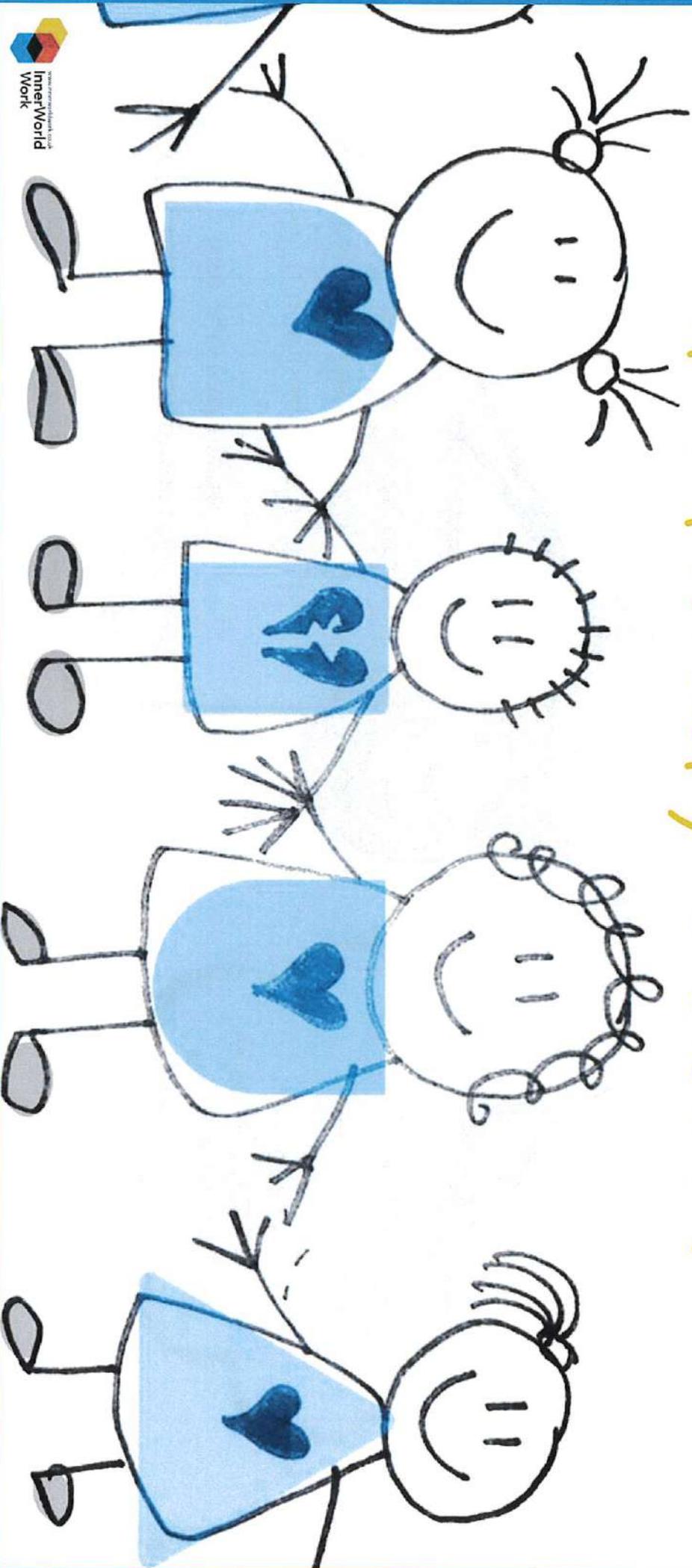


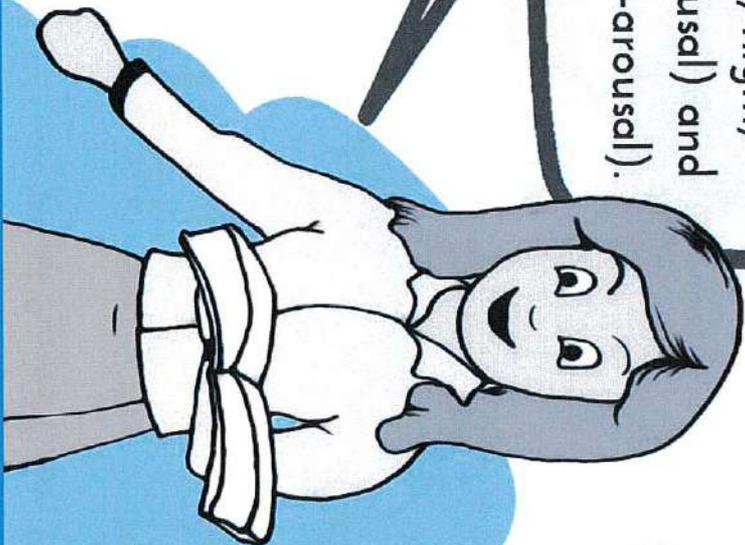
What Survival Looks Like...

In Primary School



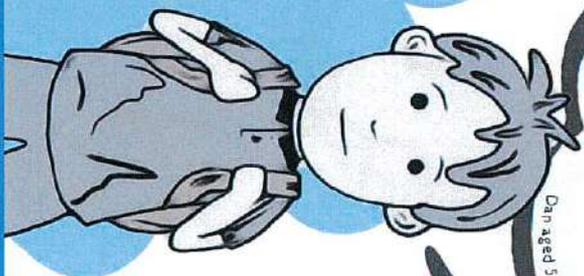
When we think and feel we are in danger, our body automatically goes into survival mode.

Survival mode is our fight, flight, freeze responses (hyper-arousal) and our collapse response (hypo-arousal).

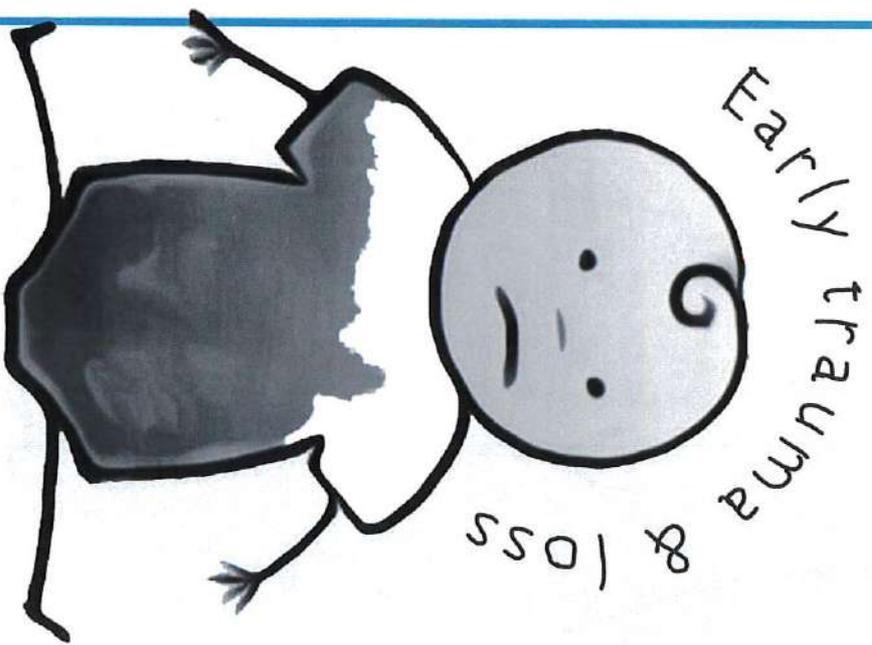


"Do you know where I learnt to be brave?"

School - it's a really scary place."



Dan aged 5



When I was little, I felt very unsafe a lot of the time and this has impacted the way my brain developed.

The lower part of my brain (my amygdala) doesn't always communicate with the higher part of my brain to help me to accurately assess the people and the environment around me. I often think and feel like I am under attack even when I'm actually very safe. My lower brain disconnects from my higher brain and activates survival mode to protect me.

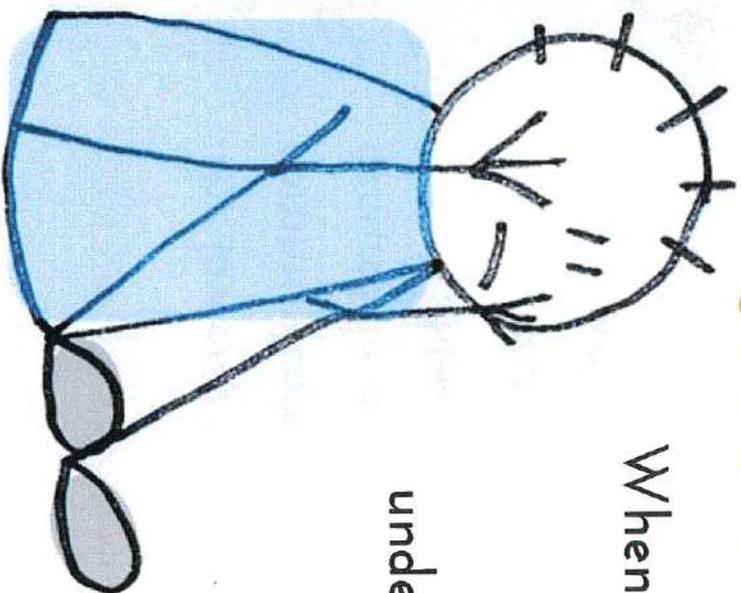
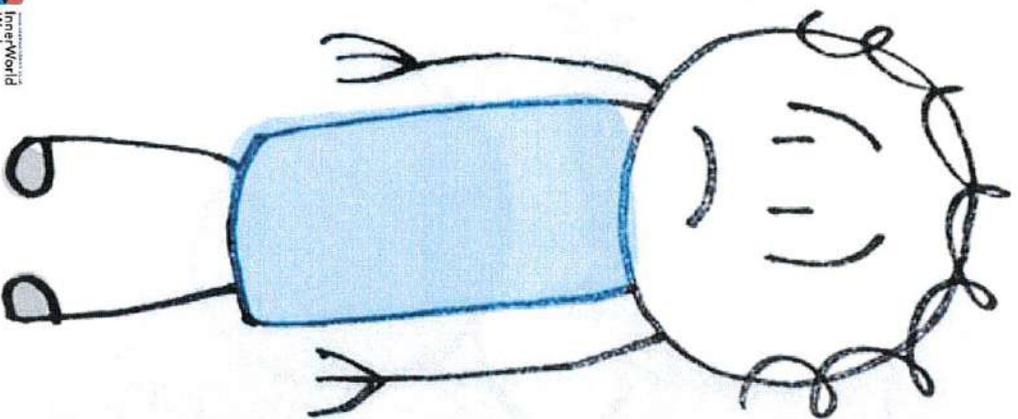
I don't even know that I have gone into survival mode, I probably can't tell you what feels wrong. It happens so often that this part of my brain is really strong and rules over the calm part of my brain. I can't turn it off by myself.

Why is it so important that you know this?

Because I can only learn effectively when the higher part of my brain is working well.

When I am in a survival state it disconnects my higher brain and I cannot reflect, understand, process information and learn.

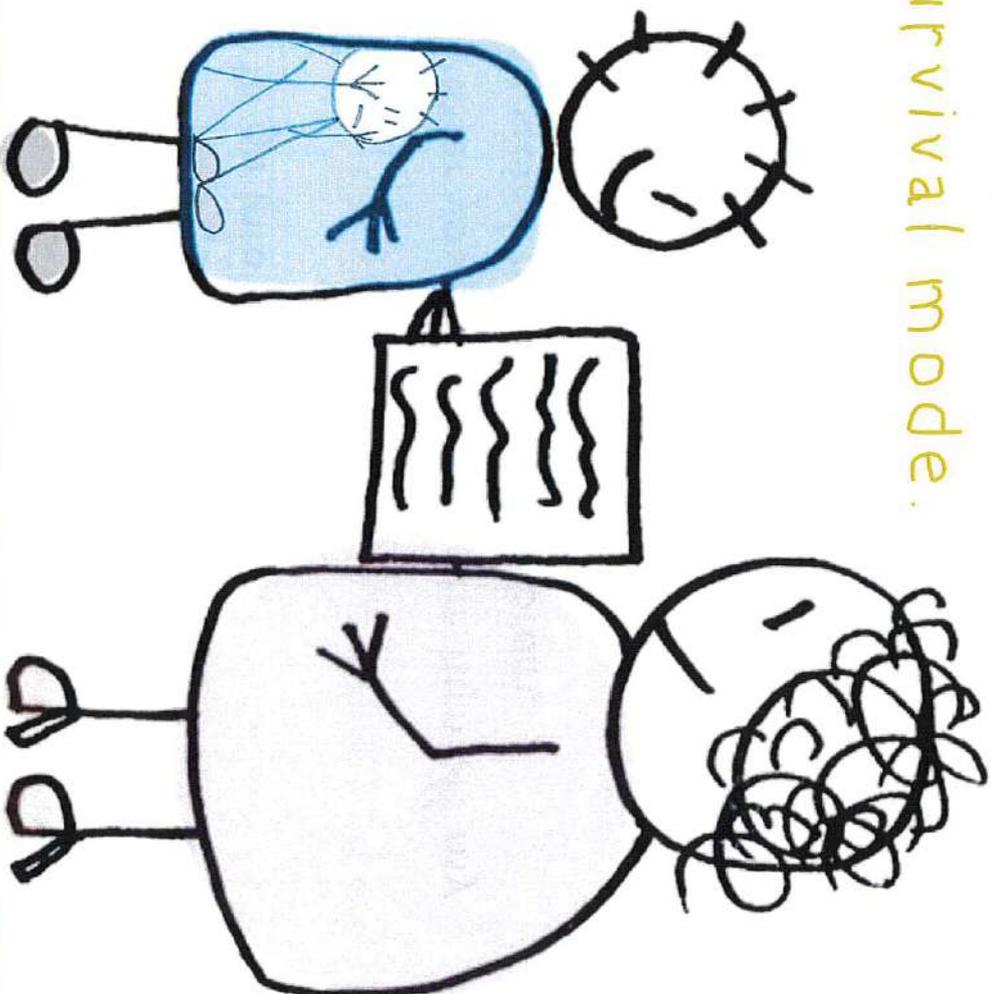
If I don't feel safe, I won't be able to learn to the best of my ability.



The problem is it can be really hard to see and believe I am in survival mode.

