

FREE!

RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH **WEAVING WELL-BEING** PRIMARY TEACHER RESOURCE PACK



Compiled by Fiona Forman

Weaving Well-Being

By Fiona Forman & Mick Rock

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www.otb.ie/Return-to-School



Weaving Well-Being

THE MORE YOU WEAVE...
THE BETTER YOU FEEL!

RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH WEAVING WELL-BEING

About the Author

Fiona Forman is an author, speaker, facilitator and trainer in the area of well-being and Positive Psychology. Having spent many years as a primary school teacher, she is absolutely passionate about placing well-being at the heart of school life and she has seen first-hand the great benefits of empowering children, teachers and parents to understand, value and enhance their own mental health. Fiona holds an M. Sc. in Applied Positive Psychology, the science of well-being, from the University of East London. She is also the co-author of **Weaving Well-Being**, a positive mental health programme for primary school children that is now in use in the majority of Irish Primary Schools.

For further information on the **Weaving Well-Being** programme, please follow this link:

www.otb.ie/WWB

Useful Links:

www.fionaformanwellbeing.com

www.otb.ie/Return-to-School

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RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH WEAVING WELL-BEING

Introduction for Teachers

TEACHER NOTES

This well-being resource pack from **Outside the Box Learning Resources** was created for primary school teachers to help their students process and express their emotions and experiences as they return to school after the school closures caused by Covid-19. It can be used in the first weeks back to school and is suitable for children aged from 8 to 12 years. The activities are based on the **Weaving Well-Being** programme and are written by its co-author, Fiona Forman. The activities are stand-alone, and can be used whether or not **Weaving Well-Being** is in use in the school. For more information please visit www.otb.ie/Return-to-School

Many students will have had challenging experiences and may be dealing with strong emotions such as worry, anger, fear, sadness and grief. Prioritising well-being will be more important than ever and students will need to feel a sense of safety, connection and belonging before they will be in a position to learn. Helping students to feel calm, relaxed and supported and providing opportunities to boost and amplify

positivity will help to nurture their well-being and build resilience. We all have a natural capacity for resilience and most students will recover and adapt over time, with some needing more support in this process than others.

Most of the activities provide an opportunity for children to express themselves either in writing or through talk and discussion. This expression allows children the opportunity to be heard and for their experiences to be validated and empathised with. This is part of the process of recovering and adapting to new challenges.

Although schools and teachers can't undo many of the negative effects and experiences that children may have experienced, they can provide support and empathy and hope to children to help them to move forward with a sense of hope and positivity.

Children's sense of self-efficacy also needs to be nurtured so that they feel strong and confident in their own ability to cope with problems and challenges.

The well-being activities are based on the following 5 messages:

1. Covid-19: It's time to tell your story!
2. All feelings are ok.
3. Notice the good stuff!
4. Everything you need is inside you!
5. Look back, but move forward.

Through these messages, students get the opportunity to express themselves, to be heard, to focus on the positives and to offer support to each other.

The activities are underpinned by the DES Guidelines:

Supporting the Well-Being of School Communities as schools re-open: Guidance for Schools (2020)

www.otb.ie/DES-Schools-Reopening-Wellbeing-Guidance

and also the guidance document from the *Psychological Society of Ireland: The Relaunch: Back to School After Covid-19 Restrictions* (2020)

www.otb.ie/PSI-Relaunch

The following specific principles (*Hobfoll et al., 2007*) that support psychological recovery after serious challenges are outlined in these documents:



1. A sense of security
2. A sense of calm
3. A sense of self-efficacy
4. Social connectedness
5. Promoting hope

These two documents provide information and further resources to guide schools in supporting well-being in the re-opening stage.

RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH WEAVING WELL-BEING

PART 1: TEACHER NOTES

SCRIPT FOR MINDFULNESS BREATHING – IN AND OUT

Did you know that we can use our minds and our imaginations to help our well-being? We can use our imaginations to see things in our heads. Let's try it now!

