

Emotional First Aid

FOR PARENTS/CARERS



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EMOTIONAL CARE FOR YOU

Anyone who is a parent or carer will know the emotional rollercoaster it is to care for our kids.

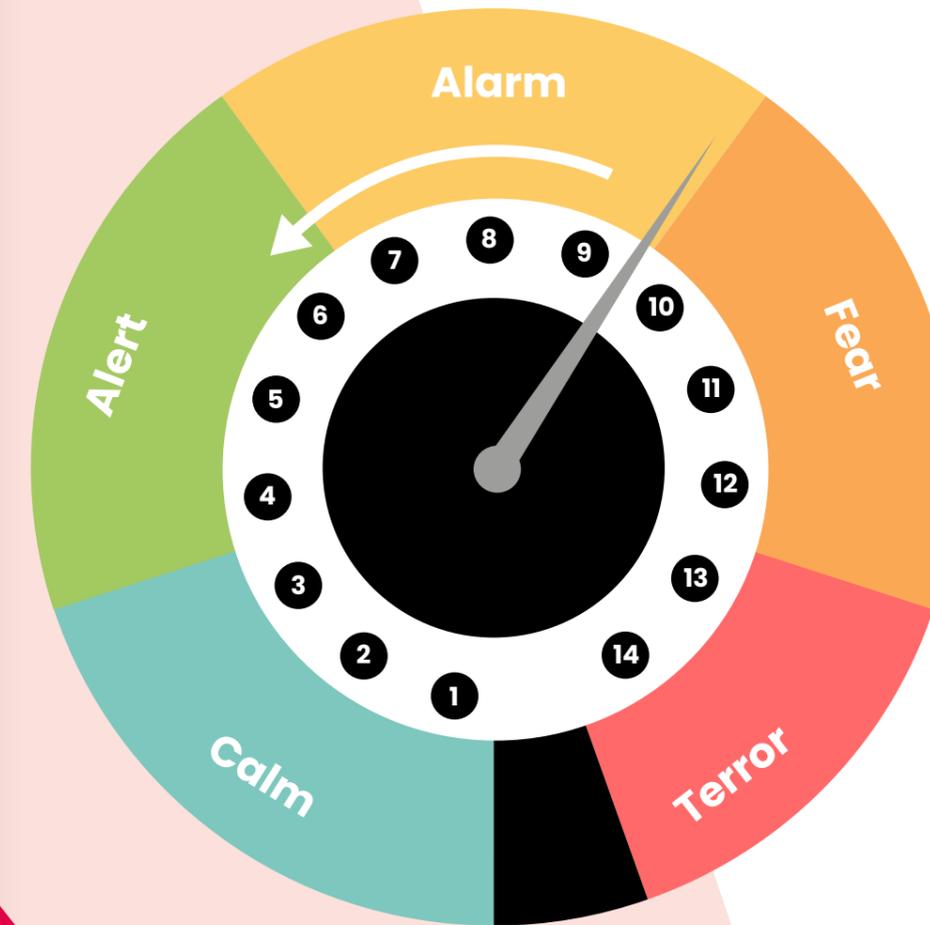
We can easily take on the cares of others as well as carrying our own stuff, which is why we want to take a moment to say:

YOU matter, YOU are appreciated.

Our hope and prayer is that you find this booklet supports you, even if it's just a little, to be kind to yourself. That it equips you with some ideas and activities to help you and your kids handle the emotions that can come and go every day.



