

The 4 A's

ADHD, ASD, Anxiety, Anger



CAMHS Schools Programme

Created by Chelsie Shaw and Claire Scott

Content

- *Introduction to The 4 A's*
- *Executive functioning*
- *What is ADHD*
- *What is ASD*
- *Anxiety*
- *Anger*





10% of children in the UK have one or more Neurodevelopmental disorders (likely higher as many go undiagnosed) (NICE 2019)



Introduction

The most common Neurodevelopmental disorders are: ASD and ADHD

42% of children with a Neurodevelopmental disorders also have an anxiety disorder.

Neurodevelopmental disorders affect children's cognition, academic attainment, behaviour, social interactions and lived experience.

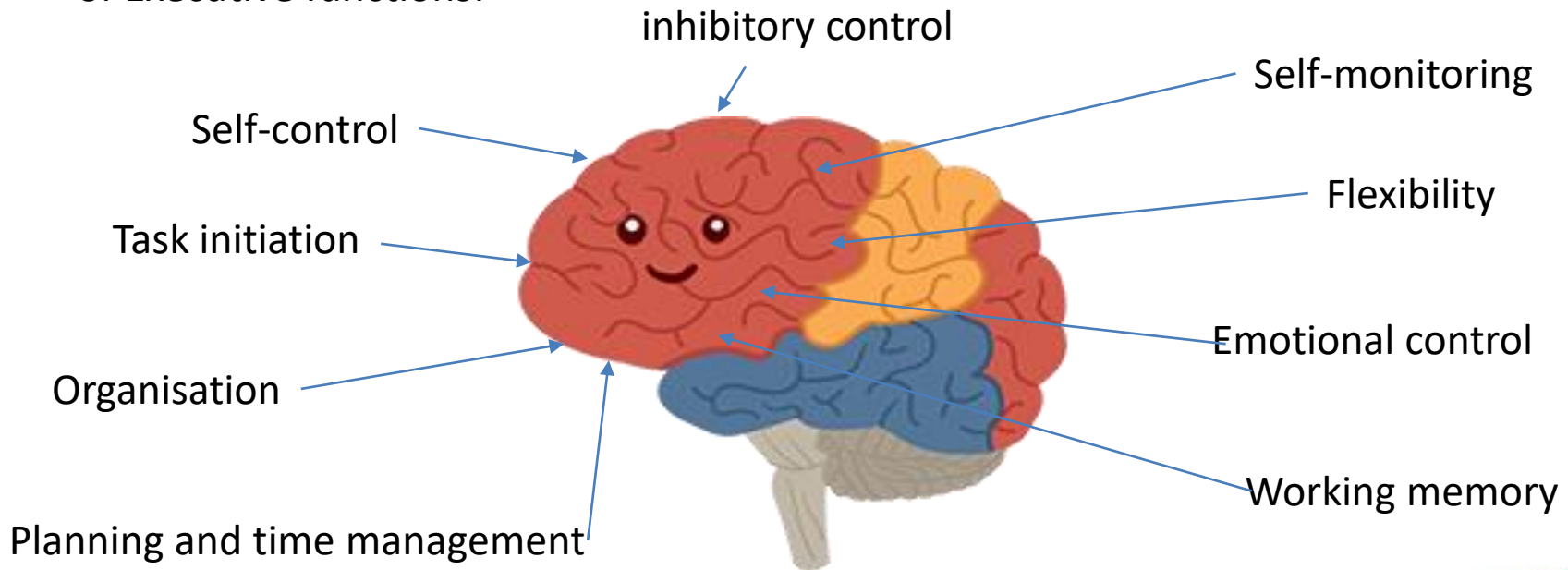


Children with Neurodevelopmental disorders find regulating emotions more challenging due to their brain development

Children with Neurodevelopmental disorders are under a greater pressure to 'fit in'.

Executive functions

Executive functioning happens in the frontal lobe of the brain. It helps us regulate, control and manage our actions and thoughts. Here are some examples of Executive functions:





Executive functions are the brain's self-management system. They work together to help the brain organise and act on information. People with **executive dysfunction** find it difficult to initiate tasks, even when they're enjoyable and/or important, and they may find it difficult to gather information, structure it and change their behaviour in response. Executive dysfunction is heavily linked with autism and ADHD, and **these skills can be developed over time.**

Try this: Look at the words below and say aloud the font colour for each word, without reading the word itself. It's often trickier than it looks!

RED

BLUE

GREEN

PURPLE

YELLOW

BLACK

RED

BLUE

GREEN

YELLOW

PURPLE

BLACK

The Stroop Test is a good example of when we need to use our inhibition skills this cognitive ability is one of our Executive Functions, we have to filter out the meaning of each word in order to say the font colour.

CL

"I find it hard to plan ahead"

"My brain jumps from one thing to another"

"I forget things quickly"

"I forget instructions"

"I lose important things I need"

"If my plans need to change I panic"

"People think I am rude"

"Sometimes I act without thinking"

"I get in trouble when I forget or lose things"

"I find it hard to concentrate"

"I find it hard to control my anger"

"Everything seems harder for me then for my friends"

"I feel safe when I know what's happening"

"I worry about getting things wrong"

ADHD



<https://www.additudemag.com/childs-perspective-adhd-emotions-video/>

ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects people's behaviour. People with ADHD can seem restless, may have trouble concentrating and may act on impulse.

The symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be categorised into 2 types of behavioural problems:

- Inattentiveness (difficulty concentrating and focusing)
- Hyperactivity and impulsiveness

Symptoms of ADHD

Hyperactivity and impulsiveness

- being unable to sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings
- constantly fidgeting
- being unable to concentrate on tasks
- excessive physical movement
- excessive talking
- being unable to wait their turn
- acting without thinking
- interrupting conversations
- little or no sense of danger

Inattentiveness (difficulty concentrating)

- having a short attention span and being easily distracted
- making careless mistakes – for example, in schoolwork
- appearing forgetful or losing things
- being unable to stick to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming
- appearing to be unable to listen to or carry out instructions
- constantly changing activity or task
- having difficulty organising tasks



