

PATIENT INFORMATION

Raising Awareness With Parents (RAP)

Dealing with difficult feelings in ourselves and young people

Introduction

This booklet accompanies CAMHS 'Raising Awareness with Parents' (RAP) group which has been developed with the intention of supporting parents whose children have been referred to our service. Parents are invited to join the group for four weekly sessions led by members of the CAMHS team. It is hoped that parents will gain confidence in dealing with the difficulties their children and young people may be experiencing through meeting other parents, sharing experiences and learning about how CAMHS works with young people.



Contents – Raising Awareness with Parents (RAP) Group

Overview of content

The RAP group meets for four sessions over a course of four weeks. Sessions run from 10.00-12.30 and are held at Lescaze Offices, Dartington. The aim is to provide an opportunity for parents to talk about their children's difficulties in a safe and containing environment. Members of the Primary Mental Health Team will lead the sessions, the content of which is below:

Session One

Introduction and welcome, hopes and expectations for the group. Some definitions of mental health. Reflectivity. The Nine Dot Problem. How emotions can get in the way of thinking. How our brain is hard wired for survival. React or Respond – Reactive loops. The crocodile brain. Thoughtcatching. Becoming a curious scientist.

Session Two

The Four Steps of Learning, the iceberg, the crucial C's – feeling Connected, Capable, that I Count, that I have Courage, faulty thinking, the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviour, introduction to active listening.

Session Three

How's it going? What age is she? Introduction to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – the Hot Cross Bun, negative automatic thinking, introduction to mindfulness.

Session Four

Review, Thoughtcatching revisited, reflecting again and where next?

Some definitions of Mental Health

“Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others’ dignity and worth.”

(From Mental Health Programme Factsheet, Health Education Authority 1998: Mental Health promotion and young people)

“Good mental health is to move towards the challenges that life presents and to deal with those problems in ways that are of help to themselves and to others.”

(From Francis X. Walton Adlerian workshop, Cambridge, March 2003)

A Mentally Healthy Young Child

Based on Bright Futures (1999) The Mental Health Foundation



Session One

We start with an acknowledgement: Life is difficult! This is not always something we like to think about and actually, we are not encouraged to think in this way. When things are going well, it's great, but when they aren't, it often feels like we have done something wrong, or that we are at fault in some way, or, that life is being unfair – someone's got it in for us.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Life is difficult; it always has been and it always will be. However, as at least one psychologist* has said, once this is acknowledged it immediately becomes easier. This is because once it is accepted that life is difficult, it no longer is an issue.

The aim of this course is not to tell you what to do or how to make your difficulties go away. Our aim is to offer you an opportunity to think about some of life's difficulties, to share them with others, and to explore them in a spirit of curiosity. That word is very important and so here it is again, in bold and underlined: **curiosity.**

The Nine-Dot Puzzle

Join all the dots with four straight lines without taking the pencil from the paper.



What were your initial thoughts when you began to solve that problem? What thought were you aware of as you continued your attempts to solve it? It may be that you felt excited and confident, or it may be that you thought 'Oh no, I hate this sort of thing' or 'I'm useless at these.' Whatever thoughts you had, they would have impacted on your ability to solve the problem.

This puzzle also provides a good example of how we often bring assumptions to situations which influence what we might do. In this case, there is an assumption about the placing of the four lines that influences our efforts.

You may have found that you become very frustrated if you were unable to complete the task. Frustration can lead to a number of powerful emotions. A key phrase used in our approach is '**THINK CLEARLY IN THE MIDST OF FRUSTRATION.**' Not easy!

*M.Scott –Peck, The Road Less Travelled, 1978

What makes us worried, upset or angry?



Imagine two rabbits in their burrows. One day, they pop up to see what's going on in the wider world and guess what – in the distance, there's a fox! Peter darts back down into the burrow but his friend is curious and decides to investigate further. Reynard enjoys an unexpected lunch; Peter lives to see another day. The rabbit population then learns that foxes are dangerous and best avoided.

Animal brains have developed over thousands of years to protect themselves by detecting danger and alerting the body to act on it. It's a basic survival mechanism and we all have it. It is there to keep us safe. The 'reptilian' brain (see above) is the oldest part of our brain and is primed for survival. It can program our bodies to speed up, become more alert in an instant – in short, get us ready for action. We don't need to think about it, it is an instinctual part of us.

However, mammalian and in particular human brains have developed further. Neuroscientists* have identified aspects of our brains that act as antennae – to interpret what enters our brains via eyes and ears and decide what, if any, action is needed. Dr Paul McClean has developed the concept of what is called the 'triune brain' which helps us to understand why the same situation creates different responses in different people.

In essence, parts of our brain act rather like a **smoke alarm**. It receives information ('smoke') and decide whether we need to take action ('beep').



In our case, 'beeping' will usually mean preparing the body for 'flight, or 'fight'.

