

"SUMO4Schools has had a profound impact on the wellbeing of the children and staff in my school"

Primary School Headteacher

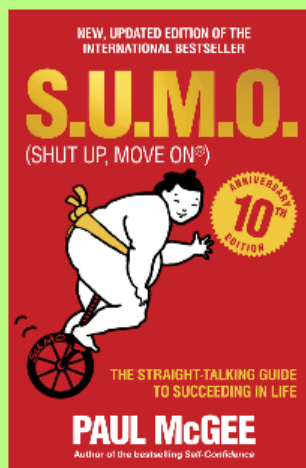


The SUMO Guide to

LIVING & LEARNING TOGETHER

A free practical guide for teachers, parents and carers
to support children during the Coronavirus crisis

Kevin Pace



Based on
the book
S.U.M.O
by international
bestselling author
Paul McGee

**Packed with
SUMO wisdom,
activities &
resources!**

The SUMO Guide to Living and Learning Together
A free resource produced for schools, teachers, parents and carers
by the SUMO4Schools Foundation during the Covid-19 crisis, March 2020

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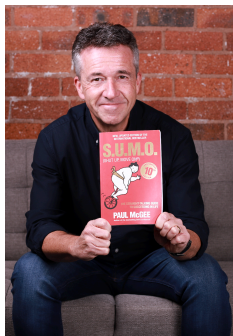
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Also from the SUMO4Schools Foundation



The SUMO Guide to Living & Learning Together

Like all of the SUMO4Schools resources, the approaches and techniques here are based around **S.U.M.O: Shut Up, Move On** the Sunday Times bestselling book by my business partner and fellow director of the SUMO4Schools Foundation, Paul McGee.



Paul McGee

S.U.M.O was first published in 2005 and went on to be a Sunday Times bestseller. It was updated and re-published in 2015. The book has been described as a thought provoking and, for many, a life-changing read.

As well as the 'Foundation Formula' of $E+R=O$, S.U.M.O introduced the six SUMO principles six principles of:

- Change Your T-Shirt
- Remember The Beachball
- Develop Fruity Thinking
- Hippo Time is OK
- Dare to Dream (Ditch Doris Day)
- Learn Latin

Under its alternative name for S.U.M.O: **Stop, Understand, Move On**, the SUMO4Schools Foundation supports young people and the professionals who work with them to:

- Get more out of themselves
- Get more out of others
- Get more out of life

Like all of the SUMO4Schools resources, this free resource has been written by me, a lecturer, teacher and educator for over 30 years. I have introduced and delivered SUMO to countless schools across the UK and beyond since 2014. SUMO approaches include proven psychological techniques such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), reframing, growth mindset, self-talk, distraction, mindfulness, self-reflection and thinking strategies, all wrapped up in practical, easy to understand techniques and delivered in memorable metaphors and an accessible language.

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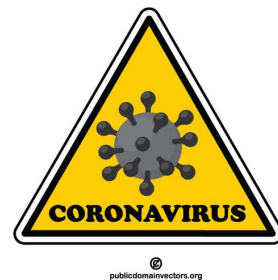
Kevin Pace, DCA, BA, MA, Cert.Ed



The SUMO Guide to Living & Learning Together

Mental Health & Wellbeing Matters Too

We are in the middle of an extraordinary world crisis. The impact and change to our daily lives from the Coronavirus is far-reaching, unprecedented and previously unthinkable.



The seriousness of the Coronavirus pandemic has of course meant that much emphasis has had to be placed on the **physical effects** of the virus, actions to protect against it, and recognition of the **physical symptoms** as the trigger for self-isolation to protect others. But our mental health and wellbeing matters too.

You would expect an organisation like the *SUMO4Schools Foundation* to say that **mental health and wellbeing matters too**. After all, we exist to promote and teach mental and emotional health and wellbeing and resilience to children and teachers using the SUMO techniques, but we know that SUMO can help us all to stay mentally healthy and look after our wellbeing. This means we can take responsibility to cope with the ups and downs of life and embrace and manage the full range of emotions that goes with it.

Of course, many teachers and parents will be feeling additional pressure and even overwhelmed right now. Teachers have had to quickly adapt from their busy teaching schedules to working out how they can provide some **meaningful education at a distance**. Parents are also navigating additional challenges on their families that they were not prepared for, while organising some meaningful home-schooling duties they never expected to have. All while trying to follow disease-prevention measures to keep themselves and their families safe.



Children too are being significantly impacted by this crisis of course. Most have had to quickly come to terms with **huge changes to their lives** when most children feel most secure and able to thrive when they have routine, familiarity and predictability. There is also the **inevitable worry and anxiety** that comes from limited ability to understand a pandemic and its impact on lives, especially for younger children.

At the time of writing, ChildLine were reporting 'unprecedented' levels of calls from distressed young people struggling to deal with the pandemic and its impact on their lives, including children who felt cut off from their vital support networks such as school, and friends, increasing their feelings of loneliness and vulnerability.

All of the solutions to these most exceptional of challenges won't be found in this SUMO Guide. But we do hope that the practical advice and SUMO wisdom presented here in **12 sections**, in no particular order, along with the activities and resources from **page 33** will help a little in your efforts to support your children with their mental health and wellbeing during this crisis.



1. Avoid C.N.N

Before you think we are discriminating against the American news channel CNN (Cable News Network), when we use 'C.N.N for SUMO we mean '**Constant Negative News.**'

Of course, it is important to stay informed during the Coronavirus crisis, but it is more important to avoid becoming consumed by the news. As we said earlier, our **mental health and wellbeing matters** and we need to protect it against the effects of a diet of constant worrying and distressing news.



We need to put our mental health and wellbeing first.

Try to **achieve balance** between allowing children some exposure to the news updates – if they want it – but limit it and the conversation at home about the news. Whilst we don't want children to be completely shielded from the news as this could actually increase their interest in knowing what's really going on and trigger their imaginations taking over, we do need to protect them from C.N.N.



SUMO WISDOM

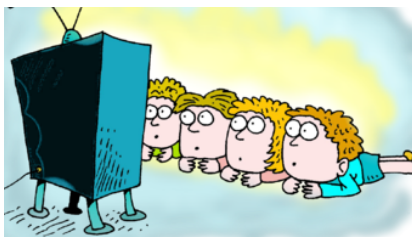
Children can become fixated on a news story like the Coronavirus and repeatedly look for news coverage relating to it.

This is not healthy.

The bottom line is this:

Constantly following the latest coronavirus news will only **increase the entire family's anxiety.**

Even when parents are themselves feeling anxious about the news, it's important to set a **calm tone** during these conversations wherever possible. Even babies and very young children can pick up on their parents' anxieties.



Younger children will not have the emotional maturity or experience to interpret the news. All children would benefit from a regular conversation about what they have seen or heard on the news to help them interpret it accurately.

The American Professor of Communication, George Gerbner studied the effects of television on society, which is equally relevant to the modern age. He coined the term 'Mean World Syndrome' to introduce his **cultivation theory** to the world.



His studies found that the **more time people spent watching the news** the more likely they were to believe that the world was an intimidating and unforgiving place and harboured more fear and anxiety about the world around them.

They believed that **world is more dangerous than it actually is.**

DANGER

A simple solution to this in the past would have been to simply not watch the evening news bulletin. Of course, in the modern world of 24 hour news and the 'push and pull' of the smartphone and social media notifications culture, makes it much harder to maintain boundaries and take time out from anxiety-inducing Coronavirus news.

The **nature** of news delivery also adds to the challenge. The endless channels through which the news can be obtained means constant competition between TV stations, online news organisations and social media to secure our subscriptions, our attention, our views and our 'clicks'. The way they compete for our attention, even when reporting the same news stories is to use **sensationalised language and highlighting threats.**

Why does this work?

Well, our **brains are wired to constantly look for threats.** Our brain will notice 1 threat more than 99 other things which are going fine. This helps to keep us alive when there is danger about. Threats trigger our stress response which readies us for the **fight or flight response.** It puts us on high alert by raising our heart rates to pump blood faster around our bodies, releasing adrenaline and tensing our muscles.

When the news organisations use sensationalised language and highlight threats, our brains of course notice this. The problem is, we can be on **constant stress alert** which is not healthy and can lead to real problems with anxiety.



SUMO WISDOM

Remember the story of Chicken Licken? If you let them, news channels will convince you that every day the sky is falling, and then, when we wake up next morning to find that it has not yet fallen, we will be told today is surely going to be the day!

Positive actions you can take to balance your news intake:

- **Turn off your news notifications**
- **Set a limit of news each day**
- **Be choosy about where you get your news from**
- **Don't let fear rule**

When we use SUMO, we use '**fear**' as a way to describe worries and anxiety that can be caused by inaccurate and false information. We call this: **False Evidence Appearing Real. Fear** can also be used to describe how children and adults can worry about things that haven't yet happened. This is **Future Events Appearing Real.**



2. Change is Challenging

Charles Darwin has been described as one of the most influential figures in human history. Though there is still some debate as to the actual originator, for many years he has been credited with the following quote: *'It is not the strongest nor the most intelligent of the species that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.'*

Most children thrive on the predictability of daily routines. They get used to people, places and favourite activities and change requires them to expend a lot of effort, not only physically, but emotionally, socially, and cognitively. The Coronavirus crisis has meant they have had to quickly come to terms with **huge changes to their lives**.



