Wellbeing & Resilience

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the body's way of responding to stress or dangers. There are lots of other different words people use to describe this feeling such as: **nervous, worried, stressed or scared.**

Is it normal to feel anxious?

Everyone gets worried about different things. **It is normal to feel worried sometimes.** Our bodies are designed to respond to stress and dangers in order to keep us safe. Feeling a bit worried or stressed can be helpful sometimes. For example; if you have a test coming up, feeling a bit worried about it, might make you study for it and get a better mark!

Stress, anxiety and the brain

The brain responds to stressful things everyday. Whether it's a big bear chasing your or a spider in your room, the brain and your body work together to keep you safe.

Our brains are like superhero's, ready to save the day! The stress response system is like a team of superhero's in your body, and the brain is their leader. When your brain thinks you are in danger, it alerts the stress response system team who then send out signals to make your heart beat faster to increase the blood pumping around your body. They also send out signals to make you breathe faster to take in more oxygen and slow down signals to your tummy to they can store energy in the body.

Amygdala
"The Jumpy Superhero"

Tries to protect us at all costs, but often mistakes stress for real threats and stops the Prefrontal Cortex from getting the information it needs to help us make good choices. When the Amygdala is calm, it gives the PFC what it needs.

The Brain

Prefrontal Cortex
"The Smart One"

Figures out stuff for us and helps us make good, well balanced choices. The PFC also sends and retrieves memories to and from the Hippocampus. When the Amygdala is upset, the PFC cannot help us.

Hippocampus
"The Librarian"

The Hippocampus stores and recalls memories. When the Amygdala is upset, poor Hippocampus cannot store memories or properly bring them to mind.

Even though our bodies have this team of superhero's, they sometimes need some extra help. This extra help can come from friends, family, carers, teachers, anyone that makes us feel safe and looked after. These people might help us calm down by giving us a hug, or saying something helpful. This extra support and protection helps the superhero team work better!
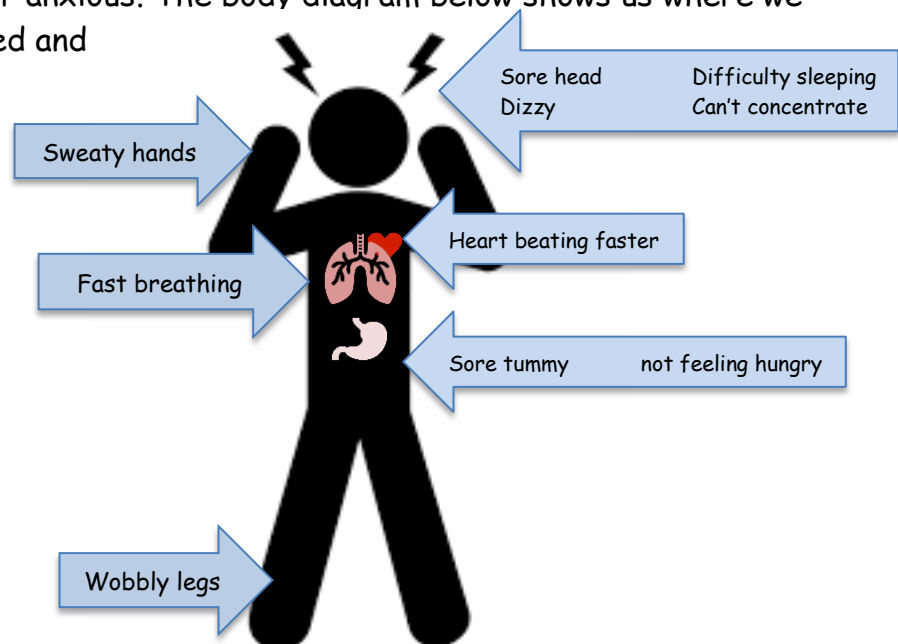
Stress, anxiety and the body

When we are faced with something that is making us scared, anxious or stressed, our bodies can react in different ways. But we now know, that this is our brains way of trying to keep us safe. When the brain sends signals that makes us sweat, and gets our muscles ready, this is it preparing us to do a lot of movement. This is helpful if you need to fight a bear, or run out of the way of a moving bus. Sometimes our minds go blank and we freeze up, and feel like we can't move or talk. This might be helpful if we needed to hide from something. These reactions to stress and anxiety are described as a '**fight, flight or freeze**' response.

