

COPING WITH CHANGE



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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Introduction

2020 has been a year that has resulted in enormous upheaval to the lives of people all over the world because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Families have had to endure a forced lockdown to protect their health that has meant that they have had to remain indoors for what has seemed like an inordinate amount of time.

This change in lifestyle has put an immense strain on many people including children and young people, which has led to increased levels of stress and anxiety while at the same time giving rise to a deterioration in mental health.

Yet, as we begin to emerge from the period of lockdown, we see many stories of the resilience of young people to cope.

This programme has been designed to help young people reflect on their time while in lockdown, identify the strategies they used to help them cope and recognise the connections they made with family and others. It also considers strategies to maintain positive mental health and physical wellbeing and to use these to build their capacity, going forward, for other periods of change in their lives that they will encounter. It facilitates their understanding of the support networks that are available to them, that they can be a support for others and helps them develop resilience for dealing with times of change.

The sessions have been designed to last approximately one hour but it is recognised that the issues being tackled may stimulate a lot of discussion so youth workers should use their professional discretion and allow these to happen rather than adhere to a rigid session plan. It is more important to create a safe space for the group to speak and process what they are learning/feeling than to keep to a strict timeline. If necessary, extend the session into a second day/night.

This EA programme takes a strengths-based youth work approach that genuinely recognises and validates that every young person has strengths, and that there is strength in every action and decision they make. It is a conscious attempt to help young people gain for themselves, the knowledge, feelings and skills necessary to meet their own and others' development needs to deal with times of change in their lives. It is underpinned by an understanding of the **fours** developmental domains of Belonging, Mastery, Generosity and Independence and promotes a growth mindset. Similarly, it promotes a recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence that we all have with friends, family and local communities.

The programme should take a **Project-Based Learning** (PBL) methodology in which the young people reflect on their learning to create a resource, which they will present publicly, for other young people to help them deal with times of change.

Workers should read the information on Project-Based Learning in the Resource Section and become familiar with its content. Briefly, Project-based Learning allows the group to be full participants in the learning process and to synthesise this into producing a product of their learning.

There are two specific ways of approaching this which will depend on the age and ability of the group:

1. Pose a PBL driving question at the start of the very first session that will form the basis of the learning in all future sessions towards production of a product; or
2. Pose the PBL driving question after you have delivered the curriculum and ask the group to work on the production based on the information they have received to date.

Programme outline

PROGRAMME AIMS & KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES	
AIM	A group work programme designed for Key Stage 2 (KS2/3) young people 9-13yrs to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to better support them to deal with life's challenges and periods of change.
THEMES	Coping in times of Change Develop an understanding and strategies to manage the impact of change on body, mind and behaviour.
	Staying Positive/ Connected Learn the importance of staying connected with friends, family and local community.
	Keeping active Understand the relationship between exercise, diet and sleep with positive mental health.
KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how change affects self. Greater knowledge of coping with change. Recognising the need to stay connected with others. Understand the benefits of Positive thinking. Development of a growth mindset. Development of personal responsibility for self. Development of critical thinking skills.
YOUTH WORK OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Personal Capabilities. Improved Health and Wellbeing.
NI CURRICULUM OBJECTIVE KS2/3	To develop the young person as an individual.
Interdependence is promoted throughout this programme	

Underpinning values

OPENNESS

Promote a culture of openness with the young people within sessions and support their learning about Coping with Change honestly, and in consideration of their age and level of understanding

RESPECT

Listen to and respect the young people undertaking this programme, encourage respect between peers and recognise effort, achievement and contributions

REFLECTION

Take all opportunities to learn, reflect on how the sessions are impacting on the young people and how your own understanding of the topics will support greater learning

RESPONSIBILITY

Take responsibility and acknowledge that your actions will impact on the young people in the programme. Be helpful, conscientious, reliable and accountable for all your actions

EXCELLENCE

Strive for quality in everything you do. Research the session content. Act professionally in all you say and do and take time to connect with the aims and outcomes you are trying to support

EQUALITY

Promote equality of opportunity throughout the programme. Ensure all young people are encouraged to benefit from their participation in session activities and roles

Session Plan 1

Title: My Learning/Experiences from Lockdown

Session Aim:

To reflect on experiences of lockdown and understand its effect on mood, activity and ability to cope.

Session Outcomes:

- Understanding that change is a constant in our lives
- Understanding that change can have positive as well as negative impacts

Date	Start Time	Finish Time	
Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
5 mins	Introduction to Programme	Facilitator to provide overview of programme	None required
15 mins (dependant on size of group)	Introductions/ Group Contract	Facilitator to invite everyone to introduce himself or herself and tell us 3 things about them. Keep this moving as it can drag on. Facilitator to develop a contract with the group and record this on a flip chart. All group to sign this.	Flipchart Markers
10 mins	Change Game	Ask the group to stand at the back of the room. Take one step forward if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have ever moved house. • Your hair colour has changed since you were born. • You have a younger brother or sister. • Your height has changed since you were born. • You have ever lost a tooth. • You have ever fought with a friend. • Someone you know has died. • You have tried new food. • You joined a club. • You played a new sport. • You slept away from home. • You were sick. <p>Debrief: Remind the group that our lives are constantly changing and that most of the time we don't even notice that changes that are happening to us most of the time.</p>	None required
5 mins	Reflections on Lockdown	Play the Dealing with Change video for the group. After this, again, remind the group that change is a fact of life.	https://riseabove.org.uk/article/dealing-with-change/ Projector Laptop Speakers
15 mins		Break into small groups. Remind the group that they've been through a long period of lockdown. Ask them to record the following: What have been the negatives for you from the lockdown? What were the positive aspects of it? Ask each group to come up to the front and present their findings. Stick their poster to a wall if possible for all to see. Draw out the common comments and remind them that many people felt the same way as them.	

Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
10 mins	Coping Strategies	<p>Using Mentimeter ask the group to identify things they did that made them feel happy or to stop from being bored.</p> <p>Use the word cloud generated from the group's input to facilitate a discussion about the different things participants did that helped them cope with lockdown. Remind them that its important to keep to some sort of routine.</p>	https://www.mentimeter.com/
5 mins	Closing Reflection	<p>Ask the group to think about 2 things that they have learned from this session. Facilitator to provide positive reinforcement of how well the group have coped to date. Advise them that in the next session they're going to look at the importance of personal relationships to help get through difficult times.</p> <p>Place two flip chart pages in the centre of the room. Ask them to draw a happy, sad or neutral face to represent how they enjoyed the session on the first page. Then ask them to write suggestions for what they might want to do differently in the next session.</p>	

Session Plan 2

Title: Connections

Session Aim:

To learn about the importance of developing and maintaining personal connections to friends, family and local organisations for support when times get tough.

Session Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of the need to share and connect to others at times of change;
- Understanding of the need to maintain lines of communication.

Date	Start Time	Finish Time	
Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
10 mins	4 Corners Exercise – Feelings about change	Place a sheet of paper in each corner of the room with the words ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Not Sure’. Ask the group members to go to a corner based on how they feel with the following statements: I found the lockdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frightening. • Exciting. • Hard. • Enjoyable. • Necessary. • Boring. • Anxious/Nervous. • Angry. Facilitate a discussion with the group about why they walked to their space. Remind the group that it’s ok to feel differently during times of significant change and that this session is going to help them explore strategies for coping.	Paper signs
10 mins	Making connections	Ask the group to spread out around the room and take a good look at everyone else. Then ask them to find someone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the same shoe size as you; • Who has the same birthday month as you; • Has the same first name initial as you; • Has the same colour of eyes as you; • Lives near you; • Has the same number of brothers and sisters as you; • Has the same hobby as you; • Has the same favourite animal as you; • Has been in the same place on holiday as you. Debrief: This exercise is a reminder that there are many different people who may not be close friends or family but share common interests with us. At the same time, many of these people may feel the same as us at times of change in our lives. It’s important therefore to connect to others as they may be able to help us and we may be able to help them.	None
10 mins	Curveball	Introduction: Sometimes Life throws us a major curveball just like with Covid -19. Nobody saw it coming, nobody really knew what it was or what to do and as a result the whole country had to shut down to prevent it spreading and we had the biggest change to our lifestyle that anyone	Flip chart paper Markers

Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
		<p>has ever known. We stopped going to schools, shops, parks, meeting friends and family. For many people this was very stressful. Take 5 minutes and write down all the people you could turn to for support if you are stressed. After five minutes list in order of importance who you would speak to first.</p> <p>Debrief: This exercise is important because it emphasises who we feel most comfortable with and who makes us feel happy when life deals us a bad hand. Science shows us that having a good friend who we can talk to and share our problems is important for our long-term happiness.</p>	
15 mins	Staying connected	<p>In small groups write down all the different ways you can stay connected with friends and family if you can't always meet them face to face. Bring the groups back to the large group to share ideas and record a comprehensive list.</p> <p>Debrief: maintaining your friendship groups and staying connected is really important for happiness and it's especially important that we have one person at least that we can talk to on a regular basis.</p>	Flip chart Markers
15 mins	Talk to me Speed date	<p>Introduction: thinking of the last exercise, sometimes we find it difficult to speak to friends and family about things that concern us. Now we're going to do a short exercise in which we'll begin to practice speaking to others. You're going to move around the room speed dating style and speak to the person in front of you for 2 minutes about how you both coped with the lockdown. Who did you speak to most days, did you feel stressed, frustrated bored etc.? Who have you started to meet up with again and how does it feel being able to meet after so long?</p> <p>Debrief: Ask the group to comment on how it felt to speak to someone who isn't necessarily a close friend. Remind them that sometimes friends are not the best people to talk to and that there may be someone in our wider circle of friends that might be better.</p>	
10 mins	Connecting to organisations	<p>In small groups ask participants to identify all the different organisations that could help them at times when life gets tough. It may be useful to record these down on a map.</p> <p>Debrief: Remind the group that if they don't want to speak to friends or family there are a wide range of organisations that can help and support them. It will be important for the youth worker to be able to advise the full range of services that are available at local and national level and to emphasise the services that the youth service has to offer.</p>	Map of local area Flip chart Markers
5 mins	Closing Evaluation	<p>Ask each member to provide feedback on one thing they've learnt from the session and how they felt the session went.</p>	

Session Plan 3

Title: Positive Mental Health

Session Aim:

To learn about strategies to use at stressful times to maintain positive mental health.

Session Outcomes:

- Recognise Stressors and how they impact.
- Develop coping strategies to help self and others deal with stressful times.

