



Coping skills for Children



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



Your time,
your words,
your presence

Children experience a vast array of feelings, just as adults do. They can feel bored, anxious, sad, disappointed, embarrassed, and scared—to name a few. While most of us experience any number of emotions from day to day, we are not necessarily taught how to deal with them or how to cope.

Children need to learn skills to manage their emotions in a healthy way. It's important to teach them coping skills that can help them face their fears, calm themselves down, and cheer themselves up.

Why Kids Need Coping Skills

Without healthy coping skills, kids are likely to act out—essentially sending a message that says, “I feel out of control so I’m going to act out of control.” Kids who don’t know how to deal with their feelings are also more likely to turn to unhealthy coping strategies. Here are a few coping skills that may help.

(Very well family 2020)

Emotion-Focused Coping Skills

Emotion-focused skills may involve your child doing things that help them feel better (like calming down when she is angry or cheering up when she is sad). However, these skills might also involve doing something that offers a temporary distraction so he can return to the issue when she’s feeling more level-headed (like taking a quick break when she’s feeling frustrated). The following are some healthy emotion-focused coping skills for kids.

Labelling Feelings

Strong emotions can be scary for kids, and they can fuel strong reactions. But when children are able to talk about how they’re feeling and what may be causing it, their emotions can feel more manageable. Below are some statements that may help:

- “How are you feeling right now?” Offer them the words to use, like mad, sad, frustrated, scared, worried or embarrassed.
- “Where are you feeling it in your body?” They may say their belly feels tight, their heart is racing or their head feels hot.
- Using “I am wondering or I can see” language will help those children who struggle to recognise their own emotions, and with time they will learn to verbalise their needs.
- NEVER try to find the cause of big emotions until both YOU and the CHILD is calm.

Understanding dysregulation: How to Support a Highly Emotional Child



Dysregulation occurs when the brain responds to sensory input in a manner that triggers the alarm state.



When a child is dysregulated, it is harder to listen, comprehend, and cope.

Remember the Three "R"s

Regulate

focus on soothing your child. Make them feel calm, safe, and loved.



Relate

Validate their feelings with your words and tone of voice. "I know you're upset right now." "This is very hard". Focus on connecting with your child.

Reason



Once your child is calm, now it is time to talk about alternatives to behaviors while reinforcing limits you set before. You can reassure them you love them but that the behavior they're exhibiting is not ok.

Until a child is regulated, they are unlikely to relate to you (feel connected & comfortable). And until a child is related, they are unlikely to have the mental capacity to reason with you.

<http://www.thinkkids.org/regulate-relate-reason/>

<https://jessicalangtherapy.com/blog/regulate-relate-reason-brain-state/>

(Think kids. Org 2019)

Emotions & Feelings

Draw a line from each feeling on the left to the corresponding Emotion on the right.

1. Furious
2. Happy
3. Gagged Out
4. Forlorn
5. Scared
6. Glum
7. Mad
8. Jolly
9. Unhappy
10. Afraid
11. Livid
12. Revolted
13. Cheerful
14. Nervous
15. Repulsed



A



B



C



D



E

ANSWERS: 1.C, 2.A, 3.B, 4.E, 5.D, 6.E, 7.C, 8.A, 9.E, 10.D, 11.C, 12.B, 13.A, 14.D, 15.B



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Emotions Board Game

Instructions

Roll the die and move your game piece that number of squares. Read the emotion written in the square and say a time when you have felt that emotion e.g. I feel happy when I am riding my bike.

The game can be for 2-4 players. The first player to get to the end wins!



twinkl



ink saving Eco

(Twinkl 2020)

