

Testwood School

Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Policy



Key Responsibility area:	CSi
Last Review:	January 2022
Next Review:	January 2023

Revision History

Version	Date	Amendments	Initials
2.0	21.10.20	Five Appendices added	CSi
2.1	26.01.21	Additions to purpose in light of current climate	CSi
2.2	08.02.21	Personal pronouns removed	JB
2.3	20.2.21	Amendments made	CSI
2.4	8.1.2022	Amendments made	CSi

Introduction

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community. (World Health Organisation)

'Members of the Testwood School Community actively value, educate and support Children & Young People (C&YP) and each other on their journey to positive mental health.'

Purpose

The Department for Education recognises that schools and colleges have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their students and students, by developing approaches tailored to the particular needs of their students and students. Taking a coordinated and evidence-informed approach to mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges can also help foster readiness to learn (DfE 2021). At Testwood School we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and student body. It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood (DfE Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-Being. At Testwood School we pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable students.

The Mental Health of Children and Young People in England survey (2020) found 16% (1 in 6) of children aged 5 to 16 years to have a probable mental health disorder, an increase from 1 in 9 in 2017. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in fundamental changes to the lives of children and young people.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, at Testwood School we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures Testwood School can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our **Medical policy** in cases where a student's mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue; the **SEND policy** where a student

has an identified special educational need and the **Safeguarding Policy** where a student has been identified as possibly being at risk.

Aims

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to students and staff suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers
- Develop a whole school approach to promote resilience within our young people.

All staff have a responsibility and a role to play in helping to promote students' Mental Health and Emotional Well-being. However, any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a student should if possible have a discussion with the student. They should then contact the relevant Year Leader or Pastoral Support Worker. If there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Headteacher. See **Appendix 1 – Pathway**. If the student presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting matron; first aid staff, parents/cares and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be lead and managed by the individual submitting the form. The criteria required for a CAMHS referral is provided in

Appendix 2

Individual Health Care Plans – (Appendix 3)

Any student who is receiving regular support from CAMHS should have an IHCP. This should be drawn up in discussion with the student, parents/carers and any relevant health care professionals. This will outline: -

- Details of a student's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play in supporting the student and lead support.

Signposting

Testwood School will ensure that staff, students and parents/carers are aware of the sources of support within the school and in the local community. What support is available within our school and local community, who it is aimed at and how to access it is outlined on the school's website. **There is also a help booklet 'Well-being, through and after COVID' for all staff, parents/carers and students on the website (Appendix 6),**

Testwood School will display relevant sources of support in communal areas such as the canteen area, corridors, classrooms, pastoral office, reception and toilets and will regularly highlight sources of support to students within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of student help-seeking by ensuring students understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. **See Appendix 5** These warning signs should **always** be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with Year Leader/Pastoral Support Worker - following Pathway **as identified in Appendix 1**

Managing Disclosures and Confidentiality

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'

This information should be shared on CPOMS and with the Year Leader and Pastoral Support Worker who will record the information appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps.

Testwood School will be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent/carer. For example, if the student or another student's health, well-being and safety is being put at serious risk.

If this is the case, if a student gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues. The DSL will take responsibility for following safeguarding protocols.

However, for other reasons parents/carers must always be informed and students may choose to tell their parents/carers themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents/carers. We should always give students the option of us informing parents/carers for them or with them.

Working with Parents/Carers

It is imperative that we have the support of parents/carers and therefore communication and contact is vital. We will not only signpost them to other support and guidance for their son/daughter but also share sources of further support aimed specifically at the parents/carers themselves.

Additional support for our parents/carers will also include: -

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on the school website
- Ensure that all parents/carers are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Share ideas about how parents/carers can support positive mental health in their children through information evenings and on the website
- Keep parents/carers informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in school and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home
- Wellbeing through and after COVID booklet (Appendix 6)

Supporting Peers

When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, We will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the student who is suffering and their parents/carers with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend should report (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is imperative that there are clear accountability systems in place so that once early identification has been undertaken then support within school or access to specialist support is commenced and tracked on CPOMs.

This will be monitored regularly by the Pastoral Team.

The awareness and understanding of staff will be monitored termly via a survey using google forms.

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees and will be reviewed annually.