Lets analyse

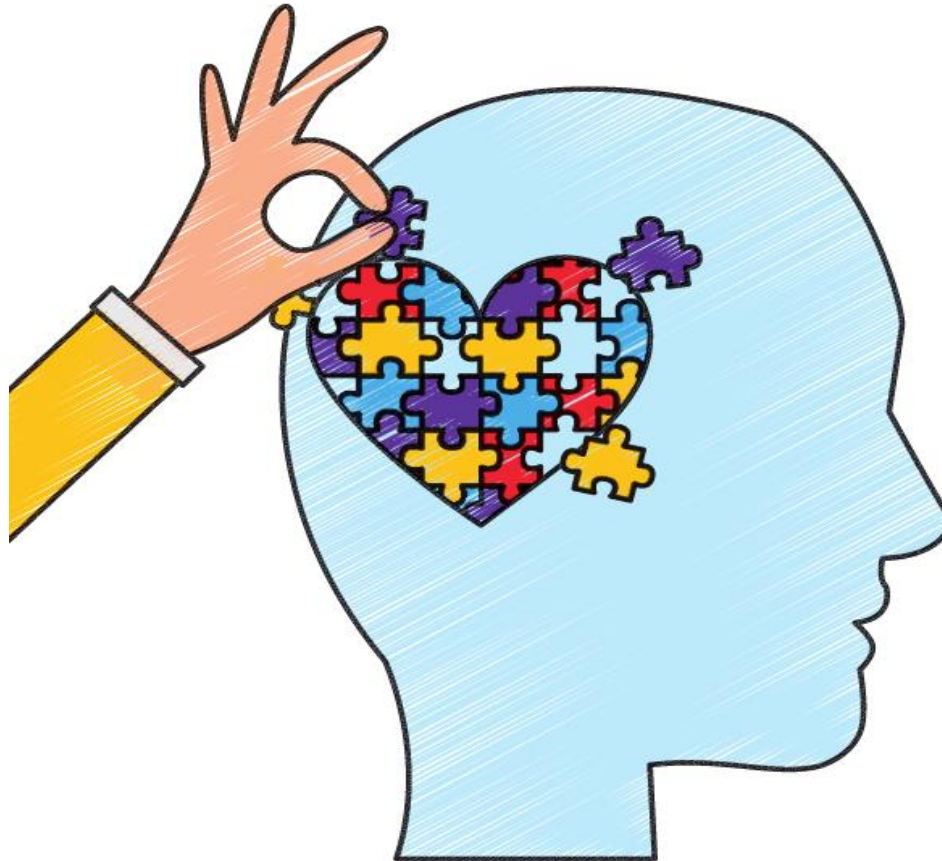


- The challenges that come with ADHD can create stress and lead to anxiety.
- Many people with ADHD also have an anxiety disorder.
- ADHD can create frequent problems — in school, at work, and at home.
- People with ADHD may have trouble with executive functions — Inhibitions (impulse control), self-monitoring, emotional control, working memory, task initiation and organisation

Life's responsibilities are harder to manage, forgetful and unorganised (things take longer), their emotions are harder to manage, they notice things are more difficult for them than their peers and life is more stressful leading to flight or fight response:

Anger or Anxiety!

Autism



Autism

A neurodevelopment disorder that causes a wide range of impairments in social communication and restricted and repetitive behaviours, may also include sensory sensitivity.

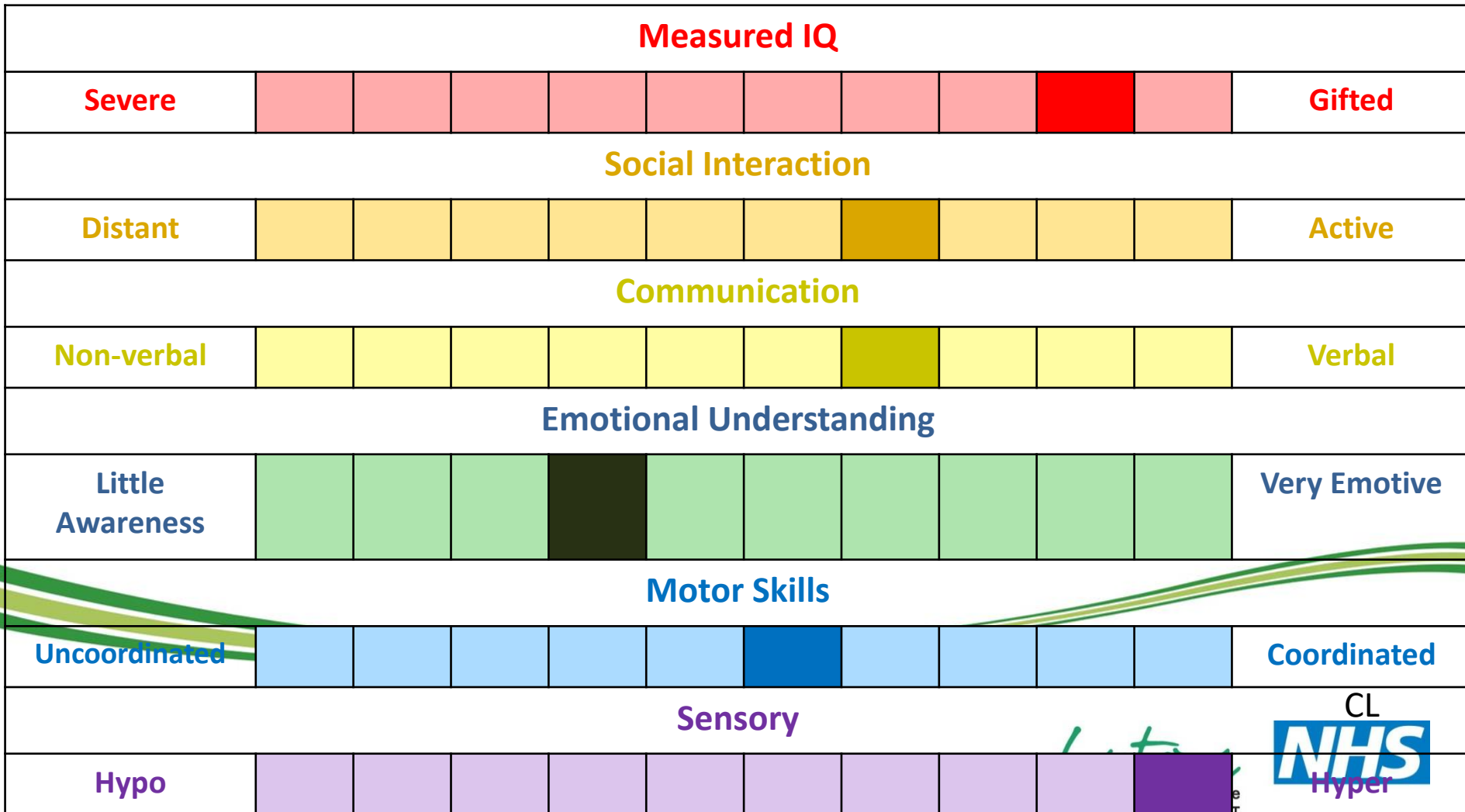
People with Autism may:


- Find it hard to communicate and interact with other people
- Find it hard to understand how other people think or feel
- Find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- Get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events
- Take longer to understand information
- do or think the same things over and over



Autism as a Spectrum

Autism is a spectrum. This means everybody with autism is different. Some autistic people need little or no support. Others may need help from a parent or carer every day.





