

Worry and Anxiety

MOSS HALL PARENT AND CARER WORKSHOP

PRESENTED BY BARNET'S EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY TEAM

Aims of the session

- ▶ What is worry and anxiety?
- ▶ What do they look like?
- ▶ How emotional regulation develops
- ▶ Understanding the role of adults in developing resilience and emotional regulation
- ▶ Strategies to reduce anxiety and build emotional resilience
- ▶ Other strategies and resources if you are interested/feel they would be useful.

What is anxiety and how does it present in children and young people?

Emotional Regulation

Definitions

- ▶ Emotional regulation is the ability to control over one's own emotional state.
- ▶ Emotional dysregulation: emotional dysregulation means an individual has excessively intense emotions in response to a trigger.
- ▶ Trigger: an **event, experience, or memory that cause an intense emotional reaction**

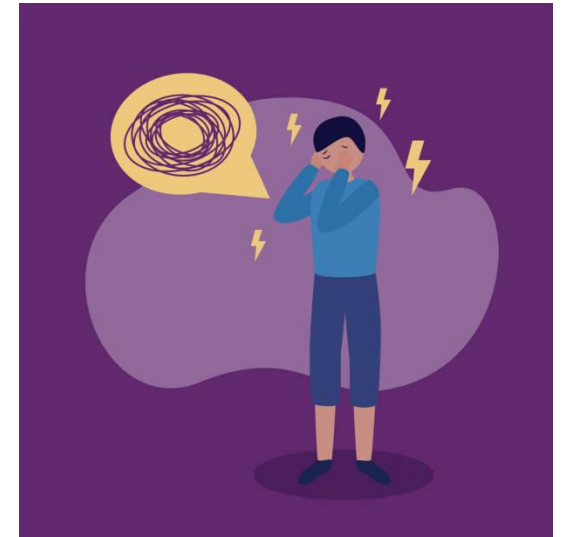
How Emotional Regulation develops?

- ▶ Being able to do this independently is a skill that develops over time.
- ▶ Emotional dysregulation can feel overwhelming for children and carers, but there are ways to learn how to help a child gain their emotional balance again.
- ▶ Children learn to manage their emotions from adults teaching them how to do this and being supported to make the experience more manageable.



What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is an **internal sense** of **worry, dread or fear**.
- **Everyone will feel anxious at some point in their life** when faced with a difficult situation.
- Anxiety can be a **normal and appropriate** response.
- However, sometimes anxiety can be **out of proportion** to threats in the environment.
- Anxiety becomes a difficulty when it **prevents us from enjoying normal life experiences**.



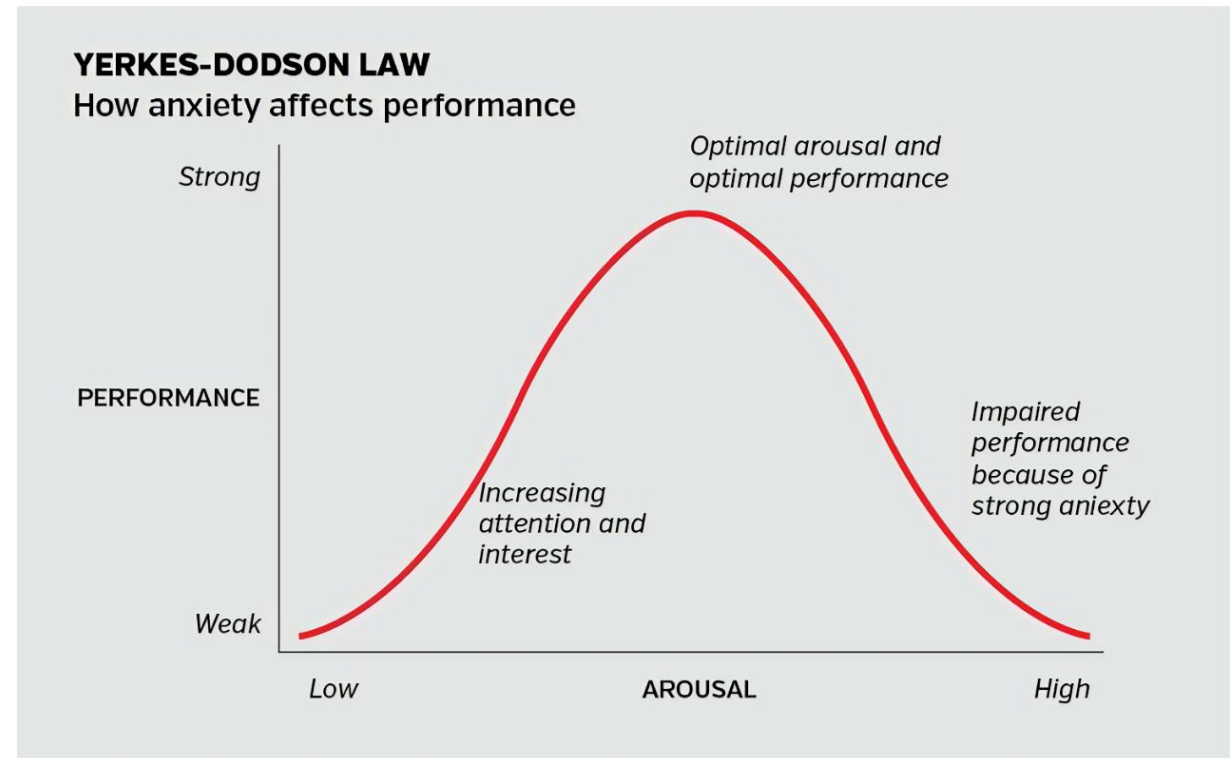
Fight, flight or freeze response



[Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained For Teens - YouTube](#)

What happens when anxiety becomes too much?

- There is a difference between **adaptive** and **maladaptive** feelings of anxiety.
 - Feeling nervous about an exam or delivering training is **adaptive**.
 - Feeling nervous about going to sleep without checking all the plugs in the house could be **maladaptive**.



