

# Emotional Regulation and Adolescents

**SWLSTG Educational Wellbeing Service**

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Welcome to being a parent of a teenager. Prepare for a large amount of eye rolling, emotional outbursts, and thoughts of running away. And that's just the parents.



# Aims of the workshop

- 
- ▶ To understand the development of emotions in adolescence.
  - ▶ To understand what emotion regulation is and why it is important.
  - ▶ To discuss practical ways to support your adolescent.
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# Social Emotional Development of Teens

**Adolescents are in transition- not children and not adults**

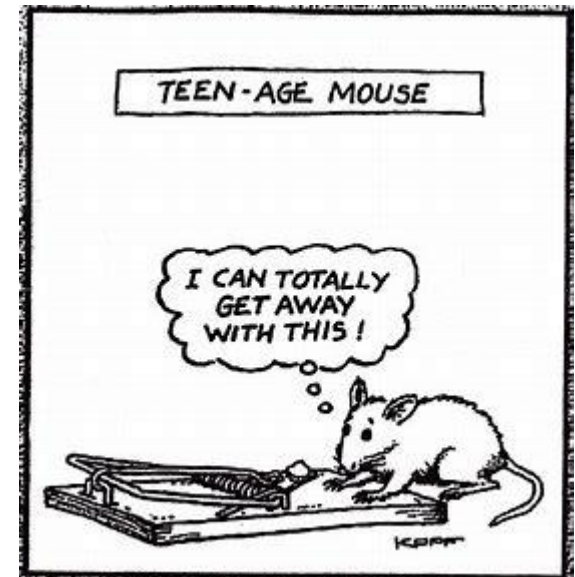


# Stages of Adolescence

- Early adolescence- ages 9-13
- Increased “negative attitude”
- Increased dissatisfaction in being treated as a “child”
- More “bored” and restless—may be less interested in activities they may have been interested when younger
- May feel things are “unfair” regarding demands and limit setting
- May resist authority – questioning, arguing, non-compliance
- Experimentation- which may include some risky behaviors

# Stages of Adolescence

- Middle adolescence- ages 13-15
- Increased conflicts about social independence and freedom
- May lie more often (omission or commission) either to do something (which they may not be allowed to do) or to get out of trouble
- May feel more peer pressure including to engage in risky behaviors i.e. alcohol or substance or social media



# Stages of Adolescence

- Late adolescence- ages 15-18
- Increased independence overall- may have part time job, more social freedom. . .
- More significant emotional involvement in relationships including romantic ones
- May have sadness and worry about next steps- separating from friends and family or being worried about if they are ready for more independence i.e. work/uni...




## Communication and Conflict

Conflict is normal and often linked to the demands and requirements for adolescents to find their wings and for parents to let them fly.





# Emotion/Feelings



Emotions provide us with a signal that something significant is happening and they are necessary for our survival.

- *The urge to react to certain emotions may be hard wired e.g. our startle response. This is to save time so we react quickly.*

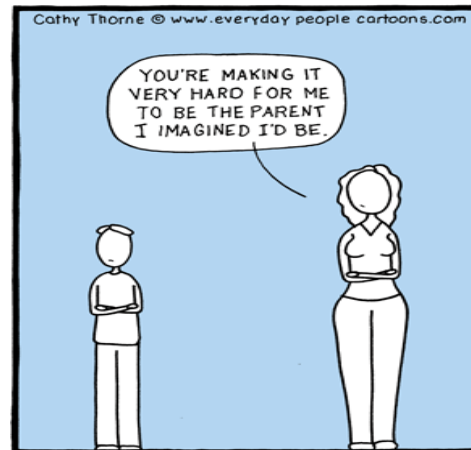
Emotions can help motivate us to take action to change a situation or can help us process a situation

- e.g crying when feeling upset about something can be cathartic

# Emotions-Feelings

Emotions communicate to - and impact on - others

- How you express emotions by words, face or body language will impact on how others respond to you. E.g. a crying baby will elicit a response from their parent/ carer



REMEMBER EMOTIONS ARE WHAT MAKES US HUMAN AND ARE A **GOOD** THING!