Let's start by closing our eyes and sitting up straight at our places. We place our feet on the floor and our hands relaxed on our laps. Now we can bring our attention to our breath. Notice the air gently coming into your nostrils and then gently coming out. Feel the sensation of the air in your nose. Is it warm or cool? Let's keep our attention on our breath for ten breaths. You can say the words 'in' and 'out' to yourself as you hear me say them. In, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in, out.

Now try to notice the air going right down into your lungs as you breathe. Put your hands on your tummy so that you can feel it rising and falling as the air goes in and out. This time say the words 'up and down' as you breathe in and out and as you hear me say them. We will notice for 10 breaths again. (Up/down x 10)

This time we will imagine the air going all the way down into our feet, as if our whole body is breathing. You can say the words 'nose' and 'feet' in your head as you breathe in and out and as you hear me say them. (Nose/feet x 10)

Now we will imagine the air going right down through our feet into the earth beneath us. We can feel ourselves connected to the earth and everyone else on the earth. You can say the words me/earth in your head as you hear me say them. (Me/earth x10)

Now you can gently open your eyes and spend a couple of moments bringing your attention back into the room.

You may notice a nice feeling of calmness and relaxation as you concentrate on your breath like this. Try it any time you would like to feel calm!

Teachers may wish to use this short mindfulness breathing script before each lesson. It is also available as an audio track at:

www.otb.ie/Return-to-School

Other guided meditations are also available on the Outside The Box website here:

www.otb.ie/meditations

RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH WEAVING WELL-BEING

PART 1: TEACHER NOTES

TEACHER NOTES: MESSAGE 1: TIME TO TELL YOUR STORY

This activity gives children the opportunity to express their experiences since the beginning of school closures. Giving children this opportunity to reflect, process and express themselves is very important and allows them to feel heard and supported.

The writing prompts can be read out and discussed at the start of the lesson, perhaps in a think, pair share session. Some children may wish to share some of their experiences with the class while others may choose not to. However, children should be encouraged to share ideas about what helped them to feel positive and strong during this time so that others can try these suggestions.

As a follow up, children could write down any concerns and worries they have about coming back to school on a piece of paper (anonymously) and place them in a **'Class Advice'** box. Teachers could read out the concerns over a number of lessons and the class could offer advice or suggestions on how to deal with them.

Children should also be encouraged to write a confidential letter to the teacher expressing their experiences during school closures that they would like known. This could be called 'Telling My Story' and teachers can then offer additional support as required. Even empathizing and having a private word with students to acknowledge their experiences and to offer support could be very beneficial.

They could also write a short piece called 'Covid-19: My Story' based on the writing prompts and these could be displayed under the title- 'Living Through History – Our Covid-19 Stories'

Children could also choose some quotes that motivate and inspire them to keep going and create posters of them. **Refer to photocopiable pupil pages 7 and 8.**

TEACHER NOTES: MESSAGE 2: ALL FEELINGS ARE OK

This activity reminds students that all feelings are OK. They are encouraged to name the different feelings they felt, and still feel, during the current crisis. Emotional regulation is a key factor in resilience so children need to be taught strategies to develop this.

They then discuss constructive ways to process and express their strong feelings and they are given ways to help them deal with strong feelings as follows:

- Name the feeling
- Talk to someone
- Do some deep breathing to help yourself to feel calm and relaxed
- Remind yourself that you can cope with this feeling!
- Do some physical activity
- Do some art or creative activities
- Write down how you are feeling

Students could also create posters based on this message and include ways to express emotions on them.

As a follow-up, consider setting up some type of daily 'check-in' system for students and provide a support system to help them to regulate strong emotions which may arise. This could involve a 'safe-space', a movement break, a calming or sensory box or other regulating activities.

Refer to photocopiable pupil pages 9 and 10.

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PART 1: TEACHER NOTES

TEACHER NOTES: MESSAGE 3: NOTICE THE GOOD STUFF

This activity encourages children to actively notice the small positives of everyday life – this is necessary in order to counteract the negativity bias of the mind, in which negative events are more powerful in impacting on our mood. The children are asked to notice the small positive events of the day – the ‘Rainbow Moments’ and also to reflect on any positives that came out of the crisis.

