

**Early Years  
Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)  
(for 0-5 year olds)**



Supporting your child's social  
communication at home  
(Conversation Partner Level)

April 2020

## The Pack

This home programme pack has been designed by Speech and Language Therapists and is based on the most up-to-date research on communication development in the early years.

### How-to-use this pack

1. Take a look at the **top tip**
2. Each top tip has an **activity** idea you could try
3. Think about how you can use the top tip in other **daily routines** (e.g. snack time, playtime, bath time etc.) to increase the opportunities for your child to learn throughout their day
4. ... and finally keep it **fun** and keep it **going!**

### Tip 1: Give your child the language they need to play in an interactive way with others



#### Activity 1: Playtime

**You will need:** Toys that allow for sharing resources and playing together e.g. duplo/lego, playdough and cutters etc

- Make sure there is a need to share resources e.g. only one rolling pin

**Visual supports:** see 'social phrases' symbol cards in 'Resources' section of the pack

**What to do:** Talk with your child about the different symbols and when they might be needed :

e.g. When you want something someone else has you can say (show symbol): "Can I have a turn please?"

It's nice to notice what your friends are doing, you can say (show symbol): "I like your....", or "That's great!"

As you play together, model the use of social phrase to swap, comment, request etc and use the symbols to prompt your child to do the same.

**You could also try this tip when:**

- Cooking together
- Gardening/planting seeds
- Doing a craft activity together

## Tip 2: Use stories to support your child's understanding of social situations and friendships



### Activity 2: Storytime

**You will need:** Children's books about friendship e.g. 'Pip and Posy' series  
- see the links below for suggestions:

<https://teachingwithchildrensbooks.com/books-about-friendship/>  
<https://ican.org.uk/shop/jake-tizzy-book-1-hello/>

**What to do:** As you share stories, keep the following tips in mind (depending on your child's level of language):

- **Label the emotions** different characters might be feeling and talk about why e.g. This boy is feeling sad because he dropped his ice cream
- **Relate stories to personal experiences:** "Can you think of a time when someone wouldn't let you play?"... "How did you feel?"
- **Own and talk about your own feelings:** e.g. "I feel sad when it's time to say goodbye"
- **Talk about possible solutions** to problems that occur e.g. "What can the boy do now?"... "he could ask his dad for a cuddle... he could ask his mum if he can have another ice cream..." etc – give your child time to think and come up with ideas for themselves.
- **Talk about 'what ifs....'** E.g. "What would happen if the little boy snatched his friend's scooter?"

**You could also try.... WRITING YOUR OWN 'SOCIAL STORY'**

#### What is a social story?

Social stories are written for children to help them learn and understand social rules and cope in social situations.

- See Social Stories Information Sheet (in the Resources section of this pack)
- See [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) (or download the app) for examples of social stories

**You could also try....**

- Writing social stories with an app – there are lots of apps available to do this, so you can make them really personal, including photos of your child/family members and real-life situations. Here's one that's free:

<http://touchautism.com/app/social-stories-creator-library/>

## Tip 3: Give your child the words they need to communicate how they are feeling



### Activity 3: Craft time /Emotions cube

#### You will need:

- An empty cube shaped tissue box
- Emotions pictures – you can use the ones from the resource section, draw your own together with your child, or look for motivating ones (e.g. lego faces) on the internet
- Glue

#### What to do:

- For this game you will need to make a feelings cube.
- Paste pictures of feeling faces on a tissue box.
- Take turns to roll the box and whatever feeling face it lands on they have to act out.
- If you want, you can roll the dice where the other player(s) can't see and let them guess which emotion you are acting out

**For a fun 'Inside Out' version of feelings cube, see this link:**

<https://crayonsandcompliance.wordpress.com/2018/03/02/inside-out-feelings-cube-activity/>

#### Other games to try with emotions pictures:

- Memory game/ 'pairs': Simply print out two sets of Feeling Cards, shuffle them, place them face down on a table and take turns to turn over two cards to find the matching Feelings Card
- Lotto: print/draw a board of faces for each player and place a second copy in a bag. Take turns to pull a picture out of the bag and label the emotion
- 

**For an extra challenge:** say what makes people feel that way or what makes you/your child feel that way

**For more ideas see this link:**

<https://www.kiddiematters.com/9-ways-to-teach-children-about-feelings/>

**For more general advice for supporting your child to understand and express emotions, see the Resources section of this pack**

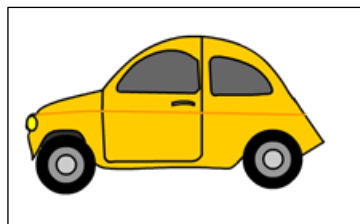
## Tip 4: Give your child strategies to manage their emotions

### Activity 4: Practice breathing with 'Take 5' strategy



For more ideas to support your child's emotional regulation, see the resources section of this pack: 'Helping my child to manage their emotions'

## Tip 5: Teach your child how to take turns to listen and talk in conversation



### Activity 4: Zig-Zag talking

You will need: conversation topic cards and the 'zig-zag talking' visual (in the resources section)

What to do:

Discuss what makes you a 'Good Talker', using the 'Good Talking' visual prompt sheet in the resources section.

