

Back to school for staff— Teacher Wellbeing

Hull and East Riding Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Schools have provided a beacon of safety and security for children and families throughout this pandemic and gone above and beyond in extremely difficult circumstances.



Those working in education have faced a range of new challenges with little to no warning or time to prepare.

Personally, you may be worried about contracting the virus yourself or about your loved ones.

At work, you will have been asked to work in new and different ways. Some of these things may have felt out of your comfort zone. Of course, you may also be worried about the upcoming demands and pressures going forward.

It has been, and continues to be, a huge ask in a time which is challenging for you both personally and professionally. Given these demands, it is natural that you may be feeling overwhelmed, frustrated or anxious.

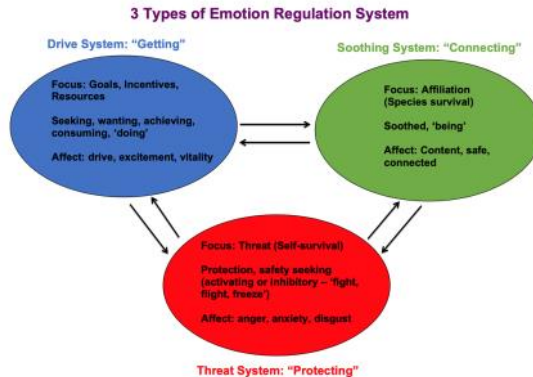


This leaflet is intended to provide an overview of psychological models which may help you to understand and reflect on your feelings, and possible ways to promote wellbeing and support one another.

Compassion-focused Therapy (CFT)

CFT suggests that we have three systems: **The Drive**, **Threat**, and **Self-soothing systems**.

These three systems should be balanced. Consider what your three systems may look like in the current climate. CFT suggests that we can struggle when these three systems are unbalanced. It aims to promote wellbeing by encouraging us to engage in activities that *increase the Soothing System*.



1. Drive System

The drive system gets us 'doing' and is activated when we want to do more.. But it is hard to maintain for long periods of time and can lead to fatigue.

2. Threat System: Our brain's alarm system to keep us safe.

Being worried about our health and others will activate our threat systems. This will activate our fight, flight or freeze response. Our body and mind will be activated and our mind will attend to the threat rather than thinking as normal.

Both are likely to be activated at present—we are likely to be pushing harder and running off adrenaline.

3. Soothing system: To self-care, feel safe, connect.

This is activated when we slow down.

Though we need this even more at the moment, coronavirus may have stopped us from looking after ourselves as well as normal.

How do I recharge my self soothe system?

Hints and Tips

In the moment: Basic self-care: look after yourself physically; Check in with colleagues: Talk about your day and home life; Breathing exercise: Breathe in for four, hold for 7 and out for 8—repeat 4 times.

At home: Connect— at home via social distancing or using technology; Exercise; Create a routine; Help others and create a sense of togetherness; Do what you enjoy—gardening, reading, music, new skills.

Focus on: ‘What’s in your control?’ - Be aware of the tendency to get caught into focusing on things that are not in your control—focus on your words and your actions which you can control (see ACT—next page).

Be kind to yourself—self-compassion: Notice your inner-critic who is trying to keep you safe from threat, but is imaging the worst because it is acting from fear. Maybe try the video included on the back page of this leaflet.



Self-Soothing Box

A Self-soothe box is a box full of soothing items that can be used when you are feeling anxious/worried/overwhelmed. The idea is to have these items ready to support you when needed.

Self-Soothing Box examples:

Touch: Feather, stress ball, hand cream

Taste: Chocolate, tea, gum

See: Photographs, art, affirmations

Hear: Music, bell, chimes

Smell: Essential oils, candles, lotions

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

ACT encourages acceptance of our thoughts and feelings rather than fighting with or avoiding them. If we can allow ourselves to feel the emotions which are a natural and normal part of the human experience, this can allow us to focus on what we value and what is important to us.

FACE COVID

How to respond effectively to the COVID crisis by Dr Russ Harris, founder of ACT and author of 'The Happiness Trap'.

Focus on what's in your control: Fear, anxiety & worry are normal reactions. You can't control them. You **can** control what you do – **here & now**. It is more helpful to focus on that!

Acknowledge thoughts & feelings: Kindly acknowledge your thoughts and feelings. Notice what's going on in your inner world. See the Leaves on a Stream exercise

Come back into your body: Find your way to connect with your physical body. See the Mindful Breathing Exercise.

Engage in what you're doing: Notice where you are and refocus your attention to the activity at hand. Notice what you are doing and give your full attention. See the 5 Senses Exercise.

Committed action: Take action. Follow official guidelines to protect yourself & the school.

Open up: Make room for all those painful feelings - and be kind to yourself. You are not alone. What you are feeling is natural.

Values: What sort of colleague, teacher or person do you want to be? How do you want to treat others? Your values might include love, patience, courage or kindness.

Identify resources: Identify resources for help, assistance, support, and advice.

Disinfect & Distance: Disinfect often & physically distance - to care for yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

By taking control of what you can so that you feel safe, this will help you to make space to pay attention to what is around you and what you can do.