Children with autism can experience difficulties with inhibition – inhibiting inappropriate responses and behaviours, talking only about their interests

Some children with autism may be inflexible – may get stuck on ideas or behaviours, dislike changes to routine and transitions, struggle to accept different viewpoints.

Children with autism may have difficulties planning – preparing for activities, planning for the future.

Hand flapping or Stimming, can demonstrate difficulties in impulse control

Social Understanding and relating

- *Difficulty with interpreting intentions of others*
- *Struggles to make and maintain friendships*
- *Struggle to make social approaches*
- *Difficulty in responding to social situations*
- *Understanding non-verbal body language and social cues*
- *Understanding emotion*

Communication

- *Delay or lack of development of speech*
- *Failure to respond to speech of others*
- *Echolalia*
- *Difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication*
- *Difficulty decoding communicative gesture, body language, facial expression, tone of voice*
- *Literal interpretation of language*

Inflexibility with thought and routine

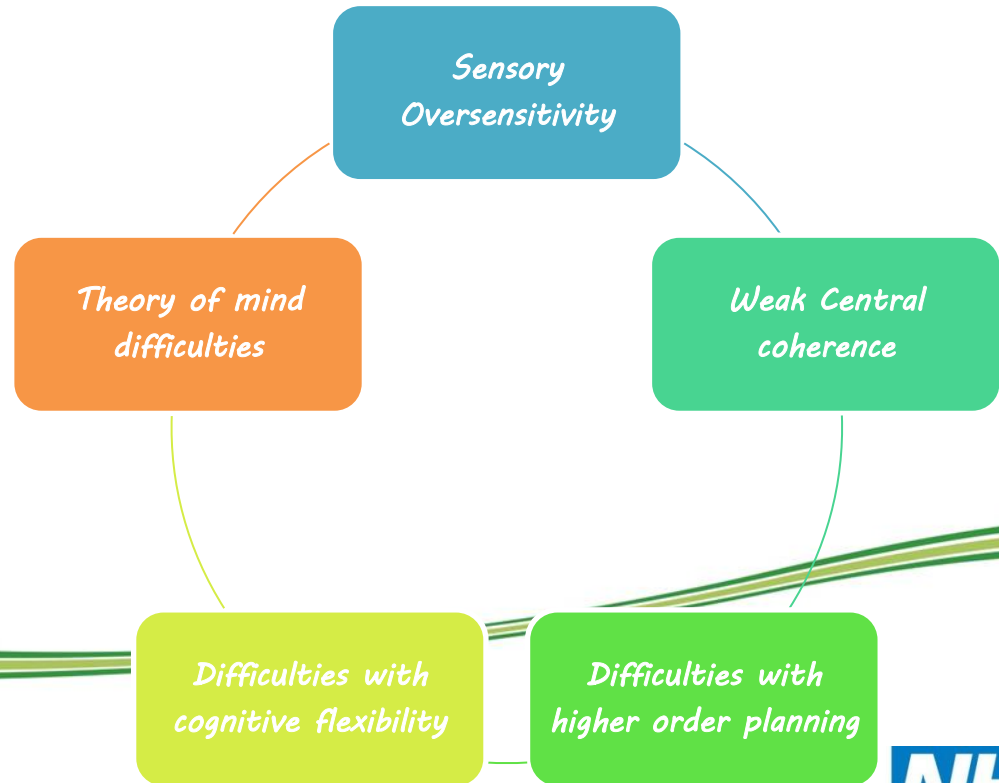
- *Difficulty with flexible thinking and behaviour*
- *Unable to create imagined activities*
- *Respond to objects unusually*
- *Intense level of interest in one area*
- *Struggle to cope with unexpected change*
- *Struggle to accept others points of view*

Sensory difficulties

- *Focus on own body*
- *Rocking and flapping*
- *Some repetitive movement*
- *Difficulty in managing sensory input*
- *Some sensory sensitivities*

Anxiety and Autism

- *Anxiety is one of the most common presenting issues for individuals with Autism.*
- *Individuals with ASD have shown cortisol patterns similar to those seen in individuals with chronic stress.*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPknwW8mPAM>

Lets analyse



- Children with Autism can worry and become anxious in new situations or when their plans change
- They can find social interactions challenging and this can lead to social anxiety
- They may misinterpret information which can cause frustration and anger. Anger will increase with difficulties with impulse control
- People with Autism may have trouble with areas of executive functions — Inhibition, flexibility, self-monitoring, emotional control, planning/time management and monitoring.

Children with autism see the world in a unique way, this can cause them to experience challenges confining to social norms, this can cause anxiety or anger. They also generally experience higher levels of anxiety due to difficulties in flexibility

Anxiety

It's an **evolutionary** response that prepares us for danger by triggering our "fight-flight-freeze" response, and prepares our body to react. For instance, our heart beats faster to pump blood to our muscles, so we have the energy to run away or fight off danger. Without it, we would not survive. It is caused by a hormone called adrenaline.

We need some anxiety



CL

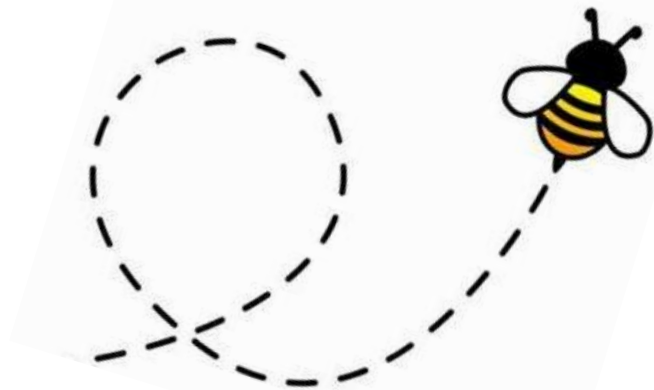
What happens during freeze, fight or flight?



Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling.....

Anxiety is a normal emotion and everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. Sometimes we experience things that our brain perceives as a threat even when sometimes it isn't. We can get trapped in a cycle of anxiety triggered by negative thoughts,

So when does it become a problem?



