

Supporting your child's emotional wellbeing as they start school

Emily Rothon - Clinical Lead & Dramatherapist
Eleni Tontikidou - Education Wellbeing Practitioner

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM (MHST)
Emotional Health Service
Achieving for Children
42 York Street
London TW1 3BW



Aims of the session:

We will be thinking about...

Building relationships and feeling secure in school

Developmental stage of your children

Sharing practical tools and tips

Importance of play and imagination

Emotional & Sensory Regulation

Resources



Introduction to the MHST:

The **Mental Health Support Team (MHST)** provides mental health support to children, young people, their families/carers and staff in school settings, within Kingston and Richmond.

We offer early intervention from a multi disciplinary team delivered as a part of Emotional Health Service provided by Achieving for Children.

What might this look like in my child's school?

- An Education Wellbeing Practitioner offering 1-1 brief guided self-help interventions for parents of children with mild to moderate anxiety or behaviour difficulties
- Colleagues offering creative therapies
- Small group-work and class workshops
- Workshops for parents and school staff

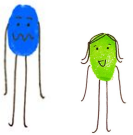
For more information, speak to your class teacher or the school's Mental Health Lead

Starting something new....

Please take a moment to think about the last time you started doing something new...

How did you feel?

What were your hopes/worries?



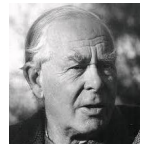
Development stage of 3-4 year olds

- Learning to play with other rather than alone
- Starting to take turns
- Very active, wanting to try out new skills for themselves
- Sensory play/exploration
- Starting to find separating from parents/carers easier
- Copies adults and friends in play and in real life
- May get upset/unsettled with any major changes in routine
- Shows affection for others without prompting

Development stage of 4-5 year olds

- Learning sensitivity to others' feelings
- Lots of changes in behaviour eg. cooperative/very demanding!
- Learning best when relaxed or playing
- Starting to understand social skills/developing friendships
- Creative in how they think about and represent their experiences
- More understanding of rules

What is attachment?



The "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings"
(Bowlby 1969)



Attachment and relationships

Attachment is...

Co-created

Predictable
and consistent

Provides
security and
safety



The Secure Base



- Strong relationship created enables you as the parent/caregiver to be a **secure base** for your child
- It gives emotional security in fear-provoking situations
- With a secure base, children can explore the world around them and be curious, knowing you will be there to comfort them in times of need

School as the secure base



As children's relationships in school develop and they feel more comfortable, school becomes a secure base:

- **Providing safety**
- **Providing emotional security in fear-provoking situations**
- **Promotes opportunities for learning, play, socialising and contribution**

School becomes a place where children can feel safe to explore and their learning can thrive.

How can you help build this secure base?

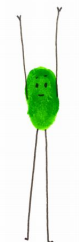
- Share stories about school with your child.
- Model talking to school staff and share how these interactions make you feel.
- Get ready for the day ahead after tea together with lots of chat about what's coming.
- Give yourselves extra time in the morning to reduce time pressures so this is a positive time too.

How can you help build this secure base?

- Talk about school as a fun and interesting place.
- Work with school.
- Any difficulties need to be addressed with the school and avoid sharing it with your child to promote positive attachment to the school.
- The same applies if you have difficulties with any teaching or other staff member.
- **Children should be free to learn and succeed instead of becoming involved in any difficulties between parents and school**

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- Social
- Personal
- Emotional development
- Relationships
- Communication
- Physical development



How can we help?

- Supporting your child to form an attachment to school
- Emotional and Sensory regulation
- Validation of feelings/emotions
- Using play to help your child's learning
- Helping your child with practical skills & self-care
- Building routines



Emotional Regulation

What Zone are you in?

blue	green	yellow	red
			
sad sick tired moving slowly bored	happy calm excited focused ready to learn	worried frustrated feeling ok wiggly silly	annoyed mad angry out of control I need space

Blue Low states of alertness

Green Ideal state of alertness

Yellow Heightened state of alertness

Red Extremely heightened state of alertness

Emotional Regulation

Blue strategies... Red strategies... Yellow strategies... Green strategies...

Talking, **be curious** about what is happening for them.

Encouragement and positive self talk.

Name feelings around events.