As a follow up, children could create a Gratitude Tree to remind them of everything that they are still grateful to have in their lives. [Refer to photocopiable pupil pages 11 and 12.](#)

TEACHER NOTES: MESSAGE 4: EVERYTHING YOU NEED IS INSIDE YOU!

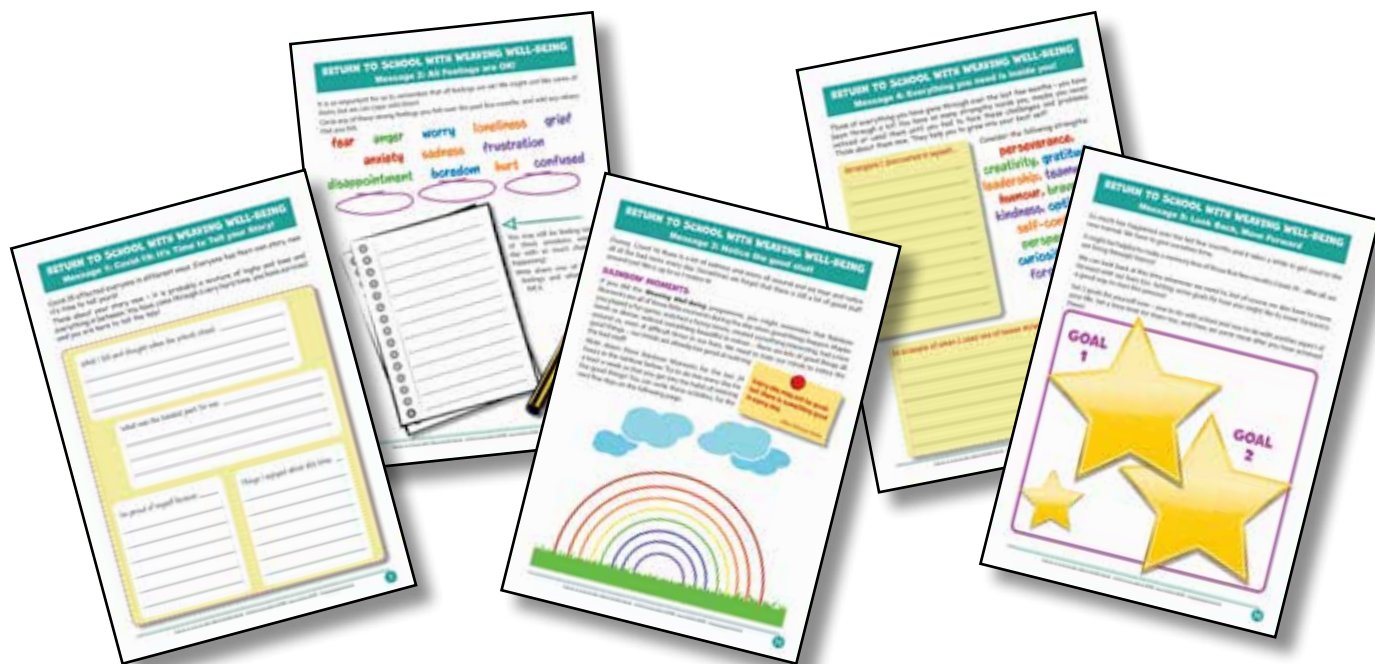
This activity reminds children of all of their inner strengths to help build a sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence. With the right support, the opportunity for Post-Traumatic Growth is possible after challenging events and this often involves looking to find what can be learned from the experience and how it may offer a new sense of perspective in terms of what is really important in life. People sometimes discover inner strengths and resources that they never realised they had.

The children are offered vocabulary based on the Character Strengths of Positive Psychology, including perseverance, creativity, gratitude, leadership, teamwork, humour, bravery, kindness, self-control, optimism, perspective, curiosity, love, forgiveness (Seligman & Peterson, 2004).

