

Children's Mental Health Week 2026

Connection Activities for Staff

Connect-Ed



Welcome to your place!

We have put together some activities that will help you to think about the theme for Children's Mental Health Week 2026:



'This is my place'

The first 4 slides are activities you could try out in the classroom. Why not have a go with your colleagues to reflect on your own place in and out of the school environment?

The next 8 slides help to foster a positive school culture where everyone is invited to reflect on their sense of belonging.



Create your place in the world

Use art materials, drawing or objects to create your place in the world...

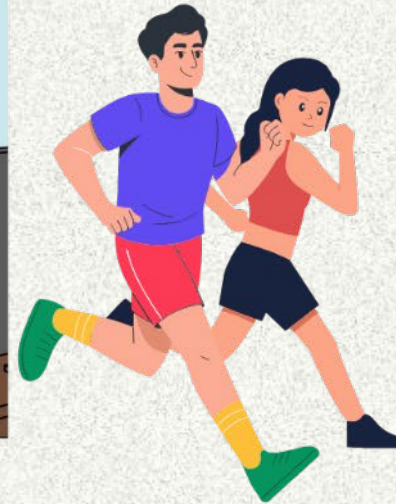
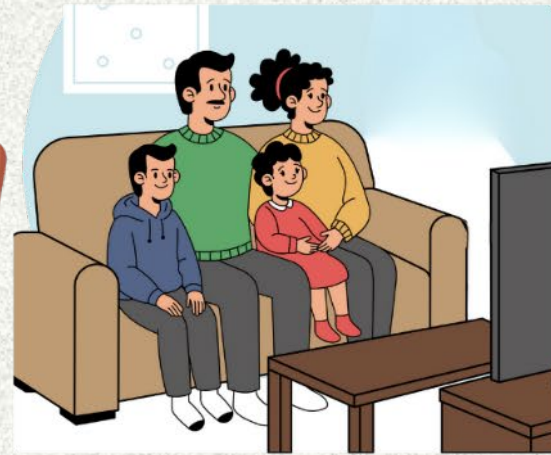
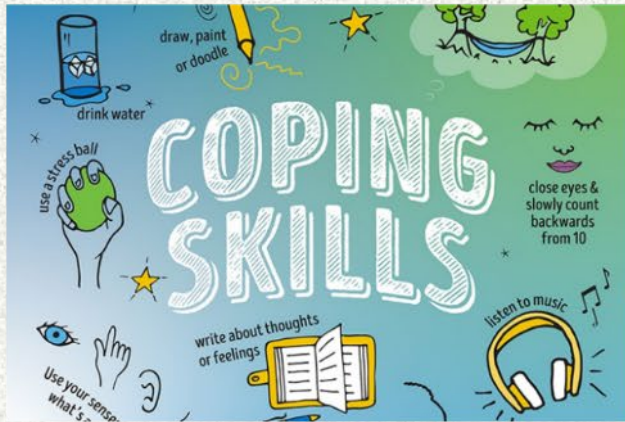
Who is part of your place or world?

What do you need in your place, what helps you to belong?