Grounding exercises.

Reduce word use. Do not warn about consequences.

Model remaining calm and using calming strategies.

Planned ignoring when appropriate.

Distraction

Grounding exercises

Relaxation and breathing techniques

Using their senses
(drink through a straw, rip paper, eat crunchy food, bubble wrap)

Distraction (count colours, quick fire questions)

movement and exercise

Creative expression
(drawing, crafts, dance)

relaxation and breathing techniques

Setting small achievable steps

Sensory regulation

Alert levels



Down regulating activities

Mixing, kneading etc.



Movement whilst carrying weight



Hugs and "deep pressure"



Wheelbarrow walks or races



Slow, repetitive, hard work for the body- heavy work is **calming and organising** for our nervous systems
Help bring us **DOWN** to "just right"

Up regulating activities

Faster, unpredictable, head movements- are **alerting** for our nervous systems
Help bring us **UP** to "just right"



Spinning

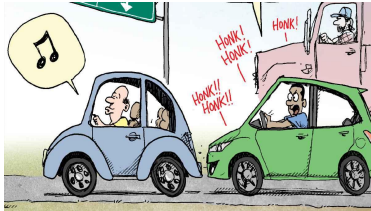


Sports and chasing games



Playground equipment

Tuning in to your child's speed



Emotional validation



- Allow children to have their feelings so they learn that they are capable of dealing with them
- Don't try to fix, rescue, or try and talk children out of their feelings
- Validate their feeling eg. 'I can see that you're feeling angry, sad, upset'
- Check you have understood correctly
- Stay with the emotion until they are ready to problem-solve or work it through

Expressing feelings through play

Move like a fast-moving fire, or a flickering candle flame
Slow, calm water
A strong, whirling wind or a cool, gentle breeze
Hard, tough earth or soft, squelchy mud

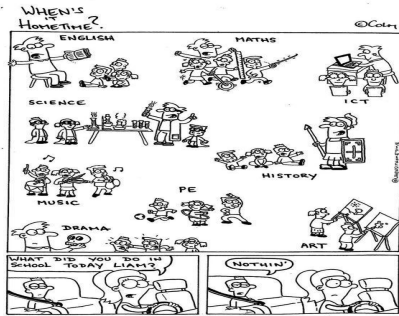


Building communication skills

How can you support your child with this?

- Support both talking and listening through play, sharing books, rhymes and songs.
- Find opportunities for using words and initiating questions e.g. imaginary play / role-play as well as in day to day conversation
- Use lots of modelling and targeted praise

'How was your day?'



Building routines

How can you support your child with this?

Routines to keep going at home:

- The time to get ready in the morning
- Bath times, mealtimes and bedtimes
- Play time, reading, family time and outdoor play
- 'Family rules'