I might look very different to how I feel inside, and often I can remain in survival mode for so long, that it seems like part of my personality - this is even true for some adults who were never supported to calm their survival brain.

I would love your help to feel safe so I can learn. For you to see that I am in a survival state and it's not a personality trait. I really want to learn; I really want to feel ok.

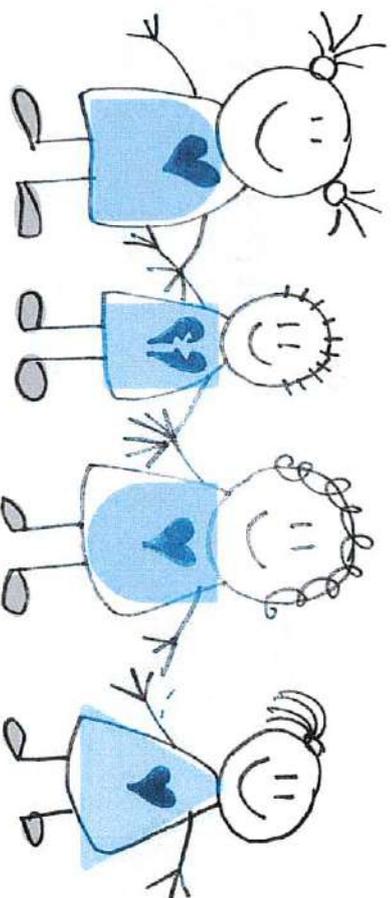


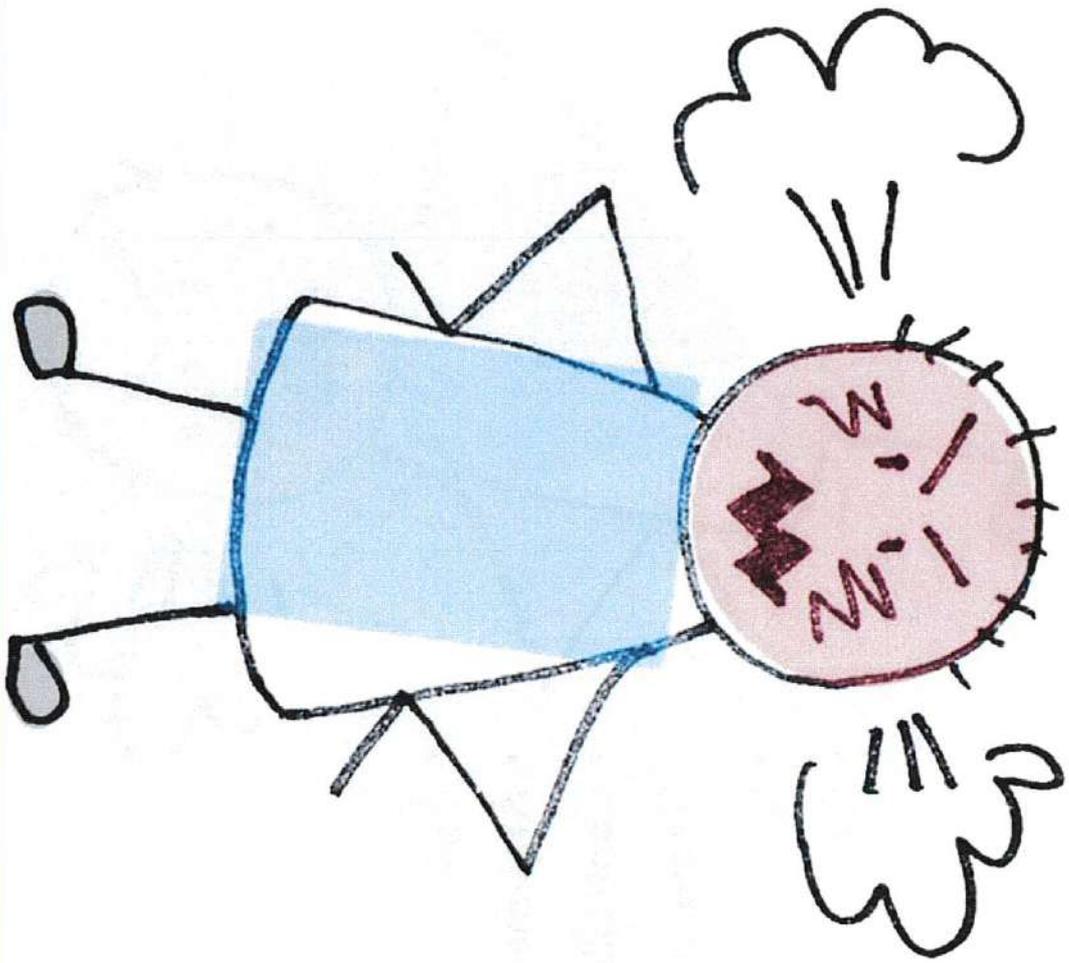
Spending just a small amount of time making me feel safe, activates the thinking part of my brain and I am ready for you to teach me again. I might need you to do this over and over again every day, but the more my brain gets to practice how to connect to my higher brain, the less likely I am to go into survival mode.

Helping me in this way will make safe and life changing differences to my brain.

Please remember, it is really important to look after yourself, to help me turn off my survival mode you will need to be connected to your higher brain.

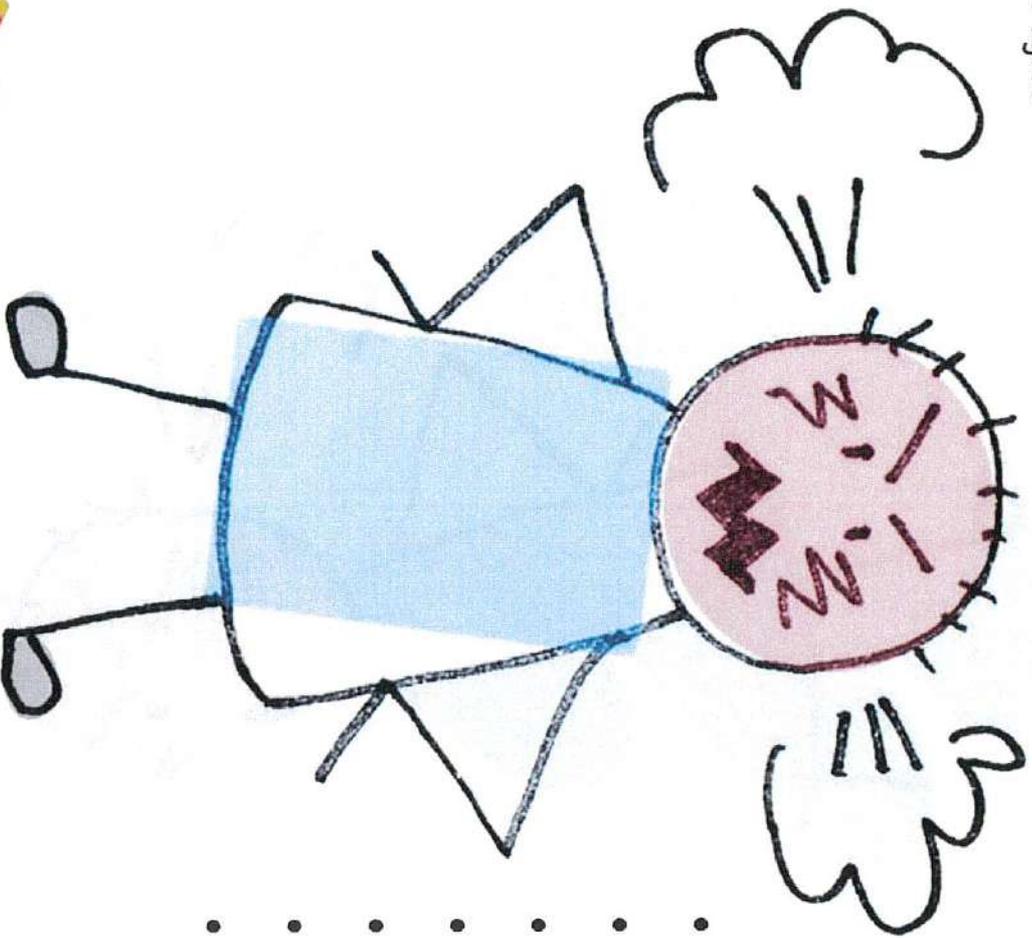
Thank you, it is an amazing thing you're doing for me.





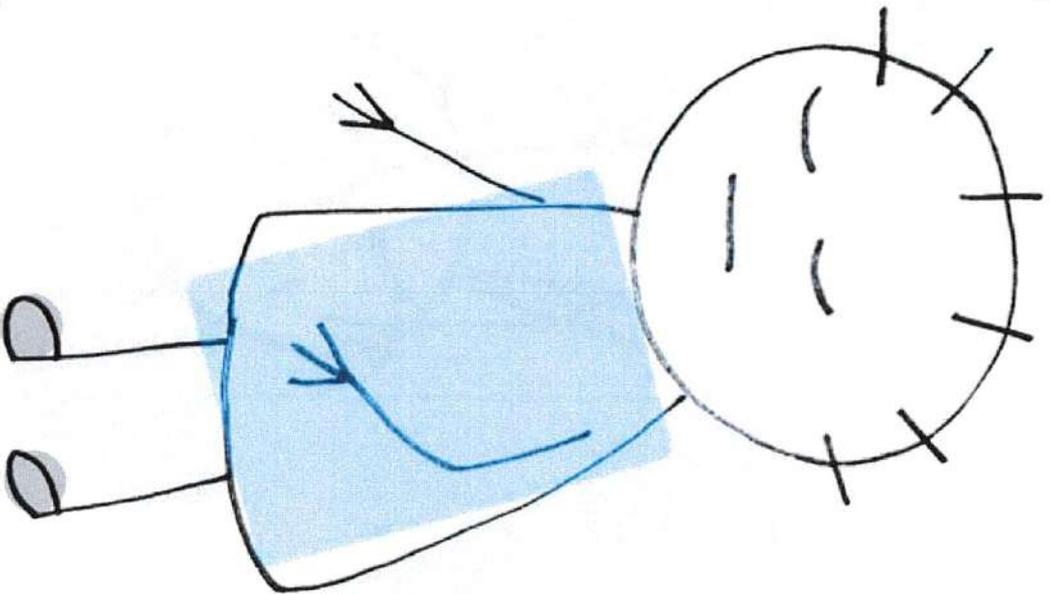
FIGHT

Fight



What I might look
like on the outside

- Hot and bothered
- Aggressive, angry
- Argumentative, shouty
- Controlling
- Demanding, inflexible
- Lying or blaming
- Can't concentrate, unable to finish work or tasks
- Pushing people away
- Not 'fitting in'
- Loner
- Immature
- Loud, noisy and disruptive
- Disrespectful
- Confrontational

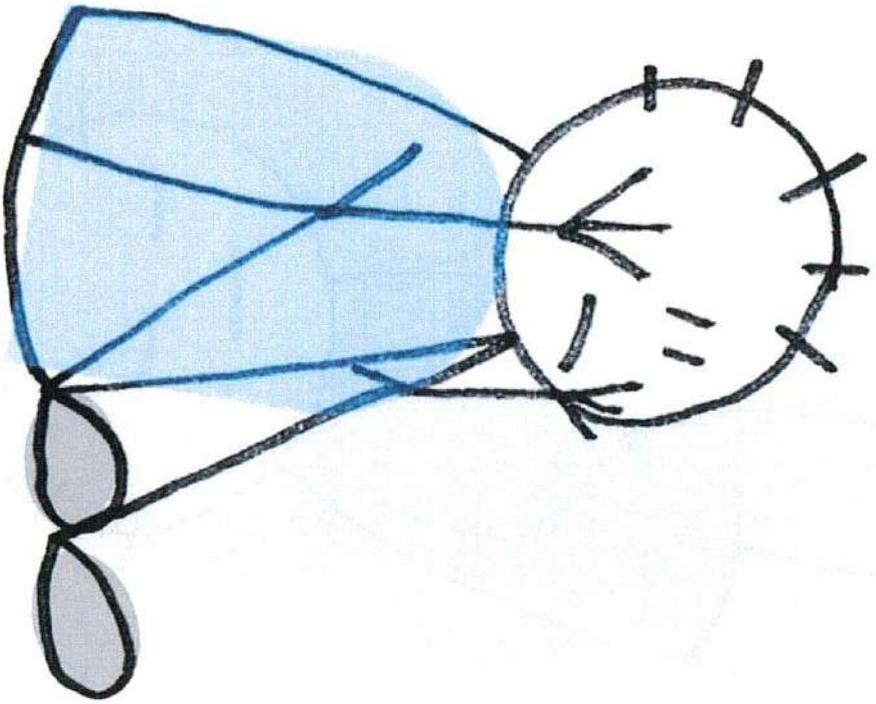


How I might feel on the inside

- I'm scared
- I am all alone
- I feel bad
- I am bad
- Frightened
- Unimportant
- Unlovable
- Invisible
- Worthless
- Danger everywhere
- Fast heartbeat
- Cold hands/feet
- Muscles charged and ready to fight
- I can hear your tone changes
- I can hear everything
- Pupils dilate, I am focused solely on the danger
- Small appetite

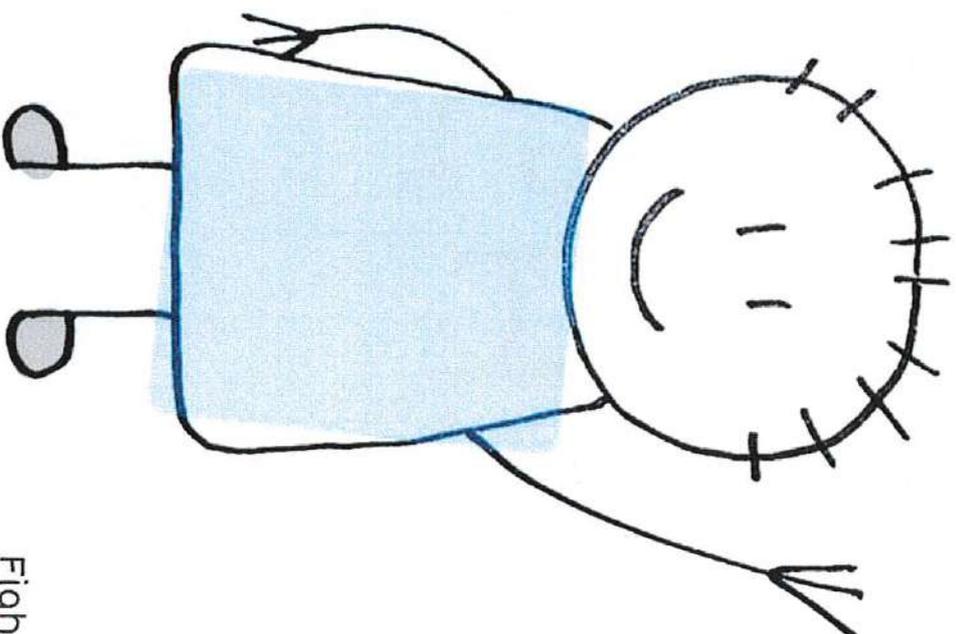
What might be happening in my inner world?

