

Great Minds Together

Interoception Toolkit



Name: _____

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This workbook contains activities and ideas that are focused on strategies to support anxiety and low mood. You can use this workbook as often as you like as a guide. There is no right or wrong way of using this workbook and please feel free to use your own ideas as well.

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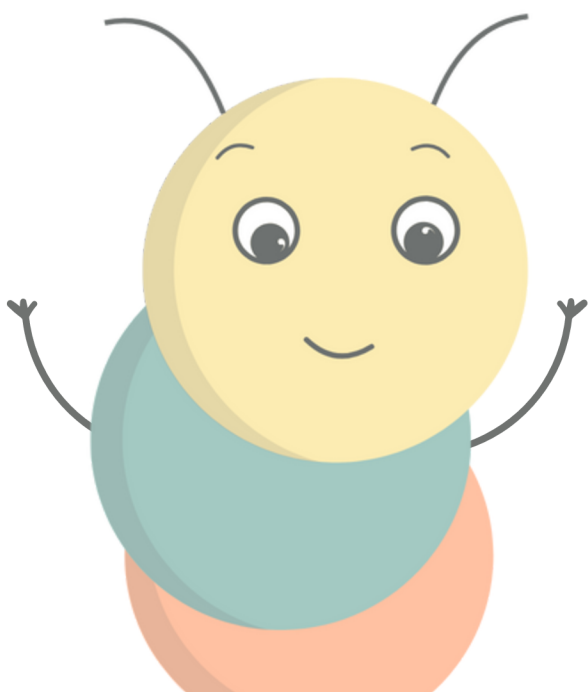
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***You've got
this!***

What is Interoception?

Interoception is a sense within all our bodies. Its biggest job is to help us experience our inner sensations. These inner sensations provide us with important clues to how we are feeling and what our body needs for health, comfort, and regulation.

It helps us feel things like:

- When we are hungry
- When we need the toilet
- When our heart is beating fast
- When we are in pain or feeling hurt
- When we are anxious, excited, sad, or happy
- When our body is too hot or too cold

We all have very different inner feelings. So, our inner sensations can differ for everyone. For example, when I notice my stomach feeling empty, it provides me with a clue that I need to eat. Or when I have a tight feeling in my chest and my brain feels slow, it's a clue that I am feeling overwhelmed or anxious and need to go for a walk.



Why is Interoception Important?

Interoception is important because when young people understand their body signals, they can:

- Learn to recognise and label the emotions they are experiencing
- Understand when they need help or need a break
- Develop self-regulation skills
- Communicate how they are feeling more clearly

For some young people—especially those who are neurodivergent—these internal signals can be hard to notice or understand. This toolkit helps make the invisible... visible.

We all have a different range of how aware we are of our internal sensations. Some people might be more aware of their internal sensations; others might be less aware of them.

For some people, they might have an inner experience that's missed. These people might completely miss body signals, like the feeling of thirst or needing the bathroom or getting overwhelmed. Or sometimes, for people that have a missed inner experience, they notice certain body signals but only when those body signals get to a very big place. So, they don't notice hunger until they are angry. It's an emergency feeling like, "I need to eat right now".

Others can experience the opposite extreme, which is when their inner experience is intense. They might notice a lot of different body sensations all at once. For some people that have an intense inner experience, they might notice one or two body signals that are really overpowering. For example, people that experience panic attacks describe their inner experience to be very intense during a panic attack. Maybe it's the feeling of a racing heart or the feeling of breathlessness.