Even children who are usually able to deal comfortably with change are likely to be experiencing some challenges given the **scale and speed** of the changes in their lives.

Children can be supported to navigate change by:

Being provided with advanced warning

The earlier children are brought into the conversation the more time they have to process and prepare for the change.

Maintaining routines as much as possible

Keeping as much the same as possible and avoiding other changes, for example during a house move, will provide some comfort and sameness for the child to hold on to.

Anticipating and answer questions

Children are likely to have a lot of questions. Some may be repeated many times.

Anticipating behaviour

Some children might regress to earlier behaviours during change.

Anticipating the grieving process

The child may go through a process similar to coping with loss and grieving. (More on this later)

Adults also play a key role in preparing and supporting children through change. Children rely on adults to help them get from where they are to where they are going: one side of the change to the other.

For children who thrive on routine, consistency and repetition, change works against them. They create instability, vulnerability, worries, stress and anxiety and a fear of the unknown.



Children manage change best when adults:



Include the child in change conversations and problem solving



Help them anticipate and prepare for what is coming next



Model positive social behaviour and language that describes the relationships between past, present, and future events



Support them to manage and express their emotions



Encourage exploration of the new environment or situation



Have realistic expectations based on the child's emotional intelligence and temperament

One of the key determiners in how well children can handle and cope with change is resilience. **Resilience explains how two children can experience the same event but cope with it entirely differently.** Where one may stay calm and look for a rational response; to problem solve and find solutions, the other may panic and over-react and respond with little thought. One child might give up and the other will push on through the same barrier, obstacle or setback regardless.



SUMO WISDOM

*'More than education, more than experience, more than training,
a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails.'*
Dean Becker

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress, challenge, tragedy, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver and more curious, which means they will go looking for new opportunities, new possibilities, which of course will mean transitioning from a place of comfort to a place of uncertainty. **Resilient children are more adaptable, and more flexible so have greater ability to bend and not break.** Adaptability and flexibility are important skills to have when dealing with transitions and change.





SUMO WISDOM

**Resilience is not something children have or don't have.
It's a life skill that they can learn and can be taught.**

One of the traits of a child who lacks resilience is a tendency to behave like a victim.

Now of course, there are genuine victims in life. Daily we are aware of people falling victim to the Coronavirus. However, when we talk about behaving like a victim when we teach SUMO, we are referring to those children who refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions. For example, where two children are equally affected by the Coronavirus, but one takes responsibility for maintaining a positive outlook and to keep active and busy, the other adopts a victim mentality and seeks to blame the virus or others and find excuses rather than take some positive action.

We call this SUMO principle: **'Change Your T Shirt'** and we use a **T Shirt with the word 'victim' on the front** to explain how this works.

Children who choose to wear a victim T-shirt can believe that their current situation in life has nothing to do with:

- The decisions they made
- The actions they took
- The attitudes they adopted.

Apart from that, they take full responsibility for everything!



Children who grow up with an attitude that the events that have happened or will happen in their life directly lead to outcomes over which they have no control, are in **real danger of spending a lifetime wearing a victim T-shirt and not realising their potential.**

Their self-talk reinforces their beliefs with statements like:

'Life is unfair'
'I never catch a break'
'It's not my fault'
'This is just the way I am'
'There's nothing I can do'

Any of which could also be printed on their T-shirt!

Changing your T-shirt means children taking responsibility for their actions and for their life.





SUMO WISDOM

When a child thinks like a victim, they can begin to feel and act like a victim. If left unchanged, the victim mentality can eventually impact their ability to have healthy relationships and to adequately function as an adult.

An important part of taking responsibility is children seeing that they are not powerless. Positive Psychology founder, Martin Seligman says that the most important question to ask is: *'Could I have changed the outcome with some personal effort on my part?'*



SUMO WISDOM

**A victim argues with life, a survivor embraces it.
A victim dwells on the past, a survivor lives in the present.
A victim believes they are powerless, a survivor takes control of their life.**

12 Signs of the Victim Mentality

The following common signs can help you to determine if a child is showing the victim mentality:

1. They constantly blame other people or situations
2. They have a 'life is against me' attitude
3. They are regularly cynical or pessimistic
4. They complain that other people are better off than them
5. They fall into thinking traps, such as catastrophising and 'me, me, me' and 'them, them, them' Thinking
6. Even when things go right, they find something to complain about
7. They struggle to appreciate other perspectives
8. They are uncooperative when people try to help them with their problems
9. They regularly act like they are powerless to change
10. They regularly believe other people have a better life
11. They often feel sorry for themselves
12. They have friends who complain, blame, and feel victimised



Supporting children to replace their victim language with more positive, more optimistic S.U.M.O language is a good start to helping them to take responsibility and avoid the victim mentality: to SUMO:

Victim Language	S.U.M.O Language
'Life is not fair'	'I am unhappy about this, what can I do?'
'It's not my fault'	'How can I move forward?'
'This is just the way I am'	'How can I improve?'
'I can't change'	'I can be flexible'
'There's nothing I can do'	'There's always something I can do'
I am powerless'	'There are positive actions I can take'
'Everything always goes wrong'	'There are specific reasons why happened, and I can learn from them'

So, as we have seen, change is challenging.

But developing the resilience to overcome the challenges and choose how to respond to the challenges is critical. This is important for children to learn. Other valuable learning from dealing with change include:

- Change can build an understanding of the need for **flexibility in life**, including responding to the unexpected, both good and bad. An ability to adapt and change in one area of life can help them to stay flexible and make changes in other areas.
- Change is a **great educator**. Through the challenges it brings, new skills and new viewpoints are developed which brings greater knowledge, awareness, and expertise in new areas.
- Change can grow **greater self-confidence, self-esteem, grit, character and inner strength**. By adapting to change and overcoming challenges, children build the confidence and resilience to meet similar occurrences in the future.
- Change can help children to **focus on who and what is really important to them**.
- Change can develop a child's **decision-making and problem-solving skills**. It can show how choices and decisions lead to consequences.

A key element of making good choices and decisions is the **SUMO formula**:



The **E+R=O**.

Put simply, E+R=O demonstrates how it is the **Event** plus the **Response** that influences the **Outcome**.

Some children can take the view that the formula for life is 'E = O' - the event that leads directly to the outcome. They can fail to take the importance of their response into account.

**Event +
Response
= Outcome**



The equation for life is not E = O. It is

SUMO WISDOM

In other words, some children can adopt the viewpoint *'the outcomes in my life are down to the events that have happened. I have no control. Certain events will trigger certain outcomes. Period.'*

Of course, this is rarely if ever true.

Children can recognise the role they all play in influencing the outcomes which follow the events and changes they experience, even something as serious as a pandemic. They can choose how they respond.



'SUMO' in Latin means 'choose'

SUMO WISDOM

Children who are able to appreciate the impact of their response to an event, even one as serious as the Coronavirus, will learn a valuable life skill.

Meeting the challenge of change has become a **learning experience**.



**Children are not always responsible for what happens to them,
but they are responsible for how they respond.**

SUMO WISDOM



3. Develop Fruity Thinking

One of the most powerful lessons that we can teach children is that **they have the power to control their thoughts, their actions and thereby influence the results they get.** This we can do through the next SUMO principle we are going to look at: **‘Develop Fruity Thinking’.**

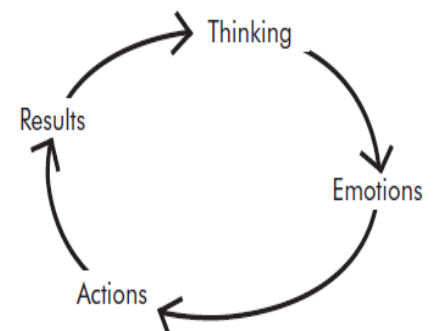
Fruity Thinking promotes the concept that like fruit is good for physical health, Fruity Thinking is good for mental health.

Thinking is a little like breathing; most of the time we are not aware we are doing it. Children are unlikely to wake up in the morning and say: *‘I think I will breathe today.’* They can also pay little attention to how they think. But how they think, and how they talk to themselves in their head, significantly impacts upon their actions, and their **actions determine the results they achieve in life.**

Fruity Thinking helps children to see the opportunities and the possibilities, rather than use Faulty Thinking which highlights the pitfalls, increases stress and anxiety and leads to self-doubt.

Fruity Thinking teaches children that when they think differently, they feel and behave differently and can ultimately achieve different results. The Fruity Thinking principle therefore helps to make the connection between thinking and results in life.

