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Happy Families

How to Protect and Support
Your Child's Mental Health


bluebird
books for life



First published 2023 by Bluebird
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
The Smithson, 6 Briset Street, London EC1M 5NR
EU representative: Macmillan Publishers Ireland Ltd, 1st Floor,
The Liffey Trust Centre, 117–126 Sheriff Street Upper,
Dublin 1, D01 YC43
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-0350-1745-4

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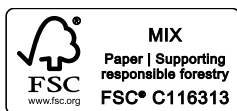
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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset by Palimpsest Book Production Ltd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY



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PART 1

Children's Mental Health

Why is it important?

Chapter 2

The must-dos

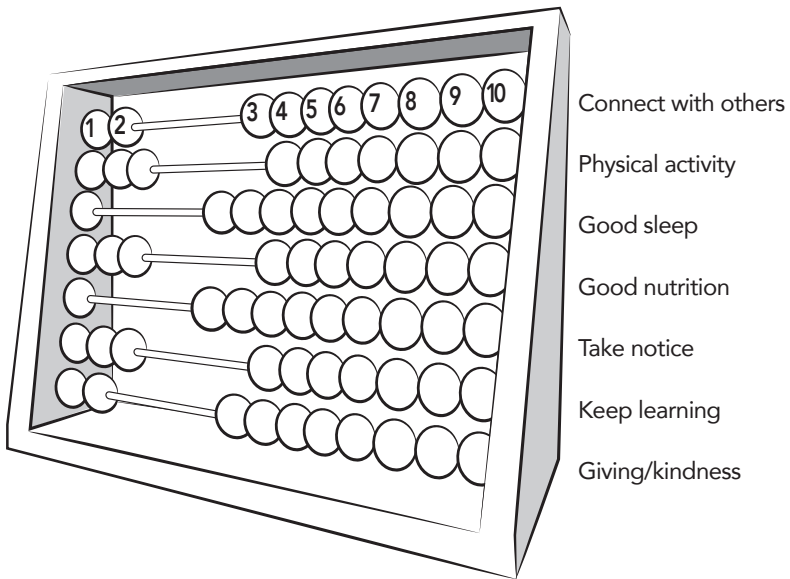


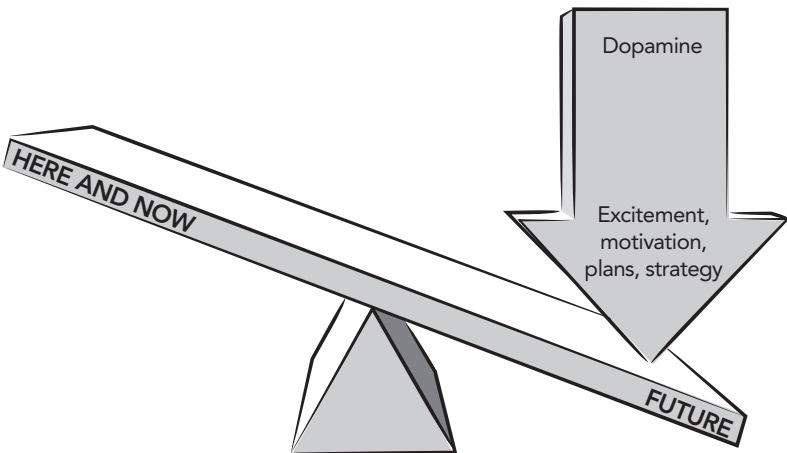
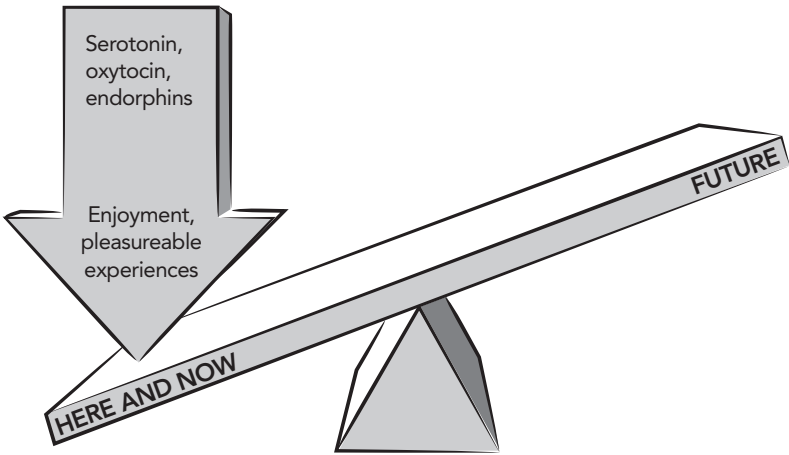
Figure 2.1: The Wellbeing Abacus

Olivia's Story Olivia's Wellbeing Abacus scores	Before	Now
Connect with others: Olivia previously enjoyed spending time with friends, but since the bullying started, in order to protect herself from being hurt (physically and emotionally), she has stopped interacting with her friends. Being more emotionally reactive, she won't cooperate with adults, leading to disagreements with her teachers and parents and behavioural reprimands at school and at home. She no longer feels she makes a positive contribution to her community.	7	2
Physical activity: Olivia used to play team sports. She loved basketball. Her difficulties with her friends mean that she has stopped going to basketball club. She generally does less physical activity, as she does not want to do things with her family either, meaning she spends a lot of time sitting or lying down doing no exercise (sedentary).	9	3
Sleep: Olivia has never been a great sleeper, but things have worsened. She can't go to sleep at night because when she tries, all the thoughts about worst-case scenarios pop into her head, making her feel sick and causing her heart to race. She uses her phone as a distraction, visiting chat rooms into the early hours of the morning and reaching out to strangers for comfort. Because of this, it's difficult to wake her in the morning.	6	1
Nutrition: Olivia used to enjoy eating a range of foods, but her appetite has changed. She goes a long time between meals. Lack of regular food and disturbed sleep means she relies on energy drinks to keep her awake in the afternoon.	7	3

Olivia's Story Olivia's Wellbeing Abacus scores	Before	Now
Take notice: Olivia has a curious side. She used to like to question things and paid attention to the world around her. She noticed things more when she was out with friends or family and enjoyed taking photos of scenes she thought were special. Lately, Olivia feels like she has been in a permanent 'fog'. She's stopped enjoying the taste of food and her attention seems to be taken up with negative thoughts.	7	1
Keep learning: Olivia used to enjoy school some of the time, and particularly liked learning coding in computer studies. Now, she struggles to concentrate in lessons and spends more time in class feeling anxious about break and lunchtime. She has started to fall behind in her classwork and has lost confidence in her abilities. She used to enjoy learning new tunes on her guitar, but she has lost the motivation to pick up her guitar.	7	3
Be giving: Olivia used to like to help her grandma mow her lawn. She also enjoyed helping her friends when they were finding things tough with a helpful text message. Olivia now finds it hard to think about giving or being kind to others. She feels so consumed with her own thoughts and feelings, she struggles to consider what other people might be thinking and feeling and how she might be able to help them or be kind to them.	7	2

Chapter 3

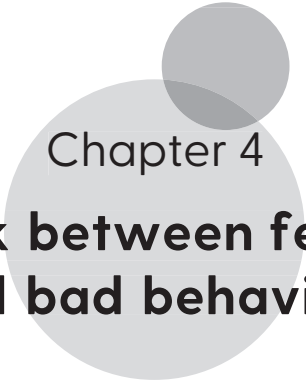
Screen time – how much is too much?





PART 2
Difficult Feelings

The good, the bad and the ugly



Chapter 4

**The link between feelings
and bad behaviour**



ACTIVITY BOX

In the table below, you'll see a range of emotions that your child might experience, and how these might present as behaviours.

1. In the second column (top row), write down a situation where you might see your child in distress. 2. Circle the behaviours you see in your child in this situation. 3. Circle any emotions they might be a sign of. 4. Lastly (bottom row), write down the response your child might get from others based on this behaviour.

1. Situation	
2. External behaviour	Shouting, crying, throwing/hitting, saying cruel things, running away, impulsive/more energy, refusing to communicate, unable to talk, physically hurting self, withdrawing from others, becoming more controlling, black-and-white thinking
3. Internal emotion	Anger, sadness, fear, shame, guilt, envy, jealousy, disgust, interest, surprise, joy
4. Response from others	

