



Peer Education Project

HEALTHY

RELATIONSHIPS

Staff guide: Healthy relationships with ourselves and our peers



Mental Health Foundation



In a survey shared with our **OPEN network**, we asked a sample of school staff, what does a healthy relationship mean to you?

"Understanding that you will have different opinions about some things and that is ok."

"Open conversations, sharing problems and resolving together, bouncing off each other."

"Being able to accept that all of us need support in different ways."

"A positive relationship whereby both parties value each other's health, wellbeing and have each other's best interests at heart."

"A relationship built on mutual trust and respect. One where there is safety in expressing emotions and feelings. One where a wide range of opinions and backgrounds are heard."

"One that is respectful, acknowledging the differences between others, listening and understanding others points of view without judgement or criticism."

"It's important in a relationship to feel loved, supported and included. There should be healthy boundaries and you should feel safe. A healthy relationship should be reciprocal and equal."

"Laughing, but working hard."





CONTENTS



Healthy relationships with ourselves	5
Practicing self-care	6
Setting boundaries	8
Talking kindly to yourself	10
Understanding how you feel	12
Protecting your self-esteem	14
Respecting your body.....	16
Setting goals	18
Healthy relationships with our peers	19
Showing and receiving respect	20
Communicating clearly and honestly.....	21
Learning how to listen	22
Being someone others can trust.....	23
Having fun	24

Connecting with peers 25

Opening up to new experiences 26



We would love to hear about how you use this resource and your feedback. Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to complete a 2-minute form. If you would like any further information about these resources, please contact the PEP team at schools@mentalhealth.org.uk

This resource is part of a campaign focused on healthy relationships with ourselves and others. The campaign has been supported by Fastn, an organisation that championed the development of relationship skills in childhood that sustain positive relationships for life. Fastn's relationships education work has now become part of charity, Family Links The Centre for Emotional Health. To find out more and get in touch please visit the website www.familylinks.org.uk

Healthy relationships with ourselves





Tip: Practicing self-care

Supporting pupils

It can sometimes be difficult for both staff and pupils alike to prioritise time for self-care. Taking time for yourself can sometimes lead to feelings of guilt and shame. Yet putting ourselves first by practicing self-care is an important part of looking after our mental health and wellbeing, and building a healthy relationship with ourselves.

As school staff, you can support pupils to understand the value of self-care and encourage them to find self-care activities that work best for them.



Introduce mindfulness moments:

Introducing mini-mindfulness practices or 'brain breaks', such as this [3-minute mindfulness video](#), into lessons, can help pupils learn more effectively and reduce feelings of stress. Using them throughout the school day can improve pupils' emotional regulation and wellbeing. Read more about the [benefits of building 'brain breaks' into lessons](#).



Set up a self-care activity board:

Create a display board focused on self-care. Pupils and staff can support with designing the board, suggesting self-care activities they like to use.



Try self-care activities during form time:

Developed with teachers and NHS approved, use these [flexible sessions](#) to explore the meaning of self-care with pupils during form time.





Tip: Practicing self-care

Support for school staff

As school staff, it is important to build in pockets of time for you, although it can feel difficult to do in practice. However, self-care is a valuable step in protecting ourselves from experiences of burnout, which can be a common experience for school staff.



Build in pockets of rest:

Take a look at our [Rethinking Rest Guide](#) to reconsider what rest means to you and how you can find ways to rest depending on your needs.



Take time to meditate:

Read [Education Support's guide](#) to meditation – a useful tool to connect with your mind and body.



Be inspired by others:

Watch this short [video](#) where teachers share their self-care activities.



Learn about the importance of self-care:

Choose from a [selection of TED talks](#) on self-care to challenge the rhetoric that we are too busy for self-care.



Tip: Setting boundaries

Supporting pupils

An important step to understanding and expressing how we are feeling, is to put in boundaries with ourselves and others. This helps us to create a safe and comfortable environment to express ourselves. Pupils may find it difficult to set personal boundaries for themselves and with their peers, especially if they feel pressured to be accepted.

As school staff, you can hold space for pupils to value and respect themselves, as well as to learn how to overcome peer pressure and establish healthy boundaries with themselves and their peers.



