

 *Summer 2020*

Bring it on

Adapting to change and building resilience
workbook for children, young people and families



*York Methodist Circuit
Children, Youth and
Families Team*

INTRODUCTION

When this workbook was first imagined, we thought it would be about helping children and young people feel prepared to go back to school after a long time away from the usual routine. As time went on and the possibility of returning to usual routines seemed to be pushed further and further back, we realised that this had to be adapted. We don't know exactly how our children will go back to school; we don't know when we will go back to work or church or any other activities we regularly took part in. The world has changed and we have all changed as people. And that may excite us or terrify us or perhaps both all at once.

This book was originally designed for parents or carers to work through with their children and will read in that way. However, it can be used to help *anyone* who needs it to feel ready to face the uncertainty. It's here to help you understand yourself and your child a little more (a lifelong journey, let's face it) and to give you a backpack of useful tools to help you along the way. A bit of theory, lots of practical tips, a bit of wisdom (we hope) and a lot of encouragement.

Remember: this workbook is designed to offer *suggested* activities and tools. *You* know your situation and your family. *You* know what will work for you and them in your own unique context. However, do have a look at each suggestion because you just never know when it might come in handy – shove it in the backpack anyway, just in case...

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.”

Mark Twain

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1. Emotions

If you have never seen the Pixar film 'Inside Out', this is a great excuse. It helps us to understand our basic emotions and what is going on inside our heads (adults as well as children!).

Emotions are good, they are designed to help us survive in the world. All too often we try to deny them or hide them, even from ourselves. Acknowledging your emotions is a healthy first step.

So, in today's context, it might be "actually, I feel really scared about going back to school/work/going out". Saying it out loud to a trusted friend or family member, or writing it down can help enormously, especially if think you "should" feel differently.

Note from the team: If this is the case, let us stop you right there! You are officially given permission not to "should" yourself. None of this "I should feel this, I should be grateful, I should be [fill in whatever adjective fits]". You feel what you feel. Your emotions are what they are. Own them. It's fine.

If you are working with young children on this, it's important to help them understand that it's ok to have lots of different feelings. Sometimes they might not be able to understand or name how they are feeling, but they need to know that they shouldn't feel bad about it. We all need help in understanding emotions, working through them and channeling them in a positive way.

The behaviour iceberg

We see this more obviously in younger children but it applies to all of us. Whether we are bickering with our partners or bursting into tears because we knocked a cup of tea over or being withdrawn or picking fights with siblings, the behaviour is the tip of the iceberg. There's a whole lot of emotion going on underneath.

Working out what is really going on can be tricky. Get your deerstalker on and practice good listening and investigation techniques to try to understand what is happening underneath the surface. If you are a young person, get a trusted adult or friend to do this with you. This is useful because how *you* see things may not be how *they* see them. It's good to get a different perspective.



Use the 'LISTEN' acronym:

L Listening

I Interest

S Specific Questions

T Time together

E Empathy

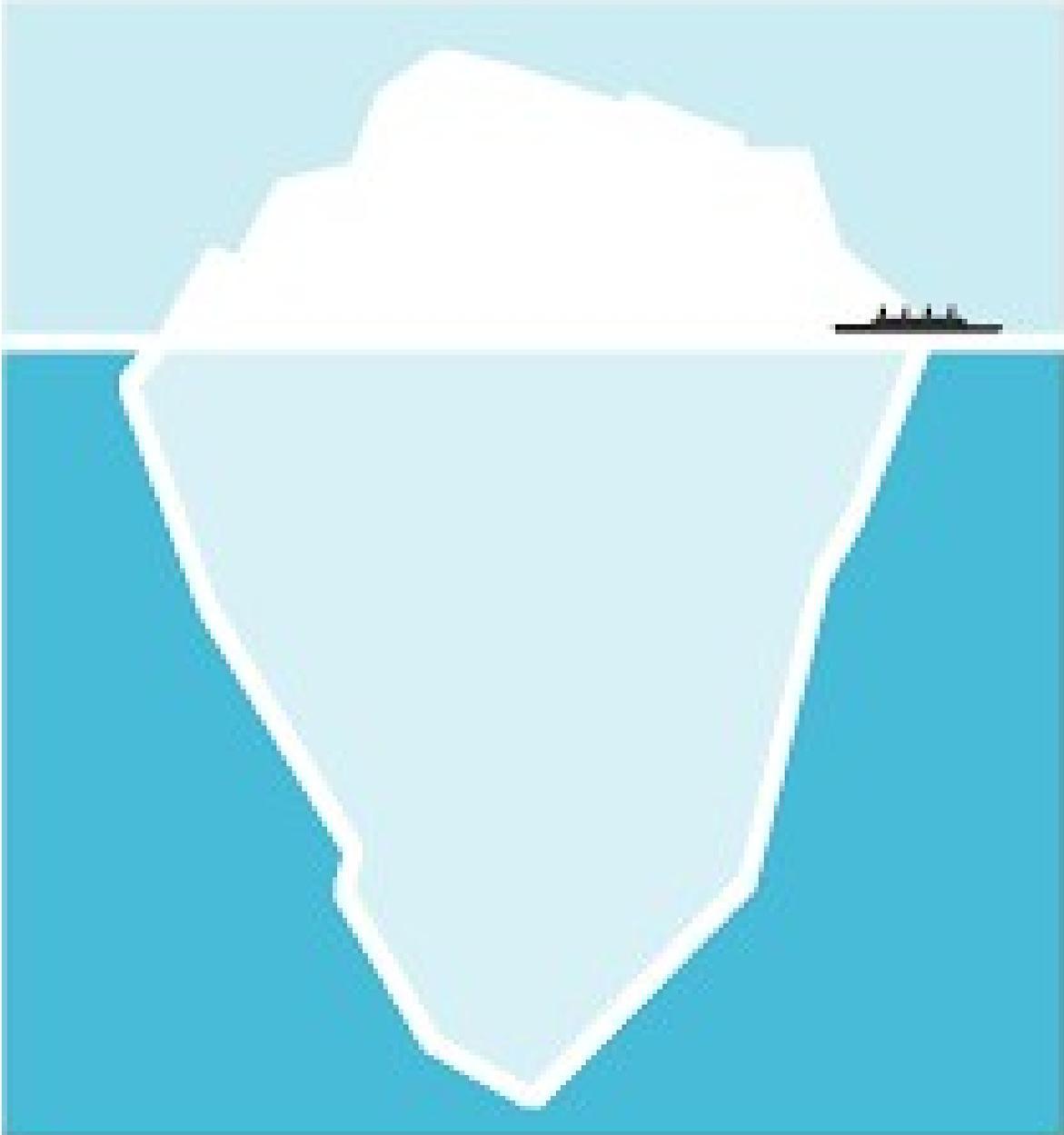
N Noticing

Dedicating time to listen carefully to your child, partner, family member, friend, or even just having a quiet bit of time on your own, shows them how important they (or you!) are. Taking a real interest in how they are feeling, asking helpful questions (it's not an interrogation remember!) and noticing what they say (and what they are not saying...) is important.



Here's a blank iceberg for you to work through. What behaviour are you seeing or experiencing? What emotions are going on underneath?

Notes: Write down any other observations





"If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff."

2. *Response to Change or Stress*

We said in part 1 that emotions are normal and are there to help us survive. In part 2 we explain how those emotions kick in when responding to our environment. In particular, when responding to a perceived threat to our well-being. Notice we said 'perceived'. The threat may or may not be an *actual* threat; the fact that it is perceived is enough to prompt the emotions and the behaviour.

We've all no doubt heard about a 'fight or flight' response to a threat. There are actually more responses than that, mainly 'freeze'. If a growling bear wanders across our path, the amygdala part of our brain would have us fight it, run away or pretend to be dead so it ignores us. The amygdala is our alarm bell, trying to get our attention to make sure we survive.

