

Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing

Gemma Howard

webinars@charliewaller.org



Let me introduce myself...



With
Charlie Waller Trust
since 2017

Experience:

Primary Teacher, PSHE
Mental Health First
Aider
Trauma
Model Practitioner
New Maudsley
Facilitator
Mindful Emotion Coach
Lived experience



About us

Charlie Waller was a dynamic, funny, kind and successful young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie died by suicide. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded the Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression initially, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.



Supporting Young People's Mental Health

Our vision

A world in which young people, and families, have the support, the skills and the resilience to be mentally well for life.

Evidence based training



Positive

We take a positive approach to mental health. We focus on prevention and early intervention and recognise the importance of offering hope.



Proven

Our consultancy, training and resources are all based on sound clinical evidence.



Practical

We give people practical strategies and tools to care for their mental health, and to support others in doing so.

Help us continue supporting young people

Fundraising for us not only brings in money to help us continue our work – it also raises mental health awareness and what people can do to take care of their wellbeing.

Find out more:

charliewaller.org/get-involved



Get involved



Before we begin



Timings: The webinar will be approximately 60 minutes. We do not have any scheduled comfort breaks but please feel free to step away from your screen if needed.

Recording: This webinar will be recorded and available on our website along with the slides.

Safety and openness: Sensitive topics may be discussed during this webinar, please feel free to step away if needed. We want to foster a sense of safety and openness during this webinar where everyone listens to one another and supports each other's perspectives. At the end of the session, we will sign post to organisations to access further support.

Safety first

- ✓ Confidentiality: 'what's said in the room stays in the room'
- ✓ Respect individual perspectives
- ✓ Listen to each other
- ✓ Sensitive issues, including suicide, may be discussed
- ✓ Monitor your own wellbeing and opt in or out of discussions accordingly
- ✓ Know where to access support



Workshop aims



- Introduce our fully funded 'Whole Organisation Approach'
- Explain the part played by stress, early experiences and emotional regulation in children's wellbeing and behaviour.
- Explore how relationships, connection and emotional understanding help children feel supported, heard and ready to thrive.
- Signpost to further resources, guidance and support.

Statistics

1 in 5 Children Experience Mental Health Difficulties

NHS Digital (2023) reports that around **20% of 8–16 year olds** have a probable mental health disorder.

This affects children across:

- All schools
- All communities
- All family types
- With and without SEND

[\(NHS Digital 2023\)](#)



The need for emotional support

Children do better when emotional wellbeing is supported through safe relationships, whole-school culture and early, inclusive support.

Emotional wellbeing is not just an individual intervention. National guidance points to a consistent whole-school approach: leadership, relationships, pupil voice, family partnership and early help.

A trusted, emotionally available adult can be the bridge between distress and support.





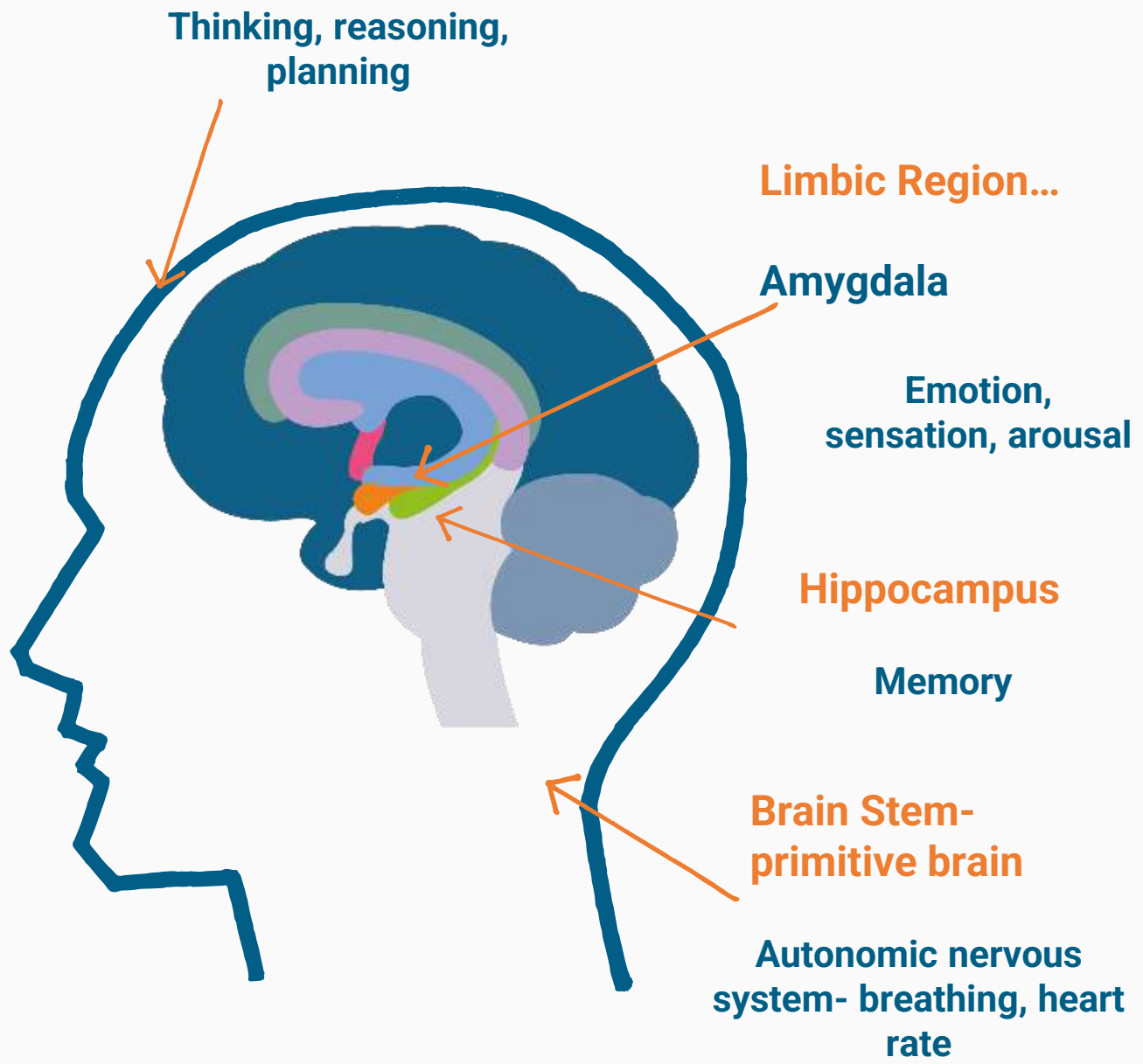
Early childhood experiences, stress and emotional regulation