Setting healthy boundaries:

Use this [video](#) to explore with pupils what boundaries are, how to set them and how to maintain them.



Spheres of control:

Use the 'Healthy relationships with our peers' lesson plan from this school pack to support pupils to think about what they can and can't control.



How to say no:

Signpost your pupils to [advice on how to say no and why it is important to do so](#).



Tip: Setting boundaries

Support for school staff

When asked to take on additional responsibilities it may feel difficult to say no and hold your personal boundaries, for worries of how other staff may perceive you and the repercussions this might have. However, it is important to understand and learn how to keep your boundaries in place to avoid burnout.



Boundaries, rest and letting go:

Listen to [Education Support's webinar](#) how to take ownership of your boundaries, make time for rest and keep the professional and personal separate.



Time management advice from teachers:

Watch this short [video](#) on how teachers manage their workload by putting boundaries in.



Saying no:

Take a look at tips from Education Support on [how to say no](#) and how to put things in place to [protect yourself from burnout](#).



Tip: Talking kindly to yourself

Supporting pupils

Sometimes, we can be unkind to ourselves through our thoughts and actions. For pupils, unkind self-talk – talking to yourself in a negative way – is likely as they face pressures in their time at school, such as achieving good grades, peer relationships, puberty, social media, exploring their identity and many other factors.

Regular unkind self-talk and actions can affect our self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing. It is important to recognise how we treat ourselves so that we can put things in place to be kind to ourselves.

By providing pupils with tools to challenge their unkind self-talk, you can support them to speak kindly to themselves.



Why kindness matters:

Use our [lesson and assembly plans](#) to explore the topic of kindness with your pupils.



Challenging unhelpful thoughts:

Developed with teachers and NHS approved, use this [form time activity](#) to support pupils to identify examples of unhelpful thoughts and practice “reframing” them.



Understanding the inner critic:

Use [video 6](#) to explore how our inner critic and inner coach can affect our health and wellbeing.



Tip: Talking kindly to yourself

Support for school staff

Throughout our lives we may face many experiences that can affect our self-esteem. It is important to regularly reflect on our situations and understand what affects our self-esteem both positively and negatively. Being open to exploring different ways of protecting our self-esteem, can support us to build a healthy relationship with ourselves.



The power of positive thinking:

Listen to this [TED talk](#) on how reframing our communication with ourselves can help us to have a more positive outlook.



Practice meditation to calm negative self-talk:

Meditation can give us the space to step away from our negative thoughts and choose kind self-talk. Read this [article from headspace](#) about how to stop negative self-talk.



Tip: Understanding how you feel

Supporting pupils

Pupils will experience a mix of feelings daily. They may find it difficult to identify and understand what they are going through and/or what they need in the moment. Being in touch with our feelings is an important part of having a healthy relationship with ourselves. It can take time, and practice, to connect with how we are feeling.

School can be a safe place for pupils to learn how to recognise and respond to how they are feeling, including the different things they can do or people they can go to for support in the moment.



Can't Talk, Write toolkits:

Download these [toolkits](#) that focus on the benefit of writing as an effective means of directing and expressing feelings and emotions, to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.



Understanding feelings:

Share this [information page](#) on understanding feelings with your pupils.



Tip: Understanding how you feel

Support for school staff

We can all experience different emotions throughout our day, but not always when we have the time and space to process these feelings and meet our needs. It is important to find ways to protect ourselves in these moments, and prioritise time to process our feelings when we are comfortable and supported.



Prioritising your mental health and wellbeing as school staff:

Watch this [webinar](#) on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing, building more opportunities for rest in your daily schedules, and where to go for more support.



How to handle stress: teachers & education staff:

Read these [practical tips](#) on how to manage stress.



Help for you:

If you need support, talk to one of [Education Support's](#) qualified counsellors on 08000 562 561.



Tip: Protecting your self-esteem

Supporting pupils

Whether it comes from within school, family, friends, social media or elsewhere, we can all feel pressured at times to speak or act in a particular way. It is important for pupils to learn how to recognise the impact external pressures can have, and find ways to manage the thoughts and feelings they can raise. By doing this, we can protect our self-esteem and our connection with who we are.

