



# THE ESSENTIAL RESILIENCE & WELLBEING TOOLKIT FOR EARLY YEARS & YOUNGER CHILDREN

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Activities & Strategies for  
Professionals & Parents



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# Part 3

## Handouts for Parents, Carers & Professionals

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# Introduction

Part 3 is a resource bank of informative handouts that can be used by anyone working with young children, including parents, carers and professionals. The handouts are intended to give practical overviews of key areas, with a focus on what we can do to support children within these areas, or to support adults who support children within these areas.

Professionals may like to share these handouts with other adults, as appropriate, for example by talking the issues through with parents, or using the handouts to structure workshops or training for staff.

The handouts are not a sequential 'programme' and are best thought of as a resource to dip into and out of, when required. The following are included in this section and are all photocopiable for ease of use:

- 1 Understanding Worries & Anxiety
- 2 Attachment
- 3 Emotional Literacy
- 4 Stress Busters & Relaxation
- 5 Building Authentic Self-Esteem
- 6 Motivation Matters
- 7 Using Emotion Coaching
- 8 Managing Anger & Tantrums
- 9 Problem-Solving
- 10 Friendship
- 11 Building Strengths & Skills
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# Handout 1

## Understanding Worries & Anxiety

### What is worry?

Worrying is something that all of us do, every day – children, young people and adults. It is a normal part of life. The stress that we all typically experience in conjunction with or as a direct result of worrying is something that we all need to be able to manage. It is particularly important for us, as adults, to be able to do this in an effective way as we need to be able to model such behaviours to the children we care for. This handout is designed for adults to gain a greater understanding of what worry and anxiety are, and to help them problem-solve around some of their own worries.

Even though worrying and stress is a normal part of everyday life, too much stress makes young people become anxious, exhausted, tired and unable to function appropriately. All of us have an optimum stress level which allows us to function effectively and efficiently in our daily lives - what is vital is that we learn how to recognise our own stress levels and develop coping strategies when we are experiencing higher levels of stress. This will enable us to maintain a healthy balance of tension, growth, rest and self-nurturing. We need to be able to focus and build up reactions that reduce stress alongside understanding, acknowledging and coping effectively with the sources of our individual stresses.

Anxiety is a normal response to a perceived threat, and includes physical, emotional and mental responses such as an increase in adrenalin, feelings of worry and confusion, and thoughts about danger and catastrophic outcomes. Normal levels of anxiety can assist people to be more focused and motivated, and to solve problems more efficiently. However, **chronic or high levels of anxiety** can reduce a person's capacity to respond appropriately or effectively to stressful situations or even normal routine activities. For example a highly anxious person may experience constant physical feelings of panic and may seek to avoid anything that might trigger their anxiety (such as being alone, going to work or talking in front of a group).

Anxiety may be triggered in many different ways. Sources of anxiety may include (but are not limited to) fear of:

- ❖ Social situations
- ❖ Negative evaluation and rejection
- ❖ Performing in public
- ❖ A specific object or situation (e.g. storms or lightning/thunder, insects, blood)
- ❖ Separation from a parent/carer
- ❖ A parent/carer being harmed
- ❖ Harm to oneself
- ❖ Academic performance and exams
- ❖ Starting school or work
- ❖ The future (what will happen, how it might turn out)

Anxiety may manifest as a number of physical symptoms including muscle tension, shaking/ trembling and heart palpitations, sweating/ flushing or feeling very hot or cold amongst many others. In addition, children and young people experiencing anxiety may display a number of behavioural symptoms including withdrawing from friends and family, avoidance of particular situations and negative thoughts or pessimism.

When the anxiety starts to affect our general functioning, we may not just be feeling stressed - we may be suffering from an **anxiety disorder**. Anxiety disorders are considered serious mental health problems and are one of the most common types of mental health concerns for children and young people and adults. When the levels of anxiety are at this heightened level, it is clearly appropriate to obtain support via your GP.

## The Worry Cycle

We know that young children are not usually conscious of worrying and it is unhelpful to draw their attention to worry, or push them to manage it as an adult would. Our job as adults is to observe, listen and model resilience and emotion management. Part of this involves understanding our own worries and anxiety and managing our stress levels effectively.

Worry tends to manifest as a cavalcade of thoughts that come one after another, about events in the future or in the past. We begin with one worry and quickly build this into a series of worries.



This cycle can become difficult to disengage with unless we are able to challenge the initial worry and recognise that we have the means to change our thinking patterns.

Quite often *worry thoughts* start with things such as, 'If only I had ...', or 'I must remember to ...', or 'What if ...', and spiral on from there. An example might be the thought: 'What if I have left the front door unlocked? A burglar might break in! Then all my things might be stolen ... and then I'd have to go to the police ... it would be terrible!'

Sometimes worrying can help us, by making us do things such as checking that we have locked the front door or completed a report correctly. But sometimes worrying can become a real problem when it actually prevents us from functioning effectively in our daily lives.

## Worry weigh-up

If you answer 'yes' to the following questions, then worrying might be a problem for you.

- ❖ Do you spend a lot of your time worrying?
- ❖ Does worrying get you really upset and anxious?
- ❖ Does worrying stop you getting a good sleep at night?
- ❖ Does worrying stop you enjoying yourself and getting on with things during the day, or at work?
- ❖ Do you feel that your worrying is 'out of control', or that once you start you just cannot stop?
- ❖ Do you feel worrying has affected your health (e.g., given you stomach aches, headaches, or diarrhoea)?

## What is anxiety & how can I beat it?

Worrying about things can make you anxious. Anxiety is easy to notice if you are on the look out for it. However, many people suffer from anxiety without realising what it is.

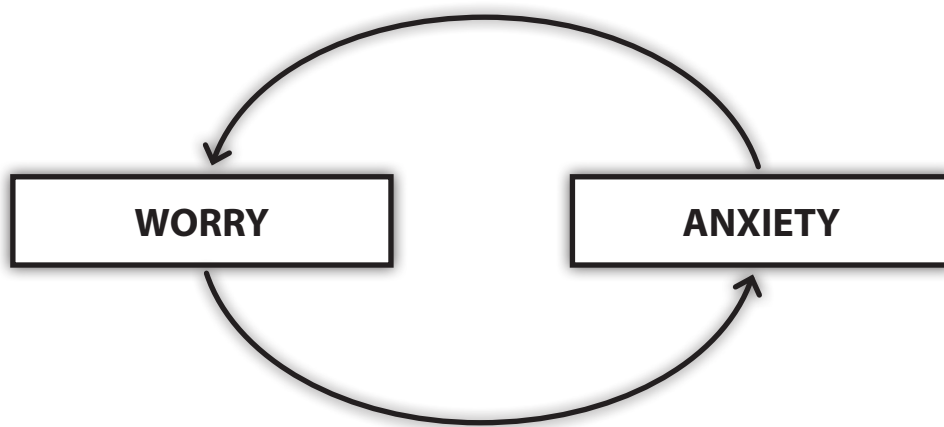
When you are anxious you may notice things such as:

- ❖ Heart rate speeding up, sweaty skin or going pale
- ❖ Feeling upset, on edge, angry, or irritable
- ❖ Feeling that something terrible is about to happen
- ❖ Throat or mouth dry

- ❖ Muscle aches or headaches
- ❖ Feeling tired, having little energy
- ❖ Poor digestion (e.g., stomach aches, bowel problems)
- ❖ Concentration problems (e.g., mind racing, inability to sleep)

Anxiety can make it more difficult to concentrate on work, to remember things, to get on with enjoying life. If you have a physical health condition or illness, it can also make this more difficult to cope with and even directly affect your health.

