

A large, stylized blue arrow graphic pointing to the right, composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent blue shapes. The arrow is the central visual element of the slide.

Supporting the mental health of our children

**Dr Danielle Shbero  
Clinical Psychologist  
Sutton Wellbeing Services  
Sutton CAMHS**



## Plan for the session:

The importance of discussing wellbeing and positive mental health

Understanding the adolescent brain

Understanding the continuum from typical thoughts/feelings and mental health difficulties

Low mood and anxiety

Ways to interact with your teenager

Strategies to help your teenager



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## Why Talk about Teenage Wellbeing?

- Teenage Mental Health and Wellbeing is strongly linked to:
  - Their reported quality of life  
*(Reference: Sharpe, Patalay, Fink et al., 2016)*
  - Their friendships and relationship quality  
*(Reference: Long, Gardani, McCann et al., 2020)*
  - Their educational attainment and grades  
*(Reference: Smith, Marshall, Albakri et al., 2021)*

*“We all have mental health”*



## Defining Mental Health

*“Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium.”*

*-Journal of World Psychiatry, 2015*





## Defined another way...

*“**We all have mental health**, just like we all have physical health. Sometimes we feel well, and sometimes we don’t.*

*Mental health is complicated because it’s **about how we think, feel and act**, and this is always **changing**.*

*When our mental health is good, we **enjoy being around other people and we feel able to take on challenges and new experiences**. But when our mental health is not so good, we can find it much **harder to cope**.”*



# Mental Health in the Media

News > Health

 INDEPENDENT PREMIUM

## Record number of children referred to mental health services, new analysis suggests

Children and young people are 'suffering terribly' as **Zoe Tidman** finds

14 hours ago | comments



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## Girls' mental health crisis was fuelled by internet use in lockdown: Report warns of children being driven down the 'dark spiral of online life'

- Girls mental health crisis fuelled by being driven down the 'dark spiral of online life' in lockdown
- Children's Commissioner issued the warning last night after survey carried out
- Survey found girls twice as likely to face mental health problems than boys

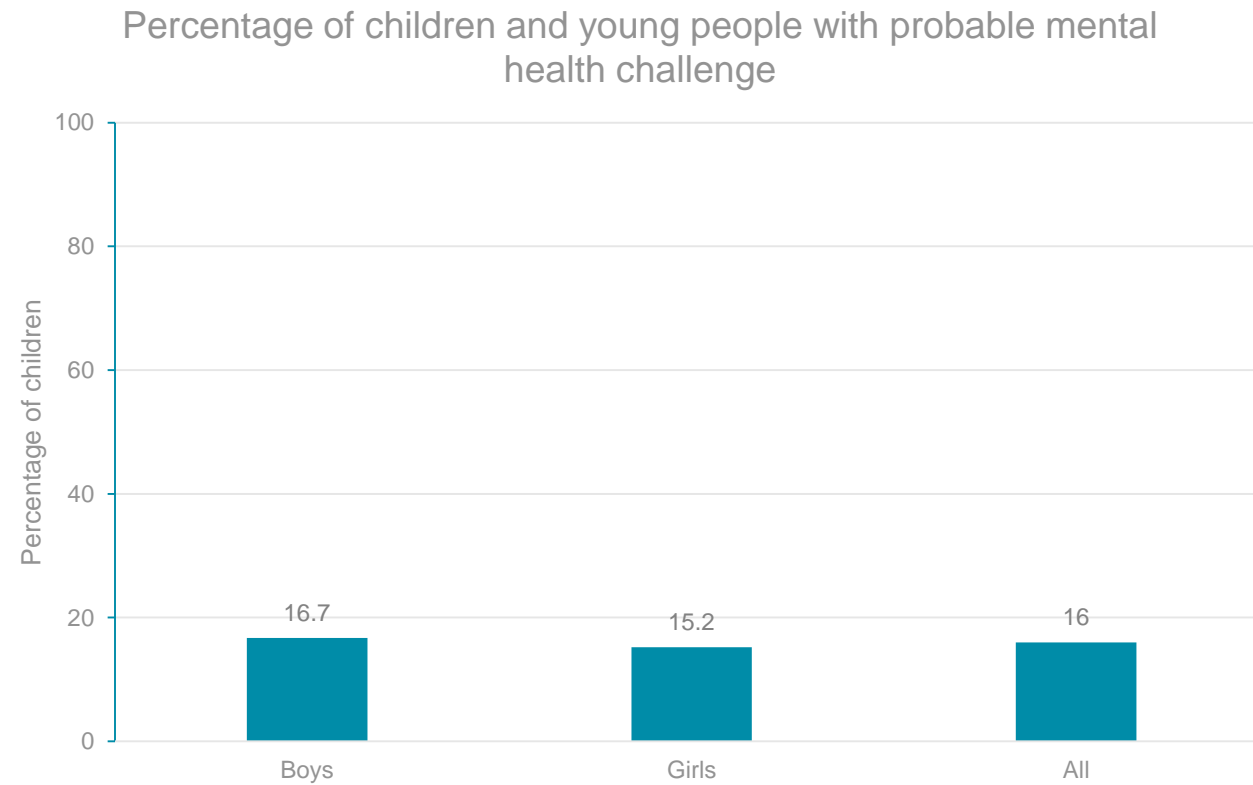


BBC News article snippet: "Young people's mental health services 'in crisis', MPs warn". By Charlotte Wright, Political Editor, BBC South East. 6 September.



