



Dear Parents/Carers and Children

We hope that this finds our families well, knowing you are in our thoughts as we continue the term in our online classrooms.

As the media begins to talk of a “new normal” for our communities in the event of lockdown restrictions easing, we wanted to use this Connects to focus on Mental Health.

In our school, we have a focussed programme to help build resilience, which promotes positive thinking and encourages us to remember that we are not alone when encountering difficulties in our lives. However, the pandemic situation has forced families and children to play, live and work in ways which would have been inconceivable only a few months ago.

With this in mind, we wanted to share our BOUNCEBACK acronym with you in order for you to be able to remind your children of how many of these statements not only apply to the current situation, but may be able to help them better understand to support them through it.

The BOUNCEBACK statements are listed below and the themes will be recurrent in books and films that you read or watch together. See if you can find an example together.

Bad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.

Other people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.

Nobody is perfect - not you and not others.

Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.

Everybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a part of life. Try not to personalise them.

Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, others and to bad luck or circumstance?

Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can change first).

Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.

Keep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.

In a more formal manner, the Government has set out ways in which parents can support their children's mental health and wellbeing and the link to the full document is at the bottom of this newsletter.

Key messages include:

Listen and acknowledge changes in behaviour - which could be emotional (being teary or upset), behavioural (being clingy or wetting the bed) or physical (sore heads or tummies). Feeling safe to communicate their feelings can reduce children's anxiety.

Provide clear information about the situation - be open and honest with any questions your child has so they feel reassured, making sure you explain things in a language they understand. Focus on practical action they can take eg washing hands to help keep themselves and loved ones safe. For older children who may be finding their own answers make sure they are using trusted websites. Limit what they are exposed to but a complete news blackout is not considered helpful either.

Be aware of your own reactions - possibly the hardest of the lot! Children take their cues from the important adults in their lives. It is important to remain calm, listen carefully and speak kindly when answering their questions. Looking after your own mental health is equally important. Organisations such as Every Mind Matters can provide more information. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Connect regularly - we may all have become experts in video calls but the importance of these is not to be taken lightly especially where families are separated.

Create a new routine - routines give children the feeling of safety in uncertain times. Sleep is also an essential part of mental health so stick to similar bedtime routines if possible.

The government organisation Minded can provide more specific information and advice on supporting children through this difficult time. <https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people>

Although none of us are mental health experts, please remember, you are an expert in knowing your child. Take guidance from those who can help where you think appropriate. These are exceptional times and learning is secondary to children's health and wellbeing in the current climate.

Please take time to look after yourselves and continue to get in touch with school if we can be of any help - big or small!

The Mauricewood Team

Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-0-utbreak>