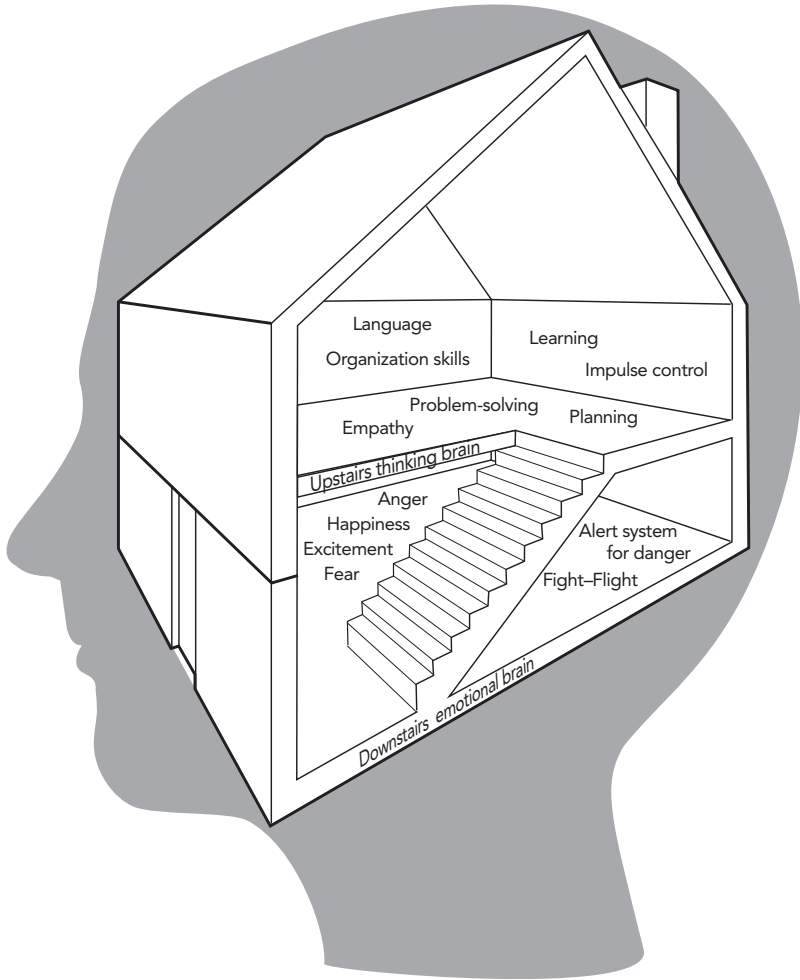


Figure 4.1: The Brain House

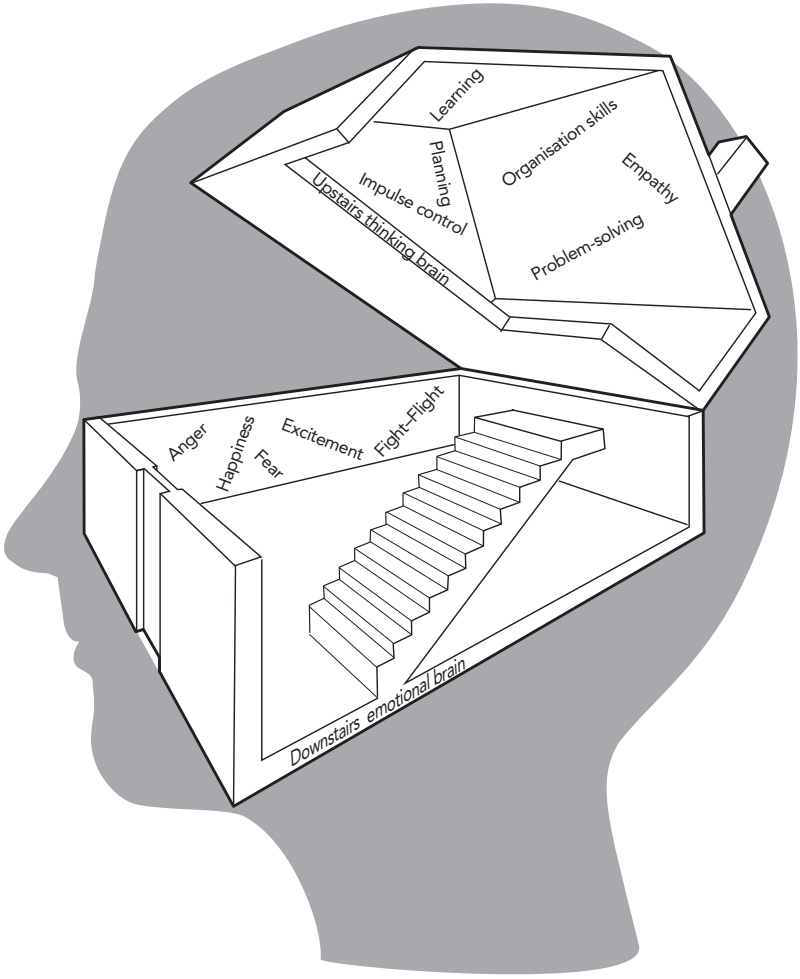


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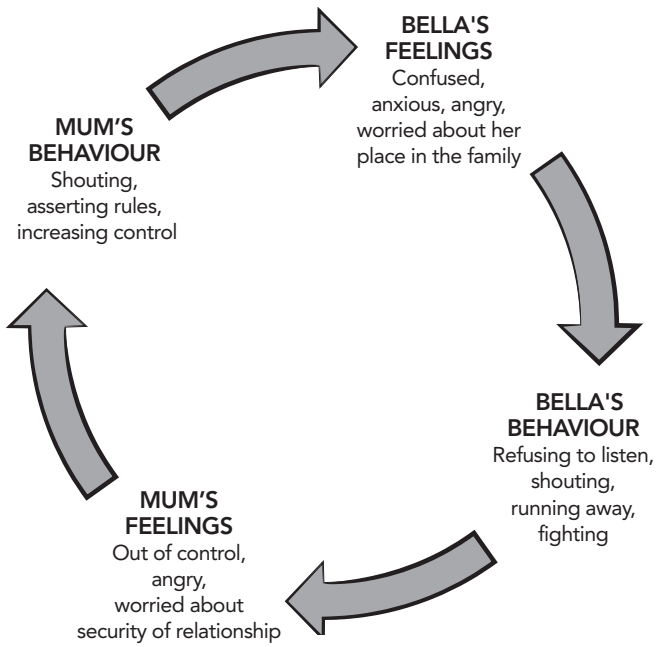
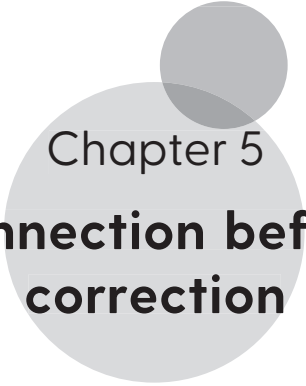


Figure 4.2: The Flip-the-Lid Cycle



Chapter 5

Connection before correction

HYPERAROUSAL (TOO MUCH ENERGY)

Fight or flight: shouting, running away, hyperalert, racing body and mind, not listening to others

Feels like: rage, panic, fear, excitement

No new learning can happen

OPTIMAL LEVEL OF AROUSAL – WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (OPTIMAL ENERGY)

Self-control: aware of self, others, space, time

Can feel: the full range of feelings

New learning can happen

HYPOAROUSAL (TOO LITTLE ENERGY)

Freeze: exhausted, tired, slow, drained, shut down

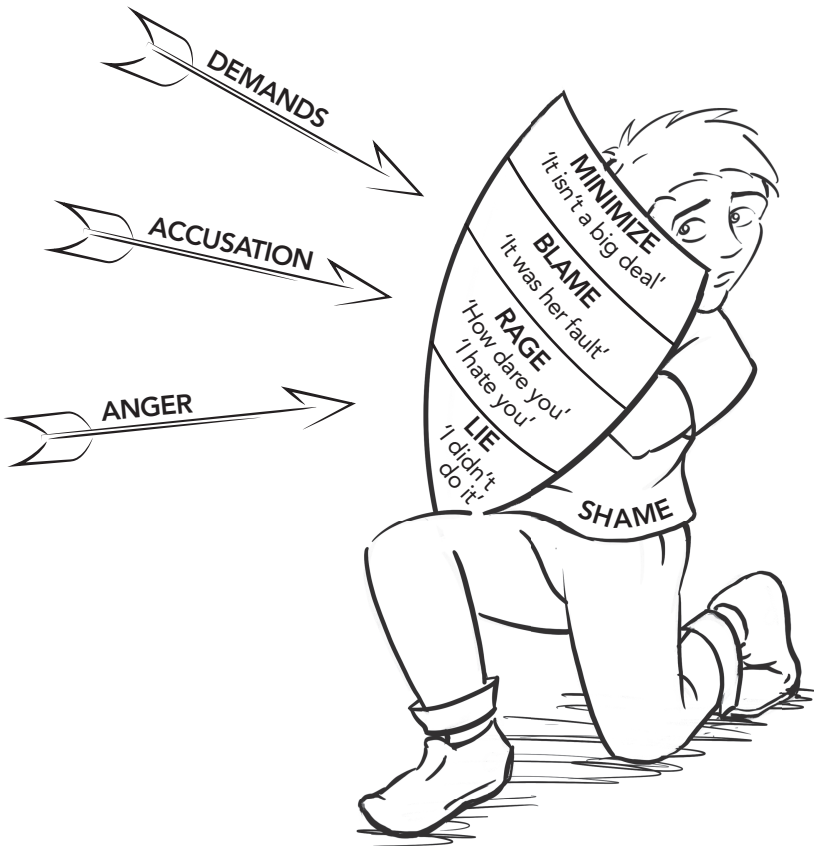
Feels like: flat, no emotions/feelings, numb, dissociated

No new learning can happen

Figure 5.1: The Window of Tolerance

Chapter 6

Working out what's important



The Shield of Shame (adapted from Golding and Hughes, 2012)³¹

Loving	Being loved	Achievement	Connection	Belonging
Security	Friendship	Creativity	Passion	Movement
Adventure	Learning	Curiosity	Knowledge	Nature
Respect	Discipline	Pride	Freedom	Forgiveness
Fun	Community	Humour	Home	Fairness
Safety	Trust	Growth	Diversity	Family

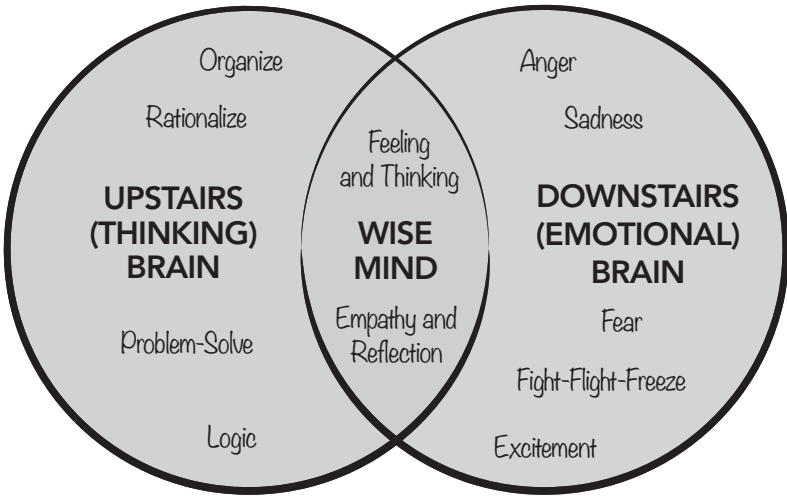


Figure 6.2: The Wise Mind

Situations your child might face, their possible accompanying emotions and the values these could signpost to