The Guardian article snippet: "Opinion Mental health: Children face a mental health crisis, but they need more than antidepressants" by Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett.

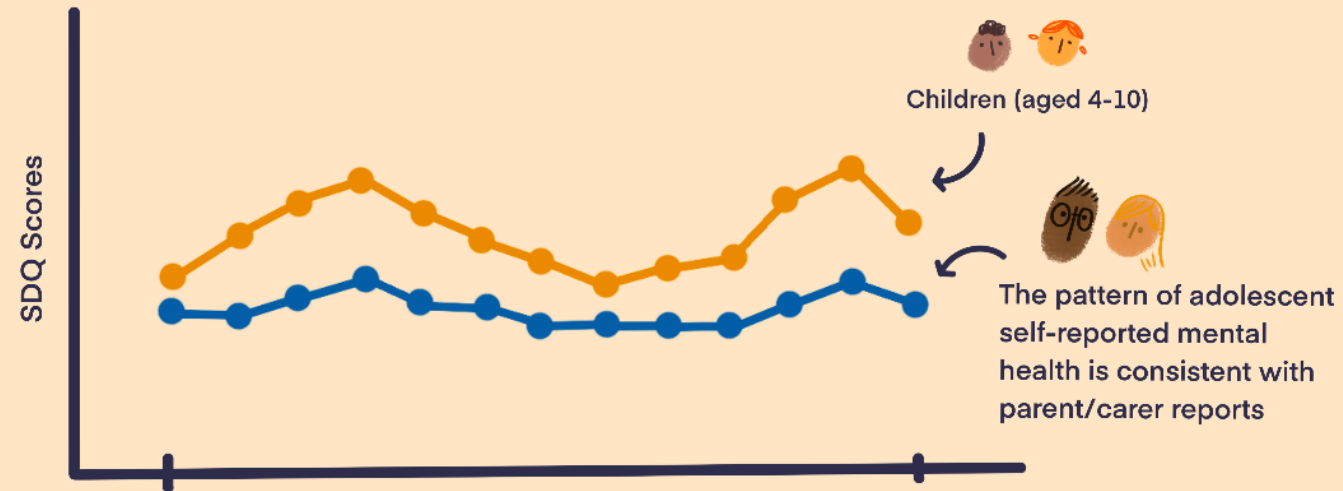
## Also, looking beyond headlines



*Reference: 'Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020 survey, NHS digital'*



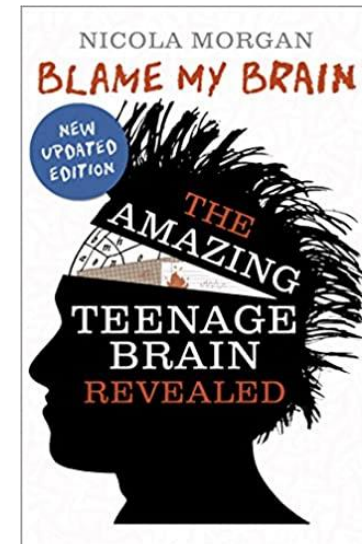
Overall, children (aged 4-10) have had **greater** changes in levels of mental health difficulties throughout the pandemic; levels of difficulties among adolescents (aged 11-16) have been more **stable**



Take part here: [www.cospaceoxford.org/takepart](http://www.cospaceoxford.org/takepart)



*“All parents and adults were once perfect teenagers. Model humans. They were completely in control of all their hormones and brain changes. In fact, they probably never had any hormones at all. They were calm, always smiling and incredibly polite to everyone around them, never struggling or having any difficulty. Many adults also have amnesia. That’s why they think the above paragraph is true.” – Nicola Morgan*



# Defining Adolescence

Storm and Stress, G. Stanley Hall (1904)

- Adolescence as naturally, inevitably and appropriately tempestuous
- Emotional turmoil and crisis assumed to be universal
- Increase of internalising and externalising challenging behaviours
- Identity crisis, 'who am I, what can I do or be, Where do I belong, What do I believe in?'



