



Community Education Service

Child & Youth

Mental Health Program

Ron Joyce

Children's Health Centre

**Helping My Child or
Youth Stress Less**

Presenters: Michelle McVittie, Child Life Specialist

Stress

- Stress is a normal response to certain situations and demands.
- Stress is part of everyday life.
- Stress can affect any child that can feel overwhelmed, even a preschooler.
- But chronic stress can lead to mental health problems and medical issues

Major life changes can shake their sense of security

- Divorce
- A death in the family
- Moving
- The birth of a new sibling

- **Stress** comes up whenever a child or teen needs to adapt or change.
- **Stress** may be caused by positive changes, such as starting a new activity



SYMPTOMS OF STRESS



Behavioural

- ☐ Isolate yourself from others
- ☐ Over or under eating
- ☐ Decreased activities
- ☐ Irritability?
 - ☐ Acting out?
 - ☐ Clinging behaviour
- ☐ Change in sleep (less or more)
- ☐ Substance use
- ☐ Risky behaviour
- ☐ Unmotivated (“stuck”)



Poll Activity 1:

What behaviours do you notice when stress is higher?

- ☐ Isolate yourself from others
- ☐ Over or under eating
- ☐ Decreased activities
- ☐ Irritability?
 - ☐ Acting out?
 - ☐ Clinging behaviour
- ☐ Change in sleep (less or more)
- ☐ Substance use
- ☐ Risky behaviour
- ☐ Unmotivated (“stuck”)



Emotional Symptoms

- ☐ Low mood
- ☐ Shuts down
- ☐ Big emotions
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Sad/depressed
- ☐ Irritable
- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Worthless (low self-esteem)



Physical Symptoms

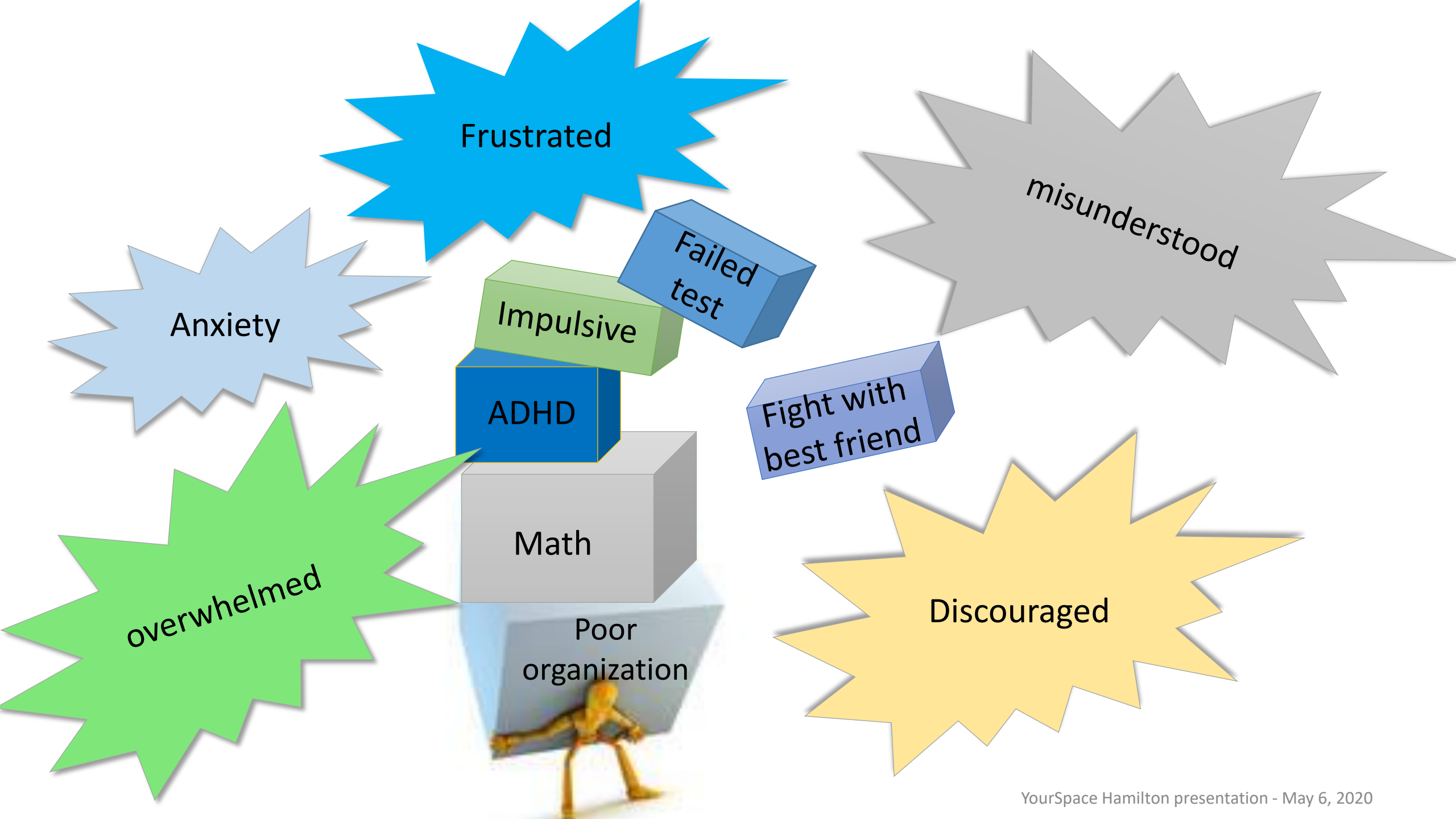
- ☐ Tense muscles
- ☐ Crying
- ☐ Feeling tired/sleeping a lot
- ☐ Upset stomach
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Heart beating fast
- ☐ Fidgeting
- ☐ Grinding teeth