They could also write a short piece called ‘Me at My Best’ outlining when they used their strengths over the past few months. As a follow up, children could do projects or short essays on individuals who inspired them during the crisis. [Refer to photocopiable pupil pages 13 and 14.](#)

TEACHER NOTES: MESSAGE 5: LOOK BACK, BUT MOVE FORWARD.

This activity encourages students to focus on moving forward with hope and optimism. They set 2 goals for themselves, and also write their own happiness list. [Refer to photocopiable pupil pages 15 and 16.](#)



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PART 2: STUDENT BOOKLET

NAME: _____



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PART 2: Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to school - we have all had a hard time over the last few months due to Covid-19. It is really important now to focus on your well-being, as you have probably had a lot of ups and downs and mixed emotions!

These well-being activities are designed to help you to understand and strengthen your well-being so that you feel good about yourself in mind and body, and strong enough to deal with past, present and future challenges.

Maybe you have done the **Weaving Well-Being** programme before - if so, hopefully you have some ideas to help your well-being already! Even if you haven't, you can still try these activities!

There are 5 well-being messages in it for you to explore:

1. **Covid-19: It's time to tell your story!**
2. **All feelings are OK.**
3. **Notice the good stuff!**
4. **Everything you need is inside you!**
5. **Look back, but move forward.**



LET'S REMIND OURSELVES WHAT WELL-BEING MEANS AND FEELS LIKE:

Well-being means feeling **good** and **strong** in our **minds** and **bodies**, having **energy**, getting along with and helping **others**, knowing our **strengths** and feeling **proud** because we are doing our **best**. It means we can **cope** with the little problems and disappointments of life. It means **enjoying** life, being **grateful** for what we have and **accepting ourselves** just as we are!

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Message 1: Covid-19: It's Time to Tell your Story!

Covid-19 affected everyone in different ways. Everyone has their own story, now it's time to tell yours!

Think about your story now - it is probably a mixture of highs and lows and everything in between. You have come through a very hard time, you have survived and you are here to tell the tale!

What I felt and thought when the schools closed: _____

What was the hardest part for me: _____

I'm proud of myself because: _____

Things I enjoyed about this time: _____

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Message 1: Covid-19: It's Time to Tell your Story!

Worries I have about coming back to school: _____

What helped me to feel strong and good during this time: _____

Other parts of my story: _____

**So far you've
survived 100 percent
of your worst days.
You're doing great.**

-Unknown

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Message 2: All Feelings are OK!

It is so important for us to remember that all feelings are ok! We might not like some of them, but we can cope with them!

Circle any of these strong feelings you felt over the past few months, and add any others that you felt.

fear anger worry loneliness grief

confusion sadness frustration

disappointment boredom hurt anxiety



You may still be feeling lots of these emotions every day with so much change happening!

Write down one of these feelings and when you felt it.



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Message 2: All Feelings are OK!

All feelings are OK, but it's very important to deal with them in helpful ways, rather than ways that might make us feel even worse!

Here are some ways to deal with strong feelings in a helpful way:



Name the feeling



Talk to someone



Remind yourself that you can cope with this feeling!

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf

— Jon Kabat-Zinn



Do some deep breathing to help yourself to feel calm and relaxed



Do some physical activity



Do some art or creative activities



Write down how you are feeling

What other helpful way do you deal with your strong feelings?

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Message 3: Notice the good stuff

During Covid-19, there is a lot of sadness and worry all around and we hear and notice all of the bad news every day. Sometimes we forget that there is still a lot of good stuff around too! It is up to us to notice it!

RAINBOW MOMENTS

If you did the *Weaving Well-Being* programme, you might remember that Rainbow Moments are all of those little moments during the day when good things happen. Maybe you played a fun game, watched a funny movie, created something interesting, had a nice lunch or dinner, noticed something beautiful in nature - there are lots of good things all around us, even at difficult times in our lives. We need to train our minds to notice the good things - our minds are already too good at noticing the bad stuff!