See [Harris Information Sheet](#) for further information.

Exercises

Leaves on a Stream

The Leaves on a Stream exercise can help us distance ourselves from our almost constant flow of thoughts. To stand back and observe our thoughts rather than get caught up in them. We can notice that thoughts are simply thoughts, passing streams of words that we don't need to react to, we can just notice them.



[Leaves on a Stream Exercise](#)

5 Senses

The goal of the 5 senses exercise is to calm your mind by using your five senses to focus on your environment instead of your thoughts. You can do this by noticing things that you can see, smell, taste, touch and feel in your immediate environment. The idea is to notice these things without adding judgement.

[5 Senses Exercise](#)



Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing can help anchor you in the present time to stop our minds racing about the future or the past. It does this by focusing all of our attention and energy on to our breathing.

[Mindful Breathing Script](#)

[Mindful Breathing Video Clip](#)



Mentalising: Supporting Ourselves and Each Other

Mentalise means to focus on what is going on in your mind and in the minds of other people.

It helps us to understand our own actions and those of others based on how we think and feel.

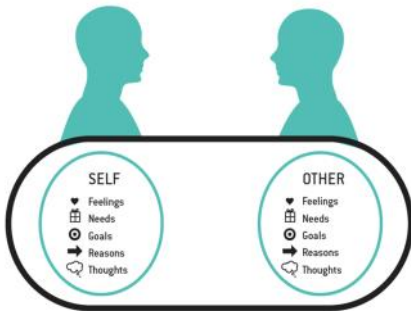
To Mentalise we need to be **flexible** and **curious**.

We can Mentalise with the children we support by being curious about how they may be thinking or feeling rather than respond to their behaviour.

We first need to be aware of our own mental state. How are we feeling?



MODEL MENTALIZATION



Stress

Stress can lead to reduced flexibility in thinking.

In the current world anxieties or worries about coronavirus can lead to us acting without thinking about ourselves or each other and what we might need.

How to Mentalise with ourselves and with others:

- Be flexible and curious
- Put ourselves in another's shoes and consider their thoughts and feelings
- Be open to the idea of 'not knowing' (i.e. that we may not know what someone else is thinking)
- Maintain a non-judgmental stance
- Be empathic and validate

If we can try to Mentalise and hold each other in mind, we can begin to understand what is going on in our own minds and in the minds of other people. We can realise how this is effecting the emotions, thoughts, and actions of ourselves and others.

This may help slow our own anxiety, worry and reactions. It can also help us to have more supportive interactions and relationships.

Top Tips to Support Well-Being

Adapted from www.nhs.uk

1. Stay connected with people

Maintaining healthy relationships with people is important for our mental wellbeing. You could try phone calls, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person.

2. Talk about your worries

It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too.

3. Reflect

Find a time and space where you and your team can sit and reflect on how everyone is feeling without fear of judgement but to support one another.



4. Look after your body

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking or drugs, and try not to drink too much alcohol.

5. Stick to the facts

Find a credible source you can trust – such as GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.

6. Do things you enjoy

If we are feeling worried, anxious or low, we might stop doing things we usually enjoy. Focusing on your favourite hobby, relaxing indoors or connecting with others can help with anxious thoughts and feelings.

7. Focus on the present

Focusing on the present, rather than worrying about the future, can help with difficult emotions and improve our wellbeing. [Relaxation techniques](#) can also help some people deal with feelings of anxiety.

8. Look after your sleep

Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically, so it is important to get enough.

See [10 tips to help if you are worried about coronavirus](#) for further information.

Staff Well-Being Additional Resources

Web Resources— hold control and click to access.

[Education Support: Anxiety, Isolation & Grief](#)

Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Schools Booklet <https://www.annafreud.org/media/7653/3rdanna-freud-booklet-staff-wellbeing-web-pdf-21-june.pdf>

[Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

[Looking After Each Other and Ourselves](#)

[FACE COVID: Russ Harris Video](#)

[The Self-Compassion Break](#)

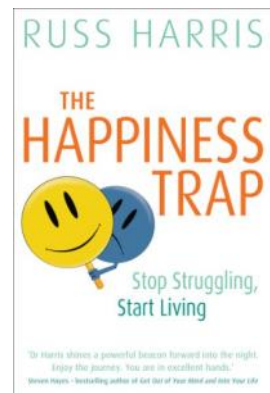
**MENTALLY
HEALTHY
SCHOOLS**

Books

The Happiness Trap: Stop Struggling, Start Living by Dr Russ Harris (2008)

The Compassionate Mind by Paul Gilbert (2010)

The Compassionate Mind Workbook: A Step by Step Guide to Developing your Compassionate Self by Elaine Beaumont & Chris Evans (2017)



Additional services

If you would like additional help and support, please contact the CAMHS team for additional support on 01482 303688 (8am-8pm)

[Let's Talk](#)

Made by Dr Emma Gibson and Dr Rosalyn Nelson, Clinical Psychologists, Hull CAMHS.