

ANXIETY

TOOLKIT



**A COLLECTION OF STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY**



Acknowledgements

The following services, organisations and people contributed to this toolkit at the East Ayrshire Wellbeing Discussions Event held in March 2023:

- The Exchange Counselling Service
- EAC Educational Psychology Service
- Children's 1st
- EAC Homelink team
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- Ayrshire Cancer Support
- EAC Young Carers
- Kirsty Ramsay, GIRFEC Education Manager
- What Matters To you

Overview

The overarching theme during the discussions on strategies that support children and young people to manage anxiety was relationships and how crucial these are when implementing any supports or strategies. This toolkit provides some strategies/activities that can be used when working with whole class, small groups or on a 1-1 basis but these must be used as part of a whole school/community approach built around positive relationships. The groups also agreed that adults delivering any kind of strategy or intervention should be trauma informed.

Outdoor learning and the benefits of this on mental health and wellbeing was also a prominent part of the discussions. All agreed that supporting children and young people with anxiety is most successful when they are in a comfortable, positive and calm environment - for many of our C&YP this will involve being outdoors and being active.

Unless stated, all activities can be used with either Primary or Secondary school aged children and young people.

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Catch it, Check it, Challenge it, Change it

Sometimes we get caught in a vicious cycle.

Anxious thoughts → uncomfortable feelings → making choices that are restrictive/limiting.

It can be helpful to notice those thoughts as they arise and then consider whether the fears are justified. If they seem to be exaggerated, try responding in a more balanced/helpful way.

Use the table below to help you **CATCH** these thoughts, **CHECK** them, **CHALLENGE** them and **CHANGE** your response.

CATCH IT: What anxious thoughts are you having?

CHECK IT: Are you perhaps thinking that things are worse than they really are?

CHALLENGE IT: What is 1. The evidence for and 2. The evidence against these thoughts? Is there something you have overlooked?

CHANGE IT: Considering all of the above, is there another more helpful and balanced way of thinking?

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 you can



e.g., sun, animal,
chair, desk, laptop, pen

5 4 3 2 1
GROUNDING
TECHNIQUE

4 you can



e.g., feet on the
floor, desk, pen, book

3 you can




e.g., clock ticking, wind
blowing, peers talking

2 you can



e.g., food, perfume,
fresh cut grass,

1 you can



e.g., breakfast,
toothpaste, chewy gum

Thought Records

By Stephen Raikes, Secondary School Counsellor, The Exchange

We have thoughts all the time. Sometimes these thoughts are there because we want them to be, for example you might choose to think about what you are going to do this evening. Sometimes thoughts are there because other people put them into our heads. For example, if I say there is a pink elephant sitting in the corner in the room, you may now have a thought or a picture in your mind of a pink elephant. Other times though thoughts just arrive by themselves.

Spend a couple of minutes capturing your thoughts. Sit still and make a note of all the different thoughts or pictures that come into your head. How many did you notice?

Quite often thoughts are harmless. At other times, they can give us positive emotions. But at other times what we think about ourselves and others can lead us to becoming anxious, depressed or upset (and a lot more things beside).

Here are some examples of how what we think can affect how we feel.



Thoughts



Feelings

I have passed all my exams

Excited, Relieved

I am going to mess up my science presentation

Anxious, Scared

Over to you!

Write down some examples of your thoughts and then consider the emotions you felt as you were thinking about them.



Thoughts



Feelings



Are thoughts random?

Not always – we all have a filter in our brain that means we are more likely to pay attention to negative thoughts – to remember things that have gone wrong or to worry about things that might go wrong. This is called the negativity bias.

Secondly our brains get used to thinking in a particular way and about a particular thing. We pay attention to what we are interested in. If you are interested in football and not very interested in a lesson, you are far more likely to remember what your friend was saying about football during the lesson than what the teacher was talking about. This can sometimes be a problem. If for example we believe we are not good at maths, we will find it much easier to remember all the times we got something wrong in maths than the times we got something right. We are therefore much more likely to believe we are not good at maths than to believe we are good at it.

Are thoughts True?

Now we have recognised some of our thoughts, we can ask ourselves whether they are true or not.

Sometimes it is obvious if something is true. For example we can probably all agree that $2+2=4$.

Write down some other examples of things that are definitely true.

Sometimes it is also obvious that a thought is not true. For example, if I say Christmas Day is on the 25th June, we all know that is not true.

Sometimes though it is not obvious whether something is true or false. When we are not sure, we can use evidence to test to see if something is true or not. At other times something may be partly true or partly not true. Again we can use evidence, to make sure we have considered everything and not jumped to conclusions.

It can be hard to change our thoughts because our brains can be a bit lazy and they get used to thinking in particular ways. The good news though is that our brains are amazing and they can always learn new ways of thinking.

Is it worth it? Remember we discovered that our thoughts are linked to how we feel? If we change how we think we will also change how we feel.

Thought Record

We are going to look at a situation to see how when we change the way we think about it, our anxiety and other feelings can change as well.

Stage 1 is to think about a time when you felt anxious.

Write down:

- Who was there?
- What happened?
- Where did it take place?
- When did this happen?

Stage 2: Now think about how you felt in this situation. Did you have any other feelings or emotions as well as anxiety? Feelings and emotions are usually single words. (If you are not sure, have a look at the emotion wheel to see if any of these words describe how you were feeling.)

Write down any feelings.

Now for each feeling (including anxiety) rate how much you felt this when you were in the situation – 100% is the most you have ever felt this and 0% means you weren't feeling it at all.

Feelings

Scale

| | | | |
|------------|----|-------|------|
| 1. Anxiety | 0% | _____ | 100% |
| 2. | 0% | _____ | 100% |
| 3. | 0% | _____ | 100% |
| 4. | 0% | _____ | 100% |

Stage 3: The next stage is to write down the thoughts you were having at this time. Thoughts are often phrases or sentences. Sometimes though we think in pictures. If an image came into your head during the situation describe it or draw it here.

If you have written or drawn more than one thought, highlight the one that was the most upsetting. This is the hot thought. This is the thought you are going to work with now.

Write or draw your thoughts here.

Thoughts

My hot thought



Stage 4: The next stage is to think of all the reasons / evidence you had for thinking this thought. All the reasons for believing it to be true.

Write down the evidence that supports the hot thought here.

Stage 5:

Now, very importantly, think of all the evidence that suggests this is not true, or that it is not the whole story.

You might like to imagine two people having a discussion about this. One person gives the reason why it is true and the other gives the reason why it is not.

Write down the evidence that suggests your hot thought is not true here.

Stage 6: The New Balanced Thought

Once you have written down all the evidence you can think of the next stage is to create an alternative balanced thought. This includes all the evidence for your original hot thought as well as all the evidence against. Have a look at the example before you write your own.

Write your new balanced thought here:

Although it is true that _____

nevertheless it is also true that _____

Once you have written your new thought check to see if it is true. Do you believe it is 100% true?
If not, go back and change your balanced thought until you are satisfied it is 100% true.

Stage 7: Finally go back to the list of emotions you listed at the beginning. Keeping your new thought firmly in your mind, re-rate these emotions. For example, how anxious are you now you are thinking your new balanced thought?

Feelings

Scale

- 1. Anxiety 0% _____ 100%
- 2. 0% _____ 100%
- 3. 0% _____ 100%
- 4. 0% _____ 100%



Comfort Menu

A personalised list (Autonomy) of regulation or coping strategies that the young person can use in times of adversity (Self-Regulation).

This is an opportunity to educate the young person on a wide range of strategies appropriate for different circumstances.

