



## Welcome!

Welcome to another newsletter from the SEAL Community. There are new resources, fascinating research and some great tips from schools.

### News Update

#### Now and Beyond is back on 5 February



Now in its fifth year, Now and Beyond is a national online festival for educational settings that takes place during Children's Mental Health Week. Showcasing lesson plans for 4-18 year olds, workshops and live content, Now and Beyond equips educators with the tools they need to facilitate difficult conversations on subjects that confront them every day, including resilience, self harm, and suicidal ideation.

Now and Beyond is produced by youth mental health charity Beyond and their Youth Board in partnership with Mental Health UK. [Sign up here](#)

#### 250,000 students are In — don't miss out



Empathy Week runs from 10th–14th March and bookings for some live in-person events are now open. Even if you've taken part before, you'll need to register again to access the free resources:

- Two film-based assemblies per age group
- On-demand talks with inspiring guests—including adventurers and international sports stars
- Live in-person events for UK schools

The theme for 2025, 'What's Your Spark?', will give students a chance to embark on a journey to discover the passions that shape their identities, while connecting with powerful stories from real and diverse individuals.

Sign up [here](#).

Save the date



2-12 June 2025 will be a ten-day nationwide Empathy Festival, culminating in the annual Empathy Day

itself on 12 June. The festival will feature nine Empathy Challenge activities, a nationwide assembly with Children's Laureate, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, brilliant authors and illustrators to spark empathy inspiration, CPD webinars and more. Sign up to get on the mailing list at [www.empathylab.uk](http://www.empathylab.uk)

Sharing practice

Sharing the Zones of Regulation with parents – an early years case study



Whitefield Primary in Liverpool have used Leah Kuyper's [Zones of Regulation](#) very successfully in classrooms for many years. Two years ago they received funding from the SHINE charity to develop and evaluate a project to share the Zones idea with families. They have focused particularly on



Reception children, offering three , one-hour sessions for parents in the second half of the autumn term.

All parents are invited to the 'How can I help my child manage their feelings?' sessions, which are run several times for groups of ten parents each time, with some families particularly encouraged by staff to attend. Incentives include the promise of a picture book goody bag to take home. Sessions take place first thing in the morning, or in the afternoon just before pick-up.

In the first session , parents learn about the Zones of Regulation. They think about how to recognise different emotions, how they can help their child know whether they are in the blue, green, yellow or red zone, and that there is no such thing as a 'bad zone' – all emotions are OK, it's what we do with them that might not be. Then they discuss the impact of their own reactions and emotions on their children, and that 'When their storm meets our calm, co-regulation takes place.'

Children join their parents for the last twenty minutes of each session. In one session they play the 'Twister' game, where the coloured circles on the large floor mat are conveniently coloured red, yellow, green and blue. The parent and child have to decide which colour circle goes with each of a series of scenario cards: ' You have fallen over and cut your knee, what zone/s might you be in? ', for example, or 'You have spent time jumping in muddy puddles in your wellington boots, what zone/s might you be in?'

Session 2 explores ways of regulating feelings. Families think about a range of strategies – deep breathing, using a glitter jar, distraction counting, listening to music, sensory support (stroking a piece of velvet, scented lavender, lava lamps and ear defenders, massage , blanket roll, wall push ups, a bear hug and so on). The course makes use of the brilliant and free '[Keep your cool toolbox](#)' app, with short films for many different ways to self-regulate.

Families make their own choice of strategies that they think would work best for them, and with their child add them to a blank 'family toolbox' sheet set out in columns representing the four Zones.

Session 3 is about the '[Size of the problem](#)'. Parents discuss whether their own reactions to their child's behaviour always matches the size of the problem. The facilitator reads aloud the 'My no no day' book, by Rebecca Patterson, about a contrary child for whom one day nothing is right. Parents are asked to identify the emotions in the story and consider the best ways to react. The parent/child activity in the last part of the session is guided yoga.

Resources include little booklets and take-home laminated Zones sheets for the fridge and a digital pathway of picture books to support talking about feelings.

Families have really valued the programme and evaluations are showing the impact on their children. One parent, who had learned about five finger breathing, said 'My daughter, she's only in reception... she came up to me and said, 'mum, hold your hands up'... she said, 'are you calm?'. Another said "We communicate in the language of colours and zones... my eldest now uses big words to describe his emotions, like, 'I'm feeling anxious.'" Families asked for later refresher courses, and for the programme to be available to everyone: "If all schools taught this, the world would be a better place."

Whitefield have now trained a group of other schools in using the approach, and have developed online training sessions.