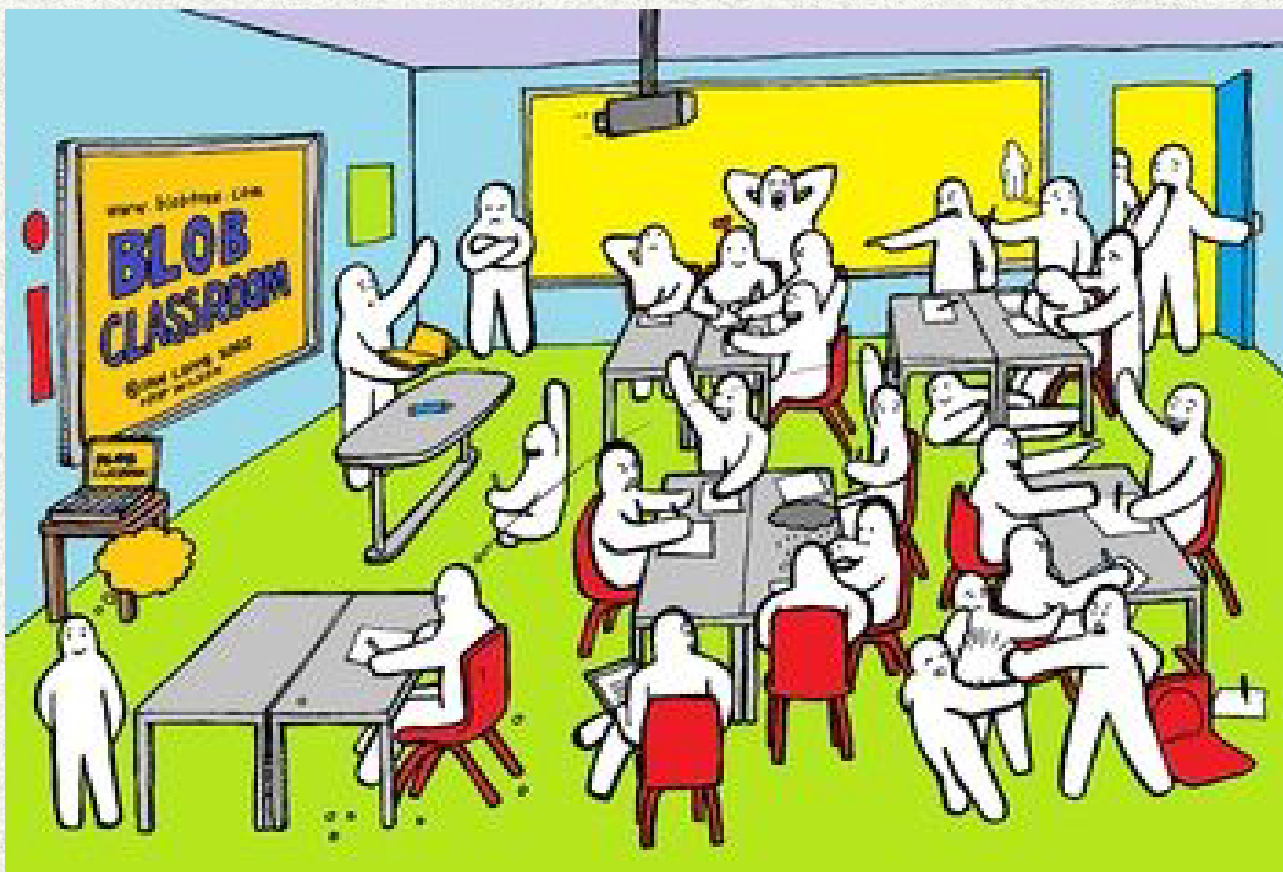
What could make your place feel even better?



