

Hope for Children and Families

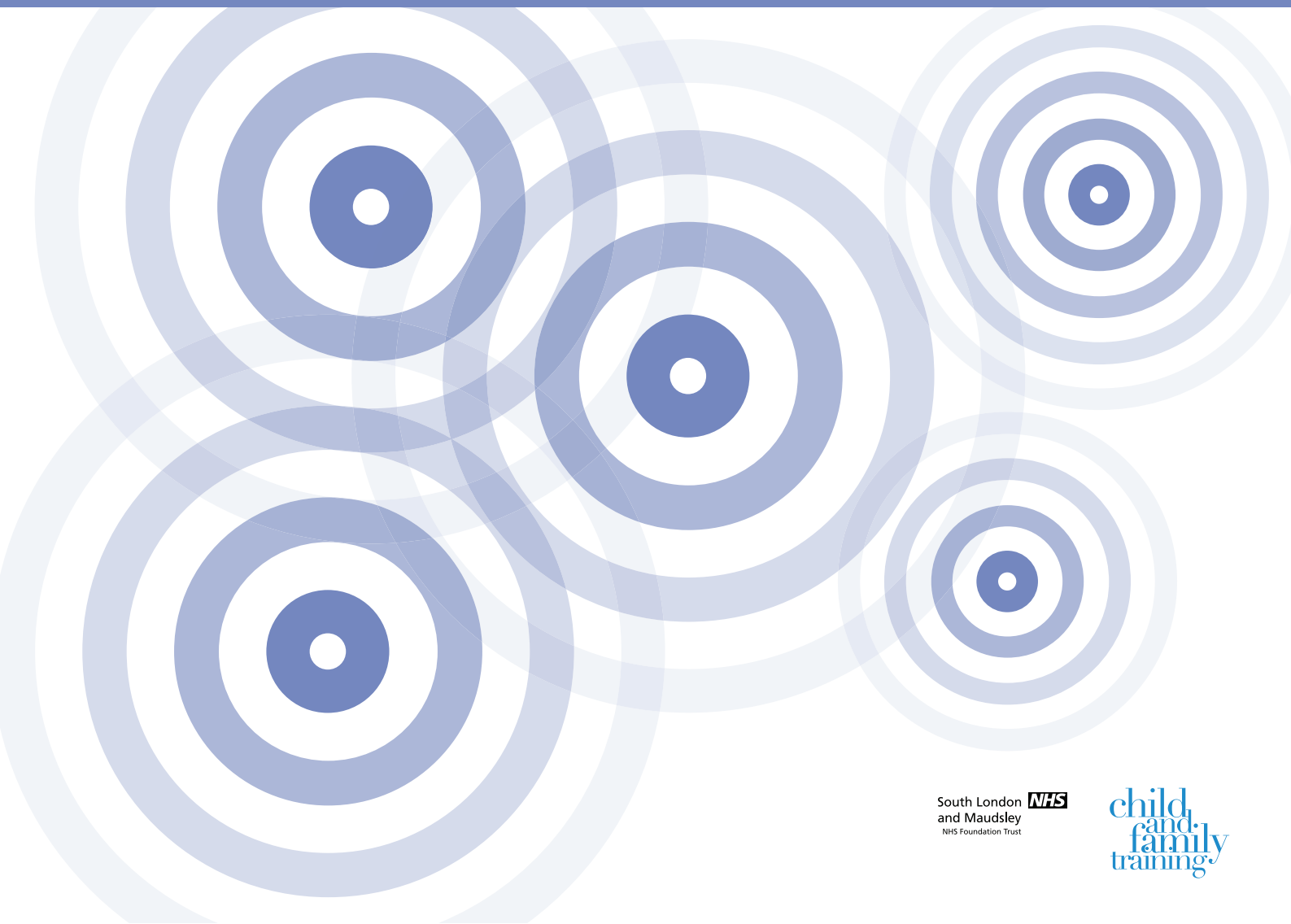
Building on strengths, overcoming difficulties

Intervention guide for practitioners

Working with children and young people: Addressing emotional and traumatic responses

Intervention guide editor: **Tara Weeramanthri**

Series editors: **Arnon Bentovim and Jenny Gray**





Module WR-M5

Relaxing and calming

Content

- The idea that staying calm and relaxing are good ways to affect the way we feel
- Demonstrating what relaxation feels like to children who have difficulty relaxing
- Increasing a child's awareness about their own tension so that relaxation skills can be applied at the proper time
- Teaching the child to relax on demand in certain situations – e.g. bedtime, before a test.

Materials

- h** Handout
- n** Practitioner notes
- r** Record
- w** Worksheet

- Quick calming [WR-5] **h**
- My relaxing place [WR-6] **w**
- Quick calming practice [WR-7] **w**

Main steps

Introduce the benefits of relaxation

Present the idea that staying calm and relaxing are good ways to affect the way we feel – especially when we are stressed out and tense.

Convey the idea that being tense can make us feel bad

Discuss with the child times when they have felt uptight, tense or stressed, particularly focusing on the somatic or physical responses they experience at such times. If the child has difficulty recalling somatic or physical feelings associated with stressful experiences, imaginal techniques may be used to help the child identify the physical expressions of their feelings.

