family action

Building stronger families

Lincolnshire BOSS

Toolkit for Regulation

Maintaining Positive Behaviours in the Classroom

RESTORATIVE SOLUTIONS

reducing harm, resolving conflict

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Introduction video

For a description of the arousal curve [1] and the four stages of behaviour, as well as an overview of how to use this toolkit please access the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe5DVJCYBjw&t=18s

Skills practice videos KS1

Tucker Turtle [2]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9K1DLT_J14&t=146s

Star breathing – long version

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeR5ZGECj7o&t=171s

Star breathing – short version

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt89cm3BDn8&t=14s

Square breathing – long version

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJF-FIVtVyQ&t=5s

Square breathing – short version

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwAvr0hNAX8

Skills practice videos KS2

How the brain responds to anxiety

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1cwFV-dJwg&t=98s

Star breathing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JPoEl6-R3c&t=45s

Green stage

While children are in the green stage they are functioning from their cortex - they can think ahead and reason. We can help them to stay in the green stage by threading regulating exercises throughout the day in between cognitive tasks.

Some examples are as follows:

- Movement exercises
  - *Running on the spot*
  - *Star jumps*
  - *Marching on the spot*
  - *Balancing on one leg*
  - *Chair press ups*
  - *Desk push ups*
  - *Gorilla dance*
  - *Play copy me. Follow a sequence e.g. touch your head, stamp your feet and jump*
  - *Red light Green light. Name a movement (do it on the spot)–go on green, stop on red*
  - *Be popcorn popping, straight spaghetti, cooked spaghetti, jelly on a plate, peas boiling in a pan, melting chocolate.*

- Rhythmic activities
  - *Tapping a pattern on the desk*
  - *Create a clapping pattern for children to copy*
  - *Stamping*
  - *Singing*

- ABC around the room. Spot things that you can see around the room. See if you can get all through the alphabet
- Lazy eights - draw horizontal number eights in the air with your hands- this activates the brain and improves connection between hemispheres and eye muscle coordination
- Zoom-erk. Pass the word zoom from one child to the next (verbally), when a child says 'erk', the zoom reverses and goes the opposite way
- Simon says - movements and facial expressions to practice understanding emotions
- Pushing palms together to release muscle tension
- Practice positive self-talk i.e. affirmations
- Use the skills practice videos
- Mindful yoga

  Do the following yoga poses and say the corresponding phrases as you hold the position:

  - *Warrior pose: 'I am powerful'*
  - *Tree pose: 'I am strong'*
  - *Chair pose: 'I am aware'*
  - *Downward-facing dog pose: 'I am kind'*
  - *Hero pose: 'I am worthy'*

Tree in the Wind [3]

Stand with your children – make sure everyone can stretch out their arms without bumping someone else!
Read out the following directions (and follow them yourself, to enjoy a moment of calm too):

1. Please stand nice and straight with your feet placed apart (about as far apart as the width of your shoulders) and bend your knees a little bit. Relax your arms at your sides, letting them hang down.

2. Close your eyes, or, you can just keep your eyes lowered and look softly toward the floor.

3. Be sure to stay standing on the same spot, and to feel your feet planted onto the ground, just like the roots of a tree. Imagine you have roots growing down into the ground, standing firm.

4. Now find the centre of your body (centre of gravity) – you might feel this just below your belly button. Breathe nice slow, deep breaths and imagine your breath going down to your centre.

5. Feel your feet (roots) connecting you to the earth.

6. Breathe into your belly, and as you breathe out, imagine your roots digging deeper and deeper into the soil. Let your roots tunnel down through soil and stones and become strong. Your roots keep you balanced and steady. Your legs are like the trunk of a tree supported by your roots.

7. As you breathe in, imagine energy coming up through your roots and trunk and up into your arms. Slowly lift up your arms like branches and then, as you breathe out, send the energy into your arms and fingertips to grow branches and leaves. Breathe in the energy from your roots, and breathe out to send the energy to feed your branches and leaves. Let the branches grow and spread – some may be thick and strong, others more delicate. Wiggle your fingers and feel your leaves moving in the wind.

8. Let the leaves and branches reach up to the sun. Imagine the sun's energy coming in from above, and then the energy coming up from the soil below. Feel nourished and refreshed. Let the energy flow.

