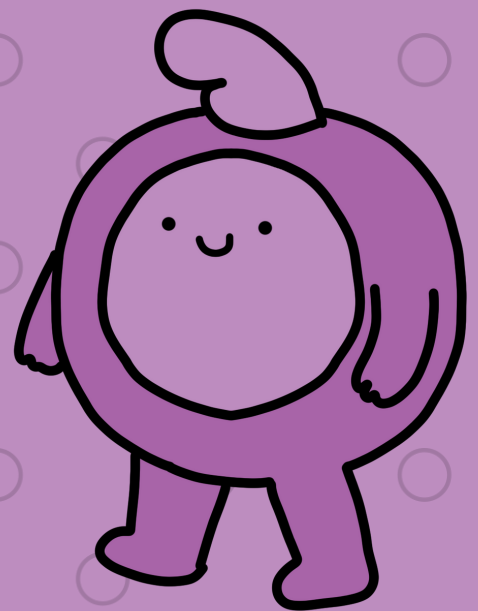


supporting a child with low mood

A 3 session guide for
parents/families

Session 1



Faye North
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For all references, visit www.weheartcbt.com/references

Information for Parents/Families

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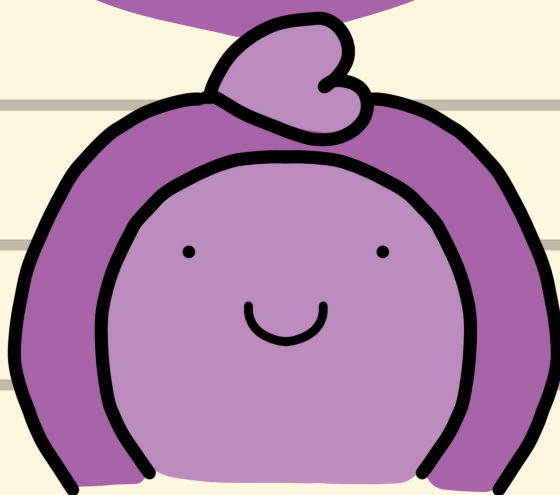
Session One: Overview

This session should be spread over 2 weeks.

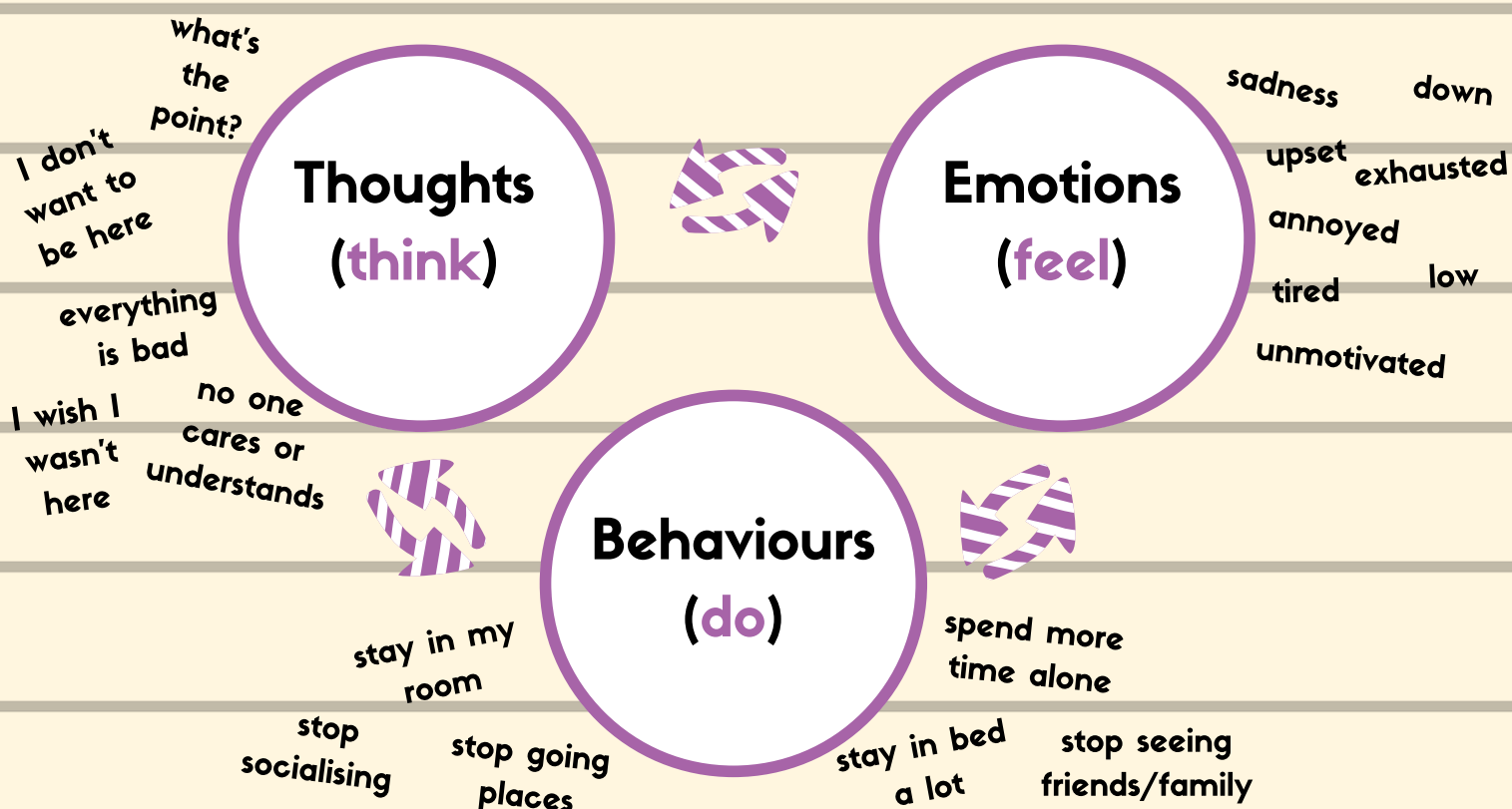
When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information about low mood and Behavioural Activation.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Go through the 'what is low mood?' and 'symptoms of low mood' sections with your child. Encourage them to circle the symptoms they recognise in themselves or make a list of their symptoms.	If your child doesn't want to write these down or circle them, they might want to make a list on a tablet/laptop or they might want to draw pictures instead. Use what you know about your child to make it engaging and interesting for them.
Day 3	Go through the Behavioural Activation section together. Complete the 'behavioural activation cycles' section together.	Try to use open questions to encourage your child to think about the cycles. For example, ask, <i>What have you stopped doing? What would you like to do? If you felt happier, what would you be doing? How do you feel? Give examples if needed.</i>
Day 4 (+ 7 days of monitoring)	Discuss the activity diary with your child and begin the daily activity monitoring together. For each activity, think ACE : encourage your child to rate their sense of achievement (A) , their closeness to others (C) and their enjoyment (E) from 0-10. This is important for the next session.	It can be useful to keep the activity monitoring worksheet somewhere prominent so you and your child don't forget to fill it in. For example, put it up on the fridge or keep it near the TV. Fill it in as often as possible (at the very least, at the end of each day).
Day 10	Complete the 'What did you learn this week?' section.	Either do this together or complete separately before discussing afterwards.

