

SENCO newsletter 2020



PLANNING FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

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SEND Support Service Manager

We hope you are surviving and coping in these unpredictable times. Just as we heave a sigh of relief and think we have finally managed to get a grip on the new ways of working, it's all change and we are having to plan for a whole new world of more children in schools with social distancing. There are days when it is so exhausting trying to keep up with all of the new guidance, I'm sure that like me you have felt like hiding in bed and refusing to engage with the world! (and that is before we even start to mention juggling home schooling for many). However, I hope you are managing to stay well and find some golden moments in amongst all of the chaos.

As we now start to seriously plan for children returning to school, I know many of you will have concerns about supporting the emotional wellbeing of pupils and the staff in your schools. Having been told we needed to stay at home for so long it is now the outside world which seems like the 'scary' and 'unsafe place'. A return to routine and school is likely to present worries and challenges for many children most particularly those children with SEND. Evidence shows us that children and young people will not make good progress with their academic learning until their emotional state is regulated (Perry, 2005; Bergin and Bergin, 2012). In this time of uncertainty, we need to ensure that we as school staff give ourselves 'permission' to focus first on nurturing our children and helping them to feel emotionally safe, before we try to catch up with all of the missed curriculum. With this in mind we decided to create a special SENCO Newsletter for schools focussing on this issue and including contributions from all of the SEND Support Teams and the Psychology Service.

Please also remember, we are always here for you, on the phone, by email or to visit your schools. Please do not hesitate to contact us or book a slot on the Psychology telephone support line.

There is also information and advice on the council website and the school's extranet.

Take care and stay safe.

Sophie Maltby

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Early Years Support Team

Ideas for relaxation:

Breathing



You can help your child relax by taking a deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth. Try pinwheel, bubble, a dandelion, large feathers or onto your hand as this will help them to “see” the big breaths.

Use a teddy – it moves up and down as they breathe.
Finger-tips touching – fingers move apart as they breathe.



Early Years Support Team

Massage



Follow these links to a lovely gentle massage to rhymes *and* stories:

[Humpty Dumpty](#)

[Wind the Bobbin up](#)

[Story massage](#)

[Ideas for social stories for returning to school](#)

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

1. Find something that makes you happy
2. Something to give someone else to make them smile
3. Find one thing that you love to smell
4. Find one thing you enjoy looking at
5. Find something that's your favourite colour
6. Find something you are thankful for in nature
7. Find something that you can use to make a gift for someone
8. Find something that is useful for you

Early Years Support Team

Wellbeing links from the Early Years Support Team

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

- [Supporting the most vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Coronavirus: mental health and wellbeing resources](#)

Nurture UK – created a [bereavement guide](#) for children and young people

Relax Kids

<https://www.relaxkids.com/>

The Relax Kids Facebook page also has some good links to resources and is currently running live bedtime relaxation and meditations for children at 7pm on their facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/relaxkidsofficial>

Partnership for children – [wellbeing exercises](#)

Hearing Support Team

How we can help support our children's emotional wellbeing

Follow the link to [Twinkl](#) to help when having discussions with children about their feelings and worries at this time. There are some simple ideas to support children who may have lower language levels and struggle to understand and talk about their feelings.

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

Supporting your child's mental health

(contains a link to What are you Feeling?)

Can be downloaded if you register for membership): [National Deaf Children's Society](#)

Buzz website for Deaf children aged 8-18,

with stories on lockdown, isolation tips and bereavement: <https://www.buzz.org.uk/>

Free book illustrated by Axel Scheffler,

explaining coronavirus to children: [Nosy Crow.com](#)

[BBC Bitesize – Parents Toolkit](#)

This has ideas for supporting wellbeing at both primary and secondary ages:

- 8 simple steps to support children with anxiety
- Tips to help children cope the current situation
- Resources to support children's wellbeing
- How to support a young person's wellbeing

Learning, Communication and Interaction (LCI) Team

Useful online resources for supporting the emotional needs of children following the COVID-19 pandemic