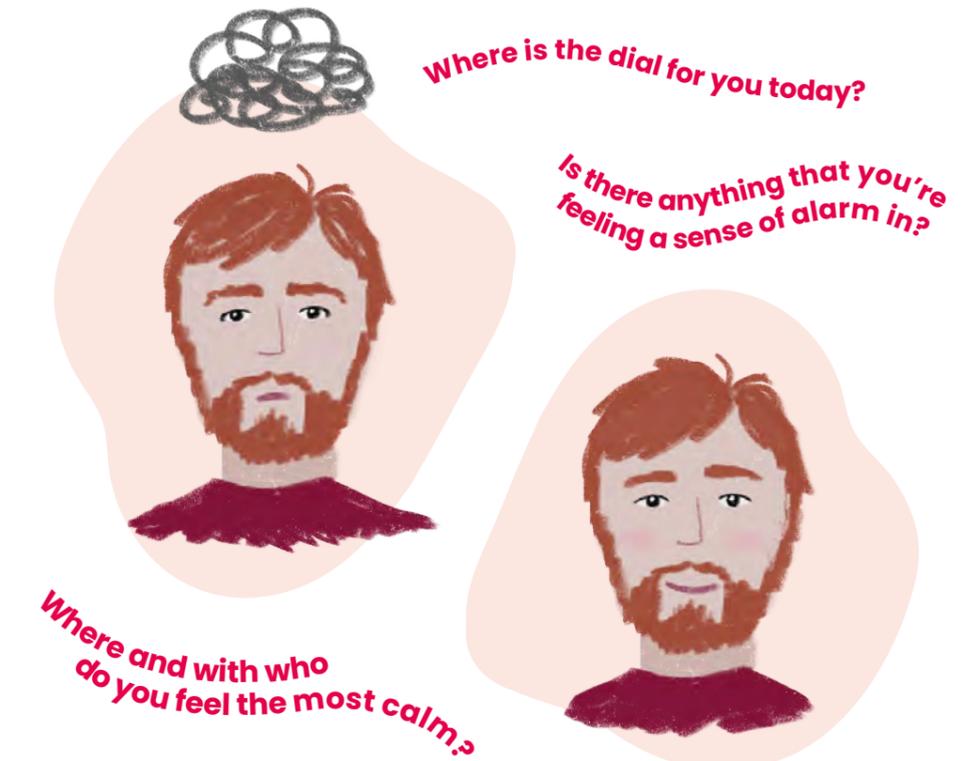
INTERNAL STRESS DIAL



We all have an internal Stress Dial. Let's take a minute to be aware of it.

Things that can effect our Stress Dial:

- Expectations from family, friends, partners, people we work for, colleagues...
- Circumstances in our home, work, community, nation, world
- Physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual health





TUNING IN TO YOUR BRAIN STATES

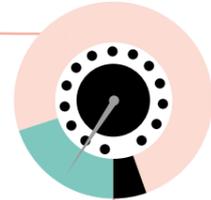
YOUR EMOTIONS HELP SIGNAL WHERE YOU ARE ON THE STRESS DIAL

Calm

You feel calm and peaceful. You are able to think, create, reflect, have great ideas and dream about your future.

Your heart beat is steady.

Question: What and who keeps you calm? When and how do you best reflect?



Alert

You feel alert, engaged and steady.

You may feel some stress but this is manageable stress. You may be aware of nerves because you need to meet a deadline, be assessed through interview or deadlines/expectations given for work, social or home life.

This kind of stress helps you to learn, perform and grow.

Question: What do you want to learn and grow in? Who helps to stretch you in a good way?

