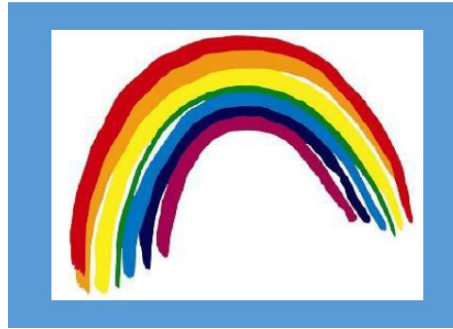


A Guide for Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing in Early Years Settings



As we prepare for our children to return to their early years setting we have all been busy planning for the safety of the children, parents & staff and re-establishing ways of doing things that will become the 'new normal' for a unknown period of time. However, it is just as important to consider ways we can support children's emotional well being on their return as this is fundamental in helping to minimize the impact that the Covid-19 crisis may have had on children's lives and experiences while they have not been in our care. This includes putting in processes and routines to enable children to feel calm, safe & secure through a *transition period* as everyone develops new ways of learning and being together. During this stage both the children and your colleagues need to be nurtured through a curriculum of care & reassurance, particularly as we will not know what types of adverse experiences children may have recently experienced. The following are some ideas that can be considered during this transition period:

- Establish a new daily routine to ensure there is structure and predictability throughout the day as this is essential in helping children to feel safe & secure. Although there will always be some flexibility in these routines, generally the daily routine should remain the same to allow children to understand what will be happening next and help them to adjust to the changes to physical environment and any new expectations of them.
- Spend time explaining what the new boundaries & expectations are to the children and why these are important, making it as positive and fun & possible e.g. regular hand washing etc.
- Ensure all children are individually greeted & welcomed on arrival to the setting or when they reach their own group/bubble, particularly as they may be arriving at different times throughout the session due to staggered start times.
- Build in lots of group time where the group/bubble come together for shared activities that are familiar to the children such as song/rhyme time and story time. This will help children to reconnect with the others in their group/bubble and feel part of this 'mini community' which is paramount to helping them feel safe & secure.
- Provide opportunities and resources for children to express their feelings and re-live their recent experiences through their play and activities e.g. role play, small world play such as dolls houses, drawing materials etc. Some children may need these opportunities to process and make sense of experiences that may have had in recent times.
- Allow lots of opportunities for physical movement and outdoor play as children need to expend their energy in purposeful ways in order to experience feeling of calmness at other times.

- Appreciate that all behaviour is a form of communication so try and respond to children's behaviour by understanding the emotions that may be driving that behaviour and respond accordingly.
- Be observant of the children's behaviours/actions in order to assess and meet both their emotional and well being needs to enable them to thrive.
- Use this opportunity of being with children in small groups/bubbles to build strong relationships and attachments with each child as we know these bonds are fundamental to children's long-term well being. This will also enable us to 'tune in' to their emotional needs and feelings and be better placed to meet these. *'To be 'tuned in' means that you fully understand the other's point of view and are entirely empathetic. This is a hard task for anyone but every step taken to understand how and why a child behaves as they do is a step to tuning in. This in turn helps every child to develop skills which enable them to blossom in the community in which they live. (Social & Emotional Aspects of Development 2008).*
- Consider doing calming or mindfulness activities with your group/bubble such as yoga or breathing exercises such as the example below:

Appendix 5 : Tummy Buddies



1. Choose a soft toy that you can balance on your tummy and ask your teacher to put on some gentle music
2. Take your shoes off and lie down so you are comfortable
3. Put the toy on your belly
4. Breathe in: While your teacher counts to three, breathe in through your nose so your tummy gets big and your toy goes up in the air.
5. Breathe out: While your teacher counts to 4 breath out through your mouth so your tummy sinks and your toy sinks down.
6. Repeat this 10 times, can you rock your tummy buddy to sleep so they feel completely safe, calm and relaxed?



Additional Resources to support children's emotional well being

Yoga sessions for children:

www.cosmickids.com

A Story to help children understand the Coronavirus:

<https://nursedottybooks.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/dave-the-dog-coronavirus-1-1.pdf>

A short story to help children understand social distancing - While We Can't Hug:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY&feature=youtu.be