Educating the Heart: Cultivating Courage for Transitioning to Post-Primary school.
In September of 2015, world leaders set a transformational course for the future of human development with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Millions of people were involved in crafting this global agenda - governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, the UN system and concerned individuals, including children and youth. These stakeholders and others are now actively involved in implementing this agenda from the local to the global levels so that all people, including all children, will live in a safer, cleaner, more equal and more prosperous world by the year 2030 (https://www.unicef.org/agenda2030).

When thinking about young people transitioning from primary to post-primary school, it is difficult to ignore the many challenges they will face in creating a positive future for themselves and others. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, these challenges extend across a global scale. With global hunger, poverty, gender injustice, the climate emergency, inequality, and human rights abuses increasing on a daily basis, it is of the utmost importance that we, as teachers and educators, nurture and support our young people to develop the necessary competencies to participate in the world from a place of wellbeing and resilience, so that they can contribute to the world in a positive way and reach their full potential.

We hope that this resource makes a direct contribution to achieving Goal 3 Good Health and Wellbeing. We hope that the process of implementing this resource has a lasting and resonating effect for the young people as they prepare to transition to post-primary school. We hope they carry the developed competencies as they transition into adulthood and onto the wider world as global citizens.

It is our young people who will be the driving force for shaping human development in 2030 and beyond – but only if their capacity for resilience, wellbeing, empathy and active compassion is nurtured from the heart!

Engage young people in actions and activities for the SDGs by implementing this resource alongside Children in Crossfire’s ‘Little Guide to Health and Happiness’ available at

www.childrenincrossfire.org
or order hard copies from dee.abbott@childrenincrossfire.org
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Teacher Note

This resource was compiled alongside Year 7 students from Scoil Eoghan, Moville, Co. Donegal. The resource is intended to support you to:

- Create the conditions to prepare students for an effective closure from the primary school experience (which helps to enable a smoother transition);
- Create an understanding and awareness among the students about the process of transition;
- Equip students with skills and strategies to manage their own transition from primary school, and provide them with tools to apply to future transitions.

We invite you to use this material with your own students, changing adapting and shaping it to suit their needs as required.

The role for primary schools in preparing students for transitions encompasses helping them to develop a sense of themselves as competent, capable and compassionate beings and helping them to value their unique traits and qualities.

- I can do it
- I am resilient
- I can deal with challenges
- I am independent / interdependent
- I can listen to others
- I am cooperative
- I contribute to my school community
- I am ready for a new challenge
Facilitating A Learning Journal

A resource that can be quite powerful in developing this work is to have a Personal Learning Journal for each student.

Before getting started into these sessions, time can be spent decorating these journals, personalising them and introducing what the journals will be used for. The purpose of the journal is to document the learning they will have in the coming sessions, and something that they can take with them as they finish primary school and into post-primary school. They might want to continue adding to the journal over the summer, e.g. with thoughts about how they feel as the new term approaches. Or they might just want to keep it to remind them of the lessons learned as they prepare for starting post-primary school.

We recommend that you provide the space for your students to develop and utilise a Personal Learning Journal as part of this overall process.

What We Learned from Scoil Eoghan Students

- Developing a Personal Learning Journal is a fun interactive activity
- The students enjoyed decorating their journals in their own unique ways
- The students used the journals to document their learning throughout each session
- The students have their journals as a permanent reminder of how they were supported to transition from primary school
- They students were encouraged to continue adding to the journal over the summer, e.g. with thoughts about how they feel as the new term approaches
The Earth element of this resource reflects the importance of grounding ourselves during times of transition.

Before getting started into this work it might be an idea to bring the students outside to nature, get them to connect with the earth and notice which season they are in.

Grounding students in a positive sense of self, strengthening personal resilience and coping skills is a solid place to begin when preparing for transitions of any kind. As young people move through post-primary school, moving from childhood into adolescence, this sense of self can become more pronounced. Peer pressure can be countered by a strong sense of self and the values that have formed each person. This in particular may be useful as they move into a new school and make new friends, but also encounter new challenges and situations.