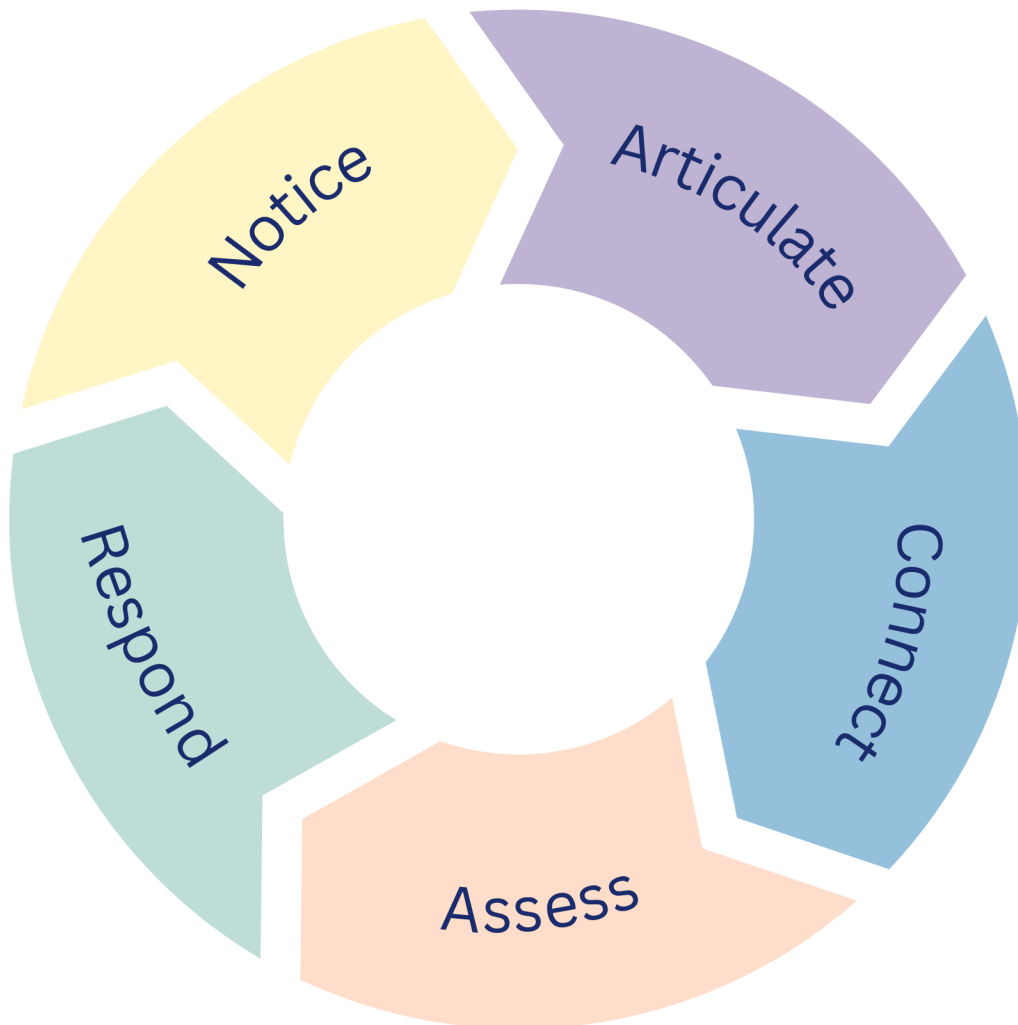
How Can We Develop Our Interoceptive Sense?

1: Notice

Identify or pay attention to what is happening

2: Articulate

Describe the sensation and where it is happening



5: Respond

Take the necessary action

3: Connect

Attach the sensation to feelings or needs

4: Assess

Think, reflect and plan about what may happen in this situation

What is Alexithymia?

"Just because I struggle to put how I feel into words it doesn't mean I don't feel things. In fact, the worse I feel, the more I struggle and often default to, 'I'm fine'."

People who have alexithymia may have have differences identifying, understanding and describing emotions.

They may also struggle to show or feel emotions that others view as expected in certain situations, such as happiness on a joyous occasion.



Emotion and Body Awareness Activities

It can really help to use interoception vocabulary all the time. By doing so, it models that there are these important sensations to pay attention to within our bodies. Eventually, as caregivers, we can work on shifting our curiosity to the child or young person's body and invite them to notice how their body is feeling.

Start talking out loud about the way their own body feels during the different daily activities such as their stomach may feel hard or swollen when they need to use the toilet.

Or, when they are holding a cold drink, recognizing and saying out loud how their hands feel whilst holding that cold drink.

When you are running or moving your body, talk about the way your body may feel when doing this. Have you noticed your heart? How do your muscles feel? What is happening with your muscles?

Avoid labelling what we think is going on inside their body, instead, invite them to discover their own inner experience:

We can use “I wonder...” statements. E.g., I wonder how your hands feel while you’re holding that cold drink. I wonder how your heart feels after I’m chasing you. If your child is unable to answer, that’s okay. We want to offer this curiosity and body noticing in a way that’s validating to their own inner experience. If we label that, we risk being wrong and mislabelling, which leads to inner confusion.

Feelings Wheel

A feelings wheel can be used to identify our emotions. We start by identifying a basic emotion that we are feeling. Once we have done this, we can begin to explore and identify other words that better describe how our experiences are making us feel.



