



Northumberland County Council

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Guidance and Suggested Activities for secondary teachers to use during uncertain times

We have all been very unsettled by the current situation with the Coronavirus

Worry and concern has been very present in the news, and all adults and children will have some degree of awareness of events so far, and may have had their lives disrupted.

It's normal that we would all feel anxious and upset by what is happening.

What's important is that we provide opportunities where students and adults feel safe, and if appropriate feelings can be discussed within a safe context, but at the same time maintaining a sense of normality, routine and calm.

In such times it is useful to:

- **Keep to normal routines as much as possible**-students will find the routines reassuring
- **Show compassion for self and others**- Take time to look after yourself. Remember the guidance for oxygen masks on planes, self first then others
- **Model gratitude to others**- Make a special show of being thankful to others, for opportunities, for safety, for the people who care for us
- **Comment on strengths used**- This is definitely the time to notice and comment on the strengths used by others, and to notice our own
- **Highlight resilience in others**- Comment when someone has shown perseverance in the face of difficulty
- **Look out for others**. 4 simple letters are really important at the moment. If you notice someone is struggling, adult or child. Just ask R U O K? They may be fine, they may not, but asking makes sure we don't miss a chance to help

Specific approaches for teachers

- **Emphasising and developing resilience and inner resources.** Conveying to students that they have the power to manage difficult times and challenges can help to foster hope and positivity
 - (Yr 7-13) In any discussions of the current situations a focus might be to identify the people who are helping. There are always those who give to others without question. This emphasises how many caring people there are in the world.
 - (Yr 7-13) Suitcase of valuables exercise [1](#) [2](#). This exercise helps students/ adults realise that there are positive resources they can call on when they feel anxious or upset.
 - (Yr 11-13) For older students and adults, this [5 minutes wellbeing](#) resource is useful for identifying goals and sources of support for the year.
- **Mindful resets and relaxation.** Short meditations can be useful to reduce anxiety, and bring adults and students back to the present
 - (Yr 7-9) [The conveyor belt of worries](#) is a 5 minute meditation that helps students if they are ruminating over a current situation.
 - (Yr 7-9) [Sleep tight](#) is a great 6 minute meditation which can help students to go to sleep at night if they are having problems in this area.
 - (Yr 7-9) ['The spaghetti test'](#) is a 6 minute relaxation meditation where students need to be lying down. It involves tensing and relaxing muscles.
 - (Yr 11-13) [The Solid as a rock meditation](#) is a 9 minute file with a 1 minute introduction. It asks adults and students to visualise themselves as a rock in all 4 seasons emphasising the resilience of the rock remaining. A great one to boost strength and confidence.
 - (Yr 7-13) Drawing sketching and colouring can be relaxing activities for students. Drawing [zentangles](#) is a mindful drawing activity for students who don't like breathing meditation.
- **Promotion of hope.** Hope is associated with higher academic success, good problem solving, creativity, stronger friendships and lower levels of depression and anxiety. In times where hope seems challenged its useful to create the conditions for more hope
 - (Yr 7-13) This [article](#) from the Greater Good organisation at the University of Berkeley has 5 suggestions for developing hope in students
- **Emphasising connectedness and relationships** Linking with others helps us to feel safe and secure and gives us the capacity to share thoughts and feelings
 - (Yr 10-13) The 9 minute [Just like me meditation](#) emphasises connectedness and mutual respect for others. It's a paired activity that students may feel some self consciousness doing but it is also a very powerful exercise that helps develop empathy and connectedness with others. (*NB Listen to the meditation first to identify if you think it is suitable for your group*)

- **Promoting safety.** In the current situation, adults and students might feel less safe. School routines will feel very reassuring but there are some other activities that can make adults and students feel more secure
 - (Yr 7-9) [The safe place meditation](#) This 6 minute meditation asks students to visualise a safe place they can go to in their mind whenever they feel worried

- **Sharing feelings** No one should be forced to talk about the current situation but it is good practice to offer the opportunity should someone want to.
 - (Yr 7-13) Sometimes it's useful to use visual resources such as blobs! [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) and ask students to colour in based on [certain questions](#): This can create an atmosphere where students are more able to share their feelings

- **Promoting character strengths.** A focus on strengths, particularly strength spotting in others can help students develop problem solving skills and introduce a more positive outlook
 - (Yr 10-13) Looking at students signature strengths from the VIA survey, and getting them to think about how they could leverage these strengths to cope with the current situation in hong kong
 - (Yr 10-13) Getting students to think of themselves at their best by producing a [best self story](#)
 - (Yr 10-13) Looking at the [strengths of inspirational people](#) to identify that there are caring and inspirational people in the world who adults and students may share strengths with.