In order to survive, our thinking part of the brain is shut down and messages are sent to the adrenal glands to pump adrenalin through our body to get us ready to act. We don't think – we act. This is why we sometimes hear of superhuman feats; people being able to do things they are sure they wouldn't have been able to in normal circumstances. They don't think about it – they just do it (and maybe go to pieces afterwards!). It's also the reason why we say 'we can't think straight' when we are stressed. You can't; in stress mode, your brain has shut down the rational thought processes.

The physical responses to perceived stress are: heart racing, shaking, anger, crying, being frozen to the spot, dry mouth,

sweaty hands, aggression, dizziness, shutting down, feeling far away or like you are disappearing, being unable to concentrate.

Triggers

As individuals, we all have different things which will trigger our alarm bell. What feels like a threat to one person will not necessarily be perceived in the same way by someone else. One person will be anxious about going into social situations, other people love it. It's important for us and our children to remember that everyone will have a trigger, everyone will be anxious at some point in their life. Everyone should be treated with gentleness and consideration at those times.

Often, we feel stress because we feel we have no **control** over what's happening in our world, or over what other people say or do. In today's world, it feels like there is more and more outside of our control. This is going to be a trigger for stress for many. Taking positive steps is about helping us to take control.

Building on from the iceberg, the next step is to identify why you or your friend/family member are having those feelings. What are those triggers....?

The Stress Bucket

There are two parts to the stress bucket. The first part is to think about what fills your stress bucket: what are the triggers...? What are the things that are making you or your child anxious? The second is about balancing that with having an outlet pipe – how do you go about relieving that stress? We'll talk more about that later.

In a moment, go to the next page and think about what goes on in your child's/your life that adds another cup of stress to that stress bucket. Also consider that things that are causing *you* stress may be affecting your child's stress too. Don't we get irritable and snap at our nearest and dearest when we are stressed ourselves? It may be worth doing this exercise for yourself or other members of your family too. If this is the case, please do not feel guilty! Own those emotions and have an honest conversation with your child. It's often incredibly helpful for your child to understand that adults struggle too and that we are not perfect. Working through this together may be helpful, bring new insights and bring you closer as a family, as difficult as it might be at the time.

Here's some ideas of typical triggers:

- Starting a new job/school
- Changes to key relationships (divorce, marriage, death in the family, ending of friendships...)
- Work related worries (including schoolwork).
- Social anxiety
- Bereavement/loss – at this time it may be loss of a way of life or physical contact, work colleagues leaving, missing friends.
- Financial worries
- Work related worries (including schoolwork).
- Anything else – big or small....



Developed from an idea by Brabban and Turkington (2002)

"Don't believe every worried thought you have. Worried thoughts are notoriously inaccurate."
 ~RENEE JAIN

Here's your stress bucket. Feel free to do one for yourself as well as others in your family. Even just starting a conversation might bring you useful insights. Others might be worrying about things you hadn't even realised were a problem. This is the first step to addressing the worry.

Complete the stresses going in first, then come back to the stress-relieving tap later.



3. *Managing the Stress Bucket*

There are different ways we can deal with this overflowing bucket. The appropriate response will depend on the situation and the person in question. The person's own characteristics, preferences and choices all play a part in this. There may also be things that you or your family are already doing anyway that you hadn't realised were 'coping strategies!'

In summary, here's what you can do:

1. Reduce what goes in your bucket – taking yourself away from the stresses.
2. Reduce what is perceived as a stress.
3. Make the bucket bigger. This involves increasing your capacity for coping with stress; your resilience.
4. Turning on the tap attached to the bucket; finding ways of relieving the stress.

Each of these will be taken in turn. Some may involve short term fixes, some require longer term work; you can't buy another bucket load of resilience from the supermarket. If only! It's not always as easy as taking yourself away from the cause of the stress, either. Either you are not allowed to, or you or maybe it's not desirable – there are life lessons to be learned in coping with difficult situations. It often requires a judgement call and there's not always an obvious answer (eeurgh, life is just so *hard* sometimes!).

We would like to reassure you, right now, that YOU are the biggest single factor in building your child's stress bucket. The fact that you are even taking the time to read this means they have a trusted cheerleader in their lives who loves them

and wants the best for them. Keep going.

Reducing what goes in your bucket

Having identified what the triggers and stresses are, can any of them be avoided? The term 'energy vampires' sums it up; those things (or sadly, sometimes people) who sap your energy, never giving any benefit or sense of wellbeing in return.

The Circles of Control diagram overleaf may be helpful for you in deciding whether you have control over these triggers. There may be some things causing stress which can easily be removed from your life. Some may not be so easily removed, but can still be done. Unhealthy friendships or an overly busy lifestyle perhaps. Some triggers may actually be physical; sugar, additives, certain medication or lack of sleep may influence behaviour, for example.

Reducing the perception of a trigger as stressful.

In some cases, particularly for children, they have little knowledge of the world, so lots of things are scary for them. As our brain develops and our knowledge increases, we understand better whether something is a threat or not. Encouraging your child, or your friend or family member to talk it out is key. It's important to get other opinions to check whether something is 'worth worrying about'. Ok, this may not stop them worrying in all cases, but perhaps in some.

This is particularly relevant at the moment when they tune in to the fact that *we* are worried but they know far less about the implications of the virus and the changes happening in schools, etc, so may exaggerate the possibilities in their heads. Knowledge is power; the more you know about something, the more in control you feel.

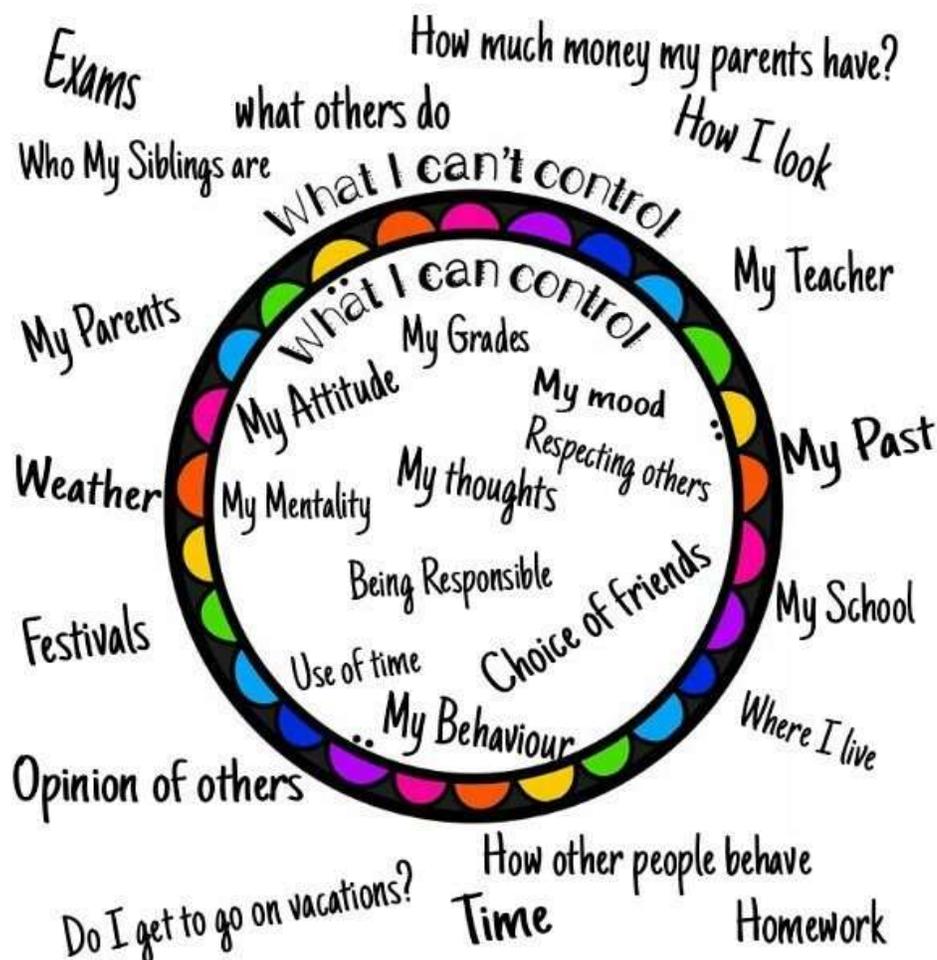
The Circle of Control

Here's an example of a circle of control. In the centre are the things that you have control over and can do something about.