Discuss how bad feelings can make the body tense

Introduce the idea that many of the physical sensations associated with feelings of worry, sadness or stress involve muscle tension. Suggest that when a person becomes upset, some parts of the body become tense and that these somatic or physical responses are the result of that tension.

Introduce the idea that learning to relax can help combat bad feelings

- Ask the child to think of a time or situation when they were really calm and happy.
- Ask them to imagine themselves in that scene and then to focus on how their body feels.
- Discuss with the child the difference between how their body feels when it is tense and when it is relaxed.
- Reinforce this idea by asking the child to make a tight fist by clenching their hand while you count to five and to focus on how it feels.
- Then tell the child to relax their fist to the count of five and to focus on the warm, relaxed feeling.

Initial training in deep-muscle relaxation

Tell the child that if they can relax tense parts, they will be taking the first step in coping with these feelings. Scripts are available for these exercises, but you will want to adapt your training to the child's age and other characteristics – for example, emotional maturity. Allow 10–20 minutes:

- Ask the child to get into a comfortable position, with their eyes closed and to practise deep breathing.
- Prompt the child to progressively tense and relax various muscle groups until the child feels relaxed.

Brief, self-calming techniques

Alternatively, or additionally, educate the child in other techniques that can be practised at any time and in any place that the child feels the need to

reduce tension but cannot participate in deep-muscle relaxation. Give the child examples of such stressful situations (e.g. just before an exam).

The child should:

- sit with a relaxed posture, hands partly open (i.e. no fists) and resting on their lap or thighs
- check the tension level of the muscle group where they tend to become most tense (e.g. the neck) and try to relax those muscles
- take a deep breath and exhale slowly
- imagine that they are relaxing in their favourite place
- do this over and over again until they feel calmer, or until it is their time to perform.

Mood rating

Discuss with the child the effect of this activity on their mood ratings.

If the child's mood ratings went up after the activity, note how well this activity worked for the child.

If the child's mood rating remained the same or declined, discuss the possible reasons (e.g. the particular activity is not mood enhancing for this particular child).

Emphasise that your goal in doing these activities together is:

- to help the child discover which activities are mood enhancers for them
- that using these activities to feel better is under their control.

Discuss the experience of the relaxation exercise

Include the following:

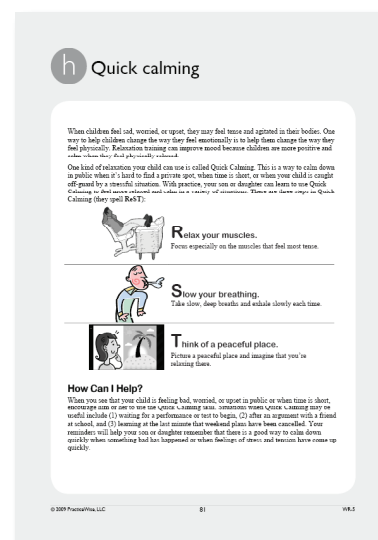
- There is a sensed difference between a relaxed body and a tense one.
- Slowing and paying attention to one's breathing can help relax the body.
- Tensing and relaxing muscles helps relax the body.
- Pleasant and relaxing imagery can magnify the relaxation experience.
- The ultimate goal is to recognise tension in the body and then work to relax it.

Reinforce and further develop the child's awareness of how and when relaxation might be useful by explaining that relaxation-training exercises (such as those practised today) are done to help them:

- realise what it feels like to be tense or relaxed
- learn to relax more quickly.

Imagery

Calming imagery may also be incorporated with any relaxation technique, such that the child is encouraged to visualise a peaceful setting, situation or safe place. Ask the child to remember a time and place when they felt really safe and to describe the experience in detail – the place, sight, sounds, smell



and how they felt. At stressful times you can then ask the child to remember and go back into that moment.

Imagery can also be used to counter traumatic experiences – for example, when getting an intrusive image, turning off the image through the imagined presence of a supportive figure. You can suggest the idea of changing nightmares by introducing a different ending.

Relaxing exercises with younger children

Cohen et al.⁹ describe the value of animal postures with younger children. You might encourage them to see themselves as a lion or other favourite animal (feeling ‘lion energy’ going through their bodies) and to express that strength with a ‘roar’, and then going quiet to demonstrate control.

Then encourage the child to adopt a stretching posture (feeling the quiet strength) and practise the slow breathing of the ‘calm lion’.

W My relaxing place

My relaxing place is _____

What I see:

What I smell:

What I feel/touch:

What I hear:

What I taste:

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W Quick calming practice

It's amazing how quickly you can feel better when you use Quick Calming. It's a great way to bring down feelings that are too intense, upset, or tense. Quick Calming involves relaxing our mind, muscles, taking deep breaths and exhaling slowly, and thinking of a peaceful place. Quick Calming can be used anywhere. It is especially good to use when other people are around, like before a test, or when you've been caught off-guard by a situation that makes you tense.

Practice Instructions

One day this week, practice Quick Calming using the following steps:

1. Find a time when you are in a public place, such as sitting on the bus, in your classroom at school, or in a waiting room.
2. Use the **Feeling Thermometer** to show how you feel before you start using Quick Calming.
3. Use the **Feeling Thermometer** to show how you feel after you use Quick Calming.

