



Emotion Coaching
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Shout out!

Who made a difference to you
during your childhood?

What did they do?

How did they make you feel?



“they were interested in me”

“they listened to me”

“they accepted me as me”

“they took me seriously”

“lots of positive interactions with us”

Emotion Coaching

A **universal approach** to support children and young people to **understand their feelings**.

'Emotion Coaching helps children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them'

Gottman (1996)



How do we develop the ability to regulate our emotions?



How do we learn to regulate our emotions?

- Initially via the adult ***physically*** soothing and comforting the child.
- By positive ***emotional*** experiences and empathy ('co-regulation' by another person)
- We learn to ***self-soothe and self-regulate*** from our ***ongoing*** relationships with parents ***and*** significant others

Attachment responses are social learning processes

- Attunement refers to the ways in which internal emotional and bodily states are the focus of attention and '***seen***' by the adult within the child-caregiver relationship (Siegel,2012)
- Attunement promotes a sense of felt security in the child.
- **Some children and young people have not had enough experiences of adults tuning in to their internal emotional states.**

Temperament also plays a role.

Building Brains through Experience: Plasticity

The brain's ability to continuously adopt and adapt to stimulus



Neuronal networks are ***continuously*** shaped by genes, environments and experiences and ***strengthened*** through repetition. Children's brains have the ***greatest plasticity*** and as we age brain plasticity reduces

Building Brains by Learning from Others: Mirroring System

Encoding information about the external world and goal-directed behaviour



They enable humans to emulate others and thereby empathise and understand intent – essential for the socialisation of children

Activity – Challenging Behaviours

Think about a time when:

- You were supporting a child who was becoming upset, but this didn't escalate
- You were supporting the child and they became highly distressed
 - What was different about those times?
 - What did you do?
 - What was the impact of this?



Emotion Coaching is a relational approach which develops internal regulation

- When we use sanctions and rewards this moves the locus of control outside of the child
- These approaches are based on the assumption that a child is able to control their behaviour/has the ability to regulate
- EC works on the assumption that the child may not be able to regulate and we need to help them build those skills