The more anxious you get, the more you worry and the more anxious you become! It can be a vicious circle.



This is obviously why it is essential that we develop our own range of key tools and strategies in order to manage worries more effectively. The idea is to ensure prevention so that smaller everyday worries do not escalate into more significant anxiety issues or disorders.

## Basic ideas to manage worries

Here are some helpful tips on how to make worrying less of a problem and how to reduce anxiety which you may wish to share with your child or make use of yourself. Some worrying and anxiety are a normal part of life, so they will not go away all together – but they should not take over your life.

### 1 Notice

Notice when you are worrying or feeling anxious! This is the first step in making things better. If you feel the signs of anxiety mentioned earlier, or you notice you are thinking thoughts such as those listed earlier, then take note of these. You can even keep a diary or visual record.



## 2 Stop!

When you notice you are worrying, say to yourself 'stop!', and then see if you can get your brain to think about something else, especially something nice, relaxing, or enjoyable. Try doing something to keep your brain occupied (such as reading, watching TV, doing a hobby, or playing a sport).

## 3 Worry time

Think about your day and find a time in it when it would be okay to worry – no more than 5 or 10 minutes is needed. This is your special 'worry time'.

When you find yourself worrying at a time when you have other things to do (such as at bedtime, or while you are trying to concentrate on something else), tell yourself to stop and put off the worries for later, at your worry time.

## 4 Self-talk

If you find yourself worrying about the same thing over and over (e.g., 'I'll start my new job or course and no one will like me'), write down for yourself the opposite, 'positive' thought (e.g., 'People will like me. I'm a nice person'). Then every time you notice yourself worrying the first thought, tell yourself the positive thought. You can even write it down on a small card and carry it with you, in your pocket, to remind yourself of it.

## 5 Problem-solving

This is something you can try by yourself, or with another person. Remember – a problem shared is a problem halved! If you can tell someone else that you trust what your problem is, they can often help you with solving it, or coping with it. Try the following logical, problem-solving steps:

### Step 1

If you find yourself worrying about a problem you are facing, write down what that problem is. Be specific – write down exactly what the problem is. 'I'm worried I won't cope', isn't specific, while 'I'm worried that I will forget people's names when I go to my new school', is specific.

### Step 2

Then brainstorm all the possible ways you can think of to sort this problem out – even the silliest ones! Write them all down as you think of them.



**Step 3**

Once you have a list of possible solutions, go through them one at a time. Write down the pros (what is good about that solution) and the cons (what is bad about that solution). Think about the consequences of each solution: 'What will happen if I do that?'

**Step 4**

When you have all the pros and cons, decide which solution you will choose. If you can, check with someone else you trust whether they think this is a good solution. Then go and do it!

**Step 5**

Once you have done what you have decided, take a new look at the problem. Is it sorted out? Has it changed? Is it still there? Go back to Step 1 and problem-solve again if you need to.

## 6 Relaxation

Relaxation can be a really helpful way of making worrying less of a problem, and reducing anxiety.

- ❖ Get away from the things that are worrying or upsetting you – even if it is just for a minute. Go somewhere quiet (even the bathroom!), or just look out of a window for a bit.
- ❖ Breathing. Spend a minute thinking about breathing. Breathe in and out regularly and not too deeply, or too little. Sometimes it can help to count in your head while you breathe (for example, breathe in for three and then out for three).
- ❖ Relax your muscles. Stretch out your muscles and then let them go floppy and relaxed. This is easier if you have somewhere comfortable to sit. Make sure you include all your muscles, even those in your face, forehead, back and stomach.

# Handout 2

## Attachment

A resilient child will generally have, or have had, some experience of a consistent, positive parent or carer. They will generally be securely attached and will usually have an 'internal model' of their own being: worthwhile, safe and capable.

Positive parenting and positive role models (responsive, available, meeting the child's needs) can help to promote a person's ability to develop positive/secure attachment behaviour right through to early adulthood. However, we must remind ourselves that we cannot be positive and perfect all of the time and that is normal!

This handout is about understanding attachment behaviour and reflecting on some ways we might best support children who show insecure attachment behaviour.

### An overview of the psychology of attachment

John Bowlby came up with attachment theory, which included some of the following ideas:

- ❖ Attachments are a form of unique bond that all children make with significant adults.
- ❖ Attachment is about developing a style of attachment that is adaptive and useful to you in your local context.
- ❖ Children do not form only one attachment. There appear to be primary and secondary attachment figures.
- ❖ Although the first three years of life are thought to be a key time in attachment, attachment is a life-long process.
- ❖ There are many types of attachment and individual differences in how people respond to the behaviour they experience from caregivers.
- ❖ Through the 'attachment' the child learns an internal working model of: how people tend to behave; how emotions can be regulated; how likely it is that they will be given responsive attention; how much they are on their own, or 'in it with others'.



## Golden rules of attachment

Securely attached children tend to be:

- ❖ better learners
- ❖ more able to form new attachments
- ❖ able to ask for help easily
- ❖ willing to share adults' attention

Insecurely attached children:

- ❖ often feel lost and unnoticed
- ❖ may set out to reinforce their internal model (e.g., naughty, shy)
- ❖ may provoke hostile reactions in teachers, which reinforce their feelings of insecurity

What do insecurely attached children need?

- ❖ reliable adults who have time to respond
- ❖ predictable interactions and routines (or changes explained clearly)
- ❖ adults who respond to their needs (at the appropriate developmental level)
- ❖ clear boundaries
- ❖ specific attachment figures
- ❖ people prepared to challenge their negative internal models through sensitive interaction

There are many children and young people that demonstrate 'insecure' attachment behaviour. 'Avoidant' or 'ambivalent' behaviours are included in this category of insecure attachment behaviours.

Please note we are not labelling a child as 'secure', 'insecure', 'avoidant', or 'ambivalent', just their behaviour or 'behavioural style'. There is also evidence that the plasticity of the brain means that our 'styles' or 'internal working models' can change.

## What is 'avoidant' attachment behaviour?

It is a type of insecure attachment behaviour linked to having had consistently unavailable care.

### Approach to school & structure

- ✦ apparent indifference to uncertainty in new situations

### Response to adults

- ✦ denial of need of support
- ✦ sensitivity to proximity of adult

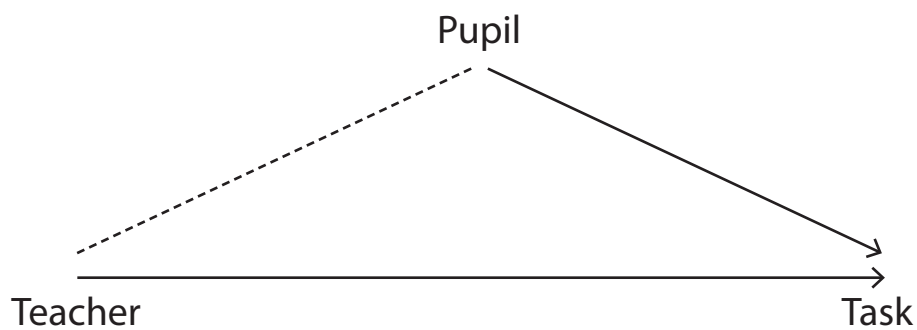
### Response to tasks

- ✦ seems to need to be autonomous and independent
- ✦ hostility towards the adult may be directed towards the task
- ✦ the task operates as an emotional safety barrier between the child and the adult

### Possible skills & difficulties

- ✦ limited use of creativity
- ✦ likely to be under-achieving
- ✦ limited use of language
- ✦ may be resilient

In the context of school, the relationship dynamic within the avoidant behaviour profile can be summarised by the learning triangle (below), in which the child avoids the relationship with the teacher and directs their focus towards the task.