*Resource from Calm - Originally created by Dr. Gloria Willcox

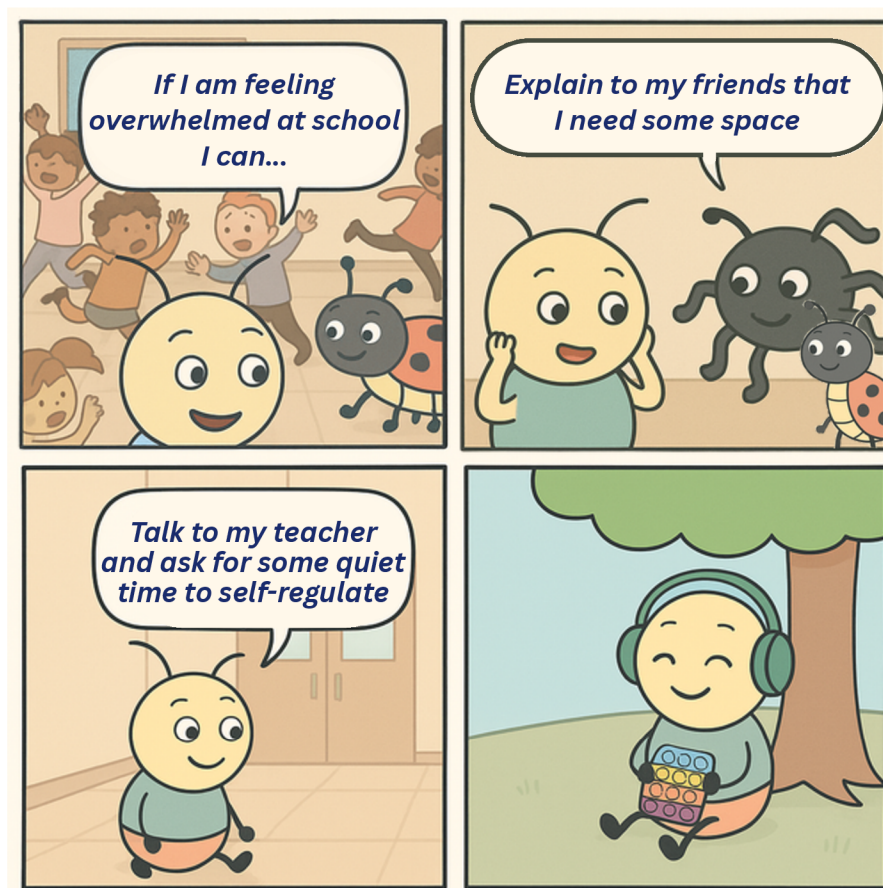
Comic Strip Conversations

These are a helpful tool to support children and young people to understand what happens during an event or a potential situation.

They help children and young people:

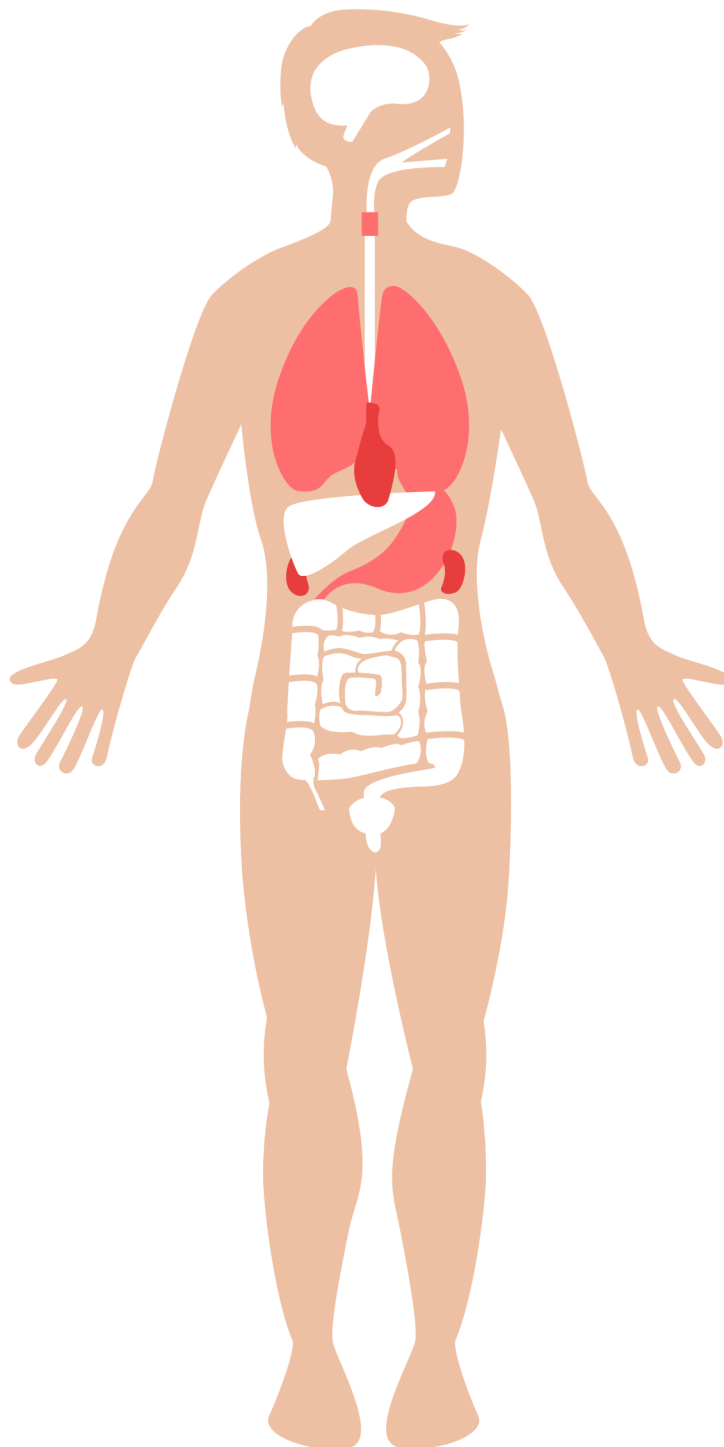
- Understand their own emotions
- Build empathy for others
- See situations from other people's point of view
- Understand abstract concepts
- Understand what others are thinking and how it relates to what they say

A comic strip conversation does not need to be a detailed illustration. You can use stick figures, find images online or draw using a pen & paper or whiteboard & pen.