When is it a problem:

- Excessive worry
- Irrational fears
- Discomfort interacting with or having others look at them
- Stomach aches and bowel problems
- Other physical symptoms of stress
- Sleep difficulties
- Avoidance of stressful situations
- Obsessive thinking
- Compulsive and ritualistic behaviours



Anger

Throwing

Mean

Shouting

Hitting

Banging

Crying

Screaming



Kicking

Defiant

Running away

Anger

Anger is a basic human emotion that is experienced by all people. Triggered by an emotional hurt, anger is usually experienced as an unpleasant feeling that occurs when we think we have been injured, mistreated, opposed in our views, or when we are faced with obstacles that keep us from achieving personal goals.

The experience of anger varies widely; how often anger occurs, how intensely it is felt, and how long it lasts are different for each person and situation.

Some experts suggest that the average adult gets angry about once a day. Other anger management experts suggest that getting angry fifteen times a day is more likely a realistic average.

People also vary in how easily they get angry as well as how comfortable they are with feeling angry.

Some people are very aware of their anger, while others fail to recognise anger when it occurs.

How often do you get angry?

Thank you for listening

Key message: Children with neurodevelopmental disorders find the world more of a challenging place and this impacts their emotions. They need understanding and support from those around them to help them cope better with anxiety and anger 😊

Homework: To complete the ABC chart for next week



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The 4 A's

Strategies



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Content

- *Introduction*
- *Executive functioning strategies*
- *Emotional regulation strategies*
- *Anxiety strategies*
- *Anger strategies*
- *Communication strategies*
- *Resilience*





Introduction

Children ADHD and Autism struggle in areas such as executive functioning, social interactions and regulating their emotions.



They need support from adults around them to show them ways to cope with their difficulties and regulate their emotions.



This presentation will aim to provide strategies that can be use to support and guide the children.





Disclaimer



1. All children are unique and respond differently to different strategies.
2. It is important to try different strategies and find what works best for you and your child.
3. The strategies may not make an immediate change but with constancy and perseverance will make a positive difference.

Parent commitment

Allow the child time for any daily routine or task

Use straightforward and direct language

Use visual support to help with schedules and communication

Establish predictable routines that are not over-stimulating

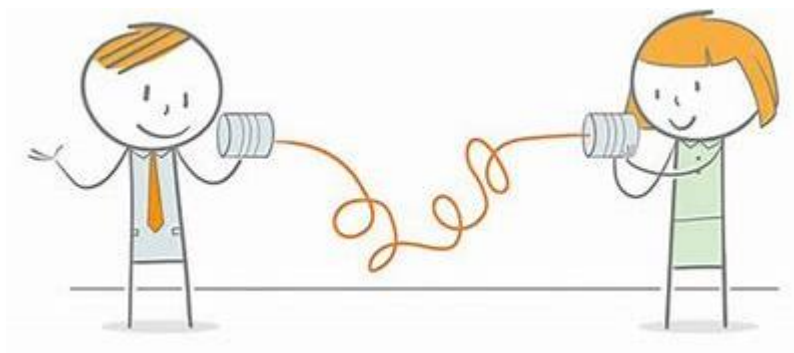
Make sure the child has adequate sleep, nutrition and exercise

Understand that the child perspective may not be the same as your perspective

Remain calm if the child becomes anxious or agitated

Effective Communication

- Validate how your child is feeling.
- Be open and honest with your child.
- You don't have to have all the answers.
- Encourage your child to problem solve- this builds resilience.
- Be positive.
- Offer reassurance.



Executive functioning

We are not born with Executive function and self-regulation skills we develop through interactions and practice.

- ❖ Did you know that executive functioning skills may play a part in letter reversals and other handwriting concerns? Executive function is a component of so much that we do, including handwriting!
- ❖ **Games** can exercise children's executive function and self-regulation skills and allow them to practice these skills. At this age, children start to enjoy games that have rules, but do so with widely varying levels of interest and skill. The skills learnt through playing games included negotiating conflict,
- ❖ **Sports** (such as Football or Netball), Performing arts, musical instruments can challenge a child's coordination of working memory, attention, cognitive flexibility, and inhibition.

Flexibility



Games involving strategy: help children plan ahead, challenge working memory and cognitive flexibility (Chess, Cluedo, Monopoly)

Crossword puzzles: are available for all skill levels and draw on manipulation of letters and words in working memory as well as cognitive flexibility.

Organised sports and team games: There is also evidence that high levels of physical activity, particularly activity that requires coordination, like soccer, can improve all aspects of executive function.

Make a Plan B: Explain to the young person that things don't always go to plan, so it's best to prepare for these situations. Come up with a 'Plan B' for some situations that the young person may face on a daily basis, e.g. activity is cancelled, item is unavailable, etc.



Working memory



Break it down: Give the young person step-by-step instructions (e.g. “put your shoes on”) one at a time instead of generic tasks (e.g. “get ready to leave”). Ask the young person to repeat the instruction back to you.

Games that involve fantasy play: Require holding in working memory complicated information (rule, places visited and characters) Such as Minecraft, Roadblox and other simpler games.

Learning music or songs: Challenges working memory to hold the music in mind.

Games: Especially where they need to track playing cards (promoting flexibility and working memory) Such as Uno, Rummy, Snap, and Dobble)



Puzzles: That require information to be held and manipulated in working memory can be terrific challenges.



Organisation



Identify reasonable plans: (with timelines) for completing each piece. Be sure that all steps have been explicitly identified and ensure that the completion of each step is recognized and celebrated.

Stop and check...self-monitoring

Checklists: Get the young person to think about what they will need for an activity (e.g. swimming) and get them to check off each item as they pack it.

Tommy's Schedule Monday		All Done
Put backpack in cubby		
Independent Work		
Morning meeting		
Reading Time		
reading group		
spelling work at desk		
Music Class		
Speech		
Lunch		
Recess		
Special Reading Group		
Pack up backpack		
Go home		

Planning a social event: Helps with confidence

Step by step plans: Easier to follow

Break a project down into manageable pieces

Initiation



Visual timetables: Give prompts and motivators to start tasks.

Goal setting: Can help motivate the child to start task in order to get to the end goal.

Games: Playing Snap promotes fast action initiation. Hiding/tag games like laser tag and paintball.

Routines create: Habits for everyday activities tasks become automatic

Limit distractions: When you want them to complete a task limit distractions (quiet environment)

Attention

Sports: That require focus and attention: Tennis, basketball, netball, football or badminton.