**Figure 4** Learning triangle for avoidant attachment behaviour

There are interventions that may support the child's development:

- ❖ The relationship between the pupil and the adult can be made 'safe' by the presence of the task. Highly structured games with clear rules and outcomes can assist in overcoming resistance to offers of help.
- ❖ The presence of another child can moderate the intensity of the adult's proximity. Pairs or small groups may help a child to experience closer proximity to the adult, moderated by the presence of others.
- ❖ Using another older child or mentor to act as an intermediary can be helpful. This strategy can enable the child to get involved more and defuse any tensions arising from the adult/student interaction.
- ❖ The learning/play task is the starting point for a child who finds relationships challenging. A well-structured task that may be completed independently can reduce the perceived threat of 'not knowing' something and feeling unsupported.
- ❖ Differentiation of the task, which acknowledges the child's need to exercise some choice, demonstrates that the pupil is being thought about and held in mind.
- ❖ Verbal expression can sometimes be inhibited within this group of children, so think of non-verbal ways to involve them and interact with them (e.g., through drawing, puppets and play).

## What is 'ambivalent' (or anxious) attachment behaviour?

It is a type of insecure attachment behaviour linked to having had inconsistent care.

### Approach to school & structure

- ❖ high level of anxiety and uncertainty

### Response to adults

- ❖ a need to hold on to the attention of the teacher
- ❖ apparent dependence on the teacher in order to engage in learning
- ❖ expressed hostility to the teacher when frustrated



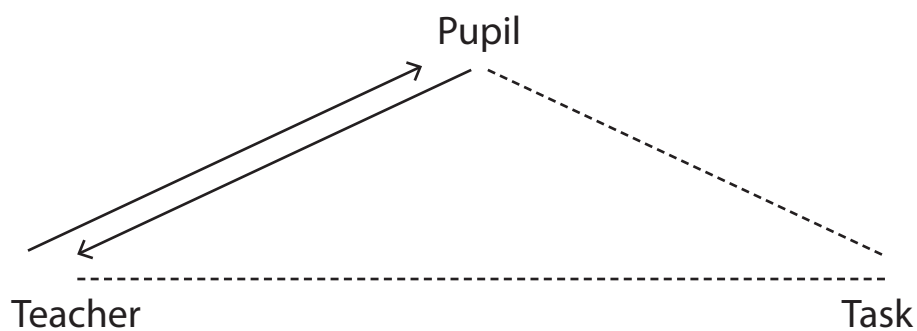
## Response to the task

- ✦ difficulties attempting the task if unsupported
- ✦ unable to focus on the task for fear of losing the adult's attention

## Skills & difficulties

- ✦ likely to be under-achieving
- ✦ language may well be developed, but not consistent with levels of achievement
- ✦ may show resilience

The learning triangle for this pattern (below) reflects the child and adult at the expense of the task: interpreted in terms of early relationships, it may demonstrate an unresolved conflict, which does not permit 'another' to intrude into the parent/child link. In the learning situation, the child can be preoccupied with the relationship with the teacher, at the expense of the task.



**Figure 5** Learning triangle for ambivalent attachment behaviour

There are interventions that may support the child's development:

- ✦ Differentiation of the task into small independent steps.
- ✦ Turn-taking to model the experience of two separate people working alongside each other.
- ✦ A timer can help moderate anxiety during short, timed, independent tasks.
- ✦ Board games provide separation and can also create opportunities to express hostility towards adults in a safe manner – with structure and rules.
- ✦ Holding a special (transitional) object can take the place of the adult for short periods: 'Please look after this for me for a while.'
- ✦ Making explicit comments across the classroom, or the use of eye contact, can be reassuring. They demonstrate that the adult is aware of the pupil and thinking about them.

- ❖ Children with this attachment style may have a capacity to be tuned into others that will enable them to predict and control others in order to reassure themselves. This can be experienced by others as very bossy and controlling. For some children this capacity can become an asset in the classroom when appropriately directed into being helpful to the class in ways other than caring for others, for example, taking responsibility for a *task* rather than people. The children can then experience themselves as involved with others, as well as functioning with some degree of independence.
- ❖ Small group work, which facilitates peer relationships and provides opportunities to explore experience through stories of imaginary journeys, enables the child to experience anxiety safely, find support from peers and experience having a 'mind of their own'.
- ❖ Planning beginnings, separations and endings at the beginning and the end of the day can be helpful, for example, a planned withdrawal of the parent or a brief time in the office before going into class.
- ❖ Planning and warnings of changes and class movements can ease separation anxiety being triggered when changes take place.
- ❖ Reliable consistent adult support is important. The presence of someone to go to on arrival into school or care at the beginning of, or during, the day can assist a child with separation anxiety.

## What is 'disorganised' attachment behaviour?

This is a rare attachment style linked to the attachment figure having been, or continuing to be, the subject of the child's fear.

### Approach to school & structure

- ❖ intense anxiety, which may be expressed as controlling and omnipotent behaviour

### Response to adults

- ❖ great difficulty experiencing trust in authority of, for example, the teacher, but may submit to the authority of the head of the school
- ❖ may be unable to accept being taught and/or unable to 'permit' the teacher to know more than they do



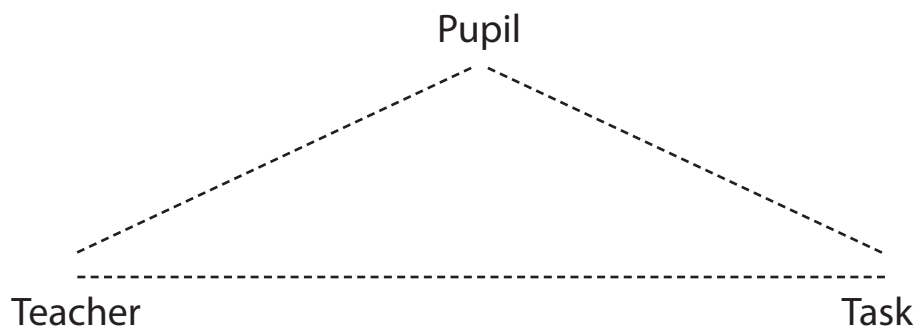
## Response to the task

- ✦ the task may seem like a challenge to their fears of incompetence, triggering overwhelming feelings of humiliation, and ultimately rejection of the task
- ✦ difficulty accepting 'not knowing'
- ✦ may appear to be omnipotent and know everything already

## Skills & difficulties

- ✦ May seem unimaginative and uncreative, and find conceptual thought difficult
- ✦ Likely to be under-achieving and possibly at a very immature stage of learning

The triangular model for this pattern (below) demonstrates the difficulties in engaging with adults and with the learning task, and has long term implications for future adult relationships and access in society. The fear of many who work with these children is that there may be long term implications for mental health and offending.