Day of the week: _____

How I felt before Quick Calming

very good
sort of good
so-so
sort of bad
very bad

How I felt after Quick Calming

very good
sort of good
so-so
sort of bad
very bad

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⁹ Cohen, J.A., Mannarino, A.P. and Deblinger, E. (2006) *Treating Trauma and Traumatic Grief in Children and Adolescents*. New York: Guilford.



Module WR-M6

Describing and monitoring feelings

Content

- Helping the child to describe, measure and monitor their feelings and get a better appreciation of how feelings can be affected by different events in both positive and negative directions
- The child gaining, through this process, an understanding of the factors that affect their feelings and how these can be influenced.

Materials

- h** Handout
- n** Practitioner notes
- r** Record
- w** Worksheet

- Paper and coloured pencils
- Notebook
- Feelings thermometer [WR-8] **w**
- Identifying feeling states [WR-9] **w**
- Body maps [WR-3] **w**
- Thinking-feeling-doing [WR-10] **w**

Main steps

Feelings thermometer and monitoring feelings

Encourage the child to draw a thermometer with a scale of 1 to 10. If the child finds this too difficult you can help. Depending on the child's main difficulties, the scale can be used to rate happiness (mood problems), worries (anxiety problems) and distress (trauma problems).



Practitioner: Tell me, how would you rate how you are feeling right now on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the happiest you have ever been and 1 being the most upset you have ever been?

Child: 5.

Practitioner: In the last week, how low have you felt on this scale?

Child: 2.

Practitioner: Did anything happen that day that made you feel so bad?

Child: ...

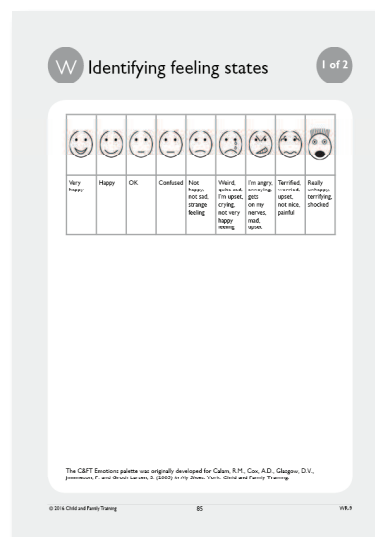
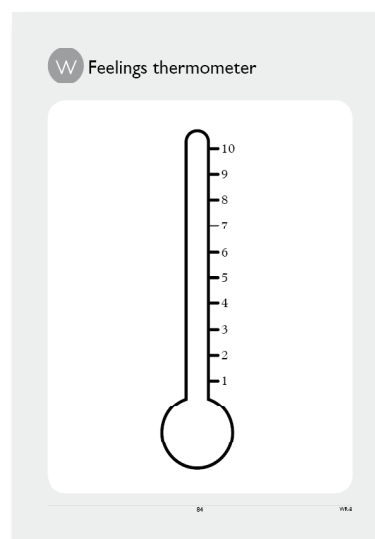
Practitioner: In the last week, what was the high point on this scale ?

Child: 7.

Practitioner: Did anything that day make you feel better?

Child: ...

In each intervention session, you will get the child to rate their feelings in this way so that you can track progress over time and get a picture of the child's pattern of responding to events.



The 'feelings detective'

In utilising the notion of the 'feelings detective' the child is encouraged to investigate and function like a detective, paying attention to various clues and other signs to determine how they or another person feels. ('A feeling is on the inside of your body so you can't see it. So, how do you know how you're feeling?')¹⁰

Using 'Identifying feeling states' [WR-9], encourage children and young people to identify these expressions and to recall what might have provoked that feeling. In this way, begin to talk about the cycle of triggers, thoughts and feelings.

¹⁰ Kolko, D.J. and Swenson, C.C. (2002) *Assessing and Treating Physically Abused Children and Their Families: A Cognitive-Behavioural Approach*. London: Sage. (p.144)

Searching for clues to construct a picture of the child's typical feeling states

Encourage the child to search for clues for feelings, like a detective, by:

- looking at their own body
- looking at their face, hands and posture
- listening to their voice, tone and volume when talking
- thinking about how their head, stomach, chest, neck and shoulders feel
- thinking about how they feel and paying attention to these clues to identify their own or someone else's feelings.



If you were being a detective and looking for clues about feelings, what would you notice about your body if you were feeling scared or worried?

You may want to use a body map and ask the child to identify areas on the body that are affected and in what ways.

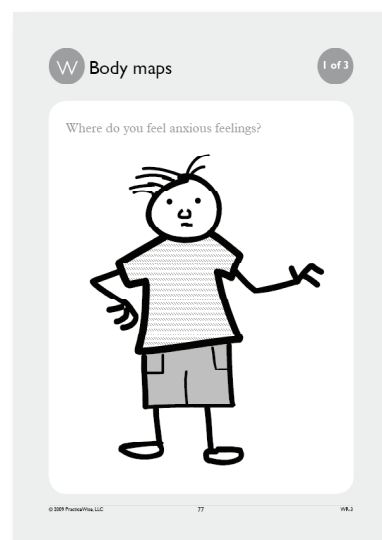
You could also do this by:

- looking at a magazine or other pictures, identifying the feeling states of people in the pictures via facial or postural clues
- modelling feeling states, asking open-ended questions – e.g. how a boy might feel sad because...
- role-playing an emotional state with the child
- reading statements in different ways – e.g. an angry voice, a sad voice
- establishing how often the child has special feelings, locating when they feel sad or angry or unhappy, constructing pictures which emphasise physical sensations – e.g. butterflies in the stomach
- describing physical sensations and identifying states, helping the child identify physical sensations associated with their own feelings.



