

The
Exchange

Resources for Parents & Carers

2: Keeping **their** Mentals Healthy

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Resources for Parents & Carers

2: Keeping My Mentals Healthy

COVID was an anxious period for some, during the interview your child might be reminded of anxious feelings & memories. This pack will provide you with information on anxiety and how to support your child if they feel this way, it will also give you some handy tips that will help you complete the activities with your child.

The resources included will provide your young person with the tools to understand, manage and regulate their anxiety

If you would like further support you can visit our Support Hub. From there you can call our helpline or make an online booking with one of our team.



Supporting Young People with Anxiety

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Fear is a normal response to danger. The feeling of Anxiety is similar but there is no real danger, the person thinks that there is danger but there isn't.

How we respond to anxiety can be affected by:

Temperament (some people are more relaxed by nature and some people are more tightly wired)

Experience (this depends on whether its the first time feeling this or whether they are used to the feeling)

The implications (the importance given to is - i.e. is it a big deal if it goes wrong or not)

Social cues (especially for children and young people, they are affected by the anxiety of others)

SCALE OF ANXIETY

It is important to remember that we each have our own scale of what makes us feel anxious.

This could mean that what seems "normal" for one person could be extremely anxiety-inducing for someone else. Simple tasks can have a negative impact on some people whilst others take them for granted.

A moment of complete freedom from anxiety.

A situation of overwhelming anxiety



TOP TIPS

In this pack you'll find targeted resources for your child to use when they're feeling stressed or anxious, we also recommend that you complete the activities yourself to promote connection with your child and encourage a wellbeing dialogue.

Below are some handy tips when completing the activities:

Top Tip: Before beginning ask yourself-

Who do you want to help?

What do you want to do to help your young person?

What would be a good outcome for you?

What would be a good outcome for your young person?

Top Tip: Encourage your young person to go at their own pace and take their time, there's no right or wrong when completing these activities, just encourage them to answer how they feel.

Top Tip: Try implementing the **Feelings Thermometer** into your daily family check-ins.

Top Tip: Try reframing their thoughts & bring them back to reality- prompt them to reframe negative thoughts into positive ones. Remember to acknowledge and validate the negative ones too.

Top Tip: Go for a walk together and complete the **Give Me 5** activity in nature.

Top Tip: Create a family **A-Z of Coping Skills** & put it on display.

Top Tip: Put on your favourite playlist in the background.

Top Tip: Flip it! Why not start **When & Then** by completing your "whens" and ask your young person to do the same, then flip it by swapping and completing the "better thoughts and actions" for each other.

Top Tip: In order to get the full benefit, get the best outcome and be fully involved in the process it's important to use Active Listening skills while completing these with your child. You'll find below our **Active Listening Cheat Sheet** to help.

ACTIVE LISTENING – CHEAT SHEET

Remember active listening can be done anywhere- at bedtime, on a walk or whilst doing an activity. This Cheat Sheet gives handy tips for how to be an active listener but the same rules apply not just for children but for adults too.

There are a few basic key principles to focus on:

Allow silence take things slowly, don't rush and don't be tempted to fill the silence

Repeat words which the person has said so they know you have "registered" these words- "Let me see if I am understanding this?..."

Do not express judgement or disagreement, just empathy

Notice and show you care – "Are you okay? You seem a little down. Anything you want to talk about?"

Don't minimise the situation or their emotions – "this isn't a big deal" "You are over-reacting, this isn't worth getting upset about."

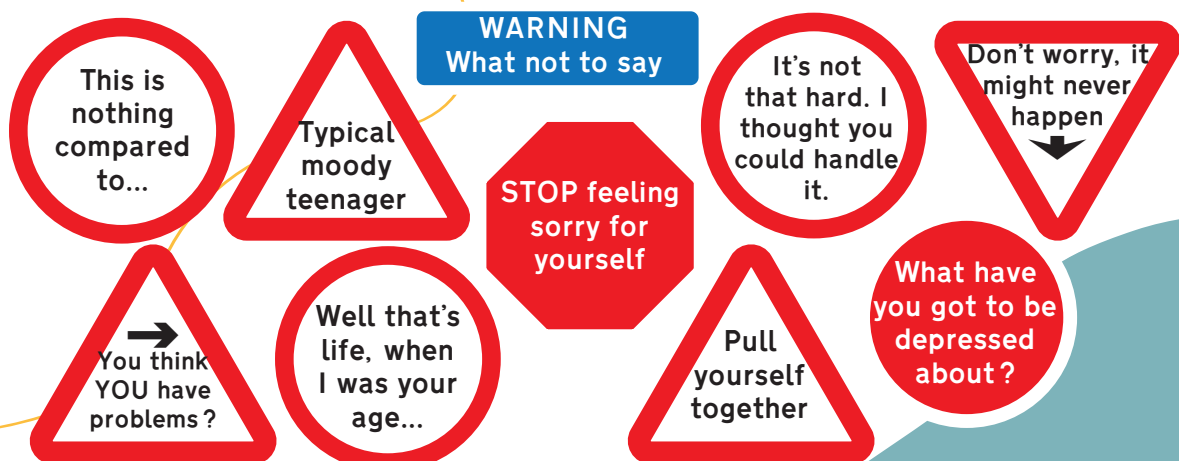
Validate their feelings - "I can see why you would feel angry about this..."

