

# Wellbeing toolkit – Part 2: Case study activities

Age range: 14-16, 16-19

Enter



Commended

City  
Guilds

LifeSkills

Created with  BARCLAYS

# Wellbeing activities



These activities can be delivered as standalone sessions or as part of a series to give students a more well-rounded introduction to mental wellbeing. Each activity includes prompt questions and activities centred around a young person's experiences.



**Taking the pressure off**



**Approaching applications**



**Dealing with feedback**



**First day fears**



**Building relationships**

**Using practical activities and case studies based on real life situations, young people will be able to:**

- Manage and maintain their mental wellbeing as an integral part of their overall health
- Focus on developing skills such as resilience, communication, self-confidence, adaptability and proactivity
- Develop coping strategies that will better enable them to manage the everyday pressures and additional responsibilities of work
- Identify where and how they can ask for help and support, for themselves and others

Refer back to Part 1 of wellbeing toolkit for an introduction to the importance of young people's wellbeing for employability and ice-breaker activities to try with your students.



## Activity: Taking the pressure off

### Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify and use healthy coping strategies at school and in the workplace to manage unavoidable stress factors
- Demonstrate a positive, resilient mindset to cope with pressured situations
- Describe time management and organisation techniques to deal with high-pressure situations

**Activity affirmation – by the end of this activity, your students will be able to say:**

“When I am under extra pressure, I can manage it in a healthy, positive and productive way.”





## Case study: Luke's story whilst in education

I had always done well at school, but the pressure I felt in the lead-up to my GCSEs was like nothing I experienced before. I made a revision schedule for my mock exams and spent as many hours I could going through what I had learnt throughout the year. I got up early to fit in some revision before lessons started. As soon as I got home, I would eat quickly, then go to my room to continue revision, usually at least until midnight. I had no social life and spent all my weekends revising.

I found it hard to sleep at night and isolated myself from my friends and family. I kept having thoughts that I would fail my exams and worried about what people would think of me and how this would impact my ability to secure an apprenticeship. I also didn't want to let my teachers or family down.

The day of my first mock exam I felt so anxious that I almost didn't make it into school – I hardly slept the night before and found my heart racing leading up to the exam. As soon as it was over, I went to see my best mate. He knew something was wrong and when he asked if I was okay, I explained how bad the exam stress was making me feel.





## Case study: Luke's story at work

The first year of my apprenticeship job was great, I loved having a job and finally earning some money. I missed studying so was really pleased when my boss offered to pay for me to do a professional qualification in gas installation, which would allow me to add to my skills as a plumber and help with my future career goal of having my own business. What I hadn't realised was how difficult this would be to balance alongside my full-time role.

I chose to attend face-to-face classes, as well as online sessions. At first this was fine, as I could take one day off work to help with the studying... but in the lead-up to the practical exam, my team was given an emergency project with a really tight deadline on top of the usual workload. In order to complete the project in time and keep on top of my regular workload I worked through my lunchtime and stayed late at work, meaning I had less time for revision in the evenings. I noticed that my stress levels were rising as I had a short temper with my colleagues and I was struggling to sleep at night.





## Quick initial discussion

Focusing on the signs that Luke was under pressure, get students to read through Luke's story whilst in education and at work, then ask the following questions:

- What are the signs that Luke is under pressure?
- What other signs might you see that someone is under pressure leading up to exams and during the exam period?
- What is the impact of the pressure on this thoughts, feelings and behaviour?  
Are there any changes in the way that Luke has dealt with the pressures comparing education to work?

Ask the questions below for general discussion. You could also return to these at the end of the lesson:

- Why do you think people often imagine the worst-case scenario when they're in high-pressure situations?
- Are there ways in which being under pressure and feeling stressed could be useful or positive?





## 1. Coping strategies



In small groups, ask students to make a mind map of different coping strategies that someone like Luke could use to maintain his wellbeing when under pressure. Ask them to think about strategies related to:

- Turning around unhelpful and negative thoughts (e.g. establishing a growth, rather than fixed mindset)
- Managing expectations and keeping them realistic
- Making a plan B in case things don't work out
- Dealing with change
- Recognising the signals of stress in yourself and others and being able to act on it

Ask someone from each group to present three strategies from their mind map to the class and briefly explain them.

14-16

When every group has fed back, ask the class to vote for the three strategies which they think would work best for when they are under pressure at school e.g. revising for tests and exams; managing large amounts of homework.

16-19

When every group has fed back, ask the class to vote for the three strategies they think would work best when they are under pressure in a new job e.g. studying for work-related qualifications; taking on additional responsibilities; managing a new task on top of their usual workload.



## 2. Luke's action plan

In small groups, draw up an action plan for Luke to help him manage the pressure he's under. Students should make sure they include the following:

- Practical suggestions of what Luke can do (relate these to his thoughts, feelings and behaviour). Typical examples which the students could suggest:
  - Speaking to other people who can offer support and guidance
  - Researching websites and forums with helpful advice
  - Taking more breaks and short walks
  - Writing everything down in a journal and focusing on the successes/positives
- Organisation of the coping strategies:
  - When will they happen – e.g. every day, all the time, for a short time each day, once only?
  - Where will they happen?
  - Do they require any additional resources?
  - Who else could be involved or help?
- Alternative ideas (a plan B) in case a strategy isn't effective
- How the strategies will help ease the pressure on Luke
- Next, show students how Luke dealt with his challenges (choose the slide appropriate to your group). Get students to compare their action plans and discuss any similarities and differences
- Consider measurable outcomes i.e. how will Luke know that the strategy is working?





## How Luke decided to resolve this: Whilst in education

I went to see my best mate. He knew something was wrong and when he asked if I was OK, I explained how bad the exam stress was making me feel.

Initially, I felt embarrassed telling him everything, but he was so supportive and didn't judge me. He took me to see our tutor who was helpful and understanding and helped me feel more normal for being so stressed about exams. She said I should start doing things to keep the stress at bay, like taking more breaks and being active, even if that just meant going for a short walk each day. She also encouraged me to speak to my parents to show them how worried I was about letting them down.

