

# Psychological First Aid

GUIDANCE AND TIPS



# What is PFA?



- PFA is where you help an individual cope with problems by providing non-intrusive care and support, address their basic needs, listening, but not pressuring them to talk, helping them feel calm and connecting with professional agencies if needed.
- **PFA is split into 4 areas:**
  - **Prepare** - Assess support needs. Find out background knowledge about the child.
  - **Look** - Watch the child's behaviour and what is different about them.
  - **Listen** - Pay attention and listen actively. Accept and acknowledge feelings
  - **Link** – Have knowledge of agencies available to be able to offer professional support.

# Key elements



Key aspects of effective PFA:

- Powerful opinions from children about being listened too (see video, Was not Heard, on Youtube).
- PFA is about being a good listener and respecting safety, dignity and rights.
- Ideas and calming strategies to help carry out successful PFA, from identifying who needs support and where to get outside support.
- Self-care is vital, keeping yourself healthy in mind and body, as it is difficult to help others if you are feeling stressed yourself.

# Calming Techniques



## Grounding

- Ask the child or young person to place their feet solidly on the floor or ground and sense the support from floor or ground. If sitting on a chair, feet on the floor, tensing the leg muscles by stemming the feet against the floor as if wanting to push the chair back without actually doing so, can also be useful.

## 5,4,3,2,1 technique

- Acknowledge FIVE things you see around you. It could be a pen, a spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings.
- Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch around you. It could be your hair, or the ground under your feet.
- Acknowledge THREE things you hear. For example, birds singing, a clock ticking or the sound of a car in the distance.
- Acknowledge TWO things you can smell. For example, the smell of a drink, soap in your bathroom, or smells of nature outside.
- Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like – can you taste food you ate earlier, or something you are eating now?

## Mindfulness and Breathing techniques

# Coping Techniques



Younger children

- Playing games or drawing.
- Comfort toy or blanket

Older Children – ask them what helps them calm down, they have their own ideas

- If they do not have something they normally use, suggest activities designed to help them relax or focus on the present; connecting with others; talking about worries; physical activity; keeping the mind active through puzzles or quizzes; getting outside or bringing nature in, for example through watching birds. If passing time with children, try to involve them in play activities or simple conversation about their interests.
- Write, type or draw – writing or drawing thoughts can help let out feelings
- Listening to music

# Helpful Phrases to use in conversation



## Reflecting their concerns and experiences

- "I understand your feelings and lots of people are feeling similarly to you about what's happened / the situation ..."
- "It is very natural to be sad, angry, upset or ...."
- "I hear what you are saying, about having to ..."

## Explore concerns

Explore what the child or young person is particularly worried about and what their specific concerns are.

- "Tell me a bit about what worries you."
- "Is there anything else that worries you?"
- "I sense that there is something more on your mind..."

## Normalise and name reactions

- "In this situation, how you are feeling and how you want to react is very natural..."
- "Many parents would be finding this situation difficult, but you have managed to look after your family so far and are able to ask for help when you need it."

## Explore solutions

- "It can be overwhelming, so maybe we can talk about how to help you manage those difficult feelings."
- "Maybe we can discuss possible ways around this/solutions..."

# Support Agencies



Support for Mental & Physical Health Needs:

- NHS Children and Young People Mental Health Services (CYPMHS)
- NHS 111
- Compass Reach 01609 777662
- Childline or text Shout to 85258 to speak to an empathetic, trained volunteer who will actively listen.
- Papyrus' Hopeline UK offers support to young people if they are feeling suicidal

Bereavement Support

- The childhood bereavement Network
- If the parent or carer needs support for themselves, then organisations like Cruse or Sudden can help