9. On your firm roots deep in the ground, begin to sway like a tree in the wind. Gently wave your arms from side to side, and forwards and backwards, while you keep taking deep breaths.

10. Now, imagine the wind has stopped. Be still and come back to your centre – your standing tree.

11. Slowly draw your roots and your branches back into your body – bring your arms slowly back in toward your sides. Stand still for a few moments, breathing and feeling calm.

12. Finally, open your eyes and gently 'shake loose'. Begin to lift up each foot, bounce a few times gently on your feet and shake your hands and arms.

Variation

This exercise can also be done sitting down. Imagine the roots coming from the base of the body and sitting bones.

The Energy Within [3]

1. Stand with your children, spaced apart.

2. Ask your children to shake their bodies – starting with their hands, then their arms, legs, torso, head. Shake all parts of the body. (You can join in too!)

3. Next, start walking on the spot, running on the spot, and then running as fast as you can on the spot for at least one minute, to get everyone's heart rate up.

4. Next, tell everyone to stand very still.

5. Ask your children what's happening in their bodies.
Can they feel their heart beating? Do they notice tingles in their belly, legs or arms? Is there heat in their body? Tell them **'This is your energy. Your energy within.'** This feeling might seem similar to when they're very excited. Sometimes when we're excited, we might find it hard to calm down. In these situations, it can help to remember that our energy can also be still and calm.

6. Now (either standing or lying down) ask everyone to close their eyes and think of the floor. The floor is steady. It doesn't move and it keeps us safe. Can your children think of someone who helps them feel safe and steady? Ask them to use their energy within to feel that love and support now.

7. Next, ask the children to open their eyes slowly, gently moving their fingers, their shoulders, their heads from side to side and returning to 'normal'.

Amber stage

In the Amber stage you can increase the frequency of strategies from the green stage as well as adding in some of these.

- Butterfly hug: direct the children to cross their arms in front of them, holding the left shoulder with the right hand, and the right shoulder with the left hand. Direct the children to breath in and out for a few short breaths. Ask the children to pretend their hands are butterfly wings, and gently flap them against their shoulders. You can set a number of 'flaps' and count together as you do it
- Self-cuddle: children who need sensory feedback can give themselves a cuddle by wrapping their arms across their body and squeezing tightly. The adult can do this at the same time commenting "I'm so sorry I cannot give you a cuddle at this time. You cuddle yourself and I'll cuddle myself, we will do it together"
- Drinking milk or water through a straw can be calming and regulating
- Eating something crunchy (i.e. carrot, apple) that requires effort
- Loud empathy - breathe loudly as you are practicing breathing exercises – this can encourage the child to mirror your breaths and calm down without being told to
- Count the colours - how many yellow things can you see? How many yellow things can you imagine?
- Quick fire question - what's your favourite thing to do and why?
- Playdough to squash and squeeze - giving the child something tactile to manipulate can be regulating
- Resistance bands e.g. on chair legs
- Have small bags of Lego (7-10 pieces) - allow a few minutes to build
- Calming colouring/drawing
- Ripping paper or popping bubble wrap

Eye Movement Integration exercise: This approach is based on the theory that eye movements activates different parts of the brain. When a child becomes anxious, distressed or agitated, you can hold up a pen and ask the child to follow the pen with their eyes. As the child follows the movements of the pen with his eyes, different parts of the brain will be activated, and the child will start to calm down.

Grounding Exercises

- 5 things that you can see
  4 things you can hear
  3 things you can touch
  2 things you can smell
  1 thing I don't know about you

- 5 colours you can see
  4 shapes you can see
  3 smooth things you can see
  2 people you can see
  1 book you can see

- 5 things you like to eat
  4 things you like to smell
  3 things you like to touch
  2 things you like to do
  1 thing you're looking forward to today

- 5 star jumps
  4 jumping jacks
  3 claps
  2 high steps
  1 self-hug

Visualisation

Pretend that you have just baked some delicious cookies
I wonder what flavour you have chosen?
Now pretend to put your oven gloves on (safety first!)
Open the oven
Take a deep breath in through your nose-they smell delicious!
They smell sooooo good don't they
Bur they are too hot to eat, you need to blow them cool
Smell the cookies, blow them cool (repeat several times)

Read this slowly, ensure the children know not to answer the questions until the discussion at the end.

