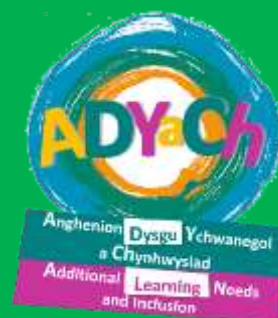




# SUPPORTING TRANSITION WORKBOOK

Gwynedd & Môn Educational  
Psychology Service



# Transitioning back to school

After months of lockdown, there will be mixed feelings in children transitioning back to school. While some will be excited to see their friends and go back to the old routine, others might struggle with the transition. This workbook has activities that might be useful in supporting children going back to school.

Firstly, some things to consider:

- Promote **feelings of familiarity**.
- Consider the context of the child's **lockdown experience**.
- What was the child's school experience before lockdown? Are there any reasons they might be anxious to return?
- Possibility of communication issues.
- Possibility of interaction issues.
- Are there any sensory needs?
- Providing emotional support.
- The academic gap (Consider what has been missed, what were academic strengths and weaknesses before lockdown?)
- Encourage problem-solving by helping come up with solutions to issues raised that work best for them.
- Promoting **resilience**.
- **Listen** to concerns **and validate** feelings.

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# Transition Tips

For those who are helping children through change.

## 1) Communicate

- Check-in on how your child is doing.
- Keep talking.
- **Empathise** with your child's situation and provide reassurance by talking, hugging or **just listening** to their concerns.
- Share your own experiences.
- Make suggestions you think will be helpful, encourage where you can and respect how they feel

## 2) Work Together

- Try problem-solving approaches.
- Create action plans.
- Try to look to the future.
- Celebrate achievements.
- Show your child that we can all get things wrong sometimes.

## 3) Be the anchor

- Consistency is essential during times of change.
- Try to keep things as familiar as possible.
- Establish routines.
- Provide comfort.
- Do things as a family.

## 5) Encourage independence

- Increase responsibilities.
- Be positive when they act maturely.
- Be aware of their identity.
- Remember that needs can change.

## 6) As your child tries new things or things they haven't done for a while try to:

- Be interested.
- Be non-judgemental.
- Guide them.
- Set boundaries.
- Listen to their point of view.
- Respond to warning signs.

## 7) Have Fun

- Be silly.
- Don't be afraid of being embarrassing.
- Makes jokes.
- Play games.
- Spend time outside.

## 8) Look after yourself

- Lean on friends.
- Offload when you need to.
- Self-soothe and find 'me time'.
- Relax.
- Exercise.
- Sleep and eat well.

# Lockdown Diary

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Who were you home with?

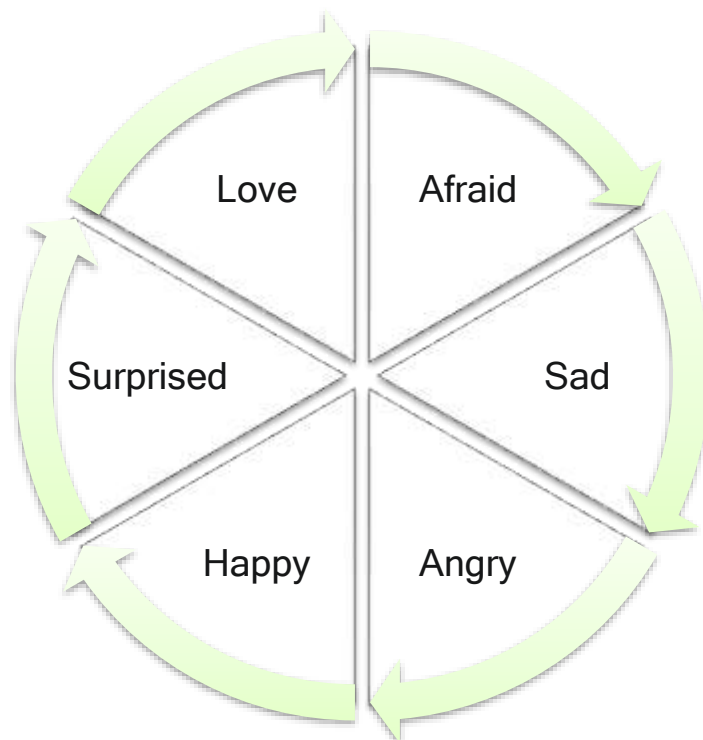
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How did you feel during the lockdown?  
Colour in how you felt!