Help them unpack their feelings by inquiring about their emotions - "Are you feeling frustrated because...?", "It must be so overwhelming to see..., is it?"

Keep your opinions and views out of the conversation as much as possible (for the time being). You can offer advice if you feel necessary but wait until the end of the conversation.

Don't say or imply to look at the bright side, count your blessings or tell them it's all going to be okay. This can cause the young person to feel misunderstood. If you want to share your hope you can say things like "this seems very difficult for you, I hope we can work together to make some changes"

Summarise what you have understood, this will also help the young person feel listened to.

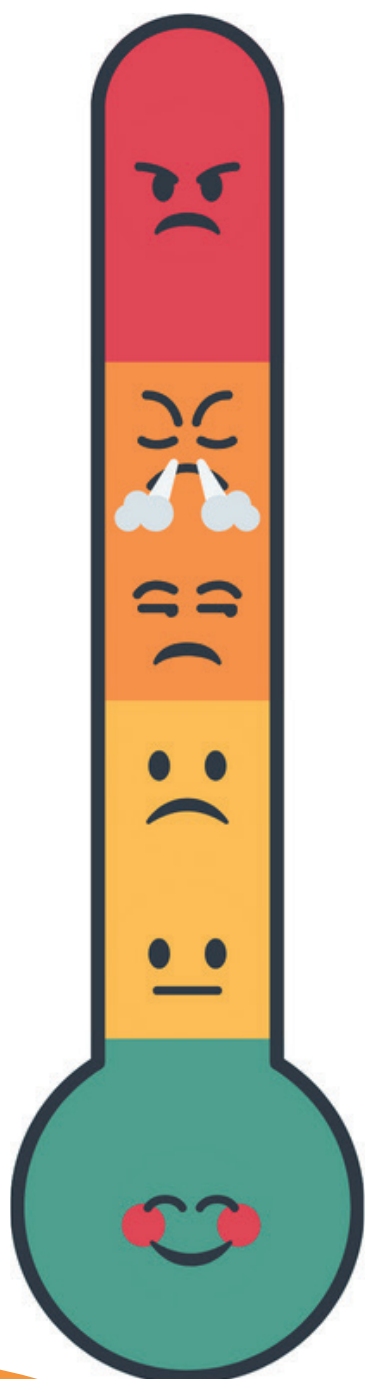


Check In - Feelings Thermometer

You may be feeling a bit out of sorts or “jumbled” up after your interview and might not be quite sure of how you’re feeling.

Some of the questions may have taken you by surprise or perhaps brought up some difficult feelings for you. Checking in with how we are feeling is so important and the feelings thermometer is a great way to do that.

This is good for you to do before and after each activity, but also when you notice a big feeling coming up – it is good to check in with our-selves before we react. You can then check in again after completing an activity to see if it has helped.



I feel overwhelmed.
I'm struggling to control my emotions.
I need space.

I feel angry.
Lots of things are irritating me.
I don't want to talk to anyone.

I feel irritated.
Some things are annoying me.
I am trying to control my emotions.

I feel sad.
I feel like quite low.
I need comfort and support.

I feel okay.
I just feel a little worried.
I can cope with things as they are.

I feel happy.
I feel positive and optimistic.

Stress Audit



You may be reminded of stressful or worrying times during the interview, or even just being interviewed could bring up some big feelings. This activity helps you to break down any stress or worry by understanding what's causing it and how you're responding.

It's good to pair this activity with the "When & Then" activity, to give you practical ideas to help once you've broken down and understood the stress.

Stressor



What is causing the feeling or stress of worry?

Panic about the future

Response



This usually falls into a fight, flight or freeze response

Get angry when people ask questions, can be aggressive

Outcome



What ultimately happens and who is affected?

