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**SPOTLIGHT**



# SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LOSS AND TRAUMA

## Hands-On Strategies to Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing



A David Fulton Book

**JULIET ANN TAYLOR**

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*Supporting Children and Young People Through Loss and Trauma* is accompanied by a downloadable summary chapter and printable online materials, designed to ensure this resource best supports your professional needs

Go to [resourcecentre.routledge.com/books/9781032230238](http://resourcecentre.routledge.com/books/9781032230238) and answer the question prompt using your copy of the book to gain access to the online content.



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# Supporting Children and Young People Through Loss and Trauma

Loss and trauma impacts families, communities and children and young people. This includes “collective trauma” experienced within situations such as a global pandemic, economic poverty, displacement, war, natural hazards or political turmoil. As a result, various common characteristics may be exhibited by children in school settings.

This practical book provides strategies and interventions to support the effects of loss and trauma in children and young people. It offers easy-to-understand research and theory to develop knowledge and skills, alongside hands-on strategies to support emotional responses, with practical examples of “what to do if...” Chapters consider why and how these emotions occur, recognising each child’s life experiences and focus on identifying suitable approaches. The intention is to validate feelings and help each child find a way to navigate the variety of emotions experienced, using the simple “5S-Scaffold” model: **SUBSIDE-SOOTHE-SUPPORT-STRENGTHEN-SELF-CARE**.

With a wealth of information and additional downloadable resources, *Supporting Young People Through Loss and Trauma* is essential reading for teachers, senior leaders, mental health or behaviour leads and SENDCos.

**Juliet Ann Taylor** is an affiliate tutor and coordinator on the Postgraduate Diploma course in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, provided by Oxford Brookes University in partnership with SEBDA. Her writing, presenting, training and support for school staff centres around pupil’s positive wellbeing, mental health and trauma-informed, attachment-aware practice.

She was a longstanding KS 3-5 teacher and key worker at a specialist school where SEND pupils, with a medical condition and SEMH diagnosis, are supported and educated utilising a graduated approach to offer a personalised curriculum and bespoke pathway.



## **nasen spotlight**

**nasen** is a professional membership association that supports all those who work with or care for children and young people with special and additional educational needs. Members include SENCOs, school leaders, governors/trustees, teachers, teaching assistants, support workers, other educationalists, students and families.

**nasen** supports its members through policy documents, peer-reviewed academic journals, its membership magazine *nasen Connect*, publications, professional development courses, regional networks and newsletters. Its website contains more current information such as responses to government consultations.

**nasen's** published documents are held in very high regard both in the UK and internationally.

For a full list of titles see: <https://www.routledge.com/nasen-spotlight/book-series/FULNASEN>

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Juliet Ann Taylor

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# **Supporting Children and Young People Through Loss and Trauma**

Hands-On Strategies to Improve Mental Health  
and Wellbeing

**Juliet Ann Taylor**

Designed cover image: © Getty Images

First published 2024  
by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9781032230221 (hbk)  
ISBN: 9781032230238 (pbk)  
ISBN: 9781003275268 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003275268

Typeset in Helvetica  
by codeMantra

Access the Support Material: [resourcecentre.routledge.com/  
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## **Dedication**

**I would like to dedicate these pages to anyone who picks up this book, reads a snippet and puts some type of strategy in place, to support a child or young person who once experienced something that rocked their world in a bad-type-of-way.**

**While this book is not exhaustive, and I don't have anywhere near all the answers, if one adult gains an extra helping of compassion, along with a pinch of new knowledge and a heap of practical ideas, then this recipe might give a child better life prospects; together we make a difference when we don't give up on the young people in our care but believe in what they can grow to be – and resolve to simply just “be there” for them.**

***One adult – one good thing – for one child.***



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# Acknowledgements

I would like to personally thank the people that made this writing possible; this book is a team effort.

Thank you to my husband Bren, for your belief, support and breakfasts-while-I-typed, all are truly appreciated. As is the care, love and offers of breaks away (while we simultaneously built a house) from my son Callum, daughter Aemelia, and their partner's Tom and Tara, respectively. Tara, thanks too for your content advice and speed reading. To my Dad, I appreciate all your support, in so many ways, with love.