This can be seen in the T.E.A.R model (right):



The T.E.A.R model show us that a child’s thinking can become a self-fulfilling prophesy. Negative thinking leads to an emotional course of action which leads to a less satisfying result. Next time such a situation occurs, the thinking and emotions will be impacted by the previous results and so the cycle continues.



SUMO WISDOM

The T.E.A.R model shows how a child’s negative thinking can lead to an emotional course of action leading to a less satisfying result. The cycle continues as each time a similar situation occurs, the thinking and emotions will be impacted by the previous results.

Fruity Thinking links well with professor Carol Dweck’s **Growth Mindset theory.**



Professor Carol Dweck of Stanford University describes the ability of some children to be flexible and adaptable to change and new experiences as a 'growth mindset'.

On the other hand, children who are less able to adapt to new circumstances have a 'fixed mindset'.

Her research found that it is **not intelligence and talent that creates success in a life but whether a person has a growth or fixed mindset.**



A child with a growth mindset has a 'Can Do, Will Do' attitude and adopts the position that they can grow, be better and learn new things; their abilities are not fixed. They see failure and setback not as proof they couldn't do something but as feedback that they need to continue to learn and develop their skills.



SUMO WISDOM

The mind is like a parachute. It works best when it's open.

4. Hippo Time is OK

Another one of the six SUMO principles is '**Hippo Time is OK**'.

SUMO stands for Stop, Understand, Move On. Sometimes however, we can all find it hard to **Move On**. We are all going to have good days and bad days during the Coronavirus crisis. Some days, we will be able to keep ourselves and our children occupied, and the day will seem quite normal. Other days will be more difficult. The news will feel overwhelming and the worries will feel overbearing.

This is OK. In fact, it's normal.

It's OK not to be OK

Hippo Time means children taking some time to acknowledge their fears, their sadness, their confusion, their frustration and their anger.

To feel **mad, bad or sad**.

Hippo Time is a useful 'mini break' for quiet, calm and for thinking; to get events, situations and life in perspective.



Hippo Time is time to find some balance and some clarity.

Why Hippo Time?

Well, what do hippos love to do?

They love to wallow in the mud!

They do this to get out of the heat, to cool down and to play.

Hippo Time is a key part of the SUMO process: Stop, Understand, Move On.

But... and this is the really important bit...

It is temporary.

‘Move On’ means moving out of Hippo Time.

Moving On is saying to yourself: *‘I’ve had my Hippo Time and I’m OK now.’*

Moving On with an awareness and understanding.

Moving On with greater clarity, perspective and purpose.

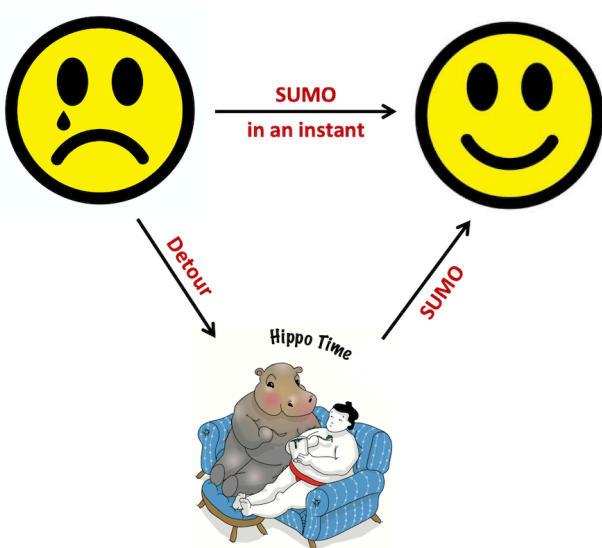
Children who are able to use the SUMO formula $E+R=O$ and change their T-Shirt are more likely to focus on moving out of Hippo Time and onto better outcomes.



SUMO WISDOM

Hippo Time is the bridge between the Stop and Understand and Moving On. It's a place and time when children can press pause.

Everyone, child and adult, would like to be able to immediately SUMO after every setback and disappointment.



But even the most resilient individuals are unlikely to be able to do this. Most children will need to take a **‘Hippo Time Detour’** first. See the illustration (right).

Hippo Time can be seen as a bridge between the Stop and Understand, and the Moving On. A place and time to press pause.

This is normal and part of the learning process. It is part of having a **growth mindset**.

Hippo Time is OK.



5. Let's Talk About It

Talking to children about the Coronavirus pandemic is **never going to be easy**.

But it shouldn't be avoided if children want to talk about it. Going through their concerns and questions with them will let them get them off their chest and is better than dismissing their feelings or telling them everything is fine. You won't have all the answers but you can be **honest about your own feelings and questions**, balanced by the fact that most of the things we worry about do not come true.



As we saw earlier, sensationalised news abounds and children will find it difficult to separate the current reality from headlines designed to catch our attention and worst case scenario articles. Helping children to understand how news works to bring **some important perspective** will help.

Share some of the **more positive and solution-focussed facts** to balance against the negative focussed news. For example, that thousands of scientists and experts all around the world are working very hard to reduce the impact of the pandemic, and greater understanding of the virus is growing every day by the health professionals. Modern medicine can treat so many illnesses and is constantly progressing.



SUMO WISDOM

Spending time doing a positive activity with children, such as playing a game, painting or cooking will not only keep them active, it will provide the time and space to talk through their concerns and provide reassurance, without having to have a 'big chat'.

Choosing to face up to the challenge of the Coronavirus by keeping themselves safe, helping to keep others safe, and staying positive day to day are all ways that children can have a positive mindset and build resilience.

It will also help them to not feel scared all the time.

6. Learning from Loss

The seriousness of the Coronavirus, and the predictions for its reach, means some children will experience the death of a loved one. Other children will also experience the sense of loss and grieving through social distancing and the closure of schools and other organisations meaning, in the physical sense at least, they will no longer have contact with their teachers, coaches, group leaders and other adults, and of course, their friends both in and out of school.



Whatever the nature of their loss, what children are most likely to need is an **understanding of the thoughts and feelings** that get stirred up, and someone to **listen and help them regulate**.

A child who is dealing with loss has many of the same feelings of grief that adults do, but usually fewer resources and abilities to cope with them without support to understand their thoughts and feelings, help them regulate, and find a way to move forward. Adults cannot take away the pain from a child, but they can help them to **identify it, label it and deal with it**.



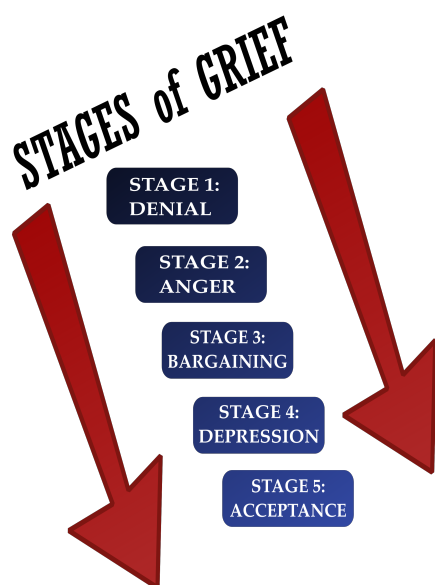
Children generally have a different concept of death to that of adults. For example, until they are aged between 5 and 7 they will have little appreciation of what permanent means. So, they might be able to accept that someone has gone, but not that they won't be coming back.

Comics, cartoons and computer games often portray death as a temporary state and it is important to help their understanding that in the real-world death is permanent, irreversible and has a cause. Points of reference which can help include the death of a goldfish, other pet, a film character or even a favourite plant.

Like change, there are similar lessons to be learned from loss which will build resilience to cope with change and loss in the future.

Children & Grief

Grief is a challenging process which is painful, uncomfortable and impacts the child's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. The book by grief expert David Kessler and author Elisabeth Kübler-Ross '*On Grief and Grieving*' describes how grief has a number of stages:



Denial

In this stage, children will be in a state of shock and denial, with a sense of being overwhelmed and life not making sense. Denial needs to fade for the healing process to begin.

Anger

Anger is normal and is OK so long as the effects are not destructive and damaging. There will be other emotions as well as anger, but these might be more complicated to understand. Anger shows the child is in pain.



Bargaining

Children can become stuck in with 'If only' and 'What if' thinking and wanting to fix what happened to cause the loss. They can feel guilt and blame themselves for not preventing the loss.

Depression

Different to the mental illness, depression is used to describe how the grief goes to a deeper, more intense level and feels as though it will last forever. This can follow the growing realisation that the loss is permanent.

Acceptance

Acceptance is children learning to live with the loss: the new norm. Finding acceptance may just be them having more good days than bad ones. They will not like the new norm but over time will come to terms with it and live their life within it.



SUMO WISDOM

Children can use Hippo Time to help them grieve. It will help them to acknowledge their sadness, confusion, frustration and anger, and find some balance and some clarity.

Though a child's grief might manifest itself differently to an adult, they **still need to be given the opportunity to grieve**.