Emotional Regulation – The Limbic System



It is a relatively recent discovery* that when the part of our brain that is involved in deciding whether we are in danger or not – the **'smoke alarm'** – is highly aroused, it can affect the thinking part of our brain. When we receive information through our senses, the brain will access additional information about what we see from variety of sources. (Remember the unfortunate rabbit from earlier – he did not have any previous knowledge of foxes and so his smoke alarm did not detect danger.) This additional information may come from **CONTEXT** – in other words, what else is going on at the time. It can also come from **MEMORY** and your previous experience of similar situations. Certain memories of similar situations can arouse your emotions and make it more likely that activity in your thinking brain is reduced.

The experience of standing a few feet away from a live tiger with elicit different responses in your brain depending on whether you are standing in your garden or in front of an enclosure at Paignton Zoo.



What might complicate things further is that if you had previous witnessed a tiger escaping from a zoo (unlikely I know but I'm sure you get the point!) this would heavily impact on your perception of the situation. As Daniel Goleman says in his book 'Emotional Intelligence', 'Emotional memories can be faulty guides to the present.' Goleman further describes the Limbic System, also referred to as the 'emotional brain' plays a fundamental role on how we perceive a given situation. It has far more influence than previously thought and is key in determining how well we manage our ability to remain in touch with our thinking brain.

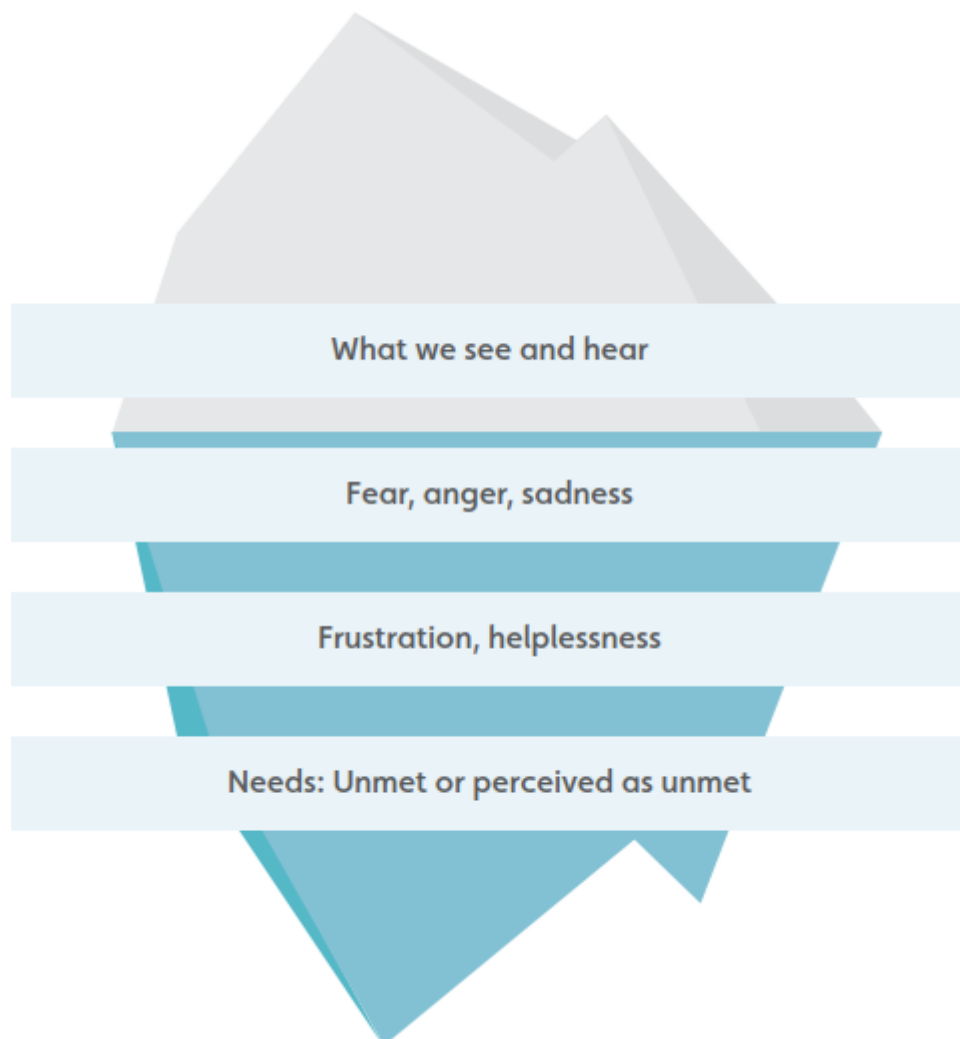
The good news is that the more we keep the pathways to our thinking brain open, the easier it becomes. Just like a river forging its way through the landscape. Our job as parents is not just to become brilliant at doing this ourselves but also to teach our children to become equally skilled.

