

# ConnectEd

Mental Health Services for Schools

## Children's Mental Health Week 2021

### The importance of expressing our feelings and connecting with others to support good mental health

#### Introduction

This year we are promoting the importance of connection to our feelings, and to others, to support good mental health. As the pandemic continues it is vital that children are able to name and express their feelings with someone they trust. These activities are aimed to help children express and share their feelings in creative ways and can be delivered through remote teaching with minimal materials required.

#### Activity 1: Connect with your feelings

Invite each child to take a few deep breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth, focusing on the out breath and ask themselves: "How do I feel right now?"

Use this image as a prompt:



ConnectEd

It is ok if some children feel worried, sad, angry or mixed up. Here's some helpful responses:

- Thank you for sharing your feelings with me.
- You and your feelings are important to me.
- Who else can you share your feelings with?
- What helps when you feel angry/sad/worried/mixed up?

*If you are concerned about a child's wellbeing always let a member of your safeguarding team know so that they can get the help they need.*

## **Activity 2: Amrita and her tree**

**Materials needed: Paper, colouring pens/pencils/crayons.**

Listen to our therapist, Xav, read this story which is all about the importance of connection to ourselves and each other. Complete the activities after to explore the different feelings and how to express them creatively: <https://vimeo.com/406581668>

## **Activity 3: Express Your Self Through Music**

Our music therapists have suggested some excellent resources to support children to express their thoughts and feelings through music.

Singing is highly recommended for both children and adults of all ages, due to its proven health and wellbeing benefits through working and engaging with breath, the expression of emotion and being connected with other.

They have suggested the following activities for Primary aged children and young people.

### **Kazoos and facial expression cards**

Kazoos are inexpensive, easy to get hold of and allow children to blow off steam! As with singing, blowing instruments can reduce cortisol levels. This activity can be a good conversation starter whilst helping children to link language around emotions with their awareness of how feelings are experienced in their body.

To play the game a child has a kazoo and chooses one of the images/emotions to represent from the range of picture cards ([click here to download](#)). The other children/adults then guess which emotion they're playing: it can be done one to one or in a group. Then, questions might follow such as:

1. How did you know that was an 'angry' sound, or a 'sad' sound?
2. How 'loud' is that feeling in your mind, what is the 'tempo' (are they agitated, calm, anxious...?)

Movement can be incorporated too through stamping feet, hanging head or hiding away gestures to accompany the sound, which adults can model and draw out. Depending on situation, this might lead to further, verbal exploration around the feelings – children might want to explore when they have this feeling, what it is like, how they can manage it.

### **Make an instrument at home**

For primary and possibly secondary aged children and young people, making instruments from scratch with household items might be appealing as another way to express yourself.