I took my tutor's advice and found ways to manage my stress – there were loads of helpful websites and forums out there. I found the courage to speak to my parents and they were really reassuring, which helped take off some of the pressure.

For the rest of the exam period I felt stressed at times, but not as much as when I sat that first mock. I realised that regularly talking to my friend, tutor and family, even if it's difficult to start with, was really good for my overall wellbeing.



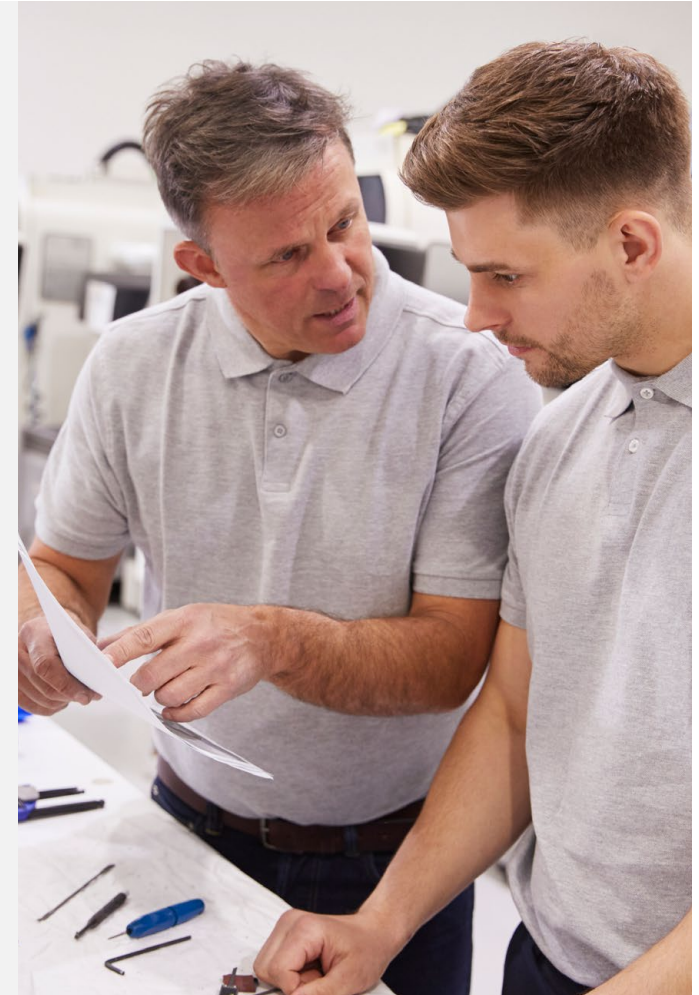


## How Luke decided to resolve this: Whilst at work

I knew I had to take control of the situation and speak to my manager about the pressure I was feeling. I related this to when I was at school so decided to talk to my teacher.

The conversation with my manager went well, he helped lessen my workload and encouraged me to leave work on time each day. To feel less anxious about the exam, I practised simple techniques to manage my stress. Before going to bed, I wrote down everything I was worried about in a journal, plus at least one positive thing that had happened that day. This helped me reflect on my wellbeing, figure out what sorts of things trigger my anxiety, and see the positives.

I'm now working towards my final module and, although it's still challenging sometimes, I feel like I can strike a better balance now between my job and studying.





## 3. What helps me?

Ask the students to take the following activity away to complete in their own time so that they have time to reflect upon their own pressures and coping strategies that they already use or could use to overcome.

- What pressures do you currently feel within your personal life, school, extra curricular activities, voluntary and paid work?
- Identify any strategies you particularly liked the sound of during class discussion, or others that you may have identified after the session, that could make useful coping strategies for you





## Activity: Approaching applications

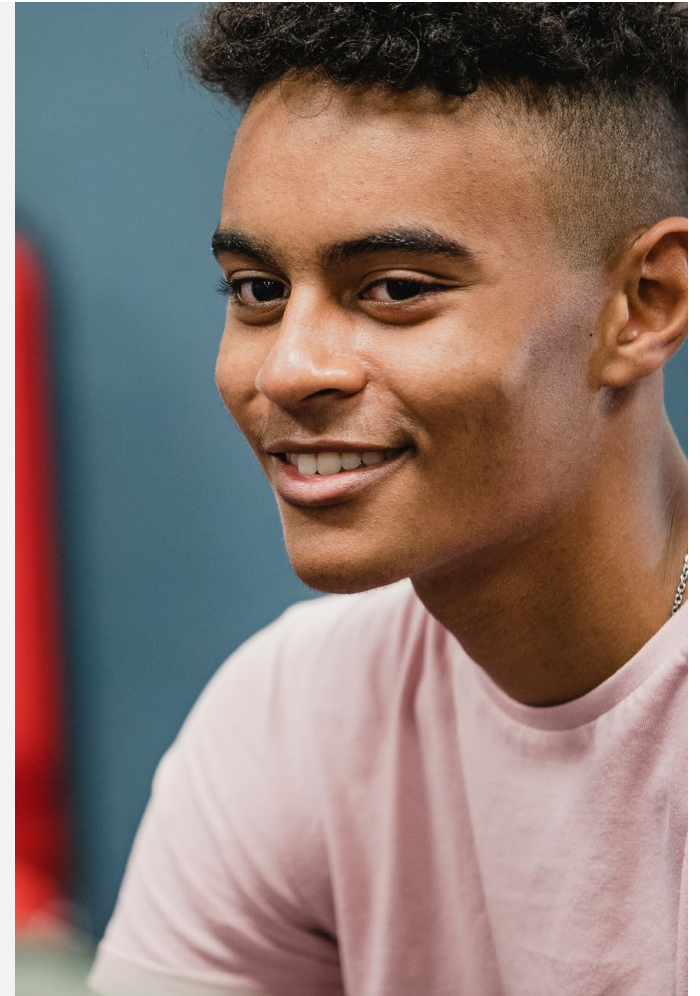
### Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify ways to develop resilience and a positive mindset when going through the application process.
- Identify the skills, strengths and qualities you have that will help you achieve your goals, and those you need to develop further and develop resilience.