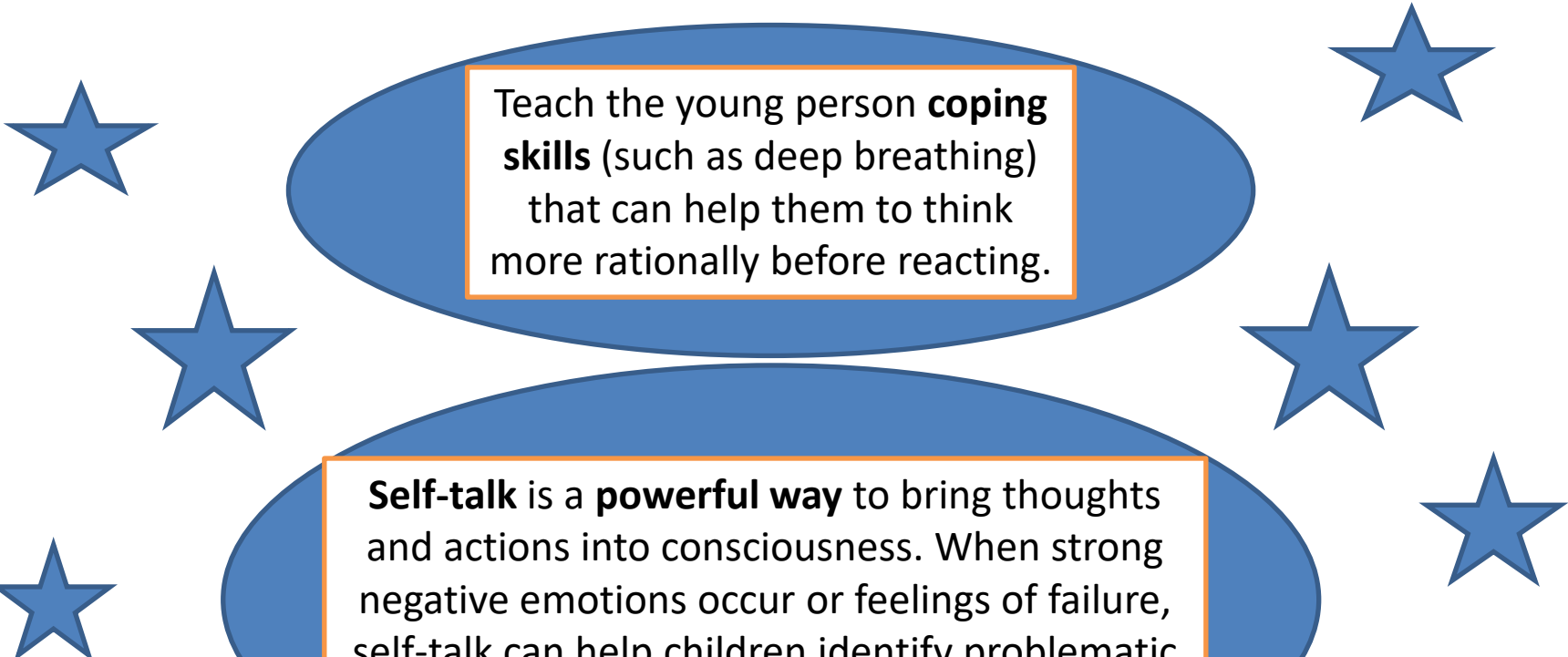
Learning to play a musical instrument: can test selective attention and self-monitoring.

Games: Like jump rope, double Dutch, Chinese jump rope, and other such challenges. Developing skill in these games requires focused practice, as well as the attention control and working memory to recall the words of the chant while attending to the motions.

Games: That require fast responses challenge attention and quick decision making (Dobble, Rummy, Snap,

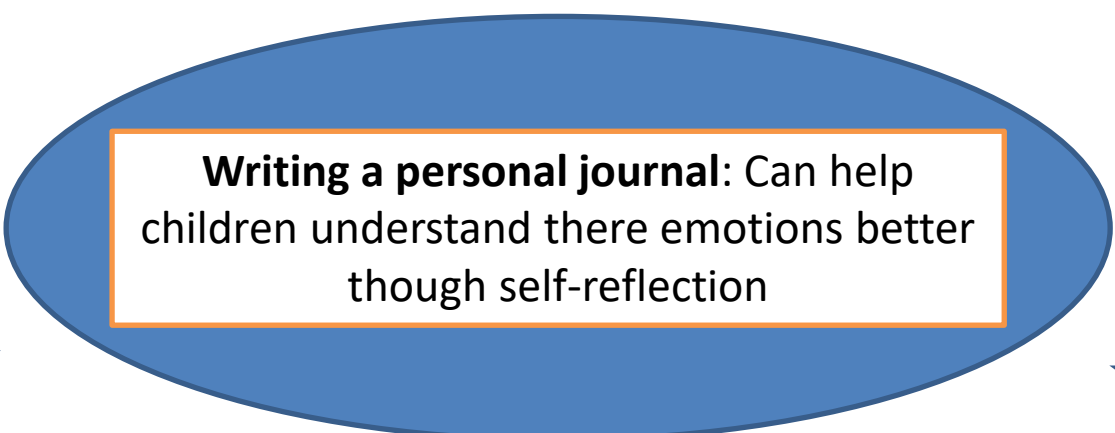


Emotional regulation

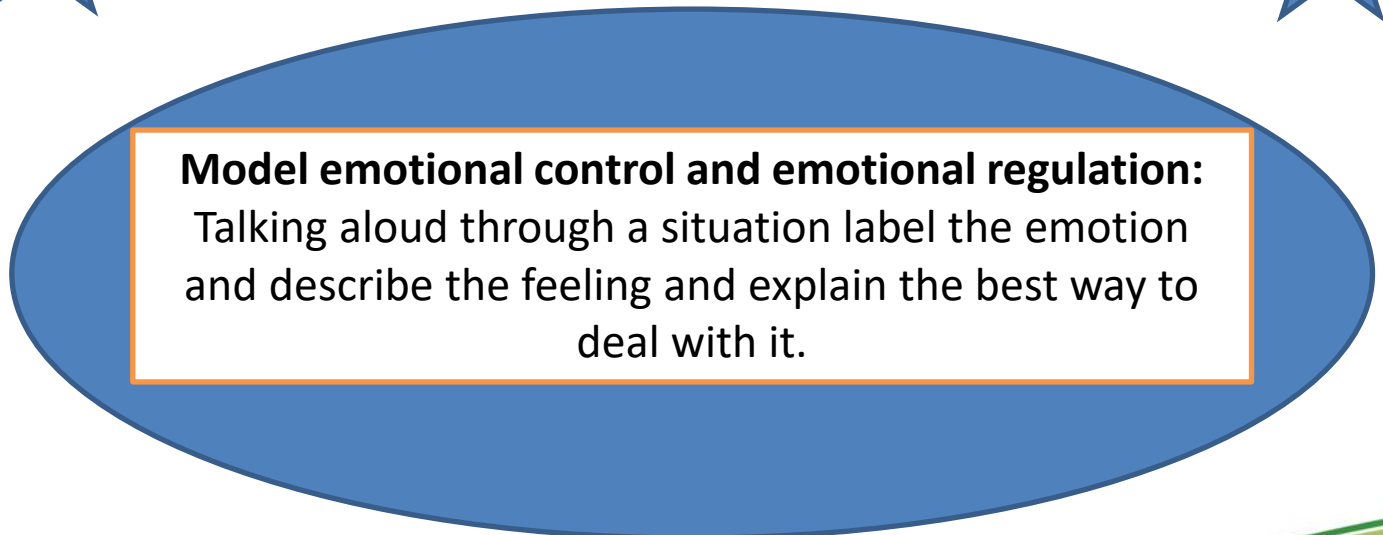
The slide features several blue five-pointed stars of varying sizes scattered around the central text boxes. At the bottom, there are three wavy green lines that sweep across the width of the slide.