Outside of that circle are the things that you have no direct control over. They may be things you can *influence*, but you ultimately can't control them. You can only control what *you* do. For example, being a kind and supportive friend means that it is more likely that others will be the same to you, but you can't force them to be so. Anxieties are often cause when people try to control things which they ultimately can't. There is sometimes work to be done on learning to let those things go.

There's a blank one on the next page for you to have a go with your child or young person.

CIRCLE OF CONTROL



Circle of Control

What I can't control

What I can control

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4. Resilience and Self-Esteem

This response to stress is such a biggy that it deserves a whole section of the workbook – and let's face it, a whole other library!

The building up of a young person's self-esteem is deep, far reaching and multi-faceted. This really does just touch the tip of our earlier iceberg. There are things you can do which will slowly chip away at poor self-esteem, but you are in for a long journey. It's no quick fix. If there are outside sources which are eroding that self-esteem, you need to come back with twice as much positive encouragement. Actually, it's more like 10 times as much because the natural human inclination is to focus on the negative.

The Cycle of Self-Esteem

Both high and low self-esteem can be self-reinforcing. Think about it, in it's simple terms, when people have high self-esteem, they will expect people to like them (or not worry if they don't) and expect to succeed at some things (or not worry if they don't). They are more likely to be willing to try new things and set goals for themselves. Although they may have set backs, they will be more likely to achieve their goals because they *believe* they can, not because of any predisposition to succeed. As you can imagine, the opposite is true of those with low self-esteem. The trick is to break out of this cycle. It's hard work and it takes a long time, because it requires us to take a *risk* sometimes – for example, going to try out for a sports team. It's about setting yourself a realistic goal and going for it. That can be hard.

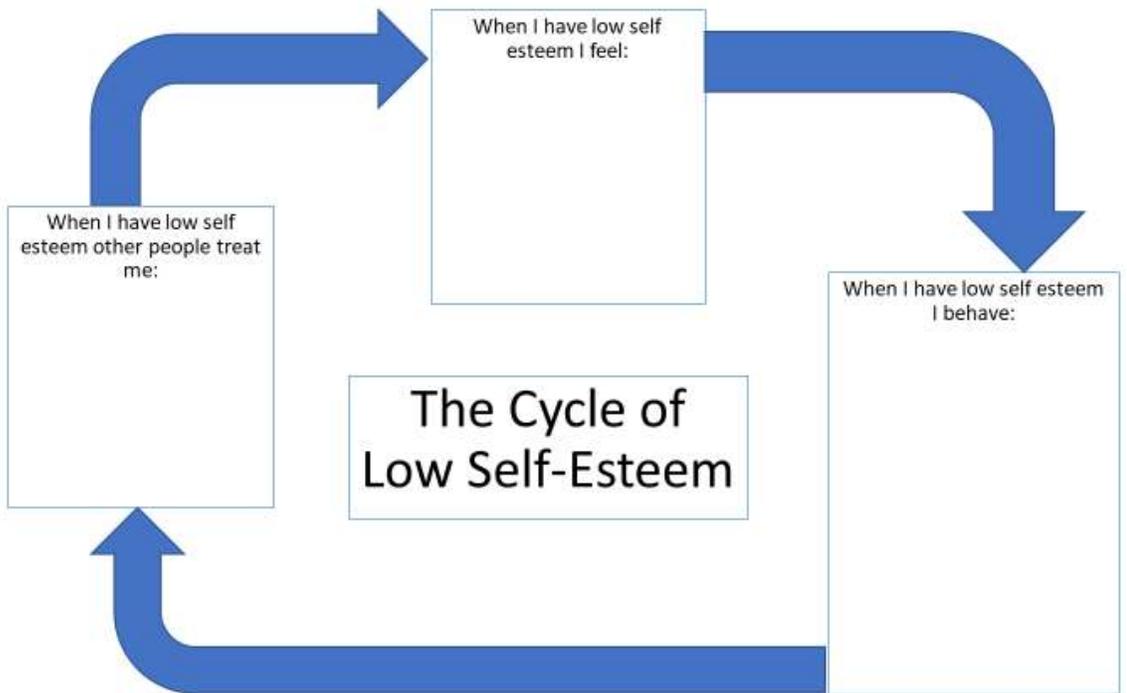
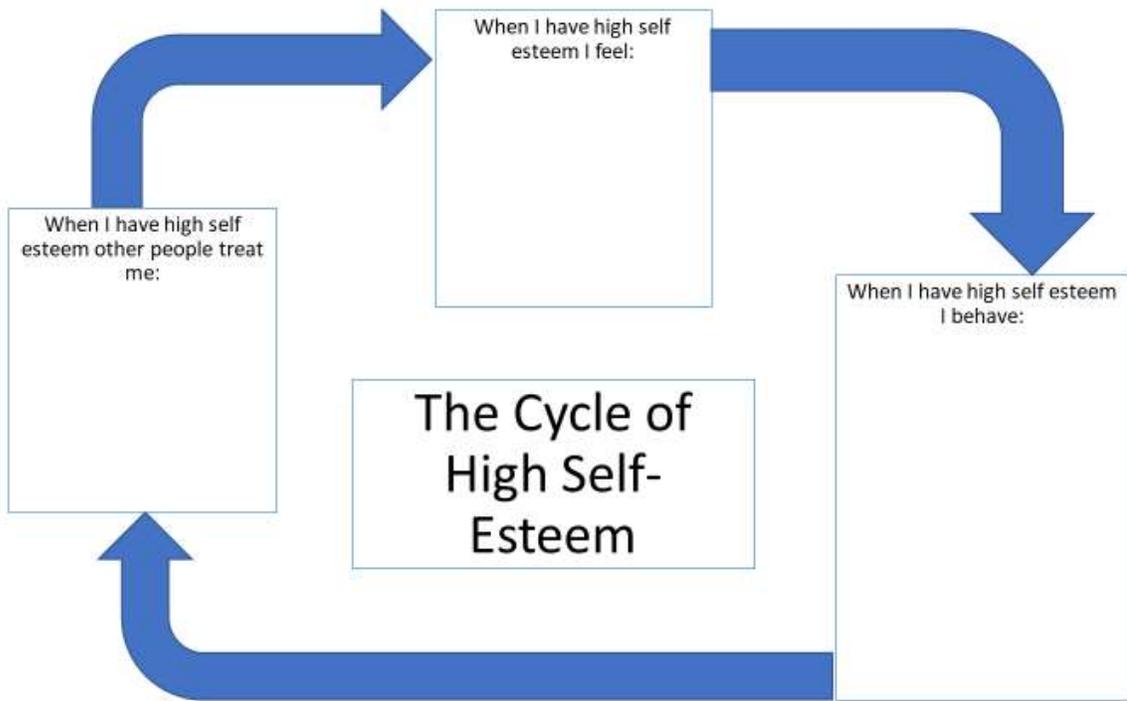
The exercise over the page can help you or your young person understand the cycle they are in, and to give them a framework to break out of it.



Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that **we are gifted** for something and that this thing must be attained.

