



**PLYMOUTH**  
CITY COUNCIL

# Back to School After COVID -19

# Overview

- ▶ This presentation has been developed by Plymouth Educational Psychology Service and is being delivered in school by your SENCo.
- ▶ This presentation has been designed to offer you some support regarding the needs of the children/young people in your school, with a particular focus on supporting their transition back into school, or into a new class.
- ▶ We share several different models of thinking to help you decide on the approach that best suits you and your school, as well as your pupils and their parents/carers.
- ▶ This presentation is designed to aid this thinking. If any further information or support is required, please contact your link Educational Psychologist (EP) through the school SENCo.
- ▶ An information pack has also been sent to your school with further advice/support

# Life After COVID -19

- ▶ According to research, many children and young people find it unsettling and stressful to transition between schools.
- ▶ Following the current Public Health Crisis (Covid-19), and the subsequent period of social isolation, it is likely that many children and young people will experience similar feelings when they return to school.
- ▶ Some children are particularly at risk, including those who are vulnerable, those who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and those who are moving to a new school.

# Life After COVID -19

- ▶ The usual programmes of transition may not have taken place, leaving children, parents and staff feeling anxious.
- ▶ Many children may also have experienced loss, bereavement, hardship and other safeguarding difficulties.
- ▶ However, there will be many other children who have had a more positive experience of being at home. They may simply be looking forward to getting back to their 'normal' routine.
- ▶ The purpose of this presentation is to provide advice on how schools can support all of their children and young people during the transition back to school.

# Children who are transitioning to a new school and returning back to school

- ▶ Plymouth EPS have developed a document to provide some advice on how to support children, whether they are transitioning to a new school, or returning to a familiar school.
- ▶ It is important to remember that - although many children will be returning to a familiar school - this will be following a long period of absence. They will therefore need support.
- ▶ While the psychological models can be applied to new starters, it may be beneficial for schools to think about how the new term will start for them in the context of the current public health situation.

- ▶ Disengaged. Some children will not have completed any type of learning due to the long period of absence from school.
- ▶ Frustrated. Some children have been kept away from their friends, some of the adults who support them, and are missing key experiences (exams, prom, leaving school, trips etc)
- ▶ Challenging. This might be because of a flight/fight response, and uncertainty due to a change of routine.
- ▶ Anxious. Returning to school may result in some children being anxious over leaving parents, home and the safety that this offered. Some may be anxious over getting ill themselves.

Behaviours  
that we may  
expect

- ▶ Crying, shouting, anger etc. Some children may have experienced loss and bereavement which result in this response.
- ▶ Anger. Possibly in relation to a range of other feelings (see next slide).
- ▶ ...also, some children may not experience any of the above, and return to school with no difficulty.

**NOTE:**

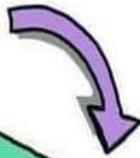
- ▶ Speaking to parents/carer about how their child has been over isolation will give information.

Behaviours  
that we may  
expect

BEHIND  
THIS



MIGHT  
BE



# Approaches

This presentation offers an overview of several psychological theories that can be applied within schools to support the needs of the children/young people.

Building  
Positive  
relationships

Nurturing  
School  
approach

Resilience

Growth  
Mindset

Emotion  
Coaching

Psychosocial  
Care

PACE  
model

Attachment

Mindfulness

# Relationships

- ▶ Upon returning to school, a key area to think about will be the development and re-establishment of relationships. This will not only be between pupils. Staff and pupils will want to reconnect with each other.
- ▶ **It is suggested that schools focus on relationships first.** This means supporting staff and pupils to reconnect having been separated. It also means helping children and young people re-establish friendships.
- ▶ Younger children may need additional adult support to remind them of how to play and interact appropriately with others.
- ▶ Staff also need time to reconnect with each other. When they feel safe, fit and ready, they will be better equipped to model the expected behaviours for children.
- ▶ The development of relationships can then lead to feelings of belonging, and feeling safe, as well as the opportunity to re-affirm structures and routines.

