3 Key Messages Mental Health and Well-Being

Leisa Randall, Principal Educational Psychologist, Midlothian Educational Psychology Service

The COVID 19 outbreak has been difficult, challenging and distressing for many.

There is a great deal of information online to guide parents, teachers and young people in the area of mental health and well-being.

It has also been a time for people to reflect on the things that matter and find new ways to cope in a global crisis.

There are some very important, fundamental messages to remember when we think and talk about mental health and well-being for children and young people.

Key Message 1

Not every child or young person will have been traumatised, or feel anxious because of COVID 19.

For those who have been worried, sad and afraid, these feelings are normal and natural.

We must be very careful not to pathologise these natural responses as anxiety, depression or phobias.

Accepting 'negative' feelings as a natural response to a critical situation and exploring coping strategies is important in developing resilience.

Key Message 2

It can be hard for adults to see children and young people upset or worried. The temptation is often to try to 'solve' these feelings.

Adults should acknowledge and validate a child's emotions, not try to 'fix' them.

Listening to a child speak about difficult emotions, acknowledging and validating them as legitimate feelings are important steps to helping a young person build resilience.

Key Message 3

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity.

During this crisis we can help children and young people to build their resilience in a real-life way.

Resilience is developed through safe exposure to risk. An example of this is going out for exercise whilst taking the appropriate precautions of social distancing.

When an adult labels what a young person is doing to reduce the impact of the virus, this helps to promote a sense of personal agency and influence on circumstances beyond their control.

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