Date	Start Time	Finish Time	
Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
10 mins	Icebreaker	<p>Newspaper Walk Instructions: each person needs 2 sheets of newspaper and need to remove their shoes. They have to race from one end of the room to the other, trying to keep their feet on the newspaper at all times. If their feet slip off the paper and touch the ground then they have to return to the start again.</p> <p>Debrief: Life can be like walking with paper under our feet. We all have set-backs that can get us down so in this session we will explore how our mental health can be affected when things get tough and the things we can do to keep positive.</p>	Sheets of newspaper
10 mins	Stressors	<p>In small groups talk about the sorts of things that make you feel stressed and what affect this has on your behaviour. Record your finding on a flip chart. Bring this back to the large group for general discussion.</p> <p>Debrief: its important for us to be mindful of the different types of things that trigger our stress and how this affects us. We might shout and yell at friends and family, cry, be really quiet, not want to eat or have trouble sleeping. Everyone reacts differently so once we become aware of our feeling and reactions we can begin to take positive steps to help us cope better.</p>	Flip chart Markers
10 mins	Anxiety Thermometer	<p>Give each member a copy of the Anxiety Thermometer. Ask them to write on the Thermometer the things that cause them the most stress.</p> <p>Ask them to present back to the main group and facilitate a discussion exploring where there are common triggers and reactions to stress. Be careful at this stage not to explore ways of dealing with stress, keep the focus on increasing their awareness of their emotions and responses. Remind them all that its ok to feel stress and it happens to us all.</p>	Anxiety Thermometer (see resource section)
10 mins	Helping Heart	<p>Give all members a copy of the Helping Heart handout. Ask the group to reflect on the things that stress them and ask them to write down 3 things in this that they think they could to help them cope with stressful situations. On the second heart, ask them to think about 3 things they could do to help someone else who is feeling stressed.</p> <p>Open this up to a group discussion and develop as big a list as possible of possible strategies. You might prompt them with such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to someone you trust • Make time for relaxing activities • Have realistic expectations 	Helping Heart Flip chart Markers

Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat and drink healthily • Create a daily routine • Reduce time on social media • Spend time doing activities you enjoy such as listening to music or playing sports • Set achievable goals • Give yourself time to adjust • Think positively and use self-encouragement <p>Debrief: So far we've looked at the sorts of things that cause us stress and to start to think of things we can do to help us stay positive. Life is full of stress and some stress is actually good for us! However, when we have too much stress, it can have a negative affect on our health and our relationships. That's why it's important to have coping strategies. It's also important to understand how your mindset can affect how you deal with things.</p>	
15 mins	Mindset	<p>Show the group the video How your Mindset can Affect Your Approach to Challenges https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/pshe-ks2-growth-mindset-how-your-mindset-can-affect-approach-to-challenges/zrjwf4j</p> <p>Facilitate a discussion on what sort of things different members find difficult. Can they give an example of a time when they just gave up on something? Similarly, can they give an example of a time when they stuck with something that was difficult? These are examples of Fixed and growth Mindsets. How did they feel when they persevered and succeeded? Giving up due to being frustrated can often make us feel bad and can stop us from trying new things. If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again!!! What ways could we overcome difficult tasks?</p>	Laptop Projector
15 mins	Poster	<p>Following the last discussion break the group into small groups and ask them to design a poster based, on what they have learned so far, giving advice to young people about different things they can do to deal with stress and to help maintain a growth mindset. Present the posters back to the group.</p>	Flip chart Marker
5 mins	Closing evaluation	<p>Check in with the members and ask them how they felt about the session and if they have learned anything that might help them.</p>	

Session Plan 4

Title: Physical Wellbeing

Session Aim:

To learn and understand about the importance of a healthy lifestyle to maintain positive mental health.

Session Outcomes:

- Understand the relationship between exercise, diet and sleep and positive mental health.
- Develop strategies for developing a healthy lifestyle.

Date	Start Time	Finish Time	
Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
10 min	Icebreaker	<p>Dodge Ball</p> <p>Debrief: Running around and having fun in games is a really good way of preventing stress, making us feel good and promoting our health. This session is going to look at things like exercise, diet and sleep which we all need to promote our health and wellbeing.</p>	Sponge Ball
15 mins	Exercise log	<p>Ask for a show of hands of how many of the group take regular exercise. Give the group a copy of the Exercise log and ask them to honestly record how much exercise they have undertaken in the past week and how long for.</p> <p>Ask each member to present their findings and facilitate a discussion on the need for exercise for a healthy mindset. Remind the group that as well as being beneficial for our overall health, exercise releases important chemicals in the brain like adrenalin and endorphins. These chemicals wake up the brain making us feel alert and improve our mood. Therefore, if we're feeling down or stressed doing some exercise can actually lift our mood and help get rid of some of the stress. In small groups ask the members to come up with a list of things they could do to exercise more and remind them that they need a minimum of 30 minutes a day. It may also be useful to explore what the barriers to exercise are for them. Can they form a support group to help each other exercise more?</p>	Exercise log Sheets Flip Chart Markers
20 mins	Diet Log	<p>Introduction: Coupled with exercise, a healthy diet is important to promote a positive mindset.</p> <p>Give each member a copy of the Food Log and ask them to record all the foods they have eaten in the last week (including snacks). Ask them also to log how much water they drank. Facilitate a group discussion on healthy eating and ask the group to consider how they could reduce the bad foods they eat or substitute them for healthy alternatives.</p> <p>Lay out a 'Healthy Food Taster Table' with a range of fresh fruit and vegetables and things like dried foods such as banana slices and raisins as alternatives to sweets. Gauge how many of the group would be prepared to make small changes to their diet.</p> <p>Debrief: It's important to highlight the amount of sugary and caffeinated food and drink that group members consume. When we eat, important chemicals in our brains are released which control how we think, feel and behave so if we drink a lot of fizzy drinks or coffee we can start to become hyperactive. Food and drinks that are high in fat or contain alcohol, lots of sugar and/or salt can be as unhealthy for our brains as it is for our bodies. Many people eat fatty, sugary foods as a comfort when they feel stressed but while this may make them feel</p>	Diet Log Sheet Fresh Fruit, Veg Table Paper plates Napkins

Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
		good at the time, it can make them feel down over a longer term.	
20 mins	Sleep Log	<p>Introduction: The amount of sleep we get is a major factor in all aspect of our health. If we don't get enough sleep we can end up grumpy and depressed. Give each member a copy of the Sleep Log and ask each one to log the time they went to bed every night the previous week, what time they actually went to sleep at and what time they woke up at. Ask them to record the times they go to bed, wake up on schools nights, and compare to their sleep patterns during lockdown. Also ask them how long they normally spend listening to music, on their phones/tablets reading a book etc. Create a group chart to visualise the time most of the group go to bed and how much sleep they actually get.</p> <p>Debrief: Advise the group that regular sleep patterns are important to help us 'recharge our batteries' and to de-stress. Research shows that 90% teenagers don't get enough sleep on school nights. Getting sufficient is important for thinking, learning and concentration skills. A lack of sleep is also linked to mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Primary school aged kids need 10-11 hours sleep a night while teenagers need 8-10 hours a night. Compare that with how much sleep they are actually getting. How big is the difference?</p> <p>In small groups ask the members to come up with ideas of how they could improve their sleep. Compile a list in the large group and discuss. If necessary the youth work should add suggestions like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a regular bedtime and wake up time; • Relax for an hour before bed; • Lights out or very low lights in bedroom; • Have quiet in the room; • Don't eat food shortly before you go to bed; • Remove any clocks from the room; • No blue screen time for an hour before bed; • No phone/tablet in the bedroom. <p>If time allows try the breathing awareness exercise and/or Body Scan Exercise in the Resources section with the group to help them relax before trying to get to sleep.</p>	Sleep Log Pens Flip chart Markers
5 mins	Closing evaluation	Check in with the group and ask them how they felt about the session and to identify one thing that they might try to change to improve their exercise, diet or sleep.	

Session Plan 5&6

Title: Project-Based Learning

Session Aim:

To develop an active learning project and synthesise the learning from the programme into the production of a meaningful product.

Session Outcomes:

- Develop a driving question
- Promote sustained inquiry
- Collaborative learning
- Reflection on learning
- Critique and revise development process
- Production of product

Date	Start Time	Finish Time	
Time for Task	Activity	Instruction/Purpose	Resources
		<p>Guidance for Workers: Read the information on Project-Based Learning in the Resource Section and familiarise yourself with its content. Project-based Learning allows the group to be full participants in the learning process and to synthesise this into producing a product of their learning. There are two specific ways of approaching this which will depend on the age and ability of the group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pose a PBL driving question at the start of the very first session that will form the basis of the learning in all future session towards production of a product; or 2. Pose the PBL driving question after you have delivered the curriculum and ask the group to work on the production based on the information they have received to date. <p>Possible PBL Question:</p> <p><i>What advice would we give a young person about how to deal with times of change (such as lockdown) in their lives so that they can maintain positive mental health?</i></p> <p>The product they produce might be a resource pack, a poster, a video, animated film, social media resource etc.</p> <p>The amount of time required will be based on the type of product the group wants to produce but you should ensure that you adhere to the <i>PBL Seven Essential Project Design Elements</i>.</p> <p>Whatever is decided you should try to ensure that it is produced to the highest possible quality e.g. graphically designed, high quality print etc. so that it is something the group can be proud of.</p> <p>A key part of PBL is that the group should present their project in a public arena so you might want to invite a group of 'dignitaries' to a presentation event so that the group have the opportunity to present their product.</p>	

RESOURCES

Project-Based Learning

(adapted from PBL Works <https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl>)

Introduction

In Project Based Learning (PBL), tutors/trainers make learning come alive for Learners. Learners work on a project over an extended period of time – from a week up to a semester – that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question. They demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience. In essence, the subject is taught holistically (experiential learning) and, by default, assessed holistically. For youth workers there are clear links with social education, EA's promotion of strengths-based youth work and the four domains of the Circle of Courage advocated by Larry Brentro et al.

As a result of their involvement in PBL, Learners develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. Project-Based Learning unleashes an infectious, creative energy among learners and tutors/trainers.

Project-Based Learning Defined

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which Learners gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge.

How does PBL differ from “doing a project”?

PBL is becoming widely used in schools, colleges and other educational settings, with different varieties being practiced. However, there are key characteristics that differentiate “doing a project” from engaging in rigorous Project Based Learning.

It's helpful to distinguish a “*dessert project*” - a short, intellectually-light project served up after the tutor covers the content of a unit in the usual way - from a “*main course*” project, in which the project is the unit. In Project Based Learning, the project is the vehicle for teaching the important knowledge and skills student need to learn. The project contains and frames curriculum and instruction.