– Marie Curie

AZ QUOTES



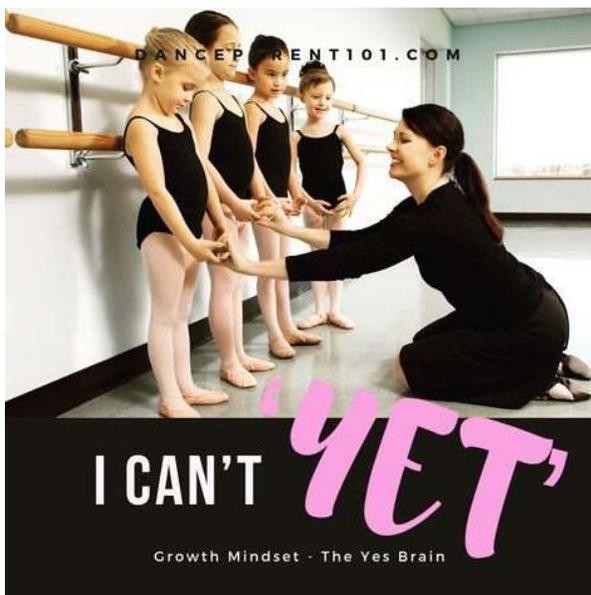
Resilience

Sometimes we think of resilience as the ability to ‘bounce back’ from difficult situations and circumstances. That is only partly true. Our experiences shape us and change us. Instead of thinking of a bouncy ball, think of a bouncy egg-shaped ball. It might bounce back, but it might also take off in a completely different direction, sometimes unpredictable. We are in such unpredictable and unprecedented times, perhaps we should expect that our children and those around us will change.

Having a growth mindset

Change and experience is a part of life. Failing is a part of life. Learning how to deal with this is a life-long skill. In some schools they talk about a growth mindset, so children and young people might be familiar with it. It’s good to remind them of it regularly (and to remind ourselves sometimes!). See the Adjacent image for a comparison in the different ways of viewing the world.

Talking more positively about ourselves is something that takes time and is a hard habit to get into. Sorry – no quick fix. But we also need to catch ourselves when we



Growth mindset	Fixed mindset
Embraces challenges	Avoids challenges
Accepts criticism and negative feedback as constructive	Rejects criticism and is hurt by negative feedback
Equates reward with effort	Expects reward without effort
Persists in the face of setbacks	Lets setbacks derail them
Never gives up	Gives up easily
Learns from failure	To fail once is to fail completely
“Talent is developed”	“I’m no good at this”
“What more can I do?”	“Why should I bother?”

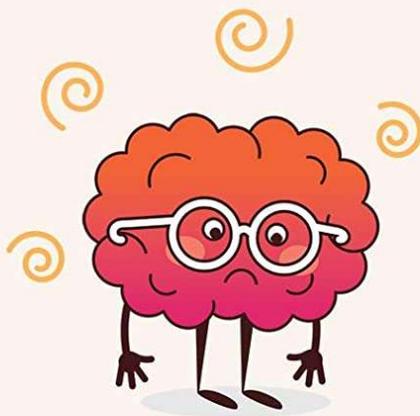
speak negatively about ourselves too. There’s a great ‘magic word’ that can be used whenever your child says they can’t do something. Try saying “You can’t do it **yet**. But you will. Keep persevering”. It really annoys them and they roll their eyes but deep down they know it’s true!

Overleaf are some phrases to gently correct them with if they are using that negative self-talk. It will help build resilience and self-esteem in the longer term.

Included in the last section of this resource is a list of different ways you can encourage a positive mindset and self-image in you or your young person. It is by no means exhaustive; there are many different ways you can encourage positivity. The thing to note though, is that this shouldn’t be seen as a big list of things you need to do such as “Oooh, I haven’t said 10 encouraging things before breakfast”, it’s more about a general way of doing things and will become more natural the more you do it!

Accomplish BIG Things With a
GROWTH MINDSET!

Success Begins With Believing You Can



Instead of Thinking...

- I can't do it.
- I'm not good at this.
- It's good enough.
- It's too hard.
- I'm afraid of making a mistake.
- They are better at it than I am.
- I don't know how.
- I can't make this any better.
- I don't like challenges.
- I give up.

Think This...

- I'm still learning. I'll keep trying!
- What can I learn to get better at this?
- Is this the best I can do?
- With more practice it will get easier!
- Mistakes are how I learn & get better!
- What can I learn from them?
- I can learn how!
- I can always find ways to improve!
- Challenges make me better!
- I'll try a different way!

5. *Turning on the tap of the Stress Bucket*

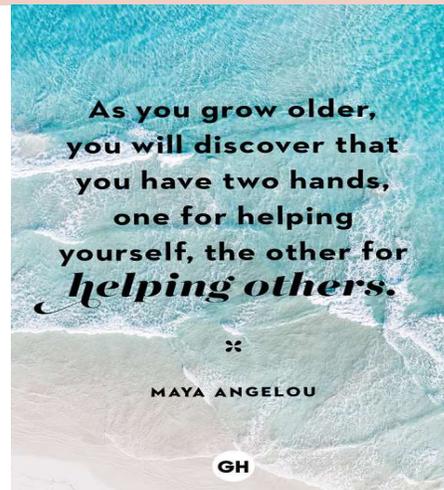
The last way we can think about managing stress is by ‘turning on the outlet tap’ of the stress bucket. If we can’t hold all of that stress, we have to let it out somehow. This is where our coping strategies come in.

Self-care

Looking after ourselves ensures that we are better able to face the world. We know it sounds like a boring cop out but fresh air, exercise, a good night’s sleep and a healthy diet do a lot more than self-help books and medication in a lot of cases. If you feel run down, you don’t exactly feel ready to take on the world and in fact will be more inclined to fall ill and feel worse. If we find an exercise we enjoy, food that we love that nourishes us, we find we are more likely to stick to it and feel the benefits. We can encourage our children to do the same (yes, we know, we have teenagers, too, trying to turf them out of their room feels like exercise enough!). It’s not only looking after our bodies though, it’s looking after our souls too; we feel ‘nourished’ by connecting to others, learning new skills, making goals, connecting to nature, helping others. More of this in the ‘toolbox’.

Self-comfort

A health warning! Self-comfort has its place. Who hasn’t had a bad day and gone home and had a glass of alcohol/chocolate/take away (fill in whatever works for you!)? These things are totally fine when used in appropriate amounts. When these coping strategies start causing longer term damage to you, your children and to their relationships that warning signs need to be listened to.



All forms of self-harm (alcoholism, gambling, risk taking behaviour, eating disorders etc) are coping strategies. If anyone you know is experiencing these, then, firstly, try to breathe and stay calm, because they are *coping*. But you can help them find other coping strategies to gradually replace those damaging ones. But don’t be afraid to ask for help. There are a list of useful websites to go to at the end of the booklet.

In the moment strategies

Self-care is much more about longer term well-being. Sometimes we, and our children, need to learn to cope at those particularly stressful moments. These fall into a few different categories:

Breathing exercises. In times of heightened anxiety, our heart beats faster and our breathing becomes shallow. Exercises involving slow, deep breathing will help to calm us.

Grounding exercises. When we feel anxious, we sometimes feel disconnected, ‘far away’ or numb. Connecting back to earth in some way can help us feel calmer (think stress balls and fidget gadgets). The action of ‘fidgeting’ can help our ‘thinking’ brains kick back in, so we think more rationally.

Distraction techniques help us to move our focus from negative and unhelpful thoughts.

The next chapter gives you the toolbox of coping strategies to work through.

6. *The Backpack*

Use any of the ideas on the following pages to complete your stress bucket exercise. What ideas could really work for you or your child? Imagine putting them into a 'backpack' to be used when most needed.

