Supporting Resilience and Well-being for key adults during Complex and Uncertain Times

To support others to develop resilience, maintain positive well-being and to successfully regulate their emotions, it is helpful to first recognise what is going on for us internally as adults working with children and families.

How are you at present? How are you feeling?

Example feelings when our **needs** are being met include; happiness, confidence, gratitude, wonder, pride and joy.

Example feelings when out **needs** are not being met include; fear, anxiety, anger, upset, shame, sadness, confusion, boredom, shock, fatigue, hurt, jealousy.

Needs can refer a range of different areas, e.g.
- Basic needs – food, water, warmth, clothing, shelter, feelings of safety and security
- Psychological needs – feelings of belonging and love (linked to intimate relationships and friends) and self-esteem (feelings of accomplishment, pride and self-worth).
- Self-fulfilment needs – achieving one's potential, becoming the most that one can be).

As well as considering feelings, it is helpful to notice what you are **thinking.** During complex and uncertain times, we may have MANY thoughts and worries and it can be helpful to pause and recognise these.

What is going through your mind at present?
(If this is difficult to answer, why not have a go at mindfulness? Mindfulness involves consciously focusing your attention on the present moment. Notice your thoughts, acknowledge them and let them pass. Try; 'Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness for Beginners)

We experience many different types of thought including those that aren't always helpful, e.g.:

- *Negative glasses* – focusing only on what is wrong
- *Fortune telling* – "I know I can't do it"; "It's going to go badly"
- *Mind reader* – "I bet everyone is judging me"; "I know they think I can't do it"
- *All or nothing* – evaluating experiences according to extremes; things are either excellent or terrible, perfection or failure
- *Catastrophising* – Predicting the worst case scenario without considering other likely outcomes, e.g. "This is awful, nothing could be worse"

Have you ever experienced any of these?
(Remember, these thoughts are normal. They only become problematic if we become stuck with these and allow them to take over!)

All of our thoughts lead to emotional and behavioural consequences. E.g. if we experience an 'all or nothing' thought such as "this is wholly bad and nothing can come from it", the consequences of that might be feeling disheartened and losing motivation.

So, what can we do about these thoughts?

DISPUTE THEM! – Instead of taking them at face value, we could ask:
- What is the evidence for that thought? Or evidence against that thought?
- Is that thought logical?
- Is that thought helpful?
- What could I think instead?
- What would you say to a friend who said that?

Just because we have a thought, doesn't make it true!

If we re-consider the types of unhelpful thoughts, here are some examples of what we could instead thing to turn these into more helpful thoughts:

- *Taking off the negative glasses* – e.g. "this has happened/gone wrong, but what can I do?"
- *Face the demons* – e.g. "What's the worst that could happen?" "If that does happen, what could I do?"
- *Compassion to self* – Not rating/comparing/labelling ourselves or others on the basis of specific actions.
- *Broadening the picture* – Consider the range of factors influencing a situation, not just the extremes. Consider the broader context of situations.
- *De-catastrophising* – e.g. "It's not as bad as it could be", "It's not 100% awful", "some good may come from this".

TASK: It may be helpful to write a list of unhelpful thoughts you have recently had and alongside, record any helpful thoughts they could be replaced with.

Another approach to support ourselves and others during times of uncertainty can be to;
- Clarify our **values** (what is important and meaningful to us) and use this knowledge to guide our actions.
- Learn skills to help us cope with painful thoughts and feelings so that they have less impact and influence.

Examples of **values** that we may hold include; acceptance, achievement, adventure, assertiveness, authenticity, beauty, caring, challenge, compassion, connections, courage, creativity, equality, fairness, fitness, freedom, friendliness, forgiveness, fun, generosity, gratitude, honesty, humour, integrity, intimacy, kindness, learning, love, open-mindedness, persistence, reliability, respect, responsibility, self-development, supportiveness, trust.

Which of these values might be especially important during times of uncertainty? How could you bring those values into your actions?

