



# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING IN THE EARLY YEARS

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Making Sense of Feelings & Behaviour

# GROUP CONTRACT

- Confidentiality
- Take responsibility for what you share
- Turn mobile phones to off or silent
- Respect contribution of others
- Attend all sessions
- Personal reflection

# WORKSHOP AIMS

- Explore emotional intelligence in the first 5 years of life
- Consider how best to listen to children and hear their voice
- Develop your own support skills
- Reflect on the needs behind the behaviour and discover how to promote positive behaviour as well as manage challenging behaviour

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## Emotional Intelligence

The five components of emotional intelligence were developed by psychologist and author Daniel Goleman.

Do you recognise yourself in any of these descriptions?

### 1. Self-awareness

- Recognise and understand feelings in self and others
- Being aware of how you impact others
- Recognise own strengths & limitations

### 2. Self-regulation

- Ability to regulate own emotions
- Take responsibility for own actions
- Being able to control or re-direct disruptive emotions

### 3. Motivation

- A curiosity and desire for learning
- Fulfilment of goals & dreams
- Show commitment and take initiative

### 4. Empathy

- Understanding and responding to the feelings of others
- Skills in establishing and maintaining relationships
- Understanding of others perspectives

### 5. Social Skills

- Strong interactions with others
- Effective communication skills
- Building of social networks



# NURTURING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN EARLY YEARS

- Build emotional vocabulary
- Validate their feelings
- Model coping strategies
- Encourage problem solving skills
- Promote empathy
- Celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity

# BUILDING YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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- Emotional intelligence is generally considered a key competence for helping professionals.
- The important role played by emotional intelligence in enhancing the resilience and psychological wellbeing of helping professionals has been highlighted (Kinman & Grant 2011); it has been found to protect against burnout and compassion fatigue in different helping contexts (McQueen 2004, Killian 2008, Görgens-Ekermans & Brand 2012).

# UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S VOICES

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- Listening to parents
- Giving babies a voice: the role of observation
- Curiosity & creativity





# HOT AIR BALLOON ADVENTURE

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- Where are you going?
- What's your plan?
- Who do you want in the basket with you?
- What might blow you off course?
- What might get in the way of your adventure?
- What do you need to make this work?



## BODY LANGUAGE

Use positive body language to show that you are interested and engaged. Nodding, smiling and maintaining a relaxed, open body posture is key.

## EMPATHY

Try to validate how a child is feeling by responding with kindness, compassion and empathy. Consider why they might feel this way and try to put yourself in their shoes.

## PARAPHRASE

Reflect back what you've heard to show the child that you understand and are paying attention.

## ASK OPEN QUESTIONS

Give careful thought to the questions you ask. Closed questions lead to a yes or no answer. Open questions encourage wider exploration and ideally do not lead in one particular direction

## DON'T FIX

We may be tempted to try and fix the problem but often children just want us to listen. Don't give advice too quickly but give a child space to explore their own solution in their own time.