Write down three Rainbow Moments for the last 24 hours in the rainbow below. Try to do this every day for a least a week so that you get into the habit of noticing the good things! You can write these activities, for the next five days on the following page.

Every day may not be good,
but there is something good
in every day.

-Alice Morse Earle



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Message 3: Notice the good stuff

MY RAINBOW MOMENTS

DAY 1	1.
	2.
	3.
DAY 2	1.
	2.
	3.
DAY 3	1.
	2.
	3.
DAY 4	1.
	2.
	3.
DAY 5	1.
	2.
	3.

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Message 4: Everything you need is inside you!

Think of everything you have gone through over the last few months - you have been through a lot! You have so many strengths inside you, maybe you never noticed or used them until you had to face these challenges and problems. Think about them now. They help you to grow into your best self!

Strengths I discovered in myself...

Consider the following strengths:

perseverance,
creativity, gratitude,
leadership, teamwork,
humour, bravery,
kindness, optimism,
self-control,
perspective,
curiosity, love,
forgiveness

An example of when I used one of these strengths:

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Message 4: Everything you need is inside you!

Something that I used to think was important...

Something I now realise is really important...

A person (famous or not) who inspired me at this time

Good changes in the world

You
got
this!



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Message 5: Look Back, But Move Forward

So much has happened over the last few months and it takes a while to get used to the new normal. We have to give ourselves time.

It might be helpful to make a memory box of those first few months Covid-19 after all, we are living through history!

We can look back at this time whenever we need to, but of course we also have to move forward with our lives too. Setting some goals for how you might like to move forward is a good way to start this process!

Set 2 goals for yourself now - one to do with school and one to do with another aspect of your life. Set a time limit for them too, and then set some more after you have achieved these!

