

ConnectEd

Mental Health Services for Schools

Children's Mental Health Week 2021

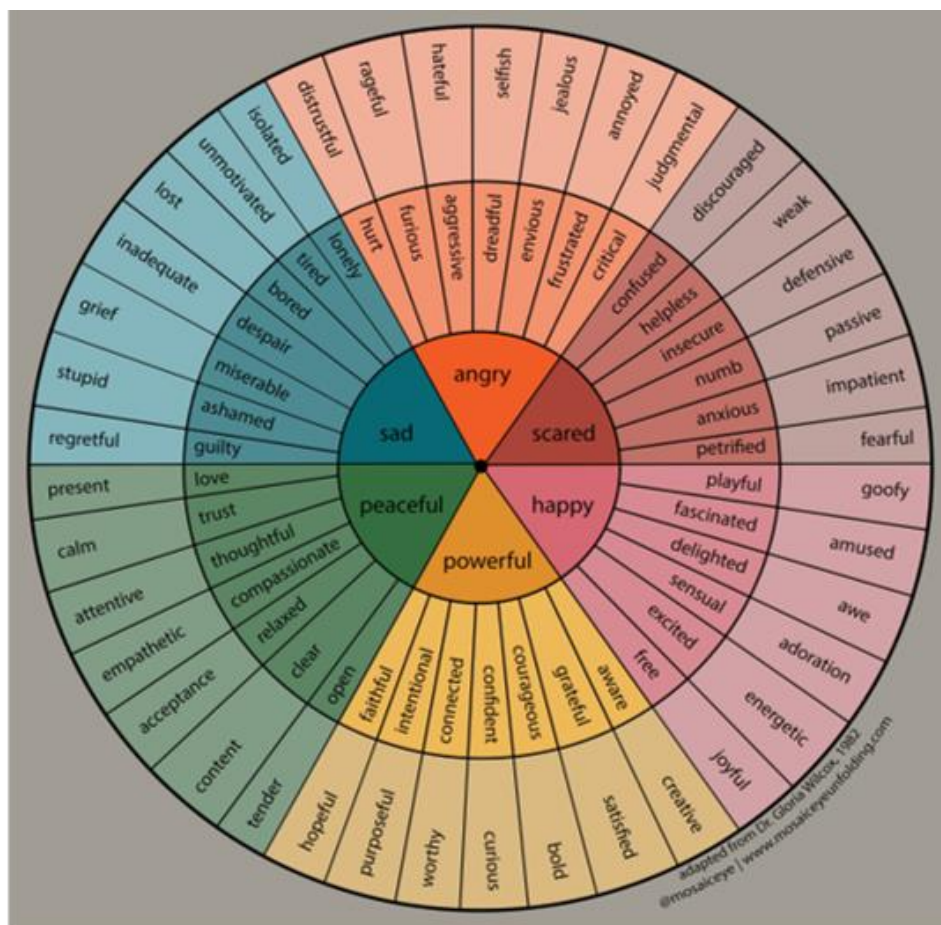
The importance of expressing our feelings and connecting with others to support good mental health

Introduction

This year we are promoting the importance of connection to our feelings, and to others, to support good mental health. As the pandemic continues it is vital that young people are able to name and express their feelings with someone they trust. These activities are aimed to help young people express and share their feelings in creative ways and can be delivered through remote teaching with minimal materials required.

Activity 1: Name it to tame it

When we can put our feelings into words it helps our brains connect the feeling we have in our bodies with what is happening in the outside world. Naming our feelings (even just to ourselves) is a proven way to feel calmer and more in control. Take a look at the feelings wheel and choose one that best describes how you are feeling:



Activity 2: Express yourself

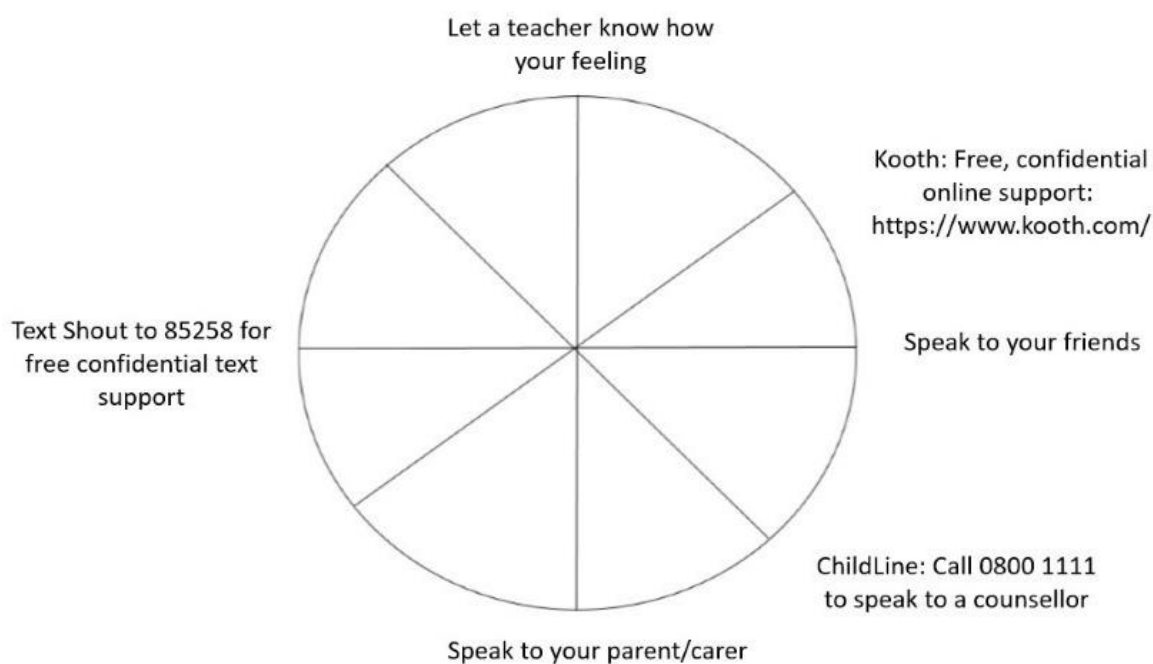
Materials needed: Paper and pen

Now that you have identified how you are feeling it is time to find a way to express it. You can listen to this piece of music <https://youtu.be/O-Bsy-nJnXo> and write or draw the first thing that comes into your mind. Try not to think too much and see what happens. If you are feeling stuck and don't know where to start, put your pen on the paper and move it to the music. This activity is just for you, so don't worry about anyone else seeing it.

Activity 3: Resource Yourself

Discussion: Why is it important to have more than one person to talk to and reach out to for help when you need it?

Activity: Complete the wheel below and add in what you can do to support your mental health. It can be activities such as exercising or listening to music. It can also include people you can reach out to for support.



Activity 4: Express Your Self Through Music

Our music therapists have suggested some excellent resources to support young people to express their thoughts and feelings through music.

Singing is highly recommended for both children and adults of all ages, due to its proven health and wellbeing benefits through working and engaging with breath, the expression of emotion and being connected with other.

They have suggested the following activities for secondary aged young people.

Create a playlist

Encourage the young person to create a playlist to capture different moods, they may use *YouTube*, *Spotify* or whatever is their preferred medium. It can be fun to get the young person thinking along the lines of 'prescribing' themselves what they need at any given time, and having their own, personalised go-to playlists as a resource they can use to help self-soothe, or reflect on their feelings. It would be specific to them, but they may title different playlists with titles such as "my happy songs," "songs that help me think," "songs that remind me of X," "songs that help me calm down" and so on.

Write a song

There are some great apps like *SongCraft* for lyric ideas, and *Garageband* for generating musical ideas. This places an emphasis on process, rather than the end product. If writing a song from scratch is too daunting, it could be adapted to taking an existing melody and changing the words to make it personal to their situation. Specific song templates can be given depending on the needs of the young person. A song can be like a container for thoughts and feelings that might be hard to express otherwise.

Rhythm work and drumming

These exercises can be useful for anxiety and getting grounded through the linking of body and mind, bilateral stimulation, etc.

If the Young Person doesn't have drums or equipment this can be simply improvised with a table or any other surface and some pens/sticks for playing along to a favourite song. Videos on *YouTube* are available with fun ideas around this and some simple beats to learn and play.

Exploring music tech

Cove is a free app that has been specifically designed to support mental health through musical expression. It is user friendly and appealing to young people.