



Homerton Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN CHILDREN PARENT WORKSHOP

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Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools Project (WAMHS)*

*Woodberry Down Primary School
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EMOTIONAL REGULATIC



- Emotion regulation refers to our ability to notice, observe, understand, express, and influence our different emotional responses
- Emotional regulation can be automatic or controlled, conscious or unconscious – *why is this important?*
- Sometimes children's behaviours in response to emotions may not be adaptive, this may be due to them still learning how to handle and express their emotions in a more helpful and acceptable way

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

No emotion is bad, it is how we or others respond to it that is important



Self regulation

Things we do to monitor and manage our emotional states, as well as pause between feeling and reactions

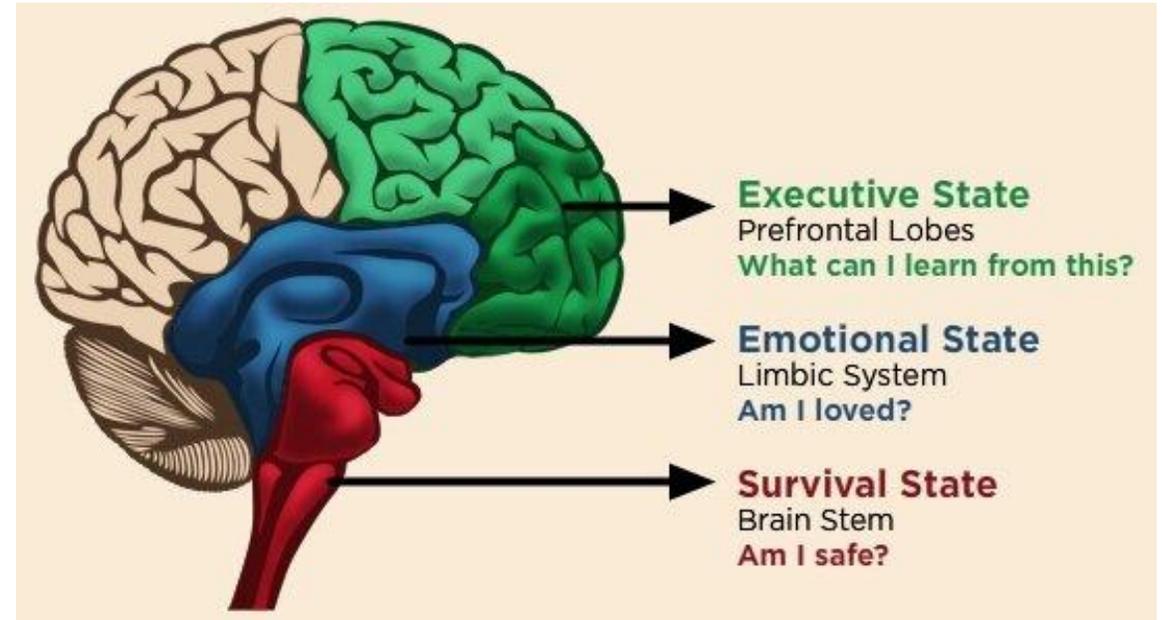


Mutual regulation

Seeking help or comfort from others to make us feel calm or safe

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BRAIN WHEN SOMEONE HAS STRONG FEELINGS

When we feel strong feelings the emotional part of the brain inhibits the thinking part of the brain making it more difficult to think logically and rationally. Therefore, when someone is emotional, it is important to give them time and space.