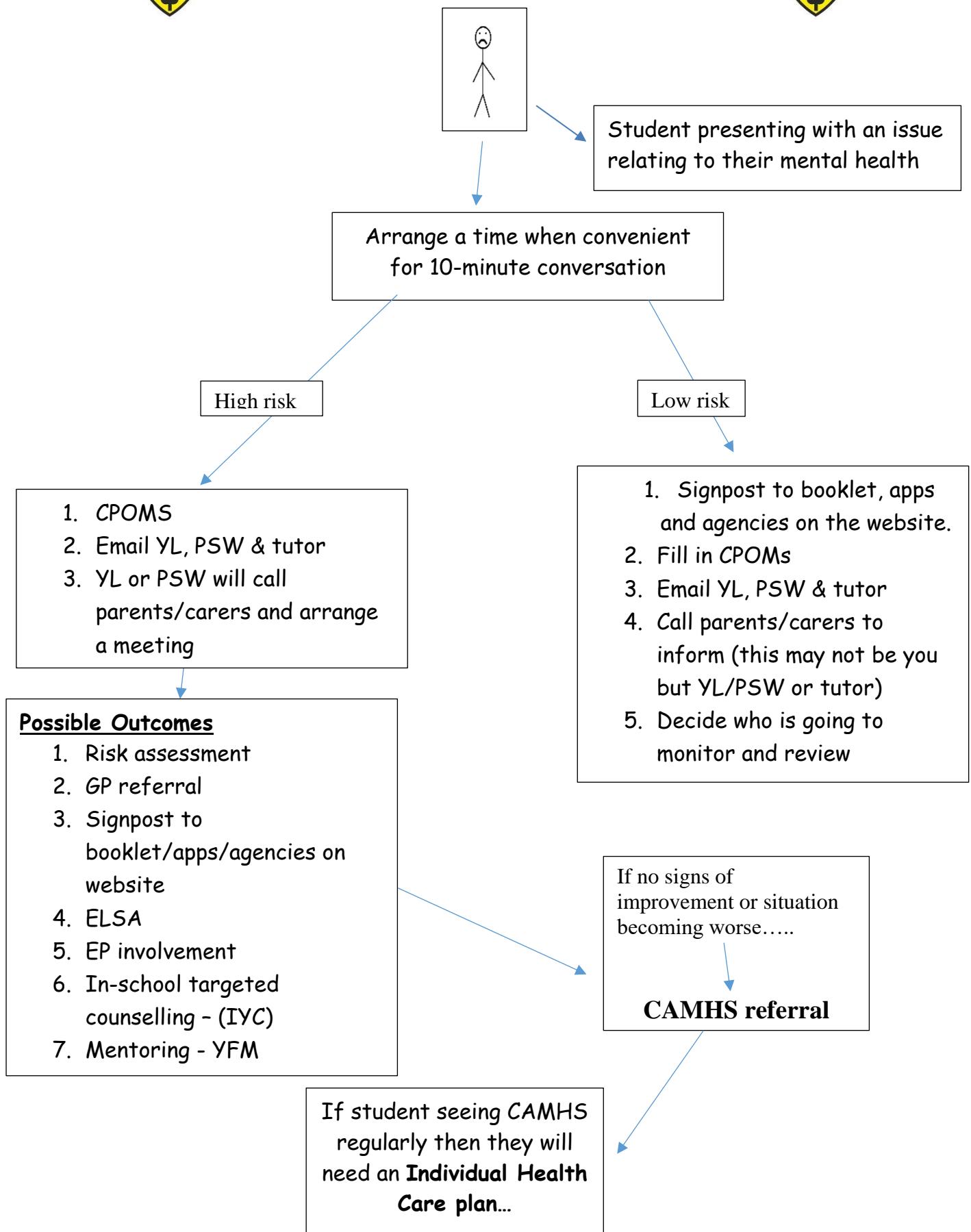
Date policy agreed: January 2022

Date of review: January 2023

Signature of Chair of Trustees:

Appendix 1

Pathway for Support at Testwood



Appendix 2 Guidance for referring to CAMHS

This information is to be used for cross-check purposes when completing a CAMHS referral

REFERRAL CRITERIA
Anxiety Disorders Significantly impairing and of diagnosable level <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe or debilitating anxiety panic attacks• Separation anxiety which severely impacts on the child's functioning• Phobias including phobic anxiety
ASC Assessment Only - Autism Spectrum Condition
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant difficulties in concentration and attention occurring in more than one environment e.g. home and school. Overactive, poorly modulated behaviour.
Complex Trauma Complex trauma occurs when an individual is exposed to multiple traumatic events with an impact on immediate and long-term outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symptoms are chronic and prolonger and may present as any symptoms from this guidance, likely to occur within the context of sexual or physical abuse.• It can impact physical and emotional development
Depression <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical symptoms – poor sleep/appetite• Cognitive symptoms – negative thoughts about self/others/world• Social symptoms, significant withdrawal from social activities, school, activities previously enjoyed• These symptoms should have been present for a period of 2 weeks.• Suicidal ideation – level on intent, current thought etc.• Co-morbidity – depression often occurs concurrently with other presenting mental health problems.
Eating Disorders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An early discussion around any possible eating disorder difficulties is strongly encouraged.• Anorexia Nervosa – an eating disorder characterised by excessive food restriction and an irrational fear of weight gain and distorted body image. It typically involves excessive weight loss.• Bulimia – engaging in binge and purge behaviour• Eating Disorders – Other difficulties around food and eating.
Mood Disorders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This includes those presenting with moderate to severe depression as well as those young people who present with complex diagnostic issues involving mood and bipolar disorders

<p>Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obsessions and/or compulsions with functional impairment
<p>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms occurring more than 3 months after a recognised traumatic event • Intrusion and avoidance of thoughts and memories about the trauma. • Revisiting site of trauma. • Hyper-vigilance, hyper-arousal and emotional numbing.
<p>Psychosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive symptoms – Paranoia, delusional beliefs, abnormal perceptions (hallucinations on all sensory modalities) • Negative symptoms – deterioration in self-care and daily personal hygiene, social and family functioning • Disinhibited behaviour, over activity, risk taking, with pressure of speech and agitation • Severe depression with psychomotor retardation, social withdrawal, suicidal ideation
<p>Self-Harm – deliberate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most commonly skin-cutting but might include burning, scratching, banging or hitting body parts, interfering with wound healing, hair pulling (trichotillomania) and the ingestion of toxic substances of objects. • May be associated with suicidal ideation and intent and/or a pattern of emotional dysregulation, interpersonal difficulty and maladaptive coping strategies.

Appendix 3

Testwood School

Individual Health Care Plan

**Student's Full Name:****DOB:** DD/MM/YYYY **Current Age:** _____ **Year Group:** _____**Medical Diagnosis/Condition:****Consultant/Specialist 1:**

Primary/Main Symptoms	Treatment/ Medication/Therapy	Known triggers	Resulting Emotional/Social Educational Need

Does your child have an EHCP? Yes / No**Does your child have SEN, but no EHCP? Yes / No****Would you like us to hold medication securely on behalf of your child? Yes / No**

If 'yes', please request a medication administration consent form (all controlled drugs are to be held by school)

What 'daily care requirements' does your child have while in school?**Describe what constitutes as an emergency and the action to take if this occurs:**

I (the parent/carer)

.....will be responsible for updating the school with any changes to this information as and when changes occur.

