

ELSA / LM Training for staff

Settling the children back in to class.

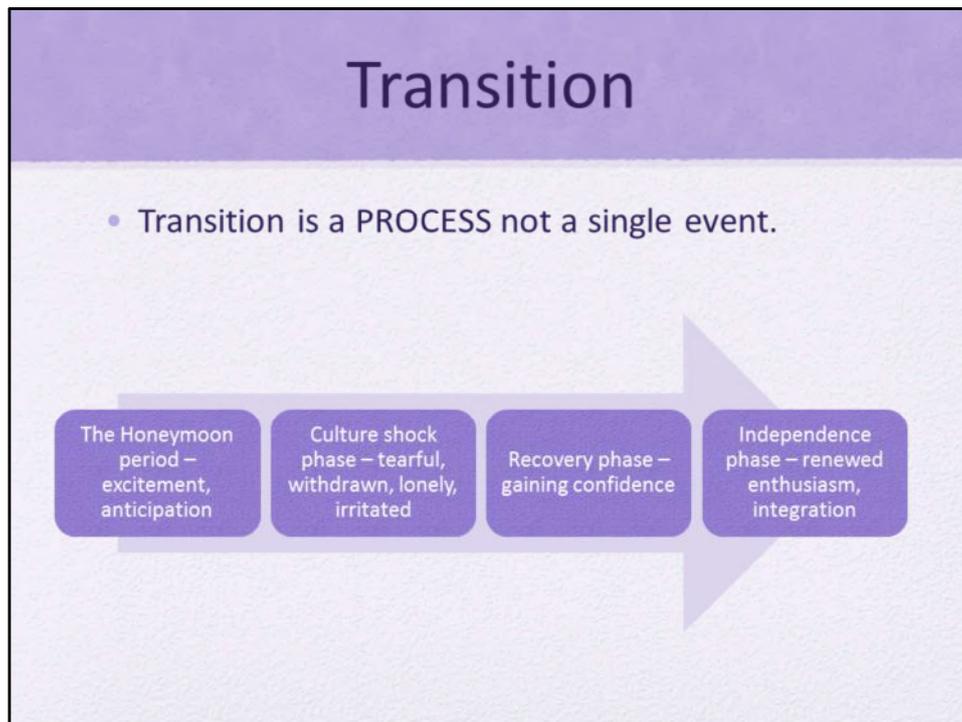
Introduction

- Today we are going to look at practical strategies to support pupils transition back to their educational setting.

During the first half term of the academic year 20/21 we will NOT be accepting any new ELSA or LM referrals. Hopefully this training will give you an insight into our work, particularly the language and strategies we use to ease anxieties amongst our pupils. We anticipate that emotions will be high in the first few weeks of term, therefore as teachers, TA's or one to one's in the classroom you will be the children's immediate support network and will be a huge help in easing the anxieties that some children may be feeling.

Objectives

1. Transition
2. Emotional wellbeing and resilience
3. Managing anxiety
4. Where to get help if needed



There are many transitions that take place throughout a typical day, not just the ‘transition to secondary school or new class’ that we are mostly familiar with. For example, transitions can include moving from one room to another, one part of school to another, the journey to and from school, break times, etc. Some children struggle more with the subtle changes than others. Children with ASD can struggle a lot with transitions but neuro-typical children may do too. We expect that the transition from lockdown, back to school, may be tricky for some children.

It is worth spending a moment or two looking at the known phases of transition.

The Honeymoon period – excitement and anticipation – we anticipate that the majority of children who have attended school during lockdown will be in this stage
Culture Shock phase – tearful, withdrawn, lonely, irritated – we anticipate that some children will be in this stage

Recovery phase – gaining confidence (with our help)

Independence phase – renewed enthusiasm, integration back into school – the aim!

Emotional Wellbeing



Research has found that a pupils experience of the process of transition can have a long-lasting impact on their emotional well-being, self esteem and academic outcomes.

While transition can be a time of great excitement and opportunity for others they can experience worry, uncertainty, anxiety and confusion.

