



families are at the heart of us ●



# Parent / Carer Resource

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# Introduction



## WELCOME!

This resource has been prepared by **CFF** to support you – the parents and carers of Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland – with your approach to parenting across six important topics:

Communication  
Positive Relationships  
Boundaries  
Optimism  
Self-esteem  
Positive Choices

Each topic follows our **KUBA approach** to give you information, tips, and practical strategies you can use to help support your child's development, and mental wellbeing. This guidance is universal regardless of your child's age, so 5 or 15-years-old we hope you and your child learn something new.

To get the most out of this resource, read through each topic in order, stay focused and try to apply what you have learned before moving onto another topic. You will be amazed at how fast changes can be made when applied consistently and with love. If you are having trouble with a topic, for whatever reason, take a break and pick up where you left off later once things have settled.



If you are reading this guide on a computer, tablet, or phone, look out for this icon. Clicking on it takes you to our website where you can download and print additional materials / resources as indicated in the topic.



If you ever get lost in this guide, just click on this icon in the top right-hand corner of each page and you will be brought back to the contents page.

If you feel your child may need more specialist support, please feel free to reach out to us or your school who may be able to offer more specific guidance and advice.

## Who are CFF?

**CFF (Centre for Fun and Families Ltd)** is a leading registered charity delivering specialist parent and family support through the delivery of group work programmes based on **Social Learning Theory**. We are a local, grassroots organisation that has developed its products through the voice of the families we work with. CFF group work programmes are evidence-based, which means that independent research has been carried out and clearly demonstrates that parents who attend a group will experience change as opposed to parents who do not receive the service. CFF has a 30-year track record of working collaboratively with families and partner agencies across Leicester City, Leicestershire County and Rutland. Over these 30 years, our core mission has remained unchanged:

# Empowering Families by Building on their Strengths

Since 2017, we have also worked with partner organisations to deliver support to over 300 schools across the City and County as part of the **Route to Resilience** programme (through which you are receiving this resource), and are currently commissioned by the NHS to deliver group work programmes within the **Early Intervention Service** (support to young people with low to moderate mental health problems).

Feedback from young people and their families is consistently excellent across all programmes: reducing isolation, improving life chances, and putting the fun back into family life. We are a national training provider of parenting group work for professionals. Locally, our work with families is highly regarded by partners, local authorities, and the NHS.

We can be reached at:

**Website:** <https://www.cffcharity.org.uk/>

**Email:** [centre@cffcharity.org.uk](mailto:centre@cffcharity.org.uk)

**Telephone:** (0116) 223 4254

## What is Social Learning Theory?

The basic assumption of Social Learning Theory is that many behaviours are learned and therefore can be changed by altering certain things in the environment before and / or after the behaviour has happened. Social Learning Theory provides us with a greater choice and level of control over our affairs. It enables people to recognise the way other people influence them. Then, if they have some objection, the knowledge provides a way of countering such control. The theory is scientific and like the theory of gravity it applies universally without bias or prejudice regarding race, gender, disability, sexuality. Because it always sets behaviour in context, Social Learning Theory avoids labelling anybody as a 'problem'. It simply provides a means of identifying behaviours and the way they are maintained. It is for whoever uses these ideas to decide whether a given behaviour should be changed.

### References:

- Bandura, A. (1977) Social Learning Theory. Harlow. Pearson Education.
- Pavlov, I.P. (1927) Conditional Reflexes. New York. Oxford University Press.







## What is KUBA?

KUBA is an acronym and mnemonic strategy designed to help you understand and apply the content of this guide. Each topic follows a Know, Use, Build, Apply approach:

- KNOW** Includes information on why the topic is **important** for your child's development and mental wellbeing.
- USE** Provides suggestions on how to implement the learning from the topic using **existing opportunities** – consider them quick wins!
- BUILD** Provides suggestions on how to implement the learning from the topic using **new opportunities**.
- APPLY** Provides information on a **specific approach** within the topic for greater understanding and application.

Each section also includes a fun activity that you can try with your child to illustrate the key points of each topic and strengthen your relationship with them.



All the best in your parenting adventure!

**The CFF Team**

# Communication



## **KNOW how important communication is for your child.**

**Communication** is the act of passing meaning from one individual to another using mutually understood signs and symbols. For example, our language through speech or non-verbal indicators such as smiling etc.

From birth, warm, gentle, and responsive communication helps babies and children feel safe and secure in their worlds. It also builds and strengthens relationships between a child and their parents / carers. As your child gets older, they are dependent on the **communication skills** they have learned to manage and regulate their emotions – being capable of expressing themselves clearly and confidently in all aspects and areas of their life and future work. Good everyday communication and a strong relationship will make it easier for your child to talk about their worries and concerns.

## **USE touchpoints throughout the day to catch up with your child.**

Set aside time for talking and listening to each other by using your family's routine interactions to improve communication. For example, getting up in the morning, mealtimes, and car travel.

Even without communication, a regular routine of interactions can bring you and your child together by providing a sense of security and stability. In addition, children are influenced by what you do, so be a good example and use these interactions to model effective communication with other members of your household.

## **BUILD opportunities to communicate.**

### **My child is quiet during mealtimes etc.**

Consider whether they need some 1-2-1 time or more time to 'warm up' to having a conversation. Explore the use of tools to help support conversation such as conversation flash cards or creative / expressive arts such as self-serve food art.