Signed.....Parent/Carer

Date.....

Spotting the signs

Appendix 5

Physical

- Difficulty sleeping or constant tiredness
- Being run down
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Suffering from frequent minor illnesses

Emotional/behavioural

- Irritability/aggression/tearfulness
- Being withdrawn/not participating
- Increased conflicts or arguments with others
- Inability to concentrate
- Erratic or socially unacceptable behaviour
- Being louder or more exuberant than others
- Loss of confidence/humour
- Difficulty remembering things

Appendix 6



Wellbeing through and after Coronavirus



This is a strange and challenging time for everyone, and naturally will increase feelings of stress and anxiety. Therefore, it is important to look after our wellbeing and find ways to reduce anxiety and improve mood, alongside being safe and maintaining social distance

This was created as a toolkit to help us all do this. Feel free to use it as you wish. Jump into any section and maybe teach others. Just do whatever works best for you.





Steps to Wellbeing

1. Connect with other people
2. Be physically active
3. Keep learning
4. Give to others
5. Take notice/pay attention to the present moment (Mindfulness).

This guide will keep in mind the 5 steps throughout - but here are some easy quick tips of how to follow the 5 steps whilst learning at home:

Tips:

- **Connect:** This may seem hard at the moment but it can still be done! Try some of these:
 - - Video or voice chat with friends or family you can't see in person when you need a catch up.
 - - WhatsApp to chat to others/ texting
 - - Gaming online with friends you know (remember to stay safe whilst you do this!)
 - - Spending some quality time with those in your house-hold (including pets!)
- **Be physically active:**
 - On-line classes to follow
 - Or you could go for a walk, a bike ride, a run!
 - Create a dance or exercise routine yourself at home.
- **Keep Learning:** Of course this includes doing what you can on google classroom and working with your teachers. But there are lots of other things you can do too!
 - Learn a new language or even sign-language!
 - Learn how to bake or cook something new.
 - Learn something creative like a song on an instrument or how to paint.

- **Give to others:** This can be simple little things, for example:
 - Helping around the house.
 - Baking something for those you live with.
 - Cooking a meal for your family.
 - Being supportive to friends and family who are finding this hard and reaching out to them remotely.
- **Take notice:**
 - Writing down 3 things you are grateful for each evening.
 - Spending time (safely) outside in the sun taking in nature and what is around you.
 - 'Mindful' colouring - focusing on just the colouring and what you are doing.

If you try to incorporate these things into your week when you can, you are already on the right track to feeling better!



Important facts about anxiety

Anxiety is the body's way of responding to being in danger.

Adrenaline is rushed into our bloodstream to enable us to run away, hide or fight.

That is why:

- Our heart beats fast (gets more blood to the muscles)
- We breathe faster (gets more oxygen into the blood for the muscles)
- We shake
- We feel sick
- We get tense muscles

Every physical response to anxiety has a reason behind it, to make us strong and ready for a quick reaction.

It is the body's alarm and survival mechanism. Primitive man (Cavemen) wouldn't have survived for long without this life-saving response.



However, our lives are very different today to Caveman times.

This 'anxiety/danger' response has been passed down to us as we have evolved, and now works so well, that it often kicks in when it's not needed - when the danger isn't really real and is a worry about the possibility of it happening, rather than it being a reality.

We think we're in danger, so that's enough to trigger the brain to go, go, go!

Our brains don't mean to upset us. They are just trying to keep us safe.

'Safety first' is the brain's priority.

So, when you next feel anxious remind yourself, it is just a response to get you ready, just in case, and is a very normal thing to feel.

In one way it is actually making you stronger and ready to act.

However, it is so important to remember that feeling anxious or worried **does not** mean you are in danger.

The thing we are worried about is not definitely going to happen just because we are worried about it.

In fact, it is actually a lot more likely that it won't happen most of the time, or at least will not be as bad as we expect.

Have a look at this short helpful video about the way our brains have evolved from caveman times: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv6HkipQcfA> (or type in 'The Happiness Trap: The evolution of the human mind.' into YouTube/google.)

Also this one about 'rewiring' the brain:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g>

(or type Neuroplasticity by sentis into YouTube/google.)

Anxiety is normal and at times helpful, and often is just getting us ready for challenges in case we need it.

However, if we use our brains 'anxious pathways' too much, and struggle with a lot of anxious thoughts, this can create a constant feeling of anxiety and make us feel anxious far too much, which is obviously horrible.

It can then get in the way of our lives, stopping us being able to do what we want or need to.

It can get in the way of us being able to relax and just enjoy ourselves.

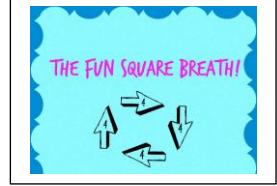
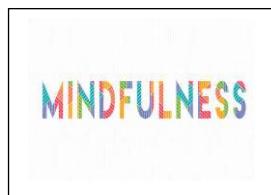
The environment around us can also impact our levels of anxiety and anxious thinking patterns, which is why this is so important at the moment.

Remember you are not alone!

Lots of people will be feeling anxious too.

So how can we stop this cycle?

There are lots of different ways.....



Everyone is different so feel free to choose what works best for you as we go along.

It is important however to give things a try, and to try them more than once to get a good idea of whether they will work for you or not.

Your brain has to learn how to do it.

It has to be trained (just like a puppy has to learn how to sit for a treat) and so needs time and practice.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

Watch this short video clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUOaHsxe8OQ>



What is CBT?

It is a therapeutic technique that is useful for anxiety and low mood. It is usually delivered by specialists either through CAMHS (a referral is then needed) or privately.

