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PEDAGOGICAL

BOOKLET



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Goals of PsyTales

Introduction to the PsyTales

Every child carries a story of challenges, emotions, and triumphs. For children aged 9 to 12, these stories often include the growing pains of stress, anxiety, and social pressure. PsyTales addresses these challenges by taking a proactive approach to wellbeing in schools through storytelling.

PsyTales integrates wellbeing practices into carefully crafted stories, creating a supportive classroom environment where students can explore and manage their emotions. The project aligns with key European frameworks, such as the 2020 LifeComp Framework, which emphasises life competences like emotional regulation, resilience, and social skills. Additionally, PsyTales contributes to the European Healthier Together Initiative (2022), which focuses on promoting mental health in schools. If you would like to know more about these frameworks, check Chapter 1: “Scientific Foundations of Wellbeing Purpose and Goals of PsyTales”, where we provide you with more details.

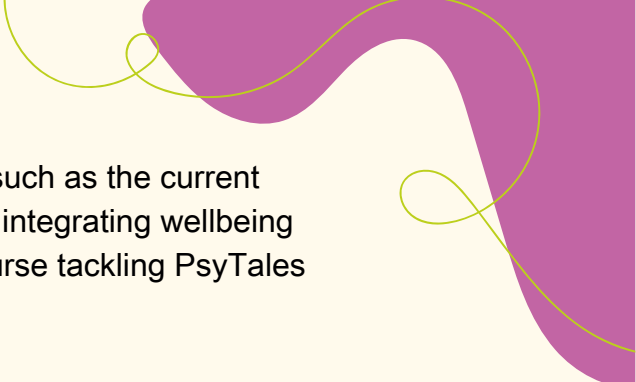
By combining storytelling with these frameworks, PsyTales empowers both students and educators to prioritise emotional wellbeing alongside academic success, fostering a positive learning atmosphere.

Objectives: Enhancing Wellbeing in Education

The core goal of PsyTales is to equip students with the tools they need to face challenges constructively. By using relatable stories, the project helps students develop emotional literacy and resilience, enabling them to better manage stress, failure, and interpersonal conflicts. The key objectives are:

- **Providing coping tools for students:** The stories in PsyTales reflect real-life situations, encouraging students to adopt positive coping strategies such as emotional regulation and problem-solving to navigate challenges.



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- **Supporting educators with practical resources:** such as the current pedagogical booklet offering educators guidance on integrating wellbeing practices into their classroom, but also an online course tackling PsyTales stories creation.
 - **Enhancing emotional literacy and resilience through storytelling:** PsyTales engages students emotionally, helping them recognise and articulate their feelings while building empathy and self-awareness.
 - **Equip parents and caregivers to support their children:** The stories of PsyTales empower parents and caregivers to foster a supportive learning environment at home, enriching their children's emotional growth and educational journey.

Approach and Methodology

Storytelling lies at the heart of PsyTales. Stories make abstract wellbeing concepts more accessible to students, allowing them to understand emotional challenges through relatable characters and situations. This approach draws on positive psychology and lifestyle medicine principles, incorporating strategies for emotional regulation, mindfulness, and resilience-building.

In conclusion, PsyTales offers more than just stories. It provides a holistic educational approach that integrates wellbeing into learning. By equipping students with emotional tools and educators with practical resources, PsyTales fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that prioritises emotional wellbeing alongside academic achievement.



Target audience and Booklet purpose

Who will benefit from the Booklet?

The main target group for this activity's output is educators who will utilise the stories with their pupils. The booklet provides teachers with helpful guidance on how to apply the project's methodology and use the stories with their students in the most effective way so that their learning and positive psychology improve. However, it is expected that the booklet will also be beneficial to other target groups.

More specifically, the booklet is certain to offer helpful information and practical advice to each of the following target groups:

1. **Primary school teachers** can use the tales to improve their students' well-being in the classroom. For example, readers will be able to be acquainted with practical strategies for incorporating tales that promote emotional well-being, resilience, and social skills among young learners. Moreover, the booklet can serve as a training resource. This will equip teachers with the background knowledge and necessary tools so that they create their own tales. In this way, the booklet ultimately fosters creativity and innovation in lesson planning.
2. These tales, intended for primary students, might also inspire **secondary school teachers**. More particularly, secondary teachers can draw inspiration from primary tales, adapting themes and lessons to suit older students, thereby creating relatable content that engages teenagers. Another important aspect is that the booklet can help bridge the gap between primary and secondary education, encouraging continuity in teaching methods that promote well-being and emotional intelligence.
it of body text
3. **Special education professionals** can use these tales or adapt them to meet the needs of students with different learning abilities, who require additional support to develop positive attitudes and self-confidence. As a result, the tales can be designed to boost self-esteem and positive attitudes, helping students with different abilities feel valued and understood in an inclusive environment.
4. **School administrators** who are looking to implement storytelling programs that enhance school culture and community engagement, promoting a shared focus on well-being can refer to the booklet to find useful information. Moreover, the booklet can be used in **teacher training programs** to prepare new educators for integrating storytelling into their classrooms. The booklet provides essential knowledge and practical tools for integrating storytelling into their teaching practice, emphasising its impact on student learning and development.








5. Parents and caregivers can also benefit from the booklet to enhance their children's wellbeing and learning experience at home. In particular, parents can utilise the tales to create a supportive learning environment at home, enhancing their children's emotional and educational experiences. What is more, engaging with stories together can foster deeper connections between parents and children, encouraging discussion about values and life lessons.

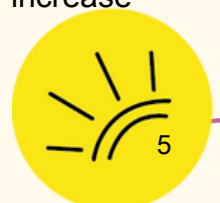
Overall, this pedagogical booklet serves as a multifaceted resource that not only improves classroom dynamics but also fosters a community approach to nurturing students' wellbeing and learning.

How can you use this resource effectively?

Let us see how this educational booklet's practical advice emphasises how the different target groups can effectively use its content.

-  • The booklet provides practical advice on how education professionals can best utilise the tales in their teaching practice. For this to happen, educators need to familiarise themselves with the tales, grasping not only their narratives but also their educational goals. This knowledge will allow them to align the stories with specific learning objectives, ensuring relevance and impact in the classroom.
-  • Educators will be able to integrate the tales in their own teaching situations making all the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of their unique learning environments.
-  • Engaging with colleagues during department meetings and training events enhances understanding and creates opportunities for sharing insights and strategies. This collaborative approach can lead to richer applications of storytelling across the curriculum.
-  • Teachers are encouraged to engage the students in the storytelling process through appealing and interactive post-tale activities. Students' active involvement will surely make learning more memorable. In addition, when teachers facilitate discussions after each tale, students are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings, deepening their comprehension and developing their critical thinking and communication skills.
-  • The booklet includes instructions for parents on how to use the tales at home, empowering them to support their children's learning. This involvement can foster a love for storytelling and reinforce the values and lessons discussed in the classroom.

These useful tips will help teachers use stories to improve their instruction, increase student interest, and foster a culture of learning outside of the classroom.



CHAPTER 1

Scientific foundations of wellbeing

Positive psychology in education

Theories and key concepts

The health and wellbeing of young people are declining in many parts of Europe (PISA, 2024). Currently, over 9 million adolescents aged 10-19 (16.3%) are affected by mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, or eating disorders, a higher rate compared to the global average of 13.2% in this age group (UNICEF, 2021). Additionally, the report highlights rising levels of cyberbullying and a decline in school belonging. This aligns with research with almost 3,000 adolescents indicating that wellbeing tends to decrease as students advance through their education (Burke & Minton, 2019). To address this, a comprehensive approach is needed, involving healthcare systems, schools, and families. In Europe, initiatives like Schools4Health have been introduced, promoting a whole-school strategy to improve health and wellbeing while encouraging policymakers to adopt these models across the region. The PsyTales project addresses health and wellbeing through a holistic approach, integrating well-established health and wellbeing[EG1] frameworks. They include a clinical perspective that focuses on young people's ill-being (e.g., anxiety), a positive psychology approach focusing on their well-being (e.g., school belonging), and a health component through a Lifestyle Medicine approach.