You are in the countryside and you see something that frightens you, like a large animal coming towards you. What would you feel?

You are aiming to guide the child towards describing sensations like the heart pounding, feeling that one can't breathe, sweating, butterflies in the stomach. You might want to explain that this is a normal response to danger and the body's way of preparing to fight or to run.



Thinking-feeling-doing: How they are connected

Use 'Thinking-feeling-doing' [WR-10]. In this exercise, you are helping the child explore how our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are interconnected and affect each other, by looking at simple, everyday examples and the child then working on their own examples.

Mentalisation: Describing the feeling states of the child and of others

Encourage mentalisation. This is awareness that we and others each have intentional mental states – that is, thoughts, feelings and beliefs that govern our behaviour and actions. It may be helpful, with the child, to draw diagrams, pictures or cartoons of the child and others and write thought bubbles in order to think about how the child and other people may think and feel in a range of interactive situations.



So, when your friend didn't say hello to you, you thought they didn't like you any more and you felt upset. Could there have been any other reasons why they didn't say hello?

You are aiming to help the child see that there may be several possible explanations and to consider these rather than assuming a negative explanation. Alternative explanations could be that the friend hadn't seen the child or the friend had something on their mind that was preoccupying them.

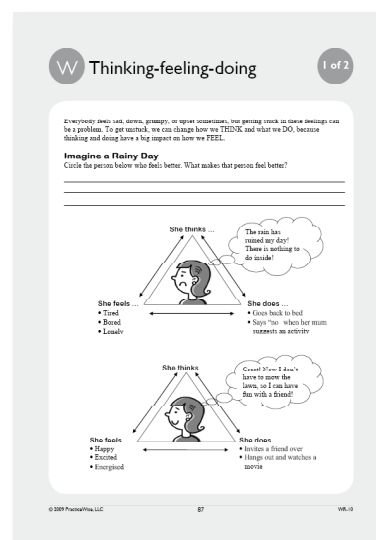
practice assignment

Keeping a diary

As part of practice, give the child a notebook and ask them to write down each day one 'good' thing and one 'bad' thing that happened, in the following way:

- Describe events leading up to the incident or event (i.e. antecedents or triggers).
- Describe the 'good' or 'bad' event itself.
- Describe what happened afterwards, including how the child was left feeling afterwards (i.e. consequences).

By reviewing the entries together in the following session, you and the child will get a better understanding of the factors that are affecting the child's feelings and of where change may be possible.



tips

- Remember to praise the child for doing this hard work.
 - For younger children, ratings using drawings of the smiley faces and sad faces may be easier than the feelings thermometer.
 - It is very important that if you give the child a practice assignment, you review it together in the next session.
-

Work with the child on patterns – for example, self-blame, selective attention to negative events, anticipating the worst, catastrophising, all of which contribute to sad feelings or low mood. Explore how the experience of abuse or neglect may leave the child vulnerable to such thoughts – for example, ‘Bad things will always happen to me’ – that need to be challenged.



Ok, let’s pause and rewind. What other ways are there of thinking about this?

The aim of such interventions is to widen the frame of the child’s thinking that has been narrowed by experiences of abuse and neglect into streams of negative thinking about themselves and about the world, and to help the child see that there can be many different reasons for why things happen and the importance of checking out other possibilities to get an accurate appraisal of situations.

If a thought or belief is unduly negative or unrealistic, get the child to think of the evidence for and against the thought or belief – are there other ways of viewing or understanding the situation? This is a form of ‘pause and rewind’, stopping to look at the evidence.



Practitioner: So, let’s look at this idea you have that when your parents were having those really bad arguments it was somehow your fault. What was the evidence for that?

Child: My mother would say that my behaviour made everybody stressed.

Practitioner: So how does that work? How could a five-year-old be so powerful that they made a grown-up be so stressed that they argued with someone else? What other reasons could there be?

Child: Dunno.

Practitioner: Do you think that grown-ups are all the same in how they cope with stress or do you think some are calmer and some get stressed more easily and get cross with their family?

Child: Some get more stressed.

Practitioner: Do you think your mum is someone who is generally calm or someone who gets stressed easily?

Child: Someone who gets stressed easily.

Practitioner: So if your mum is someone who gets stressed easily, would it be your fault if she had more arguments with your dad?

Child: No.

Practitioner: That's right, it's not your fault. Sometimes getting stressed easily is just to do with how someone reacts and if someone get stressed easily, they need to learn ways of calming themselves down, just like we learnt about before.

With the child work through 'Double bubbles on my own' [WR-22] on generating 'true' thoughts as alternatives to negative 'blue' thoughts.

practice assignment

Get the child to identify a couple of upsetting situations in the week and use 'Double bubbles on my own' [WR-22] to rethink the situations and rate their mood before and after doing this.

