

Lesson Plan: Emotional Health Toolkit

THEME:

PLAYING SAFE

PERSONAL SAFETY

KEY STAGE: 3

Session Overview:

This session aims to help young people choose and practice some simple strategies which they can use to help them manage their emotional health and well-being.

Aims and objectives:

1. Young people begin to build their 'Toolkit' in relation to self-help strategies and approaches which can help them manage their emotional health.

Session Type: Discussion based

Materials needed: None

Learning outcomes:

- Young People have a self-help strategies to help with their own emotional health.

Introduction

This session aims to help young people choose and practice some simple strategies which they can use to help them manage their emotional health and well-being.

The session contains multiple activities which can be used. In this session we are encouraging young people to begin to build their 'Toolkit' in relation to self-help strategies and approaches which can help them manage their emotional health.

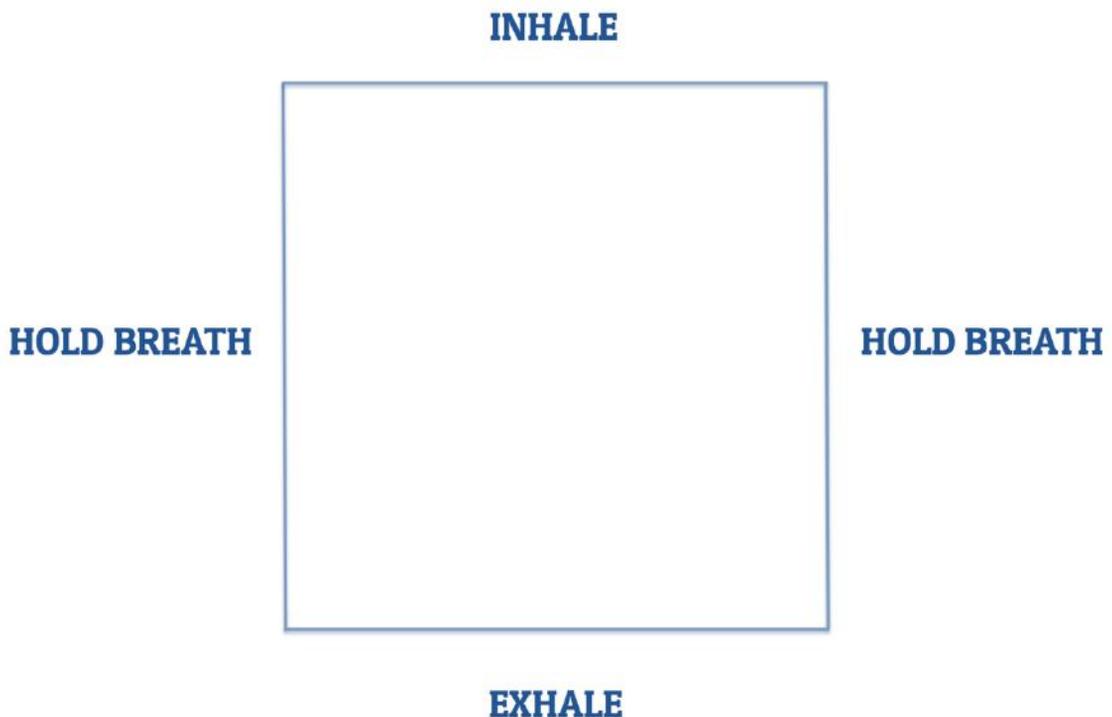
'Today we are going to look at some activities which can help us manage our emotions. We are going to make our own "toolkit" where you can choose which activities help you the most.'

Box Breathing Activity

1. Tell your pupils that we are now going to think about a simple strategy we can use when we feel angry or upset. Read the scenario below to your pupils;

'Uh oh...Your brain is telling you that you are angry, upset or stressed about something. Before you have a chance to get overwhelmed, let's try something that can help calm you down so you can think more clearly and return to feeling calm.'

Introduce 'Box breathing' as a strategy for difficult emotions. Box breathing is explained in the diagram below. Further information is included at the end of this lesson plan.



Box Breathing Activity

This simple step by step guide will assist you in delivering the Box Breathing activity to your pupils.

Step 1

Sit straight up in a comfortable chair. Put your feet flat on the floor and relax your hands in your lap. You may overlap your hands or let them lie separately with palms facing up. The important factor is to maintain an aligned posture and to be at ease.

Step 2

Close your mouth and breath in slowly through your nose. Count to four as you inhale. Hold your breath for four seconds. You are not trying to deprive your body of oxygen, but need to allow a few seconds for the air to fill your lungs. Concentrate on your belly and notice how it also moves when you inhale deeply.

