

# Feelings are Funny Things

## A Storytelling Toolkit



A programme for exploring feelings, thinking and action using stories and storytelling

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Consortiwm Canolbarth y De  
Central South Consortium

Gwasanaeth Addysg ar y Cyd  
Joint Education Service



### Mind's Eye Storytelling



## Foreword

My experience in education has been wide and varied and latterly as Director of Education in Rhondda Cynon Taf I had the privilege of being the regional Lead Director for children looked after (CLA) on behalf of the Central South Consortium. In that role I was able to see for myself some of the innovative practices shared and deployed within our schools to promote better learning experiences for CLAs.

Having spent the first twenty years of my professional life in classrooms working with vulnerable learners I firmly believe that finding the key to engage children and young people in education lies in investing time in building relationships. Effective relationships between staff and learners and between learners is essential in creating an environment where mutual trust exists, and everyone's opinion is listened to, respected and valued. Investing time in developing the skill of active listening undoubtedly helps learners handle their social and emotional needs.

Too many children and young people are subjected to negative experiences at home or at school but if the right person employs the right approach at the right time it can be life changing for the learner. Developing and maturing from childhood to adulthood is complex and fraught with many pitfalls. Navigating through the emotional and social turbulence to find the right pathway can be a daunting journey for many and requires those staff working with vulnerable learners to have a repertoire of skills and experiences to draw upon if they are to be successful.

Building relationships takes time and energy, to reach a stage where mutual trust is achieved demands that staff are patient, persistent and have the ability to be flexible. The pedagogical principles, approaches and activities in The Storyteller's Tool Kit undoubtedly resonate with my strategic overview and experience of working with vulnerable learners and I believe will provide useful resources for both teachers and support staff.

I am grateful to all the staff and learners involved in designing this programme and I will be closely following its impact when it is rolled out universally in schools across the region.

Esther Thomas

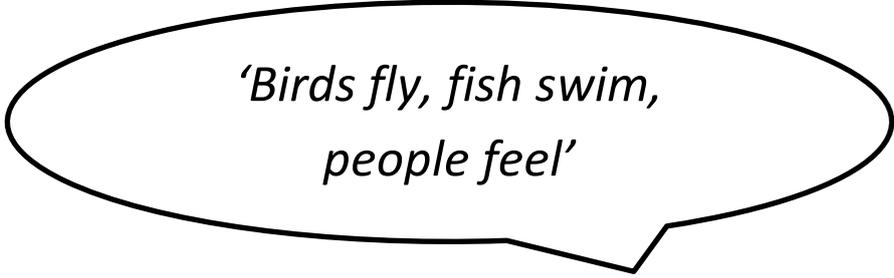
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## 1. Introduction



*'Birds fly, fish swim,  
people feel'*

Hiam Ginott, 'Between Teacher and Child'

Storytelling has an enormous contribution to make to children and young people's wellbeing and engagement in learning. Stories are enjoyable, which makes learning effortless and easy, and the active listening that storytelling produces, facilitates creative and imaginative learning. It becomes possible to think about both possible and impossible worlds and can help give voice to feelings and thoughts. Being able to listen to and consider a story and being able to voice an opinion or tell a story to another has a significant contribution to the Four Purposes of the New Welsh Curriculum. Storytelling can help learners on their journey to becoming healthy, capable, confident and creative individuals while also developing a sense of what is right and wrong.

The 'Feelings are Funny Things' Programme aims to contribute to learners' emotional health and a positive attitude to learning through helping them understand more about their emotions, thoughts and beliefs and how these influence the choices they make. The methodology used is that of storytelling. This does not mean reading stories either aloud or to one's self but rediscovering the ancient and traditional art of telling a story, face-to-face, without text but improvising from visual memory. Stories are used to explore feelings, thoughts and actions while storytelling skills are used to build imagination, which is a necessary component for problem solving, and communication skills. To this end, stories and storytelling are also used to develop awareness of non-verbal communication. Stories can be a powerful tool for learning and inquiry and storytelling skills can help build confidence in communication as well as also bodily awareness, an essential ingredient of understanding emotions.

This programme is not about working to an outcome such as a performance of storytelling (although that may be something that happens). It is, like many arts in education projects, about the process of working creatively and closely with others. Along the way an

environment is created that is playful, respectful and most importantly recognises and respects our emotions as an important part of our experience. Emotions can be both pleasant and, at times, uncomfortable. Our emotions are something that can be thought about and understood, both within ourselves and others. Our feelings are highly personal so safety and trust are needed if they are to be explored. This is one reason that stories are so useful as a tool – they allow us to explore the feelings of characters as well as our own reactions and responses. Our feelings are subjective but they are also universal. It is our emotional life that makes us human. Our feelings exist in relation to our thoughts and beliefs and the things we do. The programme aims to explore the nature of feelings and to develop emotional literacy by taking time to think about and reflect on this aspect of our nature. The development of children’s emotions and their ability to think and reflect will vary enormously even within one year group, let alone across the whole school. This programme aims to start where children are and by adapting the exercises in this book helps to gently extend and develop them from where they are to having a greater understanding of their own and others feelings.

### **Working with Vulnerable Learners.**

The role of emotions in learning is increasingly recognised as important for all children – It is a central component of wellbeing. However, there are some children who particularly benefit from an education that focusses on feelings. Some children, for many reasons, will not have experienced the supportive nurturing essential for emotional development. There will also be children who have grown up in situations where they have felt particularly fearful or anxious or experienced overwhelming loss and sadness. They can end up constantly on the lookout for danger, unable to focus on learning and with problems of developing trust and regulating emotions. Such children are often identified as having difficulties with attachment or as vulnerable learners. Children who are anxious, feeling unsupported and alone may focus more on trying to protect themselves rather than on the learning tasks in front of them. Such children may have experienced a number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and/or may be experiencing ‘developmental trauma’.

Emotional difficulties are, of course, a major component of mental health problems and there are also many children who have experienced trauma, or have specific learning difficulties who may also be experiencing high levels of emotional distress. This programme cannot meet all their needs but it can contribute to their self-understanding, confidence and ability to manage their feelings as long as it is carried out in a safe environment. This approach can be particularly helpful for vulnerable learners. The routine, rhythm and repetition of stories can help give focus, especially if an atmosphere of playfulness and safety is established for storytelling sessions. If particular sensitivities or difficulties are apparent it can be useful to explore this with workers skilled in wellbeing and mental health. The pedagogic approach used in storytelling (described below) values playfulness and

acceptance of what learners give to us. This is met with curiosity and empathy. This 'attitude' is helpful for vulnerable learners.

It should be noted that even raising the subject of emotions can be difficult for some learners, for instance at a time of bereavement or change, so sensitivity is required and work should follow the lead of the children. This is why it is so important that this work is carried out by staff who are comfortable in discussing feelings and can work at a pace that meets children's needs. There may also be times when such work might lead children to talk about personal issues. Therefore, it is important to have the support to be able to reflect on such issues and it can be helpful to have sufficient staff members (such as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants ELSA's) should children need individual support. If safeguarding is an issue it must be dealt with in accordance to school safeguarding policies.

### **Feeling, Thinking and Acting – Key Ideas.**

The programme draws upon theories and techniques from a number of educational and therapeutic approaches including philosophy in education, emotional literacy/intelligence, restorative practise and non-violent communication. Ideas developed from mindfulness approaches have also been incorporated as these can help learners develop self-soothing skills, both as individuals and for the class-as-a-whole. Another central approach is creating a 'community of enquiry' to explore the stories and learners' reactions to them. However, it is stories and storytelling that is central to the programme.

This resource aims to offer practical exercises that can be incorporated into a wide variety of curriculum areas or developed as a storytelling programme in its own right, giving the opportunity to explore our inner world of feeling, thinking and choosing to act. Whilst these exercises can be carried out without specialised training, we would strongly recommend staff seek out opportunities to gain further experience and skills in storytelling, mindfulness and other areas related to health and wellbeing through the many excellent courses and workshops that are available in this area. For teachers and school staff, the best way to develop skills in storytelling, philosophical inquiry and mindfulness is through practice and training with guidance from mentors. Such training can develop expertise and creativity in working with these exercises and adapting them, or creating new activities, to explore an area fundamental to our wellbeing, emotional health and resilience.

This manual was developed from our work with schools in the Central South Consortium region where we worked with children in Key Stage Two and these exercises are most suitable for that year group. They can, of course, be adapted for and used with both younger and older children. We would sincerely like to thank the children and staff with whom we worked and the CSCJES for the inspiration, fun and challenge that they gave us. The key ideas we continually explore are outlined below.

### ***Feelings are Funny Things***

Feelings are indeed funny things; we can be preoccupied with a worry and then distracted and forget what we were worried about. Sometimes it helps for a feeling to be expressed, sometimes it's better to keep it to oneself. How do we learn which is which? Feelings are part of being human and learning to manage them is a lifelong process. Being aware of what we are feeling is an important first step in learning to deal with them, which is itself, an underlying component of wellbeing – Young people can be helped by understanding their feelings through having them accepted and validated. Emotions can be better understood when they are respected and reflected on rather than dismissed or denied. Feeling good, especially about oneself, aids learning. Overwhelming negative feelings impede learning.

If children's home environments are not supportive to their emotional experiences, and this can be for many reasons, they find it harder to learn about managing feelings or feel confident in themselves. Children who have experienced a large number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) often do not receive the emotional support they need to learn about emotions. It is important that schools are able to offer the support to help learners understand emotions and the relationship between thoughts, feelings, actions and choices so they can develop confidence and be in a position to learn.

<b>In unsupportive emotional environments emotions are.....</b>	<b>In supportive emotional environments emotions are.....</b>
Often invalidated	Validated - Seen as important and needing respect and attention.
Seen as wrong and dangerous	Seen as pleasant or unpleasant but not dangerous
Something that should be controlled.	Seen as difficult to control sometimes
Not important	Important to one's experience and wellbeing
Not to be trusted	To be trusted as a guide to action
Not hard to sort out	Sometimes hard to sort out and are helped by support.
Something to be ashamed of	Valued as part of being human.

### ***Thoughts are Living Things***

Our feelings exist in relation to our thinking. How we think about a situation will affect how we feel about it and our mood will influence our thoughts. Our mind is always 'on' and offering a constant inner dialogue of judgements and evaluations. Children develop inner speech from about age 7 and it has a powerful effect on their wellbeing and confidence. It is important to develop an awareness of our thinking process, to see our thoughts as theories, sometimes helpful and sometimes not, and to be able to distinguish facts and opinions. This work relates to important educational ideas such as having a 'growth mindset' and being able to think critically. These skills can be illustrated well in stories. We can even see the thinking mind as a 'storyteller'- always telling us stories about the world and about ourselves. If those stories are predominantly negative there can be an impact on mental health and wellbeing. Some thinking styles promote anxiety and trigger the fight/flight response. If we are able to think about our feelings we are able to give ourselves more choice in how to respond.

We aim to create a community of enquiry which encourages and values flexible thinking above rigid thinking styles.

<b>Rigid Thinking</b>	<b>Flexible thinking</b>
Sees intelligence as fixed	Sees intelligence as fluid and variable
Sees things in one way	Finds multiple perspectives and viewpoints
Doesn't question how thinking styles affect feelings	Recognises how black and white thinking, comparison making, mindreading or catastrophising influence feelings
Sees thoughts as true or false	Reflects on what we are thinking and values creativity.

***It is in our actions that we are able to choose.***

We have more control over our choices and actions than we do over many of our thoughts and feelings. Our emotions and automatic thoughts can lead to impulsive actions often as we attempt to avoid difficult feelings. Rather than try and change thoughts and feelings we can accept them, use them as guides but make our own choices based on our values and goals.

<b>Impulsive Behaviour</b>	<b>Values-led Behaviour</b>
Avoids difficult emotions	Moves towards what is seen as important
Seeks immediate gratification	Develops learning and curiosity
Is reactive to events	Sets short and long term goals
Considers own needs only	Considers the needs of others and collaborates with them.

Developing awareness about choices and actions can assist in developing well-being. It is possible to link this work to models of wellbeing such as PERMA (Seligman) model or 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (New Economics Foundation), both of which have been applied in Welsh schools.

**A Pedagogic Approach**

We have outlined ways of becoming more aware of the aspects of our inner world, particularly the areas of feelings, thoughts and actions and the relationship between them. There is, of course, much more to be said and many ideas about how this work can be developed but our aim here is to help give staff confidence in understanding and talking about these areas. Stories and storytelling are powerful tools for exploring these areas. We have also outlined some pedagogic principles that we believe facilitate learning. We explore with an attitude of playfulness, using games, humour and a lightness of touch. We are accepting of emotions and the ideas that children can present to us. We are curious about what is presented and explore with questions learners' thinking and perceptions. Finally, we aim to be empathic to how children are feeling and to validate their emotional experiences, as well as guiding them to find ways of managing their emotions.

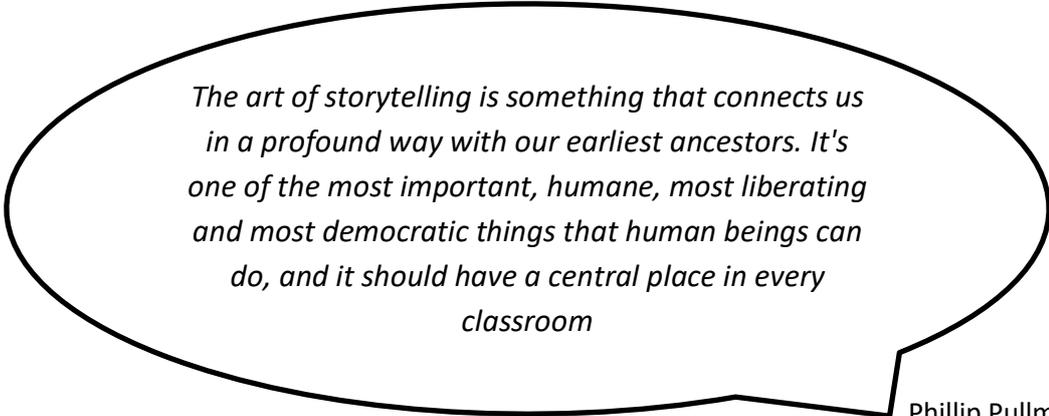
We now present a series of exercises based around telling stories and teaching storytelling skills which form the process of the programme. We use the exercises by modelling and scaffolding as appropriate to help children develop their skills and confidence as storytellers so that they may better communicate their experiences. We hope to create a community of enquiry that is characterised by both safety and playfulness.

We also give a number of stories that can be easily told. These can be used either for the exercises or just for the sheer joy and pleasure of telling and listening to a story together.

