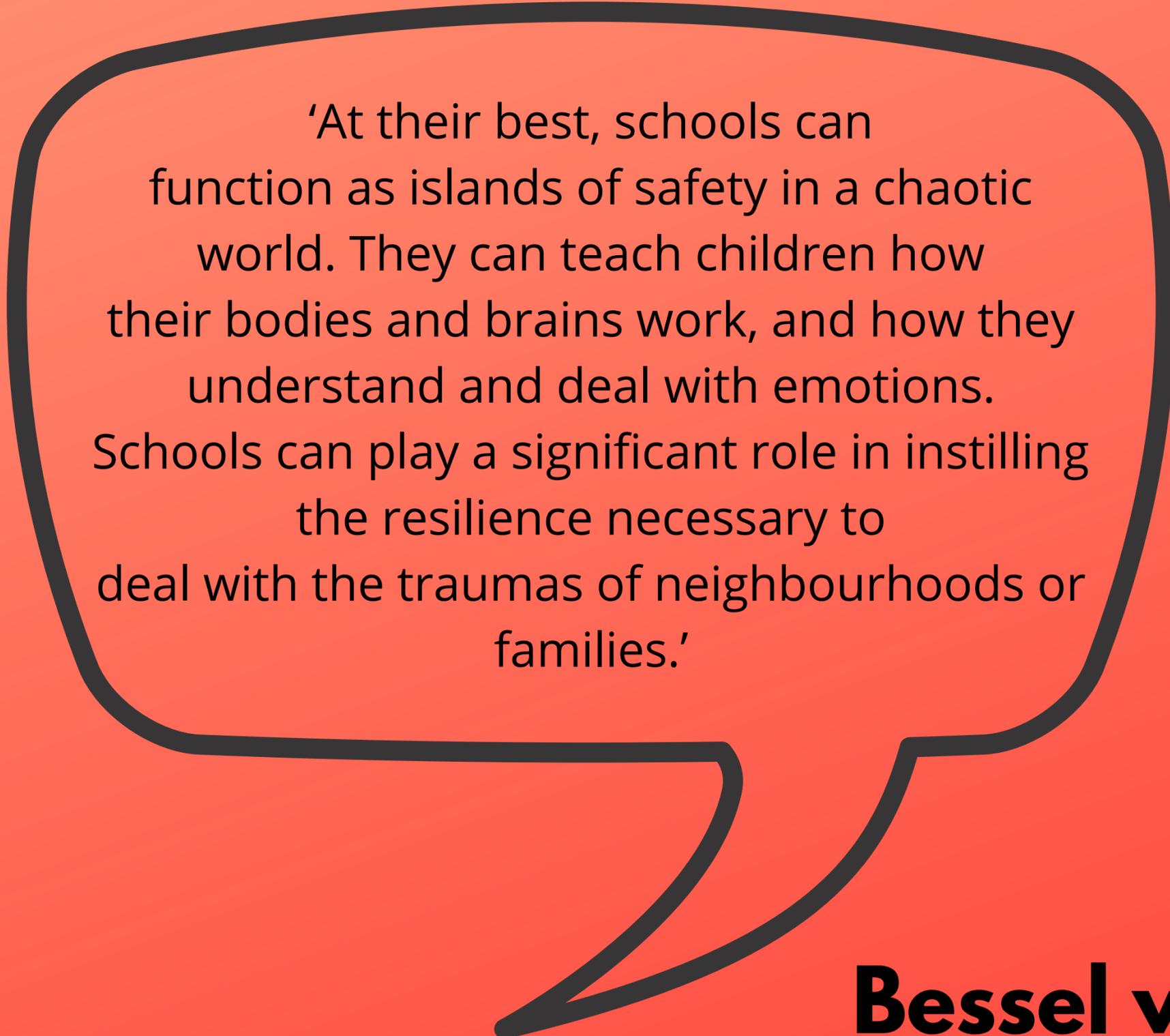


# Collective Trauma Recovery



## *Secondary School Guide*



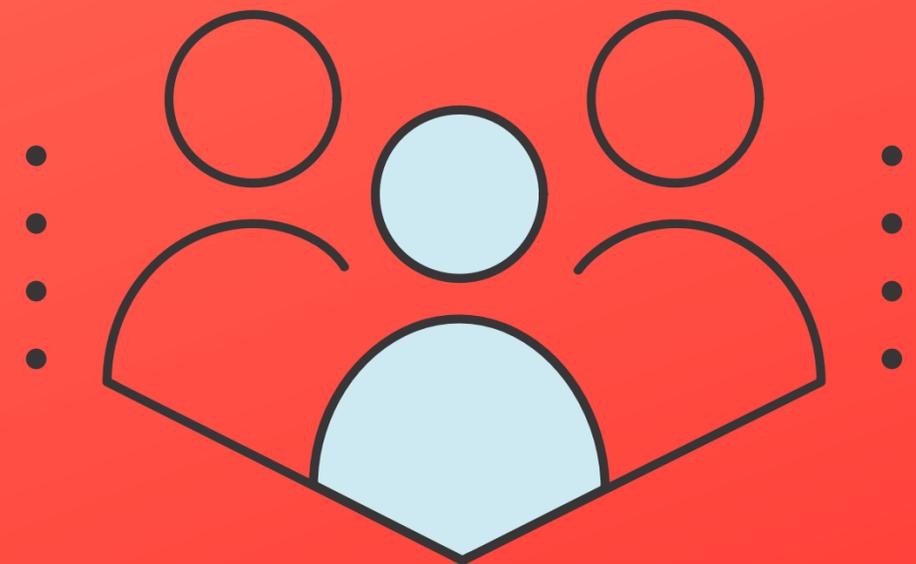


'At their best, schools can function as islands of safety in a chaotic world. They can teach children how their bodies and brains work, and how they understand and deal with emotions. Schools can play a significant role in instilling the resilience necessary to deal with the traumas of neighbourhoods or families.'

**Bessel van der Kolk**

# A practical guide for staff, parents and pupils.

We all have a different experience of the pandemic we are living in. This guidance is for you to adapt and differentiate as appropriate. It accompanies the **Collective Trauma Recovery** webinars by Louise Michelle Bomber.



# Thoughts about self-care...



**Put your own  
oxygen mask on  
first!**

The **polyvagal theory** (the work of Stephen Porges) tells us that we can send others into their alarm systems by ourselves being in our own alarm system. It is vital at this time of heightened stress that we as adults take care of ourselves in order to be the present, attuned and responsive grown-ups that children need us to be, and in order for us all to stay regulated.

# Self-care strategies

## Slow Down

As much as possible, slow down - give yourself time to adjust.

## Increase Familiarity

Add in photos or pictures of people and places that make you smile to your pod.