- I can't be cross at the people I really want to be cross at
- I need to be in control, so everything is predictable
- I am going to push you away before you get rid of me
- I feel unsafe
- I hate myself, I am unlovable
- I want to die
- Why am I not good enough?
- Adults can't be trusted; they don't keep you safe

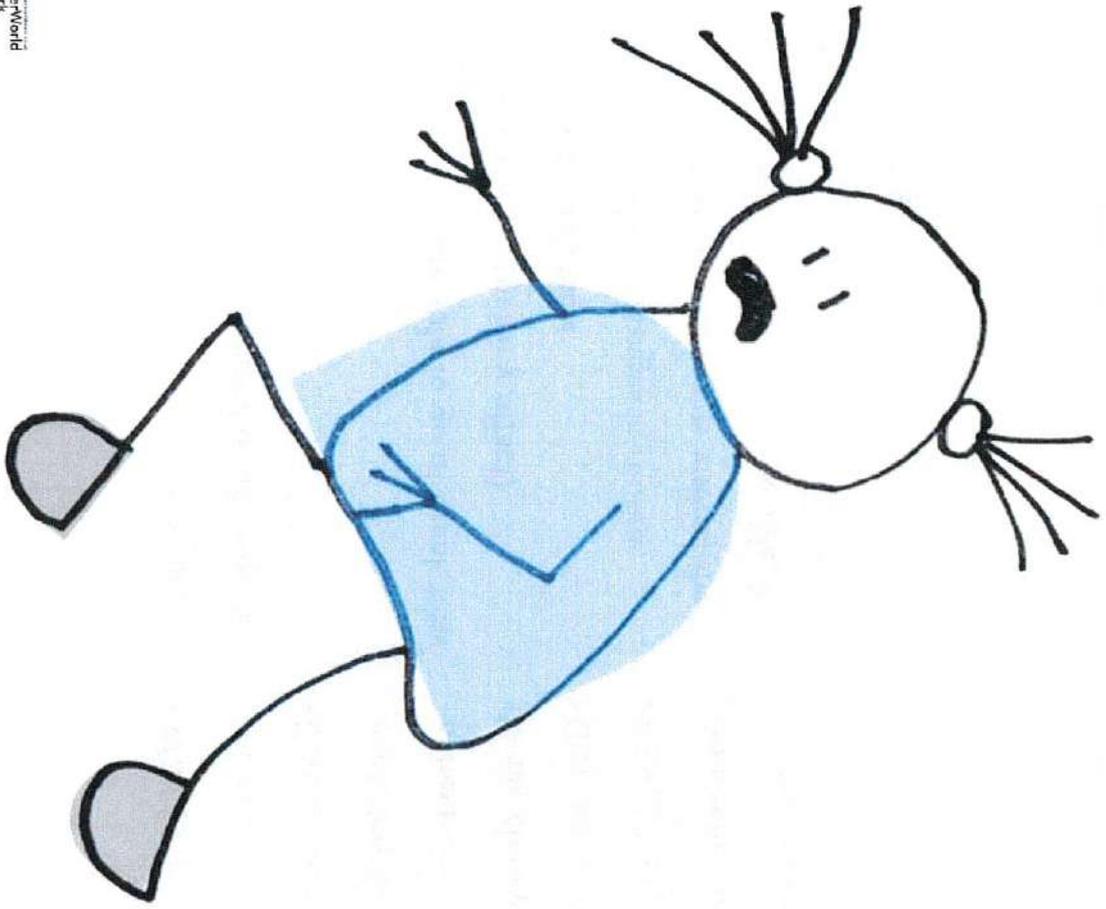


You can help me feel safe with the following...

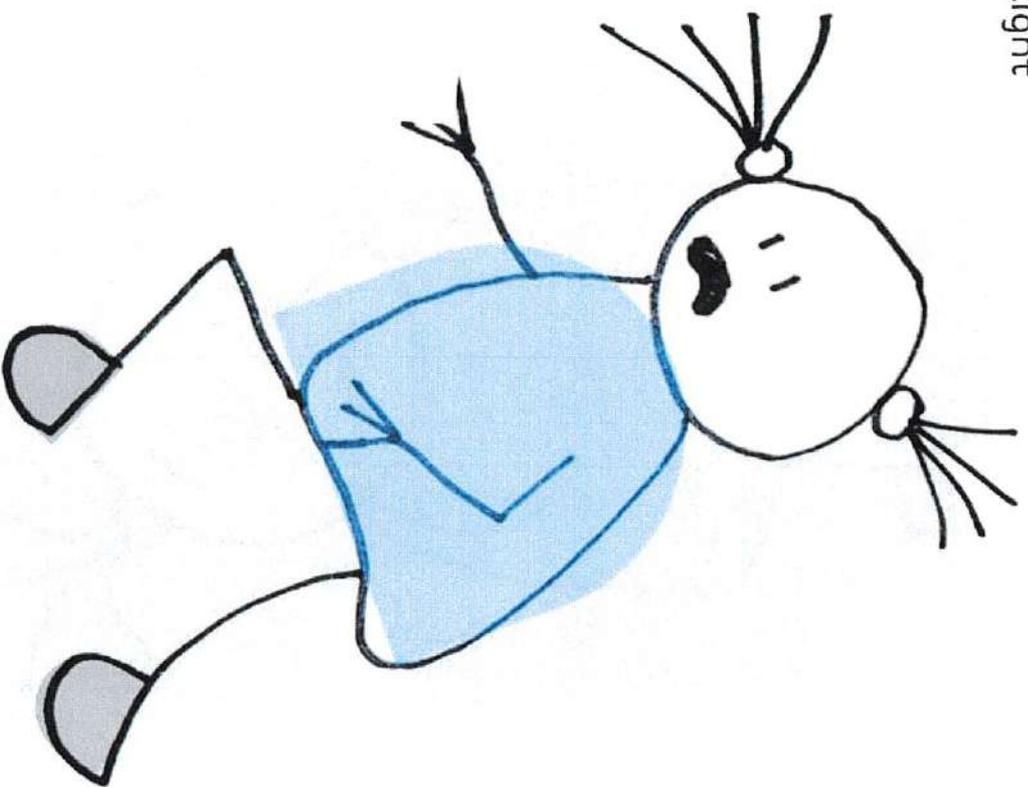
- Safety first. Keep me & everyone else safe
- Allow me to choose a trusted adult to go to
- Give me a role
- Support me socially
- Give me somewhere safe to go at break time
- Match my energy (not my affect)
- Make things predictable
- Let me know about changes in routine, especially if there are strangers visiting the school - even if you think they are safe, I might not
- Hanging, swinging, climbing
- Deep breathing
- Wait for me to volunteer, don't single me out
- Connect and show empathy before exploring the consequences of my behaviour
- Really chewy snack
- Give me an important job
- Accept I might not understand or remember what happened, I was trying to survive what felt dangerous
- Give me somewhere safe to go if I need to self-soothe



Fight

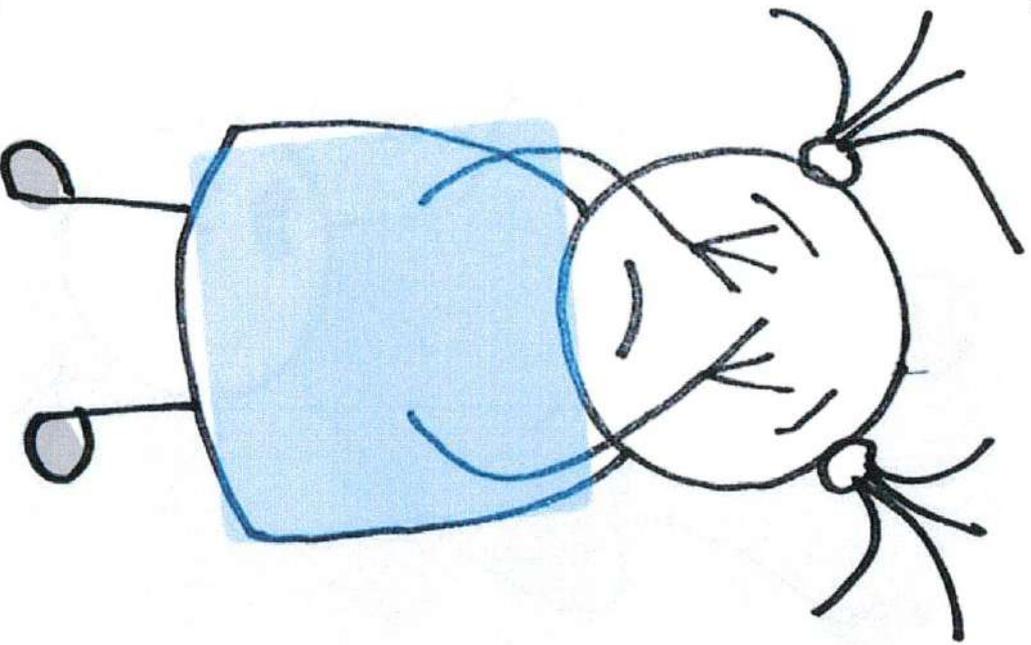


FLIGHT



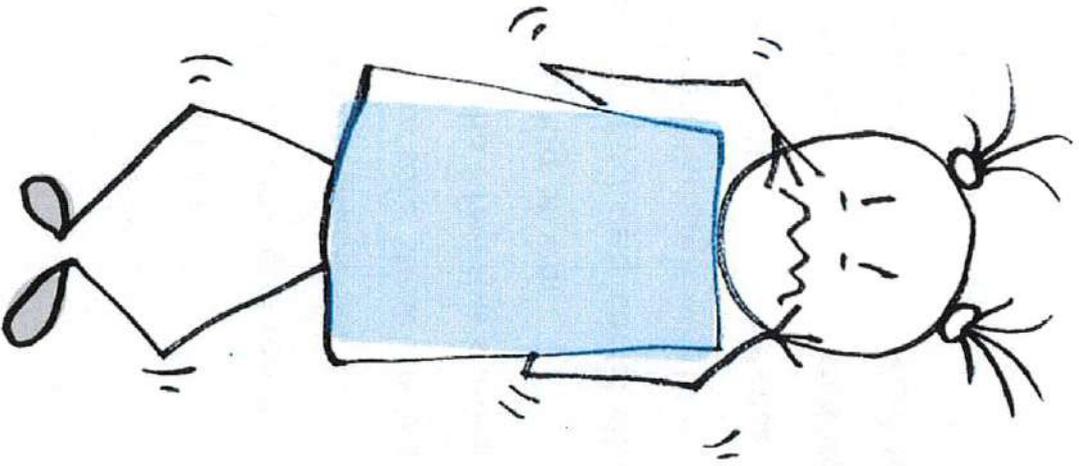
What I might look like on the outside

- Keeping super busy
- Running away
- Constantly asking to go to the toilet a lot (when no medical issues are present)
- Constantly asking to get something located outside of the classroom
- Hiding under tables
- Head on the desk
- Not coping in free time or able to follow school rules
- Need to be first or at the front
- Aggressive, clenched fists, threatening
- Bumping into people
- Avoiding tasks and activities or closeness to people
- Baby talk or silly voices
- Crying - especially if I normally go into fight mode and I can't as you are stronger/bigger than me
- 'Hyperactive', giddy & silly



How I might feel on the inside

- You're bigger/stronger than me, I can't fight, it's safer to get away
- Unable to focus
- Lonely
- Panic
- Feeling bad, movement is distracting
- Shame
- Overwhelmed
- Worried about what is happening next
- Anxious, apprehensive
- Painful joints
- Numb
- Vibrating
- Ready for action
- Jumpy and tense
- Sick

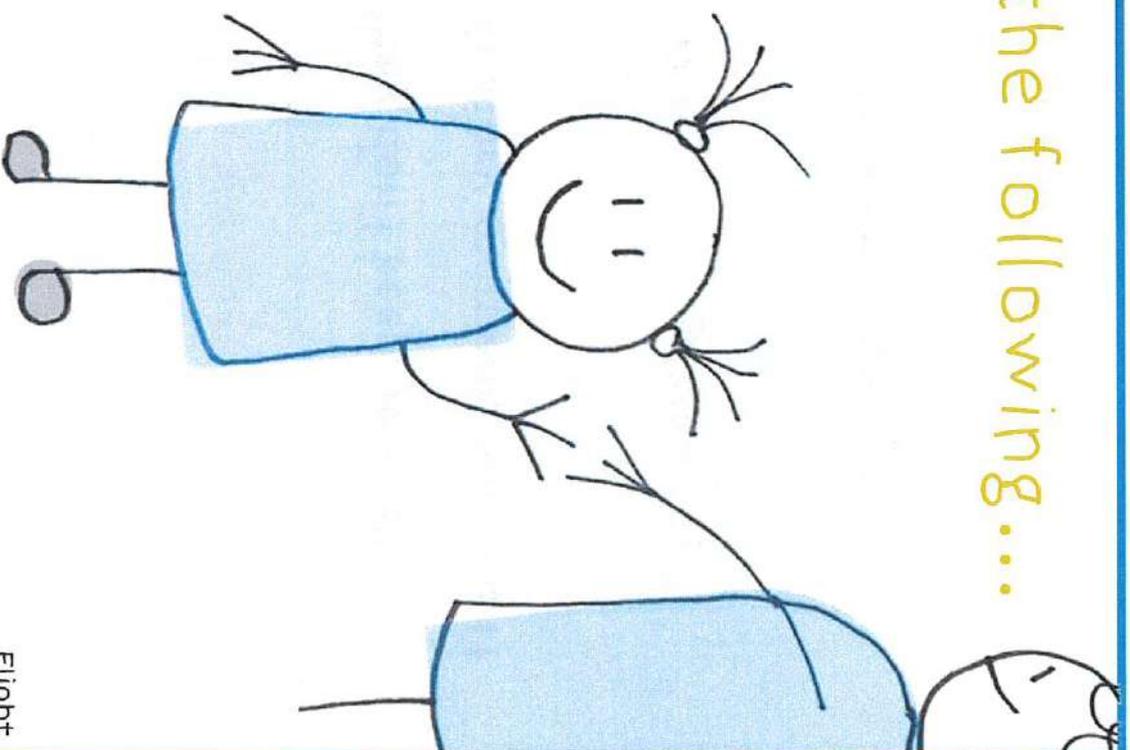


What might be happening in my inner world?