**Steve Killick & Phil Okwedy**

**Mind's Eye Storytelling**

[www.feelingsarefunnythings.org](http://www.feelingsarefunnythings.org)



*The art of storytelling is something that connects us in a profound way with our earliest ancestors. It's one of the most important, humane, most liberating and most democratic things that human beings can do, and it should have a central place in every classroom*

Phillip Pullman

# The Storyteller's Toolkit



## Listening

Paying attention, focus, presence, curiosity, comprehension



## Imagination

Seeing the story in the Mind's Eye  
Visualisation, problem-solving



## Emotion

Feelings and emotions in the story, the teller and the listener - verbal and non-verbal



## Language

Language used - phrases and metaphors - repetitions, rhythms



## Voice

Vocal expression, tone of voice, sound effects



## Action

Gestures, movements, physical position, character



## Face

Facial expressions, feelings conveyed



## Memory

Images, Story Bones  
Story Maps



## Eye Contact

Contact and connection with the audience



## 2. Riddles & Games – Warm-Ups and Wind-downs

Games are an important way of warming up the class before engaging in storytelling activities. They can be fun, help children relax, and use physical and interpersonal skills of non-verbal communication such as eye-contact.

Games can build social skills through co-operation and create the playful, non-competitive and non-judgemental atmosphere necessary for storytelling. They can help relax and prepare the mind for the activities that come. Similarly they can be used at the end of a class to help the group wind down and relax after the session.

Riddles serve to get the mind thinking flexibly and creatively. They can be great warm-ups and children will have ones they want to offer as well. Many more riddles can be found on the internet. We often use a game and/or a riddle to begin an activity to help give focus for what is to come. Here is a small selection of games that we have used successfully with KS2. There are of course many others that work equally well.

# Riddles

What can you hold without touching it or using your hands?

What is as light as air but you can only hold it for a minute?

The answer to both these riddles is *breath*

What can you break with just one word?

You may get very many interesting answers to this one but one answer is *silence*

I am always wet but I never rust. Go on and wag me if you must. What am I?

*A Tongue*

What can you make that no one ever sees?

*Noise*

Feed me and I live. Give me water and I die. What am I?

*Fire.*

You wear a coat to keep you dry but wear this one and you will be wet

*A Coat of Paint*

What can you catch but never throw?

*A Cold*

More riddles can easily be found on the internet.

# Eye Contact - Clap

Aim: encourage eye-contact and focus. It can also help settle a class.

1. Arrange students in standing circle
2. The object is to send a 'clap' around the circle.
3. The leader starts by turning to the right, making eye contact with student next to them, and then claps. The student then turns to the student on their right and repeats the stages of making eye contact and clapping.
4. The clap should pass round the circle until it returns to the leader.

## Development

When two students make eye contact they try to both clap at same time. Note – some students will clap in front of another student's face. This is an opportunity to ask students to be more considerate and talk about what it feels like to receiving end of such a clap.

## 1, 2 & 3 - Clap

This game encourages concentration, co-operation and eye contact. It is useful to model it and to get students who have grasped it to model it for the rest of the class.

1. Put students into pairs
2. One student says '1', the second says, '2' and the first says, '3'. The second student starts the sequence again by saying '1' and so it continues for a few moments
3. Then instead of saying '3' the student replaces the number with a clap.
4. Then '1' can also be replaced with a foot stamp.

# The King/Queen of Silence

Aim: Encourage focused attention, concentration and awareness of movement.

1. Assemble the class in a seated semi-circle
2. Leader says 'Pray silence for the King/Queen'
3. The Leader then sits in chair opposite the semi-circle and explains s/he will only accept people in the court who are completely silent. S/he then beckons to a player to come and join the court.
4. Player has to stand up and come to the King without making any noise.
5. If they succeed then they sit next to the King. If they make any noise they have to return to their place.

## Development

The 'King' or 'Queen' should only talk in whispers and appear outraged by any unseemly noise.

The Leader gives a riddle or question that can only be answered by a student quietly coming to the front of class.

Students can have the opportunity to be the King or Queen

Classes can be held where only whispering is allowed for the duration of the game/session. This often enables less confident children to speak and encourages a calmer atmosphere.

# Making Sense of a Sentence

Aim- This game encourages team work and an understanding of sentence structure.

You need a set of plain cards or a piece of paper. Write out a sentence with one word on each card. Or you can write on a larger piece of paper and then cut it up into pieces with just one word on each piece.

Jumble the cards and give to a small group for them to lay out and work out the correct order for the sentence so it makes sense. The group has to work as a team to achieve this.

Begin with simple sentences which give the opportunity for the team to work out how to achieve the task.

The first sentence of a story can be a good start:

*Once upon a time there was a large, smelly giant.*

*Once a young man and woman got married and they lived in a small house on the top of a hill.*

There build up to more complex ideas. Proverbs can be useful.

*Worry gives a small thing a large shadow*

*You cannot stop the birds of sadness flying over your head but you can stop them making a nest in your hair.*

## **Development**

Help the group reflect on how successful they were in the task. Did everybody help? Were ideas listened to or ignored? Did a person make decisions without consulting? What worked well? What could have been better?

Explore the meaning of the sentence - If it is the first sentence of a story what would happen in that story?

Explore the meanings of the proverbs.

## What did you do at the....?

Aim: to encourage listening and remembering and also help students get to know each other better.

1. Put students in pairs - it is best with students who don't know each other well.
2. Each student has to ask the other for something they did at the weekend and what they had for breakfast this morning.
3. They find another pair and each student introduces their partner and says what they did at the weekend and what they had for breakfast that morning.

### Development

More questions can be asked such as 'What is your favourite song?' or 'What do you most like doing?' Children can be asked to think of good questions that would be good to ask their partner. This exercise allows for an assessment of how good listening and memory skills are.

If you have a large open space you can begin the game by asking students to walk round the room in all directions. Then they make eye contact with another person as they pass. Following this they then do high fives with another person. Then they make a pair with the next person they make contact with.

# What's in the bag?

Aim: Encourage imagination and non-verbal communication

1. In a circle the leader produces a large paper bag or box (it can be mimed). They put their hand in and pull out an imaginary object that they found in the box such as a bell, an animal or indeed anything they can imagine.
2. The bag is passed round the circle and each student puts their hand in and says what they found.

## Development

As students understand the rules then they have to mime the object rather than telling it

# Name Games

Aim: If children don't know each other these games can help get to know each other's names.

## Name Mash-Up

1. Have group stand in a circle
2. Decide in which direction to go and have the first four people say their names, after which the whole group repeat their names.
3. The four now switch places, mixing up the order in which the names were heard, after which the group repeat the names.
4. The next four say their names and the process is repeated for them, after which all eight switch places and the whole group repeats the names
5. Continue until everyone has been named and the whole group switches places and is again named

## Action Names

1. Students stand in a circle.
2. One person starts by saying their name and making an action. The class repeat the name and action. The action can be a gesture or an expression of an emotion.
3. The next child then says their name and action and so on round the circle.

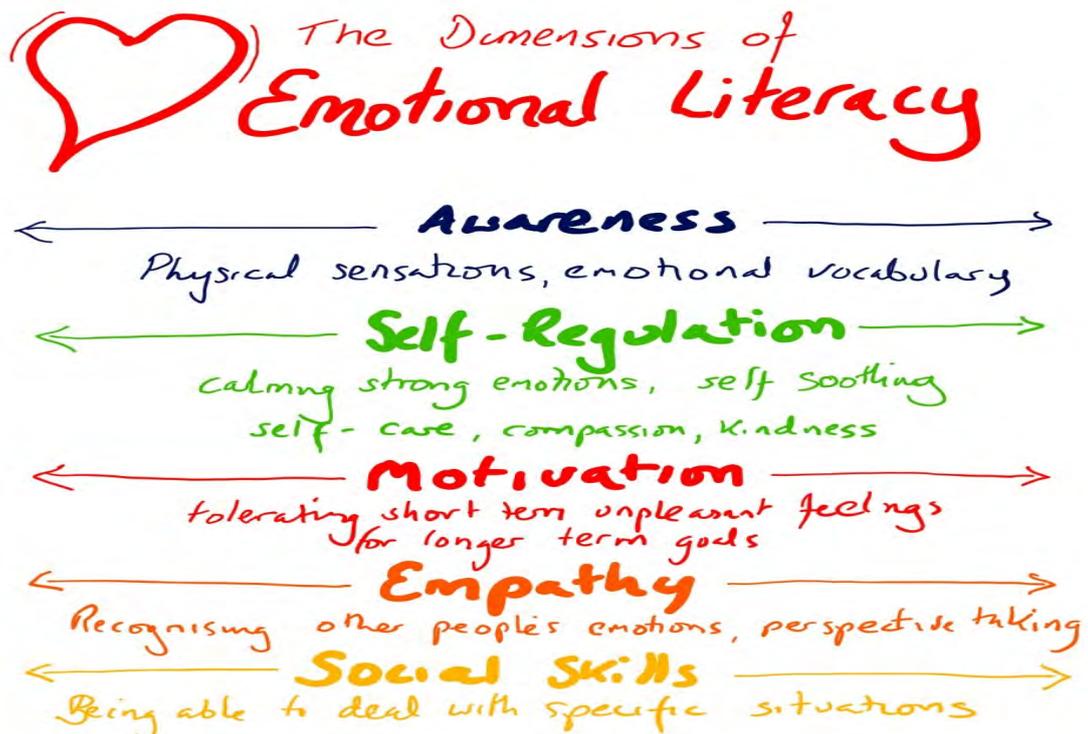


### 3. Feelings, Thoughts and Actions

Developing an awareness of emotion in oneself and others is an important skill for emotional health and can be developed by listening to and discussing stories. Two key areas to focus on are developing awareness of emotions and empathy (reading emotions in others). This is done by developing an emotional vocabulary and recognising non-verbal cues for emotion. These skills can be further developed by teaching storytelling skills which also encourage a number of key emotional, cognitive and social skills.

# Emotional Literacy Skills

These exercises aim to help students identify and discriminate between thoughts, feelings and actions in a story. After reading, watching, or preferably, telling a story, it can be explored using a number of exercises to draw out the emotions in the story or those experienced by the audience. Also, the thoughts, actions, decisions and choices of the characters can be explored. Philosophical enquiry skills can be useful for drawing out what learners thought about the story. Many of these exercises are best done in a circle with children either sitting on chairs or on the floor



## Story - The Meat of the Tongue

Here is a possible story that could be used with following exercises - Other stories can, of course, be used. The stories presented here are given in 'Bare Bone' form – outlining the main points of the story to which a teller, using storytelling skills, puts flesh on the bones and so brings to the story to life in their own way.

- On the East African Coast there is a fishing village. Above the village, a town. Above the town, a place where the Sultan lives with his two children.
- He is a busy Sultan, spending all his days doing what sultans must do. He makes up for this by giving his children the best of everything: toys, clothes, entertainments.
- However, he notices his children do not play like other children and they are pale, thin and sad.
- He asks his advisor why this is. The advisor does not know, but has seen that the children in the fishing village are happy & healthy.
- The advisor is despatched to find out why this is. He meets a poor fisherman who says his children are happy and healthy because he feeds them meat of the tongue.
- Hearing this, the Sultan has meat of the tongue from many different animals collected and cooked in every sort of way.
- Despite feeding it to his children, they remain pale and thin and sad.
- Believing he has been lied to, the Sultan orders that the advisor gives his children to the fisherman and brings the fisherman's children back to the palace.
- For a while all is well, but soon the fisherman's children grow pale and thin and sad despite being fed meat of the tongue every day.
- At his wit's end, the Sultan visits the fisherman himself and discovers that meat of the tongue does not mean the meat of animals but sharing news, jokes, songs and stories.
- Afterwards, no matter how busy he has been in the day, the sultan always spends time in the evening with his children who grow happy and healthy.

A version of this story can be found in, **Ancient Stories for Modern Times** – Faye Morgensen, Skinner House Books 2016

# Feelings are Funny

Aim: To develop a shared emotional vocabulary for the group.

1. Tell or read a story - then ask students what emotions were there either in the story, or in their responses to listening to the story, or both
2. Write each feeling/emotion down on whiteboard or flipchart and put two columns one labelled FEELINGS, the other FUNNY. Everything that is clearly a feeling or emotion goes in the 'feelings' column. If answers are given that are figures of speech, or more complex attitudes they are put in the funny column for further investigation. This exercise helps to discriminate between metaphors and idioms like 'over the moon' or 'fuming' (often used to communicate feelings), attitudes or actions such as 'determined'. It can also discriminate between feeling and emotion; for instance we can 'feel hungry' but that is not an emotion. The purpose here is not to identify student responses as right or wrong but to show that what constitutes a feeling or emotion is not always straight forward.
3. The nature of emotions can be explored further through questions –

*'Is that an emotion or a thought/or an action?'* - Trying to identify if it is a feeling, thought or action word.

*'What is that feeling like?'* - Trying to explore for metaphors and similes which are important in emotional expression.

*'Where do you feel it inside?'* – Linking it to physical feelings and sensations.

*'What does the feeling give an impulse to do?'* - What is the motivation that the feeling produces- Is it away or towards something?

*'What kind of .....?'* - If very general answers are given i.e. 'happy' or 'sad', this question might identify more precise feelings.

*'What might the character be thinking?'* - Identifying internal thoughts or dilemmas.

*'What does the character care about? What matters to him/her?'* – Linking feelings and actions to values and what is important.

*'What strategies did the character use?'* – What actions or plans did the character do? What were the intentions?

*'How successful was it?'* - Evaluating outcomes.

*'What else could they have done?'* - Different, flexible solutions.

## **Development**

This exercise helps assess and develop student's level of emotional recognition and vocabulary. The list can be developed over further exercises as new feelings are identified. If possible it should stay available for students to see and read and help develop their awareness of feelings.

In discussing feelings in this, and subsequent activities, it is useful to emphasise features of emotions such as their physical components; that they can be felt in the body and can feel pleasant or uncomfortable, they can vary in strength and that they give an impulse to act or behave in a certain way. Feelings also can prioritise our thinking. For instance, if we are worrying about something a lot it can be hard to concentrate on other things.

It is important to stress that feelings are neither right or wrong but that our experience of them is subjective. They are not always in our control and yet can guide our actions. If we can recognise and think about them we increase our capacity to choose our response.

A list of feeling words can be generated that can be added to during further exercises. Alternately, the Feelings Cards given at the end of the manual can be used.

