

Link together

Learning Outcomes

To achieve a sense of belonging to children returning.

Context

This activity can be used for any group of children or young people who are coming back to school and are going to remain in a group together. The simple idea is to foster a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Activity

- Introduce the idea of belonging and ask the children what it means to them, e.g. being part of a group, being together with others, fitting in with others.
- Encourage the children to think of places or groups where we might have that feeling of belonging, e.g. in families, in faith groups, in play/sports groups, in classes or tutor groups. Make sure this is a general discussion, as some children may not have many groups to which they feel they belong.
- Ask the group what this sense of belonging gives them, e.g. a feeling that they have a place, people notice when they are not there, self-confidence, a connection to others, safe and looked after.
- Explain that they are all going to write their name on one side of a strip of paper. On the other side they are going to write one thing they are going to do to contribute to the group, e.g. try my hardest, make sure nobody is left out, be kind.
- Explain that once they are finished, the class are going to read them out and stick them, one-by-one, together to make a paper chain of belonging for this class/group.

Time

20 mins



Age Group

Primary School

Secondary School

Resources

- Strips of paper
- Coloured pens
- Glue

Things to consider

Once all the strips have been stuck together, hang it up in their classroom to remind them that they are all together in this group and they can all contribute to everyone feeling a sense of belonging.

Activity: Link together

Strips of paper

Blank lined paper strip with a pink border.

Blank lined paper strip with a blue border.

Blank lined paper strip with a yellow border.

Blank lined paper strip with a pink border.

Blank lined paper strip with a blue border.

Blank lined paper strip with a yellow border.

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. Some children may have suffered the loss of someone close to them during coronavirus and this activity may need to be done in a 1-1 setting with these children.

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.

