

Helping Children Understand and Manage their Emotions

- *Exploring Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours*

Workshop 1

Tuesday 2nd March, 2021 3.30-5p.m

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Essex Educational Psychology Service

Improving lives: using psychology to create positive change



Introduce Yourself:

Name

Age of child

One thing you hope to gain from the workshop

Overview

- Group agreement
- Warm up activity
- Importance of emotional literacy and explanation of concepts
- Strategies to promote emotional literacy
- Behaviour as a form of communication
- Strategies to promote emotional regulation
- Action plan
- Q & A



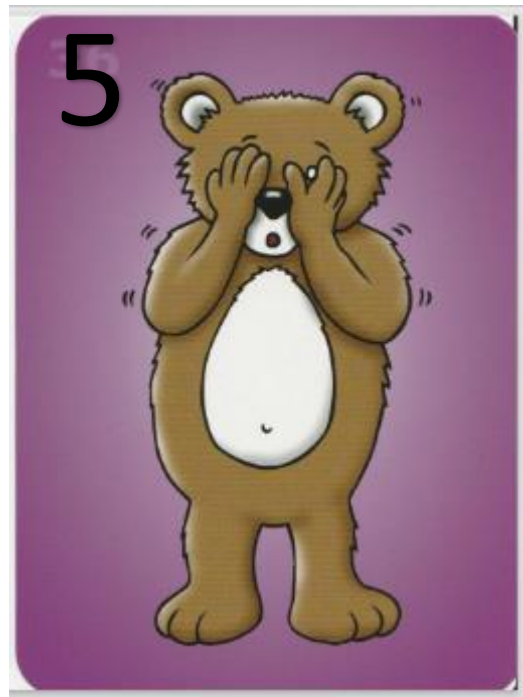
Group Agreement

- Keep microphone turned off until you wish to contribute
- Welcome to use the hands up function and chat box or contribute verbally
- Respect confidentiality and avoid judgement
- Take a break/step back when needed
- Can say pass if do not wish to participate
- Anything else?



Emotional Check In





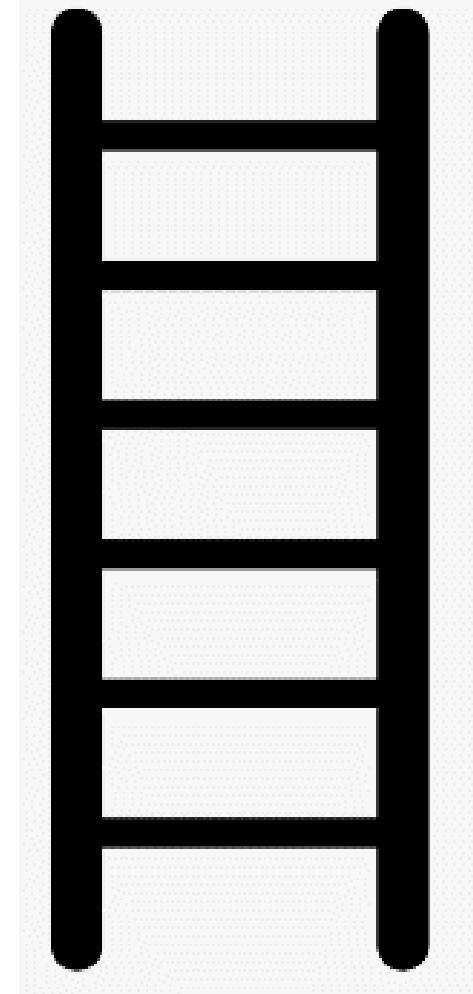
What is Emotional Literacy and Emotional Regulation?

Emotional literacy:

- Ability to recognise, label, and understand our emotions (i.e. what triggers different emotions, how we respond to different emotions)

Emotional regulation:

- Ability to manage our emotions (i.e. return to calm state when we feel frustrated or worried)



Step 4:

Regulating/managing emotions (return to a calm state)

Step 3: Understanding emotions (meaning and subtle differences between emotions)

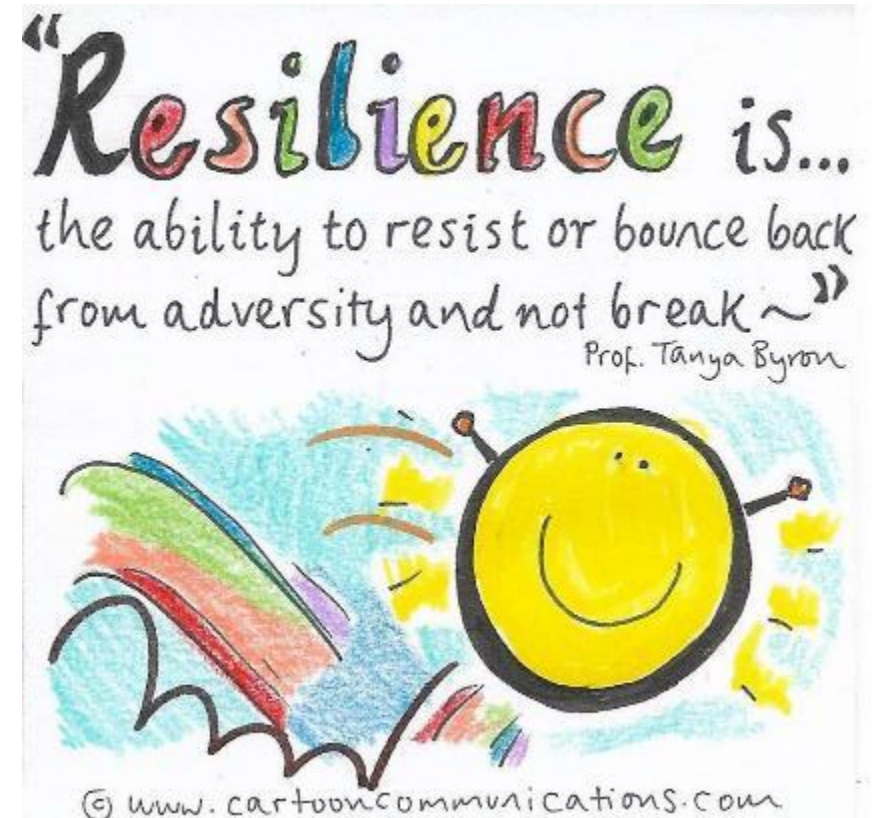
Step 2: Using emotions to assist thinking (act based upon emotion)

Step 1: Recognising and perceiving emotions

Based upon Mayer and Salovey's (1997) four branch model of emotional intelligence

Why is Emotional Literacy and Regulation Important?