Cognitive Symptoms

- ☐ Perfectionism
- ☐ Forgetfulness
- ☐ Worrying
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Predicting the worst
- ☐ Memory biases





Plan A

- We do what feels better in a time of stress
- Unfortunately some of these strategies only provide temporary relief.
- Strategies such as:
 - Panicking!!!
 - Avoidance
 - Withdraw/shutdown

Plan B: How Can We Help?

- Make a plan
- Customize it
- Practice, Practice, Practice
- Be patient
- Change it up, make alterations
- Share feelings
- Be a good role model

Everyone is affected differently

- What stresses you out may not bother someone else.
- Our children and teens have different tolerance levels to stressors.
- They may lack the skills to deal with it.

Are you protecting or preparing them?

- We may jump in or fix things to avoid them becoming stressed.
 - This helps our stress levels and as well as theirs.
- However this is a Band-Aid solution for a long term problem
- We need to learn to handle some distress in ourselves and our children

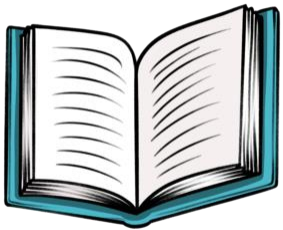
What works?

Tips, resources and strategies to try

Poll Activity 2:

What works to calm your child or teen?

