

# People bouncing back

## KEY MESSAGES

### People can bounce back, just like balls bounce back.

A ball is pushed out of shape when it hits the ground. Then it bounces back to almost the same shape. When you have difficult or unhappy times in your life, you can bounce back too.

The BOUNCE BACK! acronym is the basis of this unit. You can learn the BOUNCE BACK! statements off by heart so that when you have any setbacks you can remember the statements to help you cope better. (See Handbook Chapter 5: Teaching the BOUNCE BACK! acronym, which explains the key concepts that underpin the acronym.)

### Bad times don't last. Things always get better. Stay optimistic.

Bad times and unhappy feelings (nearly) always last for a short time. Things get better, even if it takes a little while. When things are difficult, just focus on getting through one day at a time. (See also Unit 5: Looking on the bright side.)

### Other people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.

Nothing is so bad that you can't talk about it to someone you trust. Talking to someone you trust when you feel unhappy or worried will help you to bounce back and feel supported. It also gives you a reality check, which is evidence, new facts or other opinions that help you to see if you are being realistic. It takes courage to talk to someone about your troubles.

### Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. Think again.

Helpful thinking is sensible thinking, and it can make you feel better, calmer and more hopeful about things. Helpful thinking is based on evidence and real facts. Unhelpful thinking isn't based on what's real. It makes you feel more upset and less hopeful about things. Examples of unhelpful thinking are:

- jumping to conclusions without proof
- guessing what someone else is thinking (rather than asking them)
- seeing only one side of a situation

- exaggerating the facts or your feelings
- thinking that because something has happened once it will keep happening.

'I-can't-stand-it-itis' is also unhelpful thinking – it's when you tell yourself that you 'couldn't stand it' if something you didn't like happened or if you miss out on something. Stop and think again to change your unhelpful thinking into helpful thinking so you can feel better and make better decisions in your life. (See also Unit 6: Emotions.)

### Nobody is perfect – not you and not others.

Everyone makes mistakes and gets things wrong sometimes – that's normal. There is no such thing as a perfect person. We are all just doing our best. We all have strengths and weaknesses. If you always try to be perfect, you will be too hard on yourself when you make a mistake or a poor decision, and you will lose self-confidence. If you want other people to be perfect, you will be too critical of and unfairly angry with them. This can hurt your relationships with family and friends.

### Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter.

Look for the positives (the good bits) in a worrying or unhappy situation, even though they may be small. Ask yourself: 'Is there anything slightly funny about what's happening?' Use laughter in a helpful way to feel less stressed and more hopeful. This won't make your problems go away, but you will feel a bit better and more hopeful about solving your problems. (See also Unit 5: Looking on the bright side and Unit 8: Humour.)

### Everybody experiences sadness, hurt, failure, rejection and setbacks sometimes, not just you. They are a normal part of life. Try not to personalise them.

It is normal to sometimes have some sad, painful and worrying times in your life. They happen to everyone now and then, not just you. Normalise them (see them as normal and happening to lots of other people) and don't personalise them (don't see them as happening just to you).

**Blame fairly. How much of what happened was due to you, to others and to bad luck or circumstances?**

Upsetting things usually happen because of three things – what you did, what other people did, and bad luck or circumstances. Try to be responsible and fairly work out how much the bad thing that has happened was due to these three things. Don't let yourself off the hook when you should take some responsibility for what happened, but don't 'overblame' yourself either.

**Accept what can't be changed (but try to change what you can first).**

There are some things in our life that we don't like much and we wish they were different. Do your best to try to change things you don't like (e.g. you might try some problem-solving if it is a friendship problem). But sometimes we can't do much to change things because they aren't in our control (e.g. moving to a new school or to a new house). Sometimes you just have to accept that this new situation is just the way it is, and find a way to put up with it. Finding something useful to do can help take your mind off it for a while (e.g. keeping busy playing music, enjoying nature, spending time with friends). But if it is a bad or unsafe situation that you can't change or is out of your control, speak to a teacher or another trusted adult.

**Catastrophising exaggerates your worries. Don't believe the worst possible picture.**

Catastrophising means thinking about the worst thing that could happen and then thinking that it will happen and getting upset about it now. Don't panic and make yourself miserable over something that may never happen. Do a reality check. Panicking over something that hasn't yet happened (but possibly could happen) is like seeing the weather forecast which says 'a chance of rain' and having your umbrella up all day 'just in case'. (See also Unit 6: Emotions.)

**Keep things in perspective. It's only part of your life.**

When you feel unhappy or worried about something, try to keep things in perspective. Remind yourself that things could be worse and this is not the end of the world. An upsetting situation usually affects only one part of your life, and doesn't have to spoil everything else. You may have a problem with a friend, but your family life is probably still fine, your pets are still fun and your basketball team is still playing well. Seeing the difference between a minor worry and a serious worry will also help you keep things in perspective.

**? Learning objectives**

In this unit, students will further develop their:

- understanding that changes in life are normal
- knowledge of how to manage challenges, setbacks and difficult times.

# Resources list



A complete list of resources including references for core and additional books, films, video clips, poems, songs and websites is available.

## Life has ups and downs but you can bounce back

### Resources



#### ◆ Books

##### *Lizzy's Ups and Downs: NOT an Ordinary School Day*

Lizzy shares the good and bad parts of her day and how she felt about each (e.g. embarrassed, silly, jealous, happy and frustrated). The book emphasises that ups and downs are normal.

##### *Sunday Chutney*

Sunday Chutney's family has to move a lot because of her father's job, so Sunday is always the new kid at school. She copes well by accepting the inevitable changes and by looking for the positives.