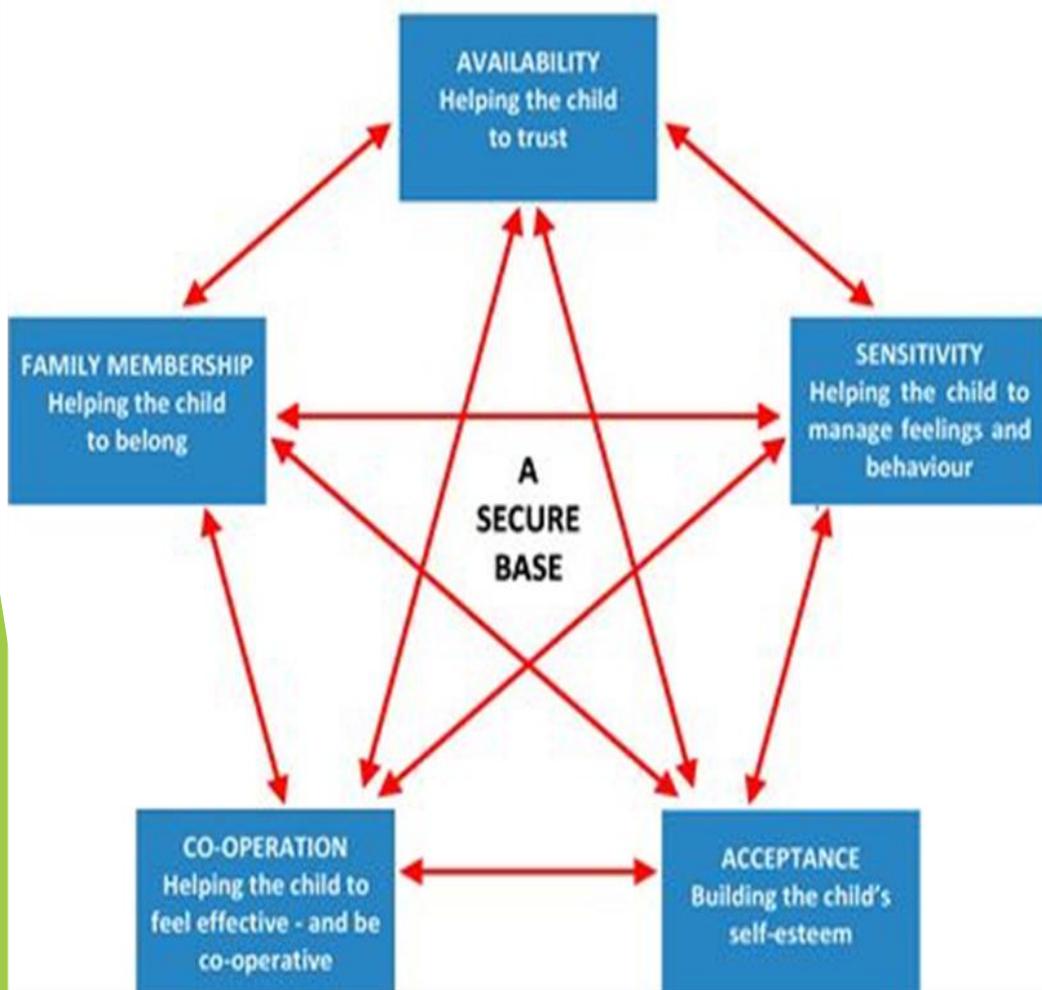
# Attachment

- ▶ As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some children may have experienced trauma/further trauma. The impact of the trauma often depends upon the severity and timing.
- ▶ Children whose caregivers respond sensitively and appropriately to the child's needs at times of distress and fear are thought to develop secure attachments to their caregivers. They are thought to have better outcomes than non-securely attached children

# Attachment

- ▶ We know that transition can be a difficult time, even for children with secure and stable ‘backgrounds.’ Attachment informed principles should, therefore, apply to all students.
- ▶ It is important that relationships with staff are re-established for all children.
- ▶ The school setting, as well as the adults that care for children and young people, need to be safe and secure bases.
- ▶ This will help children to become emotionally able and ready to learn.

