



Preparatory

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Uniquely United to be The Best That We Can Be

The beginning of the year is filled with hope and renewed enthusiasm in the classroom and on the playground. We are **UNITED** in our aims to provide a supportive environment in working towards being the best that we can all be. However, we also acknowledge that we are **UNIQUE** in our journey and experiences, and therefore the paths we use and obstacles we face are all diverse.



The world has experienced such significant shifts in understanding what is 'normal' and if we can once again hope for an ordinary year in which we can achieve extraordinary things... we first need to acknowledge the impact of what we have been through and what our expectations are.

We can all unite in our frustration and concern about the ongoing load shedding, but we are probably as unique in the impact it is having on us as we are in our strategies to manage the rolling blackouts. We also need to be aware that on some days we manage the stress more easily than on others. On some days we need support and on others we need space. We have individual needs and preferences even when we are all facing a global or local obstacle. Therefore, we can acknowledge that we are **uniquely united**.

In trying times and exciting times, we can learn from and lean on each other. Instead of striving just to catch up, keep up and 'man up'; we can encourage the following:

Reconnecting with your purpose and yourself

Having been in survival mode to manage various states of loss, trauma and coping, we are beginning to emerge and look around with a renewed perspective on life. It is essential that we reconnect with our purpose in work and life and in so doing, reconnect with ourselves.



Acknowledging your post-trauma state

It is important to acknowledge and be aware of the significant emotional strain which has occurred, as a result of loss (of loved ones, financial security, freedom, development, or all of the above) in order to be realistic in the expectations we have of ourselves and the children in our care. We are not yet able to put it all behind us, we can learn from these tough times, but first, we need to acknowledge that it has been hard and we have been shaken.



Taking Time to Regulate

Grounding ourselves in what is important, meaningful and thoughtful is the first step of checking in with yourself, with your kids and your family and friends. It becomes increasingly important to practice mindfulness and keep a sense of awareness. Finding spaces to reconnect with nature or your body and knowing that you can breathe again is crucial before expecting that you can be successful and productive in the year ahead.

Protecting and Prioritising Relationships

Connection is key to coping. Feeling heard, understood or seen is an essential human requirement for leading a full life. It is important for us to protect and prioritize relationships above goals and gains, as these have become the most valued approach to uniting and supporting each other through challenging times, past and future.

Practising Resilience

The ability to withstand and recover from difficulties has become a critical component of being South African or coping with the challenging nature of life. By practising resilience and problem-solving skills, your children can observe these skills first-hand, and you can benefit from and become equipped in demonstrating these skills with peers, teachers and at home.



The ability of parents and role models to adapt, withstand and problem-solve when experiencing changes has been identified as crucial in a child's resilience when facing hardship or obstacles. Keep in mind your attitude to an increased level of load shedding, communication from the school, or an unexpected statement or request. Try to model the behaviour that you would hope your child would show when facing something which requires bravery, effort or self-control, but also allow them the space to express their difficulties.

We are unique in the triggers we experience in our environment or the obstacles that we have encountered on our journey through life; however, we are united in the range of emotions that we have all experienced and our preferred hope for the future of our children, ourselves and our country. Let us work together and unite for increased strength, resolve, and skill development for a brighter future no matter the stage or darkness we might encounter through the year.

Let 2023 be a year of **reconnection, regulation and resilience.**



Practice problem Solving WITH your children.

1. Identify opportunities to model or encourage problem solving skills
2. Acknowledge the feeling of frustration
3. Name the Problem
4. Brainstorm possible solutions and create multiple choice options
5. Allow your child to choose one and test it out
6. Be supportive in reflecting on how it's working or not working
7. Allow natural consequences and reinforce that 'failing' is learning
8. Ask questions and view the problem from their perspective