Building executive function



Source: https://youtu.be/S5uo_Gbi4RA?feature=shared

The brain... Prefrontal cortex- executive function



Stress and the Alarm System

- Release of adrenaline & cortisol
- Heart rate & blood pressure increase
- Pupils dilate
- Muscles tense up ready to fight or flee
- Blood glucose levels increase
- Digestion & immune system shut down

Brainpower directed towards escape



Dan Seigel's Hand Model of the Brain:



Source: [Centre on the Developing Child](#)



Be curious about behaviour



Examples of behavioural indicators of emotional distress:

- Anger, aggression and irritability
- Disruption/self-sabotage
- Oppositional/defiant/avoidant behaviours/withdrawal
- Aches, pains and physical discomfort
- Appetite, digestion and toileting differences
- Difficulties with executive function (memory, problem-solving etc)
- Sleep difficulties

All behaviour is communication

Be curious about behaviour

What might we see above the surface?

What might be going on beneath the surface?

Reflection Questions



Instead of asking only:

“How do I stop this behaviour?”

We can also ask:

- What might this behaviour be communicating?
- What might this child be feeling, needing or protecting themselves from?
- What assumptions might I be making?
- What barriers or pressures might this child or their family be experiencing?
- What would help this child feel safe, seen and supported?




**Relationships,
connection and
emotional
understanding**

Adults matter

Children do not develop emotional regulation in isolation. They learn safety, communication and coping through reliable caring adults at home and in school.

Trusted adults matter because they help children:

- feel safe enough to communicate distress
- borrow adult calm through co-regulation
- develop emotional language
- build resilience and coping skills
- feel a sense of belonging
- know who to go to when things feel too much



This is why every adult matters: wellbeing is held in daily interactions, not just specialist sessions.

Prioritise Responsive Relationships

Science tells us that responsive relationships like those with **serve and return** interactions-between children and adults, adults and other adults, and children and other children **help buffer us against the effects of ongoing stress**. These relationships act as a core building block for **Resilience** and help us navigate life's ups and downs."

Source: [Centre on the Developing Child](#)





How might our stress response impact our relationships and communication with our children?

