

The Emotional Management Programme for Children

This guide outlines all the information taught in the Staff and Parents Workshops, including the techniques taught to the children

***** At the end of this guide, are two A3 posters which you could print as reminders at home if you wish. Please choose the correct one for EYFS/KS1 or KS2**

The aims of the programme are to:

- Improve positive mindset
- Help children realise they are in control of their bodies, their minds and their emotions
- Help children learn HOW to control all of the above
- Increase emotional intelligence
- Build resilience

What are resilience and stress?

Resilience is defined as your “bounce-back-ability” from stressful situations. The more resilient you are, the quicker and easier you find it to bounce back from stress. Stress occurs when there is an imbalance between a person’s ability & resources and the demands that are placed upon them.

The body’s response to stress is called the ‘fight or flight’ response and is triggered by the body’s limbic system which is responsible for emotions, motivations, breathing, heart rate and hormone production. The fight or flight response increases the production of adrenaline and cortisol which work together to speed up heart rate, increase metabolism, increase blood pressure, suppress the immune system and lower pain sensitivity amongst other things.

Priority is given to all physical functions that provide more power in the face of an enemy or to flee eg sabre tooth tiger. And when the stressful situation is over the body returns to normal. Which is all great when survival is on the line. BUT under constant stress body is unable to reset. And this is where problems set in. We don’t face many sabre tooth tigers these days but our bodies still react in the same way.

How does your mind work?

Conscious Mind

Your actual age

5% of you

Logical

Rational

Willpower

Discriminates

Critical

Factor

Subconscious Mind

6 years old

95% of you

Feelings/emotions

Visual

Literal

Blueprint of beliefs

Remember that your subconscious mind does not have one single ounce of logic in it. It responds to situations on auto-pilot, in a knee-jerk way, according to how it has learned to behave.

Most of your beliefs are in place in the Blueprint by the time you are 6/7 years old. You are pure subconscious until you are about 6/7 years old.

No thought is true.

No belief is true.

Programme Introduction

The programme began by talking to the children about different emotions and asking them who has ever felt angry? Or frustrated? Or happy? Or excited? Or sad? Or relaxed? etc.

We talked about what kinds of things made us feel each of those emotions. We talked about how each of those emotions felt within our bodies and where in our bodies we felt them. Then we discussed the kinds of behaviours that typically go with each emotion, for instance, shouting, screaming, laughing, jumping, skipping, hitting etc.

The children were asked which emotions they liked feeling best and which behaviours they enjoyed displaying most of all. From this point on the programme taught the children a variety of both positive mindset techniques and breathing/relaxation techniques. All of the techniques are designed to help them be in charge of their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Breathing and relaxation techniques

We took a moment to notice our breath and how it felt when we were all sitting calmly. Then we stood up and ran on the spot for several minutes. The children were then asked to notice the difference in their breath now that their bodies were worked up. The breath was faster and shallower than when we were calm.

We then took several slow, deep breaths to show the children that they could quite simply return their breath to the calmness it had displayed before. We then discussed how they could use a deep breath in and out to help calm themselves down whenever they felt worked up about something.

Tummy Breaths:

We asked the children to put their hands on their tummy and then breathe in and out. We noticed how the tummy goes in and out as we breathe in and out. When we breathe in the tummy goes out and when we breathe out the tummy goes in. We then asked the children to start focusing their attention on their tummy as they breathed in and out, to imagine going inside so that they could focus on the movement of their tummy as they breathe.

This technique is a brilliant way to calm down. It removes attention from whatever issue, problem or situation is going on and allows the child to focus solely on their breath. It works particularly well if a child has problems going to sleep at bedtime. Ask them to lie flat on their back, put their hands on their tummy and breathe. Get them to pay attention to the rise and fall of their tummy with each breathe in and out. You can also tell them that if any thoughts come into their mind while they are breathing like this they can simply imagine the thought inside a bubble and let it float away while they bring their attention back to their tummy/breath.

Colour Breaths:

We progressed on to a breathing exercise called Colour Breaths.

These are simple, slow and deep breaths. The children identify how they are feeling with a particular colour, so anger might be red or green or yellow, sadness might be blue or purple etc. They then take a slow deep breath in and as they breathe out they imagine that they are breathing out that colour. They keep breathing until all of the colour has gone.