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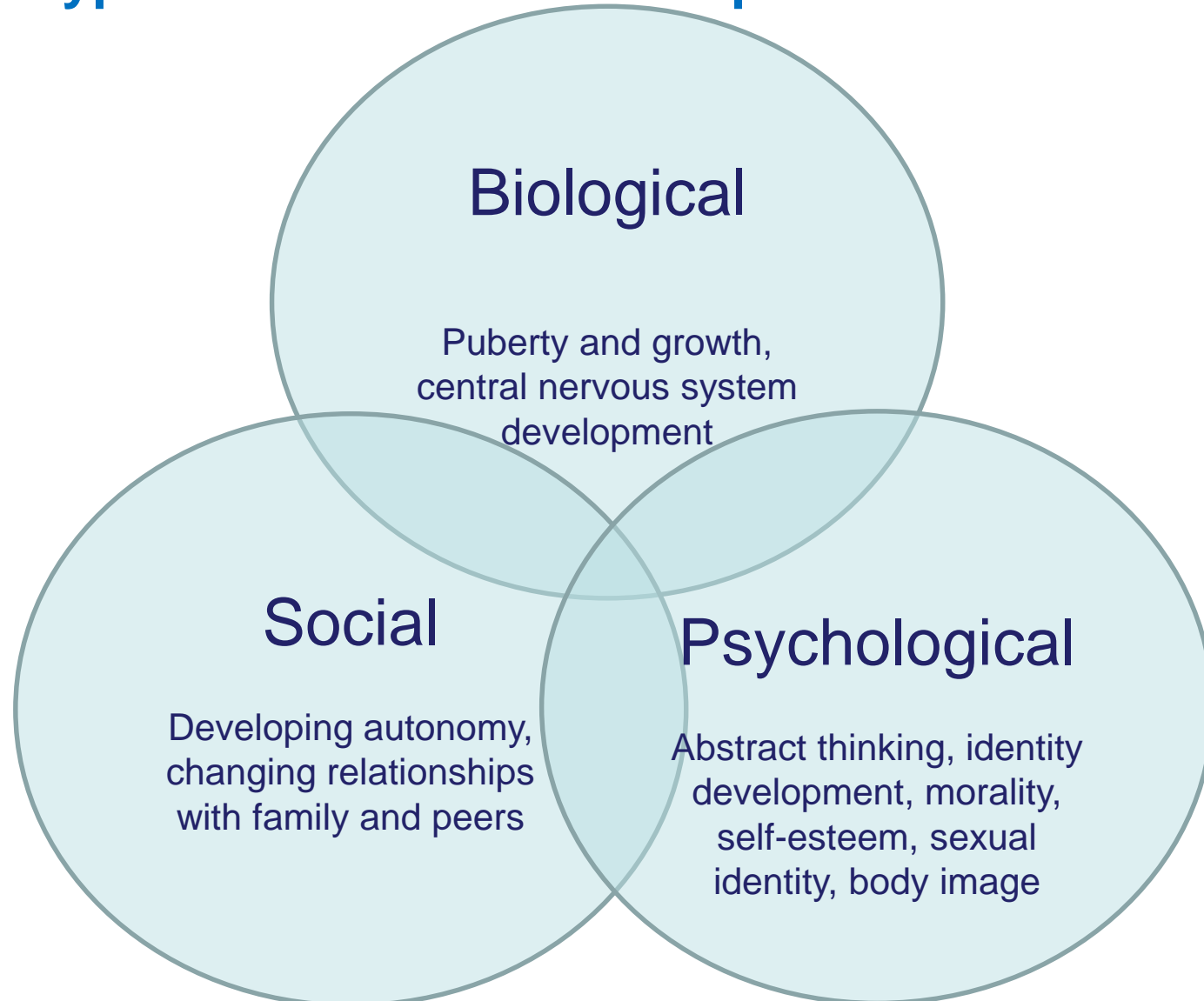


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# Typical Adolescent Development



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# Adolescent Brain Development

- Adolescents are not very skilled at distinguishing the subtlety of facial expression (excitement, anger, fear, sadness, etc.)—results in a lot of miscues—leads to lack of communication and inappropriate behavior
- Differences in processing, organization, and responding to information/events leads to misperceptions and misunderstanding verbal and non-verbal cues



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# What does this mean?



What we see in adults	What we see in teenagers
Reasoning	Struggle to process cause and effect
Logical thinking/decision making	Decisions based on current feelings
Planning	Impulsive
Impulse control	Impulsive/risk-taking
Problem solve to work out the best option	Focus on short term goals Ignoring negative consequences
Decision making skills	Misinterpretation of information
Processing emotions	Poor processing of emotions Stronger reaction to stress Displays of aggression



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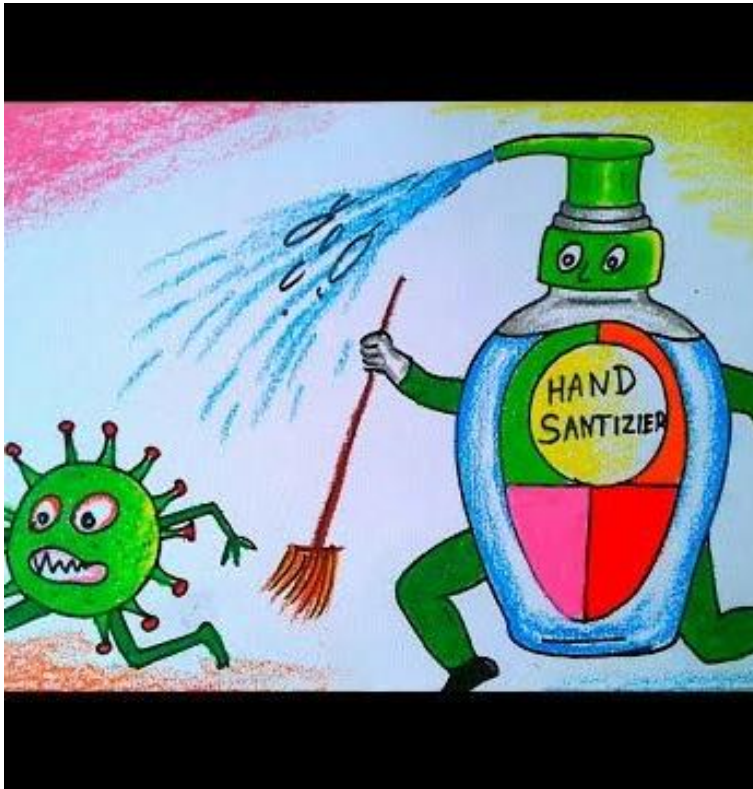