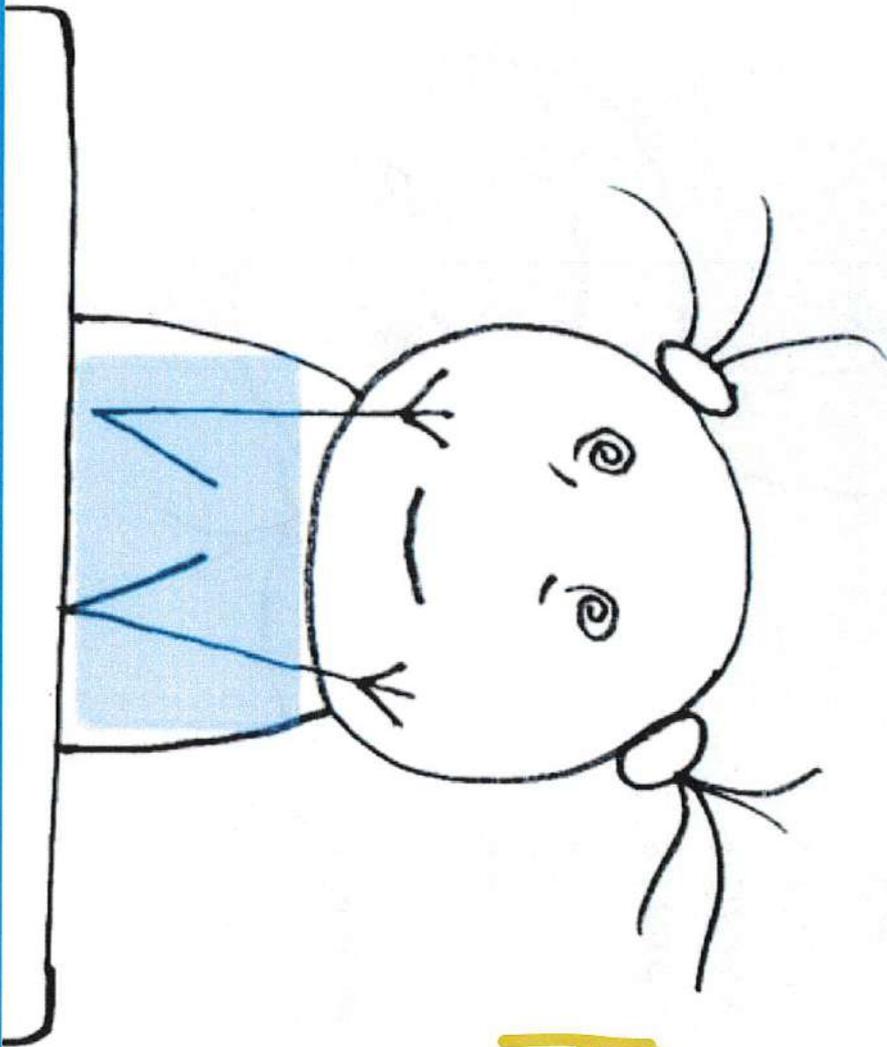
- Adults can't be trusted; they don't keep you safe
- I want to escape from this scary moment, but I can't
- I am trapped
- I don't want you to see my real feelings you can't handle them
- I am really worried I can't do what is going to happen next

You can help me feel safe with the following...

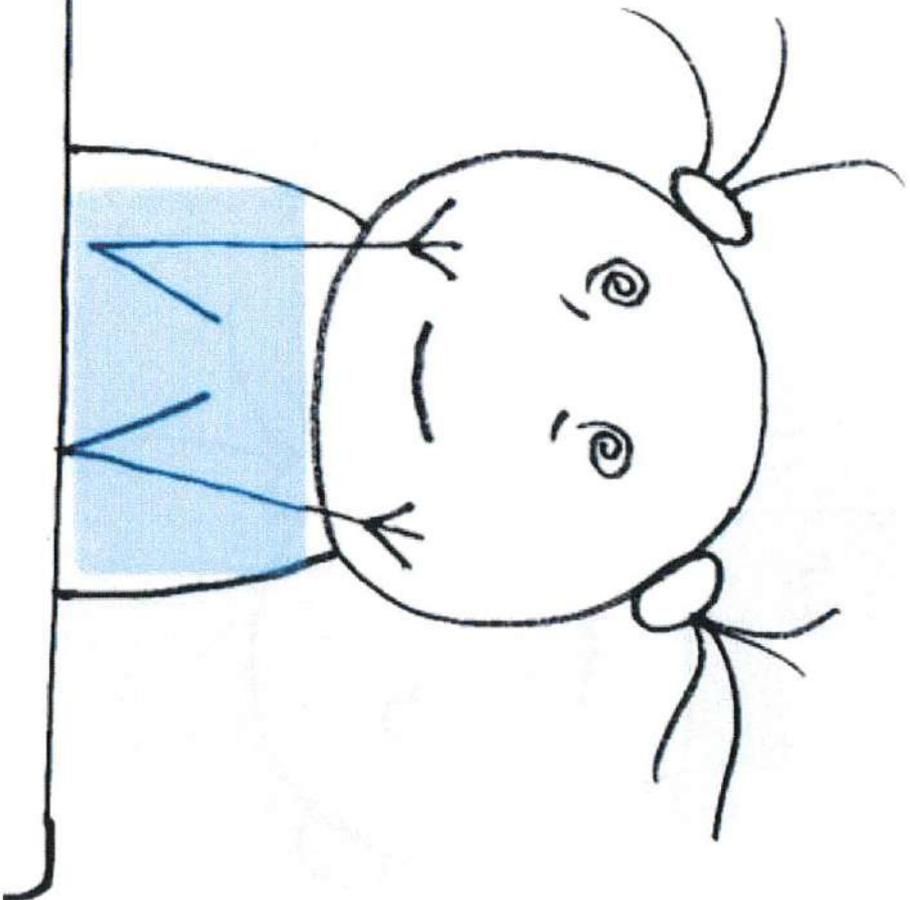
- Keep me close by
- Deep breathing
- Give me an easy and familiar task
- Make things predictable
- Tell me I'm safe, show me a safe place or trusted person I can go to - ask me who I feel this should be
- Hanging, tug of war
- Crunchy snacks e.g. carrot sticks, pretzels
- Kindly talk through what might be tricky
- Agree a code word/sentence with me so I can easily leave the classroom to see my trusted adult if I need to without being shamed
- Remind me what I'm meant to be doing alongside my friends rather than singling me out



Flight

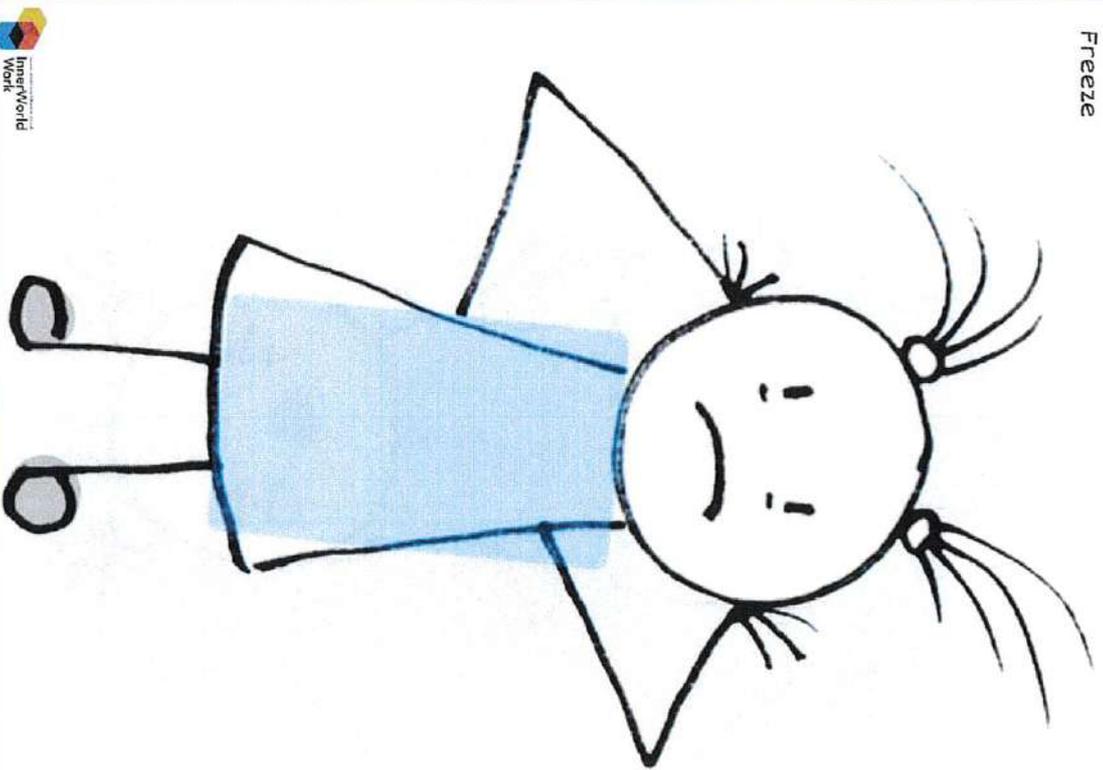


FREEZE



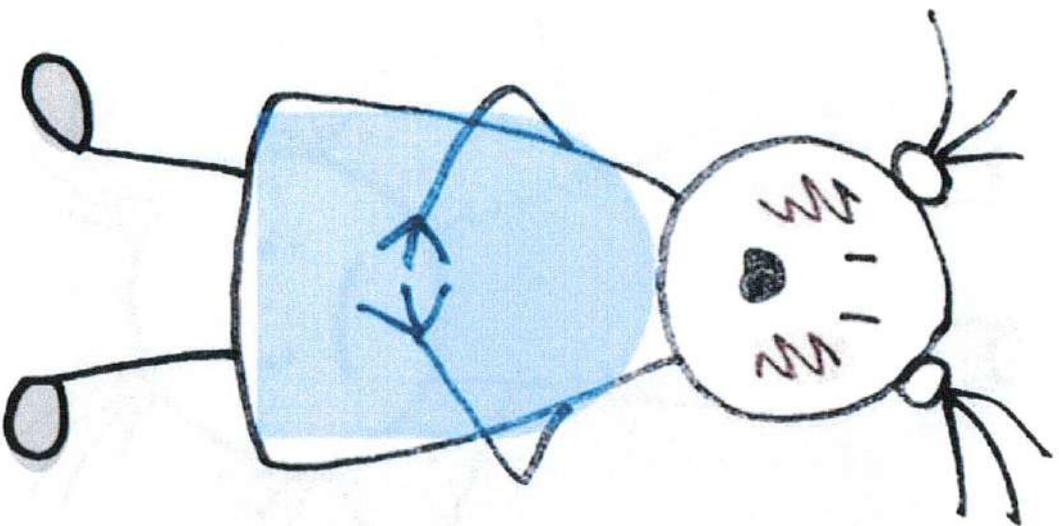
What I might look like on the outside

- Not interested, bored
- Confused
- Forgetful
- Trying to distract, talking about something else
- Hard to move through a task
- Scanning the room
- Not listening
- Daydreaming or staring into space
- Clumsy
- Slow to move when they have been asked



How I might feel on the inside

- Deeply anxious
- Under attack
- Frozen brain
- Heart racing
- Pupils dilated
- Blood is rushing to legs
- ready to escape
- My brain is slowing down
- Hearing becomes more sensitive
- If I don't move, you can't see me, or you'll lose interest so I can escape (go into flight)
- I feel like I am in a dream
- I feel under attack
- Disconnected
- I am trying to think of something safe
- I can't do this

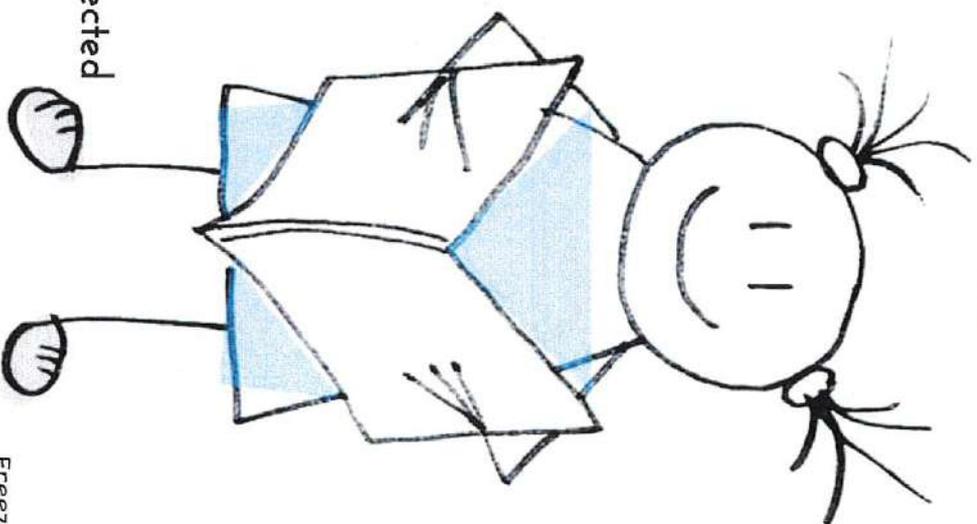


What might be happening in my inner world?