Ensure to Recommend:

- Breathing Techniques
- Grounding Techniques
- Exercise

| Things that make me feel better | Feelings Rating |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Go for a walk | 10 |
| • Time with my family | 10 |
| • Play with the dogs | 8 |
| • Go to the gym | 4 |
| • Football | 7 |
| • Movie Night | 8 |
| • Playstation | 4 |
| • Time with my friends | 8 |
| • Go for a run | 3 |
| • Eat some good food | 4 |
| • Connect 4 | 2 |
| • Relaxation Time | 9 |
| • Read a book | 5 |
| • Mindfulness | 6 |
| • Drive my car | 3 |

I can see my thoughts

This exercise helps children consider their own thoughts- positive and negative- and the impact they can have.

Invite them to write down some of the thoughts they've had that day. Make it clear to the children that they don't need to write down any private thoughts that they don't want to share. Encourage them to also write the thoughts that were more difficult to have, like "I can't do this" in the rainclouds.

Ask the children to look at their clouds and question whether they're ALL true?

- Thoughts about what we like and don't like aren't false,
 - Thoughts about how we feel aren't false,
- But OTHER THOUGHTS CAN BE, for example:

"She doesn't like me" (unless we're a mind-reader or 'she' tells us this, we can't know that for sure), or

"I'm never going to be good at this"

(We don't have a crystal ball to see into the future, so we can't know this for sure).

Ask the children to put a question mark over any thought cloud that might not be true, and a cross over any thought cloud that definitely isn't true.

Write down some of the thoughts that you've had today inside the clouds below. You don't have to write down anything that you don't want to. You can put difficult thoughts in too (or if you didn't have any just leave them blank). Examples might be: "Yum, I like this new cereal that Mum bought!", "Ugh, I can't do this maths question", "I wonder if Sarah likes my new bag" etc.

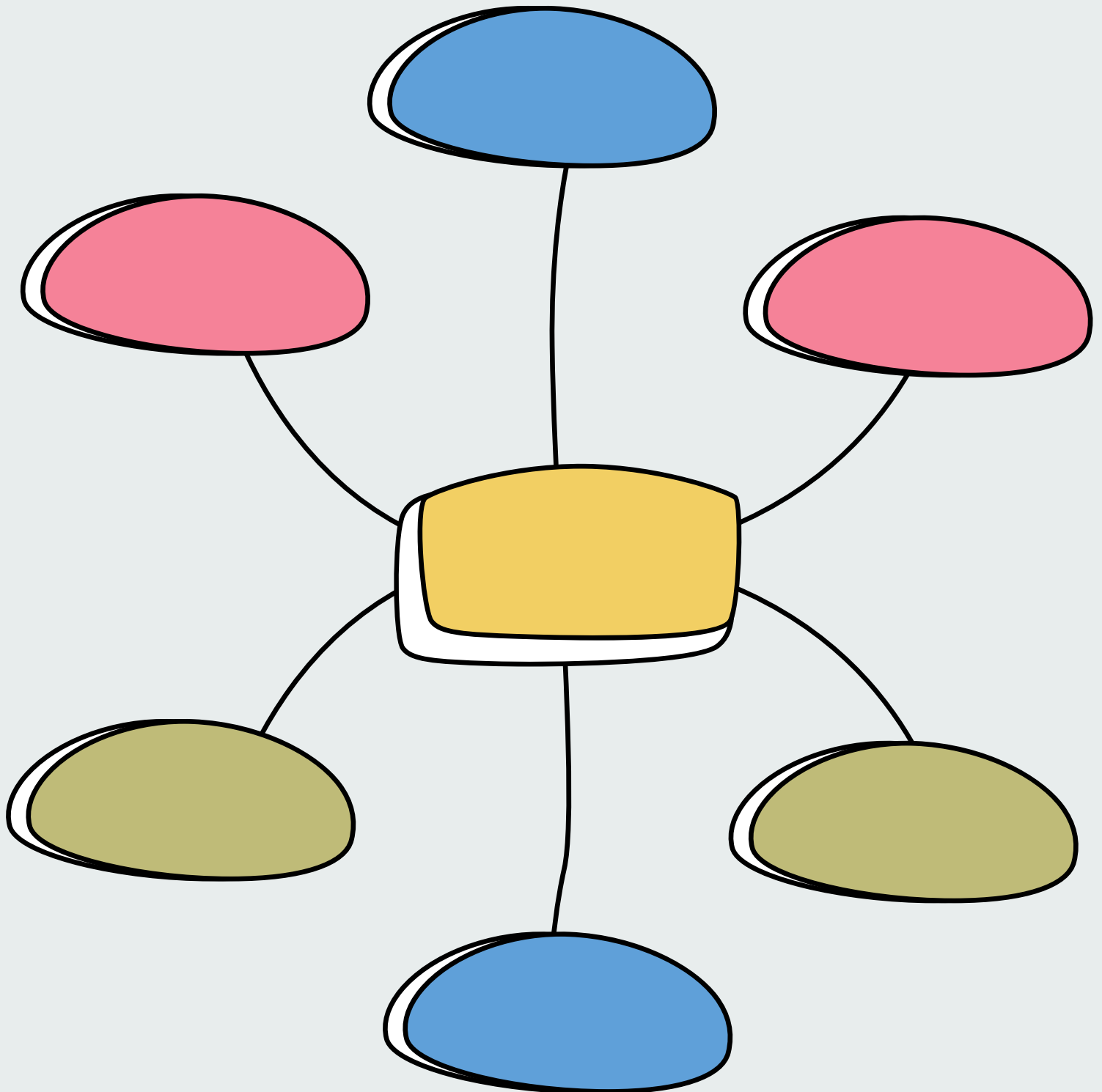


Signature Strengths

17

We are all different and have different skills, qualities and personality traits. You may be a thoughtful person and be good at reading or you may be adventurous and good at sport. Our strengths, traits, skills and differences are what make us special and unique.

Stick a picture of yourself in the centre, then you can draw pictures, stick things down or write to show what you are good at and what your signature strengths are.



Positive Affirmations

What are Positive Affirmations?

Affirmations - the action or process of affirming something, or emotional support or encouragement.

Positive affirmations are exactly that what they say on the tin. They're positive phrases we can use to challenge unhelpful, negative thoughts. Sometimes, all it takes is a subtle change in the language in a sentence to transform someone's outlook. Here are some different ways you can use positive affirmations in your teaching.

Compliments - Call and repeat phrases like "I am a great friend" and "I am important" with your class. This could be in a poem or song. Positive affirmations are handy to stick around a mirror in the classroom or could be on a poster on the wall. Encourage children to think about different aspects of themselves that they like. "I make others laugh", "I'm kind to animals" or "I'm good at baking with Auntie" could be examples.

Acknowledge them - Validate how they feel. Use phrases like "I understand why you feel that way", and encourage them to explain why they feel a certain way, "I'm sad because..."

Support while learning - Reassure them that it's okay to not get everything right first time! It's how we learn. Tell them they can do it, and ask them to say positive affirmations like, "I am good at reading, so I will get better at writing paragraphs."

Teaching love and acceptance - If you show a positive attitude to life and show kindness and optimism, children will learn from that. It's important to actively teach them, too. Encourage them to turn negative thoughts around - if they think, "I'm not very good at Maths", they say "I am strong facing my challenges!"

Top tip: Challenge them when they say "I can't do this." Instead, tell them to say "I can't do this yet, but I will!"

