

A Pick 'n' Mix of Ideas

Recovery is important after an illness, a traumatic event or an unexpected challenge in life. It takes time, often longer than expected and involves a process of engaging with our emotions, integrating our losses, and embracing our new reality. Healthy recovering includes: remembering, reflecting and recuperating. To recover well, we all need a chance to revisit these three Rs of recovery in a range of ways. To support this, we have offered schools material to use for Collective Worship, in staff meetings, as the basis for prayer spaces and reflective activities and, in this resource, activities that can be undertaken as a class or form group to further support this journey. Some of the activities below will work better in different key stages, but all have been included as some may be easy to adapt.

NB: A number of the 'Recovery Reflection Space' ideas will adapt easily for use in a classroom, so please do take a look at that document, even if you don't intend to run any prayer/reflection spaces.



Remember

These activities have been selected to meet one of these four purposes (activities ordered as such beneath):

1. Help articulate what has happened.
2. Express how we feel / have felt.
3. Consider what we are thankful for
4. Acknowledge what we have lost or missed (lament).

For primary pupils, it will be particularly important to help them first communicate what they have experienced (1 and 2) before moving on to expressing thanksgiving and lament (3 and 4).

CIRCLE TIME

Seat pupils in a circle with an additional space. Pupils may choose to cross the circle and choose a new place if any of the statements apply to them. Start light and move to deeper statements. Consider the statements carefully beforehand with a safeguarding hat on – things may need phrasing thoughtfully. You may choose to cross the circle if...

- You had toast for breakfast.
- You have a brother.
- Your favourite lesson is PE.
- You played more computer games than normal during lockdown.
- You learnt something new in lockdown.
- You found it harder to sleep in lockdown.
- People in your household were more irritable than normal.
- You felt listened to when you expressed your emotions.
- ... etc.

(NB this activity may be best done outside to keep it COVID safe.)

THE YEAR AS A GRAPH

Invite pupils to sketch out a graph (x axis = time, y axis = positive mental attitude to life). They might like to label the highs (e.g. summer hols, seeing friends outside, 'eat out to help out') and the lows (e.g. not seeing family at Christmas, frayed tempers at home, school work via a screen and so on).

EMOJI WALL

Give pupils a poster of many different emotions displayed as emojis (many available online). Pupils to tick any that they have experienced and circle the most common three.



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LEAD
ON

EMOTIONS WHEEL

Similar to the emoji poster. Various emotions wheels are available online and provide a tool for pupils to have the vocabulary to articulate themselves better. Pupils could be encouraged to rank their top five most experienced emotions or to pick three and give examples of when they experienced these during lockdown.

THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN

Ask questions and get them to put thumbs up for good and thumbs down for bad (younger pupils). For older pupils, they might give it a score out of 10 (10 most positive) using their fingers. Consider doing this activity with heads face down on the desk so that pupils feel confident to give a true response without their classmates watching them.

How has it been...

- Spending so much time at home?
- Home schooling?
- Parents / Carers working from home?
- Coming back to school?
- Only being able to go out for a walk?
- Something around seeing family / friends?



THANKSGIVING

Write the letters of the alphabet on a sheet of paper. Challenge the pupils to see how many letters they can fill with things they are thankful for. For example:

- a. Aunty Sarah
- b. Baking
- c. Crocuses
- ...
- z. Zoom!

GUESS MY JOY

Act out something that they have enjoyed and get other people to guess what it is.

MUSIC

It is well known that we can affect our emotions with music. Play Barber's Adagio for strings and talk about why it sounds so sad – why is it a good song to cry to? (very slow, and so feels like it gives you space to think; minor key; 'unresolved' i.e. never reaches the note that would make it feel finished or like it can stop.) Talk about how music can help our moods. If we feel 'down' and want to cheer up, what songs do they know that might help? What about if they want to let their sadness out – what other music might help them to have a good cry?

LAMENT POEMS

The Bible is full of lament poems in the Psalms. A good example is Psalm 42 or Psalm 88 (which is particularly downcast). Give pupils space to create their own lament poetry. For those who need support, consider using either a haiku or an acrostic poem as these provide an easy structure. Consider showing the pupils images and talking about the impact of the pandemic in other countries. Some may wish to lament how covid has exemplified the injustices of the world.

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Write or draw on petals the things that we have missed. Then make them into flowers. Could even group the petals together in themes e.g. school, family, home. Display somewhere.

Before moving on to 'Reflect', consider closing this section by listening to Matt and Beth Redman's song Blessed be Your Name. It was written by them following a time of deep grief, and the words echo those of Job in the Bible. He lost everything (great wealth, his children died, his house was destroyed and he became physically unwell). Somehow he was able to say: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised' (Job 1:21).