For pupils some of these pressures can be experienced within school, particularly when seeking validation from their peers. By providing opportunities for pupils to learn about self-esteem, they can begin to recognise their self-worth and feel more confident in themselves.



Improving Self Esteem:

Read this [article](#) on how to support your pupils to understand and improve their self-esteem.



Understanding the impact of discrimination:

Being treated differently, and unfairly, can affect self-esteem. Explore this [resource page](#) on diversity and inclusion with pupils, and discuss how such experiences can affect our self-confidence. Then, use this [resource page](#), to help them to think about ways they can build their confidence and self-esteem.



Self-esteem and believing in yourself:

Share this [guide](#) with your pupils on self-esteem, and how they can look after themselves and others who may be struggling.



Tip: Protecting your self-esteem

Support for school staff

Sometimes our self-esteem can be knocked and we can find it difficult to feel accepted and comfortable with who we are. Over time, this kind of uncertainty can start to affect our mental health, and make it difficult to recognise our self-worth.

Take the time to reflect on the people and situations you have and whether they support your self-esteem. Sometimes, we may need to make difficult decisions about how we spend our time and with who, in order to protect ourselves and our mental health.



Improving self-esteem:

Read these [tips](#) on how to improve your self-esteem.



Building and maintaining positive self-esteem:

Read this [article](#) on ways to build lasting self-esteem.



Tip: Respecting your body

Supporting pupils

Each body is unique. As individuals, our bodies have different needs and abilities. Sometimes we can feel a sense of discomfort with our bodies. This can often be experienced in times of bodily change such as puberty, injury and illness. It is important to show our bodies self-love and respect. For pupils who feel their bodies are not represented or valued in mainstream media, they experience shame, discomfort and feel discriminated against.

As school staff, you can support pupils to connect with what their body needs and develop a sense of appreciation for their body. When pupils struggle with their body image, you may notice them becoming increasingly focused on how their body looks and/or comparing themselves with others, as well as engaging differently with food and exercise. It is important to ensure pupils are offered the right support as early on as possible.



Body image: how we think and feel about our bodies:

Use our [lesson and assembly plans](#) to support pupils to understand what body image is, what affects body image, its effect on our mental health and wellbeing, and how to develop and maintain a good body image.



How you look:

Signpost pupils to this [advice page](#) on appreciating their own identity and where to find support with body image concerns.



Teacher guidance: Key standards in teaching about body image:

Read [guidance](#) on how to deliver safe teaching on body image as part of their curriculum.



Tip: Respecting your body

Support for school staff



Tips to improve body image:

Read this [guide](#) on actions that can be taken to improve how we feel about our bodies, and help to protect, promote and maintain a positive body image throughout our lives.



Future Learn: Body Image and Mental Health Online Course:

Take our [free online course](#) exploring how body image affects children and young people, its impact on mental health, and how to support children and young people to develop and maintain healthy body image within a professional setting.





Tip: Setting goals



Supporting pupils

Goals can be a useful way of exploring our interests and challenging our learning and development. Working towards and reaching our goals, no matter the size, can give us a sense of achievement, and help to increase our confidence. For some, sharing their goals with others can help them to stay focused and feel supported. For others, working towards their goals independently, and keeping themselves on track, can add to their sense of achievement.

Using examples of goal setting in relation to school work, you can support pupils to understand how to set goals and the process to achieving them. You can highlight to them how the skills needed for school work can be applied to any goal they may want to achieve.



How to set goals:

Use this [video](#) to support pupils to set goals for themselves.



Time management:

Use this [blog](#) to discuss with pupils ways they can manage their time effectively.

Support for school staff

Sometimes, when we have already reached certain goals or milestones, it can be difficult to identify what's next. We may struggle to find the time and energy to try something new or set ourselves a challenge. However, there are many benefits of stepping outside our comfort zone for our mental health and wellbeing. Start with something small, and try different things, to find your next goal.



