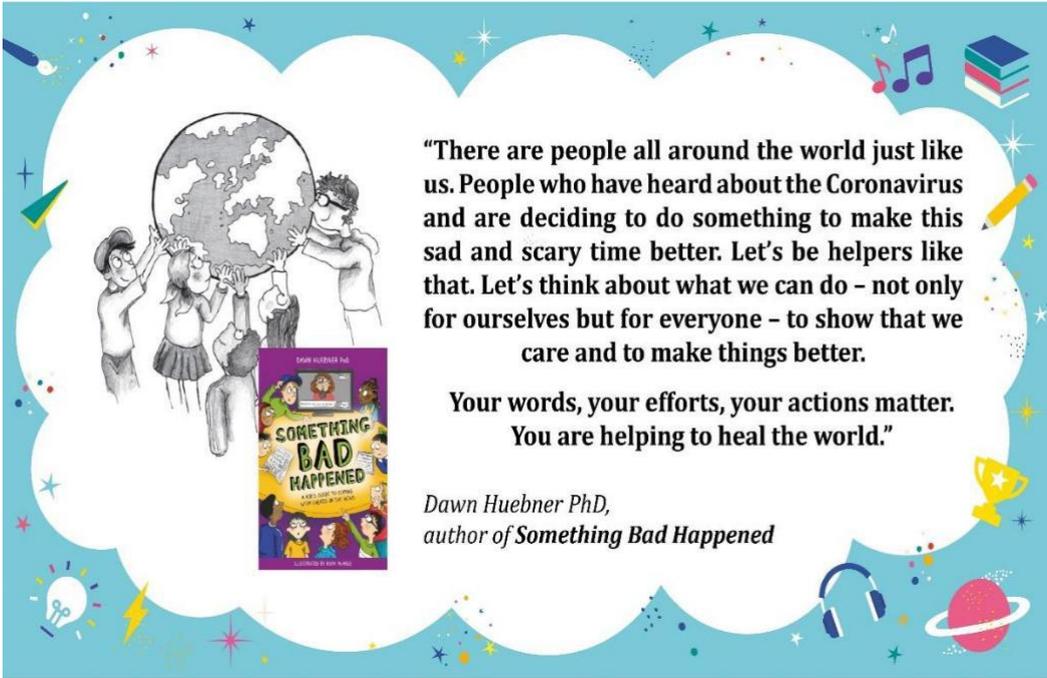


Activities promoting connectedness and resilience

During disasters and emergencies, alongside the stories of loss and grief, we also hear extraordinary stories of how different individuals, families and communities come together and act with kindness, courage and initiative.

We can encourage children and young people to share their stories about ways in which their community helped each other. For example, neighbourhood delivery networks springing up to provide medicines or shopping to people who couldn't get out.

We can reflect on what might have changed possibly for the better or what has been brought into sharper focus for us. For example, stories about the impact on the climate such as reduced industrial activity, road traffic and expanded bike lanes leading to air pollution plummeting and birdsong returning to neighbourhoods.



“There are people all around the world just like us. People who have heard about the Coronavirus and are deciding to do something to make this sad and scary time better. Let’s be helpers like that. Let’s think about what we can do - not only for ourselves but for everyone - to show that we care and to make things better.

**Your words, your efforts, your actions matter.
You are helping to heal the world.”**

*Dawn Huebner PhD,
author of **Something Bad Happened***

Depending on the age of the children and young people, activities listed below may be helpful in promoting connectedness and resilience.

- **Collaborative group or class activity such as Tree of Life**, prayer flags, tree of hope using handprints, planting seeds etc. (*doing something active can help children and young people who seem very restless or have lots of 'unspent' energy*).



- **People who care for me.** Draw around the child's hand and get them to write on each finger the people they can talk to about their thoughts and feelings. Draw their family or friends involved in an activity or doing something fun, or something fun they are looking forward to doing with their family/ friends in the future.
- **Positive Memory in the palm of your hand.** Draw around the child's hand and get them to write a positive memory for each of the 5 senses (1 per finger) to help them feel safe and calm wherever they are.
- **Growing around Grief Jar or class memory book** where children can complete sentence strings about their experiences.

The hardest thing for me was/is....