- External Frameworks
- External regulation



Sanctions and Rewards

Behaviour Management Policy

- Internal Frameworks
- Internal regulation



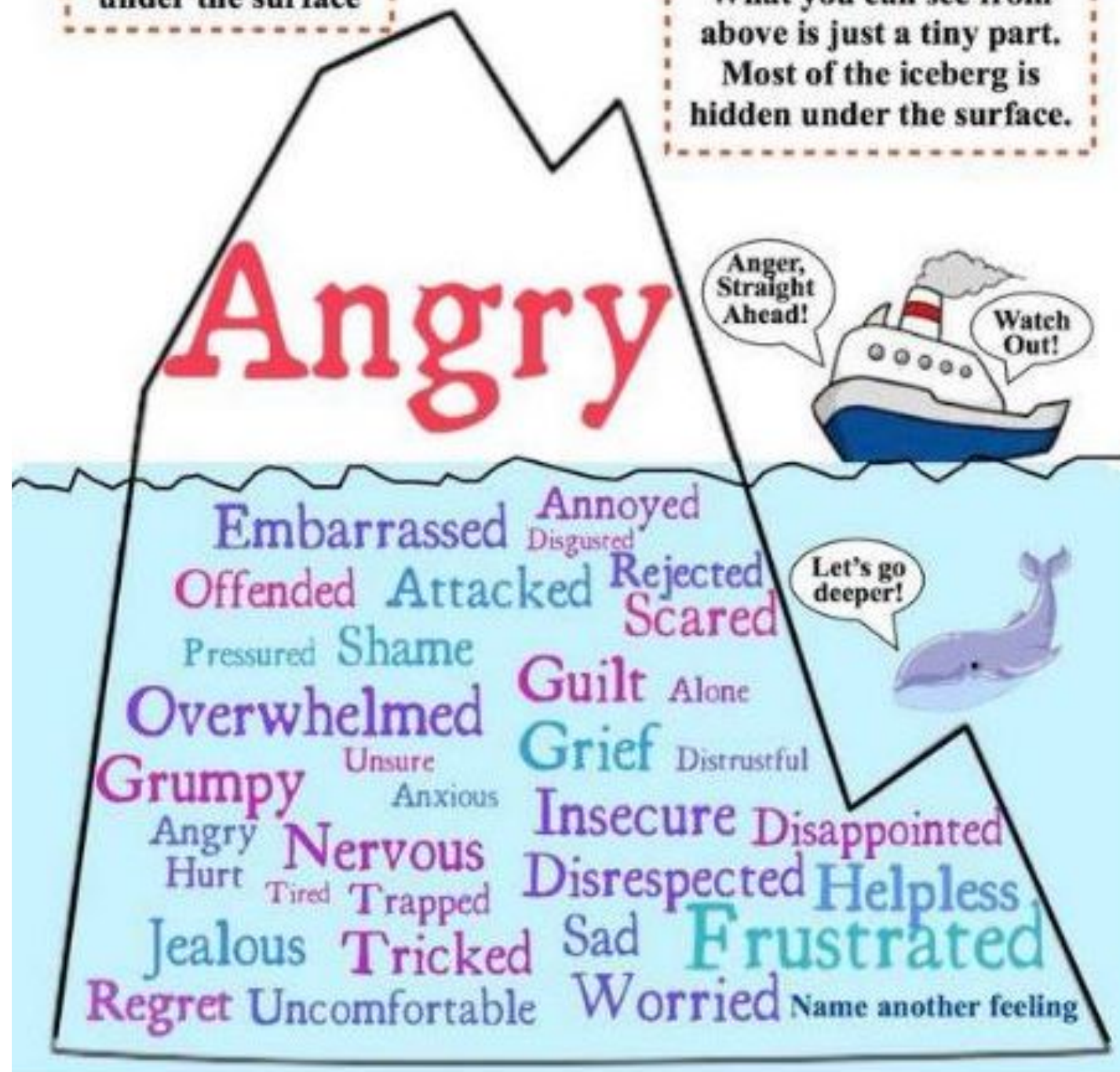
Emotion Coaching

Behaviour Regulation Policy

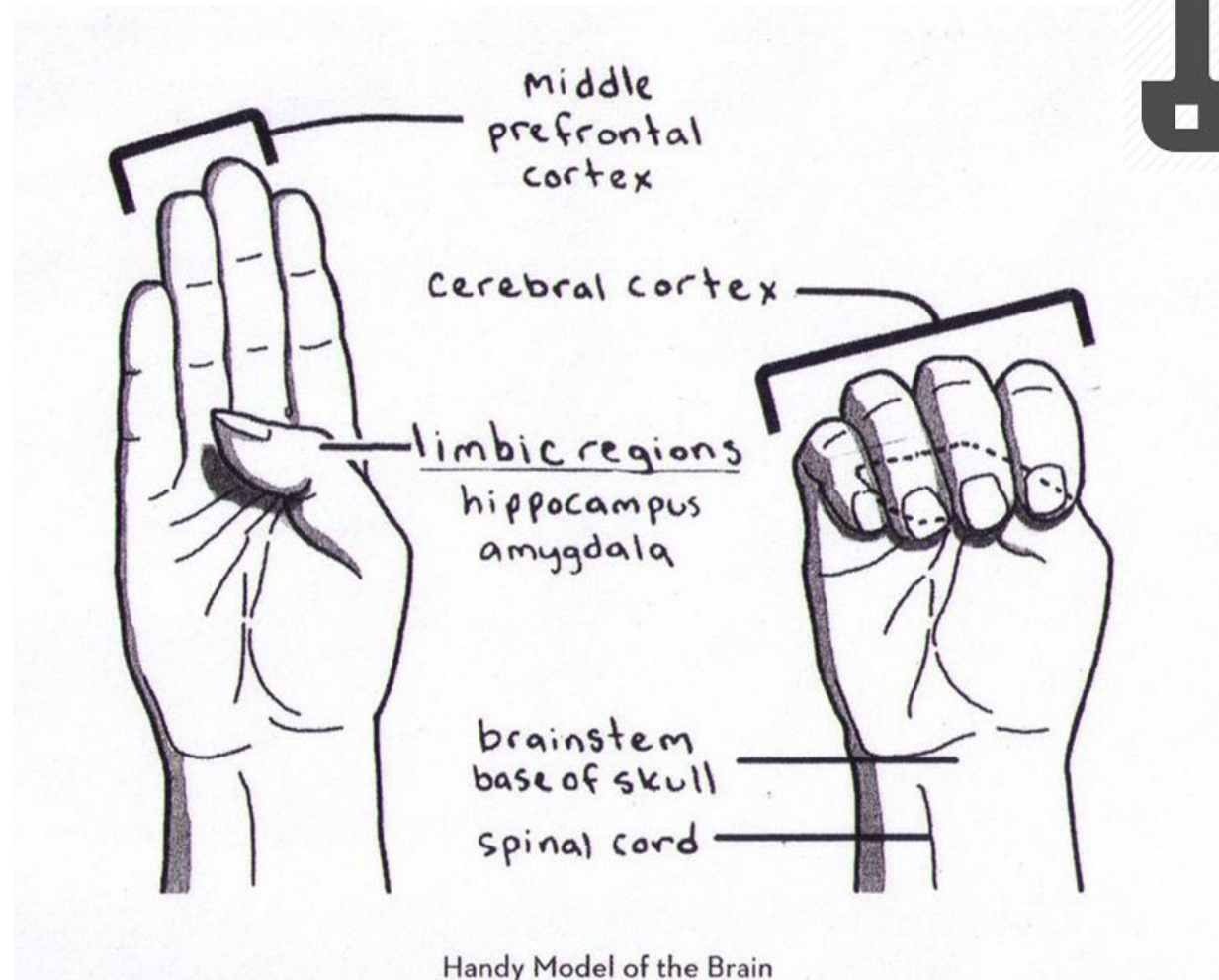
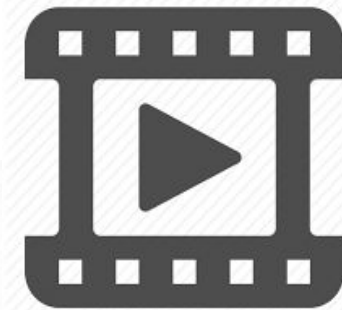
Anger Iceberg

Sometimes when we are angry, there are other emotions under the surface

Icebergs are giant floating pieces of ice found in the coldest parts of the ocean. What you can see from above is just a tiny part. Most of the iceberg is hidden under the surface.



A brain in the palm of your hand



Siegel, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

Styles of emotions

- Emotion Coaching
- Emotion Dismissing
- Emotion Disapproving
- Laissez-faire



Emotion Coaching styles

Emotion Coaching

High empathy
High guidance

Disapproving

Low empathy
High guidance

Laissez Faire

High empathy
Low guidance

Dismissing

Low empathy
Low guidance



Matthew and friend

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Disapproving
Low empathy
High guidance

Disapproving style

“There’s nothing to be afraid of in your room,
just go to bed and go to sleep”

- Disapproves of negative emotions and tries to get rid of negative emotions
- Lacks empathy
- Focuses on the behaviour rather than the emotions
- Often motivated by need to control and regain power and/or to ‘toughen up’ child

Any more examples?

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Dismissing

Low empathy

Low guidance

Dismissing style

“[something gets broken] There’s no need to cry about it, I’ll buy you a new one”

- Wants negative emotions to go away quickly and thinks that giving attention to such emotions will make them worse
- Tries to stop negative emotions by reducing/ minimising/ making light of their importance /significance
- Often motivated by need to rescue and make things better, fix the problem e.g. ‘have a biscuit’, ‘I’ll buy a new one’, ‘you need to do this’

Any more examples?