“The thing that is
really hard, and
really amazing, is
giving up on being
perfect and
beginning the work of
becoming yourself.” –
Anna Quindlen



Section A -longer term positive steps

This is not going to fix things quickly, but, step by step, changing the way you or your child sees things and encouraging a more positive outlook will help. **BE WARNED – SERIOUS CHEESINESS ALERT!** Some of these things might sound trite and often easy to say; it's often as you get older you realise the truth of them. So, feel free to roll your eyes, but acknowledge that somewhere in amongst the cheese, there is a golden nugget of truth to hold on to. Share the nuggets with your child, start a conversation about it.

IDEA 1: Embrace the cheesiness. Find inspirational quotes that inspire you and keep them together or put them on your wall or in your notebooks or diary or wallet/purse/backpack etc. Write it on a little card. You can buy postcards or little plastic credit card size notes.

IDEA 2: Being inside your own head is often the hardest place to be. **Looking outward** to the rest of the world can do you the world of good. That's tricky at the moment, but it can be a simple thing that you do. By helping others or signing up for a cause close to your heart, you might also find it can help *you*. It might be signing a petition, helping in the community, or donating to foodbanks etc.

IDEA 3: Make plans and goals. Ok, at the minute, these might be fairly restricted, but look ahead. What's your dream? What have you always wanted to do? Each dream is made up of small steps toward it. What positive step have you done toward that dream? Some days you will make big steps toward it – like signing up for a new course or buying a pair of trainers. Most days they will be small steps – cleaning off a shelf to put your study materials, getting out of bed to go for that run. But those little steps add up to many miles. You will be able to look back and say “Look how far I have come”. See, I told you it would get cheesy. Keep looking forward, keep your eye on your goal.

IDEA 4: Be connected. And we're not just talking about WIFI. We need to feel connected in lots of different ways. That goes for you, your child, your friend, your family, everyone. Anxiety and depression often comes from a loss of connection in some way. We all need to connect to nature in some way, we need to belong to 'a tribe', a community, a family. What are those connections like for you or your child? Do they have people they feel close to and a sense of belonging? It might be an emotional connection, it might be a spiritual connection. At this time, many people have been asking big questions about life, faith, meaning and purpose. It might be time to explore those things. Many of these ideas are linked. For example, by helping others and looking outward, you may feel connected because it gives meaning and purpose. It will be different for everyone.

IDEA 5: Be you own best friend. You can encourage yourself or your child to challenge their own negative thinking. Whenever a negative thought enters your head think 'STOP', what would mum/best mate/Auntie Gertie/favourite teacher say about that? “You're useless and rubbish at everything...?!! Really ??! But what about that time you did this or that awesome thing..?” It's important that we understand that *thoughts* are not necessarily *fact* and to get into the habit of checking them. Try the exercise of

‘shooting the parrot’ – imagine a parrot on your shoulder that is your own inner critic. Every time that darn parrot says things like ‘You’re rubbish at everything, what’s the point of even trying?’ just take a well aimed shot with your fingers and ‘shoot’ that parrot off your shoulder. They can be persistent little creatures, so it might take a few attempts! Children will particularly like this one!

IDEA 6: Be an encourager. After reading all of this, we hope you or your children and young people understand the importance of positive words and the power of having a cheerleader in your lives. Build people up in the way that you would like other people to build you up. Catch people doing it right. Who doesn’t like compliments?! (Even though we find them hard to swallow sometimes). Find good things to say about people. Kindness is one of the most powerful things in the world and also one of the most underestimated. Be kind. You or your child might have been through a lot, you know how it feels. Imagine other people’s icebergs – their behaviour might be saying one thing, but there might be a whole lot going on under the surface. You will find it’s infectious; treat people with kindness and mostly you will find they treat you the same. Sometimes not; but then that’s back to that iceberg. Be kind anyway.

IDEA 7: Gifts and Accomplishments. Get hold of an old shoebox and make a ‘happy’ box or achievements box. Make a note of things you have achieved or compliments you have been given. Whenever you need a boost, or having negative thoughts, have a rummage through to make you feel better. Put things in there that always make you smile – a photo of a holiday, a play list of favourite music, whatever works for you or your child. Here’s a hard task to do though – write down your gifts, talents and things that people love about you. You might need to enlist help - sometimes it’s hard to think of our own gifts. And when people give compliments, don’t argue, simply say THANK YOU. This might be harder than you think!

IDEA 8: Self-care. So what do you or your child do to look after yourselves well? Do you have an exercise that you enjoy. Not everyone is a runner or footballer – find your thing that you enjoy and can stick it. Try to get a balanced diet, treats are ok, but not too many. How is your sleep? Try avoiding social media or TV half an hour before bedtime and don’t sleep with your phone in your room if notifications are going to keep you awake. Find a way to relax; read, find silly videos on your phone to laugh at (but not before bedtime!), enjoy your favourite music, chat to a friend. Get a list of things that relax you. You could put that list in your happy box too.

IDEA 9: Be aware of the pitfalls of social media. Yes, yes, ya-de-ya-yah, we know, we know, be careful, whatever. When it’s at it’s best, social media is awesome – it can help you feel connected with others, there are some great self help videos, it can provide you with a laugh when you need it. But remember, there are massive downsides and the effects of social media can be huge and far reaching. Sometimes the sheer number of notifications and stuff going on can be overwhelming. Have phone down-time. At the beginning of lockdown, the amount of information coming through was like an avalanche. For your own well-being, try limiting your engagement with the news to something like once a day. The other thing is about negative posts. They can never be taken back. It’s out there. Just don’t do it. Also, for young people especially, ‘friending’ people they haven’t met -are they who they say they are?– again, just impress on them not to do it. Make sure they know to check with you if they are ever in doubt. Lastly for this section, avoid comparing your life with all of those posts on social media. For every ‘perfect’ selfie, there are another 10 deleted pictures of their nostrils or when they

blinked at the wrong moment. People tend to only post positive stuff in their life. The negative stuff still happens, you just don't get to see it. No one has a perfect life, everyone has a story to tell.

IDEA 10: Being you is enough. Trying to be someone else is just plain hard work. Don't compare yourself to others and don't let anyone compare you to others either. We are all unique, perfectly imperfect, a wobbly work in progress, but an amazing piece of creation with a unique set of gifts, talents, characteristics, background and experiences. That makes you who you are. And you are enough. If our young people grew up knowing that, too, what a better place the world would be.

GREAT DREAM
Ten keys to happier living

- GIVING** Do things for others
- RELATING** Connect with people
- EXERCISING** Take care of your body
- AWARENESS** Live life mindfully
- TRYING OUT** Keep learning new things
- DIRECTION** Have goals to look forward to
- RESILIENCE** Find ways to bounce back
- EMOTIONS** Look for what's good
- ACCEPTANCE** Be comfortable with who you are
- MEANING** Be part of something bigger

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS
www.actionforhappiness.org

Section B -Mindfulness

Often, our anxiety has us imagining worst case scenarios. What if this, what if that, what if, what if..? Mindfulness is a tool to help us put those things to one side and to be in the moment. Those emails, that problem, that worry or that homework will still be there when you get back to it, but for now, the most important thing is to just be you, here and now. No other distractions.

As with all of these ideas, it's important to find what will work for you. Give them a try. It's good to try lots of different things to have them in your backpack. Remember, in times of high anxiety, your thinking brain won't be working – you never know what your unconscious mind will pick out!

IDEA 1: Find an absorbing activity. What do you or your child do that you really give all of your attention to? Find your 'thing'. For some it's something creative like arts and crafts, maybe gardening, reading, gaming, lego, jigsaws, imagination games with dolls, baking, a bit of mindful colouring. It might even be something new. Have fun trying out different things. For some of the team, for example, a new found love of gardening has got us through the lockdown. We have realized that it gives us many things that are good for mental health; fresh air and exercise, a connection with the natural world, a creative and absorbing mindful activity and a sense of hope for the future – by planting seeds you are automatically thinking ahead to the future to when they will flower or produce a harvest (albeit very small!). What's your all-absorbing activity?