# Strength of Feeling

Aim: Understand intensity of feeling

Sometimes responses echo very broad emotion categories such as 'happy' or 'sad' and these can vary considerably in the strength of feeling. To introduce more discrimination, explore such responses with further questioning such as;

- 'What kind of *happy*?'
- 'What kind of *sad*?'
- 'On a scale of one to ten, how *angry* is she?'
- 'How *scared* is he? Is there another word that might say more about how scared he is?'

Emotions can be explored in stories or other stimuli like pictures, poems or music. This can be started with questions like, 'What feelings did you notice in the story?' 'What do you think that character was feeling?' Or, 'What different emotions did you have during the story?'

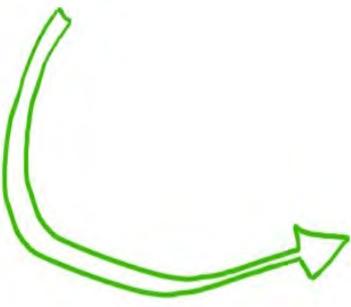
Responses can then be explored.

Other useful questions that explore the links between emotions, thoughts, values and decisions.

- 'What made you think that the character was feeling that?'
- 'What do they want or need at that moment?'
- 'What do you think they *want* to do next?' 'What do you think they *will* do next?'
- 'What matters to them? What is important to them?'
- What do they care about?

Another useful way of exploring the strength of emotion is by asking learners to rate the emotion on a 1-10 scale. This can help strengthen the idea that emotions can fluctuate in strength.

'On a scale of one to ten, where one is not at all angry and ten is extremely angry, how angry do you think that character is?'

		
<p>What are they feeling? Where do you feel that in your body? What do they care about?</p>	<p>What are they thinking? Is it a fact or opinion? How might they see it differently?</p>	<p>What do they want to do? What will happen next if they do that?</p>

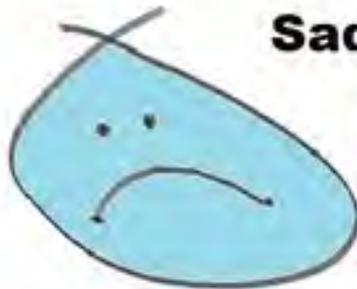
### The Primary Emotions

Particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing, it is important that young people recognise and have strategies for dealing with the primary emotions. These are commonly recognised as happiness, sadness, anxiety and anger (or *glad, sad, mad and scared*). These along with surprise and disgust are often seen as the universal human emotions. Although there are different theories of emotions, the idea of primary emotions is a useful concept. Primary emotions might be seen like primary colours – they can vary in hue and intensity and also mix with other emotions. Secondary emotions have a thinking component – for instance ‘Disappointment’ may be a more specific feeling belonging to the spectrum of the ‘sadness’ family. Recognition of these emotional states, and the different emotions within each group, provides the basis for being able to deal with them appropriately. It also provides the basis for being able to help others when they may be distressed. The following exercises can help learners identify the difference in these feelings.

### Exploring the Families of Feelings

Sessions can explore the different families of feeling. Suggestions and information about each family are given here. Art work and images can be used and students can be encouraged to draw images that respond to different emotions.

# The Families of Feelings



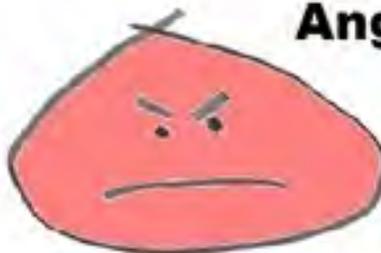
## Sadness

Feelings like 'low', 'miserable' or 'lonely' belong to this family. Sadness is often a response to loss or change. It also communicates to others we need support and it connects us to those we love with compassion.



## Fear

Fear, from 'worry' through to 'terror' is an emotional response to perceived danger, be that a physical threat or not being accepted by others. It keeps us alive but can overcome more pleasant emotions.



## Anger

Anger can range from 'frustration' to 'rage'. It helps us stand up for ourselves and fight for fairness and justice. It can also lead to aggression so knowing how to manage this feeling carefully is important.



## Happiness

Happiness refers to many different positive emotions like 'joy', 'excitement', 'gratitude' and 'hope'. These feelings can positively motivate us towards what we value and find important.

Happiness can be a state of satisfaction but can also be a problem if we become too hedonic.

## Family of Feelings Sort

**Aim:** To help students identify the primary emotion groups and develop a vocabulary for varying intensity of feeling.

You need a number of feelings cards, at least one per student, generated either from the list provided (in Section 8) or from a list the students have made. You also need A4 sheets with HAPPINESS, SADNESS, ANGER AND ANXIETY/FEAR written and an extra one for OTHERS – Those feelings that don't fit into any of these major categories.

1. Get the class sitting in four groups in circles on the floor. Give a number to each child in the group and give each one a card which they mustn't show to others yet.
2. Place the sheets with the Primary Emotions around the room and introduce the idea of the Families of Feelings. You can ask what they think the four most important emotions are and talk about how an emotion like happiness has lots of different feelings within it.
3. Explain that Student No 1 should show their card to the group and the group should decide which 'family' the feeling word should go in; either Happiness, Sad, Anger, Anxiety or Others. When they have decided Student No 1 puts it on the appropriate sheet.
4. Student No 2 then does the same and it continues until the whole group has put their card into one group or another.
5. Then look at each family and what feelings have been put into each family. The class can discuss each family and if the class as a whole can agree with decision made. If there are anomalies such as 'terrified' being put into the Anger family then the class discuss whether they agree.

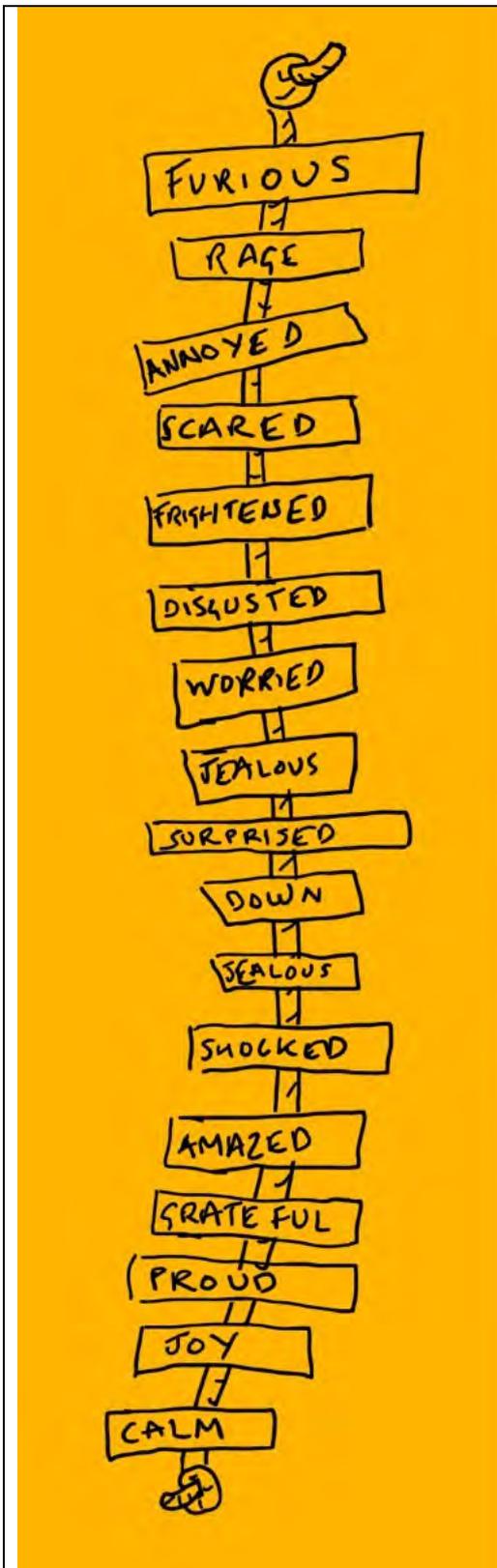
### Development

Again questions that explore how the learners felt emotions in their body and whether they are uncomfortable or unpleasant are important. These physical aspects help motivate our responses to what we do when we have these feelings. For instance we might avoid something that makes us anxious which may or may not be appropriate.

If the class is settled enough and you believe they are able to do so, you can ask students what sort of things make them feel sad, happy, angry or scared and use their examples to explore why we have feelings. It is also possible to explore what sort of things they do with these feelings and what people find useful. It is important to have a sensitive tone and acknowledge how difficult feelings can be to manage at times. It can help to provide appropriate personal anecdotes and experiences and to strike a hopeful tone.

Further exercises can be developed from this format.

## Expert Groups 1 – Strength of Feeling Sort



Aim: help students understand intensity and strength of feelings within each family group and encourage discussion about feelings.

1. Allocate one Feeling Family to each of the four groups and give them the cards that belong to that group
2. Ask the group to order the feelings in terms of strength from the least intense to the strongest.
3. Reasons and decision are explored noting this is a difficult exercise.

### Development & Variations

This exercise can be adapted for different dimensions like 'Calm(relaxed) to Active/energetic' or 'Pleasant' to 'Very Uncomfortable' (Feels good or bad or Nice to not-so-nice)' and done with the whole class rather than in smaller groups.

Lie a short rope (about 6') across the floor. – One end is designated pleasant (comfortable emotions, nice to experience), the other end is 'unpleasant' (uncomfortable, not OK feelings).

Give a card with an emotion word to each child or a pair and ask them to place their word on the rope where they think it goes.

When everybody has placed their words, they can be discussed. Do people agree or would they like to move the card? Suggestions can be discussed and it is stressed there are no right or wrong answers but learners can give reasons for their thinking. This can be used to explore that emotions can be positive and negative and whilst some are unpleasant they are not wrong, dangerous or to be avoided. How would we be able to deal with loss or be able to help others without the emotion of sadness? How can we stand up for what we believe if we saw something as wrong? And so on.

## Expert Groups 2 – Sculpting Feelings

Aim: to help students grasp non-verbal aspects of emotions.

1. Allocate one Feeling Family to each of the four groups.
2. Each Group stands in a circle facing inwards and takes a pose that expresses that emotion using body and facial expression. They then relax.
3. One group is selected – The other groups then stand around the circle.
4. On the given word, the group takes up their poses and turn around to face the rest of the class.
5. The observers walk round the group looking at how the emotion is represented. There can be a discussion about what they liked and what features such as eyes, mouth, body position convey that feeling. Point out good examples.
6. Each group has a turn conveying the feeling family they have been working with.

### Development & Variation

Different intensity of the emotion can be conveyed by having students work with different feeling cards or by exploring what is the smallest thing that conveys the emotion (usually eye contact) and what is the largest (usually body posture).

Again, this exercise can be developed a whole class activity with two groups formed to show two different emotions.

1. Have the group form two circles, one inside the other
2. The inner group turn to face the outer group
3. Tell the inner group that when you give the signal you want each to take a pose that portrays an emotion, eg. Anger or Sadness are good ones to begin with
4. Give them a few moments to think this through then call, “Pose”

## Mime It – Say it

Aims - Help students recognise and understand different feelings and what provokes them. This can be a complex game and students may need to have gained a level of experience. It may need demonstration. It can also help to select cards which can be easily communicated by the students.

### Mime It

1. Put students in groups of 8-10 and give each one a feeling card.
2. One student goes first. The other students ask them to perform certain actions in the manner of the emotion on the card. For instance, 'get dressed' 'drink a glass of water' 'kick a ball' – it can be useful to develop a list of 10 actions from which to choose.
3. The student then mimes the action as if they feel the emotion whilst doing it.
4. When it has been guessed move on to the next student.
5. Discuss which emotions were easy, which are more difficult to recognise.

### Say It

Put students in groups of 8-10 and give each one a feeling card.

1. One student goes first taking the emotion that is on their card.
2. The other students can ask questions about where and when they might feel that emotion. It is good to give a list of examples e.g. 'Would you feel it if somebody gave you something nice?' 'when you lost something?' 'If someone said something horrible?' Is it in the ..... family of feelings?'
  3. The student answering must answer the questions accurately but not name what the emotion is.
  4. The group is allowed 10 questions and then they can guess the answer.
  5. Each student has a turn until everyone has had a go.

## Face It!

**Aim:** Help identify emotions from facial expressions – increase sensitivity to non-verbal communication.

**Materials:** Emotions Cards (Section 8) – With emotion concealed and the face visible.

1. Show cards to students one at a time.
2. Get them to identify if they think the emotion is
  - i) pleasant/unpleasant in its physical feeling.
  - ii) High or low arousal(energy)
3. Identify which family it might belong to.
4. Name the emotion itself

NB It may be easier to identify the family rather than the specific emotion but it can be fun guessing. It is a chance to discuss how some emotions are more readily identifiable than others. Also, faces can be a clue but sometimes we need further information, usually about the situation, to identify what a person is feeling.

## Using Films

**Aim:** To help students be aware of how they are reading non-verbal cues and predicting actions.

- Short films or excerpts from longer films (that can be found on the internet) can be used to explore thoughts, feelings, actions and consequences. Films with little or no dialogue that tell the story through facial expressions and images are most useful.
- The film can be shown for a minute, or even a few seconds, then stopped and explored with questions to help children become aware of how they are making judgments about the characters emotions and intentions.
- Films like 'The Other Pair', 'Joy Story' or 'Boa', amongst others, can be useful. This technique can also be used with the telling of stories. The questions both stimulate and explore the imagination and can help students become more aware of feelings.
- Questions described in the 'Feelings are Funny' exercise can again be useful for exploring thoughts, feelings, choices, values and actions.

# Facts and Opinions

Using stories, told, read or watched, can be helpful in exploring the difference between facts and opinions. This exercise can be used to help explore the often subtle difference between the two.

Aim: helping students differentiate between facts and opinions and develop awareness of thinking styles. This exercise also develops listening and memory skills.