Clinical approach

Mental health disorders typically present by the age of 14 (Inserm, 2002), affecting young people's emotion regulation, cognition and behaviour, making them vulnerable. These disorders include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), depressive, anxiety, eating and substance use disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Their prevalence is high, with stigma and socioeconomic inequality playing key roles in diagnosis and the support provided to young people and their families (Sacco et al., 2022).



Unfortunately, only a quarter of young people with diagnosable disorders access specialised mental health services (Soneson & Ford, 2020). When left untreated, these disorders can lead to lower educational achievements, substance abuse, violence, suicide and various health issues (Patel et al., 2007). It is essential to address these issues promptly, and a whole-school approach involving students, teachers, and parents, getting involved in such programmes as PsyTales, is vital for reducing the burden of mental health disorders and supporting young people facing these challenges.



Positive psychology approach

Positive psychology is the science of wellbeing that aims to prevent mental health issues and help individuals live fulfilling lives (Burke et al., 2022). It has been integrated into positive education, which applies the principles of positive psychology in school settings (Burke & Arslan, 2020). This approach has become especially relevant in the post-COVID era, as the pandemic has disrupted educational systems worldwide and negatively impacted the wellbeing of millions of children and adolescents (Arslan & Burke, 2021). The positive psychological approach does not directly target mental health issues but focuses on helping young people build psychological, physical, and intellectual resources to cope with life's challenges, develop resilience, and thrive. While its primary aim isn't to reduce symptoms of ill-being, it has been shown to effectively decrease anxiety and depression (Chakhssi et al., 2018). Moreover, longitudinal studies show that individuals who flourish psychologically are seven times less likely to develop serious mental health issues over two years (Keyes et al., 2020). Supporting students to develop positive psychology resources, can prevent mental health issues and help them achieve optimal human functioning.



Lifestyle Medicine

The PsyTales developed as part of this project explore the themes of the four core lifestyle medicine pillars that need to be addressed to ensure the health of young people in Europe. They include sleeping well, eating well, physical activity, and relationships. Lifestyle Medicine (LM) is the fastest developing medical specialty that builds on established research practices to promote healthy lifestyle through six core pillars (Burke et al., 2025). These pillars encompass getting sufficient daily sleep, consuming a diet rich in whole foods, maintaining regular physical activity, avoiding harmful substances such as alcohol and tobacco, managing stress effectively, and fostering positive relationships (ACLM, 2022).

The PsyTales are an amalgamation of research-based approaches deriving from clinical psychology that aims to reduce their symptoms of stress, anxiety or depression. Additionally, they are informed by the science of positive psychology and lifestyle medicine. Together, they provide pupils and teachers with tools to improve their health and wellbeing.



Evidence-based practices for educators

Overview of the 2020 LifeComp Framework and the European Healthier Together Initiative



LifeComp Framework

Introduction

The LifeComp Framework is a model designed to foster key competencies essential for individuals' personal, social, and learning development. By integrating these competencies into education, work, and everyday life, individuals are better equipped to adapt, thrive, and contribute positively to society.

Key Competencies

Personal Competencies

- Self-regulation: Awareness and management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour
- Flexibility: Ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges
- Wellbeing: Pursuit of life satisfaction, care of physical, mental, and social health, and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle

Social Competencies

- Empathy: The understanding of another person's emotions, experiences, and values, and the provision of appropriate responses
- Communication: Use of relevant communication strategies, domain-specific codes and tools depending on the context and the content
- Collaboration: Engagement in group activity and teamwork acknowledging and respecting others

Learning to Learn Competencies

- Growth Mindset: Belief in one's and others' potential to continuously learn and progress
- Critical Thinking: Assessment of information and arguments to support reasoned conclusions and develop innovative solutions
- Managing Learning: The planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of one's own learning



LifeComp in PsyTales

In PsyTales, LifeComp is used to develop key personal, social, and learning-to-learn competencies in pupils. Through engaging stories, PsyTales fosters all nine key competencies in some way, shape, or form. By integrating these LifeComp competencies, PsyTales equips students with the tools needed to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.





The European Healthier Together Initiative

The European Healthier Together Initiative aims to address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the European Union (EU). NCDs include lifestyle-related conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental health and neurological disorders, or cancer, and account for 80% of the disease burden in the EU and the majority of premature deaths in the EU. Launched in 2021 and spanning 2022 – 2027, the initiative is part of a broader effort to promote healthy living, prevent diseases, and reduce healthcare inequalities across Europe.

Key Strands

Mental Health and Neurological Disorders

This strand promotes the prevention of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression through education, community support, and early interventions. The initiative advocates for reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, making it easier for individuals to seek help, while ensuring equitable access to mental health services, especially for vulnerable groups.

Health Determinants

Health Determinants tackle the social, economic, and environmental factors impacting health outcomes. By addressing health inequalities, promoting healthy behaviours, and improving access to healthcare, the initiative works to create supportive environments which reduce the overall risk of NCDs.

Cardiovascular Diseases

This strand focuses on preventing heart disease and stroke through lifestyle changes such as improved diet, regular exercise, and smoking cessation.

Diabetes

The initiative promotes healthier lifestyles to prevent diabetes and encourages early detection and proper disease management.

Chronic Respiratory Diseases

Targeting diseases like asthma, this strand emphasises promoting clean air policies and reducing air pollution exposure and smoking while promoting early diagnosis and proper care.



The European Healthier Together Initiative in PsyTales

The European Healthier Together Initiative aligns closely with the goals of PsyTales by promoting healthy lifestyles and mental wellbeing. PsyTales integrates the initiative's focus on prevention by addressing mental health challenges, helping young pupils develop emotional resilience, manage stress, and adopt positive habits through tales. Additionally, our inclusive approach reflects the initiative's emphasis on reducing disparities, ensuring that all pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to resources which support their mental and physical wellbeing. Through engaging stories and educational tools, PsyTales contributes to building healthier and more resilient youth in line with the initiative's objectives.



Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

- LifeComp
- European Healthier Together Initiative
- Self-regulation
- Flexibility
- Wellbeing
- Empathy
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Growth Mindset
- Critical Thinking
- Managing Learning



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CHAPTER 2

Using tales in the classroom

Tales - features and formats

Tales - features

When discussing the features and formats of stories used in the classroom, it is crucial to explore how these elements contribute to effective teaching and learning.

Here follows a list of story features. Yet, it is important to note that not every good narrative for classroom use needs to contain each of the following characteristics:

- ☀️ • **Clear structure** (beginning-middle-end, conflict-resolution) helps students follow the narrative and understand the progression of events. This structure typically includes a conflict that drives the plot and a resolution that provides closure. Research shows that stories with a defined structure can enhance comprehension and retention (Bruner, 1991).
- ☀️ • **Memorable characters** foster emotional connections and engagement. The more students relate to characters, the more engaged in the story they are. Characters that embody specific traits can serve as models for students, encouraging empathy and understanding (Cohen, 2001).
- ☀️ • When stories convey a **morale or lesson**, they can stimulate discussion and critical thinking. In this way, students are encouraged to relate the story theme to their own lives and develop morally and psychologically (Leming, 2001).
- ☀️ • **Repetition and rhythmic language** helps students to understand key concepts and enhances memory (Sipe, 2008). They can make stories more engaging and enjoyable, particularly for younger audiences.
- ☀️ • If you want to make stories captivating for young children, you should use **fantasy elements** to trigger their imagination and creativity, which in turn strongly contributes to their cognitive development (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000).



The educational value of Tales



Emotional Literacy

Psychological tales are stories designed to address psychological themes, emotional growth, and mental health. These tales often involve characters facing challenges, overcoming obstacles, and learning valuable life lessons.

Stories, tales, and fables have a profound impact on people's emotions, particularly children. PsyTales can play a significant role in the emotional education of children by providing insight into emotions and feelings. The characters in these stories experience emotions such as fear, joy, anger, jealousy, sadness, frustration, and gratitude, offering opportunities to discuss these emotions. Children learn to recognise, understand, and express their own feelings. Reading about how characters express their feelings helps students learn appropriate ways to communicate their own emotions. By observing the characters' experiences and responses to challenges, children see that their emotions are natural, while also learning how to recognise, accept, express, and share them. Tales are valuable tools in building emotional vocabulary; the language used in these stories helps expand children's emotional vocabulary, making it easier for them to articulate and express their feelings accurately.