In contrast to dessert projects, PBL requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. To answer a *Driving Question* and create high-quality work, Learners need to do much more than remember information. They need to use higher-order thinking skills and learn to work as a team.

The gold standard for high-quality PBL

To help ensure your Learners are getting the main course and are engaging in quality Project Based Learning, tutors/trainers should promote a research-based model for “Gold Standard PBL.”

The Gold Standard PBL model encompasses two useful guides for educators:

- 1) ***Seven Essential Project Design Elements*** provide a framework for developing high quality projects for your ‘classroom’, and
- 2) ***Seven Project Based Teaching Practices*** help tutors/trainers, youth centres, schools, and organisations measure, standardise, and improve their practice.

Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements

A research-informed model for measuring, calibrating, and improving your practice.

Learner learning goals for projects include standards-based content as well as skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, self-management, project management, and collaboration.

What is Gold Standard PBL?

The following model will help Tutors/trainers do PBL well. This model is based on a comprehensive, research-informed model for PBL to help tutors/trainers, youth workers measure, standardise, and improve their practice. In Gold Standard PBL, projects are focused on students' acquiring key knowledge, understanding, and success skills.

Gold Standard PBL

Seven Essential Project Design Elements



Seven Essential Project Design Elements



A Challenging Problem or Question

The project is framed by a meaningful problem to be solved or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge



Sustained Inquiry

The project involves real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact, or the project speaks to personal concerns, interests, and issues in the Learners' lives. Learners engage in a rigorous, extended process of posing questions, finding resources, and applying information.



Authenticity

The project involves real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact, or the project speaks to personal concerns, interests, and issues in the Learners' lives.



Student Voice & Choice

Learners make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create.



Reflection

Learners and tutors reflect on the learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, and obstacles that arise and strategies for overcoming them.



Critique & Revision

Learners give, receive, and apply feedback to improve their process and products.



Public Product

Learners make their project work public by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to audiences beyond the classroom.

A Tricky Part of PBL: Writing a Driving Question



Tips and Tools

One of the most challenging parts for tutors designing a project is writing the driving question. One reason is that it's a writing task, and not everyone is a writer. Many tutors are great at creating curriculum units and lesson plans, and many are great at working with learners, but crafting the wording of a question that captures the heart of a project can be tricky.

A good driving question meets the following criteria:

- **Engaging for students.** It is understandable and interesting to students, and it provokes further questions and focuses their inquiry process.
- **Open-ended.** There are several possible answers, and it cannot simply be Googled.
- **Aligned with learning goals.** To answer it, students will need to learn the targeted content and skills.

Troubleshooting Common Pitfalls

The table below looks at some typical “first drafts” and how they can be improved to better meet the above criteria.

First Draft Driving Questions for PBL Unit	Critique	Revised Driving Question for PBL Unit
What laws do we need to keep people safe?	Not engaging because it sounds like a teacher or text book question and only considers one dimension.	Why do we need to have laws?
What were the causes of the Troubles in NI?	Not open-ended and does not require critical thinking skills or debate.	What was the most significant cause of the NI Troubles?
What should people consider when planning their finances?	Not as engaging as it would be if it were specific and had a charge to take action.	What financial planning advice would we give a young person leaving home for the first time or going to university?
Why is Marriage Equality a bad idea?	Engaging, but slanted in one direction (the youth worker's!)	Should we allow marriage equality?
How are similar themes and topics explored in stories by authors from different cultures?	Not engaging because it states learning goals and sounds like a teacher.	Do people from different backgrounds tell the same stories?
How can statistics be used in football?	Not engaging enough, too broad, not provocative.	Is Lionel Messi the best footballer ever?

Specify the Role & Product, or Not?

A key issue about driving questions that crops up is the issue of product. You'll notice on the previous chart that the project's product is not included in any of the revised driving questions. Similarly the role that students play is not included. However, the product and role could be specified in some projects, and might be useful for students in some cases.

There are invariably two general types of driving questions in PBL, and here are some pros and cons for each:

1. Driving Questions that explore a philosophical or debatable issue, or an intriguing topic, such as:

- Is there "liberty and justice for all" in our society?
- Could there be life on other planets?
- What should be our policy on immigration?
- What does it mean to be a man?
- Does it matter what we eat?

Pros: Highly engaging to students; the kind of question they'll keep talking about when they leave the classroom.

Cons: Harder to write; may feel like advanced PBL practice because the task and product are not spelled out. Typically found more often in upper grade levels and certain subject areas (e.g., humanities) more than others (e.g. math, world languages, career/tech).

2. Driving Questions that specify a product to be created or a problem to be solved—to which the students' role may be added, such as:

- How can we help protect an endangered species in our area?
- How can we reduce bullying?
- How can we create a guide to our community for new immigrants?
- How can we, as historians, create podcasts that tell the story of our city?
- How can we, as active citizens, reduce crime in our local communities?

Pros: Easier to write. Helps focus younger students on their task in a project. Roles define the kind of thinking we want students to do (as historians, scientists, etc.), add a real-world element, and can be good for career exploration.

Cons: Can feel less engaging for students; sometimes simply states what the teacher wants students to do. Roles may feel fake to some students; older students in PBL especially may prefer being themselves.