Have some fun demonstrating what happens when you don't do 'good talking' – ie look the other way/around the room, when child is talking to you (NOT looking), or keep interrupting, when the child is telling you about something (NOT good turn-taking)

Practice 'Good talking' skills, using the enclosed 'Zig-Zag' talking track:

- Put the sheet between you and the child, so that 3 circles are on each side
- Choose a car/counter etc and place on the 'start' circle.
- Explain that when the car/counter is on the child's side of the track, it is their turn to talk and vice versa.
- Choose a topic to talk about, using the topic cards provided/make up your own (see resources section)
- The child may need to choose the topic at first, but work towards taking turns to choose, so that the child practices following someone else's choice of topic as well as their own.
- When the first person (who started the conversation) has said something, push the car across the track to the other side, so that the other person has a turn to talk, and so on until you reach the end.
- You could talk about how to finish a conversation at this point, if you wish and try out some endings, eg "Well, that was interesting. I had better get back to work" etc

## Tip 6: Supporting your child to share their experiences with others

### Activity 6: Show and tell time

#### You will need:

- symbols to support sharing experiences
- photo of an activity or experience to talk about (e.g. on mobile phone)  
– **take pictures of your child doing various activities during the day and if appropriate, let them take photos of you (or other family members doing activities)**

#### What to do:

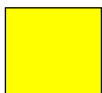
- Talk with your child about 'telling a story'... when we tell others about what we did (e.g. at the weekend/at nursery), we need to include certain information, for the story to make sense to someone who wasn't there:



who was there

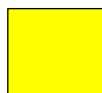


where the event (story) happened



what happened

- Show your child a photo of something you did when they were not with you. Use the symbols (who, where, what happened) to 'tell the story' in simple language, pointing to each symbol as you do so
- E.g.     I went shopping at the supermarket



- Now it's your child's turn... you could start by taking a photo of them doing something and talking about it immediately afterwards, to help them make the link between the event and how they tell 'the story'
- Make a special time each day to show and tell something you each did during the day, using the symbols to remind your child of what to include and support their language.

**You could try:** including other family members and make it a family routine e.g. at mealtimes or before going to bed

- Using the additional symbols (what, when, what like) to extend your child's story telling skills.



## Tip 7: Give your child the language they need to show an interest in others and what they like.

### Asking Questions



### Activity 7: Questions and comments

#### You will need:

- Conversation prompt cards (see resources section)

**What to do:** Find an area in your house where it is quiet and there are few distractions e.g. ensuring all toys are out of sight

- Model asking one of the questions on the cards to another adult or sibling to show your child how to appropriately answer the stated question
- Then ask your child the stated question and encourage your child to respond with words. If your child does not want to speak, then encourage your child to use gestures, e.g. pointing to a symbol
- Now it is your child's turn to ask you the question
- Continue taking it in turns to ask each other questions using the prompt cards provided (see resources section)

**You could try:** If your child is reluctant to use their words, you could try using a **choice board** with options for e.g. colours (eyes), patterns (stripy/spotty), flavours (ice-cream) etc. They can point to the one they want, or use this as a prompt to help them say it with words. See resources.

- If your child is finding it difficult to answer a question, give your child the **choice of two prompt ideas**, e.g. 'what fruit do you like best? apple or banana?'
- Model back their choice with a clear phrase e.g. 'that's right, you have brown eyes'. This will hopefully increase your child's confidence in stating their answer with words for the next time

#### Or:

- Using the conversation prompt cards with the 'zig-zag talking' visual, with one person asking questions (blue circles) e.g. "What is your favourite ice-cream? and the others making comments orange circles) e.g. "I like strawberry too!" or "I don't like..."



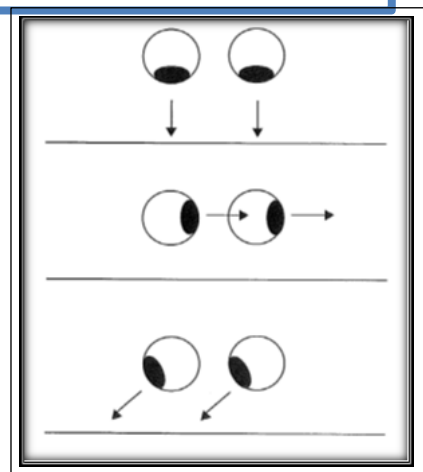
## Tip 8: Support your child to ‘tune in’ to what others are thinking about and use this to predict what they might do next

### Activity 7: Thinking with your eyes

#### 1. Teach your child that “eyes are like arrows” and they point towards what people are looking at.

You could draw out pictures of eyeballs facing different Directions. Ask the child to draw in arrows pointing in the direction they are looking at. You could take it in turns to draw the eyeballs.

- Play games where the child has to figure out what you are looking at. Stare at objects around the room and see if they can identify what you are looking at (e.g. clock, table, floor, chair)
- Start by being very obvious and look at people or objects close to you.
- You could space out a number of objects on the table. Look at one and ask the child to identify where you are looking.
- Move the objects closer together to make it more difficult.