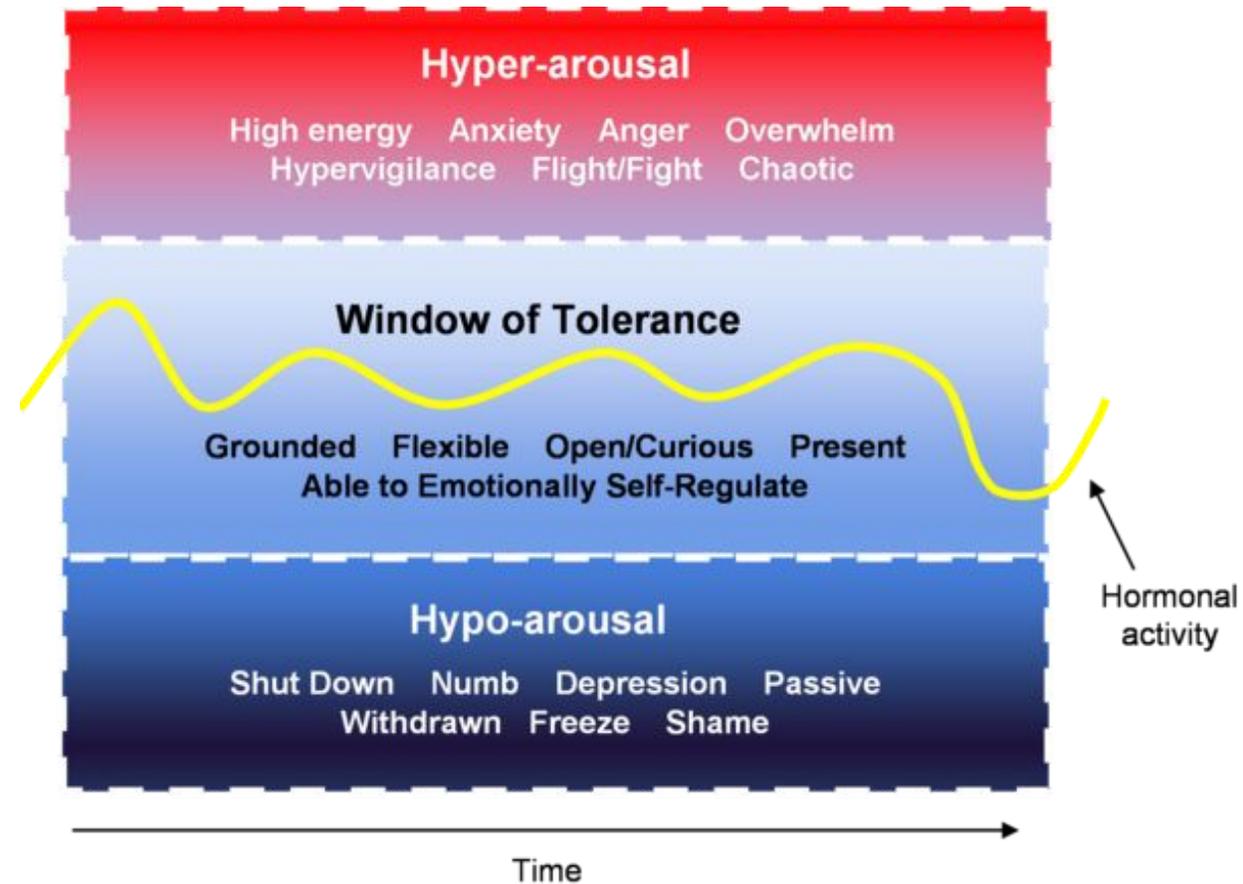


WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN CHILDREN ARE STRUGGLING WITH EMOTIONAL REGULATION?