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# CURRENT CHALLENGES



- Lack of stimulation
- Uncertainty
- Emotion dysregulation
- Limited social connection
- Change in behaviour
- Change of routine
- Mix of environments
- Prolonged times together
- Limited space
- Hopes and expectations lost/changed



# Common thoughts at the moment



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# Common feelings at the moment

What might your children be feeling?



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## What does low mood look like in adolescents?

More than normal sadness or upset:

- Feelings of worthlessness and / or hopelessness
- Not getting enjoyment out of previously enjoyable activities
- Wanting to spend more time alone / social withdrawal
- Persistent thoughts about death and questioning the meaning of life (not necessarily suicidal)
- Flat affect (not feeling highs or lows as usual)
- Unable to hold onto positives / jumping to negative conclusions (self critical)



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## What to watch out for

- Flat feeling / little energy
- Deterioration in self – care
- Less engaged in activities
- Unexpected angry outbursts
- Getting into more trouble than usual
- Perplexing changes in attitude or behaviour
- **Consistent at home and school**
- **Ongoing over a sustained period of time**



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## How can parents help?

- Spend 1 to 1 time with child/adolescent
- Listen, empathise and understand before problem solving
- Avoid nagging but do insist on some family time together
- Make time for exercise and activities with your child



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# Anxious thinking

It'll be a  
disaster

They will  
ignore me

They will think  
I'm boring and  
never invite me  
again

**Anxiety = Overestimate chance of danger**  
Underestimate ability to cope

I won't  
manage

I can't do it

I won't be able  
to talk to  
anyone



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# Anxious Behaviour




Ask lots of  
questions



Outbursts



Withdrawn



Say difficult  
statements



Avoidance



Cry



Aggressive



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# Common parent responses to anxiety

## Being drawn into giving too much reassurance

- Children and young people can become reliant on reassurance and depend on adults saying what's ok to feel safe
  - Ask questions instead: try to help your child work out whether their worry is realistic or not for themselves.

## Becoming over protective / colluding with avoidance

- Stepping in to protect children from all their fears means they never get the chance to learn they can cope and find out it's not as scary as they thought
  - Instead, notice and praise sensible or brave behaviour
  - Encourage them to face their fears in small, manageable steps



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# What can I do when my teen won't listen?!



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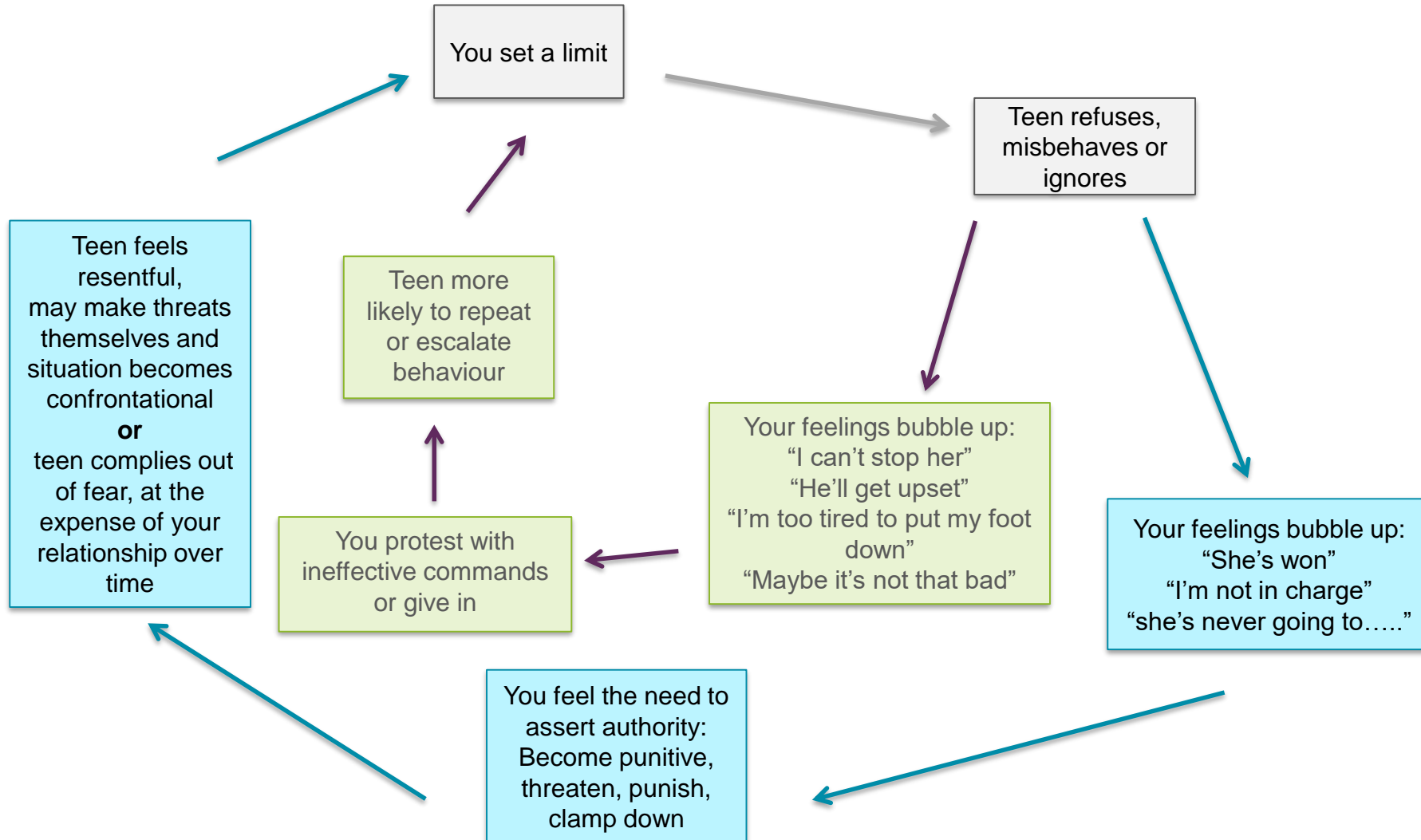
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# Common parenting cycles