My indefatigable proofreader, Rob F., deserves a medal – thank you for your time, patience, care and chronic sense of humour. Thank you, Sarah, for your encouraging support, patience and being my sounding board. You both know what your friendship means to me ... along with the rest of my “dance family.” Happy days!

Ultimately, the book's theme was inspired through decades of teaching wonderful children at James Brindley, a city-wide, multi-site specialist Social, Emotional and Mental health (SEMH) school. The opportunities, projects and training I received all played their part – thank you to all my amazing colleagues, principal Hardip and deputy Toisin. Our young people prompted my master's studies, to research first-hand exactly what support the pupils valued the most, and why – an opportunity for everyone to hear their voice (thank you deputies, Diane and Sheilagh, for your faith in me, unending support and the opportunity to fulfil a pivotal project). Subsequently, these studies led to my role as tutor on a postgraduate specialist SEMH course – a joint venture with SEBDA (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Association) and Oxford Brookes University – a qualification for those working with vulnerable children and young people. My SEBDA article became a presentation at “The TES SEN Show” conference (thanks to the connections of Rob L.), whereupon I was approached by the publishers to write on the theme I spoke about.

Hence, to all James Brindley and SEBDA colleagues, thank you; this weaving of events led the journey to this book.

To the publishers, thank you Clare and Molly for your calm help, friendly guidance and unending patience. Gayathree and team, thanks too for your role in bringing this book to print.

Thanks too to my family and dear friends (old and newer) who played an important part in this journey. You have drawn caricature illustrations (thank you Sue), inspired messages (thank you Carol), shared personal memories or simply asked how it was progressing (you know who you are). You've all been there during the joys and throws of life.

To my insightful friends and neighbours, Sharon, Mike and Andy; you inspired with your childhood snippets, advisory specialist teacher thoughts or political (with a small p) ex-teacher conversation and accompanying life advice.

There are parallels to be drawn between the re-building of my forever home and the contents between these pages – hopefully both offer shelter and a place of safety; dodgy foundations and cracked brickwork have been rebuilt along the way, not everything goes to plan, but patience and creativity (and skilled builders – thank you) are essential. Also, everyone needs a patient wingman, someone who sees all the layers that have gone before and, remaining calm, can step in when needed to support with something bespoke and practical (thank you kitchen and floor man). As both book and house project now near their end, I am hopeful, humbled and excited by the people-centred opportunities they both offer.

My aim is to emulate one of my favourite quotes, from *Wonder*, by R. J. Palacio which urges us to be – just a little bit kinder than needed.



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# Overview and Aim

The book offers practical strategies and interventions which aim to support the effects of loss and trauma in children and young people. The easy-to-understand theory provides a foundation for the practical interventions. The aim of this theory is to give a level of understanding that helps clarify why the child or young person may be behaving, or responding, as they are; it helps establish the appropriate practical strategies required to support the child or young person. With understanding comes compassion and empathy; *knowledge* gives us an opportunity to remove ourselves from our perspective and see life from another angle.

This is a rare skill, but having empathy and considering another's point of view, gives the ability to make a positive difference on small or large scales. One small act of kindness can change a life.

- It is the power that empathy gives which enables us to have compassion when trying to understand others.
- We can begin to understand emotions and experiences that differ from our own.
- Through this we can help our children and young people feel seen and known.
- We can increase our self-awareness of how our words and actions can impact others (both positively and negatively).
- Compassion brings connection, and “the sense of connection is a key element of feeling safe” (Riley, 2022, p. xiv).
- This encourages the very practical support strategies to be effective.

It is hoped that the language is accessible to all, for those with experience in education or in related professions, to those who are parents or carers or have read on this topic for the very first time.

The book is relevant for anyone wishing to understand child development, and what helps make our children and young people who they are. It is particularly helpful for those wishing to understand why the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic turmoil, the Ukraine war, grief and loss can have a tremendous impact on the youngsters in our care; practical and simple strategies are there to help us journey alongside these children and young people, whether they have an SEMH difficulty, a diagnosis or are having a blip in their wellbeing. The suggestions are not to replace specialist mental health support or care, rather the interventions should help us understand our young people and know what we can practicably do to support them.