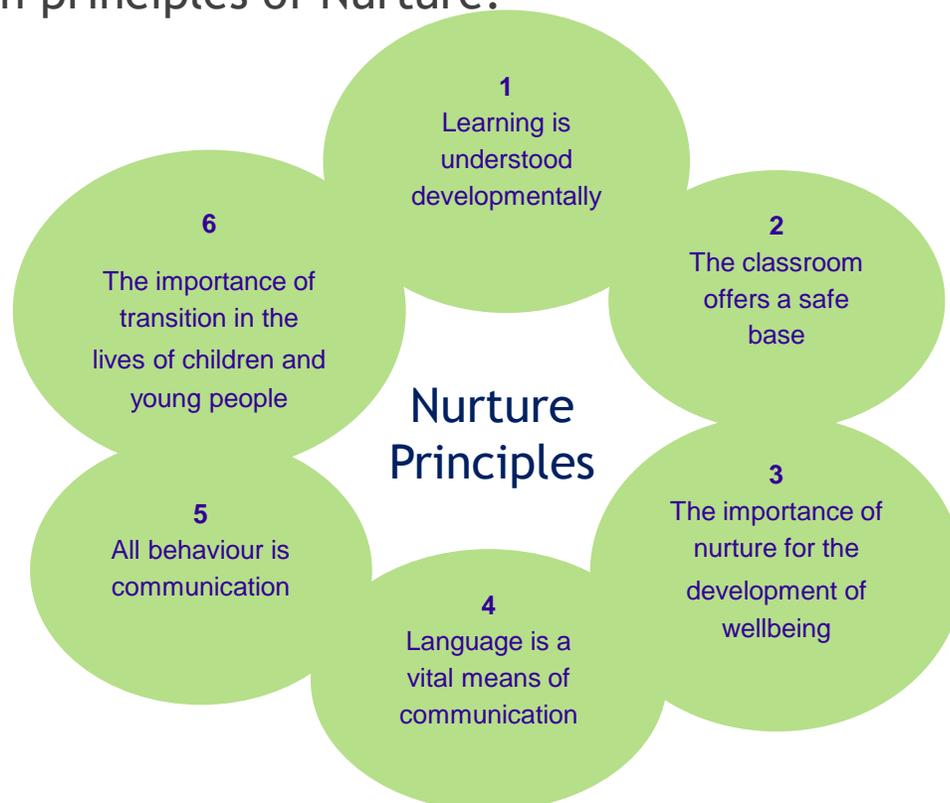
# Attachment



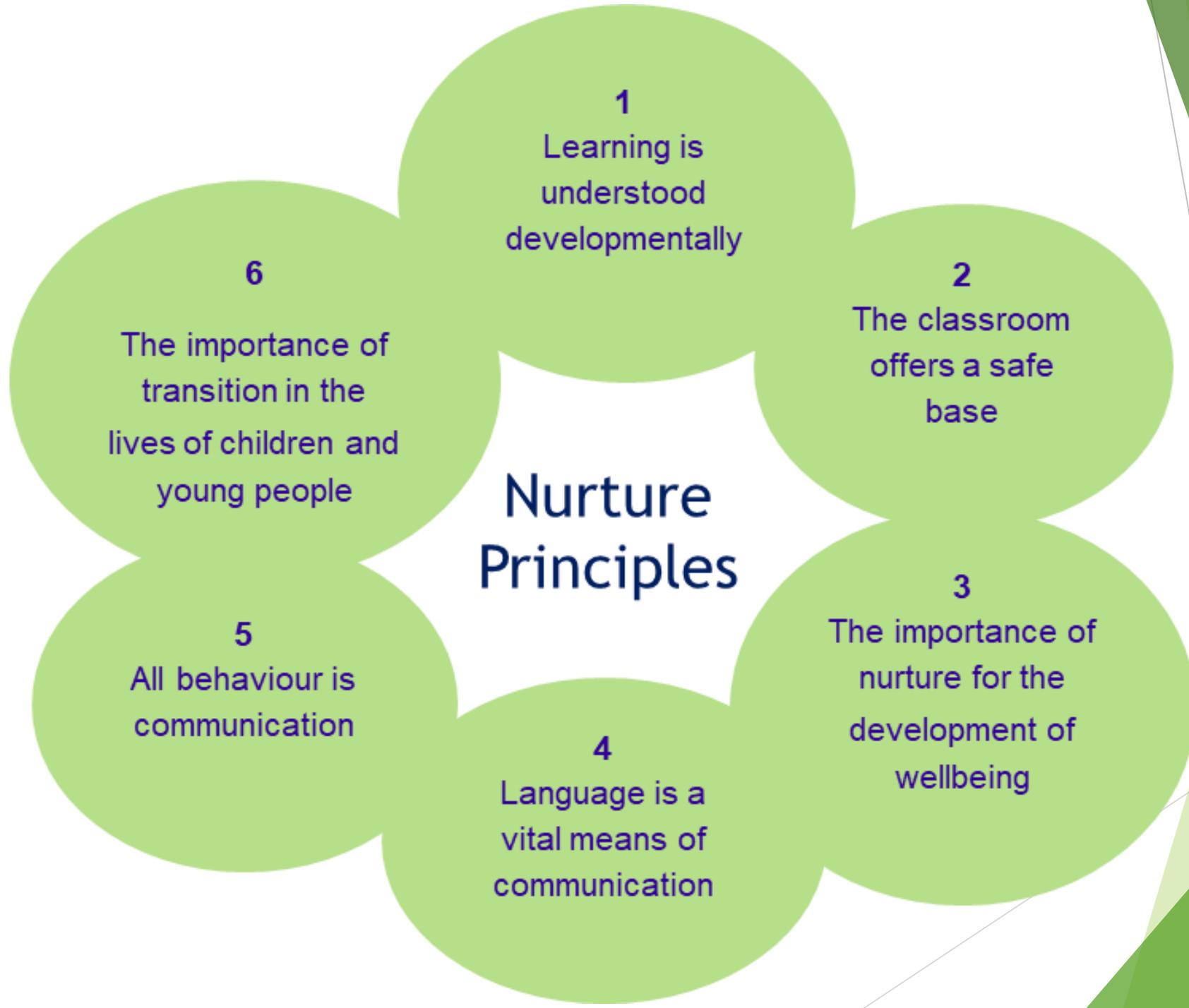
- ▶ This diagram demonstrates the importance of schools being a safe base. It also shows how this can be achieved.
- ▶ Children need to experience the feeling of being calm; of believing that they are lovable and are loved; and feeling that others want to connect and interact with them.
- ▶ Children should also feel that others are interested in them, as well as in their thoughts and ideas.
- ▶ Finally, children should feel safe enough to be curious and make mistakes and feel that they can trust others to meet their needs.