Childhood anxiety

All children experience some anxiety as part of their normal development

Age	Common sources of anxiety/fear
0-5 months	Loss of support; loud noises
7-12 months	Strangers; sudden, unexpected and looming objects
1 year	Separation from parent; toilet; injury; strangers
2 years	Loud noises; animals; dark rooms; separation; large objects; change in environment
3-4 years	The dark; animals; separation; noises
5 years	'Bad' people; bodily harm; animals; dark; separation
6 years	Supernatural beings; bodily injuries; thunder and lightning; dark; sleeping or staying alone
7-8 years	Supernatural beings; dark; fears based on media events; staying alone; injury
9-12 years	Tests and exams; school performance; bodily injury; physical appearance; thunder and lightning; death
Adolescents	School; safety; political issues; personal relationships; personal appearance; natural phenomena; future; animals

Developmental Milestones

- ▶ 2 months old: looking at caregiver; crying to have needs met; sometimes self-soothing by sucking on their hands or fingers
- ▶ 4 months: smiling spontaneously; beginning to imitate facial expressions
- ▶ 6 months: crying, smiling, or laughing in response to other people's emotions; differentiating between strangers and familiar faces
- ▶ 9 months: showing stranger anxiety; begins showing a preference for toys or comfort objects; may cry when caregiver leaves room; learns the meaning of a few words



Developmental Milestones

- ▶ 12 months
 - ▶ has favourite people among those known to them
 - ▶ enjoys simple games like peek-a-boo
 - ▶ may show fear in new situations/ with unfamiliar people
 - ▶ imitates sounds or actions
- ▶ 18 months – 2 years
 - ▶ more frequent temper tantrums
 - ▶ asserts independence
 - ▶ may become frustrated trying to communicate
 - ▶ engages in simple pretend play, imitates what adults or other children do
 - ▶ does not understand what others think or feel



Developmental Milestones

▶ 3 – 4 years

- ▶ beginning to express a wider range of emotion
- ▶ can be spontaneously kind and caring
- ▶ play with other kids in what is called cooperative play
- ▶ separates from caregiver more easily
- ▶ uses words to communicate needs but often not able to articulate emotions with words
- ▶ may still have tantrums, particularly because of changes in routine or not getting what they want

▶ 5 – 6 years

- ▶ Understands others' feelings and can be sensitive towards them
- ▶ More aware of following rules
- ▶ More conversational and independent
- ▶ Will test boundaries but still eager to please adults and help out
- ▶ Understand the different between fantasy and reality



Developmental Milestones

12

▶ 7 – 8 years

- ▶ More aware of the perceptions of others/trying to fit in
- ▶ Expanding their emotional vocabulary
- ▶ desire to behave appropriately, but aren't as attentive to directions
- ▶ trying to express feelings with words, but may still resort to aggression or tantrums when upset

▶ 9 – 10 years

- ▶ concerned about rules which can lead to bossiness
- ▶ uses problem solving, negotiating, and compromising skills with peers
- ▶ begins narrowing their peer group down to a few close friends
- ▶ may begin to withdraw from family time or conversations to develop their own identity
- ▶ may change emotions quickly
- ▶ can express subtle emotion

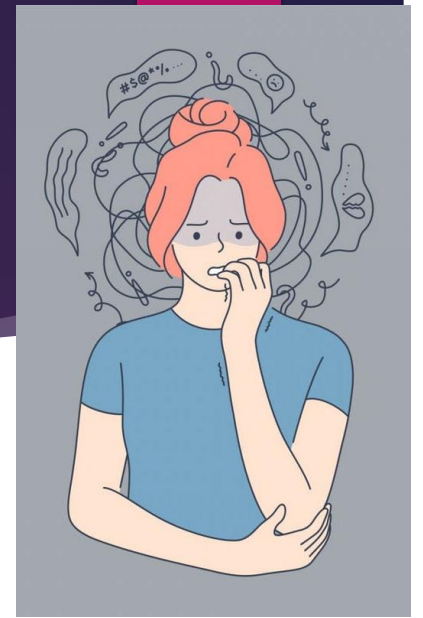
Discussion



What worries does your child/children have?

Common signs of anxiety

- Fidgeting
- Feeling restless or on edge
- Difficulty focusing or mind going blank
- Fatigue from sleep disturbance
- Irritability and oppositional behaviour (sometimes referred to as “acting out”)
- Self-doubt
- Fear of talking in front of a group
- Fear of scrutiny or judgment
- Difficulty separating from care givers
- Avoidance behaviours
- Crying
- Tantrums or meltdowns
- Psychosomatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches, muscle pains, etc.)
- Panic attacks
- Excessive worry
- Repetitive behaviours, thoughts or questions