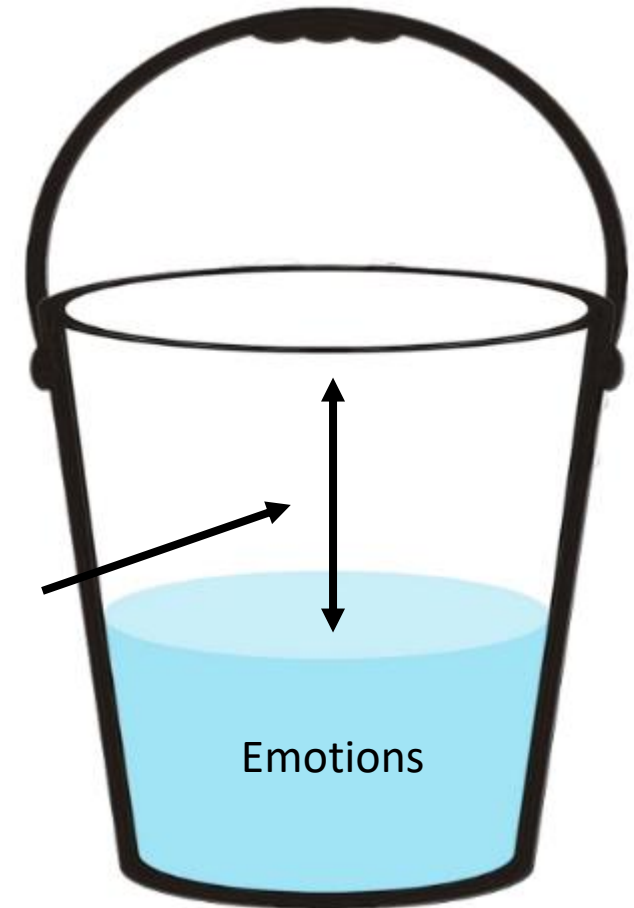
- Supports positive social relationships (*Trentacosta & Fine, 2010; Eggum et al., 2011; Housman, 2017*)
- Promotes attention and learning – higher academic grades (*Rivers et al. 2012*)
- Increased resilience (ability to ‘bounce back’) and reduces risk of mental health difficulties (*Tamir, John, Srivastava, & Gross, 2007*)
- Important in the current Covid-19 pandemic



Why is Emotional Literacy and Regulation Important?

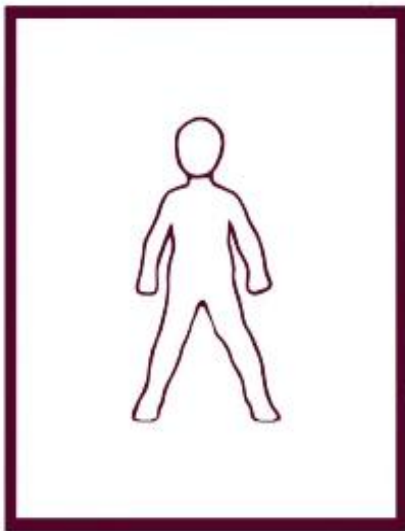
- We each have an 'emotional bucket'
- Daily stressors and life events fill up our buckets
- Understanding of our emotions and ability to manage our emotions prevents our bucket from overflowing (prevents us from tipping over the edge/reaching melting point)

Window of tolerance



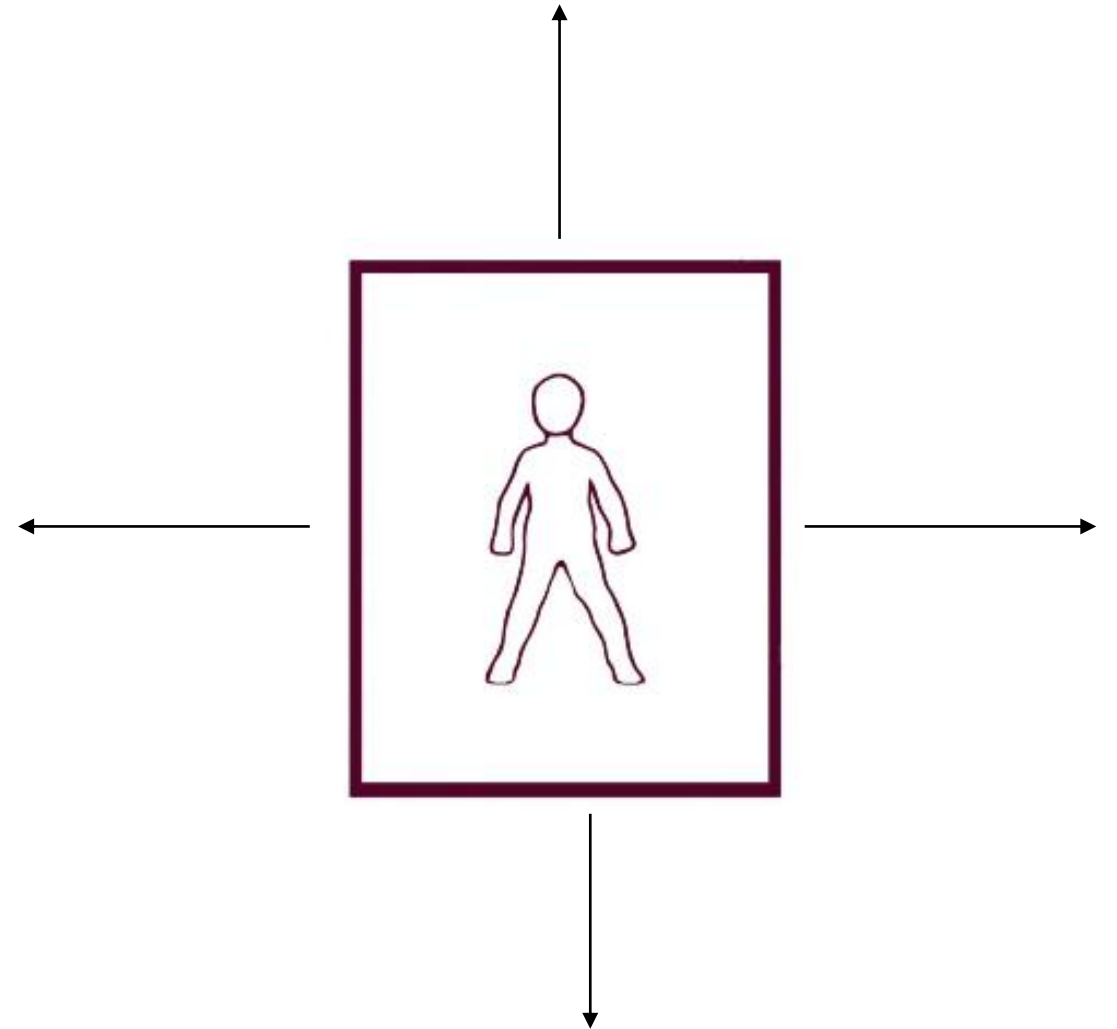
'Window of Tolerance'