This section has some activities that can enable the young person to understand themselves, their changing identity as someone moving from primary into post-primary school, and - importantly - to celebrate achievements and successes to date.

Understanding our roots, what roots us and what nourishes us can emerge from connecting with the earth and considering what nourishes the earth.

Transitions can hold enormous potential and unlock a creativity emerging from newness and by being pushed outside of everyday boundaries and comfort zones. However, just like a roaring fire, this energy needs sometimes to be contained.

The fire element also represents courage and creativity. Moving school, and indeed going through any change or transition takes courage. If transitions can be managed well and if people feel supported, creativity and new possibilities may become unlocked.

As the students move from a more dependent culture in primary school to a situation which requires more independence and self-sufficiency, drawing on the fire element and these properties of courage and creativity can be a good way to begin conversations about such issues.

Preparing to be in charge of knowing which books to pack, which homework to be done, where all the new classes are, can seem like a daunting task for some people, especially as up to now the students would have been highly supported by their teachers and parents to carry these out. Simple conversations around tools we can all use to become more self-reliant when moving into a new surrounding can be a great support and resource in the first few months of transition.

That is not to say, however, that this will nurture independent creatures - skills of interdependence are important at this time. Being able to rely on others, asking for help and knowing where the support structures are is what helps people grow and develop.

The Element of Air is connected to the mind, wisdom, spirit and the soul. This section will focus on the mind, particularly in growing minds with challenges and difficult situations.

Moving to a new school can seem like a scary and stressful process. This section will draw on the materials and research and apply the context of transitions, focusing on change and how we can balance what causes stress, change or challenge to care for ourselves through the transition. Air will be the focus of this section.

Air reminds us that there is more to this world than what we see... in the same way we would love to nurture this with children by encouraging them what we know; but also to value what we feel, what we can sense, and what we do not yet know. Education can sometimes focus too heavily on 'brain intelligence', and through this work we aspire to reconnect the brain with feelings and sensations, growing compassion and strengthening emotional intelligence.
The Element of Air is connected to the mind, wisdom, spirit and the soul. This section will explore the mind, particularly what is happening in growing minds when presented with challenges or stressful situations.

Moving to a new school can seem like a scary and stressful process. This section will draw on many of the materials and learning that has been developed from Children in Crossfire’s ‘Educating the Heart’ research and apply this to the context of transitions, particularly focusing on change and how it can affect us. Understanding what causes stress, how to manage change or challenge, and how to care for ourselves at a time of transition will be the focus of this section.

Air reminds us that there is more to this world than what we can see… in the same way we would love to nurture this with children by encouraging them to value what we know; but also to value what we feel, what we can sense, and what we do not yet know. Education can sometimes focus on ‘brain intelligence’, but also to value what we can sense, not yet know.

If ‘calm seas do not make skillful sailors’ then it is these moments of change and transition in our lives that can help us to uncover the deepest learning. New possibilities and transformations are possible following a period of transition. Weaving our way through periods of transition can be difficult, however if we feel supported and equipped with the tools we need to manage our emotions during this time of change and chaos, we can help to enable such transformation to take place. As well as this, through encouraging and supporting each other during these changing times, we can build on our own courage, as well as that of those around us, to deal with the transition we are facing ahead.

This section also helps to increase student’s understanding of the brain and to strengthen their emotional intelligence.

The aether element is the fifth and often unknown element. It represents a ‘spirit energy’ around us and so is unseen and without physical properties. Aether connects the body to the spirit, and even beyond connecting to a bigger picture outside of ourselves. This is why we have chosen to situate the last section of this resource within the element of aether – a chance to honour the uniqueness of each individual as they go forth into their next steps.