### **My child does not like to speak to me face-to-face.**

Consider whether they have a preferred method of communication that could be used instead of a face-to-face conversation. For example, a text message conversation or social media interactions that, over time, can lead to more in-depth face-to-face communications.



## **We have no common ground.**

You and your child do not need common interests. What is important is that you can appreciate each other's interests. Be a good example and show sincere interest in an aspect of their life that they are passionate about. Explore their view by asking open questions.

## **APPLY the principles of effective communication.**

Effective communication is not just about exchanging information. It is about understanding the feelings behind the message. If we understand how people feel, we can build a bridge with them and they will react better to us. To be a good communicator we need a lot of different learned skills. As with any skill, the more effort and practice we put in, the easier and more natural our communication skills become. Remember the following principles of effective communication:

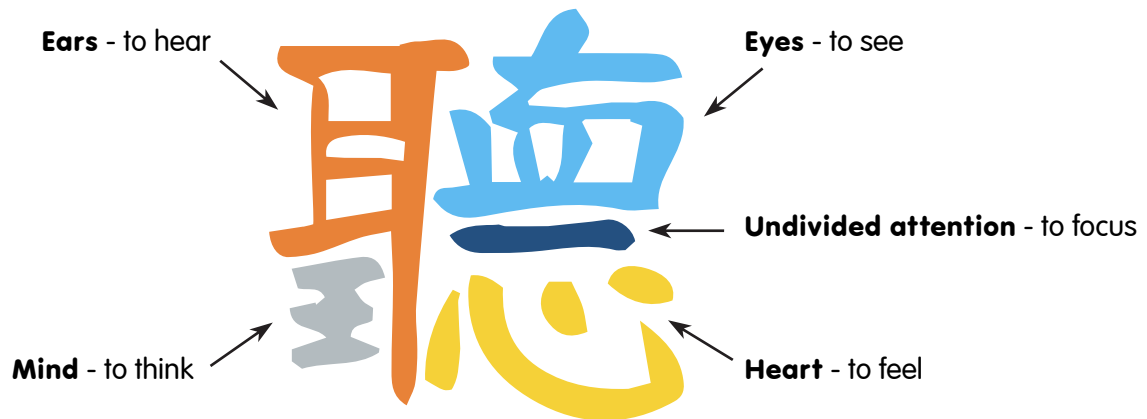
- **Use open questions.** An open question gives your child the opportunity to say more unlike a 'yes / no' question.
- **Give them the opportunity to opt-out.** Sometimes your child does not want to talk. Recognise these times and do not pressure them to talk or share information.
- **Share something of yourself.** A conversation is two-way process, but do not offload onto your child with your concerns or worries.
- **Validate their feelings.** Listen without judgment or criticism and instead show your child that you understand and empathise by reflecting their comments back.
- **Understand and take action when asked for help.** You may feel a need to solve their problems but wait for the invitation to offer advice or act.
- **Show trust and praise.** Volunteering information about themselves and their feelings is a privilege given in confidence. Do not share their information further without their consent and thank them for sharing.
- **Use non-verbal communication.** Look for and give non-verbal signals, for example tone of voice, eye contact, body signals etc. Remember that non-verbal cues can be misread and that your child's overall behaviour is more important than a single gesture or signal.





- **Actively listen.** The Chinese verb 'to listen' means:

"I give you my ears, my eyes, my undivided attention and my heart."



Be attentive, try not to interrupt, and take the time to understand what your child is saying. It is important to minimise distractions so make sure you are facing your child, making frequent eye contact, and have the sound on your mobile phones and / or television turned off.



# Activity



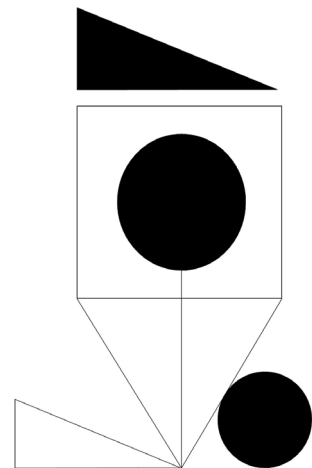
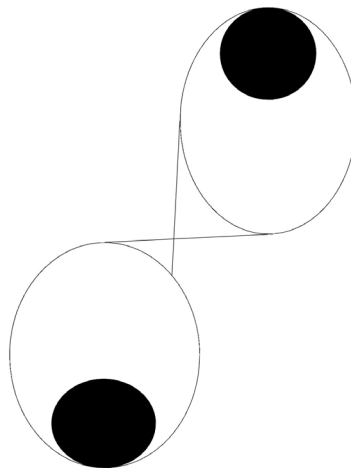
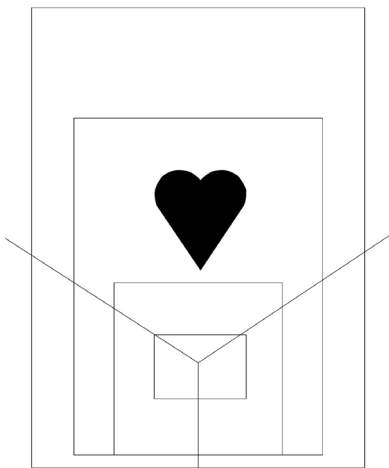
## BACK-TO-BACK DRAWING GAME

Sit back-to-back against your child and do not turn around. Decide who is going to be **A** and who is going to be **B**. **A** chooses a picture. They are the 'sender of the message' and their job is to accurately describe the picture to **B** so that **B** can draw the picture without looking at it. You have 3-minutes to describe and draw the picture. Once finished, swap over so that **B** chooses a picture to describe to **A**. During the second attempt have other members of the family try to distract the exercise.