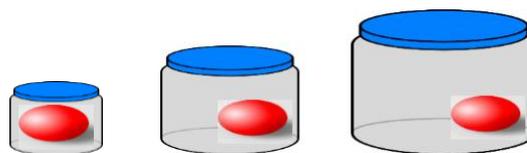
A challenge I have overcome...

A new skill I have learned...

Right now I feel...

What I hope for in the future...

Things I have appreciated most about my family/friends....



- **Cook & Talk activities** - come together to make a fruit salad. The table leader gives step by step cooking instructions and at each step the leader reads out a scripted question for the pairs or groups to discuss. For example, *'It's important to try to find times to relax and have fun even when scary or sad things have happened. Talk about a time when you were able to relax and have fun.'*

What challenges have you had to overcome?



We have all had to find ways to cope and to try to stay strong and carry on this year.

- **Ways to Wellbeing activities.** Plan curriculum activities throughout the day/week linked to the 5 ways to wellbeing: **Connect, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Keep Active and Give.**



- **Calming activities** for example, approaches based on mindfulness such as MindUp, or Finger Breathing (.B materials) and Tummy Buddies.

Older Children and Young People

For older children and young people team projects can develop a sense of shared experience and togetherness. Activities can focus on the positive gains made. Topics that can be used in discussions, digital media and projects may include:

- The role of the individual, family and community. Thinking about how different groups came together through this time. For example, Community Choirs, Clap for Carers, 5k for Heroes.
- Thinking and reflecting on what might have changed for the better. For example, impact on the climate, opportunities to pursue a new interest, appreciation of loved ones.
- Local heroes – family and friends who are carers or keyworkers, work for the NHS, leaders in the local community etc.

Guidelines for supporting children and young people during these activities:

- Acknowledge losses, fears and other emotions when present.
- Provide reassurance that the thoughts, feelings and reactions are a normal part of recovering from the losses associated with the pandemic, even though they may be upsetting, and that they will lessen in intensity over time.
- Help children and young people to feel safe in their contributions.
- Celebrate strengths and progress.
- Have supportive and trusted adults available to help in case children and young people become overwhelmed by their feelings and reactions.
- Remind children and young people of their coping strategies through your genuine observations and knowledge of them.
- Focusing any discussions around group collaborative, practical activities or tasks can be helpful with additional adults to support.



Tree of Life

Tree of Life

(Adapted by Jill Olver from Ncube-Mlilo, 2006.)

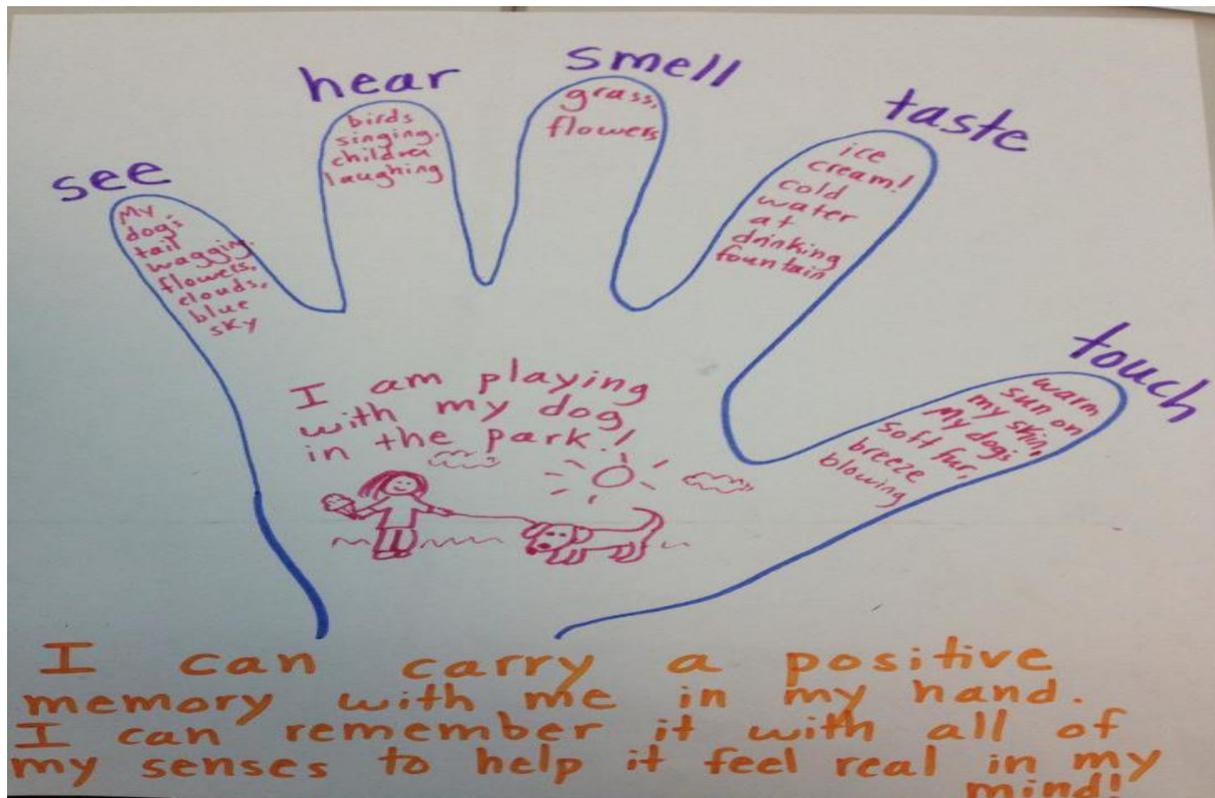
This exercise helps children to cope with trauma or loss and move on with their life. Its aim is to highlight for children their existing strengths, encourage an alternative storyline to a 'problem saturated' narrative and increase a sense of connectedness with family and community. This exercise can also be particularly useful when exploring issues of culture and diversity.



