

# **‘Feelings are Funny Things: Developing Emotional Literacy Using Storytelling’**

An extension session focusing on feelings  
of loneliness and isolation following  
COVID-19



Developed by the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Resilience  
Project

This is a single session plan to encourage the discussion and exploration of feelings of loneliness and isolation from COVID-19, which is structured to be delivered in 50 minutes. It follows on from the Resilience Project's 'Feelings are Funny Things: Developing Emotional Literacy Using Storytelling' six session group programme for school staff to use to support the development of children's emotional literacy which was adapted from 'Feelings are Funny Things: A Storytelling Toolkit' authored by Dr Steve Killick (Clinical Psychologist and Storyteller) and Phil Okwedy (Storyteller and Teacher). Primary school and secondary school versions of the 6 session manual are free access by emailing [Resilienceproject.Cav@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Resilienceproject.Cav@wales.nhs.uk)

## Extended Isolation Session - Stone Soup

### Aims

- To re-connect with others
- To explore feelings of isolation and loneliness
- To practice up and down regulating activities

### Equipment and materials

- Story – Stone soup
- Large flip chart paper
- Feelings cards

### Key Information on loneliness and isolation

- Feelings/emotions are a part of being human, and they come and go
- Children / young people will have experienced many feelings over lockdown.
- The story covers a range of emotions, which may help you to identify which children may be struggling or more effected by COVID-19 than others.
- Loneliness and isolation can be really difficult feelings. We also know the importance of both peer and teacher-child relationships.
- Returning to school may feel very overwhelming for children / young people who have been isolated for a long time (e.g. particularly with those with parents who have been shielding).

### Introduction to session and warm up (10 minutes)

Activity	Instructions
<b>Eye contact clap with name</b>  Aim: to encourage eye-contact (promotes relationships building) and focus. It can help to settle the group.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Arrange students in a standing circle.</li><li>2. The objective is to send a 'clap' around the circle.</li><li>3. The leader starts by turning to the right, making eye contact with the student next to them, and then claps and says their name. The student then turns to the student on their right and repeats the stages of making eye contact, clapping and saying their name.</li><li>4. The clap should pass round the circle until it returns to the leader.</li></ol>

<b>Development</b>	<p>When two students make eye contact, they try to both clap at the same time. Note – some students will clap in front of another students face. This is an opportunity to ask students to be more considerate and talk about what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such a clap.</p>
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	For this session you may want to spend more time on games to make sure the group feels relaxed, and re-connect. Particularly if you've got more time than the recommended 50 minutes.
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### Group rules (5 minutes)

Activity	Instructions
<b>Set boundaries</b>  <u>Resources</u> Pen Flipchart Paper	<p>Once the students have warmed up and are more relaxed, ask them to generate and agree a list of group rules. Place these on display at the start of each session as a reminder to everyone.</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be respectful to each other (Try to be specific about what that looks like, as the students for their suggestions '<i>What does 'being respectful look like?'</i>') E.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen when somebody is talking, making eye contact, not talking over them</li> <li>• Being polite, not swearing or saying nasty things to or about someone</li> <li>• Not laughing at someone's answer (being non-judgemental)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Confidentiality within the group (unless leaders feel you or someone else is unsafe)</li> <li>3. To be able to take time out with an adult if I am feeling upset, angry etc.</li> <li>4. To take part and have fun</li> </ol>

### Story – Stone Soup (10 minutes)

Activity	Instructions
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<b>Story</b>	<p>Tell the story 'Stone Soup'. Remember telling stories are more than reading from the page. The young people will likely be more engaged if you are able to relay the story from memory.</p> <p><b>Key Themes / emotions that may arise :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loneliness - The man was on his own. The village people didn't talk to one another.</li> <li>- "People didn't talk to each other much..."</li> </ul>
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- “She was most lonely and longed for company but she had closed her heart to what she wanted the most”
- Sadness –
  - ... “many bore a heavy heart”
  - “the village remained a sad place”
- Scared –
  - “He was traveling through a land he had never been before, and it didn't feel the friendliest place.”
  - “A woman answered the door but she was fearful of strangers”
- Curious –
  - “The woman could not refuse this request and she was curious to see how the man might feed himself from a stone.”
  - “The woman who had watched all this could contain herself no longer and went down to where the man was sitting underneath the tree.”
- Sharing/Kindness/Generosity –
  - Villagers bring different food, firewood, wine etc
  - “this was all due to the generosity of the traveller with his stone soup.”
  - “the woman insisted that he must stay and made up a bed for him so that he might have one night in the warmth.”
- Being together –
  - “Soon the woman’s house was ready for a banquet and a fire was roaring in the hearth.”
  - “Soon there was quite a group standing around the fire”
  - “wine flowed as well as the conversation”
- Happiness
  - “In the orange glow of the fires many hearts warmed and opened”
  - “everyone agreed it was the best evening that had been had for many a year.”