This idea of praising God, recognising that life will bring both good things and pain, is deeply embedded within Matt and Beth's song and is a truth that Christians journeyed more deeply into during the pandemic.

Reflect

Having worked through articulating and processing their pandemic experiences, this section provides space for pupils to consider:

- a. What they have learned through these experiences.
- b. What they might do differently post pandemic in light of this.

A LETTER TO MYSELF

Pupils can write a letter to their pre-COVID selves, readying themselves for the pandemic experience that was coming. With what you know now, what advice would you have given to someone back in March 2020? Write this on one side of the note. On the other side, reflect on what they want to do differently this next year, in the light of what they have learned during the pandemic. Take it home to stick up and remind them.

KINTSUGI

Kintsugi is the name given to the



Japanese art form of fixing broken pottery using a special gold lacquer glue. Look at some examples together of how beautiful the broken pottery becomes. If you are feeling brave, you might even enjoy breaking some pottery with pupils (this could be very cathartic – perhaps they could reflect on the things that bring them to anger, before smashing their bowl or plate!?) and then as they re-join the pieces with glue, encourage pupils to reflect on the broken areas of their lives, perhaps the places that cause them anger or pain or disappointment, and allowing healing to come to these areas. Do they need to reach out for support from anyone with this? Who can they ask for help – or for older pupils, where can they go online for support? NB: don't smash the pottery into tiny pieces or the gluing becomes impossible!

MASKS

Give pupils a paper mask and get them to write or draw on the outside what 'face' they put on for the outside world to see (what would others say about them). On the inside (let them keep this private) what things do they keep hidden (this might be anxious thoughts, it might be worries or pressures they feel upon them, it might be feelings about something or doubts, it might be their true character – maybe feeling shy, embarrassed or misunderstood). They can choose to hand in a share with the teacher at the end or to take it home and keep it private. Some pupils might be encouraged to be reminded of the calling of David in the Bible. He was the youngest of the eight brothers, and no one expected him to be chosen by the prophet Samuel (so much so that he was left in the fields during the selection). But God does not judge people in the way that we do. We often look at the outside things, but God sees the inside things. Both the inside things you like (such as hobbies and interests that you perhaps keep to yourself) and also the bits you don't like about yourself and would hate for others to know. The Bible teaches that God knows it all and loves us all the same (Romans 5:8).

WOULD YOU RATHER?

This is an activity to help pupils think about how they value some of the things that the pandemic has put on hold, and what they are going to prioritise as life reopens. Ask them to respond to a series of 'would you rather questions'. You could do this physically outside in the playground by racing to a different side depending on their answer, or in a more controlled hand up/down sort of way in the classroom. You will be able to come up with your own ideas, we suggest starting 'easy' and building up, along the lines of:

Would you rather:

- Draw a picture or write a poem?
- Climb a mountain or walk by the sea?
- Feel the sun on your back or the snow under foot?
- Eat a meal with your family or on your own?
- Be able to play at the park or come to school?
- Visit your grandparents/other family or spend time online?
- Go away on holiday or see your family you've not seen for ages? Etc.

Recuperate

We use the word 'recuperate' to mean 'getting better from something'. We talk about recuperating from an operation or an injury. The activities in this section are to support pupils in looking forwards and healing from the toll that the pandemic might have taken on them. What positive steps can they take to do things that will bring them joy and re-strengthen them again?

TOKENS

Pupils create a booklet of vouchers (like you might get from a supermarket offering money off certain items on your next shop). Can they come up with vouchers to reward themselves with of things to look forward to? E.g. this voucher entitles the holder to a trip to the park with five friends, a meal at Grandma's house, a cinema trip, a McDonalds and so on. Can they think of at least four free treats as well as those that might require payment?

THANKSGIVING POT

Collect jam jars, coffee pots, hot choc cylinders and so on. Pupils to decorate theirs as a 'Thanksgiving pot' to take home. The challenge is to daily write down three things that were good about that day. Give them time to start themselves off by thinking of three things for the day before. Research suggests that actively choosing to name good things (even if small) can grow much stronger mental health.

QUOTE ME

If I am ill, a doctor might prescribe me medicine to take after food three times a day to help me get better. Some vicars 'prescribe' helpful Bible verses to people to recite three times a day in order to help them with whatever situation they are facing. Pupils to suggest and/or search on the internet for appropriate verses and other motivational texts that they could memorise and prescribe to themselves 3x per day. Alternatively, they could write them on a postcard and take them home and stick them to their mirror so that they are reminded at the start and end of the day.