However, you can also use this as a form of self-help to help manage low level anxiety.

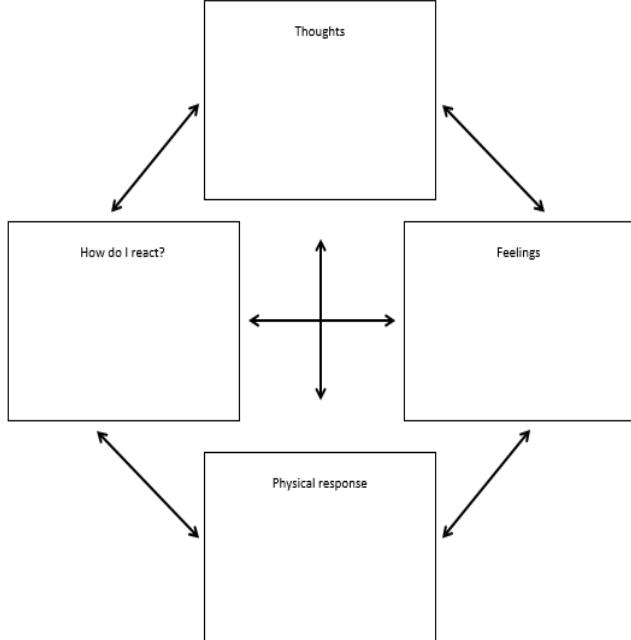
It can help us organise our:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Behaviour (Actions)

We can then start to notice the links between them. These links create cycles for us that can be either helpful or unhelpful. Once we learn how, it is our job to change these cycles from unhelpful to helpful.

Hot Cross Bun
Negative, unhelpful version:

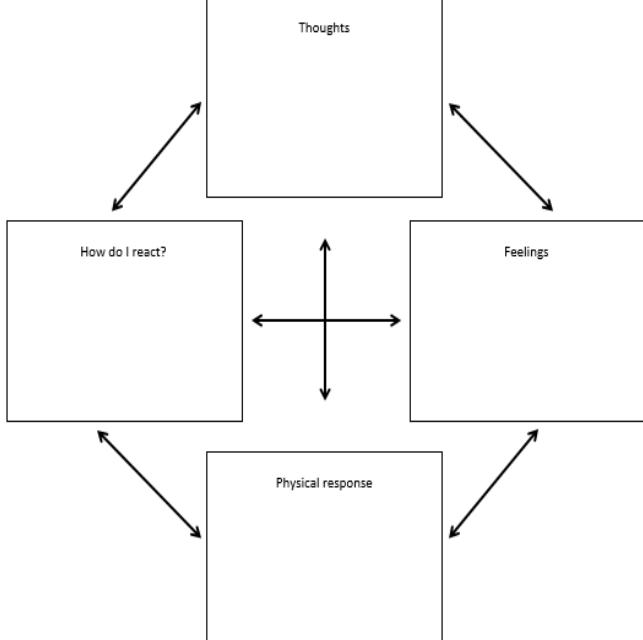
Trigger - what has happened?



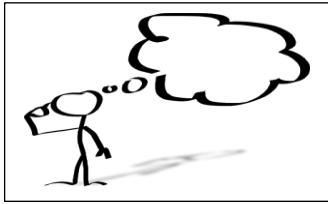
Rationalise - what could the actual situation have been? How could I react instead?

Hot Cross Bun
Positive, helpful version:

Trigger - what has happened?



Rationalise - what is the different outcome of this helpful version compared to the unhelpful?



Thoughts

In general, thoughts are how we think about the world, ourselves and others.

We all think differently to each other as we are all individual and have had different life experiences.

This is important, as it shows that if we all think differently about a situation, then most of the time thoughts can't be facts.

They are **opinions**.

For example, if one person hates chocolate and thinks "***Chocolate is disgusting***" then that means chocolate is definitely terrible right?

"***Wrong!***". A lot of people love chocolate and so this is just an **opinion**
Not a fact.

It works the same with thoughts about ourselves.

Someone who is feeling sad and worried about their school work, may think something like:

"I am terrible at this, what is the point, I'm stupid anyway."

This is an example of an unhelpful thought. It is not a fact, it is just popping into someone's head because they feel bad.

But of course, a thought like this is just going to make a person feel worse!

We all have unhelpful and negative thoughts sometimes, but it is so important to be able to notice when this happens and start to challenge thoughts like this.

We have the power to change our thoughts to helpful ones, if we learn how.

Click the link and have a look to see if you can notice any 'unhelpful thoughts' that you have had in the past.

Knowing what types of thoughts they are will help you notice when they pop into your brain without permission.

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/UnhelpfulThinkingHabitsWithAlternatives.pdf>

(Or type - 'unhelpful thinking habits' get self-help - into google.)

Unhelpful thinking often makes us feel bad about ourselves, makes us assume the worst, makes us worry all the time and makes us feel alone.

But knowing what 'Traps' we fall into when thinking can really help us to get back out of the trap.

Have a look at this short video on thought traps by 'Think Ninja' to see it in action. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnxWRwQYdIQ>

So what to change our thoughts to instead?

Changing thoughts from unhelpful to helpful does not mean just thinking the opposite.

Going from "*I am stupid*" to "*I am so intelligent*" doesn't really work as you are very unlikely to believe it at that point and it will probably just feel silly.

It is more about trying to be realistic and not just listen to thoughts based on feeling worried or sad.

For example; instead of thinking "*I'm stupid*" when getting stuck, instead try something like:

- "*I am feeling stupid because I am finding this hard. But I am falling into a thought trap. Lots of people find different things hard sometimes, it doesn't make me stupid. It is ok to feel worried about it, but I can get help and can get through this. Everyone is good at different things, and something I find easy others may find hard. If a friend was upset and said they were stupid what would I say to them to help them? Can I say this to myself too?*

Can you see the difference?