What did you miss?

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5 things you enjoyed during lockdown

- 1 

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- 2 

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- 3 

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- 4 

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- 5 

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What did you do not to get bored?

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Did you try something new in lockdown?  
Circle your answer!

YES

NO

What was your favourite new thing to try?

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What would you like to have tried?

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Write a summary of your for your future  
self

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# Resilience to Transition Activities

## Activity 1: Change Tunnel

**Learning Outcome:** *Increase awareness of how children are feeling about the transition back to school.*

**Context:** *Transition is a significant change, and it's useful to gauge how children feel as things such as isolation can be risk factors for anxiety. Sharing worries and anticipation can help reassure children.*

- 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 should be done as a group. Explain to the class that they are going to discuss a transition (like going to secondary school) 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 about their transition.
- Ask them to write each idea on a post-it. When the children have written all their ideas down, ask them to put all their post its in the hat/bowl.
- Put up the signs 'Nervous', 'Excited', and 'Not Sure' in different areas of the classroom/hall. These can simply be words written in biro/pencil on plain paper.
- Read each statement from the hat/bowl out aloud and ask children to go to the sign that best describes how they feel about it. Ask a few children to explain why they think that way and acknowledge this reaction.

- Repeat with other statements until most of the common themes are 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 who they can talk to about these worries.

- **Time: 40 Minutes**
- **Resources: Post-its, pens, bowl/hat and signs ('nervous', 'excited' and 'not sure').**

## Activity 2: Star Qualities

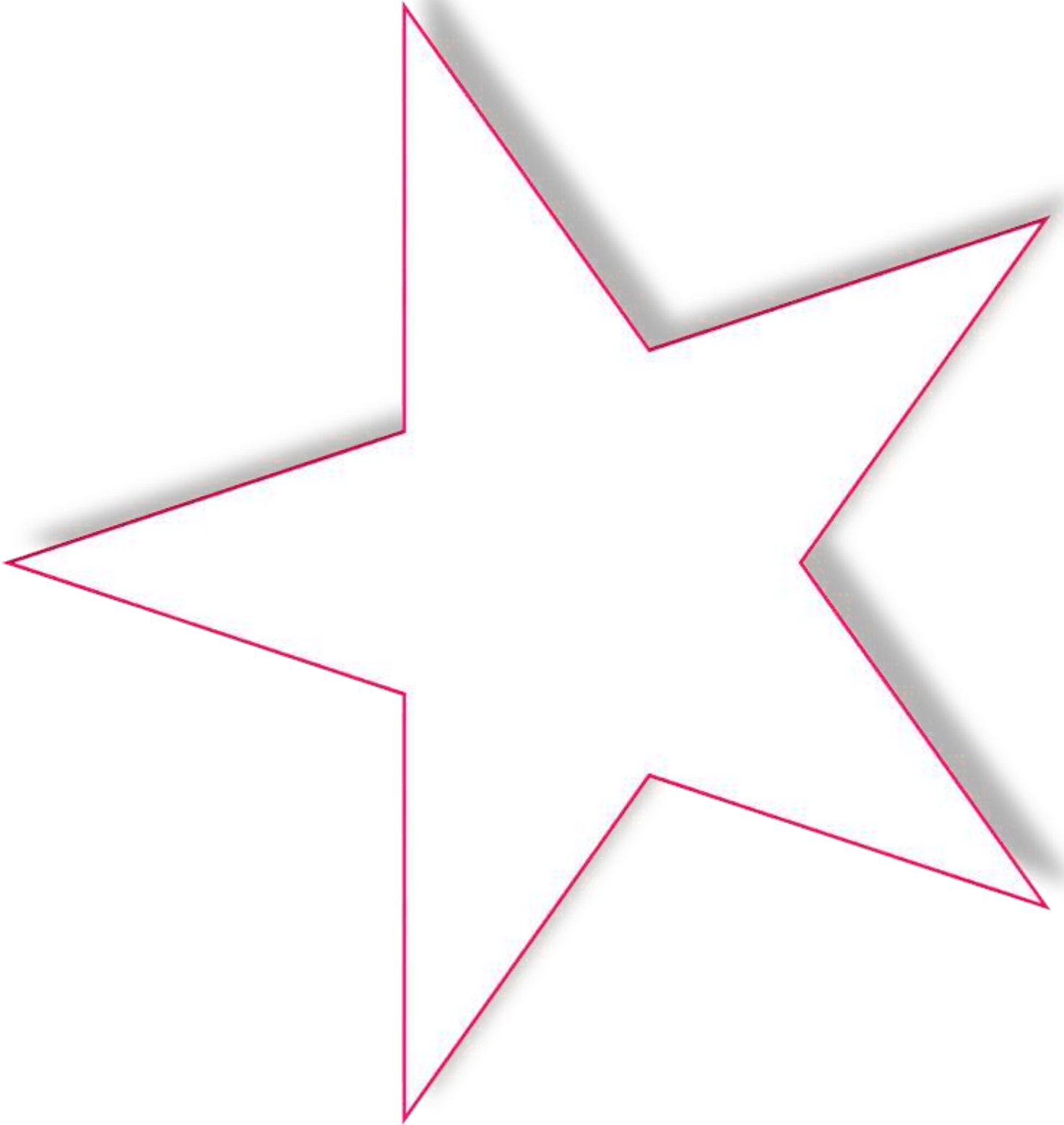
**Learning Outcome:** *Learn and discuss my positive qualities.*