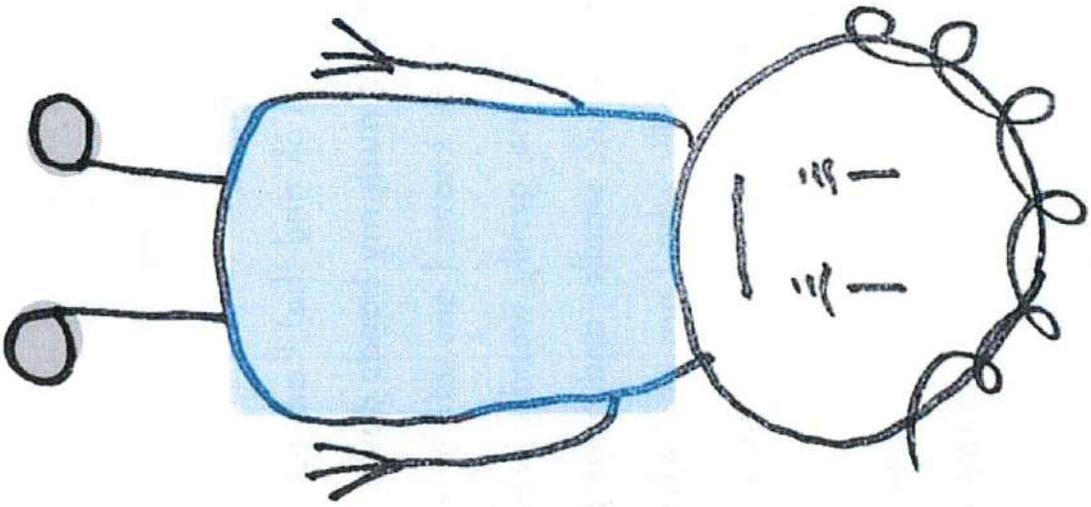
- I can't bear your rejection
- I need to feel safe
- Shame, I hate myself
- I'm scared, I don't know what is going to happen
- When I fail at this, you'll send me away
- When you realise, I can't do this, you won't want me in your class anymore
- Adults can't be trusted; they don't keep you safe

You can help me feel safe with the following...

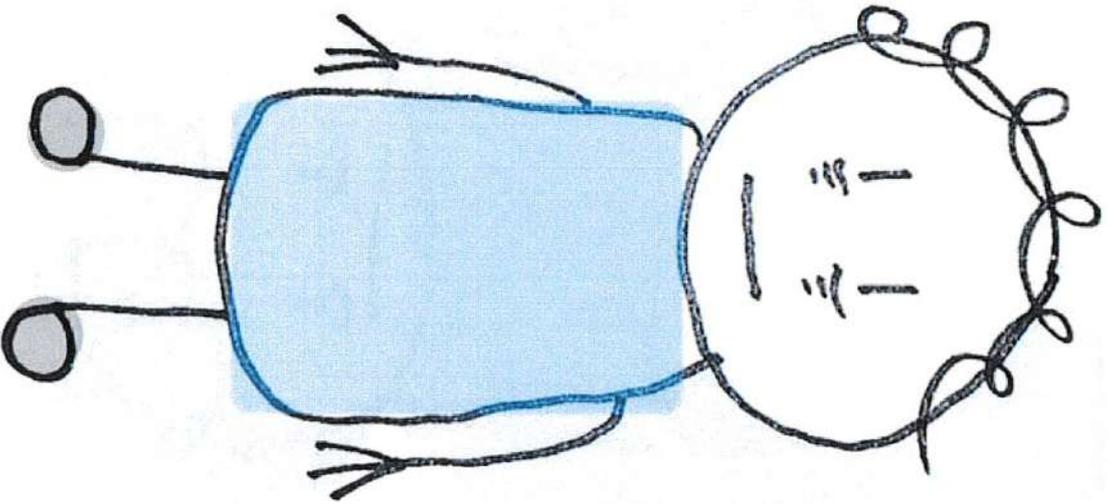
- Do the task with me
- Deep breathing
- Tell me I'm ok and that I am safe
- Ask me to push my hands down under my seat and lift myself up off the chair so my body knows I am safe in the classroom
- Stay with me, gently wonder where I've gone and welcome me back to the room
- Make the task smaller and more predictable
- Tell me kindly who I am and what I am doing
- Climbing, hanging, jumping on a trampoline
- Digging in mud/sand
- Tell me what you want me to do 1:1 without showing me frustration
- If I can tolerate touch, touch my shoulder every time you pass me to keep us connected



Freeze

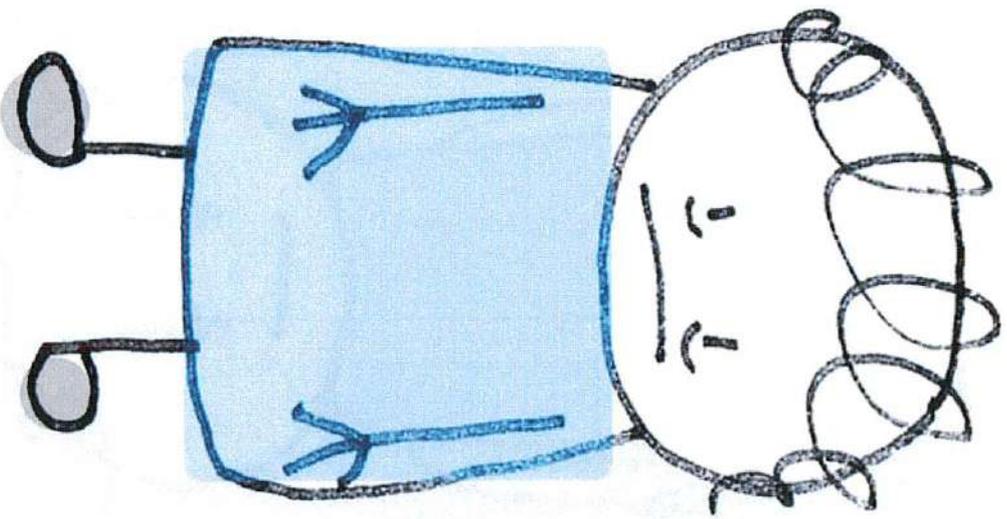


COLLAPSE



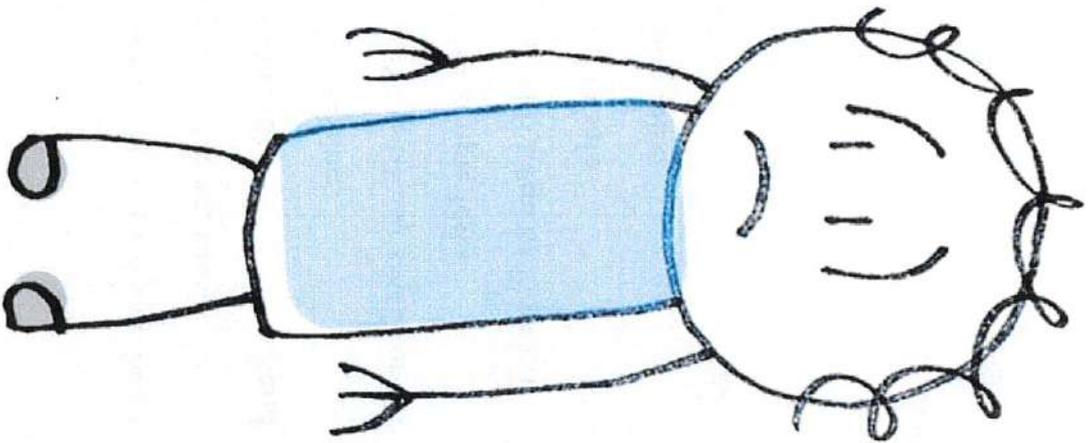
What I might look like on the outside

- Head on the desk
- Socially withdrawn, quiet
- Compliant - never drawing attention
- Unable to think, just yes or no answers
- Passive
- Resigned
- Neutral expression
- Low mood
- Slow movement
- Disconnected
- Withdrawn, loner
- Silent
- Anxious
- Easily bullied



How I might feel on the inside

- Muscles are floppy
- Heart rate slows
- Shallow breathing
- I can't think
- My tummy aches
- Poorly
- Tired
- Worn out
- No energy
- Sad, tearful
- Lonely

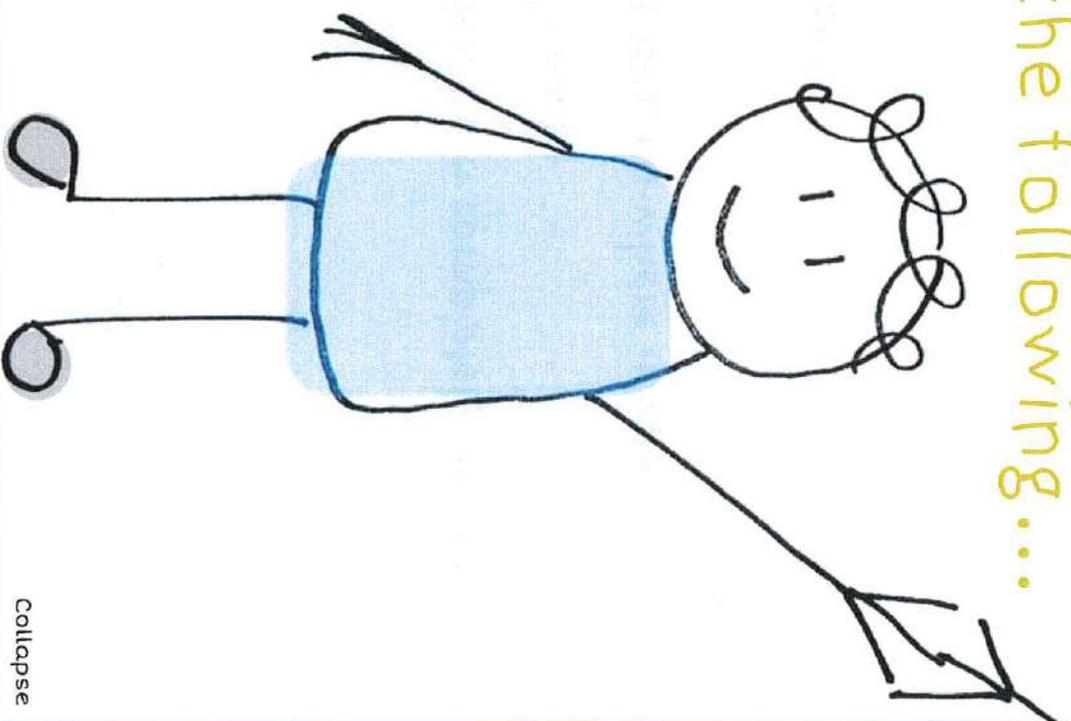


What might be happening in my inner world?

- I've given up
- Why couldn't I be better, I am completely useless
- I hate myself, I am unliveable
- The world is too dangerous, no-where is safe
- It's all my fault
- Nothing will ever feel ok
- I can't keep myself safe
- I want to die

You can help me feel safe with the following...

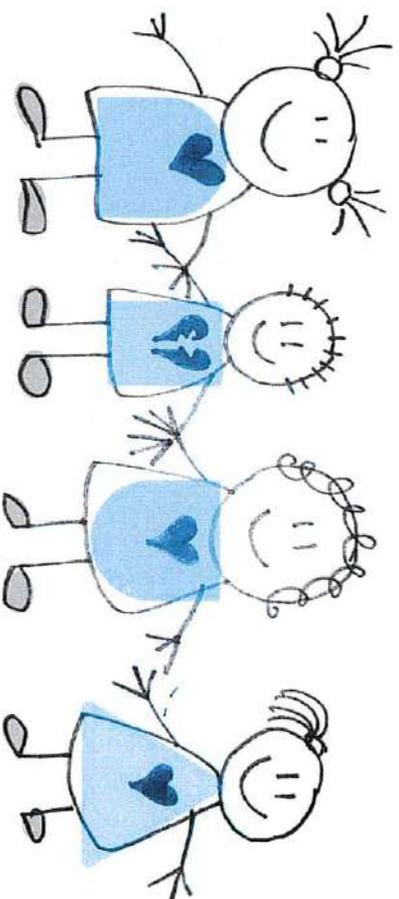
- Get me moving – swinging, bouncing on a trampoline, dancing, running
- Drumming, singing, music
- If I can tolerate touch, try a hand massage
- Butterfly tapping
- Use scent, try citrusy smells or cinnamon
- Repetitive simple tasks
- Building with Lego or Playdoh
- Tell me I'm safe
- Deep breathing
- Crunchy biscuit & hot chocolate
- Spend time with a trusted adult
- Do the task with me
- Tell me what to do without showing frustration
- Let me blend in without losing me, I don't want to be the centre of attention



For a clear and easy understanding of developmental trauma, how it impacts development and what can be done to support repair, please read the following free articles by Beacon House -

Developmental Trauma Close Up The Repair of Early Trauma

Download here: www.beaconhouse.org.uk/useful-resources/



MOVING FROM BEHAVIOURAL TO RELATIONAL RESPONSES

IN SCHOOL

Is it always the same students who receive sanctions, detentions and exclusions? Are the same pupils always in the 'sun' at the top of the behaviour chart and the same pupils always in the 'dark cloud'? What if we made the brave* decision to accept that often our behavioural approaches aren't working and in some cases, make it worse? What if we tried something different? What if we go to where the student is in their brain and body in that moment? What if we connect with the way the brain is sequenced and develops?



REGULATING THE BRAINSTEM

A regulated, safe adult checking in with a dysregulated student regularly through the day offers them co-regulation opportunities.



CREATE CONNECTION INSTEAD OF DISCONNECTION

Doing this every day may make a calmer classroom and at the very least offers a predictable daily quiet space/time



MEDITATE INSTEAD OF MEDIATE

Movement, sensory and play breaks for all (and one on one) are not just for younger students. Taking away break time may take away the movement the student needs to self-regulate



MOVEMENT, SENSORY AND PLAY BREAKS FOR ALL

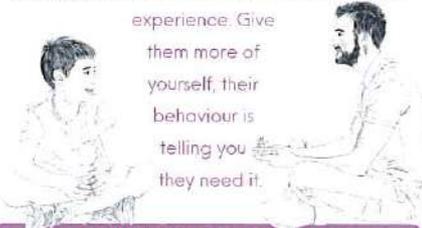
RELATING WITH THE LIMBIC REGION

Imagine if you knew how a student was feeling at the start of the day, at lunch, at home time. Would you adapt your approach?



CONFIDENTIAL FEELINGS CHECK IN INSTEAD OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR CHARTS

Taking something away from our children intensifies loss. If their early lives were defined by loss the language you use needs to be respectful of this experience. Give them more of yourself, their behaviour is telling you they need it.



