



## Worry, Anxiety and Building Resilience: RSHE Teachers Lesson Notes

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### Aims

To help pupils understand the effects of worry, to know where and how to seek help if they or someone they know is worried and to enable pupils to feel empowered about building their own resilience using the Resilience Framework.

To recognise and celebrate the pupils' role as experts in a different way from adults because they know about the worries and concerns of people their age and what works for them, thus the outcome is coproduced.

### Objectives

- Pupils understand that worry is normal and how discuss the physical effects
  - Pupils know where to seek help in the school and what will happen when they ask for help
  - Pupils become familiar with the Resilience Framework as a tool to implement their own resilient moves when things are tough.
  - Pupils are recognised for their expertise in coproducing a plan to deal with worry
  - Preparation for a further lesson about anxiety
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### Optional items you could add to the presentation:

This session uses a scenario to enable pupils to explore issues around worry without feeling exposed or vulnerable. The scenario should be adapted to reflect the age and experience of pupils you are teaching but staff should be careful to ensure it does not match a particular pupil's life so closely that they and others think it is about them. \*

A model scenario is in Appendix 1 for reference

Be aware that some pupils may be distressed discussing Covid – 19 because of experiences they had. Use your discretion based on your knowledge of the pupils.

It is hard to challenge the predominant model of education where the teacher imparts knowledge. The closer the adults can get to re distributing power in this lesson and allowing the solutions for worry to be co-produced the more resilience-building it will be. Be aware that some pupils may be distressed discussing Covid – 19 because of experiences they had. Use your discretion based on your knowledge of the pupils.

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## **Resources**

Resilience Framework – colour copy one per pupils

Outline of a person with space to write outside and inside – A4 one per pupil or A3 between a group of 4 pupils

Scenario with illustrations for younger pupils

Coloured pencils

Time – approximately 45 minutes

## **Introduction**

Begin by explaining that you will be talking about worry and what to do about it, but the adults in the room are not experts - they know how they cope with tough times and are using information from research but they don't know what it's like to be the age of the pupils or what works for them. Emphasise that the pupils are equal in this lesson and that you plan to work out a solution together.

Refer to your usual Ground Rules which keep people safe in RSHE lessons \*\*

## **Starter activity**

Introduce the character from the scenario (Jay) Students can choose whether Jay is male or female. Read out initial information about Jay which indicates why Jay might be worried. Ask pupils to write on the outline figure or share reasons why Jay is worried. They can add additional ideas not just from the scenario.

## **Exploring Worry**

Reassure pupils that worry is very normal. Discuss people's worries during the pandemic and the impact of uncertainty, change, health issues etc. some people may have enjoyed parts of lockdown. There were probably a range of feelings. Perhaps give examples when the teacher has been worried. Do not encourage pupils to share their own worries but remind them that you'll be discussing what to do if you need to talk to someone about your worries\*\*\*.

**Give separate tasks below to groups. They will add words or pictures to their outline figure.**

- What thoughts Jay might be having will mum get ill, will my friends like me, will I remember anything
- What feelings Jay might have nervous excited, numb, angry, restless
- Where Jay might feel the worry and what it feels like (around the body) eg dry mouth, fast heart beat, need to go to toilet, sweaty palms, headache, butterflies, tummy ache
- You can discuss the difference between excitement and worry as these can have similar sensations
- How Jay might behave if they were worried eg move around, getting cross with people, avoid situations, seek reassurance.

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The-Anxiety-Cycle.jpg>

Pupils feedback some answers as a class or in groups. They share some advice they would give to Jay. This can form part of your assessment as a baseline for comparison at the end of the lesson. What would you say to Jay, how could you help?

## **The Resilience Framework**

Introduce the Resilience Framework.

It was made by people doing research about how young people manage and get through even when they have to face tough things like the pandemic, or they are disabled or other stressful things happen to them. Then other people such as teachers or families who had had a difficult time added their ideas.

It turns out that very normal things seem to help young people when times are tough. We call them Resilient Moves because they help people to be resilient.

### **Familiarise pupils with the Framework**

For instance...Suggest Resilient Moves from the Framework which pupils have to find by pointing with their fingers.