Noticing our thoughts and letting them come and go can help to create some distance between us and our thoughts, rather than getting caught up in them. We can help this process by trying some of the following:

- **"I'm having the thought that"** – whatever your unhelpful thought is, put it into a short sentence (e.g. "It's going to go badly"). Then replay your thought with the phrase "I'm having the thought that…" in front of it. E.g. "I'm having the thought it's going to go badly".
- **"My mind is telling me"** – Notice your thought and repeat it with the phrase "my mind is telling me that…", e.g. "my mind is telling me that I can't cope with that situation".
- **Treat your mind as a separate entity** – When your mind offers unhelpful thoughts, thank it for the offer and return your focus to your values-drive action – "Thanks mind!".
- **Consider your thoughts as 'leaves on a stream'** – Imagine your thoughts as leaves on a stream, or cars going past a window, or clouds moving across the sky. Watch each one come and go!
- **"I wonder what my next thoughts will be**…" – Say this to yourself and wait to see what your next thought will be.
- **Writing thoughts down** – Write your thought on a piece of paper and look at it from a distance as a string of words.
- **Thoughts as stories** – Give your unhelpful thoughts the label of a story e.g. "Here comes the failure story again".

It is important to remember during complex and uncertain times, that there will be things that we **can control and influence, and other things that we can't.**

TASK: It may be helpful to write a list of factors that are present during these times that I can't control or influence, and alongside, record factors that you can control and influence.

There might be lots that we feel that we can't control and accept that we can't do anything about it. Having identified some factors that you can have some control over, you might wish to apply a problem-solving framework to it, just like the two below:

ENABLE: A solution-focused coaching model (Adams, 2015; 2016).

Elicit preferred future – *"Imagine a time when things are as you want them to be…what does that look like?"*

Notice exceptions – *"On a scale from 0-10, where 10 is that your preferred future is happening, where are things now?" "Why X and not any lower?"*

Activate strengths and resources – *"What helped to achieve those successes?"*

Build on what's working – *"What would a step forward look like?"*

Look for opportunities – *"How can you go about that in the coming days or weeks?"*

Evaluation – *"What progress has there been since last time?"*

The **PRACTICE** Problem-Solving Framework (Palmer, 2007; 2008).

Problem Identification
- What's the problem you want to focus on?
- What is it that you would like to change?

Realistic, relevant goals
- What do you want to achieve?
- How would you like things to be different?

Alternative actions
- What are your options?

Consideration of consequences
- What are the pros and cons of each of these options?

Target most feasible solution
- On a scale from 0-10, how interested are you in pursuing each of these?

Implementation of **C**hosen solution
- Go and do it!

Evaluation
- How successful was it?
- What can be learned?
- Where next?

We can do a lot of work related to our thoughts and feelings, but it is also important to be able to access support from others and provide support to others where we can. It may be helpful to consider the following questions:

Who is in my support network? E.g. family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, professionals

Which aspects of support might I need more help with during complex and uncertain times? E.g. practical, emotional, financial, psychological.

Which aspects of my support network might I need to develop?

How can I access support if I am unable to see people face-to-face? E.g. because I am self-isolating or in quarantine, or if others are.

Who can I give support to (without putting myself at risk)? In what way?

Below you will find a list of reflection questions, summarising the material covered in this resource:

- *How am I **feeling** at present?*

- *What **thoughts** am I experiencing?*

- *How am I **thinking** about this situation? How is my thinking influencing my reaction?*

- *Can I identify any **unhelpful thoughts** in my thinking?*

- *How can I **dispute** some of these unhelpful thoughts?*

- *How can I turn some of my unhelpful thoughts into **helpful thoughts**?*

- *What are my **values**? How can I continue to act upon my values?*

- *To what extent am I living in line with my **values**?*

- *How can my values inform my **goals and behaviours**?*

- *How can I **notice** some of my unhelpful thoughts and **let them go**?*

- *What factors do I have **control** over during complex and uncertain times? What factors can't I control?*

- *What **factors** can I do something about?*

- *What **different options** are available to me? After considering these, what can I do?*

- *Who is in my **support network**, and how can I develop and use that further to help myself and others?*