# Nurture

- ▶ Many staff will have heard of Marjorie Boxall's intervention; Nurture Groups. However, many of the key principles can be implemented within the classroom.
- ▶ There are six main principles of Nurture:



“A nurturing approach can be applied at both the universal and targeted level and promotes inclusive, respectful relationships across the whole school community, including learners, staff, parents/carers and partners” (Education Scotland).



## Nurture Principles

1

Learning is understood developmentally

2

The classroom offers a safe base

3

The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

4

Language is a vital means of communication

5

All behaviour is communication

6

The importance of transition in the lives of children and young people

- ▶ A nurturing approach recognises that positive relationships are central to both learning and wellbeing.
- ▶ A key aspect of a nurturing approach is an understanding of attachment theory and how early experiences can have a significant impact on development.
- ▶ This approach recognises that all school/EYFS settings staff have a role to play in establishing positive relationships, because positive relationships are required to promote healthy social and emotional development.

Taken from 'Applying Nurture as a whole school approach' - Education Scotland

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/inc55ApplyingNurturingApproaches120617.pdf>

## Nurturing Approaches

- ▶ Relationships should also be reliable, predictable and consistent where possible.
- ▶ A nurturing approach has a key focus on the school environment and emphasises the balance between care and challenge.
- ▶ This means a balance between attunement, warmth and connection, but also structure, high expectations and a focus on achievement and attainment.

## Nurturing Approaches

Taken from 'Applying Nurture as a whole school approach' - Education Scotland

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/inc55ApplyingNurturingApproaches120617.pdf>

# Resilience

- ▶ Resilience is the ability to ‘bounce back’ from adversity.
- ▶ Resilience is not a personality trait. Innate characteristics play a part, but resilience is something that can be promoted and developed, through the provision of support and opportunities for growth.
- ▶ Whole-school resilience-based approaches are more likely to have long-term positive benefits than individual interventions.