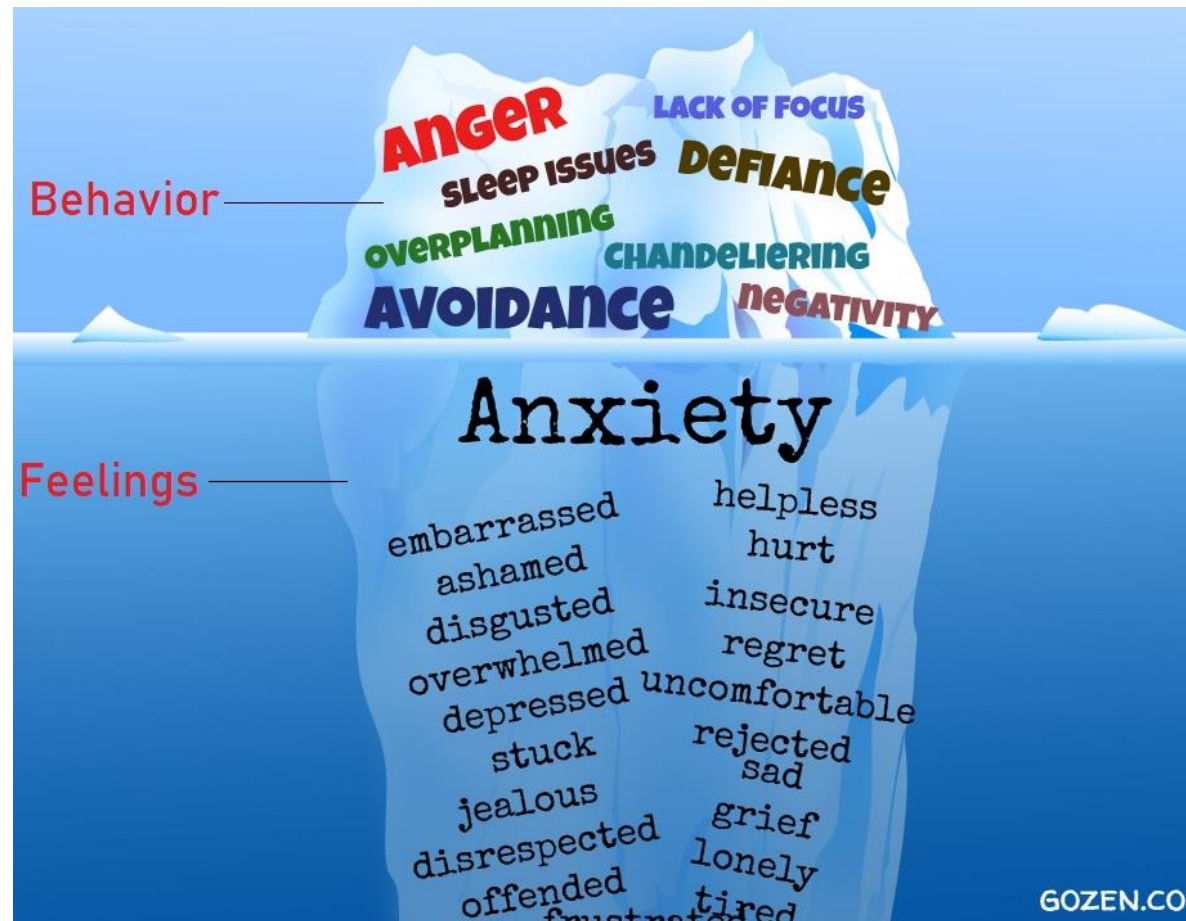


Discussion



What signs of anxiety does your child/children display?

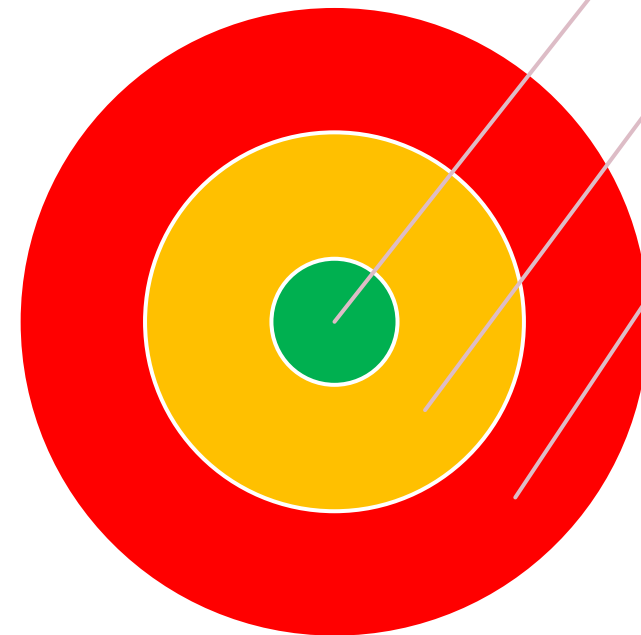
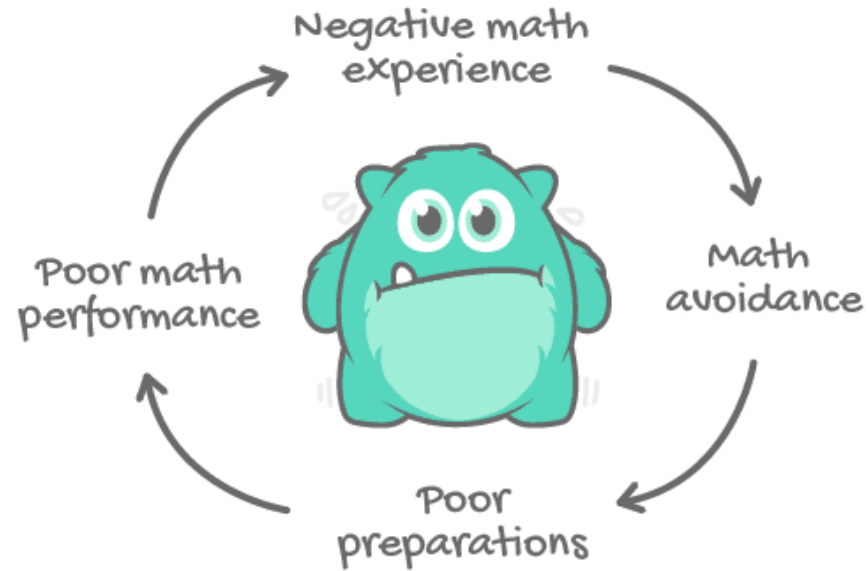
Behaviour is a form of communication



Teachers and parents...

- ▶ Play a big role in teaching a child how to manage situations where they become anxious.
- ▶ If we avoid situations that make us anxious, we teach our brain that we should be afraid.
- ▶ Supporting your child to face the situation with support will teach their brain that they can manage.

Math anxiety cycle



Comfort Zone

Growth Zone

Panic Zone



Own oxygen
mask first

Whole school interventions used at Moss Hall

Visual
timetables
+ Routines

Emotion
Coaching

Zones of
Regulation

Structure and Predictability

My Choices

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Now

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Next

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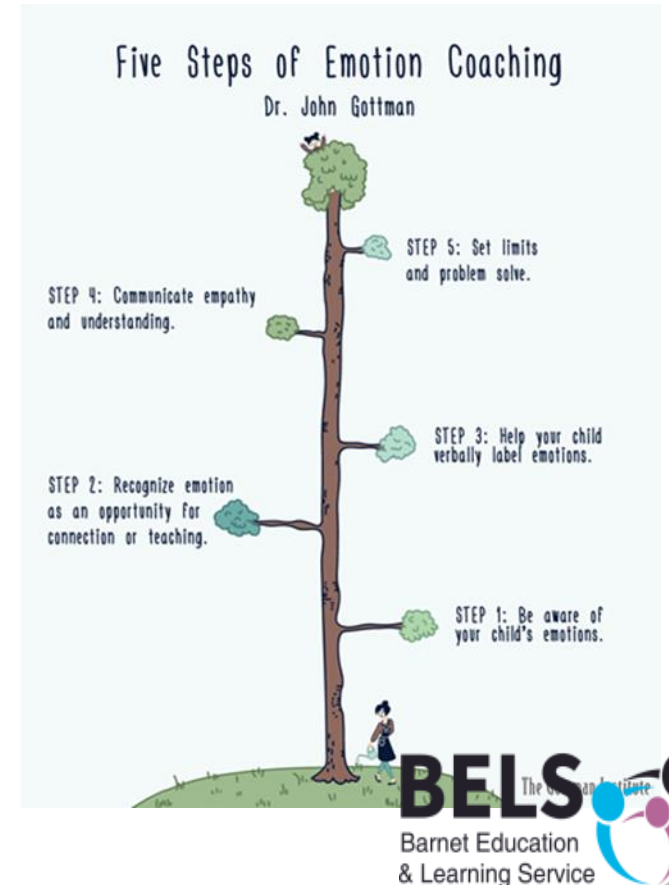


Remember to timetable some fun activities and exercise breaks between work tasks!