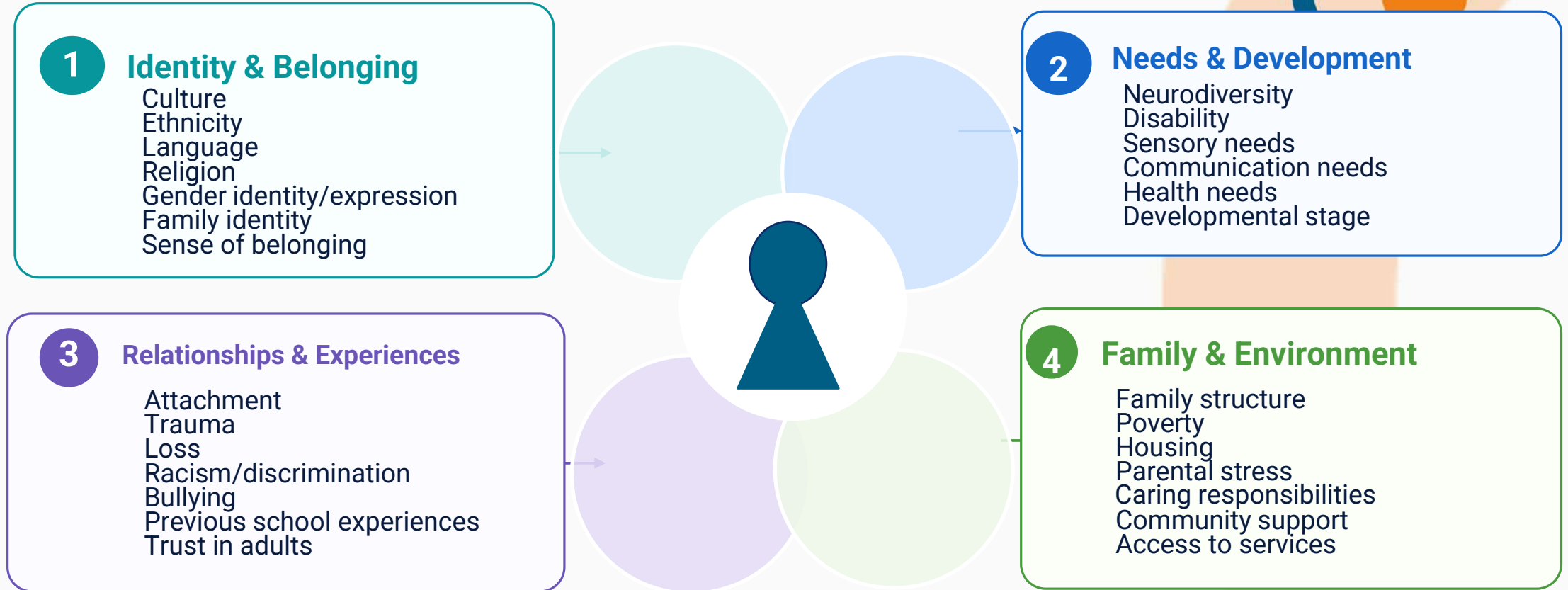
Be kind to yourself

- STOP- stop, pause and breathe
- Self-compassion
- Mindfulness
- Regular breaks
- A good night's sleep
- Digital wellbeing (for all)
- 5 Ways to wellbeing
- Seek help when you are struggling



Begin with an intersectional lens

These are intersectional factors – overlapping aspects of identity, experience and context that can shape a child's emotional wellbeing, behaviour and access to support.



Two children may show the same behaviour, but what sits underneath may be very different.

Intersectionality helps us look beyond one behaviour, one label or one explanation.

The 5 Cs of supporting children's emotional wellbeing



1. **Connect** – serve and return
2. **Create safety** – relational and predictable environments
3. **Co-regulate** – regulate before reasoning
4. **Communicate feelings** – name, validate and understand emotions
5. **Co-plan support** – agree what helps and who can help