#### 2. Introduce the concept that you “think with your eyes”: explain that what you are looking at is often

**what you are thinking about**

- e.g. my eyes are looking at the chair, I am thinking about the chair.
- e.g. I am looking the teacher, I am thinking about the teacher.
- Play the same type of game as above but now ask the child to guess what you might be thinking about based on what you are looking at

#### 3. Introduce the concept that you can guess what people are going to do by looking at their eyes

- Stand in a circle and explain that you are going to look at the person that you are going to throw a ball too. Ask the child to look carefully for who the ball will be thrown to next. The child can then decide who to look at and throw the ball too.
- You could also do this with asking/answering questions. Explain that you are going to ask a question and you want the person who you are looking at to answer it. Encourage the child to ask a question and to look at someone.
- You could use YouTube clips for this. For example, clips of characters from Toy Story who have large eyes. Freeze the clip and ask the child to look at the characters eyes and to say what they might be thinking about. You could also ask what the character might do next.
- Play “freeze”. Begin to walk towards somewhere and then freeze part way. Ask the child to predict what you might be doing based on where you are looking. E.g. walking over towards the sink and “freeze” (make sure your eyes are on the sink).

## Tip 9: Give your child opportunities to practice giving instructions, following instructions and asking specific questions to get the information they need



### Activity 9: Barrier games

**Speakers** learn the importance of giving clear and complete information to listeners.

**Listeners** learn the importance of asking questions to clarify or gain further information.

#### You will need:

- Two sets of identical building blocks – this could be e.g. wooden blocks, duplo or lego
- (Optional) a photo of the completed model you intend to make with the bricks – this can be used to support the child if they are struggling to understand or give instructions with words only – MAKE SURE THE MODEL IS SIMPLE
- A 'barrier' between the listener and speaker e.g. large book /folder so that each player cannot see what the other is doing

#### What to do:

- Decide who is going to give instructions (Speaker) and who is going to follow them (Listener)
- **The speaker** starts to make the model, telling the listener what to do with each step e.g. if making the model in the illustration above:
  1. Find two green blocks with curved ends.
  2. Put them together with the straight edges back-to-back
  3. Find a blue square block
  4. Put this on top of the green blocks to join them together etc.
- **The listener** follows the instructions given by the speaker, asking questions to clarify whether they have understood correctly – you may need to model questions or use a choice board (like the one in the resources section) to prompt your child to ask relevant questions e.g. "What colour is it?", "What size is it?", "Where does it go?", "Can you say that again please?"
- **Continue until the models are complete**, then remove the barrier and see if they are the same! If they are not the same talk about how they are different.

**If your child is struggling at any point, use the photo to support their understanding**

#### You could also try:

- A barrier game with pencil & paper/felt tip pens – the speaker draws a simple picture and tells the listener what to draw to make the pictures the same.

## Websites

You may also find the following websites helpful:

- ❑ Our speech and language therapy website: <https://www.clch.nhs.uk/services/speech-and-language-therapy-children>
- ❑ **NSPCC's** 'Look, Say, Sing, Play' campaign' with the following link <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/look-say-sing-play/sign-up>
- ❑ **Vroom:** Boost your child's learning with **Vroom's** fast and fun tips to your phone or via email. <https://www.vroom.org>
- ❑ The **Hungry Little Minds** campaign provides lots of ideas that can help boost your child's learning. [www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk](http://www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk)
- ❑ **Local Offer website:** (search "SEND local offer with the name of your borough"). This website has lots of useful information for parents about local help for children with additional education and/or health needs
- ❑ **Parent forums:** Contact for support if your child has additional education/health need
  - Parents Active (Hammersmith & Fulham) [www.parentsactive.org.uk](http://www.parentsactive.org.uk)
  - Full of Life (RBKC) [www.fulloflifekc.com](http://www.fulloflifekc.com)
  - Make it Happen (Westminster) [www.wppg.org.uk](http://www.wppg.org.uk)
- ❑ **The Communication Trust:** for what to expect at different ages [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)
- ❑ **ICAN:** a children's communication charity [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