As with the many decisions tutors need to make when designing and facilitating PBL, how to write a driving question depends on your own style, your context, and your students. The main criterion should, however, be student engagement. Tutors should also try to get feedback from colleagues on their draft driving questions—and even from students in a focus group. Or you could actually co-create it with students.

For more information on Project-Based Learning visit PBL Works
<https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl>

Additional Information

Challenging Problem or Question

- A Tricky Part of PBL: Writing a Driving Question
- Lowering the Driving (Question) Age
- PBL in Music: Driving Questions Invoke Deeper Musical Learning
- How to Improve (or Abandon) Some “Classic” Initial Ideas for Projects

Sustained Inquiry

- Resource List: Sustained Inquiry
- How We Use “Need to Know” Questions to Guide Sustained Inquiry
- Sustained Inquiry in PBL as a Tool for Social Justice
- The Importance of Student-Generated Questions in PBL

Authenticity

- What does it take for a project to be “Authentic”?
- Authenticity: How to Move Projects from Engaging to Empowering
- Yes, You Really Can Do Authentic Projects With Limited Resources
- Creating Authentic Kindergarten PBL
- Level Up Your PBL With Authentic Adult Learning
- An Authentic Writing Project for English Language Learners

Student Voice & Choice

- Gold Standard PBL: Student Voice & Choice
- Student Voice and Choice in the Elementary Grades
- Student Voice and Choice: How I Learned to Let Go of the Reins
- Voice and Vision: Engaging Learners in School Design
- Learners Ask Four Deep Question, PBL Provides Opportunities to Answer Them
- Designing Projects with Learners, Not for Them

Reflection

- The Power of Reflection in PBL
- PBL in the Mirror: Planning for Student Reflection
- Making Time for Reflection in Our Projects
- Using Gallery Walks for Revision and Reflection

Public Product

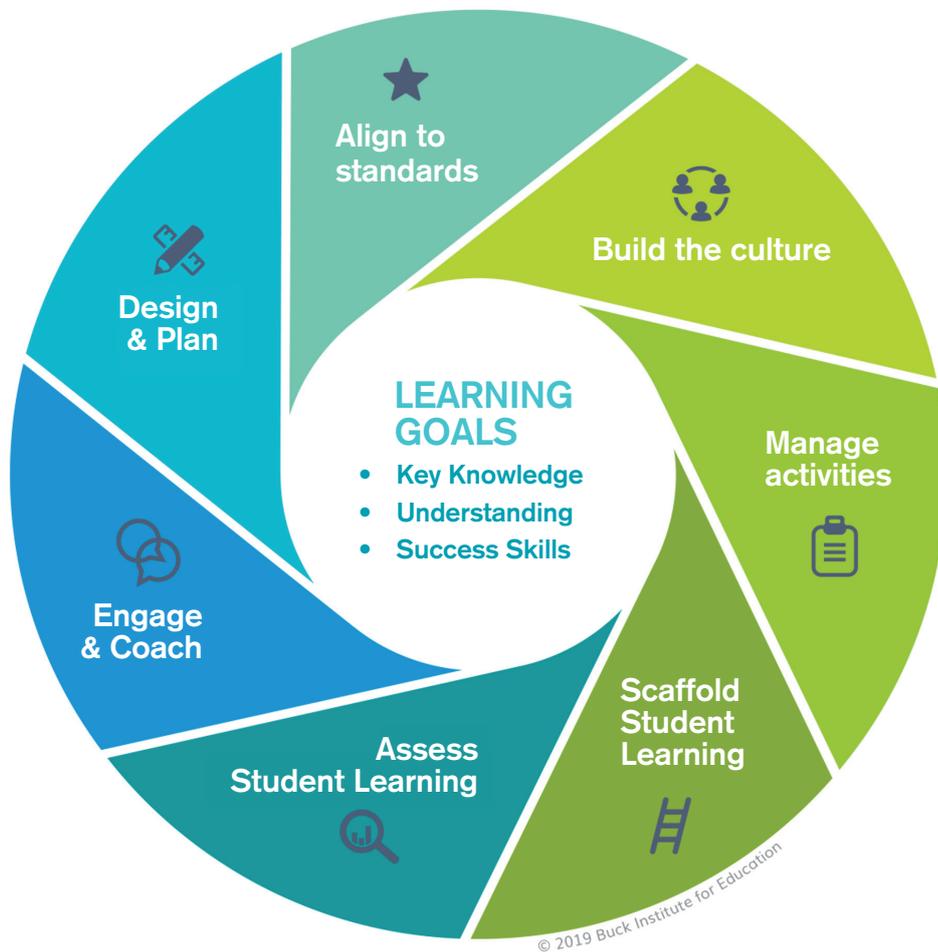
- Gold Standard PBL: Public Product
- The Power of Professional Presentations
- How to Prepare Learners for Explaining Their Work in Public
- How to Engage Reluctant (and Even Refusing) Presenters in PBL
- How to Get Higher-Quality Student Work in PBL

Gold Standard PBL: Project Based Teaching Practices

When transitioning to PBL, one of the biggest hurdles for many tutors/trainers is the need to give up some degree of control over the classroom, and trust in their Learners. However, even though they are more often the “guide on the side” than the “sage on the stage,” this most certainly does not mean that tutors/trainers don’t “teach” in a PBL classroom. Many traditional practices remain, but are reframed in the context of a project.