- Zone in which we can function at our best and feel safe, secure, and happy
- Some situations push us outside of our 'safe zone'
- Outside of this 'safe zone' we go into a 'fight/flight' OR 'freeze' mode



'Window of Tolerance'

- Everybody has a unique 'window of tolerance'
- The bigger the window the more resilient children are
- Must expand windows through supporting the development of emotional literacy and regulation skills



Window of Tolerance

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcm-1FBrDvU&t=317s>



Emotional Literacy

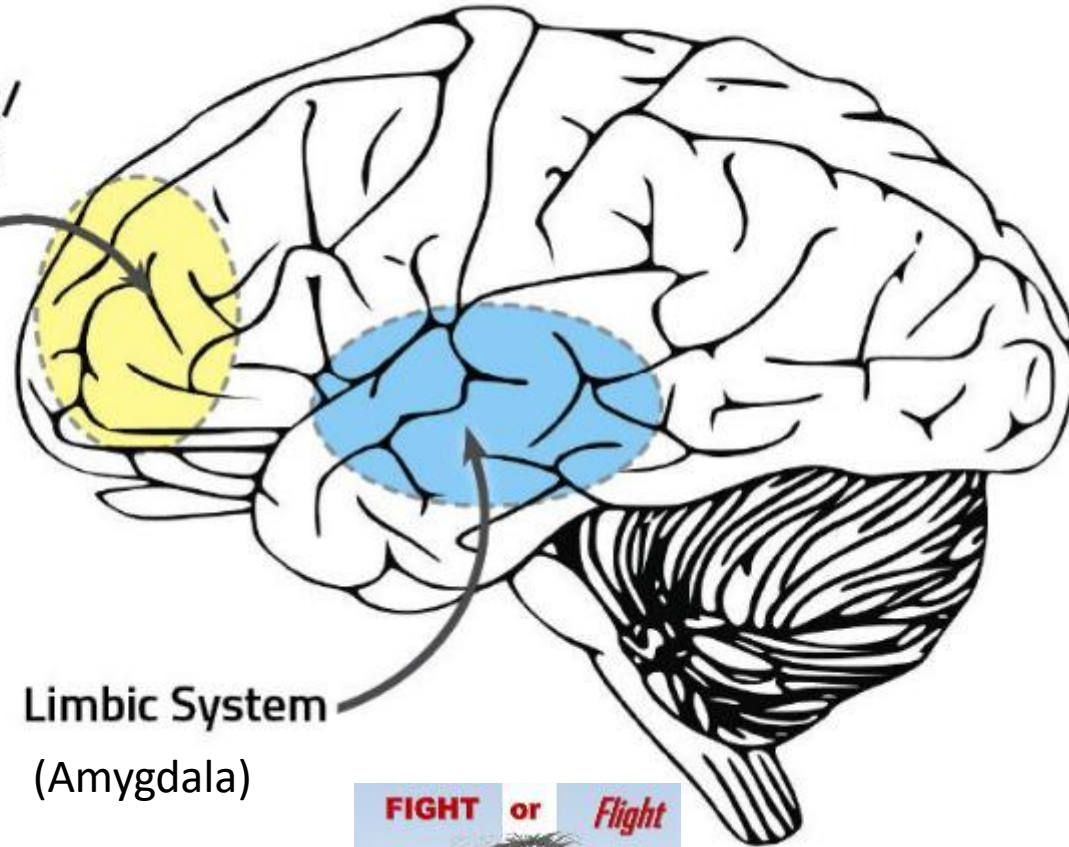


Biology Behind Emotions



The controller

Learning/
Thinking
Brain
(Prefrontal
Cortex)



Limbic System
(Amygdala)

FIGHT/FLIGHT
/FREEZE



“FLIPPING your lid!”

Where is your brain?



Thinking Brain
Upstairs Brain
Ready to Learn



Yellow Zone
Caution area



Feeling Brain
Downstairs Brain
Flipping your lid



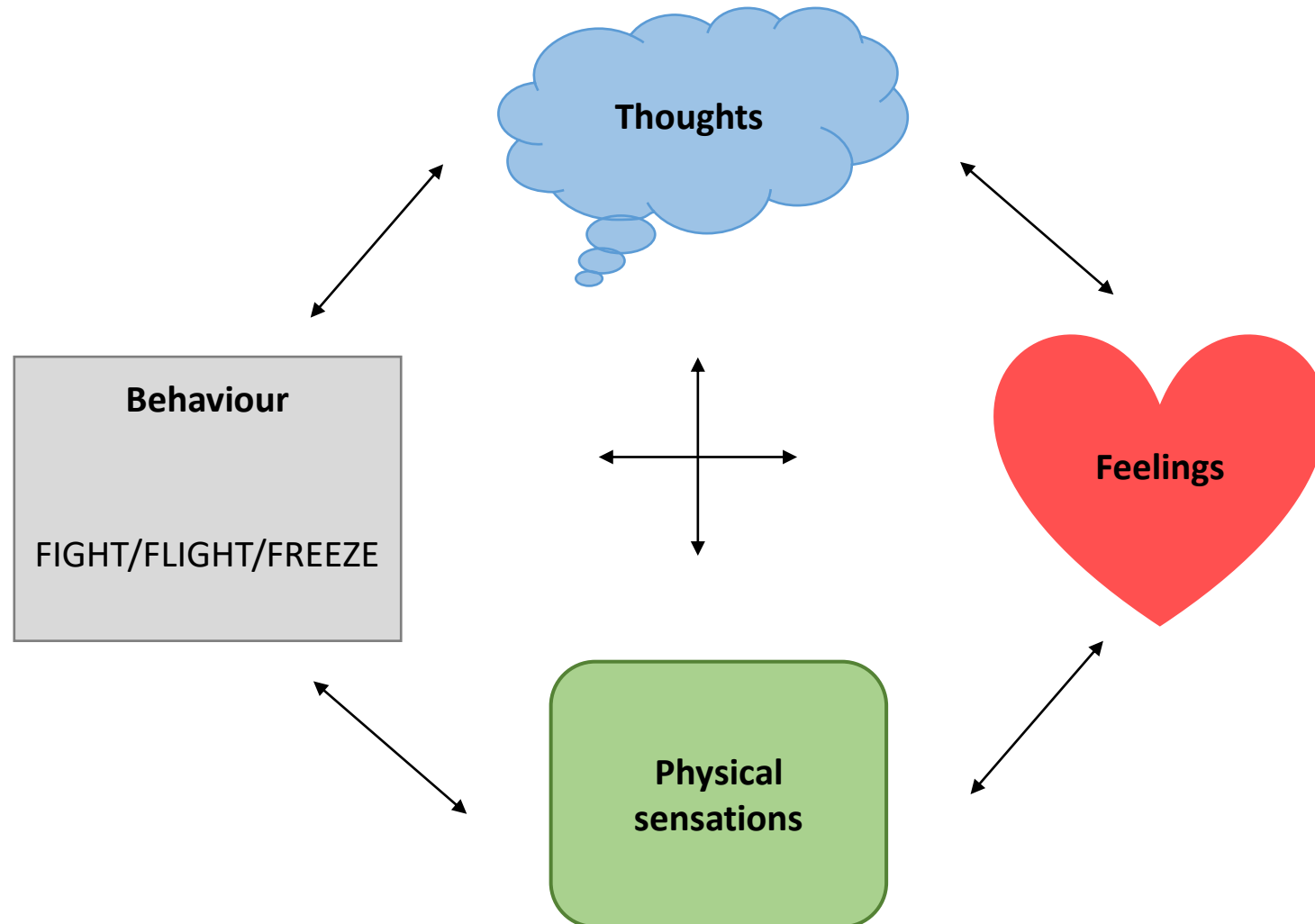
Prefrontal cortex
P.F.C.
“THE WISE LEADER”