- ▶ Use a visual timetable to structure the day, activity that your child is worried about.
- ▶ Breaking activities into manageable chunks can help.

Emotion Coaching

- Emotion Coaching is an **evidence-based strategy** based upon the work of John Gottman.
- Adults can use this approach to **pre-empt or respond to children's behaviour**.
- Emotion Coaching enables children to manage their behaviour by helping them to **understand** the different **emotions** they experience, **why** they occur, and **how** to handle them.





For more on Emotion Coaching...

PLEASE SEE THE SLIDES FROM THE DECEMBER 2022
PARENT/CARER WORKSHOP

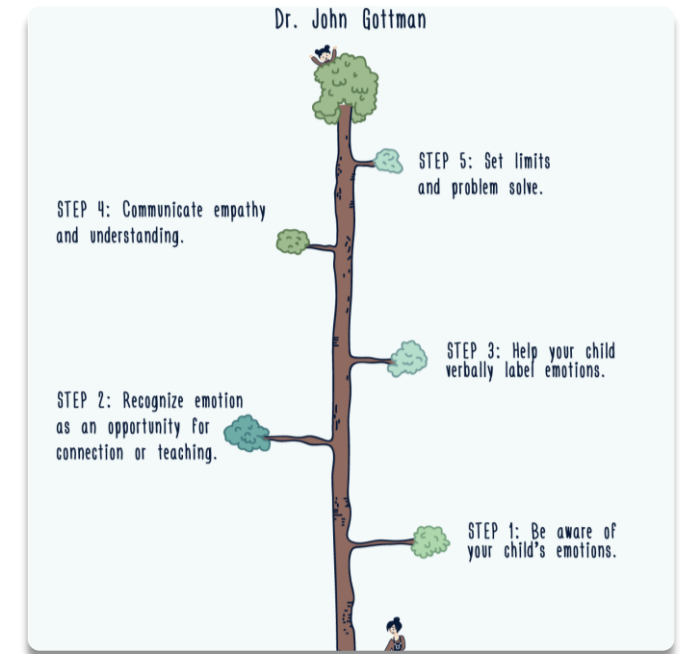
Emotion Coaching involves:

- Teaching children about different emotions '**in the moment**'.
- Giving children **strategies** to deal with different emotions.
- Accepting **negative emotions** as **normal**.
- Using moments of negative behaviour as **opportunities for teaching and learning**.
- Building **trusting and respectful relationships**.



5 Steps of Emotion Coaching

1. Be aware of the child's emotions.
2. Recognise the child's expression of emotion as an opportunity to connect with them and teach them.
3. Listen with empathy and validate the child's feelings.
4. Help the child to verbally label their emotions.
5. Set limits whilst helping the child to problem-solve or deal with situations appropriately.



Messages we receive when those around us use Emotion Coaching

- We **all have feelings** and need to **recognise them** in ourselves as well as others.
- We are **understood, accepted, supported, cared about and respected**.
- **All feelings are normal** but need to be **regulated and expressed constructively**.
- We are **empowered** and it's **safe to engage in problem-solving**.



Steps 3/4: Example scripts

- ▶ *'I can see that you feel angry when that happens. I imagine I would feel angry if that happened to me. It's normal to feel like that.'*
- ▶ *'I can see you're frowning. You're kicking the wall and you're expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn't want to do something.'*
- ▶ *'I noticed you looking around at the other students who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be ok. Have I got that right?'*
- ▶ *'I wonder if you're worried about getting it wrong. It's normal to feel a bit anxious when you're learning something new. Learning new things can feel hard sometimes.'*

Stage 5: Example scripts for setting limits

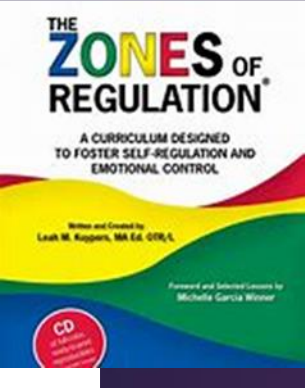
- ▶ *'You are angry that I've taken away your phone, but these are the rules everyone has to follow. I will keep it safe for you.'*
- ▶ *'It's really important in our school that we are safe with each other and with our belongings. It's not OK to hit people or to break and throw things when we are angry.'*
- ▶ *'These are the rules that we have to follow. Doing that is not okay.'*
- ▶ *'You didn't do the task as we agreed. You're probably angry that you can't join in the practical session with the others now because you have to complete the written assessment first.'*
- ▶ *'We can't behave like that, even though you are feeling annoyed, because it is not safe.'*

**We can often use the structure:
'It's ok to feel...but it is not ok to...'**



Stage 5: Example scripts for problem solving

- ▶ *“Let’s think of what we could have done instead”*
- ▶ *“Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings”*
- ▶ *“I can help you to think of a different way to cope”*
- ▶ *“Can you remember what we said before”*
- ▶ *“What would happen if...?”*
- ▶ *“Let’s look at some different choices.”*
- ▶ *“Let’s sort this out”*
- ▶ *“Try and do this next time you feel like this”*
- ▶ *“Let’s decide what you will do next time you feel like this”*
- ▶ *“This is what you can do instead”*
- ▶ *“What might your friend do or suggest you do?”*
- ▶ *“What can you do to solve this problem?”*



The Zones of Regulation

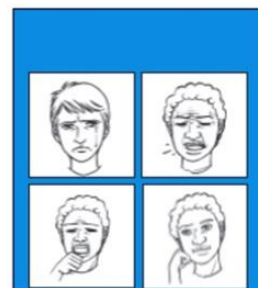
- ▶ **Aim:** The Zones of Regulation is a conceptual framework used to teach students (aged 4 years old and above) about self-regulation.
- ▶ **Background:** It was developed by an Occupational Therapist (Leah Kuypers) and was originally designed for children with autism, but can be used to support the self-regulation of all students.
- ▶ **Key message:** Students need to be regulated in order to be able to learn!



What are the four Zones?

- ▶ Our **feelings/emotions** and our **state of alertness** determines our Zone.
- ▶ The four Zones represent **emotions** that are grouped together because they have **similar effects on our body**.