10 Popular Positive Affirmations

I am enough
 Today is going to be a great day
 Everything will be okay
 I deserve to be happy
 I am proud of myself
 I stand up for what I believe in
 I can make a difference
 If I fall down, I will get back up again
 I am capable of so much
 I've got this

Create a mental health playlist

Creating a playlist is a great way to use music for wellbeing in our daily lives. Music has the power to inspire us to move, to lift our mood and to connect us with others. Here are a few ideas to get you started in creating personalised playlists or depending on what you need throughout your day:

1. Wake-up

Create a playlist of music that will motivate you to wake-up and get you ready for the day ahead. Listen to the playlist during your morning routine, while you get dressed, brush your teeth... starting the morning with some of your favourite tunes can help set the tone for the rest of your day.

2. Get Moving

Try using a playlist of music while you exercise. Music may motivate you to exercise for longer periods and may give you something positive to focus on during routine exercises. Think of music that is rhythmic and that makes you want to move!

3. Reach your goals

Music can help inspire us to focus on the goals we set for ourselves. You might think of this playlist as a personalised soundtrack. What music/songs would tell the story of how you are working towards your goals, how you will reach those goals, and how you will feel when you get there?

4. Relax

When we feel stressed music can be an effective way to help us relax. When creating this playlist remember to think of your musical preferences. Music for relaxation often makes us think of classical music but this may not be for everyone. Choose tracks that are relaxing for you. If you can, bring the playlist and some headphones along to situations you know make you stressed so that you have it ready to listen to.

5. Connect with others

Creating a playlist for friends and family can be a very meaningful way to connect. You might choose songs that have special meaning for you, that you associate with positive memories, that make you laugh, that send a particular message, or that gives someone the chance to discover new music that tells them something about you.

6. Sleep

While similar to creating a playlist to relax, creating a separate playlist to listen to when going to bed may be helpful as it will be specific to your sleep routine. Try and choose music that helps you unwind. Some people prefer audio books or calming sounds. There are many apps that combine music with guided meditation specifically for going to sleep. It may take time to find what works for you but again, think of your musical preferences and perhaps try something new!

Rainbow Breathing

taking a minute to focus on breathing can help you refocus and ground yourself.



Place your finger on one of the dots. Take a deep breath in and trace your finger around the curve of the colour. trace the next colour and when you reach the end breathe out. Repeat for all the colours.

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5 Finger Breathing

When we feel a bit overwhelmed, it can help to take a second to focus on our breathing.

Why not try with an adult or teacher?

take the palm of your hand and using one finger from your other hand run it up every individual finger.

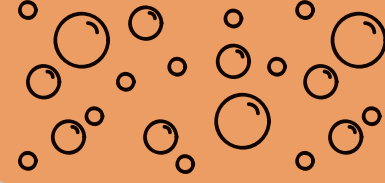
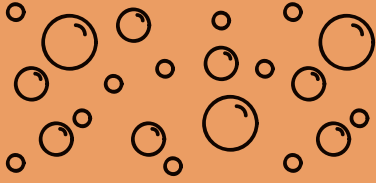
Whilst you go up a finger breathe in then
When you run it back down breathe out

Repeat for all 5 fingers

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Bubble Breathing



What is bubble breathing?

Bubble breathing is simply using blowing bubbles to help to introduce younger children to calming breathing in a fun way.

By focussing on trying to blow big bubbles, children are encouraged to focus on their out breath and breathe in a slow, calm way. This can help them to understand how it feels to 'do' calming breathing and to see if it can work as a calming tool for them. Learning calming breathing is well established as a way to reduce stress, anxiety and panic – it is even recommended by the NHS!

Bubble Breathing Steps:

- Sit comfortably
- If you have them, use really bubbles and have fun!
- If not, imagine you have a wand to blow bubble with
- Take a deep breath in through the nose
- Slowly breathe out through the mouth pretending to blow through the wand to make magical bubbles
- Repeat as desired



Balloon Breathing (Belly Breathing)

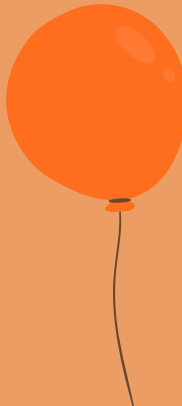
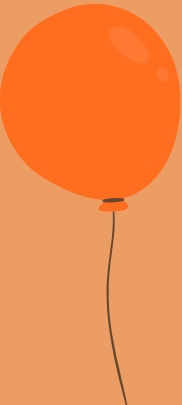


Step 1: Inhale Fully

Place your hands on your belly. Breathe in slowly through your nose to fill your lungs all the way to the top, as you feel your belly, abdomen and chest expanding out like a big balloon.

Step 2: Exhale Fully

Now open your mouth and blow **all** of the air back out of your lungs, letting your belly sink down flat, as if deflating that imaginary balloon. Repeat, but the next time close your mouth and practice breathing in, and out, through your nose, as you feel your belly expanding and shrinking.



Solution Focused Approaches

The solution focused journey:

- You start by identifying your hopes for the work
 - You think about what achieving your hopes would look like
 - You think about what you are already doing to move towards your hopes
- You think about what it would look like if you moved just one or two steps closer toward reaching your hopes
- As you go, you learn more about your strengths and what you are capable of.



+ CHECKLIST ✨+



The child could write or draw a checklist of things they want to do each day to stay on track. Keep this realistic and limit the number of items at the beginning of the work. Include scaling of how confident they feel to implement their own suggestions and use solution-focused questions to explore feeling more confident.



They can then take the checklist with them and hang it in a prominent place at home, to provide a reminder.



The checklist can be discussed at the next session, to explore how they did it, what helped them to do that, what difference it made, and to add or amend the checklist to make it more helpful for the child. Include the child's solution team (family, school etc) to help them notice actions from the checklist and feedback to the child/young person.



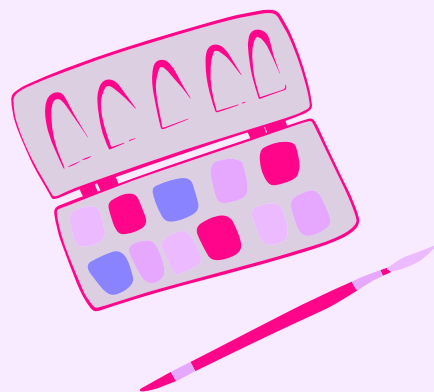
PAIN'T THE HAND



Ask the child to draw around their hand, or provide them with the outline of a hand.

Ask the child to paint each finger a different colour to represent the different strategies they have used to move towards their preferred future. They may want to describe or draw these strategies around the outside of the hand.

In the middle (the palm of their hand) they could paint a face.

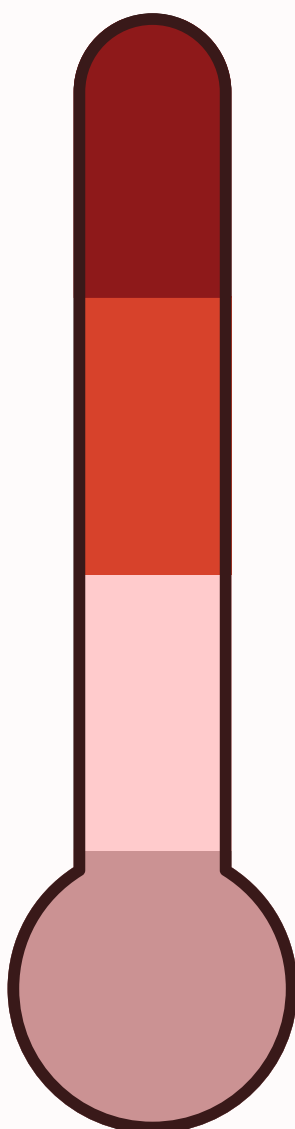


ANXIETY THERMOMETER

Children can get anxious for lots of reasons. It can be helpful to scale their worries from small to large. This can help to work through the worries and sort out a plan on how to deal with them. The worksheet is simply a way to think about situations that might make us feel calm and then all the way up to anxious.