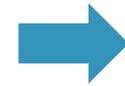
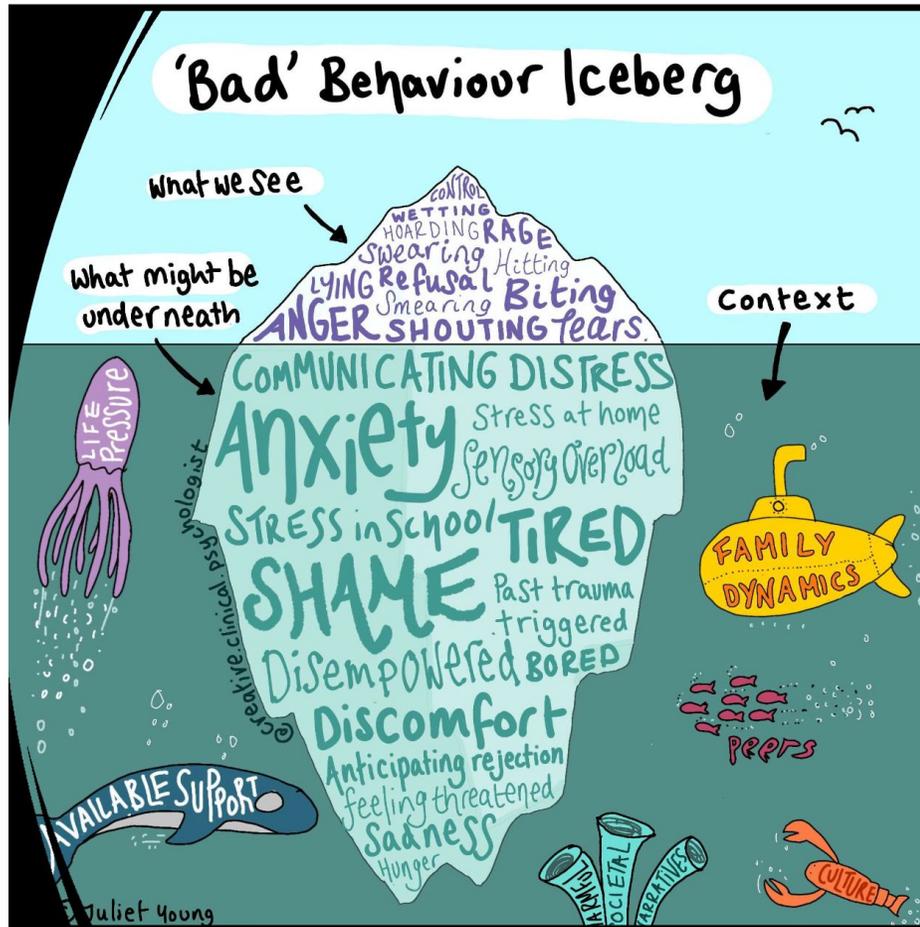
- Acting overly silly or out of control
- Emotional tantrums, “meltdowns”, crying
- Struggle with transitions
- Difficulties waiting for their turn
- Feeling uncomfortable being close to others
- Grab, throw or touch things impulsively
- Agitation and lots of moving around
- Talk too loudly and shouting out
- Appearing withdrawn or preoccupied

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Different children will have different windows of tolerance depending on their experience and environment



THE ICEBERG OF BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS



We see and respond to this



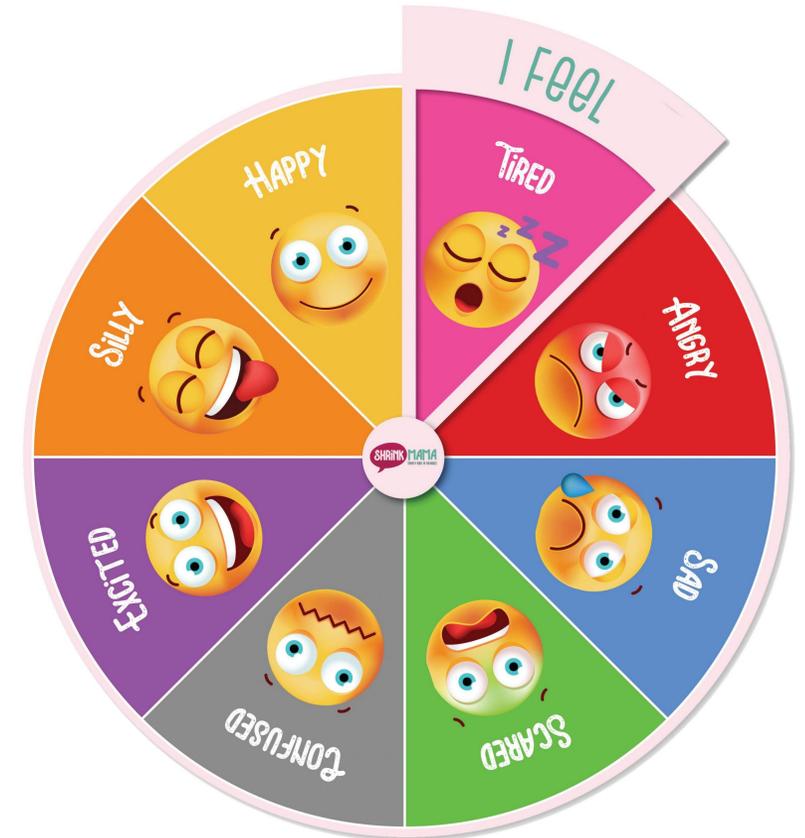
We don't usually see or respond to this



Unwelcome behaviour is often punished, but if the thoughts and feelings are resolved or eased, the behaviour will change