Teach the young person **copng skills** (such as deep breathing) that can help them to think more rationally before reacting.

Self-talk is a **powerful way** to bring thoughts and actions into consciousness. When strong negative emotions occur or feelings of failure, self-talk can help children identify problematic thinking and behaviour patterns.



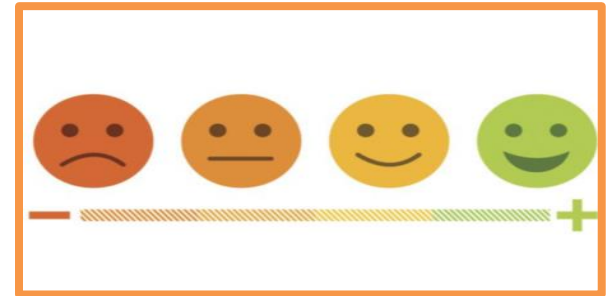
Writing a personal journal: Can help children understand their emotions better through self-reflection



Model emotional control and emotional regulation: Talking aloud through a situation label the emotion and describe the feeling and explain the best way to deal with it.

Building Emotional Development

- *Awareness of emotions*
- *Naming our emotions*
- *Validating emotions*



You look
angry? Do you
feel angry?

How does that
emotion feel
in your body?

I can see that made
you feel sad.

Homework: Watch the film Inside Out



Self regulation



Sports



Meditation

Yoga



Music



Mindfulness



Games

Calm down and reflection



Talking



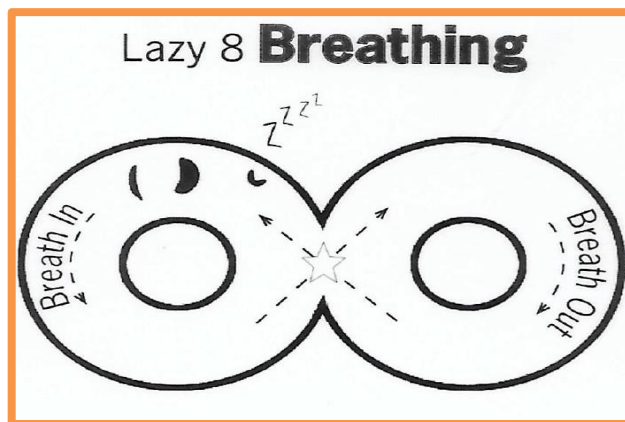
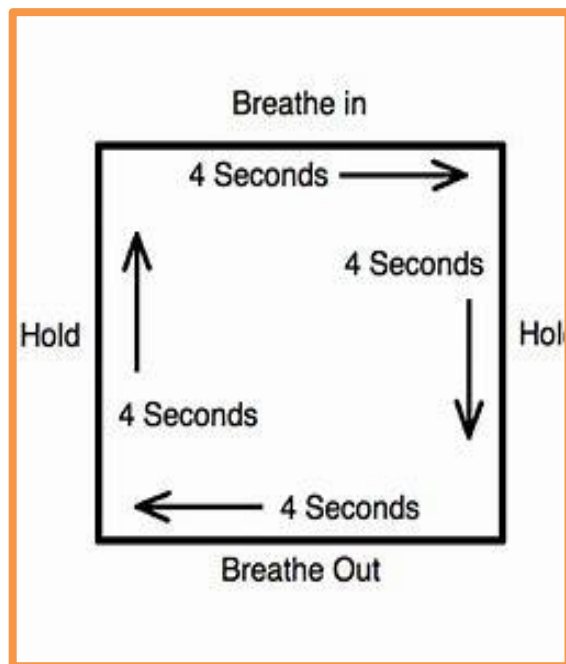
Breathing

Calming Down With Take 5 Breathing

1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly - slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose - out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down. Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



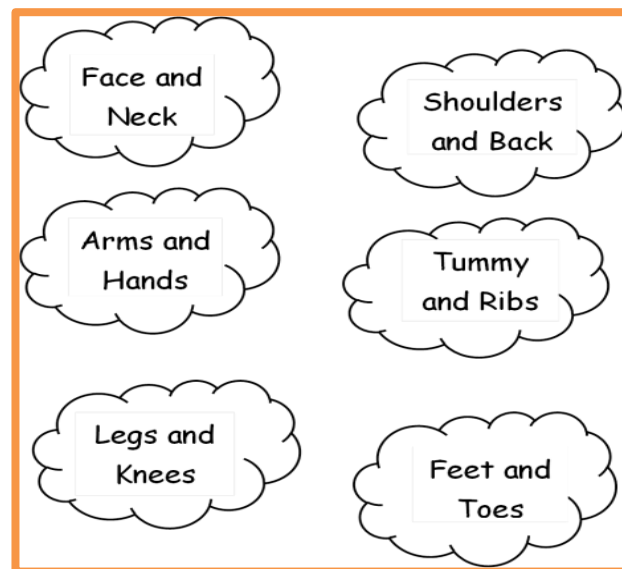
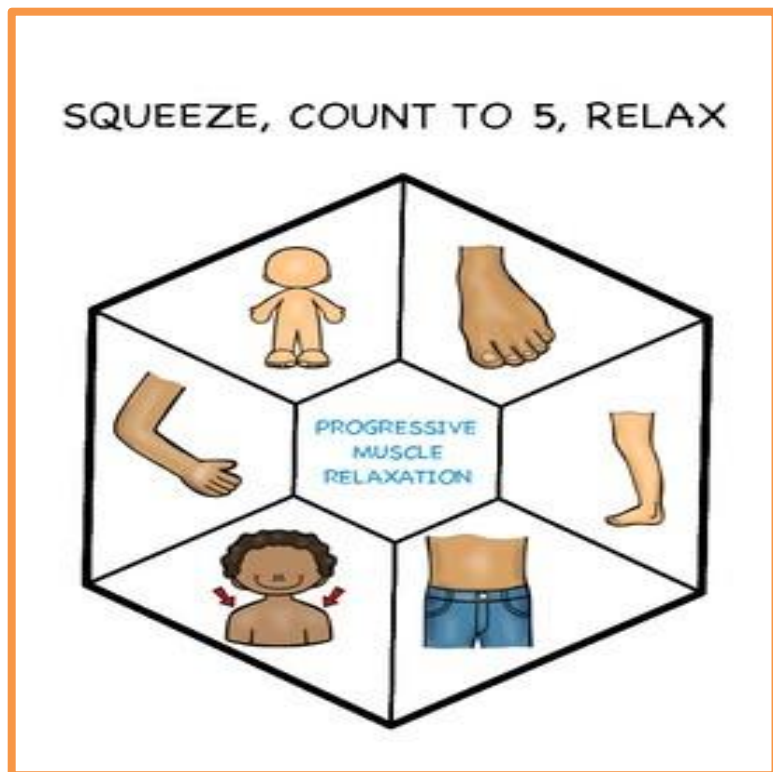
Breathing exercises