Session Two

The Iceberg

It is well known that the bulk of an iceberg lies beneath the surface and cannot be seen. It is helpful to use this to illustrate how deeper parts of the self can influence behaviour. Above the surface is what we see and hear – a child shouting and screaming, or shutting themselves in their room. We may be able to detect anger easily; sometimes fear and sadness are often quite close to the surface, but what might be lurking in the deeper levels?

Some psychologists* have suggested that we have fundamental basic needs, which if not met, or perceived as not met, can cause high levels of distress. They are the **‘Crucial C’s’**.



The Crucial C's

Some psychologists* have suggested that we have fundamental basic needs, which if not met, or perceived as not met, can cause high levels of distress. They are the 'Crucial C's'.

- To feel **Connected** – to belong, fit in, to feel secure
- To feel **Capable** – to feel competent and to take responsibility
- To feel we **Count** – that we make a difference and are significant
- To have **Courage** – to feel able to handle difficult situations and overcome fear

If I have the Crucial C's		If I don't have the Crucial C's
	CONNECT	
I feel <i>secure</i>	I believe I <i>belong</i>	I feel <i>insecure, isolated</i>
I can reach out		I'm more susceptible to peer pressure
Make friends		
I cooperate	I need <i>communication skills</i>	I seek ATTENTION
	CAPABLE	
I feel <i>competent</i>	I believe I <i>can do it</i>	I feel <i>inadequate</i>
I have self-control		I try to control others
I am self-reliant	I need self-discipline	I seek POWER
	COUNT	
I feel <i>valuable</i>	I believe I <i>matter</i>	I feel <i>insignificant</i>
I can make a difference		I may try to hurt back
I contribute		I seek REVENGE
	I need to <i>assume responsibility</i>	

In order to look for the crucial C's (meet our needs) through useful means, we need:

	COURAGE	
I feel <i>hopeful</i>	I believe I <i>can handle what comes</i>	I feel <i>inferior</i>
I am willing to try		I may give up
I am resilient		I use AVOIDANCE
I am encouraged	I need <i>good judgement</i>	I am DISCOURAGED

In a very famous episode of a very famous sitcom, John Cleese expresses his frustration at a car that will not start by hitting it with a branch.



In this episode, Cleese's character Basil Fawlty is hosting a very important evening at his hotel, attended by some local dignitaries. It is very important for him that it goes well and he is attempted to rescue the evening by collecting a duck from a nearby restaurant. Hence his frustration at his car failing to start.

What are Basil's needs?

- Does he feel **connected**?
- Does he feel **capable**?
- Does he feel as though he **counts**?
- Does he have **courage**?

The four steps of learning a new skill

Think about when you have learned to drive a car (assuming you have!) and how conscious you were of everything you had to do. Mastering the clutch, brakes, accelerator, gear changes, mirror-signal-manoeuve – it seemed an impossible challenge. But, if you have learned and have been driving a few years you will sometimes have the experience of completing a journey and failing to remember any detail of it. This is because the skills that were once so difficult have become ingrained in you and you no longer need to think about them.

This is a four step process. When you were ten years old, you probably had no interest in learning to drive. Other things would be occupying your mind. This step is called '**unconscious incompetence**', in other words, you can't drive but you never even think about it.

However, around the age of 16 or 17 you begin to think 'hmmm...it would be nice to have a car – I need driving lessons.' (Not everyone of course has this experience) You know that in order to drive, you need lessons. This stage is called '**conscious incompetence**', in other words, you have started to think about it.

So you have some lessons, and as described above, it seems that there is a lot to master. You think carefully about each move and it takes a lot of concentration. However you are able to control the car and drive. This stage is called '**conscious competence**.'

Eventually you have the experience of driving with really thinking about it – most of it has become automatic. This final stage is '**unconscious competence**'.

This four step process can be applied to learning any new skill – playing an instrument, learning a foreign language, learning to walk.

Reactive Loops

When we react to situations, we are often reacting unconsciously, without thinking full about possible responses. In relationships, this can lead to becoming trapped in what might be called 'reactive loops'. You can recognize a reactive loop when you get the thought 'here we go again' entering your head in an altercation with your child (or partner!)



A further difficulty with reactive loops is that they can easily trigger strong emotions. This is because they tend to strengthen our feeling of frustration that a familiar stressful situation is happening again and nothing we seem to do changes it. Once we are in the loop, emotion increases and our capacity to **‘think clearly in the midst of frustration’** diminishes.

An example of a reactive loop

Child: *You never listen!*

Parent: *Yes I do, I spend HOURS listening to your problems!*

Child: *You don’t, you’re always shouting. You are shouting now.*

Parent: *I am not shouting, I am talking calmly.*

Child: *See, it’s just like I said! You never listen!*

Etc.