Situation	Emotion/Feeling	Value	Away moves	Towards moves	Exploration points
Rejection from a friendship group	Anger Fear Shame Hurt Sadness Guilt Confusion Disappointment	Loving/ being loved Belonging Connection Community Kindness Friendship Loyalty	Withdrawing from others Saying/messaging unhelpful things Not trusting other people/friends	Reaching out to others Repairing relationship (saying sorry, resolving issues) Investing in good friendships	What do good friendships look like? How can you be a good friend? What other things can you do to help build belonging (join an activity group)? How can I/other adults help?
Failing an assignment	Shame Frustration Disappointment Embarrassment Guilt Worry	Achievement Ambition Pride Knowledge Learning Success Wisdom Self-discipline	Giving up Dropping the topic Not going to that lesson/school	Asking for help Doing more prep work Working out where you went wrong so you can learn from your mistake(s)	What are your aspirations/goals? What are your hopes for the future? What does success look like to you? How can I teach them the power of learning from failure? What structures/routines can support learning? How can I/other adults help?

Situation	Emotion/Feeling	Value	Away moves	Towards moves	Exploration points
Changing school	Fear Excitement	Belonging Inclusion Security Community Learning Career Growth	Avoiding going to school Not fully engaging with school or activities or new relationships	Being brave Investing in new relationships/activities Opportunity for a new start	What are your hopes and dreams for school and the future? How would you like to feel at school? Are learning or social opportunities the priority? What can be done to support integration? How can I/other adults help?
Death of a loved one	Sadness Confusion Fear Hurt Guilt Anger	Loving/ being loved Connection Care History/roots Forgiveness Legacy Safety Spirituality Health Vulnerability Peace	Withdrawing from others Not engaging in new relationships Blocking memories Getting rid of associated items	Reaching out to others Sharing grief and memories with others who cared about the person Investing in relationships Putting aside associated items until able to manage	What is/was the importance of the person in their life? How can I teach them about memories and legacy? How can I discuss the death of a loved one and how they can live on in you? How can I talk about how we let go? How can I encourage them to think about the power of love? What can we do to honour or commemorate that person – memory box, poem, letter? How can I/other adults help?

Situation	Emotion/Feeling	Value	Away moves	Towards moves	Exploration points
Not seeing a parent/parents separating	Sadness Fear Anger Guilt Hurt Insecurity Disappointment	Loving/ being loved Connection Family Loyalty Security Care Commitment Belonging Harmony Friendship Honesty Truth Trust Respect Forgiveness	Withdrawing from others Saying or doing hurtful things Ruminating on who's to blame/vengeance Black/white thinking: good/bad Taking too much responsibility Siding with one parent Seeing everything a parent does through a negative lens Shutting down communication	Reaching out for help Investing in family activities Sharing feelings constructively Repairing/rebuilding relationships Opportunity to know parents in a different way Staying close to siblings/other family members/friends	How do you view what a family is and what's the importance of that? How might this be changed or preserved? How can I explore things like commitment/loyalty as well as fears about loss of connection? How can I consider views on conflict and harmony? How can I explore routines and structures that might help make it easier? How can I provide balanced perspectives that acknowledge both sides of the story? How do I reckon with my own feelings as a parent? How can I/other adults help?

Situation	Emotion/Feeling	Value	Away moves	Towards moves	Exploration points
Adjusting to new siblings or a blended family	Fear Anger Envy Jealousy Insecurity Hurt	Loving/ being loved Connection Fairness Uniqueness	Being in competition with/being unkind to/ withdrawing from parent Feeling unvalued Resenting others Behaving badly for attention	Investing in relationship with parent Trying to find ways to communicate fears Believing in love being infinite Embracing uniqueness Opportunity for new relationships/friendship/fun	What is love? Can we love more than one person? What different things can we get from different relationships? How do we let others know what's important to us? What structures/routines can be introduced to support feeling fair/unique/special time? How can I help?
Losing a sports game	Anger Shame Sadness Disappointment Frustration Insecurity	Being the best Success Sportsmanship Teamwork Leadership Learning Belonging Fairness	Poor sportsmanship behaviours Not playing games in the future Giving up	Bringing team together to praise effort Exploring why and how the game was lost in order to build and practise skills to perform better next time Practising good sportsmanship	How do we explore what was so difficult about losing the game (e.g., decisions made by the coach, player performance, bad luck, unfair decision/cheating)? How do we analyse these insights to reveal values around the game? What kind of behaviours would support these values going forward? How can I/other adults help?

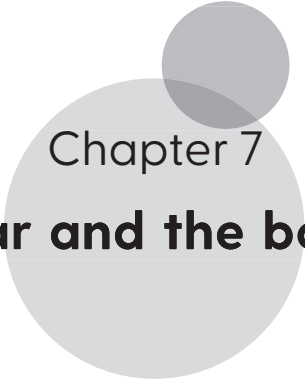
Situation	Emotion/Feeling	Value	Away moves	Towards moves	Exploration points
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For you to complete . . .



PART 3
Anxiety

**How to stop it controlling
your child's life**



Chapter 7

Fear and the body

Physical sensations	Thoughts	Actions
Difficulties in concentration	'What if ...' thoughts about the future	Avoiding feared situations (this can then grow to more situations)
Complaining of physical ailments (stomach pains, feeling sick, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, headaches, feeling shaky)	often focused on the worst-case scenario	Asking for reassurance from others
Reductions in sleep quality	All-or-nothing thinking	Having routines or ways of doing things to help them feel safe
Difficulties with digestion (loss of appetite, urges to go to the toilet, constipation)	Blaming self	Difficulties with friendships
	Should/must thoughts	Spending more time with adults at home and school
	Discounting the positive	
	Only paying attention to the negative	
	Having high expectations of self	
	Blowing things out of proportion	
	Nightmares	