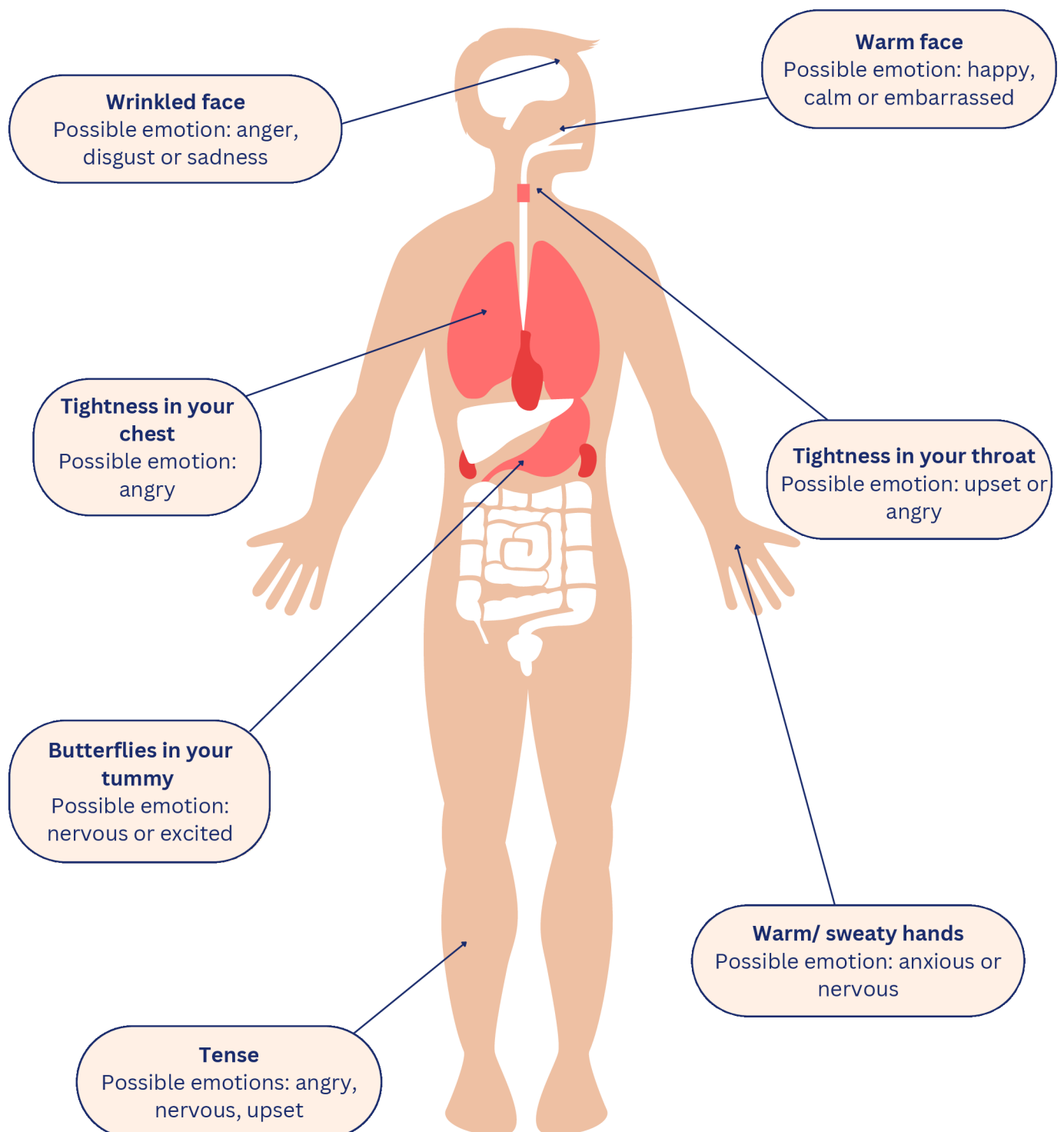
Where Do I Feel It?

Colour in or label the parts of your body where you feel different things.



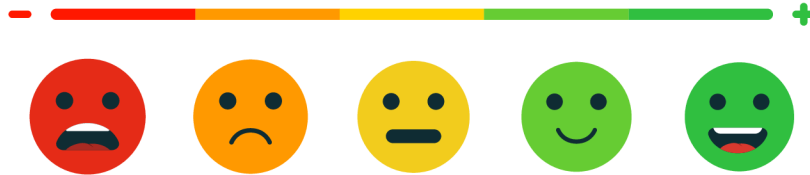
Where Do I Feel It?

Changes in our body happen when we feel different emotions. Here are some explanations for the changes that can happen within our bodies:



Interoception Check-In

How does my body feel right now?