Muscle Tensing and Relaxing:

We did a short exercise with the children to teach them another method of relaxing themselves. They were asked to stand up and tense every muscle in their body, to make themselves really stiff and straight. Then we simply let go of that tension and consciously relaxed our muscles.

We explained to the children that when they felt angry or frustrated or upset certain muscles in their body would tense up but they now understood that they could relax those muscles for themselves. It was suggested that, whenever they realised they were wound up, they have a go at finding the muscles, which had tensed up and relaxed them. And if they couldn't find them then they could simply tense all their muscles and relax all of them in one go.

This exercise can be extended to use for relaxation at bedtime. Ask your child to lie flat on their back. Ask them to gently tense their feet muscles and then relax them, then move slowly up the body tensing and relaxing muscles until you reach the face.

Positive Mindset Tools

The Glad Exercise

This is an incredibly simple yet powerful and effective mindset technique. Sit down at the end of the day and reflect back over that particular day. The rules are that you must find at least 5 things from that day to be glad about or grateful for. This game can be played with the children in school at the end of the school day and/or at the end of their actual day at bedtime.

The ideal is to verbalise the list of glad things because it has a much deeper psychological impact to think something, say something and hear it at the same time.

There will be days when those things trip off your tongue, if you can find more than 5 things from that day then say as many as you can think of. Then there will be days when it's really hard to get to 5 things. These are the most important days to do the exercise on because it will make you look at things that you take for granted in your life, things that you walk past with blinkers on every day, things that you are so used to having that you pay them no attention. And obviously if it's been a rubbish day then it is the day you most need a positive pick-you-up.

Emotions don't last forever

We asked the children what day it was. When they said Monday we replied, "Right so it's Monday forever now is that right?" They laughed and said no, tomorrow would be Tuesday and yesterday had been Sunday etc. We kept up the pretense of thinking it would be Monday forever up for several minutes to make sure that they were laughing at the idea that one day could last forever.

We explained that their emotions worked in the same way. Sometimes when we get angry, sad or upset it can feel like the negative emotion is going to last forever but we do come out the other side of it and feel happy or calm again. The point was to teach them that emotions pass, that everything is temporary and that things move on.

This is true of both positive and negative emotions. So when we are going through a positive period we can realise it is temporary and make the effort to appreciate the positive period more. And when we are going through a negative period we can realise it is temporary which helps us cope with the negative feelings.

Bad Thinks & Good Thinks (Infants only)

Often children get what they might call "Bad Thinks" at bedtime. They are thoughts that scare or upset us; it might have been from something she had seen on TV or from a bad dream or just generally.

This game uses the idea of an invisible bag behind the left ear and anytime you have a bad think you can take that bag out then pluck the bad thoughts out of your head and put it in the bag. Some of the thoughts were wiggly, some came out of our ears, some out of our nose, some out of our mouth. We imagined plucking these thoughts out and putting them into her bag.

Once all the thoughts are in the bag then we tied the top together nice and tight. Then we threw the bag out of the window where it disappeared completely.

Next we would look in the air around us to find good thoughts, we imagined what those good thoughts would look like (sparkly, colourful, rainbows, unicorns etc) and we would pluck them out of the air and put them into her head. Again, these can go in through the nose, mouth, eyes etc.

This technique shows children that they can control the thoughts they have.

Happy Jar

Each class has a happy jar and a packet of post-it notes. The rules were as follows:

Each time the children thought of something good or something good happened or they enjoyed doing something or someone was nice to them then they were to write it down on one of the post-it notes, fold it up and pop it in the jar. As long as the thing they wrote down was positive and good then they could write as many as they liked.

Then anytime that they felt a bit sad or upset or wound up they could go to the happy jar and pick a note out to read. It might not be one that they themselves had written but it would be about something good, to put a smile back on their face.

The jars have been left with each class permanently and they work incredibly well at home too, any jar will do, it's what you put in it that matters.

3 Good Things

We talked to the children about how they felt when they woke up first thing in the morning. Did they bound out of bed with a spring in their step and a big smile or did they wish they could go back to sleep and stay in bed?

A simple yet effective technique for getting out of bed with a smile on your face is this: as soon as your eyes open in the morning and your brain clicks into gear take a moment and consciously turn your attention to thinking of 3 good things. They can be any things at all, for example thoughts of family but could also be how comfortable my bed is, how lovely my friends are, how much I like the picture on my bedroom wall, the activities I have lined up for that day, how much I like the clothes I'm going to wear etc. The thoughts can be about anything as long as they are good, positive things.