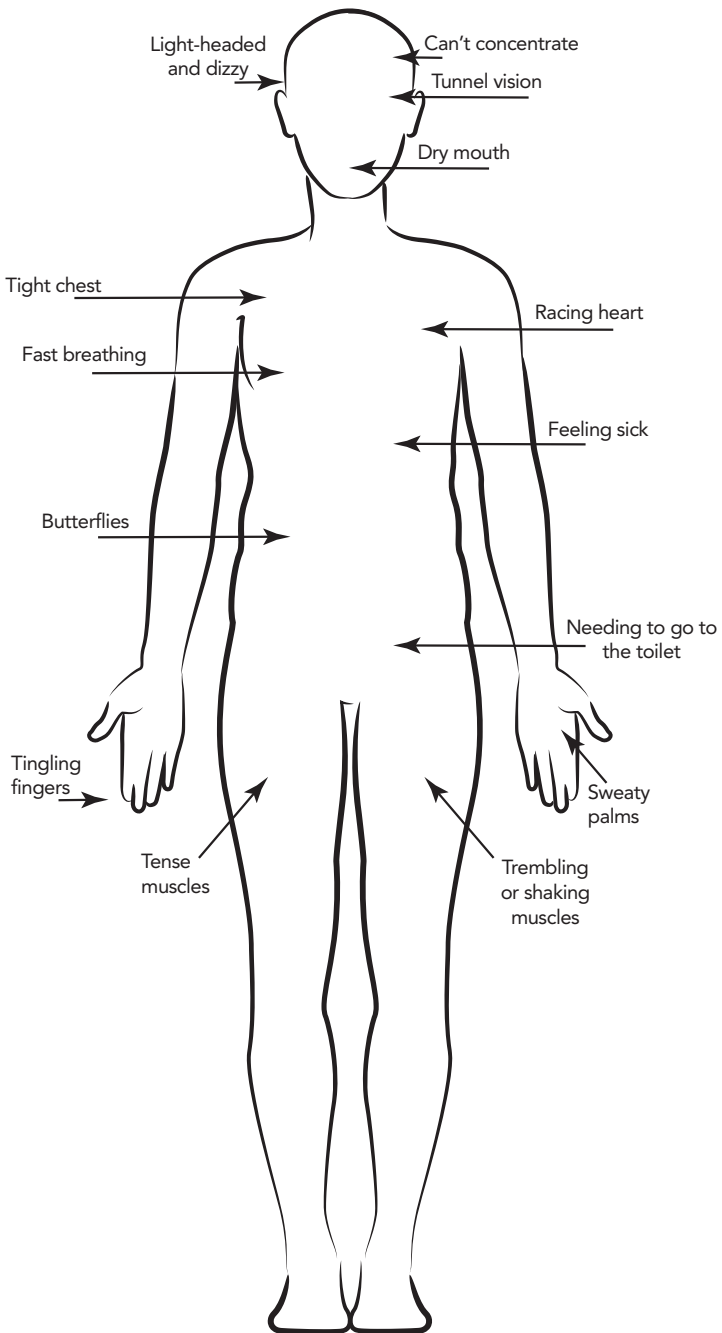


Figure 7.1: The body during fight, flight or freeze

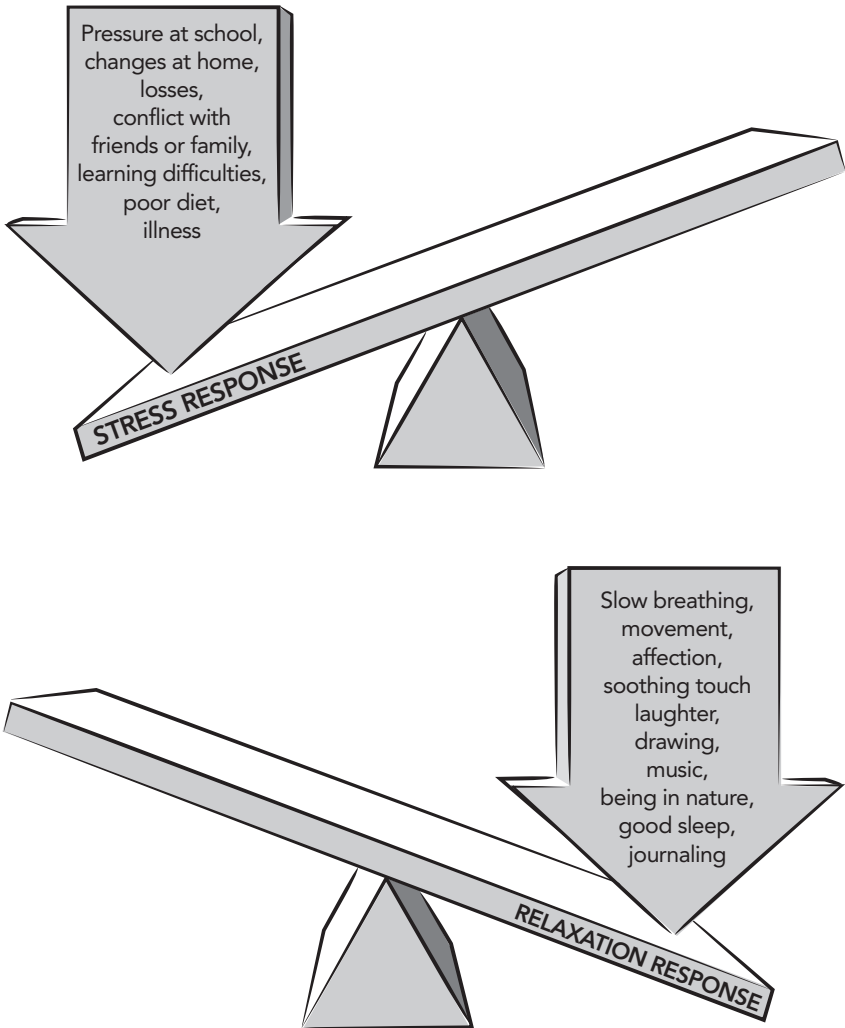
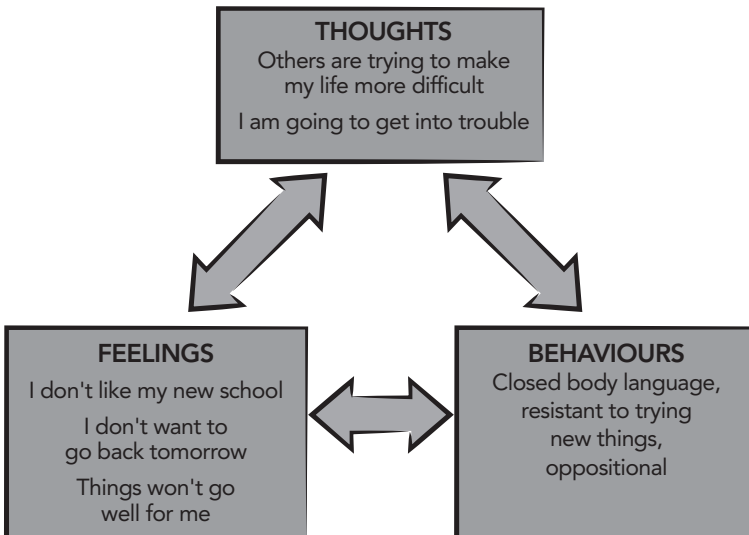
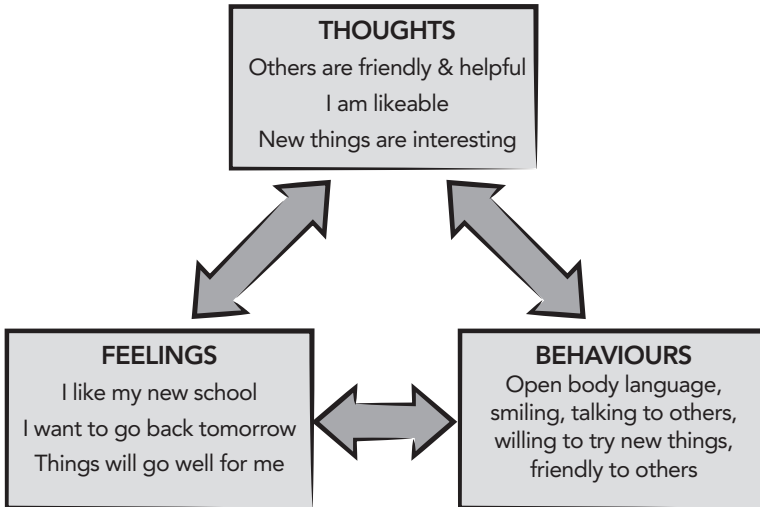


Figure 7.2: Stress and relaxation response seesaw



Chapter 8

**What to do
about worry**





Reflection Box

All-or-nothing thinking

'I'm always going to be late for lessons.'

Jumping to conclusions

'My teacher is strict; she doesn't like me.' (Imagining we know what others are thinking.)

'I'm going to hate maths lessons.' (Predicting the future.)

Catastrophizing – blowing things out of proportion

'I'm not going to see all of my friends at lunchtime, so they are going to hate me, then I'll end up with no friends.'

Minimizing – making something (which could be good) seem less significant

'I'm only in top set because everyone else is crap.'

Discounting the good things

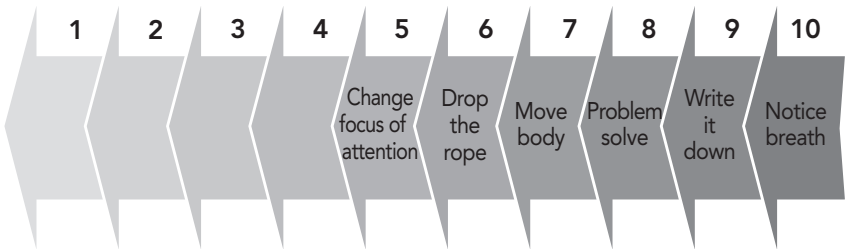
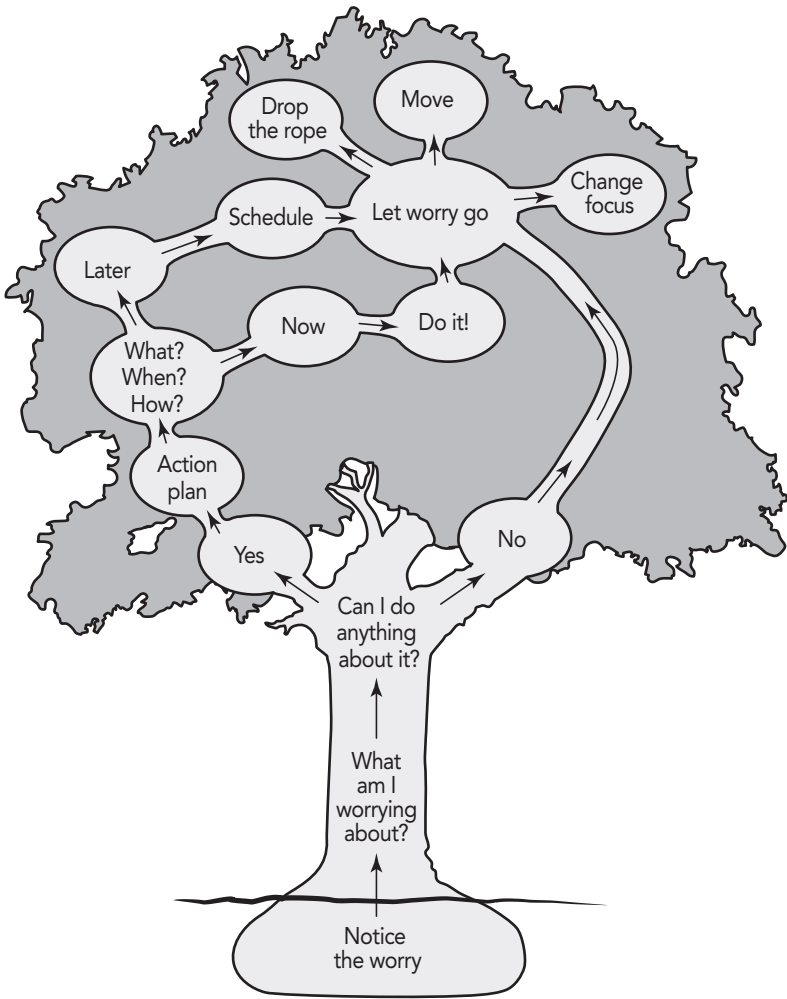
'It doesn't count that English went well; maths was terrible.'

Labelling

'I'm useless'; 'School rules are stupid and controlling.'

Blaming self

'It's my fault my friends couldn't find me at lunchtime.'