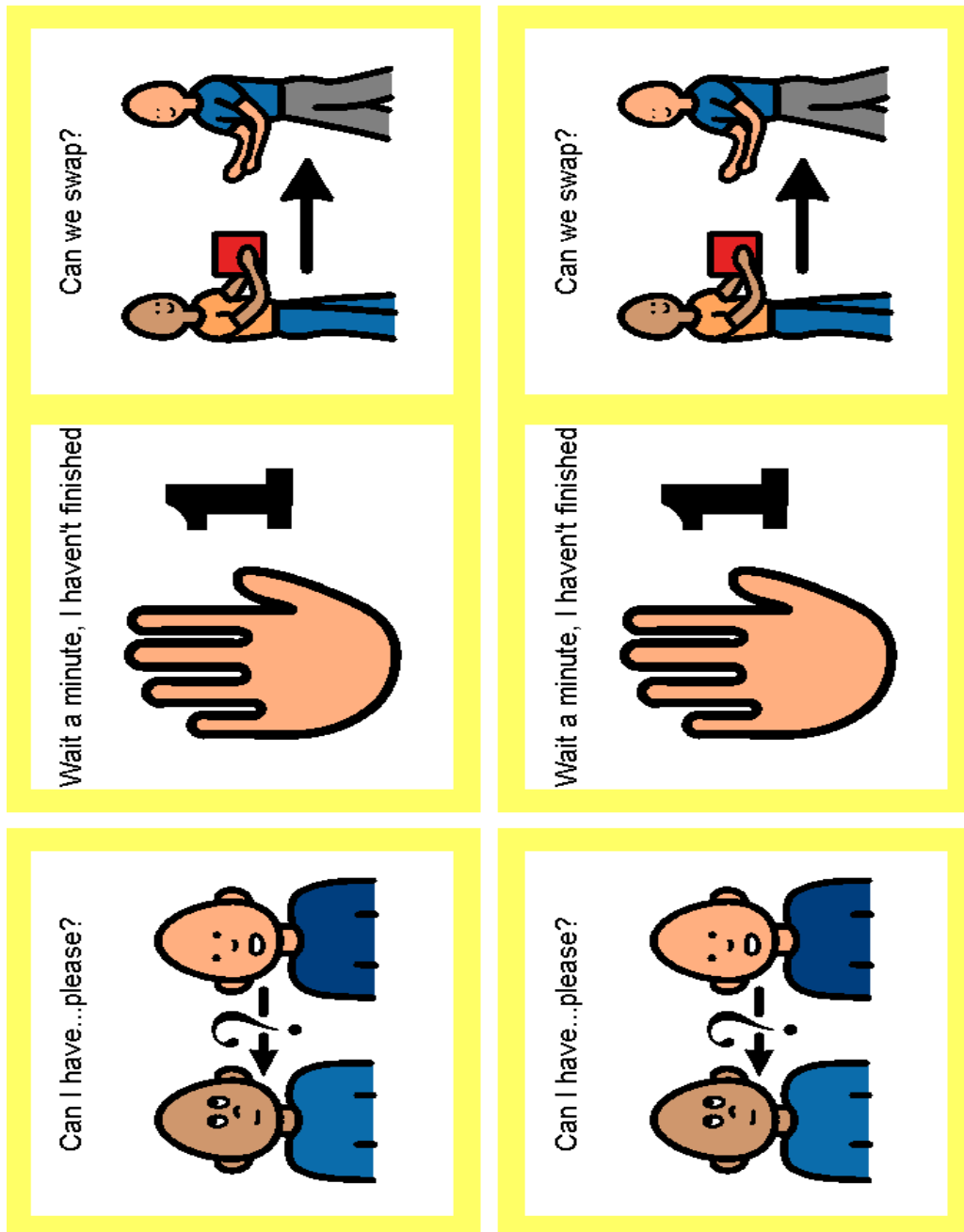
## CLCH NHS Trust

The speech and language therapy service is provided by Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

For more information visit [www.clch.nhs.uk](http://www.clch.nhs.uk) or call us on 020 7266 8777

# Resources

Here you will find visuals to  
help you support your  
child's learning

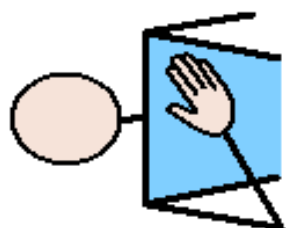


You could also make some visual prompts to encourage your child to make social comments such as:

Showing: "look at this!"

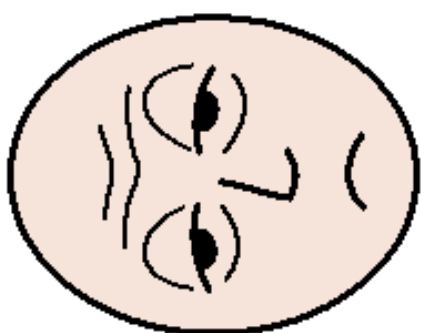
Commenting: e.g. "wow! That looks great!"

"Can I have turn please?"



How am I feeling today?

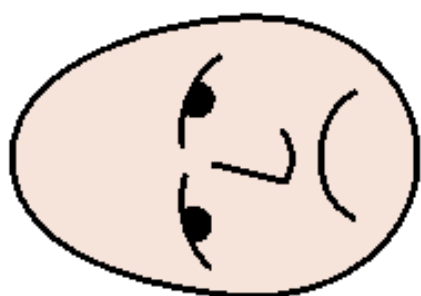
A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a child to draw or write their response to the question.



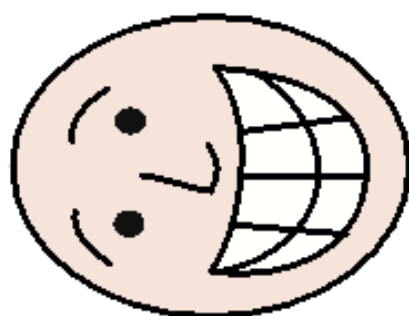
tired



worried



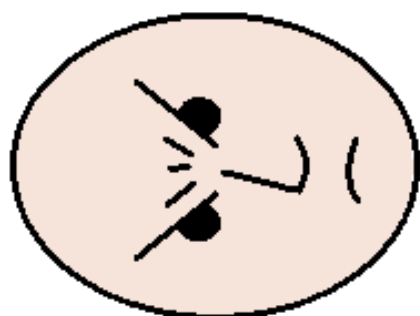
sad



excited



happy



angry



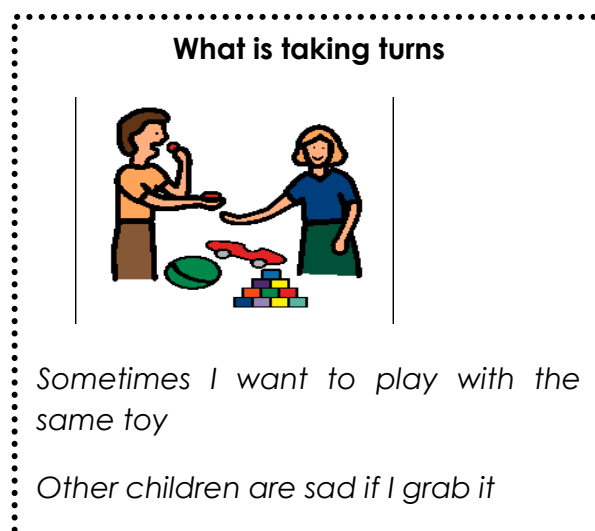
# Social Stories

## What is a social story?

- Social stories are written for children to help them learn and understand social rules and cope in social situations.
- Social stories are devised for your child's level of ability and may include photos, symbols, pictures, and words/written text.
- Social stories are normally quite short – just 2 to 12 sentences long.