For more information contact Marie Beale, Whitefield's Deputy Headteacher / Inclusion Manager.  
[mbeale@whitefieldprimaryschool.co.uk](mailto:mbeale@whitefieldprimaryschool.co.uk)

### Building a mentally strong school at Thornbury Primary

Thornbury Primary have thought long and hard about how to make sure every child can talk to an adult if they need to.

Most children are happy to share their thoughts and feelings openly, but all classrooms have worry boxes, so children have a way to seek adult support without having to raise anything in front of their peers.

Adults always make time to talk with any child who needs to. They give them tools to help them with these discussions such as pictures, vocabulary, dolls and symbolic forms of communication such as 'widgets'. Some children have completely individualised ways of signalling they are seeking a conversation – traffic light cards, putting an item on the teacher's keyboard, having a daily catch up, or keeping a journal to share every now and again.

It is a school rule that any child, at any time can come and speak to the headteacher, or other staff member they name. When a child feeling sad comes to the headteacher to borrow a 'Worry Puppy' (or dinosaur) soft toy to keep with them for the day, the headteacher always takes time for a discussion, listens with empathy, and considers whether the child needs additional support.



### *Developing Emotional Vocabulary and Coping Strategies*

Building children's vocabulary through scaling emotional words and building their own emotions glossaries enables children to talk in accurate and meaningful ways about their feelings, and helps adults to scaffold and support them to reflect. Children are all helped to acquire self-regulation strategies such as breathing techniques.

### *Reducing anxiety*

Staff work to reduce anxiety in lessons. For example, visual timetables help to dissipate anxiety about the day ahead. In literacy and maths, teachers often use a 'perfect practice' model, where the lesson is virtually the same as the day before, with slight variation.

*'I used to worry about Literacy before but now I know what we are doing because we did it yesterday. It makes me feel a lot more confident.'*

The school uses 'narratives' to make learning and life meaningful for the children. 'Learning is all based around a journey theme', says headteacher Claire Hardisty. 'We need a destination, tools for the trip which we put in our metaphorical 'rucksacks', we plot out our 'stepping stones' through learning, and our 'footprints' show us what we have learned. We also know that the journey may face challenges and barriers, mountain tops and deep dark valleys (The Learning Pit) where we need to understand that good learning is on the edge of the comfort zone, and if it's too easy we probably aren't learning. We need to accept that we may stray from the path and find new ways of doing things, that we may make mistakes, and these are often the best ways of learning. In other words, within a scaffolded and supportive culture, the children now embrace the uncomfortableness of learning and school life.'

Teachers display speech bubbles in every classroom, color-coded red for "I don't understand/I need help," orange for "I get it to this bit, but then I don't/ Could you explain again?," and green for "I get it/ I'm feeling good/ I'm ready for the next challenge." Children know they can say these at any time, including when the teacher is talking.

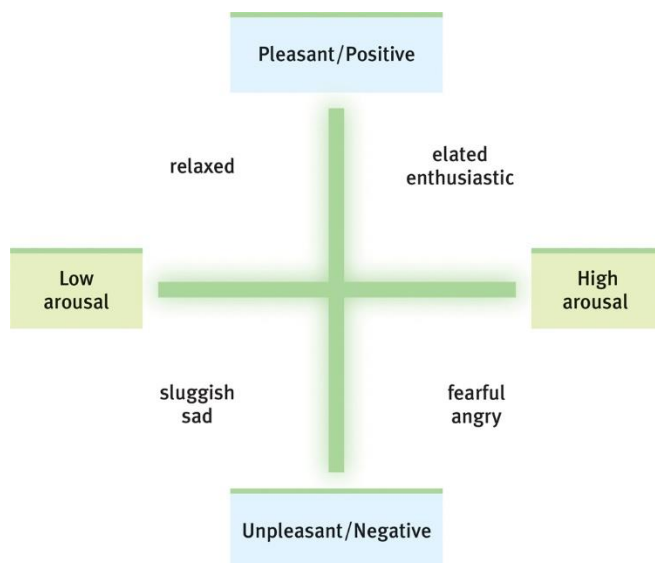
### *Building a sense of agency*

Each class has its own 'Moments that Matter' book, where students add pictures and words related to topics discussed in PSHE, as well as things to celebrate from home, like a swimming certificate. All of this helps to build a class identity, and a feeling of shared goals and belonging.

Pupil leadership opportunities exist across the school, from jobs in the classroom, to those you have to apply for, such as Play Leaders, Reading Buddies, and Sports Leaders. The older children who fulfil these roles plan and lead sports activities at lunchtime, organise their rotas, and independently organise 'cover' with other children if they have another responsibility such as a club, and might miss their duty.