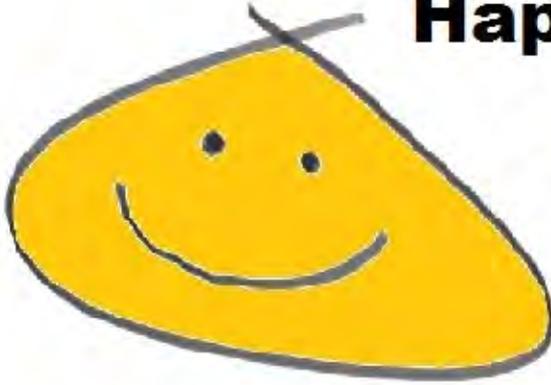
1. Choose a stimulus story to read or tell.
2. Discuss with class the difference between facts and opinions. Ask the class what they think the difference might be. It can be useful to have some examples: 'The man is wearing a red suit', which is a factual description, while, 'The man looks very handsome', is an opinion. Another useful distinction is the difference between knowing something such as 'two plus two equals four' and believing something such as 'maths is boring'. There are things that can be described, things that are known which would be agreed by all and those things that are personal subjective opinions. Key points to make are: sometimes it is clear but sometimes it is hard to know the difference. Also: that everyone is entitled to their opinion and as such they can't be right or wrong. However, it is helpful to know the reasons and evidence on which opinions are based.
3. Tell or read a story or a segment of a story.
4. Get learners to work in a pairs and find one fact and one opinion in the story.
5. Ask for examples and explore with the class whether they agree. The class as a whole can decide if each example given is 'fact', 'opinion' or 'difficult to decide'

## Developments

As groups get more proficient, examples can get more challenging and more specific test of memory and detail can be given. Developments can include identifying thinking errors or the precise mindset of characters in the story.



# Happiness



**Happiness refers to many different positive emotions like 'joy', 'excitement', 'gratitude' and 'hope'. These feelings can positively motivate us towards what we value and find important.**

**Happiness can be a state of satisfaction but can also be a problem if we become too hedonic.**

Each morning when I open my eyes I say to myself: I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet, and I'm going to be happy in it

**Groucho Marx**

Happiness is not strictly a feeling but a concept that can refer to any number of positive emotions. We are on the whole motivated towards the positive emotions and they are an important part of our wellbeing and resilience. Martin Seligman's concept of wellbeing is based on five dimensions; positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement (PERMA).

## What we need for our well-being in our families, schools/work, communities



**Positive Emotion** - Being aware of different types of pleasant feelings - in past, present and future.

**Engagement** - to be able to focus on activities we enjoy or value/care about - To be able to access 'flow'.

**Relationships** - We need strong relationships - a sense of 'connection'- with family, friends, colleagues

**Meaning** - We are meaning makers and we need to find something 'bigger' than ourselves; values, faith, goals.

**Achievement** - we need a sense of 'mastery' - 'I can do it!' - that is meaningful and recognised.

**PLUS Activity/exercise, diet/nutrition, sleep and Optimism**

### The PERMA Model for Wellbeing (Martin Seligman, 2011)

A knowledge of the positive emotions is important. The more familiar we are with them, the more we can recognise them and the more we are able to seek them out. It is useful for learners to have a grasp of these feelings and to start to have ways they can experience them in their lives. Many of these emotions feature in both the content of stories and the process of storytelling

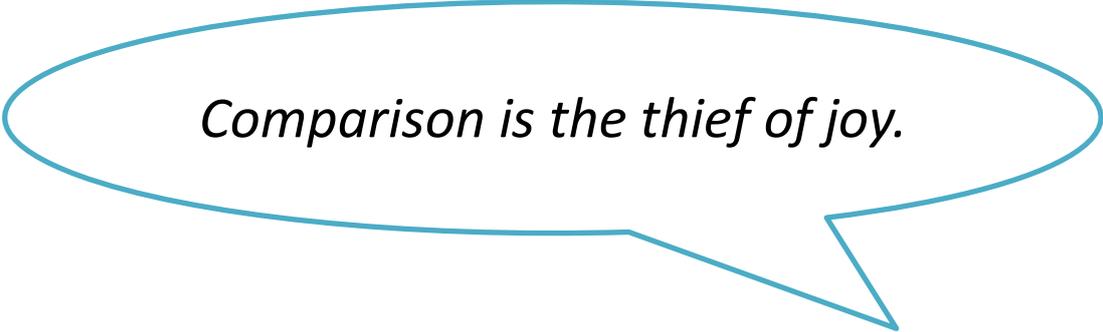


## The Gratitude Diary.

Martin Seligman developed an exercise to help make people more aware of how gratitude can impact on our wellbeing and happiness levels. It can be done with learners.

Every day for two weeks, take a few moments to think of three things you are grateful for that day. Write the three things down. They can be big or small, permanent or passing. You can develop this by spending a few moments considering how each of the three things you are grateful for came to be. Also, take time in wondering what you could do to make more of it or to experience it again.

If it is appropriate to share this, it can start some interesting conversations and can also impact on mood. Other ideas for gratitude projects can be developed.



*Comparison is the thief of joy.*

**Theodore Roosevelt**

Happiness is not a destination. We want to be happy all the time but in fact, these emotions, like all others are fleeting and short-lived. The search for happiness is a journey not an endpoint. It is a process rather than an endpoint.

The Shirt of Happiness is a traditional Tale that explores the nature of happiness. A version can be found at

[www.philosophy-foundation.org/enquiries/view/the-happiness-shirt-part-2](http://www.philosophy-foundation.org/enquiries/view/the-happiness-shirt-part-2)



## Fear

**Fear, from 'worry' through to 'terror' is an emotional response to perceived danger, be that a physical threat or not being accepted by others. It keeps us alive but can overcome more pleasant emotions.**

*'Worry gives a small thing a big shadow'*

*Proverb*

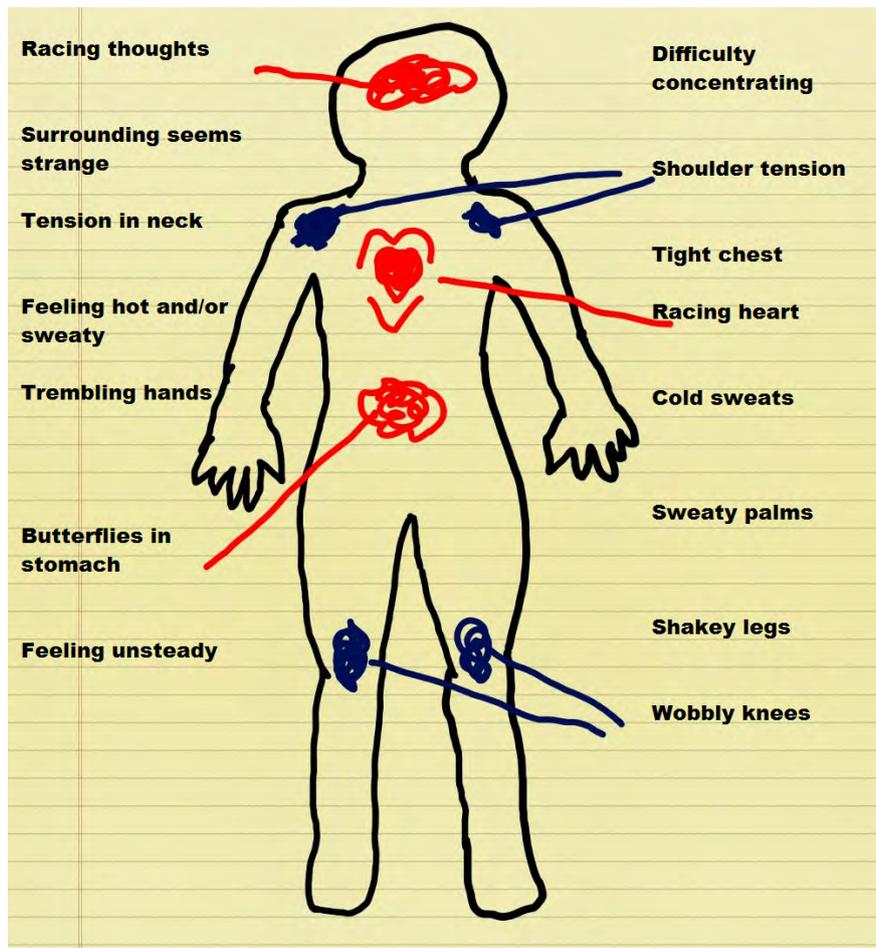
Anxiety is a protective emotion that keeps us safe and helps with danger but can also restrict our confidence and our lives. We all have things that make us anxious and it is often our anxieties that can interfere with enjoying the present as much as we could. Anxiety can vary through worry to terror and trauma. It can be helpful to explore the many emotion words for these varying shades of anxiety. Our anxieties can make us want to avoid, be over-controlling or even over-think many situations. However, we must often face our fears to gain experience and emotions like courage can only really exist in the presence of anxiety. Looking at ways of managing anxiety helps young people build useful skills and stories can often illustrate the emotion of anxiety.

Some of the secondary feelings in the emotion family are illustrated below.



# Fight or Flight

1. Ask learners to think of a cave man/woman having left the safety of the cave and exploring the forest. Then they hear a twig break and become aware that tiger is close by. The body prepares for action.
2. Ask learners what might be some of the physical sensations the person would experience. Draw out the sensations that might be experienced showing where in the body they would be felt. If appropriate this could be the opportunity to talk about the 'Fight-Flight' response mechanism of the human body. Then go onto explore what the person might be thinking and what they might do.



'You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do.'

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

The story of the 'Fearsome Giant' explores the emotion of fear.

## The Fearsome Giant

A young man is travelling home. He doesn't have far to go but he must cross the mountains and there is only one road.

He saw a man running down the road. The man told him that there is a giant, at least 10 feet tall, who is blocking the road through the mountains and that he shouldn't travel further.

'I must', says the young man. 'Aren't you worried about the Giant?' asked the man. 'Well, worry gives a small thing a long shadow,' says the young man and continues on his journey.

A little while later, a woman came running down the road and told him that there was a giant, at least 20 feet tall, and that he shouldn't go further.

'I must' says the young man, 'That's where my home is'. The woman said 'Aren't you anxious about the giant?' The young man replied, 'Anxiety is like a ball. However high you throw it up, it always comes back down,' and he continued on his journey.

He saw another man running towards him. This man shouted breathlessly and said 'There is a giant, at least 30 feet tall, who is blocking the road. Turn around and run away.'

'I always thought you should make friends with the thing that scares you,' said the young man and he carried on towards the mountain.

When he came to the mountain the giant appeared. He was 40 feet tall. The young man felt scared but he knew he had to make friends with this giant if he wanted get home. He decided to keep walking towards him

He felt his heart racing, his knees tremble and there were butterflies in his stomach. He tried to take a step but his leg just went backwards. Every time he tried to walk towards the giant he went backwards. He noticed that with every step backwards the giant got that much bigger.

He summoned his courage and took a step towards the giant. The giant got smaller.

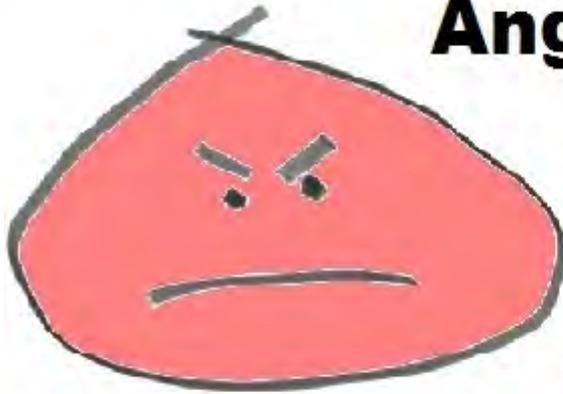
He took another step, and another. The giant got smaller and smaller with every step.

Soon the young man was in front of the giant and the giant was now only one foot high.

'What is your name?' said the young man.

'My name is Fear' said the Giant. And the young man did make friends and he took him home and always gave him a place at the table.

*The metaphorical message of this story is that our fears grow larger when we run away from them and the story also helps names the physical sensations of anxiety and fear. A different and longer version of this story can be found in 'Telling Tales: Storytelling as Emotional Literacy' by Taffy Thomas and Steve Killick.*



## Anger

**Anger can rage from 'frustration' to 'rage'. It helps us stand up for ourselves and fight for fairness and justice. It can also lead to aggression so knowing how to manage this feeling carefully is important.**

*Anybody can be angry, that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way,. That is not in within everybody's power, that is not easy.*

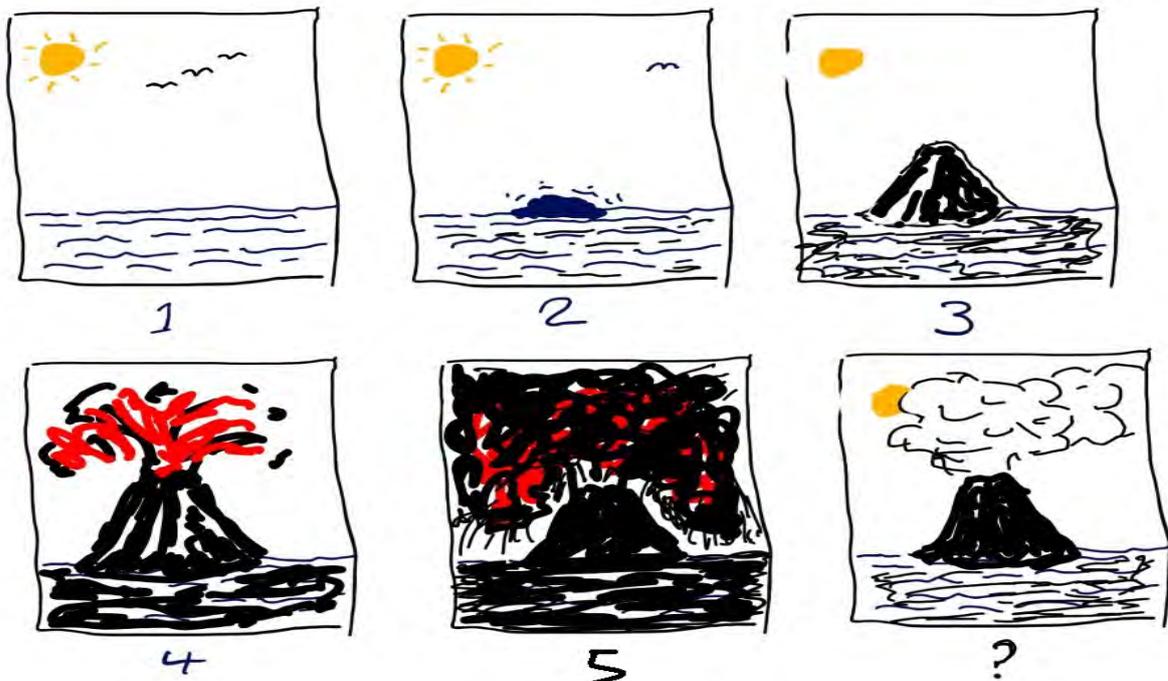
Aristotle

Anger is a difficult emotion as it can often lead to aggression. However, the solution is not to be angry but to deal with it effectively. Anger can be triggered when something is seen as unfair or a person feels they are being treated badly. Some of the secondary emotions demonstrate the differing intensities in the 'Anger' family and it is helpful to develop both a vocabulary and a sense of different coping strategies beyond aggressive responses. These might include, letting it pass, communicating assertively about your feelings and respecting others enough to problem solve.