**Context:** *Like adults, children can find it easier to believe negative things about themselves. Focusing on positives is a skill that we can teach to build resilience and coping skills.*

- Ask pupils to sit in a circle.
- Encourage the children to have a moment of reflection and think of some of the strengths and qualities that they like in themselves and others.
- Use the ball to roll or throw around the circle so that everyone can say a word or phrase to describe these qualities, e.g. kind, caring, funny, full of energy, a good friend etc.
- Give out the star outlines and explain that they are going to write their name in the middle of the star and ask other people in the class to write positive qualities about them in each of the points (five words or phrases in all).
- Organise the children into groups (perhaps their home tables) so that they can carry out the activity.
- Invite children to share some of the qualities with the class if they want to.
- Explain that it is vital to be aware of all the positive qualities they all have and what makes them unique.

- **Time: 40 Minutes**
- **Resources: Small ball and a star outline for each pupil**

## Activity 2: Star Qualities



## Activity 3: Who Supports Me?

**Learning Outcome:** *To identify a child's support network and promote using the support of others to cope with stressful situations.*

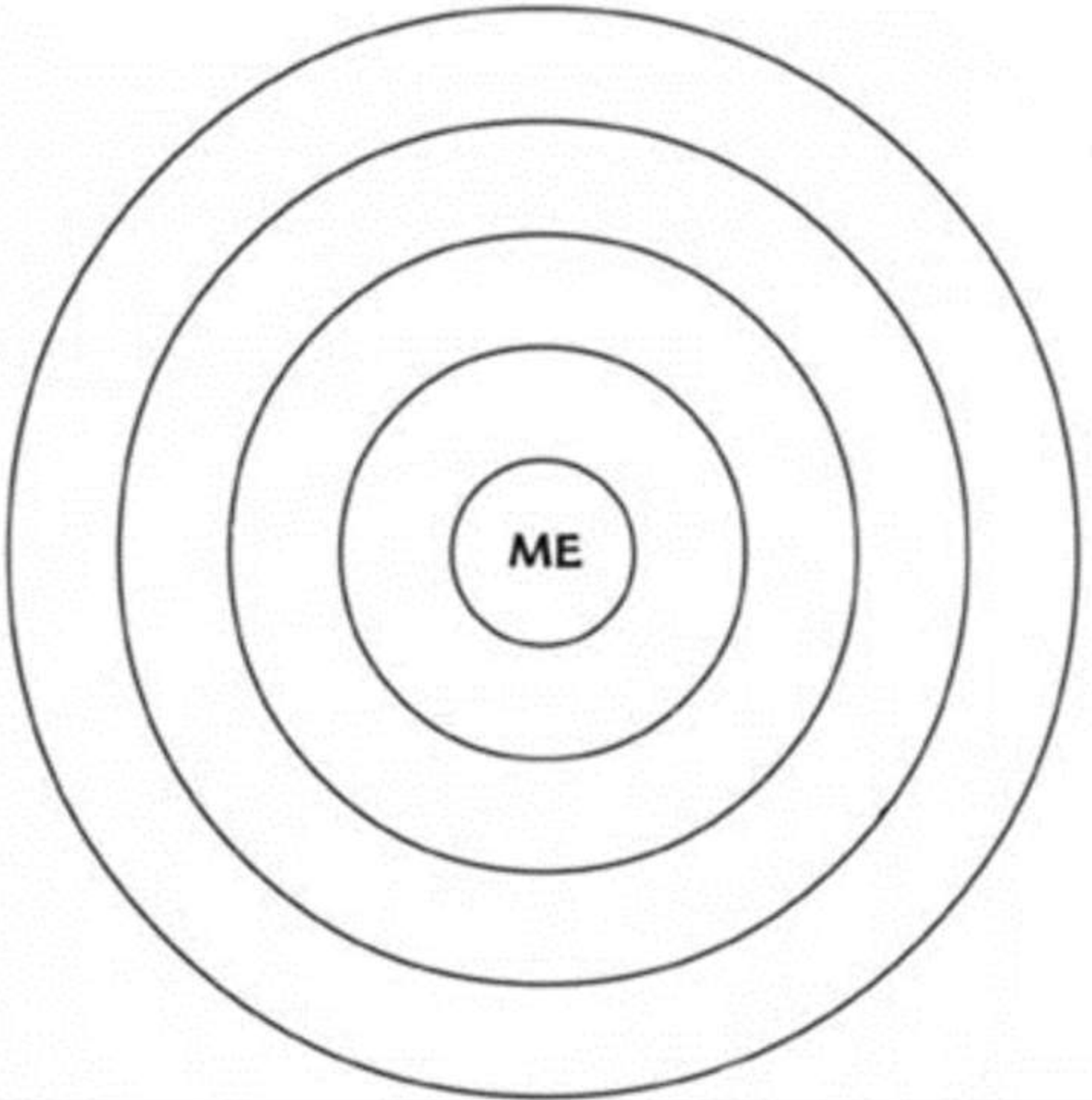
**Context:** *Using the support of others is a very effective coping mechanism for difficulties like change. Learning or developing this skill can make children more resilient and highlight a sense of belonging.*

- Show the class the circle diagram.
- In the middle circle, ask them to write all the names of with who they live.
- 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 write the names of their close friends.