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## Statements of high emotion

- It's all rubbish
- I can't do it
- I hate my life
- Nothing is good



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# Managing emotive statements

Adults usually:

- **Refute** “You know that’s not right”
- **Question** “What do you mean?”
- **Persuade** “Last week you wrote a great essay...”
- **Give advice** “Why don’t you just....”



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## How would you feel?

I don't want to go to work today.

Well you're going in anyway! You'll get into trouble if you don't. Finish that coffee and get your shoes on!





# What Can Parents Do Instead?



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## How would you feel?

I don't want to go to work tomorrow.

Ugh, I know how you feel. Having a bad morning? Yeah, I hate it when it's raining too





## Two steps for parents to hold in mind

1. Notice what *YOU* as a parent are feeling and try to stay calm
  - Catching thoughts “she *ALWAYS* does this”, “why can’t he just...”
  - Recognising physical tension
2. Try to think from your child’s perspective – what might they be feeling?

*“You look really upset”*

*“If that had happened to me, I think I would feel quite angry”*

## Take a step back from criticism

- ◆ Separate the behaviour from the child
- ◆ Problems with labelling and typecasting
- ◆ Comparisons tend to backfire



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## Sitting with emotion

- That sounds very hard
- Those are difficult feelings to have
- No wonder you are frustrated
- What do you need?



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# Talking about thoughts and feelings

**Validation** = recognising and accepting emotions

- Communicates that **feelings and thoughts** make sense and are understandable

- ✗ Judge
- ✗ Criticize
- ✗ Ridicule
- ✗ Ignore
- ✗ Lecture
- ✗ Dismiss



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# Talking about thoughts and feelings

**Validation** = recognising and accepting emotions

- Communicates that **feelings and thoughts** make sense and are understandable
- ✓ Be **present** and **listen**
- ✓ **Allow** them to have and express their feelings
- ✓ **Acknowledge** their problems and that they matter
- ✓ **Reflect on** and **summarise** what they are feeling

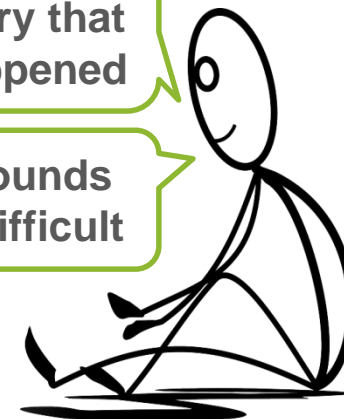
I can see you're really upset about that