The inability of a child to handle grief may result in overwhelming sadness and upset, lots of negative thinking, angry outbursts, irritability, withdrawal, behaviour regression, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and persistent questioning about death and personal fallibility.

Children who can process how they are feeling and are supported to understand their emotions, the process they are going through, and able to come to terms with the loss, will learn skills for adulthood when further loss is to be expected.

7. Feel The Feelings

As we saw earlier, **Hippo Time is OK** means it's OK not to be OK.

During the Coronavirus crisis there are going to be better days than others. Some days will seem quite normal, others will be more difficult and our feelings might be overwhelming and the worries overbearing.

Some days we will all feel **mad, bad or sad**.



This is OK. In fact, it's normal.

The enforced time at home, away from friends, school, social activities and the sense of a loss of freedom will mean children will sometimes be **angry, frustrated, fearful, overwhelmed, bored and nervous**. Other times, they will enjoy the freedom from the pressure of school or sporting activities, and sometimes even feel excited at the new opportunities to have more of their parent's time than is usual.

Sometimes they will have all these feelings on the same day!

This is feeling the feelings.

As we discussed earlier, **parents** too might feel pressure from the new responsibilities they were not prepared for, and even overwhelmed at times.



The important response when feelings are running away with us is to focus on how the **feelings will change** when you are feeling less anxious, less fear, less responsibility. By focussing more on what 'normal' is like, your feelings will slowly change.

When we are in stress response mode, our brains expect us to panic and act like it is an emergency. When we act normally instead, as though we are saying "thank you brain but I've got this" our stress eases and normality returns.

Take a deep breath parents. You won't ruin your children!



SUMO WISDOM

**It's important that teachers and parents don't put too much pressure on themselves.
This is an extraordinarily difficult situation for everybody.
Children, schools and families will recover.**

8. Children can be supported to worry less. And you can help them.

Worry, anxiety and stress is actually more optional and more controllable than many children will first believe. With appropriate support and talking therapy, even children with diagnosable anxiety disorders are able to regain control of their anxiety and live a happy life in the majority of cases.

Ensuring children appreciate that they have control over their worries, the skills to keep them under control, and are able to regain control when required is important to a happier, healthier, and more productive life. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on.

Let's look at some ways you can support them to worry less.



Name Them, Claim Them, Tame Them

A way to help children to manage their worries is to help them **recognise them, accept they are there, understand what they do, how they make them feel and what they can do about it**: 'Name them, claim them, tame them'. Children will tend to focus on the physical effects: how worries make them feel physically. These can include:

- Faster breathing, increased temperature and sweaty
- Tense muscles
- Feeling 'shaky' and wobbly knees
- Butterflies in the tummy, stomach ache or suddenly needing to go to the toilet
- Feeling dizzy and/or sick
- Feeling like they want to cry

Worry, anxiety and stress can make the threat or danger a child is concerned about appear to be much greater than it actually is. The child can fall into a number of thinking traps. This is the primitive brain dominating the rational brain. At this point it is also worth exploring the differences between worry, stress and anxiety.



SUMO WISDOM

For many children, worry, anxiety and stress can feel like a heavy sack on their back. Except there is no sack to remove the weight. They are more complicated and trickier than that.

Worry is a form of thinking. In its normal form, it is an essential and instinctive emotion that is hard-wired into humans to help them survive. Worry occurs when the mind becomes focussed on a particular problem, concern or challenge which is perceived as a threat. Prehistoric people had to worry about being eaten by predators. Those that focussed on the potential threats survived, those that didn't got eaten!

Worry can be either constructive: 'Worth-it Worry' or destructive: 'Worthless Worry'.

Worth-it Worry leads to some form of positive action to resolve the problem, concern or challenge. 'Worthless Worry' provides nothing more than hinderance.

Beware the '**Worry Wrestle**'.

This is the ability we all have to wrestle with our assessment of a worth-it or worthless worry in our heads, casting doubts, and nagging away. Even the most worthless of Worthless Worry can continue to be troublesome in a Worry Wrestle. All it usually takes is this question: "*Are you sure?*"

WORTH IT WORRY

Leading to
positive action



WORTHLESS WORRY

Provides nothing
to help



Worry can ask this question over and over. Filling the child with doubts. Even when they have worked out whether the worry is Worth-it or Worthless, and they start to take some positive steps to move forward, worry can continue to demand a worry wrestle.

“Are you sure you are sure?”

There are three main ways of dealing with the demand for a Worry Wrestle:

1. The Scale of 1 - 10

The **7 Questions to Help You SUMO** is available free the SUMO4School website. Question 1: Where is this issue on a scale of 1 – 10 (where 10 = death) is an excellent way of putting worry into perspective.

You can change 10 to the ‘end of the world’.

2. Uncertainty is a part of life.

Children cannot be sure their judgement of a worry: worth-it or worthless, is correct. But neither can their worry. This is like saying to the worry: *‘No, I’m not sure but then neither are you. Neither of us have a crystal ball!’*

3. Let It Be

The Beatles wrote a song about worrying about troubles called ‘Let It Be’. They may not have heard the song, but it does have a useful lesson for children. Let it be means acknowledging and accepting a worry but making no attempt to stop it, complain about it, or enter into the ring with it for a Worry Wrestle.

Just letting it be.

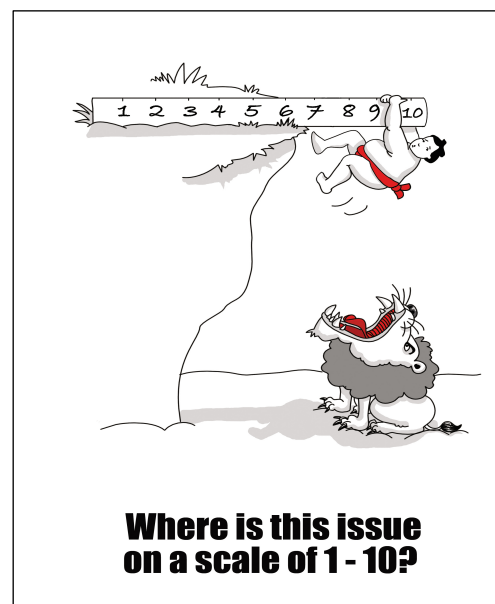
Children who are able to develop an attitude to worry that accepts them as part of life and build a set of SUMO skills to SUMO: **Stop**, **Understand** (and accept them) and **Move On** anyway, will not be bogged down by worry.



SUMO WISDOM

Worry occurs when the mind becomes focussed on a particular problem, concern or challenge which is perceived as a threat.
The ‘stress response’ kicks the body’s defence system into high gear.

Stress is a response to danger, a demand or a threat which, whether real or imagined, kicks the body’s defence system into high gear in a rapid, automatic **process known as the ‘stress response’**. When it’s working properly, it helps us stay focused, energetic, and alert.



Stress can help children rise to meet their challenges. It can sharpen their concentration when they are taking aim for the game-winning throw at the basket or ensure they revise for an exam rather than watch YouTube. In extreme and emergency situations, stress can even save our life by giving us extra strength to defend ourselves or the energy to avoid a situation or run away. This is often referred to as **‘fight-or-flight.’**



SUMO WISDOM

Beyond a certain point, stress stops being helpful and can cause major damage to a child's happiness, health, mood, relationships, and quality of life.

It can even rewire a young brain, leaving a child more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems.

Stress can be:

Anticipatory

The stress arises from something that is going to happen in the future. This could be something specific like a child moving to a new school or taking a test, or it could be caused by something non-specific. This can feel like a big black cloud, **a sense of doom** that something will go wrong or something bad is going to happen.

Situational

The stress is related to some situation that is occurring, usually something highly demanding, unexpected or scary and the **child does not feel they have any control over it**. This could be an emergency or could be a conflict or a loss of face or status, perhaps caused by a mistake or an embarrassment.

Residual

This is stress from the **after-effects of a situation** that has already occurred. This can be mild and can be helped by children talking about what has happened rather than bottling it up, or it can be severe; a very serious mental health condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. A child with PTSD will have regular scary thoughts and memories of a past terrifying event and will require specialist help.

Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling or emotion. It's a feeling of fear, apprehension or panic about what's to come. Examples include the first day of school, performing in the school nativity play or reading a poem to the class.

As we have discussed, it can also be impacted by the news surrounding the Coronavirus



SUMO WISDOM

Most children will experience anxiety as 'butterflies' in their stomach, quicker breathing and an increased heart rate. Some might feel like there's a disconnect between their mind and body or their legs feel like jelly.



Anxiety is normal and it comes and goes naturally. Once the difficult situation is over, children should calm down and normal levels of anxiety should not interfere with a child's everyday life.

If the difficult situation is over but the feeling of fear or panic stays or even gets stronger, that's when anxiety becomes a problem and it can be **highly debilitating and a significant barrier to a full life**.