Time management: a guide for teachers and education staff:

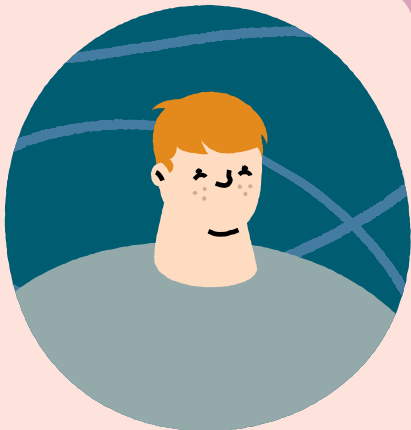
Read [Education Support's tips](#) to help you manage your workload and life goals productively.



Reaching your goals:

Be inspired by this [TED playlist](#), providing tips to help you set and reach your goals.

Healthy relationships with our peers





Tip: Showing and receiving respect

Supporting pupils

An important part of building healthy relationships with our peers is showing respect and kindness to them, but also recognising that we deserve the same from others. Building in time to reflect on the people and spaces around us, and also our own actions, can help us to recognise where changes might need to happen to make us and others feel safe and comfortable.

Learning how to show respect and kindness to peers is an important social skill to develop. Supporting pupils to develop understandings of difference, the impact of words and actions and how to withhold judgement, will help them through their time at school and in the future.



Choose respect:

Use [this lesson plan and activities](#), written by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, to explore what respect means and how to show it.



Why kindness matters:

Share our pupil [guide](#) on how to show kindness to ourselves and others.



Promoting equality and diversity in the classroom:

Read this [guide](#) about equality and diversity and the fundamental principles you can refer to when building multiculturalism and understanding in the classroom.

Support for school staff

Building kind and respectful relationships in the workplace can sometimes feel difficult, especially when we may not always agree with the words and actions of our colleagues. However, being able to manage these situations with respect and honesty, will help us to feel more comfortable and supported.



Dealing with difference in the workplace:

Read this [article](#) on how teachers and education staff can feel connected and supported through positive social relationships at work.



Tip: Communicating clearly and honestly



Supporting pupils

Pupils may find it difficult to feel confident in opening up to peers, both in-person and online. Additionally, pupils are faced with an ever-changing, wide range of communication platforms. They may feel pressured to use a type of communication to keep up with their peers online, even if this style of communication does not feel the most comfortable for them.

Schools can provide pupils with spaces to explore different communication styles, find what works for them, learn what works for their peers, and how to navigate feeling safe online.



Tips on starting difficult conversations:

Share these [8 top tips](#) with pupils to support them with opening up to their peers.



Stay safe online:

Use this [short video](#) to explore using social media platforms safely with your pupils.

Support for school staff

Take the time to reflect on the types of communication you use within your role and how they make you feel. By doing so you can better understand what you need to feel most comfortable and share with your colleagues what you need from them. It is also important to support your colleagues by listening and acting on their communication needs.



The power of conversations:

Watch this [webinar](#) exploring the importance of talking to each other. It offers practical advice on how to have open and honest conversations about mental health, as well as how to create a culture where you and your colleagues feel valued, cared for and supported.



Managing difficult conversations:

Read this [guide](#) on how to manage difficult conversations in the different relationships you may face in your role.



Tip: Learning how to listen

Supporting pupils

Being able to listen is an important skill in all types of relationships. Active listening is tuning into a conversation, giving someone your full attention and minimising distractions. This can feel difficult, especially as we have our own ways of showing our attention and staying engaged. Being able to share with one another what makes us feel listened to, can help us to feel connected in our conversations.

As staff, you can build in spaces for pupils to practice their listening skills, and explore what they and their peers need in a conversation to feel safe and supported.



Tips for being a good listener:

This short [video](#) highlights top tips pupils can use to become good listeners.



A mindful moment:

Use the mindful listening exercise in the 'Healthy relationships with our peers' lesson plan included in the Mental Health Foundation's healthy relationships school pack, to practice mindful listening.

Support for school staff

Sometimes, when life is busy, setting time aside to listen or being able to focus in conversations can feel challenging. Our listening skills can be developed throughout our lives, especially when the types of conversations we have, or the situations we are in, change the way in which we need to listen or be listened to.



Hear what people are really saying:

Read this [guide](#) on active listening, listing top tips to improve your communication skills.



The art of meaningful conversation:

Choose from a [selection of TED talks](#) on how to have meaningful conversations.