Worry is manageable

Worry is overwhelming

Chapter 9

Acts of courage

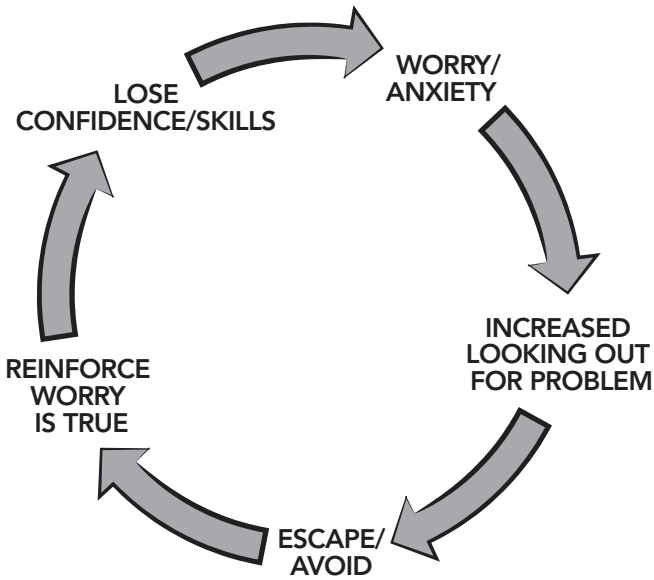


Figure 9.1: The Anxiety Trap

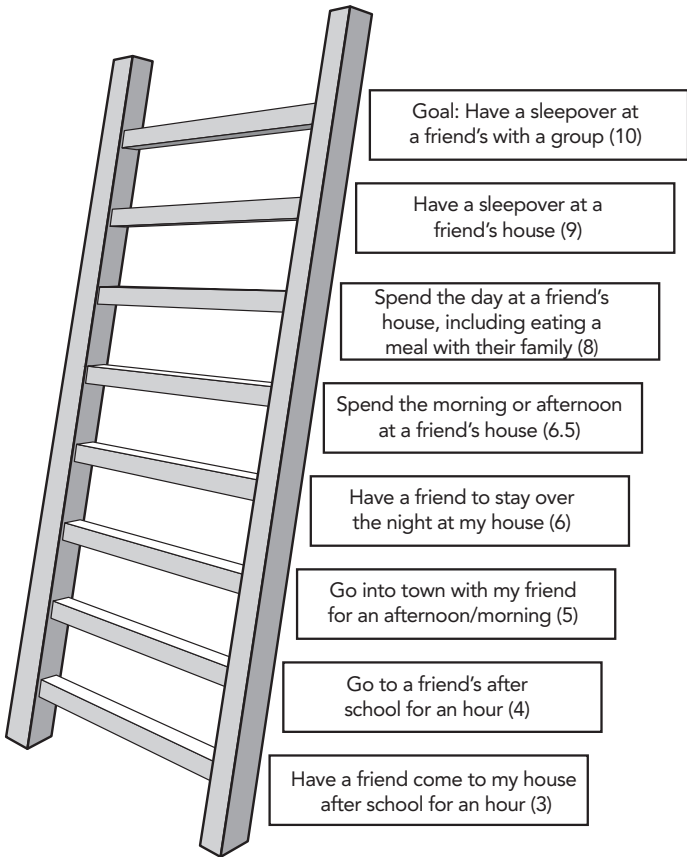


Figure 9.2: Brave behaviours ladder



PART 4
Low Mood

How to get your child back

Chapter 10

Low-mood traps

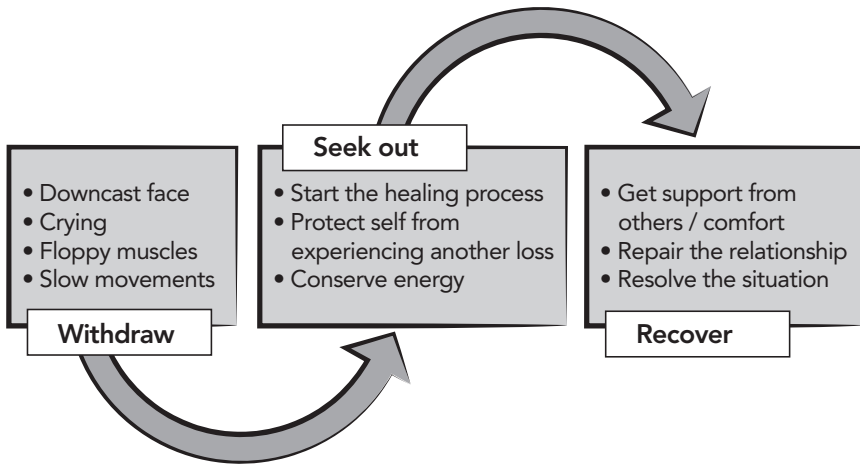


Figure 10.1: Withdraw, Seek Out, Recover

Feeling different	Gender identity	Sexuality	Loneliness	Lack of sleep
Bereavement	School pressures	Cyber bullying	Verbal abuse	Failure
Family health	Transitions/ change	Body image	Social exclusion	Hormones
Boredom	Parental conflict	Romantic issues	No job	Isolation
Loss	Bullying	Existential crisis		
Wellbeing Abacus areas affected?		e.g., connect with others, sleep		
What's important to my child?		e.g., loyalty, belonging, feeling loved		

Mood	Thinking	Activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty making decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> No energy
<input type="checkbox"/> Increased irritability	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased tiredness
<input type="checkbox"/> Things don't feel as much fun anymore	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-critical focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Restless
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of interest in activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling worthless	<input type="checkbox"/> Slowed down
	<input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts of death	<input type="checkbox"/> Appetite changes
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep changes
		<input type="checkbox"/> Pain

Anti-low-mood lifestyle with the Wellbeing Abacus**I can help by . . .**

Connect with others: Critical for wellbeing. Peer relationships and social status are particularly important for adolescents.

Physical activity: More movement and physical activity can reduce the impact of stress, improve mood and physical health.

Sleep: Low mood impacts sleep quality and in turn contributes to low mood. Supporting good sleep is protective for both mental and physical health. It can be a particular challenge for adolescents – how you can help is covered below.

Nutrition: Increased omega-3 fatty-acid foods/supplements with their anti-inflammatory properties can reduce the impact of stress on the nervous system. Not getting enough sunshine can contribute to low mood. Brain serotonin is at its lowest in the winter and highest in the summer. Getting outside, a light box and vitamin D all help.

Take notice: Opportunities to engage in ‘flow’ activities (see page 80).

Keep learning: Doing things that are important to you, that fit with your values and support positive mood.

Be giving Completing simple acts of kindness can improve mood by increasing dopamine and social connection with others.

Low mood	Additional adolescent brain challenges	Ways to help
Less reward out of life	Need more thrills to experience reward, more sensitive to social rewards	Structure, meaningful activity planning (Chapter 11)
Relationship difficulties/ withdrawal	Peer relationships critical, adult input less valued, more sensitive to negative social cues, feels emotions more intensely, may maintain a persona of doing well	Supporting connection and communication skills (Part 2, Chapters 11 and 13)
Increased rumination	Negativity bias, hypersensitive to negative social feedback, social narrative around 'perfection'	Unhooking from unhelpful thoughts (Chapters 8 and 11)

Chapter 11

Doing what counts

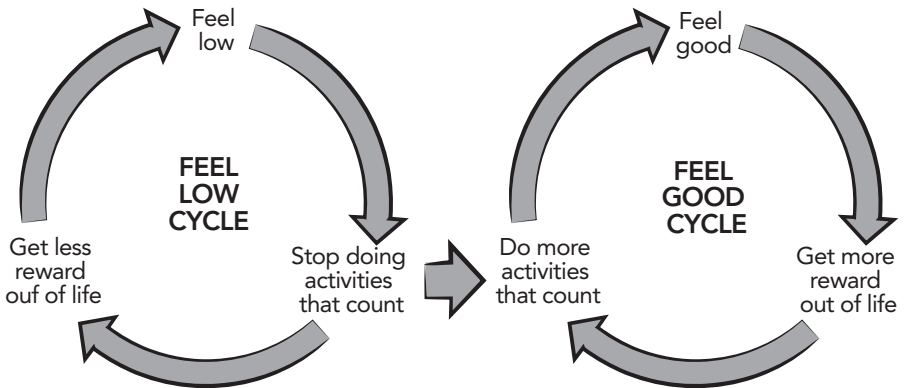


Figure 11.1: The Feel-Low and the Feel-Good Cycle

Day/Time	Activity	Achievement	Closeness	Enjoyment
Wed 08:00	Breakfast with parents and sister	0	4	4
Wed 08:30	Bus to school, sat on my own	0	0	2
Wed 09:30	Maths lesson. Zoned out	2	0	2
Wed 10:30	Break, went to library with two friends	5	7	7
Wed 11:30	Art lesson – completed sculpture	7	1	6
Sat 11:00	Spent two hours on Instagram/YouTube	0	2	2
Sat 13:00	Helped sister make brownies	5	6	6

Day/Time	Activity	Achievement	Closeness	Enjoyment
Sat 15:00	Made a creative video, posted online; got lots of positive feedback from friends	6	6	7
Sat 18:00	Mum complained I hadn't tidied up. In my room on my own, lay on bed, stared at ceiling	0	0	0

Daily mood score: 0 = Really low, unhappy, to 10 = Upbeat, happy
Wed = 5; Sat at 3 p.m. = 7, Sat at 10 p.m. = 3



Chapter 12

Self-harm



ACTIVITY BOX

Relationship difficulties	Gender identity	Anxiety	Struggling academically
Bereavement	School pressures	Parental conflict	Discrimination
Disability	Emotional abuse	Physical abuse	Not going to school
Chronic physical illness	Conflict with parents	Neglect	Drug/alcohol use
Parental mental health	Worries about money	Bullying	Lack of close friends
Exposure to self-harm (friends/family)	Media and internet influence	Low mood/ anxiety	Sexual identity

	Home	School	Friends
What is my child finding hard/ difficult in this area?			
How can I support my child emotionally? Who else can help?			
What practical things can help?			