1. A website created to support mental health in schools as a legacy to the Heads Together campaign, easy to use with free toolkits and resources. Mainly aimed at Primary but useful for Secondary too.
Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
[Supporting Children's Mental Health](#)
[Mentally Healthy Schools](#)
2. [The Educational psychologist's website](#) with lots of useful links for parents and professionals, Dave the Dog is a lovely story to read with Primary children about feeling scared.
3. The National Autistic Society website has real life lockdown stories from Autistic children and adults that depict their struggles with lockdown and techniques they've used to help them. Worth a read, especially with Secondary children. They also have a page with links and resources including social stories.
[Coronavirus: your stories](#)
[Coronavirus: resources for autistic people and families](#)
4. [NHS Every mind matters website](#) with useful tips and helplines.
5. Large scale social story, useful for sharing with the whole class.
[Carol Gray – Social Stories](#)
6. [A simple social story about social distancing](#) that is available in a variety of languages with easy to follow visuals.

Learning, Communication and Interaction (LCI) Team

7. CBeebies has a page dedicated to helping young children to regulate their emotions with activities and video clips. Can be shared with parents.
[Coping with emotions](#)
8. [STARS](#) have practical tips on addressing anxiety and supporting children to voice their worries as well as free resources, including 5 point scale templates, and targeted tips for supporting in the classroom and at home for specific age ranges.
9. Tips to support children with managing anxiety with book links, especially useful read alongside Zones of Regulation intervention.
[14 Tips to Help All Kids Learn to Manage Anxiety](#)
10. [Leicester City Children's Hospital has social stories](#), passports, video tours and helpful links to support children who may have had experience of either being in hospital or having family in hospital with top tips for calming.
11. [Bamboozle Theatre](#) have created a host of engaging videos based around their recent production of Moon Song. The videos include songs for you to learn and join in with at home, as well as creative and crafty projects.

Bamboozle Theatre specialise in creating amazing experiences for children with learning disabilities and those on the autistic spectrum, so this inclusive programme is perfect for all little ones, parents and carers to enjoy.

Learning, Communication and Interaction (LCI) Team

Dyslexia Gold are giving a free Dyslexia Gold school license till September.

It includes our 2 reading programs for struggling readers (Engaging Eyes and Reading Fluency), but also Spelling Tutor and Times Table Tutor which are suitable for all pupils.

Any interested school should sign up

here: <https://dyslexiagold.co.uk/supportforschools>

BlueHills Provision Map Writer and EduKey ProvisionMap

BlueHills pricing is:

£585 for year 1 for a site licence incl. a 1-hour phone consultation

£310 for year 2 onwards

MIS integration is included within these prices at £65

BlueHills can offer a 7% discount per school if 2-10 schools sign up. If more schools sign up, they would negotiate a higher discount.

A number of you have been touch about provision map writers; here are a couple of ones we would recommend:

EduKey's pricing is as follows:

Provision Map

1 year £795 2 years £715 3 years £675

MIS Integration

1 year £120 2 years £120 3 years £120

To calculate the total, multiply the cost per year by number of years and add to MIS Integration cost/year multiplied by number of years.

Example: PM for 3 years + MIS: $(675 \times 3) + (120 \times 3) = £2385$

They have agreed that if any other Leicester schools are interested in signing up with me, they could offer the following discounts:

5% for 1 school

10% for 2 schools each

15% for 3 schools each

20% for 4+ schools each

If anyone is interested in a demo, if they could mention my name and school and contact me if they are interested in purchasing.

Katherine Rayner, Inclusion Manager, Inglehurst Infant School

Tel: 0116 262 2479 School office: office@inglehurst-inf.leicester.sch.uk

Leicester Psychology Service

Supporting Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing

The Psychology Service have produced advice and guidance for parents / carers and education staff to help them support children and young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This advice contains the following information:

- [Looking after your own mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Risk factors for experiencing heightened levels of anxiety](#)
- [Supporting children and young people of different ages](#)
- [Supporting children and young people with additional needs](#)
- [Supporting children and young people with transition and change](#)



Telephone consultations available

Members of the Psychology Service are also able to provide a 30 minute telephone consultation for parents/carers and education staff who are concerned about a child or young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Please telephone 0116 454 5470 to book an appointment.