The Closing Circle is an opportunity to mark the end of this stage in the students’ education and to open the door for the next stage. Where possible, these activities can also be held outside, or by using nature in some way. The ‘gifts’ that they will take away will include their pebbles (these will be designed during the process of implementing this resource) and the meaning behind them for each person - but also the gift of how they are feeling during these sessions. This stage might be linked in with wider events or celebrations in the school to mark the end of their time there.
1 Grounding the Self

Preparing for the Transition

Grounding Exercise

Invite the students to stand with their feet hip-width apart.

Together, invite them to rock back and forth on their feet until they stop and feel like the weight of their bodies through their feet is equally spread.

Notice how it feels to have their feet securely on the ground.

Notice how gravity feels, the weight of their body through their feet.

Notice their shoulders and their head sitting on top of their bodies.

Together, take a breath in... and out. Repeat this two more times - breathing in and out together. In and out together.

Finally, notice if they feel a little more grounded by bringing attention to how they are standing on the floor. This is a stance they can return to if needed any time, just grounding themselves wherever they are.

Making my Mould

Materials Needed: Play dough, salt dough or earth clay for moulding (enough for one pot per child/ or one between two)

Time: 35 minutes

Steps:
Distribute the Play Dough among the Students

Invite students to make a mould of themselves (5 minutes).

- What makes them unique (not just physically, more emphasis on personal attributes)
- What skills and qualities do they bring to their group of classmates and others in their lives?
- What is something they are proud of from their time in primary school?

Ask students to write down something for each of these 3 reflections in their Personal Learning Journal

As a large group, invite everyone to share one thing that they have learned about themselves from this exercise.

Note: You can showcase the individual moulds by placing them around the room or all together on one table for everyone to see one another’s artwork.
Lithuanian Listening Exercise

Materials Needed:
- White board
- White board markers

*Note you will need space for students to move around for this activity

Steps:
Invite each student to think of a small (invisible) object that they can hold in their hands. You may give an example to help them, e.g. a stone, a ring, a key etc...

Write each of the objects on the flipchart – ensure there is only one of each object.

Invite everyone to walk around the room and swap their objects with one another. They should speak aloud when they are making each exchange with each other e.g. “I give you my stone”.

Continue swapping objects for a few minutes, until the objects have been exchanged on numerous occasions. You must always exchange the object you have been given. You can never decide to keep an object.

After 3 – 5 minutes, end the exchange, and ask students to remember the last object they received and take their seats again.

Ask each student to call out the last object they have received. Go back to the original list and check off each object the student states – some objects will have multiplied and some will have disappeared!

Ask the group why this might have happened. What were the barriers? – write up what they come up with (noisy/ distracting; a lot of information, etc.)

Remind the class that they are preparing for the transition to post-primary school.

- Are any of these barriers also something that might get in the way of helping us transition to post-primary school e.g. a lot of information etc?

- What might be ways that some of these challenges could be overcome (briefly – as this will be covered in more detail later)?

The essence of Grounding the Self is that each person is unique and brings something with them to this group. When moving to post-primary school, it is important to value what we bring with us, as well as to notice and value what others bring too. If we can do these two things, we can multiply our own gifts and make others feel appreciated.

If we find ourselves getting overwhelmed by some of the challenges of moving school, we may find it difficult to fully appreciate the talents and values we all have to share. These sessions will address some of the things that students may find challenging, as well as celebrate what makes us unique and special as we move into post-primary school.

Finding a Resource

Materials needed: None
Time: 15 minutes

Steps:
Invite students to think about a person, memory, place or object that makes them feel calm, happy, peaceful or strong.

Explain that this is just for them and that there is no pressure to share this with the class.

Invite them to write or draw the person, memory, place or object into their Personal Learning Journal (take 10 minutes for this).

Around the image they have drawn, invite them to write words to describe how they feel when they remember or think about this.

To conclude, explain that whatever they have drawn is a Resource. A Resource is something that they can lean on if they are not feeling happy, strong, calm. Just by thinking of their Resource, already they can begin to feel better and can gain strength to better deal with whatever situation they are in.