The thermometer can then be used when you think your child might be feeling worried. Can they tell you how big the worry is to them.

Show them the thermometer and ask them to mark off a number. If you can laminate them and use a dry wipe pen, they can be used many times



Here are some examples of what might make me feel worried:

Anxious

5

5

I am anxious and scared when:

My Mum and Dad are ill. What if they die?

4

4

I am very worried when:

I have to leave my Mum and Dad to go to school

3

3

I am worried when:

I am in the dark at night. What if there is something under the bed?

2

2

I am a bit bothered when:

My Mum is late picking me up from school

1

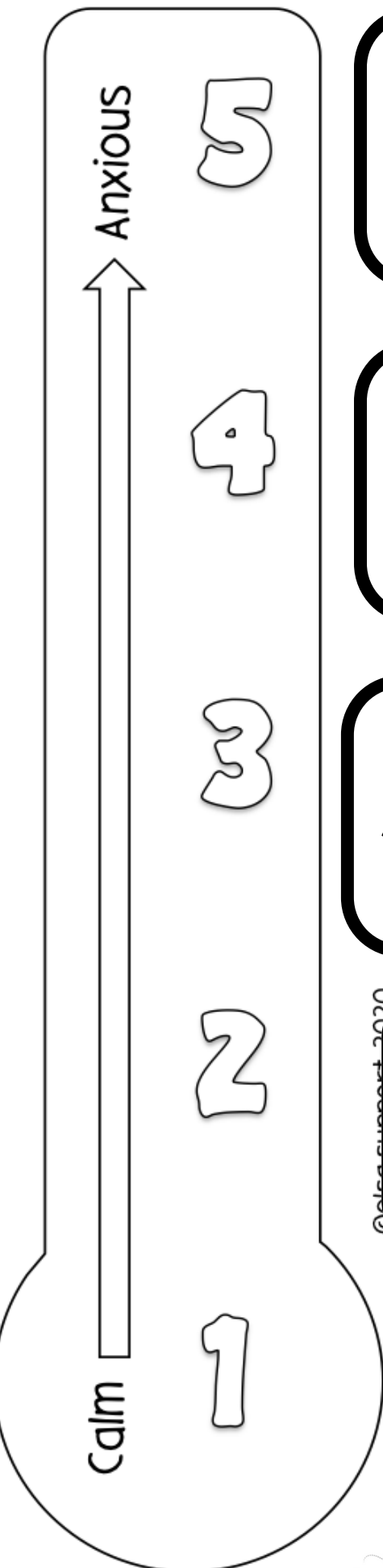
1

I am calm when:

I am playing with my toys

Calm

Here are some examples of what might make me feel worried:



I am anxious and scared when:

5

I am very worried when:

4

I am worried when:

3

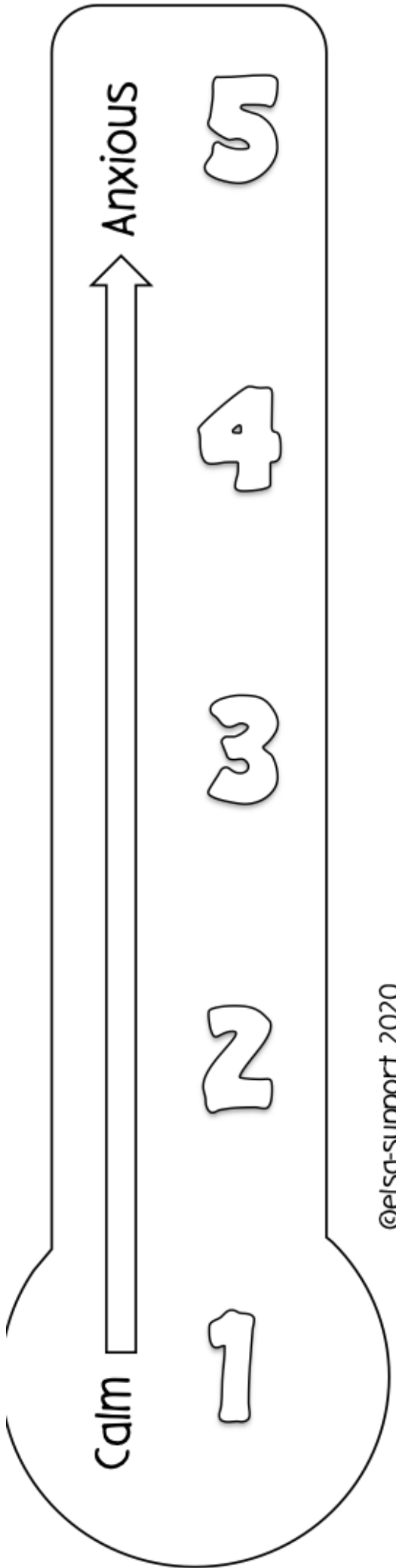
I am a bit bothered when:

2

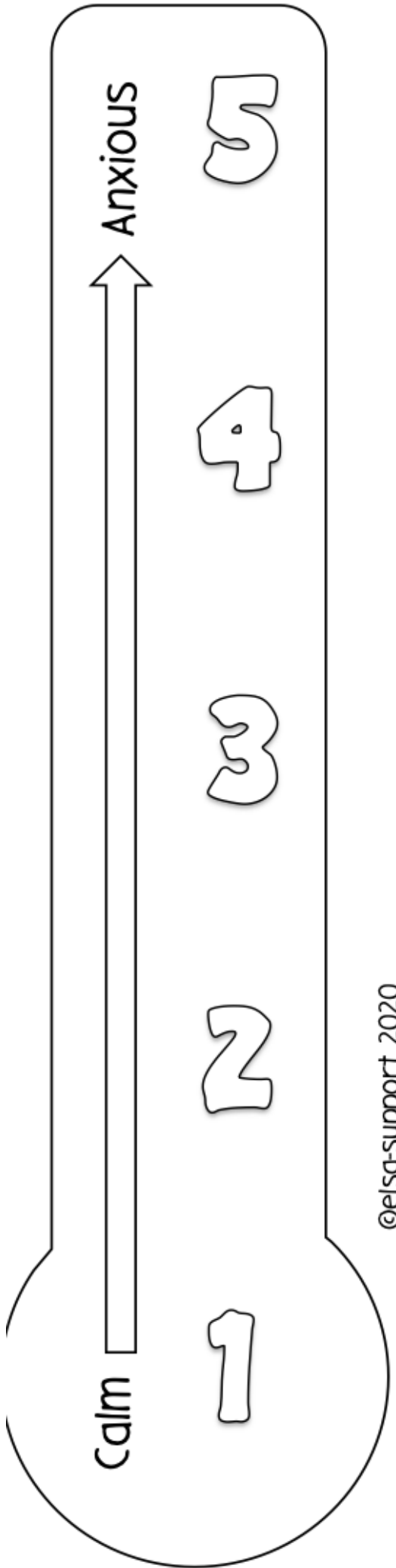
I am calm when:

1

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Calming Box

What is a Calming box?