But sometimes, the amygdala part of our stress response system gets confused, and it can't tell the difference between an angry bear and a new teacher. Both things can be scary, and cause anxiety, but the new teacher is probably a lot less dangerous than the angry bear! This is why we might feel our heart beating really fast when we are asked to do something new and scary, or why we might freeze and forget everything when the teacher asks us to speak out in class. It is a normal way of the body reacting to something scary.

We can use the clues our body gives us to work our when we might be feeling stressed or anxious. The body diagram below shows us where we might feel stressed and

Sore head   Difficulty sleeping
Dizzy   Can't concentrate

Sweaty hands

Heart beating faster

Fast breathing

Sore tummy   not feeling hungry

Wobbly legs

When does stress and anxiety become a problem?

Anxiety becomes a problem when it starts to get in the way of everyday life. For example, if it is stopping you from doing things you would normally do. Severe anxiety can impact your self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing.

What is resilience?

Resilience means bouncing back. It is our ability to cope with things when they get difficult. Life will always have it's challenges, so it's important that we learn how to manage these. We are all born with some resilience, but it is useful to keep on developing it We can use our friends, family, carers and other helpful people in our lives to become help us become more resilient. If we learn skills to make us more resilient, and practice them lots in small, everyday situations, it will help us when we are faced with things that are really difficult.

grow

believe motivation success

strength

hope

RESILIENCE

determination

vision

effort

positive

How can I become more resilient?

There are lots of strategies we can practice to help us deal with stress and anxiety, that make us more resilient. Lots of them are based on a cycle of our **thoughts, feelings and behaviours**.

BEHAVIOUR   THOUGHT
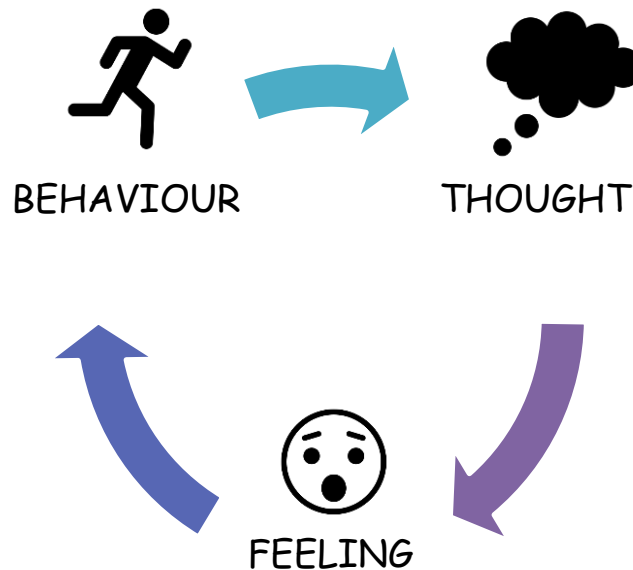
FEELING

This means that the **thoughts** we have in our head, decide how we are **feeling**, and those then decide how we are going to **behave**.

For example: If you think that you are rubbish at sports, you might start to feel sad or annoyed, so you decide not to take part in the game.
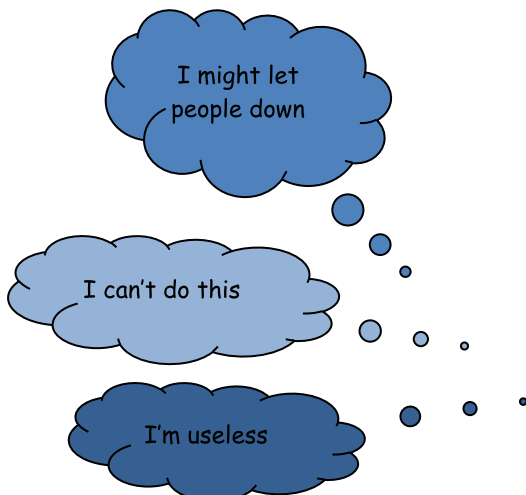
don't take part   rubbish at sports

sad & annoyed
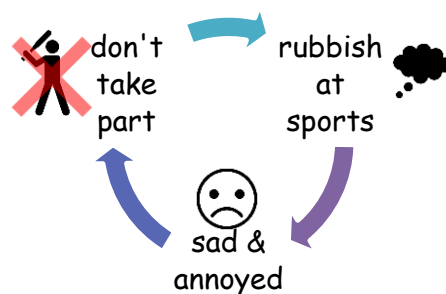
Helpful and Unhelpful Thinking