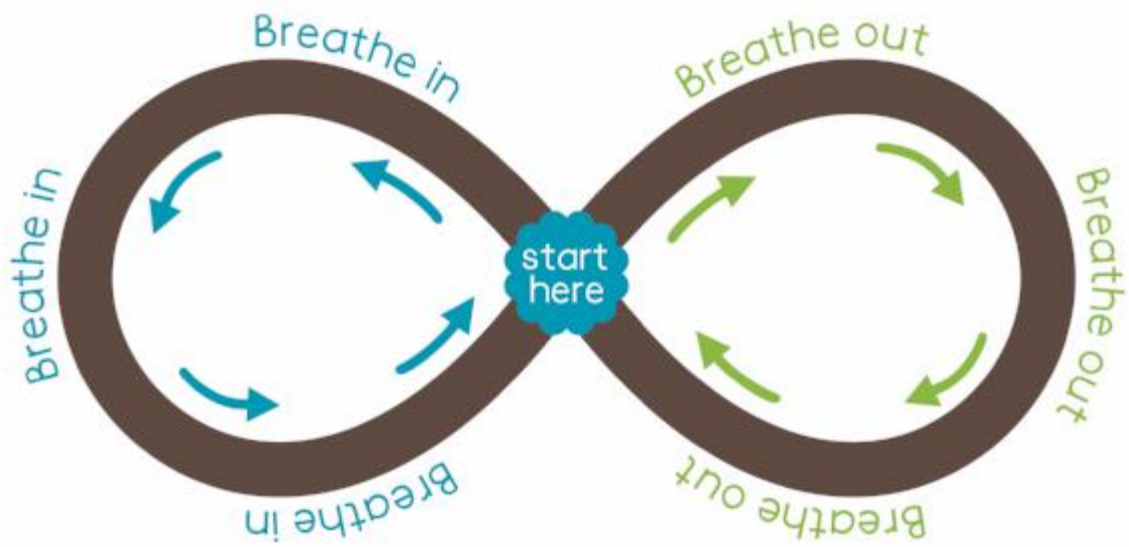
Breathing Exercises

A few slow, deep breaths can help children relax their minds and their bodies. One way to teach children to do this is by encouraging them to take "bubble breaths." Tell your child to breathe in deeply through her nose and then breathe out slowly through her mouth like she's trying to blow a bubble with a wand.

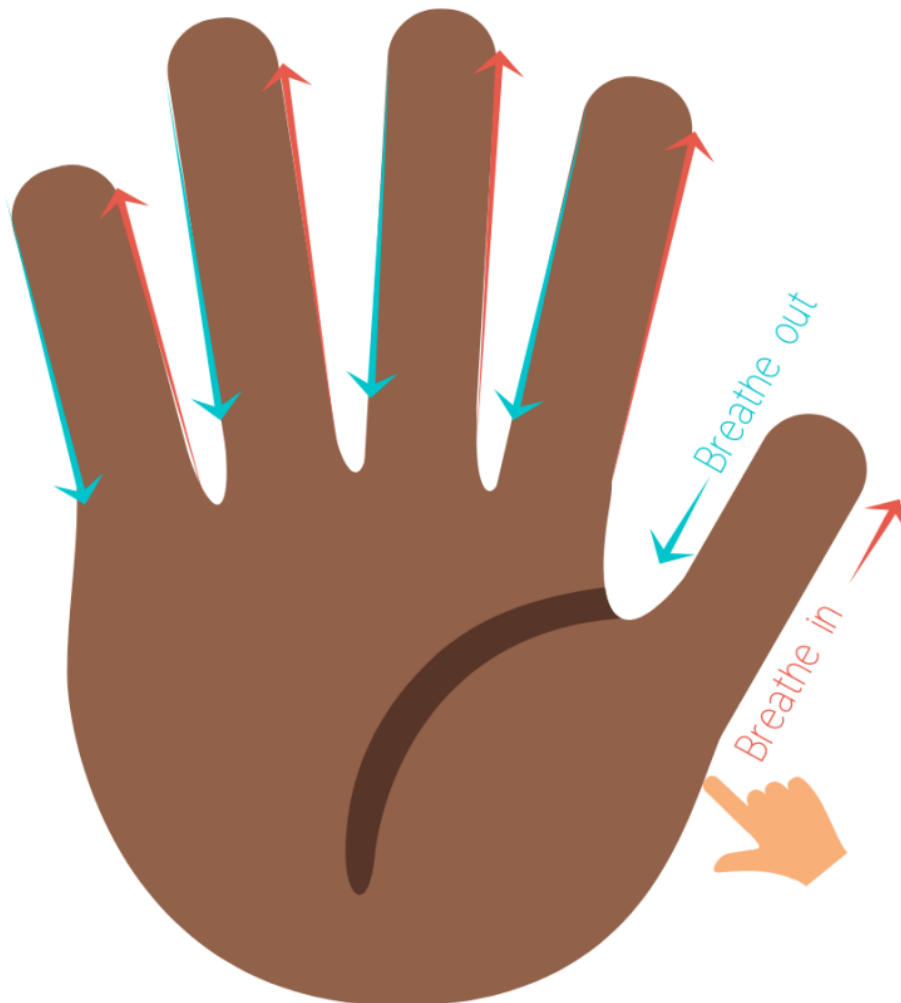
An alternative strategy is to teach your child to "smell the pizza." Tell her to breathe in through her nose like they are smelling a piece of pizza. Then, tell them to blow on the pizza to cool it down. Encourage your child to do this several times to help her feel better.