What is Low Mood?

Anyone can get Low Mood. It is the most common psychological problem. It varies from person to person and stressful or difficult things can trigger it or it can seemingly come out of nowhere. We all feel sad from time to time but usually the feeling passes. With Low Mood, these feelings of sadness just seem to go on and on and it's hard to see a way to feel happy again.



Low Mood can affect how you **feel**, how you **think** and things that you **do**. It's all linked together.



Symptoms of Low Mood

Feeling Hopeless, Sad & Guilty

Feeling low for a long time can make us focus on the bad things in life, making us feel hopeless, sad, or like nothing is good. We might also feel guilty for thinking this way.

Concentration

Low Mood slows our bodies and brains down meaning we might struggle to concentrate or make decisions. We might also feel like we're 'clumsier' than normal or might forget things easily.

Negative Thoughts

Feeling low is linked to negative thinking for example, you might think that nothing is good, that you don't want to be here anymore, or you might have thoughts about hurting yourself. These are really upsetting thoughts but are a very common symptom of low mood.

Change in Appetite

Cortisol (our stress hormone) is released by the brain when we feel low - this might mean we don't feel hungry. Or, we might also comfort eat and eat more than usual.

Sleep

Changes to our hormones can make it difficult to get to sleep. Equally, negative thoughts could also stop you getting to sleep. You might also notice you're sleeping more or sleeping through the day because you don't have much energy.

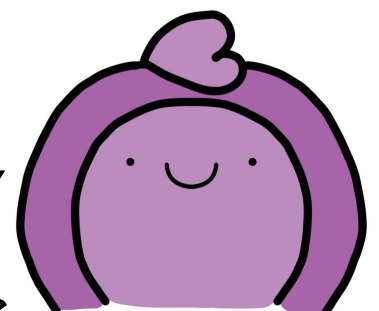
Aches and Pains

Low mood and pain share nerve pathways in the spinal cord and also share chemicals in the brain. This means we might feel aches and pains in our muscles due to feeling low.

Lack of Energy

Low mood drains our bodies of energy, making us feel tired and drained. This might mean we feel too tired to do the things we'd usually want to do.

Understanding your symptoms of low mood is the first step to getting better. Remember, though these symptoms are upsetting, they are a **NORMAL** reaction.



Behavioural Activation

Behavioural Activation is an intervention used to help people who are struggling with low mood. It is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and there is lots of evidence and research that shows it works! The main idea behind Behavioural Activation is that, when low in mood, we get stuck in a vicious negative cycle. To feel better, we therefore need to change something in the cycle so that it becomes a positive cycle.

The Vicious Cycle

feel low

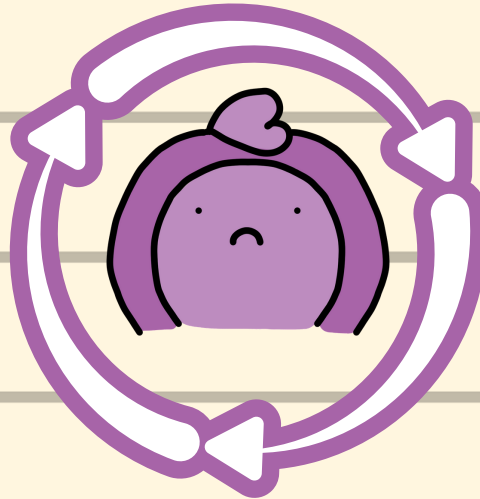
Feel low, down and sad.

Feel tired and exhausted.

Feel bad or guilty.

Feel unmotivated.

Feel hopeless or like nothing will get better.



do less

Slow down physically and mentally.

Do less things that you'd normally do.

Avoid seeing/socialising with friends/family.

Find it difficult to find motivation to do things.

get less out of life

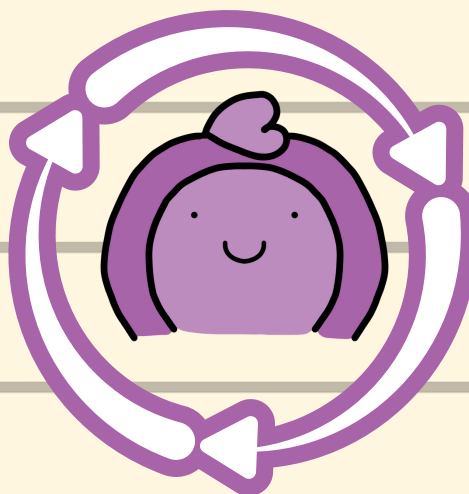
Stop getting enjoyment from life, stop feeling any sense of achievement and feel isolated from others.

The longer we're stuck in the vicious cycle, the lower and more unhappy we feel. This then makes it more and more difficult to do things and means we get even less out of life.