Effects of disapproving and dismissing styles

- Child learns ‘what I am **feeling is not right**, my assessment of the problem is **wrong**, I must not feel this way’
- Child does **not learn to trust own feelings** affecting decision-making
- Not given **opportunities to experience** emotions and deal with them effectively so grow up unprepared for life’s challenges
- Not given opportunities to **self-regulate or problem-solve**
- Can lead to **suppression of natural emotions**, less or lack of self-regulation, reliance on distraction to get rid of emotion
- Generates **more negative feelings** - resentment, guilt, shame, anger



Identify the Emotion Coach



- Compare Sadness and Happiness in the following clip from the movie “Inside out”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5Q2dah75Zc>

- Who is emotion coaching ?
- What is the other character doing?

Laissez-faire style

Laissez Faire
High empathy
Low guidance



“I’m sorry he took the book that your were reading”

- Accepts all emotional expression from the children
- Offers comfort to the child experiencing negative feelings
- Offers little guidance on behaviour and does not set limits
- Does not teach the child about emotions
- Does not help children solve problems
- Believes there is little you can do about negative emotions other than ride them out.

Any other examples...?



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How to Emotion Coach

- Step 1

Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them

- Step 2

Validating the feelings and labelling them

- Step 3

Setting limits on behaviour (if needed)

- Step 4

Problem-solve with the child

Think about a time when you have found it difficult to manage your child's emotions and behaviour.

Hold it in mind, as we're going to keep coming back to it!

“Connect before correct”

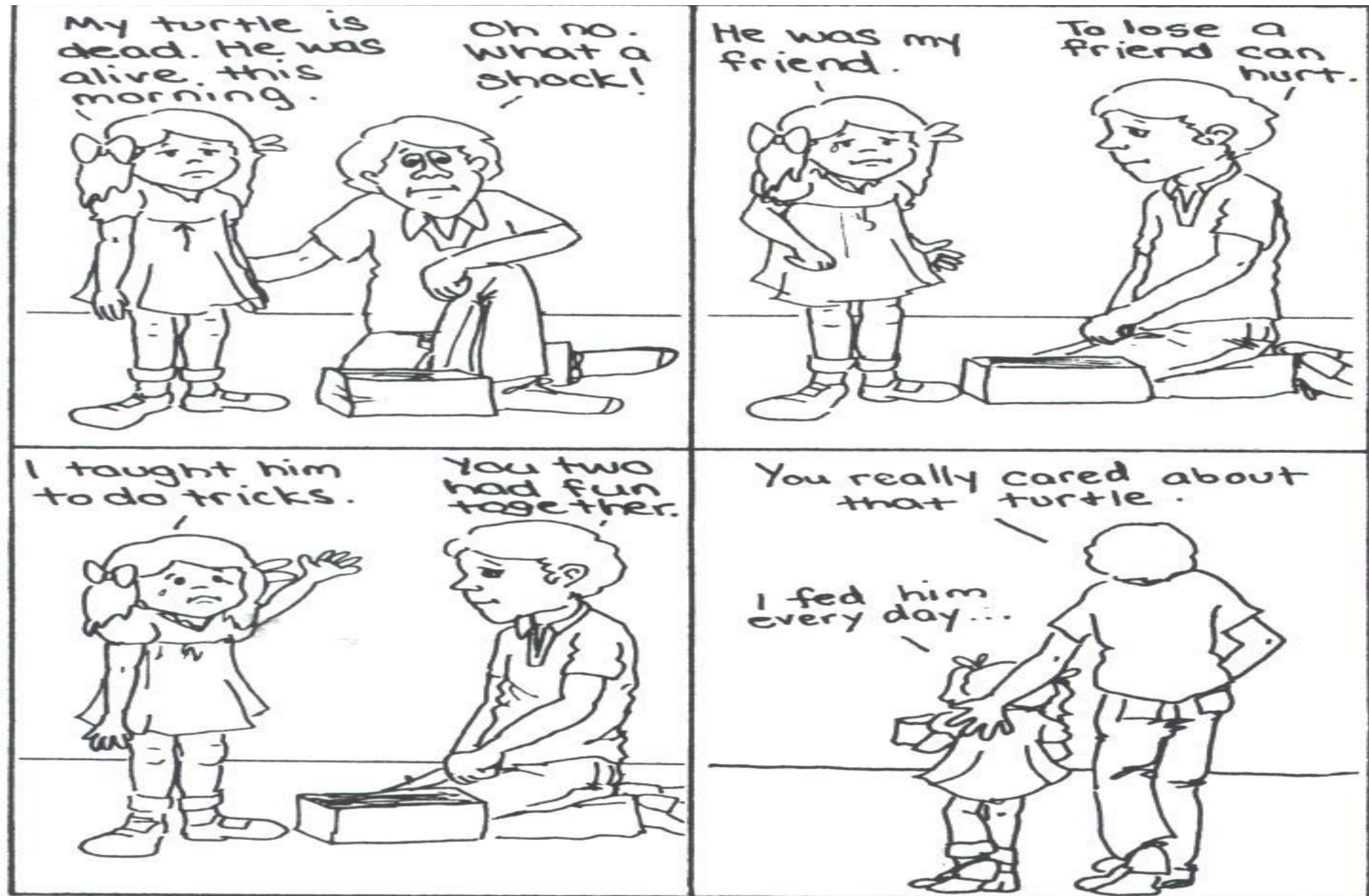
- Need to genuinely empathise with the child/young person from their point of view.
- This doesn't mean agreeing with them, just viewing things from their perspective
- Recognise all emotions as being natural and normal
- Recognise behaviour as communication
- Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt
- Take on the child/young person's perspective