You can use these emotions / feelings to be curious and wonder aloud if children struggle to answer questions in the exploration of story activity. *‘I wonder if they had been lonely but now they were all happy to be together. What do you think?’*

## Exploration of story (15-20 minutes)

Activity	Instructions
<p><b>Inquire about feelings in the story</b></p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>The nature of emotions can be explored further through questions.</p>	<p>Begin to explore the emotions in the story. You can ask students about what emotions were directly mentioned or ask how they felt listening to the story. Here are some examples of questions you can ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What emotions do you think the traveller felt at the start of the story?</i></li> <li>• <i>Was it the same throughout the whole story, or do you think his feelings changed?</i></li> <li>• <i>What about the people from the village? How do you think they felt?</i></li> <li>• <i>If a person knocked on your door, how would you feel?</i></li> <li>• <i>What words came to mind when people started giving him food and ingredients? (e.g. sharing, kindness)</i></li> <li>• <i>Can you think of time where you've seen that recently?</i></li> <li>• <i>The story says ... "He had not seen a soul for days but at last he came to the place of human life". Does this remind anyone of how they may have felt recently?</i></li> <li>• <i>How did the villagers feel when they were all together and sitting around the fire?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you think the stone is magic? Is there any magic in the story?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do you think the villagers would have felt if they knew the stone was just a regular stone?</i></li> </ul>
<p><u>Discussion activity</u></p>	<p>Once you have acknowledged the feelings that the children / young people have experienced and discussed feelings from the story, the main aim of this session is to re-connect.</p> <p>Take time for the remainder of the session to play relational games which encourage connection, to enjoy being together and bringing a sense of joy. These games can also be regulating.</p> <p>As we've already discussed, some children may feel emotions such as anxious, sad, nervous, apprehensive during the return to school. You may need to add in more opportunities for regulation as a class to create a sense of safety and security.</p> <p>The Resilience Project has developed a resource for '<a href="#">Relational and Regulating Activities</a>' that adults can use with children and young people. This resource is now on the Resilience Project's <a href="#">padlet</a> &amp; the Mentally Healthy Schools Website. They've also created a YouTube animation on '<a href="#">Keeping ourselves and our class well: Quick Tips</a>' which is available on our YouTube channel.</p>



## Regulating exercise (5-10 minutes)

Activity	Instructions
<p>5 4 3 2 1 Grounding Exercise</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Take a few minutes to slowly complete this grounding exercise, to help the group to be mindful and stay in the present moment.</p> <p>Look for:</p> <p>5 things you can see</p> <p>4 things you can touch</p> <p>3 things you can hear</p> <p>2 things you can smell</p> <p>1 thing you can taste</p> <p>Where possible, have something ready for the group to drink or eat, as this is regulating in itself.</p> <p><a href="#">Here is a demonstration video by Dr Helen Williams from Beacon House</a></p>

## Stone Soup

There was once a village at a place where three countries bordered with each other. Every time there was a war, which had been often, it was this village that bore the brunt. Many people had been lost and buildings destroyed and even though peace had come, the village remained a sad place. Money was short. People didn't talk to each other much and many bore a heavy heart. One night, as autumn blurred with winter, a traveller came to the village. He had journeyed through many lands and seen many things. What he learnt had made him wise but not rich for he had no money to speak of. He was traveling through a land he had never been before, and it didn't feel the friendliest place. He had not seen a soul for days but at last he came to the place of human life. The sun had set and the sky glowed like the last embers of a dying fire.