Breaking the Cycle: Do More to Feel Better

A proven way to break this cycle is to start **DOING** more meaningful and enjoyable activities. This can be very difficult at first but we know that activity helps us to feel happier, distracts us from negative thoughts, makes us feel more motivated, improves our concentration, and makes us feel less tired. This is why we say **DO MORE TO FEEL BETTER!**

do more of what matters



feel better and happier

This can be hard to do at first, but the more you do it, the happier you will feel, the closer you will feel to others and the more you will feel a sense of achievement.

get more from life

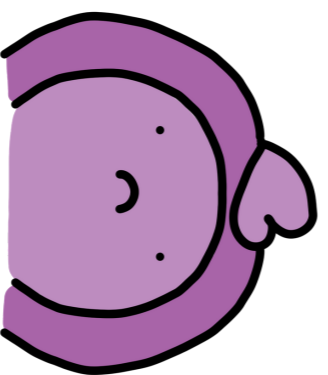
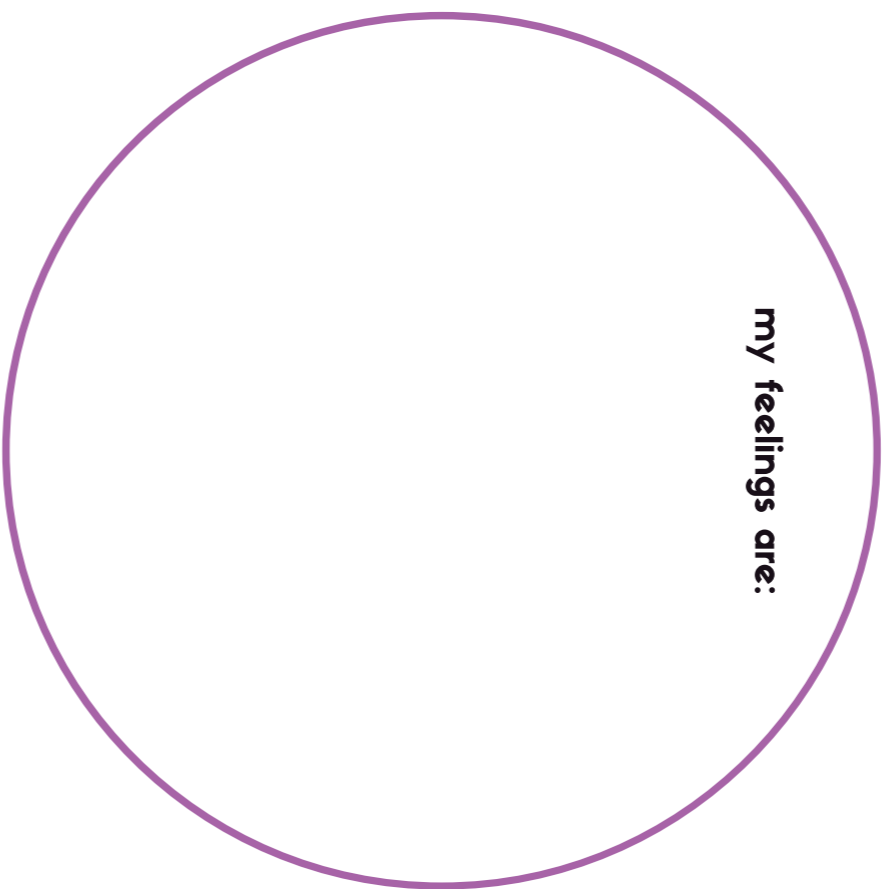
Behavioural Activation Cycles

Fill in the Negative behavioural activation cycle based your current **feelings and behaviours** (the things you do).

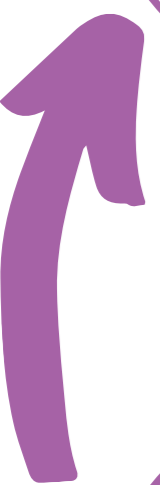
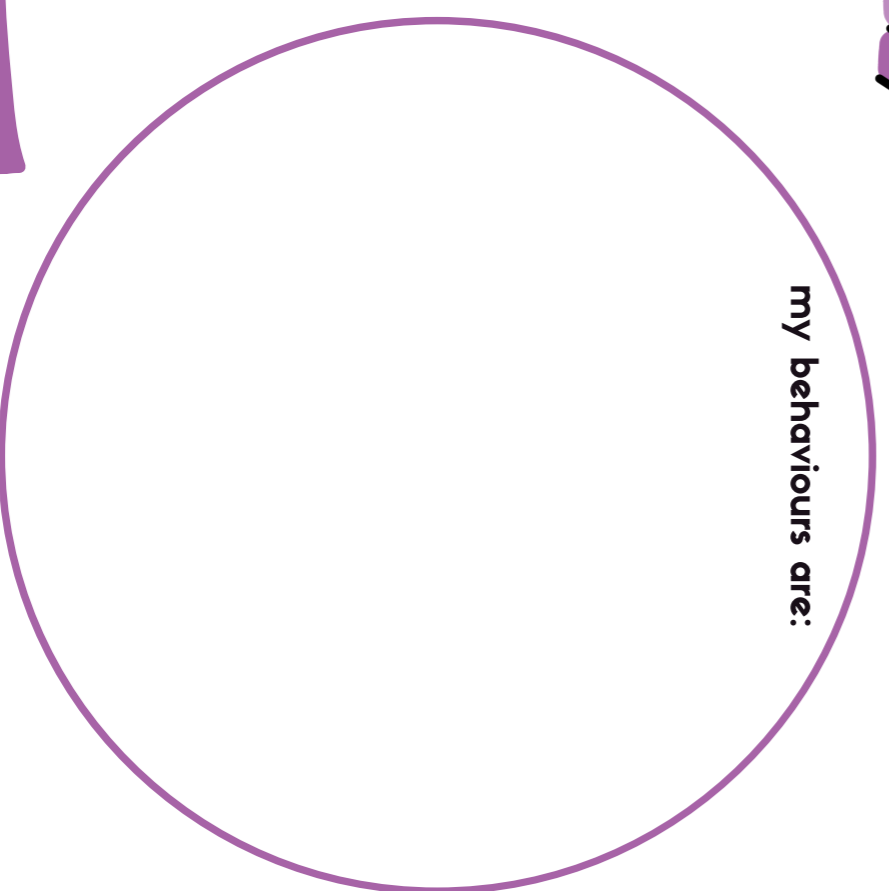
Fill in the Positive behavioural activation cycle based on how you would **like to feel and behave** (what you'd like to be doing) in the future.

