

# PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

WELLBEING FOR EDUCATION RETURN PROJECT

Gateshead Psychological Service  
February 2021





# WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

PFA is a supportive and flexible way of responding at during or following times of extreme stress. It is based on the assumption that most people respond with great resilience at these times.

It builds on an ethos of recovery and the idea that support provided as soon as possible can identify pathways that in turn support the return to wellbeing. It encourages people to draw on their previous experiences and personal resources in order to support resilience.

Evidence tells us that people are more likely to psychologically cope with and recover from ongoing situations if they:

- Feel safe, connected, calm and hopeful
- Access social, physical and emotional support
- Feel able to help themselves as individuals and communities.

*PFA is not needed for everyone affected by Covid-19, and is not counselling.*

# THE IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC

The pandemic will have affected people in different ways and everybody's response will be unique.

Most people will respond with resilience and employ means to protect themselves and their loved ones.

An individual's response will depend on:

- How much support we have at the time
- Our previous experience of challenging events
- Our perceived ability to cope
- The nature and severity of the situation

# RESPONDING TO A PANDEMIC

There are many ways a person may respond to the pandemic. Strong emotions are normal and may include:

- Distress
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Anger
- Withdrawal

# STEPS TO USING PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID



# PREPARE YOURSELF

Learn about the crisis event

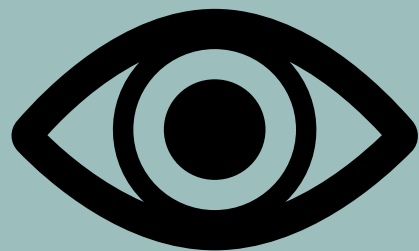
Learn about available services  
and support

Learn about safety and security  
concerns

Caring for yourself is part of the  
process of getting ready for help:

- Managing stress
- Rest and reflection
- Leisure activities

# LOOK



## Look for signs of distress

- Upset
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Anger
- Withdrawal

When we are under stress we can fall into traps, which may include:

- Insufficient sleep
- Isolating oneself either psychologically or physically
- Self sabotage
- Relationship breakdown
- Substance abuse
- Addictions

# LISTEN

Hearing content

Listening for feelings

Observing body language

Non-judgemental

Paraphrasing

Self-awareness

Reflection

Questioning

Clarifying

Summarising





# HELP PEOPLE TO FEEL CALM

- Keep your tone of voice calm
- Remind them you are there to listen
- Remind them it is safe (if this is true)
- Help them connect with the environment they are in if they seem disconnected.  
You can do this by asking them to:
  - Name 5 things they can see
  - Name 4 things they can feel
  - Name 3 things they can hear
  - Name 2 things they can smell
  - Name 1 thing they can taste

# COPING

Encourage positive coping strategies:

- Get enough rest
- Eat and drink regularly
- Spend time with friends and family
- Discuss problems with someone you trust
- Do activities which make you relax
- Do physical exercise
- Engage in community projects



# PRACTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

SUPPORT PEOPLES RESILIENCE AND SENSE OF CONTROL BY SUPPORTING THEM TO GENERATE THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS.



# LINK

Where links can be made to:

- Support connections with loved ones
- Social supports within your community or organisation,
- Support within your organisation, e.g. Supervision, Appraisal, Line management
- Support from other agencies, including those working in schools/colleges
- Support in 3rd sector resources

A photograph of two women sitting at a table in what appears to be a cafe or office setting. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing glasses and a light blue shirt. The woman on the right has blonde hair in a ponytail and is wearing a patterned top. They are both smiling and looking at a laptop screen. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

# PLAN A FOLLOW UP MEETING

Psychological First Aid should not be a one off.

# REFERENCES

World Health Organisation (2011). Psychological First Aid: A guide for fieldworkers.

NHS Education for Scotland (2020). Psychological First Aid.

HM Government (2020). Wellbeing for Education Return COVID – 19

Futurelearn (2020). COVID – 19 : Psychological First Aid.

American Psychological Association resources.