GIVING BACK INSTEAD OF TAKING AWAY

"What can I do to help you through the day?"



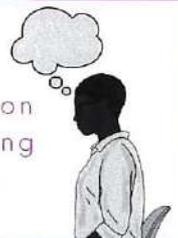
ASK INSTEAD OF ASSUME

If you looked in the mirror would you feel safe & relaxed with your reflection? All these non-verbal approaches are just as important as the language you use



TONE, VOLUME AND BODY LANGUAGE

Curiosity & care, rather than judgement & punishment. Offering curiosity and compassion EVERY TIME something goes wrong creates a different path for the child to eventually take



TONE, VOLUME AND BODY LANGUAGE

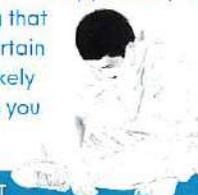
REASONING WITH THE CORTICAL REGION

What if we waited? What if we asked "How can this be repaired either today or the next day when we are all calmer?"



REPAIR INSTEAD OF REPROACH

Moving into the present and not holding on to what has passed. Holding a child in the past forces them to stay stuck in their behaviour and offers them no opportunity to step forward. Expecting that they will behave in a certain way will make it more likely that they will behave as you are predicting



A FLUID PRESENT INSTEAD OF STUCK PAST

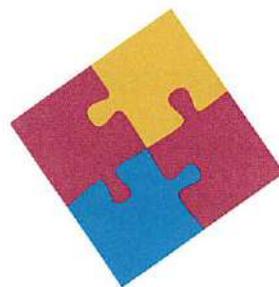
Do you and your students know what their survival behaviours look like? Do you and your students know what helps to regulate their survival urges?



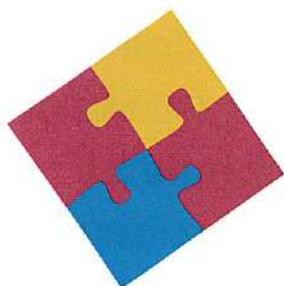
PROACTIVE INSTEAD OF REACTIVE

Important note: A student who has experienced multiple behavioural responses may take time to accept an attuned relational response as trustworthy. Multiple experiences of the new relational responses might be needed before the student is able to accept it as authentic.

*Moving from behavioural to relational is tough. It takes personal commitment, openness and can increase your own sense of vulnerability. By taking a relational approach, we are stepping into the risk that we ask our students to take – the risk of being hurt; and the risk of trusting and being trusted.



Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit



THE **OT** TOOLBOX.COM



Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit
Copyright 2018 Colleen Beck, OTR/L
www.theottoolbox.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without written permission of the author.

This product has been created for educational purposes only. The information found in this publication should not substitute for medical advice from a physician. If necessary, all children should be individually evaluated by an occupational therapist. This publication does not substitute direct intervention from a physician or occupational therapist. All activities should be completed with common sense and with direct observation by a responsible adult. Use of the activities in this publication indicate consent. The author of this publication is not liable for any injury caused to a child by completing these activities.





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Fidgeting Tools for the Classroom

Fidgeting with items can help with attention, regulation, and focus. Try these fidgeting options in the classroom:

- A chain of paper clips
- Pipe cleaners and beads attached to the pencils topper
- Pipe cleaners and beads made into a desk-top fidget tool
- Key chains linked together
- Balloons filled with a small amount of flour, play dough, dry beans, rice, or slime
- Cotton glove made into a weighted fidget toy
- Strip of sticky-back velcro inside or under a desk
- Small rubber bands and a shower curtain loop
- Soft kneaded eraser
- Nuts and bolts
- Slice of a pool noodle
- Bead keychain crafts
- Bubble wrap
- Binder clip attached to a pencil
- Pipe cleaners wrapped in a loose ball
- Plastic straw
- Coil keychain ring
- Craft stick with rubber bands
- Fuzzy craft pom pom
- Koosh ball
- Small squeeze ball
- Stress ball
- Silly putty
- Pencil grip
- Bendable string (Wikki Stix)
- Chewable pencil topper
- Chewable jewelry
- Belt buckle fidget tool
- Strip of buttons or zipper cut from an old shirt
- Shoe laces threaded with beads and tied in a loop
- Bean bag
- Stretchy toy
- Wrist weight
- Mermaid fabric
- Slap bracelet
- Tape stuck to the desk
- Mini erasers
- 3-4 small LEGO blocks
- Rubber band looped through the belt loops of the child's pants or a button hole on the shirt
- "Jelly" bracelets or rings
- Rubber bands wrapped around the pencil (Use them as a pencil gripper, too)
- Zipper bracelets
- Beads laced on the shoes
- Marble sewn into fabric
- Stickers
- Post-it note pad
- Bendable toys





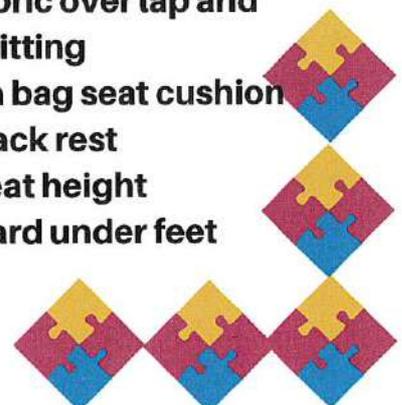
Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Adapted Seating in the Classroom

Adapted seating can be a sensory strategy that helps with fidgeting as well.

Sensory needs can overflow to wiggling, poor posture, slouching, and decreased focus. An altered seating system is sometimes used to address a weak core strength and resulting inefficient posture as well. Try these sensory-based seating ideas:

- Wobble seat
- Inflated disk cushion
- Inflated textured cushion
- Inclined cushion
- Foam cushion
- Picnic chair covers
- Stadium seat warmer
- Bean bags
- Intertubes
- Therapy balls
- Wedge seats
- Support added to the seat
- Partially inflated beach ball
- Therapy ball
- Large ball placed in a milk crate
- Lounge chair
- Milk crate with soft cushion topper
- Large floor pillows
- Camp chairs
- Body pillows
- Rocking chair
- Kneel on a pillow
- Plastic storage bin with half of lid cut off (the child can work, sitting in the bin and use the half-lid as a desk surface)
- Prone on floor with clipboards
- Standing at an easel
- Standing at a raised table
- Inside a cardboard box
- Inside a tent
- Attach bungee cord or therapy tubing to chair legs
- Pedal bike under desk
- Pool noodle attached to seat surface for a border
- Swivel chair
- Chair on wheels
- Memory foam cushion
- Carpet squares
- No-slip shelf covering on seats
- Rocker board at a high desk
- Bungee lounge chair
- Stand on a foam cushion
- Therapy band and pool noodle on desk legs
- Bungee cord threaded through tennis ball(s) and attached to desk legs
- Stretchy fabric over lap and legs while sitting
- Fabric bean bag seat cushion
- Textured back rest
- Adjusted seat height
- Scooter board under feet



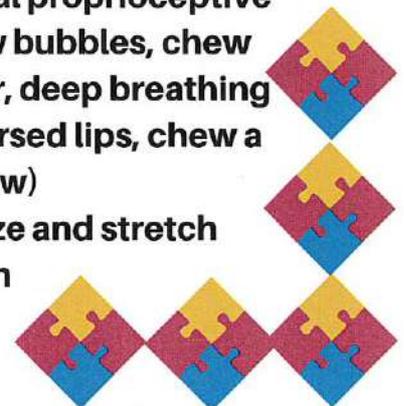


Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Self-Regulation in the Classroom

For the child who struggles with sensory processing disorder or is challenged with impaired responsiveness, interventions in regulation can be used in the classroom. Self-regulation allows students to manage their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions so that they can successfully learn and navigate their environment. Try these self-regulation activities in the classroom:

- Guided visualization of appropriate responses
- Refocusing activities
- Relaxation exercises
- emotional regulation activities
- Stop and listen impulsivity exercises
- Schedules and warnings before transitions
- Impulse control strategies
- Printable impulse control journal
- A quiet space or corner of the classroom
- The Alert Program to teach and promote self-regulation
- The Zones of Regulation program to help students recognize and address self-regulation needs
- Listening activities
- Simon Says
- Slowly count to ten and stretch
- Yoga break
- Brain breaks (keep them themed to learning topics)
- "Draw How I Feel exercises"
- Red Light, Green Light game
- Teach individual goal planning
- Guided imagination
- Self-motivation by working toward individual rewards
- Stop and Check: self-monitor strategies
- Peer guidance
- Self-reflection at the end of the day
- Model self-regulation through self-talk in difficult situations
- Teach students to identify emotions and how to respond to them in the classroom setting
- Deep breathing exercises
- Teach self-monitoring strategies
- Create a calm-down bin with sensory tools
- Teach mindfulness exercises
- Stop, Drop, and Stretch
- Provide extra time on the playground
- Calming oral proprioceptive input (blow bubbles, chew fruit leather, deep breathing through pursed lips, chew a plastic straw)
- Jaw squeeze and stretch mouth open





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

105 Calm Down Strategies for School

The classroom is an environment that is a place where over-responsiveness can easily interfere with learning, self-confidence, or social emotional development. Try these calm-down activities in the classroom:

- Use a predictive schedule
- Limit close seating
- Minimize auditory stimulation
- Increase space between children
- Movement breaks
- Sensory seating
- Provide a calm down zone
- Weighted lap blanket
- Try tactile tools at the desk
- Decrease visual distractions (trifold, work standing at an easel, single color bulletin boards)
- Use a visual schedule for transitions
- Provide a warning before fire drills or bus evacuation drills
- Plan an accomodate for school-wide assemblies
- Provide a calm down portion of the day build into the schedule with deep breathing and soft music
- Overhead arm stretch
- Stretch before desk work or tests
- Catch weighted ball in learning tasks
- Water bottles with a straw at each desk (ask parents to send in sports bottles)
- Bean bag chair reading center
- Utilize earbuds
- Try sound-minimizing headphones
- Whisper phones for quiet work and test-taking
- Wall Push-Ups- Show the student how to push against the wall while doing "push-ups" from a standing position. This is a great "brain break" activity that provides proprioceptive input for heavy work for improved focus, calming, and self-regulation
- Chair Push-Ups- Allow the child to push up from the seat with his arms, keeping the elbows strait. Pushing up through the arms provides proprioceptive heavy work through the upper body
- Move desk/furniture
- Erase the chalkboard, Smartboard, or dry erase board
- Carry milk crates or plastic bins full of books or supplies from center to center around the classroom or from room to room in the building





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

105 Calm Down Strategies for School (Continued)

- Allow gum during tests or quiet work time
- Quiet fidget toys
- Movement learning with the whole classroom
- Shoe laces fidget- Add a couple of beads to the child's shoe laces for a fidget toy that can be used discretely while sitting in floor circle time or during desk work.
- Allow student to use the manual pencil sharpener
- Carry a backpack from room to room or to specials
- Staple paper onto/remove staples from a bulletin board
- Air cushion seating or other alternative seating option
- Place chairs on rugs
- Hallway March between classrooms
- Sports bottles for drinking
- Movement breaks in the classroom
- Push mats in the gym
- Headphones for limiting auditory stimulation
- Visual picture schedule
- Simon Says Spelling
- Use play dough in math
- Use a kneaded pencil eraser for a hand exercise
- Chewy snacks for calming input
- Sensory bin for math or sight words
- Vibrating pen rainbow writing for sight word or spelling practice
- Jump/move/hop in hallway
- Roll a ball between the legs
- Hopscotch Math
- Graph Paper Writing
- Make a desk sensory diet box
- Wash desks with spray bottles
- Cut classroom decorations or projects from oaktag
- Body squeezes
- Therapy band or bungee cord tied to the chair legs
- Hand gripper exercises
- Weighted vest or lap pad
- Provide visual organization strategies such as simplified instructions, colored folders to organize subject matter, or a daily schedule
- Provide a separate desk space area with visual borders such as "walls" created by classroom furniture to reduce visual distractions during desk work
- Provide extra space to prevent incidental touch by others
- Weighted lap pads

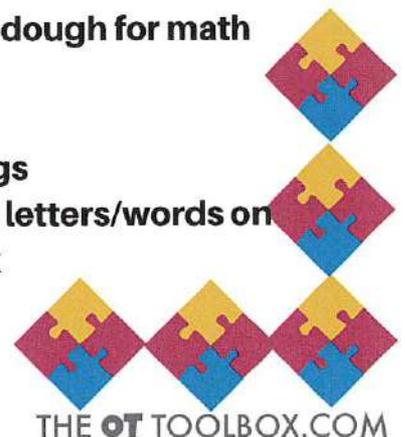




Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

105 Calm Down Strategies for School (Continued)

- Designate spaces for circle time (e.g., carpet square or taped area of the floor)
- Approach the child from the front and warn the child before touch
- Use firm touch and avoid light touch
- Minimize other possible overwhelming environmental stimuli by using natural lighting and curtains over the windows
- Shut the classroom door and blinds during periods of the day
- Use rubber bottoms on the chair and desk legs to reduce auditory impact
- Ensure a firm, supportive seat and that the desk and chair fit appropriately
- Sharpen pencils with manual pencil sharpener
- Staple paper
- Stack chairs
- Isometric exercise breaks
- Allow student to stand at their desk
- Wheelbarrow walk breaks
- Provide Calm Down Breaks
- Stress Ball at each desk
- Squeeze Pencil Gripper
- Standing in Line exercises
- Paper clip chain at desk as a counter tool and fidget tool.
- Teach students to identify emotions
- Drawing
- Use a visual timer
- Discovery bottles
- DIY stress balls
- Scented sensory bin for matching tasks
- Graded hand squeezes
- Classical music during quiet reading
- Deep breathing
- Stick masking tape to a desk so students can peel it off during listening tasks
- Worry stones
- Green plants to water
- Calming sounds: water running, rain, beach, thunderstorm audio
- Quiet reading
- Lead students in joint compressions
- Doodle
- Listen to a story
- Lava lamp with lights turned down low
- Rocking chair
- Lavender play dough for math or writing
- Rainstick
- Shoulder shrugs
- Student draws letters/words on another's back



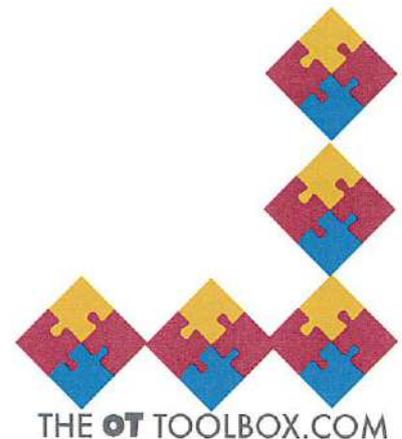


Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Chewing Tools for Classroom Sensory Needs

Chewable jewelry and tools come in a variety of textures and toughness to meet sensory needs of students. In the classroom setting, chewable tools are helpful for sensory needs because the discreteness and the variety of styles on the market. Use chewable items in the classroom to meet sensory needs. Here are types of chewable items that may be used in the classroom:

- Pencil toppers
- Coil bracelets
- Coil necklaces
- Hand-held chew items
- Chewable necklace charms
- Chewable bracelet charms
- Chewable ring
- Chewable beads
- Chewable tube
- Plastic straw of various widths
- "Chew stick"
- Oral desensitization brush
- Toothbrush
- Fabric necklace
- Fabric bracelet
- Cord bracelet
- Chewable charm attached to keychain and looped to shirt collar
- Break-away necklace with chewable charm
- Chewable utensils for lunch time





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Organization Strategies for Classroom Sensory Needs

Studies show that individuals with a small or underdeveloped frontal lobe of the brain tend to have difficulties with organization, poor memory, emotional reactions, and they tend to become overwhelmed by simple tasks. These individuals will have trouble keeping themselves organized in tasks. Often times, organization challenges are a result of difficulty with planning and prioritizing tasks.