The **ZONES** of Regulation®



BLUE ZONE

Sad
Sick
Tired
Bored
Moving Slowly



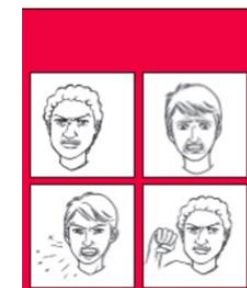
GREEN ZONE

Happy
Calm
Feeling Okay
Focused
Ready to Learn



YELLOW ZONE

Frustrated
Worried
Silly/Wiggly
Excited
Loss of Some Control

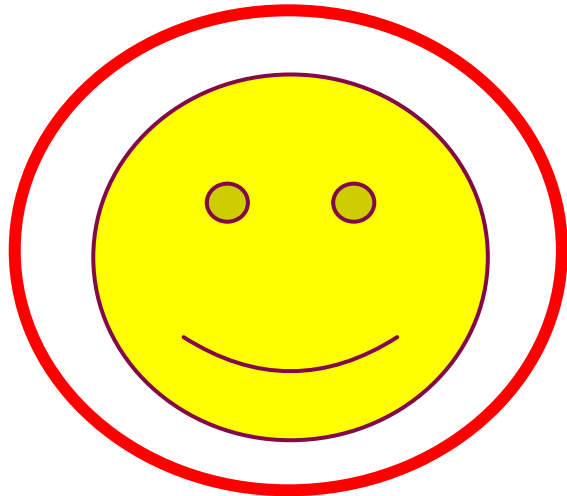


RED ZONE

Mad/Angry
Mean
Terrified
Yelling/Hitting
Out of Control

Emotion coaching develops internal regulation

External Frameworks



**External regulations
(Sanctions &
Rewards)**

Internal Frameworks



**Internal regulation
(Emotion Coaching)**

Self-regulation strategies

There are three types of self regulation strategies:

- **Sensory supports** (help us to become more alert or calm down)
- **Calming techniques** (help to calm our body and mind)
- **Thinking strategies** (help us to analyse and rationalise)

Students should be supported to:

- **Learn and practice various tools** for calming and alerting.
- Identify their **unique preferences** for particular tools and add these to their zones 'toolbox'.
- Understand there is an **overlap between tools** (the same tools may be helpful to move to different zones).





Sensory supports

Sensory supports can be used when we're in the **red**, **yellow** or **blue** zones, as they can be calming and/or alerting.

Examples:

- ▶ Yoga poses
- ▶ "Heavy" lifting
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Fidget tools
- ▶ Doodling / colouring
- ▶ Movement breaks (e.g. taking a message to someone or going to get a drink)
- ▶ Music / headphones to block out noise
- ▶ Sitting on a bean bag or wobble cushion
- ▶ Weighted blankets
- ▶ Sitting on your knees / standing to work





Calming techniques

Calming techniques can be used when we're in the **red** or **yellow** zones.

Calming techniques aim to shift:

- ▶ The **physiological reaction** of the body (i.e. from a stressed to calm nervous system)
- ▶ The **neurocognition** (i.e. changing the brain's pattern of thinking).

Examples:

- ▶ Breathing exercises
- ▶ Calming sequence using rhythmic movement
- ▶ Counting to 10

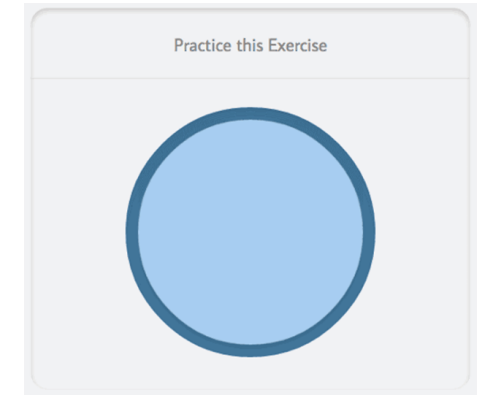
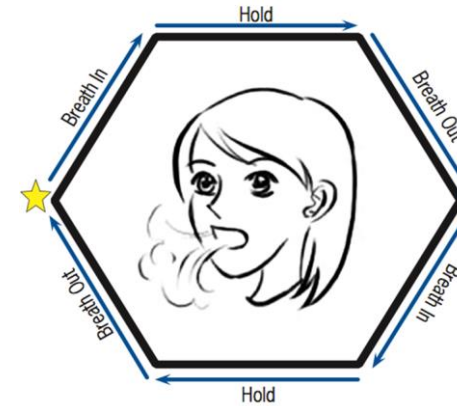


Calming techniques: Breathing exercises

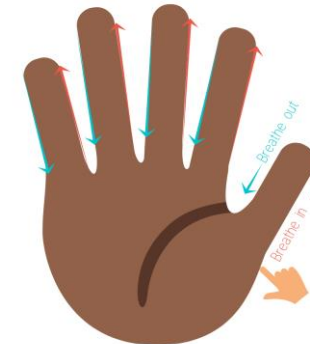


- Breathing exercises can **slow down your heart rate** and the **physical response to anxiety**.
- There are a range of different breathing exercises, including:
 - YouTube videos.
 - Lazy 8 breathing.
 - 5 finger breathing.
 - The six sides of breathing.