By now emotions will have become raised, and even if you are able to remain outwardly calm, it is highly likely that you will feel frustrated at your child’s irrational behaviour and unfair accusations. This will interfere in your ability to think clearly and plan your responses.

And that’s where ‘active listening’ comes in. This is a skill that takes real effort to learn; in fact, in the authors’ experience, there is always more to learn. But it is worth it as it can pay real dividends. It can be very powerful at interrupting a reactive loop. For example, let’s replay the above loop:

Child: *You never listen!*

Parent: *(looks surprised) Oh? Hmmm... it seems to you that I never listen?*

Child: *Yeah, you just go on and on and you don’t listen.*

Parent: *Hmm, let me get this straight. It feels to you that I don’t listen and that I am going on and on at you? Have I done that recently?*

Child: *Yeah you do it all the time.*

Parent: *Really? Sounds like we need to sort something out here. I’m not aware that I am going on and on. Can you think of a recent time when I did that?*

Child: *The other day, when I...*

Etc.

Active Listening

Attention

- What is being said?
- How is it being said?
- What is not being said?

Questions

Listening questions: 'And then what happened?' 'Can you give me an example?'
Summarising questions: 'As I understand it...?' 'So what you're saying is..?'

Encouragement

Non – verbal: 'Hmmm...oh...ah'

Supportive statements: 'I see'; 'that must have been difficult'

Reflective statements: 'Sounds as though...'

Interruption

DON'T – unless interrupting a monologue

Active Listening – some do's and don'ts

DON'T: Try to reassure: 'No one cares about me' 'Of course they do, we all care about you'

INSTEAD: Reflect: 'Oh? You feel that no one cares about you?'

DON'T: Be defensive: 'You always give Sean stuff and not me' 'that's not true, what about when we...'

INSTEAD: Clarify: 'Oh? Does it seem to you that I am treating you unfairly?'

DON'T: Cajole/Explain/Lecture/Problem Solve: 'Why don't you... you have to make an effort you know...you could always...if you don't then...you need to...'

INSTEAD: Encourage the child to take responsibility: 'What do you think could be done/you could do about that?'

REMEMBER: Active listening takes a lot of practice but it does get easier!

Session Three

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Research is now suggesting that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can be very effective in treating a number of mental health difficulties, including low mood, anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). It is likely that a young person receiving a service from CAMHS will be offered CBT. It is therefore useful to have some knowledge of this approach.

“People are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.”
Epictetus, Enchiridion

The above quotation shows that the ideas underpinning CBT are not new (Epictetus died in 135 A.D. which makes this quote nearly two thousand years old). You will recall from what you have read so far that a key element of managing difficult situations or feelings is learning to respond rather than react. You may also recall that reactions are sometimes based on our interpretations of situations, rather than the situations themselves. Remember these?



Our response to seeing a live tiger depends on our interpretation of the situation in which we meet it. If we have had a traumatic experience in the past related to a tiger – being attacked by one, for example – it is likely that we will experience a stronger reaction to it than a person who has only previously seen one in a zoo.

Our interpretations of what we experience through our senses are shaped through life. This can lead to distorted views and cause us to assume that there is danger where none, and our ‘smoke alarm’ can sometimes become over sensitive.

Here's the Greek philosopher Epictetus again.

*'It is not external events themselves that cause us distress, but the way in which we think about them, our interpretation of their significance. It is our attitudes and reactions that give us trouble. We cannot choose our external circumstances, **but we can always choose how we respond to them.**'* [Our emphasis]

Here's another, unfortunately unsourced, seen in a church in Cornwall:

'Nothing has changed except my attitude, therefore everything has changed.'

The Hot Cross Bun



So basically, any given situation will cause us to have certain thoughts, certain feelings and will cause us to behave in certain ways, which includes doing nothing. You will be aware by now that thought, feelings and behaviours are all related; each affects with other. We will also have physiological reactions which is the fourth sector of the hot cross bun.

What's really important about this is that TWO or those four things can be changed independently of the others. In our work with young people, we use the hot cross bun a lot and we find that they are nearly always able to identify which can be changed. We are hard wired to respond physiologically to stress – heart rate increases for example, and we can't just decide to slow it down without changing something else. Similarly, it is impossible to stop feeling anxious by a sheer act of will. But we can change our thinking (cognitions) and we can change what we do (behaviour). And changing those will have an effect on our feelings and physiology.

So... remembering that our lived experience is likely to shape our perception of events. A common anxiety – inducing event is speaking in public, or a large group. Typical thoughts that will increase anxiety would be:

- 'I'm going to look really stupid'
- 'People will think I'm weird'
- 'I won't know what to say and will freeze up'
- 'I'm going to destroy what confidence I have left'

These thoughts could be described as 'predicting the future' and they are examples of '**Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATS)**' or '**Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS)**'. NATS and ANTS can bite and although insects have their uses, particularly ants, they can be a nuisance!