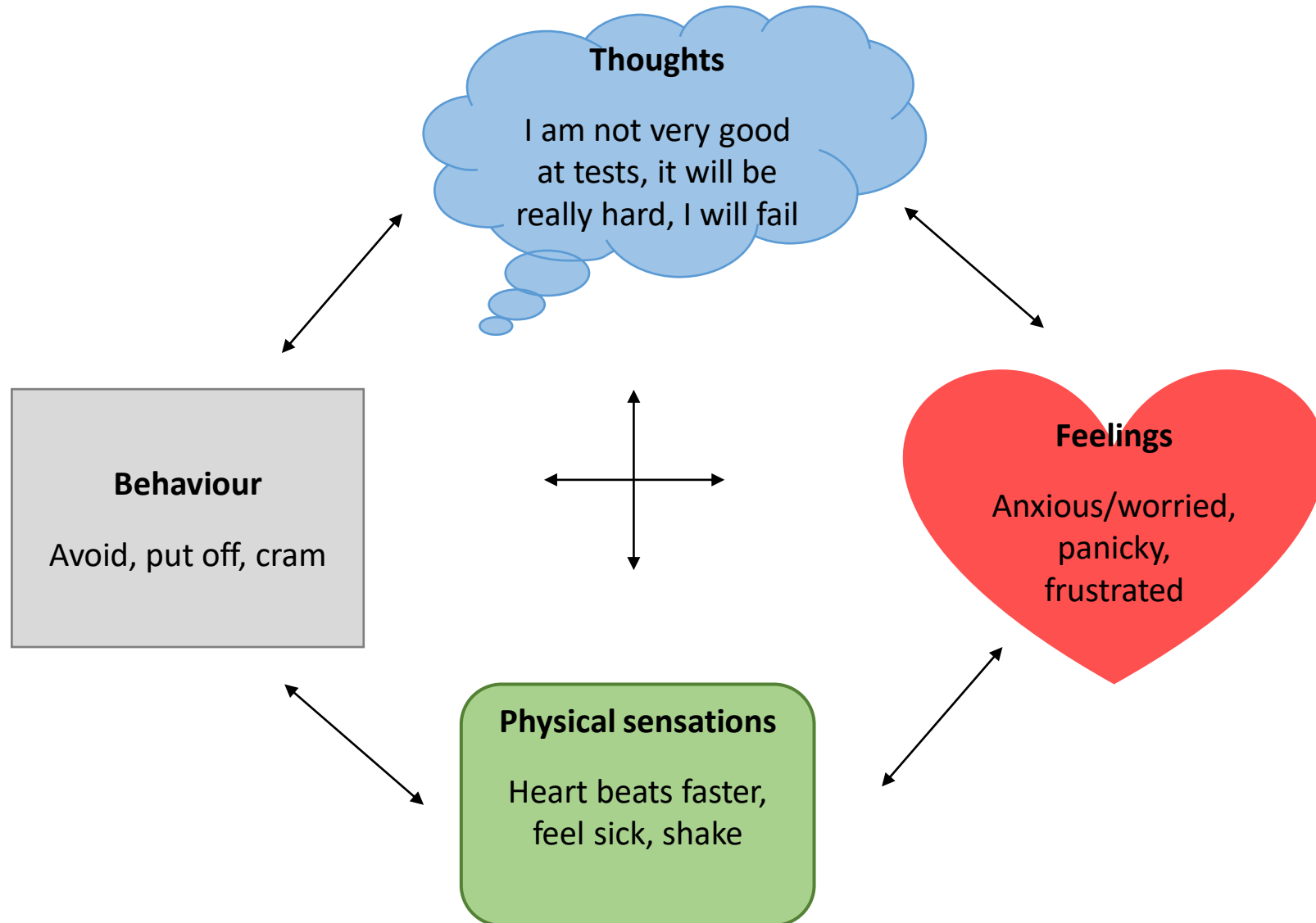
“Flipped Your Lid”

The big emotions, anger, fear,
anxiety etc...
The AMYGDALA - The alarm center
Acts on instinct
fight, flight or freeze