Development of Empathy

PsyTales encourage students to put themselves in the shoes of the characters, fostering empathy and understanding of others' feelings and experiences. Children often identify with different characters, including those who experience pain or hardship, which encourages the development of empathy. Children experience similar emotions. It promotes empathy development. By understanding the emotions and experiences of these characters, children learn to empathise and develop compassion. This is an essential part of socio-emotional development, leading to positive behaviours such as helping and supporting others.



Building Psychological Resilience and Coping Skills

PsyTales have positive outcomes, instilling a sense of hope and optimism in students. By reading about characters who face and overcome challenges, students can learn about the importance of perseverance and discover some coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and adversity.



Stories can support children who experience strong emotions, bereavement, or loss. Characters in these tales face challenges and setbacks, which helps children learn to accept these difficulties as part of life, believe in themselves, and work towards their goals. Stories also provide behavioral patterns for managing stress, fostering psychological resilience, emotional stability, and overall wellbeing. Students observe how characters interact, make friends, and resolve disputes, which can contribute to the improvement of their own social skills.

Stories can reveal patterns of behaviour and reactions that help children understand and survive stressful situations and changes. Children can learn mindfulness skills, other calming techniques that increase psychological resilience and mental wellbeing, emotional stability and how to maintain it. Tales also help children develop as individuals by encouraging them to be courageous, trust themselves, and face life's challenges. These stories can help children to make calm, rational decisions, and serve as excellent therapeutic tools that prepare children for life's challenges, helping them to stay optimistic and to think positively. Students observe how characters interact, make friends, and resolve disputes, which can improve their own social skills.



Problem-Solving Skills

The situations characters face often require children to solve problems, promoting critical thinking and the development of problem-solving skills. Many tales involve teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, highlighting the value of working together.

Selecting the right story for a particular challenge a child faces can also provide specific knowledge, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.

Benefits of PsyTales for Students' Wellbeing

Promoting Inclusion and Reducing Stigma: PsyTales can create a comfortable classroom environment, helping students reach their full potential. These stories teach children to understand and care for their well-being, encouraging better relationships with peers and normalising mental health discussions. This supportive environment allows students to express themselves, fostering critical thinking and tolerance of diverse perspectives.

Encouraging Positive Behaviour and Attitudes: Stories provide clear examples of positive behaviour, helping children understand the consequences of their actions and manage emotions. They teach communication, cooperation, compassion, and community-mindedness. Children learn how to communicate positively, be supportive, and build meaningful relationships.





Supporting Overall Mental Health

These stories can serve as a springboard for discussions about mental health and wellbeing, encouraging students to share their thoughts and feelings. By reading, listening to, or discussing stories, children become more aware of themselves, others, and the world around them. Stories help them understand that different people may interpret things differently, fostering acceptance of diversity. Discussing stories creates a sense of community, allowing children to share thoughts and feelings and develop social skills, such as kindness, courage, and honesty.



Development of Cognitive Skills

The rich vocabulary and lively language used in stories aid children's language development. Reading or listening to engaging stories improves literacy, attention, memory, and listening skills. Acting out stories can make them more memorable and visual, enhancing comprehension and engagement.

Stories also broaden children's imagination and creativity, encouraging them to create their own stories and think creatively. Analysing stories helps children distinguish important details, evaluate situations, and form their own viewpoints, which promotes critical thinking. Additionally, stories can change children's attitudes towards mistakes, towards peers who make mistakes, fostering resilience and a growth mindset.



Using stories to bond with the child

Teachers, parents, and other adults can also benefit from these stories, learning effective ways to communicate with children and recognising how small actions can greatly impact a child's well-being. Discussing stories with children allows adults to connect with them, learn about their perspectives, and build positive, trusting relationships. Reading stories and discussing them together is an excellent means to convey our own experiences and moral values, while coming to joint solutions and bonding with the child. This is one of the opportunities to spend quality time with the child, creating a safe environment where emotions are freely expressed, even if attitudes remain different. The child sees that the adult is giving him or her attention and time, feels loved and important. This kind of relationship with an adult helps the child to feel more secure and confident in themselves and in others. The tales become both-an educational and emotional bridge between the adult and the child, helping to build a strong relationship based on trust and mutual understanding.

Tales - formats

Stories can have the following formats:

Oral narratives, significantly enhancing listening skills and fostering community (Haven, 2007), allow for dynamic engagement through voice modulation and body language. In this way, student participation is encouraged, since students can predict outcomes, repeat phrases, or act out parts of the story.

Written texts include picture books and short stories. This format promotes students' literacy skills and allows students to explore the narratives independently (Morrow, 2012). Moreover, they provide visual support that enhances comprehension, especially for younger learners.

Multimedia presentations (audiobooks, animated Stories, or films) combine visual and auditory elements, thus catering to both visual and auditory learners (Lemke, 2002), so that students can better understand the stories.

Digital stories (interactive e-books and educational apps) offer interactive experiences that can engage students more deeply. As a result, digital stories promote students' active participation and enhance learning outcomes (Hague & Payton, 2010) through animations and embedded questions.

Apart from the widely known formats mentioned above, there are also the following story formats.

Comic books combine images and text to tell a story, often using panels and speech bubbles. Teachers can use comic books to develop students' visual literacy or even ask students to create their own comic strips to tell a personal story.

Illustration-only books convey a narrative primarily through illustrations, with little or no text. Teachers can analyse the illustrations to infer the story or create their own narratives based on the visual elements.

Kamishibai is a Japanese form of storytelling that uses a series of illustrated boards (often in a wooden frame) to tell a story. The storyteller flips through the boards while narrating. Teachers can use kamishibai to keep their students' attention during story telling.

In **leoporello** (accordion books) pages are folded in an accordion manner and are unfolded to reveal a continuous narrative or illustration. One interesting way this format can be used is story mapping, which allows students to visualise the connections between events.

Haiku, often related to nature and emotions, is a traditional form of Japanese poetry consisting of three lines with a 5-7-5 syllable structure. Teachers can introduce haiku as a way for students to express their thoughts and feelings.

When educators are familiar with these features and formats, they can choose stories that not only entertain but also enrich students' learning experience, while simultaneously fostering their students' cognitive and emotional development.



Overview of the Tales

Description and objectives of the Tales



Purpose of the Tales

The PsyTales collection has been designed to promote emotional wellbeing, resilience, and positive mental health in children aged 9 to 12. As pupils in this age range are transitioning from childhood to adolescence and begin to experience increasing social, academic, and emotional pressures, it is essential to provide them with the tools to manage these challenges (Denham, 2007; Eschenbeck et al., 2018).

The tales serve as a gentle yet effective approach to help children navigate their emotional landscape through engaging, relatable, and age-appropriate narratives. The collection of tales includes a variety of tales that focus on key aspects of wellbeing, such as developing character strengths, improving emotional regulation, practicing mindfulness, and practicing social skills. Each story is not only a journey through the adventures of its characters but also an exploration of the psychological concepts that are critical to children's development.



Objectives

The core objective of these tales is to use storytelling as a medium for children to understand important wellbeing notions, to manage their emotions better and to learn how to react in some specific situations, at school or at home, in their daily lives. By following the adventures and challenges faced by the characters, children are introduced to strategies for handling stress, frustration, and social dynamics.

For educators, the PsyTales collection serves as a practical resource, integrating key psychological concepts into engaging narratives. These tales provide teachers with tools to foster a supportive environment, where discussions about emotions and mental health can take place naturally through the stories. The tales offer opportunities for reflection and conversations that build emotional literacy and resilience among students.

For parents and caregivers, PsyTales encourages meaningful discussions at home, helping to create a nurturing environment that reinforces these important lessons and supports children's emotional growth beyond the classroom.



Topics of the Tales

Key Themes Addressed

The PsyTales collection addresses a wide range of themes central to children's emotional and social development.

Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience: In “Password Full of Hope” the story explores how children can develop hope as a tool for overcoming challenges. Jack, the young protagonist, faces a series of setbacks but learns that with perseverance and a plan, hope can help him achieve his goals. Similarly, “The Secret Power of Stress” teaches children that stress, often viewed as negative, can actually be harnessed for personal growth and resilience. Another example is “The Compassion Circle”, which introduces the concept of self-compassion and emotional support as essential elements of resilience.

