

Managing your own stress

- Increase your sense of felt safety – as an individual, team and as a community
- Develop safe opportunities for connection
- Acknowledge the loss – memory boards
- Make time to appreciate and show gratitude

Try to:

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, rest, relax and eat regularly and healthily
- Talk to people you trust and allow yourself to be comforted. You don't have to tell everyone everything, but not saying anything to anyone is often unhelpful
- Reduce outside demands and avoid taking on additional responsibilities
- Spend time in a place where you feel safe and calm to go over what's happened over the course of the day/week. Don't force yourself to do this if the feelings are too strong or intense at the time
- Try to reduce your access to the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Try scheduling 'digital power off' times.
- Use relaxation strategies e.g. slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, self-talk
- Build in opportunities for recognising hope and positive strength
- Allow yourself experiences of sadness and grief

Try to avoid:

- Bottling up feelings. Consider whether it would be helpful to talk about them with someone you trust
- Feeling embarrassed by your thoughts, feelings or those of others. These are normal reactions to a stressful event and period of time
- Isolating yourself from those you trust and feel safe around



What might be helpful during the transition period?

- Opportunities to orientate and ground yourself – familiarity with new routines and school spaces and staff teams. Create time to 'PAUSE' and check-in with yourself internally and externally – tune in to how your body and mind is feeling.
- Safety to share worries and concerns – opportunities to feel heard, understood, and accepted with empathy
- Create a bubble space for safety – somewhere which can be used as space for staff to take some time out if needed to regulate
- Think about having a buddy in school, so you can check in with each other at various times if needed. It might also be helpful to have someone on hand to help you think through any questions that might come up in class and work through them together.
- Don't put any pressure on yourself to do any activities or have any discussions you don't feel up to.
- Talk to each other, support each other- the staffroom can become a real sanctuary at times when things are feeling difficult. It never hurts to bring in a few snacks and treats to share or to try and come together for a quick 'socially distanced' catch-up.
- Mindfulness based activities- having strategies you can use in the moment to support you to stop.....clear your mind for a few seconds....focus on your breath....carry on again.
- Develop a staff mantra for approaching these new changes. Something that sums up unity and a shared purpose as an individual and as a staff team.
- The adults need to be grounded and be that role model for pupils. They need to be 'real' with one another – regular staff check-ins

Psychological First Aid

What can teachers do to help each other?

Psychological first aid refers to the actions that can be taken by people without formal psychological or counselling training to provide emotional support for people following an emergency or critical incident.

The following may be useful for staff when providing psychological first aid for each other:

- Ask simple questions to ascertain what help may be needed.

- Emphasise the support available.
- Initiate contact only after you have observed and appraised the situation. It is important to make sure that contact will not be seen as intrusive or disruptive.
- Review the situation and emphasise the positive actions taken by colleagues in managing the situation.
- Listen with compassion.
- Reflect the words of the person. Don't judge the statements a person makes.
- Ask non-intrusive questions (e.g. "Where were you during...?")
- Keep the discussion based on what happened. Avoid "What if...?" or "I should have..." statements. If your colleague takes this line, bring the talk back to real events.
- Follow-up should be at a level appropriate to the relationship between the person and helper. In some instances it may be as simple as asking "How are you now?"
- Psychological first aid is about reducing distress, assisting with the current needs of colleagues and making sure that colleagues are offered the support to allow them to function within their professional setting. It is not about revisiting traumatic experiences.