Gold Standard PBL

Seven Project Based Teaching Practices



Seven Project-Based Teaching Practices



Design & Plan

Tutors/trainers create or adapt a project for their context and Learners, and plan its implementation from launch to culmination while allowing for some degree of student voice and choice.



Align to Standards

Tutors/trainers use standards to plan the project and make sure it addresses key knowledge and understanding from subject areas to be included.



Build the Culture

Tutors/trainers explicitly and implicitly promote student independence and growth, open-ended inquiry, team spirit, and attention to quality.



Manage Activities

Tutors/trainers work with Learners to organize tasks and schedules, set checkpoints and deadlines, find and use resources, create products and make them public.



Scaffold Student Learning

Tutors/trainers employ a variety of lessons, tools, and instructional strategies to support all Learners in reaching project goals.



Access Student Learning

Tutors/trainers use formative and summative assessments of knowledge, understanding, and success skills, and include self and peer assessment of team and individual work.



Engage & Coach

Tutors/trainers engage in learning and creating alongside Learners, and identify when they need skill-building, redirection, encouragement, and celebration.

Useful links:

[Project Based Teaching Rubric](#) provides a detailed description of what each of the seven Project Teaching Practices looks like.

Group Activity: Change Games

The following exercises and games are designed to increase participants' understanding of the emotional barriers that are part of change and how to deal with them. In addition, they increase participant understanding of the support needed to keep changes in place.

Change Game 1: Cross Your Arms

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: unlimited

Materials required: none

Description/Process: For practitioners facing a large group and not a lot of time, this exercise really gets the point of change across. After the introduction of the “change” subject, ask the group to cross their arms (i.e. folding their arms together, as if they were bored or waiting for something). Once they have completed this task, ask them to “fold their arms the other way,” reversed of what they just performed (a significant number of the group will struggle with this!!). You could do a variation of this with their legs and/or fingers or even use all 3 to make the point.

Discussion Questions

How did it feel when you were asked to cross your arms/legs/fingers the other way?

Did it come naturally or did you have to stop and think about it?

Were you comfortable with doing this differently from your normal process?

What is it about change that we don't like?

What are some things that make us resistant to change?

What can you do to make it easier for people to accept change?

When people cross their arms, they do so naturally, without even thinking about it. When they are asked to fold them the other way they, for the most part, stop, refold their arms again and then try to figure out which arm was on top, which arm moves first and so on. Try this yourself and see. Encourage participants to consider and share their own personal emotions related to making changes.

Change Game 2: Change Your Seat

Duration: 5 to 15 minutes (depending on debrief)

Materials required: none

Description/Process: This is another quick and easy game. Participants are asked to change where they are sitting so they can experience the emotions and feelings often associated with change. After the class gets situated and comfortable, the facilitator should ask participants to change seats.

Discussion Questions

How did it feel to be asked to change seats?

Did you view changing seats as an opportunity to sit with someone new or as an uncomfortable or undesirable change?

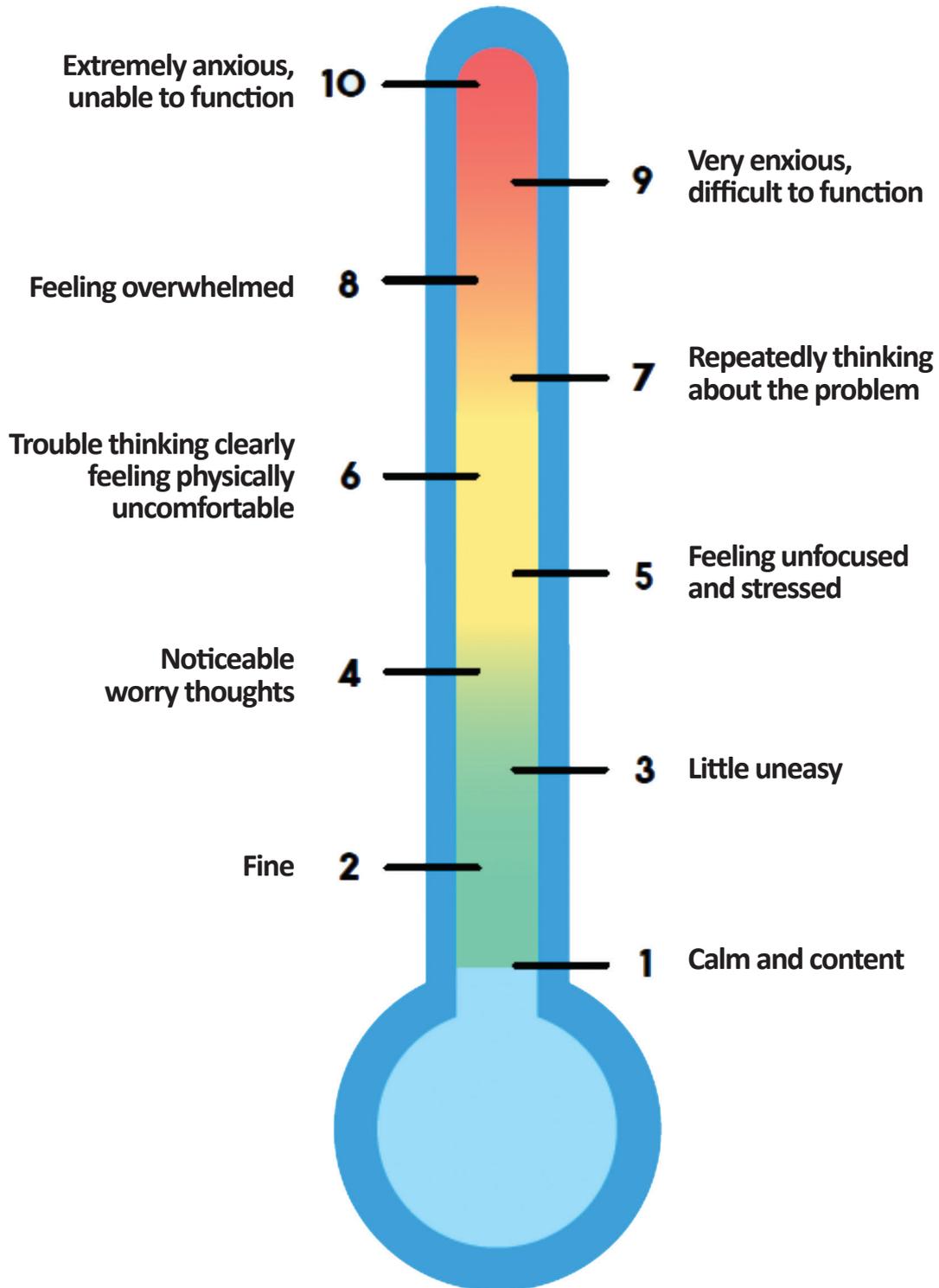
What are some things that make people resistant to change?