Positive Relationships and Social Skills: “The Tale of the Joyful Resonance” explores how the way we respond to others affects our relationships. It introduces the concept of active-constructive responses and shows how celebrating the successes of others can strengthen friendships.

Self-Discovery and Strengths: “Mia’s Hidden Talent” is a story of a young girl who learns to leverage her artistic talent to overcome academic challenges. The tale highlights the importance of recognising and celebrating one's strengths while maintaining balance, as over-reliance on a single strength can lead to other areas of personal development being neglected. This theme is echoed in other stories that encourage children to discover and embrace their unique qualities.

Mindfulness and Emotional Regulation: In “Chloé’s Colour Constellation” children are introduced to mindfulness through the metaphor of colours representing different emotions. Chloé learns to navigate complex feelings like fear, calm, and courage by embracing the full spectrum of her emotions. The story helps children understand that it’s okay to feel multiple emotions at once, teaching them to accept and regulate their feelings.

These tales are carefully crafted to address relevant topics for children, with each story contributing to a broader understanding of wellbeing and resilience. They also allow educators to engage students in discussions about emotional regulation and social skills in a way that is accessible and age-appropriate. Additionally, these tales provide valuable opportunities for parent/caregiver-child discussions, helping to reinforce key messages and support emotional growth at home.




Alignment with the LifeComp Framework


The PsyTales aligns with the LifeComp Framework (European Commission, 2020), which focuses on developing essential life competences like emotional regulation, empathy, and social awareness. These tales are designed to foster the competencies outlined in the framework, providing young people with practical skills to manage their emotions and navigate social situations. For more details on the framework, refer to Chapter 1.

Clarification of Key Concepts Addressed by the Tales

We all have a general understanding of concepts like hope, compassion, or stress, but these everyday interpretations often lack the depth and precision offered by scientific research. In reality, psychological concepts are far more nuanced and complex than what we may casually assume. In PsyTales, we build on these research-based, detailed definitions to ensure our stories meaningfully address the core of these concepts.

By grounding our tales in scientifically-backed psychological principles, we aim to make them more relevant and impactful for children aged 9 to 12. This approach allows us to go beyond the surface-level understanding of wellbeing and explore the critical aspects that truly foster emotional growth and resilience in children. Below are some examples of how we incorporate these detailed definitions into our stories:

 **Hope:** In “Password Full of Hope”, for example, hope is portrayed as more than just wishful thinking. It is shown as a dynamic process that involves setting goals, making plans, and maintaining motivation (Snyder, 2002). The scientific definition of hope emphasises the importance of both the will to achieve something and the way to make it happen, making it a critical concept for building resilience in children.

 **Self-Compassion:** Self-compassion, a theme present in tales like “Dear Food”, encourages children to treat themselves with kindness and understanding, especially during times of difficulty. The concept involves recognising one's shared humanity and responding to personal struggles with warmth rather than criticism (Neff, 2003). For children, developing self-compassion can lead to improved emotional regulation and resilience.



Capitalisation: “The Tale of the Joyful Resonance” introduces the concept of capitalisation, where celebrating others' successes strengthens relationships. This is contrasted with less constructive responses that can weaken social bonds. In psychological terms, capitalisation refers to the process of sharing positive experiences with others, and it has been shown to enhance wellbeing and deepen friendships (Gable et al., 2004).



Curiosity: In “The Curious Club”, curiosity is explored as a powerful force that drives lifelong learning and well-being (Kidd & Hayden, 2015). The story shows children how maintaining curiosity helps them see the world differently and engage in new experiences with an open mind.

These are just a few examples of the broader range of psychological topics that PsyTales addresses. For more information on additional topics such as mindfulness, gratitude and authenticity, we encourage readers to browse through the full collection of tales.

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CHAPTER 3

Teaching the Tales - Lesson design

Introducing Tales to students

I. Introduction to the concept of tales

Definition and importance of tales

Tales are simple yet powerful narratives that have played a crucial role in human culture, passing down moral values, cultural heritage, and communal wisdom. From ancient fables to modern stories, tales have adapted to reflect societal changes while continuing to entertain, educate, and provoke thought. In classrooms today, they remain valuable tools for fostering students' emotional and cultural development.

Introducing tales to students

Bringing tales into the classroom offers a creative, immersive learning experience. Setting aside time for storytime activities helps engage students, showing them that reading is both enjoyable and relatable. This practice also promotes creative writing and storytelling, turning tales into a means for self-expression and critical thinking.

The universal appeal of tales

Tales transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, connecting students to diverse perspectives and experiences. They serve as a bridge between familiar experiences and new cultural insights, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of global diversity.

II. Approaching the concept of Psytale

Strategies for introducing Psytale

To effectively introduce Psytale, teachers can present them as stories that go beyond simple entertainment, offering relatable experiences for students aged 9 to 12. Psytale provide a platform for discussing complex topics like resilience, empathy, and the journey of overcoming difficulties.



For example, tales about confronting fears or surpassing one's limits can resonate with students, showing them that they are not alone in their struggles. This approach can also be particularly effective for older students (aged 11-12) who may view tales as childish; by presenting Psytals with mature and engaging themes, educators can demonstrate their relevance and depth. Teachers can use Psytals as a tool to explore broader topics like personal growth and emotional intelligence, ensuring that students connect with the stories on a personal level. It's crucial, however, to approach emotionally challenging themes with sensitivity, gradually guiding students through the stories and fostering a safe environment for discussion.

III. Selecting and introducing specific tales



Choosing the right tales

Choosing the right tale for the appropriate age group is key to ensuring its impact and relatability. For younger students (ages 9-10), simpler tales with clear morals and relatable characters can be effective. For instance, tales like "Password full of hope" or "China pot of optimism" introduce positive psychological concepts in an accessible way. Another example is "Mia's Hidden Talent", which presents a relatable challenge that encourages perseverance.

For older students (ages 11-12), more complex tales that introduce challenging themes or moral ambiguities can be suitable. The tale "Dear Food" explores relationships with food and self-image, offering a more nuanced perspective that aligns with the developmental stage of pre-adolescents, while the tale "The Compassion circle" tackles the self-compassion subject. It's important for teachers to carefully select tales that match students' emotional and cognitive development while ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevance.



Identifying sensitive topics

When dealing with sensitive topics like grief, loss, or injustice, it's crucial to gradually introduce these themes. Teachers should start with simpler tales and gradually progress to more complex ones, always considering the geographical and cultural context of their students. Being aware of each child's background is essential, as it can help teachers approach challenging situations with greater understanding. For particularly difficult cases, teachers are encouraged to seek support from school psychologists or welfare staff. This careful and collaborative approach ensures that difficult themes are handled with the necessary care and respect, creating a supportive learning environment where students feel safe to explore and express their emotions.

Designing lessons around Tales

Step-by-step guidelines for lesson planning

I. Lesson planning for introducing tales

Introducing tales in the classroom requires a structured approach to maximise their educational value while fostering critical thinking and emotional development. Below are key steps to guide lesson planning for tales:

1. Structuring the lesson

- Choosing the tale: select a tale based on its length and theme, ensuring it aligns with the lesson's goals and the students' developmental level. Consider tales that address relatable subjects to engage students emotionally and intellectually.
- Time allocation: plan the lesson duration by deciding how much time will be dedicated to reading and discussing the tale. Allocate enough time for pre-reading activities (such as introducing key vocabulary), the reading itself, and post-reading discussions or activities.

Reading methods:

- Group reading: promotes discussion and shared understanding. It is beneficial for younger students as it encourages collaboration and helps build communication skills.
- Individual reading: encourages personal reflection and deeper engagement with the material. This method is more suitable for older students who are ready for independent analysis and critical thinking.

II. Encouraging critical thinking and emotional development

1. Linking lesson plans to school well-being policies

- Tales can be powerful tools for developing empathy and critical thinking. Integrating them into lesson plans supports school wellbeing policies by creating a safe space where students explore emotions and moral dilemmas.
- Selecting appropriate tales: choose tales that align with these goals, focusing on those that challenge students to think critically about characters' motivations and decisions while allowing them to explore different perspectives.