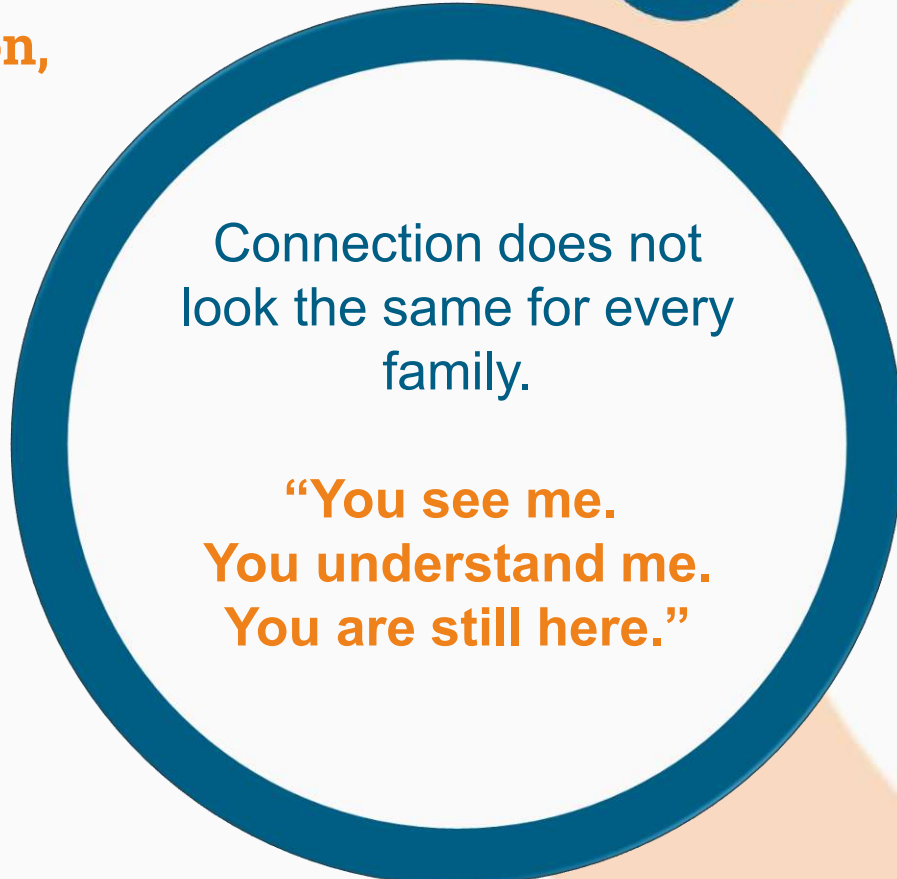


→ That gives you a memorable framework without losing the evidence base.

Connect: start with serve and return

Connection is the foundation for safety, regulation, learning and wellbeing. What this can look like:

- talking
- humour
- Play and /or stories
- music and / or movement
- quiet time
- shared routines
- special interests
- sitting close
- practical help



Connection does not look the same for every family.

**“You see me.
You understand me.
You are still here.”**

Connect: start with serve and return

Helpful questions:

- How does the child show they want connection?
- What helps the child feel noticed and understood?
- Does this child prefer talking, doing, playing, moving or quiet closeness?
- How am I expecting connection to look versus what they need?
- What small moment of connection could I offer today?
- In the moment- how can I connect and show I am here for them?

Try saying:

“I can see something feels hard.”

“I’m here with you.”

“You don’t have to manage this on your own.”



Create Safety: behaviour is communication

What to consider:

- What helps this child feel safe, calm and understood?
- Are routines predictable, with warnings before change?
- Would visuals, now/next boards or extra processing time help?
- Are boundaries clear, kind and consistent?
- Are adults using calm, non-shaming language?
- Could sensory needs, language, culture or communication differences be affecting safety?
- What could be shaping their response?
- Does the child have a trusted adult and a way to reset after difficult moments?

Try saying:

“You’re not in trouble.”

“Let’s work this out together.”

“I’m wondering what you need right now.”

Sources: [NICE NG223 recommendations](#), [DfE/OHID whole-school approach](#)

Co-regulate: regulate before reasoning



A child cannot always “think it through” when their body is overwhelmed.

What this can look like:

- Is this child too overwhelmed to talk, listen or problem-solve?
- What helps their body calm first: space, movement, breathing, grounding, sensory tools or quiet?
- Would a lower voice, slower pace and fewer words help?
- Do demands need to reduce for a short time?
- Does this child need closeness, reassurance or space before reconnecting?
- Could sensory needs, neurodiversity, trauma, anxiety, communication needs or tiredness be affecting regulation?
- Am I trying to reason too soon?

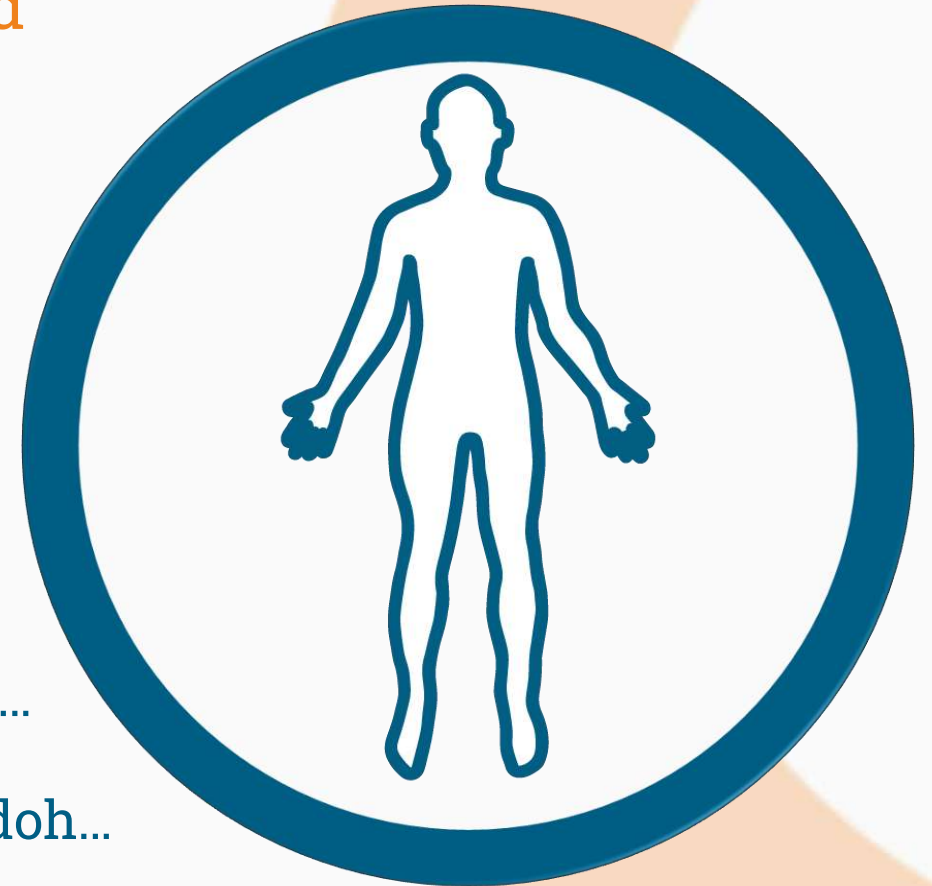
Sources: [NICE NG223](#), [Bruce Perry](#), [Harvard Serve and Return](#), [NSPCC brain development](#)