# Resilience

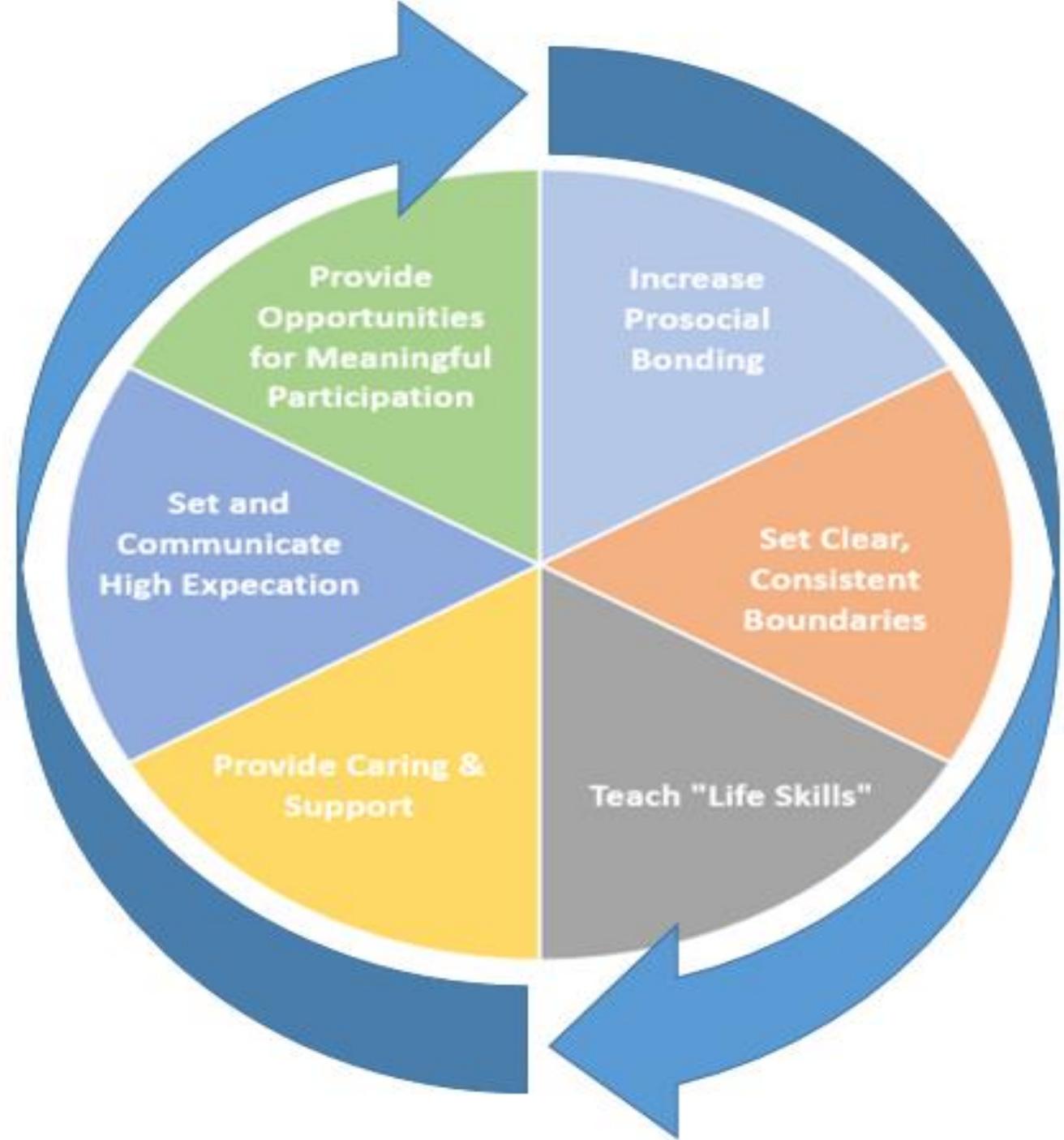
- ▶ The Resiliency Framework summarises a set of ideas and practices that promote resiliency. The Framework is split into five headings or sections; Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping and Core-Self. Within each section there is a range of evidenced-based ideas that can be used in supporting resiliency within children and young people.
- ▶ The resiliency wheel is another approach which identifies six major approaches to promoting resilience along with specific strategies. The most critical part in this model is again through relationships.