2. Discussing relatable subjects from tales

- Facilitation techniques: guide discussions that connect the themes of the tales to students' own experiences. For example, ask open-ended questions like, "How would you feel if you were in the character's situation?" or "What other choices could the character have made?"

- Encouraging personal connections: invite students to draw parallels between the tales and their lives. This method fosters a deeper emotional response and helps students practise articulating their feelings and thoughts, enhancing their emotional literacy.

III. Adapting approaches based on age

Age-specific strategies and adjustments for different age groups

For younger students (age 9):

- Emphasise group work and collaborative exploration of tales. Use group reading sessions to build teamwork and allow students to share their thoughts collectively, encouraging a sense of belonging and open communication.

For older students (age 12):

- Encourage independent reading and more in-depth analysis. Tailor lessons to include critical thinking activities such as character mapping, exploring alternative endings, or debating moral decisions made by characters in the tales.

Tailor discussions and activities to match the developmental needs of each age group. For younger students, use visual aids, interactive storytelling, or dramatisation to make the lesson engaging. For older students, introduce reflective journals or group debates to deepen their analysis.

Flexibility in lesson plans: remain flexible in your approach, adjusting lesson plans based on student responses and interests. Be prepared to shift focus if students show interest in specific aspects of the tale or if they need additional support in understanding certain themes.

By following these step-by-step guidelines, educators can create engaging and meaningful lessons that not only teach literacy skills but also encourage emotional growth and critical thinking, contributing positively to the overall well-being of students.



Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

Storytime activities

Organised sessions dedicated to reading and discussing tales, often held in schools, libraries, and other community establishments. Storytime activities engage children through storytelling, fostering creativity, literacy, and critical thinking. These sessions not only promote a love for reading but also provide a space where children can connect with stories in an enjoyable and relatable way. Storytime encourages exploration of themes in both traditional and modern tales, making it an immersive experience that nurtures imagination and self-expression.



Practical implementation strategies

Ways to use the format of the Tales

Using different storytelling formats like dialogue, monologue, description, and narrative structure in the classroom can be an effective way to enhance learning across various subjects. Let us explore how we can integrate these formats into our teaching:

Dialogues can be used in the classroom in the following ways:

- **Role-Playing Exercises:** students act out scenes from a tale, focusing on the dialogue between characters. This encourages active listening, speaking, and understanding of character interactions.
- **Dialogue Writing:** students write dialogues between characters, by either extending the story or imagining conversations that could have happened off-screen. This helps with understanding character motivation and voice.
- **Dialogue Analysis:** students break down a story's dialogue to discuss how it reveals character traits, attitudes, motives, etc. This can lead to deeper comprehension and self-awareness.

Monologues can be used in the classroom in the following ways:

- **Character Monologues:** students write or perform a monologue from the perspective of a character, exploring their thoughts, emotions, or motivations. This deepens character analysis, empathy and self-development.
- **Inner Thoughts:** students express what a character might be thinking during a particular moment in the story, even if it's not explicitly stated in the tale. This helps with reading between the lines and understanding context.
- **Creative Writing:** students write their own stories that include monologues, helping them explore voice and perspective.

Descriptions can be used in the classroom in the following ways:

- **Setting Descriptions:** students focus on the descriptive passages of a tale and draw or visualise the setting. This can enhance their ability to picture scenes and understand the importance of setting in storytelling.



- **Descriptive Writing:** students practice writing detailed descriptions of characters, settings, or objects in the story. This can help develop their vocabulary and language.
- **Visualisation Activities:** While teachers read a descriptive passage aloud, students close their eyes and visualise the scene. This way teachers can realise the power of descriptive language.

Narrative Structures can be used in the classroom in the following ways:

- **Plot Mapping:** students map out the plot structure of a tale (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution). This helps with understanding narrative flow and story elements.
- **Story Sequencing:** students place mixed-up story events in the correct order. This reinforces their understanding of narrative structure.
- **Creative Writing Projects:** students write their own stories following a similar narrative structure, focusing on developing a clear beginning, middle, and end.

We can also integrate formats for a comprehensive lesson. Have you thought of ways to combine the aforementioned formats?

- **Story Writing and Performance:** Students work in groups to create a short story or play. One group might focus on writing descriptive passages, another on dialogue, and another on plotting the narrative structure. They can then perform their story for the class, integrating all elements.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Students study a tale in its original narrative form, and then explore how the same story might be told differently using mostly dialogue or monologue. They can then discuss how these changes affect the story's impact and meaning.
- **Interdisciplinary Projects:** Tales can be used to connect with other subjects. For example, a story about a historical event can be analysed for its narrative structure in Language Arts, and then used to explore the event's significance in Social Studies.



Adapting Tales to different classroom settings

Adapting storytelling to different classroom settings requires flexibility and creativity to meet the needs of diverse learners. You can find some ideas on how we can adjust tales to various environments, age groups, and learning contexts below:

1. Adapting to different **age groups**: Simple repetitive language and clear, straightforward plots should be used with younger students, while complex themes and characters and group projects should be kept for older students.
2. Adapting to different **learning styles**: Different approaches should be used to suit the needs of visual (illustrations, mind mapping), auditory (oral storytelling, discussions-based activities), kinesthetic (role-playing, hands-on projects) and reading/writing (story sequencing) learners.
3. Adapting to different **classroom environments**: teacher's approach should be different in traditional classroom (e.g. literature circles), online teaching (e.g. digital storytelling tools) or non-traditional settings (e.g. outdoors).
4. Adapting to different **subject areas**: Depending on the areas we are focusing on, we should choose tales or adjust them to meet the content of a particular subject area. For example, if we focus on mathematics, problem-solving stories are preferable, while stories on culture or history are better in the cases of social studies.
5. Adapting to different **levels of language proficiency**: Simplified texts work better with beginner language learners while tales that introduce complex ideas and offer cultural comparisons are preferable with advanced language learners.



Tips for educators and parents to foster engagement

Using storytelling in the classroom or at home is a powerful way to engage children and enhance their learning experiences. It is a good idea for educators and parents to take into account the following tips to foster engagement through storytelling. They should:

- Choose the right story, based on the learners' age, cultural relevance and interests.
- Make the story interactive, by asking questions, using props and visuals and encouraging participation.
- Use expressive storytelling techniques, paying attention to their voice, body language and gestures.
- Create a comfortable storytelling environment – they can also use music and other sounds to enhance the atmosphere.
- Integrate stories into the curriculum by using story-based projects and cross-curricular storytelling.



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CHAPTER 4

Benefits of using the Tales

Impact on students' well being and academic success

Research and evidence supporting the Tale use

Over the past decade, the integration of positive psychology into education has flourished. Various frameworks have been developed to help schools incorporate positive psychology research and practices into their educational approaches. Many of these frameworks are adaptations of wellbeing models like PERMA, tailored to fit school wellbeing frameworks and focus on teaching the science of wellbeing and implementing positive psychology interventions (Burke, 2021).

Additionally, specific wellbeing programmes have been created to teach children about wellbeing, including Penn Resiliency, SPARKS, and Making Hope Happen (Lopez, 2013; Pluess et al., 2017; Reivich & Gillham, 2010). Some of these programmes advocate for a whole-school approach to wellbeing (Quinlan & Hone, 2020). While these approaches have been beneficial, they often functioned as supplementary components, adding extra workload for both students and teachers (Waters, 2021). In contrast, less emphasis has been placed on more integrated methods of enhancing school community wellbeing that do not require additional curriculum time or extensive teacher training, such as pedagogies for wellbeing.

Pedagogy refers to the approach to teaching, including the instructional methods and practices used. Pedagogies can influence self-esteem, trust, and respectful behaviour (Noble & McGrath, 2010). Therefore, while some pedagogies can effectively promote wellbeing outcomes, others may have little impact on them or even negatively affect the wellbeing of students and teachers. Various pedagogical approaches have been found beneficial for wellbeing. These positive pedagogies include narrative pedagogy, which uses storytelling to facilitate meaningful learning (Pulimeno et al., 2020); social pedagogy, which emphasises strength-based informal learning strategies (Petrie, 2020); person-centred pedagogies (Fielding, 2007); and pedagogical wellbeing (Soini, Pyhalto, & Pietarinen, 2010).