Choose an image that might help you *feel* your place in the world



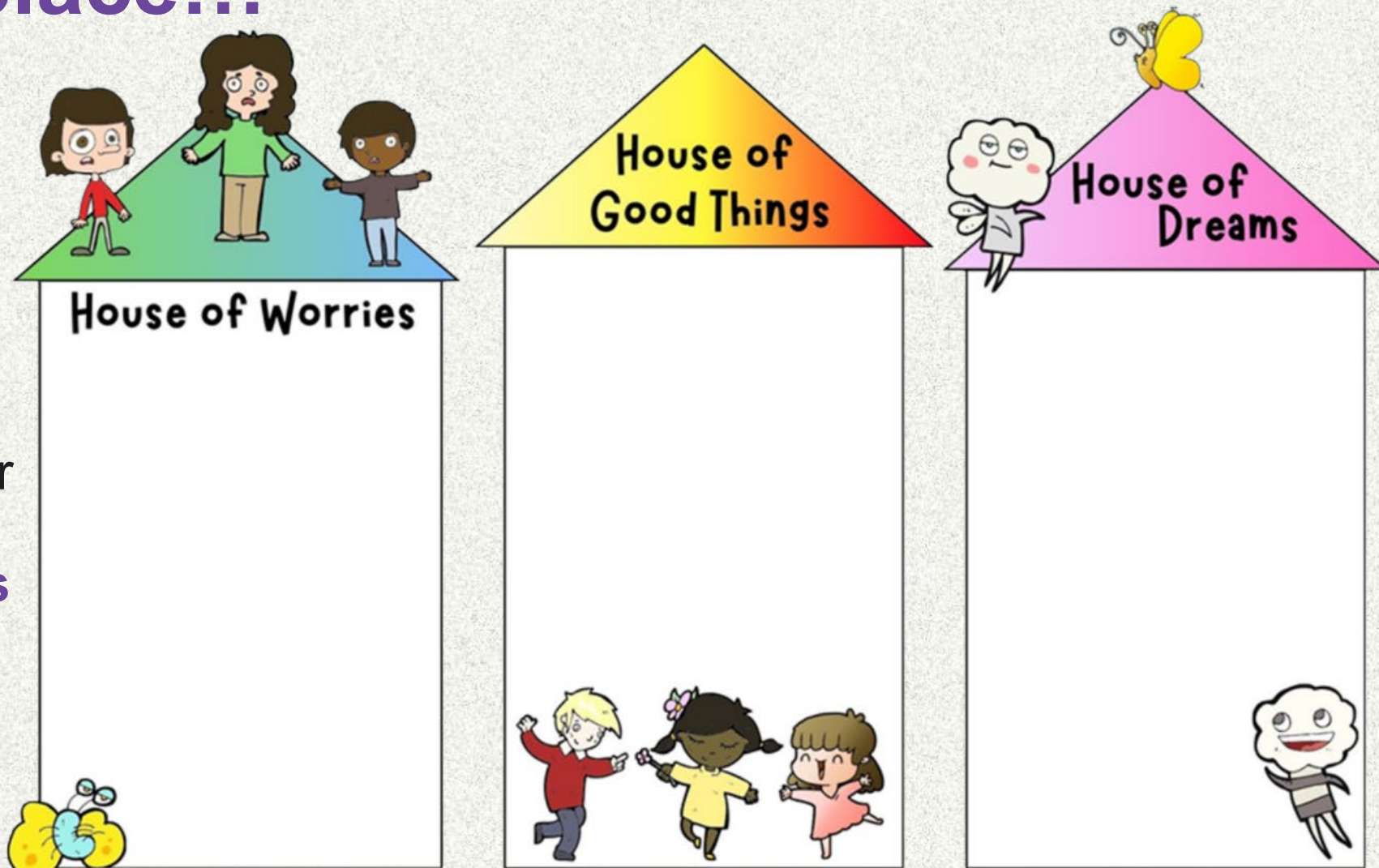
What is our place in the classroom?



How do we *feel* emotionally?



This is my place...



Reflect on each of the **three houses** and write or draw your **worries**, **dreams** and **good things** in the relevant house.



Three houses from www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com

Connect-Ed

Building positive connections with pupils



“I like that ...”

Allow the week to be filled with as much positivity with your pupils as you can, by pointing out pupils’ positive behaviours, contributions or attributes. For example, *“I like that you helped your partner with that question/ I like that answer, it seems well thought out/ I like that you didn’t shout out and raised your hand instead”*.

This can be used even when pupils are not following simple rules, for instance, *“I like that answer, please remember to raise your hand next time”*.

Ideas from the Anna Freud Centre Classroom Wellbeing Toolkit:
<https://www.annafreud.org/resources/schools-and-colleges/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit/>



Building positive connections between staff

“Dear, Thank you for...”

Use a post-it note or small paper to write a short thank-you note/sentence to a colleague; this may be a colleague who has supported you through your work, helped you get started, smiled when you most needed it, or has in any way and at any time made you feel good/positive.

Either give them the note or leave it on their desk with their name on it. It is up to you whether you sign it or leave it anonymous.



Building positive connections between staff



Box of Positivity

1. Have a list of staff names printed and cut out, put them all into a box.
2. Let each staff member pick out a name from the box (without sharing it with others). On that paper they will write something positive about that staff member (anonymously).
3. All the names/papers are anonymously collected back into the box.
4. These can then be read out at that point in time, or 5 names/papers are picked out of the box in each staff briefing/meeting and read out to the team.

If the staff member is not there, it should be read out at the next meeting when they are present to hear the positive comment.