A version of this text was originally published by TeachingTimes.com, and was part of the school's submission for its winning entry for the TES Mental Health Award 2023.

### Top tips



### Developing emotion vocabulary

This is a good KS2/3 activity to help students develop a wide vocabulary for feelings.

Make a space on the wall for a graph with two axes intersecting in the middle (like a + sign). Label the left-hand end UNPLEASANT and the right-hand end PLEASANT. Label the top INTENSE and the bottom MILD.

Provide post-its and ask students to think of words for different emotions and add them to the place they think they should go on the graph. Place a few of your own example words on the graph as a model.

You could do this online, making the + graph on a white board (such as Jamboard).

### Goal-setting



Many of you will have been helping your learners set goals and work towards them this month. But what should we say when they reach their goals? Here are some tips.

Don't say 'Well done'- the praise needs to build the learner's sense of agency/self-efficacy: 'What was it you did that really worked?' 'What strategies did you use?', 'What did you do when you met obstacles?', 'What advice would you give to someone else working on that goal?'

Get them thinking about what they can do to sustain their progress, or aim higher: 'What actions can you take so as to continue your success?', 'How will you challenge yourself next?'

And if they don't reach their goal, try: 'Which of your strategies did work for you?', 'What needs tweaking in your plan? Tweak the goal? Tweak the timescale? Tweak the supports? Tweak the reward you promised yourself?', 'What can you add or subtract from your actions to ensure you succeed?'

## Resource Round Up

### Tech Attack



We LOVED LOVED LOVED a lesson idea from 6 seconds, suitable for Y6 and secondary. It's great for helping learners understand how their own brains work – and also how tech such as social media taps into our most basic brain needs, so we get hooked on it.

In the activity, children first learn about what our basic human biology makes our brains want to do, and why (things like seek pleasure, do what other brains are doing, try to fit in/belong). They then play a game where they take turns to pull out cards from a pack and place them on a corresponding drawing of the brain - with four quadrants showing four Brain Drivers.

We have adapted the lesson and resources a bit and uploaded them all to the SEAL website. It's not judgemental, but will help students be aware of when they are being manipulated, and how. There are instructions for the lesson, a worksheet for students and two sets of cards for a sorting/discussion activity. Find the resources [here](#).

You might also want to share another interesting piece of information about consuming information on mobile devices. AI is now apparently able to recognise basic emotions from faces, and this is already being used to monitor the expressions of device users to see if they look happy and

comfortable when looking at an advertisement. If not, software will quickly switch to a different one!

### Inside Out 2



Place2Be's resource pack for mental health week 2025 is based on the Disney Inside Out 2 film and focuses on self-awareness. There are activities and sheets that can be used any time, including a useful emotion check-in

sheet based on the PIXAR characters, an emotion wheel, a 'personality islands' activity to help children reflect on their identity and qualities, and a Bingo activity to help children connect with each other. We've uploaded the pack [here](#). The website <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/schools/> also has primary and secondary assembly slides and some top tips for parents.

### Lessons from 6 Seconds



*Alebrijes and Me.* Try this primary ['my qualities' activity and resources](#) from the emotional intelligence organisation '6 seconds'. Based on a Mexican folklore tradition, it uses animals to help children identify powerful qualities inside them that can be developed. Includes a focus on climate action.

*Emo monster.* This is a nice monster activity to increase awareness of emotions. Children label drawings of different monsters (EmoCards) with the emotion the monster shows, then create their own new monster drawing based on a blend of emotions (for example anger + sadness + fear). They



give the new emotion a name and colour it to fit in with the colour categories of the EmoCards. Find everything you need - activity sheets, cards etc - [here](#).

*Colour your heart.* In [this activity](#) for KS2, children chose from a range of words to identify how they are feeling, highlight them in particular colours, and colour in a heart accordingly, using different sizes and shapes to represent how much or how little they feel that emotion. Discussion questions include What colour took up the most space in your heart? What colour took the least amount of space in your heart?

*Emotion Iceberg.* In [this activity](#) for KS2/3, children think about a recent time when they had strong feelings – such as joy, sorrow, acceptance, anger, trust, anticipation. They pick up a blank Emotion Iceberg handout from the table. On the top part (above the water) they write what other people could see of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, then what parts of their thoughts, feelings, and actions might not have been visible to others.

