

Self-care jar

Approximate time: 5-10 minutes

Materials: A jar, small pieces of paper / post it notes

Aim/outcome: To identify ways to look after ourselves and to allow ourselves to give time to self care.

Explanation:

- This is an activity that works well when done with a class of pupils, and also works well with a staff team. (see teacher resources)
- Ask all of the pupils to take a post it / slip of paper and write down one activity that they think helps their own wellbeing or something they think would help a friend if they needed cheering up. These could be simple things like 'have a bath', 'treat yourself to a bar of chocolate' or 'take the dog for a walk'.
- Ask all pupils to fold up their pieces of paper and place them in the jar at the front of the room.
- When everyone has placed something in the jar, pass the jar around the class and ask each pupil to take out a piece of paper and read it. Explain to the class that their 'homework' will be to ensure that they do something for themselves either that evening or that week / weekend. They can either do exactly what is on the paper they pulled out of the jar, or if they need to adapt it to meet their needs, that is absolutely fine; for example their paper might say 'take the dog for a walk' and they might not have a dog! So they could either go for a walk or they could do something completely different, as long as it is something for themselves and it makes them feel good.
- The idea of this activity is to help pupils identify the things that cheer them up when they are feeling down, and the things that they do to look after themselves and their own mental health on a regular basis.
- A nice extension to this activity is to then ask the pupils to all write another self-care activity down on a piece of paper, and add these to the jar to fill it back up again. The jar should then be kept somewhere in the classroom, and as pupils think of nice things to add they can put something in. If the jar is kept topped up, all pupils should be encouraged to pick a piece of paper out of the self-care jar whenever they feel down, need cheering up or feel a bit like they need a pick-me-up. Classmates should also be encouraged to notice when their classmates might be a bit down or in need of a boost – if they do notice someone they should pick something out of the jar and give it to them.
- One of the things that builds resilience is being noticed and having other people care about how you are feeling, as well as learning ways to help yourself cope.