PLEASE COULD SCHOOLS SHARE THE PHONELINE NUMBER VIA THEIR WEBSITES/NEWSLETTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

<https://schools.leicester.gov.uk/supportingemotionalwellbeing>

(no login required)

Leicester Psychology Service

Mindfulness for Children and Schools Advice from the Psychology Service for Achieving Inner Peace

Mindfulness: An Introduction

Mindfulness based approaches can be beneficial to young children. Research has demonstrated that mindfulness training twice a week helped preschoolers boost mental flexibility, empathy and academic success in end of year assessments.

Mindfulness for Schools

Regardless of their age, this may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some may be unsure or uneasy with the current situation, while others may show signs of being unsettled later on. Everyone shows stress, worry and fear in different ways and at different times.

One way we can all maintain our sense of well-being is taking action in five key areas (Seligman, 2011):

- **Positive Emotion** - doing activities which make you feel good and bring pleasure
- **Engagement** - doing things that make you lose track of time because you are so absorbed in what you are doing
- **Relationships** - connecting positively with people
- **Meaning** - doing things that are worthwhile and meaningful, a sense that you are contributing to a greater goal beyond one's self
- **Accomplishment** - enjoying things just for fun and pleasure, rather than for gain or external success.

The 'Breathing Buddies' Approach

A great activity for all ages, but particularly young children is 'Breathing Buddies'. Using a breathing buddy can help children learn the skills to pay attention to their breath, to calm themselves and to help them relax.

A breathing buddy can be any small object a teddy bear, toy or small painted stone. Children can be taught to pay attention to the sensations as they breath and to feel the rise and fall as they breath in and out.

Calming music can be played in the background to soothe and help children feel calm for the duration of the exercise.

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- Children lay down on the floor and hold their breathing buddy on their belly.
- As you count to three, children inhale deeply through their noses and notice how their belly gets bigger as you count,
- Then exhale with a slow count to four. Children see how their bellies shrink and their buddy lowers.
- After repeating 10 times, you can discuss how it felt and how they are feeling now. What did they notice about their breathing buddy? How did it feel when they breathed out?

[Listen](#) to Daniel Goleman talking about Breathing buddies

More information can be found [here](#)

Further Ideas

There are a range of apps and sites which also promote mindfulness-based approaches. For primary aged children see [Cosmic Kids](#) and for teenagers see [Headspace](#)

Training and Ongoing Support:

Further support in the areas of mindfulness, meditation and yoga breathing is available from the Psychology Service. Please refer to the SEND support services training brochure for details of the training, consultations and practice-orientated workshops available. You are also welcome to contact the service if you wish to discuss bespoke training for your organization, or group or class-based support.

Promoting the Path to Happiness!

Advice for schools

Bereavement, trauma and loss due to COVID-19 (April 2020)

The following advice is to be read in conjunction with Bereavement and Loss, A Resource for Schools to Support Grieving Children (published and sent to all schools in 2012). An electronic copy is also available on this website. This resource has great detail in working with pupils and staff who are bereaved and is likely to answer any further questions you may have.

Children and young people will be experiencing several different feelings and emotions during this time of huge change. It is normal for them to sense the worries of others around them and become anxious themselves. They may also be fearful about what might happen if someone they love and depend on catches COVID-19. They may be particularly worried about grandparents, older relatives and/or family members who already have a health condition or disability. They are likely to pick up on other anxieties related to the Coronavirus that parents or carers might have, such as money or work worries or be worried about growing tensions between family members, intensified by social isolation. There is a lot for our children and young people to try and make sense of at the moment. There are great number of stressors associated with bereavement and cognitive strategies in coming to terms with such a huge life-event. For those who have already been bereaved, their worries and emotions may be even more intense and frequent due to rumours and the press coverage of the Coronavirus; it may trigger complex feelings and thoughts from previous loss or trauma.

This guidance is intended to give schools advice specifically in relation to pupils or staff who have been bereaved and/or experienced trauma and loss as a result of the Coronavirus.