A sensory box is a collection of items that can be used by children to self-soothe and manage stress and anxiety. It can be a simple box or container filled with sensory toys, fidgets, stress balls, coloring books, or other calming items. Children can use the items in the calm box to build their skills in self-regulation and enhance emotional wellbeing.

A sensory box can also provide children with a sense of control over their emotional experiences. This happens gradually as they figure out the tools that help them feel calm and centered.

Younger children will need a lot of support from adults to use their calm box effectively at times of distress. Even older children and young people may need adult support, particularly when they are getting started with using their box.



What to Include in a Calming Box

When it comes to what to include, this is down to your child's specific needs and preferences. Which of your child's senses need to be engaged to regulate and calm them? For example, if they find soft fabrics soothing, they may choose to include a square of soft fleecy material to stroke.

Here are some ideas. Some of these are more appropriate for home use rather than school use. What you put in the box will depend on the environment your child uses it in.

- Sensory toys/ fidget toys / fidget cubes.
- Mindful coloring books and pencils in calm colors.
- Stress balls / squishy balls.
- A sensory bottle.
- Favourite soft toys.
- Lavender essential oil, organic dried lavender or other calming essential oils.
- Coconut oil, olive oil or moisturiser to rub on the skin.
- Silly putty or blu tak.
- A nostalgic item which helps them feel calm and safe through positive memories. For example, a picture of a pet.
- A music player and headphones, pre-loaded with a calming playlist.
- A set of calming positive affirmations.

The contents of your child's calming box can change over time. Their favorite things right now might not be helpful or effective in three months. It's a process of trial and error too.



How to Create a Calming Box

Here is your step-by-step guide to creating a calming box:

1. Choose a container. Shoeboxes or plastic storage containers are great options.
2. Invite your child to select items for the box. It's really important that your child is fully involved in the process. This will increase their sense of ownership and investment in the box.
3. Help them choose items that engage the senses and promote relaxation, such as stress balls, fidget toys, weighted blankets, soft blankets or stuffed animals, calming scents, or noise-cancelling headphones. Use the longer list above for even more inspiration.
4. Encourage your child to personalize their calming box by adding pictures or decorations to the container, or by including items that have special meaning or significance.
5. Store the calming box in a readily accessible location. This might be as desk drawer, cupboard or bookshelf. It needs to be somewhere your child can easily access it when they need to.
6. Prompt your child to use their calming box regularly, even if they are already feeling calm. Only through regular use will it become a helpful habit.

How to Use a Calming Box

Now that your child has their calming box, they need to practise using it. It's important that they practise when they are calm and not just when they are in a high state of arousal.

If your child is going to use the box at school, they should first practise using it at home. Sit alongside your child. Encourage them to choose an item from the box that engages their senses and helps them relax, like a stress ball or a soft blanket. Listen to your child and follow their lead. They can then use the item for a few minutes to help calm their nervous system and regulate their emotions. Try using a similar or identical item yourself at the same time. You will be modelling how to practise using sensory items to feel calm.

As time goes on, your child will be able to use the box by themselves without prompts. Persistence is key. Don't give up if they don't seem keen at first. You may need to change some of the items in the box to make it more appealing.

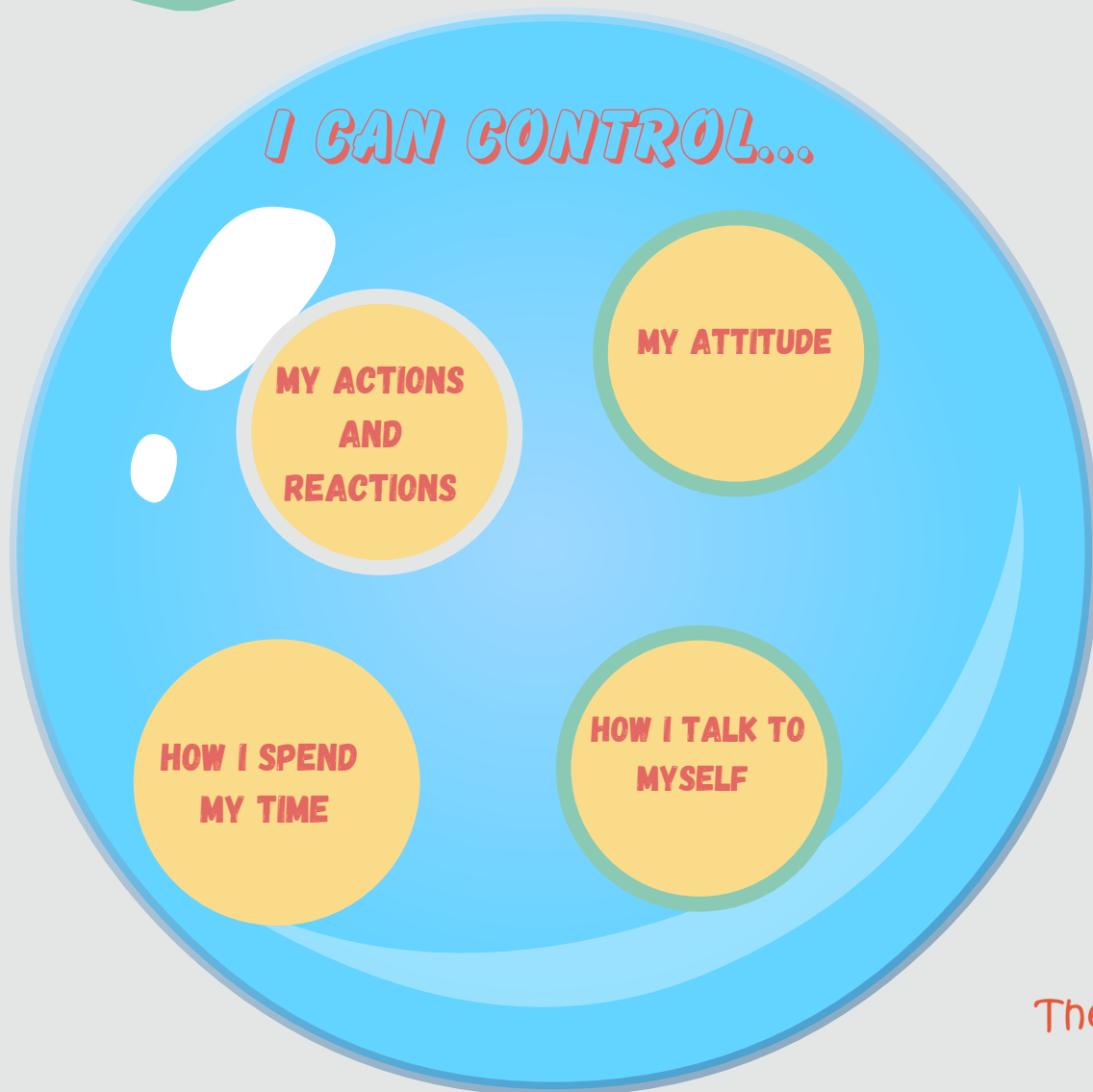
If it's going to be used in school, you will of course need to have had a positive conversation about it with school staff. They need to be on board with it and fully understand how it helps your child. It may help your child and their teacher to have a written list of when and how it is to be used. For example, every break time before your child goes out to play.

At the beginning, parents and teachers will need to give a lot of guidance and support to a child on how to use their calming box effectively.