Step 3

Open your mouth slightly and slowly exhale to a count of four. Hold the exhale to another count of four. Ideally, you should repeat the exercise for four minutes, but two or three times will help you to achieve a more relaxed state, relieve tension and settle your nerves.

Box Breathing Activity

Step 4

Allow the air to fill your belly and notice how it passes over your chest. One of the goals of boxed square breathing is to bring the respiratory system back into alignment and end the shallow breathing that results from the fight or flight response mode the body enters when feeling stressed.

While the environment can help to add to your relaxed state, it is not imperative. If there are other people around and you cannot find a private, quiet place, this exercise can be performed quietly with your eyes open. Repeat your mantra and counting to yourself and no one will even notice that you are performing a stress-reduction exercise.

Helping Hand

2. Read the following to your pupils;

'It is important to help others. But what about if we need help? Sometimes when we feel certain emotions, trying to manage them on our own isn't enough.'

'Although we can do some of the things we have learnt in school, sometimes we need other people's help to feel our very best.'

'Who would you ask for help?'

'Why do you think you would need to ask for help? Do you feel scared a lot, or angry a lot, or sad a lot?'

'What would you say to the person you were asking for help?'

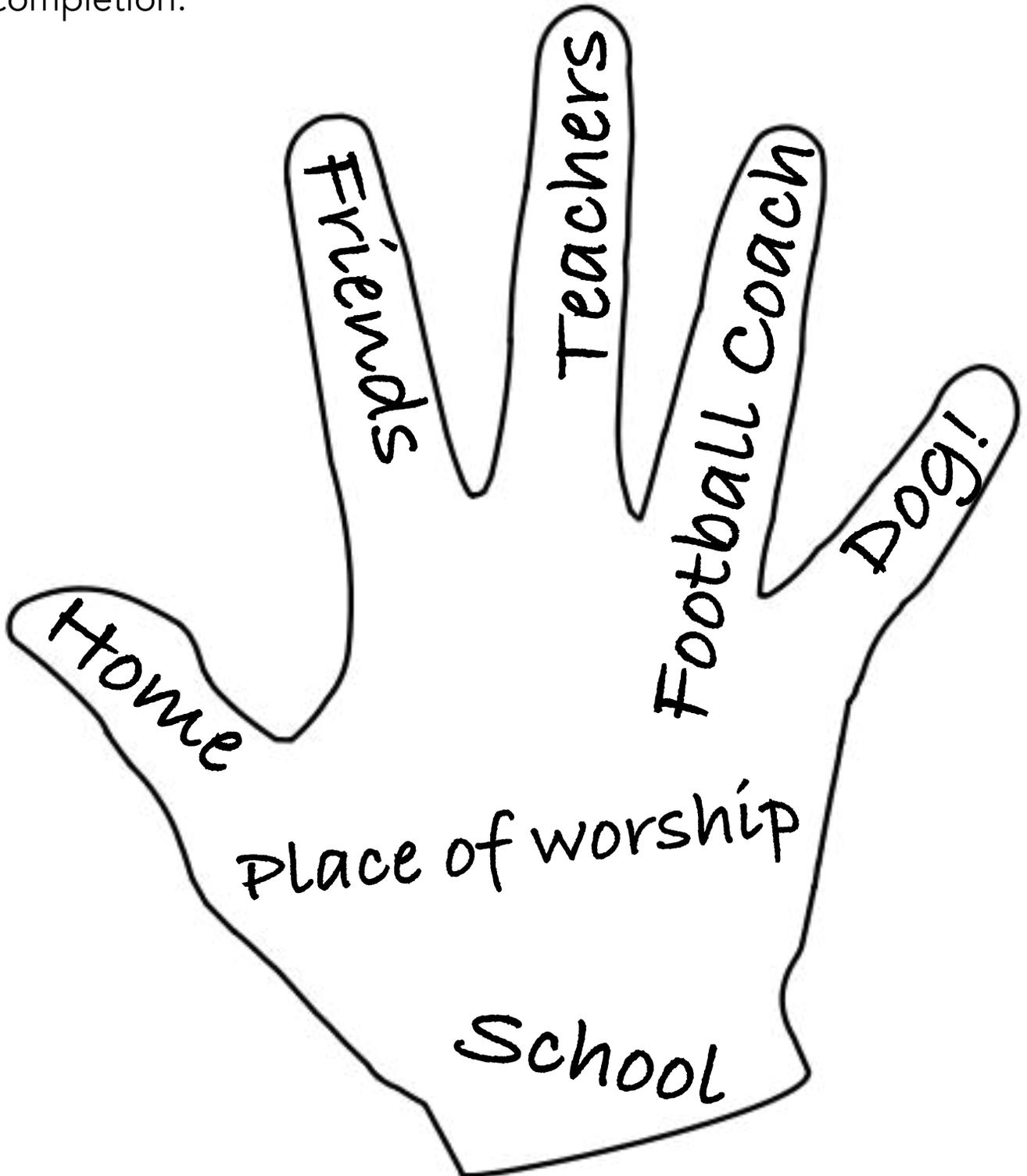
You can print off the helping hand worksheet for the children and ask them to write down who or what would make them feel better, or where they would go to feel better.