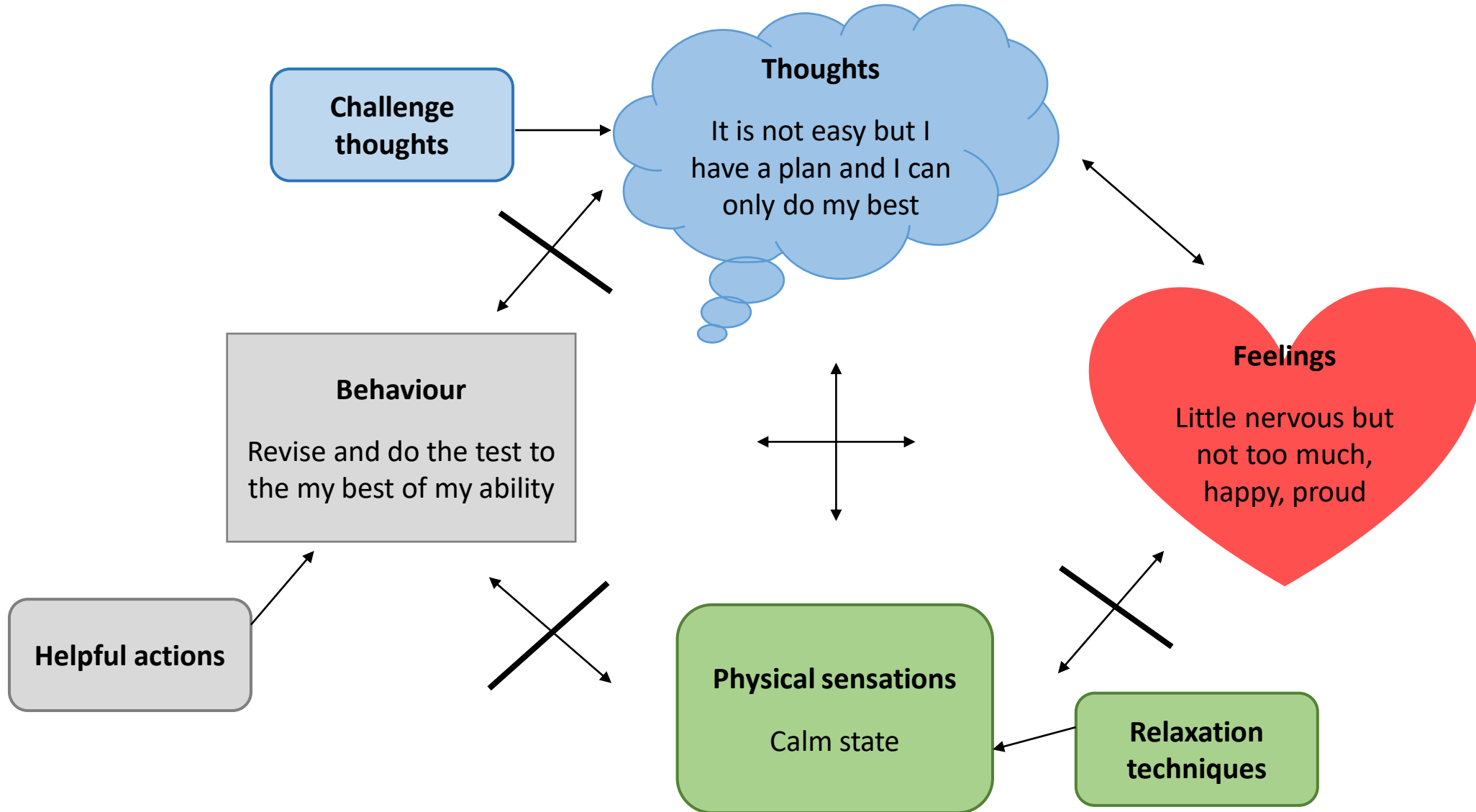
Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours



Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours



Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours



Activity

- Think of a difficult situation that your child has recently encountered (i.e. a situation that evoked anxiety or frustration)
 - What were their thoughts?
 - How did they feel?
 - What were their physical sensations?
 - What did they do? Was this helpful?

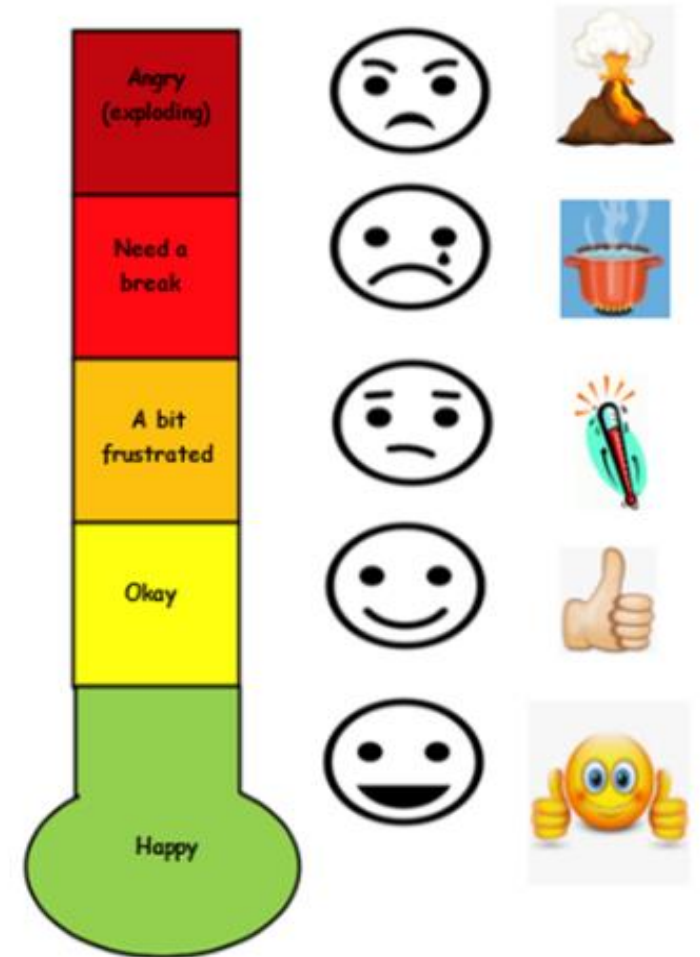
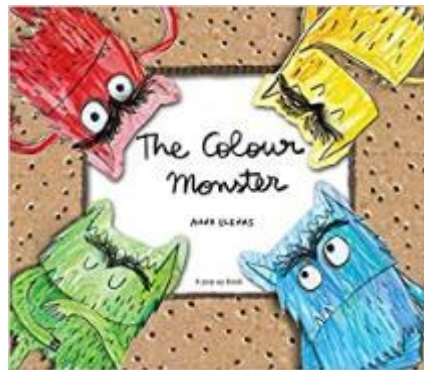




Strategies to Promote Emotional Literacy

- Normalise feelings
- Dedicated time to talk about feelings
- Model and encourage emotional language
- Visuals: Emotion flash cards, mood meter, thermometer, or pinwheel, using colour
- Books: 'Emotion in the Ocean', 'The Colour Monster', 'Listening to My Body' (and many more!)
- Games: Snap, matching games, Heads Up

When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary.