Signs that a child is suffering from higher than normal levels of anxiety include:

- Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- Not sleeping or waking in the night with bad dreams
- Not eating properly
- Being irritable
- Quickly losing their temper and getting angry
- Regular outbursts

Children who suffer from an anxiety disorder as a diagnosed mental health disorder can have feelings or emotions which are out of proportion to the situation, can suffer from panic attacks and can avoid situations that might cause them to feel anxious, including doing things that they enjoy.



SUMO WISDOM

Thinking (worry) leads to feelings (anxiety) which results in a physical response (stress)

9. There's Learning Everywhere

A positive mindset is an adventure mindset.

Children can learn that every moment in life, good and bad, offers opportunities to learn, be creative and grow. Here are 10 ways to support children to find learning everywhere:

1. Keep a journal.

Psychologists agree that there are **many benefits to children keeping a Journal**. Encouraging children to capture events as they happen, their feelings and thoughts not only gives them a 'doing document' and an historical record for the future, it can help them to express how they are feeling. They can also use it to refer back to. Maybe when they feared something would happen and it didn't.

2. Use what's in the home

Psychologists and educationalists tend to agree that the **most meaningful learning occurs** through acquiring knowledge and skills through real-life, practical or hands-on activities. The enforced time at home can mean children can learn new skills such as cooking, gardening and practical skills like DIY.



3. Keep it simple

Nobody should be expecting you to be a teacher. You can try and keep the children's learning ticking over with some real-world maths, numeracy and literacy, and you might have some support from your children's school for this, but **keep it simple and keep it enjoyable** and don't put too much pressure on yourself. School will get them back on track later.

4. Bring history alive

Children can 'interview' their grandparents or other elderly family or neighbours over the telephone or through Skype or Facetime, where such facilities are available. They can present what they learn in **art or through stories or poems**. You could also get the old photographs out and talk about what it was like when you and they were younger.

5. Let them be the teacher

Ask the child to teach you something. This could be anything, from a maths technique that you have long forgotten or a skill on one of their computer games. Reverse the roles this way and you can **model how to learn and listen**. Also, by preparing and delivering a 'lesson' it will help them to learn a deeper meaning of the subject. A great way to learn is to teach.

6. Share the learning

Try to discover and learn together. This links learning with bonding, quality time together and friendship and becomes a shared experience associated with love and pleasure. **Associating learning with pleasure triggers a good feeling when it happens and makes it enjoyable**, a priority for lifelong learning.

7. Make an action plan

Work together on an action plan for learning. This should not just be academic work but a whole range of knowledge and skills that the child wants to learn. It will provide targets and milestones and give them something to look back on to **provide a sense of achievement**.

8. Follow their interests

Try to **connect the learning with their interests** as much as possible. Find a blend of developing further what they already know and the completely new.

9. Avoid the 'being done-to feeling'

It's easy as adults to fall into the pattern of being the educator: the 'do-er' and the child being the learning: the 'done-to.' Try to **make learning an active experience**, not just a passive one. It's dispiriting for anyone to just be done-to.

10. Work out their learning style

We all learn in different ways. There's no need to know the theory of this, just that some children will learn best when the teaching is visual, others when it's more practical for example. Some learn well from books, others learn better with a partner or in group work. If they are showing reluctance or a lack of enthusiasm for learning, working out the best way they learn is **more likely to re-engage them and appeal to their curiosity**.



10. Adopt an Attitude of Gratitude

Gratitude is a very powerful skill for a child to learn, with lots of benefits to their mental health and wellbeing, including:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Improved resilience
- Greater optimism and aspiration
- Less stress and anxiety
- A greater ability to cope with stress
- Higher quality sleep
- Higher levels of happiness

Two of the SUMO principles are specifically related to the 'Move On' of SUMO: **Dare to Dream** and **Learn Latin**. They encourage children to have dreams, aspiration and the ambition to seize the day and take positive action to improve and to achieve more.

STOP
UNDERSTAND
MOVE
ON

But isn't there a danger that children can be so focussed on wanting more that they miss what they already have? The key is the desire to **achieve more is from an acceptance and appreciation of their current position**: gratitude for what they already have, and an understanding that more is not guaranteed.

However, SUMO does not promote acceptance to mean resignation. It promotes acceptance to mean **Stop** trying to change what you can't control, **Understand** what you can control and can change for the better, and **Move On** to taking positive action to bring about this change.



SUMO WISDOM

*'Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.
If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.'*

Albert Schweitzer
Writer, humanitarian, philosopher & physician

Acceptance means children are able to look at their current situation from a point of gratitude: acceptance and appreciation of what they have, rather than a point of deficit: focussing on what they don't have.

In practice this means:

Children living in a state of deficit

- Seeing success as happiness
- A focus on what's lacking and a sense of missing out
- A constant desire for the resources to do things they really want to do
- Seeing the negative in not having what they want



- Seeing only problems, barriers and obstacles
- Missing opportunities
- Momentary happiness until the next want or desire kicks in

Children living in state of gratitude

- Seeing happiness as success
- Understanding that happiness breeds success
- A focus on what they have, not what they don't have
- Accepting that challenges, problems and setbacks are an inevitable part of the journey to be overcome
- Appreciating what they already have and how that can help them to grow and progress



SUMO WISDOM

Rather than learning to dance in the rain, some children can fall into the trap of constantly waiting for the storm to pass.

As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, ***“For, after all, the best thing one can do when it is raining is let it rain.”*** Acceptance means recognising that whether you like it or not, it might rain; instead of being driven by disappointment, frustration or anger at the rain, we do our best to take positive action (seize the day) anyway. This parable by Anthony de Mello, a spiritual teacher and writer shows the power of acceptance and gratitude.:



“What kind of weather are we going to have today?”, asked the Traveller. “The kind of weather I like.”, replied the Shepherd. Surprised by this response, the Traveller asked, “How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?” The Shepherd replied, “Having found out, sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learned to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like.”



SUMO WISDOM

Acceptance does not mean children surrender their dreams. But it does mean that they avoid fighting a pointless war with things they cannot change in life. Like the weather.

A useful SUMO technique to help children practice gratitude is the **‘Thankful Four’** where they regularly list four (or more) things they are grateful for. This brings children into the moment and increases self-awareness and focus: all from a position of gratitude.



Some 'SUMO schools' even have **daily Thankful Four sessions** to help create a culture of gratitude.

The good news is that like all SUMO skills, **all children can learn gratitude**. Indeed, studies have shown that benefits can be seen after just two weeks! Even with little support, by 10 years old, most children can demonstrate empathy and gratitude.

My Thankful for...

1	<i>My Nan's operation was a success and she is back home</i>
2	<i>I survived the Maths test and did OK</i>
3	<i>My mom got us tickets to the music festival</i>
4	<i>My bed is nice and warm during these cold winter nights</i>

By Emily x



SUMO WISDOM

Children who can regularly identify four things they are grateful for will develop a greater sense of gratitude and appreciation for their values and what really matters in life.

Other techniques to help children to practice gratitude include:

Help Others

Children who help others and have a cause they feel passionate about and contribute to will build values and appreciate their own life and how fortunate they are. As Bertha Von Suttner said, 'After the verb, "To Love," "To Help" is the most beautiful verb in the world.'

Learn Compassion

Compassion is the ability to understand another person's circumstances or pain by seeing it from their point of view. Compassion as an action is the ability to reach out and care about others with kindness. Children might encounter teachers who are tough on them in expecting them to do their best work and believe in themselves more, but children still love and respect them if they are compassionate.

Class or Family Gratitude Jar

A Gratitude Jar allows children (and their classmates or family) to write down and place into the jar things they are grateful for. A weekly task to read through them helps foster a culture of gratitude.



Celebrate Kindness

A culture of celebration of kindness means children practicing being kind for no reason, just because. Random acts of kindness connect us with others and builds gratitude.

A Gratitude Journal

We saw earlier the benefits of children keeping a journal. In the **Activities & Resources** section later there is a **Thankful Four template** for children to keep in a scrapbook or glue them in an exercise book. The blank version is for children able to think independently. The version with the prompts is for those who need a little more support.



It is important that children write down what they are grateful for and not just think about them. Writing them down moves them from the abstract into reality, setting off a chain of command in their brain that increases focus and understanding greater than just thinking about them.

Children should try and record their Thankful Four at least once a week.

11. The Power of Words

Ask your child: *'Who is the most important person you will ever speak to?'* Some might say you or their teacher, their friends or God, if they believe in God. Then ask them to think about whether it might be them. Could they be the most important person they ever speak to?

Self-talk is the way all humans talk to themselves. Also known as the inner voice, **self-talk has a big impact on how we feel about ourselves and the actions we take**. A child that mainly thinks negatively about themselves and has lots of negative self-talk will feel mad, bad or sad most of the time. In SUMO, we describe the negative self-talk as the voice of the **'Inner Critic'**. It puts doubt in a child's abilities, their ambitions, and warns of all the things that can go wrong.

A child who mainly thinks positively about themselves and is able to have positive self-talk, will feel good most of the time and will have found their own happy. In SUMO, this is the voice of the 'Inner Coach'.

