



SUPPORTING THE HEALTH
AND WELLBEING OF THE
ARMED FORCES
COMMUNITY AND CIVILIAN
FAMILIES IN CORNWALL



Going back to school with confidence

The last few months have felt like social disorder and chaos for many of us. Whilst for some people mental and physical health suffered, others flourished. This raises the question; What was the difference between these 2 groups? Which character strengths prevailed, to ensure that some not only survived but thrived?

Anxiety needs to be managed

Unfortunately, due to unclear, confusing and at times contradictory guidelines, many adults have been unable to be optimistic and forthright role models. Despite teachers endeavours to sustain learning via social media and the occasional attendance day, there has been educational disruption. Young people have suffered from, loss of learning, lack of socialisation and uncertainty about their exams. Students need to know what will happen next in an atmosphere of optimism because optimism breeds learnt helpfulness and resilience.

Take action – Teach Learnt Helpfulness

Action by Schools

1. Learners have been arranged into bubbles, for example, years 3 & 4, learn and play together. In this way, the whole school does not interact at the same time, reducing the risk of infection.
2. In some schools, learners have been asked to face the front of the classroom only and teachers are not allowed to spend more than 15 minutes with any child.
3. All schools are undertaking measures to rearrange the school day that best suit their particular circumstances. This information is posted on school websites. Here a few general websites with information:

<https://peacemakers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/06/RESTORE-Circle-time-sessions-to-support-primary-pupils-during-COVID-19.pdf>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2037/tools-for-managing-emotions.pdf>

https://leadership.hias.hants.gov.uk/pluginfile.php/7606/mod_resource/content/1/discussion%20tool%20strategic-planning%20for-recovery%20primary-schools-may-2020.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.ssatuk.co.uk/blog/a-recovery-curriculum-loss-and-life-for-our-children-and-schools-post-pandemic/>

Action for Students

1. Students can think about the strategies that worked positively for them and their learning and decide what strategies they will use in the future. They can think about their useful character strengths and how they employed them. Perhaps they could spot their friends' character strengths, as they have done in Australian Schools. A list of character strengths can be found on this website:

<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>

2. Students can look forward to seeing their friends. They can enjoy their relationships again but must do so within the guidelines set out by their schools and colleges.
3. Here are some websites which learners may access to assist them with their learning:
 - Doodle – gives revision Power Points and tests for science and maths.
 - Hegarty – maths revision and maths watch (both Doodle and Hegarty have videos and quizzes on all maths topics)
4. Look at everything you did educationally whilst in lockdown. Recap and revise to make sure you didn't just copy everything down but have really understood it. Don't let that work go to waste!
5. If you start to feel anxious or fearful, think back to a time before lockdown when you felt good. Remember this time vividly and feel the good feelings (the sights, the smells, the sounds, how your body felt, what was said, the calm, the joy.) Whenever you feel anxious go back to this 'happy place' and overlay your fears, anxieties. Repeat this process a few times, until the good feelings are easy to access. In this way you can always access them in the future.

The above methods should be completed with some supervision so that students know what to do. It is just a resource for them in teaching them 'learnt helpfulness'.

Action for Teachers:

1. Show students how the school is going to address the gaps in education.
2. Remote learning is quite different from being in a classroom environment. Students' confidence will need to be re-built as they readapt.
3. There has been a loss of social interaction so teachers will need to recognise that learners will be building relationships again.
4. Use registration/tutor group time for students to process their feelings by drawing pictures or writing articles on their experiences of Lockdown. By processing feelings and discussing views, students can acquire knowledge and understanding, which helps build resilience.
5. Children can be encouraged to share their experiences by being asked to think about what they enjoyed doing differently during the lockdown. There will also probably be moments of upset, anger and anxiety that will have to be managed sensitively.
6. Ask students to write down their expectations of safety in school.
7. Create 'little islands of sanity' where students can discover how they can help people locally during this time. The knowledge that they can help someone else, is associated with positive emotion and purpose in life.

8. Use the 'time machine' concept of looking ahead 40 years from now and writing about what happened during the pandemic and how they got through it.
9. Welcome students back to school at their current development point; not at the level they should ordinarily be. Being realistic, relieves pressure and grows positivity.

Action for Parents:

1. Be compassionate towards yourself. This has been a difficult time.
2. Consider having a quiet time of meditation during the day to process rumination and pessimistic thoughts. Remember that they are just thoughts. You can always go back to the breath for calm and grounding.
3. Keep up to date with the notices from the schools. They will be taking their guidance from government.
4. Try to provide your children with a balanced view on what social media are reporting so that the news does not appear one-sided.
5. Teach helpfulness and ask your whole family to consider, 'What action can I take to get through this?'
6. When children return from school, ask them about their school day and what they experienced.

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