The exercise involves encouraging the child to build a picture of their life through the representation of a tree. Encourage the child to build their tree from the ground up, talking along the way about each of the elements that make up their tree.

You can use what you know about the child to help them (e.g. you may know that the child's grandmother was a very important person who taught the child how to stick up for themselves). This is normally carried out over several sessions, in groups, so that children can share their story and understand each other's. Other children in the group may also be called upon e.g. to help name each other's qualities, skills and knowledge in 'the trunk'.

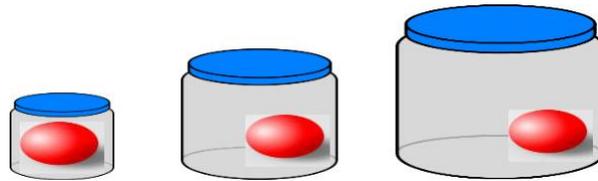
Carrying a positive sense of calm in the palm of your hand
kristinamarcelli.wordpress.com



Kristina Marcelli writes: "I have seen this intervention done before and I have always found it powerful to use with children of all ages. I tweaked it a bit to make sure all the senses were included. This helps make it a more integrated experience and truly helps the brain and body more fully relate to the sense of calm and happiness from the memory".

- 1) First have the child or young person trace their hand on a sheet of paper.
- 2) The person then thinks of a positive memory that would help them feel safe and calm to remember even in the midst of stressful and triggering situations.
- 3) Write each of the five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling) on each of the five fingers.
- 4) The child or adult with them will draw and / or write about the memory in the palm of the hand.
- 5) Encourage the individual to identify how the memory is experienced using each of the five senses on each finger and write or draw a picture for each.
- 6) Last but not least talk about how thinking of this memory can help the person feel a sense of safety and inner calmness despite outer life circumstances.

Growing Around Grief activity for small groups or whole class



Equipment: 3 different size jars, small, medium and large. One ping pong ball.
Plus one large jar per child or one very large jar for the group/class to use.
Lots of strips of coloured paper with coping or restorative questions such as:

A challenge I have overcome.....

A new skill I have learned.....

A kindness I have appreciated.....

Someone who has helped me.....

A time when I had fun.....

Place the ping pong ball in the small jar.

Talk about the ball representing grief or sadness after something terrible has happened and the jar representing someone's life.

Ask the children what they notice?

It feels as if the sadness almost entirely fills our lives for a long time after a tragic event and there isn't much space for anything else.

Children are invited to share their ideas/thoughts at any stage during the activity. Reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers.

Move the ping pong ball to the medium size jar.

Ask what do you notice now?

Time has passed. The grief and sadness has not gone away or got smaller but our life has started to grow around it. Gradually we start to create space for new and different memories alongside the sad memories.