Do:

- Right time, right place, right pace (page 122).
- Express warmth and non-judgement.
- Explain that you're not angry, but your voice and face might seem worried, because you deeply care.
- Help them feel like you want to find ways to help and/or enable help.
- Understand and validate feelings.
- Be curious about what they are finding hard in their life.

Once you've done all of this:

- Find a way to make a plan together so they don't have to feel so alone.

Don't:

- Focus on the impact on you as the parent/adult.
 - Tell or ask the young person not to self-harm again.
 - Communicate in a way that works for you, but not for them.
 - Make the young person feel like they've done something bad or are in trouble.
 - Only give care to a young person around the self-harm incidents.
 - Assume that the young person wants to end their life.
-



PART 5
Help

The secret to giving and getting

Chapter 13

Building strong relationships – communication hacks

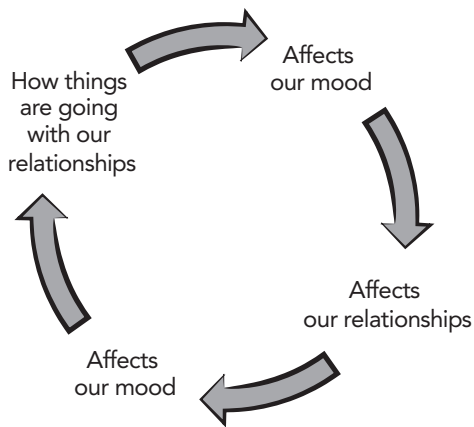


Figure 13.1: The Relationship–Mood Cycle



Chapter 14

**Adolescence – a time
of risk and opportunity**

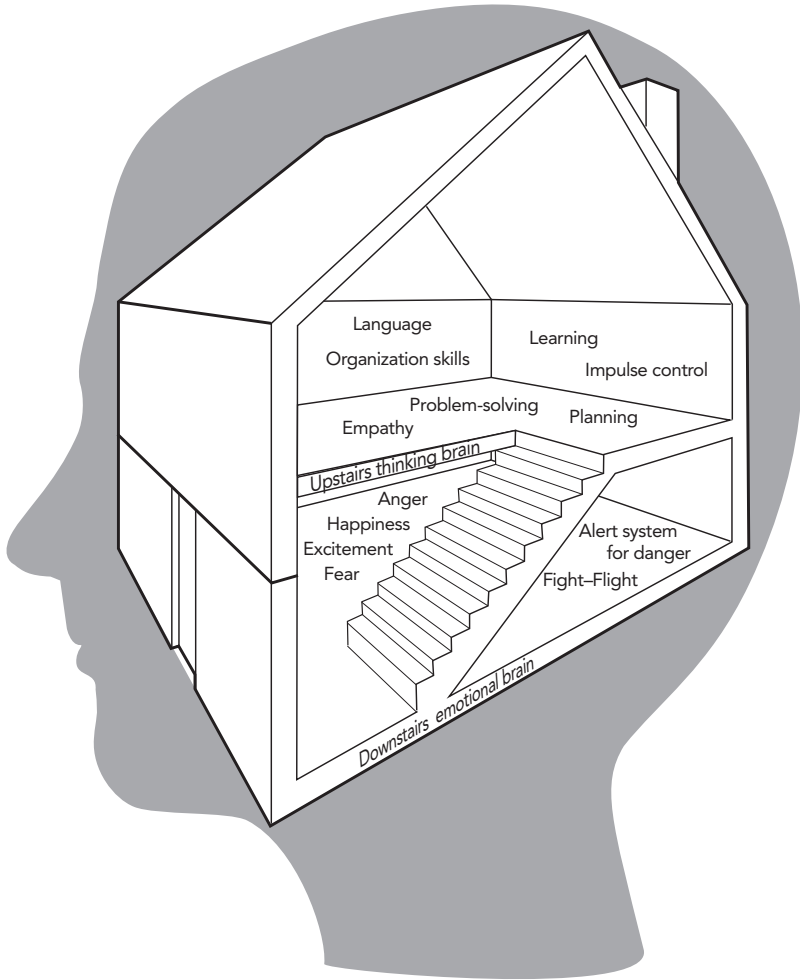


Figure 4.1: The Brain House



ACTIVITY BOX

Think about your adolescent. For each of the four areas mentioned below, consider the questions and write down things you can do to create more opportunities for safe spaces to encourage supportive relationships.

Circle of trust	Think about people you trust (e.g., family/friends/professionals). How can you practically provide more opportunities for your child to spend time with them? What messages can you give to your child to encourage them to view them as trusted adults?
Routines and rituals	Think about your family's daily routines. When are you best resourced to be available to your child? Write down a time in the day you could commit to being available to your child that you think will also work for them. Have a collaborative conversation with your teen if you need to work it out together.
Hanging out	Think about the activities your teen enjoys. Try to build in time to do these activities together with you relaxing and having fun rather than instructing or hassling. Remember: give to get – getting out of your comfort zone will likely mean your teen will be more willing to get out of theirs.
Roles and responsibilities	Think about your teen's strengths and assets. How can they use these to contribute to the household? What support do they need to get going with a new role? Give them support and space. For example, if they are going to cook dinner, let them choose the meal. Meal kits are a good way to get them started. Think about what they enjoy or have an aptitude for and support them to be part of an organized group.

Worksheets and Activities

Simple Acts of Kindness Activity Worksheet

Challenge:

Complete three acts of kindness in a day, twice in a week.

Acts of Kindness: Big or small actions that help others or bring them happiness, which require you to apply some effort (at some cost to yourself in terms of time or assets).

How to get the maximum impact:

- * Vary the kinds of activities you do.
- * Brainstorm examples of kind acts you could do in different categories.
- * Use the brainstorming box below to come up with shared ideas of different sorts of acts of kindness together with your child.
- * Hold in mind that people often believe before doing the act:
 - that it's going to be more awkward to complete an act of kindness than it actually is;
 - that the act won't make as positive a difference as it does.⁷⁵

Worksheets and Activities

- * Remember what's most important about the act of kindness is that it benefits someone else (try not to expect something back from the person you help).
- * Make sure that it's up to your child when, where, and for whom they complete the acts of kindness.

Brainstorm: Write down all your ideas for different sorts of acts of kindness (e.g., helping another student find somewhere to go if they look lost, reaching out to a friend to check they are OK, noticing when someone does something well and telling them, helping carry the shopping, baking a cake for a family event).

Wellbeing Abacus Worksheet

Go through each line of the Wellbeing Abacus to explore how your child feels they are doing in each area – what is going well, what could be better.

Three important things to remember:

- * There is no right or wrong answer; this is an exploration of these areas from your child's perspective. It enables a conversation and the opportunity to share ideas.
- * How they use the numbers to rate their experience is for them to decide. For example, a child may naturally like to use higher numbers across the categories (may pick 7s, 8s and 9s) or lower numbers (3s, 4s, and 5s). My son felt 5 was a good average for him, and therefore in his descriptions most of his scores fell a few points beneath or above 5. He was not aiming for 10 to be the best number. This is fine. The key thing is that the differences in their scores gives you an opportunity to explore the difference between things that are going better and things they might be struggling with.
- * There are no winning numbers. You're not looking for 10 out of 10 across all areas. You're exploring the natural variation that occurs in daily life. Try to avoid judging the number ('Oh that's bad you got a 2' or 'Great you got a 7'). Instead, use the number to be curious about why and how it links to feelings of wellbeing. We're trying to help our children understand that there may be things happening in their lives that influence how they feel and what they do. And that this is OK. We're also trying to help them understand

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what they can do to help their bodies and minds feel better when they might be struggling.

For each line, ask where they are out of 10 (1 being the worst it has ever been, 10 being the best). Use the explanations below to help them understand each line of the Wellbeing Abacus and why it's important. If you identify an area of difficulty, spend some time being curious about why and what's happening in your child's life which may impact this area. This can help 1) validate your child's feelings, and 2) give you some ideas as to what might help.

1. **Connect with others:** 'Tell me how things are with your relationships/how you're getting on with others. This could be family (your mum/dad, siblings), friends and teachers at school). Your child might like to use different numbers for different relationships (e.g., family 6, friends 4, teachers 3, sports coach 7). Explain, 'We know that being well supported by others can help you feel good about your life. Sometimes, when people are fighting or falling out, or we lose important people in our life, this can make us feel worried and sad. Feeling like people understand us and care about us is very important. We all like to feel we belong somewhere, which is why family, friends and school can be so important.' (Go to Chapter 6 if things are tricky in this area.)
2. **Physical activity:** 'How much we move our body is very important to how we feel. Being able to move around, do exercise, play sports, be outside and do physical activities are all important for how we feel in our body and mind. Just doing physical activity for ten minutes at a time can help.'
3. **Sleep:** 'Our sleep is very important as it's when our body heals and our brain gets a proper break. When we wake up

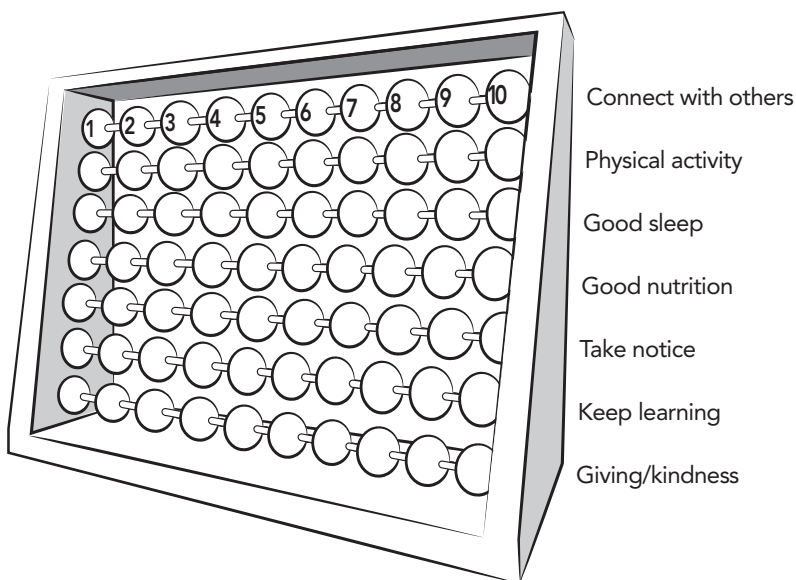
the next day we can concentrate, learn and not get irritated with others. When we don't get good sleep, it can make us more worried about things. Sometimes it can be difficult to fall asleep. Sometimes we might find we wake up in the night.'