## Introducing a social story

- Identify a social situation, friendship skill or event that your child needs help with (such as 'saying hello to people', 'going to the doctors' etc)
- Think of a title that asks a question that the story will describe (e.g. 'how do I say hello to people?')
- The social story is written from the child's perspective and uses positive sentences instead of negative (I should look at people.....)
- A social story has a reassuring and patient quality and it is important to introduce it in the same friendly, gentle way
- Share the story only when your child is calm. Do not share the story during the difficult or upsetting event or as a consequence for bad behaviour
- The social story should be individual to the child and address what it is about the situation that is difficult



# Tips for writing a social story

- Write it from the child's perspective, in the first person
- Use photos where possible. Include the child's photo in the story
- Read it before the situation happens, not afterwards. Otherwise, it may be seen as a 'telling off'
- Ask other people if needed to help you figure out why your child is doing something and what alternative strategies they could possibly do instead
- Use a computer program like iphoto photobook or i-social story app
- Use the following structure for a simple social story:

1. **Describe the situation:** *you need to explain what the situation is from the child's perspective*

Sometimes I.....

2. **Say what effect this has on others:** *This may not be obvious to a child with autism and needs to be explained clearly*

This makes other people feel.....

3. **Give your child an alternative that they could do.** *A social story isn't about pointing out the negative behaviour, but showing that there is another way. Think about what your child might do instead and be realistic about how possible it is what you are asking them to do*

instead, I could.....

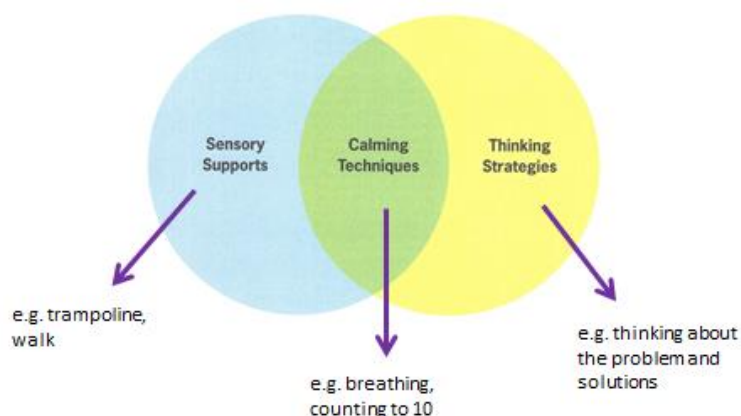
4. **End on a positive statement:** *It is important to explain why your strategy is better. e.g. why is tapping someone on the shoulder a better attention-seeking strategy than shouting?*

This is a good thing to do.....

- Each section could have one page or as many as you need!

# Helping your child to manage their emotions

We all have emotions and have to learn to express them in ways that are not harmful to ourselves or others. This can be a challenge! Below are some strategies to try out with your child:



Each child will have their own particular needs and preferences, so work out together which strategies work for your child. Different strategies will work in different situations. Most of us find it hard to be rational when we are upset or emotional – sensory or calming strategies are likely to work better at those times. It can help to have **visual supports** to help your child know what to do when they are feeling emotional: e.g.

- see '**emotions keyring**' pictures (these could also be made into a poster/chart – change the strategies to reflect your child's needs / preferences)
- See '**5 point scale**' – personalise this by talking with your child about what helps them / trying things out and reflecting together – working it out together will make the strategy more effective