my negative cycle

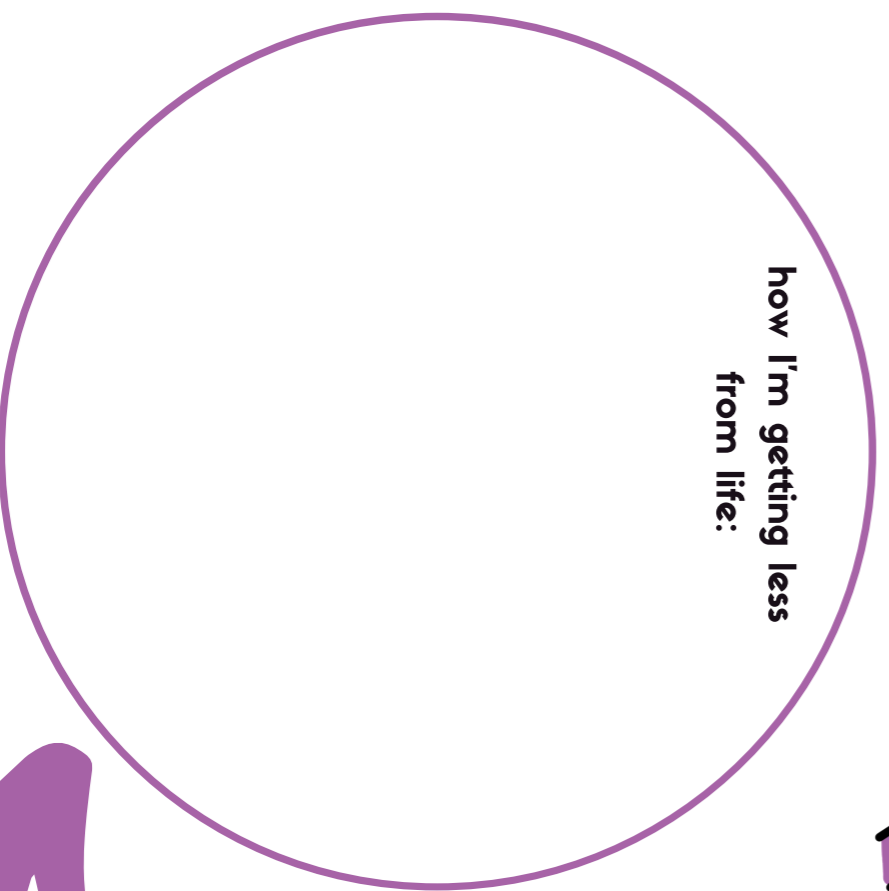
my feelings are:



my behaviours are:

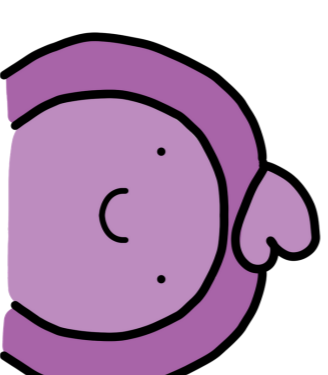
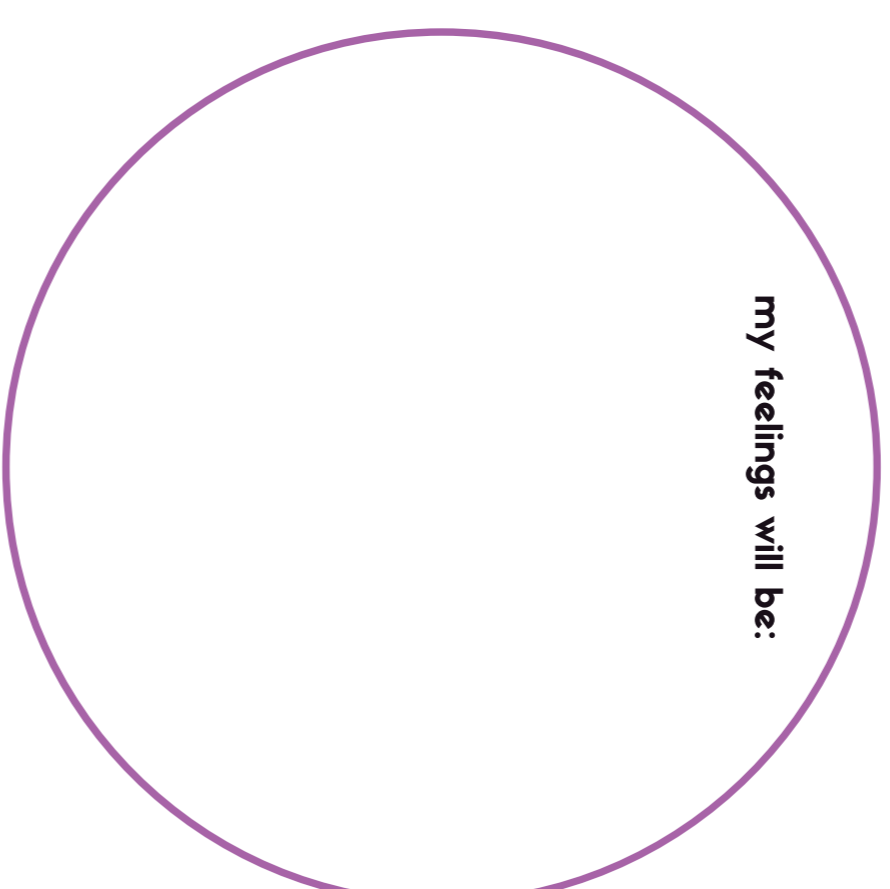


how I'm getting less from life:

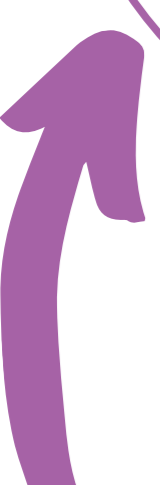
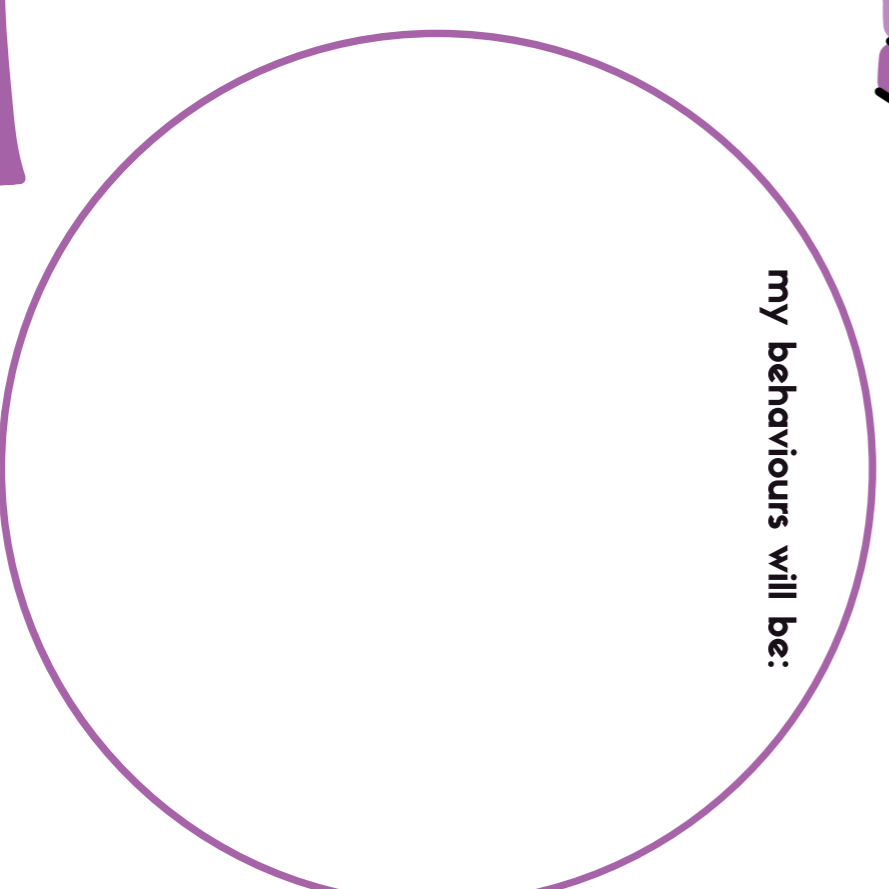


my positive cycle

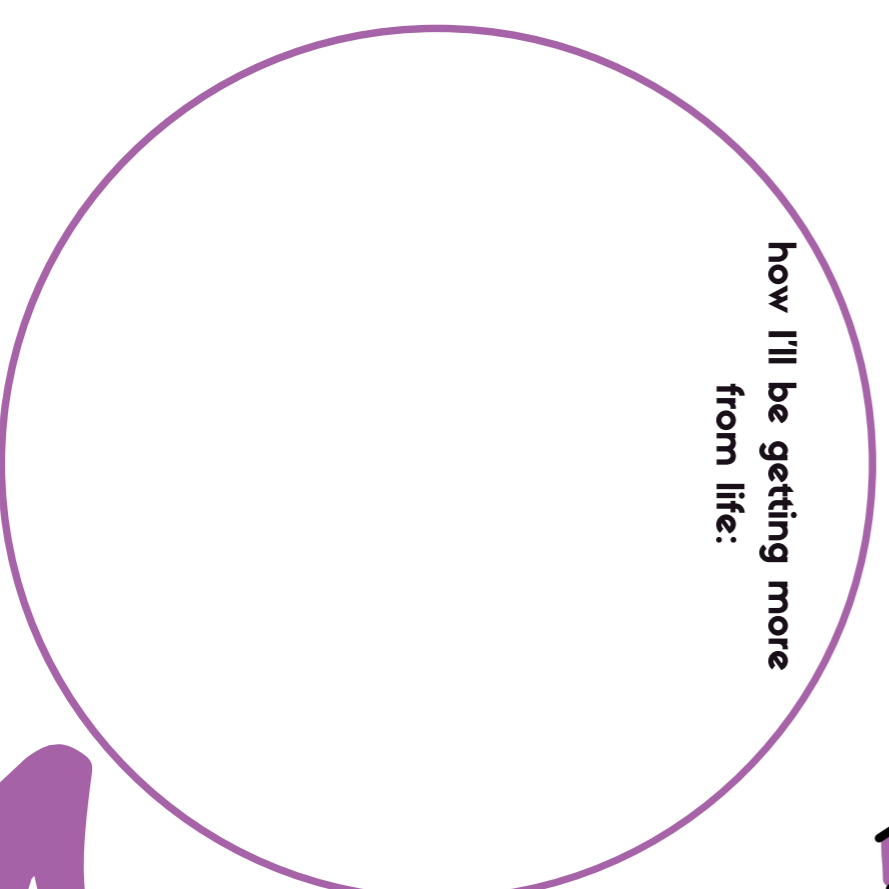
my feelings will be:



my behaviours will be:



how I'll be getting more from life:



What did you learn this week?

Use this space to:

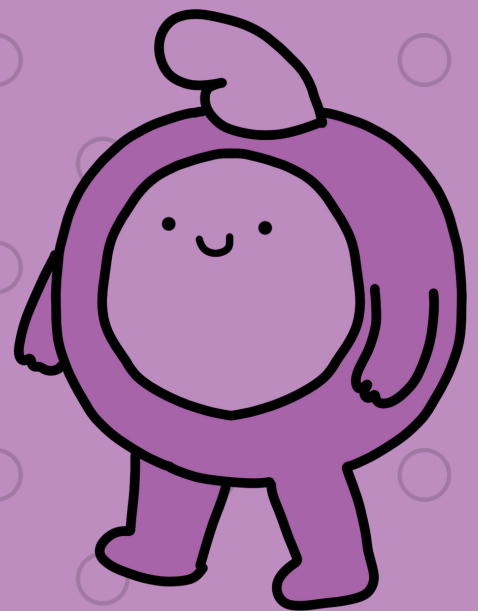
- 1) Write/draw about what you have found out this week.
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Session 2



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Further Help

Remember!