Escape/distraction



ex. video games, books, quiet time, getting out

Physical/energy release



ex. run, play, workout, dance

Sensory-based/soothing



ex. bath, music, massage, cuddle a pet

Attend to basic needs



ex. food, sleep, fluids

Calming/emotion regulation



ex. meditation, nature walk, yoga, journaling

Comfort/emotion release



ex. call a friend, cry, laugh, journaling, hug

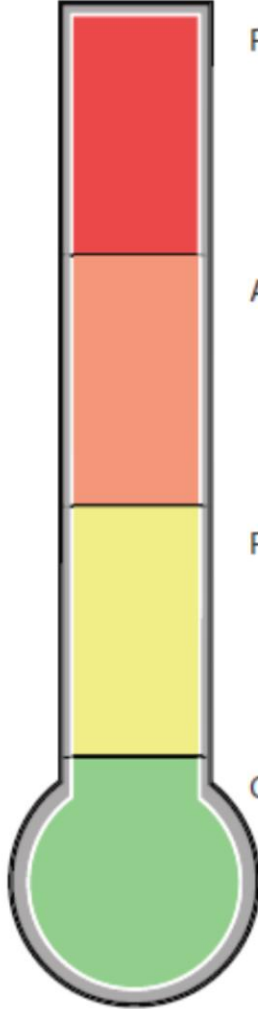
Mood & Anxiety Scales



Anger Thermometer

Anger Thermometer Name: _____

Write 2 things or situations that make you feel each of the emotions listed below.



Furious

1. _____

2. _____

Angry

1. _____

2. _____

Frustrated


1. _____

2. _____

Calm

1. _____


2. _____

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Feelings Chart

MY FEELINGS CHART

NAME
WEEK OF



Pointing Kids in the Right Direction
www.KidPointz.com


	TODAY I FEEL:											
	SURPRISED	MAD	SAD	EXCITED	FRUSTRATED	ANGRY	SCARED	HAPPY	SILLY	CONFUSED	DISAPPOINTED	PROUD
MONDAY												
TUESDAY												
WEDNESDAY												
THURSDAY												
FRIDAY												
SATURDAY												
SUNDAY												

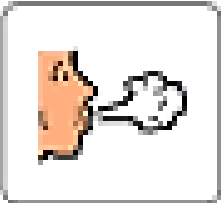
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Break Cards

Break Card

I am feeling upset. I need to calm down. What do I do?






I can take deep breaths.

1 2 3 4 5

I can count to 5.



I can use my break card and go to a quiet place.

Break Card

I feel _____ and I need a break.



Choices:

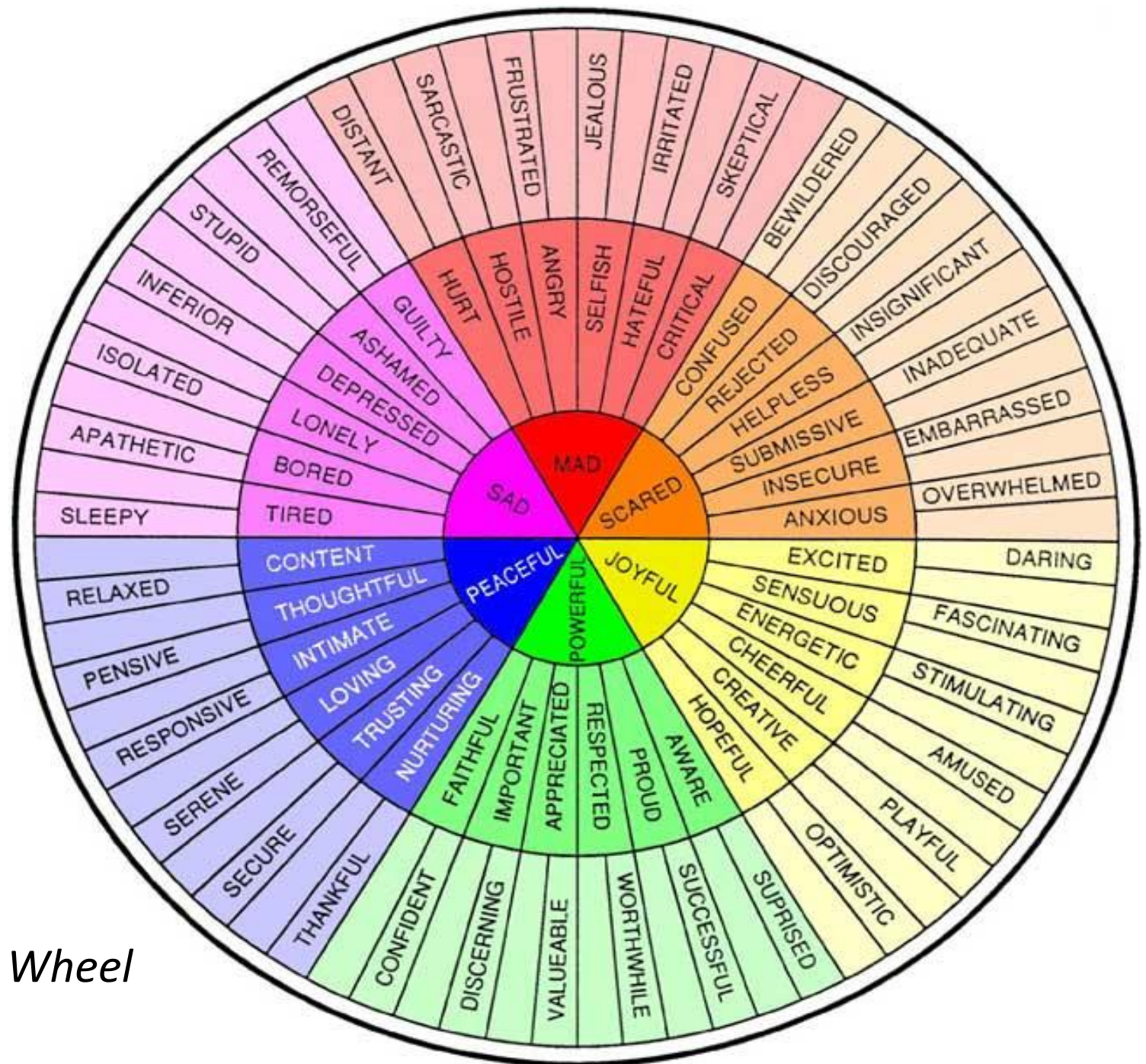
Go to a quiet place

Get a drink of water

Go to our classroom library



Name it to Tame it- Dr. Dan Siegel



The Emotion Wheel

Let's Try Something New!

- Happiness Triggers
- Make a list of three things that make you happy
- How can you incorporate these visuals into your life?
- Does it have to be a picture?



Think Happy Thoughts

- I'm worth it
- I have people that believe in me
- Will this matter in one day?...one week?..... one month?...
- The more you look back the less you see in front of you
- Do this now and you'll be thankful later

Let's Re-Think This

Negative Self Talk	Positive Self Talk
I can't do this!	I've done it before, I can do it again
What if I don't win?	I will do my best
What's going to happen tomorrow?	Take it one day at a time
No one likes me, I'm a loser	I can do _____ well

Relaxation

- Deep breathing
- Listen to music
- Do something relaxing: take a bath, get a massage
- Mental imagery
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Mindful meditation



RELAXATION ROUTINE

1. SIT
ON A CHAIR...



2. "SCRUNCH"
UP YOUR
FACE...



THEN...
RELAX
IT...