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

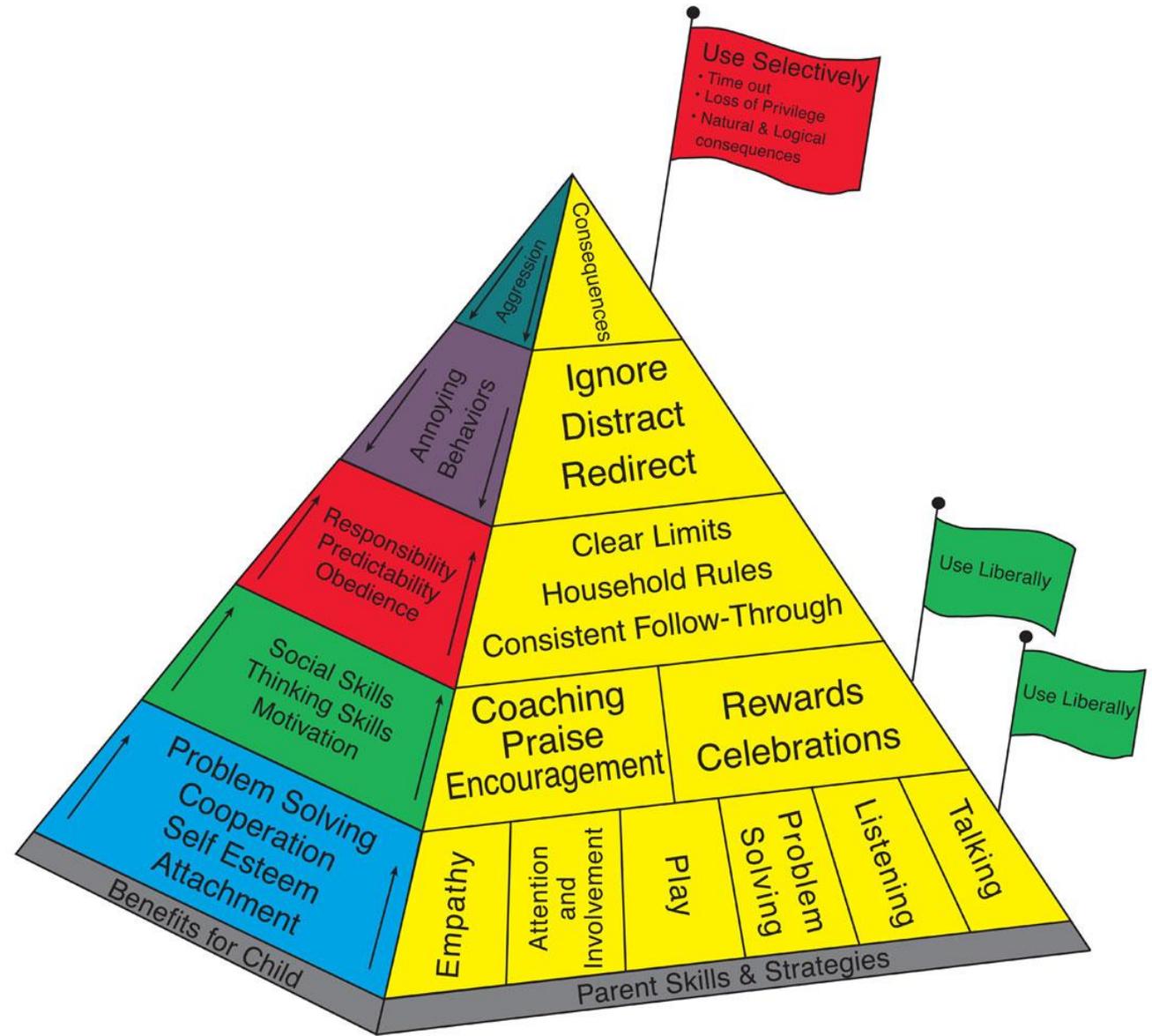
- Emotional literacy refers to our ability to:
 - notice and name the emotions we are feeling and those we see in other people
 - understand the message an emotion is aiming to communicate (cause and effect)
 - select the emotion that we are experiencing and choosing what to communicate
 - accept emotions as a normal part of life and being at ease talking about and working with them with the people we trust
- If we can link words to the emotions at the bottom of the iceberg, it becomes easier for us to communicate and understand ourself and others