**Figure 6** Learning triangle for disorganised attachment behaviour

There are interventions that may support the child's development:

- ✦ Safety, reliability and predictability. The child's first experience of these may be to regularly attend a place (e.g., the school or a unit) where safety is assured and actively promoted by rules that focus on keeping people and things safe. School may be the first experience of a structured day with predictable activities and rituals.
- ✦ At the point of crisis (when fear is triggered) be calm, non-reactive and communicate some understanding. It is at this point that new pathways can begin to form, which provide alternative ways of responding other than fight-flight.
- ✦ Positive feedback can help to develop and reinforce more positive responses.

- ❖ Risk assessments are often imperative in order to protect adults as well as controlling reactivity for the child.
- ❖ Acknowledging the developmental stage rather than the chronological age is a useful starting point, since the child's learning may be at a primitive level. Repetitive tasks can be soothing to highly charged states, for example: colouring, sequencing objects/pictures, copying. Tasks should be obviously 'doable' and not need interpreting.
- ❖ It may be possible to explore feelings and situations without reference to the self, for example: via stories, role-play, puppets, drawing and play.
- ❖ In unpredictable situations that result in a sudden eruption of violence or distress, stepping back and engaging a 'safety routine', in which confrontation is avoided, is a good first step. For younger children this could be the removal to a safe, quiet and unstimulating place and or being given a box of routine activities.

# Handout 3

## Emotional Literacy

### What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy (often referred to as 'emotional intelligence') is our ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express our emotions. It is also the ability to recognise the emotions of others and to respond to them appropriately. Emotional literacy is a key component of both self-awareness and social awareness.

Emotional literacy is a key skill which encompasses:

- ❖ Self-awareness: being able to identify and recognise your emotions
- ❖ Self-management: being able to exert self-control and manage stress and challenge
- ❖ Social awareness: being aware of others' needs and having empathy for others
- ❖ Relationship skills: being able to communicate and relate well with others
- ❖ Responsible decision-making: being able to problem-solve and accept responsibility

### How can we help children develop emotional literacy?

We need to provide children with naturalistic and fun opportunities to:

- ❖ Learn to recognise and describe their emotions
- ❖ Learn to recognise and describe others' emotions
- ❖ Discuss and practise how to express their emotions appropriately
- ❖ Think about the consequences of expressing emotions inappropriately
- ❖ Reflect on their own emotional responses to a variety of situations
- ❖ Learn new ways to manage and regulate their emotions
- ❖ Practise effective communication skills and learn to moderate emotional responses when expressing needs, wants and opinions

## Two emotional literacy activities for children

Note: ensure you match the developmental level of the child to the activity. Remember that the main way we help children develop emotional literacy is by modelling it ourselves.

### Positive & negative emotions

- ❖ Ask the child to draw the outline of a body and write some 'feelings' words, or draw some 'feelings' pictures (positive and negative) around the outside.
- ❖ Encourage the child to talk about where in their body they might feel the different emotions and show this on the drawing, for example: 'nervous' could be sweaty palms; 'excited/afraid' could be tension in the tummy; 'pride' could be a big smile. This can help your child to recognise their stress signals and encourage them to talk with you about these.

### A rollercoaster of emotions

- ❖ In the course of a day we feel a range of emotions. The metaphor of the rollercoaster can be used to help children understand emotional intensity and the way experiences can lead to, or trigger positive and negative emotions.
- ❖ Draw a 'rollercoaster diagram' that shows the high and low points of a day. This helps children recognise events and situations that lead to varying emotional responses.
- ❖ Draw the rollercoaster that represents your own day and share it with the child, and then encourage them to try drawing one of their own.

# Handout 4

## Stress Busters & Relaxation

We know that stress and Anxiety disorders are an increasing problem for our children and young people and that we do need to therefore work more at a preventative level to support the development of key skills and strategies to manage such issues. Effective stress management and specifically using relaxation strategies can be very effective for many young children.

There are also some common sense ways in which you can assist children and young people to manage anxiety more effectively:

- ❖ **Support them to challenge underlying beliefs and thoughts** – Negative and irrational beliefs and thoughts such as, ‘If I don’t look perfect, no one will like me’, or ‘I can’t cope with difficult or scary situations’, are significant factors in generating anxiety. Model and communicate effective ways to question and challenge anxiety provoking thoughts and beliefs.
- ❖ **Support them to accept uncertainty** – Uncertainty is one thing that people worry about a lot because of the potential for negative outcomes. As it is impossible to completely eliminate uncertainty, you can assist children and young people to be more accepting of uncertainty and ambiguity.
- ❖ **Be a role model** – If you can manage your own anxiety, young people will see that it can be managed and incorporate your strategies into their own behaviours. Teaching parents to manage their own anxiety has been shown to be helpful in reducing their children’s anxiety.
- ❖ **Be patient** – Sometimes the behaviours of anxious children and teens may seem unreasonable to others. It is important to remember that an anxious young person who cries or avoids situations is, in fact, responding instinctively to a perceived threat. Changing avoidant behaviours takes time and persistence.
- ❖ **Balance reassurance with new ideas** – When a child comes to you with something they are worried about, listen and understand what is happening. Explore with them what they could do to manage their fears.
- ❖ **Show children and young people some simple relaxation techniques** – Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and meditation can be helpful as a way of learning how to better manage physical anxiety symptoms. Generally these techniques are only effective if practiced consistently over several weeks



- ❖ **Encourage plenty of physical exercise and appropriate sleep** – When people are well-rested and relaxed, they will be in a better mental state to handle fears or worries.
- ❖ **Moderate the consumption of caffeine and high sugar products** – Caffeine products including cola and energy drinks increase levels of anxiety as they cause energy levels to spike and then crash. This leaves a person feeling drained and less able to deal with negative thoughts.
- ❖ **Make time for things that the child enjoys and finds relaxing** – These could be simple things like playing or listening to music, reading books or going for walks
- ❖ **Help them to face the things or situations they fear** – Learning to face their fears and reduce avoidance of feared objects and situations, is one of the most challenging parts of overcoming anxiety. Facing fears usually works best if it is undertaken gradually, a step at a time.
- ❖ **Encourage help-seeking when needed** – Make sure that children and young people know there are people who can help if they find that they can't handle a problem on their own. Knowing that they can call on others for support if needed will make them feel less anxious about what might happen in the future

## The importance of relaxation?

We all know that being relaxed is the opposite of being anxious. It is easy to know what the difference is if you notice what is going on inside your body and your mind at different times. However, this is often something that children need to be taught and shown. Using the two lists below can be helpful when you are supporting a child to initially distinguish between the 2 states. One shows what it can feel like to be anxious, while the other shows what it can feel like to be relaxed.

Anxious	Relaxed
Cross, jumpy	Happy, calm
Heart beating fast	Heart beating slowly
Breathing fast	Breathing slow and easy
Skin pale or sweaty	Skin pink, not sweaty
Muscles trembling	Muscles relaxed
Stomach or headaches	No stomach or headaches
Thoughts racing	Thoughts normal
Can't concentrate	Can concentrate
Mind full of worries	Mind able to do what you want it to

You can explain to the child that everyone feels anxious some of the time and relaxed at other times. If you were just about to take an exam, you would probably feel anxious. If you were getting ready to fall asleep, you'd probably feel relaxed. No one is relaxed all the time and usually there is a balance between the two. It is important to point out that sometimes that balance is wrong and you can find that you spend a lot of time feeling anxious and not enough time feeling relaxed.

If this balance is not right then naturally we will become unhappy and anxious. For a child this may result in them feeling tired, cross, sad, or as if they are unable to concentrate properly during the day. They may also experience bad dreams, or make it difficult in sleeping. Sometimes it can give them headaches, stomach aches, or bowel problems. Often other people around them notice because the person may not seem their normal self (e.g., they may argue a lot, get into fights, or just seem unhappy).

