

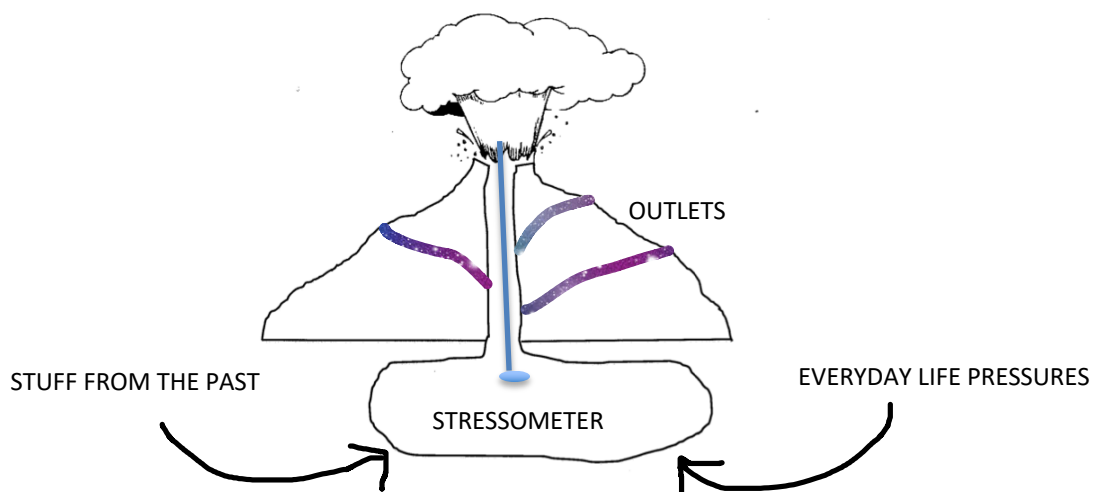


What Lies Beneath? – How To Handle Big Feelings

The Feelings Volcano

A volcano is a really helpful analogy for emotions. If we imagine that, deep within our emotional being, we have a well of lava which is increasing and decreasing in fiery intensity, sometimes getting up to “boiling point” and bubbling over, this can help us to get underneath our emotional world. Other people might struggle to know how to respond when we have a feelings “eruption”, particularly if we have gotten very good at trying keep a lid on it all. Other people think we are lovely peaceful mountain and then get surprised when we erupt! It is tempting to think of ourselves as mountains, but in fact all human beings are volcanos. It is our natural mechanism for controlling and letting out stress. Just like eruptions help create an equilibrium for the volcano (and the chronically unstable earth’s crust), our feelings eruptions help us to manage the friction, stress, and pressure that builds up from daily life.

When we suppress our feelings, it has the effect of making it more likely that they build up and explode. We nurture old hurts deep down in our lava pits, spewing it all forth during an outburst. If you have experienced traumas, losses and separations, you might have built up some deep feelings that need to be “unearthed”. This builds up along with the everyday stuff too. The trick is to learn to “check in with our temperature” and “let off steam” little bits at a time. You probably need help from parents and others around you to help you to learn how to do this.



Ideas for “Letting Off Steam”

- Relaxation exercises like deep breathing
- Talk it over with someone
- Write in a diary
- Do some exercise
- Play and run around
- Sing songs
- Make up a dramatic play
- Remember what is good about life
- Remember what is good about me
- Do something nice for someone else
- My favourite activities or hobbies
- Use positive thinking strategies

How Mum and Dad can Help

POP Psychology has a companion handout which gives parents pointers on how to help their kids manage big feelings. You might have some suggestions too!