The problem with negative self-talk is that when children hear it, they can believe it. They treat it as a true fact. Of course, just because they are telling themselves something does not mean it's true!



SUMO WISDOM

**The most important person
we ever talk to is ourselves.
You are talking to yourself right now!**

It's just as likely to be wrong.

The Inner Coach is likely to take the positives from events (and setbacks) and the Inner Critic will focus on the negatives. Negative self-talk is children engaging in one or more variations of Faulty Thinking:

- Acting as their own **Inner Critic** (and ignoring their **Inner Coach**)
- Being a **broken record** with repetitive negative thinking which changes nothing
- Thinking and behaving as if they are a **martyr**
- Playing **Trivial Pursuits**: obsessing over insignificant details, or small issues.

Instead of fear and doubt, the **Inner Coach** uses optimism and empowerment and helps to build self-confidence in children by highlighting their successes and not dwelling on their failures.



A **boxing glove** is a good way to show children how negative self-talk from the **Inner Critic** can feel, constantly delivering punch after punch of doubt, fears and criticism.



The SUMO principles were first published in Paul McGee's **Sunday Times bestselling book: S.U.M.O.** In its original form, S.U.M.O stands for 'Shut Up, Move On.' However, because we would never want to encourage children to tell each other to 'shut up', we use a different meaning of SUMO for children: '**Stop Understand Move On.**'

So why would Paul McGee use such a seemingly aggressive title for his book? Well, the 'Shut Up' is really referring to self-talk. He is not aiming the Shut Up at anyone but the reader. Encouraging them to **shut up their negative self-talk and instead move on to positive self-talk and positive action leading to positive outcomes.** Paul is encouraging them to stop what they are doing, take some time out to look at their lives and reflect on how they are behaving and thinking. In this context, 'shut up' also means letting go of the inhibiting and controlling beliefs.

The 'Move On' part is meant as encouragement that tomorrow can be different from today, it's a call to action to take some positive action and see the possibilities that lie ahead. But, more on that later. Back to the 'Stop and Understand' first.



SUMO WISDOM

The Inner Coach is encouraging and optimistic, helping children to believe they can do more, be more, have more, and contribute more.

12. Stay Connected

As we discussed earlier, the Coronavirus crisis has meant huge changes in children's lives, including the social distancing requirement resulting in a lack of contact with their friends and or even any other children at all in some cases.

When we use SUMO in schools we use the phrase '**Mates Matter**' when we look at friendships and relationships.

Psychologists agree that a major influence on a child's happiness and wellbeing is the company and friendship of other children: that **making friends in school is every bit as important as passing a test in terms of development.**

Friends provide support when times are tough, provide perspective when emotions have taken over the view of a situation, and can boost our confidence and our self-esteem.

Of course all this is more difficult during the pandemic lock-down we are experiencing.



It is nevertheless to ensure that children can stay connected to their friends even though this means staying in touch in different ways than usual. Social media, online gaming, Skype, e-mail or even the good old fashioned telephone all provide a lifeline to outside contact during the current crisis.

Children's relationships can be a **roller coaster of emotion, joy and conflict** and the current situation could place friendships under increased strain. Friendships can be fun and exciting when they are going well, and challenging and even damaging, when they are not.



SUMO WISDOM

*"Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain...
But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship,
you really haven't learned anything."*

- Muhammad Ali

Friendship can have a major impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Whether the friendship is online or offline, the American Psychologist, Professor Paul Schwartz, has five pieces of good advice for children who need it:

1. It takes one to know one.

Friendship is a two-way street. Good friends deserve good friends. This means you have to consider your friends needs as well as your own. Compromise and give and take make for good friendships. Be Kind.

2. Put yourself out there

You'll only find new friends if you are open to getting to know other people and letting them get to know you. By getting involved in activities you will naturally have something in common with other people.

3. Friends come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes.

Its ok to have different types of friends. Friends you are in a team with, friends you go to school with, friends you talk to over the internet but never meet.

4. Good friends are out there

Pay attention to how you feel when you are with different friends. Good friends make you feel good about yourself and that you matter to them. They might not be perfect – neither are you! However, they should care about you and your feelings. If they don't, or they make you feel bad, sad or mad, they are probably not the right friends for you.

5. Be flexible

Friendships are never about doing one thing. You need to be flexible and adjust your behaviour to fit the situation and the feelings and needs of your friends. Your friends also need to be flexible with you too. If you find yourself always being the one giving way, then that might be a sign that this friendship isn't right for you

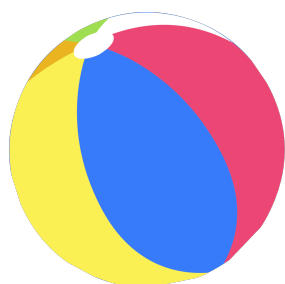
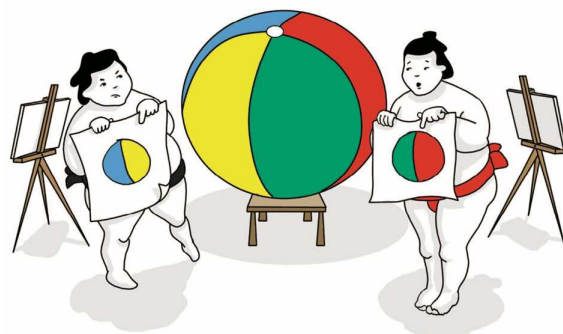


The SUMO principle '**Remember The Beachball**' can help children with building positive friendships and relationships with others. It teaches them techniques for exploring different viewpoints, perspectives and building empathy. All are useful traits to successful friendships and relationships.

Children who are able to consider other viewpoints and perceptions of situations are **more likely to be a good friend** and have positive relationships with adults and peers.

Remember The Beachball also helps children to develop understanding and tolerance of others, and **social skills** in listening, empathy, communication, negotiation and co-operation.

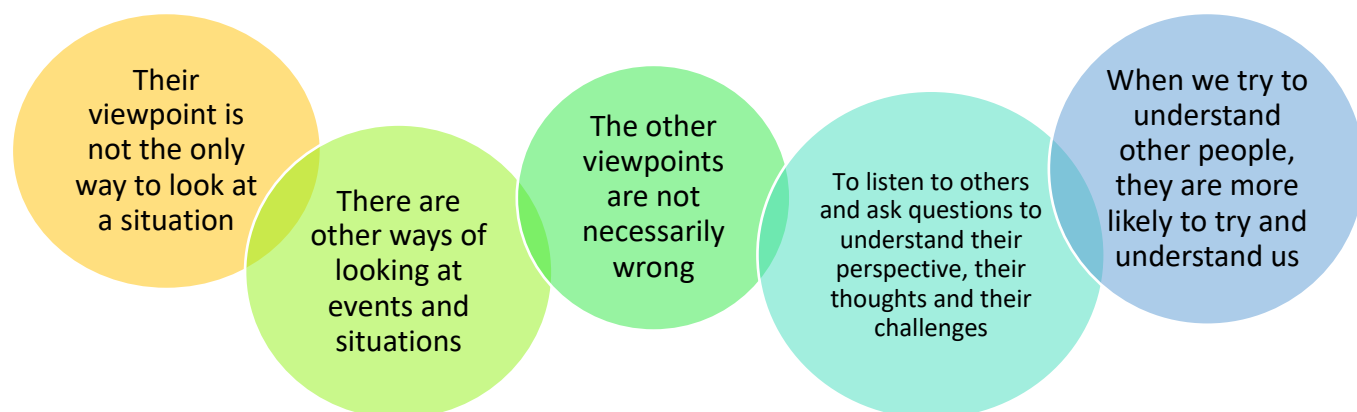
Remember The Beachball



Natasha and Sunita are sitting at opposite ends of a table with a beachball in the middle between them. The beachball has six colours but Natasha can only see three: red, yellow and blue, and Sunita can only see the three other colours: green, white and orange.

Natasha and Sunita are looking at the same object but are seeing things completely differently.

Remember the Beachball teaches children:



Remember The Beachball helps children to learn empathy though perspective-taking: the ability to consider a situation from a different point of view. To put themselves in the other child's position and imagine how they would feel, think, or do in that situation.

Children who can shift their perspectives and look at things from different viewpoints and understand how and why other people might be looking at it differently, learn skills for life to see opportunities where others see struggle.





This well-known image is useful for helping children to understand the concept of there being different perspectives of the same thing.

Some children will see a young woman, some children will see an old woman, some will be able to see both.

What do you see?



SUMO WISDOM

People tend to be less defensive and more likely to try and understand your view of the beachball when you seek to understand theirs, rather than pretend it doesn't exist.

Activities & Resources

The next section contains the activities and resources you can use with children to put some of the SUMO techniques we have looked at into practice.

You can deliver the activities in any order, to individual children or small groups.

I hope they are useful in supporting your efforts to help your children to rise to the challenges we are all facing and maintain a positive outlook.