*EmoHeads Up.* [This primary game](#) uses Emo cards placed face down on a table. One person in a small group will start as the Guesser. Without looking at the card, the Guesser will pick up a card and hold it on their forehead so others can see. The other(s) give clues so the Guesser can correctly say the feeling word on their card. The clues cannot include feeling words. The clues can only be SITUATIONS where feelings occur. For example, if the word is “Scared,” the clue might be: “When you are in a busy area, and suddenly, you look around and you cannot find the person you were with.” Once the Guesser correctly says the word, another person becomes the Guesser and picks up a new card. The game continues until a timer runs out, and the group gets a score of however many cards they successfully guessed together.

*Match the Message.* [This activity for primary and secondary](#) has children explore the idea that every feeling gives us a message. They match cards with the “messages” and “signals” of each emotion (example - I bring you the gift of time and space to reflect and heal) with a feeling.

*Name that emoji.* In [this primary activity](#) children discuss possible names for unusual emojis.

*TFAs: Thoughts, Feelings, Actions.* [An activity for primary and secondary](#) in which children explore how they usually think, feel, and act... and find more choices of how they could think, feel, and act in the future.

There's also a *Feelings Walk activity* for all ages, where students explore with a partner how they would feel in different situations.

#### BBC Moodbusters



If you haven't already, do explore the BBC KS1 and 2 Moodboosters films and resources, presented by familiar faces pupils will want to engage with (from children's television presenter Evie Pickerill to Strictly star Oti Mabuse). In the 'Recharge' section you will find stretching

techniques, quiet reflection, and simple repetitive movements to help with feelings of anxiety, low mood and lethargy. The 'Boost' section targets confidence and self-esteem, and offers opportunities to re-energise a lethargic class using physical activity such as singing, roleplay and dance. There's a live lesson on Friday, 9 May. Find out more [here](#).

#### Art activities



Have you seen Place2Be's Art Room [activity packs](#)? There is a 'Know Yourself, Grow Yourself' packs on self-awareness, an art and music activity 'Wellbeing Playlist' and activities focused on soothing worries, exploring feelings and connecting with others.

#### Free assessment tools

Julie Casey, one of our founders, has kindly made available for free a full set of SEAL assessment tools, in the form of an overall progression in SEL skills and booklets of 'I can' statements. They enable children from three to eleven to self-assess on all the key SEAL learning outcomes. We've uploaded the



booklets (one for Foundation Stage, one for KS1, one for Y3-4 and one for Y5-6) to the SEAL website [here](#). Thank you, Julie!

### Prompts and checklist to help teachers bring SEL into their planning units of work and lessons



Are you looking for ways to help your colleagues build social and emotional learning into subject lessons? [These two resources](#) from CASEL, the US centre for all things SEL, will be useful. One is a chart with a manageable number of examples of teacher actions that provide opportunities for students to practice and reflect on social and emotional skills. The second is a checklist to use when planning a lesson.



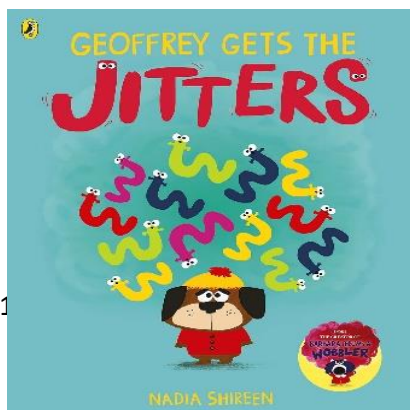
[JET Inspired](#) is the Jon Egging Trust's free resource hub for schools and teachers. The hub has engaging video content and free-to-download teaching resources and offers a privileged behind-the-scenes look at the working world of the Red Arrows. Each piece of content examines how the vital life skills of teamwork, leadership, communication and

resilience are as relevant to the success of the Reds as they are to the young people they inspire.

Each video is accompanied by a series of engaging lesson plans, activities and resources aligned to Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the English PSHE Curriculum.

### New books for Good to be Me

*Geoffrey gets the jitters.* 'A wise and comical look at anxiety and how to banish it ... With funny



pictures and a guide to different kinds of worries, this is soothing for all ages' - The Times

*Dragons on the Inside (And Other Big Feelings)* by [Valerie Coulman](#)

Dragons stomp and breathe fire, roller coasters swoop and swirl, and bats stare from a dark, damp cave ... this engaging book for four to eight year olds gives children powerful words for the feelings they are having inside. It has teaching resources at the back.

*I'm Happy-Sad Today* by Lory Britain addresses the complexity of mixed feelings . Suitable for ages five to seven.

*Maybe: A Story about the Endless Potential in All of Us* by Kobi Yamada

Written by best-selling author Kobi Yamada, this is a story about all the possibilities open to us and all the things we can be. Beautiful visual storytelling for primary pupils.

