

# Emotional Wellbeing

## Supporting Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic



**EMOTIONAL WELLBEING:  
SUPPORTING CHILDREN  
DURING THE COVID-19  
PANDEMIC**

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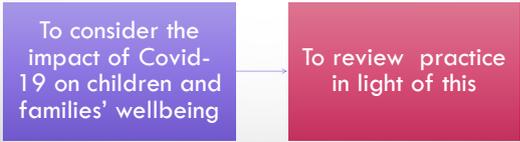
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**AIMS OF THE SESSION**

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**WHAT IS WELLBEING?**

- "A state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".

*A toolkit for well-being public health England 2011*

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**CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

The characteristics of effective learning are dependent on emotional wellbeing.

**playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

**active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

**creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

**Low wellbeing inhibits learning**

The infographic features three colored boxes with bullet points:

- Playing and Exploring (Engagement)**
  - Finding out and exploring
  - Investigating and experimenting
  - Learning to play
  - Being willing to have a go
- Active Learning (Motivation)**
  - Being involved and concentrating
  - Keeping trying
  - Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
- Creating and Thinking Critically (Thinking)**
  - Having their own ideas
  - Making links
  - Choosing how to do things

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**WHAT DOES WELLBEING LOOK LIKE?**

The infographic features a central pink circle labeled 'wellbeing' surrounded by ten smaller pink circles, each with a label: 'Can do', 'Feeling safe', 'Interacting', 'Well cared for', 'Feeling and laughing', 'Caring and being', 'Belonging', 'Energy & spirit', 'Sustenance/Resource', and 'Can do'. To the left, there are three photographs of children and adults smiling and interacting.

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**COVID 19 – THE REALITY**

- Most families will have been affected in some way or another by covid-19
- Children will have picked up on stress, caused by health, financial worries, social distancing and changes to their life
- A sudden and unexpected change for children
- Adults that are caring for them are stressed, anxious or unwell themselves.
- Routines will have been disrupted, celebrations put on hold, and sadly, some children will have lost relatives and friends.

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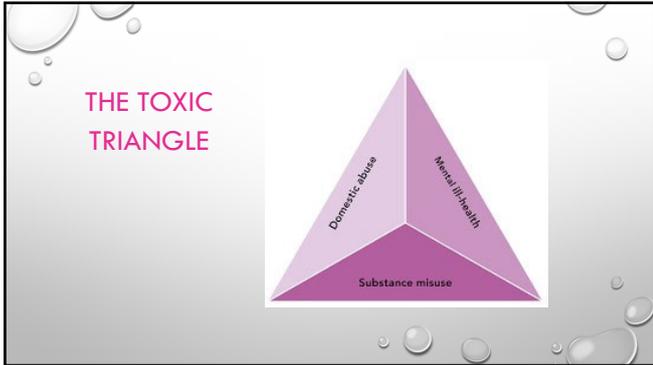
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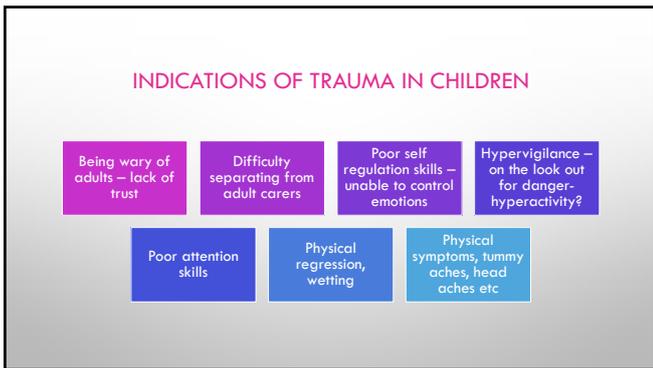
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**RETURNING TO THE SETTING**

Children and parents will need a lot of support.



A flurry of panic or a spotlight for reflection and review?

Key questions include:

- What do we need to do to ensure we meet the emotional needs of children returning to us?
- How can we ensure that we meet the needs of children and families who are new to us?
- What should we put in place to ensure that we are prepared if anything like this happens again?
- What can we do differently that will be better than what we did before?

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If we are to support our children, we cannot flick a switch and expect them to go back to normal

They may be anxious returning to a place where they thought they were safe

Their trust in adults may be shaken.

It will be necessary to provide a relationship rich environment for them to return to, where adults are there to gently support them to feel safe again, as only when that happens will they be able to learn.

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### CONNECT WITH PARENTS



- Key person could arrange a call or a zoom chat to talk about their child
- Put up video blogs for parents that introduce key staff and talk about topics such as lunch, PE etc
- Post lots of photos so they get a feel of the setting and can talk about it with their child
- Make handover and collection systems clear – consider staggering these times and making special arrangements for those that need it
- Consider setting up a system for parents to call to ask how their child is settling
- Ask their opinions and use it to review processes

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### CONNECT WITH CHILDREN



- Set up zoom chats / story time so children get used to the adults
- Introduce them to a class mascot that is waiting to meet them (maybe a wipe clean doll)
- Use the knowledge gained from parents to plan activities that reflect children's interests.
- Put key person systems in place and spend time getting to know the child and family
- Allow transitional objects and comforters in the setting within covid 19 guidelines

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### CONNECT WITH STAFF



- Work together on risk assessments and problem solving
- Listen to their concerns
- Make expectations reasonable – cleaning, curriculum, breaks environment etc.
- Build in wellbeing checks
- Review practice together regularly
- Keep a relaxed atmosphere
- Ensure they have what they need.

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### EXPLORING WELLBEING



- Plan in plenty of opportunities for playing and socialising and talking about things together
- Use role play - maybe the class doll has been poorly? Ensure an adult is on hand to support and listen to children as they are playing
- Talk lots about feelings / emotions - give children time to feel secure
- Check out any support your educational psychologist or LA offers on bereavement support

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### BEHAVIOUR



- ⌚ Don't expect children to revert instantly back into routines – they will have to be learnt again.
- 📅 New routines will need to be taught and supported
- 👤 Children who have experienced trauma and loss may act out, masking their fear and anxiety
- 👤 A gentle approach to understanding how children may be feeling is needed here and space and time to feel safe
- 🧠 Put developing self regulation skills at the heart of your practice

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**STRATEGIES TO USE WITH CHILDREN**

*Belly breathing*







- Acknowledge children's feelings
- Develop the vocabulary of emotions with them
- Provide calm soothing spaces
- Teach breathing techniques eg belly breathing
- Play calming music
- Use calming voices (adults)
- Provide glitter jars/snow globes/sensory bottles
- Get outside and get active
- Use books that explore feelings

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**THE THREE R'S**

**Reassurance**  
Adults should *reassure* children about their safety and the safety of loved ones and tell them that it is adults' job to ensure their safety.

**Routines**  
Provide children with a sense of safety and predictability (e.g., Regular activities and meals, daily schedules for learning and play)

**Regulation**  
When children are stressed, their bodies respond by activating their stress response systems. To help them manage these reactions, it is important to both validate their feelings and encourage them to engage in activities that help them self-regulate




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**REMEMBER**

**Keep Calm**




- Take your time —there is no need to rush to get children to catch up
- Building a rich relationship environment now will pay dividends in the future
- Anxious and frightened children can't learn
- Anxious parents and staff can't fully support children either
- Be kind to yourself!

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