Please do send me your feedback and suggestions and any comments for future improvements or new subject areas you would like me to cover.

Kevin Pace
info@sumo4schools.com




Thankful Leaves



MY SUMO THANKFUL FOUR



Date:

These people in my life	1. 2. 3. 4.										
These things I get to do	1. 2. 3. 4.										
These things I am good at	1. 2. 3. 4.										
Songs, TV shows, films or books I love	1. 2. 3. 4.										
Food I enjoy	1. 2. 3. 4.										
Things in the world (stars, nature, animals, etc)	1. 2. 3. 4.										
My mood today: 	My happiness Scale today (tick): <table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		



MY SUMO THANKFUL FOUR



Date:

<p>Today I am grateful for</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>										
<p>When I used SUMO today</p>											
<p>What I learned today</p>											
<p>My mood today:</p> <div data-bbox="177 1787 454 1883"> </div>	<p>My happiness Scale today (tick):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="555 1805 1477 1861"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		



Worth-it -v- Worthless Worries

Something that happened:



These were my worth-it worries and how they helped:

These were my worthless worries and what they did:



Understanding F.E.A.R

Everybody worries that bad things are going to happen from time to time. Of course, bad things can and do happen, but rarely as often as we think, and rarely as bad as we thought too.



On a separate piece of paper:

- 1. Write about two occasions when you worried something bad was going to happen.**
- 2. Write about how you felt on both occasions.**
- 3. Draw a picture of one of the occasions and how you felt.**
- 4. For each of the two occasions, write about what actually happened.**
- 5. Compare your worries about what was going to happen with what actually happened. Were they as bad as you thought?**

Evidence

Do you know what **evidence** is?

Evidence gives us proof of something. Or it gives us a reason to believe something is true.

Scientists have not yet found evidence of life on Mars.

Scientists do have evidence that fruit and vegetables are good for us.

The judge said the evidence proved the thief was guilty of stealing.

The **F.E.A.R model** helps us to understand that sometimes the evidence that something bad is going to happen might not be accurate evidence, or might not be true evidence, or evidence might not exist at all, we have made it up!



Wanted: A True Friend

Your community newspaper is offering free advertisements for children to find friends. Use the space below to write an advertisement listing the **type** of friend you are looking for, the **qualities** you are looking for, and **why** those qualities are important to you. You will also need to include what they can **expect from you** as a friend.



It takes one to know one

‘The way to have a friend is to be friend’

I am a good friend when I...

My three best friendship traits are...

1.

2.

3.

Three ways I could be a better friend are...

1.

2.

3.



Fruity Thinking Alishia's Story

Alishia has lived in her house since she was born. She lives with her mom, gran, younger sister and older brother. She shares a room with her younger sister and although this meant space was tight, her younger sister often has restless sleep and sometimes even nightmares, so she was there to support her.

Earlier this year, in June, Alishia's mom announced that they were all going to move in with her partner 5 miles away. This is a much bigger house with a large garden, and it meant that Alishia and her sister could each have a room of their own.

Alishia got really upset about the thought of moving. She worried she might have to move school, would lose all her friends, and would not be able to make new ones. Most of all though, she worried about her sister being in a room all on her own. How could her mom do this to the family?

Alishia couldn't get it out of her mind, and she started to get moody and her friends kept asking her what was wrong. She didn't want to tell them she was moving because she was sure they would dump her. When her mom and partner asked Alishia to help them do a 'moving house action plan' she told them to 'do what they liked' and stormed off to her room.



Update

Alishia and her family have now been living in their new house for four months. Alishia is still at the same school. Her mom or her partner drops her off each morning and she catches the bus back home with some of her new friends who live nearby and go to her school.

She still has her old friends too. They like to sleep over at Alishia's now she has her own room and a large garden. Oh, and Alishia's sister is fine too. She had been watching *Stranger Things* on TV which had given her restless sleep for a while. She now loves having her own room too. Though she still sometimes climbs into Alishia's bed in the night!

Discussion Starters:

1. Describe the feelings and emotions Alishia had felt, and some reasons why.
2. What was the worst situation she was imagining?
3. How did her thoughts, feelings and emotions impact on her?
4. How was her Faulty Thinking different to what actually happened?
5. How could she have used Fruity Thinking instead?
6. How would you use Alishia's story to help you in the future?



Fruity Thinking

Alisha's Story

1. Describe a time when, like Alishia, you have done some faulty thinking and have feared the worst.
2. What did you think was going to happen?
3. What really happened?
4. How will you try and prevent using faulty thinking and move on to Fruity Thinking in the future?



Draw Alishia in this box

Develop Fruity Thinking helps us to make the connection between thinking and results in life.

Fruity Thinking is positive thinking. Seeing the possibilities rather than highlighting all of the pitfalls.

Like fruit is good for physical health, fruity thinking is good for mental health. Negative thinking can lead to negative results while positive thinking will lead to positive outcomes.



Avoiding Anxiety About Anxiety

12 ways to support children who are feeling worried, anxious, stressed, scared, uncertain or trying to cope with change. These are particularly relevant during the current Coronavirus crisis.

1. Respect	Show respect to a child's worries. Tell them that you appreciate that the situation is difficult and challenging. That they are not being silly. This helps them feel respected, understood and not judged by you.
2. Reassurance	Reassurance that you care for them and will help them through this. Knowing they are safe will counteract the effects of the feeling that they are in danger and soothe the nervous system.
3. Problem-solve	Avoid the temptation to provide the answers – they may be your answers not theirs. Encourage them to believe they can find the answers to how they feel. This will help them develop the skills to problem solve in the future.
4. Why?	Getting to the 'why' will aid problem solving and getting to the root of the worries. Try these questions: 'Why do think [the worry] has made you feel that way?' 'Why do you think this time is different?' 'Why do think that [their explanation] is?'
5. Help	Sometimes some immediate help is required. Try these questions to find out what you can do: 'How can I help?' 'What do you need from me?' 'If you were me what would you do to help you?'
6. Hippo Time	The SUMO principle Hippo Time is OK gives children time and space to acknowledge their frustrations, disappointments, fears and anger. But, it is temporary and cannot last too long or the temptation to wear the 'victim' T shirt may arise.
7. Detective	Supporting children to recognise whether their worries are based on reality or are relying on False Evidence Appearing Real . Worry can create worst case scenario thinking. Ask them to play detective: 'What evidence is there that this worry is reality?'
8. Balloon	Taking a deep breath and counting to ten is a fabulous technique to practice in the middle of anxiety, but many children (and adults) struggle to do it. Blowing up an imaginary balloon makes taking a deep breath and counting to ten is creative and fun and can reverse the stress response.



9. Scriptwriter	Humans think in pictures and 'movies' that play in our minds. Children can play the worst-case scenario film over and over in their heads. Encourage them to instead play the movie of their safe, happy place. Learning this skill gives them a vacation movie they can take with them anywhere they go.
10. Artist	Drawing, painting or model making about an anxiety provides an outlet for worries when they are struggling to use words. Encourage them to create their worry as a monster or other character which they could talk to and explain how they feel.
11. Shelf-stacking	Children who put their worries on the shelf or in a Worry Bank and listen to their favourite song, read their favourite book or go for a walk learn that they don't have to take their worries with them everywhere. They can place them somewhere and pick them up again later. This increases their sense of control, distracts their thoughts, and puts worries into perspective.
12. Battle Cry	You may have to choose your locations carefully for this one but encouraging children to yell can replace the worry with endorphins – the body's natural feel-good mood changers.

Make a Worry Bank



A Worry Bank is a proven cognitive behavioural therapy technique in which the child deposit their worries to help them let their worries go and can be used to look back on their worries later. When children deposit their worries, even if only temporary while they read their favourite book or listen to their favourite song, they are being distracted, allowing time for the rational brain to take over. Over time, they will be able to regularly deposit their worries into the bank.

Worry Banks give the worry a boundary. The worries are still there but they have been acknowledged and expressed by words or pictures, but they weaken and lose control by their expression. They are filling a space other than the child's mind.

The children choose the container for the worry bank. It might be a shoe box, a jar or a jewellery box. The box can be decorated any way the children fancy. Label it 'Worry Box' and the children can write or draw their worries on pieces of paper, card, post-it notes, multi-coloured plastic gemstones or even smooth stones.

A stuffed toy can be the 'Guard' and sit next to the Worry Bank to watch over it and scare the worries into staying in the box where they belong. The children should choose the location of the Worry Bank. Some will want it far away from them.



Event		Response		Outcome
Jamie has been fired from his paper round. He is often 20 minutes late in starting and whenever it was raining, he always delivered soggy papers instead of covering them up.	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO
Martin had an opportunity to try out for Liverpool FC under 12s team. He argued with his coach and kicked a wall which caused him an injury. He didn't get a place on the team.	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO
Kelly and her best friend Amy have been arguing a lot lately and this has affected Kelly's self-esteem and self-confidence. Last night they had a big row and Amy said some really nasty things. How should she respond?	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO

A cartoon illustration of a large Sumo wrestler riding a bicycle. The wrestler is wearing a white kimono and a red sash. He is holding a sign that says "SUMO # SCHOOLS". The bicycle has large, spoked wheels. The background is a simple line drawing of a hill.