Afterwards, have a conversation with your child about the activity and jointly answer the following questions:

- What made it difficult for the senders to give an accurate message?
- What made it difficult for the receivers to understand the message?
- How did the distractions get in the way of messages being sent and received?
- What could help improve the communication between you and your child?

Feel free to use the following pictures:



A4 versions of these pictures can be downloaded and printed from our website.

# Positive Relationships



## **KNOW** how important positive relationships are for your child.

A **relationship** is the way in which two or more people are connected. Our behaviours, attitudes and mental wellbeing are heavily influenced by our relationships. **Positive relationships** help us feel healthier, happier, and more satisfied with our lives.

As parents and carers, the relationship you have with your child is extremely important. There is lots written about **attachment theory**, but the essence is that, from birth, a child needs a consistent and sensitive relationship to ensure they develop a sense of worth and feel worthy of being loved. A child who is better attached is better able to manage their own feelings, behaviours, and ability to relate to others.

While your child is young, you are the most important figure in their world. Your approval, love and support are critical to your child, and much of what they do and say is aimed at maintaining that love and approval. As your child gets older, they will form and develop relationships with their peers and other adults. As your child's social and emotional maturity increases, they will assert their independence from you and start to place an increased reliance on these other relationships for approval, love, and support. The **quality** of these relationships is important and is dependent on two things that you can influence: (1) Your child's ability to form, develop and sustain relationships (i.e. their social skills); and (2) Your child's ability to identify, and set aside, an unhealthy relationship.

## **USE** your relationship with your child as an example.

A positive relationship consists of several things including mutual respect, understanding, patience, communication, trust, honesty, compromise, and safety. The single most important thing you can do for your child is to **model a positive relationship** through your relationship with them. This provides them with a foundation on which to build their own relationships with others.

As your child goes through adolescence (the teenage years) they will want to establish independence, and this can become a challenge if either of you start to view it as a **struggle for control**. As a parent you may feel rejected, hurt, or anxious about your child's new independence. Similarly, your child can feel angry or upset if they feel they are not getting enough independence. This can result in conflict. Know that your child still needs your guidance and support during adolescence, but achieving independence is an essential part of growing up. To become a capable adult, your child must learn to take on more responsibility, make decisions, work out their values, and form their own identity. Your child will take risks and make mistakes, your role is not to prevent them from doing this but to explore the situation with them, so they become learning opportunities.





## **BUILD opportunities to explore relationships.**

### **Have conversations about relationships.**

While your child is young, read story books to them that explore relationships. Talk to your school or local library about your child's reading list as there are lots of stories to choose from. After reading, ask discussion questions such as:

- What was the relationship between [character] and [character]?
- What characteristics did [character] have that made them a good friend?
- Was their relationship healthy or unhealthy? Why?
- What would you do in their situation?

As your child gets older, use other shared media, such as your favourite TV show, to explore relationships. Soaps are particularly useful in showcasing a range of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Consider using role play to bring the conversations to life.

### **Explore the characteristics of a healthy relationship.**

A positive healthy relationship is one with someone who:

- Is willing to compromise.
- Lets you feel comfortable being yourself.
- Can admit to being wrong.
- Tries to resolve arguments and conflict by talking honestly.
- Enables you to feel safe by being with them.
- Respects your feelings, opinions, and friends.

### **Understand your child's friendship group.**

Know your child's friends, what they mean to your child and the roles they play in their group. Invite your child's friends over to do something with your family. If you have a positive relationship with your child's friendship group, then you create a supportive network for all involved.





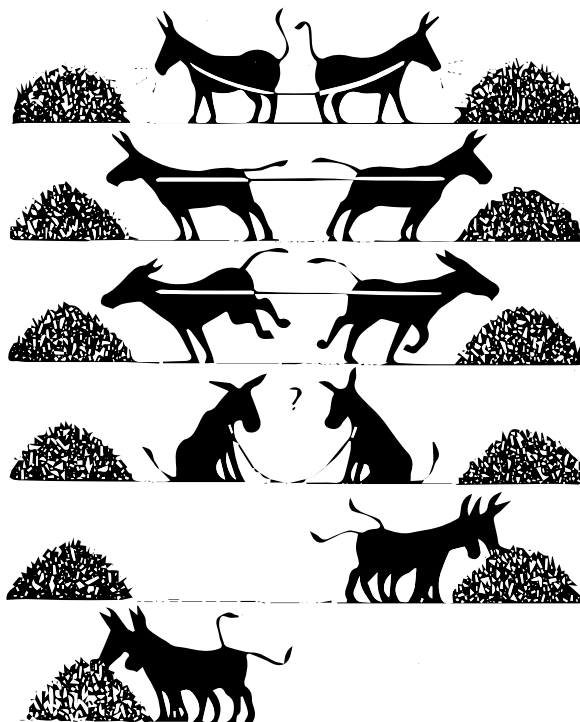
## Consider getting a pet.