- In the next outer circle write in all the people (including, pupils, teachers, office staff, librarians, the 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 after their transition (e.g. 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 if they are worried.

- **Time: 30 Minutes**
- **Resources: Circle diagram**

## Activity 3: Circle Diagram



## Activity 4: Feelings Overflow

**Learning Outcome:** *To explore techniques to manage emotions*

**Context:** *We can increase the capacity to cope by learning to pay attention to our emotions and stress so we can help ourselves before we get overwhelmed*

- This activity can be done in small groups or as a class.
- Set out a jug/bucket in the middle of the table, with a newspaper or a towel around or underneath it.
- Put cups full of water around the jug/bucket. The cups represent our emotions.
- Give each child in the group a turn to come forward and pour some water into the bucket to represent the emotion they are thinking about.
- Tell pupils that they are free to share what they are thinking about with the group, but only if they want to.
- Keep going around until the bucket fills up and begins to spill over.
- Explain to the class just like the jug; and our minds sometimes get so full of the different emotions we feel that we struggle to keep control of them. We might cry or shout or, scream or we might go a bit quiet when our emotions get too much.
- Ask pupils to think of times when they have felt their emotions were overflowing. As pupils share their examples, you can get them thinking about the connection between body and mind.
- Ask the group - How did the emotions make you feel physical?
- Explain that we should do something before our emotions overflow.