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Session Two: Overview

When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information in this booklet and look through each section.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Review your child's activities together using the 'Review your Activity Diary' section.	It can be useful to have the completed 'Behavioural Activation Cycles' section from session 1 to hand during this task. Once you've reviewed the activities, encourage your child to link what they have learnt to the cycles.
Day 3	Complete the 'What Matters to Me' section together.	If your child is finding it difficult, use the example sheet to help. They might also prefer drawing pictures of what matters to them or making their own list electronically.
Day 4	Use the completed activity diary and the 'What Matters to Me' section to plan in one meaningful activity based on what your child knows will lift their mood. Do this activity before the next session.	It can be difficult to find the motivation to do things when feeling low in mood so remind your child that it's important to follow the plan and not the mood . Refer back to their activity diary and the link between their mood and activities. If they're finding it too difficult, start by planning an easier activity and gradually work your way up to the bigger/more daunting ones.
Day 5	Complete the 'What did you Learn this Week?' section.	Either do this together or complete separately before discussing afterwards.

Reviewing your Activity Diary

Once you've completed your 7 day activity diary, it's important to review this and see what you notice about the links between what you do and how you feel. Follow the steps below to review your diary.

Choose some coloured pens/pencils as you'll need these to highlight your activities.

1) Choose 3 days to look at in detail.

2) Go through each activity for each of these days and think/talk about how it made you feel. Highlight any activities you rated as high for Achievement, Closeness or Enjoyment.

3) Rate how you felt at the end of each of these days from 0-10.

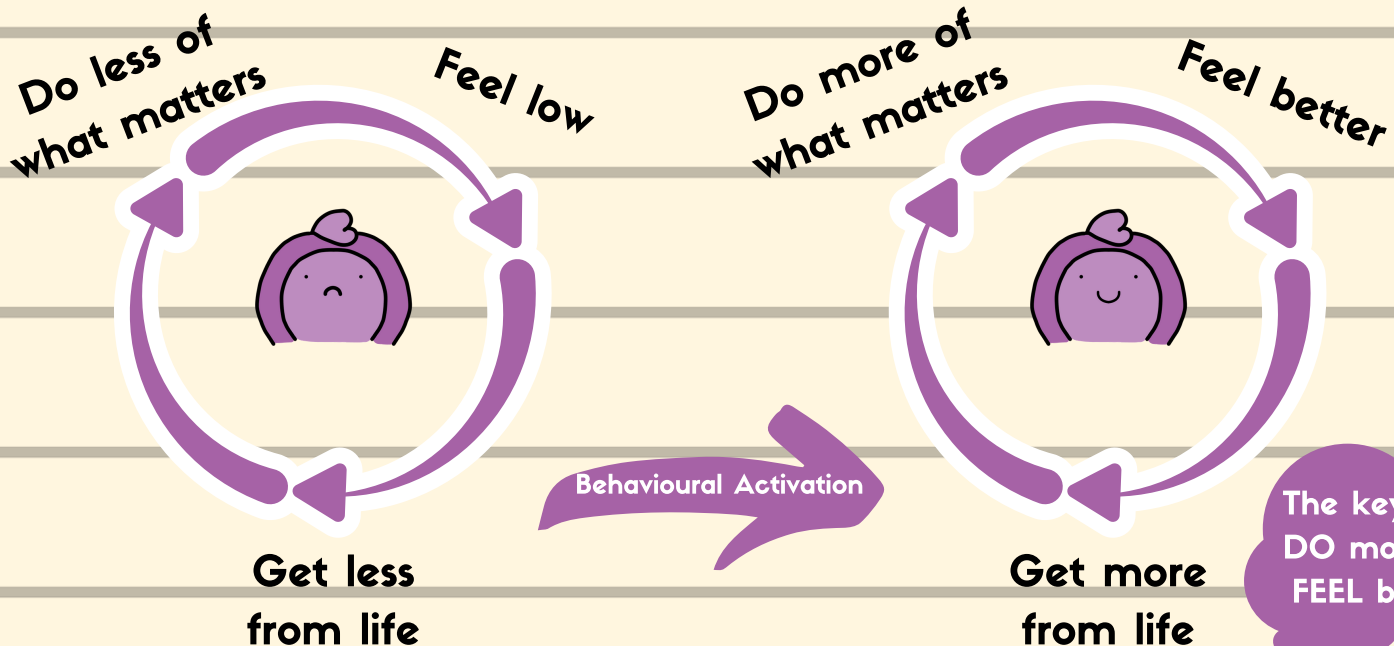
4) What do you notice about the activities you have highlighted and how you felt that day. What do you notice about the activities you did not highlight and how you felt? What links/patterns do you notice.

5) Highlight any other activities you rated highly this week.

6) Overall, what do you notice about the link between the things you did this week and how you felt?

It's the Cycle

From reviewing your activity diary, you'll be able to see that we tend to feel worse when we do less, and feel better when we do more of what matters.



What Matters to Me

It's important to understand and recognise your values and what things matter to you in your life. This helps to plan time to do the things that matter to you and therefore have a better balance of activities in your life.

About Me:

The things I enjoy doing/find fun:

What Matters to Me

What I enjoy learning about/what I want to do in the future:

Who Matters to Me

Family who are important to me:

Things I do to take care of my self:

Things I do everyday which help me feel happy:

Friends who are important to me:

The things I do which help me relax/feel better:

Things I feel strongly about that matter to me:

Anyone else who is important to me:

Anything else that matters/is important to me:

What Matters to Me

It's important to understand and recognise your values and what things matter to you in your life. This helps to plan time to do the things that matter to you and therefore have a better balance of activities in your life.