If we want to change how we feel, or how we behave, we need to look at our **thoughts**. We're constantly thinking about things. As 1 thought leaves our head, another one takes its place. We think about the past, the future, what's going on around us. We have loads of thoughts! Some of these are helpful, because they help us to feel positive and achieve things.

I am just as good as everyone else

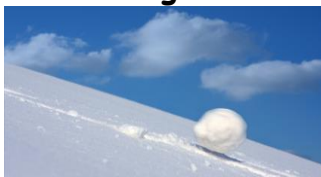I can do this

We are a team

Confident
Brave
Strong

Some thoughts are **not helpful**, and they make us feel unhappy and stop us from achieving.

I might let people down

I can't do this

I'm useless

Nervous
Worried
Sad

i give up
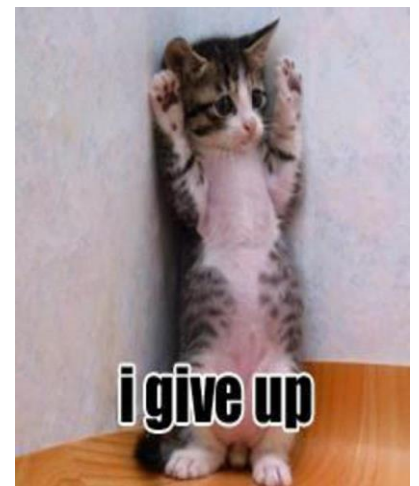
Thinking Errors

Thinking errors are things that we might do that cause unhelpful thoughts. If we want to change our thoughts from unhelpful to helpful, we need to be able to spot thinking errors.

Thinking Error	Description	Example
Negative Glasses	Only noticing negatives Can't see any positives	You do well in a class task but say 'everyone done well, so it must have been really easy'
Magnifying	Making the negatives bigger Making the positives smaller	You dropped your book in class and think 'everyone stopped working and stared at me'
Snowballing	One thought leads to another Keeps getting bigger	There's none of your favourite cereal left so you think 'everyone always eats my cereal, there's never anything I like to eat, there's no point even getting out of bed today!!'
Mind Reading	Assuming you know what others are thinking Not having any evidence	Saying things like 'I know she doesn't like me' or 'I bet everyone thinks I'm stupid'
Blowing Up	Blowing things out of proportion	You lose a turn in a game and think 'I'm the worst at this!'
Emotional Thinking	Feelings at the time affecting how you're thinking	Feeling angry and thinking 'I hate them. I'm never speaking to them again. I'm going to throw out all their stuff!'

Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Noticing unhelpful thoughts and thinking errors is the first step to building resilience. Once you can do this, you can start to change your thoughts into more helpful ones. Here are some examples of how you can challenge your unhelpful thoughts:
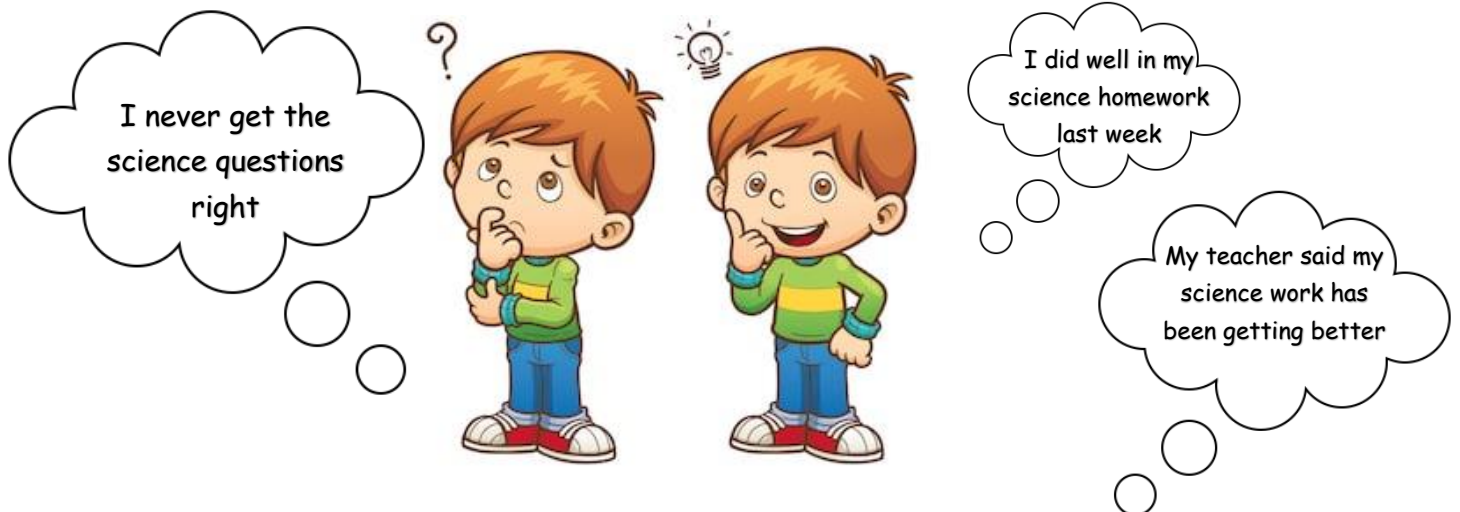
Give yourself the advice you might give to a friend.

You're not rubbish at this game. You just haven't had much practice!

Pick someone you trust and ask them for advice.

Try and think of times where this thought isn't true.

I never get the science questions right

I did well in my science homework last week