When preparing for a transition, such as moving school, thinking of a resource can be helpful in calming our emotions and easing any anxiety which may arise.
Planting wildflower seeds

**Materials Needed:** Seeds for each student; tools, soil and a space for planting the seeds.
**Time:** 20 minutes.

In advance of this activity, ensure that the space for planting the seeds has already been prepared.

Over the weeks the students will be able to watch the seeds grow into plants, and witness the ongoing change which takes place in nature.

Start off the session by showing this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjCzPp-MK48

The video is quite meditative and can be used to bring the students into a conducive space to consider changes in nature, or as an introduction to change more generally.

Questions to follow video:
- What did you notice from the video?
- How did the video make you feel? Why?
- What will happen the flowers eventually?
- What is sad about this?
- What is useful or valuable about a flower dying?

**Lesson 2B**

**Beautiful at Every Age**

**Materials Needed:**
- Laptop/Computer
- Speakers
- Projector and projector screen.
**Time:** 15 minutes.

**Steps:**
Watch the video ‘Beautiful at Every Age’
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ht-amIfOnU

Invite the students to share their initial thoughts about the video.
Suggested questions to follow the video:

- What did you like about this video?
- Do you think it growing older is a positive experience?
- What helps people to move through changes in life?

Each day we are growing, learning and getting older. Each new stage of life brings new possibilities and new growth for ourselves. Our identities are continually being shaped and changed by the different experiences and events, as well as those of the people around us.

**Lesson 2C**

**Becoming a Butterfly**

*Materials needed:*
- Laptop/computer
- Speakers

*Time required: 15 minutes.*

Begin the lesson by watch this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XWFFTuX5gQ

After showing the video, ask the students to think from the perspective of a caterpillar:
- Do you think the caterpillar was aware of what was happening during this transition?
- What might they be thinking/feeling?
- What was positive about the transition that happened?
- What advice would you give the caterpillar, knowing what happens in the end?

In their journals, invite the students to write a diary entry for the day that they became a butterfly.

Alternative videos to use:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yodn-nmSQco
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1guZF3F8m24

**Lesson 2D**

**Advice for myself**

*Materials needed: None.*

*Time required: 20 minutes.*

Invite students to think about the following, and record their thoughts in their journals:

**Q:** What do I remember about starting school or primary 1?

**Q:** What piece of advice would I give to my primary 1 self or to a new primary 1 who was excited and nervous for starting school?

**Q:** What helped me when I started primary school?

- Can I learn from this advice for post-primary school?

*Reminding students of what has worked for them previously during any changes like starting school will help them through this next transition that they are about to experience in moving to post-primary school.*
Understanding the Brain

Materials Needed:
- A whiteboard/large flipchart paper
- Pens/markers
- Comics

Time: 35 minutes

Explain that this lesson is going to help the students to understand the brain, which is split into two areas: the ‘upstairs’ brain and the downstairs’ brain.

Upstairs
The ‘upstairs’ area of our brain can be referred to as the ‘Thinking Brain’ and helps us to plan, problem solve, encourages flexibility, regulates emotions and produces creativity.

Downstairs
The ‘downstairs’ area of our brain can be referred to as the ‘Feeling Brain’ and helps to keep us safe and make sure our needs are met. It detects danger, sounds the alarm, and lets us know to run or hide when we are faced with a threat.

Our brains work best when the upstairs and the downstairs areas work together, with messages being sent up and down via the ‘communication stairs’ (see image below). This is what helps us make good choices, make friends, come up with exciting games to play, calm ourselves down and get ourselves out of sticky situations.

Sometimes, in the downstairs brain danger is sensed, causing us to go into a state of panic, and ‘flip the lid’ on the upstairs side of our brain, preventing clear messages to be sent from one area to the other.