A Resilient Move might be finding somewhere you feel you belong, or finding time for your talents (what talents does Jay have?) It might be getting fresh air (Where can Jay go for fresh air?) Sometimes a Resilient Move is taking some responsibility for someone else (What could Jay do?). It can be solving problems by working out what the problem is and thinking of different solutions. (who was Jay going to problem solve with? What are some good ways to problem solve?) Sometimes it is about finding the positives (What positives does Jay have eg a talent, a brother, relationships) If you have had a bad day you can remember that tomorrow is another day (what could you say to Jay about their bad day at school to help them feel more positive?) Sometimes you have to find opportunities to do these things because they're not happening for you right now. For instance you might have to make a special effort to put on positivity glasses – to fake it til you make it. It's also important to lean on others (who could Jay lean on?).

Or get pupils to act out a Resilient Move to each other in groups.

Or get them to spot a move they have done in the last week.

The Resilience Framework has possible things to try when things are tough. Some things we already do. There are other things we could try out when we feel things are getting on top of us. This is useful when hard things are coming up like exams or difficult situations and we know there are things to try. Thinking about what we have going for us can help us to be resilient.

If appropriate give more details about Jay and the Resilience Framework \*\*\*\*

### **Anxiety**

Read the second half of the scenario to show how Jay's worry has started getting in the way of their everyday activities.

Jay is feeling anxious and needs some help. When worry prevents you doing everyday things and affects your sleep or eating then it can be called anxiety. Sometimes anxiety gets in the way. For instance, it can stop people wanting to come to school or they avoid other things. There are lots of things to try to help anxiety, like learning how to self soothe, having someone meet them when they come to school, knowing where to go to be calm, or breaking things down into manageable chunks. (These could be covered in the next lesson.) The key thing is that someone knows.

It's good to notice what positives you have when things are worrying. Ask pupils to imagine what positives Jay already has. Eg good at Art, has a good relationship with Mary, mum is listening, can go out to the park, a brother to look after.

Older pupils can use a black and white copy of the Framework to colour all the Resilient Moves they already have in green, resilient moves they are ready to try amber and resilient moves they don't do or have yet red.

### **Seeking help**

This is a good opportunity to establish what the pupils know about help seeking within the school.

- Ask the pupils where Jay could get help at this school or in the community (You could also discuss who Jay could talk to if they were worried about their mum's anxiety)
- Ask pupils to come up with suggestions about what else the school could do that it doesn't offer already
- Try to make sure there is clarity about what happens when pupils seek help for instance, when is a good time for Jay to talk to a teacher, where is the right room, what will the teacher say to others, could their family get in trouble if they tell someone.
- Using what you have learned In groups pupils suggest advice for Jay from the Resilient Framework. Groups feedback to the class.

## **Plenary:**

Ask pupils to record or tell a friend one new thing they have learned about worry.

\* When learning is distanced, pupils are better able to engage with and discuss issues relating to mental health. If pupils are asked to reflect on and share their own experiences, they may feel strong emotions that hinder the ability to learn from, or derive insight from the example. (see PSHE association guidance Mental Health guidance online version (Updated July 2019).pdf (pshe-association.org.uk) p10)

\*\* Ground rules are fundamental to creating and maintaining a safe teaching and learning environment. Establishing a safe learning environment for both pupils and teacher is important for PSHE education lessons, especially those focusing on mental health and emotional wellbeing, as it: • protects pupils from possible distress • enables them to feel comfortable exploring values and attitudes • enables them to express their own opinions and consider the views and opinions of others, without the fear of negative feedback (ibid, p6)

\*\*\*it is very important that if pupils make personal disclosures to school staff they do so in a suitable, one-to-one setting. It is not appropriate to encourage pupils to talk about sensitive personal matters in the classroom. (ibid p.6)

\*\*\*\* More details for teaching the Resilience Framework in future lessons

Explain that the resilient moves have been grouped under different headings. Use Jay to give age-appropriate examples of resilient moves that Jay has in their life which would be possible in your school for example:

**Basics** – some basic things in life like enough sleep, play and exercise will help you when things feel difficult. Jay likes to go to the library at lunchtime to feel safe

**Belonging** – finding and keeping good relationships is a powerful way to get through tough times but sometimes it takes effort and thought to connect with people. Doing things for other people also helps us to feel good. Jay's teacher encouraged Jay to get involved in a club at school where they met other people from different classes and they are helping to keep the register.