# ACTIVE LISTENING IN THE EARLY YEARS





# LEARNING TO LISTEN

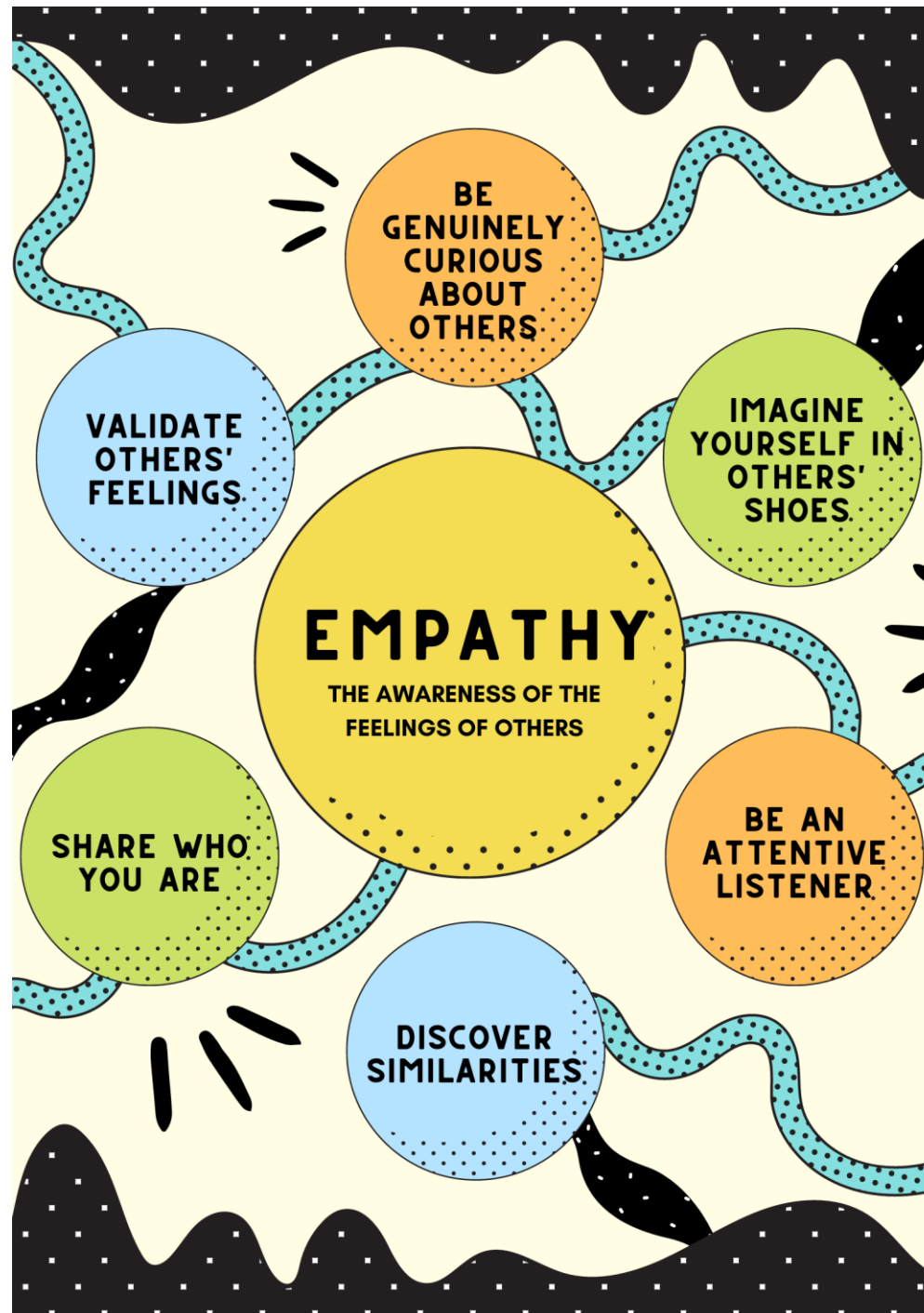
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Some helpful questions may include:

- How would you like things to be different?
- What can you do to make the change?
- What do you need from me?
- What has helped when you have found things hard in the past?

# EMPATHY

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# SELF-REGULATION

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- Emotional self-regulation: includes a child's ability to identify, label and communicate their feelings as well as understanding and managing their emotional responses.
- Cognitive self-regulation: includes a child's impulse control, such as waiting their turn, following instructions to stop, sustaining attention, problem-solving and decision making

# CO-REGULATION

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- Co-regulation is a process where adults and children influence each other's emotional and physiological states, both positively and negatively.
- When a child is feeling stressed or threatened, they turn to their trusted adult for support and containment.
- The role of the adult is to engage with them, stay calm and help soothe them

# CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

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What triggers my stress response?