Help the child explore difficult situations to see if they can identify any positive sides to the experience. Identify situations where the child's thoughts have become ruminative and counter-productive.

Work with the child to identify ways they can distract themselves so as to stop ruminative—depressive thoughts.

Encourage the child to utilise support from others – 'a problem shared is a problem halved'. Talking to another person and being listened to in a sympathetic and respectful way can be helpful in its own right, as well as other people's comments providing a reality check – for example, the other person picking up on the child being too negative about themselves and providing a corrective balance.

Mentalisation

Encourage mentalisation. This is another way of helping the child to think more widely and consider a range of explanations for events. Mentalisation is the awareness that we and others each have intentional mental states – that is, thoughts, feelings and beliefs that govern our behaviour and actions. It may be helpful to draw diagrams or drawings or cartoons of self and others and thought bubbles with the child to think about how the child and other people may think and feel in a range of interactive situations.

W Double bubbles on my own

Think of a situation from your own life when you had a **BLUE** thought. Examine the evidence to see if the thought is realistic. Try to come up with a more realistic **TRUE** thought, and see whether it changes your feelings. Answer the questions. Example is at the end of the worksheet.

What was the situation? _____

What's the evidence?

- Is there another way to look at the situation?
- What would you tell a friend who had this thought?
- What if it is true—would that really be so bad?

What was the situation? _____

Your **BLUE** thought

A more realistic **TRUE** thought

This thought made me feel ...

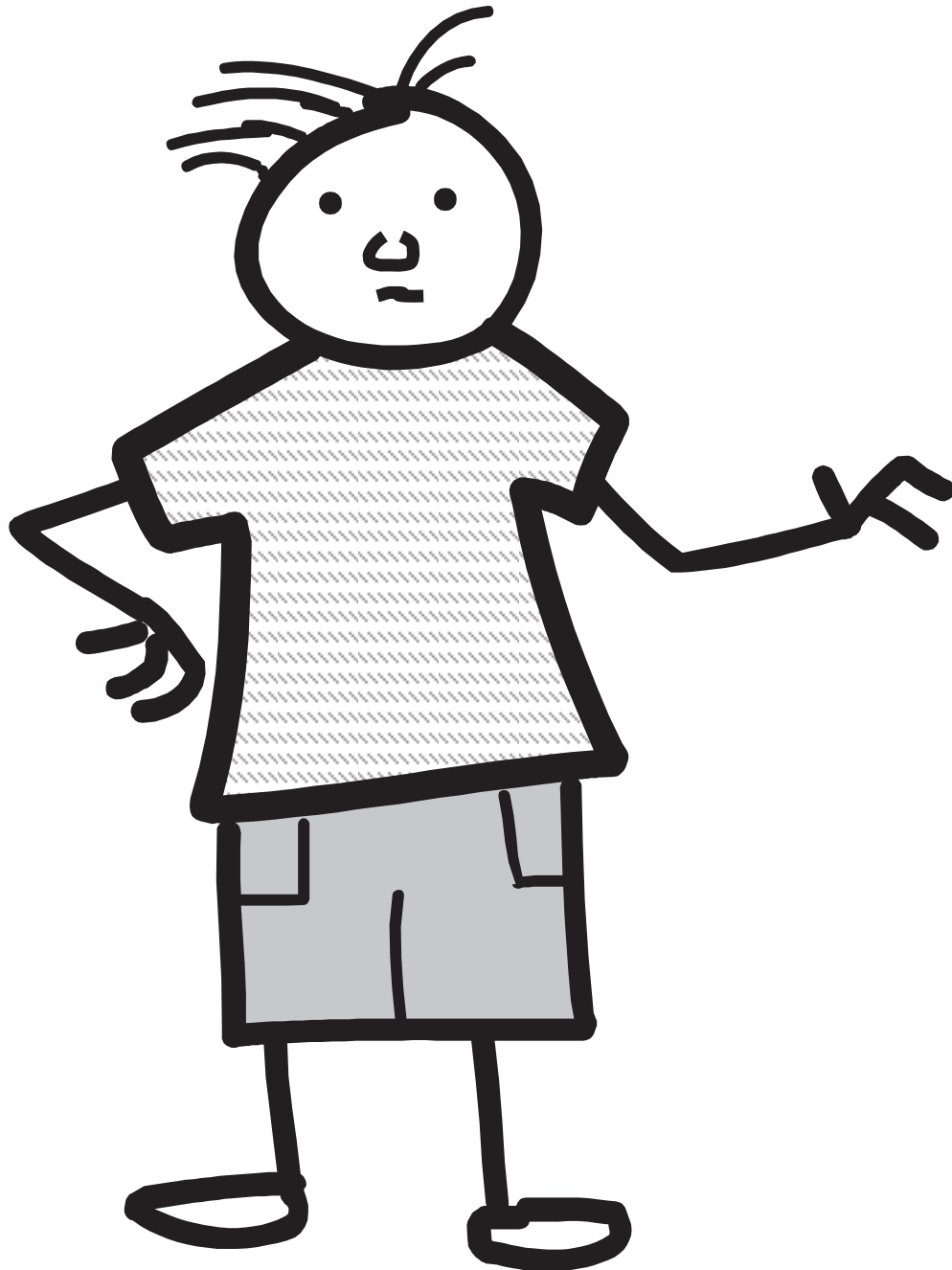
This thought made me feel ...