## Connect

Check-in with yourself - how are you feeling? Have 1:1 check-ins at work first, and then group check-ins with trusted colleagues. Encourage genuine connection.

## Safe Space - for staff!

A protected space for staff to retreat to. Even if it is in the toilets - add a chair, hand-cream, plants etc.

## Use PACE - Dan Hughes.

Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. Smile. Use a warm, open body language with each other.

## Teams

Create small staff teams - Determine who you can swap-in with prior to the children returning. Encourage time out for staff not the pupils. Swap-in to release each other.

# Preparing for re-entry to school

## Staff

- Be mindful that some pupils will be missing school and their friends and some will have been happier at home - there will be **mixed responses about the transition** back to school.
- **Check-in with the pupils**, send weekly cards or emails with doodles, drawings or picture in to personalise. Let them know what you're doing.
- **Remember events** such as birthdays, sports day, parents evening, trips they would have been going on and get in touch on those days.
- **Honour their prom celebration**, dress up and have a virtual ball, post photos on school website.
- Ensure **check-ins are sustained for those (staff and pupils) who are not yet returning** to school. Do a book or game swap each week to encourage pupils to make contact with school. Organise Zoom calls for staff on 1:1 basis or have team social calls.
- **Visit pupils and staff**, stand on the driveway and have a bit of banter.

