

Taking CARE to promote mental health in schools and colleges – Guidance notes



The Anna Freud Centre has developed a short [animation](#) for all staff that recognises the importance of supporting children and young people's mental health in schools and colleges, and offers a simple principle for staff to remember; **CARE**:

Be	C urious
Be	A pproachable
	R efer (when you need to)
Show	E mpathy

There are 3 ways that the animation could be used in your setting:

- 1 Use the animation on a staff training day**
If you would like to commission or attend one of our schools trainings, click [here](#).
- 2 Use the animation in a staff briefing or team meeting**
- 3 Send the animation and these guidance notes out as a staff bulletin**

Practical ways to implement the CARE principle in your setting:



Be CURIOUS

- Curiosity is non-threatening and opens up conversations, as you show an interest in hearing that pupil's perspective.
- Notice changes in behaviour, attitude or mood. No change is too small.
- You don't need to be a mental health expert to listen and you don't need to know all the answers.
- If you need to ask questions keep them open-ended.



Be APPROACHABLE

- Be open and honest, particularly about confidentiality. Explain that you may need to speak to someone else if you're worried about them.
- Ensure that when a conversation with the child or young person happens, it's in a safe and quiet space.
- Dr Rina Bajaj on [Creating a safe environment in schools](#) video.



REFER...when you need to

- Some matters may not need a formal referral, but do speak to a relevant staff member if you have any concerns about a pupil.
- Ensure that you are clear on your schools referral process, and in the first instance speak to your line manager.
- There will be certain members of staff who are responsible for making referrals to Mental health professionals, i.e. a Mental Health Lead.



Show EMPATHY

- Have the confidence to offer non-judgemental listening and to be alongside the pupil in their journey.
- Empathy is not just about being kind or agreeing, it is also about allowing discrepancies to emerge and to be explored;
 - Between your view and their view
 - Between their different feelings and reality
- Empathy, therefore, opens up opportunities for things to be different.

Remember that...

- You will know the points in the school year when you may need to be more vigilant e.g. during exams, transitions or events that are particular to your setting.
- Mental health is everyone's responsibility and an important part of a school or college's commitment to safeguarding.
- It's important to know your limitations. You do not always have to solve the problem or have all the answers, but there is power in listening, understanding, gathering information and liaising with the appropriate people for support.
- Your school or college will have links with professionals and services to offer support if needed.
- In order to support pupils well, it's also important that you take care of your own mental health and wellbeing needs. Knowing what support systems you can link in with during difficult times can help you to cope and manage better.

Join the [Schools in Mind](#) network for further information and resources on mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

