



Stormbreak@Home: An approach for schools, families, parents, carers and children in response to COVID-19

What is stormbreak?

Stormbreak is a charity that aims to support children's mental health through movement, equipping them with sustainable and transferable skills and coping strategies to thrive during the complex demands of growth into adult life. We aim to embed mentally healthy movement for every child, every day into the life of every primary school. www.stormbreak.org.uk Your children may have already experienced stormbreak within their school setting.

With the support of BBC Children in Need stormbreak are producing an online way for schools, families and children to support emotional wellbeing through doing movement activities together. This will be available to support families over the summer as 'stormbreak@home'. Here are two example stormbreaks for you to try at home. More information to support your participation is below.

[WATCH Self-care: Monkey Mind with Kate](#)

[WATCH Self-worth: Classroom Rockstars with Darryl](#)



Why now?

Children globally have been impacted significantly by the current situation and have experienced massive change by being educated at home, or in very different circumstances, if they have continued to go to school as EYFS, Year One, Year Six, vulnerable or key worker children. These changes have meant loss of daily contact with friends and wider family members, change in routines and environments, and with this have been levels of anxiety and fear, as well as a sense of things being out of control. As a result of this there will also be a range of natural, but difficult feelings that emerge such as anger, frustration, confusion, denial and disbelief that can sometimes present in difficult behaviours as we try to make sense of the situation we are in, and for children, this is more complex as it is so hard to put into words the experience we are having.

As children go back to school now and others in September there may be further changes therefore more than ever before, children's emotional wellbeing is of paramount importance and has to be the primary focus of this next transitional process.

We believe stormbreak is an important part of strengthening children's capacity to cope with the current uncertain and complex situation. We believe that mentally healthy movement can support children in the here and now in building their resilience and enabling them to develop a range of skills, attitudes, beliefs and strategies to enable them to stay positive, hopeful and energised and stay mentally well. This is also essential for their long term mental health and wellbeing.





At Stormbreak we believe that;

- Children are happier and healthier when they move more
- Children and their parents/carers are happier and healthier when they interact together through movement
- Movement improves children's wellbeing and teaches them essential emotional and physical life skills
- Homes can be wonderful environments for mentally healthy movement
- Everyone has a part to play in sharing the responsibility for improving children's current and future mental health
- The core values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the family matter in supporting and maintaining our mental health

How to Stormbreak with your children.

Whilst doing Stormbreak@home we encourage you to:

1. **Be open and talk! It's ok to talk things over.** Be open to talking about mental health, notice how your children are feeling and be responsive to what they may be worried or concerned about. Acknowledge that it is normal to have worries or concerns and that it helps to be able to voice this and talk about it.
2. **Have fun first! It's ok to not get it right.** Enjoy opportunities through stormbreak to engage in the movements themselves rather than worry about how well they are moving, it's more the process than the end result.
3. **Relax and join in!** Focus on allowing the stormbreaks to be open for everyone and accessible so that it is about joining together, connectedness, fun and strengthening our mental health
4. **Feel good!** Recognise how we can feel good about ourselves through movement, how it can energise and regulate us and this builds our sense of self worth
5. **Notice our words and body language.** Be aware how our body language and the words we say impact on our children. They are perceptive and will thrive when they feel reassured, encouraged and understood.
6. **Listen and validate!** Children's thoughts and feelings are real to them so we need to acknowledge and hear before those feelings can shift and change or strengthen.
7. **Be playful!** Enjoy fun moments and be playful in tone and action so that we connect and alleviate stress and anxieties.

Our Stormbreak Mental Health concepts:

Within stormbreak we focus on core mental health concepts as we believe these strengthen, support and build our current, as well as, long term mental health. These are:

1. Resilience

Through strengthening resilience it is our intention that children gain the ability and inner strength and courage to 'bounce back' and begin to recognise that;

- There are things that happen in our lives that cannot be controlled and this can affect everyone.





- That our feelings are normal and will change and have an impact on our well being
- We can endure frustration and disappointment and can survive through these times
- We can develop problem solving skills and ways of communicating under stress.

Things we can say to help our children with resilience:

- It's ok and normal to have difficult feelings especially during this strange time
- It can feel so hard when we can't control situations and this can be scary too
- The feelings you are having, maybe frustration or disappointment, will pass and change and things will feel different again
- We can bounce back even when things are tough.

2. Relationships

Through strengthening our relationships we can feel safe, connected and understood and can help children to;

- communicate in various ways with our friends
- understand that relationships are ever changing, can shift and even breakdown but can also be repaired
- respond to each other with care, compassion and kindness
- listen and notice how ourselves and others are feeling and respond positively to this.

Things we can say to help our children with their relationships:

- It's important to be kind and caring
- Friendships do change, and sometimes we do fall out with our friends and even our brothers and sisters, but we can solve the problems and friendships can be repaired
- It's important to say how we are feeling and to empathise with others' feelings

3. Self-care & self-regulation

Through taking care of ourselves intentionally and consistently, we can also be aware of our emotional anxieties and stresses and learn how to calm or energise ourselves. We aim to help children to;

- recognise and name the feelings they are having e.g. anxiety, anger, worry, fear, frustration, disappointment
- know how and be able to seek support when they need it
- choose from a range of strategies to respond and help with their feelings

Things we can say to help our children with self-care and self-regulation:

- When we feel difficult feelings it is good to look after ourselves and do something that helps us to feel better or distracts us like take deep breaths, go outside, jump, run, listen to music, dance
- You can always talk to me and I will listen

4. Self-worth

We want children to feel a sense of their own value and self-worth, to be confident about who they are and to believe in themselves. We aim to help children to:

- Know that they matter and feel loved and cared for
- Feel good about their abilities and skills
- Recognise their own strengths and interests
- Receive compliments and praise





Things we can say to help our children with self-worth:

- I have noticed that you are good at.....
- I am proud of the way you....
- I am wondering if you are proud of yourself that you have managed to achieve.....
- I think you should be feeling good about yourself because....

5. Hope & optimism

By having a sense of hope and optimism we can help children be open to new opportunities and positive change. We aim to help children to;

- Recognise how they are feeling and know that we can help shift this for ourselves
- We can be hopeful and excited about things in the future as well as now
- Know that the present moment can be adapted and can change
- Have ideas and hopes that we can work towards

Things we can say to our children to help with a sense of hope and optimism:

- Situations do change for everyone
- What are the things you are most looking forward to?
- I'm noticing that you are excited about.....
- What is the best part about the situation we are in at the moment?

Questions children might ask before, during or after the stormbreak and how to respond

Is it safe to go back to school? Has the coronavirus gone now?

Again reassure as much about the facts that we know. It is important to still wash hands and to be aware of their own hygiene to minimise any risks but give key facts that everyone is doing everything to ensure we are as safe as possible.

What if I've missed too much learning?

Reassure children that it is the teacher's job to see where they are at with their learning and they don't need to worry. Everyone is always at different stages and it is more important to just get back to school and to get back to the new routines.

Will my friends still be my friends?

Be honest and direct that friendships do change and grow and new friendships can happen as well. Enjoy the feeling of looking forward to seeing friends again and know your friends will be looking forward to this too.

Be responsive and aware in listening to any concerns or questions. Give factual answers where possible and reassure, encourage and empower children to use their inner skills of resilience, relationships, self worth, self regulation and optimism and encourage them to keep talking to people that care about them.

For additional supporting information please see the [Public Health England guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