(coping skills for kids 2017)



5 Finger Breathing



(The dam corner 2018)

Exercising

Exercise can be a great way for children to get out their excess energy when they are nervous and to boost their mood when they are down. Strength building exercises (like lifting weights) and aerobic exercise (like running) can be excellent ways to help kids regulate their emotions. Exercise can be done anywhere using an array of objects. For example simple push ups against a wall, Jumping jacks, skipping, bouncing on a trampoline to name a few can all be done at home.

40 Quick and Easy SENSORY BREAK IDEAS

- Jumping Jacks
- Jumping on a mini or large outdoor trampoline
- Heavy work activities
- Crawling through tunnels or under objects
- Wall or chair Pushes
- Animal Crawls (can you crawl like a bear? crab? frogs? seals?)
- Ball Pass
- Ball Pits
- Reading in a bean bag chair
- Biking
- Climbing trees or on a jungle gym
- Use fidget toys
- Chewing toys or tools such a Chewable Jewelry
- Crashing mat
- Play with a parachute
- Popcorn jumps
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Obstacle course
- Passing weighted balls back and forth
- Scooter board activities
- Resistance bands
- Bouncing on a therapy or exercise ball
- Listening to upbeat OR calming music
- Swinging
- Going outside for a walk or hike
- Jumping jacks
- Skipping
- Running
- Bean bag squeezes
- Drinking water through a water bottle with a Bite Valve
- Chewing gum (all natural chewing gum option)
- Using a weighted blanket or vest
- Lifting light weights
- Yoga moves
- Swimming
- Tummy Time
- Headphones to block out unnecessary noise
- Roller blade or skating
- Visit the playground

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(Verywell family 2020 (lemon lime adventures 2020)

Getting creative

Whether your child enjoys painting with water colours, colouring in a colouring book, doodling, sculpting with clay, or creating a collage, art work can be an excellent coping strategy. Drawing out their feelings is another good way children can learn to communicate.

Reading

Reading books can serve as a great temporary distraction. When your child is done reading, she might feel better equipped to tackle a problem because she's feeling calm and rejuvenated.

Playing a Game

If your child can't stop thinking about something bad that happened at school or something he's dreading in the future, do something to get his mind off his concerns.

Whether you play a board game or kick around a ball outside, doing something active can help change the channel in his brain. Then, he'll be able to think about other things, rather than dwell on all the things that make him feel bad.

Yoga/mindfulness

Yoga provides many benefits to the mind and the body.

And when your child needs a boost in mood or needs help relaxing, you can remind her to practice some of her yoga poses. Simple mindfulness provides children with simple, practical tools to work directly with their nervous systems, helping them regulate emotional states and focus attention. Mindfulness gives children the tools to focus their minds, calm down and reflect on a situation when they need to make a choice.

Body Scan

The body scan is a key practice in mindfulness, and an easy one to teach to children.

- Have your kids lie down on their back on a comfortable surface and close their eyes;
- Then tell them to squeeze every muscle in their body as tight as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, squeeze their hands into fists, and make their legs and arms as hard as stone;
- After a few seconds, have them release all their muscles and relax for a few minutes;
- Encourage them to think about how their body is feeling throughout the activity (Roman, 2015).

This simple exercise gets kids to be more aware of their bodies and helps them find a way to be present in the moment.

(Verywell family 2020)

TENSE AND RELEASE

MUSCLE RELAXATION

1. Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.
2. Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.
3. Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

(Big Life Journal 2019)

Heartbeat Exercise

Paying attention to one's heartbeat has a role in many mindfulness exercises and activities. To begin, tell your child to jump up and down in place or do jumping jacks for one minute.

