You don't need to be a perfect teacher. You just need to keep showing up.

THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

for Primary School Staff

How our presence shapes pupils' wellbeing, behaviour and learning.

by Dan Siegel

THE CORE IDEA

Children don't need perfect teachers. They need us to show up—again and again—with connection, curiosity and compassion. That's how they feel safe, learn well and grow.



Our presence is powerful.
It tells pupils: "I see you. You matter. You're not alone."

WHAT IS SHOWING UP?

It's more than being in the room. It's an attuned, mindful presence that helps pupils feel seen, safe and supported—especially in stressful or challenging moments.

- Real presence
- Emotional connection
- Curiosity over judgement
- Compassion in the hard moments
- Steady, consistent care



WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

OVERWHELM
Stress, workload, fatigue and big emotions (ours and theirs).

DISTRACTIONS
Emails, planning, admin, phones and a never-ending to-do list.

DEFENSIVENESS
When we feel disrespected, challenged or under pressure.

DISCONNECTION
We lose touch with ourselves and the reason we do this work.

Awareness is the first step back to connection.

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **SHOW UP AND TUNE IN**
   Be present. Notice what's really going on for the child behind the behaviour.
2. **STAY ENGAGED, NOT JUST AGREEABLE**
   Connection isn't about letting pupils do what they want. It's about helping them with what they need.
3. **WELCOME ALL FEELINGS**
   Big feelings are okay. Our job is to help pupils feel them safely.
4. **FIND THE "WHY" BEHIND BEHAVIOUR**
   Behaviour is communication. Curiosity opens the door; judgement closes it.
5. **REPAIR WHEN YOU MISS**
   We'll all get it wrong sometimes. Repair builds trust and deeper relationships.

♡ Connection + Repair = Stronger Together

HOW SHOWING UP HELPS PUPILS

REGULATES
Your calm helps pupils' nervous systems settle.

INTEGRATES
Helps pupils make sense of big feelings and experiences.

BUILDS RESILIENCE
Safe relationships are the foundation for bouncing back.

SHAPES WHO THEY BECOME
Secure, connected pupils are more confident, empathetic and ready to learn.

Strong relationships are the invisible curriculum. ☆

THE S.I.E.G.E.L. FRAMEWORK

A simple way to show up every day

- **S — SEE**
  Notice what's happening for the pupil in front of you.
- **I — INTERPRET**
  Make sense with curiosity, not assumptions.
- **E — ENGAGE**
  Connect with warmth, empathy and presence.
- **G — GET THEM / EMPATHISE**
  Validate their experience. "Of course that's hard."
- **E — EXTEND**
  Help them reach, learn and grow.
- **L — LOVE (ATTACH)**
  Strengthen the belonging and weaing base.

Use it flexibly. It's a guide, not a script.

IN PRACTICE: SMALL MOMENTS, BIG IMPACT

PAUSE



Take a breath. Regulate yourself so you can be present for them.

LISTEN



Listen to understand. Let them feel heard before you try to fix it.

CONNECT



Use eye contact, kind words, smiles and small gestures. Connection first.



Set limits with respect and clarity. Teach skills and offer choices.

REPAIR



Apologise when needed. Reconnect and give another go.

LOOK AFTER YOU
You can't pour from an empty cup. Protect your sleep, breaks and boundaries. Reflect, refuel and support each other.



> When we show up with presence and love, we help children build the inner roots they need to thrive—at school and for a lifetime. ♡



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT.
You just have to keep showing up.



Your presence is one of the most powerful resources in every classroom. ♡