**Activity affirmation – by the end of this activity, your students will be able to say:**

“I can identify my strengths, qualities and abilities, and stay focussed on these to achieve my goals and be resilient in the face of setbacks.”





## 14-16 Case study: Mia's story applying for a course whilst in education

During last year of sixth form, I applied to five universities to study primary education with qualified teacher status, but I failed to get a place at any of them. I worked hard on my personal statement and I felt as though I had done the best I could, so I was devastated not to get an interview.

At the time, it felt like all my friends were doing well and I was getting left behind. I found it hard to concentrate on studying because I was so worried about the future. I felt as though I had let everyone down.





## 16-19 Case study: Mia's story applying for jobs

After graduating from university and having lots of work experience within education, I thought I would get a job quickly, but I was completely wrong.

I'd hoped to stay on with the school where I did my last placement but there were no job openings. Instead, I applied for a school near to where I lived and plus a few others. It was a tiring process as I put a lot of effort into each application.

When the first rejection email came through, I was a bit disappointed but when the second, third and fourth rejection emails arrived, I started to feel really anxious and worried. I asked the schools for feedback but only got vague comments.





## Quick initial discussion

Ask students to read Mia's story, then use the following prompts to start an introductory discussion:

- What are her feelings about the university and course/job she's applying for?
- How could the way she feels after the rejection impact on her job search and how she behaves in a job once she secures one?
- Will this be an easy process for her?





## 1. Managing negative feelings



Divide the class into small groups and ask them to first make a list of the kinds of feelings and emotions that Mia might have had after her university and job applications were rejected.

Give each group a set of the 'Mia's choice cards' (see next slide to print copies of these and hand them out to each group). These list different ways Mia could manage her feelings and the choices she could make based on those feelings.

Ask each group to sort the cards into two piles: helpful and unhelpful. For each one, ask them to identify the following:

- Why is this a helpful/unhelpful choice?
- What could be the outcome if Mia made this choice?
- How could Mia's feelings have affected this choice?
- What could be the effect on Mia's mental wellbeing of making this choice?

For each unhelpful choice, ask the group to pick a 'helpful choice' card which could act as a way for Mia to reframe her reaction. e.g. 'I feel like a failure and don't see the point in my exams now.' could be reframed as 'I really want to go to that university and do that course. I'm not going to give up'

### Extension activity

Ask the group to choose one unhelpful and one helpful choice. For each, draw a consequences spider diagram to show how the way we manage our feelings can affect our behaviours and final outcomes of situations.





## Mia's choice cards

I feel like a failure and don't see the point in my exams now.	I put so much effort into that application next time I won't waste my time.
I feel bad about this, but I just have to keep on trying to get where I want to be.	I didn't want the job anyway.
It's ok, I'll re-apply next year and make sure I work really hard to get the grades I need.	I was perfect for that job, it's their loss.
Maybe I need to think again about whether this is really what I want to do. I'll do some more research.	The ideal job is out there waiting for me, I just have to find it.
Is there another course or university I could apply for?	Perhaps I could email the company and ask them for some feedback on my interview, to help me work out where I went wrong...
I really want to go to that university and do that course. I'm not going to give up!	Not another rejection... what's the matter with me?
I never wanted to do that course anyway.	Right, I'm going back to my application to work out what I can do better next time.
Ok, I didn't get in but I know this is what I want to do so I'll make it happen some other way.	Oh well, if I'd got that job I'd have had loads of commuting and I wasn't sure about that from the start.
Right, I've got an extra year that I didn't bargain for. Let's think about what I can do with it.	This is the third rejection for this type of work. Perhaps I need to think about applying for something different.



## 2. Resilience and adaptability strategies

Divide students into pairs or threes and give them a set of **Resilience and adaptability strategy cards** (see next slide).

Ask them to sort these into **two** piles:

1. Helpful strategies to manage disappointment and help build resilience
2. Unhelpful strategies to manage disappointment. You may want to skip to the next step of this activity for older or more advanced groups

Now ask them to sort the cards again, this time into **three** piles:

1. Unhelpful strategies
2. Strategies to prevent disappointments
3. Strategies to manage disappointments and move on

Ask pairs/groups to share some of their responses, then discuss as a class:

- Which are unhelpful coping strategies and why? What could be the eventual impact of using these?
- What can people do to reduce the impact of disappointments that haven't happened yet?
- How does a balanced approach to disappointments help a person manage them?
- What might be the implications if people don't manage disappointments successfully?

Ask students to consider how these strategies might be helpful to them when applying for future courses or work

Individually, ask students to reflect on the strategies given on the cards and choose at least three which they think could be helpful to them in the future



Activity main menu	Taking the pressure off	<b>Approaching applications</b>	Dealing with feedback	First day fears	Building relationships	Further support
--------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	------------------------	-----------------

## Resilience and adaptability strategy cards

Tell yourself that you are useless and that you can't do it.	Give up trying to achieve your goal. Tell yourself it's not going to happen.	Ignore the disappointment and hope it goes away.
Acknowledge your feelings, but don't blame yourself or others for them.	Talk to someone who might help you see a situation differently.	Get help or speak to someone who might know how to deal with a situation differently.
Complain to people about how unfair the situation is.	Remind yourself of a time when you managed a similar disappointment well.	Think of the positives about a situation (e.g. you'll have more time for other things); you'll be able to stay at home for longer; it would have meant a lot of travelling.
Let your emotions out.		
Have ambitious goals, but make them realistic (e.g. 'I'm going to be the best at everything I ever do' vs. 'I'm going to work hard to get the grades I need').	Eat unhealthily to make you feel better or forget your troubles.	Reframe negative elements and turn them into positives i.e. look for the silver lining.
Recognise your value even when you don't get what you wanted.	Do things you know cheer you up: see a friend who makes you laugh, do an activity/exercise you enjoy etc.	Re-assess goals – are they the right ones for you?
Learn from the experience – what could you do differently next time?	Gain perspective – how will this disappointment impact on your life tomorrow, next week, next year?	Take a deep breath and try again.
Think about how someone you admire or look up to would cope in this situation.	Use positive reinforcement (e.g. 'I can do this) and dismiss unhelpful doubts, especially absolutes (e.g. 'I'm never going to succeed').	Write a list of all your achievements or positive qualities and read it to yourself as a reminder when things go wrong.