Teaching a child basic relaxation and Mindfulness strategies can be very effective in decreasing the 'wrong' balance and helping the child to become more regulated and happier. You can try out a range of strategies until you find those that best work for the individual child.

## Exercise 1: Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about getting into a 'mind-ful state'. One of the simplest ways to do this is to simply sit down on a chair, close your eyes and begin to focus on your breathing. As you sit still, relaxed but also alert, you can then direct your attention to the sensation of each inhalation and exhalation, and also become aware of the feeling of air as it enters and then leaves your mouth or nostrils.

It is whilst doing this that other thoughts will enter into your mind. The idea is to become aware of such intrusions, noting each of these in turn without judgement and then simply letting them pass.

Mindfulness training has at least five broad beneficial effects:

- ❖ Increased sensory awareness
- ❖ Greater cognitive control
- ❖ Enhanced regulation of emotions
- ❖ Acceptance of transient thoughts and feelings
- ❖ The capacity to regulate attention



Some other mindfulness exercises to try:

- ❖ Close your eyes. Breathe in slowly through the nose as if you are smelling a lovely flower. Breathe out slowly through the mouth as if you are blowing out a candle flame.
- ❖ Take a blank page and create an image of your favourite or most special place. Think about somewhere that you would choose to go to, to relax. This place can be imaginary or real, inside or outside. Make sure you fill your special place with all the things you would like to help you relax.
- ❖ Stretch your arms over your head, reaching for the sky; shrug your shoulders tight into your neck and curl up into a ball, as if you are a tortoise hiding in its shell; wrinkle your nose as if you are trying to get a bug off your nose; clench your jaw and then release; imagine it has been raining and you are standing barefoot in mud, then visualise yourself squishing your toes in the mud – wriggle your toes about in your shoes.
- ❖ Be aware of one pleasant event or occurrence each day while it is happening.
- ❖ Keep a gratitude or pleasant events diary.

## Effective coping strategies & calming self-talk

What are coping strategies?

- ❖ Coping strategies are the thoughts, feelings and actions that we use to help deal with the challenges, stresses and demands we all face.
- ❖ They include the things we do to help us to calm down, cheer up, confront fears, deal with challenges, work at a problem, or to continue to work hard at something even when we do not feel like it.
- ❖ Some coping strategies are more productive than others, so we need to be able to use a range of effective coping strategies to help us deal well with life and its challenges.
- ❖ Children and young people tend to learn how to cope by copying the strategies that they see others use. They can also learn new strategies when provided with activities that assist them to reflect on what works and to try new techniques.
- ❖ Parents can help by modelling healthy coping strategies, and by talking with children and young people about the kinds of strategies they can use in different sorts of situations.





## Some coping strategies work better than others

Research highlights that while some coping strategies are helpful and effective, others are ineffective or even harmful.

Ineffective Coping Strategies	Effective Coping Strategies
(Try to <i>minimise and model</i> use of these):	(Try to <i>maximise and model</i> use of these):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Worry</li> <li>❖ Self-blame</li> <li>❖ Keep things to self</li> <li>❖ Tension reduction (via alcohol, acting out, displays of anger and distress)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Work hard</li> <li>❖ Focus on solving the problem</li> <li>❖ Seek relaxing diversions</li> <li>❖ Seek physical recreation</li> </ul>

## Why model self-calming & coping strategies?

To help children start to:

- ❖ Identify emotions and feelings related to stress
- ❖ Recognise common stressors
- ❖ Reflect on personal stressors and coping behaviours
- ❖ Identify positive and negative coping strategies
- ❖ Learn about different coping strategies
- ❖ Practise a variety of positive strategies
- ❖ Decide which strategies to apply at different times and in different situations

## What is self-talk?

Self-talk is the voice inside our heads that tells us how we are doing. There are two main types of self-talk:

- 1 Negative self-talk includes thinking the worst and blaming oneself, exaggerating and focusing on what is wrong and ignoring what is right. It is pessimistic thinking.

- 2 Positive self-talk includes being more realistic in thinking about the circumstances and one's own effort, being grateful for the positives, recognising personal strengths and being realistic about the level of responsibility. It is optimistic thinking.

Use of positive self-talk is associated with greater persistence in the face of challenge, whereas negative self-talk is associated with higher levels of distress, depression and anxiety. Those who use positive self-talk are more likely to succeed. Positive self-talk can be learnt or strengthened through practice.

## Activities for parents and carers

### Positive coping profiles

Draw up your own 'Positive Coping Profile'. Try to identify 20 positive coping strategies you use, with at least one strategy from each of the following five categories:

- 1 Energetic activity
- 2 Self-calming activity
- 3 Social activity
- 4 Shifting attention activity
- 5 Getting organised activity

Model some of your favourite coping strategies with the child.

### Identifying self-talk

- ◆ Imagine your child is about to start their first day at infant or primary school.
- ◆ What might their positive and negative self-talk be?
- ◆ What could they say to themselves to counter the negative self-talk?



## Managing stress

Thinking about our own sources of stress and coping strategies can help us to role-model coping for our children and young people:

- ❖ Make a list of some of the stresses and challenges you face (include stresses or challenges in the physical environment, relationships, events, fears, anxieties or thoughts that affect how you feel either physically or emotionally).
- ❖ Talk with a friend about how these stressors might be affected by time, or how they might change over time.
- ❖ Discuss which positive coping strategies help you to deal with one or two of these stressors.
- ❖ Brainstorm some additional coping strategies. Review the list and see if some are worth a try.

# Handout 5

## Building Authentic Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is something that is learnt – children are not born with negative thoughts about themselves, they are learnt through childhood experiences.

Parents have an important part to play in fostering self-esteem in their children, and other adults and carers can also make a big impact on how children and young people view themselves.

### Ways to encourage authentic self-esteem

- ❖ Use praise, not only when children have done well, but also when they have tried hard, and when they need support to try again. Being told that we are good at something makes us believe that we are, and encourages us to have another go. Even when something has not gone so well, being told that we tried hard, and finding small points that did go well can help in developing the resilience to cope with failure. We need a lot of praise before we can take in criticism without damaging our self-esteem.
- ❖ Give them lots of experiences. Having the chance to do lots of different things means children can learn what they are good at and what they enjoy, which helps to improve their self-esteem and develop an identity. Watching people play music on TV is nothing in comparison to watching a live band. By allowing children to have as many experiences as possible, we are enabling them to be more informed about the world, which helps to improve self-esteem by creating the confidence to try new things. Schools have an important part to play in this, through after school clubs, school trips and visiting performers and artists.
- ❖ Find the child's strengths. If a child can be helped to find their strengths, it can make a difference to how they view school, friends and themselves. The Strengths Cards and Skills Cards used in Activity 30 (Worksheets 26 & 28) can be used for this: think about putting up displays and lists of strengths and skills somewhere where the child and other people can see them. Update the lists when necessary.
- ❖ Help children to achieve. Sit down with children to discuss/draw/play around their plans and goals for the future. Try to make the goals specific and make sure they are the child's goals, not yours! Do not be afraid to add or remove things from the list, or to change the goals. We do not want children to feel as if they have to succeed or fail in achieving their goals, but rather encourage the idea that they have control over their own lives.