The main purpose is to help regulate breathing, reducing uncomfortable emotions and helping distract from negative thoughts.



Muscle relaxation



Relieves stress

Relieves tension

Promotes relaxation



Regulates emotions



Grounding techniques



5 THINGS THAT YOU CAN SEE



4 THINGS THAT YOU CAN FEEL



LISTEN FOR 3 SOUNDS

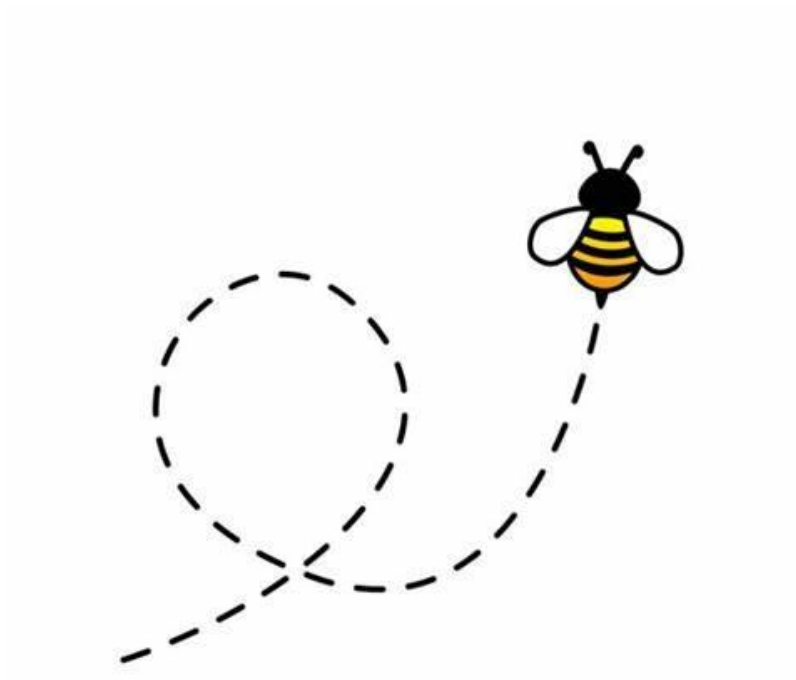


SAY TWO THINGS YOU CAN SMELL



SAY ONE THING YOU CAN TASTE

Anxiety



Explore Your Childs Fears

For example moving to secondary school, studies have found that children are most worried about the following things:

1. Getting lost
2. Losing old friends
3. Discipline and detentions
4. Homework
5. Being bullied



What is your child scared of?

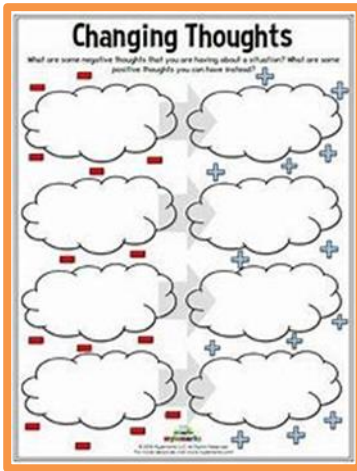
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Listen To Our Children

You can't help me problem solve if I don't feel you understand me

Before we try to solve our child's problems or give them solutions they need to feel understood. Don't jump in or offer reassurance, Just join and show empathy



Breathing Exercises

Distraction Techniques

Relaxation Techniques

Exposure Techniques

Thought Challenging



Our Worry Bucket

Lets think of all the stress and worries our children are experiencing as the water



As the stress and worry builds up the buckets ability to hold the water is compromised, resulting in the bucket over flowing.

The bucket represents our children's ability to cope.



As parents we can support our child in emptying their bucket and also in helping them build a bigger and more resilient bucket.

Separation anxiety

Children experiencing separation anxiety feel constantly worried or fearful about separation. Many children are overwhelmed with symptoms such as:

- Fear that something terrible will happen to a loved one,
- worry that an unpredicted event will lead to permanent separation,
- refusal to go to school a child with separation anxiety disorder may have an unreasonable fear of school, and will do almost anything to stay home.
- Reluctance to go to sleep from fear of being alone or due to nightmares about separation.
- Physical sickness like a headache or stomach pain. At the time of separation, or before, children with separation anxiety problems often complain they feel ill.
- Clinging to the caregiver. Your child may shadow you around the house or cling to your arm or leg if you attempt to step out.

Support strategies

Talk openly: With them about their struggles and show validation.

Show empathy: towards your child's worries and distress.

Anticipate: Be emotionally and physically ready.

Keep calm during separation: Keep goodbyes short and sweet. If your child sees that you can stay cool, they are more likely to be calm, too.

Provide a consistent pattern for the day: Routines provide children with a sense of security and help to eliminate their fear of the unknown.

Follow through with promises: For your child to develop the confidence that they can handle separation, it's important you return at the time you promised.

Try not to give in: Reassure your child that they will be just fine setting consistent limits.

Support the child's participation in activities: Encourage your child to participate in healthy social and physical activities. They're great ways to ease anxiety and help your child develop friendships.

Praise your child's efforts: Use the smallest of accomplishments (going to bed without a fuss, a good report from school) as reason to give your child positive reinforcement.

Identify a safe place: Find a place at school where your child can go to reduce anxiety during stressful periods.

Distraction: Suggestions could be an activity from a calming box, colouring in, playing a game and reading a story.