## Sensory Strategies:

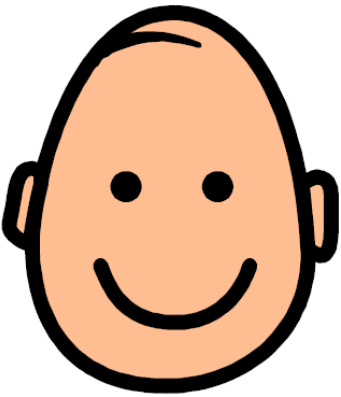

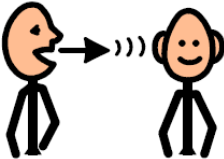


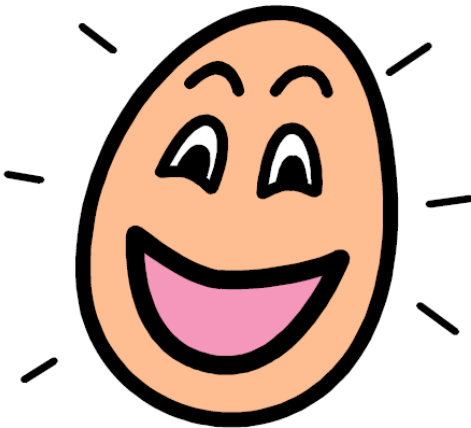

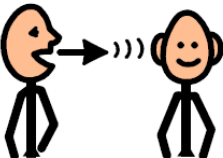


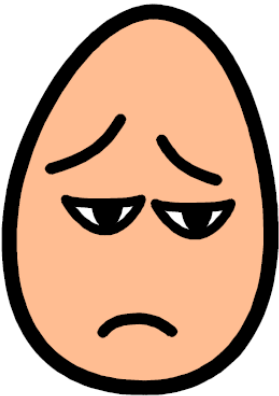




- Bouncing on a trampoline
- Running/walking/spinning
- Having a drink

## Calming strategies:

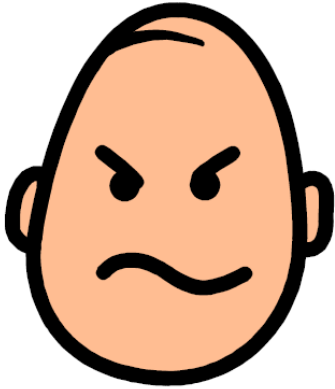

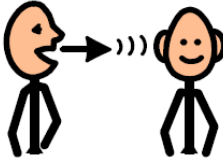







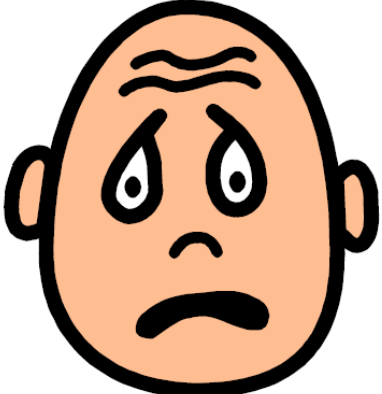
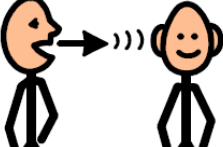



- Breathing exercises (see 'take 5' example in the resources section)
- Counting to 10
- Mindfulness for kids e.g. <https://mindful-app.com/>
- Yoga for kids – see yoga cards for kids, available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

**Thinking Strategies:** help your child develop their problem-solving skills outside of emotional situations e.g. after they have calmed down:

- See **comic-strip flow-chart**

<p><i>happy</i></p> 	<p><i>smile</i></p>  <p><i>talk</i></p>  <p><i>jump</i></p>  <p><i>high five</i></p> 
<p><i>excited</i></p> 	<p><i>smile</i></p>  <p><i>talk</i></p>  <p><i>jump</i></p>  <p><i>high five</i></p> 
<p><i>sad</i></p> 	<p><i>write</i></p>  <p><i>cry</i></p>  <p><i>ask for hug</i></p>  <p><i>take a break</i></p> 

Emotions key ring pictures

<p><i>mad</i></p> 	<p><i>squeeze hands</i>      <i>talk</i></p>   <p><i>write</i>      <i>take a break</i></p>  
<p><i>tired</i></p> 	<p><i>drink water</i>      <i>squeeze hands</i></p>   <p><i>walk</i>      <i>take a break</i></p>  
<p><i>scared</i></p> 	<p><i>talk</i>      <i>cry</i></p>   <p><i>ask for hug</i>      <i>take a break</i></p>  