Event		Response		Outcome
	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO
	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO
	+	VICTIM SUMO	=	VICTIM SUMO

The Inner Critic and the Inner Coach



Things my inner critic says that do not help me (I need to ignore these):



Things my inner coach says that do help me (I need to listen to these):



Match the following statements to the Inner Critic and the Inner Coach

- You might make a fool of yourself
- You've got this
- What if, what if, what if....
- You can do it
- If it doesn't work, you can make adjustments and try again
- Everyone else is going to be better than you
- Failure isn't the end of the world
- Why take the chance, it might fail?
- I'm worried
- Go for it!

Remember:

The inner critic says 'Stop.' The inner coach, says, 'Go!'

The inner critic says 'Don't.' The inner coach, says, 'Do!'



Change Your T Shirt

Some children like to play the blame game.

This is blaming everyone and everything else for their problems, it's like they assume that everyone is out to ruin their lives and have the word 'victim' on their T-shirt.

They have trouble accepting responsibility for their actions.



What sort of things does a Victim T-Shirt wearer say?

Please fill in the blank bubbles with your own suggestions.

I'm stupid.

Life isn't fair.

I'm not good.

I blame my parents,
my teachers and the
government!

Everyone
blames me!

I'm always the
one who
misses out.

Nothing ever goes
right for me.

It's not my
fault.

It always happens
to me.

People who play the blame game use words like '*always*' and '*never*' and say things like '*nobody understands me*' and '*it's not my fault*'.

Some Blame Game Statements

It's not my fault!	It's your fault we got in trouble!
She started it!	If you listened to me, everything would be fine!
He made me do it!	Why did you make me do that?
I can't help it!	You ruined EVERYTHING!
It's my mom's fault that I am late!	You NEVER listen to me!
How come she got away with it last week?	You are SO lazy!
You don't care about me!	We lost the game because of her!



Blame Game Questions:

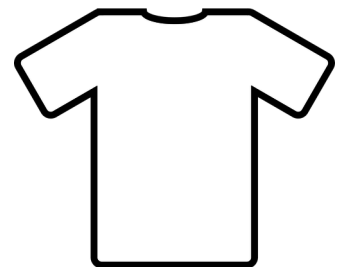
1. How can these statements be used to avoid taking responsibility?
2. How can they result in conflict with friends and other relationship problems?
3. When have used one or more of the statements in real life?
4. Why can it sometimes be difficult to accept responsibility for our actions?
5. What feelings do people avoid when they blame other people for their actions?
6. What are the opposite statements that show you are taking responsibility: using SUMO language?

The SUMO foundation formula for life is the **E + R = O** - it is the **Event plus the Response** that influences the **Outcome**. People who play the blame game might also say the formula for life is **E = O** - they believe that the **event** leads directly to the **outcome**. They miss the importance of **their response** to the event. Taking responsibility means recognising that **our response to an event is the critical factor**.

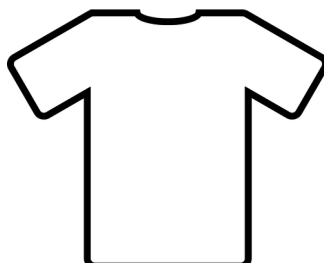
Identify if you agree or disagree with the statement about your responsibilities

	Yes/No
<p>I am responsible for making sure I have breakfast before school</p> <p>I am responsible for sorting out the bins at home</p> <p>I am responsible for considering other viewpoints when looking at an event</p> <p>I am responsible for making sure I wear my seat belt in a car</p> <p>I am responsible for washing the car</p> <p>I am responsible for bad things that happen on the news</p> <p>I am responsible for telling my parents about things that are happening at school</p> <p>I am responsible for doing my jobs at home without having to be reminded</p> <p>I am responsible for ensuring I listen to my inner coach, not my inner critic</p> <p>I am responsible for doing the weekly food shop</p> <p>I am responsible for my actions and how I behave at school and at home</p> <p>I am responsible for keeping myself clean</p> <p>I am responsible for washing my school uniform</p>	

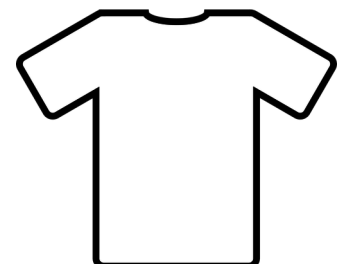
What statement about you would you choose to have on your T Shirt?



What statement would your friends put on your T shirt?



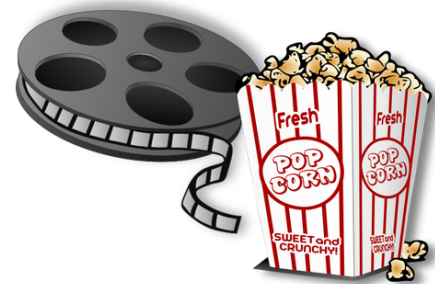
What statement would your teachers or parents put on your T shirt?



Bounce Back (Building Resilience)

We learn a lot from hard knocks in life.

Unhappy events provide valuable lessons to learn from and get through. When tough things happen, like the challenges presented by the Coronavirus, but you show you are tougher than they are and can stay positive and overcome them, this proves you have resilience. Resilience is a really important life skill.



Watch one or more of the following films together as examples of how the characters showed resilience to overcome their challenges and then use the questions below as discussion topics.

Younger children:

Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius

11-year-old Jimmy Neutron has to save the adults in Retroville after they are kidnapped by aliens.

Stellaluna

A baby fruit bat becomes separated from her mother and is adopted by a mama bird. She struggles to fit in with her new feathered siblings.

Frozen

A story about letting go of the expectations others have living your own life.

Charlotte's Web

A film that has positive messages about the power of friendship, acceptance, courage and resilience.

Older children:

ANTZ

A neurotic worker ant becomes a star when he swaps places with a soldier.

School of Rock

A group of misfits fight their fears and doubts and learn to become rock stars.

Inside Out

A story all about big feelings.

Meet The Robinsons

A story all about resilience and perseverance in the face of continued adversity.



Discussion Topics & Questions

- What were the top three messages you took from each film?
- Name at least one example of when you faced a similar challenge to those overcome by the main characters in the films.
- What happened?
- How did you overcome the challenge?
- What did you learn from this?
- Think of three examples when you learned an important life lesson from going through a hard time.
- What did you learn about yourself when you went through a hard time?
- What did you learn about others when you went through a hard time?
- What lessons will you take away from this session today?
- How will these lessons help you to survive and thrive during the Coronavirus crisis?

Do something creative to demonstrate your learning: write a story or a blog, or a poem or song. Or, you could paint a picture or design a computer game.

Remember to try really hard to keep an open mind. We call this a 'Growth Mindset' which is open to new possibilities, new learning and is flexible. A growth mindset means that you believe that you can do learn and grow through hard work and effort. It puts you in charge of your beliefs that you can overcome something challenging if you believe and work hard.

This is better than a 'Fixed Mindset' which is the belief that you can't change. You talk yourself out of trying challenging yourself to accomplish something. People with Fixed Mindsets are afraid of risking and being wrong. Growth Mindset people thrive under pressure. Fixed Mindsets cause people to fold or fall apart.

This short video is a great example of Growth v Fixed Mindset:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNAMrZr9OWY>

To help you develop a Growth Mindset remember to **Change your T-Shirt** when you catch yourself blaming others and not taking responsibility for your thoughts, actions or your life. And to '**Remember The Beachball**' by asking yourself: *'How can I see this differently and learn something new?'*

Finally, watch these two movie scenes about never giving up on your dreams:

The Pursuit of Happyness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n693m0l8qAk> and Rocky Balboa talking to his son: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkJLTGweKl0>

Give yourself a big pat on the back for learning something new today!



The SUMO Survival Guide to Managing Coronavirus Anxiety



SUMO WISDOM

Children should:

- Keep themselves busy and active
- Keep to a routine as much as possible
- Make short, medium and long-term plans
- Limit their news consumption
- Talk about their worries
- Stay in touch with friends and family



SUMO WISDOM

Parents should:

- Do everything children should, plus:
- Provide reassurance for children but don't expect to have all the answers
- Lead the disease-prevention measures and social distancing to keep themselves and their families safe
- Build in some daily stress relief: some quiet time
- Take a regular brain-break
- Be realistic and don't put too much pressure on themselves
- Practice self-care
- If they need help, ask for it
- Maintain belief that life will return to normal



The SUMO4Schools Foundation is a not-for-profit, community interest company providing:

- * TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & COACHING**
- * WHOLE SCHOOL SUMO STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELLBEING & PSHE**
- * IN-SCHOOL SUMO WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS**
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STOP, UNDERSTAND, MOVE ON