What can I control in my bubble? 33

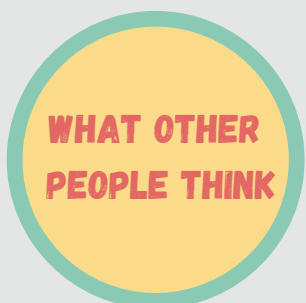
When we feel overwhelmed it can help to stop and look at what is within our control. By separating the elements of our life into those which we can have an impact on and actually affect and those which we cannot change.

In this activity you can cut out and use the counters to write out different elements of your life. Then consider what you can impact in your bubble and what is out-with your control. Look at our example to help.



The Exchange

I CAN'T CONTROL....

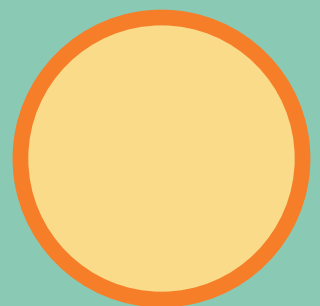
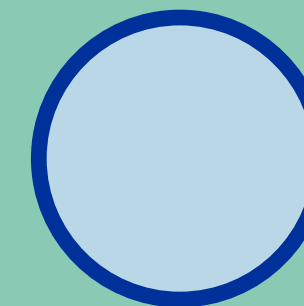
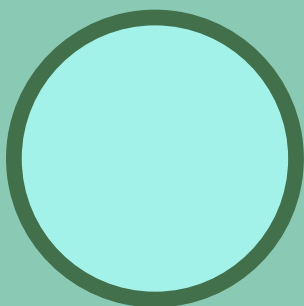
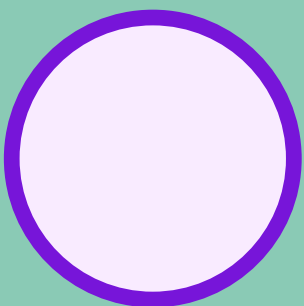
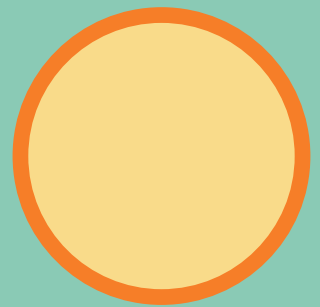
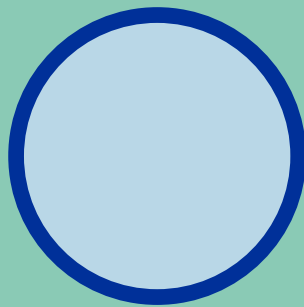
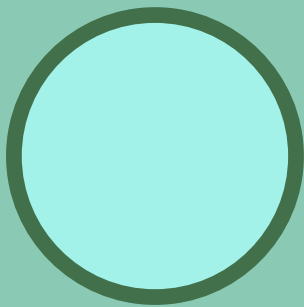
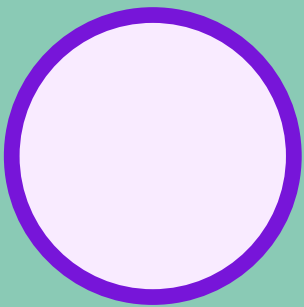
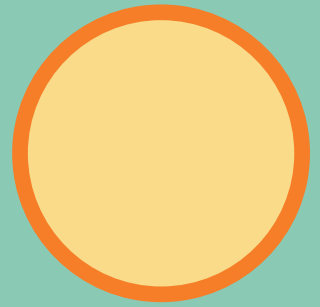
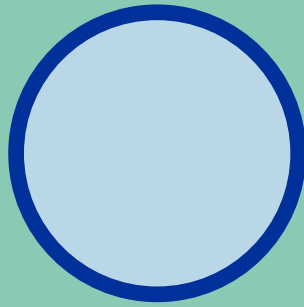
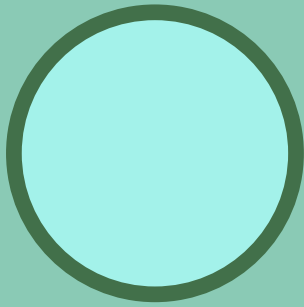
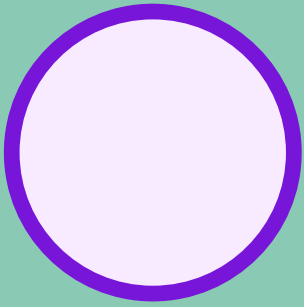
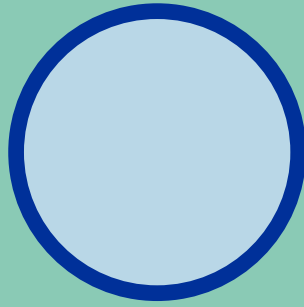
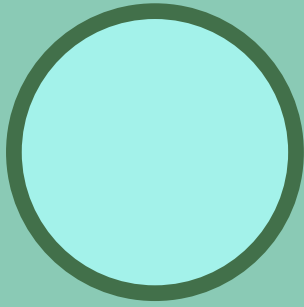
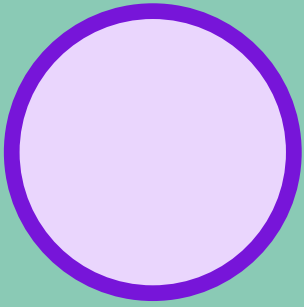


I CAN CONTROL

(SO I WILL FOCUS ON THESE THINGS)

I CAN'T CONTROL (SO I CAN LET GO OF THESE THINGS)

CUT THESE OUT AND WRITE THE DIFFERENT THINGS IN YOUR LIFE



Outdoor Fun!

Spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both mental and physical wellbeing. For example, doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have lots of positive effects including reducing feelings of stress.



Activity Ideas:

- Take a walk in green space.
- Get creative. Draw or paint animals or nature scenes, or let them inspire a poem or song lyrics.
- Eat meals outdoors.
- Exercise outside.
- Set up an outdoor scavenger hunt or woodland trail
- Go on a litter picking walk.
- Build an animal habitat. For example, a hedgehog house or a bird box or mini-beast hotel.
- Try upcycling. Get creative and find a new purpose for your rubbish.
- Plant vegetables
- Grow food together with others.
- Find things you can see, hear, taste, smell or touch. For example, grass under your feet or the feeling of wind and sunlight.
- Create outdoor art using leaves, ticks, stones, flowers etc
- Build a shelter - make this a challenge and set criteria for what the YP have to achieve
- Watch out for wildlife. Go on a wildlife hunt and record what you see.
- Hang a bird feeders and nesting boxes.
- Try birdwatching. You don't need any special equipment. See the RSPB website for more information on feeding, sheltering and watching birds.
- Take part in a nature survey. This might involve counting birds, animals or insects in a particular time and place, or reporting individual sightings of wildlife. See the Big Garden Birdwatch, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Big Butterfly Count for examples of nature surveys.
-

Sensory Regulation Activities

Self-regulation is the ability to maintain or change arousal/energy level and manage emotions to match the situation or activity (e.g. preparing for sleep, lower level vs. preparing to play soccer, higher level). Engaging in different types of sensory activities help us to learn more about our sensory system needs and how we respond to various stimuli. The more we learn about and use these systems the better equipped we are to self-regulate. Receptors located throughout the body take in information from the environment (and body) to make sense of, and interact with the world. Listed below are various activities or tools that may assist with self-regulation.

Visual

Vision is the ability of the eyes to focus and detect images. Visual perception is how the brain processes information – recognizing, differentiating and interpreting visual stimuli. The visual system is very important in learning to read, write, count and a lot of other skills that are important in life.