IDEA 2: Focus on one thing. This can become a daily habit or a one-off task when you need it. Pick a small task or thing to do – or help your child do it – and just focus on that one thing for 5 or 10 minutes. Give it all of your attention and concentrate on how everything looks, feels, smells, sounds or even tastes. As an example it might be hanging out the washing; the smell of the laundry, the sound of the birds or people on the street, the feel of the wet laundry and the pegs, watch how the breeze gently moves them.....Or it could be having a very mindful cup of tea or a cool drink of water. Be aware of how it feels to hold the cup, the drink going down your throat, sitting in your chair curled up. For children, it might be just making their bed or going for a walk, or sorting out some pens into different colours. Writing things down or having a doodle and letting your mind wander is a good one too.

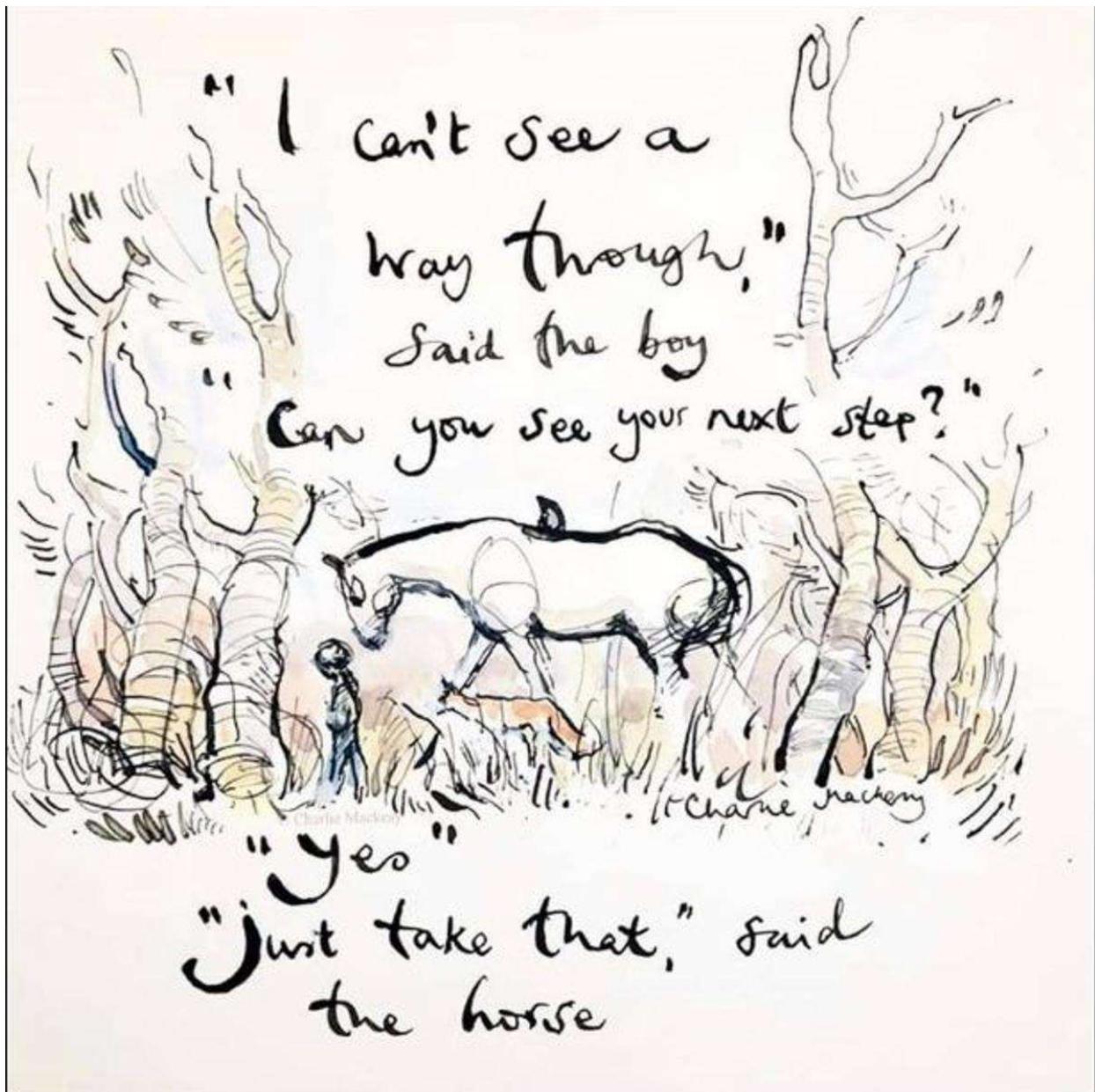
IDEA 3: Practise Gratitude. People who practice mindfulness are often able to appreciate that moments come and go (both good and bad) and to be grateful for those small moments that have made them content or happy. An example might be "right now, I am very grateful for the feel of this freshly made bed". It could be a cup of coffee, a nice text message, or the 'pop' of using a spoon to pierce the lid of a new coffee pot (it's the little things.....).

IDEA 4: Practise Generosity. This doesn't just mean being generous with money, it is about being generous with praise, kindness, understanding, forgiving of other people's faults. It's recognizing that others will have good and bad days, just like you,

and to resist jumping in to judge them. This does not have to be big gestures (and it usually isn't) – it's small things. You were grateful for that little encouraging text from a friend – so send them one too. Little by little, you will find the world around you is kinder. This is an important step in breaking out of that cycle of low self-esteem. The best way to invite kindness and generosity into your life is by being kind to others. You may find that some will reject that kindness; don't be put off, do it anyway. Does this sound like a repeat of things mentioned elsewhere? Good. It's important and needs repeating.

IDEA 5: Be aware of yourself and the world around you. Every now and again it's good to sit back and 'check in' with yourself. How are you feeling? Is any part of you tense? How's your posture? Take some deep breaths in. What's the world around you like? Can you see the clouds in the sky, the pattern on your duvet cover, a picture on the wall..? Do you need to have a bit of a move around for a while?

See below for some more ideas. The internet has no shortage of mindfulness ideas!





be mindful

NOW



Breathe In, Breathe Out -
Feel the flow of the breath



Be Aware of every Daily
Activity (driving, texting,
cleaning, etc..)



Pay attention to all your
Senses - for ex; notice the
taste, texture of food.



Go Outdoors - Walk
Around in Nature



Empty the Mind - Take
a few moments to be still



Forgive Yourself for
every Negative Thought



As soon as the Mind
wanders, bring it back to
your Breath



Be Grateful - Say Thank
You to Nature, People
and Things.



Practice
Non-Judgemental
Listening



Go Easy on Yourself
- with time, you will see
the progress!



Section C -Breathing Techniques

If ever you have a moment of panic, you may find yourself naturally gravitating towards breathing techniques. It's always good to have a few of these in your backpack. They are great for slowing down your breathing and bringing your heart rate back to normal. It's good to practice when you are calm, then it can mentally go in your backpack, ready to be pulled out without thinking in times of high anxiety.

IDEA 1: Simple slow, deep breaths. Take 5 slow breaths in and 5 breaths out. Need some more? Take 5 more. Concentrate on getting your breathing slower and calmer. You can also add words that you find calming, for example "With every breath in and out I feel more peaceful". It doesn't matter whether you say it out loud or in your head.

IDEA 2: Petal breathing. This is a lovely one for young children to focus on. Close your hand in a fist and breathe in. As you breathe out, blow out onto the fist and open your fingers like a petal of a flower opening. Repeat as many times as needed.