When they have finished, have them sit down and put a hand over their heart. Instruct them to close their eyes and pay attention only to their heartbeat and, perhaps, their breath as well (Roman, 2015).

This exercise teaches children to notice their heartbeat, and use it as a tool to help their focus. These skills will come in handy as they start engaging in more advanced mindfulness activities.

The graphic features a light blue background with a white heart in the center. A red heart with a white ECG line is positioned above the white heart. Below the white heart, there is a horizontal line. The text is centered and reads: "Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute." followed by "At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels." Below the text is an illustration of a child with dark hair, eyes closed, and hands clasped in front of their chest. At the bottom of the graphic, there is a teal bar with the text "Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com".

Heartbeat Exercise

Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.

At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels.

Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

(Big Life Journal 2019)

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing is a staple of practicing mindfulness. It is the foundation of many other exercises.

Just One Breath

BREATHING ACTIVITY




Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.

Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.



Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.

Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com (Big Life Journal 2019)

Playing Music

Whether your child likes to make their own music on a keyboard or they enjoy listening to calming songs, music can affect his brain and his body. Music is often incorporated into treatment programs for physical health, mental health, and substance abuse problems because it has been shown to speed healing, calm anxiety, and reduce depression.

Help your child discover how music can be helpful to them. Are there songs that calm him down? Does certain music cheer them up?

Watching a Funny Video

Laughing is a good way to take a mental break from problems. Watching a funny animal video, a hilarious cartoon, or something you captured on video could be a great way to help him feel better.

Positive Self-Talk

When your child is feeling upset, their self-talk is likely to become quite negative. They may think things like, "I'm going to embarrass myself," or "None of the other kids are going to talk to me."

Teach them how to speak to themselves kindly by asking, "What would you say to a friend who had this problem?" They are likely to have some kind, supportive words. Encourage them to give those same kind words to self.

10 Growth Mindset Statements

What can I say to myself?

FIXED MINDSET (represented by a brick wall) **GROWTH MINDSET** (represented by a tree)

INSTEAD OF:

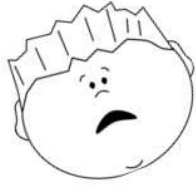
- I'm not good at this.
- I'm awesome at this.
- I give up.
- This is too hard.
- I can't make this any better.
- I just can't do Math.
- I made a mistake.
- She's so smart. I will never be that smart.
- It's good enough.
- Plan "A" didn't work.

TRY THINKING:

- 1 What am I missing?
- 2 I'm on the right track.
- 3 I'll use some of the strategies we've learned.
- 4 This may take some time and effort.
- 5 I can always improve so I'll keep trying.
- 6 I'm going to train my brain in Math.
- 7 Mistakes help me to learn better.
- 8 I'm going to figure out how she does it.
- 9 Is it really my best work?
- 10 Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters!

(Original source unknown)

@sylvia Duckworth



Self Talk



Sometimes when we are frustrated or upset our mind goes to all the things about ourselves that we don't like. A strategy for this is changing our negative talk to positive and thinking of the great things that we CAN do. Let's practice below. Write some negative thoughts you have had and then remind yourself of the positives.

Negative Thoughts	Positive Reminders
<i>Example: I got in trouble in class so I am a "bad" kid.</i>	<i>Example: Today was a rough day but I usually help my teacher.</i>

(The stylish school counsellor 2014).

Words that describe

ME!

This is me:

(What the teacher wants 2016)

Engage in a Mood Booster

Work with your child on making a list of all the things they like to do when they are happy—such as do a dance, sing, kick a ball, or tell jokes. Those are his mood boosters.

8 FEEL GOOD TIPS TO BOOST YOUR MOOD

Having a bad day? Here are some ways to feel better.

Take your mind off it: make plans with friends or family. Laughing and spending time with loved ones can be a good distraction from a bad day.

Let it out: cry, yell, sob... it's OK to express yourself in whatever way feels right for you.

Breathe: focus on your breathing. Take a few deep breaths, relax your body and mind and concentrate on feeling better.

Focus on you: what makes you happy? Take some alone time doing something just for you, such as listening to your favourite music or watching your favourite TV show.