Once this happens, the downstairs area within our brain sends messages to other areas within the body to switch them on or off. It can make our heart beat faster to enable us to move quickly, or can tell parts of our body to stay very still in order to hide from the danger.
Steps:

1. Invite the students to draw their own brain house (see image below)

2. Invite the students to draw a picture of what it looks like in the house when the downstairs ‘flips the lid’

3. Find a comic, cut out and stick characters into the downstairs and the upstairs

4. Write stories about the adventures of the characters in the brain house

You may want to think of examples to share with the students about how we can all flip our lids. Choose examples that aren’t too stressful, e.g. Remember when mum couldn’t find the car keys and we were already late for school. She kept looking in the same place over and over again. That’s because the downstairs brain had taken over, she had flipped her lid and the upstairs, thinking part of her brain, wasn’t working properly.

We all flip our lids, but often children flip their lids more than adults. In children’s brains, the ‘downstairs’ area within the brain can become easily overwhelmed, causing panic to ensue in the form of tantrums. This is because the ‘upstairs’ area of our brains is not fully developed until our mid-twenties, and so is not able to fully support the downstairs brain in handling emotions.

This activity can lead onto longer term conversations using the language of the ‘Brain House’ to understand emotions, including any emotions as part of their everyday experiences and challenges. Exploring approaches and techniques to help them not to flip their lids so quickly for small and unnecessary things is a next step from this activity.
Finding ways to my Wellbeing

*Materials Needed:* none
*Time required:* 15 minutes

**Steps:**
- Invite the students to get comfortable in their chairs. Put anything on the desk away and just sit on the chair with their feet firmly on the ground.
- Invite the students to notice where their bodies make contact with the chair and with the floor. Notice the sensation of the weight of their bodies on the chair and where the weight falls.
- Take a deep breath in.
- Ask the students (if they feel comfortable) to close their eyes or relax their gaze on the floor, and to tune into the sensations in their body. Not to change anything, but to notice any parts of their body where they might feel sensations.
- Ask them to think about times when they feel stressed. Where in their body do they feel the stress?
- Invite them to put their hands on the part of their body that they notice when they are feeling stressed.
- Invite them to open their eyes, look around at their classmates and where they hold stress. It might be similar for some people.

Validate that everyone reacts to stress and different situations differently. It is important not to be judgemental about this - what we are trying to achieve here is just to notice when we feel stress, and where in the body we can notice this.

Following this, ask the students to think about what helps them to relieve their stress.

A framework that can be useful is ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ from the New Economics Foundation:

- **GIVE**
- **TAKE NOTICE**
- **BE ACTIVE**
- **KEEP LEARNING**
- **CONNECT**

Explore together what these terms each mean.

Invite the students to think of what they could do within each of these themes for their ongoing wellbeing, particularly in times of stress.

Bring up a few ideas for each theme, then invite the students to write down in their journals one thing they do/can do for themselves for their ongoing and overall wellbeing within each theme.
Brody and Gratitude

Materials:
- Laptop/computer
- Speakers
- Projector and projector screen

Time: 20 minutes.

Steps
Watch this video from Youtube ‘A Very Happy Brain’ : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZZ0zpUQhBQ

Ask the students what are the main messages coming out of the video? If needed, watch it again.

Some discussion points within video are:
- Seeing others in pain fires our own pain network
- Imaginary fears and real hurts light up the same area in the brain.
- Practicing daily gratitude and doing kind acts for others makes your own brain happy.

Ask the students if there were any words or ideas that they didn’t fully understand in this video, e.g. Compassion, Gratitude and invite the whole class to be involved in answering any outstanding questions.

What are things we can be grateful for each day? E.g. our parents/ carers for getting us fed and to school; the food that we have eaten; gratitude for those who grew the food; the bus driver for driving the bus that brought us to school.

Using their Personal Journals, invite the students to write down one thing they are grateful for so far today. They can animate this with colour or pictures.