IDEA 3: Breathe around your hand. Hold out one hand, palm toward you. With the other hand, use your pointing finger to trace the outline of your hand. Breathe in and slowly trace your finger along the side of your little finger or thumb. Stop at the top and slowly breathe out as your finger traces down the other side. Work your way around your hand. You can go back again if you wish.

IDEA 4: Tense and release breathing. This is one to do sitting down or lying in bed. The idea is that you are breathing slowly in and out as you tense each muscle, starting from the top of your head, down to your toes and as you are breathing slowly in and out, you gradually release each muscle from the head downwards.

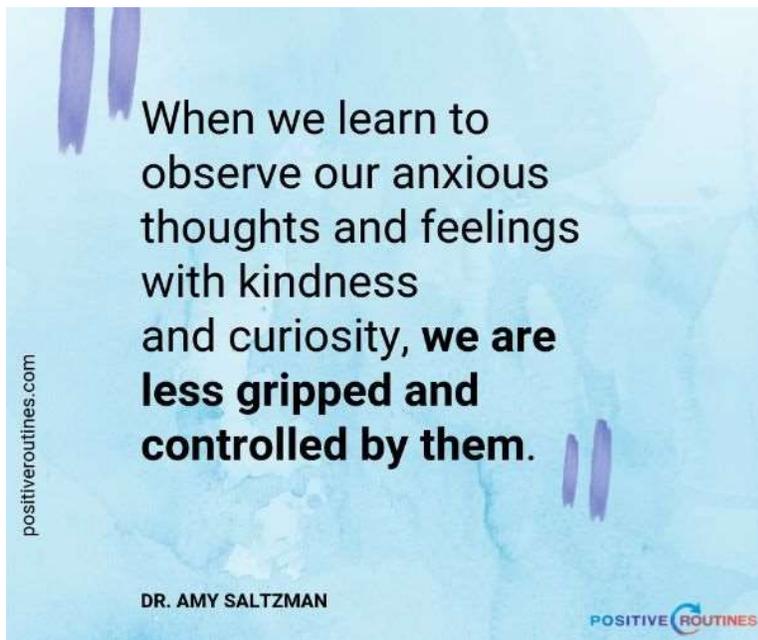
IDEA 5: Breathing and visualisation. You've heard of going to 'your happy place' when things get tough? This is visualisation. Think of a place you have been where you feel safe, calm and peaceful. It doesn't matter where, it matters the feelings it provokes. It helps if you can close your eyes so you don't get distracted by the environment around you. Carefully picture the scene around you, focusing on the details and breathing slowly and calmly all the while. The more detail the better; use all of your senses. What can you hear, feel, see, smell or taste? Move around the area, explore the detail. Take your time and enjoy the feeling of peace it brings.

IDEA 6: Belly Breathing. Sit comfortably with your hands on your belly, just below your ribs. Breathe in and let your belly inflate; your diaphragm is pushing down. Count to 5 slowly and breathe out again, feeling your belly go back in. Just sit quietly with this exercise for a few minutes until you feel calmer.

IDEA 7: Breathing with scents. Having a little lemon or lavender oil on a tissue can help to feel calmer. It's something you can easily put on a piece of cloth in the morning

and have tucked away in your bag for when it's needed. A younger child may enjoy having the scent of their carer close by. If you have a young child, you could sleep with that piece of cloth close to you so it has your scent on it in the morning. You can also buy small bottles of rollerball scented oils which you can rub on your wrists or temples. You may want to check with a health professional before your child uses this.

IDEA 8: Square Breathing. Another simple one. Imagine the corners of a square. You can trace the square on your hand or on the table or even walk the square. Breathe in and count for 4 as you go along one side of the square. Breathe out for 4 as you go along the other side. Keep doing this for as long as you need, slowing down as you go.



Section D -Grounding Techniques

For that sudden feeling of anxiety and feeling ‘far away’, techniques that bring you back to earth and make you feel more ‘real’ and physically connected might help. Don’t worry if you don’t do each exercise exactly as it’s written. It’s meant to be *effective*, not totally accurate. Does it work your way better? Fine, do it your way! It’s meant to take your mind away from the jumble of thoughts that is going on in your head and give your rational brain time to kick in. Remember that amygdala – the action part of the brain – we just need to find ways to encourage it to take a back seat until you can think about the worry more rationally.

PLEASE NOTE If your child finds having something physical helps, like a fidget toy or a small token from home, don’t forget to make the child’s teacher aware of it, so they know it’s a coping strategy, rather than just a toy brought from home. Enlisting their teacher’s help is also a good idea because they can encourage them to use the techniques and strategies if they have an anxious moment in school.

IDEA 1: A senses countdown. Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.

IDEA 2: Rainbow colour check. This is a nice one to combine with a walk in the fresh air too. Go through each of the colours of the rainbow and see how many things you can see of each colour. You don’t have to get through them all, enough to produce the desired calming effect.

IDEA 3: Fidget gadget. Fidget toys or gadgets have their place in helping you feel grounded. Anything that you can quietly turn around in your hand or feel the shape of or squeeze will do the trick. Do you or child love lego – what about a small lego figure that they can trace their fingers around? A Fidget Cube, a smooth pebble? A small token from a loved one – sometimes just holding that token can help you feel connected to that loved one and imagine them with you, maybe giving you a hug or saying calming words like “you’ll be fine”. Have fun with this one, trying out different things that might work, but that can be discreetly held in your hand.

IDEA 4: Chair grounding. Place your feet on the floor and hold your desk or chair. Hold on to something solid to help you feel grounded. If you are in a public place, go to a wall, a bench, a fence or even bob down and touch the grass or ground. Find something that would work in that space at that time.

IDEA 5: ABC game. Ever played the game ‘I went to market and bought...’? It’s a variation on that. It’s a great distraction technique – whether you are distracting yourself or your child! So you can get creative with this one and do what works for them. Name marvel heroes beginning with each letter of the alphabet, or what about TV shows or animals or plants in your garden. It doesn’t matter what you choose.



Section E -Distraction Techniques

Many of the above techniques are actually helping to distract you from the overwhelming thoughts on your head. Getting into the habit of interrupting unhelpful thoughts and replacing them with more positive ones can be great. We have often got into negative habits and coping strategies, find ways to replace them which are more helpful and will ultimately lead you or your child to a much more positive place.

Start off by ‘traffic lighting’ your thoughts. If it’s one that has the potential to move you into a track of negative thinking (amber), then be careful. If it’s already negative and looking like it’s ready to go off on to panic mode, then it’s a red light. Do not go there. What can you do to distract yourself or what positive thought can you replace it with?

IDEA 1: Go and have a laugh! Funny videos, call a friend who always makes you laugh, pull stupid faces, whatever makes you laugh. Laughter is a powerful feel-good tool.

IDEA 2: Do something else. Go make a cup of tea, do a jigsaw, take a walk do exercise, go to a different room, play games, do a mindful exercise.

IDEA 3: Go through your ‘happy box’. Have a box that is filled with your favourite things – photos of holidays or happy times or souvenirs of things you have done or places you have visited, maybe inspirational quotes or useful mindfulness hints and tips.

IDEA 4: Cloud busting. Look up to the sky and look at the clouds. What crazy things you make out of the shapes?

IDEA 5: Write it down. If ever your brain is overloaded, you might like to write down everything that is there – a ‘brain dump’. It doesn’t matter how that looks, make it work for you - reminders on your phone, a diary, a list. Life is so busy that we can feel overwhelmed by the amount that is coming at us. Do not expect your brain to hold lots of information – that is just not the way it is designed. Think of your list as your external hard drive or some extra memory.

IDEA 6: Check out a box set or series. This could also be a series of books or comics or music. You can pick them up when you need distraction. Also, if you are having a bad day, think about that video you will watch later, or that book you will read and it will keep you going.

Section F -Further Help

Our hope in writing this is that it has got you or your child onto the right path; filled with positive thoughts, hopes and dreams for the future and a backpack full of useful tools for when the road of life gets bumpy.