very good
sort of good
so-so
sort of bad
very bad

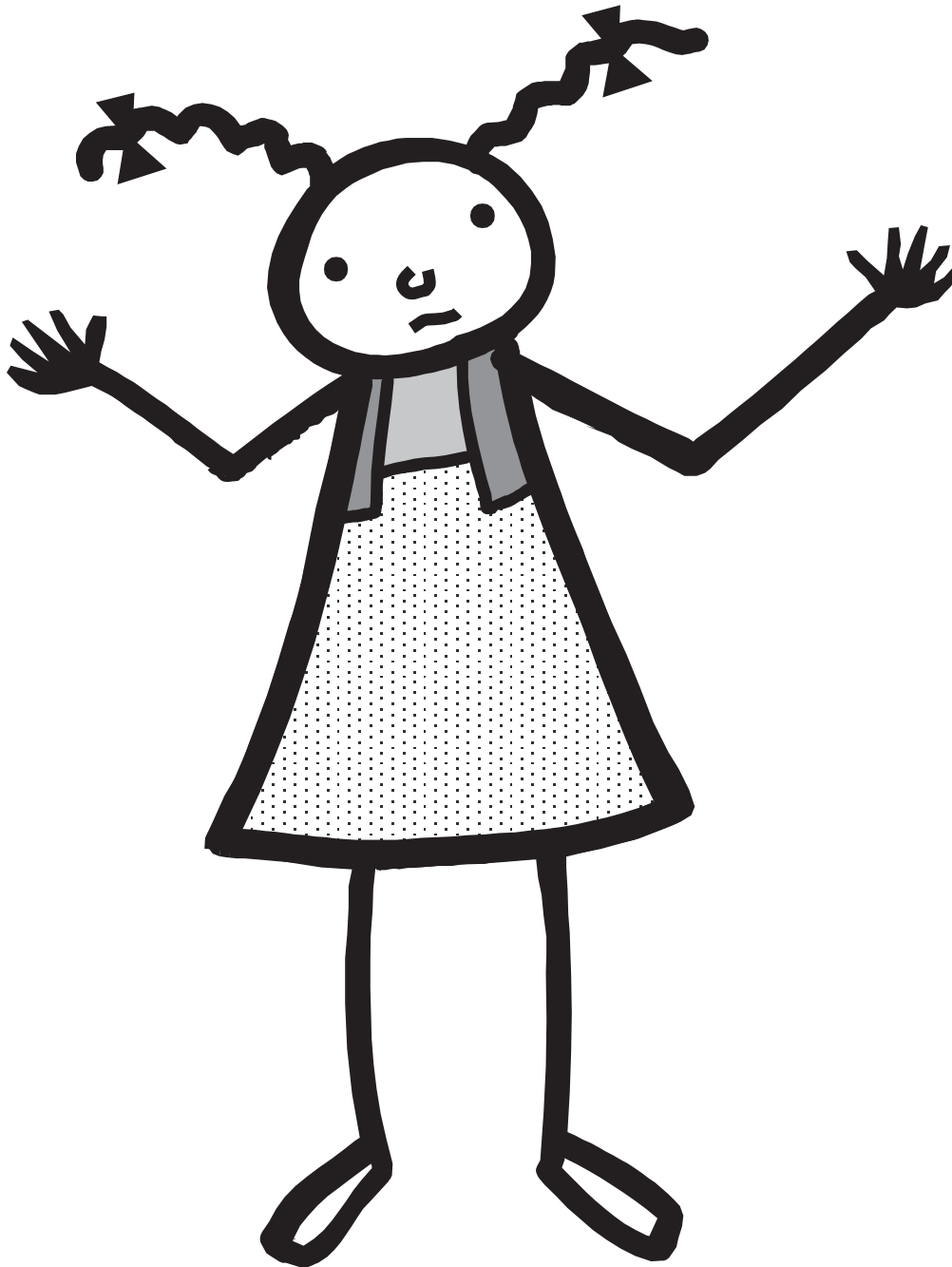
very good
sort of good
so-so
sort of bad
very bad

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Where do you feel anxious feelings?



Where do you feel anxious feelings?



When children feel sad, worried, or upset, they may feel tense and agitated in their bodies. One way to help children change the way they feel emotionally is to help them change the way they feel physically. Relaxation training can improve mood because children are more positive and calm when they feel physically relaxed.

One kind of relaxation your child can use is called Quick Calming. This is a way to calm down in public when it's hard to find a private spot, when time is short, or when your child is caught off-guard by a stressful situation. With practice, your son or daughter can learn to use Quick Calming to feel more relaxed and calm in a variety of situations. There are three steps in Quick Calming (they spell **ReST**):



Relax your muscles.

Focus especially on the muscles that feel most tense.



Slow your breathing.

Take slow, deep breaths and exhale slowly each time.



Think of a peaceful place.

Picture a peaceful place and imagine that you're relaxing there.

How Can I Help?