**Learning** – learning new things helps you to see that you are making progress and can have some control. It doesn't have to be just school learning. Jay is really interested in castles and the receptionist at school is always asking Jay for a new fact so Jay tries to learn something new each week.

**Coping** – Different coping activities might work at different times. Sometimes being brave and faking it till you make it, sometimes trying to find some good things in a bad situation, sometimes remembering tomorrow is another day and you can start again. Jay has a bag with self-soothing items Jay is allowed to use if things get too much in class.

**Core-Self** - remembering who we are and what we value gets us through challenges. Also understanding other people's feelings. Jay has noticed they have a talent for rhythm and is following YouTube videos to get better at drumming on empty tins.

Learning how to use the Resilience Framework can be helped if you start with the Noble Truths.

**Accepting** – What types of things does Jay have to accept about their life at the moment, even if they'd rather it was not the case?

**Conserving** – What are the good things which have happened or what are some of the things Jay already has going for them?

**Commitment** – How long can Jay commit to do some resilient moves – perhaps going to bed at the same time for one week or doing exercise every Monday for one month? What type of things help with commitment – setting targets, putting alarms on a phone, building in some rest days, having people to check in with etc

**Enlisting** – Who could Jay enlist for help?

### **Additional resources about worry and anxiety**

For year 6 What to do about worry – Year 6 lesson plan pack | PHE School Zone

Activities for calming down <http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>

Information about anxiety <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/anxiety/>

7 ways to support young people who are worried <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/7-ways-to-support-children-and-young-people-who-are-worried/>

## **Appendix 1**

### **Example Scenario**

#### **Part 1**

Jay lives with their mum and step-dad near Alexandra Park in Hastings. They have one brother. On the last day before the lockdown Jay had a bad day because everything felt really strange and the head teacher had to talk to Jay about staying calm. During the pandemic Jay's mum had to go out to work in a shop every day and Jay's dad is a taxi driver. Jay was worried about their parents getting Covid but didn't want to talk about it because everyone was just getting on with stuff. For ages Jay didn't have any contact with school because there was no computer at home. At first it was fun staying in bed til lunchtime and staying up late at night. Jay did lots of drawing. But soon it got lonely and everyone argued a lot.

Jay had no idea what their friends were doing and started to feel scared that they were all meeting up or having fun and it would be impossible to make friends again when they went back to school.

#### **Part 2**

Jay used to like school, especially art. Jay also liked one of the lunch-time supervisors called Mary because she always lets Jay stand near-by if things are getting too loud and busy at break time. When Jay came back to school in September it started badly because Jay had trouble waking up and had a big row with their mum. Then there was a new teacher in a new classroom and Jay found it hard to sit still. Jay wanted to run away. At break time Jay couldn't think of anything to say to their friends. Jay felt really sick. Eventually Jay was sent home, but Jay's mum was cross because she had to come home early from work. When she listened to Jay, she said they would work out what to do together. Jay still couldn't sleep that night and could not face going to school. Everything felt too scary and out of control.

## **Appendix 2**

There are a range of activities you can try to familiarise pupils with the Resilience Framework.

- Pupils find four resilient that they did during the past year which might have helped them get through.
- Pupils plan some Resilient Moves they would like to try if things feel tough
- Discuss different ways to self soothe – eg breathing exercises, progressive relaxation, go for a run, listen to music, have a bath.
- In groups pupils act out resilient moves and guess which one is being acted
- Pupils create some bunting showing all the talents they already have in the class
- Pupils role play giving advice to different characters using the Resilience Framework

- See also The Resilient Classroom for activities based on the Framework [Boingboing-The-Resilient-Classroom-Web.pdf](#)

**If you have any further questions or would like any further support, please contact Gabrielle Rowles at [gabrielle@boingboing.org.uk](mailto:gabrielle@boingboing.org.uk)**

**Resources for schools created by Boingboing (CIC)  
in partnership with Hastings Opportunity Area**