Tokens: A strategy that is useful with children with separation anxiety is the use of a token. There is a token between the parent and child and the rules should be agreed upon by the child and parent. The token is given to the child at the beginning of the day and returned to the parent at the end of the day.

Special handshake or goodbye: Creates excitement, distraction and special connection.

Send notes for your child to read. You can place a note for your child in their lunch box or locker.

Anger

How many times in a day did you get angry?

"There's nothing wrong with anger provided you use it constructively." - Wayne Dyer.

"You will not be punished for your anger; you will be punished by your anger." — Buddha

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned." - Buddha.

"It is wise to direct your anger towards problems - not people; to focus your energies on answers - not excuses." - William Arthur Ward.

Triggers

Being told 'no'

Scared

Hungry

Losing

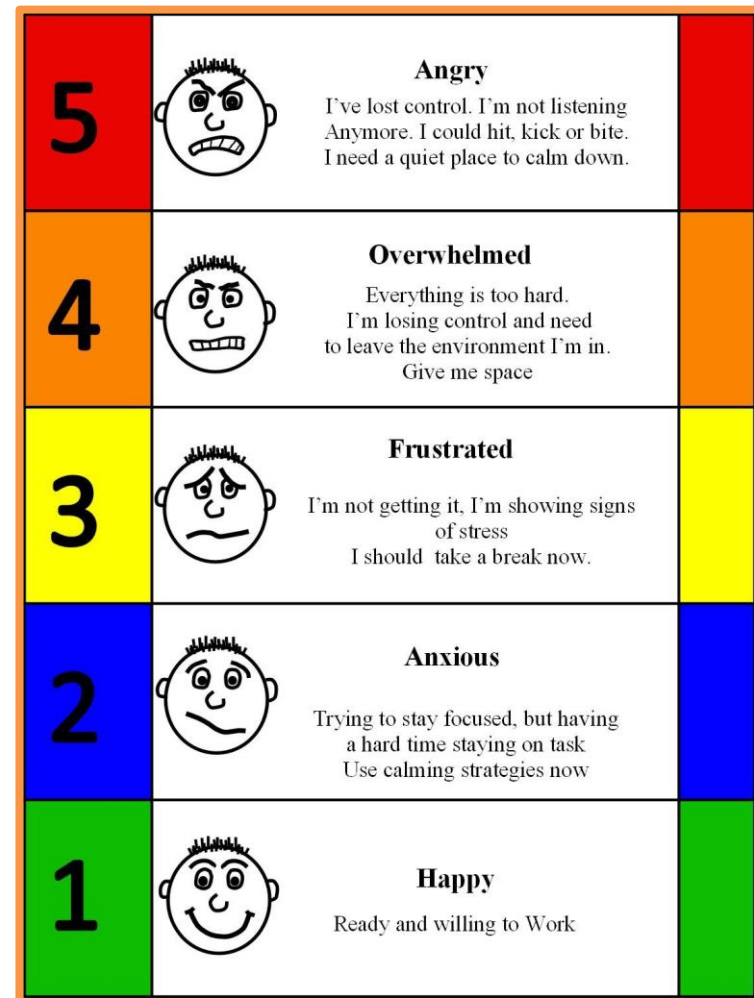
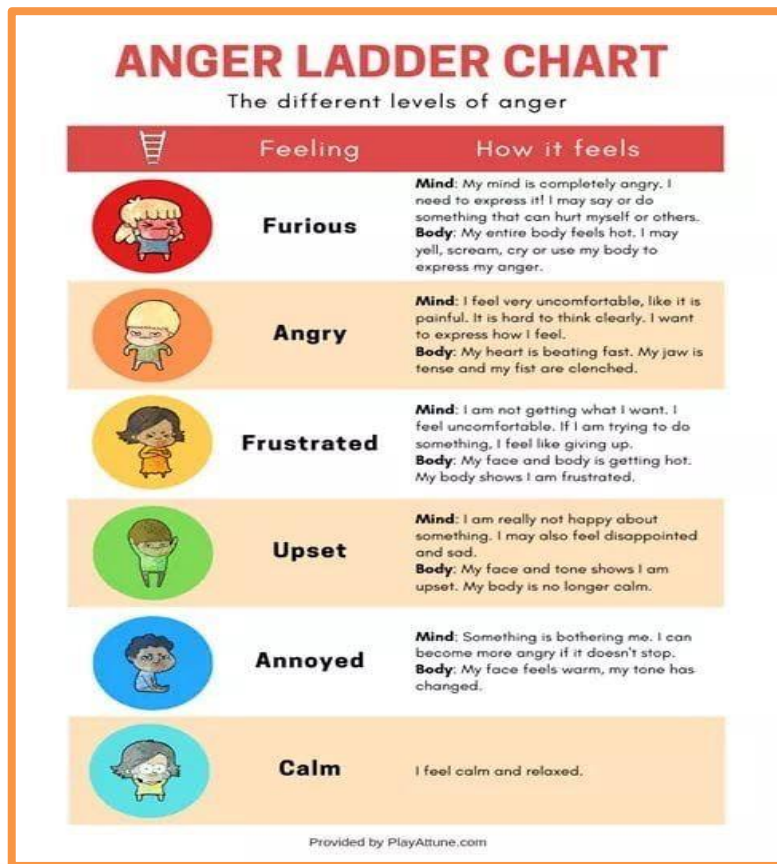
Being left out

Tired



ABC charts and trigger worksheets help children reflect on the anger and understand what causes the feeling we can help until we understand.....

5 point scale



Thermometers can also be used the principle is a visual way to communicate emotions.....

Communication strategies

- *Emotions cards*
- *Social stories*
- *Verbal prompts*
- *Role playing expressive language*
- *Encourage social interactions*
- *Role play social interactions*



I can be a good friend.



A Social Story
By Amy Murray



I can be a good friend to others.



I use kind words. I do not hurt my friends.



I can share my toys with a friend.



I can ask a friend to play with me.



When I am a good friend, I feel happy.

Building Resilience

- **Support** our children to maintain their independence skills- maybe give them small tasks. This also increases their self esteem.
- **Highlight** and celebrate your child's strengths.
- Our children may need us a little more- be present.
- **Remind** our children of the adversities they have already faced and got through. The first time they went to football or dance etc.
- **Show** our children different perspectives- there are always more than one way to look at a situation, keep the glass half full not half empty.
- **Team work-** you and your child are in it together.

Thank you for listening



*If You Have Any Concerns About Your Child
Please Talk To Your School, GP Or Go To The
CAMHS Website*

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2219/rebuild-and-recover-separation-anxiety-tips-and-guidance.pdf>