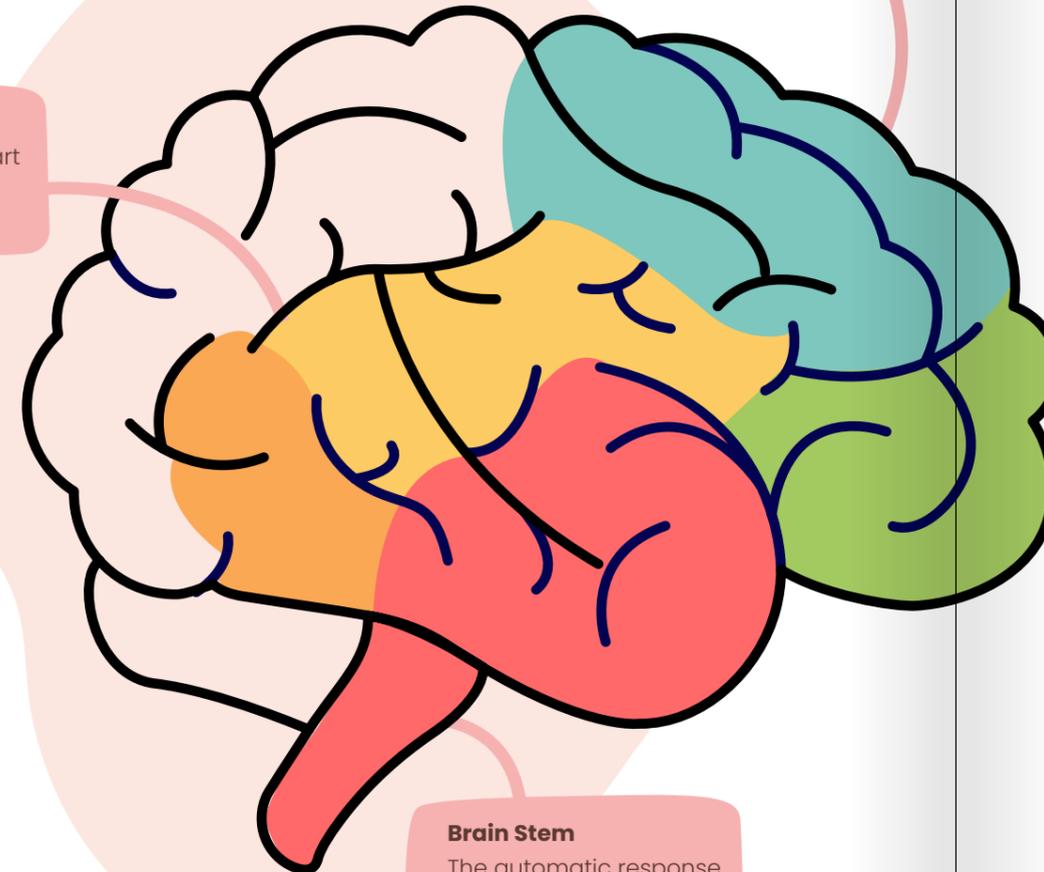


Limbic System

The emotional part of the brain
"Am I loved?"

Prefrontal Cortex

The thinking part of the brain
"I can learn"



Brain Stem

The automatic response part of the brain
"Am I safe?"



Alarm

You feel a sense of alarm linked to your physical or relational wellbeing.

Your thinking and actions are likely to be coming from the emotions you're feeling.

You may feel the need to be watchful, and really aware of people and situations that you are preparing to react to immediately if needed.

Your heartbeat may be faster.

Your temperature may fluctuate to hot or cold.

Question: What and who are you concerned about? What and who triggers you?



Fear

You can feel a sense of panic, shock or numbness.

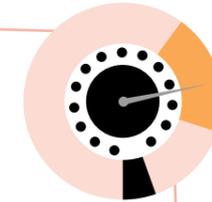
It is very hard to think clearly and your emotions can feel overwhelming.

You may be scanning for escape routes, glued to the spot or feeling wobbly.

Your heartbeat can fluctuate from beating fast to beating slow.

Your temperature can be really different to normal.

Question: When and where do you feel unsafe, overwhelmed or really anxious? What and where do you look for escape? Who do you feel safe with?



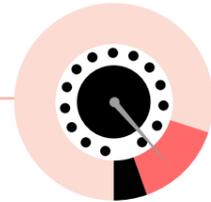
Terror

You're not really aware of how you feel or what to think.

Your reactions are from instinct and will respond with one or more of:

- Fight – with your words and/or actions
- Flight – running away or finding somewhere to hide
- Freeze – very tired, dazed or numb

Question: Have you ever felt like your life was in danger? What did you do? Run/Attack/Freeze. Who helped?





TURNING THE **STRESS DIAL DOWN**



Having good emotional health isn't about trying to stay in calm all of the time. This would be unrealistic as life happens with all sorts of people and situations to respond to!

Good emotional health is knowing we all have a spectrum of emotions that signal to us **HOW** our health is doing.

By tending to our emotions, the whole spectrum of them, we are better able to recognise there is a reason behind them and address those reasons when they reach the 'Alarm' on our stress dials.



So how can we turn our **Stress Dials down?**

Good times to pause and think 'How am I doing':

- Start and end of the day
- During breaks
- Just before and just after chats with those you live with
- Just before and after chats/activities with your kids

It can be helpful to ask the question – 'Has the emotion I'm feeling been generated by me or am I carrying my kids or someone else's emotion with me?'

It has been shown through research that activating our senses in a positive way can really help calm the body and the mind.

So, whether your emotions are your own or being impacted by someone else we care about, let's take a moment to pause and reflect on the ways we can nurture and calm our body, mind, emotions and spirit.