Strategies to Promote Emotional Literacy

Body mapping:

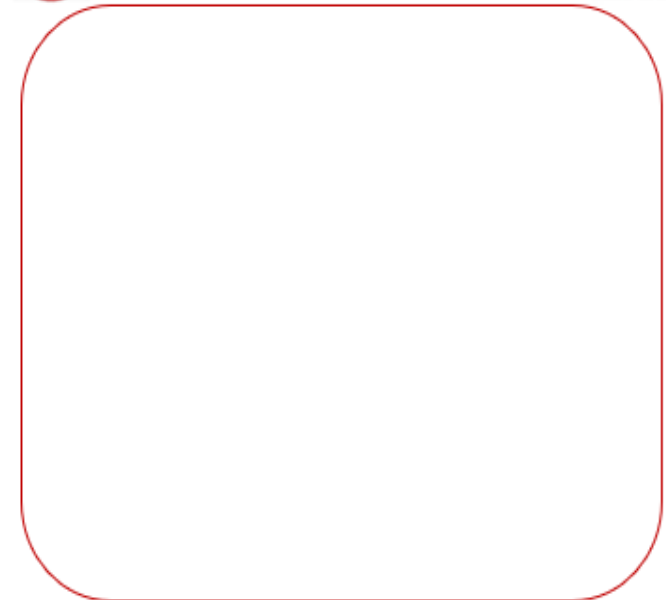


What kind of things make me feel anxious?

school tests parties
food Mum and dad fighting



This is a picture of me when I am feeling ANGRY and I am about to explode



I feel angry when:

-

What I do when I feel angry (actions):

-

TIME FOR A
BREAK



What Kinds of
Behaviours are
you Seeing?

<https://www.mentimeter.com/s/8c196c1eb515920015e24db66990b2d3/9be744fff0b5/edit>

Anger Iceberg

Sometimes when we are angry, there are other emotions under the surface

Icebergs are giant floating pieces of ice found in the coldest parts of the ocean.

What you can see from above is just a tiny part. Most of the iceberg is hidden under the surface.



www.creativesocialworker.tumblr.com

Behaviour as
Communication

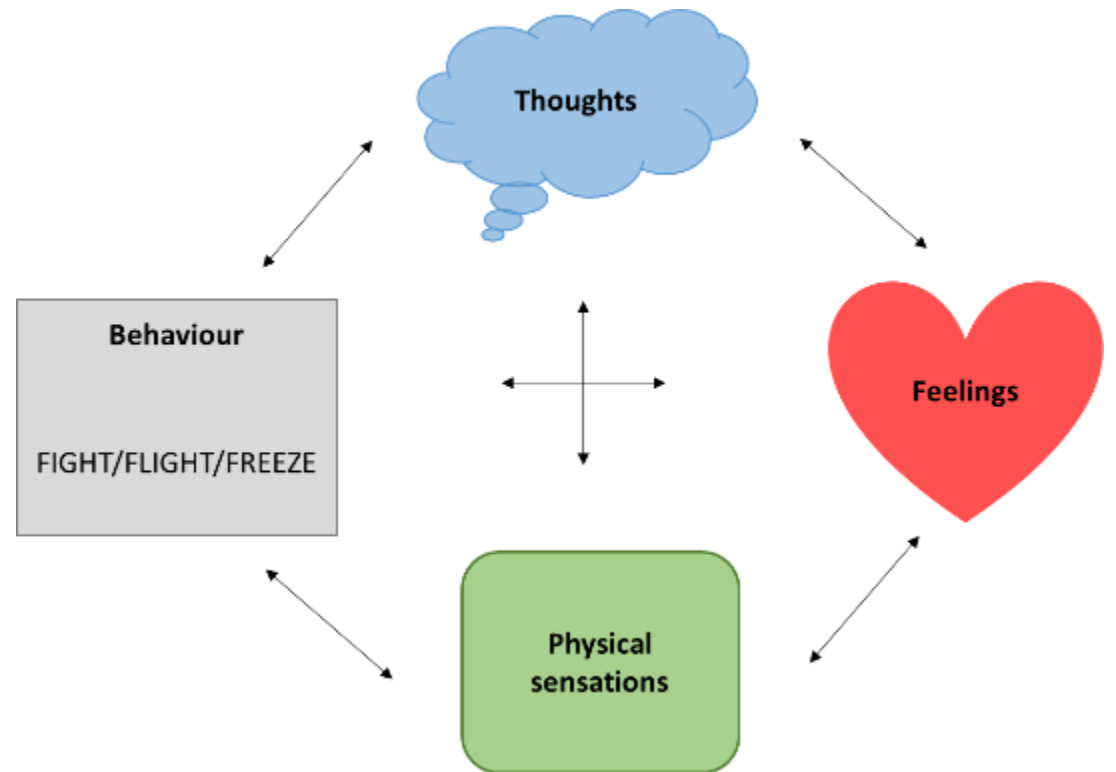
Functional Behavioural Analysis

| Antecedent (A) | Behaviour (B) | Consequence (C) | Function (F) |
|--|---|---|---|
| What happened just before? Immediate trigger? | What did the child's behaviour look like? | What happened as a result of the child's behaviour? | Why did the child engage in that behaviour? |



Function of behaviour

- Social Affirmation
 - Gaining support from adults and/or peers.
- Escape or avoidance
 - To leave a situation
- Sensory
 - Gain more or less sensory input
- Tangible
 - Wanting access to a desired object or activity.