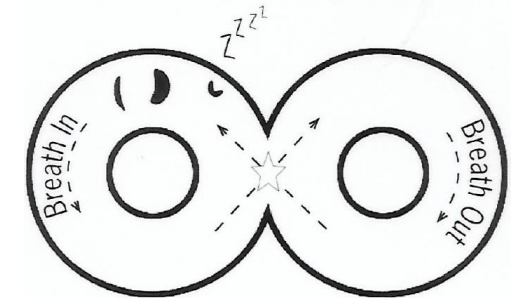
The Six Sides of **Breathing**



5 Finger Breathing

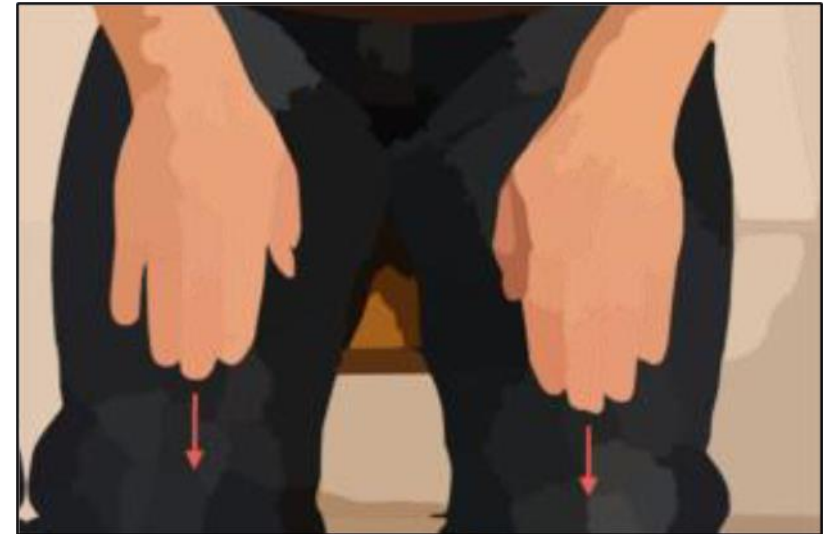
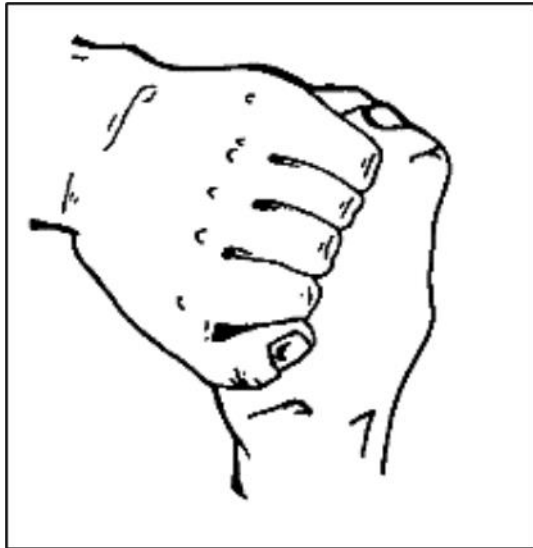


Lazy 8 **Breathing**





Calming techniques: Calming sequence using rhythmic movement

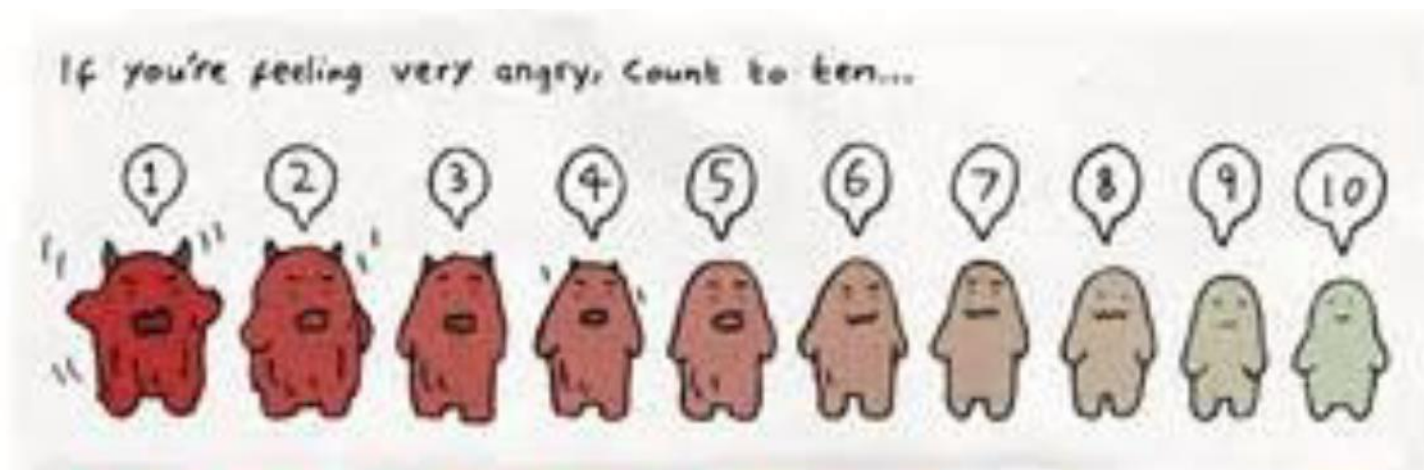




Calming techniques: Counting to 10

Slowly and in a calm voice, say:

“1 hold steady, 2 hold steady, 3 hold steady, ... 10 I’m ready”



Try with a movement component (e.g. press fingers on table or touch fingers).

Physical exercise

- Physical exercise has been found to **reduce feelings of anxiety**.
- “Evidence from 12 RCTs suggested benefits of exercise, for select groups, similar to established treatments and greater than placebo” in the treatment of anxiety (Stonerock, 2015).
- We should encourage children to engage in physical exercise throughout the day. Where possible, we should **allow children to choose which activities they would like to do** from a range of choices provided by the adult.
- We should also try to **join in with these activities** so that we can support them to regulate!