## 3. Mia's resilience action plan



In groups, ask students to review Mia's story again, along with the second part of her story on the next slides (choose the scenario appropriate to your group). Then ask them to list all the knowledge, character qualities, skills and attitudes that Mia needed to manage the situation she was in.

Discuss with the class:

- Which words would they use to describe someone who has these qualities, skills and attitudes? (For example, resilience, adaptability)
- What do you think 'resilience' means?
- How can someone demonstrate resilience?
- How might someone develop the qualities and skills they need to be resilient?
- In which life situations might we need to be resilient? (Try to draw out examples which are relevant to the age group)

**Note: ensure students recognise that being resilient does not mean putting up with bad situations**





## How Mia decided to resolve this: Whilst in education

The turning point came when I met with my tutor and explained how I was feeling. He helped me see I wasn't a failure and that taking a year out to get experience working with children could make my application stronger for next time around. I started opening up to friends and family and I realised that sharing my worries made me feel less alone. One of my friends encouraged me to join her running club and we started going together three times a week.

With help from my tutor, I came up with a new plan to focus on my studies and get the A Level results needed to get onto the University course. In the meantime, I contacted schools in my area and got myself a two-week placement, which gave me something to look forward to. I made sure I spoke to friends and family if I ever felt down and I kept up my running.

Although getting lots of rejections from universities was disheartening at first, it helped me build resilience, overcome setbacks, and learn how to ask for help when I need it.





## How Mia decided to resolve this: Whilst applying for jobs

I knew from experience that it wasn't good for my wellbeing to deal with challenges like this alone, so I decided to contact my university's careers service. I found out I could visit them even a year or two after graduating. Having regular one-to-ones with a careers adviser enabled me set realistic goals and stay positive. The careers adviser also looked over my job applications to see where I had been going wrong and gave guidance on making it better.

During this period of unemployment, I started practising yoga and mindfulness – I downloaded a free app to guide me through a short daily routine, which really helped me with my sleep.

Finally, I got interviews with two schools and was offered a role. The graduate job application process was a tough one but reaching out for support helped massively and I've kept up my mindfulness exercises.





## 4. My action plan

As a class, make a list of life goals that people of their age might have, ensuring you get a mix of life- and work-related achievements. At this stage, write down any suggestions, even if they seem unrealistic or unattainable (e.g. winning the London Marathon; owning their own business; inventing the next big innovation of the 21st century; becoming the next big social media star; etc.)

Discuss the difference between aspirations and goals which are realistic, and those which are less so (e.g. it isn't impossible to win the London Marathon, but it's unlikely unless you're prepared to do a lot of training to become a high-level athlete). Draw up a final list of realistic goals and aspirations which relate to life and work

In groups, ask students to revisit the list they made earlier of the knowledge, skills, attributes and qualities people would need to achieve the listed goals; what would they add to this list to make the goals achievable?

**Individually, ask students to make an action planner (see next slide):**

- In the first column they should list their existing skills, qualities and attributes (if they struggle with this, consider pairing them with a friend for mutual support)
- In the second column they should list their goals and aspirations for life and work
- In the third column they should list the challenges and possible setbacks they see there being (e.g. if wanting to become an author, they could get multiple rejections from the publishers they send their manuscript to). What skills, knowledge and strengths could they use or develop to overcome these challenges?

# Wellbeing activities



Activity main menu

Taking the pressure off

**Approaching applications**

Dealing with feedback

First day fears

Building relationships

Further support

## Action plan

What are your existing skills, qualities and attributes?	What are your goals and aspiration for life and work?	What potential challenges might you face? How could you overcome these?



# Wellbeing activities



Activity main menu

Taking the pressure off

Approaching applications

Dealing with feedback

First day fears

Building relationships

Further support



14-16

Now ask students to consider what they will need to do to reach one of their current goals. They should identify a back-up plan to put in place if it didn't work out, and how they might use the skills of adaptability to get around the challenges. The planner can be revisited at different times as they develop strengths and skills and move towards their goals.

16-19

For older students, focus more on where students are in their lives now, and what they have done to get to this point. Students may also want to complete this activity individually and think about more immediate, closely attainable goals e.g. a job interview coming up for their dream job, putting their name down for a scholarship etc. They should also include alternative possibilities in case they don't manage to achieve them.



## Activity: Dealing with feedback

### Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe ways in which feedback can help with personal development and improvement
- Identify contrasting ways in which people may act on feedback, and the possible consequences of their behaviour
- Identify positive ways to use feedback to further develop skills and employability
- Describe ways to ‘move on’ from disappointing feedback or setbacks and develop resilience to improve performance

**Activity affirmation – by the end of this activity, your students will be able to say:**

“I can use feedback to develop and improve.”





14-16

## Case study: Emma's story whilst in education

At school I kept my head down and got on with my work. I found maths difficult and had a strict teacher. On one occasion I was really struggling to solve a maths problem and it felt impossible. My teacher told me I was 'giving up too easily'; he said: 'I know you can solve this'.

I took it personally and rather than believe him, I talked myself down and got myself into a negative state of mind, with 'I can't do it, it's impossible' circling round my head. Then, when I realised I was going to be kept behind if I didn't solve the problem, I started crying. I felt like I was a failure as I couldn't get the right answer and wasn't able to meet my teacher's expectations of me.