Which one do you think will make someone feel better?

This is something that can seem simple, but takes a lot of practice.

Sometimes asking yourself some of these questions can help:

- Is this fact or opinion?
- Is this making me feel better or worse?
- Am I falling into a thought trap?

- Is this a realistic thought?
- What would someone else say about this?
- What's the bigger picture?
- What is another way of looking at this?
- What advice would I give someone else?
- Am I overreacting a bit?
- Is this really as important as it seems?
- Is there any evidence for this?

Have a go at choosing a helpful thought to change these ones too. Choose from A), B) or C)

1. **Abbie:** "All my friends are going to forget about me whilst I am away from school. It will be awful when I go back."
 - A) "I can still talk to my friends online or on my phone, so it will be ok."
 - B) "All my other friends are not at school the same as me, so they will feel the same and understand."
 - C) "It may be nice when I go back as we will all be happy to see each other and chat about new things!"
2. **Jack:** "What if I get sick? I am too worried to think about anything else."
 - A) "I am young and will be fine even if I get sick."
 - B) "I am being safe and washing my hands so I will probably be fine."
 - C) "I don't know what will happen but I'm sure I will be ok, I need to try to do something fun to forget my worries for a bit."
3. **Emily:** "I'm never going to be able to do this, what's the point in even trying. I should be able to do the work but I can't. I'm so stupid."
 - A) "Just because I find it hard doesn't mean I am stupid, lots of people find things hard."
 - B) "I am doing my best, and doing things online is hard, it is going to be ok."

C) "I can try to do something else if I can't do this right now, or I can ask the teacher for help and send them a message"

You can use some of these worksheets to help you:

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/think.htm>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/CourtCase.htm>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/abcde.htm>

We can't help what thoughts pop into our heads, but we can decide whether to listen to that thought and continue thinking it, or whether to challenge it and choose to try to think something else too.

We may not really believe our helpful thoughts at first, as we are so used to thinking negatively.

However, with practice this will change overtime, and eventually the thoughts that pop up will be more helpful straight away. (Remember the video about neuroplasticity?)



Relaxation



Now a useful thing to remember about anxiety is that it is natural.

It would not be possible to feel relaxed all the time.

In fact it would probably be unhelpful to us to never feel some stress or anxiety, as like we have previously said, sometimes it helps us to be ready for things and motivates us to get things done.

But, it is still very useful to feel able to relax when anxiety and stress is building up and we need a break.

Just like how eating healthy is good for our bodies, relaxation is good for our minds.

But how do we relax?

Many people will say they like to go online or start gaming to relax.

However, I would argue that that sort of thing is more for enjoyment and distraction.

Which is not a bad thing!

But just not really relaxing.

Feeling real relaxation is a bit different to just being distracted.

You have to be free from tension as well as anxiety and stress.

We can relax the body, and we can relax the mind.



Mindfulness

One of the best ways to relax and really give your mind a break, is called **Mindfulness**.

Mindfulness is purposely bringing your attention to what you are experiencing right now, or 'being in the present moment'.

This includes what you are thinking, what you are feeling, mentally and physically, and what is happening around you, without judging it and without trying to change it.

Try this mini-mindfulness exercise....

<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>

Both mindfulness and meditation help us to relax.

But mindfulness also helps us to be more aware of how we are feeling and so have more control over what we do next.

This includes having more control over our thoughts and helping them to become more helpful and less anxious.

The basics of Mindfulness:

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, giving us time to think things through.

It also helps us to focus on what we want instead of feeling distracted.

Here's how to tune into mindfulness throughout the day:

- 1. Set aside some time.** You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills—but you do need to set aside some time and space.



- 2. Observe the present moment as it is.** The aim of mindfulness is not making your mind go blank, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment.

- 3. Let your judgements roll by.** When we notice judgements pop up during our practice, we can make a mental note of them, and let them pass. (Judgments including thinking things like: "I am terrible at this." Or "This is stupid.").

- 4. Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.

- 5. Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practise recognising when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back.

The work is to just keep doing it. Results will grow.

Listen to this mindful video on You Tube and follow along:

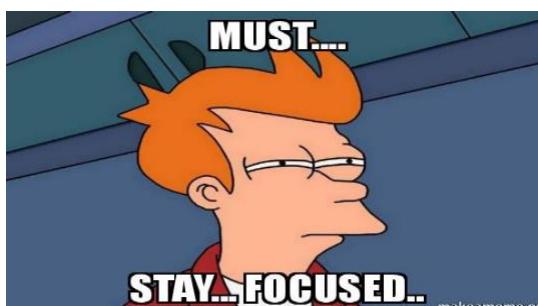
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmFUDkj1Ag0>

There are many others you can try for free. Just type in Mindfulness or meditation into You Tube and see what you can find.

You can also give some of these Mindfulness activities a try! You could set yourself a goal of doing one a day and see if you start to feel a difference.

Mindful Activity ideas:

- **Notice Urges** - Sit completely still for 2 minutes. You cannot move or do anything but breathe and blink (if your eyes are open). Just notice the urges you have - do you want to twitch your leg? Stretch? Itch? What does it feel like? Do they get worse or go away?
- **Notice Thoughts** - Just sit for 2 minutes and observe the thoughts going in and out of your mind. Don't try to change them or act on them just watch them. Make a note using a dot or line on a piece of paper of how many you have if you want to.
- **Sit in total peace and quiet for 2 minutes** - (or longer if you can) and just notice everything around you. The sounds, smells, temperature, feeling of the chair or your clothes. If your thoughts wander to other things, just notice this and stop and bring your thoughts back to the environment.