# Adolescents and Emotion

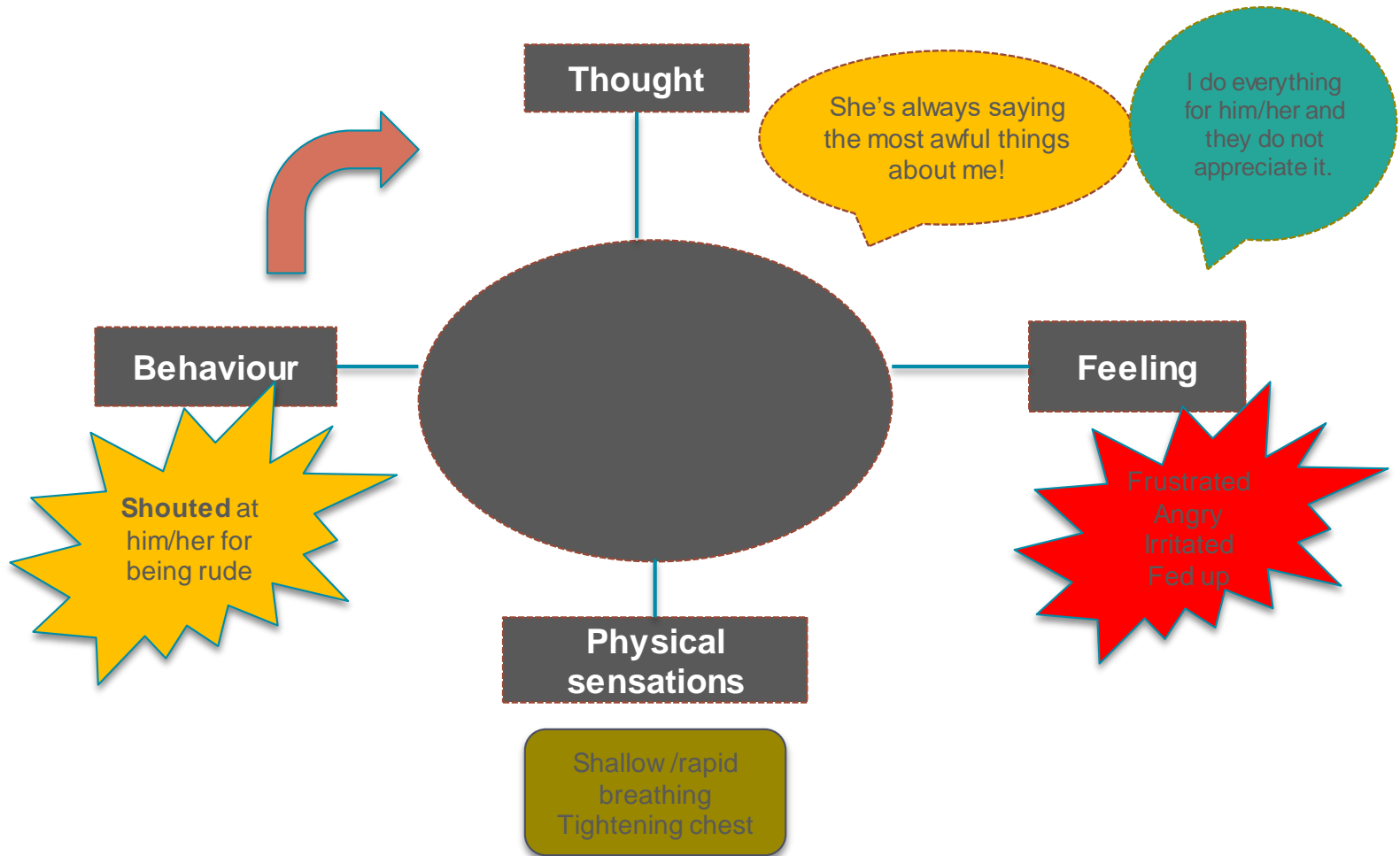




# Behaviours

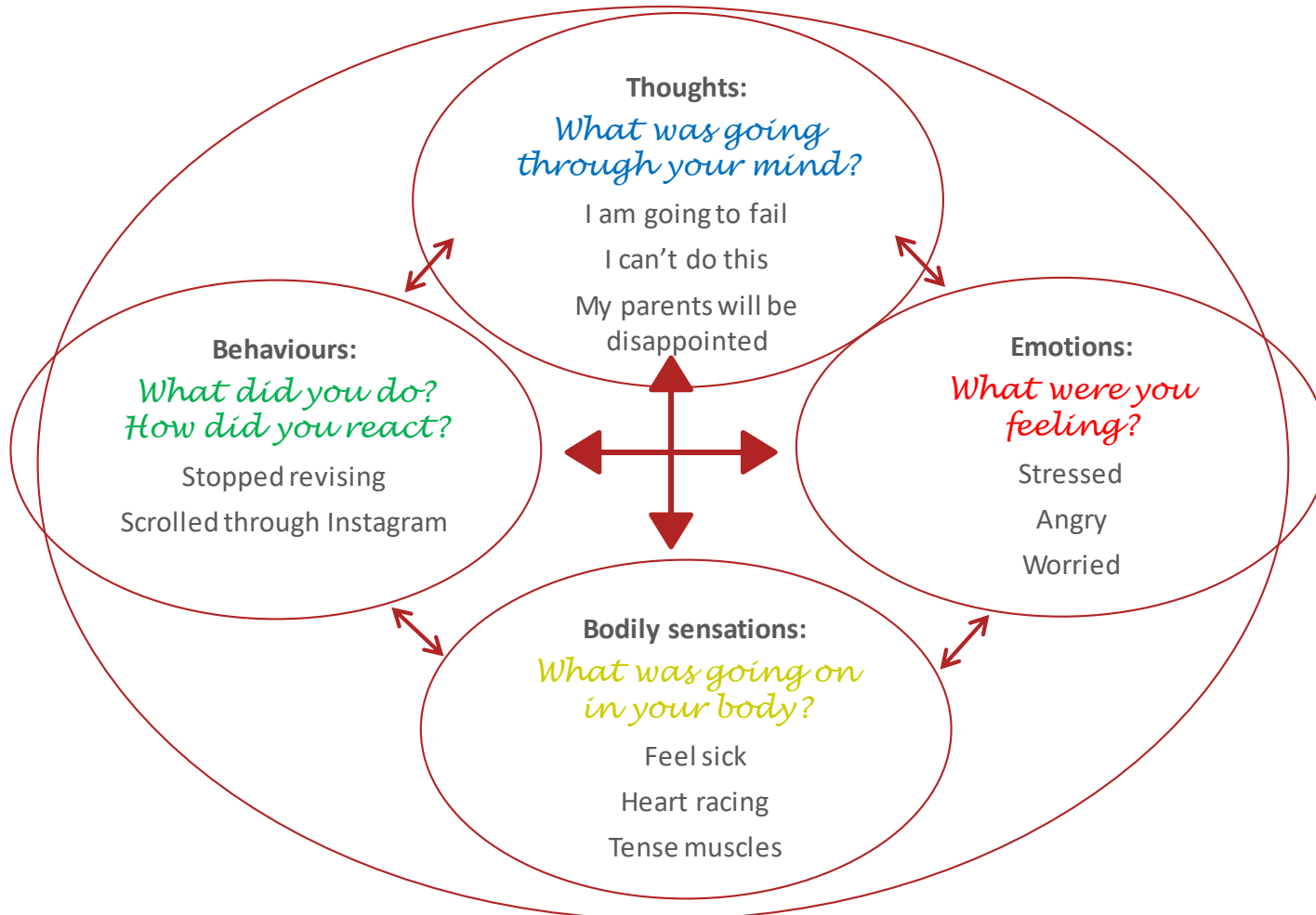
- Moaning and procrastinating
- Refusing to tidy up
- Outbursts or refusing to communicate
- Lying (omission or commission)
- Testing Limits and Boundaries

# “I hate you!”




# What your teen might say/do?

Situation: revising for a test



# What some young people say...



I am not going to  
get my predicted  
grades.