Regulate- Relate- Reason - Perry

The nervous system may need to be regulated first.

Patterned.....repetitive..... rhythmic activities:

- **Fight:** Wall pushes, pushing, deep touch, pressure
- **Flight:** Walking, running, dancing, trampolining, swinging...
- **Freeze:** breathing, comfort object, gentle movements...
- **Shut down:** deep breathing, quiet games: lego/ play-doh...



Sources: [Harvard Serve and Return](#), [NSPCC brain development](#)

Communicate feelings: name, validate and understand



A children often need adults to help translate big feelings into words, body clues and choices.

What this can look like:

- Can I name the feeling without judgement?
- Can I validate the feeling while keeping safe boundaries?
- Would visuals help: emotion cards, feelings thermometer or body map?
- Is this child showing feelings through behaviour, silence, movement, shutdown or physical symptoms?
- Would simpler language, drawing, pointing or first-language words help?
- Can I separate the feeling from the behaviour?

→
Sources: [EEF SEL guidance](#), [NICE NG223 strengths-based approaches](#), [Gottman Emotion Coaching](#)

→

Examples



Emotion Cards

Cut out and use for check-ins, matching feelings and conversation prompts.

Happy	Sad	Angry
Worried	Calm	Frustrated
Nervous	Excited	Lonely
Proud	Confused	Tired

Feelings Thermometer

Use the thermometer to check in and talk about the size of your feelings.

5 overwhelmed	5	
4 very upset	4	
3 upset	3	
2 a little wobbly	2	
1 calm	1	

What helps me when my feelings get bigger?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Body Clues Outline

Use this sheet to notice where feelings show up in the body.

My feeling is...

I notice...

What helps...

Emotion Coaching Style



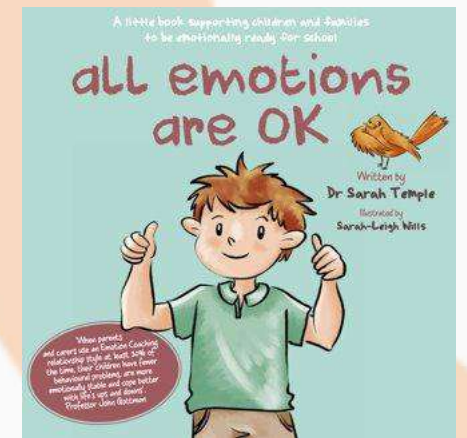
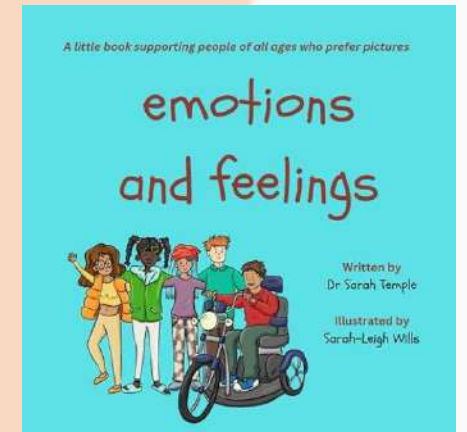
- Appreciates the opportunity in a child's negative emotions
- Can understand and are able to value their own emotions
- Understands the importance of negative emotions
- Does not laugh at or dismiss a child's feelings
- Does not tell a child how to feel
- Listens, empathises, helps the child label their emotions, offers guidance and support, set limits, teaches children how to express emotions and problem solves with the child.



Emotion Coaching Style



- 1. Notice:** Be aware of the child's emotions – and your own.
- 2. Connect:** Use the moment to connect before correcting.
- 3. Validate:** Listen, show empathy and let the child know their feelings make sense.
- 4. Name:** Help the child label the feeling using words, visuals or body clues.
- 5. Guide:** When calm, problem-solve, repair and set kind, clear limits.



Co-plan support: what helps and who can help?