Try these tips to help organize students in the classroom:

1. Develop routines and stick to them. Morning routines can involve unpacking a backpack, planning homework into correct bins, putting away items needed for the day, sitting at the desk, and starting on morning work.

Maintain a consistent routine.

2. Develop routines for different parts of the student's day. Social stories, picture schedules, story stones, and physical routing minders can help.

3. Use a simple Schoolwork Folder system. Create a system for paperwork that needs to come back to school and what can stay at home. A simple 2 pocket folders works best for this. Adding extra pages or parts to the folder creates too much visual input. Add a bright sticker to one pocket for "Keep at Home" and a bright sticker for the pocket to "Bring Back". A plastic folder is more durable. Older students can use color coded folders for each subject.

4. Clear document folders in different colors can be used to coordinate with each subject's color.

5. Create a container system for lockers. Use one container for hat, gloves, scarf, and one container for books. The container can be emptied into the backpack at the end of the day. Add pictures to the locker for a visual cue for where the coat, lunchbox, and backpack should hang. Add shelves if needed.

6. Picture Symbols. A visual cue is a great way to break down tasks. Create a series of pictures for desk morning tasks, lunch tasks, or end-of-the-day tasks. Pictures can be printed off in a strip and the strips replaced as the day goes by.





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Organization Strategies for Classroom Sensory Needs (Continued)

7. **Use checklists.** Make checklists that the student can mark off tasks as they are completed. Using a checklist is a great way to incorporate handwriting skills into the routine. Marking a check mark or "x" in a small box allows for precision of motor movements.
8. **Eliminate dropping of the pencil.** Students with organizational problems often times have difficulty with fidgeting, sensory issues, fine motor skills, attention. Dropping the pencil can create a break in attention that allows for further disorganization. Tie the pencil to the desk to prevent dropping: Tie a string to the eraser end of the pencil and tie the end of the string to a suction cup . Attach the suction cup to the desk surface.
9. **Homework assignments should be written in the same place on the blackboard each day.**
10. **Allow time at the beginning of the class or day instead of at the end to write down that day's homework.**
11. **Teachers can sign off in an assignment book after the student writes down the day's homework. Provide a space for parent sign-off after homework has been completed.**
12. **Reward systems.** Set up an incentive or reward system for appropriate organization of folders, backpack, locker, or homework completion. These can be tailored to the student's interests.
13. **Use a second set of textbooks at home to eliminate the need to bring books back and forth between school and home.**
14. **Break long term projects into smaller tasks with deadlines.**
15. **Color code notebooks, folders, book covers, and workbooks.** Books and notebooks can use prefabricated book covers or you can use colored paper to create book covers in a variety of colors. Add a small colored dot on homework assignments that correspond with the color of the subject's book. Use markers or small stickers to color code homework.
16. **Use a zippered pouch for pencils, erasers, calculators, etc in the backpack.** This will reduce the items "floating around" in the backpack.





Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Organization Strategies for Classroom Sensory Needs (Continued)

17. Parents can be provided with a small list of students in the class that can help with homework assignment questions. These students or parents can be called if there are questions about assignments.

18. Place a checklist of what needs to be brought home each day in the locker or in the desk.

19. Use a monthly calendar to keep track of long-term assignments and weekly classes like gym or library.

20. Develop a written contract of organization tasks with the student, teacher, and parent, along with choices for the student.

21. Mailed homework. The parents would need to provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope and the teacher can mail the next few week's homework assignments.

22. Clear plastic, gallon-sized bags in the backpack to hold items like gloves, gym clothes, etc.

23. Email parent permission slips.

24. Breakdown worksheets by folding the paper into sections that can be completed before moving on to the next section.

25. Reduce distractions in the classroom to prevent distractibility: place desk away from windows, doors, and the pencil sharpener.

26. Provide concise and concrete directions.

27. Use a classroom peer as an organizing mentor.

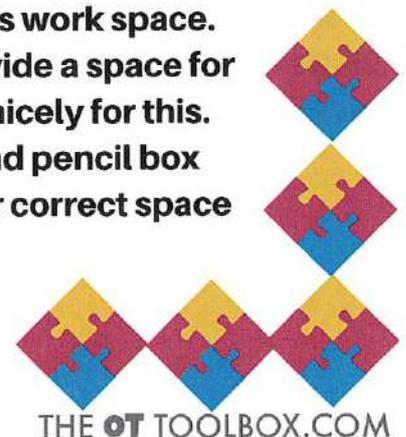
28. Provide a daily class checklist.

29. Mark pages in a book or workbook with a paperclip so that the student can turn to the correct page more easily and quickly.

30. Help the student clear their desk of all items except the items they should be using. Work on getting the student to be independent in this task by using visual and verbal cues. Provide a 10 second "Clear Off" time before starting a new task to allow time for the student to clear his work space.

31. Turn in completed assignments immediately and provide a space for completed work with clear label. A bin, file, or tray works nicely for this.

32. Mark off spaces inside the desk for items like books and pencil box using masking tape. The items should be "parked" in their correct space unless they are being used.

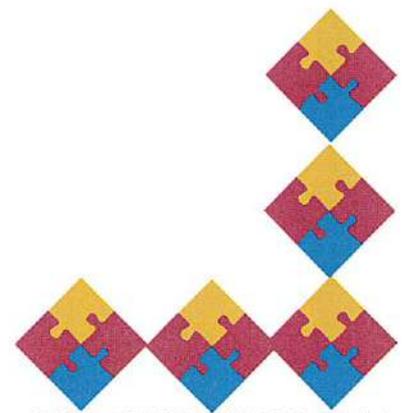




Classroom Sensory Strategies Toolkit

Organization Strategies for Classroom Sensory Needs (Continued)

33. Provide a low cardboard box inside desks with compartments for organizing supplies.
34. Provide a clear plastic bin or shelf for the student's items instead of using a desk or locker.
35. Use a triangular pencil grip to keep pencils from rolling off desks.
36. Provide velcro for students to attach their pencil to the desk surface or inside the desk.
37. Try an eraser ring to prevent losing large erasers inside desks.
38. Use a kneadable eraser. It can be stuck inside the desk when not in use and makes a great fidget toy.
39. Use a digital clock in the classroom or timers for competing tasks.
40. Conduct daily, weekly, and monthly clean-ups of desk, locker, and backpack.
41. At the end of the day, help the student prepare his work space for the next day.
42. Provide a small movement break between tasks.
43. Allow for self-monitoring of systems.
44. Provide tools for fidgeting.
45. Try using an Impulse Control Journal.



INDOOR RECESS SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES



INDOOR RECESS SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES

**Wall
push-ups**

**Hallway
hopscotch**

**Dance
party**

**Play
dough**

**Beanbag
toss**

**Animal
walk in
hall**

**Freeze
dance**

**Yoga on
YouTube**

**Hallway
hoola hoop**

**Skip in
hall**

**Shaving
cream
paint
(small
group)**

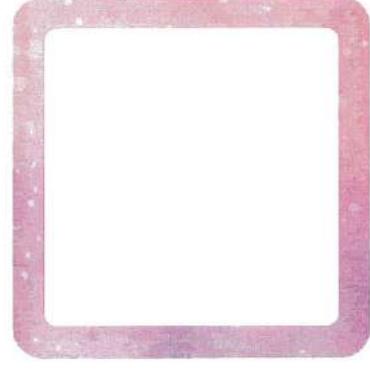
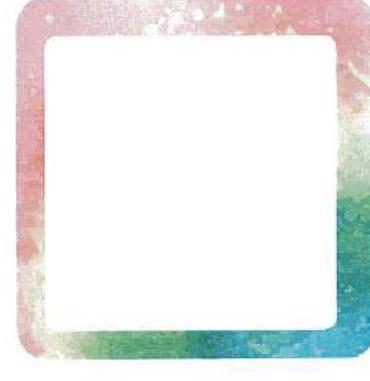
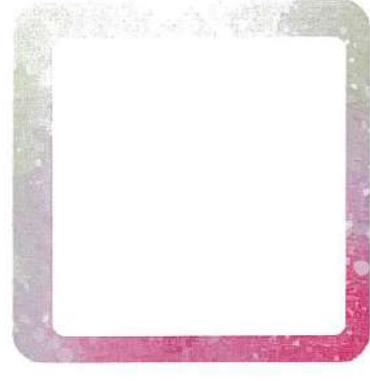
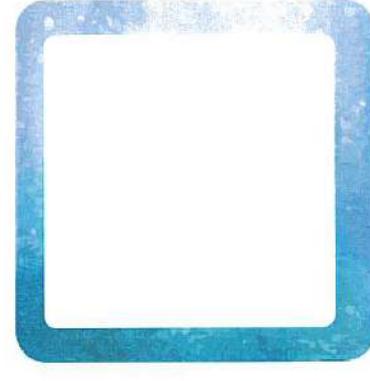
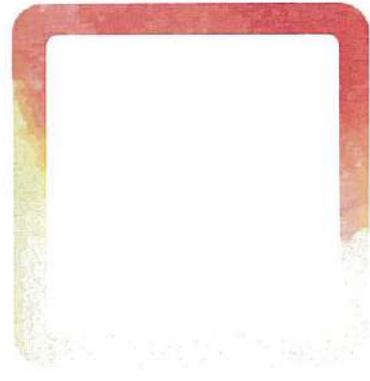
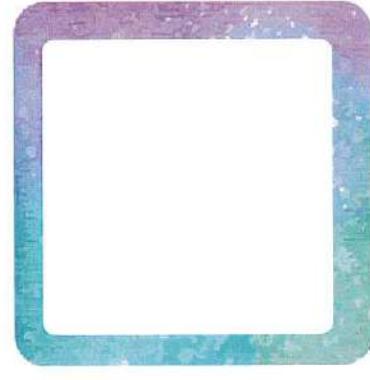
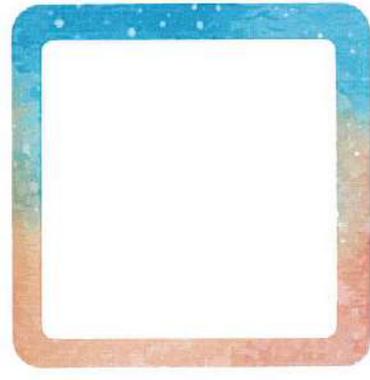
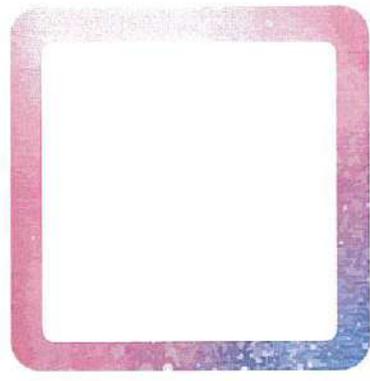
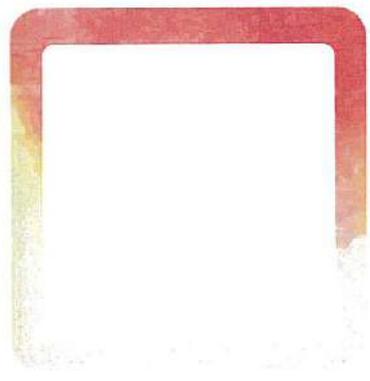
**Aerobic
exercise
video on
YouTube**

**Build with
plastic
cups**

Charades

**Jumping
jacks**

INDOOR RECESS SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES





USING PACE IN SCHOOL

*Through PACE, and as they begin to feel safer, children discover they
can now do better*



Dr Hester Riviere, Educational Psychologist

Hester.Riviere@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dr Rachel Evered, Clinical Psychologist



Using PACE in School

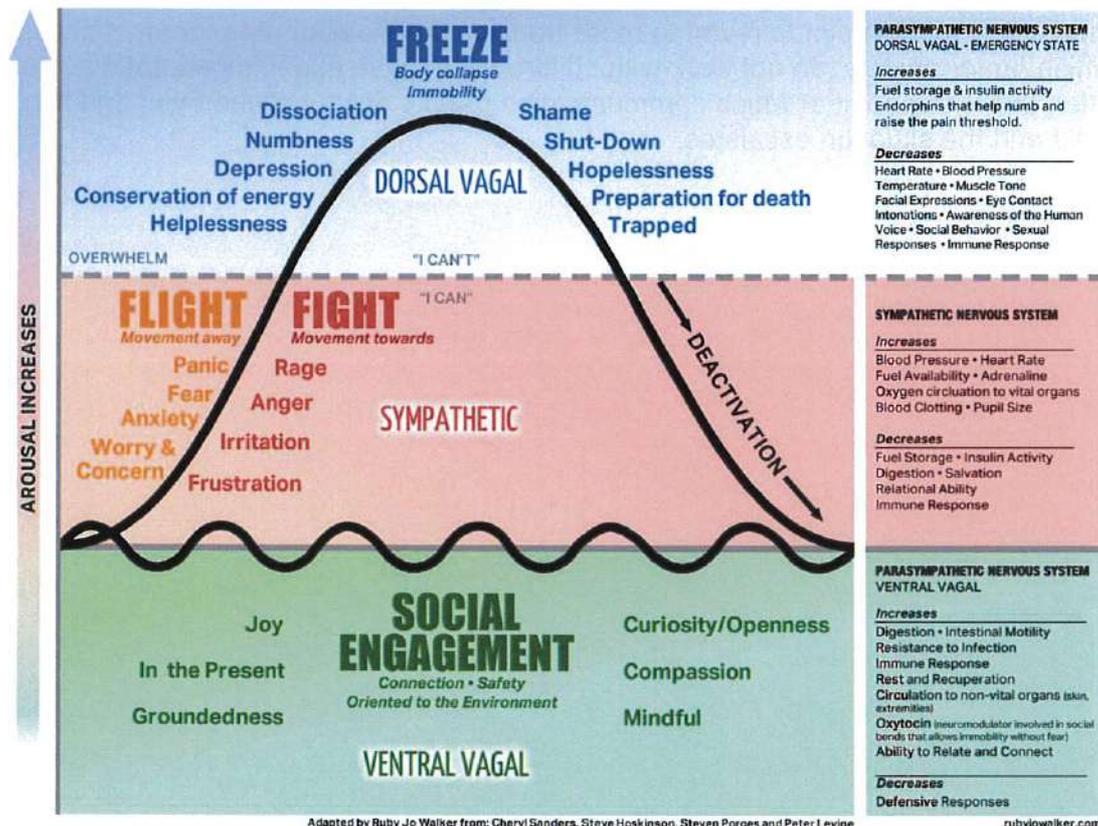
This leaflet is designed to help you to have effective, empowering interactions with children who have experienced trauma and who, as a result, do not respond to you in the same way as other children you teach.