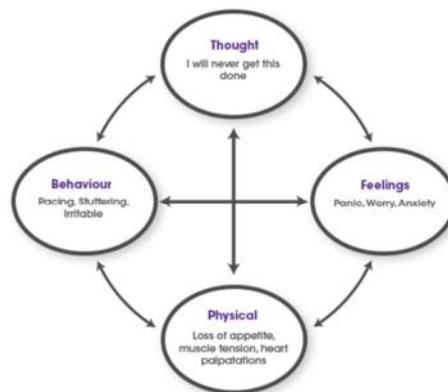
Please bear in mind that all behaviours are signals, being curious and allowing a child to talk can be powerful.

Emotional Resilience

- *'School should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems'* statement issued by the government March 2016



Managing Anxiety



Here is the 'hot cross bun model of anxiety' ! This is a great tool to use to 'unpick' what is going on with a child.

Anxiety is a normal emotion, it helps us cope with difficult, challenging or dangerous situations. There are times when we all feel worried, stressed or anxious. BUT anxiety becomes a problem when it stops us enjoying normal life by affecting school, family relationships, friendships or social activities.

What we might notice in school:

- Social withdrawal
- Psychosomatic symptoms (headache, tummy pains, nausea)
- Avoidance
- Difficulty forming friendships
- Attitude of 'never good enough'
- School refusal
- Difficulty working in groups
- Inability to accept challenge
- Aggressively acting out
- Defiance
- Distraction techniques such as chatting to avoid tasks

Emotional Wellbeing

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of self and collective efficacy
- Social connectedness
- Promoting hope

Research has shown the following five key principles are important for us to think about regarding everyone's return to an education setting.

Activity time – ideas for promoting a sense of safety in school

A sense of safety

- Clear instructions and expectations
- Regular check ins
- Time for their concerns – listen, acknowledge, **don't dismiss**
- Make sure you are aware of any relevant changes to the timetable
- Validate pupils feelings and fears (more about this later)
- Noticing is key
- Diffuse

It is important that everyone feels safe upon their return to their setting. Here is some advice from the professionals:

Clear instructions and expectations- stay concise

Regular check ins – these need to be subtle, say the child's name, a simple greeting in the morning or before/after break times can give you an indication of how they're feeling. You do not need to take the child out of the class to do this or engage in long discussions, but this will reassure the child that you are there if they need you.

Time for their concerns – listen, acknowledge, **don't dismiss their worries – we will talk more about this later**

Make sure you are aware of any relevant changes so you can communicate them to the child.

Validate pupils feelings and fears (more about this later)

Noticing is key – a child may not have the vocabulary or language skills to express themselves clearly, our job is to keep an eye.

Try to diffuse situations before they reach crisis point.

Creating a sense of calm

Active Listening

Give reassurance and affirmation/validation – 'I can see how angry you are.'

Active ignoring

Positive attention

Model the way to stay calm

Try not to catastrophise a situation

Ensure there is a reflective safe space nearby

Thoughts/feelings time with a key adult

When children are overwhelmed by feelings, the emotional side of the brain isn't communicating with the rational side, which normally regulates emotions and plans the best way to deal with a situation. Experts call it being "dysregulated." We can help by creating a sense of calm.

Active Listening – as ELSA's and LM's we are trained to use active listening with children. This is where you make a conscious effort to not only hear the words, but the complete message that is being communicated. For example use open body language, stay quiet even if it feels uncomfortable, nod, smile, and paraphrase 'so what I am hearing is...'

Reassurance and affirmation – Validation is showing acceptance, which is not the same thing as agreement. It is non judgemental and it is not trying to fix or change anything, helping them to work towards the independence phase. Imagine this for a moment. You tell your friend/colleague that you feel tired. Their reply is 'oh don't worry, we are all tired, I hardly slept last night.' How does that make you feel? Have your feelings been heard/noticed? It is important that feelings are acknowledged, validated and normalised and staff and pupils are supported to manage their feelings. You could say: 'I can see how angry you are,' 'you're feeling really sad.' 'I'm on your side.' This will create a sense of calm.