(examples: happy, sad, confused, anxious, angry, silly)

I feel:

☐

Hot

☐

Cold

☐

Hungry

☐

Full

☐

Energetic

☐

Tired

☐

Calm

☐

Anxious

☐

Comfortable

☐

Uncomfortable

☐

Needing the toilet

☐

Don't need the toilet

Optional: Add a traffic light rating system (Green = OK, Amber = Unsure, Red = Need Help)

Be a Sensory Detective!

Match the clue to what your body might be telling you.



My hands are
sweaty



Butterflies in
stomach



My mouth is dry



I have
goosebumps on
my skin



My body feels
sweaty



My stomach is
grumbling



My heart is beating
fast



My head is hurting

I am probably
hungry

I might be
scared or
excited

I might be
anxious or
need food

I could be
angry or
stressed

I could be
tired or have a
headache

I could be cold
and need to
put on
another layer
of clothing

This could mean
that I am
nervous

This could
mean I am too
warm and
need to cool
myself down

Star Breathing

Practice the star breathing method below, start off by breathing in and then follow the instructions around the star until you are back at the beginning. How do you feel afterwards?



Scan here for an
audio guide

Balloon Belly Breath

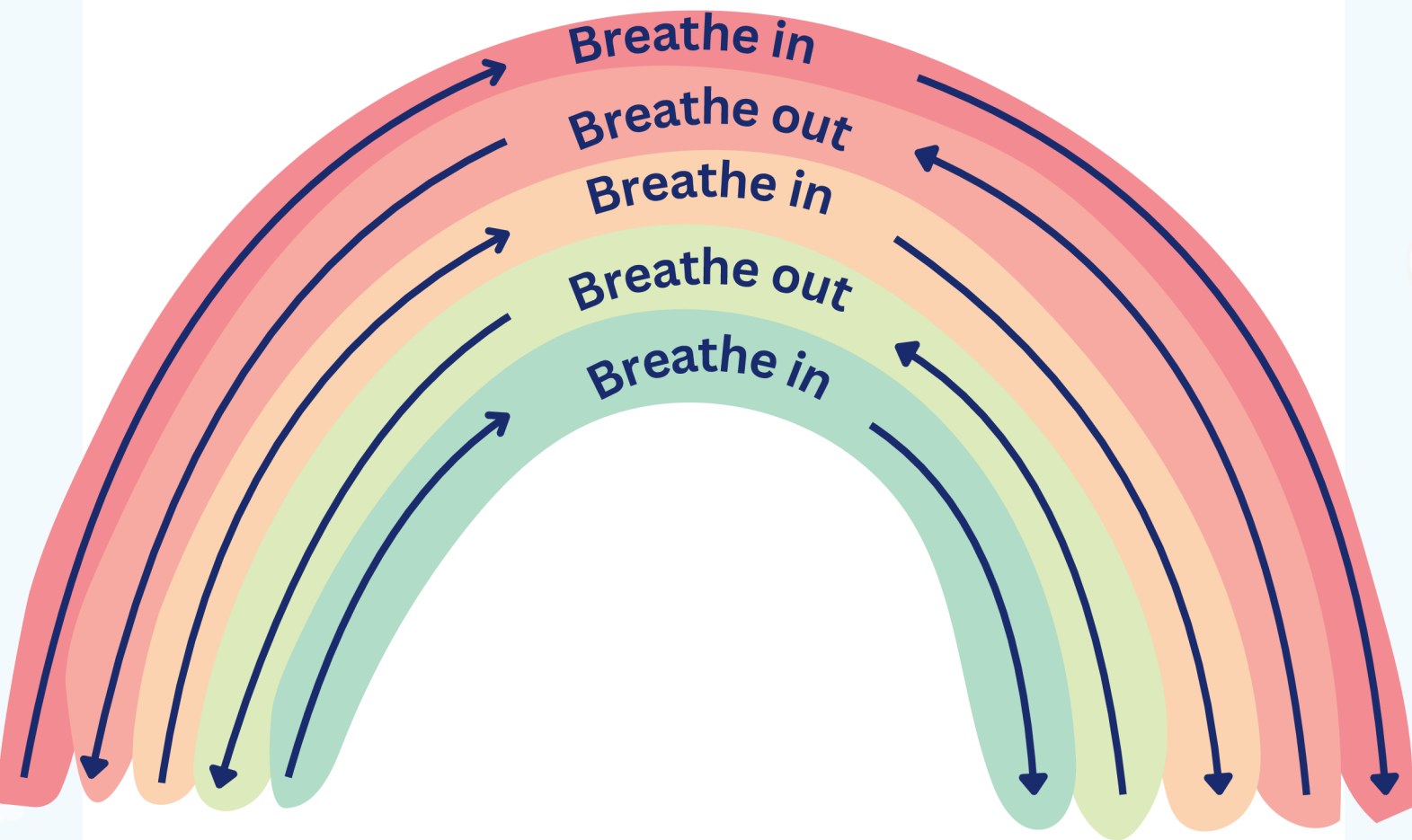
1. Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
2. Take a couple of natural breaths.
3. Breathe in and blow out your tummy. Your belly is like a balloon filling with air.
4. As you breathe out, your belly will go back down as there's no air left.
5. Repeat, being careful not to push your belly out too much.



