could face. Helpful videos, activities and coping strategies. Accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop. <https://www.childline.org.uk/>



Kooth -online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and is free to children and young people living in Darlington. www.kooth.com



Darlington Mind - Offer a range of support including counselling, one to one support, self-harm, mental wellbeing, emotional resilience workshops for pupils and support to staff.

Contact **01325 283169** contactus@darlingtonmind.co.uk



Growing Healthy Darlington 5-19 Service – School Nurse attached to each school on hand to provide advice and support based on the needs of the pupils. Call **03000 030013**



Papyrus - **HOPELineUK** is a specialist telephone service staffed by trained professionals who give non-judgemental support, practical advice and information to Children, teenagers and young people who are worried about how they are feeling. Call: **0800 068 41 41** Website: www.papyrus-uk.org



The Samaritans are available 24 hours a day Call: 116 123 and can be an invaluable point of contact in the small hours when other help lines are often closed. Website: www.samaritans.org



YoungMinds provides advice on how to seek help for yourself or a child in your care. There are also comprehensive guides to national services including a guide to Children and Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS). www.youngminds.org.uk



Breathe

Mindfulness app to help with everything from stress to sleep. It allows you to check in with your emotions and recommends short guided meditations. Free to download.



Headspace

Mindfulness app to help with everything from stress to sleep. It allows you to check in with your emotions and recommends short guided meditations. Free to download.

If any pupil is at risk of severe self-harm which could endanger life the CRISIS team is available to help on 03000200317

Getting back to a routine.

Lockdown has meant that many of us have had different patterns of sleep, doing (and not doing) different activities, eating differently and socialising differently.

If you feel that you need to get prepared and into a better routine here are some things you could try:

- Show how to get organised - prioritising things and thinking ahead
- Set alarms to get them used to a change in morning routine such as getting up earlier
- Get things ready the night before such as getting uniform ready and making sure everything is ready to go in a school bag
- Try on uniform and school shoes- make sure sizing is correct and that it is all ready to go for first day back
- Make sure all equipment is ready eg pens and pencils
- Ask for help from school in advance if anything is concerning you
- Check timetables with them and see what lessons they have the next day so they are prepared
- Encourage discussion of things in advance, such as ingredients for Food Technology, rather than leaving things until the night before
- Make a suitable space and time to create good homework habits—does it need to be somewhere quiet, do they prefer background noise, are there too many distractions?
- Get some fresh air and exercise
- Don't pick up and react too negatively to other peoples' stresses or anxiety focus on managing your own situation and support for those around you
- Reduce the amount of screen time especially in the hours leading to bedtime
- Make small healthy changes to eating habits
- Encourage reading
- Have a good chat about any concerns and contact school if you require any further support.



We are very much looking forward to welcoming you back to school!

Further information on a range of issues is available on the school website.

WELFARE



#WEARELONGFIELD