

Are you looking for resources, ideas and advice to help you understand and support children as they return to school? This issue presents a round up of some of the help that is available and an article using the grief cycle to help us understand and support children's responses to the current pandemic.

Dr Pooky Knightsmith



Provides a wealth of accessible videos and other resources which address mental health difficulties including anxiety, wellbeing, self-harm and anorexia.
www.pookyknightsmith.com/

Downloadable resources

Childrensociety.org.uk - Trauma and Young People: a guide for parents, carers, and professionals.

[Young Minds](#) - Resources and materials to support school staff to address mental health and wellbeing issues.

[Young Minds](#) - Addressing Adversity: Evidence, insight and case studies to raise awareness about the impact of adversity and trauma on the mental health of young people.

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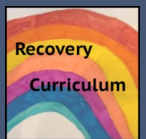
The Body Keeps the Score

by Bessel Van Der Kolk

This book makes for very interesting reading but it's not a quick read. The effects of trauma can be devastating. An expert offers a bold new treatment.

A Recovery Curriculum

Suggests 5 Levers to be used to construct a curriculum to support children's return to school. Includes a series of presentations and resources.



www.recoverycurriculum.org

The Embark Reconnection to Recovery and Resilience Pathway

A planned recovery model from lockdown to school return by a Trust prepared to share their resources. See Matt Crawford on Twitter [@CrawfordMatt77](https://twitter.com/CrawfordMatt77)



Training

Trauma Informed Schools <https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/>
Provides training for schools to become mentally healthy places for all.

[The Road to Recovery](#)—a series of 3 short videos by Sheila Mulvenney

Front of the Class

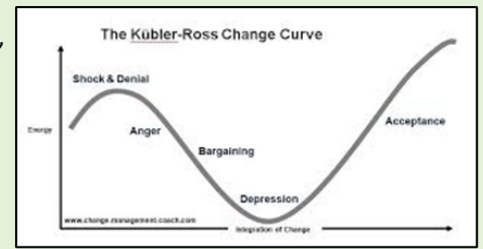
A film inspired by the true story of Brad Cohen, a young man diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome who overcomes considerable odds to become a gifted teacher. Find it on YouTube.

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA, THE GRIEF CYCLE and supporting children.

The term ‘collective trauma’ has been ascribed to this global pandemic event. It refers to the impact of a traumatic experience on communities, or society as a whole (Hirschberger, 2018) and comprises not only the event itself but also an ongoing collective memory of the event, in which experiences are recounted long afterwards, as an attempt to make sense of it. Alongside personal anguish and ramifications, collective values alter and bring a shift in culture and mass actions. With government policies and daily processes regularly altering, new social norms become commonplace.

These changes can bring loss. Losses may include loss of freedom, routine, finance, health, contact (self-isolation), or loss of a loved one (breakdown of a relationship or bereavement) (Weir, 2020). A natural response to these traumatic experiences may be feelings of oppression, confusion, anxiety or stress - all part of experiencing grief.

The grief response is not a ‘state’ but a process, when a nation (or a corporate organisation) is subject to enforced change, individuals experience these five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969): Shock & Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.



Common characteristics of the stages, and practical support for children.

Many may not recognise that these reactions are the impact of experiencing collective trauma as a response to forced change. The stages, order and intensity vary from person to person:

SHOCK and DENIAL: We do not want to believe what is happening or act as if nothing is; it may be expressed as anger.

ANGER: Outbursts are common, and children may ‘blame’ someone. We need to *validate* these feelings and *mirror actions* to aid recovery. We can help *change their physiology* by supporting relaxation techniques. *Distraction* may prevent obsessional thinking. Anxiety can be reduced by *predictability and structure*, balanced by some *flexibility*.

BARGAINING: Young people negotiate to bring relief to their loss of control. We need to *be present* and *listen*; ensure our negotiation is *non-judgemental and cheerful* – any promise made should be *realistic and achievable*.

DEPRESSION: Encompasses feelings of isolation, sadness, fear, regret, guilt, shame and hopelessness. This requires *acts of care, support and empathy*. *Naming it* ‘This is the depression taking over your thoughts at the moment, can we challenge that together’ *validates* those feelings and gives pupils an opportunity to understand why they might be behaving as they are (Bowlby, 1980. Berinato, 2020). With low activity we may need to suggest *self-care*.

We can *verbally and practically give hope*; together we can identify and name *who is in their team* and therefore who can provide support. It is important children know that they can’t get well alone, *they need people*.

ACCEPTANCE: We stop resisting change, accept and move on. With peace comes calmness and the ability to undergo challenge, hence new opportunities may be explored.

Individual circumstances and responses.

Pupils who find it impossible to engage in activities may not be at this ‘acceptance’ stage of the grief cycle. Children are not born with the ability to regulate their emotions; through their relationships and interactions they are nurtured, and learn how to respond (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 2014). Reliable, consistent support enables children to engage with challenge and learning (Ainsworth and Bell, 1970). Conversely pupils with the *risk factors* of ‘insecure attachments’ (Rose, Gilbert and Richards, 2015) or early trauma (‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’. WHO, 2017) may require ongoing support for outbursts or ‘grief’ to enable them to think, reason or calm themselves down (Siegel and Payne Bryson, 2011). It may be necessary to ‘do something’ to act as a *natural break* thereby returning someone back to a calmer functioning state (i.e. a cup of tea, a cuddly toy, a weighted blanket) or teach *self-soothing* using rhythmic predictable movement, such as in doodling, a fidget toy, or mindfulness app. This soothes and calms, helping in brain regulation.

Responding emotionally to situations is a natural instinct to aid survival and build relationships. Our life-experiences impact our reactions to new situations. In times of collective trauma insight into our emotional response, within the grief cycle, aids in bringing understanding; conducive to delivering a supportive response to a child unable to process or act rationally (Riley, 2011). Routines, (self) soothing techniques or a *break* activity may bring predictability or help a child transition to a calming activity; after which support strategies for the related ‘stage of grief’ may be able to be applied.

This is a summary of an article by Juliet Taylor: ‘COLLECTIVE TRAUMA, THE GRIEF CYCLE and supporting children’ available [here](#).

Useful Mindfulness Apps

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/cbeebies-mindfulness-app>

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/05/6-mindfulness-apps-that-could-help-with-coronavirus-anxiety/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/extras/indybest/gadgets-tech/phones-accessories/best-mindfulness-apps-a8217931.html>

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Join at www.sebda.org

Informative and relevant websites

Trauma Recovery Centre : <https://www.trc-uk.org/>

Anna Freud Centre: <https://www.annafreud.org/>

Attachment Research Community: <https://the-arc.org.uk/>

Mulberry Bush Organisation: <https://mulberrybush.org.uk/>

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