Instead of denying the feeling



Empathise, validate, label...



Faber and Mazlish (2001) *How to talk to kids so kids will listen*

Step 1

Challenge - Empathy

- We feel empathy (i.e. how the child/young person must be feeling) but don't acknowledge this or label it and instead try to make the difficult emotion go away for the child
- Confuse empathy with feeling you are agreeing with a child/young person's behaviour
- Confuse sympathy and empathy

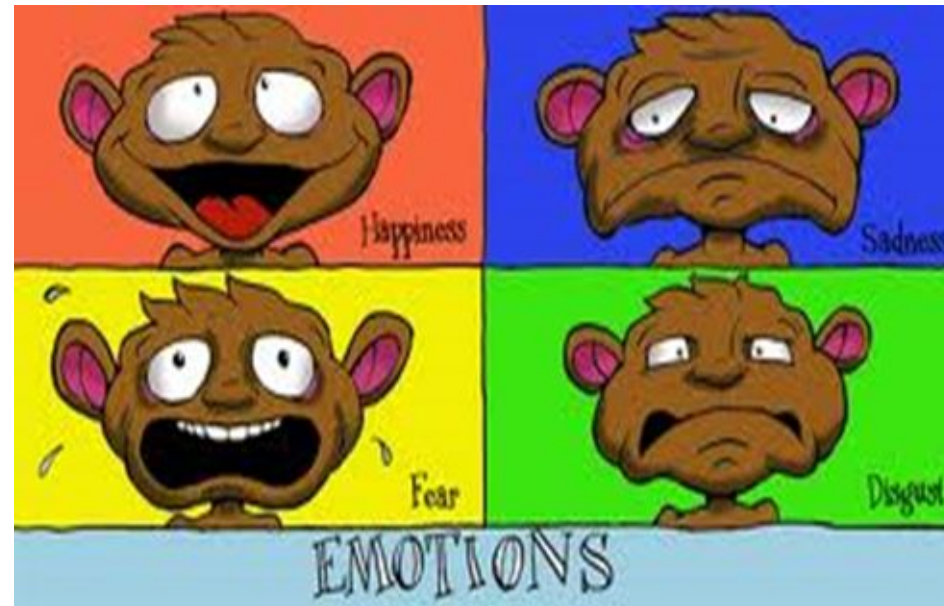


Step 2

Validating the feelings and labelling them

- Use words to reflect back child's emotion and help child to label emotion
- Provide a narrative/translation for the emotional experience (creating cognitive links)
- Try not to ask probing questions to which young people might not know answer
- Telling the emotional person that you understand their emotional situation and that you don't blame them helps sooth their emotional brain

Step 2 Validating and labelling emotions



“It sounds like you are feeling...”