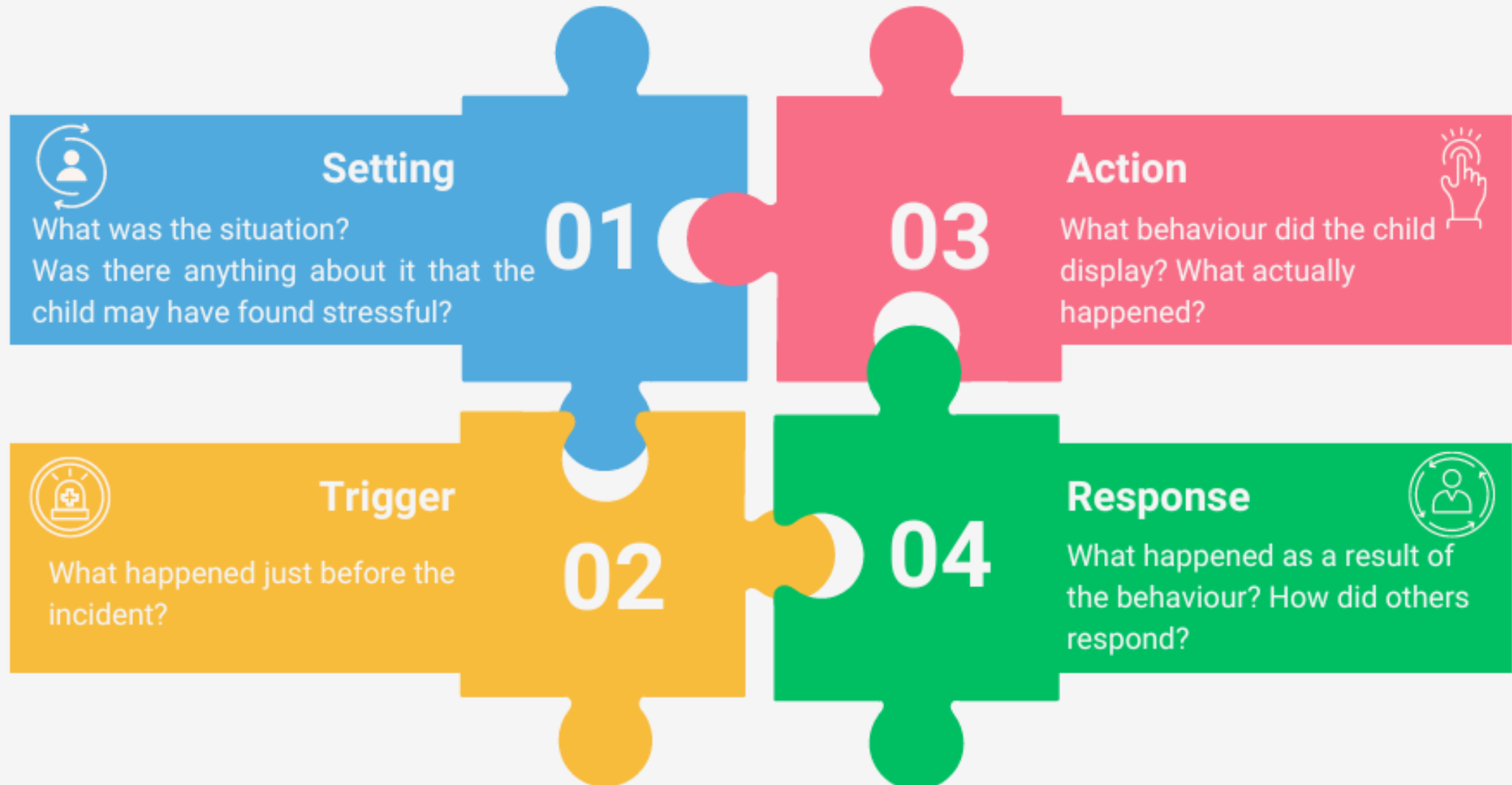
How do I know when I am feeling stressed?

How can I show children calm and regulated behaviour when I am stressed?





# STAR Method



Take some time to think about how you respond to and manage challenging behaviour. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can you think of a time when you have managed the challenging behaviour of a child? This could be in a work situation or caring for a sibling or child.
- How did you manage the situation? What might have been going on under the surface? What might the child have been trying to communicate?
- How might you have responded differently to the behaviour by shifting the focus and considering the need behind the behaviour?

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

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- What does it mean to be a helper?
- Which values do you attribute to being a helper?
- Write down 5 values that stand out to you