Emotional mindfulness. - Sit for 5 minutes and notice an emotion you are experiencing, e.g.: anxiety or stress. Just notice what it feels like inside of you. What does your body feel like? Is there any tension? What is your breathing like? What are your thoughts doing? If your mind wanders to other things, such as why you are feeling that emotion, just notice this, stop, and bring your mind back to just sitting with the emotion and what it feels like.

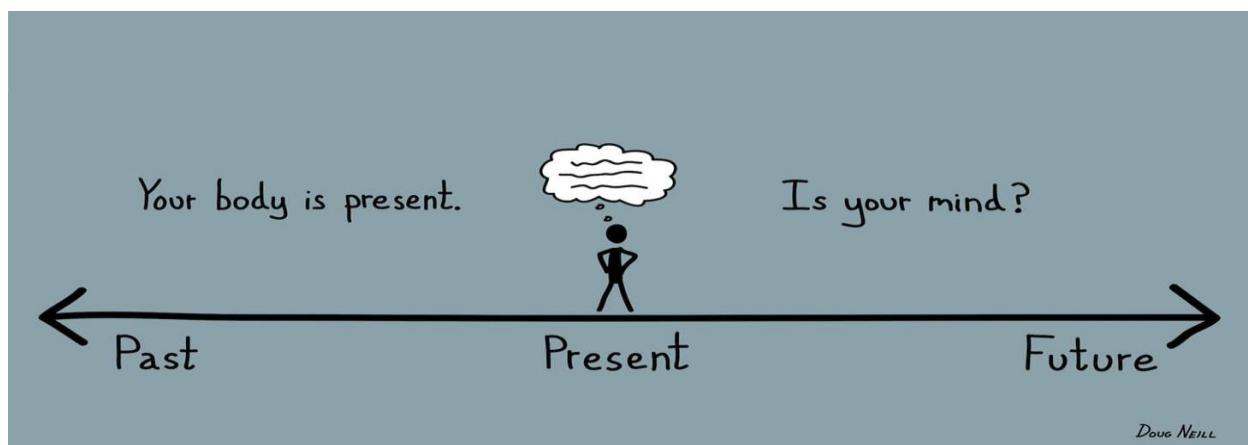
Once you feel you can do a lot of these activities more easily - try to practise being mindful when you want, in real life.

Remember the skills:

- Focus on one thing at a time in the present moment.
- If your mind wanders that is ok, just notice it and bring it back to what you want to focus on.

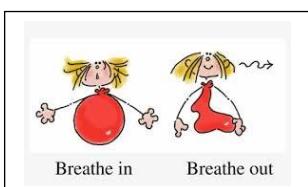
You can choose to focus on:

- An activity (what you are doing)
- An object
- Your breathing
- Some music

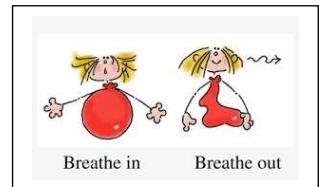


You can then use mindfulness to be able to do things like:

1. Focus on what you are doing
2. Have a break from a difficult day or difficult thoughts
3. Be more able to distract yourself with something you enjoy
4. Have a moment just to relax and do nothing
5. Be able to really notice what you are feeling or thinking before it becomes too overwhelming
6. Make a controlled decision about what to do
7. Bring difficult emotions down to a more manageable level and have better wellbeing



Square breathing

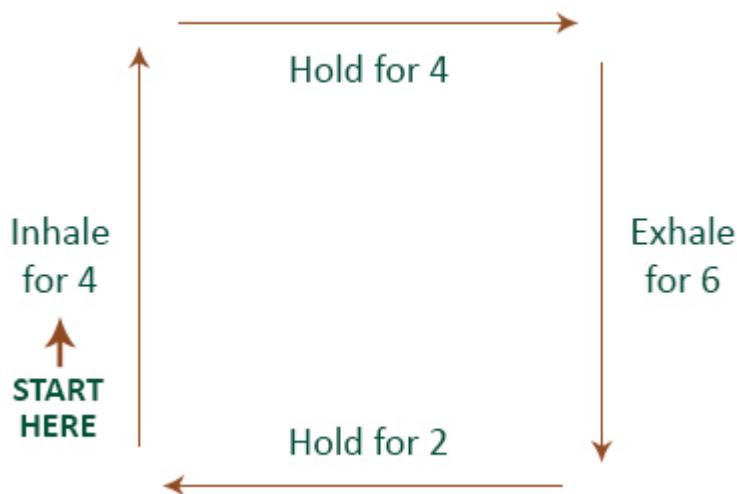


Breathing is amazingly powerful and can be a great way to relax...

When we are anxious or stressed, we naturally breathe faster to get more oxygen into our blood.

If we take back control of our breathing and start to make it slow down, the brain will realise there is no danger and will start to be able to calm down.

Square breathing is lovely and simple.



All you do is follow the picture above.

Draw or imagine a square in your head and then follow it with your breathing.

Breath in (inhale) for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breath out (exhale) for 6 seconds and hold for 2 seconds.

Repeat.

When you are anxious, it will actually feel quite hard to slow your breathing down like this and you may feel a bit out of breath at first.

If 4 seconds is too long at the start, begin with 2 seconds and gradually increase the length of time as you start to feel better.

You will have to keep doing this over and over for a good length of time until you start to feel less anxious. If you only do it once, it will not work.

It is also a useful thing to do when you are actually relaxed, as your brain will link feeling relaxed with this exercise and it will become easier to do when you are anxious.



Being able to relax our body and our mind allows us to combat the physical symptoms of anxiety, as well as being able to be more aware of when we feel anxious and what we are thinking at the time.

This lets us take back some control from our anxious brain, which will let us make helpful choices on what to do next.



Actions and Activity!



What we do when we feel stressed or anxious does make a huge difference. Anxiety has a very annoying way of making us want to do what will actually make us feel worse, such as avoid what makes us feel worries, or stay in bed all day.