Listen to audio  
version here



16-19

## Case study: Emma's story at work

I began work as a junior graphic designer. I had been in the company for 3 months when I had my first review. My line manager gave me lots of positive feedback about my work, but it was followed by telling me I should be 'more thorough' and that I was late every day. I was mortified as it felt like the negative feedback had built up and I wished they'd told me what I was doing wrong from the beginning. I'd always done well at school and not really been told off, so I felt like I'd really let myself down. After the meeting I felt disappointed in myself and had a cry.



Listen to audio  
version here



## Quick initial discussion

Listen to the case study when Emma was in education and at work, then use the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- Why do we need feedback/why is it helpful?
- How did Emma respond to the feedback?
- What could be the consequences of Emma responding the way she did? (Discuss this in relation to Emma herself, and to the situation).
- What options does Emma have now?
- If you were Emma's friend/colleague, what advice would you give?
- Do you think Emma is the only person in a similar situation who feels this way?





## 1. Responding to feedback

As a class, make a list of ways in which constructive feedback on performance helps us. Remind students that the person receiving feedback also has a responsibility to act on that feedback.

Look back at the case study. What are the words and phrases that demonstrate the aspects of feedback that were intended to help Emma improve and develop?

How could Emma have responded positively to the feedback?

In small groups, ask students to take it in turns to play the 'teacher' or 'manager' from Emma's case study and 'Emma', with at least one student observing. The 'teacher' or 'manager' gives the feedback referred to in the case study and 'Emma' responds to the feedback in a positive way. Ask the observing student(s) to identify some differences between the negative reaction (in the case study) and positive reactions.





## How Emma decided to resolve this: Whilst in education

I ended up staying over some of the lunch break and ultimately with guidance from my teacher managed to solve the problem. It made me realise how detrimental my negative attitude had been.

Solving the problem gave me more faith in my ability and I realised the value of a can-do attitude and how much more I can achieve if I focus and apply myself. The situation was ultimately positive as it showed me that my teacher believed in me and gave me the feedback to help me learn and develop. I went on to get a B in Maths at AS level.



Listen to audio version here



## How Emma decided to resolve this: Whilst at work

After I'd composed myself, I decided I would work on these areas for development. I remembered that the review was 80%-90% good, and I was dwelling on the negatives. From then on, I made sure I left the house 5 minutes earlier every morning and while the "more thorough" point has been flagged again in other reviews, I've been told each year that I have improved.

I've learnt that thorough-ness is not in my nature, so it is something I need to try to work on. However, I know that there are areas where my work is stronger than other people's. I'm grateful for my manager's feedback, as it's offered me the opportunity to get better at something. If I didn't get that feedback, I wouldn't be able to improve. After a couple of years working closely with my manager, I'd like to think that when I have a junior person reporting to me, I will instil the same values in them.



Listen to audio version here





## 2. Developing skills/ Managing disappointment



After listening to Emma's at work and in education case study, ask students to give reasons why Emma may initially have reacted in the way she did to the feedback. For example, she may have thought she was thorough, so it was a shock.

Acknowledge with students that it can be very disappointing and demoralising to receive feedback which isn't entirely positive, especially when you have worked hard for something, but you have to find ways to manage that disappointment in order to learn and move on.

Make a class list of some ways that people deal with a setback, or with getting disappointing feedback. These could range from reactions such as 'cry' which Emma refers to in the first part of her at work case study, to more long-term strategies such as remembering to focus on strengths.

Tell students that in order to start moving on from disappointment, it's useful to order strategies into things they can do now, do soon or do later, rather than trying to do everything at once when they're not feeling their best.

14-16

Divide the students into small groups and give them a set of 'Emma's choice cards' (see next slide to print copies of these and hand them out to each group). Include some blank cards so they can add any from the class list that aren't included. Ask them to sort the cards into three sets: 'Do now'; 'Do soon' and 'Do later'. When everyone has finished, ask groups to feedback one of their sets to the class, explaining why they have placed the cards there.

Discuss how each set of strategies can help, now and in the future. Distinguish between the short-term 'Do now' strategies which can help someone feel better, and the longer-term 'Do later' strategies which can help with future development.

16-19

Discuss with students how they have reacted to disappointing feedback in the past, especially in relation to employment. What have they learnt from these situations and the way they dealt with feedback? What lessons can they apply to their long-term employment goals?



## Emma's choice cards

Have a relaxing bath	Allow emotions to be shown/released
Do some exercise you enjoy e.g. go for a run/long walk/do yoga/kick a ball around	Gain perspective – how will this disappointment impact on your life tomorrow, next week, next year?
Eat chocolate	Remind yourself of a time when you managed a similar disappointment which worked out fine.
Call your best friend	Ask for help or speak to someone who can give you good advice
Speak to a teacher	Take a deep breath and try again
Consider and research other options	Look through your work again and identify things you could improve
Evaluate your strengths, work out how to use them	Use positive reinforcement (e.g. 'I can improve') and dismiss unhelpful doubts, especially absolutes (e.g. 'I'm never going to get better'; 'Everyone thinks I'm rubbish').
Focus on the present – sights, sounds, smells of what is happening right now.	Write down how you are feeling, either in a journal or on a piece of paper to throw away and 'let go'.



## 3. Moving on



If students have already done the Approaching Applications module earlier on in the toolkit, you might find it useful to recap on some of the learning from it about developing resilience.

Ask students to clarify why it is important to our growth and development to move on from setbacks and disappointments, like Emma managed to. As well as enabling us to improve our abilities and skills, how does moving on benefit our health and wellbeing? How did moving on from the feedback make Emma feel?

Divide students into small groups or pairs and give each group a set of 'Moving on' scenarios (see next slide to print copies of these and hand them out to each group). Ask students to discuss and decide on the best way to move on from that situation to benefit their future employability, and health and wellbeing.

Extension activity:



### Giving professional advice

Individually, or in pairs, ask students to imagine that they are managers or senior colleagues of Emma's that she has spoken to for advice. Ask them to write Emma an email acknowledging her disappointment and giving her professional advice about why and how she should move on.