My teacher said my science work has been getting better

Importance of exercise

- Cardiovascular (cardio) exercise is best to keep your mind healthy.
  - examples of cardio exercises are: skipping, running and swimming
  - these work by getting our heart to beat faster
  - this pumps lots of blood around our body
  - it also reduces stress chemicals(cortisol) in our blood
  - it also increases the feel good chemicals (adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine)
- Even short bursts of exercise can improve your mood
- Experts say children should be getting at least 30 minutes of exercise EVERY day
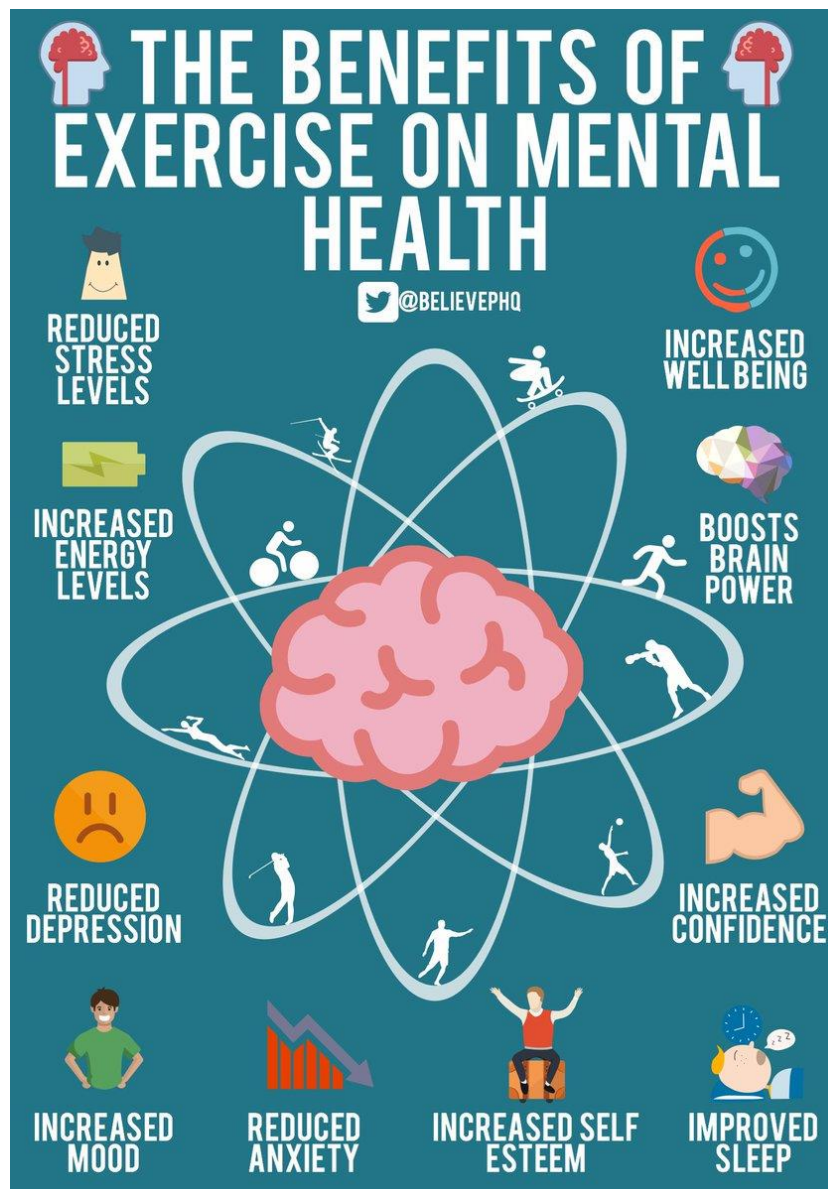
Importance of healthy eating

