

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark skin and hair, looking slightly to the right. The child is holding a round, perforated cracker in their mouth and is in the process of eating it. The child is wearing a grey and blue patterned sweater. The background is blurred, showing other children in a classroom or playroom setting.

COVID-19

Wellbeing and resilience

Session outline

- Welcome and introduction.
- The context: **a sector under pressure** – James Hempsall, Director and psychotherapist
- **Pressure and stress**, signs, symptoms, effects – Barbara Wilson
- **How people respond to pressure** – Jonathan Trubshaw, Counsellor and Executive Coach
- **Supporting the early years and childcare sector** – Nicola Millard, Bedford Borough Council

**Pre-COVID-19
pressures**

COVID-19

**Change:
Needs, demands,
preferences and
practices**

**Families and children
Practitioners
Businesses
LA EY teams**

Stress is a mental and physical response by an individual to an inappropriate level of pressure, real or perceived... some common causes include:

- Perceived ability to cope with demands.
- A lack of control.
- A lack of information and support.
- Relationships.
- Lack of clarity around role and responsibilities.
- Change.

How do we recognise stress in ourselves?

- Emotional responses.
- Lowered self-esteem/self-confidence.
- Sleep disturbance.
- Changes in appetite.
- Poor decision-making/hard to concentrate.
- Physical effects – chest pain, skin irritation, breathlessness, muscle pain or tightness.
- Self-medication.

How do we recognise stress in others?

- Argumentative/volatile.
- Emotional.
- Absenteeism or presenteeism.
- Lack of motivation.
- Poor decision making/muddled thinking.
- Decrease in performance.
- Change in appearance.
- Withdrawal.

What can we do?

- Recognise the potential signs.
- Focus on own well-being, first and foremost.
- Open the subject up for discussion.
- Acknowledge this is a difficult time for many.
- Ask for, or offer support. Allow time to talk things through.
- Look for areas that can be controlled.
- Ensure good, regular and open consultation, especially through periods of change.



Responses to Pressure

Jonathan Trubshaw

Counsellor, Coach, LGA
Associate

Physiological

Stress stimulus

Chemical reactions

Fight/Flight

Freeze/Flop

...not a conscious decision

Psychological - Script

“It’s just me – it’s just the way I do things”

Doing the same things over again – repeated patterns of behavior

‘Should’ messages

Strategies we adopt: Injunctions (Don’t)

Drivers

Boundaries

Hard

Soft

Time

Financial

Flexible

Porous

Personal

Regulatory

Coping mechanisms

Alcohol

Food

Sex

Drugs

Physical activity

Gambling

Shopping

Prescription

Recreational

...and then not enough becomes too much

Practical approaches

Breathe

Structure time

Take breaks – short and regular, longer and planned

Exercise – take a walk in the daylight

Eat – be aware of sugar

Drink water

Talk to people – don't compare

...it is a matter of balance

Supporting staff, children and their families during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Nicola Millard

Adviser for Teaching and Learning
EYFS, Bedford Borough Council

Feeling Connected

- March to July; weekly emails
- May to July; fortnightly PSGs
- August ongoing; fortnightly emails
- September ongoing; half-termly PSGs

Regular video calls, phone calls and email support.

By the summer term,

Many staff were feeling....

- Tired
- Over-whelmed
- Anxious
- Isolated

Mental Health First Aid



Transferred to an online course, 4 sessions of approx. 2 hrs each, with pre-reading in between each session.

Very high quality.

Supporting our staff

- 16 EY practitioners in settings (1 childminder, 15 working in preschools/nurseries)
- 16 EY practitioners in schools (working in preschool/nursery, reception)

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www.mhfaengland.org

How the whole community benefits from our Mental Health First Aiders

- Leader guidance
- Whole school/setting
- EY Hubs



To support our MHFAs

- Buddy system
- Half-termly CPD and catch-up
- Online forum to share resources, webinars etc.

What's next?

- Recruiting further MHFAs (using training fund for EY and WER funding for schools)
- Celebration event in the summer term to showcase the good work of the MHFAs
- Continuing CPD for MHFAs