It makes sense that you're scared given what happened last time

I'm really sorry that happened

I understand, it can be really scary trying new things

That sounds really difficult



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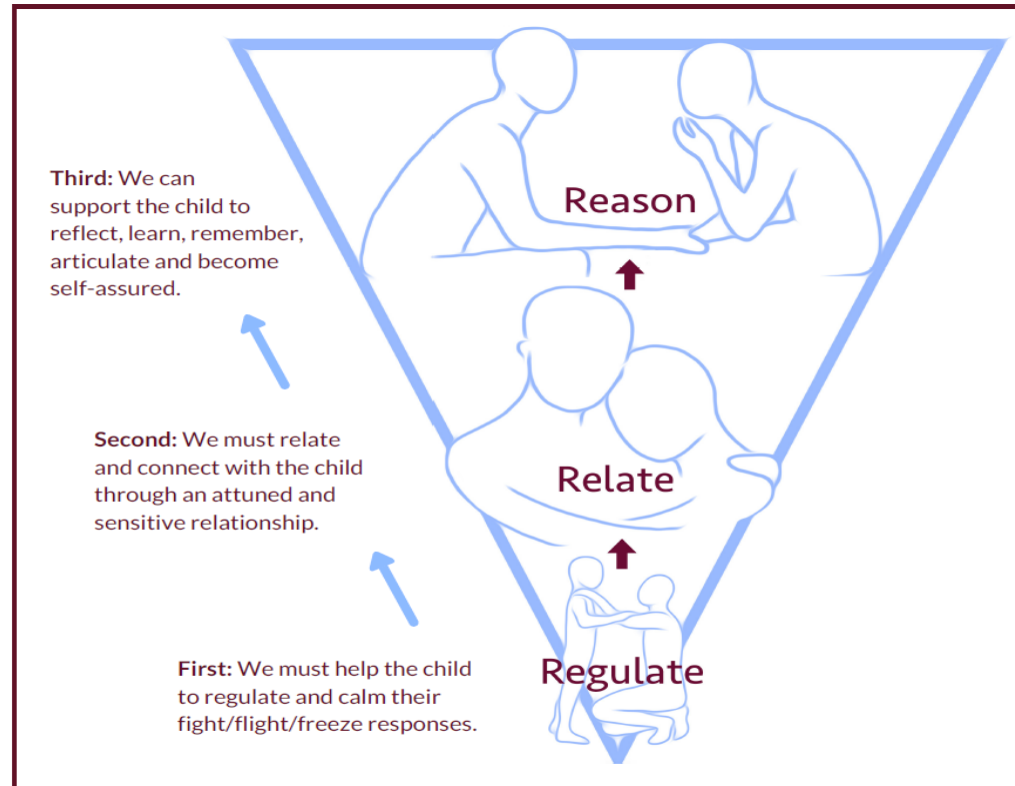
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## The 3 R's

**Regulate, relate and reason is the best way to help a child to come to a place of calm and clarity.**



Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

# 1 How to: REGULATE



Controlled breathing

Distraction techniques

Positive self talk

Source of physical  
comfort

A safe space to go

Emotional regulation  
ideas

Soothing but limited  
language


Progressive Muscle  
Relaxation

Moving  
away from  
the  
situation

Stepping back and  
allowing them time to  
process.

# THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION





**Here are some coping  
strategies to make it a  
bit easier**



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# How much sleep do we need?

Ensuring that your child gets enough sleep:

How much sleep do you really need?	
Age	Sleep Needs
Newborns (0-3 months)	14-17 hours
Infants (4-11 months)	12-15 hours
Toddlers (1-2 years)	11-14 hours
Pre-Schoolers (3-5 years)	10-13 hours
School age children (6-13 years)	9-11 hours
Teens (14-17 years)	8-10 hours
Younger Adults (18-25 years)	7-9 hours
Adults (26-64 years)	7-9 hours
Older Adults (65 years plus)	7-8 hours
	<i>Source: National Sleep Foundation (2015)</i>



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## Good sleep hygiene

- Rising early is better than going to bed early for getting adolescents back on track
- No napping!
- Relaxing but structured routine leading up to bedtime
- Beds are for sleeping, not for watching tv, doing homework, eating etc
- No screens for an hour before bedtime



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# Challenging our unhelpful thoughts

Thought: *"I will fail my exam"*

Rate truth of statement 0-100%: 70%

## Evidence for the thought      Evidence against the thought

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I have so many subjects, and not enough time</li> <li>▪ I do not have a revision timetable</li> <li>▪ I find the subjects hard</li> <li>▪ I do not know how to revise</li> <li>▪ I failed in my exam last year</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I have a good amount of time for revision</li> <li>▪ I can create a revision timetable</li> <li>▪ I have asked for help during lessons when I didn't understand something</li> <li>▪ When I study with friends it makes it more fun</li> <li>▪ I haven't failed all of my exams</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Unhelpful Thinking styles:

Catastrophising, predicting the future

## Alternative, more balanced thought:

Although I might not remember everything I still have time to revise for my exams. I can make the study fun with friends and continue to ask my teachers for support.

Review truth of statement 0-100%: 30%



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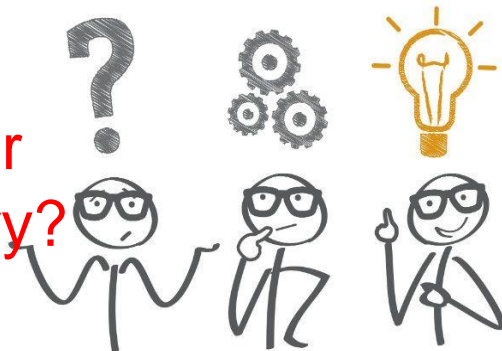
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# Problem solving unhelpful thoughts

1. Define what the problem is.
2. List all of the possible solutions. Think of as many ways to solve the problem as you can, even if some of them initially feel silly.
3. Think of the Pros and Cons of each solution. How practical are they? How helpful are they? What would the long and short term consequences be?
4. Is the plan do-able? What could get in the way? Who could help you with it?
5. Rate each plan from 0-10 in terms of how good you think it is.
6. Choose one plan to try and set a time to do it.
7. Review what happened after you did it. Did your solution work? If not which other option could you try?