Other examples of NATS are:

- Jumping to conclusions
- Over generalising
- Personalising (Basil and his car!)
- Black and White thinking
- Catastrophising
- Can you think of more?

Thoughtcatching

CBT is not about positive thinking or denying that experiences are painful or unpleasant. Upset at the loss of a loved pet, for example, is normal and is not a consequence of irrational thinking. CBT is about challenging whether our thoughts are logical or rational, particularly if they are causing extreme distress. For example, if the death of your pet hamster caused you to stop going to work and shut yourself in your room for a month, then it would very likely be the case that something was not right!

Try 'Thoughtcatching' what are you thinking right now? Is the thought helpful to you or not? Is it logical? Is it causing anxiety, annoyance? If so, what does the emotion derive from?

Managing Conflict

In his book 'The Explosive Child', psychologist Ross Greene describes a way of approaching disagreements and conflicts in a way that can avoid them escalating. He calls it 'Plan B'. The basis of the approach is that as a parent, you raise a concern with your child that you have and invite them to help you sort it out. Now, Ross Greene lives in the real world and knows a lot about children and young people. In introducing a 'Plan B' approach he is aware that a young person is likely to respond to your initial invitations with a 'bog off!' or worse. This does not matter, in fact it is to be expected. What you need to do is think like a terrier. You are not going to let go!

So the keyword is persistence, and one way of showing this is to keep returning to the issue even casually. For example: 'Oh, by the way, I'm still thinking about you hitting your brother the other day. I wonder if you have any thoughts about it?'... 'Well, let me know when you do...'

Then change the subject. This is called '**pebble dropping**' and is rather like a 'drip feed' approach.

The analogy 'pebble dropping' is a useful one. Earlier in this booklet it is described how aspects of brain activity can be likened to a river forging a path through the landscape. Eventually the river becomes ingrained into the landscape. Habitual thinking works a bit like this and it explains why it can be so difficult to change well-established thoughts and behaviours. It would take a long time to damn the River Thames by dropping pebbles into it; however, given enough time and enough pebbles it could be done. A child's brain is less well-established than an adult's and in this sense it may be more appropriate to compare the process of thought change to dropping pebbles in a stream.

Mindfulness

What is it, and what is it not?

- It is not a religion
- There is no need to sit crossed legged – be comfortable!
- It does not need to take hours
- Mindfulness is a skill that gets easier with practice
- It is not just meditations, incorporate mindfulness in daily life
- It is not about 'clearing your mind' or becoming totally calm
- Relaxation can be a pleasant bi-product of mindfulness, but it is not guaranteed!
- It is not about accepting the unacceptable
- It is not about seeing the world in greater clarity in deep and compassionate awareness.

Mindfulness practice is encouraged as a means of stress reduction; it is becoming used frequently in schools, and can also be used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. If you are interested in developing this further see the list of recommended resources.