14-16

## Scenario cards

You missed the grade you wanted in an exam by two marks.

You have an interview for a course you want to do at the local college, but receive an email telling you that you weren't successful in getting a place.

You really want to take a subject at A level, but your teacher advises that you might find too challenging and not do well.

Your teacher gives you feedback on your GCSE coursework and tells you that there are a lot of things you need to do to improve to achieve the grade you want.

16-19

## Scenario cards

You have had three unsuccessful job interviews. When you ask for feedback you are told that you don't have enough experience.

You're in your first job and have spent the last six months working hard on a project. When you finish it, your manager isn't as positive about your work as you hoped she would be.

You have had an offer for a university course you really want to do. When you get your exam results one of the grades isn't high enough for the university offer.

You and your friend are both interviewed for the same job. You really want it, but she's not that bothered. She is offered the job.



## Activity: First day fears

### Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe examples of education and job-related transition that people experience
- Identify some of the emotions people may feel during a time of transition
- Identify strategies for managing feelings and emotions during moments of transition to enable someone to feel more confident and in control
- Identify personal strategies for use during periods of transition

**Activity affirmation – by the end of this activity, your students will be able to say:**

“When I feel ‘first day nerves’, I can find ways to feel calm and in control.”





## 14-16 Case study: Darik's story whilst in education

In the summer before I started my GCSE year, we moved to a new house, and I had to start a new school in another part of the country. The first day of term I was nervous and felt sick. It was a similar feeling to when I started in Year 7, but I'd had all my friends with me then and this time I didn't know anyone. All I could think about was what ifs: what if no-one spoke to me, what if they said horrible things to me, what if I didn't meet anyone I could be friends with and had to be on my own for the next two years.

I kept worrying about the teachers as well. At my last school I'd got on well with most of my teachers and got good grades. I was worried the teachers would be really strict or expect me to know things which I'd not learnt yet. I didn't even know if at my new school we'd be doing the same things as I was before.

With all this going on in my head I found it hard to concentrate on anything.



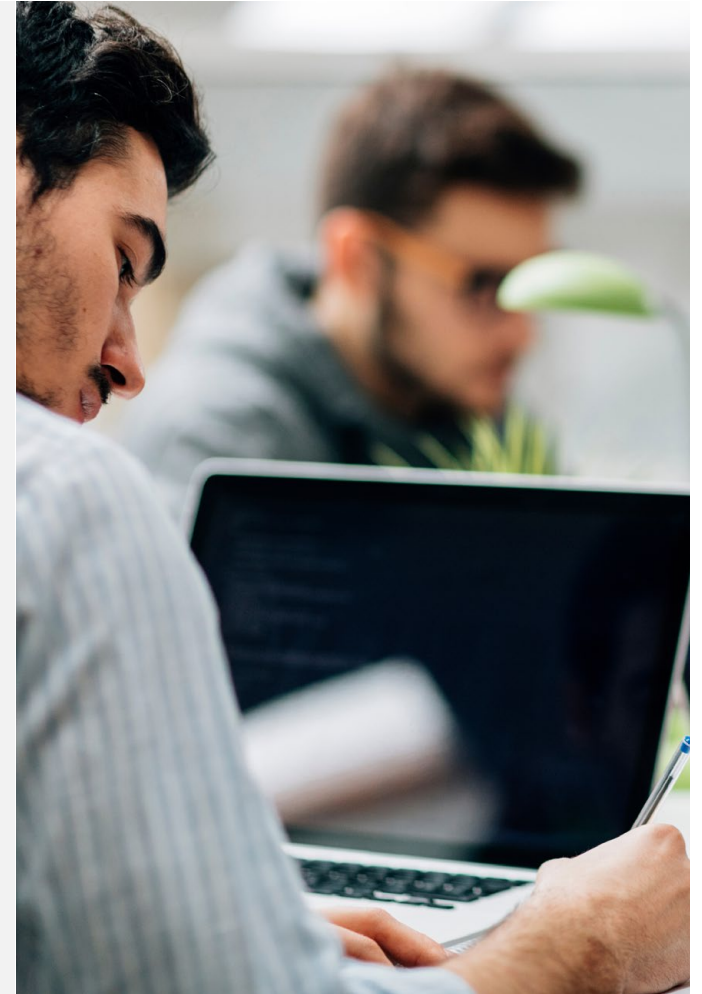


## 16-19 Case study: Darik's story whilst at work

I was so nervous on my first day of work that I didn't want to go. It was a job I had worked so hard to get, but when the day came, I just wished I could get back into bed and pull the covers over my head.

There were so many things to think about that I started to worry about little things, like whether I was dressed right - I didn't want to look overdressed, but at the same time I didn't want to look too casual either in case no-one took me seriously.

One of my biggest worries was not knowing what to do when I got there and messing up on the job. I didn't know if anyone would tell me what to do or if I'd have to get on with it by myself - I was so worried about making a mistake and letting the team down. I knew I was on probation for six months and I wasn't sure if they'd dismiss me if I got something wrong. The worst thing was that I started to think I wasn't good enough for the job and shouldn't have applied in the first place, even though it was something I'd really set my heart on doing.





## Quick initial discussion

Get students to read the first part of Darik's story (beginning a new school or job), then use the following prompts to start an introductory discussion (adapt as required for each age range):

- Identify some of Darik's feelings and fears about starting a new school/work
- Why might he be feeling this way?
- Are his fears/anxieties rational ones (i.e. are they based on a known reality?)
- Do you think he is the only person in a similar situation who feels this way?
- Why might Darik perceive others as feeling differently to him?







## 1. Identifying feelings and fears



As a class, read through Darik's case study again and discuss the word 'transition' in this context, and identify what kind of transition Darik is going through. Make a list of other transitions that young people might experience in relation to school or work (e.g. moving year group/class; starting a new course; starting a job; getting promoted at work).