Imagine that you are getting a cake out of the fridge
Think about the weight of the plate as you lift it out-careful!
Is the plate hot or cold, how does it feel on your fingers?
Can you feel the muscles in your arms working?
Is it a heavy cake or is it light?
I wonder what your cake looks like!
I wonder what it smells like
What is happening in your mouth?
You take a bite and chew it slowly
What does your cake taste like?
How do you feel while you are eating it?

Lemons [4]

(this exercise releases muscle tension)

Reach up to the tree and pick a lemon with each hand.
Squeeze the lemons hard to get all the juice out – squeeze, squeeze, squeeze.
Throw the lemons on the floor and relax your hands.

Then repeat, until you have enough juice for a glass of lemonade!
After your last squeeze and throw, shake out your hands to relax!

Feather/Statue [4]

(this exercise releases muscle tension)

Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for about ten seconds.

- Suddenly you freeze and transform into a statue. Don't move!
- Then slowly relax as you transform back into the floating feather again.
- Repeat, making sure to finish as a floaty feather in a relaxed state.

Turtle [4]

(this exercise releases muscle tension)

Pretend you are a turtle going for a slow, relaxed turtle walk (on the spot).

- Oh no, it's started to rain!
- Curl up tight under your shell for about ten seconds.
- The sun's out again, so come out of your shell and return to your relaxing walk.
- Repeat a few times, making sure to finish with a walk so that your body is relaxed.

Red stage

In the Red stage the child is no longer operating from the thinking cortex but from their limbic brain. This is the emotional part of the brain which is focused on survival-fight, flight, freeze, flop. They are only aware of the next 3 seconds.

- Reduce words used - 'stay with the silence for longer than is comfortable' - Louise M Bomber
- Planned ignoring where possible
- Use of distraction
- Humour
- Pause between sentences - the child will need longer to process things when functioning from this part of the brain
- Do not respond to insults
- Do not warn about consequences
- Stand sideways, so as to look less threatening
- Avoid folding arms
- Keep voice low and calm
- Be empathetic 'I hear you', 'I'm here with you'
- Listen
- Wait
- Change of adult
- Limit the amount of adults involved, and avoid standing and talking to other adults supporting you - the child will see it as criticism
- Removal to alternative, quieter room
- Allow to run outside - if safe follow from a distance
- Validate feelings - I know this is a big ask…
- Identify the child's feelings and wants/needs - I wonder if you are feeling…
- Identify points of agreement

Blue stage

In the Blue stage we need to support the child to settle and regulate. We need to be careful that our actions do not escalate the situation again. Remembering Bruce Perry's words can help – Regulate, Relate, Reason.

Regulate - in this stage we are concentrating on de-escalation, so this relates to the red stage
The blue stage focuses on relate and reason as follows
Relate - our relationship with the child is what is going to help them to calm and stay calm. Talking too much can be a trigger so using as few words as possible supports regulation. You may sit and do something that you know the child enjoys such as reading, colouring, or Lego. Doing this quietly can be regulating; let the child join in in their own time and keep words to the minimum.
Reason - When you feel the child is regulated and has had long enough at the relating stage you can talk about what happened.
Keep the discussion short and to the point e.g. 'We don't hit' 'We don't use unkind words' etc., can be enough. If we labour the point we risk escalating behaviours again.
Remember a tent is only a useful resource if supported by a nurturing adult. The person is the safe space, not the tent.