“You didn’t like it when he said that to you. That really hurt your feelings”

“I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It’s normal to feel like that”

“I can see you’re frowning and you’re kicking the wall; I think you might be feeling frustrated. I would be feeling like that too if I didn’t want to do something”

“I noticed you looking around at the other who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be ok. Have I got that right?”

Things we can do to co-regulate a child who has ‘flipped their lid’

The lowest part of the brain needs to be regulated first:

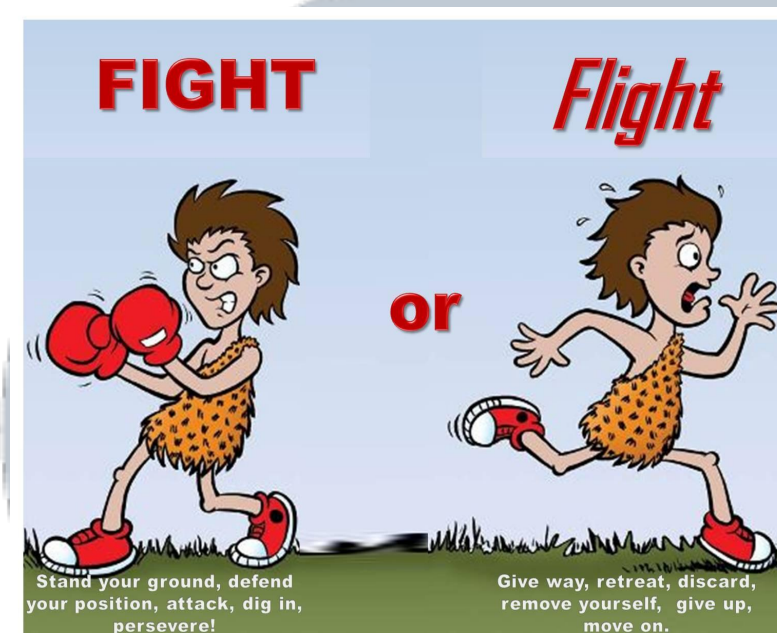
Way to do this is through **rhythm**: Patterned, repetitive rhythmic activities or somatosensory activities

Fight impulse: pushing, deep touch pressure activities

Flight impulse : running, jumping, proprioceptive activities

These might include: Walking, running, dancing, singing, deep breathing, colouring trampolining, swinging, drumming, tug of war, bouncing on a fitness ball, walking along balance beam, balance board, measuring heart rate.....

*(Step 1 & 2 of **Emotion Coaching** - recognising a child’s emotion, empathising with them, labelling and validating the emotion)*



Things we can do to co-regulate a child who has 'flipped their lid'

Grounding and calming strategies:

Grounding helps keep someone in the present. It works by **focusing outward on the external world**. You can think of it as distraction, centering, a safe place or looking outward.

Strategies include:

- Counting breaths in and out, watching clouds, counting backwards from 20
- Counting how many steps they can walk with a beanbag on their head
- Placing a cool cloth to their face
- Playing 54321 game

Let child know they are safe and secure

(think about the 4Ss of attachment)

“I can see you and I’m going to stay near you to make sure you stay safe”.

Step 3 Set limits (if needed)

Validate the emotion and label the feeling

...BUT...

certain behaviours cannot be accepted.

“I understand how you are feeling but these are the rules that we have to follow. Doing that is not ok’.

‘You didn’t put do the task as we agreed. You’re probably angry that you can’t join in the practical session with the others now because you have to complete the written assessment first’

‘We can’t behave like that even though you are feeling annoyed because it is not safe’.