3. TENSE
YOUR
ARMS...

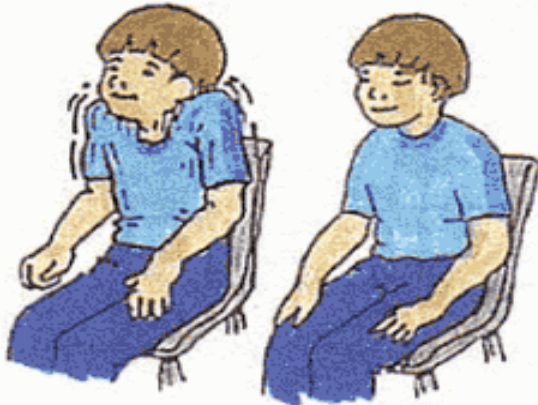


THEN...
RELAX
THEM



4. TENSE UP YOUR
SHOULDERS
AND CHEST...

THEN...
RELAX
THEM



5. TENSE UP
YOUR LEGS...

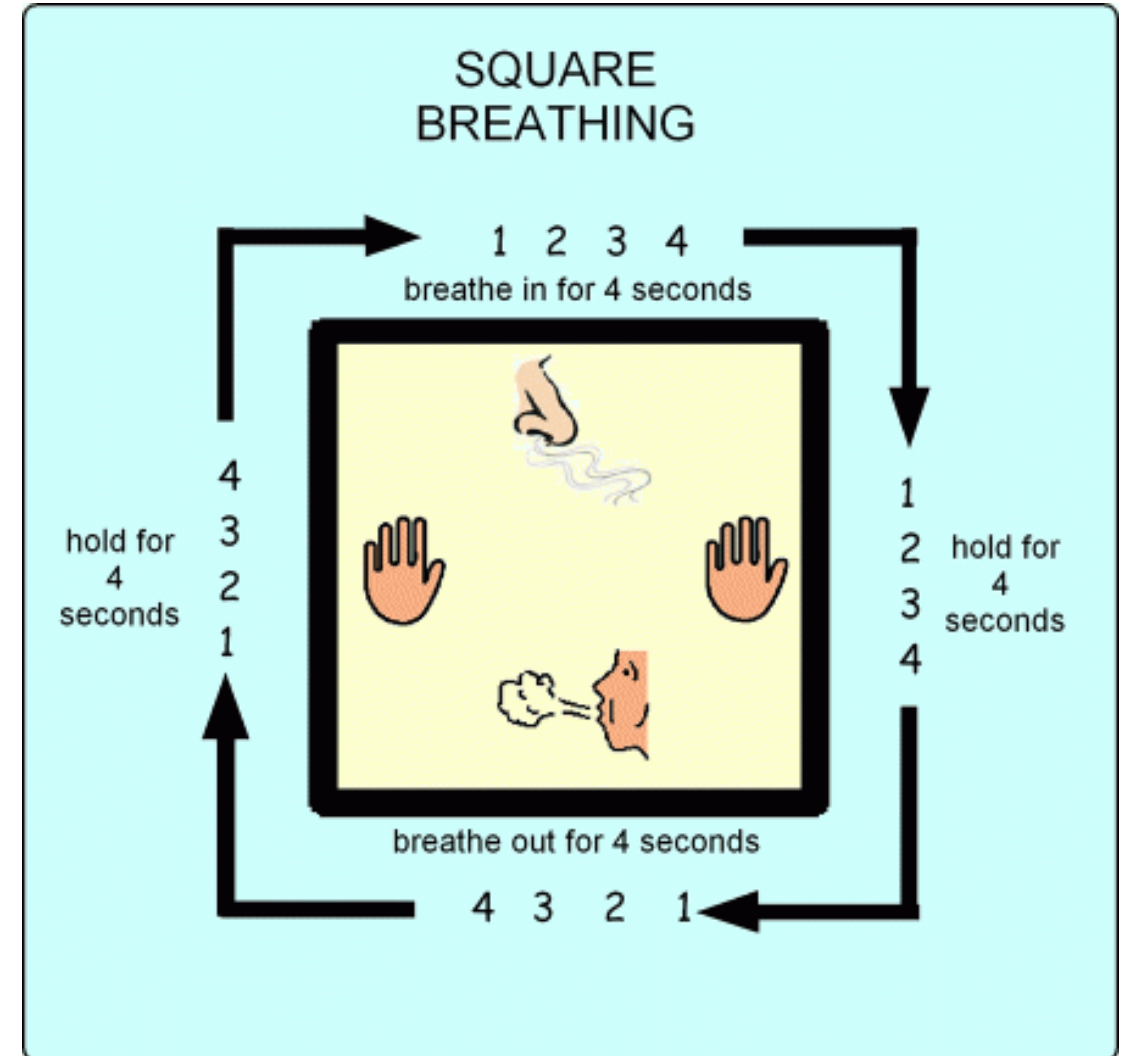


...THEN RELAX!

