

# Things to consider before starting

## 1. These are sensitive issues

When delivering lessons on the topics of mental health, resilience and emotional wellbeing you might trigger feelings in children that they find difficult to cope with. They may struggle to engage with activities or they may describe negative coping mechanisms. Different children may respond very differently to the same content. It's really important that every activity is well planned and you have carefully considered how any child may be affected and how these individuals might be best supported.

Regardless of how well we plan, it is not always possible to prevent children from becoming upset in the session. Ensure that there is an adult that the child can talk to if they are finding the session too difficult. This might be you or it might be a different adult in the room. Identify a space away from the group where the child can talk and ensure that some time is spent exploring how the child is feeling. As ever, explain the confines of confidentiality and follow up any safeguarding concerns and make sure that the child knows who you are going to talk to and what will happen next.

Sessions such as this can be difficult for all children. During the plenary, check how everyone is and tell them where they can go if they want to talk a bit more.

## 2. Setting up groundrules for sessions

For children to engage it is important to feel safe, contained and validated throughout the session.

You can foster this environment by getting the children to decide and agree upon a set of rules for the group. These should include listening to one another, keeping things confidential within the space, not sharing more than they want to, respecting what everyone says, not judging each other, being allowed to sit things out and reminding them that the safe space (somewhere else) can be used.

For the facilitator, this is about knowing the group of children and preparing them for having these discussions. Different groups may come up with different groundrules.

## 3. Safeguarding

After setting up the groundrules with a group or class, it is really important to adhere to the normal safeguarding procedures of the school you are working in. Your school will have a Designated Safeguarding Lead and clear procedures to follow if you are worried about the safety of a child in your care. If you are in any doubt as to whether a child is safe, you should seek advice from appropriate members of staff.

## 4. Staff considerations

Sessions such as this can also trigger feelings in staff. Ensure that staff are confident in running the session and that they also know where they can go to access support.

## Activity:

# Who supports me?

### Learning Outcome:

To identify people who support me.

### Context:

Schools play a key role in helping pupils to have a sense of belonging. Schools can help pupils to identify support networks. Help pupils to think about the supportive aspects in their new schools, including the people who will be there to support them. It is also important for pupils to be aware that not everything will change and many people who support them will remain constant.

### Activity:

Start the session with groundrules, to ensure that children feel safe to speak and only share what they don't mind others knowing.

- Show the class the circle diagram.
- In the middle circle ask them to write all the names of people they live with.
- In the next circle ask children to write all the names of more distant family members, friends or carers they are close too and who support them.
- In the next outer circle ask pupils to then write all the names of their close friends
- In the next outer circle write in all the people including pupils, teachers, office staff, librarian, school nurse who are supportive at school. Then write in the names of people they see out of school and in their neighbourhood, e.g. friends, youth workers, youth club friends, people at their sports club, neighbours, religious leaders etc.
- In the final circle write down organisations and other support systems they could go to if they need help (GP, NSPCC, emergency services etc).

Once the pupils have completed their circles ask the pupils to highlight all the people who will still be there when they go to secondary school.

Key questions. Which relationships are particularly important to you? How do you feel supported by that person/people? How do you feel looking at your support network on paper?

- Ask pupils to consider which of those in their network they will be able to turn to during the transition period to secondary school, if they are worried.

### Time:

30 mins



### Resources:

- Concentric circle diagram

### Thing to consider:

Pupils will need to feel safe when they are writing their circles. They may not want other pupils to know what they have written. Pupils also may not have many names in their circles – treat this sensitively, as some pupils may want to keep their relationships private.

### Extension activity:

Make a list of qualities that make us feel supported.

What additional support might there be in secondary school that you don't have now?

