26 August 2020

Dear Head Teacher / Senior Leader / Teacher

Samaritans appreciates that the return to school, with potentially very different arrangements to the organisation of spaces, staff and resources, will be challenging for you and for your students. As a charity with a track record of working with schools, colleges and other educational institutions, we want to be able to support you as best we can.

As your students begin to come back to school your primary concern will, of course, be to evaluate the impact of home schooling, or reduced access to school, on their levels of learning. You will no doubt also have some concerns about how to support your students mental and emotional health following the lockdown and social isolation.

Each child will have experienced lockdown differently and feelings that they experienced during that time may now present in school. Feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed, loneliness, low mood, depression or obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD) may become evident.

Samaritans are, therefore, again letting you know about our free resource that is available to support your students and your staff. Our online package of resources called DEAL (Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening) is easily downloadable via our website: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/deal/>

DEAL includes lesson plans, activities, hand-outs, DEAL digital resources, teachers’ notes and staff training materials can all be accessed and downloaded at any time from Samaritans website. DEAL’s aims are:

· To raise awareness of emotional health and the importance of recognising when you need help

· To develop positive coping strategies

· To reduce stigma and break down barriers around talking about emotional health.

· To develop communication skills

· To develop supportive and help-seeking behaviour in young people

It is designed to be easily understood and delivered by teachers and is endorsed by the PSHE Association.

There is a specific session designed to introduce and explore the resources with staff. This can be delivered by the school.

Whilst we are committed to supporting you and your school through this difficult time, we are also, of course, always available for anyone to talk to, in confidence, on Samaritans freephone number 116 123, any time of the day or night, about how they are feeling and whatever life problems they may be experiencing. We also have an email service if that feels more suitable which is jo@samaritans.org

If you would like to link with us as your local Samaritans branch, please let us know. We have various written materials including posters & handout cards that can provided free of charge.

Our branch email address is: Leicester@samaritans.org

Yours sincerely,

Jenny, Lead for Outreach & Education