Emotionally Responsive Practice at Bank Street College helps educators and administrators develop emotionally responsive school routines, curricula, and adult-child interactions that support all children, including those with a traumatic history. Our practice is built on a deep understanding of child development, and the need for every child’s life experiences to be valued.

Below is a list of developmental themes and activities that teachers can adapt for their students remotely to help support children’s emotional well-being during this pandemic. The activities were created with children ages 4-8 in mind. As emotional regression is an expectable way of responding to this crisis, many of these themes may be applicable for older children as well. Please feel free to adapt the activities to meet the needs of children of all ages.

**Strengthening Object Constancy: Bringing the Classroom into My Home**

*Object Constancy* refers to the ability to keep an important person or place in mind even when one is far away from them. Young children have a hard time staying connected to people and places they don’t see on a regular basis. When they can’t “remember” or “think” about someone or someplace that they miss, it feels scary. Just as we help them “bridge home and school” at the beginning of the year with home necklaces or stuffed animals from home, we can help them stay connected to school/friends/teachers while they are far away from school. This can be comforting and may ease their anxiety.

Activities to support this developmental milestone:

**Treasure Hunt:**
Your home is so different from school! I wonder if you have found anything at home that reminds you of school? Are there any books you have at home that we have read in school together? What about paper and crayons? Building materials? Schedules? Foods? Do you have any of these things at home?

Go on a treasure hunt and see how many things you can find from home that make you think about school. Take a picture or draw a picture of them. Share with us!

**Pretend to be the Teacher:**
We sing so many wonderful songs together at school. I wonder if your family knows the same songs that we know? Maybe you can play “teacher” and teach them one of your favorite songs! Here is a list of songs we sing. We will also be singing songs together on the computer in case you can’t remember how the song goes.
Help Children Reflect: Having school at home can feel so different, and there may be so much that you miss about school. There are so many ways to remember our time together at school. I wonder if there are other things that help you feel better when you miss school?

Teacher Reflections: What did you notice about how the children and parents responded to this invitation? How will you continue to refer to these themes as remote schooling continues?

Power Vs. Powerlessness: Supporting Children’s Sense of Empowerment

Young children (and older children and adults!) may be feeling especially powerless in their lives right now. People are making decisions that affect us—and those decisions are changing all the time! Stay home, don’t touch anything outside, no school, no work, no playing with friends!!! It’s so frustrating when we don’t get to make choices about these things. It’s only natural to want to feel a sense of power in our lives when we feel most powerless. When children aren’t given “positive” ways to express power and feel powerful, they might resort to striving for power in “destructive” or “negative” ways, for example by tantruming, saying hurtful things, breaking things and throwing things. Here are some activities to help children harness a more positive feeling of power.

Activities to support this developmental milestone:

**Book:** Go Away Big Green Monster
by Ed Emberly

*All books can be accessed for free during the pandemic by signing up for an account with the Internet Archive: [https://archive.org/](https://archive.org/)*

This book is all about having the power to make something scary go away! You can make the monster come back and go away as many times as you want!

**Super Heroes and Magic Wands:**
Not being able to go to school just doesn’t feel fair. Grown-ups talk about the Coronavirus. They say everyone has to stay home to stay healthy. But sometimes it’s fun to pretend that we could have a super power or a magical power that would make all of this go away! What would your magic power or superpower be?

- Draw what your superpower or magic power looks like.
- Can you make a magic wand?
- Can you make a superhero cape? Mask? You can make a cape for yourself or for a doll/stuffy. You can also draw a cape or mask.

Help Children Reflect: Wow, look at all of the powerful things you have created! Those are such helpful powers to have. When things feel unfair you can think about your special powers and maybe you will feel better.