Give back: if you're having a bad day, helping to brighten someone else's day may make you feel better. Do something nice for a friend or volunteer with a local charity.

Get artistic: draw, paint or write about how you're feeling to turn your bad day into something creative.

Talk about it: sometimes all it takes to feel better is talking about a problem. You can speak to a friend, parent/caregiver or teacher about what's on your mind. You can also call a Kids Help Phone counsellor at 1-800-668-6868.

Exercise: go for a walk, dance to music or do some other physical activity you enjoy. This can help boost your mood and make you feel better (mentally and physically).

Remember: you're not alone. Almost everyone has bad days from time to time — lots of people feel the same way you're feeling right now, but it will get better.

(Kids help phone 2020)

Then, when they are feeling down, encourage them to do something on their mood booster list. Even if they don't feel like doing it at first, doing something fun can help them feel better.

Create a Calm Down Kit

Fill a shoe box with items that engage your child's senses, like a stress ball to squeeze, lotion that smells good, and a picture that she enjoys. Ask your child for their input on things that you can include that will help them calm down when they are upset, like a colouring book and crayons.

Then, when they are anxious, angry, or overwhelmed, encourage them to go get her calm down kit. This allows them to take responsibility for calming there body and brain.

WHAT TO PUT IN A CALM DOWN BOX	
www.andnextcomesL.com	
<p>Items that provide proprioceptive support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weighted lap cushion or weighted stuffed animal • Weighted vest or pressure vest • Stretchy resistance bands • Sensory tunnel • Mini massager • Body sock • Small blanket 	<p>Items for auditory sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise cancelling headphones • MP3 player with music • Audiobooks
<p>Items to squeeze & keep hands busy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fidgets like Tangle Jr. or puffer ball • Rubik's Cube • Play dough or silly putty • Pipe cleaners • Stress balls • Bubble wrap • Bag of tissue paper to rip • Scarves or fabric scraps • Spinning top 	<p>Items for oral motor sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chew toy or chew necklace • Chewing gum, hard candies, or lollipops • Snacks with a variety of textures • Whistle, harmonica, party blowers, or similar • Rescue Remedy Spray
<p>Items to support breathing & relaxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottle of bubbles • Pinwheels • Straws and cotton balls or pom poms 	<p>Items that give kids a brain break</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzle • Books to read • Blank notebook and writing utensils • Coloring books • Scratch art doodle pad • Small chalk board, Magna-Doodle, Etch-a-Sketch, or Boogie Board • Activity books • Photo album
<p>Items for olfactory sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming essential oil spray • Smelling bottles • Scratch and sniff stickers 	<p>Items to visually calm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual calm down cards • Sensory bottle or calm down jar • Light up toys • Flashlight • Plastic snow globe • Kaleidoscope • Hourglass • Eye mask
<p>Items to get kids moving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of yoga poses or yoga activity cards • Skipping rope 	

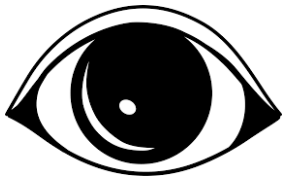
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(And next comes l 2020)

Grounding exercises. Grounding techniques are a powerful tool to help kids to connect to the here and now and interrupt spiralling worries. Like mindfulness it helps children calm but these techniques below can be used anywhere at any time.

54321 is an exercise where children use their senses to interrupt negative thoughts and ground them to the here and now.

54321.....



5 things you can see



4 things you can touch



3 things you can hear



2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste

Alphabet game: Start at A and go through the alphabet on any topic of your choice. Can you get to Z?? This is a fun activity that the whole family can engage in and it is fantastic at interrupting those negative thoughts and re directing behaviour.