Support works best when it is planned with the child, not just done to the child.

What to consider:

- Can we create a simple calm plan:
- “When I feel... I need...”?
- Who are this child’s trusted adults at home, school or in the community?
- Would visual supports help: now/next boards, routines or transition plans?
- What has helped before, and what has not helped?
- What support feels realistic for this child and family?
- Do we know when and how to seek early help or extra support?

Try saying:

“What usually helps your body feel safer?”

“Who can you go to when things feel too much?”

“Let’s make a plan together.”

Inclusive and needs - led



The inclusive, needs-led lens makes the emotional wellbeing support stronger because it asks: **“What does this child need to feel safe, seen and supported?”**

That matters because not every child experiences safety, connection, communication or support in the same way.

For example:

- A neurodivergent child may need visuals, movement or sensory breaks to feel regulated.
- A child who has experienced racism or bullying may need adults to actively build belonging and safety.
- A child with English as an additional language may need visuals, first-language words or more time to express feelings.
- A child from a family where emotions are spoken about differently may need adults to respect family culture while gently building emotional language.
- A child experiencing poverty, housing stress or family pressure may need support that is realistic and non-judgemental.

Tools to support: Pooky Knighsmith



My strengths
+
-2-
-3-

My hopes & dreams
BIG ones

My safe
-People-
-Places-
-Phrases-

My favourite
Colour
Animal

Hi, My name is:
add photo here


I love to talk about

I'm scared of

Things I love

Proud moments

I like to communicate by
 Talking
 Writing
 Drawing



www.pookynightsmith.com | @pookyh

Step into a child's shoes and take in your surroundings

I SEE

I HEAR

I FEEL

I SMELL

anything else...

Sensory Audit for Schools and Classrooms

Devised by Ian Attfield, Amy Fowler and Val Jones

This sensory audit is to help staff to assess and create an environment that enables the participation of pupils with autism. It does not cover all aspects, but gives ideas on the ways in which a setting might be altered if pupils experience sensory processing difficulties and find it hard or very anxiety-provoking to tolerate certain sensations or situations.

Visual

Good Practice and Evidence to look for	Current Situation	Possible action (if needed)
<p>Classroom illumination is suitable for pupils with autism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluorescent lights are regularly checked and changed. (Flickering lights can be very disturbing.) The effects of light coming into the room through blinds and creating distracting patterns are minimised Light reflecting on objects such as metal or shiny surfaces in the classroom is minimised. 		
<p>The classroom is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of wall displays is considered. (Busy and cluttered wall displays can be distracting). Designated areas for specific activities to give clarity to the classroom organisation. Pupils have the opportunity to work at a workstation to focus their attention, if necessary 		



We do not need the answers



Emotional wellbeing is not just about teaching children coping strategies. It is also about creating relationships, environments and support systems that help children feel safe, valued and able to access help.

- **Safe:** my environment and relationships feel predictable
- **Seen:** adults notice and understand me
- **Connected:** I have trusted relationships
- **Regulated:** adults help me calm before expecting me to reason
- **Understood:** my feelings make sense and can be named
- **Supported:** I know what helps and who can help me

Connection is not an “extra”. It is the foundation for regulation, learning, behaviour and wellbeing.

A note on 'repair'

“Repair is the act of going back to a moment of disconnection and taking responsibility for your behaviour and the effect it had on another.”

- Repair with yourself- separate your identify from your behaviour
- Repair- name what happened-responsibility-next time
- Replace a story of self blame with a story of self trust, connection

Sources: [Dr Becky Kenedy \(2023\)](#)



The Families Team



Our work with parents and carers

Learn about our work with parents and carers

[Find out more](#)



Eating Disorder Carer Skills Workshops

If you're a parent or carer of a loved one with an eating disorder, come to our free workshops to learn vital support skills.

[Find out more](#)



Free Online webinars

We run live webinars for parents and carers

[Book your place](#)



Want to use your parenting skills to help others?

Train to become a parent and carer peer support (PCPS) worker with us!

[Find out more](#)



The PLACE network

Our network of parent and carer peer support support groups

[Find a parent/carer support group near you](#)



Parent Carer Peer Support

Want to know more about parent and carer peer support?

[Learn more](#)



Parent Carer Peer Support (PCPS) Groups

*Meet parents and carers with
similar experiences*

*PCPS offers support and hope in
safe, judgement free spaces*

*Signposting to helpful resources and
services*

Use the interactive
map to find your
nearest group



<https://charliewaller.org/accessing-parent-carer-peer-support-groups>

“My Parent Carer Peer Support group is a welcoming community where it is ok not to be alright. They know through their own experience the fear of having a child experience a mental health crisis. They have had the same thoughts, asked themselves the same questions and shared the same fears. Will my child get through this? Will life ever be the same? They are comfortable to tell you they don't have all the answers, there is no magic piece of advice that can fix everything, but they are there, they understand, they listen, and they just get it. They stop you from feeling you're going through it alone and give you hope.”

