

Change tunnel

Learning Outcome:

To be aware of how they feel about changes that happen to them.

Context:

This activity can be used with Year 6 children when they are transitioning to secondary school, but also can apply to any changing situations. Children can feel anxious and/or excited about changes like coming back to school. Feeling isolated can heighten anxiety. Therefore, sharing their worries and anticipation can help to make children feel reassured.

Activity:

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

- This activity can be done as a whole class. Explain to the class that they are going to discuss and how this thought makes them feel. Remind them of the ground rules and what they need to make the space safe.
- In pairs or small groups, ask the children to think about what they are worried or excited about when they think of changes like coming back to school now (or going to secondary school for Yr 6 pupils) school. Ask them to write each idea on a post it.
- When they have written all their ideas down, ask them to put all their post its in the hat/bowl.
- Put up the signs 'Nervous', 'Excited', 'Not Sure' in different areas of the classroom/hall
- Read out each statement from the hat/bowl and ask children to go to the sign that best describes how they feel about it. Ask a few children to explain why they feel that way and acknowledge this reaction.
- Repeat with other statements until most of the common themes have been covered.
- Ask the children how they feel about other people having similar worries to them. Does it make a difference?
- Introduce the concept of resilience: *'Resilience is having the skills and resources to deal with difficult situations in life. There are different ways to build resilience in people and in these sessions we are going to have some fun and learn some new ways to cope.'*
- Ask pupils to think about who they can talk to about these worries.

Time:

40 mins



Resources:

- Post its
- Pens
- Hat/bowl
- Signs:
 - 'Nervous'
 - 'Excited'
 - 'Not Sure'

Thing to consider:

Children may feel very differently about issues, but all their feelings are valid and should be respected. Asking children to put their hands up if they agree with another child's feelings helps the less vocal children to feel listened to.

Extension activity:

Set up a worry box for other concerns that children may have about transition. These should be discussed in future sessions.

Nervous

Excited

Not sure

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 ground rules 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 ground rules.

3. Safeguarding

After setting up the ground rules 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.