- It is important we try to eat healthy to help make us feel better
- Too much sugar or caffeine can increase anxiety

  - It makes the sugar levels in your body go REALLY HIGH then REALLY LOW all of a sudden
  - The feeling of this happening in your body can increase feelings of anxiety such as a sore tummy, sore head or shaking

- Too many carbohydrates (e.g. bread, pasta or crisps) can make you feel sleepy

  - A small amount of these foods is good at giving you energy that is slowly realised through the day
  - TOO MANY of these types of foods will produce chemicals in the body that makes you sleepy

Mood-boosting food tips
  - Eat a balanced diet
    - Mixture of vegetables, proteins and carbohydrates
  - Drink lots of water
  - Limit the amount of sugar you have
  - Eat smaller meals more regularly
    - Instead of having 1 or 2 big meals

MUSCLE RELAXATION

Towers
Stand up tall with your arms raised straight above your head
Stand up on your tip toes
Make your whole body and straight and rigid as possible

Jellyfish
Relax your arms down by your sides
Bend over slightly
Let your arms swing down in front
Relax all of your muscles so you feel loose and floppy

Think of times when the unhelpful thought isn't true

Try to eat healthy

Try and do at least 30 minutes exercise every day

Coping Strategies

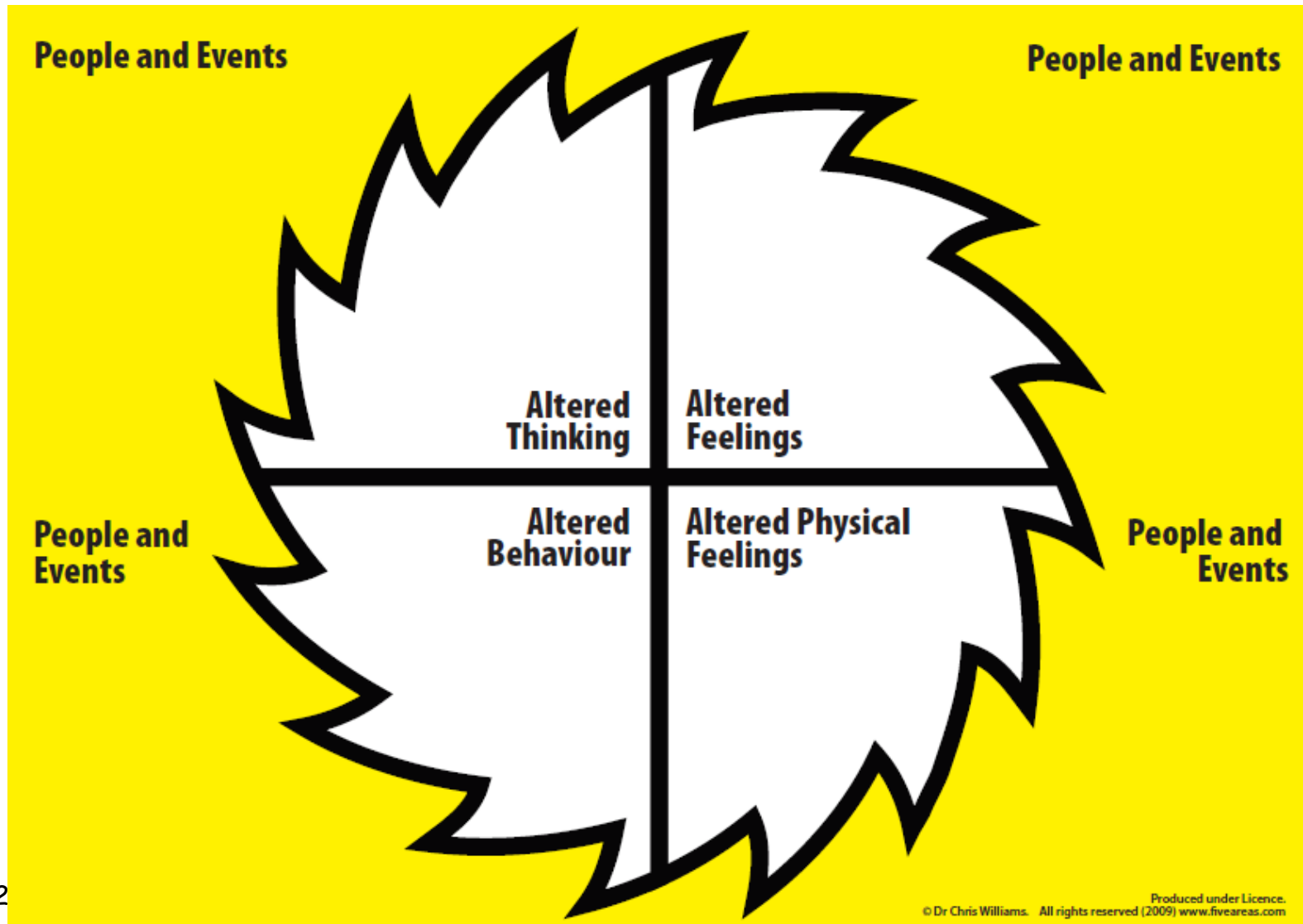Give yourself advice you would give to a friend