We have barely touched the surface, though. Sometimes we all need extra help. Please find some useful links to look into or to contact if you need more help. The children, youth and families team are always happy to talk to you if you have a particular situation you want to explore.

Lorraine Jones Lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk or call on 07910 083965
York Circuit, Children Youth and Families team.

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org> For a positive approach to mental health includes a calendar of daily actions for during lockdown

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> Great tips on staying mentally healthy through this time. Also, tips on talking to children. Plenty of podcasts on things like mindfulness and breathing techniques.

The Parenting Place is a New Zealand based website with lots of useful resources, including activities to entertain children and some really sensible and reassuring mental health advice for parents. Seven Ways to Help an Anxious Child is especially relevant at the moment. <https://www.theparentingplace.com/building-character/seven-ways-to-help-an-anxious-child/>

You Are My Hero Is an online book produced to help parents and children talk about Coronavirus and the changes it has made in their lives.

<https://www.fischytunes.com/video-repo/together/> Fischy music have been around for a while and have produced some brilliant new music for 2020 supporting our emotions (for under 10s) and best of all we can now get it all for free on this website.

<http://positivepenguins.com> his is an app for primary age children to encourage them to engage in positive self-talk.

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-supporting-children-who-may-be-especially-vulnerable/> Tips for supporting children, particularly those with additional needs, who may be feeling particularly vulnerable during this difficult time

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/talking-to-young-people/online-and-film-resources> A list of uplifting and resilience building films with question prompts to watch and discuss as a family

The boy the mole the fox and the horse, by Charlie Mackesy. Some of the illustrations above are taken from this beautiful book which is there to offer wisdom on life's journey in a simple but powerful way. Perfect for children but great for all of us.

<http://epicfriends.co.uk/> Tips for young people to support other young people with mental health concerns

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/positivity-colouring-pack-t-tp-2549451> Free mindful adult-style colouring pack with positive messages

<https://www.brightsparkscic.org.uk/our-courses> There are some brilliant courses here, designed to help parents. The one on supporting your child during covid is well worth attending and is about 2 hours long. It's a fantastic mix of theory to help you understand your child's feelings and behaviours, and practical activities to help them work through anxiety and build resilience.

<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/resources-for-schools/advice-for-parents-and-carers-talking-mental-health-with-young-people-at-primary-school> Lots of practical advice and guidance to parents and carers about promoting child well-being and how to make conversations about their child's feelings part of everyday conversation.

<https://hes-extraordinary.com/de-escalation-techniques/> Strategies to help parents cope with children's behaviour, which may be particularly challenging at the moment, due to the changes in routines and uncertainties in their lives.

Lots of incredibly useful advice for children and young people
<https://www.childline.org.uk>

<https://youtu.be/5EXpkVw3fho> This is the A-Z of coping strategies from the NHS

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org> For a positive approach to mental health includes a calendar of daily actions for during lockdown

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> Great tips on staying mentally healthy through this time. Also, tips on talking to children. Plenty of podcasts on things like mindfulness and breathing techniques.

York mind also have some great resources too. www.yorkmind.org.uk

<https://heartwoodskills.org/resources1> This is a brilliant resource. More aimed at high schools.

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/> Check out these mental health apps for all ages, recommended by the NHS.

<https://www.themix.org.uk/> This is a good all round resource for under 25s for getting on in life. Advice and support about moving out, relationships, careers, mental health, drugs, etc. It has plenty of apps to download too. I particularly like 'stresshead' - you hatch an egg and chase it around your screen until the worry goes away.

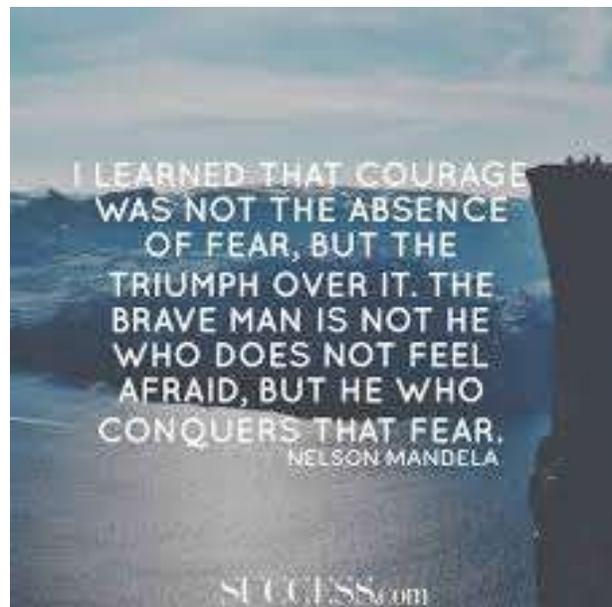
<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/support-hub> Great resources for parents and young people. Going back to school resources coming soon.

7. *Ready for the first day back – a final word.*

So, the day when we go back to 'normalish' is finally about to arrive. Whether that is back to school, work, volunteering, venturing to the shops, going further afield. I hope that this workbook has been able to help you tackle some of the things that were worrying you and given you some strategies to help you to cope with, well, with life stuff. But here's some suggestions specifically for coping with that first few days back.

1. Work out exactly what you are feeling worried about. Is it the masks, the new seating arrangements or something else? This might be about knowledge and control – find out as much as possible about how the day will look and feel – your school will help you find out what to expect.
2. For each concern, talk to a trusted person about whether your *thought* is *fact* – talking to someone else will help you see whether that thing you are worrying about is likely to *actually* happen or not.
3. For each concern, work out a coping strategy. Tell the teacher or a trusted colleague about your strategies so they can help you if you need help. Whether it's a fidget cube, an encouraging word on a card to keep in your pocket, a 'time out pass' arranged with teachers, a trusted friend to go to check in with, have it ready before that first day. Knowing you have back up plans and strategies helps you feel ready for that first day.

4. Make going back something to look forward to (at least a little). After all, it is the time of year of new backpacks, lunch boxes, coffee cups and stationery. Also, give yourself something comforting to look forward to at the end of that day. Your favourite meal, movie, gaming time, bath and a book, whatever it is for you.
5. You have talked about your worries, but what about the things you are looking forward to? There may be some, even tiny ones? Are there things you have missed that you are now going to be able to do? Catching up with friends? Hopefully the weather will still be good – can you sit and have lunch outside? Is there a new project or subject to get your teeth into?
6. The first day will pass. The second day will be easier, because you faced it and you did it. You can do it again.



Things to remember that first day:

1. Don't put any pressure on yourself that first day. If you know where the toilets are and where you get your lunch, then you are winning!! Small steps. The first time you do anything new is always the worst. On the second day, you know what to expect, which helps.
2. Everyone has changed to some extent – the bouncy egg-shaped ball has affected everyone. Teachers, colleagues, friends are all expecting everyone to be feeling strange that first day (and longer!). You will not be the only one to be feeling this way. The teachers will be being gentle with everyone.
3. Be gentle with everyone else too. Remember that iceberg? There will be a lot of emotions going on underneath those behaviours – for others as well as yourself. Take a deep breath before reacting someone who is 'being difficult'.
4. There really does seem to be such a phenomenon is 'lockdown brain' as well as 'holiday brain' – when your brain goes to mush! Teachers will not be expecting children to be performing academically on day one – or anytime soon for that matter. Children will have had different access to education during lockdown– for all sorts of reasons – and teachers know that children will be all over the place academically. So you or your child shouldn't worry about being 'behind'.
5. The most important thing (and this is the ultimate in cheese): Be yourself. You **are** enough. You need to know this as a parent or carer, too. You are doing a great job. Keep going. One foot in front of the other.



There's merit in being different,
inspiration in being individual,
courage in being unique, and
freedom in being yourself.

Fennel Hudson