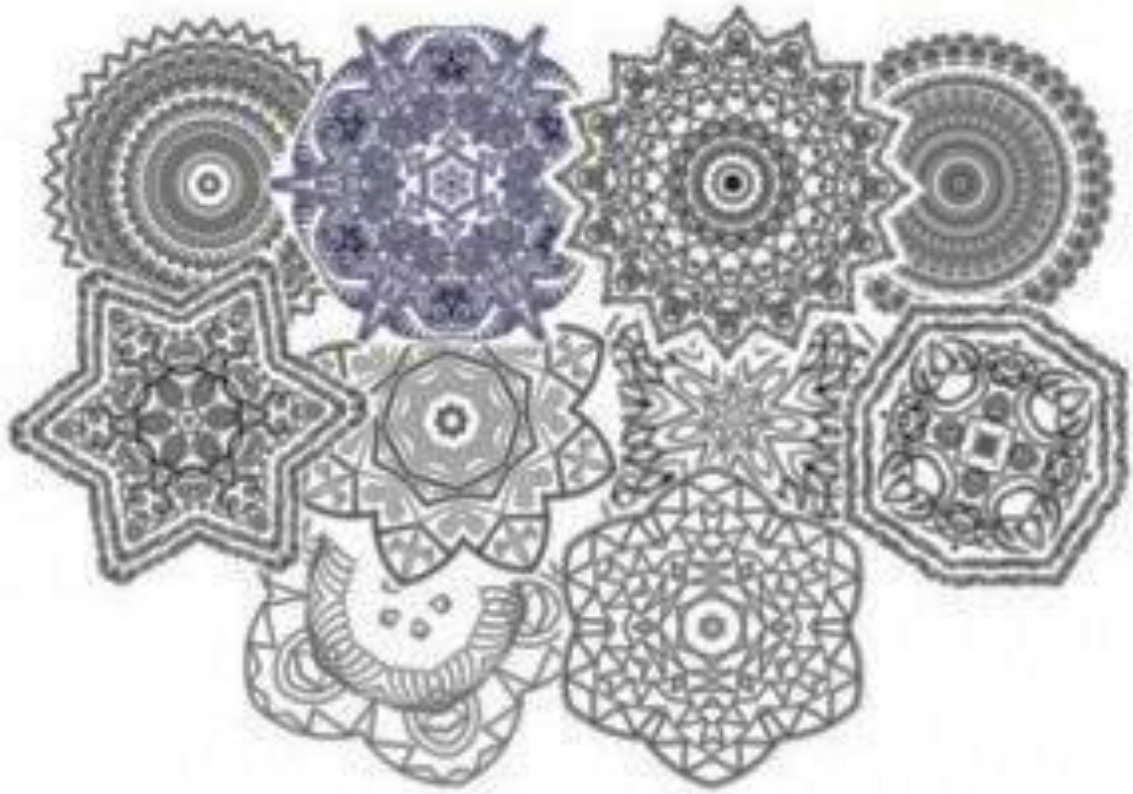
6. BREATHE
IN
RELAXATION...



...BREATHE OUT
TENSION



13 New Free Mandala Coloring Pages



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Belly Balloon

Purpose: let go of tightness.

Lie down comfortably and close your eyes.

Place one hand gently on your belly.

Breathe into your belly and feel your hand move up and down.

Imagine a balloon inside your belly.

As you breathe in, blow up the balloon. (long pause)

As you breathe out, empty the balloon. (long pause)

Blow up the balloon again.

Let the air leak out through your teeth with a long slow hissing sound.

Blow up the balloon again.