For the rest of the week, ask them to write down one ‘Act of Gratitude’ in their Personal Journal that they are grateful for each day.

Check back in with their Acts of Gratitude at the end of a week. At the same time, ask them to consider any changes as a result of being grateful, e.g. noticing others, feeling happier, wanting to do more nice things for others, etc.
Watching our Thoughts

Materials needed:
- Laptop/computer
- Projector and projector screen
- Speakers

Time required: 15 minutes

Watch the video www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMUpey1quQY
(the video is 6:25 but only needs to be watched as long as the students have attention for - maybe up to 3 minutes).

Ask the students what they notice about the leaf in this video.

- How does this video make you feel?

Imagine the leaf is a thought. Thoughts come and go in and out of our heads every day. Just like the leaf they come, stay a while and go again.

However - we don’t often have one thought at any one time. Sometimes our heads can get very busy with lots of thoughts!

We have 50,000 - 70,000 thoughts each day!

Invite the students to visualise this in the river, filled with all our thoughts as leaves.

- What might the river look like?

- How can we find stillness in a river covered in leaves? Or, in other words, how can we find some stillness in our busy heads?

Explain that one thing that can help is first to notice our thoughts. Tuning in with our breath is one good step to begin to do this. To do this:

Grounding Exercise

- Petal in a Jar

Materials that will be needed to carry out this grounding activity are: access to water, and enough cups and petals for each student.

Give the instructions for the activity before handing out the cups. The instructions are that everyone will soon go outside. This is an individual activity in a shared group of people. The invitation is to be respectful for yourself and to others, and to enjoy any peace and calm that this activity brings. The purpose of the activity will be to keep the petal as still as possible while still walking around the space.

When you are all outside, hand out cups of water and when everyone has one, gently place a petal into each cup. When everyone has one, invite the students to start walking slowly around the space, reminding them that the purpose is to keep the petals as still as possible.

After a few minutes, invite them to keep holding the silence and begin to go back inside. You might want to collect the cups before they go inside to prevent any spillages.

When everyone is back inside, ask them how they found the activity? What did they enjoy? Did they find anything difficult? How did they feel about their petal? Do some tracking to pick up on any sensations or how they are feeling in their bodies after having done the activity.
The Seasons

Materials needed:
- Colouring pencils
- Paints
- Markers
- Flipchart paper/canvas
- Aprons or other protective garments

Time required: 35 minutes

Remind the students of the leaf flowing down the river, and ask them why leaves fall off the trees in autumn?

Thinking about the 4 different seasons, ask the students to name what are the signs that one season is ending and the next one is beginning.

Break the class into 8 groups, and ask 4 of the groups to come up with an illustration for each of the 4 seasons, and the other 4 to create an illustration for the transition between each season.

Once each group has their image, work on creating a group collage.

- This could be in the form of drawing, painting, cutting images from magazines - or through another art form.

Each group will bring their image and put it on the canvas according to its place in the wider ‘Seasons’ collage.

Once they have finished, acknowledge that every single year we experience each of these 4 seasons.

It is normal to be sad when we say goodbye to a season, e.g. the end of summer.

- What helps to move from one season into another?

Once we are settled in a new place it is even hard to remember the last place - just like when we are in winter it can be hard to remember what spring felt like! Feeling prepared to enter into each season, just as we enter into the many transitions we go through in life, can make it easier for us. While transitions can be difficult, they can also result in new possibilities and new ways of life that can enable growth and learning.
Creating Solutions Together

**Materials Needed:**
- None

**Steps:**
Invite the class to brainstorm together the challenges they anticipate in moving to a new school.

In smaller groups of 4 - 5 people, share out the challenges (1 - 2 per group) and invite them to come up with solutions or strategies for each of these.

- What are ways these challenges could be overcome?

Gather the feedback from the group, and bring in your own anecdotes and advice where possible to add value to their ideas.

