

# The stress bucket activity

To help children and young people understand their emotional reactions, especially in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Step-by-step

- 1) Ask each child/young person to draw the outline of a bucket.
- 2) Explain that:
  - Each of us has the ability to take on a certain amount of stress or pressure during a normal day. Our ability to cope with stress and pressure can be thought of as a bucket - and some people's 'buckets' might be bigger than others (some people might be able to cope well with more stress or pressure than others) and that's okay.
  - If our bucket starts to get too full, if we've had to deal with more stress and pressure than our bucket can handle, then we might start to lose control of our emotions. We might have a temper tantrum, or cry about something that seems 'silly'. This is because our bucket is in danger of overflowing.
- 3) Now ask the children/young people to write or draw, inside the bucket, as many things as they can think of that can add stress/pressure during a normal day. If you are facilitating this exercise as a way of thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic then you might want to add any extra stress/pressure related to the pandemic in a different colour.
- 4) Explain that we can empty our 'stress buckets' through good self-care and healthy coping mechanisms, such as getting plenty of sleep, exercise, fresh air, eating healthy foods and doing things that we enjoy and that energise us.
- 5) Around the outside of the bucket, ask the children/young people to write or draw as many things as they can think of that helps them to empty their stress buckets. What helps them to feel better if they are sad or angry? What brings them joy or gives them energy?
- 6) Again, if you are facilitating this exercise as a way of thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic, you might want to then ask the children/young people to put a line through the coping mechanisms that they aren't able to use due to lockdown or social distancing. Use this as a starting point for a conversation about what new things they might try to help them to empty their stress buckets.