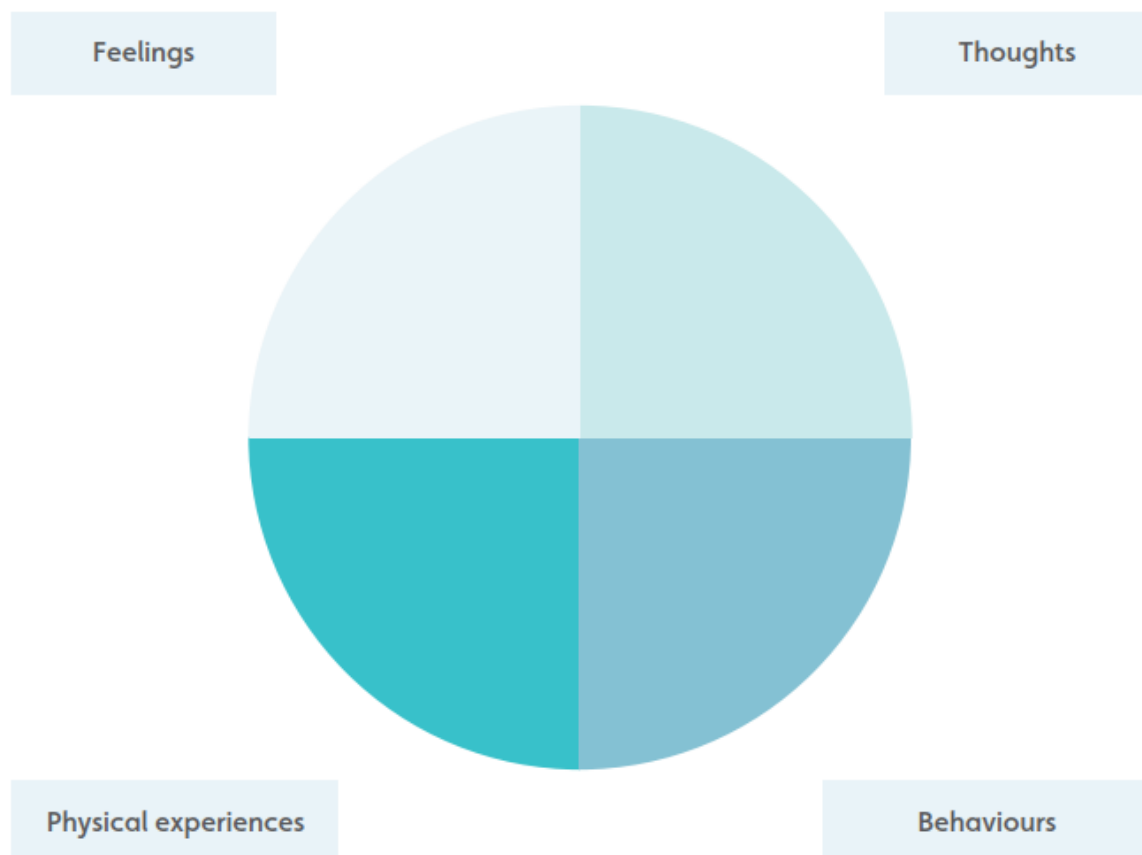
Session Four

In the final session we review progress and discuss any outstanding issues.

Key things to remember

- The Iceberg
- Response not reaction – **respons-ability**
- A change of thought can change a feeling
- The Four Steps of Change
- Listen reflectively
- Be mindful
- NATS and ANTS can bite!

Resources



- Which thoughts are helpful/not helpful?
- Which behaviours are helpful/not helpful?
- See 'Thoughtcatching' in the resources section.

Relaxation exercise

Get ready to **relax**. You can sit in a chair or lie down on a bed.

Close your eyes, and take a **deep breath** in...now breathe out.

Breathe in...and breathe out.

Keep breathing slowly like this. Feel how it relaxes you to **breathe deeply**.

Now **squeeze** your hands close into fists. Pretend that you are squeezing a ball in each hand...gripping tighter...squeeze even tighter...Right, now your muscles are **tense**.

And now **relax**. Let your hands go limp. Now your hands feel relaxed. See how relaxed your hands feel. See how tense feels different from relaxed. Relaxation is a way to make your whole body feel relaxed like your hands are now.

One way to relax your body is breathing deeply. Imagine that your body is like a **balloon**. When you breathe in, feel your chest and sides **expanding**, like a balloon filling with air. When you breathe out, imagine your body is like a balloon shrinking with the air being let out.

Breathe in like a balloon being blown up. Now breathe out, like the air is being left out of a balloon. Let the air out by blowing the air through your **mouth**.

Breathe in through your **nose**, imagining your body expanding like a balloon... and now imagine letting the end of the balloon go, and the air rushing out as you breathe out through your mouth.

As you breathe in this time, **raise your arms** above your head. When you breathe out, lower your arms.

Breathe in. **Reach** your hands above your head, stretching high up...**stretching**...and now lower your arms to your sides and relax. Breathe out.

Raise your arms and breathe in...lower your arms and breathe out...

Raise your arms and breathe in...lower your arms and breathe out...

Now relax and keep your arms at your sides, while you continue breathing **slowly** and **deeply**.

Remember the difference between tense and relaxed. Tighten your leg muscle to make both of your legs tense. Squeeze tighter...tighter...and now relax.

Let your legs become very relaxed. Each leg is as **floppy** as a piece of string.

Your legs feel **heavy**. The muscles are **loose**.

Now tense your arms. Make the muscles very tight and tense. Tighter...and now relax.

Your arms are **relaxed, limp** and **loose** as pieces of string.

See how it feels to be relaxed. Your legs and arms are relaxed.

Now let your whole body become relaxed. See how relaxed you can make your body...loosening every muscle...**no tension** at all...

Your body feels heavy and relaxed.

Relax even more by noticing your breathing again. See how **calm** your breathing is. In...and out...in...and out...

Keep breathing and simply relax. There is nothing you need to do right now except **relax quietly**.

(Pause)

See how **calm** and **relaxed** you feel. It feels good to relax.

Your relaxed time is finished now, and it is time to return to your usual activities. Keep your eyes closed for little longer while you wake up your body and your mind by wiggling your fingers and toes....moving your arms and legs...

Sit still now for a moment, and open your eyes to look around the room.

When you are ready, get up and return to your usual activities, feeling awake, but still feeling relaxed and calm.

When you are ready, get up and return to your usual activities, feelings awake, but still feeling relaxed and calm.



Some instant calmers

Rag Doll



The child flops, squirms and rolls, mimicking the loose disjointed movements of a rag doll. Then, on a secret cue or code word, the child falls limp and relaxed and if you were to lift an arm you would find no resistance.