#### ◆ Poems

##### *Monday Blues*

##### *The Wrong Start*



#### ◆ Song

##### 'Bounce Back'



#### ◆ Video clip

##### *Boundin'*

This clip features a dancing sheep who loses his confidence after being sheared. It encapsulates the BOUNCE BACK! messages.



### Circle Time or classroom discussion



Before the discussion, ask students to complete individually **BLM People Bouncing Back: What Do You Think?** Read each statement and ask students to tick in the column labelled 'first time' to indicate whether they agree or disagree. Ask them to paste the quiz in their journal (or collect it). Ask them to complete it again at the end of the unit, using the 'second time' column.

Begin the session by showing how a rubber ball can be squashed out of shape but then bounces back. Use the resources to start class discussions.

#### Discussion questions

- In the resource, what is an example of an 'up' part of a day?
- In the resource, what is an example of a 'down' part of a day?

Explain this can also be called a setback.

- Can people be 'squashed' or experience a setback and still bounce back? (Yes, but sometimes it takes time and hard work to bounce back.)

Discuss the resources in terms of the following:

- It is normal to have ups and downs in our life.
- For most of us life is pretty good, but it can be challenging and difficult at times.
- Sometimes your unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset. By changing your unhelpful thinking to helpful thinking, you feel better and cope better with the setback.
- You can bounce back from difficult times if you try.



Then explain the BOUNCE BACK! acronym using the **BOUNCE BACK! e-tool** and giving students the **BLM BOUNCE BACK! poster**. The acronym tells us how to bounce back and cope with setbacks and how to make our lives even better. Unpack any new or unfamiliar vocabulary. It is important that students are regularly exposed to the acronym and learn the statements. By doing this they are more likely to remember them for the rest of their lives. See Key messages (page 142) and Unit 5: Looking on the bright side for more information.



## Activities

- ▶ Each student makes a puppet with paper springs (see page 106) or a badge with the message 'I bounce back' (see page 108).
- ▶ Use the **Missing Words: BOUNCE BACK! e-activity** with the whole class.
- ▶ Show the video of the song 'Bounce Back'. Consider teaching the song to the class.



### Matching colours and feelings

Analyse the use of colours in the illustrations in *Sunday Chutney* to highlight Sunday's 'positive' and 'negative' perceptions. Ask students to draw a positive and negative event and use appropriate colours.

### Make a bounce-backer

Every student will enjoy having their own bounce-backer with their photo or drawing on it (see page 101). It can be a useful prompt to remind students when they are struggling with a learning or social problem that they can 'bounce back'. Discuss what makes the bounce-backer bounce back. Gravity gives it the energy to bounce back. What happens if there is no weight in the bottom of the bounce-backer? What happens if the head is too heavy? Make the link between how the bounce-backer bounces back and returns to where it started, even after being pushed over, and how we can 'bounce back' after we have had an experience that 'knocks us over'.



#### Teacher reflection

What BOUNCE BACK! statement would you find most helpful to consider when you have a setback? Consider making your own desktop bounce-backer including a photo of yourself. It can serve as a useful visual prompt for you too, and it will encourage students to use their own bounce-backer as a prompt for coping. When you have a setback, show the class how you try to push it over (gently) but can't because it always 'bounces back'.

### Backpack bouncer

Students can make a BOUNCE BACK! bouncer to attach to their backpack, such as a small 'doll', or a picture of a person with a T-shirt that says 'I bounce back', or they can draw a picture. It can be enclosed in a plastic luggage tag or laminated.

## Take-home task

Encourage students to take the BOUNCE BACK! statements home and talk to their families about what the statements mean and how the BOUNCE BACK! statements can help everyone to bounce back when they make a mistake or feel unhappy. Students can make a BOUNCE BACK! fridge magnet frame to take home to teach the whole family the coping statements (see page 103).

## Embed it

### Using the BOUNCE BACK! acronym

The BOUNCE BACK! acronym can become the language of resilience across the school. Challenge students' unhelpful thinking. Use teachable moments to reinforce the BOUNCE BACK! statements when students experience setbacks to help them get through them. Use the literature prompts on page 86 to discuss classroom situations, books, videos, media events etc. Choose books that help to reinforce the BOUNCE BACK! messages.

Teachers on yard duty take a BOUNCE BACK! card containing the acronym as a focus for discussing playground issues that arise.

### Bounce Back! journal

Many of the activities in this unit incorporate self-reflection questions. The students can record their reflections in response to the different exercises in a journal (see page 101). Students can also be encouraged to record reflections on how well they bounced back from various difficulties in their lives. Some possible questions:

- What do I remember about how I bounced back last time?
- What didn't work last time and what were the results of that?
- What did I learn when I bounced back?
- What have I learned from watching how others bounce back with a problem or setback?
- What is an example of helpful thinking that I used when I made a mistake?

## Bouncing back from injury or being ill

### Resources



#### ◆ Books

##### *Banjo Bounces Back*

Banjo the horse loves playing 'hoofball' but one day he has a fall and has to stop playing for six weeks. He becomes bored, unfit and gloomy so decides to quit hoofball. When his friend Bella is admitted to 'horspital', Banjo realises that has let himself, the team and Bella down.

##### *Sometimes You Barf*

In this humorous story, Nancy vomits at school and is very embarrassed. The key message is that everybody barfs (vomits) occasionally – even animals – and it's a normal part of everyday life.



#### Circle Time or classroom discussion

Begin Circle Time by using the Movers and shakers strategy (see page 94): after each action ask students to do a thumbs up if they bounced back and got well again.

- Nod your head if you have ever had a broken bone.