When you see that your child is feeling bad, worried, or upset in public or when time is short, encourage him or her to use the Quick Calming skill. Situations when Quick Calming may be useful include (1) waiting for a performance or test to begin, (2) after an argument with a friend at school, and (3) learning at the last minute that weekend plans have been cancelled. Your reminders will help your son or daughter remember that there is a good way to calm down quickly when something bad has happened or when feelings of stress and tension have come up quickly.

W My relaxing place

My relaxing place is _____

What I *see*:



What I *smell*:



What I *feel/touch*:



What I *hear*:



What I *taste*:





Quick calming practice

Learning to make our bodies relax is a good way to keep from feeling too nervous, upset, or tense. **Quick Calming** involves relaxing our tense muscles, taking deep breaths and exhaling slowly, and thinking of a peaceful place. Quick Calming can be used anywhere. It is especially good to use when other people are around, like before a test, or when you've been caught off-guard by a situation that makes you tense.



Practice Instructions

One day this week, practise Quick Calming using the following steps:

1. Find a time when you are in a public place, such as sitting on the bus, in your classroom at school, or in a waiting room.
2. Use the **Feelings Thermometer** to show how you feel before you start using Quick Calming.
3. Do the three steps of Quick Calming (they spell **ReST**):
 - **Relax your muscles**
 - Relax the muscles, especially those that feel most tense
 - **Slow your breathing**
 - Take slow, deep breaths and exhale slowly each time
 - **Think of a peaceful place**
 - Picture a peaceful place and imagine that you're relaxing there
4. Use the Feelings Thermometer to show how you feel after you used Quick Calming.

Day of the week: _____

How I felt before Quick Calming



very good



sort of good



so-so

sort of bad

very bad

How I felt after Quick Calming



very good



sort of good



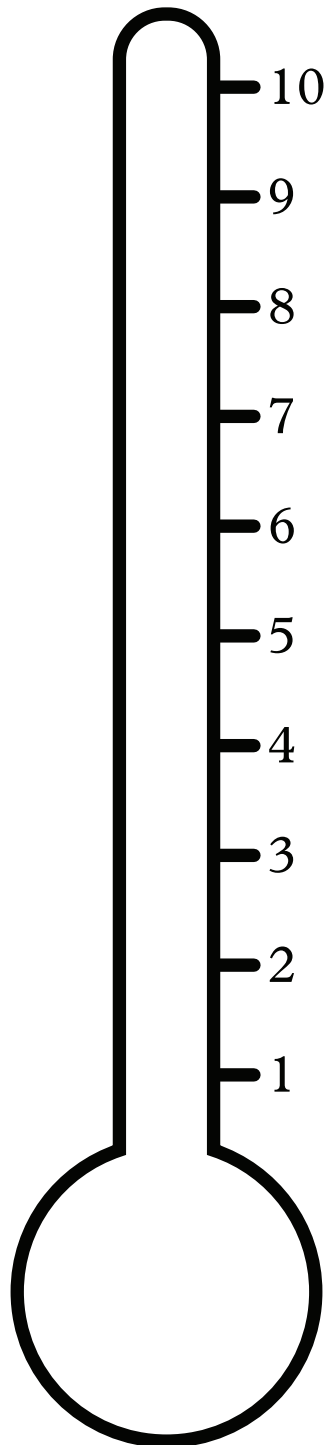
so-so










sort of bad

very bad

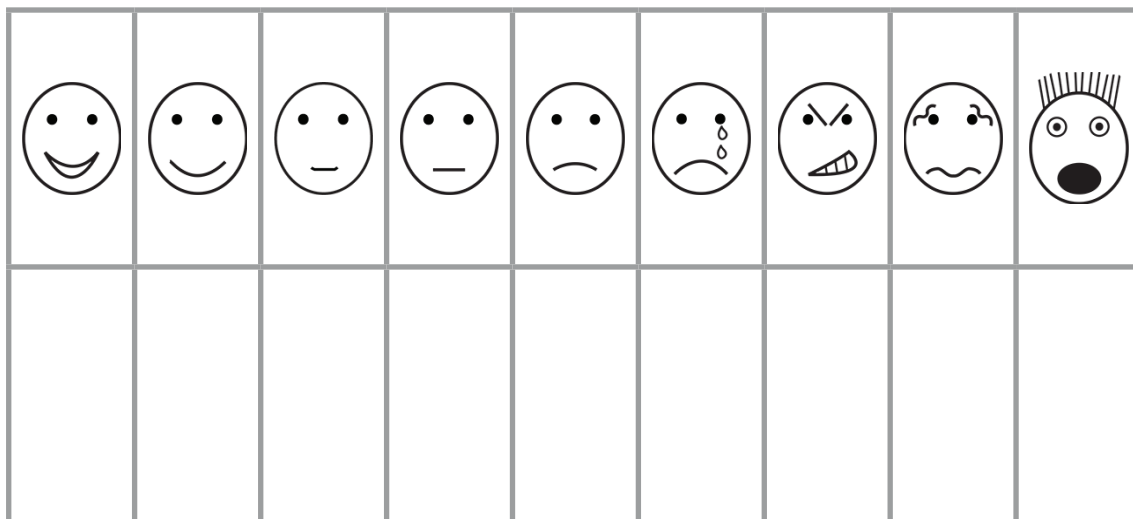


Feelings thermometer



								
Very happy	Happy	OK	Confused	Not happy, not sad, strange feeling	Weird, quite sad, I'm upset, crying, not very happy feeling	I'm angry, annoying, gets on my nerves, mad, upset	Terrified, worried, upset, not nice, painful	Really unhappy, terrifying, shocked

The C&FT Emotions palette was originally developed for Calam, R.M., Cox, A.D., Glasgow, D.V., Jimmieson, P. and Groth Larsen, S. (2005) *In My Shoes*. York: Child and Family Training.

