



HELPING PEOPLE TO RECOVER



An Outline for a Simple Online or Socially-Distanced Staff Meeting

How do we Process our Experience of the Pandemic?

It is important to help all levels within the school (SLT, staff, pupils and families) to process their pandemic experiences and to thoughtfully consider how to recover from it well. A staff meeting is an ideal forum to undertake some of this work with staff. The outline below has been designed with two objectives in mind:

- To support staff with their own well being, giving them opportunity to begin their own processing.
- To model the structure of 'Remember', 'Reflect' and 'Recuperate' to them. This structure can then be followed by staff to support pupils and the wider community as they process their pandemic experiences.

We are aware that many schools will be continuing to hold their staff meetings over Teams (or other video conferencing platforms) but the session would work equally as well in a socially-distanced context like a school hall.

Why Recovery

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 recovery includes:

REMEMBERING

We need to start by being able to tell the story of our own pandemic journey, recognising the range of emotions that we have experienced. This includes both thanksgiving and lament. We can remember with thanks those who have served and cared for us, the daily blessings we have experienced, the signs of God's grace and presence. We also remember our losses, both of people and things, and lament over the way the world is not as God would want it to be.

REFLECTING

This includes reflecting on what we have experienced (the positive and negative), what we have learned through such experiences, and what will we do differently post pandemic.

RECUPERATING

This includes what are we looking forward to (for example reconnecting with family and friends), and what will restore us (for example, travelling to some of our favourite places, playing sport, going to the cinema, visiting the hairdressers, enjoying coffee shops and restaurants, returning to places of worship, freedom to serve others more easily).

This staff meeting is structured around these three aspects of recovery. Obviously recovery is a process and this event is just a part of an ongoing journey. Use this outline as a starting point and adjust for your context.

Event Outline

WELCOME

Welcome people, ideally as they arrive. Alternatively you could have some appropriate music playing as people arrive.

OPENING PRAYER/QUIET

Invite people to be still, quiet, aware of how they are feeling. If appropriate, say an appropriate prayer and read an appropriate verse (for example Psalm 42:1-2).

ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTEXT

Take a few minutes to help people understand the normal range of emotions people experience as part of a crisis like this, and having recently returned to face-to-face teaching, there will be a range of emotions. Perhaps base your thoughts around a Psalm like [Psalm 42](#).

- Lament, for people lost, health lost, loss of hopes and dreams, loss of opportunities for the pupils they teach.
- Hope for possible changes to the way we live.
- Anxiety, fear and concern over uncertainties – especially having recently returned to the building.



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- Fatigue due to multiple deprivations, the challenges of blended learning, the lack of proper holidays.
- Thankfulness for what we have learnt.
- Irritability with others when our circumstances are confined, and when people don't see things as we do.
- Listlessness, struggles with motivation, loss of get up and go.
- And explain recovery is helped by engaging with our emotions, integrating our losses, and embracing our new reality. Three things can help that process:
 - ⇒ Remembering.
 - ⇒ Reflecting.
 - ⇒ Recuperating.

INPUT

Disaster relief agencies tell us that crisis response falls into three sections:

- Response (what needs doing to support people in the immediate aftermath).
- Recovery (once the situation is stable, helping people come to terms with what they have been through).
- Reconstruction (how we want things to look going forwards).

The most common mistake is in moving through the recovery phase too quickly. Doing so, leads to burnout amongst leaders 12-24mths later and high levels of anxiety and other mental ill-health amongst survivors. Consider either using the short video or the slides (both links are at the bottom of the 'Leading through recovery' document') to help staff understand why the recovery phase is key.



SPACE FOR REFLECTION

There are two possible ways of doing this below. Take time over this section. If you choose the triplets approach it will need around 20 minutes, to give each person time to share. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. The first approach is more private. The second approach is more intimate, but could provide a great space for people to express emotion and feel supported.

Either give some space for people to pause and reflect on what their experience has been. Provide them with the following questions to use in this time. Perhaps put on some quiet instrumental music, and introduce each section, giving time for people to process their thoughts and feelings before introducing the next section. Encourage people to write, draw, doodle, move if that helps. Staff may find it helpful to have access to an 'emotions wheel' (plenty available online). It will help them to identify and articulate the range of emotions they may have experienced.

- **Remember** Draw a graph to represent the past year—label key moments. Who or what have you lost during the pandemic? What do you want to give thanks for from this season?
- **Reflect** On what have you experienced (the positive and negative)? What have you learned through such experiences? What will you do differently post pandemic?
- **Recuperate** What are you looking forward to (for example reconnecting with family and friends)? What will help with your restoration (for example travelling to some of your favourite places, playing sport, visiting the hairdressers, enjoying coffee shops and restaurants, going to the theatre or cinema, booking a break away somewhere)? NB: In Primary schools this term might need some clarification. It means to get well/grow strong again – for example we recuperate from an operation.

Or invite them to go into triplets with two other people either using the breakout feature online (or move physically into small groups of 3). Post the questions below into the chat feature before you go into the breakout rooms and then they can open chat when they get into the breakout room to be reminded of the three questions. Ask the questions below of the first person. Listen carefully to their answers. Then the same questions are asked of the second person, then the third. Someone will need to keep time in each triplet. At the end it may be appropriate to take a few minutes to pray for one another, either out loud or silently.

- What has been your experience of the pandemic?
- How do you think that it has shaped and changed you?
- What are you looking forward to and what can you plan to do that will help you to recuperate?

OFFERING

Gather up everything people have thought, talked about, experienced in an appropriate way.

- Explain that Christians believe in a God who is present and responds to those who call out to him for help. Then use one of the following suggestions.

- Invite people to stand and hold out their hands and to imagine all that they have thought and felt in their hands. Invite them to lift their hands to God and ask for God's help with all they have experienced. Alternatively, others may prefer to imagine themselves holding the feelings and experiences that they have found heavy and hard and then simply choosing to let go of these. Consider reading a suitable verse of Scripture to remind them of God's love, grace and hope.
- Or invite people to take a piece of paper and write a few words or draw a few images that capture something of their thoughts and emotions. Then fold the paper and invite people to write a short prayer on the paper offering all these to God. For those who don't wish to pray in this way, they could choose to take their paper away with them and keep it in the diary and add to it in the days ahead as a way of supporting their processing.

Perhaps conclude by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

CLOSE

End the meeting. Thank people for engaging and make connections for people around next steps they might take, mentioning that of course recovery is a process over time, and this simple experience is just a part on an ongoing journey. It is a journey that you will be unfolding in a variety of ways across the school community. For example:

- Remind them who they can lean on at school if they want to talk with someone.
- Sketch an outline of other ways they will encounter 'Remember, Reflect and Recuperate' with their pupils and through prayer spaces, Collective Worship or chapel.
- Invite staff to feedback if they have further ideas of how to support the recovery journey amongst themselves as a staff team, or with the pupils and wider school community.

Materials

Point staff to the materials you will be using across the school to support the recovery journey:

- PHSE ideas bank.
- Prayer spaces.
- 'My Pandemic' support sheets to send home.

FOLLOW UP

Here are additional ways you could help staff to process their experience of the pandemic.

- **The Well Being Course** A new course released by HOPE Together and KingsGate church in January this year exploring well-being, a timely theme for the year ahead. There is an [introductory video](#) and a [website](#) with more information. There is also a [youth version](#).
- **Grief** If people have experienced the death of a loved one you may want to recommend this informative online booklet from the Church Army on [Death, Grief and Hope](#), or these resources from [MIND](#) on bereavement. For deeper support, the [bereavement journey](#) may be of interest.