Hurt my relationships

When & Then

You may be reminded of stressful or worrying times during the interview, or even just being interviewed for this could make you feel stressed or worried.

This activity can help you think of practical things to do to cope when you feel stressed, anxious or worried.

When

I panic about the future, I feel overwhelmed

then



Better Thoughts

I can handle whatever the outcome is.

Take Action!

Try mindfulness, look at my sleep and plan chill out time

When

then



Better Thoughts

Take Action!

When

then



Better Thoughts

Take Action!

Hot Cross Bun Exercise

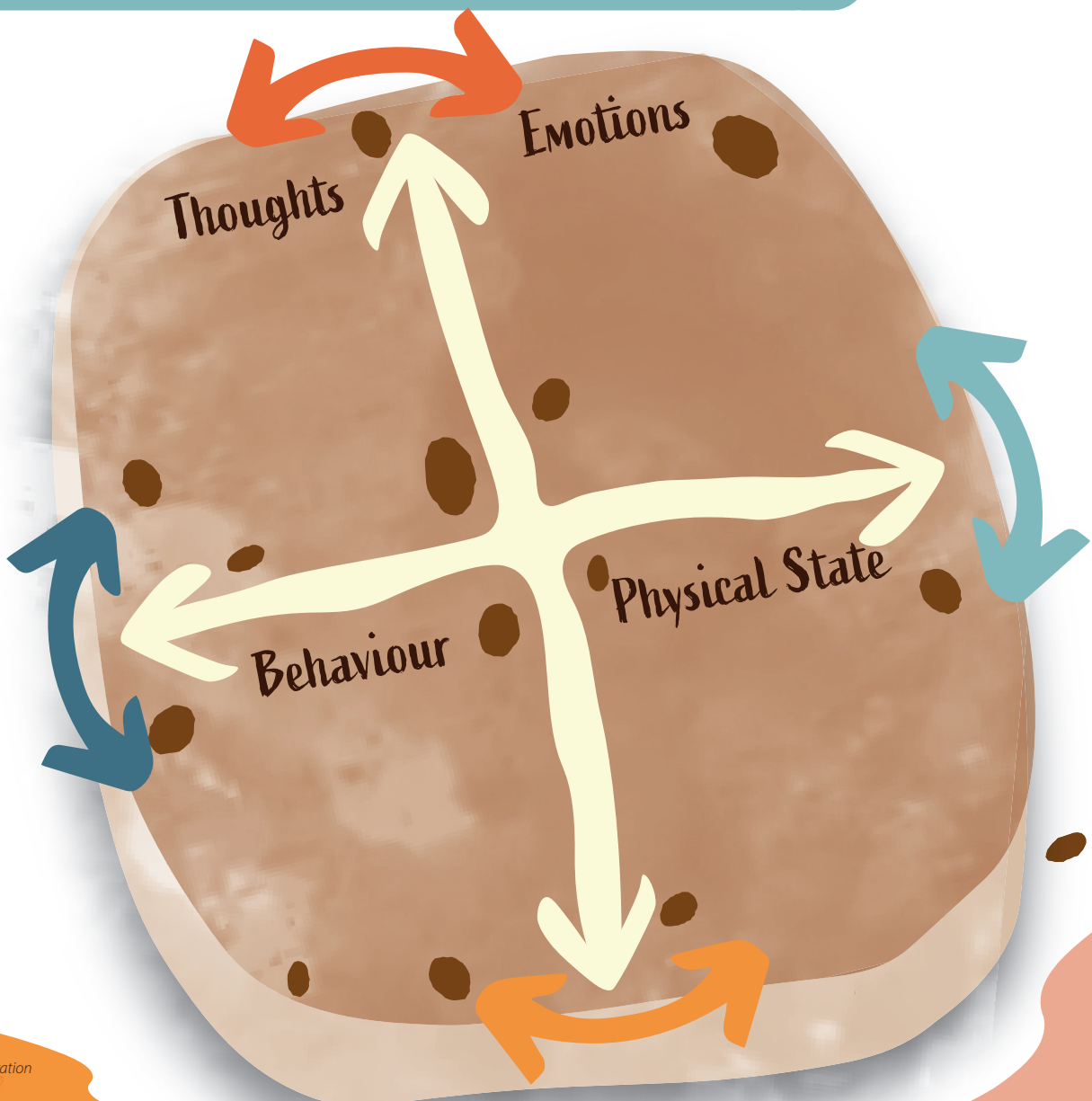
Thinking about and discussing COVID again can bring up feelings of anxiety or stress.

When we are feeling stressed or anxious it can be helpful to break it down and understand our body sensations, our emotions, our thoughts, and our behaviour.