IDEAS FOR NURTURE AND CALM FOR **YOUR BODY**



Listen

Programmes + podcasts that promote healthy living, that inform and energize you to exercise and try new foods and drinks.



Fidget Relief

If you can, take regular breaks during your day to stop, walk, eat/drink, stand/sit and stretch any part that has been still for over an hour.



Action

A nice long walk or high action sport, a lovely bubble bath or snuggle up in a super soft blanket or scarf.



Item of Scent

Choose lotions and creams that you enjoy the smell of. Give yourself a massage or ask someone you trust to massage your shoulders, arms and hands or feet.



Special Item

This could be a hot water bottle or ice pack, exercise mat, water bottle or cushion.

Your people and places



People

Talk to the doctor about any niggles or concerns to seek their advice.



Places

Have you got a place in your home for rest + comfort?



IDEAS FOR NURTURE AND CALM FOR **YOUR MIND**

Your people and places



People

Make time to chat with those in your life who you trust, who really listen, who give you space to think things through and bring wise advice when you ask for it.

Places

Go as often as you can to a natural spot, where you can clear your head and enjoy being outside.



Fidget Relief

What do you find yourself doing when thinking? Chewing, swiveling or tapping your pen? Tapping your feet, your knees, the nearest surface?

Build up a collection of things to fiddle with; puzzle cubes or snakes, bouncy stress balls or quick sudoku, word games or doodle pads.



Listen

What are you curious about? What do you enjoy creating? Make a list of what you would like to learn about just because YOU want to. Seek each one out on a video platform. Set a realistic goal of one a day or week or month.



Item of Scent

With increased hand washing and sanitiser, choose a soap you enjoy the smell of and a hand moisturiser to take time to care for your hands as a great fidget relief with purpose.



Action

Read a book, finish a jigsaw, play board games, card games on your own and also with others. Practice or learn a musical instrument, circus skill, a new craft or a new sport.



Special Item

Writing or typing out what's on your mind can really help you order your thoughts. Have a special journal that's paper or on a device. You could have themes like: 'My hopes', 'My fears', 'My projects', 'My thank-yous'.

IDEAS FOR NURTURE AND CALM FOR **YOUR EMOTIONS**

Your people and places



People

Have regular chats with someone you can depend on, who accepts you when you're angry, who can handle you being sad, who you can laugh or cry with.

Places

Consider where your peaceful place is inside and outdoors, go as often as you can. For the one off places you've been to that hold a peaceful memory - find a picture of it to keep the memory alive.



Fidget Relief

Do you find yourself biting your nails or chewing the inside of your mouth? Grow a habit of healthy snacking on apples, carrots etc. Chew gum or to help you resist - have frequent cups of water.



Item of Scent

Bake or cook up something you LOVE the smell of; cakes, bread, with fruits or ingredients you like or your favourite dinner.



Special Item

Feel connected with someone you care about by swapping pictures, accessories or gifts with them. Keep looking at photos of shared memories.



Listen

Create a 'soul soothing' playlist to calm you. Watch a favourite movie or series. Avoid listening to things that cause your stress dial to go up: certain songs, the news, social media threads and people that wind you up.



Action

Sing, hug, swim inside or outside, run, walk, find what makes you laugh. Count down; 5 things you can see on the floor, 4 things you can hear above ground, 3 different textures you can touch, 2 things near you to smell and 1 taste of something you can access.



IDEAS FOR NURTURE AND CALM FOR **YOUR SPIRIT**



Your people and places



Action

Remember that question you would ask if God was real? Why not bring it directly and have a chat with God? You don't need a special place or set of words to be heard, just where you are you can talk. There is a verse in the Bible that tells us that God says; "call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things." That's really what prayer is.



Item of Scent

In keeping with a theme of thankfulness, have a go at identifying the scents of each season. What from each season; Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn do you enjoy and which of those involve your sense of smell. Which scents in the current season do you enjoy? – look out for them and surround yourself with those whenever you can.

Fidget Relief

For finding calm: light a tea light for a moment of reflection, enjoy its light as you consider what in your life you are thankful for. Make a list of words or symbols to remind you. You could pin them up, have as a bookmark or add to a journal if you keep one.



Listen

There is a lot of spiritual music to explore with old and new traditions of worship in all sorts of genres. Why not start by using a search engine to look up your favourite style of music and add 'Worship' alongside to see what comes up.