TRIGGERS

- Current or historical event/situation/traumatic incidents/adverse experiences
- Sensory preferences
- Physical discomfort
- Emotions, e.g.: shame, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, powerlessness, hurt, grief
- Negative thoughts, e.g.: I am not safe, I am a bad kid, I am not good enough, I can't do anything right, I don't belong
- Adults on edge
- Punishment and stress
- Sometimes, an outburst can be caused by many tiny things/steps

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE FINDING IT HARD TO REGULATE



Parenting Pyramid[®]

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE FINDING IT HARD TO REGULATE

- Empathise with their distress – “sometimes it feels hard to wait”, “you sound really upset”
- Offer space if safe or help them name and understand the emotion – I wonder if you are feeling...; if I were you, I might feel...; it is understandable to feel...
- Containment: helps children from becoming “full up” with difficult emotions and have more headspace for learning, socialising and having fun
- What may be their unmet/underlying needs?

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE FINDING IT HARD TO REGULATE

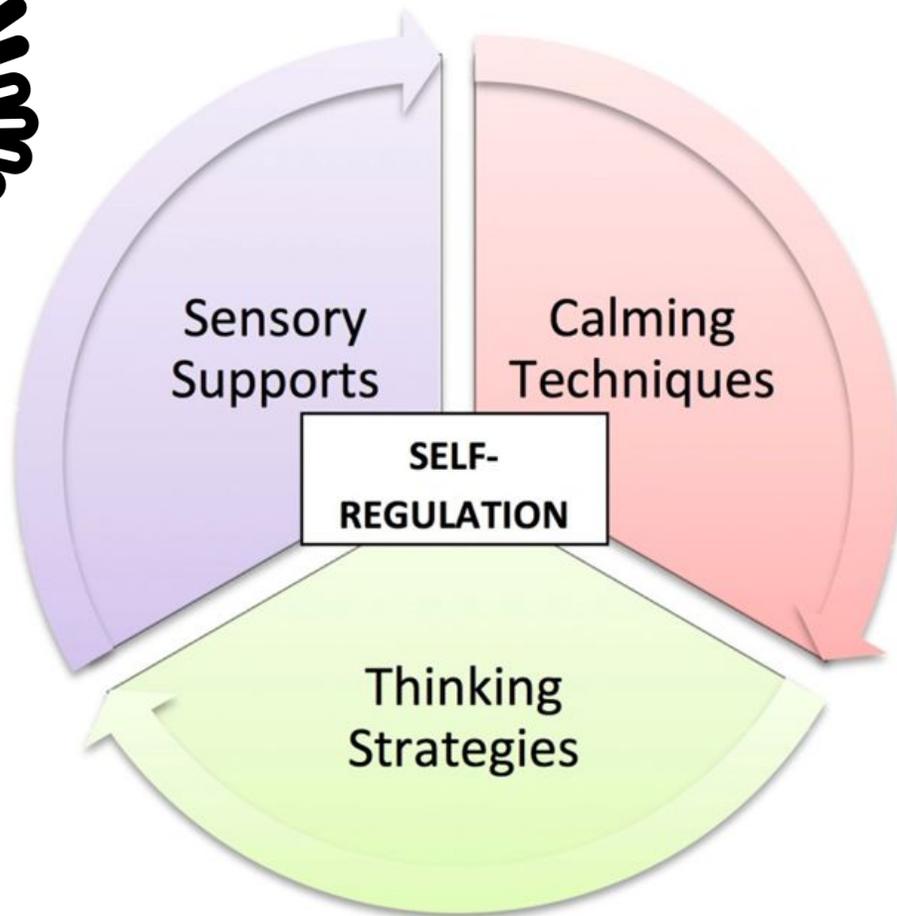
- Give more attention when a child displays positive behaviours (like sharing, waiting patiently, showing kindness): this can reduce their “need” to use more challenging, negative behaviours to get attention
- Child-directed play: helps to empower the child and their imagination, encourage problem solving, and facilitate their learning of positive attention
- Reflect with them and plan for next time