In the PsyTales, we advocate for narrative pedagogy as a means to enhance students' wellbeing. This way, they not only receive the research-based content of tales that helps them learn how to improve specific components of their wellbeing, but the methodology of storytelling we use, aims to further support their overall wellbeing, thus amplifying the impact.

Story-based learning such as that included in the PsyTales plays a crucial role in identity development and improvement of empathy and communication skills. This is particularly evident when young people both listen to and retell the tales (Hibbin, 2016). Evidence suggests that storytelling is an effective method for promoting a range of healthy behaviours, such as eating well (Pulimeno et al., 2018). However, it is better used as a prevention of risky behaviour rather than reduction of it (Shen & Han, 2014), therefore it can be particularly useful with young people. The impact of tales could be further amplified by teachers expanding on stories with stories from their own lives that emphasise learning. Teachers sharing personal stories has been shown to strengthen their relationship with students and ultimately enhance their own wellbeing (Mead, 2022). Thus, PsyTales can positively influence both young people and their teachers.

To maximise the wellbeing impact of PsyTales, it's essential to follow storytelling with a variety of additional activities (Pulimeno et al., 2020). These activities might include parents engaging in storytelling, having students create their own stories inspired by the PsyTales they've read, role-playing the stories, participating in additional games relating to a story they have read, or engaging in other post-reading exercises that check their comprehension or help them apply what they have learnt in their own lives. Such techniques help students assimilate their newly gained knowledge, make it relevant to them and develop more effective coping skills for any similar situations they find themselves in the future (Velez & Prieto, 2018). For example, when experiencing bullying, they may recall a story about “hope” which encouraged them to envision a positive outcome, and more importantly, emphasised the need to create a pathway for their ideal case scenario. This may include speaking with a parent or a teacher about bullying, learning to say stop, or finding a way of reframing the bullying situation so that an individual doesn't blame themselves for the situation.

Advantages for educators and schools

Enhancing teacher-student relationships and Creating a positive classroom environment

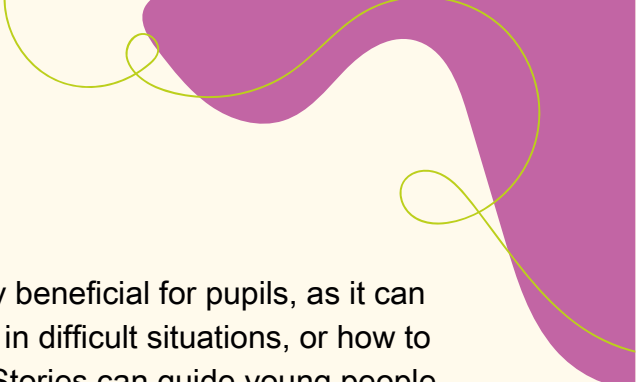
Storytelling is our main method of communication with others. We tell a story of what happened to us during the day; we tell a story to communicate our love and disappointment. We tell a story to connect with others, cheer them up or help others grow. Children and adults love listening to stories, and when a story is told well, it stays with us longer than facts and figures, especially when it relates to wellbeing. It is particularly powerful when followed up with activities that children can engage in.

Activities that can be explored with pupils after they engage in storytelling can include the following (Agosto, 2016):

- 1. Follow-up questions, e.g. asking young people what happened in the story and the details pertaining to it.
- 2. Personal connection building, e.g. exploring pupils' favourite characters or discussing similar situations that happened to young people in their own lives.
- 3. Reenactment, e.g. divide a class into smaller groups and ask each group to create a performance that reenacts a story the children have read.
- 4. Retelling, e.g. ask children to tell the story in their own words.
- 5. Connections to books, e.g. encourage pupils to read more by exploring books with similar stories.
- 6. Connection to other stories, e.g. encourage pupils to read other stories similar to this one.
- 7. Response drawings, e.g. ask pupils to draw the story they have read.
- 8. Response writing, e.g. ask pupils to write their own stories inspired by the stories they have read.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are essential for wellbeing. Introducing activities in school that can support such a relationship is crucial for improving school wellness. Storytelling can become a source of wellbeing that teachers and pupils share. In the words of teachers, storytelling with their students enhanced their wellbeing to a significant extent (Mello, 2001). Most of them remarked on their experiences of joy, fun, and enthusiasm when reading stories. They also helped teachers examine their role as a teacher in a new way. Some teachers mentioned that storytelling allowed them to find their voice and see themselves as unique people who can uniquely contribute to the classroom. As such, it allowed them to connect to their roots, values, and heritage when selecting stories to tell. Even more importantly, reading stories helped them become more creative and resulted in them writing their own stories for students. Overall, storytelling in a classroom has a beautiful effect on the teachers' wellbeing.





In addition to impacting teachers, storytelling is also very beneficial for pupils, as it can teach them how to communicate with others, what to do in difficult situations, or how to become the best version of themselves (Eades, 2006). Stories can guide young people through the process of self-improvement but also teach them about the best ways to study, learn skills and acknowledge or improve their wellbeing. Teaching through the story is safe, as it is indirect. A child is not being told what they are supposed to do, but they choose what they want to take on board. As such, storytelling boosts children's positive emotions, engages them, and gives them the autonomy to make wise choices. It facilitates environmental mastery, whereby they learn that they can impact their environment by taking action. Each of these important life lessons is associated with psychological wellbeing, which can be potentially experienced due to storytelling.

Research indicates that storytelling is very beneficial for building respectful relationships in diverse schools (Baskerville, 2011). Through storytelling, students become more empathetic, compassionate and tolerant towards others who do not share their cultural heritage. For instance, a teacher could use a story from a different culture as a starting point for a discussion on empathy and understanding. The story allows the storytellers to share the complexities, struggles and hopes of those whose lives children are not usually exposed to. Instead of seeing differences, the stories assist them in seeing similarities with other cultures where children their age have a lot in common. Stories can also help young people discover intricate information about other children's lives that they would not normally have been exposed to. As such, storytelling is a useful resource for creating bridges between people. Given European schools' cultural diversity, storytelling could be a helpful facilitator.

In summary, storytelling is a powerful delivery method linked to many positive outcomes related to health and wellbeing. When combined with content focused on health and wellbeing, storytelling can be applied as a bibliotherapeutic approach for schools, providing significant support for children and the adults in their lives, including teachers and parents. The PsyTales project is a great example of this approach, as it offers an innovative resource that has the potential to greatly enhance children's health and wellbeing by engaging them in narratives that promote emotional and psychological growth. Through this initiative, storytelling can foster resilience, understanding, and a sense of community among children and their caregivers, ultimately contributing to a healthier, more supportive environment.

Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

- Positive relationships
- Wellbeing
- Connection
- Social wellbeing
- School climate



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CHAPTER 5

The Tales and the world of publishing

Publishing options for PsyTales

Formats for print and digital access

I. Introduction to the publishing landscape

The publishing industry is currently experiencing a period of rapid change, driven by technological advancements and evolving reader preferences. Traditionally dominated by large publishing houses, the industry has become more fragmented, with independent and self-publishing options gaining traction, enabling smaller publishers and independent authors to reach a broader audience. This shift has provided increased accessibility and reach for readers of all ages and preferences. It has also impacted the world of children's books, where new formats and distribution methods have enabled more diverse, inclusive, and interactive storytelling, tailored to engage young readers and meet modern educational needs.

Print publishing remains a significant and valued format, especially for tales aimed at younger audiences or those who enjoy tangible interaction with books. Physical books continue to be popular due to their tactile nature, which allows for creativity in design (e.g., pop-up books, textured elements). For educators, tales in a physical form remain a vital tool for engaging students, particularly in classroom settings where printed materials can enhance the learning experience through interactive elements. However, in the past years, we have observed a rise of digital formats, audiobooks and the will to provide a multi-sensory experience to readers. We will tackle this subject in part III of this chapter.

II. The democratisation of publishing

The democratisation of publishing has been driven largely by technology, making it easier for small publishers and independent creators to produce books with lower costs and higher efficiency.



1. Technological advances

- Digital printing and print-on-demand: these innovations have revolutionised the publishing process by enabling small print runs. Print-on-demand technology allows books to be printed only when ordered, reducing inventory costs and minimising waste. This also means it is possible to produce smaller, targeted batches of books for specific settings or for niche markets.