At the moment this may be even more challenging, as we are stuck inside in our homes most of the time and have less choice of activities outside of the home.

But what we do will still make a difference to how we feel.

If we start to feel anxious and decide to stay in bed, or end up sitting by ourselves thinking worried thoughts this will make us feel worse.

Trying to do the **opposite** of what the anxiety makes us feel like doing is normally most helpful.

For example:

Instead of staying in bed, you get up and go and make some breakfast whilst doing some square breathing and listening to music.

This is far more likely to make you feel better.

See if you can choose a better thing to do for these people:-

Amy: Sitting in bed all day feeling sad.

- A) Gets up for a bit to get a drink and some food.
- B) Goes and talks to someone they trust about feeling sad.
- C) Phones a friend and decides to play a game.

Harry: Not doing any schoolwork because it makes him feel anxious.

- A) Decides to choose one subject and do one small piece of work.
- B) Talks to their family about how they are feeling and ask for help with work.
- C) Does some work on BBC Bitesize instead of google classroom work.

Sarah: Does nothing all day but worries about things.

- A) Tries to do a physical activity on YouTube to help her think about other things.
- B) Tries to write down all the good things that she likes, or that help her feel better and safe.
- C) Listens to some happy videos that make her feel better.

If anxiety about Coronavirus is making you want to listen to the news all the time and research all about it online, this may well make you feel even more anxious.

Instead maybe try only listening to the news once a week, and instead of researching it online, try researching new things to do at home or new activities to try when stuck indoors.



Exercise



This is maybe not as easy as it used to be as we don't have access to the gym or sports teams etc.

However, we can still go for a walk, a bike ride, a run outside, a HIT session in the garden or home workouts available for free online

.....But it doesn't just have to be about getting up and doing things.

It can also be about talking to someone about how you feel.

If anxiety makes you not want to tell anyone how you feel, or stops you from talking to those around you, see if you can find a way to communicate.

Talking things through can be so helpful, and can be surprisingly effective in lowering anxiety levels.

Anxiety can have a sneaky way of making us feel silly for being worried and make us feel embarrassed about talking.

But this is not true!

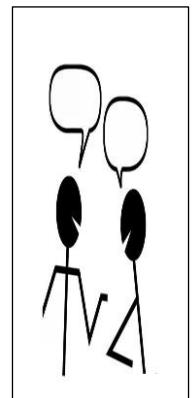
Remember how to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

You are not silly for worrying and it is brave to ask for support.

Try to remember you are not alone and there is help out there for you if you ask for it.

If you don't feel able to say how you feel out loud, maybe try writing it down as a letter, or texting / emailing it to someone you trust.

If you really don't feel able to tell someone close to you, there are also many helplines (which include email / text options) that you could try instead.



There are plenty of these on the [school website](#)

Just remember, anxiety doesn't last.

It will always come down again after going up.

It is natural and normal and ok to feel anxious sometimes.

But you do not have to manage it alone. Especially if it is starting to feel overwhelming.

So, after tackling anxious thoughts, managing the physical symptoms of anxiety, learning how to feel more relaxed, and changing our actions, we should start to be able to break those anxious, unhelpful cycles.

.....I have made a few examples below of an unhelpful and helpful thought process. I hope that they are of some use. Please print out and use the blank copies of them to help you.

Have a go at doing your own!

Remember to do the negative cycle first and then try to work out what the positive one would be like instead.

Sometimes when you first start, it is very difficult to do this at the time when you are feeling really anxious or sad.

That is ok and normal!

So instead it is useful to do this afterwards once you feel a bit better.

Look back on what happened and then see what you could try to do for next time with the helpful cycle instead.

It is also useful to practice doing this when you are feeling fine. **Make up a thought or pick one that you have struggled with in the past and see if you can break the cycle in the positive version.**



Hot Cross Bun



Negative, unhelpful version:

Trigger - what has happened? Coronavirus has meant we all have to stay inside and do our school work online. Life has changed a lot and we can't go outside and see friends or family like we did before.

Thoughts

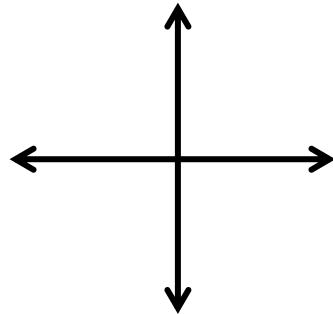
What if I can't do my school work? I'll end up so far behind and will fail everything. I can't do this. What if I fail all my exams now and never catch up?

How do I react?

I stop trying to do my work
I can't concentrate and I keep thinking about worries
I stay alone in my room and don't speak to anyone
I avoid school work and don't log in

Feelings

Anxiety and stress
Low mood



Physical response

Fast heart beat
Fast breathing
Tense muscles
Feeling shaky and sick
Tummy ache or head ache

Rationalise - what could the actual situation have been? How could I react instead?
Am I falling into thought traps? Am I thinking of the worst possible outcome?
Am I trying to predict the future? - What would a friend or family member say to me?
What would I say to someone I care about if they were feeling anxious about this?
Am I being rational? What could I try to do or think instead? What would be more helpful?



Hot Cross Bun

Positive, helpful version:

Trigger - what has happened? Coronavirus has meant we all have to stay inside and do our school work online. Life has changed a lot and we can't go outside and see friends or family like we did before.

Thoughts

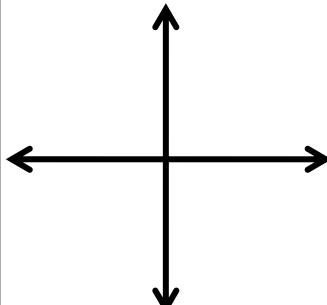
I have noticed I am having anxious thoughts about the future and about me failing the school work. But these are thought traps and are not facts! I don't know what will happen and it is ok to be worried about that, but all I can do is try my best. Everyone else is in the same boat. The teachers will help me, and once I get back to school Testwood will all have to catch up a bit. That is ok.