Calming

- Lava lamps
- Dim lighting, neutral colours
- Reduce visual distractions in the environment
- Less clutter, empty space (clear desk)

Alerting

- Bright colours, flashing lights
- Contrasting colours or patterns
- Being in busy, active areas, crowds, malls, birthday parties, playgrounds, water slides

Auditory

Hearing is the ability to perceive sound from the environment. It provides localization and differentiation of sound.

Calming

- Calm, soft, even toned voices
- Rhythmic sounds (slower, repetitive beats)
- White noise, fan, rain sound
- Ear defenders (to reduce noise)
- Eliminate background noise (TV, radio)

Alerting

- Loud, dramatic voices, screaming, crying
- Music with variation in beat and faster beats
- Unexpected sounds (alarms, sirens)

Smell

Smell is our ability to detect scent. This is a very old system and is closely linked to memories.

Calming-

- Reduce odors and scents-Use calming scents (lavender or vanilla)
- Smell from baking cookies, pies

Alerting-

- Use strong scented products (perfumes, candles)-
- Use alerting scents (lemon or citrus) -Scented markers, play doh

Taste

Taster refers to the ability to detect sweet, bitter, sour, salty, savory, and other flavours.

Calming

-bland/neutral flavours (rice, oatmeal, plain potatoes, plain bread)

Alerting

-strong flavours (lemon, peppermint, cinnamon hearts, spices, hot sauces)

Touch

Touch is the ability to perceive sensation through receptors in the skin. This system helps us recognize different characteristics (textures, temperatures, firmness, and wet/dry).

Calming

-Firm, sustained touch
-Soft blankets
-Warmth (room, bath, blanket)
-Warm drinks (tea, hot chocolate)
Tight squishing/wrapping (blanket)

Alerting

-Light, soft touch
-Tickling, poking
-Unpredictable touch (shoulder tap, bump)
-Cold (ice packs, cold drinks)

Vestibular

The vestibular system perceives the position, movement and balance of our body in relation to gravity. It measures acceleration, body movements and head position. Examples of the vestibular system include recognizing movement in an elevator, knowing whether you are lying down or sitting up, and being able to walk along a balance beam. Receptors are located in the ear.

Calming

-Slow rhythmic movements (swings, rocking chair, car motion)
-Movement up and down, side to side, back and forth (bouncing on a ball, walking)
-Slow head movements

Alerting

-Stop and Go games, Tag, Hokey-Pokey, Dodgeball, crazy dancing, jumping on cushions
-Spinning (merry-go-round)
-Rolling (rolling down a hill)
-Chaotic/fast head movements

Proprioception (heavy work)

Proprioception is the sense of position of parts of the body and strength of effort needed in movement. This sense lets us know exactly where our body parts are, how we are positioned in space and to plan our movements. The receptors are located in the joints and muscles. Examples of using the proprioceptive system include gauging how much force is needed to crack an egg, bending your arm to reach and scratch your back, and learning to ride a bike (push, pull, carry and squeeze type of activities).

-Bear hugs, pillow sandwich, blanket tortilla
-Massage (deep squishes)
-Wiping the table, raking leaves
-Yoga, stretching
-Animal walks, hanging from bars
-Hitting a baseball

Use of fidgets (squishing a ball, clicking pen, twirling hair)
-Play-doh
-Biting (chewelry)
-Crunchy foods (carrots, apples, crackers)
-Chewy foods (gum, dried fruit)
-Drinking from a straw

Writing is a great way to express thoughts and feelings. Getting things down on paper can really help to make sense of problems, too.

Activity Ideas:

- Write down your qualities, strengths and values. Write down the qualities, strengths and values other people see in you. What would a friend say about you?
- Write down some words that describe who you are or what you want to be.
- Think about the things in your life that have a positive impact on your wellbeing. What makes you feel happy?
- Write about your best day
- Write down some motivational words – or your own short quotes
- There are lots of different ways to keep a journal. You can write your thoughts on a notepad or in a diary, create notes on your phone, send text messages to yourself, etc. It's helpful to find a quiet place so you can write in a way you're comfortable with. If you're new to journaling, why not practice for five minutes every day to get into the habit? Think about what you want to write about, what you've been doing, and how it made you feel.
- Think about a time when you needed help. It could be anything, from help with homework to getting a lift somewhere. Write a list of possible support networks – for example, mum, dad, brothers and sisters, teachers, friends, helplines, etc.
- Write your worries down. Do you have any worries that are out of your control? Do you have any worries you can let go of? It's important to accept that some things are out of our control. We can't change these things by worrying about them. Everyone has worries like these sometimes. Select the worries you can let go of. Write them on another sheet of paper and destroy them – tear them up and place them in the bin.

Mood Diaries

Visit <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Feelings-tab-booklet.pdf> for full printout of a mood/feelings diary



angry



sad



disgusted



scared

Monday



happy



proud



worried



calm

| Time | Emotion | Reason | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---|---|
| | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How big is your emotion? | | | | |

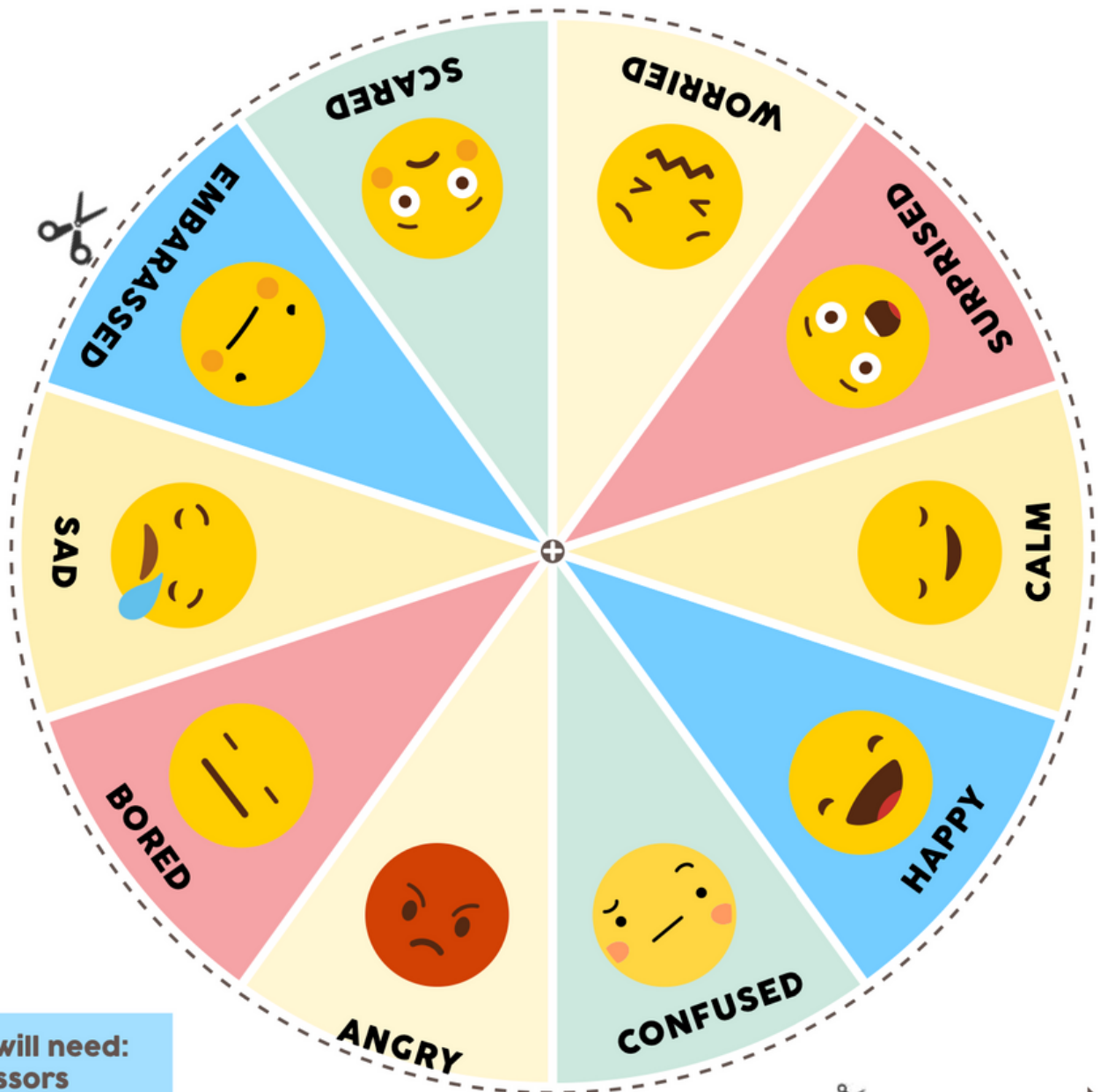
| Time | Emotion | Reason | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---|---|
| | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How big is your emotion? | | | | |