- Affordable binding options: the development of more cost-effective binding methods has allowed for professional-looking books to be produced at a fraction of the traditional cost. This benefits smaller publishers who want to create high-quality physical books without the financial burden of large print runs.

2. Accessibility of printing tools

- The rise of home and school printers has empowered individuals and small organisations to produce books independently, according to their specific needs. Digital files can now be easily accessed, edited, and printed, allowing for small-scale production of educational materials or interactive storybooks that align with specific educational objectives. The availability of copiers and user-friendly design software has further simplified the process, enabling schools and smaller publishers to create tailored stories quickly and affordably.

III. The rise of digital and audio formats

The growth of digital and audio formats has expanded the ways tales can be accessed, making them available to a wider audience and catering to different preferences and needs.

The rise of digital formats, audiobooks and multi-sensory experiences

1. Digital books (ebooks)

- Characteristics: ebooks are designed to be easily accessible on various devices, including tablets, e-readers, and smartphones. They are also environmentally friendly, as they eliminate the need for physical materials. The digital format allows for features such as adjustable fonts, hyperlinks, and interactive elements like animations or sound effects, enhancing the reading experience and making them appealing for readers that are used to tech, particularly children and adolescents.

- Potential use in the Psytale project: by producing tales in ebook format, Psytale can reach a global audience, particularly appealing to those who prefer digital access for convenience. Ebooks provide opportunities for accessibility features such as text-to-speech and language translation, supporting inclusivity in diverse cultural contexts.

2. Audiobooks

- Characteristics: audiobooks are becoming increasingly popular, especially among younger audiences who enjoy listening while on the go. This format eliminates the need for a traditional reading environment, making it more accessible for students who may struggle with conventional reading methods.

- Potential use in the Psytale project: audiobooks significantly enhance accessibility for individuals with visual impairments. Moreover, for students with DYS-troubles or ADHD, audiobooks offer a dynamic, engaging alternative to traditional reading methods, helping them stay focused and interested. Additionally, integrating sound effects, music, and character voices in audiobooks enhances the storytelling experience, making tales more immersive and emotionally engaging.

IV. Publishing choices for Psytale

The Psytale project has strategically selected a variety of formats to provide a diversified experience, ensure accessibility and maximise reach:

1. Format options chosen for Psytale

- Print format: Psytale offers physical copies for readers who appreciate tangible interaction with the text. Physical books also allow for creative elements, such as pop-ups or movable parts, making the experience more engaging for younger audiences.

- Digital format: ebooks provide easy access and widespread distribution, aligning with modern reading habits. Digital versions also allow for the integration of interactive elements, enhancing engagement and learning outcomes.

- Audio format: recognising the importance of catering to auditory learners, Psytale offers audiobooks. This multi-sensory experience supports inclusivity and makes the tales accessible to a broader audience, including those with specific learning needs.

2. Reasons for these choices

- These publishing options reflect a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that Psytale are available in formats that cater to different preferences and needs. By providing print, digital, and audio versions, Psytale meet the needs of diverse reader groups, from those who prefer traditional books to those who engage more effectively through digital or auditory means.



- By adopting multiple formats, the Psytale project also supports its global reach, using popular formats that can easily be distributed across various markets, including educational portals and online platforms.

3. Access and distribution

- Online: the Psytale project will have a dedicated website where all formats (print, ebook, and audiobook) will be available to view and download. It will also leverage educational portals and partner networks to reach a wider audience. Regular updates on social media and on the website, as well as a newsletter will help keep the community engaged and informed.

- Print distribution: physical copies will be distributed through educational institutions participating (and partnered) with the project, particularly during the testing phase. Events such as fairs and workshops will provide direct opportunities to interact with potential readers, allowing for interactive experiences where audiences can engage with the content in a controlled environment.

Conclusion

The strategic publishing choices made for Psytale ensure that the tales are not only engaging and interactive but also accessible to a diverse audience. By offering various formats and leveraging modern technologies, Psytale can reach both traditional and modern readers, many of them digital natives, contributing to the project's goal of promoting well-being and positive psychology through inclusive storytelling.



Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

Print-on-demand

A technology allowing books to be printed only as needed, reducing costs and waste, and supporting targeted or small-batch publishing.



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CHAPTER 6

How to involve parents

How to involve parents

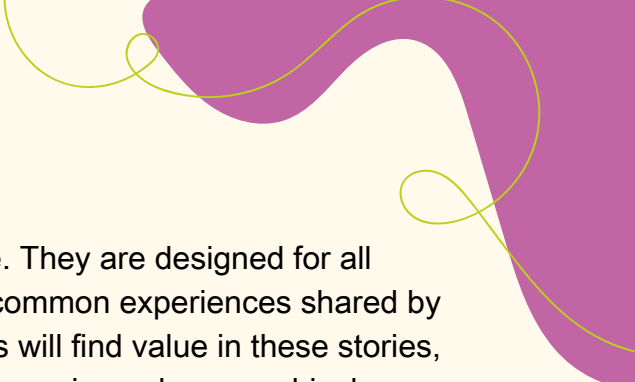
We all recognise the pivotal role that parents play in guiding their children's experience of the world around them. These tales will support you as parents in fostering your child's social and emotional growth.

Parents will find that these tales are increasingly relevant to the everyday lives of their children. For example, building resilience is a key theme, as children today are often exposed to stress and challenges from a young age. Resilience—the ability to bounce back from adversity—is an essential life skill that these stories aim to cultivate. Similarly, self-esteem is a focal point, as many young people struggle with self-worth in a world where social media and peer comparison are pervasive. The Tales also explore friendship skills, emphasizing the importance of empathy, communication, and understanding in building and maintaining healthy relationships.

Other essential topics include healthy living, which encompasses both physical and mental health. The importance of staying active, eating well, and practicing mindfulness are introduced in a child-friendly way, ensuring that young readers grasp these concepts early on. In addition, the Tales address more complex emotional issues like isolation and loneliness, problems that have become more significant in the wake of increased digital interaction and, in some cases, less face-to-face socialization. These stories provide children with the tools to recognize and express feelings of loneliness, giving them the skills to seek support when needed.

Problem-solving is another key theme woven throughout the stories. The ability to approach challenges with a constructive and critical mindset is invaluable, especially as children encounter obstacles in school, friendships, and home life. By presenting scenarios where characters face and overcome difficulties, the Tales teach children how to analyze situations, think critically, and arrive at thoughtful solutions. These skills, combined with emotional intelligence, equip young people to better handle both everyday challenges and more significant life events.






What sets these Tales apart is their universal relevance. They are designed for all children, regardless of their background, and speak to common experiences shared by young people today. Families from diverse backgrounds will find value in these stories, as they address issues that transcend cultural, socioeconomic, and geographical differences. Whether it's helping children navigate the emotions tied to a family move, the anxiety of starting a new school, or the stress of making new friends, these stories provide a guiding light for children and families alike.

PsyTales has been created by a team of experienced educational and psychological practitioners who are actively working with children in today's world. These professionals bring real-world insights into the Tales, ensuring that each story is not only relevant but also grounded in current psychological and educational practices. They understand the challenges children face today and have tailored each story to reflect these realities. The goal is to create a safe, nurturing environment where children feel comfortable exploring sensitive topics, knowing that they are supported by both their educators and their families.

The school environment plays a pivotal role in the delivery of these Tales. When introduced in the classroom, teachers guide children through the stories, introducing vocabulary and concepts that relate to the emotions and themes within each Tale. Group discussions provide children with the opportunity to engage with their peers, sharing thoughts and feelings in a safe space. However, PsyTales recognizes that not all children feel confident or comfortable sharing personal emotions in a group setting. Some may need more time, or a more intimate setting, to process the emotions triggered by the stories.

This is where the home environment becomes essential. By bringing these stories into the home, parents and caregivers can continue the conversation in a more relaxed and personal atmosphere. One of the primary goals of PsyTales is to encourage open dialogue between children and adults, providing a safe platform for children to express their thoughts, fears, and emotions. This home-based approach allows for one-on-one time between parents and children, creating moments of connection that are crucial for emotional development. In this setting, children may feel more at ease discussing sensitive topics, knowing that they have the full attention and support of a trusted adult.





Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing the lessons learned from these stories. By reading the Tales at home and engaging in meaningful conversations with their children, parents help to solidify the values and skills introduced in the classroom. This approach fosters a strong bond between parent and child, ensuring that both are aligned in terms of the child's emotional development. It also gives parents a clearer understanding of what their children are learning at school, allowing them to stay connected to their child's educational and emotional journey.

Moreover, this approach helps parents remain attuned to any challenges their children may be facing. Whether it's understanding a difficult emotion or navigating a complex social situation, parents can use the stories as a starting point for deeper discussions. By having access to the exact story content, parents are more prepared to address any issues that may arise and can offer timely guidance and support.

The connection between home and school is vital to a child's success, both emotionally and academically. PsyTales strengthens this link by creating a bridge between classroom learning and home-based conversations. This holistic approach ensures that children receive consistent support from both their educators and their families, enhancing their overall experience and helping them thrive in all areas of life. When parents and schools work together, children feel more supported, more understood, and better equipped to face life's challenges.

In summary, PsyTales offers a comprehensive approach to emotional and social development, providing children with the tools they need to navigate today's world with confidence and resilience. By addressing the most pressing issues children face today—resilience, self-esteem, friendship, emotional literacy, and problem-solving—these stories serve as a powerful resource for families and schools alike. They create a safe space for learning, discussion, and emotional growth, ensuring that children are prepared not just for the challenges of today, but for those of the future as well.



ANNEX I

Using PsyTales at Home – A Guide for Parents

Our Wellbeing social stories are powerful tools for helping children understand complex emotions, navigate social situations, and develop wellbeing strategies. These are short, simple narratives that explain situations, emotions, or behaviours in a way children can relate to, using language and visuals appropriate to their developmental stage.

The stories focus on emotions, self-regulation, and mental health, offering guidance on how to manage stress, anxiety, frustration, or other challenging feelings. This will provide you the parents with a clear guide on how to effectively use wellbeing social stories at home to support their child's emotional growth.



What Are PsyTales?

PsyTales are Wellbeing/social stories are short, illustrated narratives that:

- Describe a social or emotional situation (e.g., feeling nervous about school, managing frustration, or understanding empathy).
- Offer concrete, positive steps for the child to follow when faced with that situation.
- Reinforce emotional resilience by providing coping strategies in a safe and structured way.

These social stories can be tailored to fit your child's specific needs, allowing you, the parents, to better understand themselves and others, and giving them a sense of control over their emotions.

Why Are They Important?



Children, particularly those with special educational needs or challenges with emotional regulation, can find it difficult to understand and process their feelings. Social stories help in the following ways:

- Emotional Recognition: Children learn to identify their emotions and recognize that feelings like stress, sadness, or frustration are normal.



- **Social Understanding:** They provide a framework for understanding how their emotions fit into broader social contexts (e.g., how being anxious at school is common, and how they can manage it).
- **Self-Regulation:** Social stories guide children in developing coping strategies for their emotions.
- **Reinforcing Positive Behaviours:** The narratives often end with practical, achievable steps for managing emotions in healthy ways.



How to Use PsyTales at Home

- **Select or Create Relevant Stories**

Your school will choose stories that reflect your child's current emotional needs or challenges (e.g., a story about dealing with anger if they struggle with temper outbursts). These stories will have already been read in school and a brief class discussion will have already taken place.

You can personalize the story if possible by adding your child's name, favourite characters, or specific situations they encounter in their daily life.

- **Create a Comfortable Setting**

Choose a quiet time when your child is relaxed to read the social story together. This could be part of a bedtime routine, during a calm period of the day, or when you anticipate a challenging situation.

Make sure the environment is free from distractions to help your child focus.

- **Read and Discuss the Story Together**

As you read, pause to check in with your child about how they relate to the characters and situations.

Encourage them to talk about their own emotions or experiences. This helps your child understand that the story reflects real-life situations and that it's okay to feel certain emotions.

Use a calm, reassuring tone while reading to model the kind of behaviour and attitude the story aims to reinforce.

- **Reinforce Key Messages**

Repeat key phrases or coping strategies outlined in the story. For instance, if the story is about managing frustration, reinforce strategies like taking deep breaths or using calming words.

Practice the coping strategies outside of the story, in everyday situations. If your child feels anxious or upset, gently remind them of the story and ask how they might use the strategies from the narrative.



- **Use Visuals and Cues**

If the social story includes pictures, use them to help your child visualize the emotions and actions described.

You can also create visual cue cards based on the story's strategies (e.g., a picture of a deep breath or a smiling face) to remind your child what they can do when they feel overwhelmed.

- **Repetition Is Key**

Read the same social story multiple times. Repetition helps children internalize the message and feel more confident in applying the strategies when they need them.

Over time, your child will start to anticipate the steps they need to take and may even begin applying the strategies on their own.

- **Encourage Independence**

As your child becomes familiar with the story and its message, encourage them to refer to it independently. You can keep printed copies of the stories in a special "feelings book" or folder for your child to look at whenever they need guidance.

Praise your child when they use strategies from the social stories in real life.



Tips for Success

Be Patient: It takes time for children to process emotions and develop self-regulation. Social stories are a tool to help them along that journey, but they may not work overnight.

Adapt to Your Child: Customize the stories to reflect your child's experiences. You can change names, places, or even outcomes in the story to better suit their world.

Stay Positive: Focus on reinforcing the positive behaviours outlined in the story. Praise your child for trying to use the strategies, even if the results aren't perfect.



Activities to Expand on Social Stories

- **Create Your Own Social Story**

Materials Needed: Blank paper or notebook, markers, crayons, or printed images.

Activity: Collaborate with your child to create a custom social story about an upcoming event or situation (e.g., starting a new class, visiting a relative, or going to the doctor).

How to Do It:

Ask your child to help you draw pictures or cut out images that represent the situation. Write simple sentences describing what happens, how they might feel, and what they can do.

Read it together often to prepare for the event.

- **Feelings Matching Game**

Materials Needed: Flashcards with different facial expressions or images representing emotions (happy, sad, scared, excited, etc.).

Activity: Create or buy flashcards with various emotions. After reading the social story, use the flashcards to match emotions to the characters' feelings in the story.

How to Do It:

Ask your child to pick the correct emotion card when you describe a scenario from the story (e.g., "How did they feel when their friend didn't share the toy?").

Expand on this by talking about how your child feels in similar situations.

- **Drawing Time: Visualize the Story**

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils.

Activity: Encourage your child to draw scenes or characters from the social story you read.

How to Do It:

Ask them to draw their favorite part or how they would respond in the situation.

Talk about the drawing and reinforce the social lessons from the story.

You can even create a mini book where they illustrate different social situations.

- **Behaviour Chart: Reinforce Positive Social Skills**

Materials Needed: Chart or poster board, stickers or markers.

Activity: Create a behavior chart to track progress in applying the social skills learned from the stories (e.g., sharing, waiting patiently, using polite words).

How to Do It:

After practicing a skill (like saying "thank you" or "excuse me"), let your child place a sticker on the chart.

At the end of the week, celebrate with a small reward for completing the chart.



- **Create a Sensory Bin Based on the Story**

Materials Needed: A plastic bin, sensory materials (e.g., rice, beans, water beads), objects from the story (small toys, characters, etc.).

Activity: Build a sensory bin related to the social story. For example, if the story is about a playground, include small figures, slides, and sandbox materials.

How to Do It:

Let your child explore the sensory bin while discussing parts of the story.

This tactile experience helps reinforce learning in a fun and engaging way.

Tips for Success

Be Patient: Social stories are meant to be read and discussed repeatedly. Give your child time to fully absorb the information.

Celebrate Small Wins: Each time your child demonstrates a social skill from the story, celebrate it. Positive reinforcement encourages them to keep practicing.

Keep It Fun: Learning social skills can be challenging, so keep activities light-hearted and enjoyable. Your child will engage more when they're having fun!

By incorporating these activities and reading strategies, you'll help your child make meaningful connections between social stories and their everyday interactions, supporting their social development in a comfortable, familiar environment

By integrating wellbeing social stories into your home routine, you are giving your child a valuable toolkit for managing emotions and navigating the social world. These stories, used regularly and thoughtfully, can have a lasting impact on their emotional resilience and overall wellbeing





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