- Hand around plastic cups and explain that each one is something they can do to manage their emotions and make their minds and bodies feel better. Give them a short time to think of an action that would help them.
- Ask each student, in turn, to take some water out of the jug with their cup, explaining what their action is as they do it.
- Practical things that they could do include: talking to a trusted adult, doing some exercise, getting more sleep, eating more healthily. Continue to do this until the bucket is no longer overflowing.
- Write up some of the key coping strategies and display in class.

- **Time: 40 Minutes**
- **Resources: Plastic Cups, jug/bucket of water and a towel/newspaper**

## 5 Minute Mindfulness Activities

*Mindfulness activities are a great way to help children and adults focus on the present, relax and help regulate behaviour. It's a useful coping method that can be integrated easily into a classroom with these 5-minute mindfulness activities.*

### 1. Mindful Breathing

5-minute mindful breathing activities are one of the simplest ways to practice mindfulness in the classroom and are a great introduction to the concept. They can come in many different forms so, feel free to get creative.

- Students can stand or sit for this activity. Ask students to put both hands on their belly. Students should close their eyes, or look down to their hands.
- Guide students in taking three slow deep breaths in and out to see if they can feel their hands being moved.
- You may like to count "1, 2, 3" for each breath in and "1, 2, 3" for each breath out, pausing slightly at the end of each exhale.
- Encourage students to think about how the breath feels, answering the following questions silently, in their mind.
  - What is moving your hands? Is it the air filling your lungs?
  - "Can you feel the air moving in through your nose? Can you feel it moving out through your nose?"
  - Does the air feel a little colder on the way in and warmer on the way out?
  - "Can you hear your breath? What does it sound like?"

## 2. Belly buddies

1. Ask students to bring in a small stuffed toy, or provide a class set of small, light-weight objects such as small bean bags or wooden blocks.
2. Students lay on their backs and place the toy or object on top of their belly buttons.
3. Take students through the guided breathing activity above, asking them to watch the object as it moves up and down with their breath.

## 3. Pinwheel or bubble breathing

1. If available, mindful breathing exercises can be used with resources like a pinwheel a bubble solution or a cup of water and a straw.



2. If using a cup of water and a straw, ask children to blow air into the water to create bubbles. If using a pinwheel, ask students to control their exhaling by looking at how the wheel turns.

## 4. Finger Breathing

- Control of breath can also be taught by asking children to trace their index finger along the ridges of their hand by explaining to inhale as they trace up and exhale as they trace downwards. Being mindful of the sensation of touch is also done in this activity.



## 5. Body Scan

- Body scans are a form of meditation and can be a great introduction to meditating.
- Ask children to sit on a chair with their backs straight and their feet on the floor. If the space is available, they can also lie flat on the floor – being comfortable is the most important thing.
- Starting from the bottom (feet) or the top (head), go through each body part and ask children to bring awareness to how that body part feels. Is it tense? Warm or cold?



## 6. Mindful Eating

- This activity can be done home or school any time a child has food.
- The activity is simply to be present while eating, and to focus on taste, texture and temperature while shifting focus away from everything else.



## 7. Grounding with senses

- Grounding exercises are a useful mindful practice when someone is in a heightened emotional state and panic.
- The activity is shifting focus and naming things a child can see in the room, things they can see and things they can smell.
- The same effect can be seen if children are asked questions like *how many things can they see that is blue* or *what sounds they can hear in nature*.