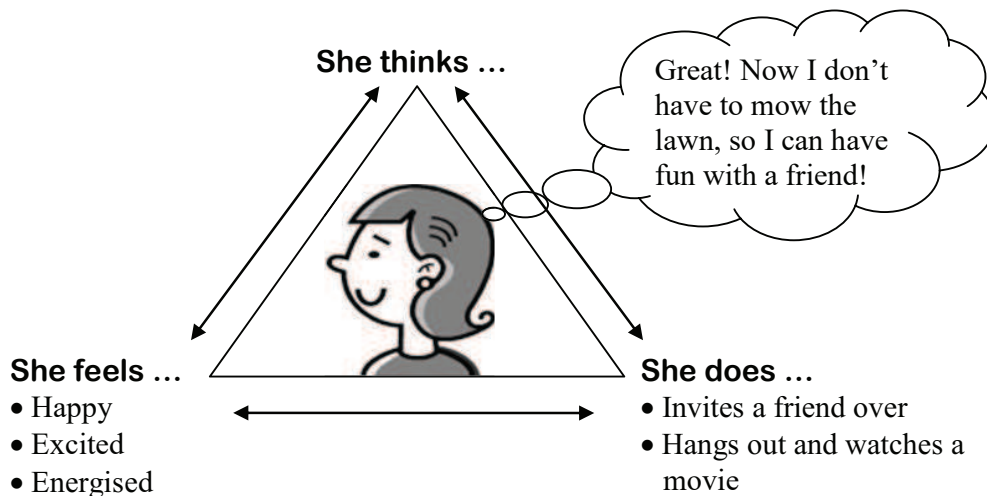
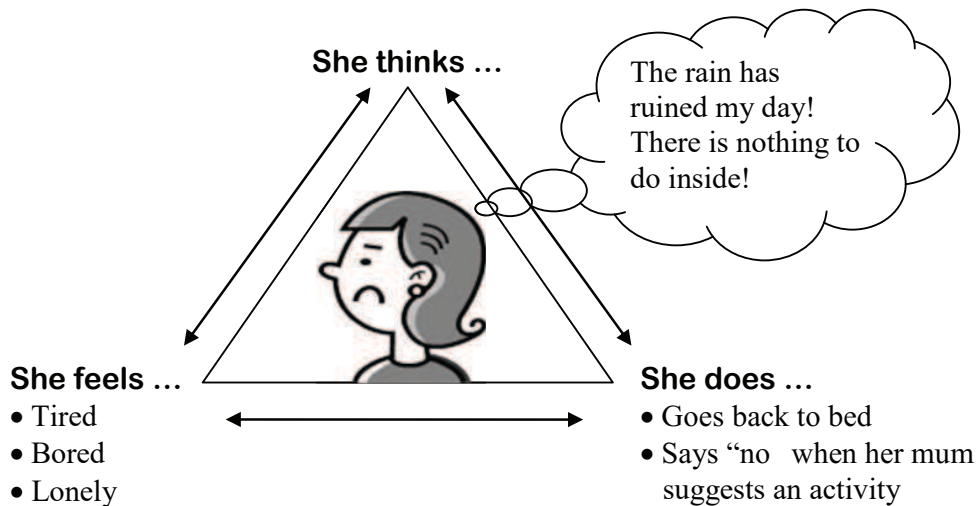


The C&FT Emotions palette was originally developed for Calam, R.M., Cox, A.D., Glasgow, D.V., Jimmieson, P. and Groth Larsen, S. (2005) *In My Shoes*. York: Child and Family Training.

Everybody feels sad, down, grumpy, or upset sometimes, but getting stuck in these feelings can be a problem. To get unstuck, we can change how we **THINK** and what we **DO**, because thinking and doing have a big impact on how we **FEEL**.

Imagine a Rainy Day

Circle the person below who feels better. What makes that person feel better?



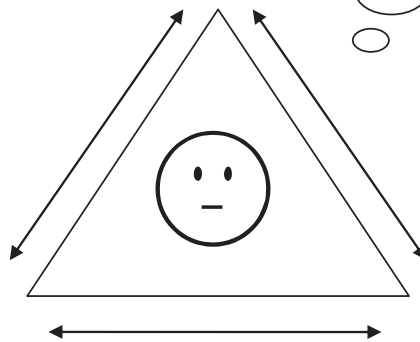
What Do YOU Think, Feel, and Do?

What about YOU? Think of a time recently when you got stuck in a bad mood. What did you THINK, FEEL, and DO? If you had different thoughts or took different actions, would you have felt differently?

What was happening?

What could you have thought instead?

You thought ...



You felt ...

You did ...

How might you have felt instead?

What could you have done instead?