Our relationships are not limited to humans. This might not be for everyone, but managed appropriately, a pet offers a lot of learning opportunities around positive relationships. It helps that a pet can offer a close and enduring bond without judgement or criticism.

## APPLY the principles of compromise.

The components of a positive relationship remain the same throughout this period. However, **compromise** and **negotiation** become particularly important as you and your child's relationship develops from dependent to independent.

### THE TALE OF TWO DONKEYS



**Step 1 Work out in clear language what each of you wants and say it / write it down.**

For example: "I want to stay out until I like." (Teenager) "I want you in at 9pm." (Parent)

**Step 2 Make sure you are clear about what each other wants to happen.**

For example: "I understand you want to stay out until you want, and I want you in at 9pm every night." The addition of "every night" is important in terms of clearness and expectations.

**Step 3 Negotiate and give and take until both of you are happy.**

For example, 9pm curfew on a school night and 11pm of a Friday / Saturday.

Remember, these steps may take time and not everything is up for negotiation.

# Activity



## RELATIONSHIP QUIZ

Strengthen your relationship by taking the following quiz to find out what you and your child know about each other's interests. Pick an item from the list below and say whether you think the other person:

Really dislikes it! | Does not like it | Is not bothered about it | Likes it | Loves it!

Find out whether you were right or wrong, then discuss:

- Why you gave your answer.
- Why they feel the way they do about it.

Once you have finished the activity, think about how many you got right. Were there any surprises?

### Items to discuss

- Food such as fast food, takeaways, certain meals or ingredients, healthy food etc.
- Entertainment such as TV shows, music, video games, books etc.
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat etc.
- Socialising such as parties, meals out, group sports, drinking etc.
- Creative activities such as drawing, writing, painting, crafting etc.
- Getting up early or staying out late.
- Weekday routines such as school and work etc.
- Holidays such as family holidays, Halloween, Christmas, birthdays etc.
- Anything else you can think of!



# Boundaries



## **KNOW how important boundaries are for your child.**

**Boundaries** are rules and limits that an individual creates to identify what they consider safe and reasonable behaviour for others to behave towards them. Boundaries are built out of a mixture of values, opinions, attitudes, past experiences, and social learning – so everyone and every family has different boundaries that they feel are appropriate to them.

While your child is young, you set boundaries for safe and reasonable behaviour on their behalf. For example: do not talk to strangers; look both ways before crossing roads; no television after dinnertime; in bed by 7pm etc. With clear and consistent boundaries, children feel more secure and develop life skills that include patience, problem-solving, resourcefulness, and responsibility. As your child gets older, they will start to assert their independence. Part of your teenage child's development is to test boundaries and push for you to expand them. Having a clear and consistent set of boundaries from childhood will provide your teenage child with an important and stable foundation on which to create their own boundaries that they will rely during this period of considerable change.

## **USE clear and consistent boundaries.**

Your parenting style will affect every aspect of your child. It is important to ensure your parenting style supports healthy growth and development. Where there is more than one care giver in the family or household (e.g. parents, grandparents, childcare etc.) it is important that boundaries are consistent.

### **CONSISTENT / PROVIDES CLEAR AND CONSISTENT BOUNDARIES AND SANCTIONS**

**Child trusts parents and is confident and secure.**

Boundaries and sanctions (consequences) are adapted appropriately to the child's age and maturity.

### **INCONSISTENT / REGULARLY CHANGES BOUNDARIES AND CONSEQUENCES**

**Child could feel confused, disrespectful (no trust), or manipulative.**

Parent may be easily persuaded ("just this once") or permissive ("kids will be kids").

### **CONSTRUCTING / FOCUSES ON OBEDIENCE AND PUNISHMENT OVER DISCIPLINE**

**Child could feel trapped and lacks self-confidence.**

Too many boundaries and no freedom or independence.

### **ABSENT / PROVIDES LITTLE GUIDANCE, NURTURING OR ATTENTION**

**Child could feel neglected, alone, and uncared for.**

Parent may not be around e.g. due to work, mental health problems, or alcohol / drugs etc.



## **BUILD opportunities to explore boundaries.**

While it is natural for your child to push the boundaries that are set, having clear and consistent boundaries teaches them that they have responsibilities to themselves and others, and that their actions have consequences. Problems can emerge during adolescence for several reasons including: boundaries aren't adapted appropriately to the child's age and maturity; new or adapted boundaries aren't negotiated with, or don't have input from, the child; or parents don't have a good justification for the boundary when asked "Why?".

Have frequent proactive conversations around adapting boundaries using the **GROW model** below. The outcome you want is for you and your child to incrementally test and alter boundaries, maintaining a balance between your responsibilities for their safety, and their growing independence.

### **GOAL**

What is the goal that you or your child is trying to achieve?

### **RISKS AND REALITY**

What are the risks and reality of the situation? What are your concerns? What can you change?

### **OPTIONS**

What are the options? What choices and solutions are available to you?

### **WAY FORWARD**

What is the way forward? Which option are you going to try and why? If the change works, reward your child. If the change does not work, return to the options stage.