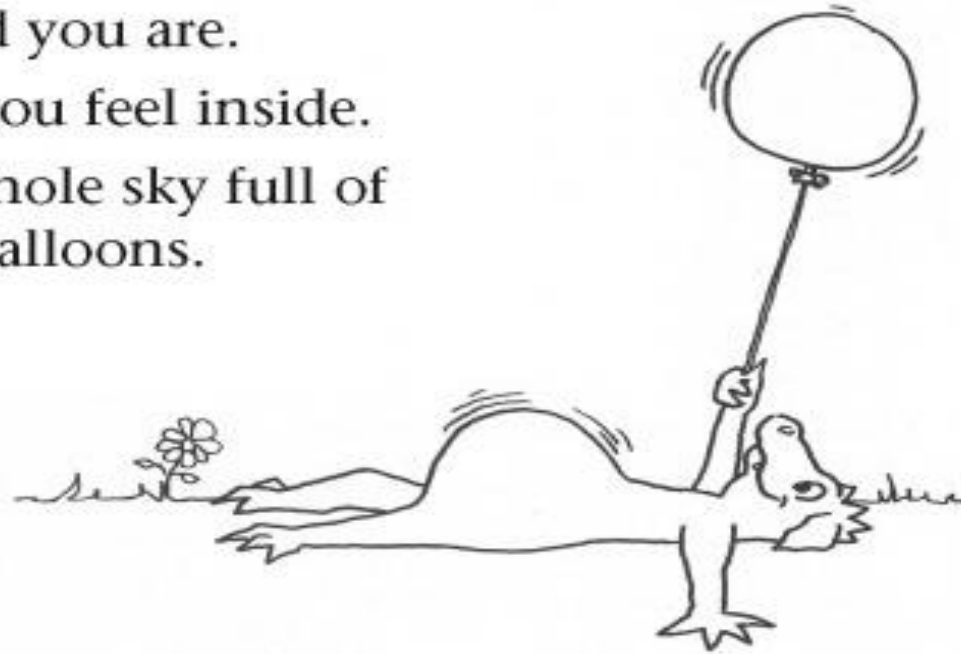
Imagine sticking a pin into the balloon.

Let the air escape through your mouth with a sudden
POP!

Notice how relaxed you are.

Notice how good you feel inside.

Now picture the whole sky full of
beautiful colored balloons.



Get Active!

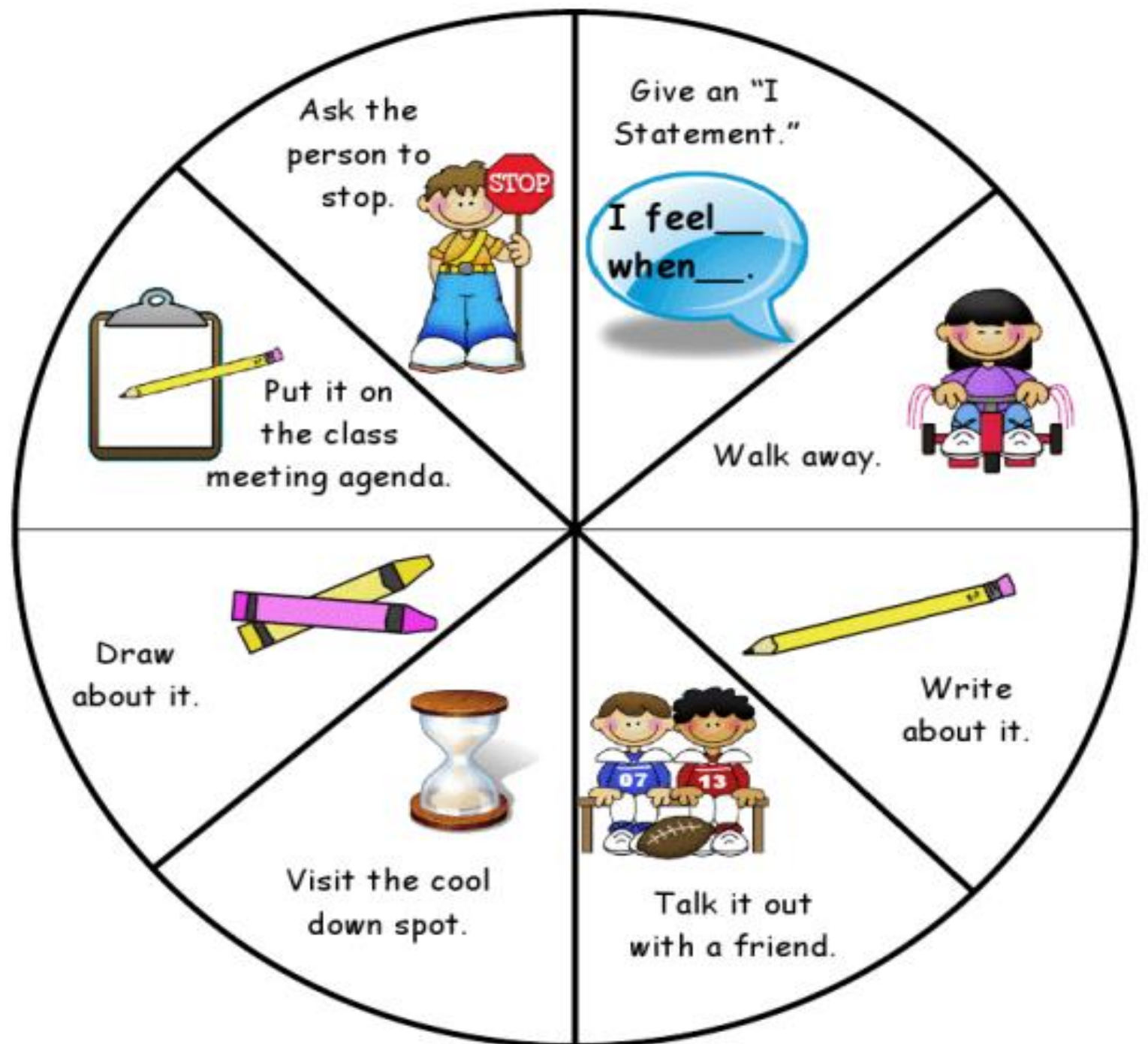
- Dance
- Go for a walk
- Join a team
- Play
- Do some yard work