Positive notes board

In a communal area, such as the staff room, you can fill a board with positive messages written on sticky notes.

Staff can then take the message that resonates with them or that they feel they need to hear.

People can also leave positive messages on the board for others to collect. Examples could be:

- I choose to follow my dreams today.
- It is enough to do my best.
- I matter.
- I am capable.
- I choose to rise above.
- I am not the mistakes I have made.
- I choose happiness today.
- I am beautiful inside and out.



First Aid Kit

What can you do when you are not feeling in a safe space emotionally?



Seek comfort e.g.

- Talk to a trusted friend/relative/colleague
- Ask for a hug

Self-soothe e.g.

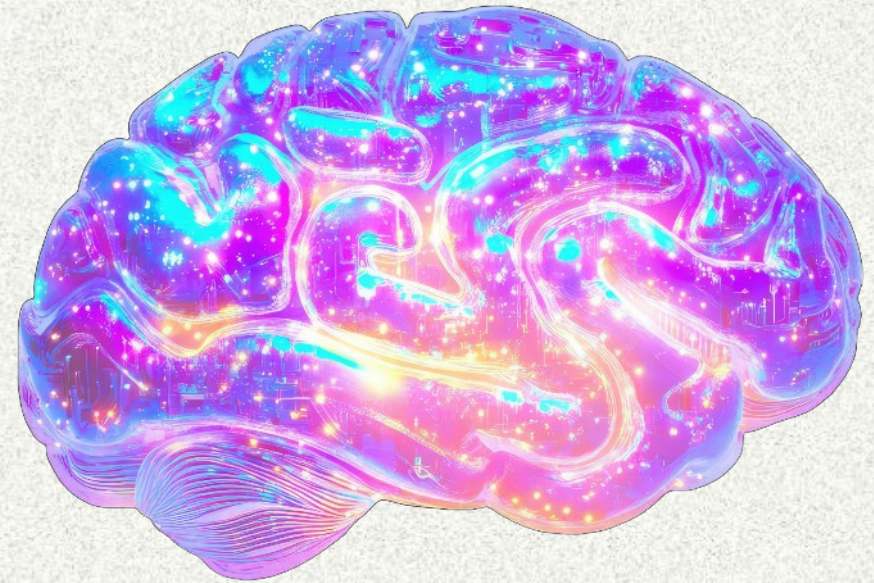
- Listen to helpful music
- Use your favourite scent, baking, coffee
- Eat your favourite food. Mindfully taste it.
- Drink our favourite drink (non-alcoholic)
- Take a bath/shower, pet your pet, change your clothes
- Rock yourself gently, do some stretches, yoga, dance



Safe Space Meditation

When you are feeling overwhelmed by your emotions, visualisation techniques can be effective in calming your mind.

Research has shown that there is scientific basis for how and why visualisation works. Studies of the brain indicate the same areas of the brain light up when you visualise an action as when you actually perform the action, e.g. when you visualise lifting your right hand, it stimulates the same part of the brain that is activated when you actually lift your right hand.



Safe Space Meditation



Link for video:

<https://youtu.be/4iqX1Hqi5Uw?si=GcVi2ZjpOXZOt3ca>

Give it a go!

When you visualize a safe place that is soothing and calm, your brain will react as if you were actually in that place.

Reacting to the sights, sounds, and even smells of your safe place can cause your brain to increase calming biochemicals like serotonin and decrease stress neurochemicals like cortisol.



One kind thing...

Pupils and staff (and even parents) can all get involved in saying or doing [at least] **'One kind thing'** to/for someone else each day, for at least a week (and to encourage everyone to continue beyond the week).

This could be simple compliments, kindness in assisting someone, there are no limits to the kindness. This helps us to become consciously thoughtful and mindful of our behaviours towards others.



30 Second Photos

Take a moment to recognise and capture the detail in everyday objects/places, focus on these details for 30 seconds either before, during or after capturing the photo.

This can help **'ground us'** in the moment, useful in promoting positive wellbeing.



1 minute a day, just for me...