## APPLY the boundaries top tips.

In addition to clear and consistent boundaries / discipline, and negotiating new boundaries using the GROW model, apply the following top tips:

- **Keep the promises you make to your child.** Your child needs to trust your words in relation to boundaries and consequences, keeping the promises you make to them will build their trust so they take you at your word.
- **Be gentle but firm.** Communicate clearly about boundaries and consequences in a gentle but firm manner, this will promote your child's feeling of safety and security.
- **Maintain your composure.** Remember, when you have lost control, your child has gained it. If you find yourself getting frustrated during a conversation about boundaries or consequences, maintain your composure and explain that you'd like to take some time to calm down, reflect on the situation and come back to it later on.
- **Praise your child.** Praise your child for behaving well (and in line with boundaries) instead of criticizing them for poor behaviour. Create opportunities to catch them being good to reinforce the message that good behaviour attracts positive attention.
- **Choose your battles.** If your child is struggling with several boundaries, focus on a smaller number of key ones in the short-term.





# Activity



## BOUNDARIES WORKSHEET

Complete this worksheet with your child and explore their answers with them. Use this as an opportunity to open the conversation to include the boundaries you have in place for them, and what their views are.

Boundaries are rules that tell us what we can and cannot do. There are three basic types of boundaries.

- RIGID** These are strict and do not change. You might not know why these are rules, but you do know that you must follow them.
- CLEAR** You understand these rules. Clear boundaries can change too. Some things that were out-of-bounds when you were younger might be okay now.
- FUZZY** These are “rules” that are not really rules at all. A fuzzy boundary might be one that says that anything goes. Or it might be a rule that is strict one day, but totally ignored the next day.

Here are some examples of boundaries. Write **R** for Rigid, **C** for Clear, or **F** for Fuzzy next to each.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| _____ “Beware of the Dog.” signs               | _____ “YOLO!” (You Only Live Once)               |
| _____ “Do your homework or no TV.”             | _____ “Always wear your seatbelt in a car.”      |
| _____ “Don’t stay out too late.”               | _____ “Stay off the grass!”                      |
| _____ Film age ratings (i.e. PG, 12A, 15, 18). | _____ “Don’t talk to strangers.”                 |
| _____ “Don’t eat before you swim.”             | _____ “Eat all your vegetables.”                 |
| _____ “No sweets before bedtime.”              | _____ “Put your coat on or you’ll catch a cold.” |

**What are your boundaries?**

**Does your family have any boundaries? Who sets them?**

**What kind of boundaries do you find the most frustrating – Rigid, Clear, or Fuzzy? Why?**



An A4 version of this worksheet can be downloaded and printed from our website.

# Optimism



## KNOW how important optimism is for your child.

**Optimism** is a mental attitude that reflects a hopefulness and confidence about the outcome of a given situation. A common expression used to convey optimism is:

**“Is the glass half empty or half full?”**

The purpose of the question is to show that a situation may be seen in different ways depending on an individual’s point of view. Whether someone is optimistic is part of their character. While your child is young, you and other members of your household play a large role in whether your child will be an optimistic person. There is a strong relationship between how optimistic you are, and how optimistic your child will be. As your child gets older, their level of optimism will be informed by their wider relationships, the community / society they live in, their economic situation, and their lived experiences.

Research shows that optimistic people are happier, have more positive emotions, fewer negative emotions, better relationships, better health (although there is a strong relationship here with their socio-economic situation), and are better able to cope with stress and take more direct action in the face of challenge.

Critics of optimism may call it complacency or unrealistic, but **healthy optimism** comes from being proactive and trying to ensure things turn out in line with the positive expectations that are held. **“The healthy optimist is the one who is brave enough to ride in a car but does wear a seatbelt.”**

## USE your optimism as an example.

Social learning theory is based on the notion that most human behaviour is learned through the observation (and modelling) of others’ behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions. One primary source of these experiences is in the context of your parent-child relationship, so it is important that you are optimistic.

Remember, being optimistic does not mean you ignore life’s stressors, or that you are naturally happier. It means that you have a more positive outlook despite the negative circumstances that can occur.