Grounding Exercise

Use the Alphabet

A B C D E F G

Go through the
alphabet and
choose a topic
to use:



Fruits-

- A- Apple
- B- Banana
- C- Cherries
- D- Dragon fruit

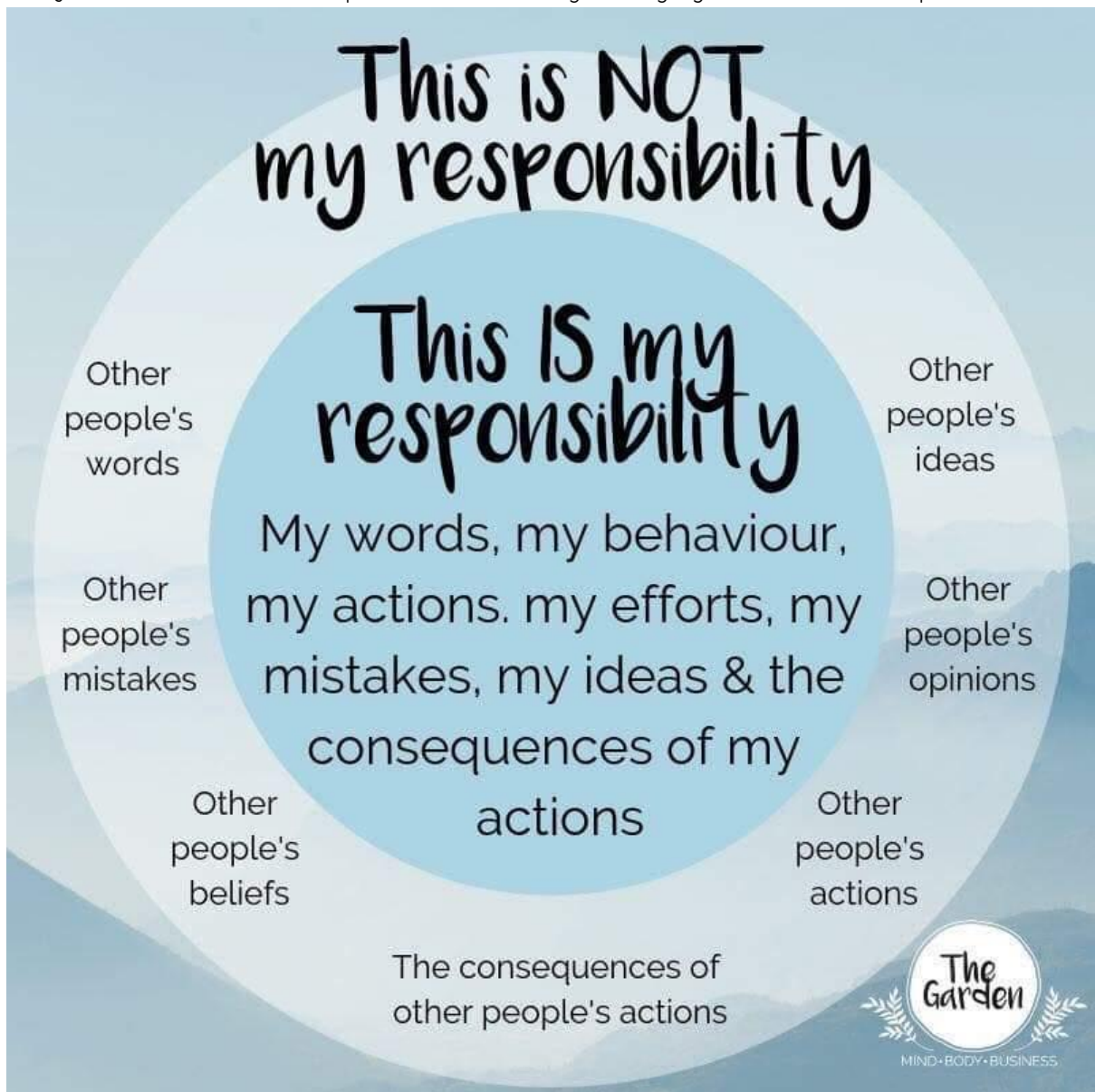
Football Teams-

- A- Arsenal
- B- Bradford City
- C- Cardiff
- D- Doncaster Rovers

Countries-

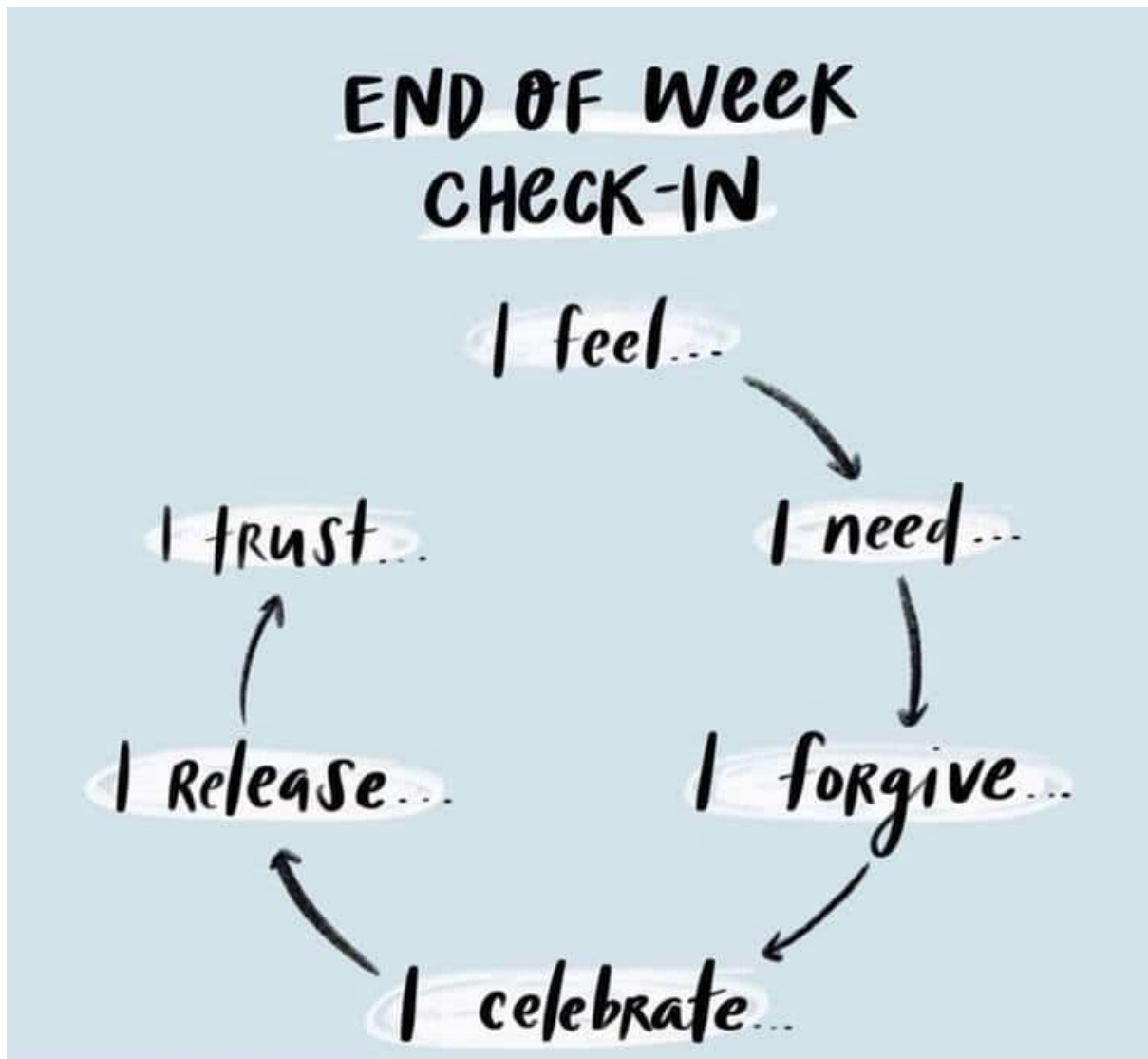
- A- America
- B- Bahamas
- C- Croatia
- D- Denmark
- E- England

Below are a couple of additional resources which may be useful to support our young people to manage their emotions and become more resilient in the process. Teaching children about responsibility not only builds confidence, it allows children to problem solve and navigate everyday situations in a more positive manner.



(Pinterest 2020)

The end of week check in is a lovely way to get children to reflect on there week in a positive way whilst having a safe space to share their thought and feelings.



(Pinterest 2020)

Finally a nice activity to do daily on an evening whilst having that protected time with your child is to explore three good things that happened that day. Doing this as a family is a really nice way to connect and share your day. 3 Good Things diverts our minds from the negative. When we reflect on the positive, it leads to noticing even more positive. We retrain our brain to remember the good things.