The traveller went up to the first house he came too hoping he may get a bite to eat and a bed for the night. A woman answered the door but she was fearful of strangers. She was most lonely and longed for company but she had closed her heart to what she wanted the most. She told the traveller, 'There's nothing here for you, we don't have enough for ourselves. Strangers used to be welcome here but not anymore.'

The man soon realised that if he wanted to eat that night he'd have to think fast. He said to the woman, 'Well thank you. I can see times are hard. But I have soup stone that will feed me for tonight. If I could borrow a pot from you I can make it myself. It will come back to you no worse than when you gave it to me.'

The woman could not refuse this request and she was curious to see how the man might feed himself from a stone. She gave the man a heavy iron cooking pot and watched from her window as the man collected wood, made a fire next to a tree and filled the pot with water from a stream. Using a rope, he hung the pot from a branch, so the flames licked the bottom of the pot. Soon the water was boiling and the man took a small smooth stone from his pocket. He rubbed it for a moment and, after inspecting it closely, dropped it carefully in the water. He looked after his meal closely, every few minutes stirring the simmering water.

The woman who had watched all this could contain herself no longer and went down to where the man was sitting underneath the tree.

'How can you possibly hope to make a meal out of that?' she asked.

'This is a fine broth,' replied the man, 'and there's enough here for a banquet if you'd care to join me. It's true it's a bit thin seeing as I've been living of it all week. But that's nothing that a potato or two wouldn't put right. Still, there's no point dwelling on that. As my mother used to say, *Whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about*. Better be grateful for what you have than wish away your life wanting more.'

'Well, I think I might have a potato that could go in' said the woman thinking it would be interesting to try some stone soup.

She went back to her house and got two potatoes for the traveller. He gratefully put them in the stew. They talked a while and another villager was passing by, he noticed them and enquired what

they were doing. The traveller explained that he was cooking stone soup, 'it's coming on nicely now although with a few carrots it really would be something, but *whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about.*'

The villager thought that he would have a couple of carrots he could contribute. That was nothing to ask for and he went and fetched them, telling his neighbour on the way that they were making stone soup. Soon there was quite a group standing around the fire, and the traveller told them about stone soup which was beginning to look more interesting in the pot.



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'It's looking pretty good now, a bit of flour would help thicken it up but *whatever you must do without is not worth another thought about.*' but someone said they might have some flour they could give.

And so it went on, as the traveller lamented that soup might benefit from some herbs, spices, noodles, tomatoes, onions and barley, well, all those things were given. Soon the air was sweetened by the aroma of rich broth. The traveller said, 'I've known kings and queens who prefer no dish more than this stone soup. Although, if truth be told they would always like some lamb or beef in it but whatever you must do without is never worth another thought about.'

At this the woman, who had first turned the traveller away remembered that she had a piece of meat, not much, but here was a man that ate with kings and queens and, at the very least, deserved to be offered some hospitality. She went and got the meat and invited everybody into her home where they could feast on a meal fit for kings. The villagers brought bread, cheeses and wine to share. Somebody said they had no food to give but they had firewood. That offer was gratefully accepted. Soon the woman's house was ready for a banquet and a fire was roaring in the hearth.

And such a feast it was, the stone soup was delicious, the wine flowed as well as the conversation. In the orange glow of the fires many hearts warmed and opened. Everyone had a story to tell and at the end of the evening everyone agreed it was the best evening that had been had for many a year. And this was all due to the generosity of the traveller with his stone soup. When everybody had gone the traveller scooped out the stone from the bottom of the now empty pot, cleaned it and put it in his pocket and telling his host he must be on his way. But the woman insisted that he must stay and made up a bed for him so that he might have one night in the warmth.

Nobody knows what happened after that night except what everybody knows that an evening of food and stories is always a great way to pass a winter's night and that something can always be made out of nothing.

*This story is a rich metaphor for growing a community where everybody thinks they have nothing to contribute. If each contributes a little it becomes something. The catalyst is just a stone. The end result is people sharing their stories which helps bind people together. There is an intriguing question about whether the traveller was just getting a meal for himself or there to heal the community.*