Psychological Theory

One of the main theories of coping with bereavement is called the Dual Process Model (Strobe & Schut, 1999), which uses everyday life experiences to help demonstrate how a bereaved person bounces between 'Loss' and 'Restoration', with everyday life routines and normality being a very important part of the 'Restoration' element of grief (which allows the bereaved person to adapt and cope). With current social distancing and self-isolation measures however, the majority of pupils' everyday routine and normality (school, lessons, break times, seeing people, going out) has completely changed and they will be unable to use these to help them cope. In this sense, the Coronavirus and the subsequent current changes in our communities is having a direct impact on the way we can grieve.

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COVID-19 and the Grief Process

There are several feelings and reactions following a death, whether the death was expected or unexpected. Generally, most people experience the following emotions:

- shock or numbness
- disbelief
- denial
- guilt
- anger
- depression
- tearfulness
- anxiety
- longing
- confusion

These can lead to changes in children and young people's, thoughts, behaviour and physical presentation. There are no real stages or order to these emotions, and it is normal for them to come and go, in any order and for any emotion to re-surface, even after we think we've dealt with them.

Whilst the current situation of self-isolation and social distancing will not affect the emergence of these emotions, it may affect the way pupils can deal with them or the intensity of them. For example:

Pupils who have been bereaved by the Coronavirus will not have had the opportunity to say goodbye in person; if they were not present at the death, they may struggle to accept the reality of the bereavement.

Without close proximity of their usual peer group or support network, pupils and adults may feel highly isolated and may risk the reinforcement of negative thoughts about themselves, others and life; it may also lead them to become highly withdrawn.

At times of considerable trauma, people tend to look for certainty. However, currently, that certainty is not there. This can amplify any feelings of anger and distress.

If the health services become stretched, friends or family may also have concerns about the care the person received before they died. This in turn can lead to feelings of anger and guilt.

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The Need for a Support Network

The pupils you have who have either experienced a bereavement prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, or as a result of it will need, first and foremost, to feel re-connected to those they have a good working relationship with and their friends. Their support network will need to be (re) established quickly.

If you become aware that a child has lost a family member due to COVID-19, a telephone call home by a trusted teacher/assistant will be helpful, or even a Skype call, in order to reassure the pupil that you are there to support them and to offer them an opportunity for a one-off or more regular phone conversations in which you can contain and advise. There is a great deal of information about what to say to bereaved pupils in the Bereavement and Loss Guidance, mentioned at the beginning of this advice.

The Coronavirus social distancing measure means that people may not be able to access the same support in the same ways, such as being around friends and family and they may feel particularly isolated. Along with a constant stream of distressing news about the number of deaths and threats, some of our young people may feel particularly vulnerable. Trying to keep in touch with these pupils regularly will be important at this time and may require a number of 'checking in' phone calls until schools re-open.

It will be important to try and monitor their use of social media also, as this will be an alternative form of reaching out for support for them. This may present additional risks and therefore any e-safety information that the school has should be sent out to parents, given to the child or young person and you should signpost them to known, trustworthy support sites, as outlined below.

On return to school, each should have a 'Meet and Greet' in order to provide immediate support and reassurance. They may need reminding that school is a safe place and, after all the change that has just happened, it is a predictable, reliable place in which a 'normal' routine can begin again, at least for a few weeks (if schools return prior to the summer holidays).

It would be advisable to consider those pupils who may need specific support on return to school to help make sense of the situation, i.e. those with additional needs. The Head Teacher and Senior Management Team may also want to think about any members of staff who have recently been bereaved or who may need close supervision when the schools re-open.

Anxiety

It is normal for those who have been recently bereaved to experience prolonged periods of anxiety. In the current situation, feelings of anxiety may feel more intense due to the reporting of on-going threat and unpredictability. The COVID-19 situation means that we cannot reassure pupils that deaths from on-going illnesses are,

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relatively rare as we may ordinarily do, in order to help contain them or help them feel safe.