Teacher Reflections: What did you notice about how the children and parents responded to
Hurt and Healing: Helping Children Maintain a Sense of Safety
for their own Health and Body Integrity

There is so much talk about illness these days. Most young children have not had many experiences with the process of getting hurt and healing. Sometimes when they get hurt or sick, it feels as though it will last forever. It can be helpful to remind them of the times they had a “boo boo” and then it healed up. Or a time when they had a very bad cold and after lots of soup and rest, they felt better! What do children know about getting hurt, getting sick, and healing? What helps their bodies feel better? What helps their bodies stay strong? Opening up conversation and exploration of these themes helps children feel a sense of safety and control, even as news and experiences of serious illness are prevalent in the news and in their lives.

Activities to support this developmental milestone:

Our Bodies Heal:
Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. On one side draw a picture of yourself or your stuffy remembering back to a time when you felt sick or had a “boo boo.” Label what parts of your body felt sick or hurt. On the other side of the line on the paper, draw yourself feeling healthy and strong. Can you draw the things (soup, medicine, sleep, band aids) and people (parents, grandparents, doctors, nurses, teachers) who helped you feel better? Can you label them too? (use a grown-up to help label)

Help Children Reflect: It was so interesting to learn about the times you have been hurt or sick and then healed up! You all know so much about what helps your bodies feel better. I wonder if some of you play doctor? Being a doctor is such a great way to help people feel better! Maybe you can make a doctor’s office or hospital to take care of your dolls and stuffies at home. Send us a picture of it, or a story about it!

Teacher Reflections: What did you notice about how the children and parents responded to this invitation? How will you continue to refer to these themes as remote schooling continues?

Together and Apart: Early Themes of Separation and Attachment Still Need Support

From the very beginning of life, babies learn to adapt to a flow between the moments they are together with their caregiver/attachment partner, and the moments when they are apart. As children grow, they continue to have to adapt to moments when they are together with loved ones and community, and moments when they are apart. Coming together can be filled with exciting feelings of connection- just as some children feel excited each morning when they come to school. For other children, coming together can be challenging- just as some children may come to school each morning more cautiously. Similarly, different children have varying feelings about separation, and varying ways of coping with those feelings. During this time of
being at home, children are apart from each other, their teachers, and the larger school community. There will be brief opportunities for coming together and we can expect that the experience of coming together and separating will bring out lots of different feelings. Teachers can support children by validating that the “together and apart” experience can be difficult (and exciting and exhausting and surprising and sad and and and...!)

Activities to support this developmental milestone:

You Go Away by Dorothy Corey
Peek-a-Boo Morning by Rachel Isadora
In My Heart by Molly Bang
Any book about “hellos” and “goodbyes” and staying connected

What do these books make you think about? Who are some people that go away and come back? Who are the people in your heart right now? Draw a picture about people who are close to you, and people who you miss. You can draw all these people inside a heart to show that they are your special people and that they are in your heart. Your teachers miss all of you, and we are pretending to draw a big heart around you right now!

Connecting Materials
Some things are made to put together and take apart. For example, Legos are made so you can connect them and then separate them. What else? Blocks can be stacked and then taken apart and separated. Can you think of other materials in our classroom that can be put together and taken apart? I wonder if you have anything at home that can be put together and taken apart? If you can’t find anything, you can invent something. For example, paper clips can be attached to each other. Or Uno cards can be lined up next to each other. Your stuffies can all hold hands and then let go! You can take a picture of what you discovered, or just tell us about it next time we meet.

Storytelling and Story Drawing
Teachers can tell a vivid story while on zoom or in a pre-recorded video. Speak slowly as you tell your story. Invite the children to draw a picture of your story while they listen or after they hear the story. What part of your story did they draw? How did they imagine the characters/places would look? Have them take a picture of their drawing to send to the teacher, or bring their drawing to the next zoom meeting to show the group.

Help Children Reflect: We have been thinking about all kinds of things that go together and come apart. Today I was so excited for all of us to come together again! And I am a little sad about saying goodbye and being apart. But I know I will see you all when we come back together again very soon.

Teacher Reflections: What did you notice about how the children and parents responded to this invitation? How will you continue to refer to these themes as remote schooling continues?