Was there something specific discussed in the interview that's made you feel anxious or stressed? Or does the thought of just remembering this time make you feel anxious or stressed?



Situation - what was happening?




A to Z of Coping Skills

When discussing stressful or anxious moments it can be easy to feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.

By creating your own A-Z of coping skills you can focus on activities which can help you work through the emotions of COVID that will be useful to do before and after the interviews.

A llow time to think	B aking cakes & cookies	C ounting count to 10 count backwards	D ANCE IT OUT!
E xercise run, jump, walk, skip	F riends & family spending time with people you love	G aming Playing my favourite game	H appy thoughts
I gnore and walk away	J OKES tell some!	K eep Calm don't let others make me angry	L AUGH OUT LOUD
M usic listen to my fave	N otes note my feelings in my journal	O bserve your surroundings	P aint your feelings
Q uiet Take some quiet time away	R iding my bike or scooter	S tress ball make & use one	T alking tell someone
U se your safe place	V isualise and use my comfort menu	W alking go for a walk	E Xhale inhale breathing focus
	Y oga	Z one out & relax	

A to Z of Coping Skills

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X
	Y	Z	

What can I control in my bubble?

You might feel that there were lots of things that were out of your control during COVID, times where we had to follow certain rules and weren't allowed to do the things we wanted to. When we feel overwhelmed, stressed or anxious by these thoughts it can help us to stop and look at what is within our control.

It helps to separate the elements of our life into those which we can have an impact on and those which we cannot change. In this activity you can cut out and use the counters to write out different elements of your life. Then consider what you can impact in your bubble and what is out of your control.

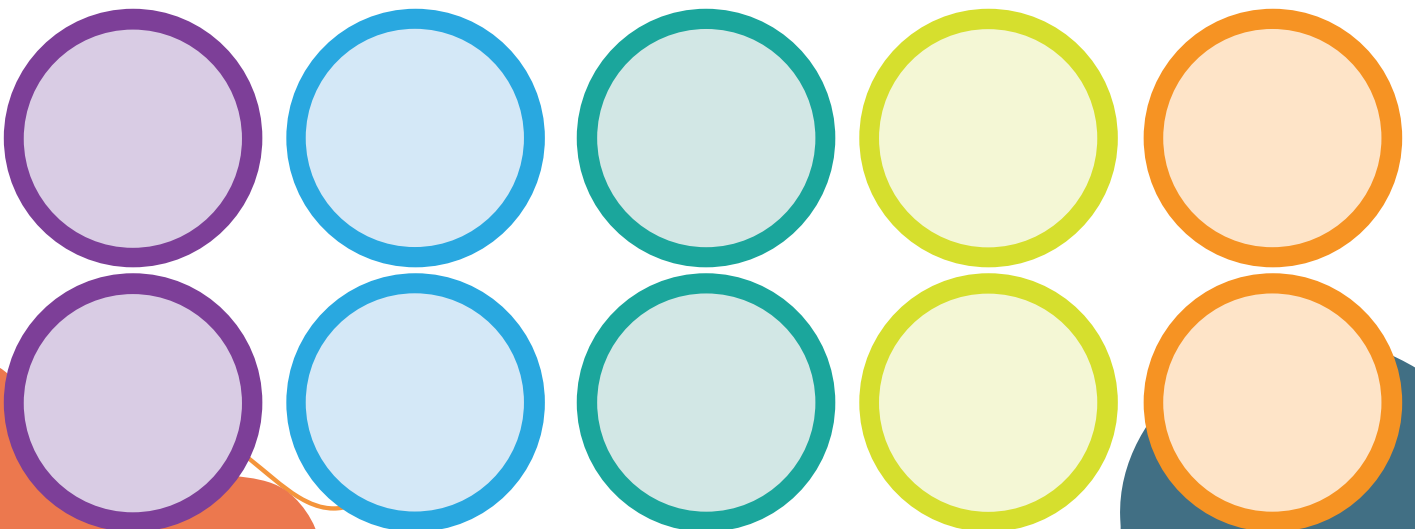
Look at our example to help.



I CAN'T CONTROL
(so I can let go of these things)



Cut these out and write in the different things in your life



GIVE ME 5!

Being asked lots of questions and thinking about difficult memories can become overwhelming, when this happens it can be helpful to take a minute to notice your surroundings. This can help you to feel calmer.

Write down what you sense around you. For example- 5 things you can touch, 4 things you can hear etc. Do this activity inside then get outside and do it again whenever you can.

Inside



5



4



3



2



1

outside



5



4



3



2



1