Ask the class to imagine that they're in Darik's situation, either having started a new school or at their first day of work (or alternatively to remember a time when they were in a similar transition situation). Create a 'First day nerves graffiti wall' by asking students to write a thought, feeling or word on a post-it and stick on a large shared piece of paper (they can do as many post-its as they like). Read out some of the post-its – many will express similar feelings. Establish that everyone feels fears and anxieties in a new situation.





## 2. Managing transition and fears



In groups, ask students to consider each of Darik's fears from his case study, and suggest ways that he could manage each one:

- a) **Calming strategy**, a way that makes Darik feel calmer (e.g. 'take some deep breaths')
- b) **Confidence building strategy**, a way that helps Darik feel more in control of the situation (e.g. 'ask for help')

Ask each group to feedback and make a class list of both types of strategy.

Drawing on the initial discussion above, question the reasons that people have fears and anxieties when they are going through a period of transition. Highlight that often it is because of 'fear of the unknown' – a situation we haven't experienced before can be scary because we don't know what to expect.

Ask each group to look again at Darik's fears and worries about his first day. Then ask them to consider whether these are known fears, i.e. those which Darik knows for certain will happen, or unknown fears i.e. those which aren't based on prior knowledge of the situation. Sort the fears into a 'known' and an 'unknown' list. Which list is longer?

Ask students to consider how identifying his fears could help Darik. Ask them to produce some advice to help him turn his negative thoughts into positive ones and take control of his feelings. They can produce this in a format of their choice e.g. action plan, mind map, video, voice recording etc., using their learning from the activities above and considering the following:

1. **Take stock/be mindful:** Accept that change is uncomfortable, but that it will pass; there will always be things that are daunting and scary; remember that once he's got through it, it will be easier next time
2. **Reflect:** Think about where his strengths lie – think about the positives so that his outlook is improved e.g. seeing this situation as a great opportunity
3. **Break it down:** Which fears can he address? What can he do? Which aspects can he solve easily because of the strengths he has? Which aspects should he try to let go of?
4. **Put it into practice:** Work out some ways to turn these reflections into action e.g. successful experiences he's had before: what did he do well? How did he learn from these?



## How Darik decided to resolve this: Whilst at school

My mum noticed I was acting differently and asked me what the matter was. Even though I felt stupid, I told her about some of the ‘what ifs’ and that I was really nervous about my first day. Each time I said ‘But what if...’ she asked me if that was a ‘known’ fear or an ‘unknown’ fear – for example, did I know that the other kids were going to be horrible, or that the teachers would be strict? She got me to take each worry in turn and decide if it was ‘known’ or ‘unknown’, and that helped me see that I was feeling afraid of things which might not even happen.

Each time I said ‘What if...’ Mum threw it back at me, so when I said ‘What if no-one wants to be my friend?’ she said, ‘But what if lots of people do?’ and that made me laugh and realised that things could work just as easily the other way.

When I went into school that day, I was nervous, but felt more in control of my feelings. The first class I went into the teacher welcomed me and told me to ask if anything was different or unclear. I sat next to someone who showed me where everything was that day and told me all the ins and outs of the school –now they’re one of my best friends.





## How Darik decided to resolve this: Whilst at work

I spoke with my manager about how I felt and how I could ensure I approach the situation professionally, whilst still getting my point across. She helped me develop my emotional intelligence – my ability to recognise emotions and understand what they are telling me. Beforehand I was afraid to be too honest and possibly hurt a colleague's feelings, but I wasn't happy with how things were going either.

After getting advice on how to best approach the situation, I felt I could openly discuss my opinions knowing that what I was saying was appropriate and had a right to be taken on board. This resulted in my colleague having newfound respect for me, strengthening our working relationship.

### Extension activity: Personal strategies



Ask students to reflect on their own situations. How might they use the strategies they have identified to help them with their own 'first day nerves'?

One way of doing this is for students to create a table headed 'First day fears' in one column and 'Ways to help' in another. Against each fear identified, ask them to think of a strength they have, and something practical they could do to manage it and feel in control.



## Activity: Building relationships

### Key learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify key aspects of positive relationships, including working relationships
- Describe ways in which to achieve positive working relationships
- Describe the benefits of positive relationships on people's health and wellbeing
- Identify the benefits of positive working relationships for both employees and employers

**Activity affirmation – by the end of this activity, your students will be able to say:**

**“I can build positive new relationships.”**





14-16

## Case study: Rhianne's story whilst in education

When I was at school, I felt anxious and constantly believed my schoolwork wasn't good enough. I would feel disappointed in myself if other people did better than me. Due to the pressure I was feeling, I wasn't just hard on myself, I was also becoming sharp with my friends and family. I felt that everyone's expectations of me were high and if I didn't reach them then I was a failure.

I didn't feel that I could be open with anyone about how I was feeling, but this was in fact pushing people away and making my situation even more difficult and I was risking valuable relationships. I eventually broke down in front of one of my teachers when they realised my studies were being affected and I was struggling to cope with all the additional pressure.

Rhianne is a Time to Change Young Champion. Young champions are aged 16-25 and have lived experience of mental health problems. They speak out and share their experiences in schools, events and conferences, online and in the media.

Visit the Time to Change website at [time-to-change.org.uk](https://time-to-change.org.uk)

**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination



Listen to audio version here



16-19

## Case study: Rhianne's story whilst at work

I work for the Council as a Partnerships Policy Officer. A big part of the role is the delivery of communications between partners and members of the council and public. When I first joined, I felt very anxious, triggered by the new environment and colleagues. When I started the job, I was given a lead role in the restructure of the partnership website and had the opportunity to redesign their logo.

This was a huge project and although I was excited about it, it also made me feel anxious as I wanted to ensure things were done well. I experienced disagreements in how to deliver the project with another colleague which I found really hard, as I didn't know how to approach and resolve the situation. I was still relatively new there and didn't feel able to confide in anyone about the pressure I was feeling and how the conflict with my colleague was affecting me.