Birthday Party



The child takes a deep, deep breath and slowly blows out the candles on an imaginary birthday cake. Then, peaceful and with closed eyes, the child makes a wish and imagines a happy thought. Use an image your child enjoys: blowing up a balloon, floating in an ocean of chocolate milkshake.

Tangerine Squeeze



Tell the child to imagine he/she are holding a tangerine in each hand. Squeeze them until you can feel all the juice running into your hands. When you can squeeze no harder drop them to the floor.

In the Land of Peace and Calm



- Turn on some slow, calming music
- Lie down on a soft blanket or carpet
- Close your eyes...breathe in...and out...in...out...in...out
- Listen to the music...breathe the music in...and out...
- Lift one leg off the floor...and let it drop. Now the other one...let it drop
- Lift one arm and let it drop...the other arm...and let go...

Breathing calmly, feel any tension in your body. Take a breath and, breathing out, send the warm, relaxing energy to that place.

Feel the tense muscles relax...

Any more tension? Breathe in again, and when breathing out send the relaxing warm energy to the tense spot on your body...

When the whole of your body feels warm and relaxed, breathe in deeply and let all the air out of your lungs.

Stretch...stretch...your legs...arms

Turn to your side slowly, open your eyes and sit feeling relaxed, happy and full of energy.

By Eva Hoffman and Zdzistaw Bartkowicz

Golden Moments (1)

'I'd like you to think back to a time when you were enjoying yourself. Maybe it was a birthday or a time when you were on holiday. Try to remember exactly how you felt when you woke in the morning and what you did during the day. Go through as many details as you can – the things you said, the things people said to you, the clothes you wore, the objects you touched, the things you saw. Go right through to bedtime and remember how you felt when the day was over.'

Do this in silence with closed eyes. Choose particular moments and make them 'snapshots'. Make the colours brighter and increase the volume of the sounds you can hear. Pay attention to any physical sensations that you notice.

With practice you can recreate this day whenever you want to and wherever you are.

Golden Moments (2)

'I'd like you to think of a particular place you have been where you felt very relaxed. This could be a day on the beach – or it could be a place in your garden. Close your eyes and remember being there. Try to recall the things that you could see and pay attention to their shapes, colours and movements. Listen to the sounds that are around you – perhaps birdsong, distant traffic, water, people talking and laughing. Make the colours brighter and the sounds more intense. Notice the feeling of relaxation spreading through your body.'

Make this your 'place to be' and return to it when you need a quick chillout.

Use your common sense

Close your eyes and imagine the sound of:

- A running tap
- A kettle boiling
- The wind in the trees
- A bird singing
- A friend's voice
- A musical instrument playing a favourite tune
- A crowd cheering
- Rain falling
- Waves crashing on a beach

It will help to visualise the image at the same time.

Close your eyes and imagine:

- The feel of the wind in your face as you cycle
- The warm water of a shower
- The cool water of a swimming pool
- A comfortable bed
- Sunshine
- The fur of a cat or dog
- The pain of a cut knee
- A drenching from heavy rain
- Sand running through your fingers
- The taste of pizza
- The smell of flowers
- Frying sausages
- Soap
- A fish and chip shop

Focusing Exercise*

Focusing is not simply about concentrating on the here and now: it is about getting to know yourself, being in touch with your feelings and ultimately assuming a greater degree of self-control. Relaxing and focusing complement each other: begin by getting your child to relax himself/herself and then provide him with exercises which might help him/her to develop his capacity not simply to focus but to feel. When he/she is relaxed, ask him/her to close his/her eyes and perform the following exercise:

1. **SEE** and hold the following images in his/her mind for ten seconds.
 - a. A mirror with his/her own face in it.
 - b. His/her own name drawn on smooth wet sands
 - c. A red circle on a black square

2. **FEEL** and hold in his/her mind for ten seconds the sensation of touching the following:
 - a. A balloon
 - b. A cat
 - c. A rope

3. **TASTE** the following and hold the sensation in his/her mind for ten seconds:
 - a. Ice cream
 - b. Lemonade
 - c. Toothpaste

4. **SMELL** the following and hold the sensation in his/her mind for ten seconds:
 - a. Fried bacon
 - b. Freshly cut grass
 - c. Cooked cabbage

5. **HEAR** the following and hold the sound in his/her mind for ten seconds:
 - a. A police car
 - b. A cuckoo
 - c. A kettle boiling

**This exercise was created by Alan Train*

Thoughtcatching

It is a good habit to check out your thoughts when you find your mood low or you are worried and anxious. Just as when the police might catch a criminal and arrest him, you can arrest your thoughts if you suspect that they are not helping you. These kind of thoughts are a bit like gremlins or 'NATS' (Negative Automatic Thoughts).

There are certain words that give away these types of thoughts. These words are ones like:

- Should
- Ought
- Always
- Never
- Everyone
- Everytime

And more...