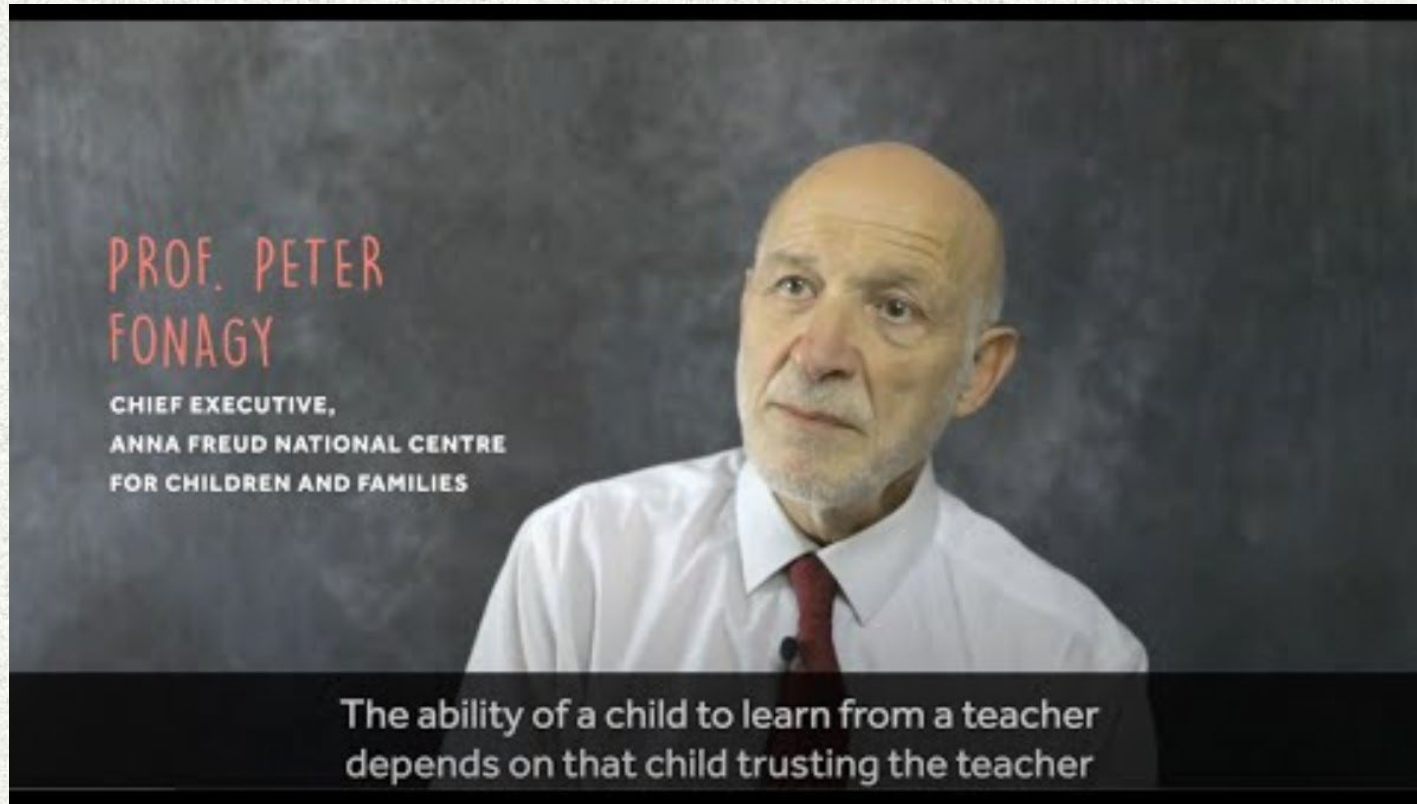
Self-gratitude can help us to feel positive about ourselves and what we do; reflecting on this and using **self-affirmations** can help set the tone for the day or help us to feel calmer during stressful situations.



With busy lives and everyday stressors, this can feel refreshing. You can always have longer **'me time'** scheduled in during the week too.



Building safety



Link for video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roZvaHhXLlc>

Watch this video and consider the following as a staff team:

- What are some ways that you build a sense of safety, consistency and trust in your classroom environment? And in your interactions with pupils?
- Pick an idea shared by a colleague to try in class this week. Feed back to each other on how it went.



Connect-Ed