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Rainbow Breathing

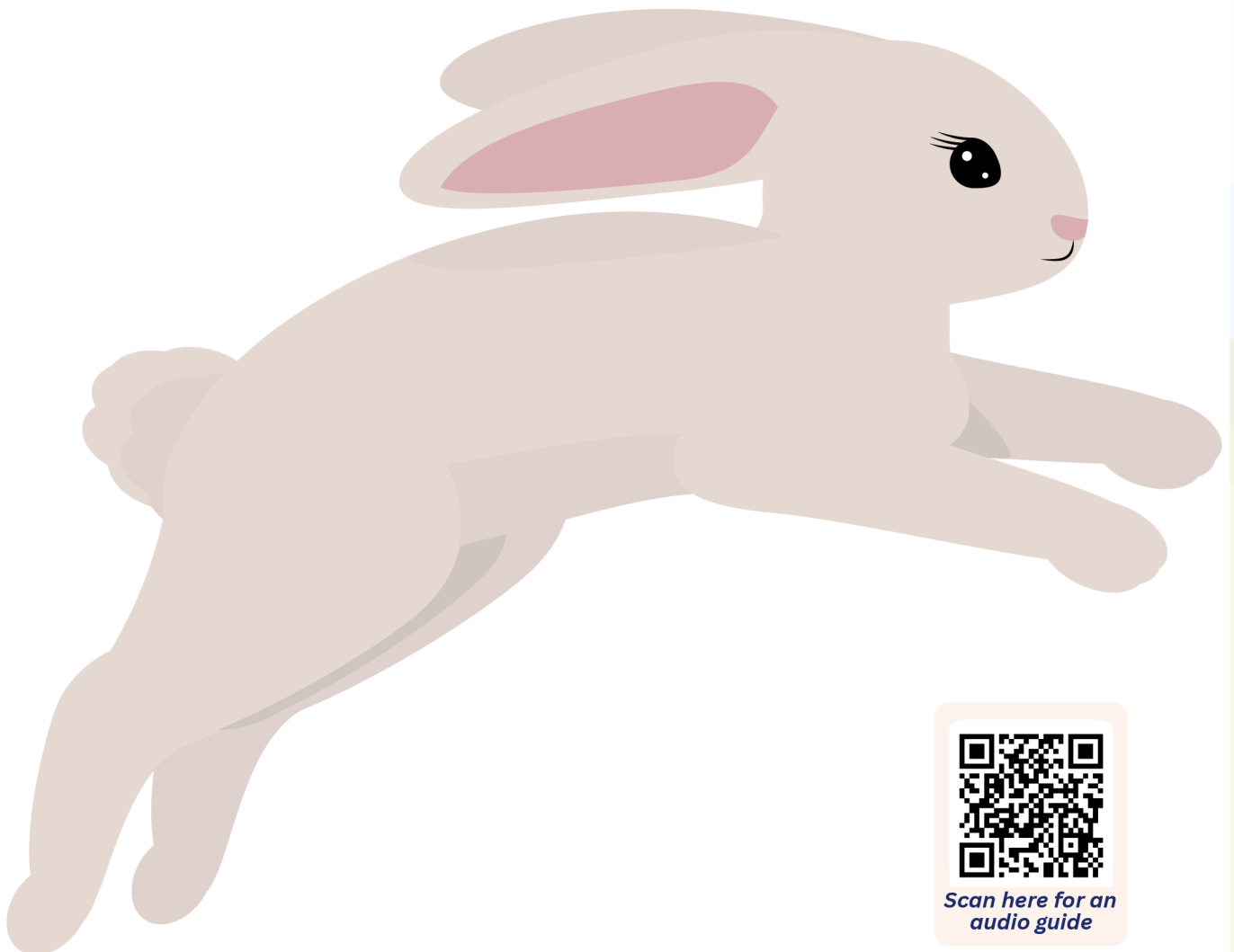
Practice the rainbow breathing method below, start off by breathing in and then follow the instructions up the rainbow until you are back at the top.
How do you feel afterwards?



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audio guide

Hopping Bunny Breath

1. Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
2. Take a couple of natural breaths and sit up tall.
3. When you breathe in, inhale through your nose in three short sniffs. Imagine a bunny hopping along.
4. Breathe all of the air out.
5. Breathe in again with your bunny breaths.
6. Breathe out and repeat



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Mindfulness Meditation



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Meditation is a great tool to keep your anxious thoughts and feelings at bay. During mindfulness meditation you will focus mostly on your breathing and how to use this as a tool to ground yourself and be focused on the present. It's absolutely normal for your mind to wander whilst you are meditating but by refocusing on your breathing you can gently bring yourself back into the present.