Parent



Summary



Avoid:

Criticism
Hostility
Arguments
Judgement
“I think you should ...”



Instead:

Listen
Reflect back
Show empathy
Notice emotions
Drip feed affirmations
Ask open questions

- Be curious not furious
- Strike when the iron is cold
- Give more attention to the behaviours you like ...
- You can still agree boundaries and be firm with negative behaviours



Help us continue supporting young people

Your support allows us to provide vital resources, guidance, and opportunities and build a brighter future.



To donate £10 text
CWT to 70085



To donate online visit
charliewaller.org/donate



Make an
impact!





Webinar feedback

Please let us know how we did and help us to plan future webinars by completing [this short survey](#)



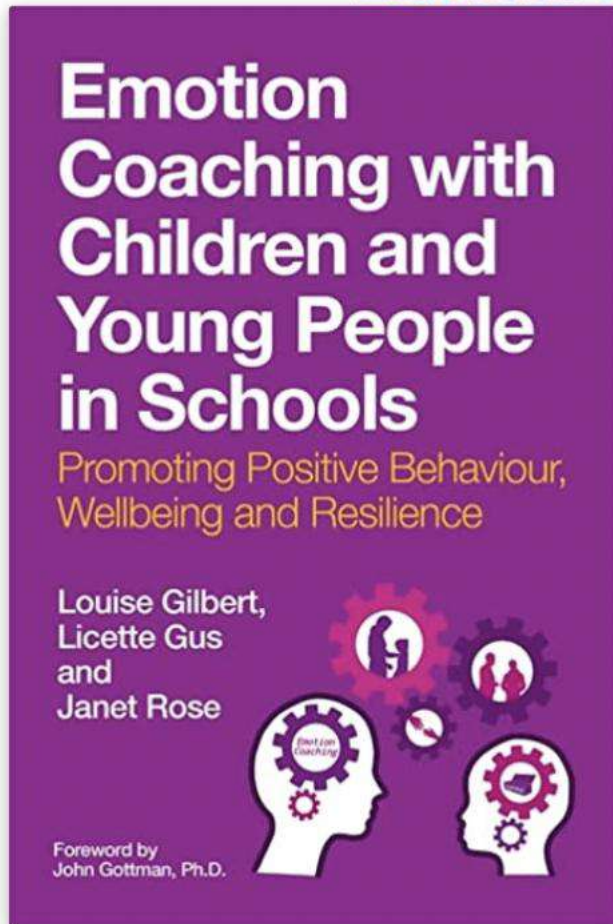
Give us your
feedback





Resources

Mindful Emotion Coaching



<https://www.amazon.co.uk>



CPD

Mindful Emotion Coaching Programme

Mindful Emotion Coaching is all about finding a framework for meaningful connections. It's about using a coaching technique to understand better and develop our awareness of emotions and in particular our ability to sit with difficult emotions (emotion literacy or emotion intelligence). The learning starts with us as health, education and care professionals. As we develop insight into our own emotional world we then use the skills we have learned to support colleagues and families develop their emotion literacy. What we know from the science is that those of us who experienced adversity in childhood— especially if either in the womb or the first three years of life— are likely to have biological reasons for experiencing difficulty managing emotions when under stress.

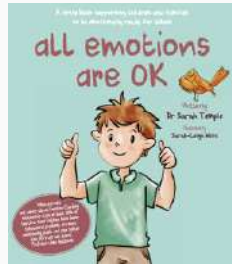
You can access our Mindful Emotion Coaching Programme materials through our advanced e-learning modules. You will receive a certificate for 4 hours accredited CPD on completion. Suitable for GPs, Nurse Practitioners, Paediatricians, Social Workers, Public Health Nurses, Family Support Workers, Parent Family Support Advisors, Early Years staff, Teachers and anyone in a caring role.

Access our accredited CPD in Mindful Emotion Coaching

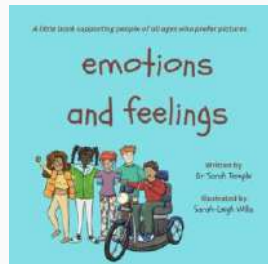
Train with us as a Mindful Emotion Coach

<https://emotioncoaching.groupsite.com>

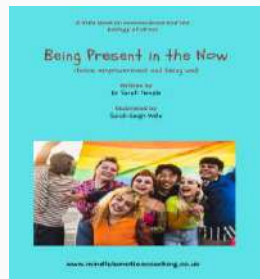
Books and resources



'all emotions are ok' in pdf – All Emotions are OK
(wpcomstaging.com) no code needed



'emotions and feelings' in pdf – All Emotions are OK
(wpcomstaging.com) emotions and feelings coupon birmingham