'The Story of the Lost Axe' is a useful story for exploring the triggers and thoughts and actions associated with anger. The story can be used to demonstrate how we can jump to conclusions without having the full information. Also, the actions taken by the farmer can be explored and considered e.g. Are they passive, aggressive or assertive?

If learners have problems with expressing anger they can be helped by using a visual metaphor to help rate the intensity of the anger and this can help in thinking about coping strategies. The learner looks at the pictures of a volcano in different stages towards eruption and can point to which picture feels closest to how they are feeling. From this, strategies about what they can do can be developed. They can also find it easier to rate their feelings on a number scale corresponding with the number in the picture. The last picture represents the aftermath of an eruption.

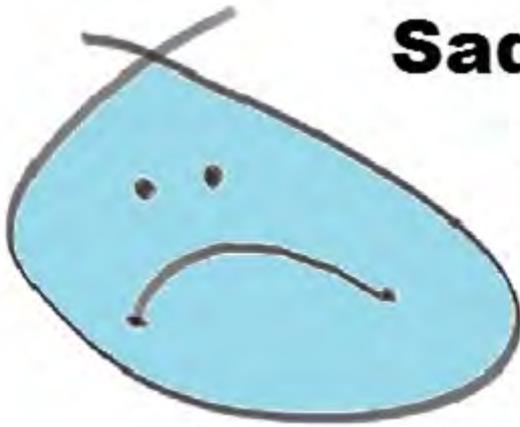


This was developed from ideas in 'Simmering to Explosive' by Samuels et al in Learning Disability Practice (2006)

## The Lost Axe

- Once, in Ancient China, there was a farmer. He went to his shed to look for his axe. But he just couldn't find it anywhere.
- He went outside and saw his neighbour's son. The farmer suddenly realised that it must have been him who had stolen the axe.
- The more he looked at the boy the more he could see that he was criminal. He looked guilty. He could tell by the way the young man looked away from him.
- One day the young man said, 'Hello', but the farmer thought he was just laughing at him. The farmer kept on thinking about what he would like to do to that boy. He played out what would happen in his mind if he accused the young man and knew the young man would deny it even though he had taken it.
- However, the farmer had to go back to his shed to get a saw. While he was looking for it, he found his axe. He realised it had been there all the time.
- Whenever he saw the boy he realised he looked exactly the same as before but now he knew that he had not stolen his axe. What had changed was not the young man's appearance or behaviour but the facts.

This story very clearly demonstrates the thinking errors we can make when we jump to conclusions or think we can read things from people's expression. The Chinese have an proverb based around this story that is used when people make judgments about someone without evidence which suggests *'that someone has lost their axe'*.



## Sadness

Feelings like 'low', 'miserable' or 'lonely' belong to this family. Sadness is often a response to loss or change. It also communicates to others we need support and it connects us to those we love with compassion.

*You cannot stop the birds of sadness from flying over your head but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair.*

Chinese proverb

Understanding the role of sadness in helping us deal with loss is important. The bodily sessions are often a loss of energy and enthusiasm but this can allow the time and space for us to adapt to change. Common secondary feelings in the 'sadness' family are illustrated below.



## Loss and Grief

Grief, the intense emotion following the loss or death of a loved one, is an intense expression of sadness and often other emotions as well and demonstrates the importance of accepting emotions with kindness.

The books below are powerful books for exploring this important emotion. Reading or telling these stories can make an important contribution to helping children understand death, loss and bereavement. It is of course important to be mindful of any children who have experienced a bereavement and if they are still in active grieving, knowing that they may need additional support.

- The Heart and the Bottle - Oliver Jeffers
- Cry Heart but Never Break - Glenn Ringtved
- The Sad Book – Michael Rosen
- The Elephant in the Room: A Children’s book for Grief and Loss - Amanda Edwards

Child Bereavement UK has produced a Schools Information Pack which is a helpful resource for thinking about the implications of bereavement and providing coping skills for dealing with loss.

The Story of ‘The Black Cloud of Wally the Dragon’ explores the relationship between thinking and sadness and has exercises to go with the story. If a safe group has been created, this story can be used for helping students identify how thoughts lead to emotions and actions. The story can be stopped towards the end to identify thoughts that make Wally feel worse and to find realistic but more positive thoughts that can be put in their place. For older students ‘Wally’ can become a boy or girl rather than a dragon.

## The Black Cloud of Wally the Dragon

Wally the Dragon was alone in his room. He had had a terrible week. He had burnt someone with his fire breath, broken his mother's best chair, had an argument with his friend and the other dragons had all laughed at him. To top it all his father had lost his job. He was feeling very low and thought to himself, *'Oh, I can't do anything right. It's been such a terrible week.'*

When Monday came Wally did not want to go school but his mother made him. On his way to school he thought, *'My mother is mean to me.'* The next day he was sick and didn't go to school for three days. He was better on Friday but still didn't want to go school but his mother made him. Under his breath, he said *'I hate my mother. She doesn't care. She's mean,'* and a little puff of black smoke came out.

His Mum heard what he said and replied, *'Maybe I am but you're going to school whether you like it or not.'* So Wally went to school that day and when he came home that night, his mother asked about his day. *'No one likes me,'* said Wally, *'I'm stupid and I'm ugly.'*

*'No, you're not,'* said his mum. *'You're fine just the way you are. Now go to bed.'* As he lay in his bed Wally felt that nobody knew how he felt at all.

On Saturday, Wally's dad was in a bad mood and Wally didn't think things were going to get better any time soon. So he spent the whole day in his room. Outside, it was cloudy and it was raining and it was another bad day. And because it was such a bad day he started chewing and biting anything he could find which made his mother cross with him. And Sunday was even worse!

When Wally woke up on Monday morning he was feeling sick in his stomach but his mother made him go to school. As he walked he thought to himself, *'My life is so frustrating and I just have terrible luck'.* And as he thought that, a small grey cloud showed up just above his head. It was just like all the other clouds in the dark overcast day. Wally thought to himself, *'Nobody likes me and nothing I do is going to make it any better'.* And as he thought that, the small cloud grew darker. He thought to himself, *'I wish I'd never been born. Everybody would be better off without me,'* and with these thoughts the cloud turned black.

Everywhere that Wally went that little black cloud went. Even if it was a sunny day there would still be a black cloud casting a shadow over Wally's head.

Everything he ever did he had to do it with that black cloud over his head. Wally decided that he would stay in his room and he wouldn't come out however much his brothers or his parents asked him to. Wally's parents were angry at first, then they got worried that they couldn't get him to go to school. He forgot what the sunshine was like.

One day his old friend Cai, the Blue Dragon, who lived down the road came over to play and said to Wally, *'I've missed you at Dragon School. Sorry for being nosy but why don't you get rid of that black cloud?'* Wally looked at him and said, *'I couldn't get rid of it even if I wanted to. I have no control over it.'*

Cai the Blue Dragon said, *'I used to have a cloud like that but I learnt how to get rid of mine. If you smile and say something positive the cloud will get lighter. If you say something grouchy or negative it will get darker. If you change what you think the cloud might even go away altogether.'*

Wally did not believe his friend but he decided to try it out so he could at least prove Cai wrong. He said out loud, *'I wish I'd never been born,'* and he saw that the cloud turned even blacker. Then he said, *'Cai is a good friend,'* and he saw that the cloud became a little bit lighter. He then thought to himself, *'Maybe Cai is right, I might be able to make this a bit better.'* As he thought this the cloud turned even lighter still.

*'See,'* said Cai, *'Look what's happening!'*

*'I guess I do have some control over the cloud'* said Wally and he started practising saying things in a more positive way. He changed thoughts like, *'No one likes me,'* to *'Some kids like me and some kids don't and I'm going to spend my time with the ones that do'.* He changed, *'Things will never get better,'* to *'I'll do what I can and see what happens?'*

This story is adapted from 'The Black Cloud' in 'Using Trauma Focused Therapy Stories' by Pat Pernicano (2014). There are lots of questions that could further explore the connection between thoughts, feelings and actions.

# Wally the Dragon - Exercises

## **Alternative thinking**

At the endpoint stop the story and ask learners to identify some of the negative thoughts that Wally had and write these on the board. After you have a number ask what those thoughts would make Wally feel and how he would act with that feeling. Then, see if learners can identify alternative thoughts – ones that are realistic but more positive, reflecting a learning mindset that is more motivating - learners may need scaffolding to develop thoughts but when some have been generated these can be evaluated for their effect on mood and actions.

**Follow on** (that can be done afterwards or at other times) can include identifying other thoughts, especially self-criticisms that are painful, then discussing these in order to find better alternatives. Ask children to identify any positive statement that they particularly like. They can write a favourite one down and keep it on them to remind them to practise using it. Other strategies for dealing with difficult thoughts can be discussed, such as accepting and allowing the thought to be there but not believing it – just noticing it.

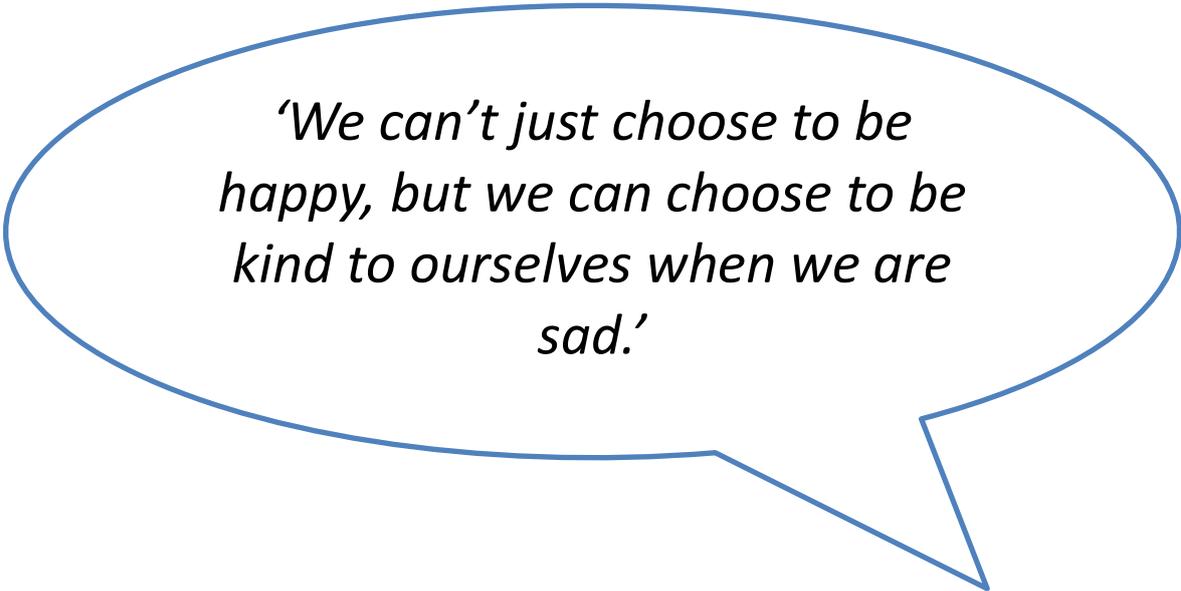
**Ending the story-** To finish, give the end of the story:- Every time Wally changed his words or thoughts the cloud became lighter and lighter and smaller and smaller. His friend Cai said, 'You know, Wally, you've done well but you need to get out in the Sun. Get some fresh air and exercise that will help raise your mood. The more you do the better you will feel. Now I have to go home and practice chasing my fire-breathing. I'll see you tomorrow.'

*Well, you might want to know how the story ends and I can't say that it finished happily ever after but Wally's cloud did get a lot smaller. He had good days and bad days, just like everybody else, but now he knew there were things he could do that could change that black cloud.*

## Helping a Friend

**Aim:** Help learners be aware of how they can help others who are feeling sad and develop friendship and social skills. This exercise might work better with smaller groups.

Ask learners to think of things that can make someone sad. Explore how you could tell if someone was sad through their body language. Take one example and develop a story. Then ask learners to think of things they could do that would be either helpful or not helpful. This exercise can develop friendship and an awareness of how to help someone who is sad. It is an opportunity for exploring how helpful listening and kindness can be. It may also raise the opportunity for thinking about how to be kind to oneself rather than self-critical



*'We can't just choose to be happy, but we can choose to be kind to ourselves when we are sad.'*

Lori Deschene





## 4. Working One-to-One

There are occasions when being able to talk individually with a student is an opportunity to help them learn about and manage their feelings. Particularly relevant are times when they are struggling with learning or there are behavioural issues.

# Emotion Coaching

Emotion Coaching' is a simple technique that can be used at any time to help a child make sense of, and learn how to deal with, feelings. It was first described by John Gottman in his book 'The Heart of Parenting' and is recognised as a useful skill for teachers to use.

## ***The Steps of Emotion Coaching***

1. Become aware of what the child is feeling.
2. See that as an opportunity for connection or teaching.
3. Label, or help the child to label, what it is that they are feeling.
4. Communicate empathy and understanding.
5. Set limits and problem solve together.

# Collaborative Problem-Solving

Often difficult behaviour can result from underlying emotions. There are times when a student can be helped to understand some of these emotions and more effective solutions can be negotiated when a child is struggling with dealing with a situation. Working through the stages of Collaborative Problem Solving is a way of helping a child develop co-operation and coping strategies and can be more effective than imposing reward and sanctions. It is a process which often takes many conversations to find workable solutions but has the capacity to help the student learn valuable skills.

1. **The Empathy Stage** – This is about understanding the problem from the student’s point of view. Listen empathically to try and find out as much as possible about what the difficulty is for the child.
2. **Reframing the Problem and Invitation to Problem-Solve** - When the student’s point of view is fully understood then it is possible to state why the student’s actions are causing others difficulties. The approach is ‘Yes and...’ rather than ‘Yes, but...’ and should end with asking if it is possible to work something out that works for both of us.
3. **Creative Possibilities** - This is a time to consider all sorts of ideas that might solve the problem. Both helper and student can come up with ideas which should be written down. All ideas can be accepted at this time. Helpers need to ensure they do not try to impose their solutions.
4. **Thinking It Through** – Once a list of possible solutions has been generated then start evaluating by considering the options critically. This is a time to consider what would happen next and explore consequences of actions. During this stage some ideas will be eliminated and some ideas will suggest new ideas.
5. **Making an Agreement** – Eventually settle on an agreed solution and make a plan specifying who has to do what. If there is a compromise on both sides this is helpful as it models flexibility to the student.
6. **Set a time for review** – Finally, set a time within a week at most to meet and see how the plan has worked. If it has, the student is congratulated. If not the process begins again based on the learning of what happened. Most often this will be a mixture of success and failure and the plan can be improved upon.