RELAXING BREATHING

- Take a deep breath in through your nose, whilst counting to 4 in your head

- Hold your breath for 2 seconds

- Breathe out through your mouth, whilst counting to 4 in your head

REPEAT THIS AT LEAST 4 TIMES

Speak to someone you trust for help

Activities

1. Fill in each of the sections with how you think feeling stressed or anxious might have an impact.

People and Events

People and Events

People and Events

People and Events

Altered Thinking

Altered Feelings

Altered Behaviour

Altered Physical Feelings

A	I	Q	Y
B	J	R	Z
C	K	S	
D	L	T	
E	M	U	
F	N	V	
G	O	W	
H	P	X	

3. Use the outline below to draw on where we might feel emotions in our body.
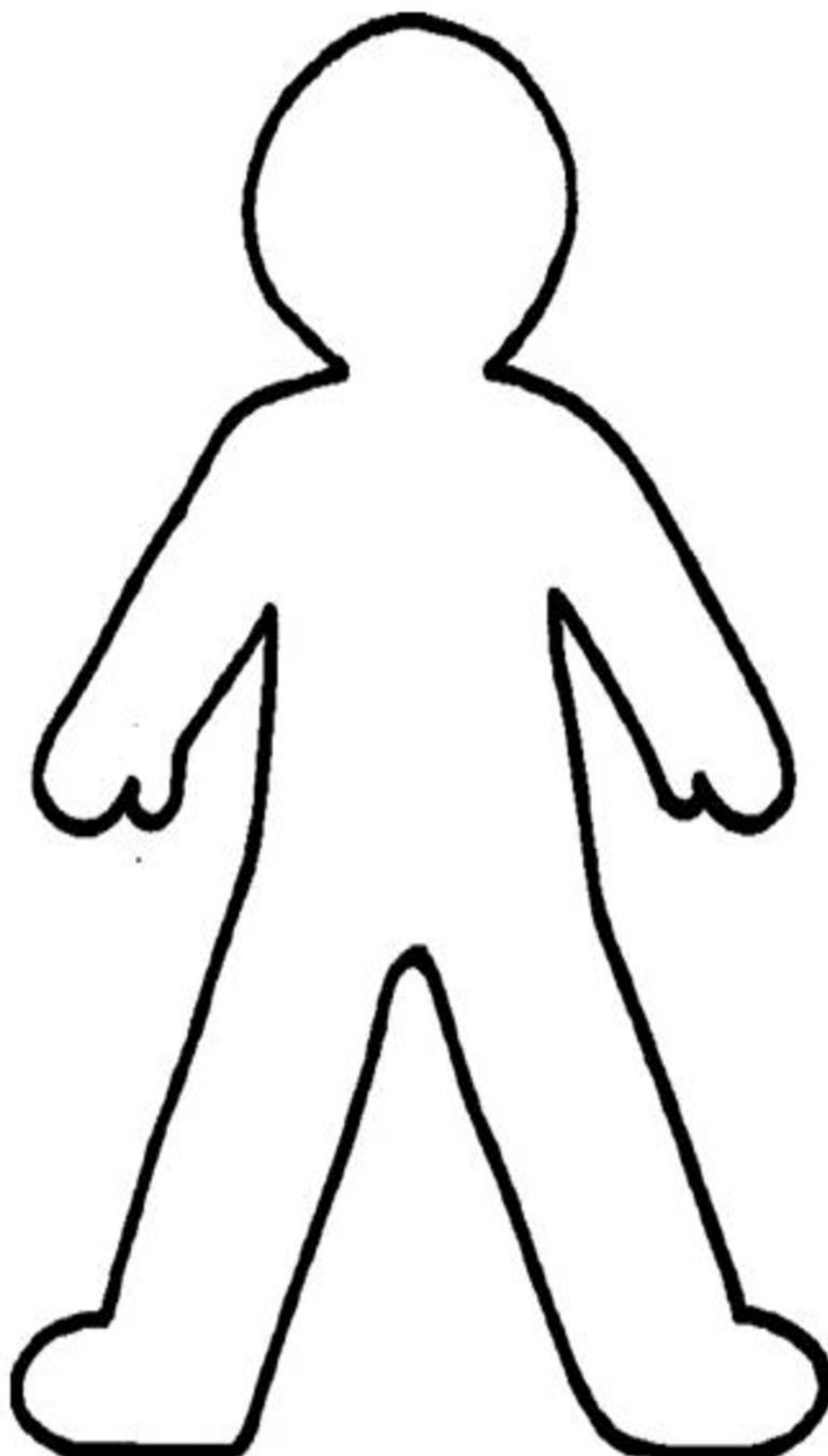
4. Feelings dice
   - Use a dice where each number represents a feeling (write this down so you remember)
   - Sit in a circle with your family or carers and take turns to roll the dice.
   - Have a discussion about:
     - A time you felt that way
     - Something you can do when you feel that way
     - A time somebody you know felt that way, what that person does when they feel that way, and how you might help them to feel better.

5. Tick the box to decide if these descriptions are a thought, feeling or behaviour.

Description	Thought	Feeling	Behaviour
Stressed			
I've tried really hard today			
I'm no good at this			
Shout at your friend			
I'm not going to get to go out tonight			
grumpy			
Wiggle on chair			
This is too easy			
Bored			
Tap fingers on table			
Surprised			
Scribble on paper			
Chat to friend			
Everyone knows how to do this except me			
unsure			

6. Try out this thought, feelings and behaviour worksheet

Thoughts, Feelings & Actions

Directions: Think of a situation from the past that was upsetting to you. Complete the questions below about the upsetting situation.

Thoughts

What happened?

Why did it happen?

Feelings

How did it make me feel?

Why did it make me feel this way?

Actions

What did I do when it happened?

Did I handle this situation as well as I could?

Next time this happens, I will remind myself...

7. Try and change each of these unhelpful thoughts into a more helpful one

Unhelpful Thought

I'm a failure

Helpful Thought

Unhelpful Thought

The world is a horrible place

Helpful Thought

Unhelpful Thought

Things will never get better

Helpful Thought

Unhelpful Thought

Everyone is better than me

Helpful Thought