

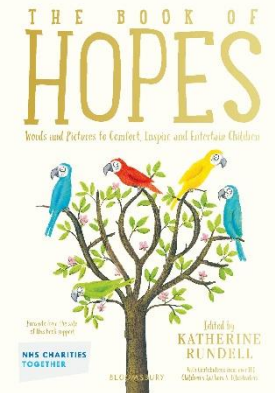
Connectedness: wellbeing and literacy activities

Key Stage 1

Introduction

After some time away from each other, humans often have a strong desire to reconnect. Although many of your pupils may have stayed digitally connected with each other, they may have missed being part of a bigger class, year group and whole school community. By exploring the theme of connectedness through these literacy activities you can help children to build coping mechanisms for when times are tough. You can use these teacher notes in partnership with the PowerPoint presentation or as inspiration to plan your own lessons.

The activities are linked to poems and stories from *The Book of Hopes* (published by Bloomsbury), which you can access at the National Literacy Trust Website: literacytrust.org.uk/bookofhopes.



Recovery Curriculum links

The activities in this resource link to the following Recovery Curriculum 'Levers' (Barry Carpenter, 2020) evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/#mentalhealth

Lever 1 Relationships: These activities will help your pupils rebuild relationships with their classmates, and consider different ways we connect with different people in our lives. Sending kind notes to each other will re-establish friendships, as well as developing new ones, and set up a culture of kindness in the classroom.

Lever 2 Community: Reconnecting after the long break with group activities in which children are encouraged to think about each other and their school community will help the children feel supported at school and part of something bigger.

Lever 5 Space: It's important to allow children time to work on their own creative activities that won't be assessed, such as writing poems and messages of friendship. Reflecting on their feelings as they are engaged in the task will provide a sense of space for children to find their voice, settle in to the school environment and encourage self-expression.



Connecting with each other – discussion

Start by having a discussion with your pupils about connectedness and why it's important. You can use the questions and comments below and in the PowerPoint to kick start the conversation.

Starter questions

What do we mean when we talk about “connecting” with someone?

How do you connect with friends?

How do you connect with family? Is it different? Draw out some of the different ways your pupils might connect with people they have different relationships with.

Why is connecting with each other important?

How did it feel during lockdown when you couldn't see your friends?

Did you find other ways of connecting with people when you couldn't see them? You could talk about the difference between connecting digitally and in person.

How does it feel now we are back at school? There are lots of positives to reconnecting with friends, but it's also okay to talk about how strange it is and why it can be hard.

Key points

After some time away from each other, humans really want to reconnect.

There are lots of ways to connect, and we might have different ways of connecting to different people in our lives.

We can find ways of connecting with others even if we can't hug or see them in person.

Sometimes the challenges we face feel really difficult, but we can reach out to others for support when we need it. We can also be a source of help and support for each other, and make sure we reach out to someone else who is having a difficult time.

Remind the children that it's important to tell their teacher or another trusted adult if they are worried about how they are feeling or about how they think someone they know may feel.



Say Something Nice by A. F. Harrold

Read the poem on page 36 of *The Book of Hopes* to the children.

Discussion about the poem

Talk to the children about their reaction to the poem. You can use the questions below and in the PowerPoint as a starting point.

What was the poem about?

Are there any parts you liked?

What made the poem funny? Some of the nice things were quite unusual and unexpected.

Why is it hard to say nice things sometimes? If we are feeling in a bad mood, or if things are going wrong, it can be tricky to think of something nice to say, but the poem helps us to see that even if it's difficult there is always a silver lining and something nice to say - like the poem being over!

How does it feel when someone says something nice to you? You could ask the children to turn to the person next to them and pay them a compliment as an experiment.

Surprise “something nice” notes

This is a fun way to facilitate connection between your pupils, even if they have to work in separate pods or bubbles.

You will need:

- Strips of card or paper
- Pens
- Stickers/sequins/decorations
- Small envelopes (optional)

Step 1 – teacher preparation

Write each child's name on an envelope or strip of paper

Step 2 – hand out the names

and hand them out so that each child has the name of another child. The challenge is that they must keep the name a total secret!



Step 3 – write something nice

Now ask the children to think very carefully about something kind they would like to say in a note to the person on their envelope. You can use the suggestions below and in the PowerPoint as prompts.

Ask them to think about the note they would like to receive. The note can be a compliment, but steer the children away from commenting on someone's appearance, and instead think more about what makes them unique and special. It can be funny, like in the poem, but support them to make sure it is kind. The note can also be a message of support or a description of something nice.