Emotions key ring pictures

## What to do when I feel angry

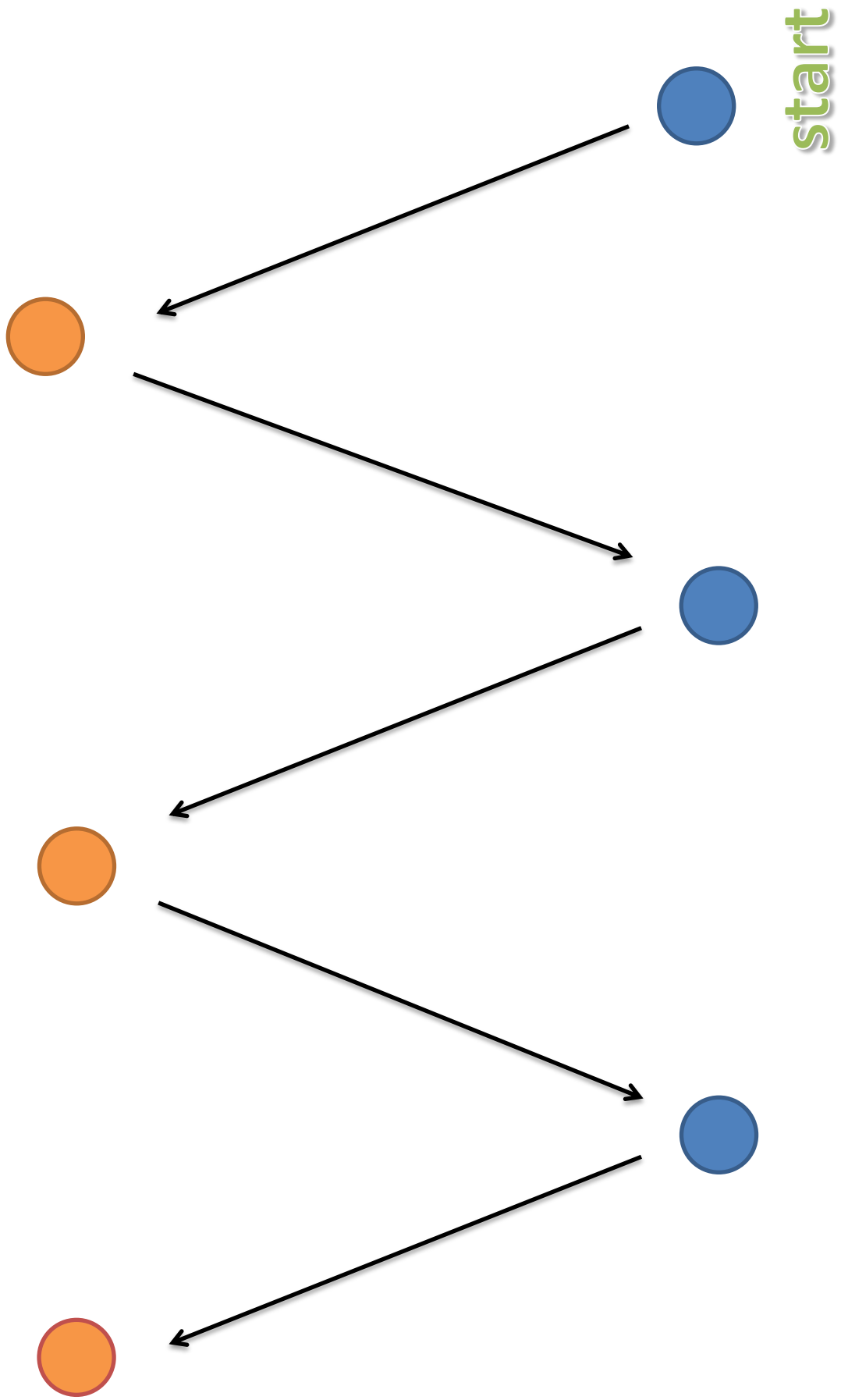
- This will help me to try and feel calm.

This will help me to understand what to do - the good choices I can make.

Emotions key ring pictures

Rating		Looks like	I feel like	I can....
	5		Really, really angry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Take time out (e.g. be on your own)</li> <li>○</li> <li>○</li> </ul>
	4		Stressed out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Count back from 10</li> <li>○</li> <li>○</li> </ul>
	3		Starting to get quite annoyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Count to 10.</li> <li>○ Take deep breaths.</li> <li>○</li> <li>○</li> </ul>
	2		Little bit irritated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ignore what others are doing.</li> <li>○</li> <li>○</li> </ul>
	1		Fine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Share my toys</li> <li>○ Talk to parents, brothers, sisters</li> <li>○</li> <li>○</li> </ul>

finish





## “Thinking with Your Eyes” games

### The Hot Chair

1. Group sits in a line on chairs. Place one chair at the front, facing the line. This chair is called the ‘hot chair’.
2. Choose a child to sit on the hot chair.
3. The child in the hot chair will look at the person that they want to swap chairs with. Explain to the children in the line that they need to look at the eyes of the person in the hot chair and swap chairs with them if they get eye contact.
4. When a child sees that the person in the hot chair is looking at them, they must say ‘[name] is **looking** at me, he is **thinking** that he wants to swap chairs with me’.

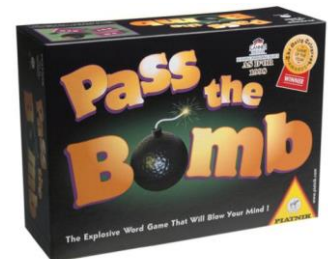


### Throwing ball

1. Children sit/ stand in a circle
2. A ball is thrown between the children. The child holding the ball chooses somebody to throw to. They must indicate who they are going to throw the ball to by gaining eye contact with them.
3. When a child sees that the person with the ball is looking at them, they must say ‘[name] is **looking** at me, he is **thinking** that he wants to throw the ball to me’.

### Pass the bomb/ hot potato

See ‘throwing ball’ game above- you can play this version using the bomb from the game ‘Pass the Bomb’ or pass a ball around and set a timer on the screen. When the bomb goes off, the child holding the bomb has to stand on one leg. If it goes off on that child again, they then have to put one hand behind their back. (Alternatively you could use the bomb going off as an end point for the game).



### Pass the clap – easy level

1. Children sit in a circle
2. Someone in the group starts the game by clapping a short rhythm (e.g. clapping hands/ knee, clicking, stamping feet etc). The person then thinks about another person with only their eyes. That person then copies the clapping rhythm and thinks about another person with only their eyes and so on.

### Variations of pass the clap:

- Pass the animal noise
- Musical instruments – pass the sound
- Pass the action
- Pass the facial expression



### **Pass the clap – medium level**

In this version you can make it more difficult by asking the children to either change the clapping rhythm **or** adding a clap onto the pattern

e.g.

Person 1: clap clap

Person 2: clap clap, click click

Person 3: clap clap, click click, stamp feet

### **Pass the clap – hard level**

In this version, everyone in the circle copies the rhythm together. The group continue until the leader thinks about another person with only their eyes. That person then claps a new rhythm for the rest of the group to copy and so on.

This is more difficult as the children have to look at the leader to see if the rhythm is being passed onto them as well as looking at the whole group to check when the rhythm has changed.