These conversations can be difficult and it can take several conversations to get results. However they offer a great opportunity to help the student learn emotional and social skills which can bring considerable benefits. It has much in common with Restorative Justice approaches.

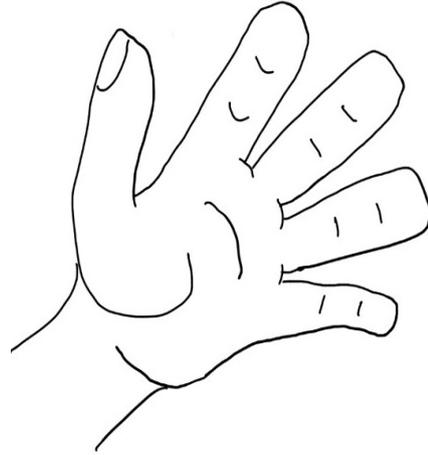


## 5. Calming Strategies

Learning to find a calm and peaceful state is important both to deal with difficult and strong emotions and for being in the right frame of mind for learning. Serenity (or similar feelings such as 'calm' or 'peaceful') is one of the positive emotions. Helping lay the foundation for developing self-calming and self-soothing skills, these exercises help learners become aware of their breathing and help develop concentration so they can begin to relax. These exercises are particularly helpful for preparing learners to begin storytelling, as well as for bringing a sense of calm to the classroom as a whole. The exercises described here can be used as warm-ups or wind-downs to start or end lessons.

**Finger Breathing**

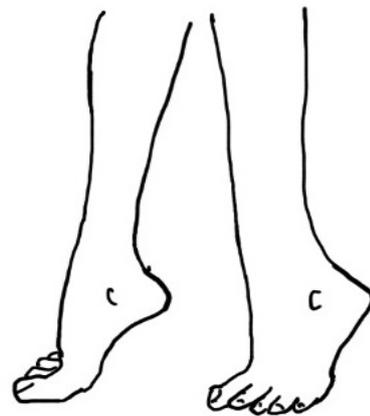
1. Become aware that you are breathing in and breathing out
2. Run your first finger along the thumb and fingers of your other hand
3. Breathing in as you go up the finger and thumb, breathing out as you come down. Maintain a slow unhurried pace.
4. When you have done all the digits return to the first and start again

**Making a Fist**

1. Become aware that you are breathing in and breathing out then open and clench your fist in time to breathing in and out.
2. Then place your hand on your stomach to be aware of your breath passing in and out.
3. As you become aware of the rhythm drop the hand movements and focus on your breath.
4. Notice that thoughts and feelings will come into your mind- that's fine, that's what minds do, so just acknowledge them and bring your attention back to your breath.

**On Tiptoe**

1. With the group standing either individually or in a circle with closed eyes if you wish, ask students to become aware of their breathing.
2. As they breathe in they rise up to stand on tiptoe. As they breathe out they return to having the soles of their feet on the ground.
3. Encourage a slow pace to establish a calm breathing pattern with the group rising and falling as they breathe together.



## Belly Breathing.

This exercise aims to help learners become aware of diaphragmatic breathing. This is a deeper, slower breathing which can help the mind and body feel calm and relaxed. As the lungs fill with air this pushes the diaphragm into the belly causing it to rise.

1. Have students lie on floor (this may best be done in a hall or large room where students are not too close together)
2. Ask students to close their eyes or fix their eyes on a point on the ceiling and keep the arms by their side. Put their legs together and let their feet fall outwards.
3. The aim is to be aware of their breathing passing it and out. Remind learners that it is normal for their minds to wander but see if they can notice that and bring their attention back to their breath.
4. Then, after a few moments, ask learners to become aware of their tummy rising and falling as their lungs fill with breath. They can put their hand on their tummy to see and feel it going up and down.

### Development

Use a beanbag, a scrunched ball of paper or any small object to place on their tummy to see the rise and fall in time with their breathing.

Further variations include helping students become aware of the particular physical sensations associated with a feeling or emotion in order that they are better able to name it. It is helpful for students to know these feelings often have physical manifestations, that this is normal, that they do not have to be controlled and that they will pass. They should also explore the idea that you can be aware of them without judging them as good or bad or reacting to them.

## Using Poetry

When the group is lying relaxed on the floor, this can be a time to slowly read a poem. At this point the words can be heard and thought about.

### Feelings are Funny Things

Feelings are funny things.

Feeling ugly doesn't mean you are ugly.

Feeling that you're not as good as someone doesn't mean  
you are not as good as them.

Feeling stupid doesn't mean you are stupid.

Feeling not good enough doesn't mean you are not good  
enough.

A feeling is not a fact – it comes from what you've thought –  
a thought can make you feel and a feeling might give you  
something to think about.

It's what you decide to do that matters. Make your actions  
based on what's important to you – the things you value.

Notice your feelings – Let them be and let them go.

'Just keep going – No feeling is final.'

With inspiration from Matt Haig and Marie Rainer Rilke

## Laying the Foundations for Mindfulness

*“Meditation is to be aware of what is going on: in your body, in your feelings, in your mind. and in the world.”*

Thich Nhat Hanh

Mindfulness techniques are used to help people be aware of and be able to calm thoughts and feelings. They are increasingly being taught in schools. We do not use the term mindfulness when talking to students but see these breathing exercises as helpful in learning to relax. The above exercises lay the foundation for developing mindfulness skills and this can be an excellent development of the programme where learners can become more aware of the thoughts and feelings continually flowing through them. These skills have been demonstrated as being helpful for children to learn calming and emotion regulation.

Formal training in Mindfulness is essential before introducing mindfulness in schools and training can also benefit staff in dealing with the stresses that life brings. There is increasing evidence as to the contribution mindfulness programmes can make to well-being.

More about mindfulness in schools can be found here

[www.mindfulnessinschools.org](http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org)

[www.awakeningjoyforkids.com](http://www.awakeningjoyforkids.com)

*“Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different; enjoying the present without holding on when it changes (which it will); being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won’t).”*

James Baraz, ‘Awakening Joy for Kids’





## 6. Developing Storytelling Skills

We begin teaching storytelling skills by creating a Storyteller's Tool Kit – These are the 'tools' that a storyteller uses to remember and communicate a story.

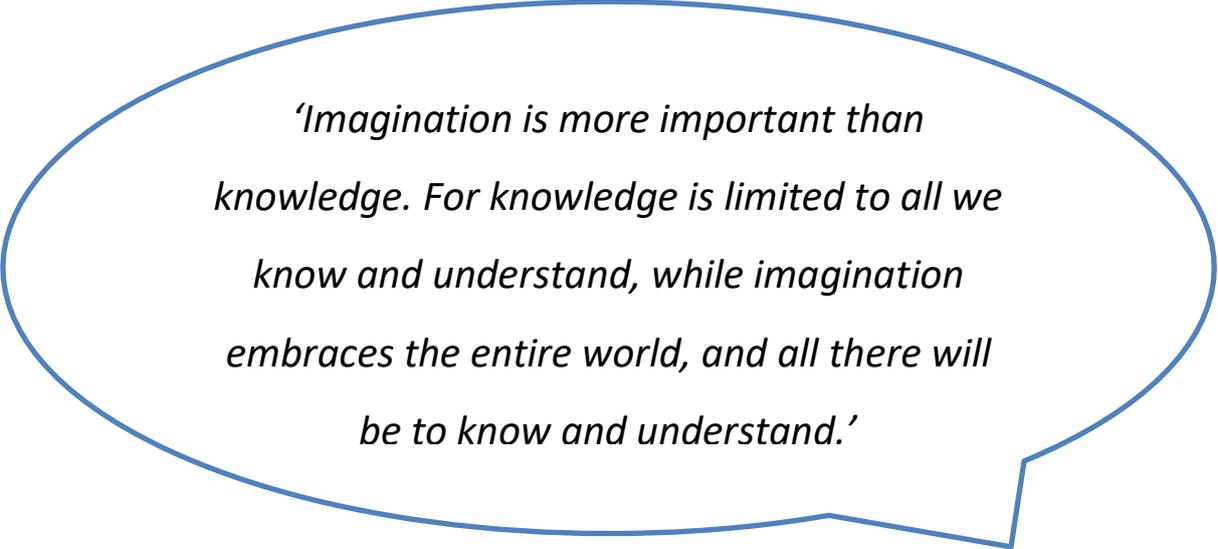
Having told some stories to the class, we ask students what they have noticed about what a storyteller does to remember and tell a story. This begins to generate a list of some of the areas we give above. And it is a list that gets added to over following sessions.

For each of these areas we give some exercises that we use to help learners develop their storytelling skills. We will often use the 'Story Swap' exercise and do some exercises with the story they are learning to help students prepare for telling the story.

# The Storyteller's Toolkit

- 
**Listening** Paying attention, focus, presence, curiosity, comprehension
- 
**Imagination** Seeing the story in the Mind's Eye  
Visualisation, problem-solving
- 
**Emotion** Feelings and emotions in the story, the teller and the listener - verbal and non-verbal
- 
**Language** Language used - phrases and metaphors - repetitions, rhythms
- 
**Voice** Vocal expression, tone of voice, sound effects
- 
**Action** Gestures, movements, physical position, character
- 
**Face** Facial expressions, feelings conveyed
- 
**Memory** Images, Story Bones  
Story Maps
- 
**Eye Contact** Contact and connection with the audience

## Imagination & Visualisation Skills



*'Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there will be to know and understand.'*

Albert Einstein

Visualisation is the ability to see the story in your mind's-eye and it is a key skill in storytelling and creative thinking in general. It is an essential element if learners are to have the ownership of the stories they need to be able to tell them in their own way. The aim is not for them to remember stories word by word but to be able to draw on a series of pictures in their mind's-eye and use these to tell the story in their own words.

# The Box

Aim: The exercise below is designed to identify and develop this key skill of visualisation.

1. Learners find a space on their own and lie down
2. Warm up using Finger Breathing
3. When sufficiently calm and relaxed have them close their eyes and say the following, allowing time between each instruction or question.
4. Learners can share what they found in the box, prompt to help them give more detail.

*Imagine that you are standing outside a door. I don't know what it looks like but you do because you can see it in your mind's eye. What is it made of? Is it painted or bare? New or old?*

*You notice a handle. Is it a round door knob, a lever, a latch? Have a good look.*

*Reach out open the door and take one step into the room beyond. Where is the light coming from? Is it natural, candle, electric light, maybe there's a fire in the room?*

*Now you have identified where light is coming from have good look around. What are the walls made of? Are they painted, bare or perhaps covered in wall paper? What condition are they in? New, old, worn? Perhaps there are pictures or a mirror on them. Certainly, there is furniture in this room? What? (Suggest possibilities).*

*What is on the floor? Carpet, rugs, tiles?*

*As you look, you notice a box on the floor that you didn't spot earlier. It has a lid of some sort but it might be big or small. I don't know but you do because you can see it in your mind's-eye. What's it made of? What colour? Old or new? Walk slowly around it. Does it have hinges? Handles?*

*Now, you've come back to the front, I'm going to count to three and then ask you to open the box. Ready, one...two...three...Open the box!...There is something inside! I've no idea what it is but you do. Take it out. Examine it. Feel its weight, texture?*

*When you've had a good look - put it back in the box and when you are ready, open your eyes.*

# Story Maps

Building on the visualisation exercise, a story map is a way of helping learners to remember the events in a story as series of pictures in their mind's eye. We first introduce this as part of the group storytelling exercise so that learners only have to sequence the part of the story they are working on (see **Story Bones**).

- Learners use a series of quick drawings to help them remember the main events in the story
- No one else need understand an individual story map, it is only for the teller, so learners can use stick figures, symbols or letters to represent things eg. a K might represent a king
- However, encourage learners to create maps using drawings & symbols rather than words. If there is important dialogue it can be recorded perhaps in speech bubbles and particular phrases or refrains shown in note form
- When finished, learners pair up and tell story from map, adding and amending as necessary



# Story Bones

Story bones provide storytellers with another method of recalling a story. The story is reduced to its bare bones – a series of short sentences, notes and phrases that strip the story back to its basic elements. The storyteller then uses their skill to put flesh back on the bones as they tell the story.

1. Once you have shared the story the group will be telling, work together to identify the bones (it is a good idea to work this out for yourself first as you want each pair in the group to work on a single bone)
2. Learners, either working in pairs or individually, can write down or draw a comic strip of the different bones of the story.
3. With a partner they can go through the bones of the story- seeing if they remember the order.
4. Start working through the different bones of the story and with each bone think about what 'flesh' can be added to the bones by adding detail and description (see later exercises on adding description)
5. How can they bring the story to 'life' by using gesture and other non-verbal communication skills when they are telling it?
6. Practise telling the story to or with a partner.

# Language & Oracy

## It's in the Detail

Select a story and ensure you give precise details e.g. She was wearing a red dress, she had seven brothers, her pet poodle was called 'Squidgy'.

Then ask the class specific questions related to the facts in the story.

What colour dress was she wearing?

How many brothers did she have?

What pet did the girl have?

### Development

Explore for emotional details- What was said and what was implied?

## Developing Descriptive Language

Adding descriptive detail can help add to the mood of the story and enhance the imagination. Helping learners recognise and create descriptive terms. This might be as simple as a word or a metaphor or simile that adds to the atmosphere of the story. Practising helps build storytelling skills and can be developed further in creative writing.

For instance, if a tree features in a story it could be described as just 'a tree' or it could be enhanced with more detail.

'The old, gnarled tree.....'

'The bare tree, having shed its leaves for winter....'

'The tree that stood at the edge of a forest.....'

'The tree cast a long dark shadow, as dark as the night.'

## Action, Description, Location

Aim: develop storytelling skills and help learners identify essential language elements of the story – Location, Description & Action Statements.

When learners are working on learning to tell a story ask them to include a statement about the location of the story; something that describes a character or place (which might suggest an emotion) and which could be factual or opinion; a statement about an action a character takes – which might be reinforced through movement.

Giving examples on a white board can help with this exercise.

**LOCATION** – The Queen stood by the window in the tower of her castle.

**DESCRIPTION** - She was tall and had long black hair, as dark as the night.

**ACTION** - She picked up the letter and began to read.

### Development

These statements can be used to develop both oracy and creative writing.

## Zoom-In.

**Purpose:** To provide more detail in a story. By having a partner ask for detail, the teller often finds details that they wouldn't on their own.

The Activity - Pair participants. One begins to tell the story while the partner, from time to time, asks them to zoom in and provide more detail.