- ❖ Think about the language you use. The language you use can affect how children feel about themselves. Rather than simply saying, 'You're really good', or, 'You're clever', be specific, for example: 'You can draw dogs really well'; or 'You're really good at riding a bike.' Do not use generalisations, such as, 'You never eat all your dinner', or, 'Your work is always messy'. These are rarely true and do not make children feel empowered to change. Try to be realistic in the expectations you have of children, saying things like, 'How would you feel if ...', since children often do not know how they would feel. Do not use comparisons, such as, 'All your friends manage to get to school on time, why can't you?' Criticise the behaviour, not the child, for instance, 'I didn't like what you did', rather than, 'You're a naughty boy.' Try to put yourself on the child's side: 'We've got a problem here. What can we do?' This makes the child feel supported in changing their behaviour.



# Handout 6

## Motivation Matters

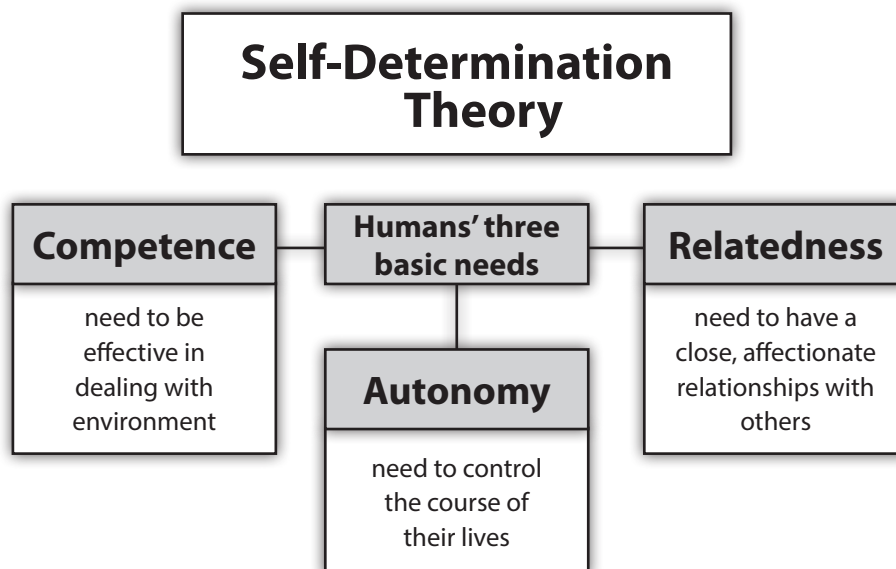
This handout is about working with children's motivation. A key distinction is between internal motivation (rewards come from inside you, e.g., you feel good) and external motivation (rewards come from outside you, e.g., money, a sticker). Internal motivation has been linked to good outcomes. Thus, as adults it is important to think about ways to help children to develop their intrinsic motivation, rather than just rewarding them when they do something that impresses us.

One key element of this is helping children to believe that they have some control over the world: that they can become 'self-determined' (motivated and independent).

Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002) provides a framework to help us understand how to do this. It is a theory of motivation that emphasises three 'innate psychological needs' that must be met for a person to be 'self-determined':

- 1 Competence/Mastery: feeling you can do things;
- 2 Relatedness: feeling connected to others;
- 3 Autonomy: feeling in control of what happens to you.

Helping children meet these needs, or develop these skills is an important adult care-giving role.



**Figure 7** Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Ways we can help children develop internal motivation and self-determination:

- ❖ Model 'self-rewarding' behaviour, for example: 'It felt great when I did that!'
- ❖ Provide children with a range of opportunities to succeed.
- ❖ Help children notice when something they do makes a positive difference to someone or something.
- ❖ Build choice into activities.
- ❖ Ask for children's views and listen to their side of a story.
- ❖ When giving an external reward, try to give it for the process (the journey) of working towards an outcome, rather than the outcome itself.
- ❖ Give rewards after an achievement, rather than telling the child, 'If you achieve X, then I will reward you with Y.'
- ❖ Help children to notice and communicate what they are good at.
- ❖ Help children to notice when other people show independence, intrinsic motivation and self-determination.
- ❖ Help children notice the important people in their lives.
- ❖ Allow children to take some risks and support them to notice that they can cope with them.



# Handout 7

## Using Emotion Coaching

### What is emotion coaching?

Emotion coaching is helping children understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them. In the simplest terms, we can coach our children about emotions by comforting, listening and understanding their thoughts and feelings, and helping them understand themselves. As we do this, our children will feel loved, supported, respected and valued. With this emotionally supportive foundation, the adult will be much more successful at setting limits and problem solving.

### Learning how to emotion coach

While emotion coaching may seem complicated at first, as we practise we find that it becomes second nature.

#### Step 1

Understand how *you* deal with feelings.

#### Step 2

Believe that your child's negative emotions are an opportunity for closeness and teaching.

#### Step 3

Listen with empathy and understanding, and then validate your child's feelings. Try to be an empathetic listener (Gottman *et al.*, 1996): use your eyes to identify physical evidence of your child's emotions; use your ears to hear the underlying messages behind what a child is saying; use your imagination to put yourself in the child's shoes; and use your words to reflect back what you hear, see and imagine in a soothing, non-judgmental way.

#### Step 4

Label your child's emotions. Keep in mind that it is easy to fall into the trap of telling your child how they *ought* to feel instead of *what* they are feeling!



**Step 5**

Set limits, while exploring possible solutions to the problem that caused the negative emotion.

John Gottman (1996) describes several parts to this step:

- 1 Set limits. Even though it is important to validate the child's feelings, we do not have to validate their actions. Once we set a limit on inappropriate behaviour and its consequences, we can follow through and be consistent.
- 2 Identify goals. Simply ask the child what they were trying to accomplish.
- 3 Think of possible solutions with the child.
- 4 Evaluate the proposed solutions together.
- 5 Help the child choose a solution.

# Handout 8

## Managing Anger & Tantrums

Young people – in fact, all human beings – need to be able to manage their anger effectively. The goal is not to repress or suppress anger as it is an entirely natural feeling with evident evolutionary and adaptive significance, but rather to express it effectively. When faced with anger we have two options available to us:

- ❖ Ineffective expression: irrational or hostile expressions of anger, such as violence
- ❖ Effective expression: to learn from past experiences and allow others to have their point of view

Clearly the main objective of any kind of intervention for children and young people who have difficulties in managing their anger is to encourage their ability to learn through self-reflection and experience, build their self-esteem and confidence levels so that they can allow others to have their point of view and respect and tolerate differences. The significant long-term effects of problem anger need to be discussed also including the detrimental effects on physical and mental health; problems in family life and friendships/relationships; difficulties in achieving and being successful in a school or learning context; and problems with the law, for example when young people 'lose it' and engage in aggression and violence towards others. Individuals struggling with anger tend to employ one of the following strategies:

- ❖ Displacement: Blaming another person or object for their negative feelings
- ❖ Repression: Containing thoughts in the subconscious
- ❖ Suppression: Hiding emotion for fear of disapproval of others

How an individual experiences anger will depend on the following:

- ❖ Learned response from parents
- ❖ Belief systems i.e. our thoughts and understanding of situations and ourselves
- ❖ Unconscious motivators such as fears, for example separation
- ❖ Individual differences i.e. genetic or biological differences

## Building resilience to manage anger

A resilient person who feels worried or under pressure will tend towards problem-solving behaviour, rather than avoidant or aggressive behaviour. In the early years children are learning this resilience, including how to manage feelings, especially anger. It is our role as adults to help them extend this resilience and begin managing their emotions with increasing independence.

