

# Guidance for using resources (primary)

## Dos

- When delivering activities in a large group, we would strongly recommend that you establish ground rules around respectful listening and confidentiality, prior to delivering the activity. It is useful to think about how to support children who may not wish to participate in the activity. There may be a number of reasons why children do not wish to participate in an activity, so it's important not to force them to take part. Should any concerns arise during the activity about a pupil's safety or wellbeing, please ensure that you follow your school's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Think about the physical space where the activity is taking place. If this is at school or at home, we would suggest that the environment is kept as calm as possible, with minimal distraction. For example, there can be relaxing music playing in the background. Try and ensure that the space is as undisturbed, quiet and comfortable as possible and that you are paying attention to the child as you are delivering the activity.
- Encourage the child to share as much as feels OK. We never force a child to take part in an activity, close their eyes or speak about an activity if they do not feel emotionally safe to do so.
- Make sure that there is enough time allocated to completing the activity and a space for discussion around this, in case the child would like to speak about what came up for them.
- Be familiar with the activities (as this makes it easier and more comfortable to deliver them) and model speaking about your emotions in a positive way. This can help you keep the process fun and will also help you to put yourself in the child's place and feel compassion for them.
- Help children to begin to name and recognise their emotions, both within the activities and around it. Think about when the activities are delivered and how this fits with the rest of the school curriculum and wider processing of mental health and emotions.
- Be aware of more vulnerable children in your class who may need to be observed more closely during the activities.
- Tone and pace of your voice is important. Children have told us that when the activities are presented in a calm and soft manner, this makes a difference to how they engage.
- Remind children that there is no "wrong" or "right" way to feel and that some of the activities may take time and practice. It is not about getting the activities right, but about immersing themselves into the experience.
- Try and make the activities as fun as you can and you can encourage involvement from the children too!

## Don'ts

- These activities should be framed in a positive and destigmatising way to help normalise that we all have mental health and emotions. The activities should not be used as a punishment.
- You don't need to continue the activity if the child is agitated, disengaged or not responding calmly. It's normal that different children will like different activities.
- Do not force a child to take part in the activity if this causes them too much anxiety or distress– we do not want to do more emotional harm than good. They may have their defences in place for a reason! You may encourage them to observe rather than take part or take part “as much as is possible” for them.
- Don't worry if it takes time for you or others to get used to a new concept. Be patient. Pace yourself and build up the length of the exercises gradually if you need to.
- Some of these activities may not be suitable for children who may not be emotionally stable at this time. For example, they may have recently been through a life changing experience (such as bereavement), may be experiencing severe mental health problems or may have a history of trauma. Please use your discretion and experience of the child or young person to assess the appropriateness of each activity. If you suspect that some children may find these activities difficult then you may wish to discuss the activity with them individually beforehand in order to gather their perspective on whether they would like to take part in the activity and a plan in case they would like to not be in the classroom, signal their distress or discomfort or end their involvement in the activity.