Being Present in the Now – a little book on neuroscience and the biology of stress – All Emotions are OK
(wpcomstaging.com) being present in the now coupon beingpresent

Mindful Emotion Coaching- to find out more about emotion coaching and access their resources:

<https://mindfulemotioncoaching.co.uk/>

Nspcc early childhood resource:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/look-say-sing-play/>

NSPCC and child development:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development>

Brain-Building Through Play: Activities for Infants, Toddlers, and Children

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/handouts-tools/brainbuildingthroughplay/>

Free training and resources

We provide training and mental health resources for:



Check our free resources



Learn more at www.charliewaller.org

Mental Health Online Support for Young People:



- **Hub of Hope**: a mental health database of local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS support.
- **Childline**: information, advice, support and tools for children and young people up to 19 years old. 0800 1111
- **Kooth**: free online counselling for 10-18 year olds.
- **The Mix**: advice, blogs, articles and 1-2-1 online chat and messenger options for 13-25 year olds. 0808 808 4994
- **Muslim Youth Helpline**: non-judgemental, confidential support 7 days a week, 365 days a year including bank holidays and Eid. All ages welcome.
- **Shout**: a free, confidential and anonymous text support service. Txt 85258 - any age group can text.

MindEd:



- “MindEd is a free elearning resource, funded by Health Education England, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education, aimed at equipping professionals and members of the public with evidence-based information about children, young people, adults, and older people’s mental health. “ (MindEd)

<https://www.minded.org.uk>

- It also has a section with advice for families:

<https://www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people>

Pooky Knightsmith resources:



- [Neurodivergent-Friendly Schools: Beyond Inclusion, Towards Belonging](#)
- [Neurodivergence in the Classroom](#)
- [Creative Inclusive Classrooms / Maslow's Toolbox](#)
- [Emotionally Wellbeing-Informed Schools](#)
- [Mental Health of Neurodivergent Learners](#)
- [Mental Health in Neurodivergent Learners Webinar](#)

PDA in the Classroom / Supporting Demand Avoidant Learners

- [Sensory Sensitive Classrooms](#)
- [Classroom Overwhelm](#)
- [Sensory Regulation](#)
- [3Cs for an Autistic Friendly Environment](#)
- [Pooky Knightsmith YouTube Channel: Neurodivergence & Mental Health](#)

Why Emotion Coach?

Research from Bath Spa, Emotion Coaching UK, Tuning into Kids and Gottman has found that Emotion Coaching helps:

- Children to emotional regulate, take responsibility of and change their behaviour
- Children to develop a better understanding of their emotions
- Children's academic progress accelerate
- Children's behavioural responses become more consistent
- Children to develop a healthier stress responses – lower physiological stress (e.g., calmer heart rate), which supports overall wellbeing.

Sources: [Rose et al, 2015](#) (& [Gus et al 2017](#)) (See slide 57 for further references)



Why Emotion Coach?



- Children to develop stronger social skills with peers
- Build positive relationships between children and adults; enhanced emotional communication, attachment and bonding
- Reduced parent/ carer stress, and reactivity
- Reduced parent/ carer-child conflict
- Healthier emotional climate
- Practitioner sensitivity to the children's needs increase
- Practitioners feel more confident (in control) during incidents



Sources: [Rose et al, 2015](#) (& [Gus et al 2017](#)) (See slide 57 for further references)

A circular photograph showing three young people sitting on a concrete ledge outdoors. On the left, a person is partially visible, wearing a dark shirt and jeans. In the center, a young man with a beard and a mustache, wearing an orange t-shirt and dark, ripped jeans, sits with his hands clasped. On the right, a young woman wearing a white t-shirt and blue, distressed jeans sits with her hands on her lap. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a school building and some greenery.

A Whole School Approach In Partnership With The Charlie Waller Trust

Tailored support based on the best available evidence to help your school build a positive culture of mental health and wellbeing across the whole school community.

Find out more:

charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/whole-school-and-college-approach

The Charlie Waller logo is located in the top right corner. It features a stylized speech bubble icon composed of two overlapping circles, one blue and one orange. Below the icon, the name "Charlie Waller" is written in a sans-serif font, with "Charlie" in blue and "Waller" in orange.

Charlie
Waller

A white, hand-drawn style arrow pointing upwards and to the right, positioned to the left of the QR code.

Find out
more



What We Offer at No Cost To You



- Six days of dedicated support across a year, delivered by an experienced mental health trainer who works with your organisation.
- One follow-up day every year, in subsequent years supporting continuity and sustainability of change.
- Training, tools and practical resources tailored to your organisation's size and priorities.
- Guidance and support with the development and implementation of mental health and wellbeing policies.
- Sessions for whoever needs them – leadership, teaching and pastoral staff, parents and carers.





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References on Emotion Coaching



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Evidence base behind the 5 Cs on Emotion Coaching



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