Use the strips of paper with coping or restorative questions on to help children to reflect on what these new and different memories might be.

Move the ping pong ball to the largest jar. *More time has passed since the tragic event. The grief and sadness has still not gone away but our life has continued to grow around it. Maybe new skills have been learned, new people may have come into our life, new experiences.*

Ask the children to write or draw on the coloured strips of paper and place into their individual jar or the group/class jar alongside the ping pong ball. The jar can be added to weekly with new and different memories.

Cook & Talk - Fruit Salad Activity



This recipe is vegan and does not contain any of the 14 major allergens

Ingredients per individual
$\frac{1}{2}$ small cup of fresh strawberries
$\frac{1}{2}$ small cup of green seedless grapes
$\frac{1}{2}$ banana
1 slices of cantaloupe melon
$\frac{1}{2}$ Granny Smith apple
$\frac{1}{2}$ kiwi fruit
$\frac{1}{2}$ small cup of orange juice

Preparation:

Wipe down the table.

1 large bowl needed for food waste

You will need (per pair)

1 chopping board, 1 sharp knife, 1 peeler, 1 mixing bowl, 1 tablespoon

1 large bowl for food waste, Bowls to serve, spoons to eat with.

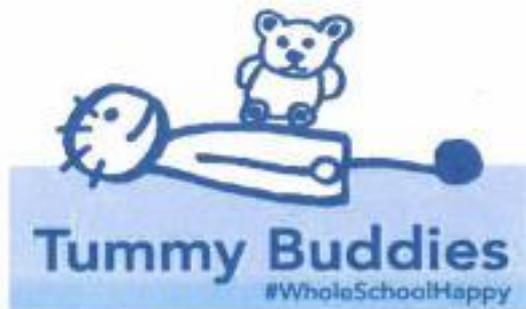
Introductory script

Today we're going to learn how to make a fruit salad at our tables, and at the same time we're going to answer some questions about ways you/we have been coping and staying strong. It's important that we remind ourselves of the courage we have shown and the skills and strengths we have learned. We're going to talk to each other about what we have done and what has helped us to do that while we make our salads.

Ask if there are any questions and don't forget to WASH HANDS before starting.

Steps:	Leader script and Questions for pairs:
1. Cut the top off the strawberries and cut in half. Add to bowl.	Optional script: We all find different ways of coping during difficult times. Q: Tell the group one way that you have tried to 'stay strong'.
2. Cut the grapes in half. Add to bowl.	Optional script: We all have different challenges to overcome. Q: Tell the group one of the challenges you have overcome and what has helped.
3. Peel and slice the banana into small pieces. Add to bowl.	Optional script: It's important to try to find times to relax and have fun even when scary or sad things have happened. Q: Tell the group about a time when you were able to relax and have fun.
4. Cut the melon slices into small pieces. Add to bowl.	Optional script: Sometimes there are opportunities to learn new things during times of crisis. Q: What strengths or new skills have you developed?
5. Peel and core the apple and cut into small pieces.	Optional script: When scary or sad things happen, the smallest act of kindness can have enormous power. Q: What kindnesses have you noticed and appreciated?
6. Peel and slice the kiwi fruit.	Optional script: Connecting with other people can help us stay strong. Q: What have other people done to help you?
7. Combine the fruit. Pour over the orange juice and toss to coat. Enjoy!	Optional script: Learning new things makes us more confident as well as being fun. Q: What new things would you like to learn or try next year?

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?

Writing to Heal

Dr. Pennebaker's Basic Writing Assignment

Over the next four days, write about your deepest emotions and thoughts about the emotional upheaval that has been influencing your life the most. In your writing, really let go and explore the event and how it has affected you. You might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. Write continuously for 20 minutes.

Tips for Writing to Heal

- Find a time and place where you won't be disturbed
- Write continuously for at least 20 minutes
- Don't worry about spelling or grammar
- Write only for yourself
- Write about something extremely personal and important for you
- Deal only with events or situations you can handle now

"People who engage in expressive writing report feeling happier and less negative than before writing. Similarly, reports of depressive symptoms, rumination, and general anxiety tend to drop in the weeks and months after writing about emotional upheavals."

From "Writing to Heal"
by James W. Pennebaker