How do I react?

I do some relaxation practice and try to relax my body and mind
I try to challenge some of my unhelpful thoughts
I email my teachers to ask for help
I leave my room and try to do something else for a bit

Feelings

Still a bit anxious but less



Physical response

Breathing slower

Heart beat slower and calmer

Stopped feeling as shaky

Don't feel sick

Muscles more relaxed

Rationalise - what is the different outcome of this helpful version compared to the unhelpful?

I feel less anxious and more able to notice my unhelpful thoughts and change them to helpful ones. This makes me feel better and more able to see what is realistic.

I then can act differently and do things that will help me. I feel much better and more in control of my anxiety.



Hot Cross Bun



Negative, unhelpful version

Trigger - what has happened?

Thoughts

How do I react?

Feelings

Physical response

Rationalise - what could the actual situation have been? How could I react instead?

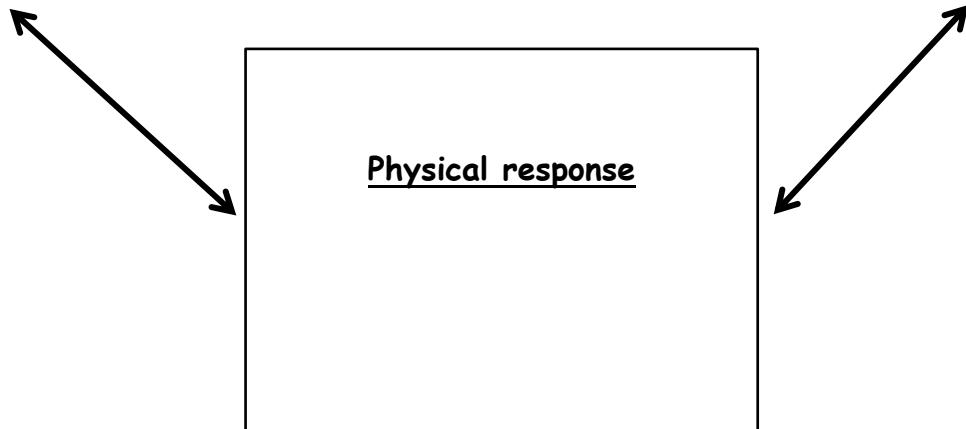
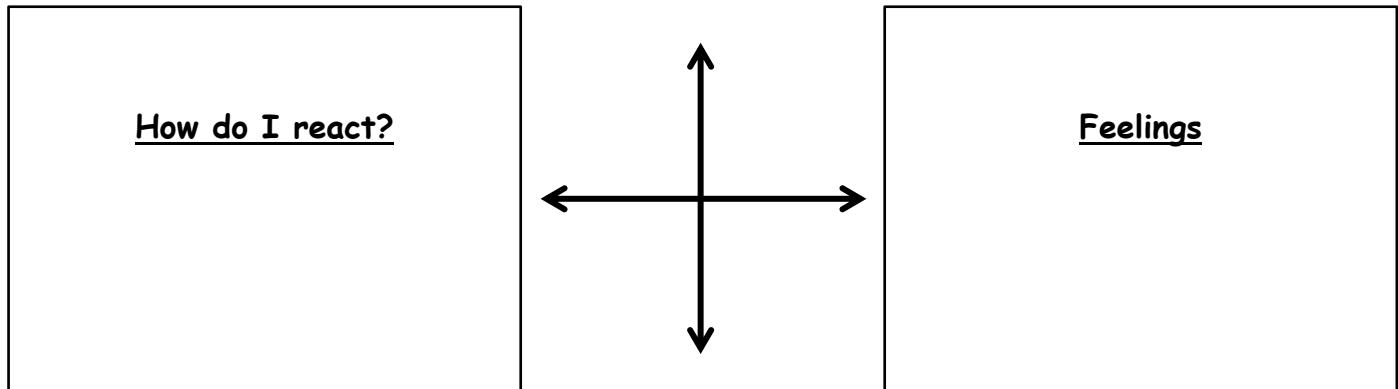
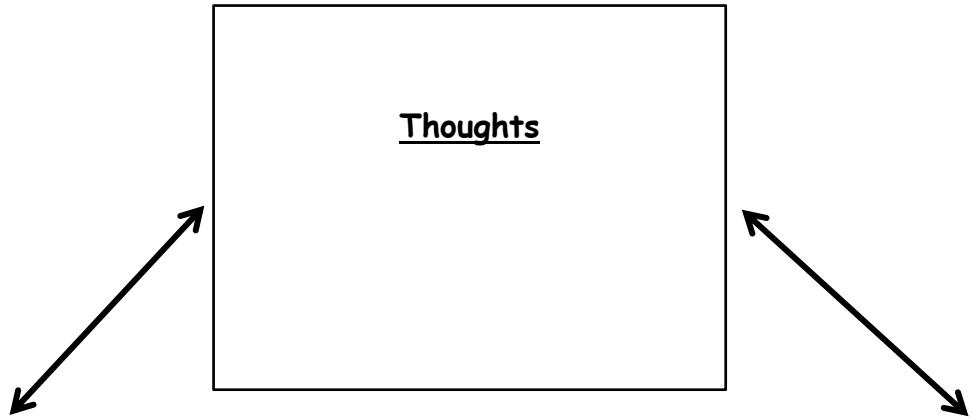


Hot Cross Bun



Positive, helpful version

Trigger - what has happened?



Rationalise - what is the different outcome of this helpful version compared to the unhelpful?