## **BUILD opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the positives.**

### **Positive thinking.**

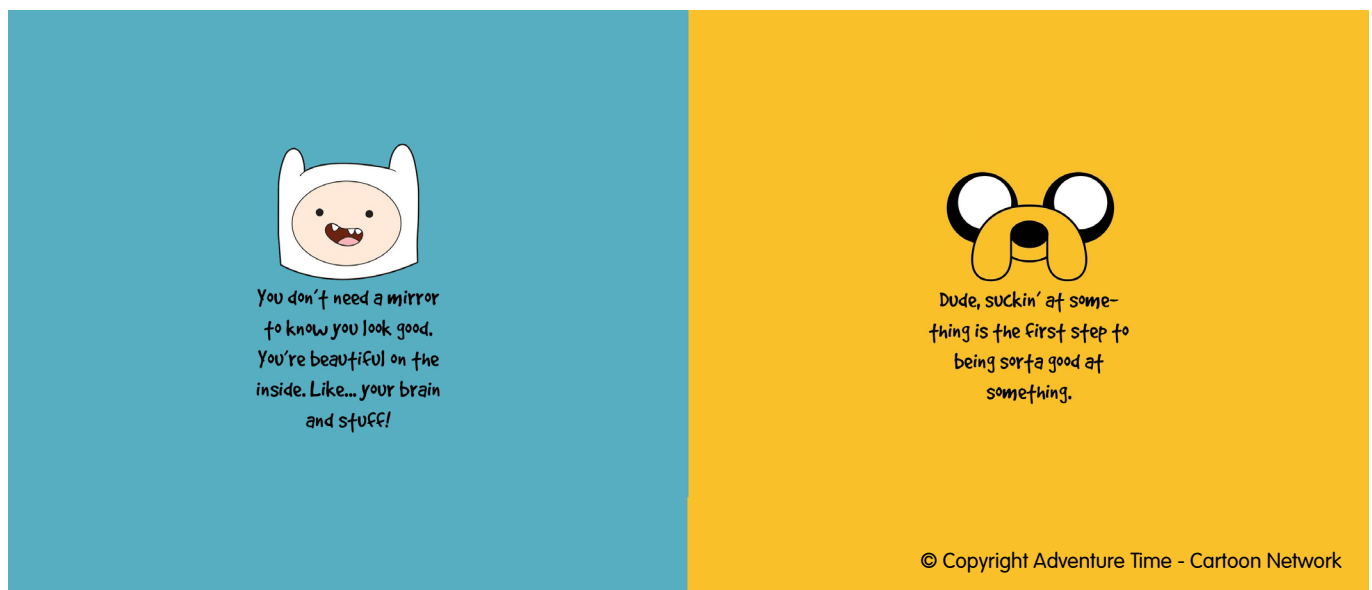
Talk with your child about what might happen / has happened throughout your day. Share excitement and focus on the things that brought joy. Try using the **“three good things” game** to reflect on your days where you each list three good things that happened (regardless of how large or small) and describe how they made you feel.

### **Focus on improvement.**

Getting better at things is a process and focus should be placed on improvement and perseverance, not the outcome. What your child may view as failure is a positive learning experience.

### **Family mantra.**

A mantra is a simple phrase that describes an intention you can use to motivate yourself. What phrase could be used that motivates you and your child during challenging times? Look to children’s books or TV show character catchphrases for inspiration.



### **Try new things.**

It is important to try new things, even scary ones, and talk with your child about the benefits of having an openness to new experiences. This could include trying new food, attending a new group, or going on a new ride at a theme park. Take pleasure from being open to new experiences and reflect on what has been learned. For example, “You might not have liked it, but well done for trying it.” Or “Next time we can try something else and maybe that will be your new favourite thing.”



## Thought watching.

If you can spot your child's negative thoughts, take some time to talk through their internal dialogue and encourage them to focus on positive messages instead.



Visit our website and watch our 'Thinking Trap' video series.

## APPLY optimism when things go wrong.

When things go wrong, or you find yourself dealing with their challenging behaviour, try to talk to your child in a way that offers interpretations of events and experiences that locate control, are specific, and allow for a different outcome next time.

For example:

- "That was a bad choice, but you are not a bad person." (not personal)
- "This isn't ideal but lots of other things are going well." (localised to the problem)
- "This is a blip. We can turn it around." (temporary)

Avoid:

- "This is your fault." (personal)
- "You always do this." (globalised)
- "You will always do this." (catastrophising)



# Activity



## STRENGTH SPOTTING

Complete this worksheet with your child and explore their answers with them. Use this as an opportunity to open the conversation to include optimism and the power of a positive mindset.

Choose whether you or your child is going to be **Person A**. (Swap roles after the first go.)

1. **Person A** talks about a recent personal experience e.g. something they are proud of and something they found challenging.
2. **Person B** listens and tries to spot **Person A's** character strengths, circling them below.
3. **Person B** feeds back strengths and evidence they heard to **Person A**.

Brave	Caring	Confident
Considerate	Creative	Determined
Fair	Forgiving	Fun
Generous	Grateful	Honest
Hopeful	Humble	Humorous
Intelligent	Kind	Loving
Modest	Persistent	Positive
Reliable	Resilient	Resourceful
Self-aware	Sensitive	Supportive



An A4 version of this worksheet can be downloaded and printed from our website.

# Self-esteem



## KNOW how important self-esteem is for your child.

"**Self-esteem** is the opinion we have of ourselves. When we have self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us better able to deal with life's ups and downs. When our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges that life throws at us." ([NHS, 2020](#))

Self-esteem and confidence are tied together. Self-esteem can start as early as babyhood and is borne from the consistent and sensitive relationship they have with their parents and carers (this is **attachment theory**). While your child is young, self-esteem comes from knowing that they are loved (unconditionally), spending quality time together, being encouraged to try new things (healthy risks) and being praised. As your child gets older, their experiences outside the home, in school, and with peers, become increasingly important in determining their level of self-esteem. This includes their school performance, friendship / relationships, physical and hormonal changes experienced during puberty etc. Those children with higher self-esteem will have an easier time managing their transition to adulthood.

If you are worried your child has low self-esteem that is affecting their day-to-day life, relationships, or ability to learn and develop, it is worth talking to your school or seeking help from your GP.

## USE positive, caring, loving and hopeful vocabulary.

The vocabulary your child hears about themselves from you and others translates into how they feel about themselves. Positive, caring, loving and hopeful vocabulary that can increase your child's self-esteem include:

- "I love you." (offered unconditionally)
- "I felt so proud when you ..."
- "You deserve it because ..."
- "I could see you were trying really hard."

Steer clear from harsh words and unhelpful comparisons that can be harmful to their self-esteem. For example: "Your brother / sister finds maths easy."