4. **Nutrition:** 'When we eat and what we eat can affect our energy levels and our mood. We need three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and usually a snack between each meal. When we don't eat regularly enough, or eat too many sugary foods, we might find we get more easily upset about things.'
5. **Take notice:** 'Taking notice is when we stop thinking about the future, and/or the past, and pay attention to the now. A good example is when you're walking to school – are you paying attention to the way the cold/warm feels on your skin, noticing the colour of the sky, the world around you, or are you busy thinking about thoughts in your head or what's going to happen next? Getting better at taking notice can help us appreciate things more and stop us getting stuck in our head with worries.'
6. **Keep learning:** 'Our brains love learning new things. Learning new things helps us feel good, especially when we learn things in different ways. For example, learning from watching something online, reading a book, playing a game, talking with someone about something you're interested in, using your hands or body to learn a new skill (drawing, sports, music). It also builds our confidence. Sometimes, when we're at school we might find what we're learning feels too difficult. This can make it hard to enjoy the learning and can make us lose confidence. Sometimes, what we're learning is not difficult enough, which can mean we switch off or get bored. Let's think about the different parts of your life where you're getting learning

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(e.g., school, home, club)?' (Head to Chapter 9 and Chapter 11 for help with activity planning.)

7. **Be giving** 'Giving to others can help us feel good. What do you do to give to others? It could be your time, your affection, how you help, listening to others. Kindness is an act of giving.' (See the activity on page 38.)



Top tips to help enrich the conversation

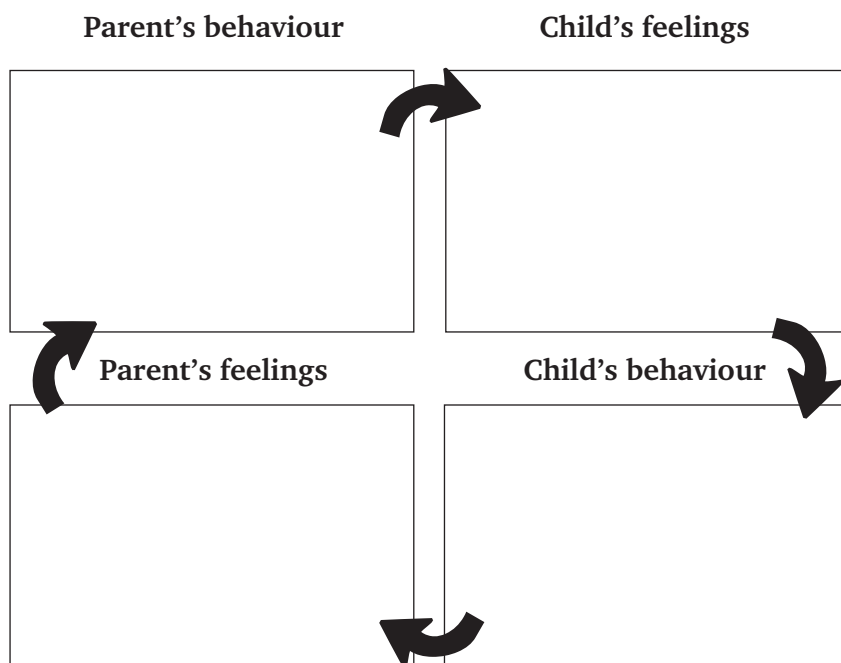
- ▶ This is the perfect activity to try your scaling questions to find out what's already going well (e.g., 'How would you know it was a 4 not a 5?' or 'What stops that 5 being a 4?') and what would need to be different to improve or make a change (e.g., 'How could things be different to take the 5 to a 6?')
- ▶ If you notice your child struggles at different times of the week, you can think about how one day might be different to another (e.g., a Saturday compared to a school day). Some children like the structure of the school day and find the weekends difficult as they have less structure. Other children find the school week might restrict them from doing some of their preferred activities. This discussion helps you collaboratively problem-solve to introduce more structure or preferred activities at other points of the week, or just make the link between a sense of wellbeing and the different activities.
- ▶ To explore how something that feels very difficult to change might be influenced, ask, 'If I magicked that problem away, what would be different? How would you behave differently? How would your day be different?' Sometimes, the things that would be different can be encouraged without taking the problem away (e.g., my son said being bored at school was his key problem. I asked, if I magicked this away, how would it change things? He said he would stop zoning out when he got bored. He wouldn't lose track of what work he had to do in the lesson and fall behind. We were then able to think about other ways to help him with this).

Flip-the-Lid Cycle Activity Worksheet

Think of a situation where you or your child might have flipped your/their lid.

Write down the feelings created by these behaviours in the other person. Write down what behaviours occurred next. Write down the feelings created by the other person's behaviours. Write down the behaviours that occurred in response to these feelings.

What was the trigger situation (e.g., being told off) or feeling (e.g., shame, anger, feeling unlovable) that created the initial flip-the-lid? Go one layer deeper. If the feeling was anger – what feeling was behind the anger (e.g., fear of failure, unfair)? What behaviour or transmitted feeling could have occurred to diffuse or break the cycle?



Body–Thoughts–Feelings Worksheet

Think of an activity or situation your child might be trying to avoid due to anxiety/worry.

Use this sheet to fill in the boxes below with your child.

1. Ask your child, when they think about this situation, how they feel in their body.
2. Ask them to describe some of the thoughts they might have (e.g., 'I can't do it').
3. Think with them about what behaviours they use to avoid or cope with this activity/situation

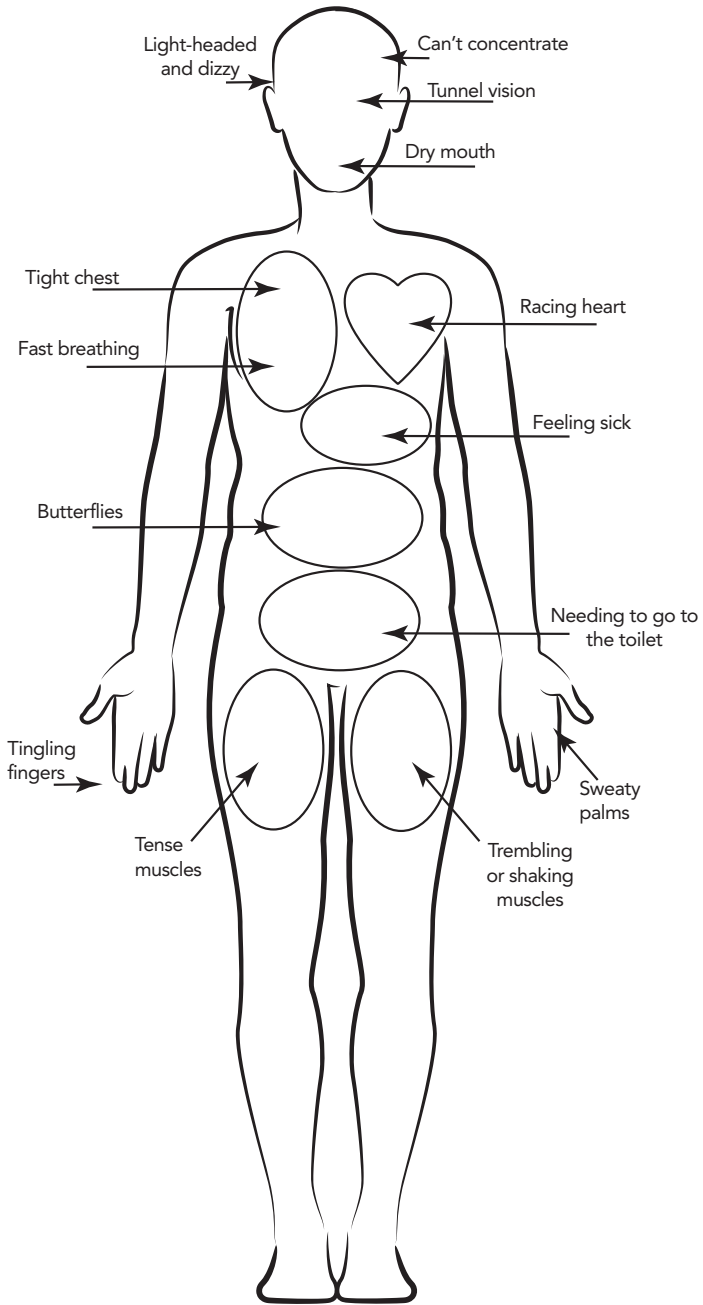
Body (how they feel)	Thoughts (what they think)	Behaviours (what they do)

Fight-Flight Body Map Worksheet

Look at the diagram of the body below. Using the diagram, help your child think about a time they were recently feeling anxious. Go through the different physical sensations and circle the ones they experience. Talk about why they are happening in the body. They can colour in the areas. (It can be helpful to show your young person a video of the fight-flight response, which will explain the physical sensations and why they are happening—there are lots of clips on YouTube that explain the stress response.)