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## About the Author

I'm the tutor coordinator and an affiliate tutor on the Postgraduate Certificate course in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, provided by Oxford Brookes University in partnership with the national charity SEBDA (the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Association). I am a member of SEBDA's National Council, have organised and delivered at national and international SEMH conferences and have written articles for the SEBDA newsletter and website. As a result of presenting at "The TES SEN Show International Conference", I was approached by the publishers to write this book, bringing theory and practice together to support children and young people (CYP) who have experienced a "collective trauma." I have a master's degree in *"Education, Learning and Teaching: Understanding, Managing and Teaching pupils with SEMH difficulties."* My research focused on investigating short and long-term supportive interventions and their impact on pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

I worked as a specialist SEMH teacher and key worker for over 20 years, with pupils aged 10–17 years at James Brindley, Birmingham, UK. At the multi-site, city-wide school, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) pupils with a medical condition and SEMH diagnosis are supported and educated utilising a graduated approach (assess-plan-do-review) to offer a personalised curriculum, bespoke pathway and supportive interventions. Multi-agency collaboration, individual pupil reviews, and Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) writing all formed part of the support process. Acting as a line-manager, peer mentor and whole-school lead (for both the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award and Unicef's "Right Respecting School" gold award), I worked with a relational ethos aimed at building resilience and confidence, within a safe and inspiring place to learn, enabling CYP to become active citizens.

I love spending time with my family and friends, and I relax by doing art, Lindy Hop swing dance, sewing and reading. A recent house-move to the (almost) countryside has reignited a love for walking.



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# Introduction

## Book overview

- The introduction offers a broad outline of the book, its intentions, aims and goals and its audience.
- The book is suitable to help support any child or young person who is impacted by trauma, grief or loss.
- The strategies of the “**5-S Scaffold**” (PART TWO), underpinned by theory (PART ONE) are designed to be practical and hands-on, to dip into when needed.
- A summary chapter and photocopiable resources can be found online by following the access instructions at the front of this book.

\*Gentle trigger warning\*

While in the research community there are ethical processes and safeguards to protect humans from harm (emotional or psychological), the same cannot be said for reading the content of books. The aim of the contents of this book is to support children and young people who have undergone a collective trauma, an event beyond their control. While there are purposefully no graphic details, some content deals with sensitive issues or may act as a trigger; an important ethical dilemma is that reading and writing about trauma can elicit a response in the writer or reader (Jané et al., 2022).

\*\*\*

The further I researched, to write this book, the more I realised that every single subject could command an entire book of its own. Trauma and loss are huge topics, as are grief, wellbeing and support strategies. Factors such as our mental health, parental aloneness and an ever-changing world (caught up in turmoil such as pandemics, war and economic spirals), all impact our ability to support the children and young people in our care. We cannot achieve the impossible and right every wrong. However, we can take bite-size snippets of knowledge and practical *hands-on strategies* to support these children and young people. A throwback to that well-worn expression: *How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!*

This book is not designed to be a perfect model, nor is it exhaustive; it is there to dip into to seek out tips as much, or as little, as you want to read. The theory is written to demonstrate why these interventions may make a difference and have a positive impact. The brief *chapter overview* at the start of each chapter aims to guide your reading, similarly the *end-of-chapter summary* sections may act as “prompts” or be a quick reference guide.

**The book is formed of two main parts:**

**PART ONE:** The first half of the book lays the foundations that is the theory behind the strategies.

**PART TWO:** The second half of the book is more practical; the “**SUBSIDE – SOOTHE – SUPPORT – STRENGTHEN – SELF-CARE**” scaffold presents five chapters dedicated to each of the “**5-S**” supportive techniques. While they are designed to read successively, the strategies can be personalised and the sections from the **5-S** scaffold utilised in a way, and in an order, that is most appropriate for the child or young person.

The downloadable summary sections and photocopiable resources add to the book’s practicality – whether the sheets are to be pinned up on a fridge, behind a teacher’s desk, or

displayed in a staff room, they can be utilised for individual interventions, classroom use or whole-school staff development.

If you are keen to explore additional resources available from the author, to enable your school or other professional setting to undertake their own staff development, you are welcome to contact: SEMHhelp@gmail.com

**Part One**

# **Theory**

For practical application