### [Self-regulation for students with learning difficulties](#)

Healthy Mind is an online Easy Read tool from Australia, designed to help older students with learning difficulties to recognise and regulate their thoughts and feelings. It includes five online learning modules: 'Breathe and relax', 'Tackling unhelpful thinking', 'Having more fun', 'Taming anger', and 'Recognising feelings'. Find it [here](#)



### [What to do about worry](#)



[Y6 lesson plan, PowerPoint and video](#) from the Public Health England School Zone . Includes a nice 'worry tree' activity , where pupils learn to work through a series of questions that will

help them deal with worries, and a take home sheet for families. There are also very useful NHS resources [here](#) for children of any age to help them learn strategies for self-help when feeling anxious, using 'worry time' and also the worry tree model.

### Go Noodle – excited



Need to calm an over-excited primary class? Try this [short Go Noodle activity](#) that involves 'square breathing'.

### Hope Box



[Here](#) you will find a booklet from the organisation Papyrus, for young people who are depressed or contemplating suicide. It helps them make a Hope Box filled with things to make them feel better when in crisis.

### Top resource



We think [this image from the picture book \*Geoffrey gets the jitters\* by Nadia Shireen](#), would be great to use as a poster or on the whiteboard for work on worries. It shows six types of worries - the brood, the niggle, the spiral, the fret and so on. Use in conjunction with the book to help children identify the different types of worry in the story, and in their own experiences.

## Research

### Can film help grow empathy?



A [Stanford study](#) has found evidence that film can lead people to be more empathetic . Participants in the study watched ‘*Just Mercy*’, a docudrama about efforts to free a wrongly convicted prisoner on death row – a Black man who was sentenced to death for the murder of an 18-year-old white girl, despite overwhelming evidence showing his innocence.

The researchers asked participants before and after they watched the movie to also watch a set of one- to three-minute-long videos that featured other men who had been imprisoned in real life. Participants were asked to rate what they thought these men were feeling as they shared their life stories. These ratings were then measured against what the men actually told the researchers they felt when recounting their experiences. The study found that after watching the docudrama participants were more empathetic toward those who were formerly incarcerated than those in the control condition.

They also changed their attitudes. They were more likely to say they would sign and share a petition that supported a federal law to restore voting rights to people with a criminal record than were participants in the control condition .

In [an early study](#) by one of the authors, citing statistics on racial disparities was not enough to lead people to take a closer look at systems – in fact, she found that presenting numbers alone can possibly backfire. For example, highlighting racial disparities in the criminal justice system can lead people to be more punitive, not less, and to be more likely to support the punitive policies that help to create those disparities in the first place.

The study underscores the power of storytelling: “Narratives move people in ways that numbers don’t.” Just like Mr Bates v the Post Office...

### Is face-to-face or web-based intervention more effective at relieving anxiety?



[This study](#) in China evaluated the impact of the DNA-V (Discover, Notice, Advise-Value) programme, which combines mindfulness-based social-emotional learning and cognitive behavioral strategies to enhance psychological flexibility and lower anxiety. The study also examined cognitive fusion—a phenomenon where individuals become entangled in their thoughts, potentially increasing psychological distress—as a contributing factor to anxiety.

The researchers randomly assigned fourteen-year-olds to three groups, each receiving different interventions: a face-to-face DNA-V group (40 students), a web-based DNA-V group (56 students), and an active control group undergoing a positive psychology program (50 students). Over six weeks, the treatment groups attended a 40-minute session weekly, with the face-to-face group in a classroom and the web-based group via an online game format.

Students completed a student anxiety scale and cognitive fusion questionnaire before the programme, immediately after, and two months later. Results showed that only the face-to-face group showed a significant reduction in anxiety and cognitive fusion scores. No significant changes were observed in the web-based or control groups over time.

### Dating Matters



This study evaluated the long term impact of *Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships*, a comprehensive prevention model for students and parents, focused on healthy dating relationships and the prevention of intimate partner violence. The model includes training for school staff, a youth communications program, and policy and data activities implemented in the community to promote healthy relationships and prevent violence. Outcomes evaluated included negative conflict



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resolution strategies, and positive relationship behaviours, among students who reported dating at any point in middle or high school. Dating Matters students when followed up several years later reported 19% reduced risk for dating violence perpetration, 24% reduced risk for dating violence victimization, 7% reduced risk for use of negative conflict strategies, and 3% more use of positive relationship skills than a control group receiving an evidence-based **comparison** programme.

The study authors conclude that comprehensive prevention models that address cross-cutting risk and protective factors for violence, such as healthy communication skills and social-emotional development, can improve the overall health and well-being of youth, and their communities, throughout their lifetimes. Read more [here](#).