Children who have had a difficult start to life have often learned that the world is not a safe place and that people in it cannot be trusted to help them to stay safe. Without safety and security children cannot settle to learn and explore. Many also do not think that they deserve care and attention, and many feel deeply ashamed much of the time. These feelings and assumptions about the world underpin all the interactions they have with you and their peers.

Working with children who do not feel safe at school is demanding and asks a lot of you as a professional. We hope that this leaflet will give you some more information about why you are successful when you are successful, why things sometimes go wrong, and some ideas for helping hard-to-reach children be settled and able to learn in your class.

Understanding how feelings direct actions

The work of neuropsychologist Stephen Porges has helped us to understand what happens to us all when we perceive danger. His polyvagal theory suggests a hierarchy of three levels:



When we do not feel safe, the body prepares itself to respond to danger. If the danger seems very great, the nervous system is activated in such a way that we have a very high tolerance for pain, and often become very still. In this 'freeze' state, which is the state of greatest stress, children sometimes appear to 'zone out', show confusing behaviours such as laughing inappropriately as though they cannot stop, or even appear to fall asleep. Sometimes this is called "dissociation".

When we perceive threat that is not at the highest level the body prepares itself for defence. Sometimes we call this "fight or flight". It is likely that you have seen this response on many occasions. Children who have experienced trauma escalate into this state very quickly. It may look as though there was no trigger, or that the apparent trigger was very small.

Many children who have experienced trauma are vulnerable to experiencing 'fight, fright or flight' reactions in everyday situations which would not normally make children feel afraid. This reaction is not conscious, is completely involuntary and out of their control. In order for children to be ready to learn, however, they need to be in



the calm, open and engaged state described in the graphic above. Only in this state can they engage with you and others to think about what has happened and how you can understand it together.

When a child is challenging or threatening to you, when you feel deskilled or frustrated by the child, your own defences are likely to kick in. At this point it is very difficult for you to be in a calm, open and engaged state too. Many teachers are more likely at this point to revert to more traditional behaviour management styles which, unfortunately, do not work with children who have experienced trauma. Very often this is the point at which communication breaks down between you and the child and the situation escalates.

What does work?

The experience of safety seems to have a profound effect on pupils

Louise Bomber, 2013

PACE is an approach developed by Dr Dan Hughes, an American psychologist who works with traumatised children. PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. These principles help to promote the experience of safety in your interactions with young people. Children need to feel that you have connected with the emotional part of their brain before they can engage the thoughtful, articulate, problem solving areas.

***Connect and redirect:** When a child is upset, connect first emotionally, right-brain to right-brain. Then, once the child is more in control and receptive, bring in the left-brain lessons and discipline.*

The Whole Brain Child, Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

Once a child feels that you have connected with their level of emotion, they can stop showing you. Children show you how they feel through their behaviour, often in ways that are very unhelpful to you and also to themselves.

Playfulness

The purpose of playfulness is to enjoy being together in an unconditional way. This gives the message that the relationship is stronger than things that go wrong. Using a playful and light-hearted tone, as if you were telling a story, shows your interest and curiosity. Playfulness reduces the shame a child might feel when something has gone wrong; difficult messages or serious conversations can be easier to have if the tone is light. It does not mean you do not take the emotions or the incident seriously. It is also helpful to maintain a playful tone if you need to deliver a short reminder about behaviour in the classroom.

Acceptance

Unconditional acceptance is fundamental to a child's sense of safety because it shows that you have connected with their feelings without judgement, and without seeking to reassure their feelings away. This can be hard to do as it means you and the child sitting with some strong emotions, together. This is painful and uncomfortable, but also very powerful. If a child expresses distressing emotions about themselves or others (e.g. "nobody loves me", "I'm stupid", "I'm bad", "you hate me") it is hard not to challenge them as being wrong, but it is really important to accept those feelings and acknowledge them using curiosity and empathy.

Accepting the child or young person's feelings and emotions does not mean accepting unwanted behaviour and it does not mean agreeing with the child's viewpoint, but for true acceptance to take place, it is important that the child also knows you can see them beyond their behaviour. When a child is very challenging, on a daily basis, this can be hard to do. Try to build in times with colleagues in which you can reflect on the child beyond their behaviour as well as expressing your own feelings about the challenges.

Curiosity

It's important to be curious about the child's thoughts, feelings, wishes and intentions: they may still be learning that other people can think about them in this way or that they can be held in mind by an adult without judgement and accusation at all. Curiosity is also important for discipline to be effective: connect with the emotion before you engage in discussion. Showing the child that you are interested in what is going on for them and willing to do something about it is a very powerful experience. Don't feel afraid to share your curiosity with the child by wondering, not telling them. Try to avoid asking "Why?". Instead you might ask:

"Is it ok if I share my idea of what is going on for you? I might be wrong but these are my ideas."

or

"What do you think was going on?", "What do you think that was about?" or "I wonder what...?"

Try to be curious in a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child: this is not the same as agreeing with their perception of the event, but shows your interest in understanding it and accepting the feelings that were involved.

Empathy

When you show empathy you are showing the child that their feelings are important to you, and that you are alongside them in their difficulty. You are showing that you can cope with the hard times with them and you are trying hard to understand how it feels. Understanding and expressing your own feelings about the child's experience can often be more effective than reassurance. For example, if a child says "You don't care", you can respond by saying "That must be really hard for you. I feel sad that you experience me as not caring"

Acceptance and empathy are your Emotional A&E. They are at the heart of the child starting to feel safe at school, which reduces conflict, stress and withdrawal.

Practical Examples

We have developed some scenarios of situations that frequently occur in schools. These PACE-informed scripts show how to have conversations with young people which connect with their feelings, thoughts and intentions. We hope you will find that connecting with children in this way de-escalates situations more quickly and increases trust between you and the child.

Angry and Negative Statements

When children make negative statements about themselves or you, for example:

You're angry and you don't want me in your classroom

It is tempting at this point to reply with a practical response, which may or may not be true:

I'm not angry and of course I want you to be here.

The PACE alternative would go something like this:

I can see that it feels like I am really cross with you, that is a really difficult feeling to have. I wonder if that is really scary and that you feel you would be better off outside the classroom. Although it doesn't feel like it, I do really want you in my classroom.

If this is too much to say to a child who is at that moment very distressed, use the Emotional A&E response:

It is really hard to feel that I am cross with you, that is such a scary feeling.

When a child runs away

This is a difficult and frightening situation for all concerned: some situations in school are highly emotional and feel unsafe for everyone. It is important that adults make sure they manage their own strong emotions with support from others. These feelings are important to acknowledge, but it is not for the child to take responsibility for the adults' feelings. It is essential to acknowledge that when a child has run away, within school or out of school, you will probably have some strong feelings such as being scared, cross, resentful, and maybe terrified about the consequences. Arrange to talk to a trusted colleague about this so that your own emotional needs are met.

When working with the child, start with connection by acknowledging and accepting the feeling: the child felt so overwhelmed that running away felt like the best option. It may well not have been the best option from where you were standing, but it was for them. Be curious around what they were feeling at the time and about where else the child can go when they have these feelings that are so hard to manage. You want to enable a discussion about finding somewhere that feels safer to both of you. This can feel very difficult and feel like you're putting the child in control, but the aim is to do this collaboratively.

Most of your PACE skill will be used after the child has come back as you reflect on what happened together.

PACEing the situation as it happens:

It may be that, in the short term, you accept where the child feels safe and you follow them gently and at a distance to that place and sit down somewhere near to them and announce that:

I have just come to be with you, because I can see things are really hard for you right now, and I am here for you when you are ready.

If they move further away from you, this is not a sign that they are disrespecting you but they are just continuing to show you that they feel afraid. You could respond

I can see it is hard to be close to me, I will be here when you are ready.

Reflecting with PACE on how it could be different next time:

It's really nice to be sitting here with you now.

You might want to have a playful tone of voice here, because whilst you're talking about somethings very serious it is easier for a child to hear if you are playful or light-hearted in tone.

I was really worried about how you were feeling when you wanted to run away. Those feelings must have been really big. I wonder if [you thought you were going to be told off about what happened at break/ you thought the work looked too hard/ you weren't sure what to do and you didn't know how to ask/ you felt a bit scared and you didn't know why]? I can see that was really difficult, because it made you feel like you had to run away.

I am wondering if we can think together about somewhere else you can go to when you feel like that. You might need somewhere to run to but I'd like it to be somewhere that I know you are safe. I have noticed that you like [think about your school and the places this child likes and what is possible for you, it should be a safe space where they can have 'time in' with someone they trust and find supportive. This doesn't need to be a formal space in school]. When you have really big feelings it is hard to be alone, and it can be helpful to have someone with you, even if they are not saying anything.

The emotional A&E statement:

You must have been so scared and so you ran away. I was really worried about you too, it is so nice to have you back.

Refusal to Engage

The child who won't speak to you at all eg head on the desk or at the top of the climbing frame telling you to go away

I wonder if you are feeling [really angry/ really scared/really overwhelmed/ really sad]

or

I don't know if you are feeling really sad or angry or scared and maybe you don't know either, but I can see it is really difficult. I am worried about you and I don't want you to feel alone with these feelings. I will just stay here if that is alright?"

If the child tells you it's not ok to stay with them the aim would still be to demonstrate your presence with them. So, you might move further away from them or continue to teach the lesson whilst continuing to let them know that you are holding them in mind. If the child isn't able to recover over the course of the lesson it would be helpful to reconnect with them briefly at the end, reiterating that you feel worried about how they feel. You might want to let them know that you will share your worries with their form tutor/ teacher/ head of year/ key person as you know they would be worried about them too.

Refusal to work and or defiance

Many children who do not feel safe at school seek to control what happens around them in an attempt to feel safer. Often this also involves defiance or refusal to work. As their teacher you may well feel deskilled, embarrassed, worried about losing face in front of the other children, angry that your lesson is being disrupted, and worried about the learning of other children so these situations easily become very highly charged. Avoiding the battle, maintaining presence, and managing your own emotions whilst helping the child with theirs, is no mean feat! The goal of this conversation is to deescalate the situation and avoid a head to head, allowing the child to continue or let you know that they can't, and for you to connect with that emotional experience. That connection may help to get them working, or it may help to avoid escalation. We have put together alternative approaches, depending on the needs of the child. Each shows a cycle of steps you could work through.

For the child whose attachment needs make it hard for them to settle and work independently:

1. Acceptance and empathy: Go to the child and say something like:

I can see this feels too difficult to start right now, and it just feels too much

2. Give the child a moment to digest that you have understood they are struggling with an emotional experience, and demonstrate your presence, that you will be holding them in mind while you get everyone else going on the task:

I'm going to get everyone else started, and then I am going to come back to you

3. Return with PACE, using playfulness to acknowledge the big feelings:

How are those big feelings now, do you think we can get going on this together?

or a teenager

So, we need to find a way together for this to feel possible. Because I am worried about you and I am interested in your learning.

4. Maintain a level of presence, for example taking turns, letting the child know that you will do one together, and then leave them to do task independently and you will continue to return to check in with them. This can be subtle across classroom and/or revisiting them.

If they are not ready to engage you could go back to step 1. If you have circled this a couple of times it is important to acknowledge that maybe they are in too difficult a place to engage in learning today and that's ok and you will follow the plan you have in school for this child.

For a child who is overwhelmed with things related to outside of the classroom:

1. Acceptance and empathy: Go to the child and say something like:

I can see this feels too difficult to start right now, and it just feels too much

2. Give the child a moment to digest that you have understood they are struggling with an emotional experience, and demonstrate your presence, that you will be holding them in mind while you get everyone else going on the task:

I'm going to get everyone else started, and then I am going to come back to you

3. Return with PACE, using playfulness to acknowledge the big feelings:

How are those big feelings now, do you think they're going to let us get any work done?

or a teenager

I'm wondering if it still feels like there's absolutely no chance we're going to get any work done today?

4. Use curiosity to find out:

What I would like to try is that we'll look again together at what you need to do so that you feel really confident. I will start you off and then I will check back in with you, how does that feel to you?

If they are not ready to engage you could go back to step 1. If you have circled this a couple of times it is important to acknowledge that maybe they are in too difficult a place to engage in learning today and that's ok and you will follow the plan you have in school for this child.

If you do manage to help the child to settle to the task, you will need to maintain a high level of adult presence throughout the lesson, checking in regularly, putting a hand on their shoulder as you go past, making eye contact across the room to show you are still holding them in mind.