Listen to audio  
version here



## Quick initial discussion

Ask the students to listen and read about Rhianne's experience then use questions to stimulate discussion, such as the following:

- Why are positive relationships important?
- How can relationships affect our wellbeing (positively and negatively)?  
What are the benefits of good working relationships?
- What are some key aspects of good working relationships? How could better relationships have helped Rhianne in the scenarios she was in?







## 1. Healthy relationships

Ask the students to listen and read about Rhianne's experience then use questions to stimulate discussion, such as the following:

- **Communication:** building positive relationships, empathising/understanding the feelings and needs of others, establishing rapport
- **Proactivity:** identifying opportunities to establish a new relationship
- **Listening:** using active listening techniques to understand the feelings and needs of, and ultimately be able to better support others
- **Empathy:** show understanding of another's feelings
- **Respect:** give due regard for someone's feelings, wishes, or rights

Divide the class into small groups and give each group one aspect from the list. Ask them to describe what that aspect might look like in practice e.g. Respect = speaking to someone politely and asking for their opinions.

Ask each group to feed back their responses for discussion.

In their groups, ask students to look at Rhianne's case study scenarios. In the scenario, which of the key aspects of positive relationships identified by the class is missing? How has the relationship been affected as a result? How might this affect Rhianne's life and work now and going forward?



## How Rhianne decided to resolve this: Whilst at school

My teacher encouraged me to visit the Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator at my school to see what I could do to help with how I was feeling. They showed me different coping mechanisms to help me deal with my feelings, such as mindfulness, writing, as well as ‘tapping’ techniques, where you gently tap parts of your body. These helped me take my mind off things and breathing techniques helped me to manage my anxiety.

I was then able to open up to friends and family, which relieved some of the pressure as they were even more supportive than before. This helped me realise that I could trust others to help me when I was feeling low or pressured and that it was more than normal for me to be feeling the way that I was.



Listen to audio version here



## How Rhianne decided to resolve this: Whilst at work

I spoke with my manager about how I felt and how I could ensure I approach the situation professionally, whilst still getting my point across. She helped me develop my emotional intelligence – my ability to recognise emotions and understand what they are telling me. Beforehand I was afraid to be too honest and possibly hurt a colleague's feelings, but I wasn't happy with how things were going either.

After getting advice on how to best approach the situation, I felt I could openly discuss my opinions knowing that what I was saying was appropriate and had a right to be taken on board. This resulted in my colleague having newfound respect for me, strengthening our working relationship.



Listen to audio version here



## 2. Learning to listen



Ask students to listen to Rhianne's case study again and consider instances where active listening helped Rhianne to resolve the situation and why active listening is such an important skill, especially in the workplace. In small groups, ask them to come up with a set of 'rules' for active listening - they should try to think of at least six. Once they have agreed on their rules, ask them to create a continuum line with 'Most important' at one end and 'Least important' at the other, then place their rules on the line. How will they decide how to do this?

When they have finished, ask groups to feed back their rules and continuum line results to the rest of the class. Discuss the outcomes using questions such as:

- How easy was it to agree on the rules of active listening?
- How easy was it to agree where to put the rules on the continuum line?
- What did this activity demonstrate about active listening as a skill?

**Note:** to achieve this activity successfully, students will need to demonstrate active listening skills within their group. You may wish to highlight this if they aren't aware they are doing it.





## 3. Improving relationships

In twos, ask students to act as a friend to Rhianne (referring to one of the case study scenarios they haven't already referenced), and give her advice on how to improve the situation.

### Their advice should include:

- Ways to get on with new people/form positive relationships generally
- Ways to get on with the people/person in the scenario
- The benefits to everyone (including an existing or future employer if relevant) of building positive relationships
- Ways in which Rhianne could look after herself and manage the emotions connected to her situation successfully

## Extension activity: Positive relationships

### Discuss the following with the class:

- Why are relationship-building skills useful in a work environment?
- How do positive relationships at work benefit both employees and employers?
- How can positive working relationships benefit people's mental health and wellbeing?

Studies have shown that a majority of people think it's important to work in a friendly environment. Work friendships can help people to enjoy work more and feel more supported in the workplace<sup>1</sup>. Discuss these findings. Might there be any negative impacts of people being friends?

For more activities to build key skills such as Listening, Presenting and Problem Solving, refer to the Skills Builder steps in the **Toolkit for building a 21st century mindset**.

<sup>1</sup> [smallbusiness.co.uk/uk-workers-relying-colleagues-support-2542724/](https://smallbusiness.co.uk/uk-workers-relying-colleagues-support-2542724/)



## Further support

The list on the next slide gives information about national organisations which provide advice, support and guidance for professionals or young people about mental health and wellbeing. Please ensure you check the suitability of websites before sharing them with students.

You should also include information about school-based support, such as pastoral staff, behaviour and learning support and school nurses and counsellors. Signpost specific staff if appropriate.

List any local support services or charities that might be accessed by students. Often there is a range of charities and other local services that can be accessed freely or at very low cost.

When providing sources of further support to students, it is advisable to include:

- What it is
- Who it is suitable for
- How to access it
- What happens when it is accessed





## Signposting: National organisations

**Time to Change:** aims to change the way people think and act about mental health problems. Produces a range of resources and research documents for use in schools.

**Mind:** provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind also campaigns to help improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

**Rethink Mental Illness:** a charity that improves the lives of people severely affected by mental illness through local groups and services, expert information and training and successful campaigning.

**YoungMinds:** provides mental health support, guidance and information for young people and professionals working with them.

**Mental Health Foundation:** provides information, guidance and resources on all aspects of managing mental health at home, at school and in the workplace.

**Action for Happiness:** focuses particularly on wellbeing and how to lead a happier life. Its Ten Keys to Happier Living is also available as an app.

**Learning and Work Institute:** offers various mental health resources including a Mental Health and Family Learning Pack aimed at adult educators.

**Mental Health in Further Education:** provides a network for those interested in adult education and mental health.

**Samaritans:** If you're going through a tough time, you can talk to Samaritans free – day or night, 365 days a year.