If you/the children practise this consistently and constantly then you will start your day with a big, lovely smile.

Kindness

We asked the children to say something kind about someone else in the class and then followed this process:

Child A: Child B helped me when I fell over and looked after me and I think she/he is really kind.
(Child B has already started smiling at the mention of their own name)

Me: So Child B, how does that make you feel knowing that Child A thinks you are kind?

Child B: Happy and good about myself

Me: So Child A, how does that make YOU feel knowing that you have said something to make Child B happy?

Child A: Really happy too

We ran through this process several times in each class and then asked the children to make a real effort to be kind to each other and when someone had been kind, to make sure that they thanked the person and told them they had been kind because that simple act gave both people a boost of happiness. Kindness is an enormous part of overall happiness.

The Happy Thumb (KS2 only)

We asked the children in the Junior classes to think of something that made them happy, something that put an enormous smile on their face. It could be anything, an event, a thing, a pet, a person, an occasion, a place, past, present or future. We then asked them to close their eyes and bring up a picture in their mind of that happy thing, whatever it was for them. We asked them to make the picture bold and bright, colourful and vibrant. We asked them to put life and energy into the picture, to really see and feel every detail, to put movement into the picture if that was relevant and to feel the happiness and joy in the picture.

We then asked them, once they had the picture really strongly and the feeling of happiness really strongly, to press the tips of the thumb and forefinger of their right hand together nice and firmly for a few seconds. We then explained that we had planted a happy picture into their subconscious mind (which thinks in pictures) and “anchored” it to the feeling of happiness by pressing the thumb and forefinger tips together. So from now on any time they feel something negative all they have to do is press their thumb and forefinger tips together and their mind will flood the happy picture and the happy feeling back to the front of their consciousness. This technique can then be used in any place at any time.

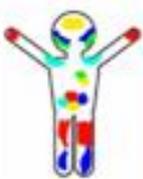
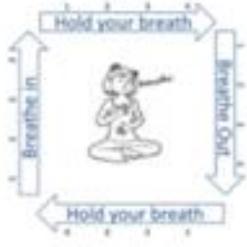
Positive Visualisation

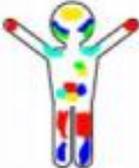
The last technique teaches children the value of positive visualisation. We asked them if they had ever really, really, really, really wanted something. We explained that this thing could be something they want to have, something they want to be, somewhere they want to go or some way they want to behave but that it had to be good. They all put their hands up!

We asked them to close their eyes and to create a picture in their mind of that thing but as if they already have it or as if they already are it. We asked them to really believe that the picture was real, to feel it in their body, to expect it to be so, to put themselves completely into the picture of having already achieved that thing.

And then we asked them to open their eyes. And I explained that if they really wanted something then all they had to do was to picture it in that way, to completely believe that they had or were it and their mind would make it reality. The subconscious mind has no concept of past, present or future. If you picture something enough times and believe it to be a reality then your mind assumes it is reality and makes it so.

This technique is particularly useful when sitting tests/exams, I explained to the Junior Classes that if they pictured themselves sitting any tests confidently and calmly, expecting good results then that is what would happen and their mind would put the necessary steps in place to make that picture a reality. A recording specifically about exam visualisation has been provided in mp3 format.

<h3>Bad thinks & Good thinks</h3> 	<h3>Tummy Breaths</h3> <p>Thoughts and worry bubbles</p> 	<h3>3 Good things</h3> 
<h3>Kindness Challenge</h3> 	<h3>Colour Breaths</h3> 	<h3>Tense and Relax</h3> 
<h3>Focus on Big Emotions</h3> <p>Where in my body can I feel them?</p> 	<h3>Glads Game</h3> 	<h3>Everything is temporary</h3> <p>(you won't feel this way forever)</p> 
<h3>Happiness Jar</h3> 	<h3>Slow, Deep Breaths</h3> 	<h3>Visualisation</h3> <h3>See success</h3> 

<h2>Happy Thumb</h2> 	<h2>Tummy Breaths</h2> <p>Thoughts and worry bubbles</p> 	<h2>3 Good things</h2> 
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