	<b>BASICS</b>	<b>BELONGING</b>	<b>LEARNING</b>	<b>COPING</b>	<b>CORE SELF</b>
<b>SPECIFIC APPROACHES</b>	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live	Help child/YP understand their place in the world		Engage mentors for children/YP	
		Tap into good influences	Solving problems		Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
	Being safe	Keep relationships going	Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
	Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better		Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope			Calming down & self-soothing
	Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster their talents
	Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations		Develop life skills	
		Enough sleep	Focus on good times and places		Have a laugh
	Play & leisure	Make sense of where child/YP has come from			
		Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Predict a good experience of someone or something new		
		Make friends and mix with other children/YPs			

**NOBLE TRUTHS**

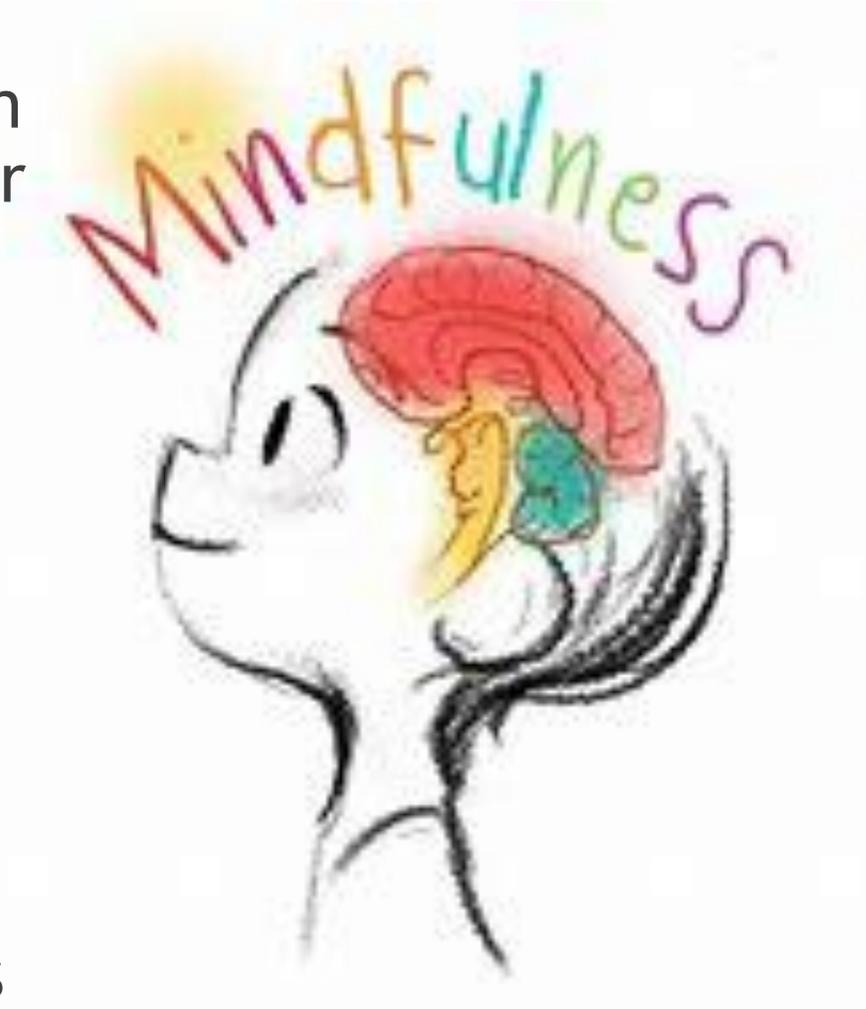
<b>ACCEPTING</b>	<b>CONSERVING</b>	<b>COMMITMENT</b>	<b>ENLISTING</b>
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# The Resiliency Wheel

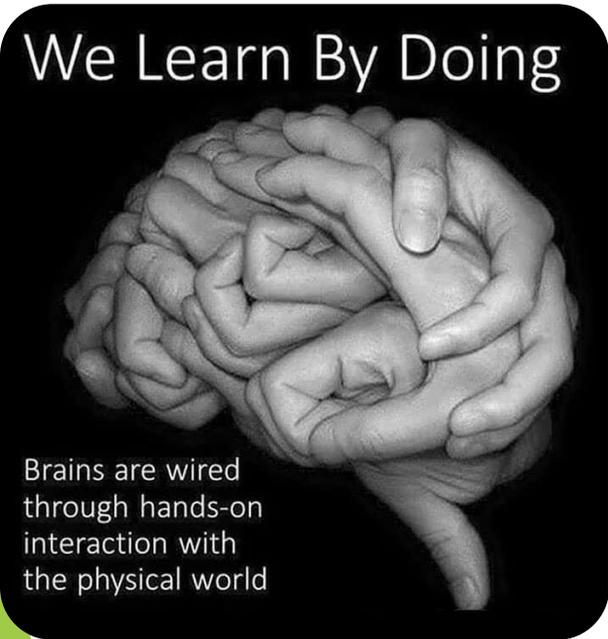


► *Adapted from the book **Resiliency in school: Making It Happen for Students and Education** by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein, published by Corvin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA (1996)*

- ▶ Mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we're doing at the moment, free of distraction or judgement, and aware of our thoughts and feelings.
- ▶ It helps children and young people to regulate their emotions and focus their attention as well as developing their resilience. Furthermore, it can open a channel of discussion with adults on discussing any thoughts worries and concerns.