Distraction

- Read
- Play a game (cards, board game, video game)
- Watch something funny
- Learn a new skill
- Hang out with friends and family
- Try something new
- Draw, colour, paint, make an art journal

The Wheel of Choice





A bird sitting on a tree is never
afraid of the branch breaking,
because her trust is not on the
branch but on it's own wings.
Always believe in yourself.

Quotes & Thoughts

What Are You Doing for Yourself?

- Read
- Play a game
- Watch something funny
- Learn a new skill
- Hang out with friends and family
- Take a class
- Craft... sew, knit, build, sculpt
- Dance
- Go for a walk or run
- Go to the gym
- Join a team
- Yoga
- Stretching
- Swimming

Helpful Apps for daily mental health check-ins

- Wysa
- Moodkit
- Headspace
- Personal Zen
- Cogmed
- Buddhify
- What's Up
- TF-CBT Triangle of Life
- Calm
- Smiling Mind
- Wildflowers
- Sinasprite
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- ReachOut WorryTime
- Calm
- MindShift
- MoodCalmer – CCBT
- The Safe Place
- Anxietyhelper
- iChill
- Pacifica

<https://psyberguide.org>

Helpful Books

- The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids, By Laurence E. Shapiro, Robin K. Sprague
- Bubble Riding A Relaxation Story, by Lori Lite
- The Mindful Child, by Susan Kaiser Greenland
- A Boy and a Bear The Children's Relaxation Book, by Lori Lite
- The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety, by John P Forsyth, Georg H. Eifert

Helpful Books & Online Resources

- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley
- Conquer Negative Thinking for Teens: A Workbook to Break the Nine Thought Habits That Are Holding You Back by [Mary Karapetian Alvord](#), [Anne McGrath](#)
- The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress by [Gina Biegel](#)
- Name It To Tame It - Dr. Dan Siegel – [YouTube video](#)
- [Think:Kids.org](#) (Stuart Ablon, collaborative problem-solving)