However, it is important to remember that angry outbursts and tantrums are developmentally normal during the early years. Reasons for this include: impulsivity; developing communication skills; developing personalities. Our role is to understand the child's developmental level and thus appropriately support the development of their communication skills and emotion-regulation skills. This handout contains a few ideas regarding how to do this.

## Strategies for supporting the development of emotion regulation & communication skills

- ❖ Reflect on and name your feelings often and model problem-solving behaviour and emotion regulation, for example: 'I feel happy because ...'; 'I am confused.' Think about how you communicate these emotions, using your face, body language and tone of voice.
- ❖ Be attentive to and name the feelings of the child, checking your understanding with them, for example: 'I think you might feel ...?'; 'You are worried about the dog?'
- ❖ To develop vocabulary (including emotional vocabulary) read to and with children when you can.
- ❖ Notice distractions that work to move the child on from their tantrum.
- ❖ Use a calm voice even when you do not feel calm!
- ❖ Consider what the child's behaviour is communicating. Bear in mind that anger is often a secondary emotion, resulting from other emotions, for example, frustration. When we do not have the language to communicate, we use behaviour. Here are a few ideas to help you investigate the reasons behind children's behaviour:
  - Use an ABCC chart. This is a big table with columns for A (Antecedents: what came just before the behaviour); B (Behaviour); C (Consequences: what happened just after the behaviour); and C (Communication: what might the child have been communicating).
  - Consider common reasons for 'difficult' behaviour: a desire to obtain access to certain things, situations or people; an attempt to seek social contact; an attempt to escape; overstimulation.

- Hypothesise. Once you have a hypothesis as to what the behaviour might be communicating, try it out by, for example, immediately supplying the desired object.

## Some key Anger Management Strategies

You may wish to also make use of some of the most useful and commonly used strategies with children and young people as follows:

### The traffic light system

This presents children with a means of identifying, analysing and subsequently deescalating strong feelings. It is a clear visual image of how strong feelings can be managed as follows:

- ❖ The red light indicates the stop and think stage in which the pupils identify the problem - what is the problem? How do I feel?
- ❖ The amber light represents the wait and plan stage – what should I do? Who can help me? What are the consequences?
- ❖ The green light represents the go stage – try your plan, go for it, reflect, evaluate.

Children people can make use of this traffic light system on a regular basis and evaluate how useful or otherwise. The traffic light strategy can be used as a visual reminder in the form of a book mark and presented in poster form in a range of contexts around the home or school.

### Change your thinking

Once children know what their triggers to anger are they can then begin to change how they think about them by creating a new script. It is useful to present opportunities for triggers to be identified and for children to then identify what they think and do as a result of these triggers. In true solution-focused fashion they can then proceed to think and articulate what they could do differently, how they could think differently, how they could respond differently in the future.

### Developing a script

Children can also develop their own personal calming down script in order to diffuse a situation when they find themselves becoming angry. This can be written down onto a small card and kept somewhere safe.



## Using 'I' messages

Children can formulate an 'I' message which can replace negative responses or statements. For example, if someone is attempting to pick a fight with them or if someone is doing something that is beginning to make them angry they can rehearse an 'I' statement such as "I would like you to stop that now because you are making me feel angry" or "I don't like what you are doing please stop it" etc.

## Using exercise

Running out your anger or engaging in some form of exercise is particularly helpful as it produces the feel good chemical endorphin alongside having a further positive pay off in terms of keeping you fit and reasonably well.

## Using the tension scale

Children can imagine a tension scale from 0-10 (10 being the most upset or angry that they could feel and 0 being the state when physiologically they are back to normal). They can then proceed through a series of steps: 1) I am upset because 2) I am at point ... on the scale 3) to get down to point... I need to ..... 4) to get down to point 0 I need to ..... 5) when I am on 0 I will feel ....

## Using a relaxation script

Children can be provided with an age appropriate relaxation script which they can practise on a regular basis. Tensing and releasing muscles in each part of their body in turn. This can either be read aloud to them or they can commit the script to memory. This can be something they use prior to entering a more stressful situation or subsequent to experiencing a real pressure on their ability to cope and manage their behaviours and angry feelings/responses effectively.

## Use of distraction

Adults in a situation can often help a child by distracting them to another activity if they can see that they are becoming angry or stressed by a situation or event. They can also make use of distraction for themselves recognising the trigger to anger and immediately distracting themselves from the situation by engaging in a more positive activity.

## Use of relocation or time out

Very often when things get really stressful children may wish to take time out. In the school context, children can be provided with time out cards or some other means of indicating to the member of staff that they need to take some time to themselves in order to calm down. For younger children, this time out would obviously need to be supervised.

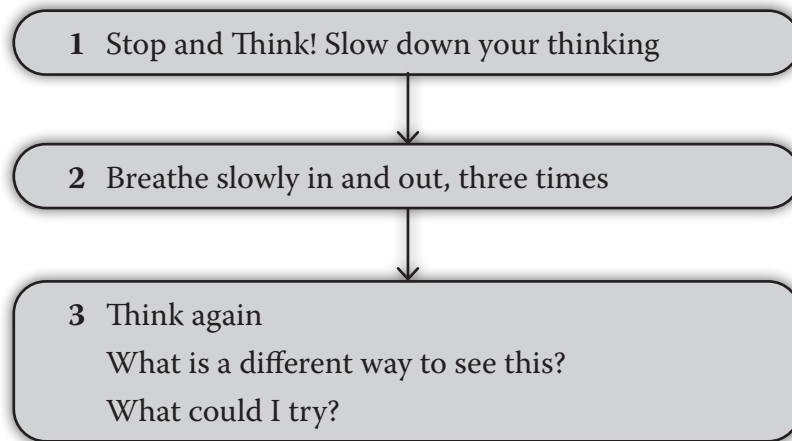
As an introduction to this area, the book *A Volcano in My Tummy* (Whitehouse & Pudney, 1998) is recommended and is a very useful resource to use with children experiencing anger issues.

# Handout 9

## Problem-Solving

This is a useful skill for adults and children alike. By modelling it ourselves and praising it when we notice it in children, we help children develop these skills.

A framework to keep in mind:



A few tips to encourage problem solving in children:

- ❖ Notice your thoughts and model noticing your thoughts, for example: 'I think that will work'; 'I wonder what will happen if I try it that way ...'
- ❖ Praise good thinking and problem-solving even if the child does not get a good result at the end or gets stuck.
- ❖ Play problem-solving and thinking games.
- ❖ Admit to getting it wrong and being okay about that!
- ❖ Notice good problem-solving in others (even if the end result is not perfect) and comment on it.
- ❖ Use puppets, rhymes, TV shows, and so on, to draw attention to problem-solving skills.
- ❖ Read stories together and discuss situations in which problem-solving occurs during the narrative.

# Handout 10

## Friendship

Humans are primed for social interaction and it is a key component of development. From about two months of age babies react differently to a child their own age compared to an adult. By 18 months they show preferences regarding peers they wish to play with. At 2- to 3-years-old most children imitate others and notice when others imitate them. Social hierarchies are developing and children are starting to develop reciprocal peer friendships.

It is through these social interactions that children learn vital emotional literacy skills such as turn-taking, use of language, conflict resolution, listening and cooperation. Our job as adults is to provide social opportunities and social support. We should also try to model good social interaction skills ourselves, such as listening to others, using social greetings, taking turns in conversation.