## **BUILD a set of praise cards for your child.**

Praise cards can be used as an added extra to verbal praise. They can help to raise your child's self-esteem and confidence by offering a tangible record of praise. Try to create a set of praise cards with a mixture of general praise and more specific praise. Praise cards can also be used as part of whatever reward / good behaviour scheme you have in place to reinforce positive behaviour and motivate your child. Some suggestions for your praise cards include:

- Thank you for listening to me.
- Thank you for tidying up.
- Thank you for helping to make dinner.
- Well done at school today.

You can also include cards to support other topics like communication and positive relationships. Leave them in hidden places to create nice surprises for your child:

- You have totally got this.
- You are all kinds of amazing.
- I love you.



Visit our website for our praise card template.



## **APPLY the principles of constructive praise.**

- **Praise the deed** – what they have done, rather than the person.
- **Praise the process** – the effort, rather than the outcome.
- **Make it mean something** – be specific and describe in detail what you find pleasing.
- **Do not qualify the praise** – say it straight with no jokes or put-downs that dilute its effect.
- **Be honest** – false or overpraise blurs a child's self-awareness and undermines trust.
- **Be spontaneous** – give praise straight away to their face so they can see your expression.
- **Do not forget physical ways to praise** – use smiles, touches, hugs, kisses as well as words.
- **Do not constantly move the goal posts** – let the child understand the landscape for praise.
- **Let your child "own" the success** – taking credit for their success is destructive.

# Activity



## RODNEY'S STORY

The following short story is one day in Rodney's life. Hold up a blank piece of paper and explain to your child that this paper represents Rodney's self-esteem. Give the blank piece of paper to your child and ask them to tear off a piece of paper when they think Rodney has his self-esteem knocked. Read through the following sections and pause at the breaks to talk with your child about how Rodney might be feeling. Change names and genders if you feel it would make the story more relatable for your child.

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Rodney is 12 years old.

"Rodney, get your backside out of bed this minute you lazy good-for nothing!" yells his father. Rodney is still tired and had fallen back to sleep (again) after switching off the alarm.

He gets out of bed, and realising he is desperate for the loo, dashes to the bathroom. Just as he is about to enter the bathroom, he is shoved out of the way by his older sister – "move Rodgers you loser, I'm going in there first" she states. Rodney complains that he is desperate, and will only be a minute, but his sister ignores his plea and slams the door shut on him.

Later, after finally getting in the bathroom, Rodney goes downstairs for his breakfast and once again, finds that his cornflakes have already been put out and the milk added. Sitting down he looks at the soggy offering and asks his father (who is reading a newspaper at the table as usual) if he can have something else instead as the cornflakes are too soggy. His dad yells at him, telling him that he is selfish and if he weren't so lazy and got up on time, then his cornflakes wouldn't be soggy – and anyway, did he think money grew on trees? So once again, Rodney eats another unappetising breakfast.

Rodney goes upstairs to get ready for school and cheers up when he remembers he had maths with Debbie – a girl he fancies. He decides to use some of his sister's hair gel and spike his hair to impress Debbie. While in the bathroom, he can hear his parents arguing and shouting at one-another downstairs and the only things he can clearly make out are 'money' and 'Rodney'. He thinks they are arguing again because of him.

As he leaves the bathroom with his new hair-do, he meets his mum on the landing (crying after another row with dad) and she takes one look at him before telling him that he looks stupid and he isn't going to school like that. He does not have time to wash his hair, so can only comb it flat, making it now look greasy.

He is heading out of the house when his mum yells that he has forgotten his packed lunch, telling him how useless he is as he cannot remember anything.



After grabbing his lunch, he bolts out the door to catch his school bus, but as he rounds the corner it's pulling off and his 'friends' are on the back seat laughing and sticking their fingers up at him. Rodney arrives at school half an hour late, runs straight into the head who promptly gives him a detention for tardiness. His first lesson is English and Rodney struggles with reading as he is dyslexic. He tries to creep in and heads to the back of the room, but his teacher spots him and after telling him off, makes him stand in front of the class and read a passage from a book they are covering. Rodney is embarrassed as he struggles with the words. He ends up being laughed at and called 'thicko' by his classmates.

Home time, Rodney has had another bad day, but is happy as Debbie smiled at him in maths and his friend gave him her number telling him she liked him, and he should call her. Rodney phones Debbie's number as soon as he gets home and says, "Hi Debbie, it's Rodney here". "Rodney who?" demands Debbie in response.

### **How do we build Rodney back up again?**



# Positive Choices



## KNOW how important positive choices are for your child.

Life is full of **choice**, the act of choosing between two or more possibilities. Sometimes these choices are small and simple (e.g. what to wear to work or school), sometimes these choices are larger, more complex and have far-reaching outcomes (e.g. whether to uproot your family's life in pursuit of a new job, or start a relationship etc.).

**Positive choices** are those choices, that when made, lead you to a positive, healthier, happier, or more satisfying life. Making a choice involves thinking skills, decision-making, and confidence / assertiveness. More specifically, the ability to weigh up the options in consideration of their consequences, make a choice, and follow-through with the corresponding action.