How to Meditate:

(it may be best if you allow someone to read the instructions aloud to you so that you can concentrate)

- Take between 15 - 30 minutes to work on your meditation
- Sit in a chair or on the floor - you may want to use a cushion for support
- Try to keep your back straight but don't make yourself uncomfortable
- Relax your neck allowing your chin to drop slightly
- Pick a point across the room to focus on or close your eyes
- If you are in a chair place your feet flat on the ground, if you are sat on the floor cross your legs
- Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs
- If you become uncomfortable you can adjust yourself accordingly
- Now focus on your breathing, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose and mouth, think of the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe in and out



Continue doing this for as long as you feel comfortable. At first you may feel silly but the more you practise the, more comfortable you will feel with meditation.

My Personal Strategy Sheet

Young people can fill this out when they're calm, to use when they feel dysregulated.

My triggers:

Signs that I notice:

Things that help me feel calm:

How can I prepare?

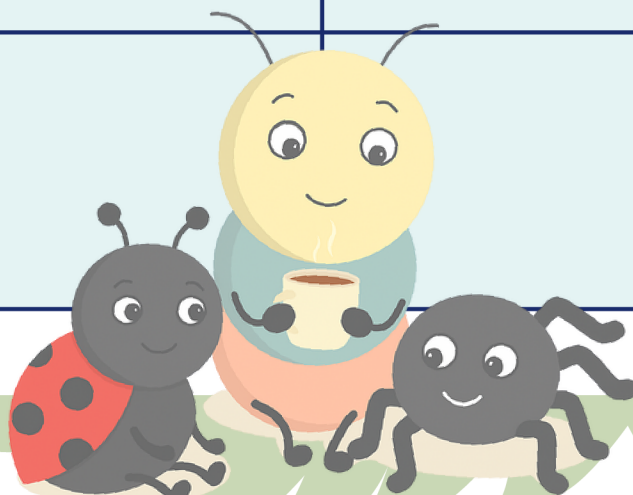
What I would like adults to do to help me:

What coping skills can I use?

My Support System

You can make a list of the people who are there to support you when calming down, and why they made the list. What do they do to help you? How does their support make you feel? For example, are you a good listener? Do they give good advice? Do they make you laugh?

Name	Why are they special to me?



My Focus Plan

Identify strategies and techniques that you know can help when regulating that you can refer back to when needed.

Movement break	Pause and breathe	Break the task into small steps
<p><i>Movement ideas:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 minute dance off • 20 jumping jacks <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Breathing/ Calming techniques I can use:</p> <p>1- 5,4,3,21</p> <p>2- Star breathing</p> <p>3- _____</p> <p>4- _____</p> <p>5- _____</p>	<p>BIG task:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Small steps:</p> <p>1- _____</p> <p>2- _____</p> <p>3- _____</p> <p>4- _____</p>

Celebrate every small finish	Ask for help if you get stuck
<p><i>My mini celebrations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mini dance party • pat myself on the back <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>People and things that can help me:</p> <p>1- _____</p> <p>2- _____</p> <p>3- _____</p> <p>4- _____</p> <p>5- _____</p>

5, 4, 3, 2, 1

5,4,3,2,1 is a calming technique which takes you through all 5 senses, it can be used to help you through difficult or stressful situations.

Take a deep breath before you begin: Then write down 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste



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Interoception Log

Use this log at the start or end of the day to help young people track their internal signals and emotional state.

Date: _____ Time _____

How does my body feel?

☐

Hot

☐

Cold

☐

Hungry

☐

Full

☐

Energetic

☐

Tired

☐

Calm

☐

Anxious

☐

Comfortable

☐

Uncomfortable

Something I would like help with tomorrow:

Who can I ask to help me tomorrow?



I Feel Cards

Cut out and laminate cards for young people to use when they want to express how they're feeling.



I feel
tired



I feel
worried



I feel
happy



I feel
angry



I feel sick



I feel
hungry



I feel
thirsty



I feel
overwhelmed

Sensory Signal Flashcards

Use these flashcards in pairs or groups to match body signals with emotional or physical states. You can play memory games or sort them into 'Emotions' vs 'Body Clues'.



My heart is racing



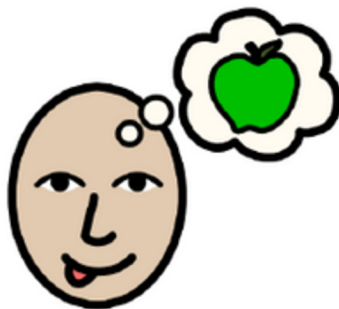
My stomach hurts



Im yawning a lot



Excited



Hungry



Anxious



Tired



Nervous

Interactive Activities and Games

Activity 1: Sensory Detective Challenge

This game helps young people practice noticing body clues and linking them to emotions or needs.

Instructions:

- Give each participant a 'clue card' (e.g., 'My hands are sweaty').
- Ask them to act out or explain what the body might be saying.
- Others guess what the feeling or need might be.

Optional: Use props, drama, or drawings to enhance the experience.

Activity 2: Scenario Matching Game

Create or print out everyday situations and a list of internal sensations. Ask participants to match the situation to how someone might feel.