Active ignoring - However it does not mean giving attention to bad behaviour.

Ignoring behaviours such as whining or inappropriate language can reduce the chance of the behaviour being repeated. It is effective because as soon as the child is doing something you can praise, you can turn your attention back on.

Positive attention - When helping your child deal with an emotion, notice the efforts to calm down, however small. For example, if your child is in the midst of a tantrum and you see him take a deep inhale of air, you can say, "I like that you took a deep breath" and join him in taking additional deep breathes.

Model the way to stay calm – For younger children, [describing your own feelings and modeling how you manage them is useful](#). Or during a meltdown experts suggest that you come down to their eye level, mirror their tone of voice, their silence or noise.

Try not to catastrophise a situation – try not to make it into a big deal/drama

Ensure there is a reflective safe space nearby – for example direct them to the common room at lunchtimes, quieter area at break times.

Thoughts / feelings time with a key adult - We are aware of the children who have high needs because they are on our LM/ELSA portfolio – you will be the 'key adult' at this time, as previously mentioned we will not be taking on new referrals this half term.

Create a sense of self and collective efficacy

- *Collective efficacy = refers to the ability of members of a community (school) to control the behaviour of individuals. This allows community residents to feel safe.*
- BELONGING
- Giving roles/jobs is so important
- House teams (Juniors only)
- Encourage to join clubs / Physi-fun etc.
- Recognising you have value and importance as a person lets you set and reach goals.



We all need to feel that we have some control over what is happening to us and to believe that our own actions lead to a positive outcome. Therefore it is important that pupils feel that they BELONG and experience positivity.

Recognising you have value and importance as a person lets you set and reach goals.

Giving roles – monitor roles, class representatives, register monitor etc you could even make up a role if you feel it will benefit that child in that moment.
Encourage and talk about the importance of belonging to a house team
Encourage to join clubs – TA's on the playground could promote clubs

Social Connectedness



We all need to feel that we belong and have a social network that can support us within our education setting. This was so apparent for us particularly during lockdown.

It will be important for us as teachers and TA's to support the children on the playground. **This means active noticing from us, we should be spread out and engaging with the children. Approaching the children where necessary before things start to go wrong or before things escalate.** With all the new wonderful playground markings encourage children to play together. Notice those that are alone or struggling. We found during skeleton school that once they got started others followed.

Brainstorm ideas- social distant playground game ideas* - **PROBABLY DON'T NEED TO DO THIS AS CLASSES/TEACHERS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN**

Promoting Hope

- Focus on one thing that has made the pupil happy
- Talk about something they are looking forward to
- Reflect positively
- What are they thankful for?

When times are difficult it is important to feel the situation will improve in the future. This is true for everyone. Seeing the bright side of life reduces stress and increases your chances of success. Therefore it is imperative that we feel reassured in the short term because uncertainty breeds fear.

Here's how: BP

Focus on one thing that has made the pupil happy.

Talk about something they are looking forward to.

Reflect positively.

What are they thankful for?

BOUNCE BACK

- B - bad times don't last, things get better
- O - other people can help you if you share with them
- U - unhelpful thinking can make you feel worse
- N - nobody is perfect, not you, friends, family, anybody
- C - concentrate on the good things in life
- E - everybody finds things difficult sometimes
- B - blame fairly - negative events are often a combination of things you did, others did and plain bad luck
- A - accept what you can't change and try to change what you can
- C - catastrophizing makes things worse
- K - keep things in perspective

Bounce back is an acronym for some of the foundational principles of resilience, specifically:

Where to get help

You are the key adults at this time and we need your help to encourage children who are struggling to get to the 'independence phase'!

If you need more support please talk to the SENCo

We hope this has been useful to give you some tips and ideas of what to do to help a child who is struggling with the transition from lockdown to school, or any other worries.

However if you do need more support then please do speak to SLT, Kate in particular!