It is important to provide accurate information to bereaved pupils whilst balancing this with sensitivity. There may be many rumours on social media from apparently 'reliable' sources (e.g. "My Mum's friend has a friend who's a nurse and **she** says.....") which will need to be quelled. It is important to provide consistent and clear messages and promote calmness.

Supporting pupils (and staff) with calming breathing exercises to use during times of heightened anxiety will be helpful – both now and when the schools re-open. The Psychology Service has examples of these if required.

Whilst it may be tempting to try to provide positive elements to the young person, such as "this will make you stronger" or "you still have X, Y or Z....", research has shown that this is 'false hope' and is likely to be unhelpful and hinder recovery. Allowing the pupil to express how they feel, however hopeless is important, acknowledge it, validate it and reassure them that with time and communication, they will learn how to cope with the grief and manage their feelings.

Please Note

When schools re-open, attendance may fluctuate for pupils who have been affected by COVID-19.

Academic performance and the ability to concentrate may be affected in pupils who are bereaved.

Bereaved pupils may be more susceptible to being bullied or being aggressive towards others.

Any adults who are staying in touch with young people regularly will need to feel able and well-supported to do this.

Further Support and Information

Leicester City Psychology Service has several other COVID-19 – specific resources, such as How to Talk to Children about the Coronavirus; Safeguarding in relation to COVID-19; Emotional Wellbeing; Further Education; Managing Change and Vulnerable Children, amongst others.

The Laura Centre, Winston's Wish and Cruse Bereavement have on-line support through emails and on-line chat services. These are available to adults as well as children.

Winston's Wish

- 1.National freephone Helpline: 08088 020 021 (open 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)
- 2.ASK email support: ask@winstonswish.org
- 3.Crisis Messenger: Text WW to 85258 (available 24/7)

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Cruse Bereavement UK

National Freephone Helpline - 0808 808 1677. Opening hours are Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when they are open until 8pm.

The Laura Centre

Bereavement counselling service for children bereaved of a parent, sibling or significant person, and for parents for the loss of a child. During the COVID-19 pandemic, The Laura Centre will continue to provide a full counselling service, remotely, via virtual and telephone counselling. We will also continue to take self-referrals and third party referrals from professionals and individuals, please contact us at: info@thelauracentre.org.uk or via our enquiry form at www.thelauracentre.org.uk or call us on 0116 2544341 Mon-Fri 9.30-4.30pm.

In addition to our usual remit, our service is now also open to any person that has been affected by a death by COVID-19. Our advice line is available to all adults, as well professionals and parents who may need some guidance on supporting children and young people through the COVID-19 pandemic. Call us on 0116 2182140 to get some advice, guidance or support at this difficult time. Please note that this advice line is also available to The Laura Centre clients who may have postponed their sessions but require some support or advice. Our telephone advice line will be open Monday-Friday 10-4pm on 0116 218 2140.

Young Minds

If you are aware of a young person who has mental health difficulties and are feeling very vulnerable, please direct them to the leading mental health charity, Young Minds link: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>

Other

If you are aware of a child with a disability and have questions about their individual circumstances, you may be able to find an answer here:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/COVID-19-support-and-guidance>

Leicester City Psychology Service has also established a Helpline for parents and professionals who have a new concern about a child in relation to the Coronavirus. This is not just for those who have experienced a bereavement as a result of the Coronavirus, but is for concerns about a child specific to it. The Helpline is available each school day from 20th April 2020 and can be accessed by calling our main number: 0116 4545470.

Please continue to look after yourselves during this very difficult time,

Best wishes,

Leicester City Psychology Team

Meeting the emotional needs of children

As our attention turns to supporting children to return to schools safely, we are also highly conscious of the needs that must be met. Some children will have found being away from school distressing and challenging, others are disappointed at coming back, after spending time at home nurtured and surrounded by family. The SEMH team have created a support document focusing on meeting the emotional needs of children at this time. It contains information, practical suggestions and links to further information. This is a brief summary:

Is my world safe?