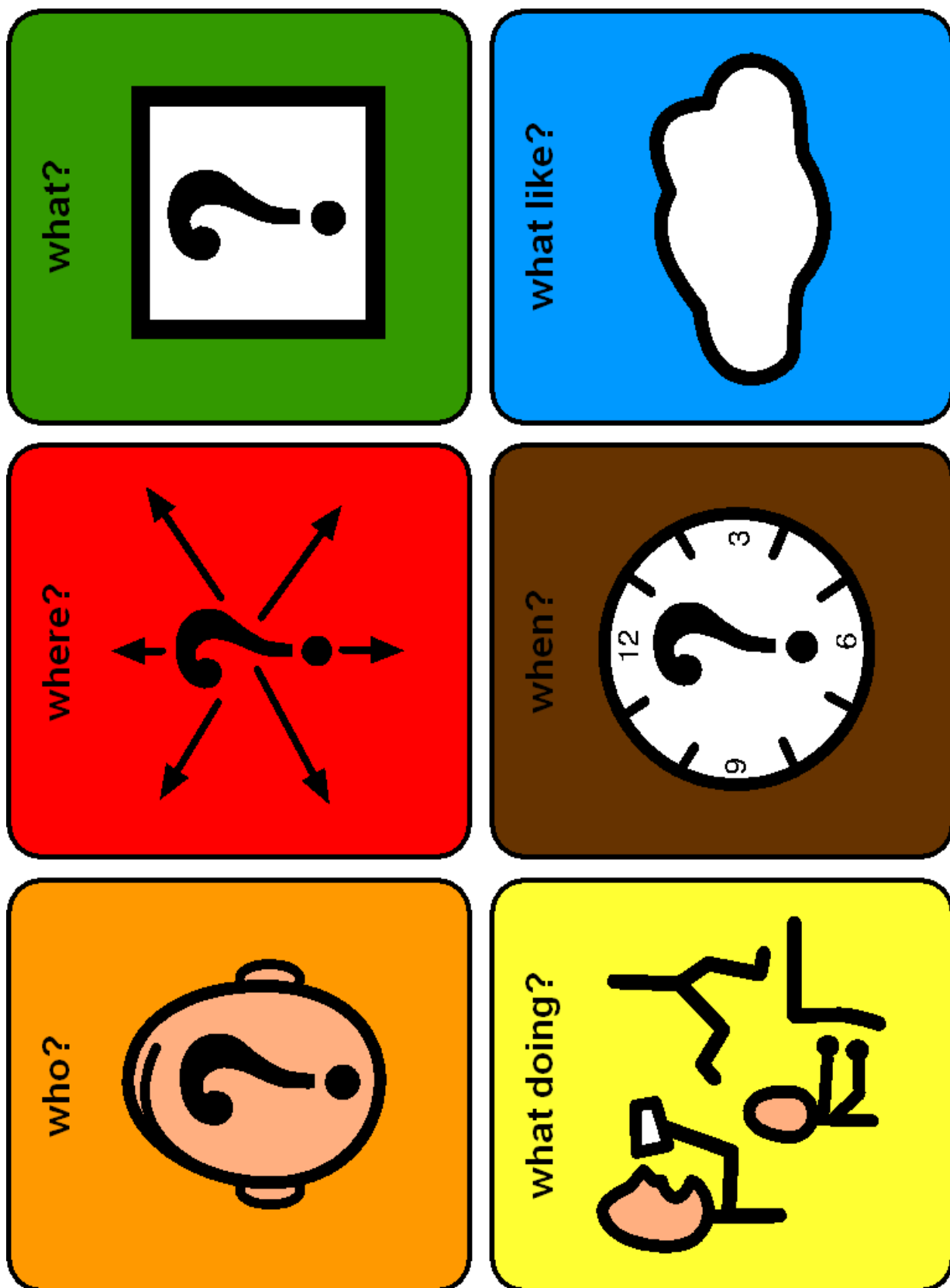
### **Building a tower**

1. Have the bricks scattered on the table/ floor.
2. Teacher starts building a tower and then makes eye contact with a child to indicate that it is their turn to add to the tower. The child then adds a brick and makes eye contact with another child and so on.
3. When a child sees that the person is looking at them, they must say '[name] is **looking** at me, he is **thinking** that he wants me to add a brick'.

### Variations:

- Lego
- Jenga
- Adding parts to Mr Potato Head





Symbols to support 'Sharing experiences'

## Conversation topic cards (for zig-zag talking: Tip 5)



Books



toys



Drink



food



Toys



friends



=



Hand moves  
down slightly  
for palms  
facing  
one another  
the other



Good talking = looking at the person you are talking to



Hand moves  
down slightly  
for palms  
facing  
one another  
the other

take turns



ask questions



say something



back



talk about



the same



thing

What socks are you wearing?



color



spots



characters



stripes



what holiday do you like best



skiing



beach holiday



camping



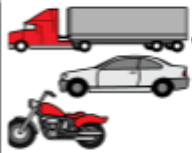
what play do you like best



what vegetables do you like best





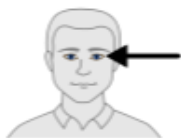


what transport do you like best



what fruit do you like best





what colour are your eyes



what icecream do you like best



what colour is your hair?



what pet do you have at home

