

MAKING A LOOK AFTER MYSELF FIRST AID KIT



Most of us are familiar with First Aid boxes – there's usually one in each classroom. Inside there are boxes and spaces for the hurts, pains, bumps that can be seen on the outside – so a standard First Aid kit will have plasters and creams and bandages.

But we also need a First Aid kit that helps when the hurts, pains and bumps are on the inside; a kit that reminds us of what we need to look after us when we may be feeling overwhelmed, on difficult days or when things build up to bursting point.

This is how we use this idea at Winston's Wish. You can use this template, or draw your own First Aid kit on a piece of paper; it helps to have 8 to 10 boxes of different size and shape. This works best when a child/children complete their own sheets at the same time as their caring adult does.

Step One

Start by sharing a normal First Aid box (if you have one). Talk about the reasons for having a box for the hurts that can be seen. Then explain that people need a similar kit of ideas of things that can help them feel better on difficult days. "We're each going to have a go at filling a sheet of our own ideas of what can help us feel a little easier and calmer and then we can share them".

Each person then draws a picture (and can add words) into each box. It's great to come up with your own ideas but here's some starters:

For children: Hugging a favourite toy; dancing to a favourite upbeat song; eating an apple; speaking to a grandparent; riding a bike; throwing bricks into a box

For young people: Playing a favourite game for half an hour; thumping a cushion; eating pizza; talking to friends on the phone or online; writing down thoughts in a book; listening to music; climbing a tree; biscuits

For adults: Bath with bubbles; walk in nature; coffee with friends; chocolate; stroking a cat; playing football

Step Two

The next bit is sharing your kits. We suggest leaving one box empty until this stage because the other person usually has a great idea you want to borrow. ("I wish I'd put 'have a hot drink' on mine"). You are allowed a veto if it's really necessary. For example, the adult could say "You can't have 'kick the cat' but you could have 'hug the cat and kick a cushion' ". (The child can say in return "Then you can't have both chocolate AND cake").

Step Three

Then you find somewhere to put the completed kits so they can be easily accessed. At home, this might be stuck to the fridge with a magnet, or in a drawer.

Step Four

The next stage is using the kits. This may be when someone is feeling very angry or very 'full-up'. Getting the First Aid kits and then deciding what idea to use reminds a child or young person that they do have 'strategies' – ways of coping when things threaten to overwhelm them. It could go like this:

"I think we need our First Aid Kits... where's mine? Where's yours? Right... well, I can't ring Sally because she'll be at work and I can't have a bath because I'm about to take you to school and I guess red wine is out of the question, so it'll have to be a doughnut! How about you?" "Can't have pizza for breakfast, guess I can't go on the X-box because it's school time, can't see the cat... I'll kick a football against the wall for 5 minutes."

In this way, everyone is gently reminded that they do have their own ways to manage their pressure: the hurts, pains and bumps on the inside.

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In a school context

It can be helpful to have a separate 'Look After Myself' First Aid kit for school. This can be created with a class teacher and have some agreed strategies on it to help a bereaved child negotiate their return to school and any subsequent days when things feel too much. This can be kept, for example, in a book tray or school bag.

Sometimes, a whole class creates their own First Aid Kit and has it on display in the classroom. Children who, for whatever reason, are finding themselves overwhelmed can – with permission – use one of the class strategies.

Ideas include:

Running around the playground three times

Five minute hug of the class mascot

Drink of water

Five minutes in the book corner

Tearing a scrap piece of paper into shreds (over a bin!)

Touching a piece of the natural world (leaf, flower, rabbit, grass)

This needs a confident teacher so that not everyone spends the day using a strategy. However, it can be really helpful if the teacher occasionally uses the First Aid kit themselves to show that everyone needs ways to help themselves feel a little calmer.

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**WINSTON'S
WISH** *WW*

Giving hope to grieving children

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