Some children might say they would feel safe in their room, or with their parents, for others it may be their place of worship or their pet. Let them think of where their safe place is, or who their friends are.

The activity is explained on the following page.

Helping Hand

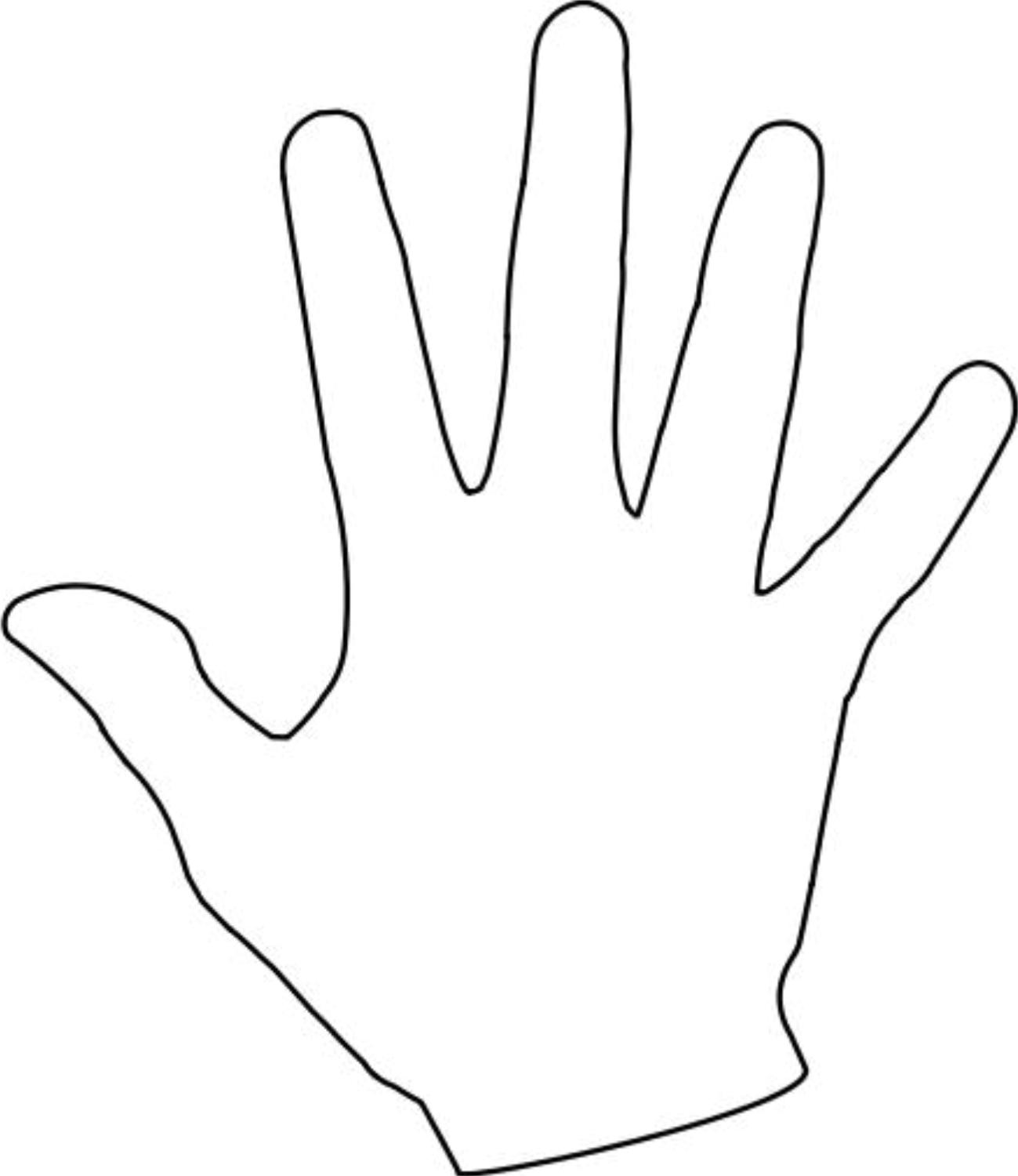
Below is the example of a completed network drawing, this should provide prompts for you as a facilitator related to completion.



Helping Hand

Below please draw round your own hand. On each of your fingers and the palm of your hand write down the things, people and places that help you. Think about those things that help you most when you're feeling sad or down.