# Emotion Coaching



- ▶ Emotion Coaching is an evidence-based strategy based upon the work of John Gottman.
- ▶ Emotion Coaching uses moments of heightened emotion and resulting behaviour to guide and teach the child or young person about more effective responses.
- ▶ Through empathetic engagement, the child's emotional state is verbally acknowledged and validated, promoting a sense of security and feeling 'felt'.
- ▶ This activates changes in the child's neurological system and allows the child to calm down, physiologically and psychologically.

# Emotion Coaching involves..

- Teaching children about the world of emotion ‘in the moment’
- Giving children strategies to deal with ups and downs
- Accepting all emotions as normal
- Seeing undesired behavioural responses as opportunities for teaching
- Building trusting and respectful relationships



# Psychosocial Care

- ▶ Research has identified five key principles that support recovery following a disaster or serious incident (Hobfoll et al., 2007). These principles will be important to consider when supporting members of staff, children and young people upon their return to school.



# Psychosocial Care

1. **A sense of safety:** It is important that adults, children and young people feel safe upon their return to school
2. **A sense of calm:** Children and young people are likely to experience a range of both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. These should be normalized, and individuals should be given support to help them manage their emotions and return to a state of calm.
3. **A sense of self- and collective- efficacy:** Children need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them.
4. **Social connectedness:** It is important that adults, children and young people feel they belong and have a social network who can support them within the educational setting.
5. **Promoting hope:** Whilst things may feel difficult now, it is important that adults, children and young people feel things will get better and work out in future. They need to be provided with reassurance and understand that in the long-term they will feel positive again.

# PACE Model

- ▶ Pace can be used by any adult to validate, explore and understand children's feelings.
- ▶ PACE stands for **PLAYFULNESS**, **ACCEPTANCE**, **CURIOSITY**, **EMPATHY**.

## **Playfulness**

An open, ready, calm, relaxed and engaged attitude

## **Acceptance**

Unconditionally accepting a child makes them feel secure, safe and loved

## **Curiosity**

Without judgement children become aware of their inner life

## **Empathy**

A sense of compassion for the child and their feelings

- ▶ A Growth Mindset refers to the belief that abilities and knowledge are not fixed i.e. with effort, experience and support we can achieve growth.
- ▶ In contrast, those who have a fixed mindset are of the view that their qualities are “carved in stone” and unchangeable (pg. 6).
- ▶ Research has shown that when children have a Growth Mindset, they are more willing to take on challenging tasks, focus on learning goals, and are able to rebound more easily from failures.

## Growth Mindset

- ▶ The Growth Mindset will be important and useful for staff to foster when children return to school.
- ▶ It is likely that they will feel overwhelmed with academic work, following the unexpected break from school.
- ▶ A Growth Mindset will reassure and support them, helping them see that the difficulties that they may be experiencing can be overcome.
- ▶ The power of the word ‘yet’ is a quick and easy way to promote a Growth Mindset. For example, “you cannot do that maths question *yet* but you will get there”.

*(Dweck, C; 2006)*

## Growth Mindset

# GROWTH MINDSET

Talent and intelligence can be developed over time and with effort.

**Attitude: Evolving**

Thrive on challenges

**Willing to try new things**

Embrace failure as a mechanism for learning and development

**BELIEF IN**  
Intelligence  
Creativity  
Talent

Talents and intelligence are fixed at birth

**Attitude: Static**

Believe there's no room for improvement

**Stuck in 'the way its always been done'**

Inability to realise 'change'

# FIXED MINDSET

# Final Thought

- ▶ What all of these psychological theories have in common is the importance of positive relationships.
- ▶ Taking time at the beginning to either start or re-establish relationships will help all of us feel safe, secure and connected with the school community.