Examples:

- Situation: 'Giving a class presentation' → Feeling: Sweaty hands, fast heartbeat
- Situation: 'Just finished PE' → Feeling: Tired legs, heavy breathing
- Situation: 'Missed breakfast' → Feeling: Headache, grumbling stomach

Activity 3: Group Discussion Prompts

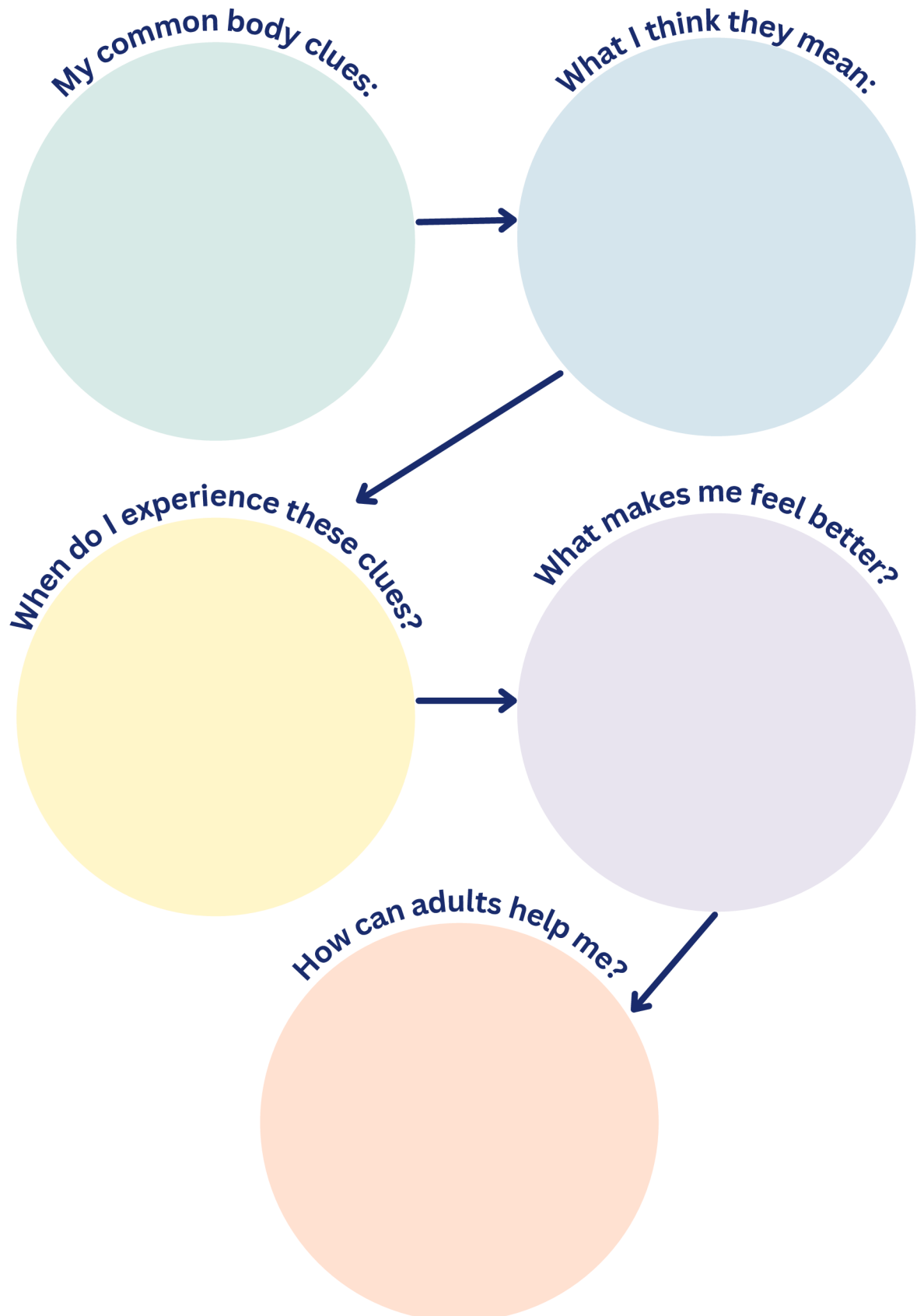
Use these prompts to spark group conversations:

- What does your body feel like when you're excited?
- Can you always tell when you're hungry or tired?
- What do you do when your body tells you it needs something?



My Interoception Friendly Plan

This tool helps young people create a support plan based on their interoception needs



Self-Reflection Journal

Encourage young people to reflect on their feelings and body signals regularly

Journal Prompts:

- Today I noticed my body felt...
- When I felt ____, I did ____ to help myself.
- Something new I learned about my body is...
- One thing I want to try next time I feel uncomfortable is...
- When I feel this way ____ is someone I can talk to ____ for support.
- Tomorrow if I feel this way again I will ____



Emotion-to-Body Chart Progress Tracking

Use a chart to help track how well a young person is beginning to link body sensations to emotional states.



Week	Emotion	Body Clue	Strategy Used	Did it Help?