Explain that these sensations do not mean they are in danger or ill. Instead, they are the body's way of helping them stay safe from danger. Explain the faulty smoke alarm.

Think together about the situations in which your child might feel anxious. Work out if they are physically in danger or not. Now explain how breathing calms down the stress response.



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Routines Worksheet

Go through the week with your child. Work out predictable stressors. Come up with some ideas that work for them, and are easy to build into routines, that they can do to help themselves counterbalance the stressors (e.g., Morning stressor = getting ready for school. Relaxer = breathing, doing some star jumps, walking to school. Afternoon stressor = coming home to a busy house. Relaxer = finding a quiet place at home to relax with a favourite activity. Evening stressor = worrying about the next day. Relaxer = listening to music, doing some drawing, writing in my journal, watching my favourite show with Mum/Dad).

Day	Morning (Stressors/ relaxers)	Afternoon (Stressors/ relaxers)	Evening (Stressors/ relaxers)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Thought Detective Worksheet

Complete this sheet with your child to help them:

- * notice unhelpful thoughts;
- * curiously question them rather than just believe them as facts;
- * consider how the thoughts influenced the outcome.

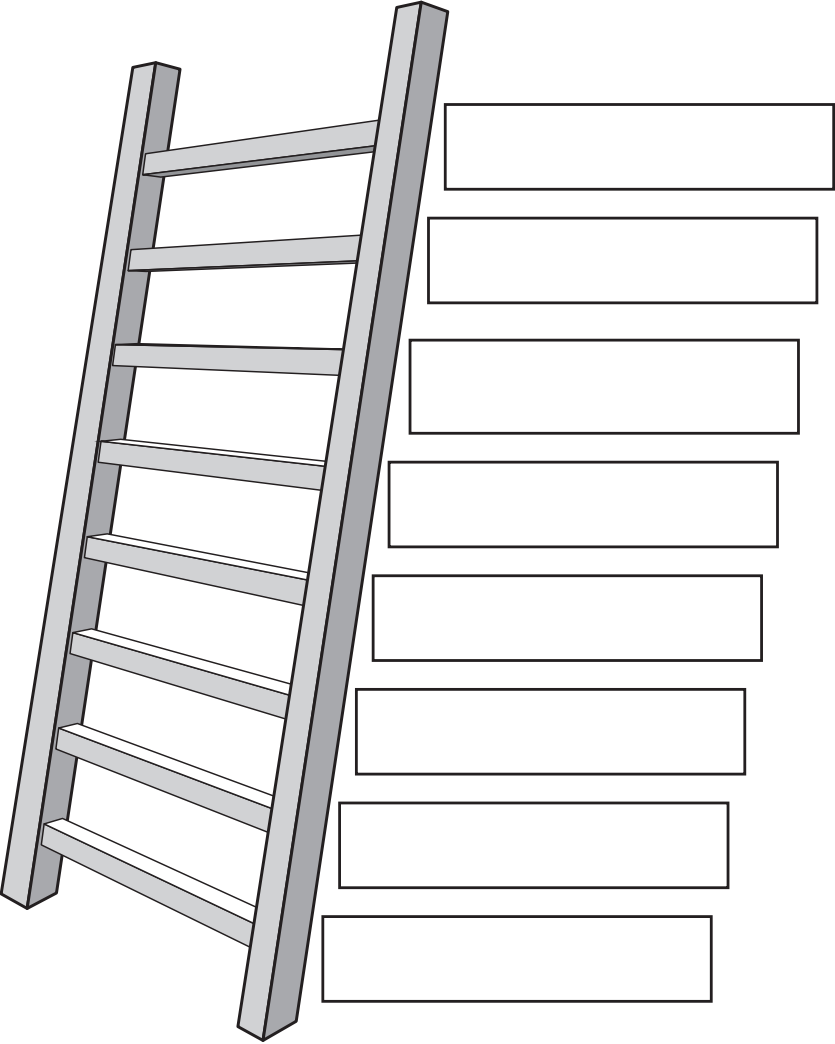
Remember to complete with warmth, no judgement and encourage your child to use their words. Try not to problem-solve for them. Be patient and wait for their ideas. Once you've done this activity with an unhelpful thought, repeat the activity with an alternative helpful thought and see the different potential outcome.

Describe the situation	Describe the thoughts	Evidence (What facts confirm the thought?) Alternatives (What other explanations are there for the situation or possible outcome?)	What happened next?
	Why are you worried? What do you think will happen? What is it about (this situation) that is making you worried?	What makes you think that (this situation) will happen? Has that ever happened to you before? How did you manage if it happened before? Have you ever seen that happen to someone else? How likely is it that (this situation) will happen? If it's quite likely, what can you do to help you cope with the situation? Can you imagine that anything else could happen? If (this situation) did happen, could there be any other reasons for it? What would you think if someone else was in the same situation? What would (another child or their hero) think if they were in this situation? How could you test out this thought?	What did your child think? What did your child do? How did your child feel?

Brave Behaviours Ladder Worksheet

Use the ladder to help you identify a goal (something you want to achieve, but anxiety gets in the way) – this goes at the top.

Work out the small steps you can make to get towards this goal. Rate your anxiety out of 10 for each rung of the ladder. Things at the bottom of the ladder should be least anxiety-inducing, things at the top more anxiety-inducing. Repeat the things on each rung of the ladder enough times that they do not make you feel especially anxious, or you can tolerate how anxious they make you feel. Then move to the next rung of the ladder. Repeat until you're ready to move to the next rung. Use your breathing, ways to manage worries and problem-solving to help at each stage. Gradually, you will get to your goal. You can always go back down a rung of the ladder if an activity was harder than expected. Use the problem-solving activity from Chapter 8 if you get stuck on a rung.



Further Resources

Additional support and urgent advice

If you need help for a mental health crisis or emergency, you should get immediate expert advice. These are services available nationally.

- **111 Mental Health Option:** For urgent mental health support.
- **999:** If someone's life is at risk.
- **Childline:** If you are under 19, Childline are there to talk about any concern you have. Call **0800 1111**. The number will not appear on your phone bill.
- **Papyrus:** If you are (or know a young person who is) thinking of suicide, Papyrus offers confidential suicide-prevention advice. Call **0800 068 4141**. Papyrus also has a digital safety plan (this is the tool a professional would use to support a conversation with a young person to build a safety plan with them for when they might be in mental health crisis) and suicide-prevention advisors who your child can contact confidentially to complete a safety plan together. They can access the digital safety plan 24/7 and share it with the key people in their life.

- **Samaritans:** If you just need to talk, any time of the day or night, Samaritans offer confidential advice from trained volunteers. Call **116 123** to talk to Samaritans or email jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours.
- Text: **SHOUT** to **85258** to contact the Shout Crisis Text Line, or Text **YM** if you're under 19.
- Speak to your school or GP if you're worried about your child or feel they need more help with their low mood. They will be able to make sure your child gets the right help from your local services. This could be access to counselling or a local mental health team specifically for children and adolescents (e.g., a wellbeing team or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – CAMHS).

Advice and support for self-harm

- **Harmless:** Email info@harmless.org.uk or visit www.harmless.org.uk
- **Self-injury support (for women and girls):** Call 0808 800 8088 or visit www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
- **National Self Harm Network forums:** Visit www.nshn.co.uk
- **Mind:** Call 0300 123 3393 or visit www.mind.org.uk
- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline:** Call 0808 802 5544

Apps

There are lots of free apps available to support health and wellbeing, which have been certified by the NHS. Here are just a few of them.

Further Resources

BlueIce is a prescribed evidence-based app to help young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm. Designed by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Calm Harm is an award-winning app for young people aged thirteen-plus to help reduce or manage to resist the urge to self-harm.

Catch It is an app to better understand mood based on capturing emotions with the use of a diary.

Clear Fear is an app that helps your child manage anxious thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and includes breathing exercises.

Combined Minds helps families and friends support young people with their mental health.

distrACT is an award-winning app that provides trusted information and links to support young people who self-harm and may feel suicidal.

MeeTwo is a safe and secure forum for teenagers wanting to discuss any issue affecting their lives. Every post and reply is checked by a human before it goes live.

Move Mood is a free app to help young people manage the behaviours associated with low mood or depression. Based on Behavioural Activation Therapy.

Sleepio is a CBT app clinically proven to support sleep in adults. This app is currently being trialled with adolescents.

Student Health App provides health and wellbeing information and promotes self-care.

ThinkNinja is for young people aged ten to eighteen to talk about health and wellbeing.

Books

It's All About Bodd: Helping Little Humans Manage Big Feelings – Lindy Wheeler and Tom Lawley (The Human Toolbox Company, 2019).

It's All About Bodd: Parent and Teacher Guide – Lindy Wheeler and Tom Lawley (The Human Toolbox Company, 2019).

Nodding Off: The Science of Sleep from Cradle to Grave – Alice Gregory (Bloomsbury, 2018).

Stuff that Sucks: Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can – Ben Sedley (Robinson, 2015).

The Art of Feeling Better: How I Heal My Mental Health (and You Can Too) – Matilda Heindow (Vermillion, 2023).

Websites

Internetmatters.org is a free online resource for every parent in the UK showing the best ways to protect children (aged 0+) online – with information, advice and support on all the big e-safety issues. It provides interactive tools to promote conversations with your child about the online world and has a range of advice from a panel of world experts.

Thepineshighland.com offers guidelines and strategies on food and nutrition for children.

Youngminds.org.uk have an excellent section on their website, including activity ideas to help create spaces to talk and a conversation-starter sheet called 'How To Talk to Your Child About Mental Health'.