You could use this as a vocabulary exercise, and write some words up on the board that the children can use.

Do they have a cool party trick?

Are they kind to their little siblings?

Can they speak another language?

Are they really good at something? Video games? Cooking? Drawing? Sport? Making jokes?

Did you see them doing something helpful for someone else?

Do they have a nice smile or a confident walk?

What would you like to hear if you were sad? For example, "It's going to be okay", "You are strong and brave", "You have lots of friends around you", "I hope you have a great weekend", "I'm sending you an imaginary hug".

Step 4 – write and decorate

Ask the children to write their note on the paper or card, decorate it with stickers or drawings and tuck it secretly into the envelope.

Step 5 – surprise

Gather the envelopes back in. Throughout the week, hide them in places the recipient is sure to find them: in their tray or cubby hole, tucked in an exercise book, on their chair, taped to the back of their coat. Have fun as a class seeing who has had a note that day. Remind the children that their classmates are here for them when times get tough.



The Store Full of Magical Things, by Rutendo Tavengerwei

Read the poem on page 317 of *The Book of Hopes* to the children.

Discussion about the poem

Talk to the children about their reaction to the poem. You can use the questions below and in the PowerPoint as a starting point.

What was the poem about?

Were there any parts you liked?

Are there any pictures that come to mind when you hear the poem? You could ask the children to close their eyes while you read it a second time and share what they imagine as they listen.

What magical things were in the store?

Where do you think the store is?

Who is the person the poet is sending the smile to? Are they a friend? A relative? The reader?

What other magical things might be in the store? Collect a big list of suggestions on the board.

What would you like to send or receive from the store of magical things? Who would you send it to?

Write your own poems

You can run this activity in groups, individually, or collectively as a class. Ask the children to first write down a list of magical things they would like in their store. The sky is the limit! Collect them on a big piece of paper or write them on the board.

Next, ask the children who they would like to send the magical things to. Ask them to think of people in their lives who have had a difficult time and what might let that person know you are thinking of them.

The children can write their poem as a list or focus on one specific person in their lives and shower them with gifts! Ask them to illustrate the poems. You could bind the poems in a book to share with the community or put them in envelopes to be gifted to friends and family.



Setting up your own store of magical things

This is a lovely class role-playing activity for young children to aid interaction and re-connection.

You will need:

- Counters. You can also use scraps of paper, toy bricks or monopoly money
- Pebbles of different sizes
- Paints
- Luggage labels
- A box, drawer or tray for the till.
- A large piece of card or a stand-alone whiteboard



Step 1 – making magical things to sell

The pebbles represent all the magical things you'd like to sell in your shop. You can use the list you made as a class from earlier, the things in the poem, and have fun thinking of some new ones. Ask the children to paint the pebbles in bright colours and write labels for them.

Step 2 – setting up shop

- Set up a table as your shop. This could be outside or inside.
- Make a sign out of the card or whiteboard that lists what the shop is selling and how much each item “costs”. You could agree different prices for different sized pebbles.
- Arrange your pebbles in your shop.
- Put the counters in the box you are using as your “till”.
- How can you make the shop more magical? Do you have velvet material you could use as a tablecloth? Could the children cut out stars to decorate the shop?

Step 3 – play

You can use this role-play set up for structured sessions in groups using reading, speaking and counting skills, or you can let the children use the shop for freeform play.



Asking for help

Ask children to think about what **they** might need from the store of magical things. Remind them that connectedness works both ways, and while it's important to help our friends and family, we can reach out for support if we need it too. Talk about why asking for help can be difficult. Think about how to facilitate a network of support and connectedness in your class.

- You could invent a code-word or flag system for when someone is feeling sad and needs extra support from the class. They can put up the flag or say the code word. This means that everyone should look out for that person: include them in games, ask if they are okay and be kind to them.
- You could have a buddy system or nominate class kindness champions whose job it is to make sure those in their group or bubble feel included and connected.
- Lots of schools have set up a “friendship bench” in the playground where children can sit if they don't have someone to play with, and it's a cue for other children to invite them to join in. How can you recreate this gesture in line with your school's health and safety procedures?



Alone time

Remind the children that there might be times where they don't feel like connecting with others. Coming back into a large group might feel overwhelming and they might need time to themselves. Reading for pleasure has been proven to benefit mental wellbeing and is a great independent activity. Think about how to safely set up a space where children can go and escape into a book or comic if they need some alone time.