### **Alternative/Development**

To begin with, the exercise can focus on just one object or character in the story.

Later, when participants are familiar with the exercise, it can be used to both zoom in as the tale is told to add more detail, or zoom out to add less.

# Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication (NVC) is important when telling stories and to communication generally. Exploring how we communicate when telling a story helps children learn about the importance of attending to this communication in interactions with others as it is how we convey emotion. NVC involves being able to read 'body language' of which the key components are;-

- Eye Contact
- Facial expression
- Tone of voice
- Posture
- Gesture

## Emotion and NVC

- In storytelling, emotions are not conveyed directly by saying the emotion. Rather it is conveyed through body language (or NVC), metaphor or through description. The principle is *'show not tell'*.
- Exercises and coaching of storytelling can help to identify a gesture, a tone of voice and so on to convey the feeling.

# Character Pose

Aim: Build awareness of body language and emotion

- Take a character, moment or emotion that was from a story or elsewhere.
- Divide group into two smaller groups
- Invite learners in one group to stand in a circle facing inwards
- They then take up a pose that captures the character's action or emotion. Suggest they think about how the emotion is displayed in facial expression and body posture.
- When they are satisfied with their 'statue' they turn around to face outwards. The other group walk around the circle inspecting the differing statues.

## Freeze-Frame.

Freeze-frames are a great way for learners to physically engage with a story, enabling them to begin exploring the power that body language and gesture have on meaning. Initially, it is a good idea to use this technique when the whole class is working on the same story.

- Working in small groups, using only their bodies, the learners create a moment that shows the action in a story frozen in time, as if the pause button has been pressed. This allows them to think about what is going on for the characters and objects in the frame and how to effectively portray them
- With groups new to the technique, establish what will make a successful freeze-frame (including the use of different heights).
- Groups then share their freeze-frame and the rest of class try and identify the moment in the story that is being portrayed

### Development:

Ask learners to

- Make a freeze-frame story map by giving each group a different moment to portray
- Choose 3 moments (beginning, middle and end) to portray
- Focus on a particular emotion that they wish to convey
- Use **Thought Tracking** to further investigate learners' understanding of characters and situations; explain that when you tap them on the shoulder, you want them to speak the thoughts and feelings of the character or object they are portraying

## Story Swap (Pairs)

**Aim:** To give children the experience of telling a story to one other person. This exercise can be done immediately without much practise and repeated after learning some of the other storytelling skills.

1. Divide the group into two preferably equal halves each with a staff member.
2. A member of staff tells their group a short story – (some example stories are given).
3. Once they have heard the story get them in pairs to remember the key parts of the story (finding the bare bones)
4. They then re-join the other group and find a partner from the other group who has learnt a different story
5. They tell each other the stories they have learnt.
6. After they have told each other their stories they both give feedback to each other about what they liked about the story and their partner's telling of it.

### **Development.**

Once they have grasped the bones of the story they could do any one of the various exercises described here such as working on gesture, story map or visualisation to help them learn the story before they tell it.

This is a key exercise in helping learners develop storytelling skills. It is best done where there are two members of staff who each have learnt a short story that they can tell to students to learn. They will then tell this to one other child.

If that is not possible then one member of staff can do it if the other group can be occupied. More information on using this exercise is given in *'Telling Tales: Storytelling as Emotional Literacy'* by Taffy Thomas and Steve Killick (2007).

## The Cracked Pot

- A man and a woman live at the top of the hill in a very hot and dry land.
- They have to get water by collecting it from the river at the bottom of the hill in a 'yoke' - Two clay pots hung from a pole and carried over the shoulders.
- One pot has a thin crack and all the water has dripped out by the time the carrier has got back to the house on top of the hill.
- The other pot thinks it is perfect and torments the Cracked Pot repeatedly, calling the Cracked Pot useless and saying, 'I don't know why they keep you. You lose all your water.'
- Eventually the Cracked Pot asks the Carrier why they keep him and don't just throw him away.
- The Carrier explains that the Cracked Pot is very useful. Seeds were planted along the path up to the house and the drops of water have helped the flowers grow. These seeds bring much beauty into the life of the couple.
- The Cracked Pot sees himself differently.

This is a well-known story and easy to learn and tell. It also raises themes of bullying and perfection. There is a full version of this story in 'Building Relationships through Storytelling – A Foster Carers Guide to Attachment and Stories' by Steve Killick & Maria Boffey.

## The Cow-tail Switch

- A hunter has a pregnant wife and four sons.
- He goes into the forest and doesn't return.
- The family waits; they search for him; they can't find him.
- One month passes and they begin to forget him.
- After three months, the hunter has disappeared from their memories. The woman gives birth to her fifth child.
- The baby's first words are, 'Where's my father?'
- 'How could we have forgotten him?' The four brothers search again and find his scattered bones in the undergrowth.
- First son has the power to bring his scattered bones together.
- Second son has the power to give him flesh, skin eyes, hair etc.
- Third son has the power to give him life (but he's still in a deep sleep)
- Fourth son has the power to give him speech, movement, laughter.
- The hunter sits up, speaks and they go home. The family is re-united, and they have a feast.
- Hunter carves a beautiful wooden handle for a cow-tail switch. 'This is for the one who saved my life.'
- All four brothers claim it but the hunter shakes his head
- 'It's for the little one. He was the one who remembered me... and as long as a person is remembered by somebody he's not altogether dead'

There are many versions of this West African tale. This is from a telling by Hugh Lupton and can be found at [http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories/upload\\_files/text\\_pdf\\_157.pdf](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories/upload_files/text_pdf_157.pdf)

## Story Swap (for Groups)

**Aims:** To help student develop storytelling skills and practise speaking in front of a group.

This exercise develops the story swap by having two groups working, each working on a different story. The exercise does require two members of staff (see above) and possibly two or more lessons to develop a performance. It pulls on many of the different storytelling skills and should come after the students have tried many of the storytelling skills. Some learners will need much coaching and guidance. It is an important exercise in working together and can build confidence in talking to a group.

### Steps

1. Divide the class into two equal groups.
2. Each group is told a (different) story.
3. The story is divided into a number of parts/bones. Ideally the number of parts/bones should be the same as half the number of children in the group.
4. The group divides into pairs and each pair selects one part/bone of the story. The group leader usually has to allocate what pair has which part but there is the opportunity for negotiation.
5. Each pair then works on the telling of their particular part. They will need guidance to think about how they will tell it using gesture, eye contact and other skills. It may be helpful to make a story-map of their part/bone.
6. Then the group has a run through of the story as a whole and feedback is given. The group can be helped to give feedback to each other about what they liked. It is important to check that the story is clear and consistent over the different pairings. Consideration can be given to staging.
7. The two groups then perform their stories to each other.

Several stories that can be used for the group or Story Swap – or indeed any of the other exercises are given - There is also an example of a story, 'The Talking Tortoise' that is broken into parts for pairs or small groups to tell so a whole class can come together to work on a story.

## Eyes, Ears, Hands and Feet

- Our eyes, ears, hands and feet are all connected but it hasn't always been so. Once they used to go about in their own tribes.
- A pair of eyes went to see the world and a pair of ears went to explore it as they had heard so much about it. They met up and decided to hang out together.
- At the same time a pair of hands were feeling their way whilst a pair of feet went walkabout. They met and decided to hang out together.
- Then the eyes and the ears met the hands and the feet. They decided to go hunting together and went into the forest.
- Ears heard a sound. Eyes saw a deer. Feet walked them closer. Hands threw a spear.
- They killed the deer but started to argue about who deserved it the most. They were about to fight.
- A passing owl heard them argue. The body parts asked the owl to decide but the owl suggested she saw the Great Discombobulator
- The Great Discombobulator listened to them argue, told them to be quiet and said she would give her judgement after she had eaten the deer.
- The Great Discombobulator said she ate the deer to teach them a lesson. They had all played a necessary part. To stop them being so foolish again she gave them a body with arms, legs and a head so they would always go around with each other. She would also give them a mind and only one mouth so no one could hear them argue.

The bones of this story have been adapted from *'Eyes, Ears, Arms and Legs'* in *'North, South, East and West – The Oxfam Book of Children's Stories'* edited by Michael Rosen (Walker Books, 1992)

## The Boy Whose Luck had Run Out.

- A lazy boy can't get out of bed as his luck has run out - His mother and his friends tell him he needs to get a job. He can't let his mother work and look after him and there is a job at the Baker's.
- A friend of his mother, a wise woman, comes round one day and tells him of a boy who went out and looked for his luck – and found it. This inspires the young man and he sets out to look for his luck.
- He walks for a long time. He comes to a forest where he meets a very slow lion. The boy is frightened but the lion says he is too slow to catch him. When he finds out the boy is looking for his luck, he asks the boy to ask his luck, if he finds it, 'Why I am so slow?' The boy agrees.
- He walks further then rests under a very small tree. The tree starts talking and when the boy tells it about his search for his luck the tree asks if he could ask his luck, when he finds it, 'Why am I so small?'
- He walks further still and then comes to a castle. He sees a beautiful but sad princess in the window of the castle. The Princess asks him to stay but the boy explains he must find his luck. The Princess asks him to ask his luck, if he finds it, 'Why am I so sad?'
- He walks again, finds a place to sleep. When he wakes he sees a man cooking breakfast. It is his Luck. They talk and share breakfast. His Luck explains that he has three great opportunities waiting for him. The Boy is pleased and wants to go home. He asks his Luck the three questions. Luck answers him and says he will always be with the boy if doesn't waste his three opportunities. If he does he will not see his luck again.

- The boy walks home looking over his shoulder to see his Luck.. He comes to the castle. The Princess wants to know if he asked Luck her question. The boy replies saying she is sad because she is lonely. The Princess asks the boy to stay with her and he could become a King. He says he can't because he must go home to take up his three opportunities.
- He keeps on walking and comes to the tree. The tree asks if he asked Luck its question – 'Why am I so small? The boy explains the tree is small because it was planted on top of a treasure chest to mark the spot. But the chest is stopping the tree from growing. If the tree got rid of the chest it would grow big. The tree asks the boy if he would dig the treasure out. If he did he could then keep it. The boy says he can't because three great opportunities are waiting for him.
- He keeps on walking and comes into the forest. The lion finds him and asks if he has found out why he is slow. The boy tells him that he is slow because he hasn't eaten anything slower than him. If eats something very stupid he will be fast. So the lion ate the boy.
- But there is another ending. The boy realised that he had had his opportunities and his luck was gone. But the lion explained that he wasn't going to eat him because he had kept his word and brought an answer. He also explained that although he had lost his luck there was a way he could make his own.
- The boy went back to his village. He took the job at the Baker's and he married the baker's daughter. He realised he didn't have to look for his luck because he had found his own luck.

Another well known story with a theme that is good for discussion. Versions of this tale can be found in *'More Ready-to-Tell Tales from Around the World'* edited by David Holt and Bill Mooney and *'The Secret of Laughter'* by Shusha Guppy.

# The Talking Tortoise – Group Exercise

This is an exercise to get a class involved in storytelling. It can incorporate making shadow puppets and using them to tell the story. Different stories can, of course, be used.

## Aims

1. Give children an experience of telling a part of the story to the class
2. Give experience in working in small groups and being involved in group decision making
3. Using images to tell a story

## Instructions:

- Tell the story of 'The Talking Tortoise'
- Discuss the story- What emotions do they notice? Do they like the ending? (There are some prompt questions on the group story sheet below).
- Divide the class into six groups
- Ask each group to think of a name for their group – named after an emotion or feeling.
- Give each group one of the six sheets below with one part of the story and ask them to work on how they want to tell it to the rest of the class. They can design puppets based on some of the images here or their own designs. Encourage them to learn rather than read. All may choose to tell or there might be a single narrator while the rest control the puppets and provide sound effects etc. Encourage creativity.
- After a shared performance encourage class to reflect and analyse the experience.

## The Talking Tortoise

There was once a tortoise who talked and talked and talked. At the water hole, where he and all the other animals used to meet, he would often find that he had no-one to talk to because the other animals avoided him because he never stopped talking. He spoke so much that he never listened to the others. This tortoise just talked too much.

One day two beautiful geese came to the water hole. They were flying south for the winter and the Tortoise started chatting to them. He told them how beautiful they were. He was very polite.

‘Oh, you do look so beautiful! And the way you fly is so graceful!’ He was very charming and the geese were flattered but they noticed that he did go on (and on) quite a lot.

After a little while he asked if they were going to stay at the water hole?

‘No! We will be leaving shortly to fly south’.

‘Take me with you, take me with you’ said the Tortoise

The geese explained that they were flying and certainly couldn't take the Tortoise with them. The tortoise said, ‘Nothing is impossible. Let me think of how it could be done. Yes, I know what to do. If you to put a stick between you and you bite each end of it with your beaks and then I bite hold on to it in the middle you will be able to carry me.’

‘Well,’ said one of the geese, ‘It’s true, that you have you talked quite a bit which means your mouth must be very strong. But we’re not sure you can keep your mouth shut that long to make the whole journey.’



## Story Bones of the Talking Tortoise for 6 Groups

### 1. The ..... Group

- There was once a Tortoise who talked too much
- All the other animals at the water hole got annoyed with Tortoise because he would never listen and never stopped talking.
- Every time the Tortoise came to the waterhole all the other animals would leave
- Tortoise would be at the water hole all by himself

#### Questions to think about:

- What sort of animals would drink at the waterhole?
- What did they feel when Tortoise never stopped talking?
- What else might the animals have done?

### 2. The ..... Group

- Tortoise would be at the water hole all by himself
- One day a flock of geese flew above the waterhole
- Two of the birds were tired and thirsty and decided to have a drink and a rest
- They circled down and landed at the waterhole

#### Questions to think about:

- What was the tortoise feeling when he was left by himself?
- Could the geese be tired and joyful at the same time?

### 3. The ..... Group

- The geese flew down and landed at the waterhole
- They started to drink and Tortoise started talking to them
- He couldn't stop talking and told them how clever he was
- When the geese had finished drinking and resting one goose said to Tortoise, 'It was nice to meet you but we must go now.'
- Tortoise says, 'Take me with you.'
- The goose says, 'Well, that would be nice but we can fly and you can't.'
- The Tortoise says, 'I've got an idea.'

#### Questions to think about:

- What actions can the storyteller use in this part of the story?
- Do the geese want to take the tortoise with them?