“You are angry that I’ve taken away your phone but these are the rules everyone has to follow. I will keep it safe for you”

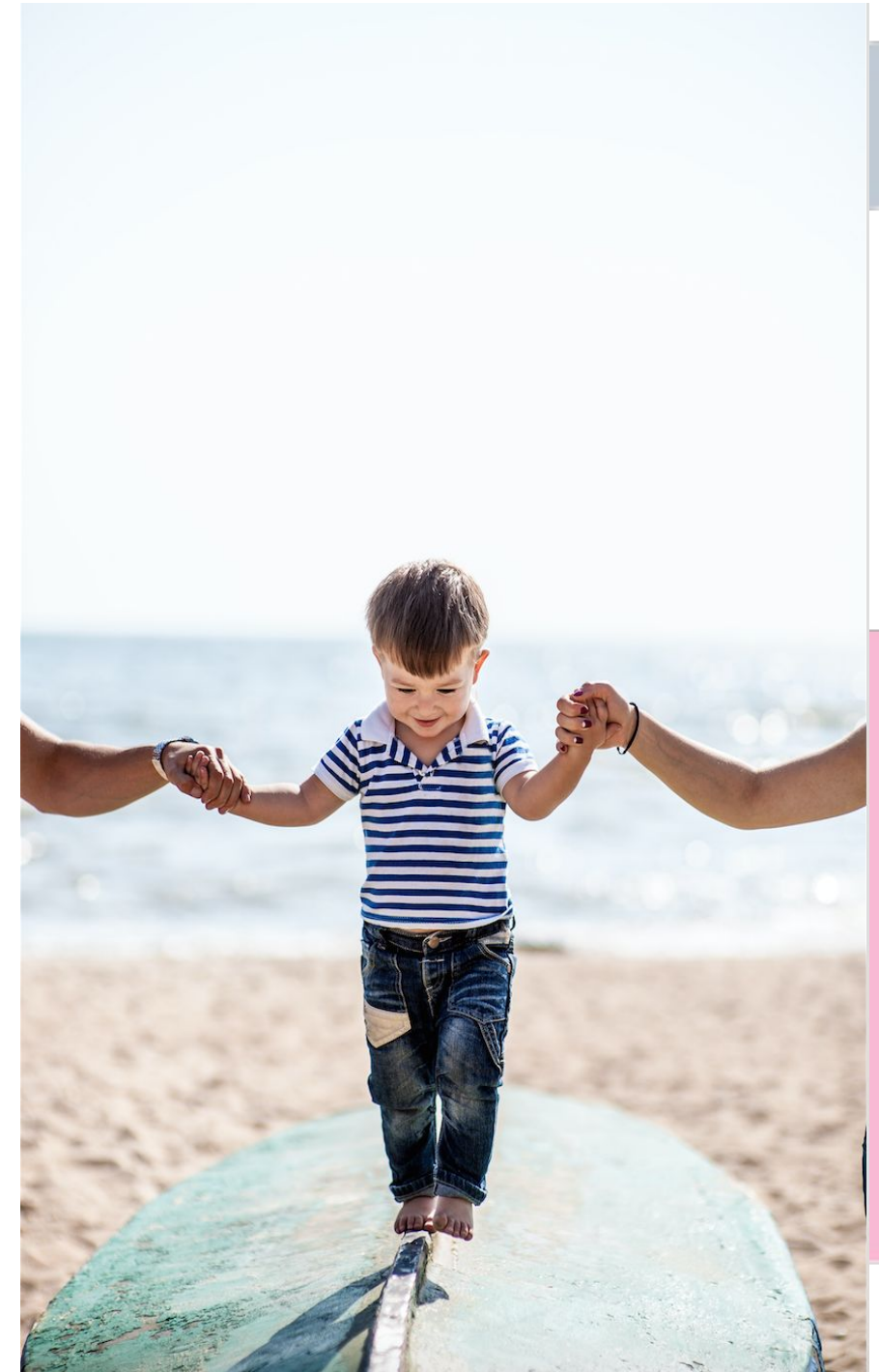
Step 4 Problem-solving

- ‘This is not a safe place to be angry. Let’s go to a safe place and then we can talk’
- ‘Next time you’re feeling like this, what could you do? How do you think you will react next time or if this happens again’
- ‘You need to work in a group with Ruth or work with me - which do you want to do?’

Rose,
2014

Putting it together

1. 'I understand how you feel, you're not alone'
2. 'This is what is happening, this is what you're feeling'
3. 'We can't always get what we want'
4. 'We can sort this out'



Any questions
Final thoughts
Thank you!