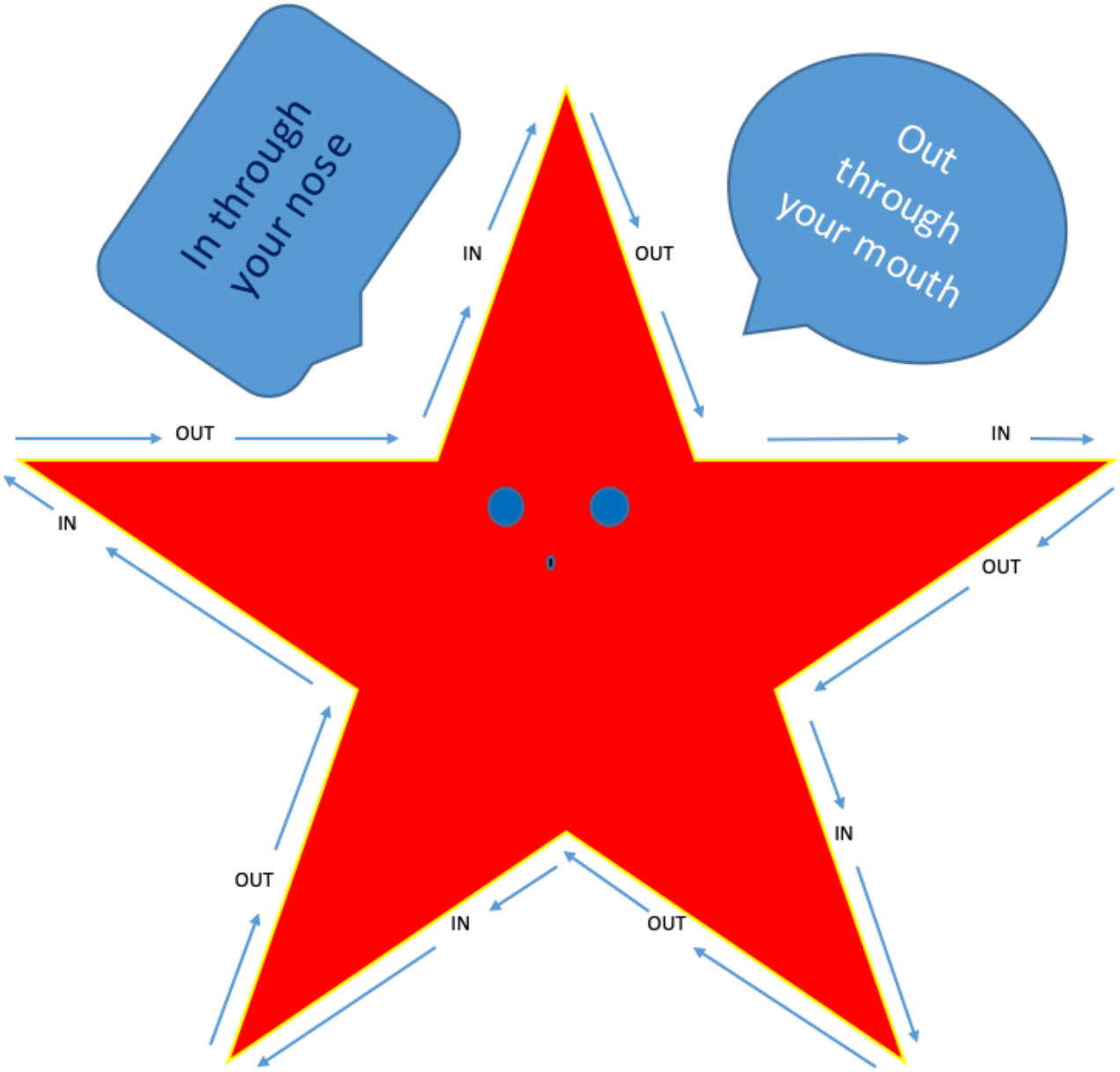
We can introduce grounding techniques to refocus the child and bring him back to the present.

Ask the child to state simple facts:

My name is
I am in
The season is
The weather is
I am wearing

It is ok to allow the child time to read/colour/build for quite some time as they make their way back to the green state. It can take a couple of days for some children to fully return to a wholly regulated state so it is worth investing in effective calming.