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE FINDING IT HARD TO REGULATE

- Specific praise, immediately after positive efforts and behaviours: helps with reinforcement – “I noticed you shared your toy with your sister, that is really kind of you”, “You didn’t know that word, but you tried hard to spell it out. Well done for practising”
- Rewards and celebrations: can be surprise rewards or reward plans
 - Important to be clear and specific about what behaviour is expected
- Clear instructions: reduce number of commands, picking your battles
- Maintaining boundaries: follow through with instructions, limits and rewards; consistency can help children feel calm and safe

Good emotion regulation starts with developing an awareness of the emotions





SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN

SENSORY SUPPC



CALMING TECHNIQUES

CALM DOWN YOGA FOR KIDS

I am strong. Use your strength to catch tricky waves

I am kind. Stretch high and spread kindness all around.

I am brave. Be brave and fearless as you fly down the ski run.

I am friendly. Stretch like a dog wagging its tail.

I am wise. Be a wise owl perched on a tree branch.

Childhood 101 & Kids Yoga Stories
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↑↑↑
INHALE

↓↓↓
EXHALE

↑↑↑
INHALE

GoodDayDeals.com

Stay Grounded Using Your 5 Senses

Relax Your Body, Take a Few Deep Breaths and Focus on the Following...

- 5** Things You Can See
- 4** Things You Can Feel
- 3** Things You Can Hear
- 2** Things You Can Smell
- 1** Thing You Can Taste

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5 finger breathing

An easy breathing technique for kids

Breathe in

Breathe out

Start here

End here

trace with your finger as you slowly take deep breaths in and out

Wellness
PEDIATRICIAN

DISTRESS TOLERANCE TECHNIQUES

– TIPP SKILLS



TEMPERATURE

Change your body temperature. Splash your face with cold water, hold an ice cube, let car AC blow on your face, take a cold shower



INTENSE EXERCISE

Do intense exercise to match your intense emotion. Sprint to the end of the street, do jumping jacks, push ups, intense dancing



PACED BREATHING

Try Box Breathing: Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold it for 4 seconds, breathe out 4, and hold 4. Start again, and continue until you feel more calm.



PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION

Focus on 1 muscle group at a time. Tighten your muscles as much as possible for 5 seconds. Then release & relax. Repeat with other muscle groups.

THINKING STRATEGIES

The best time to help children learn to calm their brain is when they are already calm

- Before: prepare and set expectations, e.g.: “this afternoon you will have to wait for Ms to ___ before ___”; “remember this activity is about sharing so ___”; “if you feel sad, annoyed, angry, etc. what shall we do?”
- During: help them to problem solve, e.g.: “what would your inner coach say?”; “what would your friend say?”; “remember we need to do this before we can do that”; “how big is the problem?”
- After: Reflect with them, e.g.: “it was really nice to see you ___”; “what could we do next time?”

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- **Parenting is hard!**
- Recognise indications you might need to take care of yourself, e.g.: physical sensations, changes in sleep, mood fluctuations, increased irritability, worrying significantly or ruminating, difficulties concentrating etc.
- Be conscious of emotion-driven reactions; children mirror and imitate things they see
- Notice your negative thoughts such as I am a bad parent, others think I'm a failure, this will never get better, this child needs to learn her lesson, I can't let her get away with that, she hates me or has it in for me
- Think about your circles of support and reach out to others
- Try to do one thing every day that improves your mental or physical health in some way – for example, go on a walk after dinner, or call a loved one you haven't seen in a while