### 4. The ..... Group

- The Tortoise says, 'I've got an idea!' He/she explains that they can bite into each end of a long stick and he will bit into the middle. That way they can carry him
- The geese think it won't work because the Tortoise can't keep his mouth shut for long enough
- Tortoise persuades the geese. The geese look for a long runway so they can take-off and the Tortoise looks for a stick
- The geese bite each end of the stick and the tortoise bites onto the middle
- The geese start to waddle down the runway

#### Questions to think about:

- Do you think the Tortoise is nervous or confident?
- If he was nervous what could he say to himself to feel better about what he is about to do?







## 7 Resources & References

## Sources of Stories – Books

Every school library will have collections of stories suitable for turning into tales that can be told. However, the following collections are full of many stories that are useful for exploring emotions.

George Burns - *101 Healing Stories for Kids and Teens* (Wiley, 2005)

Robert Fisher – *Stories for Thinking* (Nash Pollock, 1996)

Taffy Thomas & Steve Killick - *Telling Tales: Stories as Emotional Literacy* (EPS, 2007)

Jane Yolen - *Favourite Folktales from Around the World* (Random House 1986)

Naomi Adler - *Animal Tales from Around the World* (Barefoot Books 1996)

Peter Stevenson - *Welsh Folktales* (The History Press 2017)

Cath Little - *Glamorgan Folktales for Children* (The History Press 2017)

Fiona Collins – *Folk Tales for Bold Girls* (The History Press, 2019)

Peter Worley- *Once Upon an If: The Storythinking Handbook* (Bloomsbury, 2014)

Margaret Read McDonald *Three Minute Tales* (August House, 2004)

## Sources of Stories- Websites

There are many websites full of stories, short and long, that are ideal for telling.

[www.aaronshp.com](http://www.aaronshp.com) – folktales etc. from around the world

[www.surlalunefairytales.com](http://www.surlalunefairytales.com) – original annotated tales

[www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories) - text and audio

[www.feelingsarefunnythings.org/stories](http://www.feelingsarefunnythings.org/stories)

## Books about storytelling

Elaine Reese - *Tell Me a Story - Sharing Stories to Enrich Your Child's World*. (OUP, 2013)

Taffy Thomas & Steve Killick - *Telling Tales: Stories as Emotional Literacy* (EPS, 2007)

Johanna Kuyvenhoven – *In the Presence of Each Other – A Pedagogy of Storytelling* (UTP, 2009)

Jenny Fox Eades – *Classroom Tales – Using Storytelling to Build Emotional, Social and Academic Skills across the Primary Curriculum* (JKP,2006)

Christine Willison – *An Introduction to Storytelling* (The History Press, 2018)

Jack Zipes - *Creative Storytelling* (Routledge, 1995)

Nicola Grove (Ed.) - *Using Storytelling to Support Children and Adults With Special Needs*. (David Fulton, 2013).

Alida Gersie and Nancy King - *Story-making in Education and Therapy* (JKP, 1990)

Josie Felce – *Storytelling for Life – Why Stories Matter and Ways of Telling Them*. (Floris Books, 2012)

Ashley Ramsden & Sue Hollingworth – *The Storyteller's Way*. (Hawthorne Press, 2013)

## For supporting children with emotions and wellbeing

Kim Golding - *Using stories to build bridges with traumatized children*. (JKP, 2014)

Ben Sedley – *Stuff that Sucks: Accepting what you can't change and committing to what you can* (Robinson, 2015)

Dan Hughes – *Attachment Focussed Parenting* (Norton, 2009)

Lawrence Howells – *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Adolescents and Young Adults* (Routledge 2018).

Daniel Siegal & Tina Payne Bryson - *The Whole Brain Child* (Robinson, 2012)

Steve Killick - *Emotional Literacy at the Heart of the School Ethos* (Sage, 2006)

Martin Seligman – *Flourish- A new understanding of happiness and well-being* (Nicolas Brearly Pub, 2011)

Jenny Fox Eades – *Celebrating Strengths:Building Strengths-Based Schools* (CAPP Press 2008).

## Example Lesson Plans

### Session One

1. Introduce project – Here to explore feelings, thoughts and actions - Boundaries.
2. Eye Contact Clap
3. 1, 2 & 3 Clap
4. Story- Eyes, Ears, Hands and Feet (or other)
5. Inquire about feelings in story
6. Feelings Are Funny (Produce list of feelings)
7. Freeze Frame
8. Why do we have feelings? inquiry
9. Finger breathing
10. If time- short story to finish

### Session Two

1. Eye Contact Clap
2. The King/Queen of Silence with a riddle
3. Story- The Meat of the Tongue (or other)
4. Inquire about feelings in story –List new feelings
5. Introduce Families of Feelings
6. Family of Feelings Sort
7. Sculpting feelings
8. Making a Fist (breathing)
9. Get feedback – What do they like? What could be better?
10. If time- short story or riddles to finish

### Session Three

1. Eye Contact Clap
2. 1, 2 & 3 Clap
3. The Boy Who Lost his Luck (or other)
4. Inquire about feelings in story
5. Visualisation - Ask about images they had in their mind's eye.
6. The Box - visualization exercise
7. Discuss favorite stories of the group- why do they like them?(listening for feelings)
8. Finger breathing & On Tiptoe (Breathing)
9. Explore calm and other positive emotions
10. If time- short story or riddle

As group develops content can follow interests and needs of group.

**Session Four**

1. Eye Contact Clap
2. Feeling Cards- Identify the emotion from the face
3. Storyteller's Toolkit- What have you noticed about how stories are told? Elicit aspects of toolkit
4. Group Story Swap - Talking Tortoise & Cracked Pot-
5. Get groups to remember the story/reincorporate visualization
6. Pairs share their stories
7. Feedback to whole group what they liked about partner's telling
8. How did they feel before and after? Discuss handling anxiety – Where did they feel it? How did they cope with it?
9. Explore Gratitude- Decide on Gratitude projects
10. Belly Breathing and poem

**Session Five**

1. Eye Contact Clap
2. 1, 2 & 3 Clap
3. What's the best thing that happened to you in last week? How did it make you feel? Then feedback from Gratitude projects
4. Story- Fearsome Giant
5. Inquire about feelings in story – List new ones
6. Strength of Feeling -Anxiety feelings -
7. Fight or Flight –Why we have anxiety- Why it's normal- What helps
8. Finger or Belly Breathing
9. King/Queen of Silence with a riddle

**Session Six**

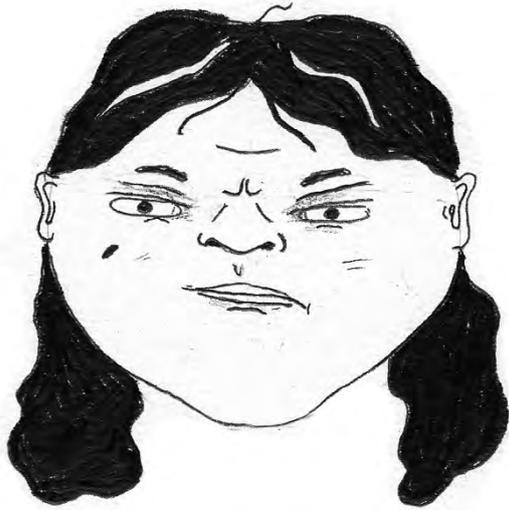
1. Eye Contact Clap
2. Making Sense of a Sentence
3. What did you do at the...?
4. Watch Film 'The Other Pair' stopping frequently to identify thoughts, feelings and actions
5. Story- The Lost Axe
6. Strength of Feeling Anger
7. Artwork- draw depictions of anger
8. Discussion- Normalising anger- dealing with it wisely
9. Review group- What's going well? What could be better?
10. Belly Breathing and poetry to finish

Future groups aim to develop storytelling skills both individually and working with others while exploring further the themes of thoughts, feelings and actions. Groups might want to start developing their own stories.



## 8 Feeling Cards

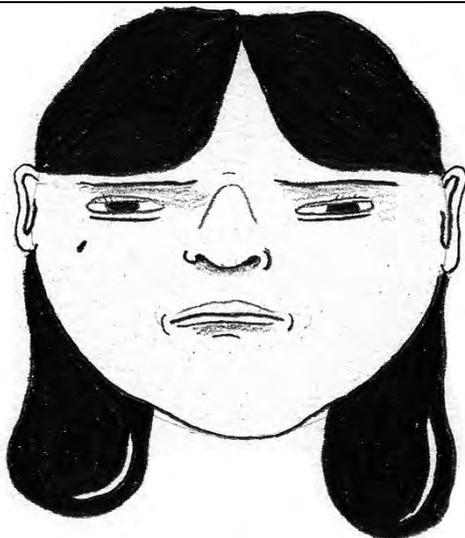
Print or photocopy the cards - can be folded to show the face on one side and the emotion on the other or where both can be seen. The cards can be used in several of the exercises given in the manual



ANNOYED



ASHAMED



DEPRESSED





DISAPPOINTED



DISGUSTING



EMBARRASSED





FRUSTRATED



FURIOUS

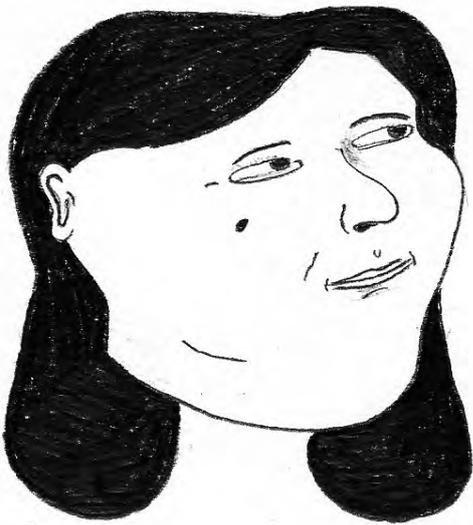


GRATEFUL





GUILTY

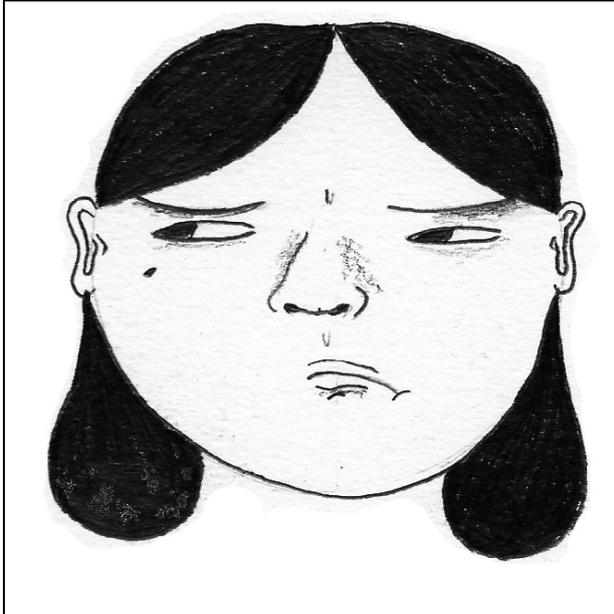


HOPE

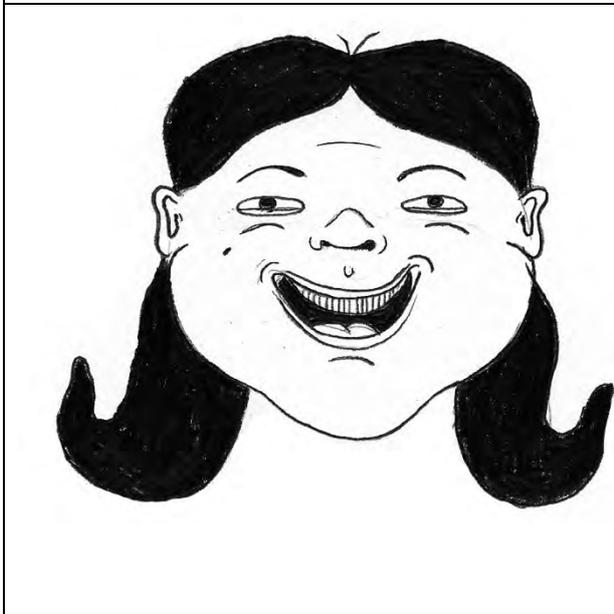


IRRITATED

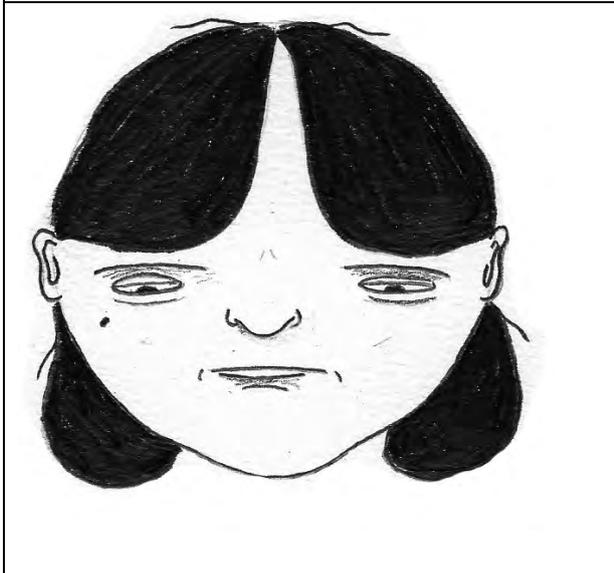




JEALOUS



JOY



LOW





MOURNFUL



NERVOUS



PEACEFUL

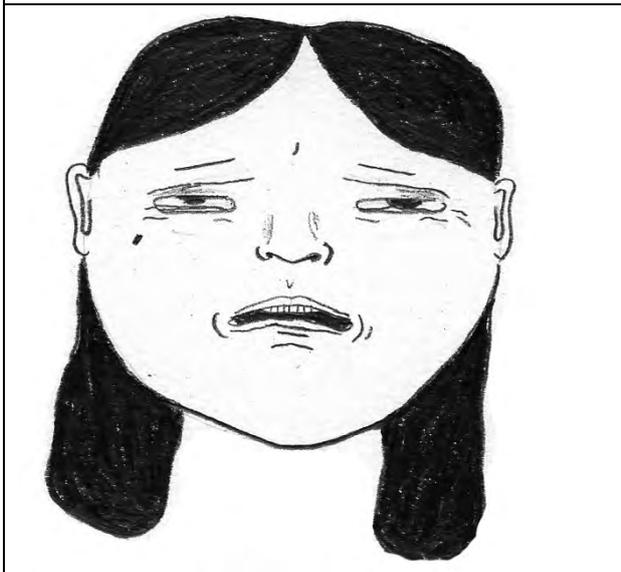




PRIDE



RAGING



REGRETFUL





SCARED



TERRIFIED



WORRIED



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*Feelings are funny things*

*A Storytelling Toolkit*