Star breathing sheet



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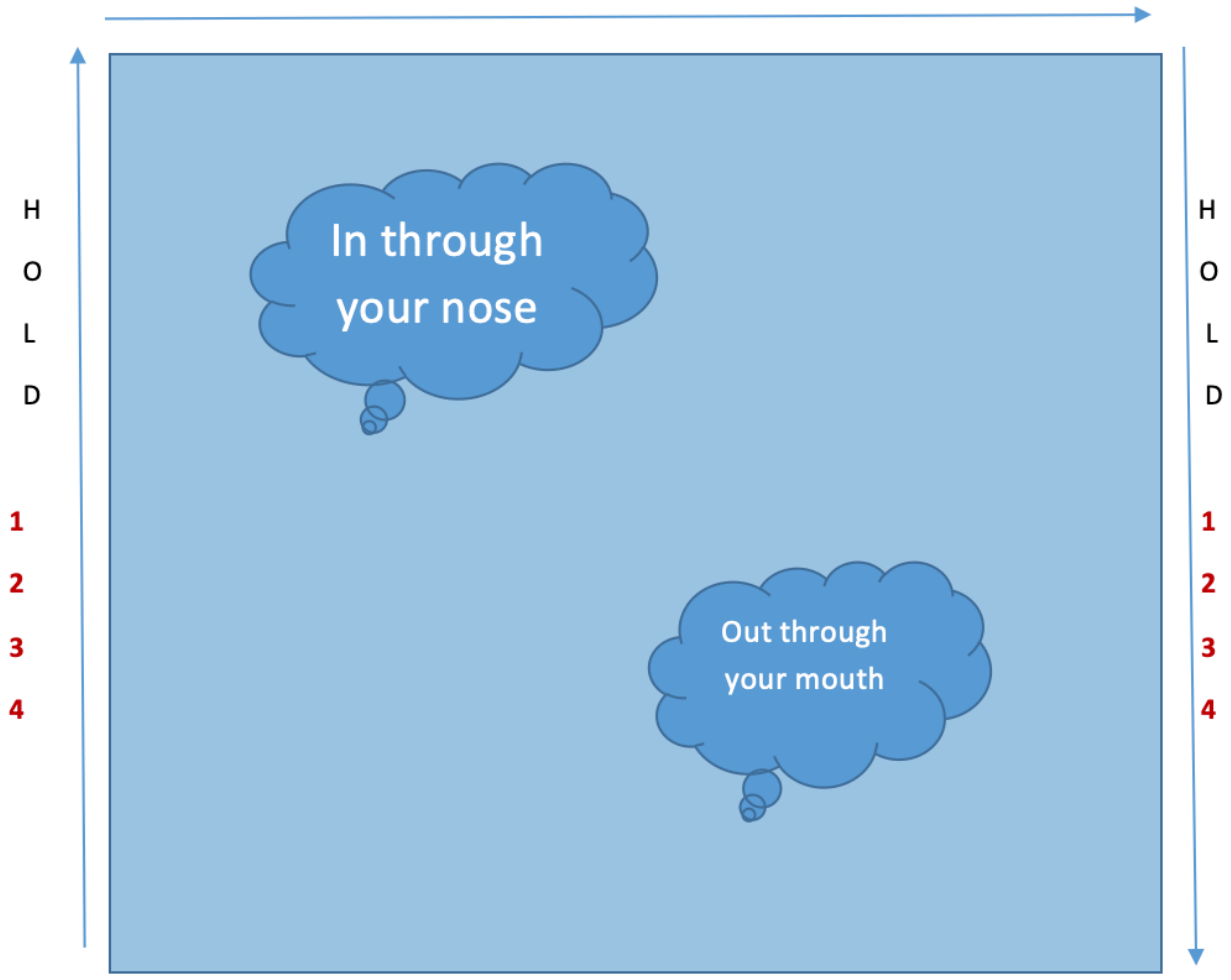
Square breathing sheet

IN **1-2-3-4**



OUT **1-2-3-4**

*This exercise can be adapted dependant on age/ability of children. Very young children may not find it easy to hold for four.

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References

The following resources are not owned by Family Action and have been sourced from:

(1) The Arousal Curve
By The Challenging Behaviour Foundation
https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/
https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/learning-disability-files/02---Finding-the-Causes-of-Challenging-Behaviour-Part-2-web.pdf

(2) Tucker Turtle
By Rochelle Lentini, University of South Florida, Updated 2007

(3) The Tree in the Wind
The energy within
By World vision https://www.worldvision.org.uk/
https://assets.worldvision.org.uk/files/1715/9007/2284/WorldVision_KidsActivity_EmotionalWellbeing.pdf

(4) Lemons
Feather/Statues
Turtle
By Save the Children https://www.savethechildren.org/
https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/emergency-response/stress-busters-from-our-heart-program.pdf

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