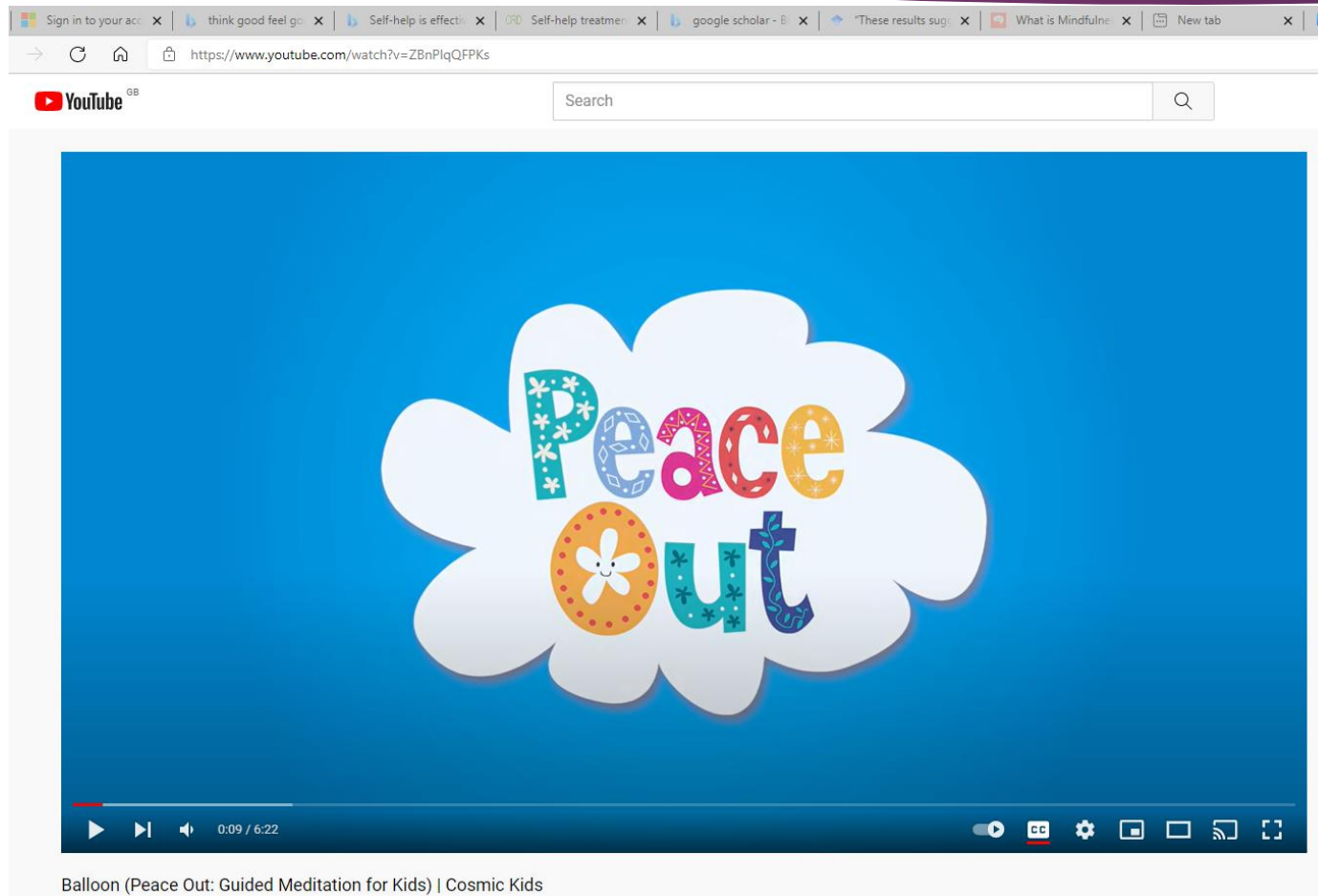


Mindfulness

- ▶ “Mindfulness refers to a process that leads to a mental state characterized by **non-judgmental awareness of the present moment experience**, including one’s sensations, thoughts, bodily states, consciousness, and the environment, while encouraging **openness, curiosity, and acceptance.**”
- ▶ “Mindfulness-based therapy is a promising intervention for treating anxiety and mood problems” (Hofmann, et al., 2010).
- ▶ Formal practice is **mindfulness meditation**, whereas informal practice involves bringing your attention to **everyday activities** (e.g. colouring, eating, walking).
- ▶ App recommendations: Headspace for Kids or Smiling Mind.



Activity – Mindfulness Meditation



The screenshot shows a web browser with several tabs open. The active tab is a YouTube video titled "Peace Out: Guided Meditation for Kids" by Cosmic Kids. The video player displays a blue background with a white cloud shape in the center. Inside the cloud, the words "Peace Out" are written in a colorful, stylized font. The letters are decorated with patterns like snowflakes, flowers, and geometric shapes. The video player interface includes a search bar, a play button, and a progress bar showing 0:09 / 6:22.

Sign in to your acc... x think good feel go... x Self-help is effect... x CPD Self-help treatme... x google scholar - B... x "These results sug... x What is Mindfulne... x New tab x

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBnPlqQFPKs

YouTube^{GB} Search

Peace Out

0:09 / 6:22

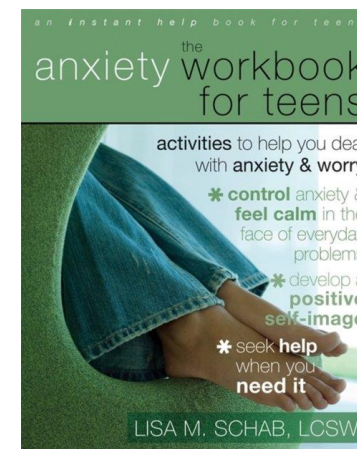
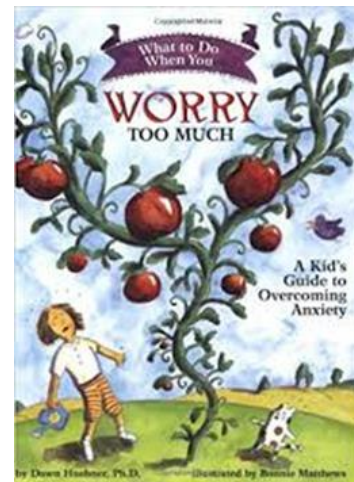
Balloon (Peace Out: Guided Meditation for Kids) | Cosmic Kids

Reflection:

- *How did that make you feel?*
- *How do you think your child would respond to Mindfulness Meditation or other Mindfulness activities?*

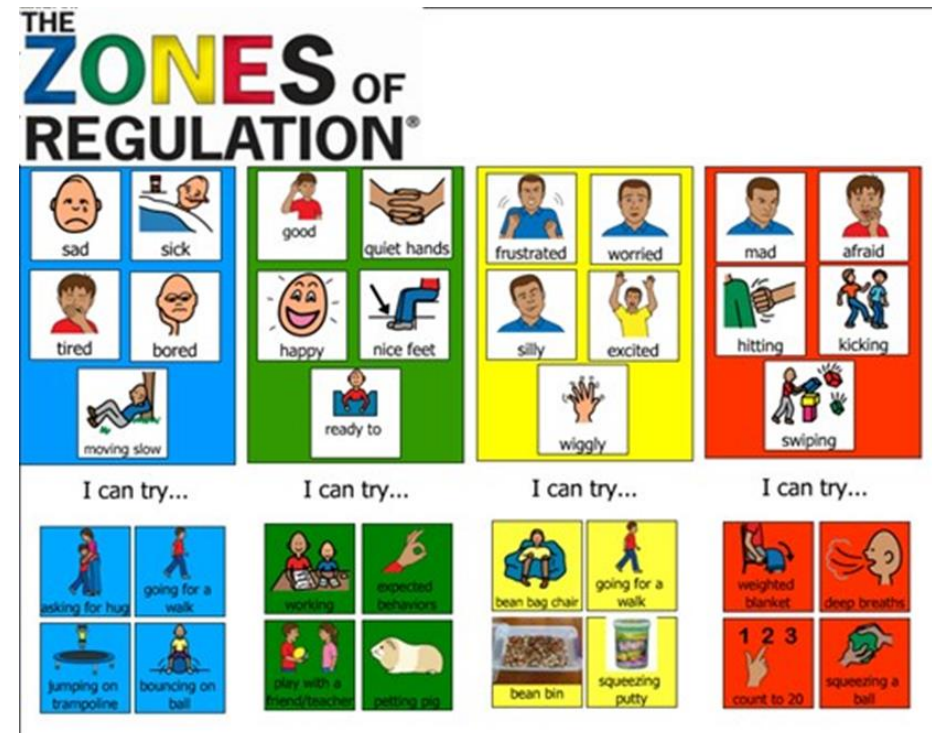
Self-help resources

- There are many self-help resources available that can be **easily implemented** with children and young people and have been found to be **effective**.
- “Self-help is effective in the treatment of anxiety disorders, and should be offered as part of stepped care treatment models in community services” and “Self-help for anxiety disorders has moderate to large effects compared to no treatment” (Haug et al., 2012).