# Preparing for re-entry to school

## Parents/Carers and Pupils

- Encourage **parents/carers to check-in with staff**, when they feel comfortable to, if there is anything they would like to share regarding their time during lockdown. The better the relationship with the parents/carers the quicker we can help the children settle.
- Where appropriate, families to have time to **work with grief and sadness at home**, privately, before any work is done in school.
- Gradually **practice getting ready for school and slowly build** into your morning routine.
- **Notice sleep patterns**, wake and sleep times, and gradually adjust in line with a school day before the return to school.
- Encourage **respite** whenever possible for the parents/carers to support their own needs for rest and sleep.

# Transitions Primary to Secondary

Every transition activates the nervous system. Overwhelm can quickly kick in. Keep this in mind and ensure you are over-compensating safety, regulation and relationship to calm the nervous system.

- Send a **video tour** of the secondary school, do it in bite-sized chunks.
- **Secondary Key Adult to visit the Primary Key Adult** and chat alongside the pupil.
- Primary Key Adult visit the secondary school with them, ideally regularly.
- Primary Team make a **memory book or a card** that acknowledges something specific about their relationships. Use photos or memorabilia.
- **Exchange a small gift** to honour the relationship.
- Arrange something special for saying goodbye.

# Transitions Primary to Secondary

- **Stagger goodbyes**, it can be overwhelming if they all happen at once.
- Allow some '**down time**' after the goodbyes, allow time to process, even if they miscue that they're fine and not bothered.
- **Send a postcard** part way through the summer holidays. They experience that goodbye doesn't mean you disappear. You show you hold them in mind.
- Arrange **2 visits from their primary Key Adult** to their secondary school in the autumn term.
- Their primary Key Adult can then **send a postcard or letter in January** to wish them well at their new school.

# Managing Separation

Think about a transitional object. This is something you can swap between you to form a relational bridge.

**Decorate each other's water bottles**

**Parents spray perfume/aftershave on uniform**

**Sew tags/buttons into uniform**

# Facilitating Felt Safety

Felt safety according to Dr Stephen Porges, has more to do with **meaningful, genuine and familiar connection**, than to do with the absence of threat.

# Structure

Use a **calendar**, mark the following events:

- **The return to school**
- **Enjoyable events**
- **Contact with Key Adults**
- **School holidays**

Ensure the calendar goes beyond the return to school.

Mark **daily hellos and goodbyes** with rituals e.g. special handshakes but mirror the movements rather than touch hands. A special signal.

Send **short videos** to communicate expectations and show the environment

Ensure pupils have copies of what their day will look like, their **timetable, before** they return to school. Make as **visual** as possible.

# Felt Safety Cues

Be really **demonstrative in your interactions**. This increases safety cues (soft and warm eyes, smiles, vocal prosody).

Try to keep everything as small as possible, e.g. less people on a desk.  
Minimise transitions where possible.

Establish a **safe/regulation space** for the pupil.  
They will need a physical secure base more than ever at this time

**Reassure parents/Carers** you are prioritising safety and relationships right now. Be confident, clear and empathic in your communication to reduce parental anxiety.

# Regulation

Teach your young person **grounding rituals**. Do a body scan followed by noticing 1 thing they can see, hear, feel and smell.

Allocate time when they can use gym equipment e.g. resistance machines, running, rowing, or use a climbing wall.

Create a calm purse or calm case ahead of going back into school.

Be **playful**, use humour – watch funny clips.

# Regulation

Use **music**! Sing!  
Drum! clap, tap or  
hum. Allow time  
to listen to music  
through earbuds.

## **Muscle Tensing and Relaxing.**

Tense muscles in you  
hands, shoulders, legs,  
feet and then release.  
Repeat up to 5 times.  
Shake out and stretch!