Another option for this activity is to bring it alive through drama activities. To do this, there is need to have a bigger space to deliver the activities. It is also important to do some warm up exercises for the body and voice.

Drama Activity

*(this can take up to 1 - 2 hours in total)*

Invite the students to write down one difficulty or challenge they anticipate in moving to post-primary school.

Split the students up into smaller groups of 4, and invite them to share their challenge with their group.

Invite each group to choose one of the challenges/difficulties they have discussed and bring it to life in a short sketch. This can take 15 - 20 minutes to put together.

Invite each group to then perform their sketch in front of the rest of the class.

At the end of each sketch, ask the rest of the class to suggest ways that the performed challenge/difficulty could be overcome. The sketch can then be performed again with the suggested solution/s. This could continue until a few solutions are explored.
Finding my way

Materials: Students’ Personal Journals

Time: 35 minutes

Steps:
Ask the students individually to write down the following questions with their answers in their Personal Journals:

- What has helped me through change in the past?
- Who can I turn to when I am finding things difficult?
- What advice would you give to someone else going to post-primary school?

For the last question on advice that they would give to someone else, ask for suggestions from the class and collate these on the board for everyone to see.

Add to the list with your own ideas. Some suggestions could include:

...Everyone is in the same boat... if you are feeling scared there is a good chance most people are feeling scared too...

... You will learn new skills...

...Choose good people to be around...

... Find something positive every single day (even on bad days)...

Invite students to remember their Acts of Gratitude and personal Resource from the earlier session.

Ask them, individually, to write a letter to that resource, including in the letter a sense of gratitude for that person.
**5. Our Closing Circle**

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**Pebble Meditations**

**Materials Needed:**
- 3 pebbles per student (preferably flat and big enough to draw on);
- Chalk/chalk markers (or another type of marker that can write on stone);
- Little silk bags to store the pebbles

**Time:** 35 minutes

**Steps:**
Before this activity can take place there is need to collect 3 pebbles per student. This might serve as a ‘pre’ activity if there is the opportunity for students to collect their own pebbles. Otherwise, this needs to be prepared in advance.

Invite the students to decorate each pebble as A FLOWER; A MOUNTAIN; STILL WATER, either by drawing or writing.

Invite them to hold the FLOWER pebble in their hands.

Explain that every FLOWER is unique and that each of them are unique.

*Flowers thrive thanks to other flowers and nature around them. They too will thrive and flourish as a result of their own efforts, but also as a result of the love and the people around them.*

Holding the flower pebble in their hands, invite students to think of times when they feel joyful and unique.

*“Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.*

*Breathing out, I feel grateful to be me and I am grateful for those around me”*

Invite students to take the MOUNTAIN pebble in their hands.

Explain that MOUNTAINS are solid and steady, even with all the changes that take place around them.

*They, too, can be solid and steady in the midst of change. They are strong, just like Mountains.*

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**Tracking Activity**

**Finding your Pulse**

Invite students to make themselves comfortable on their seats, leaving anything out of their hands or laps. Feel their feet planted firmly and solidly on the floor. Explain that you are going to invite them to find their pulse - ask them where are different places that the pulse can be found? (e.g. neck, heart, wrist). Ask the students to choose one of these places and to put their finger there now.

After a few moments of silence while the students find their pulse, ask them to notice what it is like: is it going fast, slow, is it strong or weak? As the moments move on, does their pulse change pace at all? Explain that our pulse is always going, our hearts are always beating - no matter what else is going on around us. This is something that can be returned to if ever the students feel they need to calm down or to find peace when other things might feel a bit out of our control. Returning to the pulse is a good way to track how we are feeling, and the simple exercise of just noticing it already can bring us some calm.
Holding the mountain pebble in their hands, invite students to think of times when they feel solid and steady.

“Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.
Breathing out, I feel solid strong and steady through this time of change in my life.”

Invite students to take the WATER pebble in their hands.

Explain that WATER can be still and calm and go with the flow.