If you get a thought like this then you need to do exactly what the police will do with a suspect – put them in the dock! Then get your 'lawyer' brain to challenge them. For example:

Thought: 'I always get the blame'

Challenge: 'Always? Are you sure about that? Perhaps 'sometimes' might be a more accurate word?'

Thought: 'I'm useless at sports'

Challenge: 'Useless? At all sports? Would it not be more accurate to say that you are not as good as some others at some sports? (Even most – most is not all)'

Go Fish



A game to develop the social skill of turn-taking.

Each player is dealt six cards. The remainder are left face down in the centre of the table. Players hold their cards in a fan. The aim of the game is for each player to make as many number pairs as possible, irrespective of suit. Existing pairs are placed on the table in turn then the first player asks the player to his/her left for a card to make a pair, using the words 'Do you have any...?' If the player has one he/she must hand it over. If he doesn't he/she doesn't he/she says 'Go Fish' and the player takes a card from a central pile. If he/she gets one, he/she says 'I fished upon my wish' and continues until he/she doesn't make a pair.

Play continues until all cards have been paired; the winner is the player with the most cards.

Authors



An advanced version of Go Fish.

A game to help develop social skills of politeness and the emotionally competent skill of patience.

The aim is to collect 'tricks' or 'books of four cards of one suit.' The denomination does not matter. The cards are dealt out and each player takes it in turn to ask the next player for a particular card i.e. 'Joe, have you got the six of spades?' If Joe has it he hands it over and the player continues until his request is denied. As soon as four cards of one suit are collected the player lays them on the table. The game continues until all cards are laid down; the winner is the one with most suits.

Cheat

A game to develop the social and emotional skills of reading facial expressions.



The cards are dealt and the players hold their cards in a fan. The object is to get rid of all your cards. The first player puts 1-4 cards, **face down**, on the table, announcing their denomination; for example, 'two 3s or 4 jacks' or whatever. He/she may be telling the truth or lying. The next player in turn must play, or pretend to pay between 1 and 4 cards next, announcing 'three 8s' or whatever. Any player who thinks the player is not telling the truth can challenge by calling 'Cheat!' The last cards are inspected and if the cards are not what was claimed, the player who placed them must pick up all the cards of the table and add them to his/her hand. If however the player was not lying, the player who called 'Cheat!' must pick up all the cards on the table. The player who was correct – whether by correctly calling cheat or telling the truth about his cards – resumes the game by starting a new round.

Play continues until one player has got rid of all his/her cards.

Twenty-nine

A game to develop social skills and mental alertness. Four players.

The object of the game is to collect 'tricks' by bringing the total of cards played to 29. The players sit opposite each other in pairs. The first player plays a card and calls out its value e.g. '10'. The second adds another card e.g. a 3 and calls out '13'. The third player might play a 7 and would then call out '20'. If the fourth player has a nine, he/she plays it, calls out '29' and takes the trick.

As the players are paired, the aim is either to make 29 yourself or help your partner to make 29. If it is not possible to play a card without going over 29 then the game ends and the pair with the most tricks wins.

May I?

A game to develop social skills.

The cards are dealt to all players. The aim is to collect 'tricks' or 'books' of four cards of one suit (as in 'Authors'). Players ask in turn for cards using the following dialogue pattern (which must be strictly followed!)

'May I have the (3) of (diamonds)?'

If the player has it she/he replied 'Yes, you may' and hands it over. The first player says 'Thank you' and takes another turn. If she/he does not she/he says 'No, you may not, you may have the (9) of (clubs)' or any other card that she wants to pass on. The first player must accept it if he/she has cards of that suit and say 'Thank you' and then has another turn. If he/she does not he/she says 'No, thank you' and play passes to the next person. Players can ask any player for a card upon their turn.

If a player forgets to say 'Thank you' on receiving a card he/she has to pass the cards back with all other cards of the same suit. Similarly, if he/she forgets to say 'No, thank you' 'Yes, you may' or 'No, you may not' he/she forfeits a card to the other player. This card must be chosen unseen by the other player.

The hand continues until all the cards have been sorted into groups. The winner is the player with the most groups.

Further Reading

For children and young people

The Buzz – a confidence building handbook
Hot Stuff – the Chillout Anger Management Book
What to Do When You Worry Too Much
What to Do When Your Temper Flares
Think Good Feel Good
Starving the Stress Gremlin
Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief

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Jerry Wilde
Dawn Huebner
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Paul Stallard
Kate Collins - Donnelly
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For parents and carers

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Hot Stuff – the Chillout Anger Management Book
What to Do When You Worry Too Much
What to Do When Your Temper Flares
Think Good Feel Good
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Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief
Try and Make Me

David Hodgson
Jerry Wilde
Dawn Huebner
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Paul Stallard
Kate Collins - Donnelly
Kate Collins - Donnelly
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