Tip: Being someone others can trust

Supporting pupils

Trust is an important basis for any healthy relationship, including the relationship we have with ourselves. At times, pupils may find it challenging to know who to trust, and how to build trust with their peers, particularly if they have had experiences where trust has been broken by others.

Providing pupils with the tools to understand the value of being a trustworthy person and how we can show this through our actions and words, will support them in building healthy, safe relationships with themselves and their peers.



Friendship guide:

This [guide](#) provides pupils with advice from other young people on friendship and how to look after themselves.

Support for school staff

Sometimes, when life is busy, setting time aside to listen or being able to focus in conversations can feel challenging. Our listening skills can be developed throughout our lives, especially when the types of conversations we have, or the situations we are in, change the way in which we need to listen or be listened to.



Building Trust:

Read this [article](#) on how to build trust in a relationship.





Tip: Having fun

Supporting pupils

It is important for pupils to explore and share their different interests, in fun and creative ways, to connect with their peers. Having fun with our peers can be a good way to look after our mental health.

Whether in class time or as a whole school, getting pupils involved in creating activity ideas to have fun together will help them feel more engaged.



Fun activities to connect with others:

Here is a [list of team-building activities](#) to try with your pupils.

Support for school staff

You're likely to spend more time with pupils than colleagues during your day, but it is important to find moments to connect and have fun with your colleagues. This could be having a chat over a cup of tea at break or planning in staff social events after work. By having positive and fun peer relationships this can contribute to good mental health and wellbeing.



Team building:

Read this [article](#) for ideas of activities to have fun with your colleagues.



Tip: Connecting with peers

Supporting pupils

Finding peers with shared interests may not always feel easy, and it can take time to build connections with them. It is important to build in regular opportunities to meaningfully connect with peers.

By encouraging pupils to value healthy peer relationships, and to put time aside to connect with their peers, you can help them build a supportive network around them.



Conversation starters:

Use these [conversation starters](#) with your pupils to support them in connecting with their peers. Encourage them to protect time to continuing getting to know each other outside of the classroom.



Finding connections:

Use this [school pack](#) exploring experiences of loneliness, to help pupils understand how finding connections with ourselves and others can support our mental health and wellbeing.

Support for school staff

Workplaces provide opportunities to form new connections. It is important to give yourself the time and space to connect with colleagues, explore interests together, and begin to build healthy relationships.



Connecting with your colleagues:

Read this [article](#) for tips on how to connect meaningfully with your colleagues after a school break.



Finding connections with our colleagues:

Read this [guide](#) on ways to form connections with ourselves and others to support our mental health and wellbeing, and feel less lonely.



Tip: Opening up to new experiences

Supporting pupils

Pushing ourselves out of our comfort zones can feel challenging, whether it is a small step or a large leap. Being open to new experiences can help us to explore our interests, find new connections and improve our confidence.

For pupils, school is often a place where they will feel challenged by many new experiences.

Holding space for pupils to discuss different points of view or to embrace cultural differences can help pupils to develop more open-minded thinking.



Discuss and debate:

Share this [information page](#) with your pupils to help them feel confident in sharing their views and sensitively taking part in a discussion.



Cultural awareness in the classroom:

Read this [article](#) on how to bring cultural awareness into the classroom.

Support for school staff

Trying new things can help us find a renewed sense of purpose or bring some excitement to our day. Put in time to reflect on your interests and where you can step outside your comfort zone.



Starting a new role:

Here are [tips](#) on starting a new school as a staff member



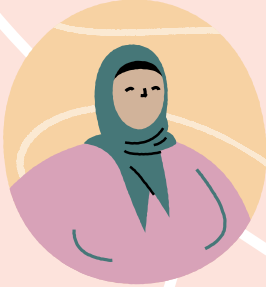
Learning something new:

There are many opportunities for you to explore your interests and learn something new. [FutureLearn](#) is a learning platform that offers many courses for free, whether it is something you want to upskill in for your role, or just a general interest.

HEALTHY



RELATIONSHIPS



Mental Health
Foundation



 [Mental Health Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthFoundation)

 [@mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

 [@MentalHealth](https://twitter.com/MentalHealth)

[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)



Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR Registered Charity No. 801130 (England), SCO39714 (Scotland). Company Registration No. 2350846.