### Tips for supporting friendship skills

- ❖ Try to provide access to a range of peers and situations.
- ❖ Plan in structured activities as well as unstructured time. Children who find social interaction difficult often respond better to more structured games and play, for example, building club, or 'sing and rhyme'.
- ❖ Consider ways to encourage cooperation, communication and teamwork, for example, group challenges, or reward systems for the group rather than just the individual.
- ❖ Think about different roles that children play when interacting (e.g., observer, leader, listener, planner) and try to provide opportunities for them to develop different roles.
- ❖ Try subtly to monitor peer interactions rather than getting too involved (depending on the needs and context of the child and situation).
- ❖ Offer praise when children show good social interaction skills, for example: sharing, listening and not interrupting.



- ❖ Observe children's social interaction skills to identify strengths and weaknesses and try to extend their skills in areas that they are finding challenging. One way to do this is via small groups or pair-work focused on developing key emotional literacy skills. It should be fun! Building, play, music, games and stories are a few ways to make it fun. Target skills could include: taking turns, saying hello, saying goodbye, listening, saying sorry, being kind, asking for help.
- ❖ Short, adult-monitored, activity-based playdates with structure (e.g., cooking activity, building activity, snack time, clear up time) can help children struggling in this area to grow their skills.
- ❖ Stories can be used to highlight key ideas about friendship, for example, sharing.



# Handout 11

## Building Strengths & Skills

Provide many different kinds of opportunity and encourage children to experience a wide variety of activities. Notice what children seem to enjoy and are interested in.

- ❖ Notice things that seem to feel good for the child and try to ensure that they are plentiful in the child's life, for example: water play, bath time, running, stories, dim lights, being with peers, animals, helping, and so on.
- ❖ If you can, include a short (e.g., 10 minutes) block of play entirely directed by the child each day. Have a box of toys just for this purpose and allow the child to lead, the adult copying the child and joining in. You could mark the start and end of the session with a bell or similar as you get out the box.
- ❖ Try some of the activities in Part 2 of this book.
- ❖ Try to find time each day to listen to, talk with, read with, and play with the child, even if it is only for short periods. Notice and support the child's preferred play.
- ❖ Give opportunities for a variety of play, including messy play, outdoor play, construction, imaginary play.
- ❖ Try to build in plenty of opportunities for independent, undirected play and praise independence, even if only tiny hints of it!

# Handout 12

## Offering Choices

Providing children with opportunities to choose activities and exercise their preferences can be important in developing their self-esteem and independence. Equally, we have a role as adults to help children develop an understanding of consequences, and this is best gained through real experience of the consequence of their choices. In time we link consequences to behavioural choices. However, remember that young children are seldom making real 'choices' with regard to their behaviour, as they lack the executive function skills reliably to do so.

### Ideas for offering choice

- ❖ As a general rule, limit choices when children are under 5-years-old. Most young children will struggle with a choice of over two options. A simple A or B choice is often the most helpful.
- ❖ If you (and they) are feeling robust, give some choices between two desired things, to help children cope with not getting everything they want; for example, ice cream or chocolate.
- ❖ It can also be helpful to give a choice when you would like a child to transition to a new activity.
- ❖ Praise children for exercising choice and for showing flexibility.
- ❖ Use visual methods and card sorts to support children to show their preferences and needs.
- ❖ Pick your battles: try to say 'yes' when children ask you if they can do something (unless there is a good reason not to), so that they learn that they have agency and that asking (rather than just doing!) is a good thing.
- ❖ Praise them when they accept a 'no' from you.
- ❖ Play some choice games, for example, closing the eyes and choosing something from a 'choice' bag.
- ❖ Try using 'First – Then' (or 'Now – Next'). The 'First' option is that desired by the adult (e.g., put your cars in the box). The 'Then' option is a reward or choice of rewards (e.g., tablet time, or 'choosing' time).
- ❖ Use visual supports when offering choices, for example: photographs, cards, or drawings.
- ❖ Make sure children get plenty of opportunities to engage in self-directed chosen play.



# Handout 13

## Using Positive Language

How we talk to children and the language we model to them (e.g., when talking to another adult or child) is important to children's communication development and wellbeing. What we say matters!

This handout contains a few ideas to provide language and language-building opportunities for children. Please do remember that none of us need to think about this all the time!

- ❖ Try using 'I' statements, for example: 'I feel ...'; 'I need ...'; 'I want ...'
- ❖ Describe what you are doing.
- ❖ Describe what the child is doing.
- ❖ Describe how you feel. You do not need always to be certain, but can simply say (out loud): 'How do I feel, I wonder, now that ...?'
- ❖ Describe your thoughts sometimes.
- ❖ Notice the kind of praise that you tend to use and the kind of praise that the child seems to like (e.g., public or private). Try to be specific in your praise and to praise actions as well as outcomes.
- ❖ Think about providing access to language in different contexts, for example, music and rhyme.
- ❖ Do not be afraid to use some words that children do not know yet. Accent them and include a simple explanation. Use them in a range of contexts. Repeat new words at the start or end of sentences.
- ❖ Reading and play are fantastic ways to develop language. Many positive outcomes are associated with children listening to 'expert' adult readers with whom they have a bond.
- ❖ Do not forget non-verbal communication!

# Handout 14

## Learning from Mistakes

### Frame 1

It is only a mistake if  
you do not learn from it.

### Frame 2

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career.

I've lost almost 300 games.

26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed.

I've failed over and over and over again in my life.

*And that's why I succeed.*

Michael Jordan

### Frame 3

James Dyson created 5126 failed prototypes of  
what would become his famous bagless vacuum  
cleaner before succeeding.

These are the attitudes we would like to encourage in our children! Making mistakes helps to develop our resilience, if we have the right mindset.

## Supporting children to learn resilience through their mistakes

- ❖ Provide supported opportunities for healthy failure, for example: offer a difficult task (e.g., tying up shoelaces) and praise persistence with the task. Then structure the child gently towards success, for example: show them a video of shoelace-tying and get them to try again. Are they a little better? Why? Praise persistence and resilience. Ask children how they managed to improve – it has likely not happened by magic or luck, but by hard work.
- ❖ Provide plenty of opportunities to try new things, including difficult ones.
- ❖ Read and tell stories about characters who learn from failure.
- ❖ Model using feedback to inform what you do. For example, when you are trying something new, 'notice' (out loud) that you may not be able to do it yet, but that you are determined to keep trying.
- ❖ Model noticing your mistakes and apologising for them.
- ❖ Model taking responsibility for your actions and noticing consequences.
- ❖ Praise persistence and hard work over 'raw talent'.

# **Part 4**

## **Recommended Reading & Resources**

# Recommended Reading & Resources for Parents, Carers & Professionals

The following publications are relevant to the promotion of resilience and wellbeing in children and young people.

**Aumann K. & Hart A.**, 2009, *Helping Children with Complex Needs Bounce Back* Jessica Kingsley Publishing, London.

**Bocchino R.**, 1999, *Emotional Literacy: To be a different kind of smart*, Convin Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

**Burton S. & Shotton G.**, 2004, 'Building Emotional Resilience', *Special Children* September/October 2004, pp18–20.

**Clifton D.O. & Anderson C.E.**, 2002, *Now Discover Your Strengths: How to develop your strengths and those of people like you*, Pocket Books, London.

**Craig C.**, 2007, *Creating Confidence: A handbook for professionals working with young people*, The Centre for Confidence & Well-being, Glasgow.

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