Get them to **journal**.  
What works to soothe  
and quieten their  
nervous  
systems? Draw,  
collage, paint, dance.

Experiment with  
**mindfulness**  
Check out the  
book **Quiet the  
Mind** *by Matthew  
Johnstone*

# Regulation

Movement will help use up some of the energy activated by the nervous system for mobilisation against threat.

Think about heavy work type movement. Get out in nature or the outdoor space of school, notice all the things you can see, smell, hear, and feel. Walking, stretching, yoga, baking, personal fitness routines, personal bests, stress ball, cycling, rocking - think about how they can build opportunities into their day for these activities.

# Regulation



## Candle Breathing

Hold both hands up, palms facing you. Blow each 'candle' out, count out loud from 1-10 as you go, and fold your finger down



## Butterfly Hug

Cross your arms over your chest and tap arms or shoulders in an alternating rhythm for up to a few minutes. Breath intentionally throughout.

## 4-2-6-2

Breath in for a count of 4, hold for 2, breath out for 6, hold for 2 - Repeat!

Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly and notice your breathing.

# Connection - building relationships

- Check-in on a daily basis once in school - show your interest in them.
- Do a creative project together before school starts. Try the following:
  - **Creating a short film together**
  - **Do a profile on someone they are interested in**
  - **Make two halves of a craft project you put together.**
  - **Use Scratch to make an animation**
  - **Creating a comic strip or story together**

# Being open with feelings

## Adults

*Keep in mind exploring sadness and loss. We need to be ready to acknowledge and process what we have collectively been through. We need to support each other to articulate the losses, big and small, that we have all felt at this time.*

- Provide supervision for staff, do through 'staff support teams' or maybe through educational psychology service..
- Provide a confidential space for staff - through a school counsellor where possible.

# Being open with feelings

## Pupils

What's tricky? What are they enjoying? **Look at *being* not just saying.** Let's listen with all our sense to what their behaviours are telling us – the body doesn't lie. Keep in mind that there may be miscuing, we need to look beyond what is on the surface.

Sit with what they communicate, **stay with the uncomfortable** for longer than feels comfortable.

Commentate! Describe what is happening and how they might be feeling.  
**Notice out loud what we see in the pupils:** "I can see/hear that you're feeling..."

Guess tentatively what might be going on using "I'm wondering..." and "Help me to understand what's happening right now..." **Curiosity leads to self-awareness**, and self-awareness leads to self-control.

**Match their affect.** If our pupils are expressing themselves with high energy we need to regulate ourselves, but speak with greater animation, energy, and intensity. This can help pupils to feel heard and understood.

## **Guess tentatively what might be going on using...**

"I'm wondering..."

"Help me to understand what's happening right now..."

"I wonder if..."

"If I were in that situation, I might feel..."

"Tell me if I got it wrong, but it sounds as if you feel...because..."

"I'm not surprised that you are feeling ... when..."

"I am not sure but..."

"I wonder if your body could talk, what would it say..."

# Recommended Reading:

- Bloom, S.L & Farragher. B (2013) Restoring Sanctuary. A new Operating System for Trauma Informed Systems. OUP: USA.
- Bombèr, L.M (2011) What About Me? Inclusive Strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties through the school day. Worth Publishing: London
- Bombèr, L.M (2020) Know Me to Teach Me. Worth Publishing: London
- Golding K.S; Phillips S; Bombèr L.M. (To be published autumn 2020) Working with Relational Trauma in Education: A Practical Guide to Using Dyadic Developmental Practice with Educators, Children and Families. Jessica Kingsley: London
- Maté, G. (2019) When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress Vermillion: USA
- Porges, S & Dana. D (2018) Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory. W.W. Norton: USA
- Siegel D. & Byrson T. (2020) The Power of Showing Up: Scribe: UK
- Taransaud D. (2011) You Think I'm Evil. Worth Publishing: London
- Van Der Kolk, B (2015) The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma. Penguin Books: Great Britain



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