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★ I can learn from this and it will be easier next time ★

★ Short term pain for long term gain ★

★ Thoughts are just thoughts ★

★ Its okay to feel this way ★

*think*  
**POSITIVE**

★ I can use my coping strategies and get through

★ Stop, and Breathe, I can do this ★



★ I have done this before, I can do it again ★



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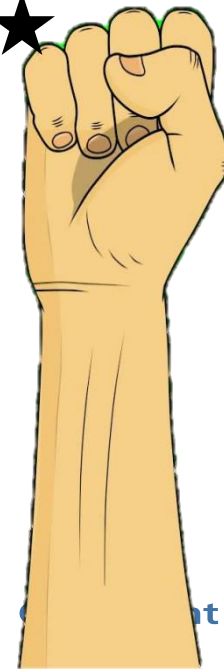
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# Relaxation strategies



★ Controlled  
breathing ★

★ Muscle  
relaxation ★



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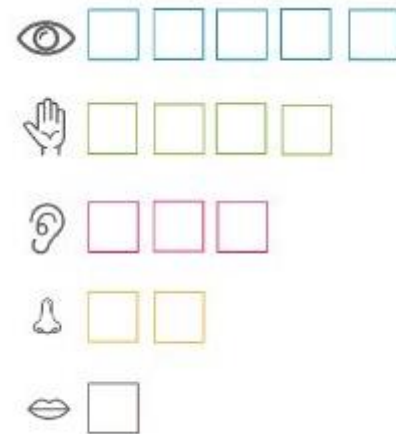


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# Distraction Techniques



★ 5 colours ★



★ 54321 ★



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**Shopping**  
**Do something creative**  
e.g. draw, paint, make,  
bake

**Have a bath**

Do something physical  
e.g. go for a walk, play

football, go

PlayStation/Xbox  
**Activities they**  
share/doing

**enjoy**

**Listen to music – have a**  
**“relaxing” playlist**

**nails/make up/face mask**

**Spend time with pets**



**Watch TV/a funny film/  
YouTube clips**



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# THE BACK-UP TEAM

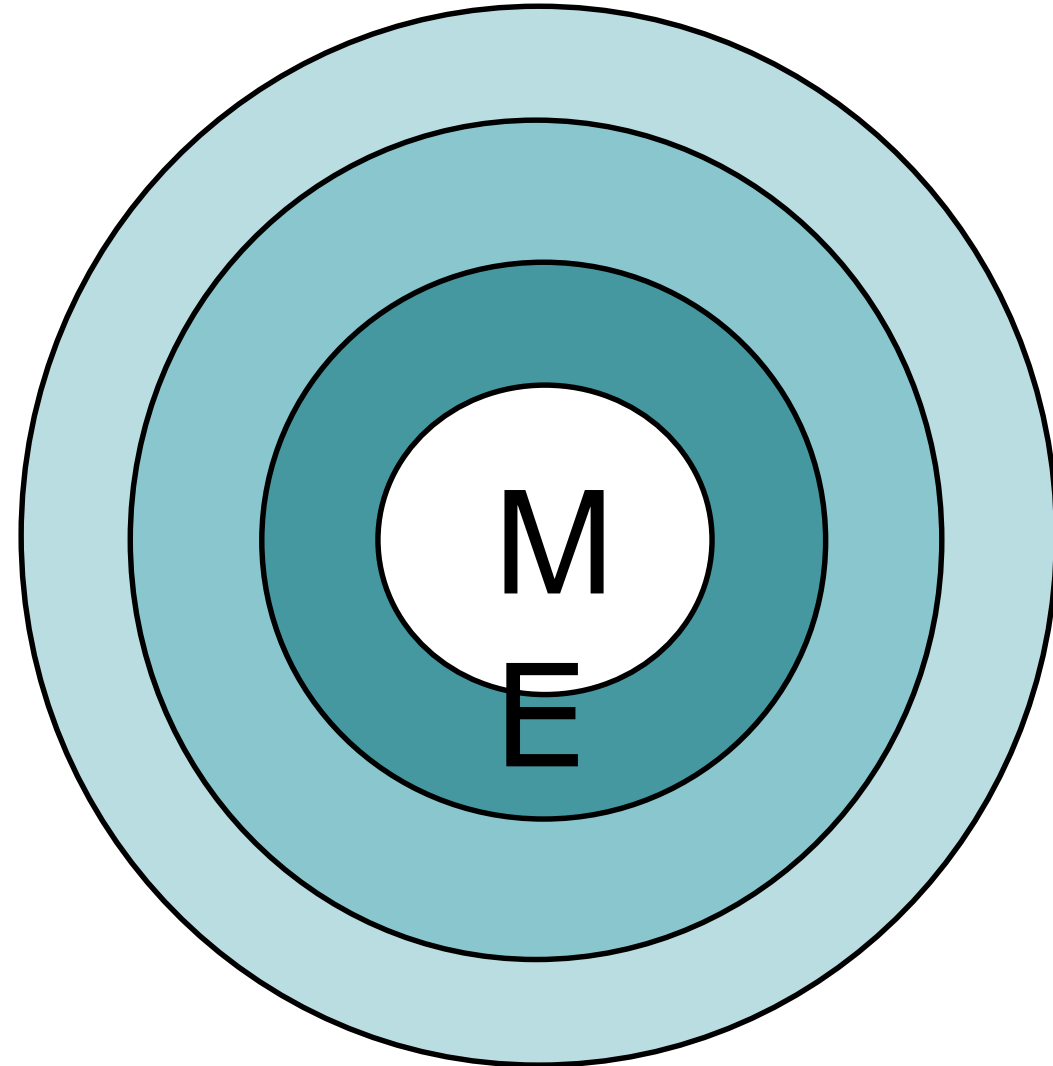
Who is in your back-up team?