Most children will return to school feeling that it has changed, some more than others. Increasing safety cues will support children in reconnecting with their experience of school. Easy ways to do this include: reinforcing routine using visuals, meet and greet all children at the door, give additional support around transitions. Being playful, accepting, curious and empathic (PACE, Hughes 2015) in your approach will not only support children's connections to the adult but will also dampen down anxiety responses.

What happened to them?

Some children will have experienced the death of a loved one during their time away from school, perhaps it was related to COVID-19. Children might have many thoughts and experiences that they are trying to make sense of. During recent times, lots of adults have experienced high levels of stress themselves, which could also impact on their ability to support children. For some children, the adults at school will be the only emotionally available person to help them understand their loss and the emotions attached.

Where are you? Where do I belong?

Connections are key. Some children will have waited the whole time in lockdown to see you again. Other will be relieved to see a familiar face. With potential reduced staff numbers and children in each class, it's important to think about how to support those connections which will in turn support their sense of belonging. Now is not the time for focusing on academics or trying to catch up, now is the time for connections and rebuilding. Playing games either 1:1 or as a group is an important way to connect, be playful and encourage positive curiosity about each other. Utilising nurturing activities, like baking or looking after plants is another simple but powerful way of connecting and feeling a sense of belonging.

What has happened?

Many children have been contained by parents who are highly stressed, often about loved ones and keeping people safe – so they have perceived threat everywhere. Often, adults and children have been surrounded by the constant noise of the TV, people talking or perhaps arguing, bombarded by news of what is going on in the world and what could happen. Learning is not a priority for a brain in this state. Children need to have opportunities to explore their time away from school, for most it will be retelling adventures, sharing the things they were not able to do, perhaps the new things they have learnt, for some their time in lockdown will have been highly stressful and

Primary School Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) Team

distressing. Regardless of their experience, they will need to be heard and will need opportunity to explore what happened for them. Friendship groups will also be keen to find out about the experiences of others.

Looking after you:

The final area of the document focuses on you and the impact of supporting children throughout the pandemic. It gives details about recognising when you might need further support, but it also gives lots of great self-care ideas and celebrates all you are doing.

Vision Support Team

Supporting the mental health of Children and Young People with a Visual Impairment (CYPVI) following their return to school post COVID-19

- Give the CYPVI plenty of opportunities to talk about their feelings and to express their feelings through a variety of multisensory ways, e.g. music, drama, art, poetry, yoga;
- Have mindfulness sessions where CYPVI are given reassurance and a feeling of security;
- Keep CYPVI informed in an age-appropriate way (Newsround is a good resource and should be audio-described for the visually impaired CYPVI);
- Social stories need to be made accessible for the CYPVI;
- Ensure a clear explanation of any new routines is given to the CYPVI and give the CYPVI plenty of opportunities to practise these with support;
- Involve the CYPVI in community projects (e.g. posters thanking the NHS, letters to people in care homes, writing to their own grandparents);
- Some CYPVI may experience increased anxiety and will benefit with a calm, safe space; make them aware of where this space is and how they can access it.



A new series of talks to help parents and carers of children with SEND

I know there is limited advice and information for parents and carers of children with special needs, so the talks allow access to support and guidance. It is a series of pre-recorded online talks, delivered like a TV series. The talks will feature experts delivering high-value talks with useful information for parents and carers across a variety of topics.

I feel the talks will not only benefit parents, but will help schools, LAs, and Support Groups. You will see the advice and support that is given to parents, you will also be able to pass the same advice and support to parents who are unable to access the talks.

What are the benefits:

Access anytime

- Watch from the comfort of your own home
- Pause the talk and come back to it when it is convenient
- Access when and where you want
- No need to travel

Ease of viewing

- Each session is a stand-alone talk, so you can watch one or two at a time, you do not need to watch them all together
- The sessions will be released in 2 parts, so you are not overloaded with information

Great value

- One payment of £10 gives you access to all 12 presentations
- Early Bird discount code when you register and purchase by the end of May
- Access to the accompanying slides and tools for each talk at no extra cost
- Come back and watch the videos as many times as you like

If you would like me to send you more information on the talks, please register your interest here: www.virtualsendconference.com/parents