If participants move back to their old seating arrangements after the exercise is over, ask the following question:

Why is it difficult to accept changes once they are made?

Encourage participants to consider and share their own personal emotions related to making changes. This is what makes the exercise powerful. Another twist to this game might be asking participants to change seats frequently, which also can help them enhance their personal ability to deal with change.

Anxiety Thermometer



Helping Heart

Write at least 3 things you could do to help yourself feel positive.



To help myself I can...

Helping Heart

Write 3 things you could do to help someone else feel positive.



To help others I can...



Exercise Log



Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
What?							
How Long?							
Afternoon							
What?							
How Long?							
Evening							
What?							
How Long?							



Diet Log



Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							



Sleep Log



Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bedtime							
Actual Sleep Time							
Wake Up Time							

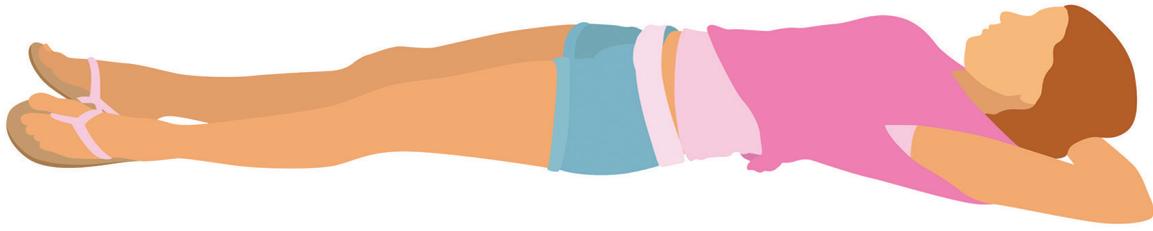


1. Breathing awareness exercise

- Lie on your back with your arms relaxed by your sides. Take a moment to get comfortable, knees up or down as you please.
- Bring your awareness to your breathing.
- There's no right way to breathe. Just relax and breathe normally.
- Try to imagine the air is coming from far away, and you blow it out to a distant place.
- You might also say the words 'in' and 'out' in your mind to match your breathing. Or perhaps think of the word 'relax' with each exhale.
- Concentrate on your chest rising and falling – can you feel it? Can you taste or smell the air as you breathe in? Is it cool or warm?
- Your mind will probably wander at some point, and thoughts may arise.
- Don't worry if you have thoughts. Acknowledge them, and then gently bring your focus back to your breathing.
- As you continue breathing, feel your body gently sink into your mattress little by little.

You can do this breathing exercise any time you feel the need to during the day. Just 5 minutes can help, but you might like to build up to 20 minutes eventually.

And if you do it in bed, you can either do it for a few minutes or until you feel too sleepy to continue.



2. Body scan relaxation exercise

The body scan technique relies on getting your mind to focus on different parts of your body.

There are different methods, and one that is effective is to imagine taking your mind on a journey around your body.

- Lie down and get yourself comfortable.
- Imagine your mind leaving your head, and travelling through your body to one of your feet.
- How does your foot feel? Is it relaxed, tense or sore? Is it hot or cold?
- Don't make any judgments on how it feels – simply scan and observe how you feel.
- Imagine your toe and foot muscles tightening, and relaxing again.
- Then take your mind up to your calf, knee and thigh.
- Stop in each body part to repeat the scanning, muscle tensing and relaxing.
- Repeat the exercise with your other leg.
- Move to a hand and work your way up both arms.
- Scan, tense and relax your back, stomach, chest, shoulders and face.
- You can either imagine your muscles tensing and relaxing, or physically tense and relax them – do what feels best.
- You'll know it's starting to work when your limbs begin to feel heavy and you're happy to sink comfortably into your mattress.
- You might find your mind wanders at times. Acknowledge any thoughts that arise in a positive way, but bring your mind gently back to the exercise.

Acknowledgements

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