



# Guidance for using resources (secondary)

## Dos

- It's important to help young people to identify the link between their feelings, thoughts and behaviours in order to try and support them to develop healthier coping strategies.
- Do remind young people of the support options that are available to them - you may wish to have these visually displayed as a reminder.
- When introducing the activity, let the young people know what to expect, for example by providing a brief summary of the activity and the duration of the activity. This can help young people to feel safer and to engage. It's also important to have a plan to support young people who may not wish to take part in the activity.
- When delivering activities in a large group, we would strongly recommend that you co-create and establish ground rules around respectful listening and confidentiality, prior to delivering the activity. Think with the group around what will help the space to feel safer. Have these ground rules somewhere that is visible and remind the group that it's a shared responsibility of the group to adhere to the ground rules. Revisit and review them regularly and amend them as necessary. It can also be useful to keep activities grounded in the third person (scenarios, case studies and general discussions in groups), rather than the sharing of personal experiences or feelings, but this should be considered in line with the participants in the group and the aims of the group session.
- Continue to risk assess students in line with your school's policies and procedures. 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 could be relaxing music playing in the background. Try and ensure that the space is as undisturbed, as quiet and comfortable as possible, and that you are paying attention to the young person as you are delivering the activity. If the activity is taking place at home or virtually, it's important to check that the young person feels emotionally safe to engage in the activity in their physical environment. You may wish to check who is around the young person and to think about confidentiality.
- Encourage the young person to share as much as feels OK. We never force a young person to take part in an activity, close their eyes or speak about their emotions or feelings if it does not feel emotionally safe to do so.
- Be aware of more vulnerable young people in your class who may need to be observed more closely during the activities. For these young people, you may wish to discuss their engagement in the activity beforehand and consider non-verbal cues that they can utilise to signal that they no longer wish to take part in the activity.
- Make sure that there is enough time allocated to completing the activity and a space for discussion around this, in case the young person would like to speak about what came up for them. It can be useful to "check in" and "check out" with the young person so that you have an indication of their mood and can follow up this discussion with them, if need be.



- 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 understand the young person's perspective.
- Help young people 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.
- Tone and pace of your voice is important. Young people have told us that when the activities are presented in a calm and soft manner, this makes a difference to how they engage.
- Remind young people 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.
- Elicit regular feedback from the young people you are supporting as this will help you to adapt the activities and delivery accordingly.
- Try and make the activities as fun as you can and you can encourage involvement from the young people too. Activities often work better when they feel a part of the process and this can also help with engagement from other pupils!

## Don'ts

- These activities should be framed in a positive and destigmatising way to help normalise that we all have mental health and can experience a range of emotions. The activities should not be used as a punishment.
- You don't need to continue the activity if a young person is agitated, disengaged or not responding calmly. It's normal that different young people will like different activities.
- Do not force a young person to take part in the activity if this causes them too much anxiety or if they do not feel comfortable – 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 young people 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. Therefore, an individualised response is advised.