What sort of support can they offer?

- Emotional
- Practical
- Motivational
- Companionship

The back-up team works better if the people who are in it, know they are in it.

How could you let them know they are part of yours?



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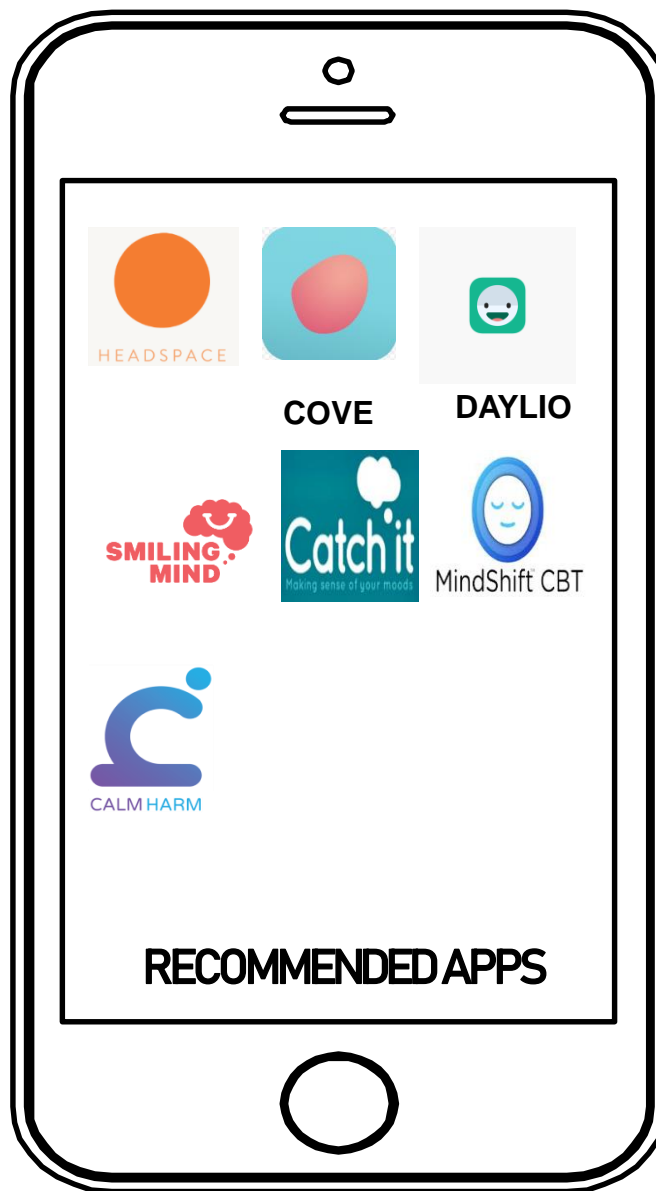


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## Things to look out for – ‘downward spirals’

- **Emotional changes:** Feeling sad, anxious, angry or looking flat most of the time – directing this towards others/self
  - Hopelessness, helplessness, struggling to see positives in life/wishing didn't exist
- **Relationship changes:** isolating self from friends/family, changes in communication (snappiness, overcompliance)
- **Self-care changes:** hygiene/appearance, eating changes, sleep changes
- **Risk-taking changes:** increased risk taking and impulsivity (including desire to harm self/others), potential physical indicators of self-harm





## Helplines

Some of what we have spoken about may have made you think about things differently.

If you are worried about your child or someone else, it is important to seek help.

Monday – Friday 09:00-17:00	Sutton CAMHS	0203 513 3800
Monday – Friday 17:00 – 22:00 Weekends 09:00 – 21:00	CAMHS Crisis Line	0203 228 5980
Outside the above hours	Crisis Line	0800 028 8000



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# Useful resources

## Corona Virus anxiety:

[https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/?dm\\_i=43MR,SZ24,3RGWSE,3HKDZ,1](https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/?dm_i=43MR,SZ24,3RGWSE,3HKDZ,1)

## Corona Virus and wellbeing:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Young minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

## Self-harm:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-harm/about-self-harm/>

Coping with anger: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-i-feel-when-i-m-angry-and-what-helps-me-cope/>

A-Z coping strategies for teens video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EXpkVw3fh0>

For parents worried about their child's mental health: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>



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