Special Item

To grow spiritual awareness, we have drawn strength and nurtured our understanding by reading or listening to the Holy Bible. A good place to start is the book of Matthew or Psalm 23 (last page of this booklet too).

People

Who is spiritual and wise in your world? If you could ask God any question what would you ask? Who could you seek out to begin a chat about those deep questions you have?

Places

Visit a church or place of worship. Are there any natural spots you can walk to? A clump of trees, a sandy walk, a river, canal or disused railway walk? We can often feel close to God when we're out and enjoying the creativity of nature.

What's the grandest natural view you have ever seen? Remember the most expansive view is available to us all, when we're outside and look up.





HELPING TO BRING CALM TO YOUR KIDS BY UNDERSTANDING THEIR EMOTIONS

Definition of Emotion:
A strong feeling of any kind.

Emotions are like signals.

It is by tuning into them, listening, understanding the reason for them that helps us to process them together. The secret for success in this is to accept and embrace the signals. The whole spectrum of them, comfortable or not, and process them well through listening and talking them through together.



Emotions are very important signals as they tell us how we're doing in our social, relational, mental, physical and spiritual health.

As the adults in the lives of our kids who are figuring out what emotions are and what they mean, we can help them navigate the many emotions felt every day.

When we see our kids act and react verbally and by their actions in any set of circumstances, we are being shown a set of signals from the soul.



SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Home can often be the place our kids feel able to be themselves the most. Any pent up emotions from the day can be released when they get home or towards the end of the day.

Here are a few ways distress can be shown, when emotions or the reasons we feel them get on top of our kids it can be displayed in these ways.





3 STEPS OF EMOTIONAL FIRST AID FOR YOUR KIDS



1. Breathe

Together – if your child is not handling their own breathing, move close to them and help them to regulate their breathing. ‘Breathe with me.....slowly in, 2, 3, 4 and out 2,3,4, 5 6’. Do this a number of times.

Ask them to watch their chest/stomach moving out and in as you breathe together. It can help to encourage them to blow out their breaths slowly so that they can also hear their breathing.

Things you can say:

‘I see you’
‘I can see that you’re really feeling it’
‘Okay, I see you, I care about what is bothering you and let’s take a few deep steady breaths’



2. Drop/Walk

Drop – if they continue to feel overwhelmed it can be helpful for them to sit on a chair or even on the floor so that they can feel a solid surface underneath and behind them (leaning against a wall). Continue the slow deep breathing.

Walk – if they want to get out, offer to walk together or follow them if they are in ‘flight’ mode and running off. Remain calm and steady as you walk/follow them as this will ease and not aggravate their agitation. Continue to promote slow, deep breathing.

Things you can say:

‘Let’s walk, I’m here for you’
‘Let’s sit, I’m not going anywhere right now’
‘I care about what you’re feeling, help me understand’



3. Listen

Let them talk/shout/process their emotions with you as you remain present with them. You can put a hand on their arm or shoulder if you know the physical touch will be calming for them.

This isn’t a time to try and fix or see the bright side; it’s a time to hear, accept, understand, be curious and just be present with them. Encourage them to keep breathing as this will help them to regulate their emotions. Say ‘I’m hearing you’.

Things you can say:

‘I hear you’
‘I’m hearing that you.....’
‘I care about how you’re feeling, you don’t have to be on your own with it.’



WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP

If you're unsure about what help you or your kids might need, have a chat with your family doctor to talk through options.

Also talk it through with someone you trust.

Here are some charities and organisations we recommend:



NSPCC

nspcc.org.uk
UK children's charity



kintsugihope.org.uk
Adult and youth wellbeing groups for churches

mind & soul foundation

mindandsoulfoundation.org.uk
Exploring christianity and mental health



touchbase.org.uk
Support for families affected by relational trauma and loss



connectedlives.org
Local Circle of Security parenting groups

POWER THE FIGHT

powerthefight.org.uk
Empowering communities to end youth violence

YOUNGMINDS
fighting for young people's mental health

youngminds.org.uk
Coping with mental health issues for YP and Parents

At a Loss.org

ataloss.org.uk
Helping the bereaved find support

The song writer who wrote Psalm 23 in the Bible, tells of his experience of God's holistic care.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23

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