They, too, have the ability to be still and calm - and they are invited to go with the flow with whatever life brings them. Explain that it is ok to go with the flow at their own pace.

Holding the water pebble in their hands, invite students to think of times when they feel calm and still.

“Breathing in, I see myself as water.
Breathing out, I go with the flow through the changes in life, at my own pace.”

 Invite students to put their pebbles in their silk bags.

They can now take these away as a reminder of further resources and strengths that they already have - the pebbles are merely a reminder of what is already inside them. They are small and discreet enough if they ever wanted to take them out and hold them at any point in the future.

*This activity is taken from ‘A Handful of Quiet’ (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Returning to Seed

This is the time to return to the seeds that each student planted at the beginning of this process a few weeks ago.

Explain that the seeds that they planted represents their time at primary school.

They each came as little seeds and are leaving now much bigger and having lived and learned so much more. They each have brought their own unique gifts and personalities to the space just as each flower is unique. The flowers that they will leave behind will brighten up the school garden and give the bees a place to visit too!

Invite students to think of:

- One thing they are taking away from their time at school.
- One thing they are looking forward to in their next school.

Invite each student to then water their plant/seedling, and as they do so they can choose to say aloud the things they are taking away and what they are looking forward to.
New Beginnings

Read the poem below by Tony Walsh. Make a copy for each student to take away with them.

Welcome to your new school!
Welcome to your future.
New beginnings here, and new rules.
New classrooms, new computers.
New timetables, new faces here.
New corridors, new signs.
But some things change, some stay the same
And some truths last all time.

You’ll take out what you put in.
You’ll reap just what you sow.
So face the tests and do your best,
Work hard, play hard and grow.

And play a full and active part
in school and its community.
Be pleased to say “I seized the day."
“I used this opportunity.”

Remember that you’re different.
There’s no-one quite like you.
But make good friends, the one’s who’ll lend
A hand to get you through.

Remember - keep your head up.
Even if you fear you’ll drown.
Achieving is believing mixed
With never looking down.

And think about your future;
And find a hope, a dream.
Put action in your action plan
And build yourself a team.

Made of parents, made of teachers,
Made of family and friends.
From this position make a mission
For a trip that never ends.

And so always keep on learning;
There’s always more to know.
It may sound strange, but you can always change.
It’s never too late to grow.

And so don’t let anybody
Try and sneer and hold you back.
Your history is not your future!
So don’t ever feel like that.

Because our town has a history
Of producing boys and girls
Who, from humble roots, pull up their boots
And go on to change the world!

And so people just like you and me
Can do very special things!
Aim higher! Be high-fliers!
And be bold, unfold your wings!

And so gain an education;
Learn skills, gain facts and knowledge.
And then take the inspiration
Through to jobs, careers and college.

And so make the most of these days,
The school and these facilities.
Take off the brakes, be sure to make
The best of your abilities.

Respect yourself and others.
Have confidence - it’s essential.
If you keep a burning urge to learn
You’ll reach your full potential.

And so do things that you’re proud of!
And let everybody see:
You’ve passed the test, you’ve done your best
To be the best that you can be!

Good luck!
Resource authored by

Gráinne O’Neill

We’d like to offer a special word of thanks and congratulations to all the students and staff at Scoil Eoghan, Moville, Co. Donegal for working with us to shape this resource as part of their preparation work for transitioning to post-primary school.
Any kind of transitional period in someone’s life can be difficult. This is especially the case for young people. Moving from one school environment into a completely different one can be very unsettling and so it’s important to support that transition in whatever way we can. As Minister for Mental Health, I believe we must educate our young people and teach them the skills to cope with the stresses and pressures they will face.

Minister McEntee, TD,
Republic of Ireland

Building the confidence of primary school children before they leave is of utmost importance: children with high self-esteem are better able to make difficult decisions under peer pressure, approach adults for support, and be self-sufficient in their learning.

Horne, V. 2015