About Me:

The things I enjoy doing/find fun:

- Reading
- Drawing
- Watching Netflix
- Spending time with friends/family
- Going to the beach

What Matters to Me

What I enjoy learning about/what I want to do in the future:

- Science
- Maths
- Art
- I want to be a teacher in the future

Who Matters to Me

Family who are important to me:

- Mum
- Dad
- Step-Dad
- Step brother
- Cousins
- Aunty and Uncle
- Grandparents
- My dog
- My cat

Things I do to take care of my self:

- Swimming
- Walks
- Cross country
- Go to the gym

Everyday things I do which help me feel happy:

- Take the dog for a walk
- Watch TV with my family
- Text my friends
- Have a cup of tea

Friends who are important to me:

- My best friend
- My group of friends
- My friends on social media

The things I do which help me relax/feel better:

- Go for a walk
- Have a bubble bath
- Have a hot chocolate
- Talk to mum

Things I feel strongly about that matter to me:

- I feel strongly about equal rights
- I feel strongly about my spirituality/religion
- I am a vegetarian and feel strongly about this

Anyone else who is important to me:

- My teacher
- My swimming instructor
- My best friend's mum

Anything else that matters/is important to me:

- I like doing my hair and makeup and trying out new styles

Activity Planner

It's important to plan in enjoyable and meaningful activities to help us feel happier and get a good balance in our lives. By taking time to plan in activities, we are much more likely to actually do them and start to feel better. It can be difficult to do activities when feeling low but remember, it's important to follow your plan and not your mood. This way, you can start to **DO MORE TO FEEL BETTER**.

What are you going to do?

When will you do this? (date/time)

Where will you do this?

Who will you do this with?

Is there anything else you need to plan in order to do this? (eg. how you'll get there, what you'll need, whether you need to ask a friend/family member)

Remember to follow your plan and not your mood!

After you've done your activity, answer these questions:

How did you feel after your activity?

Is this an activity you will do again?



If yes, make a plan to do it again!



If no, make a plan to do something different.

Remember, the key is to **DO** more to **FEEL** better!

What did you learn this week?

Use this space to:

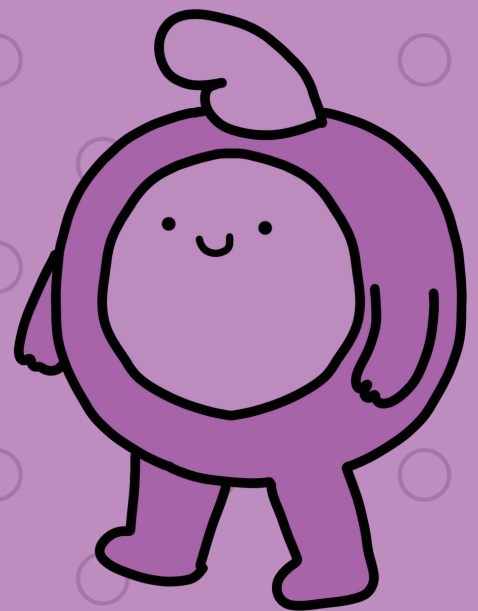
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Day 1	Read the information in this booklet and look through each section.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Complete the 'My List' section together. Help your child to create a list of all of the meaningful activities they know help to lift their mood. Use their completed 'What Matters to Me' section to generate ideas.	It can be a nice idea to get creative with the list. Let your child decorate it how they want (they might want to use colours or make an electronic list) to promote a sense of ownership and get them interested. You could also create your own list to model how it's done.
Day 3	Complete the 'Problem Solving' section together.	Problems can arise that cause children to feel down and low. Helping them to solve these problems in a practical way can help overcome this and also promote their independence and confidence.
Day 4	Use the 'Activity Planner' section to help your child plan in 3 meaningful activities to do over the next week.	Use the completed list of meaningful activities from the previous section to choose what to plan. Try to encourage your child to plan a mix of different activities.
Day 5	Complete the 'What did you Learn this Week?' section.	Either do this together or complete separately before discussing afterwards.
Next Steps	Continue to use all of the strategies you have learned from these sessions and remember to encourage and praise your child for doing so. The more you use these strategies, the better your child will manage their mood.	You can go back through these booklets and recap any of the strategies any time you need to - think of them as tools in your toolkit which you and your child can now use over and over.

My List of Meaningful Activities

When we feel low in mood, it can be difficult to plan activities or know what we can do to help us feel better. By creating a list of meaningful activities, it is much easier to choose something to do and make a plan to do it. There are some ideas here which you might want to put on your list but the most important thing is that your list is **YOURS** - it should be full of things that **YOU** enjoy doing.



- Draw or create something
- Go for a walk/jog
- Play a game

- Watch favourite movie/TV show
- Take a relaxing bath
- Do some yoga
- Play with a pet
- Read a book
- Video call/chat with a friend
- Bake a cake
- Meditate
- Lay in the sunshine



- Listen to music
- Play an instrument
- Make a meal

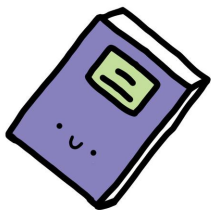
- Write in diary/journal
- Go to the cinema
- Go swimming
- Meet with friends
- Go shopping
- Make new friends
- Start a new hobby
- Knit/crochet
- Take dog for a walk



- Make a healthy snack
- Do some exercise
- Spend time with family
- Visit somewhere new
- Go to the beach
- Go out for a meal
- Have a hot chocolate with a family member
- Visit family



- Do some colouring
- Play some football
- Watch a sports game
- Join a group/class
- Rearrange/organise my room
- Do some gardening
- Go to the park
- Go somewhere new with family
- Write a book/poem/short story



- Make a gift for someone
- Go on a bike ride
- Take some photos
- Go for a picnic



- Plan a trip
- Do a jigsaw
- Dance or sing
- Get dressed up nice

Try to make sure your list has a good mixture of different activities (for example, make sure there's a mix of things you can do with others and things you can do alone, things you can do inside and things you can do outside, things that can be done easily and things that need more planning). This way, you will always have something you're able to do.

My List

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a purple border, intended for writing a list.

Problem Solving

Step by step guide to solving a real problem

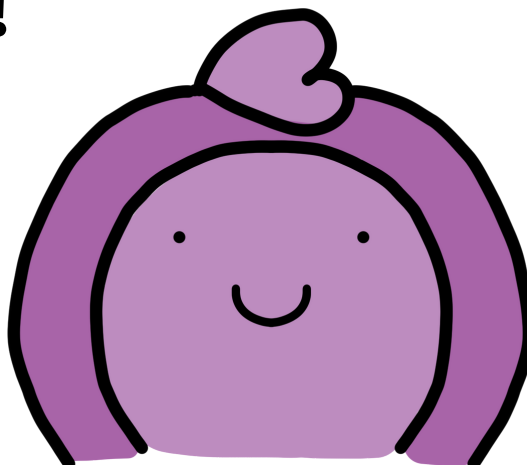
(You'll need some paper and pens/pencils)

- Step 1** Write down your problem in 1 or 2 sentences.
- Step 2** Write down all the ideas you can think of to solve the problem (no matter what they are!).
- Step 3** Make a table and write down ALL of the good things and ALL of the not so good things you can think of for each of your ideas.

