

Section 3:

Mental health and wellbeing in your school

This section of the toolkit will provide young people with the space to discuss the impact Covid-19 may have had on their school life and what affect this may be having on their mental health. In seeking balance, it's important to acknowledge the impact may have been both positive and negative.

Role modelling

Young people tend to learn from the adults in their lives. This is from the behaviour they see rather than the words they hear. With this in mind, we can help the young people in our lives by modelling the behaviour we would like to see in them.

If our young people see us responding to this challenging time in a calm way, this helps give them a sense of security.

Demonstrate positive coping strategies you are using to try and cope with the current situation.

Acknowledge feelings

Like us, young people will be feeling different emotions such as fear, frustration and sadness. Our instinct may be to try and soothe them, tell them not to worry or tell them it could be worse. Before doing this, take a deep breath, pause, visualise yourself in the young person's shoes. Their emotions are real and scary. They will need your reassurance.

But first, they will want to feel heard and have their feelings validated. Let them know you understand how difficult things are for them right now and that it can be unfair and upsetting.

Be guided by them

Instead of guessing, don't be afraid to ask the young person what they need from you right now. Do they just want to be listened to? Maybe they need some guidance or help to solve a problem? Or perhaps they are looking for advice or a new perspective on things. At times, it might be distraction and cheering up that is necessary.

If it is the case that the young person can't tell you what they need or want, trust your own instinct. You know them best. The fact that they know you want to be there for them is the key thing.

Focus on strengths

Help the young people in your life to identify their strengths, skills and qualities that will help them get through the current situation. Remind them of difficulties they may have coped with in the past. Encourage them to remember the strategies or techniques they drew on during those times. Support young people to recognise what has helped them before and implement these strategies again.

For information, support, or just to find out more about what we do, visit [jigsaw.ie](https://www.jigsaw.ie)