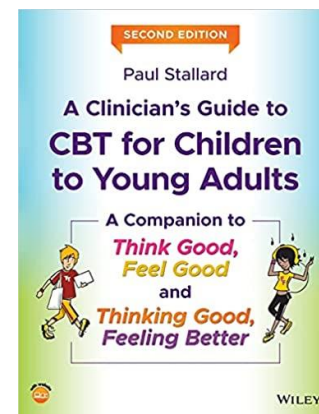
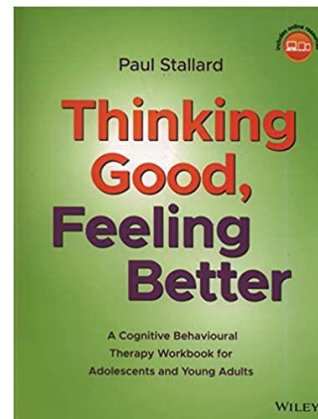
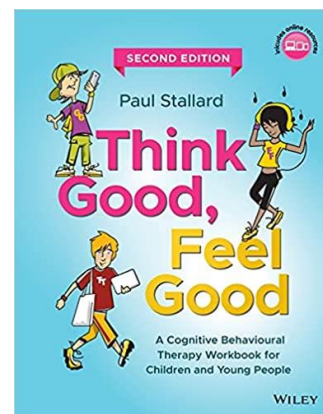
Activity: Discussion

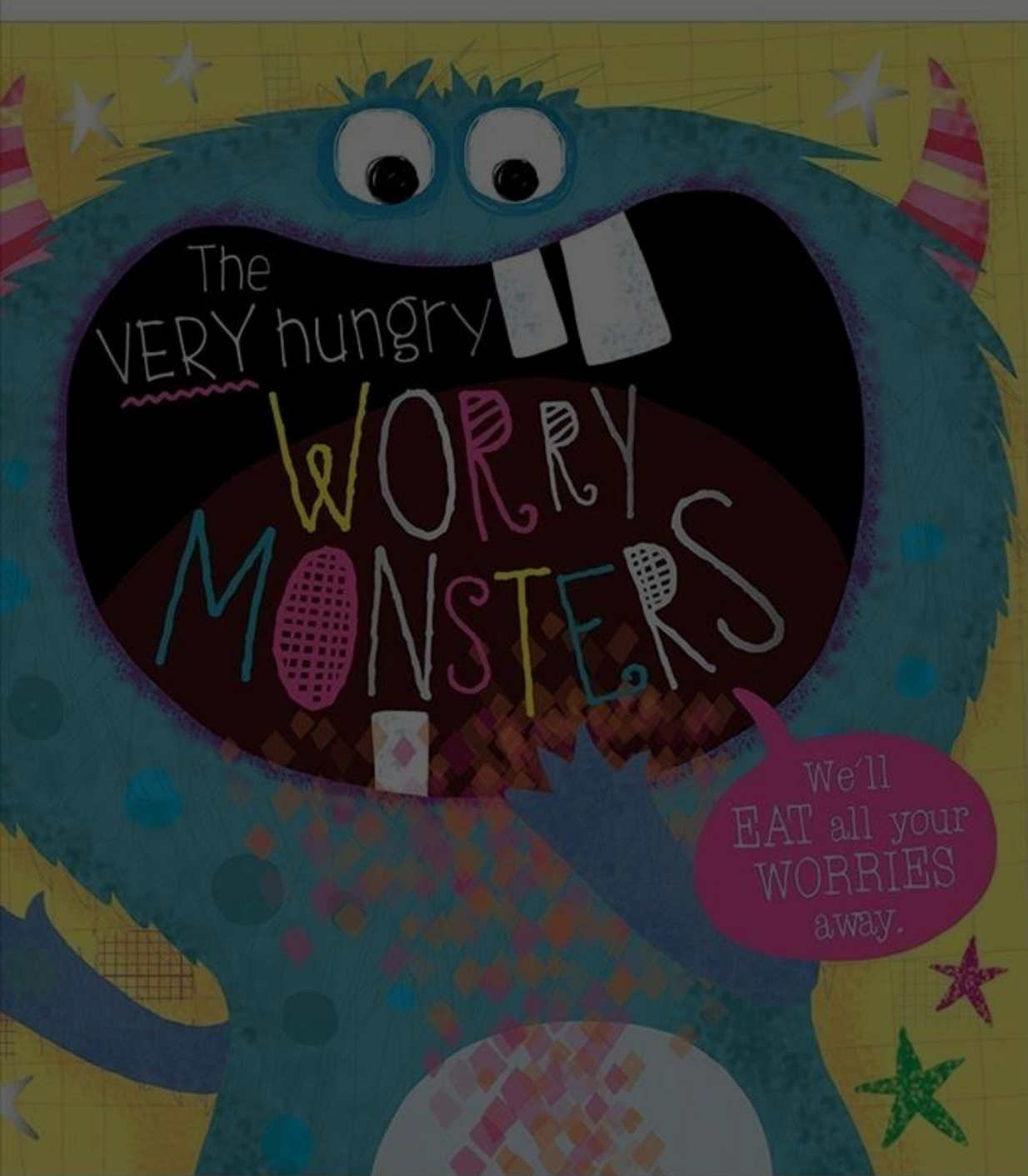
- What regulation strategies/tools does your child **already use**?
- Which of the strategies/tools listed might they find **helpful**?
- What **other strategies/tools** can you think of?
- **When** could they use them (time/events of the day and zone)?



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approaches

- For example, the resource **'Think Good, Feel Good'** (for children) or **'Thinking Good, Feeling Better'** (for adolescents and young adults) can be used by adults to support children and young people to learn about their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, so that they can begin to recognise how these are linked to one another and ways in which they can begin to change these (e.g. challenging unhelpful thoughts).





Starving the Anxiety Gremlin

A COGNITIVE
BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY
WORKBOOK ON
ANXIETY MANAGEMENT
FOR CHILDREN
AGED 5-9



End of session reflection



Which of the strategies that were spoken about today do you think would be helpful for your child?



Practice using 1-2 of these strategies at home this week and at the end of the week reflect on how it went!