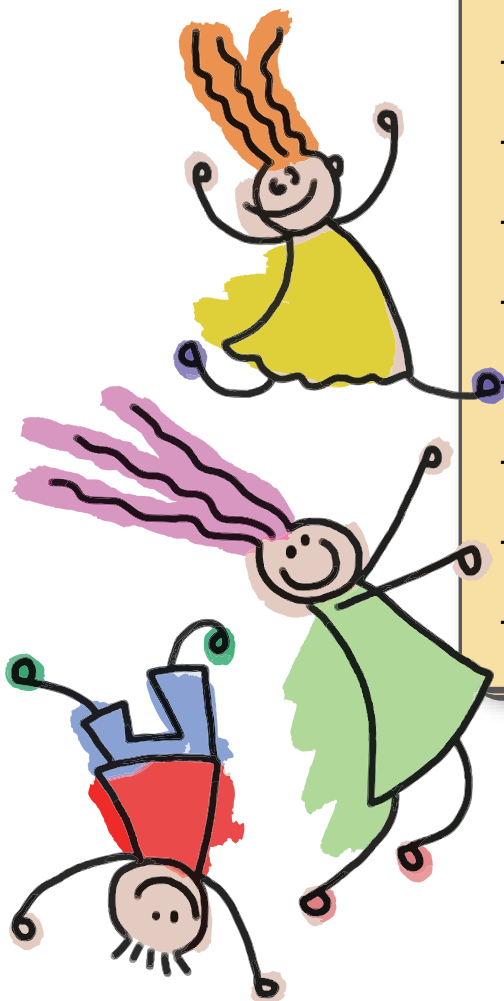
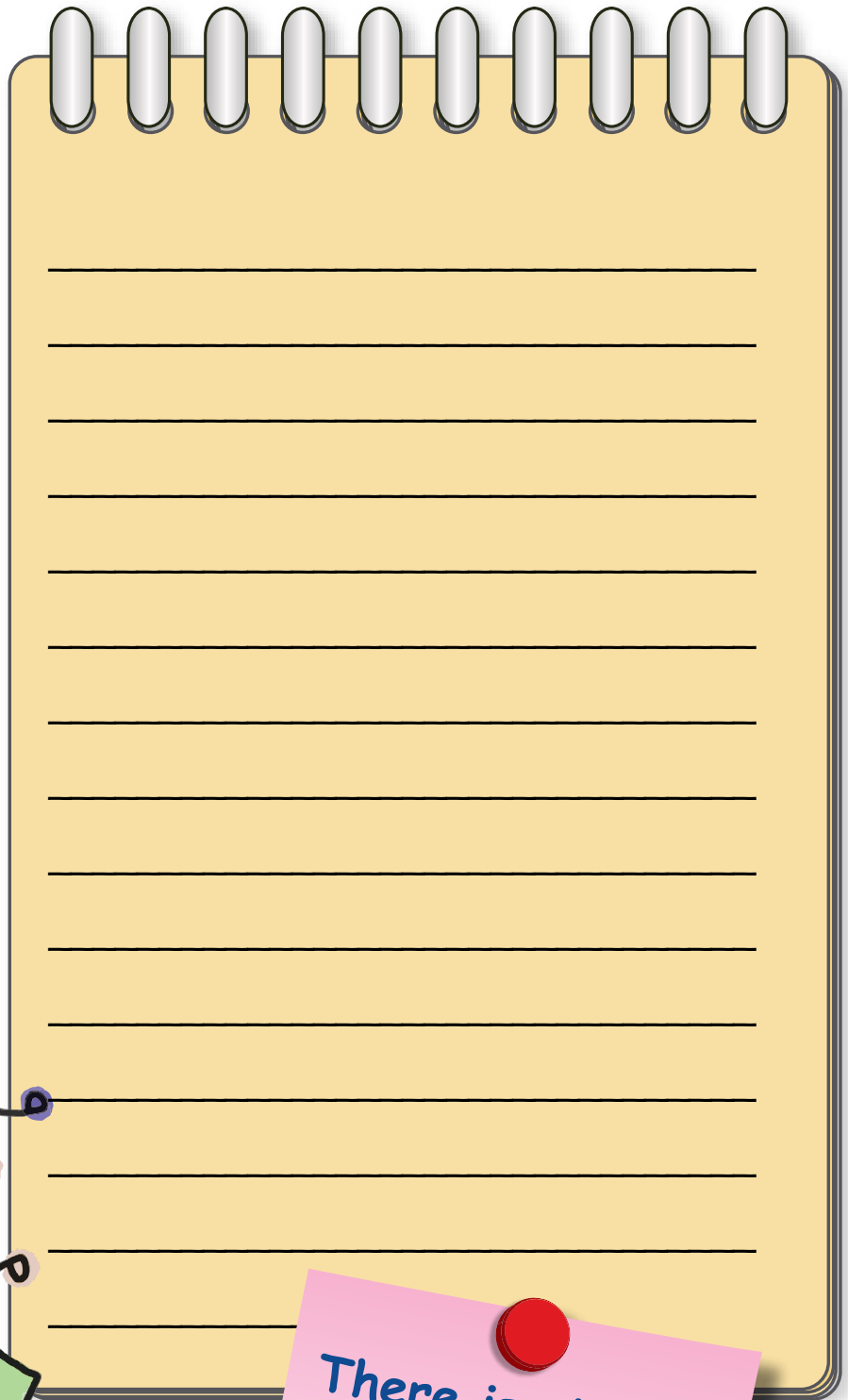


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My Happiness List

MY HAPPINESS LIST

Make a list of some of the things that make you feel happy. Think about things you do with your family, friends and pets, or hobbies, songs, movies you like - anything which puts a smile on your face! Try to do some of the things on your list this week!



There is always,
always something
to be thankful
for.

USEFUL LINKS:

[*www.otb.ie/Return-to-School*](http://www.otb.ie/Return-to-School)

[*www.otb.ie/DES-Schools-Reopening-Wellbeing-Guidance*](http://www.otb.ie/DES-Schools-Reopening-Wellbeing-Guidance)

[*www.otb.ie/PSI-Relaunch*](http://www.otb.ie/PSI-Relaunch)

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