While your child is young, **decision-making** is one of the most important skills they need to develop to become a healthy and mature adult. Often as parents, we take our children's decisions out of their hands ("Don't do that, you could get hurt.") or artificially limit their choices, but teaching your children to make their own decisions has its benefits. When your child makes a good decision on the back of the knowledge that you have provided (e.g. choosing fruit instead of chocolate for their snack) they gain satisfaction and joy because they chose it. When your child makes a bad decision, they may get hurt by it (physically or emotionally) but they can learn from the experience and make better decisions in the future.

As your child gets older, their brain development makes them more likely to engage in risky behaviours and making negative choices. Your teenage child may lose some of their ability to plan ahead and work out consequences, their gut reaction to situations becomes more pronounced than forward planning, and they become susceptible to sensation seeking. This is a normal part of development and, in general, ends about age 20 to 25-years-old.





## **USE daily interactions to strengthen decision-making skills.**

Use the following framework in conversations with your child to help them think about options and consequences. This can be used in advance of making a choice but also retrospectively if they have made a choice that turned out poorly.

- 1) What is the situation?
- 2) What choices do I have?
- 3) What are the consequences for myself and others?
- 4) How do I feel about the situation?
- 5) Is there anything else I need to learn?
- 6) Do I need to ask for help? Who can I ask?
- 7) What is my decision? Is this the right decision?

## **BUILD opportunities to take healthy risks.**

Irrespective of age, some people are risk-takers, and some are not. Everyone has a different attitude towards what an acceptable level of risk is, and this differs depending on the risk area – financial, recreational, ethical, social, health and safety etc. This level is also influenced by various internal and external factors and varies over an individual's lifetime – think about how your attitude towards risk changed when you became a parent.

Taking risks is an important part of life as they can lead to new opportunities, demonstrate confidence, and inform future decision-making. Encouraging a child to take **healthy risks** helps them to develop their independence, self-control, and good judgement. Support your child to take risks where a success results in something new and positive (e.g. a new skill, friend, or admiration) and the consequences of failure are relatively small (e.g. they might not gain those things but they have not lost anything by trying). Some examples you could try with them are:

- New foods / recipes.
- Meeting new people.
- Starting a new hobby or sport.
- Experimenting with fashion.



## **APPLY the principles of an internal locus of control.**

Locus of control is the extent to which someone believes that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives – as opposed to external forces that are beyond their control. People with a strong internal locus of control believe that events in their life are borne out of their own choices and actions.

An internal locus of control is about responsibility. Your child won't have complete control over their life (some choices are limited by factors outside their control), but they do have control over their effort, attitude and ability to be proactive and make positive choices.

### **WHAT DOES INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL LOOKS LIKE IN A CHILD?**

#### **Does well in an exam**

They believe that it is, in part, due to their efforts, experience and hard work.

#### **Does not do well in an exam**

They reflect on their exam and see how they can improve for next time.

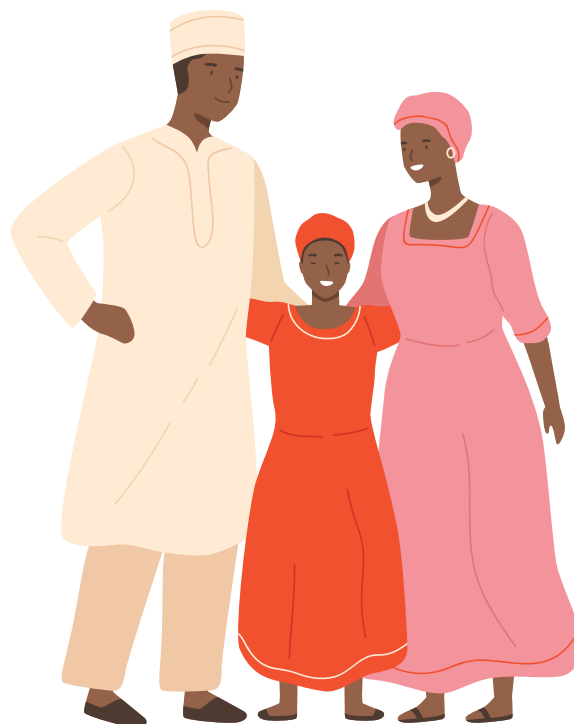
### **WHAT DOES EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL LOOKS LIKE IN A CHILD?**

#### **Does well in an exam**

They believe that it is because their teacher prepared them well or the exam was too easy.

#### **Does not do well in an exam**

They blame the teacher for not preparing them, or the exam for being too hard.  
They make no attempt to improve their outcomes for next time.





# Activity



## HOW MUCH OF A RISK-TAKER WERE YOU?

Consider the list of activities below and, if you feel comfortable doing so, share with your child about risky activities that you participated in as a child. Use this conversation to talk about experiences, what helped you shape your decision-making and how you make positive choices now.

- I stayed up / out later than I was allowed?
- I got into fights.
- I wore something that my parents / carers did not like?
- I experimented with sex, safe or unsafe.
- I smoked at school.
- I got drunk at a party.
- I lied to my parents / carers about where I had been?
- I watched an 18-rated film.
- I shoplifted.
- I rode a bike or drove a car recklessly.
- I told a lie for a friend.
- I joined in illegal activities to be accepted by a group of friends.
- I experimented with illegal drugs.
- I broke the school rules.
- I bullied another child.
- I damaged someone else's property.
- I ran away from home.
- I did something that was against my family's culture.



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