Functional Behavioural Analysis – Example

Situation: *The child has hit their younger brother.*

| Antecedent (A) | Behaviour (B) | Consequence (C) | Function (F) |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><i>What happened just before? Immediate trigger?</i></p> <p>Child had finished online learning task and younger sibling had attempted to take their colour pencils.</p> | <p><i>What did the child's behaviour look like?</i></p> <p>Crying, shouting and hitting of sibling.</p> | <p><i>What happened as a result of the child's behaviour?</i></p> <p>Child was told off by parent, sibling removed from the room.</p> | <p><i>Why did the child engage in that behaviour?</i></p> <p>Sensory? Social Attention? Escape or avoidance? Tangible?</p> |

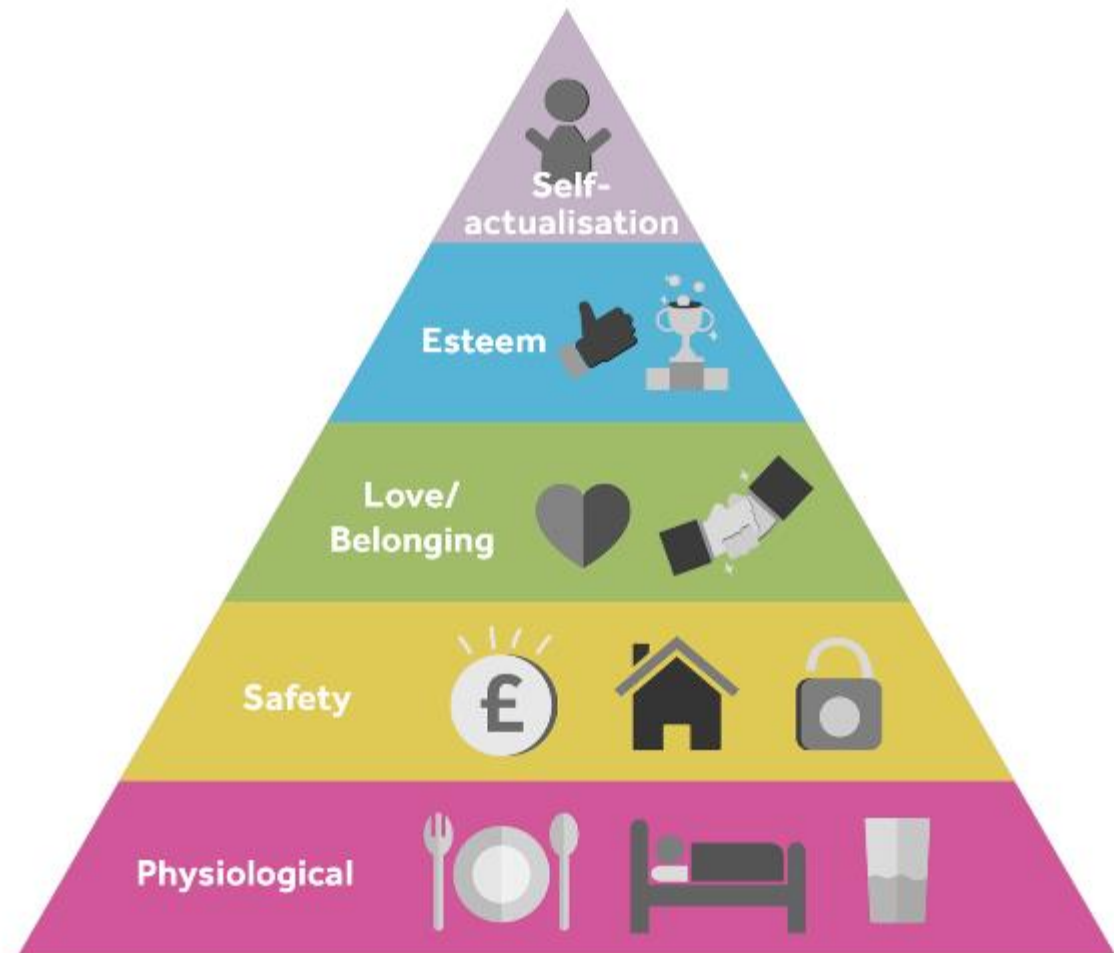


Emotional Regulation

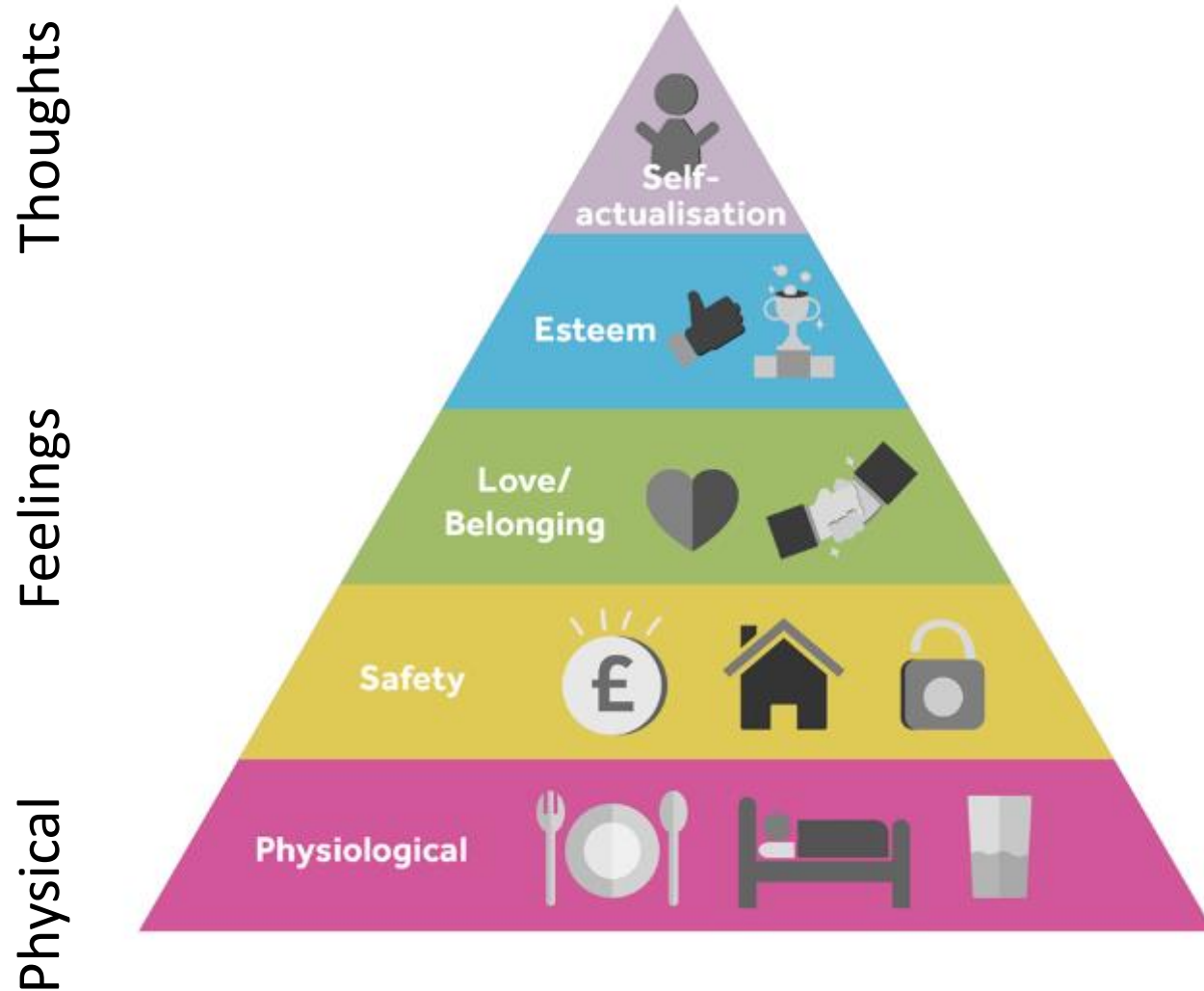


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- Pyramid to define the different levels of people's needs.
- The most essential needs form the base.
- These must be met before you can support children's higher level needs.