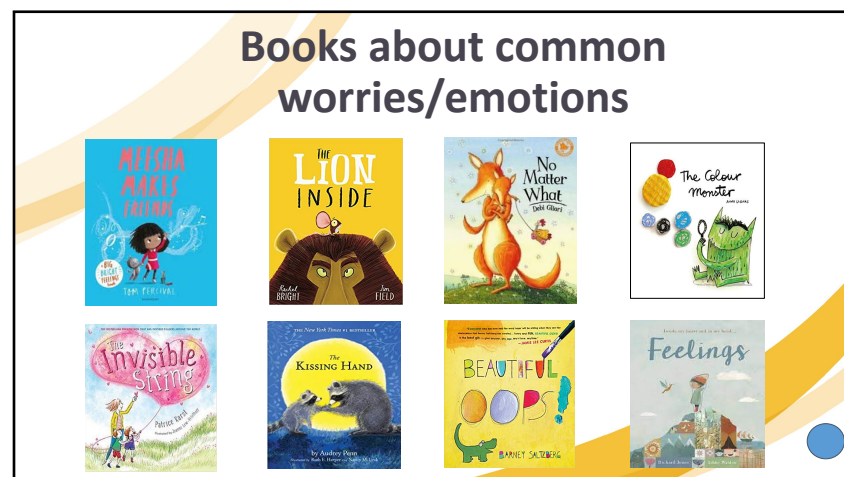
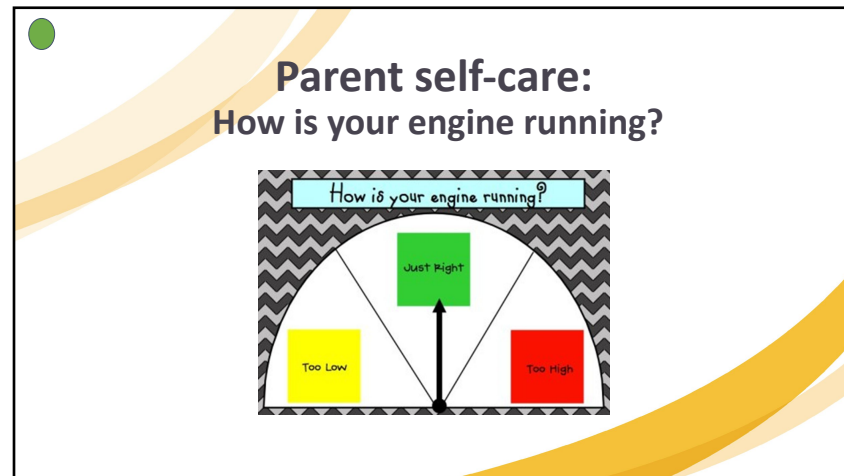
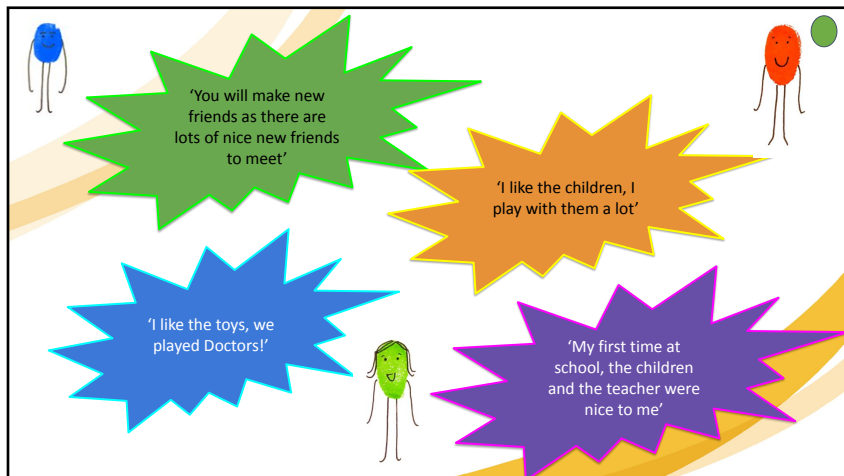


Autonomy and self care

What can you do to support your child with this?

- Keep practising at home
- Build up gradually
- Finding fun way or games such as the 'flip trick' for coats
- Labelled praise
- Tasks to grow independence





Calm down glitter jar

Fill an empty bottle with water and glitter.

Shake the bottle and watch the glitter float all around.

The water might be murky and unclear. This is like our minds when our tricky feelings get too big.

Keep watching and breathing until the glitter (and your mind) settles

Shake your glitter bottle as many times as you need.



Online resources



- BBC Bitesize – Starting School
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/grou ps/cx1lpm3ve37t>
- BBC Interactive – My First Day at School
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topic s/zhtcvk7/articles/znc9vk7>
- Cosmic Yoga - on youtube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/Cos mickidsyoga/videos>
- Preparation for starting school | PACEY
- Down regulating activity: Laundry Basket Push Activity for Kids - YouTube

Steps to starting school

Build your child's confidence so that they start school confident, curious and ready to learn

Access more great advice, tips and downloadable resources at pacey.org.uk/schoolready

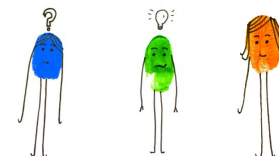


More top tips:

- ★ Get your child ready for their new routine by switching their meal times to match those of the school day
- ★ Encourage your child to explore new environments and interact with new people
- ★ Talk to your child about what they are most looking forward to at school
- ★ Let your child practise putting their new school uniform on and taking it off
- ★ And remember, every child is different and starts school with different abilities



Questions - Ideas - Feedback



Contact us on:

mhstbusiness.support@achievingforchildren.org.uk