	Good things	Not so good things
Idea 1		
Idea 2		

- Step 4** Choose one idea that looks like it could work (if you struggle, see which one has the most good things). Ask yourself, is my idea realistic? If it isn't, choose a different idea.
- Step 5** Make a plan! Write down the answers to these questions to create your plan of action!
- 1) What will you do?
 - 2) When will you do it?
 - 3) How will you do it?
 - 4) Who will you do it with?
 - 5) Could there be any difficulties? If so, what could you do to overcome these?

Step 6 DO IT!



After you've done it...

Well done for giving your idea a go and for trying to solve your problem! Now, think about how it went.

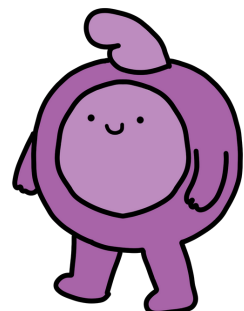
Review it

Answer the following questions to help you reflect on how it went.

- 1) Was it helpful?**
- 2) Did you achieve what you wanted to?**
- 3) If not, could you do something differently/change something next time?**
- 4) Did you achieve anything (no matter how small) towards solving your problem? Even tiny steps forward are big achievements.**
- 5) What did you learn?**

Remember...

Whether your solution worked really well or whether it didn't quite go as you'd hoped, you should be very proud of yourself for giving it a go! Well done!



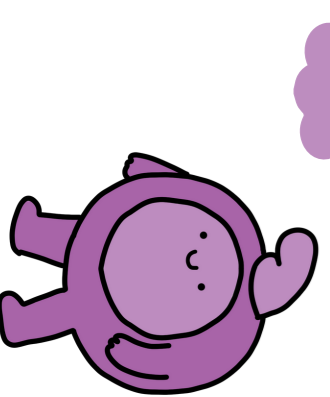
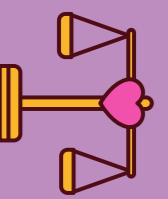
Activity Planner

When we are feeling low, it is important to plan and do activities that we know help to lift our mood. This way, we can start to break the negative cycle and change it to a more positive one. There will always be essential activities we have to do in our lives (like going to school or appointments and doing homework/revision) but the important thing to remember is that we need to have a **BALANCE**. This means we should have a good balance of essential activities we have to do, as well as activities that are enjoyable, meaningful and help lift our mood.

Use the table to plan in some meaningful activities this week which will help to lift your mood. Remember, it's about finding a good balance that works for you.

Day Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Remember!
It's about balance.



Follow the Plan
and Not the
Mood!

What did you learn this week?

Use this space to:

- 1) Write/draw about what you have found out this week.
- 2) Write/draw about what you have found useful.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick purple border, intended for writing or drawing. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the document.

keeping things going

Everyone is different and makes progress at their own pace. It's important to keep the things going which you have put in place during these sessions. The more you use these strategies, the more it will become part of everyday life and the better you will feel. Here are the main things you need to remember.

follow the plan and not the mood

Keep making plans every week to do more of the activities that are meaningful to you. Remember, by following the plan and not the mood, you will feel increasingly better. You might want to make or buy a wall calendar to write your plans on or maybe get a nice diary/notebook. If you plan it, you're more likely to do it!



do more to feel better

Keep adding to and changing your list of meaningful activities. It can be a good idea to keep your list somewhere you can see it. This way, if you're feeling low, you can easily choose something from your list to do there and then to help lift your mood. It can be a good idea to keep it up on your bedroom wall or in the kitchen.



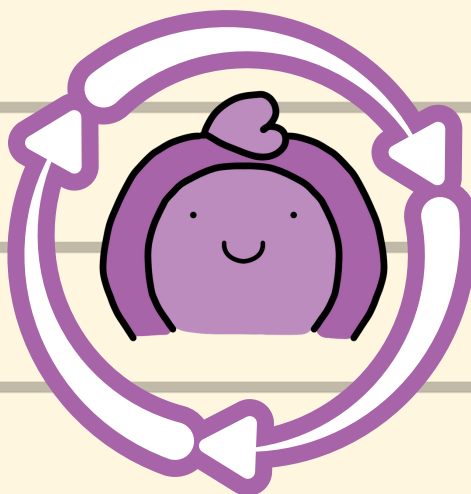
practical problem solving

If problems arise which are stopping you from doing activities or are causing you to feel low in mood, use the problem solving steps to help overcome the problem. Write down each step from the handout to break the problem down and help to solve it. This is important because solving problems helps us to feel better.



The journey to feeling better can be full of ups and downs and it's important to recognise that we all have bad days and good days. When bad days happen, don't beat yourself up! The next day is a new day and remember to break the negative cycle by **DOING MORE TO FEEL BETTER**.

do more of
what matters



feel better
and happier

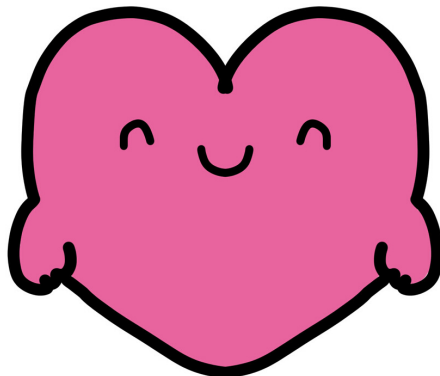
get more from life

Next Steps

It's important to continue to put all of these strategies into practise to help your child manage their mood. Make a note of the things you will continue to do or things you are going to do next.

Be Proud of Yourself!

As a parent, it can be difficult knowing what is best for your child when they are struggling with low mood and many parents report feeling overwhelmed. Be proud of yourself for taking the time and effort to put these strategies in place - a HUGE well done! Take some time to reward yourself and recognise that you are doing the right things by making changes to help your child feel better.



Don't forget! If you continue to feel your child needs support with their mental health, you can make a referral to access this by visiting your GP or contacting your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).