Supporting Children's Needs

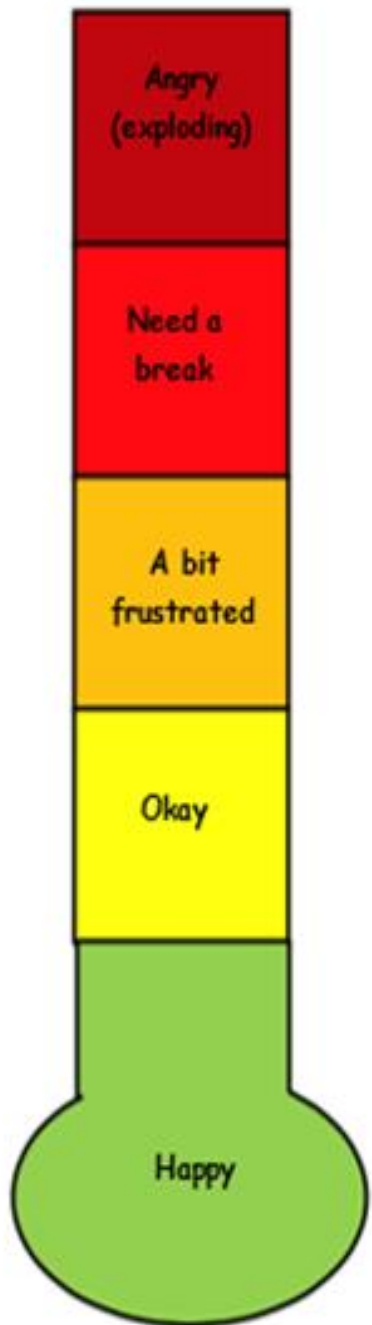


- Setting and celebrating small goals at home
- Maintaining and promoting relationships with missed friends and family
- Discussing worries and fears for children
- Access to technology
- Ways to stay healthy/sleep

Relaxation Strategies

- **Finger breathing**
- **Balloon (belly) breathing**
 - ✓ Using the concept of blowing up and deflating a balloon
- **Using bubbles or a pin wheel to teach deep breathing**
- **Visualisation/Guided Imagery**
 - ✓ Imagining ourselves somewhere calm and relaxing
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:**
 - ✓ Tensing and relaxing muscles around the body in turn
- **Mindfulness:**
 - ✓ Letting thoughts pass without attention i.e. placing thoughts on clouds floating away, focusing on 5 senses – sensory box (e.g. bell, flower/smelly toy, feather, piece of fruit)





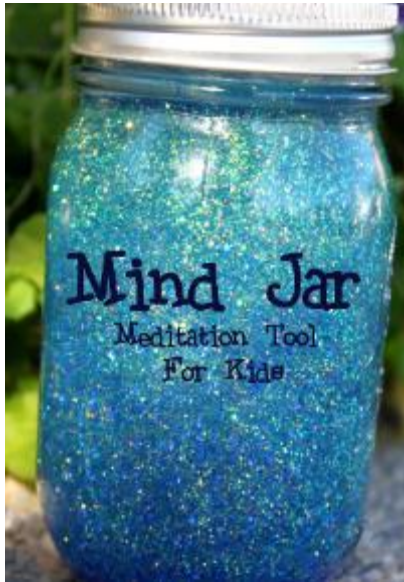
Practical Strategies

- Helping children to recognise and name their emotions.
- Label the behaviour and not the child.
- Planned sensory and movement breaks throughout the day.
- Recognising potential trigger points throughout the day (ABC + F)



Practical Strategies

- 'Emotional check-in' at least once a day
- Timetabling the day
- Being flexible
- Relaxation techniques



Modelling Self-Care and Relaxation and Practising Together

- Resource pack contains various relaxation techniques/exercises
- Additional resources:
 - ✓ CosmicKids channel on YouTube
 - ✓ Websites: Moodcafe.co.uk
 - ✓ Books: *Sitting Like a Frog* (Snel, 2014)
 - ✓ Mindful Kids cards (Stewart & Braun, 2017)
 - ✓ Mindfulness journal



What strategies do you use to help your child to manage their emotions?



Your turn.....



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

Co-Regulation

- Noticing, naming, and helping your child to work through their emotions
- ‘Being with’ your child and communicating ‘we’re in this together’

4 steps to success

Step 1: Recognise, Empathise, and Validate

- Name feelings to tame feelings
- E.g. “I can see that you’re feeling...because...”, “I can understand why you’re feeling that way, I would feel like that too, it’s ok”

Step 2: Calmly Set Limits (if needed)

- Remind of boundaries e.g. “I know you’re angry but you cannot do that, it is not safe”

Step 3: Identify Soothing Strategy

- Model and help your child to engage in a relaxation strategy e.g. “let’s calm down our breathing...by...”
- Speak quietly, slowly, and calmly

Step 4: Reflect (once your child is calm)

- E.g. “Let’s think about what happened and what we can do next time to stop us from...i.e. reaching the point of exploding”



Action plan

| What | When | Review <i>What was the impact? Was it successful?</i> |
|--|--|--|
| E.g. Make and use a feelings thermometer | E.g. Make at lunch time on Friday and stick on the fridge. Will use whenever child starts to appear frustrated | |
| E.g. Balloon breathing technique | E.g. As part of the bedtime routine | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |





THANK
YOU!

Next workshop: Tuesday 16th March 3:30 – 4:30pm

References

Eggum, N. D., Eisenberg, N., Kao, K., Spinrad, T. L., Bolnick, R., Hofer, C., Kupfer, A.S., & Fabricius, W. V. (2011). Emotion understanding, theory of mind, and prosocial orientation: Relations over time in early childhood. *The journal of positive psychology, 6*(1), 4-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2010.536776>

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