Helping Hand



Building your Toolkit

Why do we need to know more than one strategy for self management? This quote will provide insight into this;

'If the only tool in your toolkit is a hammer, you'll treat everything as a nail.'

Abraham Maslow

You should now explain each of the activities in turn to your pupils and ask them which they prefer and which they think would work best for them.

Virtual Twin

This activity can be a really useful way to helping young people to remove negative thoughts and barriers in their own thinking.

In this activity we are going to think about being happy specifically but you can use it for other problems and scenarios so please feel free to use it in other situations.

3. Ask your pupils to imagine that they have an identical twin. Tell them that their twin is their best friend, is always looking out for them and always wants what is best for them.

Now tell your pupils to imagine that they are this twin, they should give this twin a name and an identity. They are now playing the role of their own twin.

Your pupils are now going to be asked to give themselves some advice as their twin. The advice we want them to give to themselves is advice and guidance related to being happy.

Encourage your pupils to be as frank and honest in their advice and guidance as possible.

Some questions you may want to include in discussion:

- What would you tell yourself to stop worrying about?
- What would you tell yourself to start doing?
- What would you tell yourself to stop doing?
- What would you tell yourself that you are good at?

Three Senses

This is a simple activity which can be helpful when young people are experiencing a stressful situation or feel overwhelmed. It's very quick to complete and can be done anywhere. It is an example of a 'Grounding' technique.

The activity simply asks young people to notice what you are experiencing right now through three senses – sound, touch, sight.

It is useful as by practicing really focusing on each of these senses in a methodical manner you have no choice but to clear your mind and be present.

To complete this activity run through it slowly with young people several times so they can practice the exercise and remember each of the steps.

4. Ask your pupils to take a few slow breaths, it is also helpful if they close their eyes to help their focus on the first and second senses.

Guide your pupils initially by asking the following questions to them:

Three Senses

- What are three things I can hear? (e.g. clock on the wall, car going by, music in the next room, my breath)
- What are three things I can feel? (e.g. the chair under me, the floor under my feet, my phone in my pocket)

Now ask your pupils to open their eyes and ask this final question;

'What are three things you can see?'

Distraction

If we are feeling negative emotions and our thoughts and worries are going around and around in our heads, we can distract ourselves so that our brains stop focusing on the negative thoughts.

5. Ask the class to answer the following questions in their heads as a way of practicing distraction – they can look around the room but ask them not to confer with each other regarding their responses.

- Think of 3 things that are round.
- Think of 2 things that rhyme with 'door'.
- Find 3 things beginning with 'D'.
- Find 2 things that are orange.
- Think of 3 words that end in 'Y'.
- Remember what you had for dinner yesterday.
- Think of what hot chocolate smells like.
- Think of 9 things that are hot.
- Think of a song that you like – do you know all the words?
- Think of 5 things you might find on a beach.
- Find 4 things that are red.
- Think about a TV show that you like – how many characters can you name?
- Think of 15 things you would find in your bedroom.

It is a game you can play in your head to take your mind off things when you need a break or to spend some time looking after yourself.

Positive Self Talk

If we are feeling negatively about ourselves interrupting these thoughts can be really helpful. These negative thoughts are almost always 'Beliefs' rather than facts.

By talking positively to ourselves we can interrupt these negative thoughts and start to feel better, you can think about it as an old fashioned 'Pep Talk' something everyone has used at some point.

6. Ask the class to answer the following questions in their heads as a way of practicing positive self talk.

3 - Positive things about me.

2 - Positive things other people would say about me.

1 - Positive thing I've done today.

Reinforce to your pupils that the 3,2,1 approach is something we can use whenever we are feeling down and negative about ourselves.

It is a game you can play in your head to take your mind off things when you need a break or to spend some time looking after yourself.

Prioritising

Sometimes when we are faced with difficult feelings or situations we can become 'stuck' because we are worrying about the whole issue which may include things we can't necessarily change right now or maybe we can't change them at all.

This strategy uses a simple three step structure to help us change the way we are thinking about the issue we are facing, the three steps to practice and keep in our heads are:

1. What can I do immediately about the issue or feeling? (often this is about changing how we think about the issue or feeling or we may be able to use another skill we have learnt to help manage it)
2. What can wait? (are there things that I don't need to worry about right now? Am I wasting energy on things I don't have to deal with right now?)
3. What can't I change? (are we worrying about things that we realistically can't change or have little ability to change)

What's in my Toolkit?

Skills I Have Learnt	How I Like to Manage Things	What else do I think would help me?
e.g. helping hand, box breathing, who I can talk to, who I can ask for help	e.g. talking about my feelings, taking my mind of things through sports or hobbies	e.g. record anything else you would like in your toolkit