| Time | Emotion | Reason | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---|---|
| | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How big is your emotion? | | | | |

Emotion Wheel

The emotion wheel can be used with children of all ages who are struggling to express their current feelings. By identifying an image they can convey their current feelings. Using the wheel regularly throughout the day will help children and young people see the changing nature of their feelings and can help reduce anxiety around feeling a certain way.

It could be helpful for this activity to be modelled by adults before use. Make the emotion wheel together with the adult taking the first turn to identify their own current emotion. They could then discuss this further with the child before their turn.



You will need:

- Scissors
- Split pin
- Paper
- Printer

Worry Monsters

Creating a worry monster is a wonderful way to bring an otherwise indescribable feeling to life for our little ones. When a feeling becomes a tangible thing, it suddenly becomes much easier to talk about. It also makes it much easier for your child to practice looking their worry monster in the eye and telling it to "go away!" when it starts to make them feel icky. Have your child describe their worry monster as they're drawing or creating it and ask them what their worry monster talks to them about. Lastly, have your child name their worry monster.

By giving this icky feeling a face and a name, you've opened the door for your child to have a dialogue about how they are feeling in a way that makes sense to them. It also provides you a straightforward way to gauge how they are feeling by asking if "Roger the worry monster" is acting up again when you notice their behavior or mood is a little off. For some children, it is also useful to create "friendly monsters" who can help them feel safe and comforted when their worry monster comes out of his house and makes them feel sad or scared.

A quick note about teenagers:

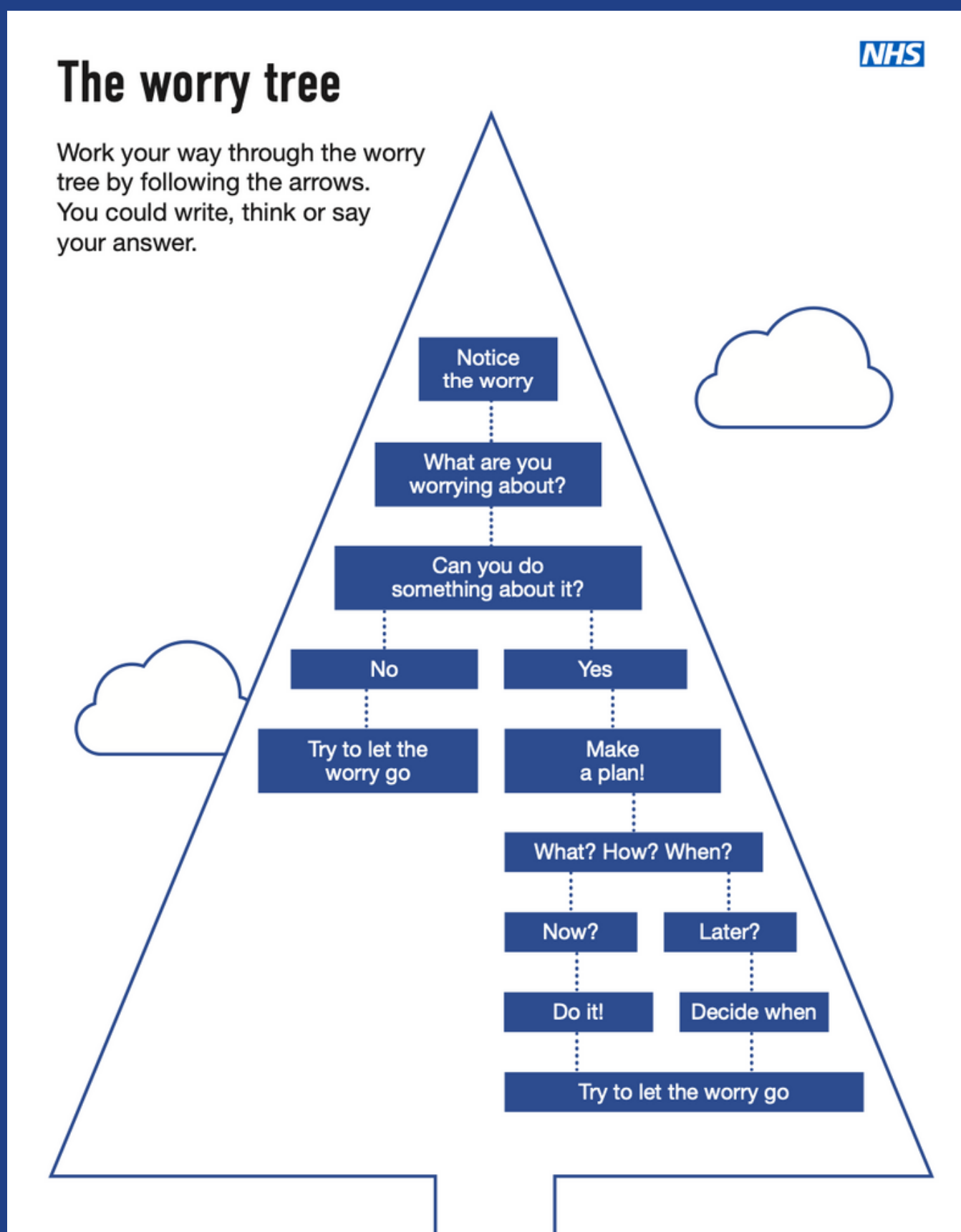
This activity can also be done with pre-teens and teenagers, but the language will need to be modified to match their developmental level (e.g., anxiety monster, anxiety creature, etc.). You might be surprised by how descriptive your otherwise closed-off teen can be about how their anxiety affects them once they're able to draw out what it looks like on paper.

You can draw, make or simply buy a worry monster!



The Worry Tree' is a simple NHS-approved cognitive tool for secondary-age students that can help them navigate away from stressful situations and find a new pattern of thinking.

Applying the logic of 'The Worry Tree' can help students to stop dwelling on the things that are out of their control, refocusing their mind on the choices they can make.



Visualisation Techniques

What is visualization?

Visualization, on its own, involves picturing in your mind the outcome of something before it's happened, whether that's a task or opportunity at hand – such as getting on stage to speak before a large audience – or a sport about to be played.

You can find lots of examples of visualisation activities for children online. Here are some examples:

- [Cosmic Kids](#)
- [The Mindful World](#)
- [ELSA](#)