I just feel like  
crying all the  
time.

I have so much  
revision to do for  
my GCSEs.

My stress is causing  
me to have  
arguments at home.

The amount of work I  
have from school is  
piling up and I am  
finding it hard to keep  
up.



# How would you respond?





# What is Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to process and express their feelings in a constructive way.

In adolescents this can be tricky as often you may not know what your teen is feeling or their behavior may confuse you.



BOY, I'M IN A BAD MOOD TODAY! EVERYONE HAD BETTER STEER CLEAR OF ME!



I HATE *EVERYBODY!* AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, EVERYONE ON THE PLANET CAN JUST DROP DEAD. PEOPLE ARE SCUM.



WELL-L-L? DOESN'T ANYONE WANT TO CHEER ME UP?!?





# Learning how to regulate your Emotions.

People aren't born with emotional regulation, it has to be learnt.

Research suggests there are at least three process that influence a child's growing ability to regulate their emotions:

- Neurological maturation
- Temperament and developmental status
- Parental socialisation and environmental support

# Sources of Stress for Teens





# Emotion Coaching: Being aware of your adolescent's emotions

- Do you know when your adolescent is sad? Angry? Confused? What are the signs that they feel this way?
- Do you know the difference between your adolescent's defensive emotion and primary emotion? For instance, when your adolescent is hurt, does he/she express it as anger?

# Anger Iceberg

Sometimes when we are angry, there are other emotions under the surface

Icebergs are giant floating pieces of ice found in the coldest parts of the ocean.

What you can see from above is just a tiny part. Most of the iceberg is hidden under the surface.

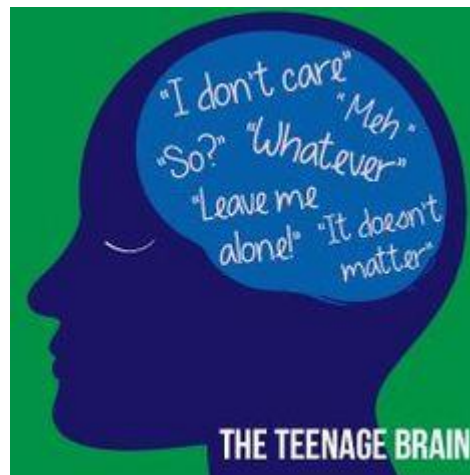






# Helping adolescents verbally label emotions

- Help adolescent find words for what they are feeling – give examples (frustrated, upset, sad)
- You can tell your adolescent it is okay to feel 2 ways at once







# Recognize emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching

- Adolescents need you most when sad or angry or afraid.
- Ability to soothe upset adolescents is when you feel most like a parent
- Parents can soothe adolescents with their words along with physically soothing them (e.g., hug, holding hands, etc.)
- Acknowledging emotions helps adolescents learn skills for soothing themselves.
- Addressing less intense feelings or topics gives you a chance to practice listening and problem-solving when stakes are small.

# Listening empathetically and validating adolescent's feelings

- Pay attention to adolescent's body language, facial expression and gestures.
- Sit at adolescent's level, take a deep breath, relax and focus
- As adolescent reveals feelings, reflect back what you hear and notice about them.
- Listen to your adolescent tell his/her side and try to see the situations and emotions through his/her eyes.



# Connection: Empathy vs Sympathy

## Empathy leads to connection

- Perspective taking
- Not judging
- Recognizing emotions in others and communicating this recognition

## Sympathy

- Feeling care and concern for someone
- Wanting them to feel better or happier.
- Does not involve a **shared** perspective or **shared** emotions.





## Talking with your adolescent – What and How NOT WHY

- Don't ask: "Why are you so mad?"

Instead ask: "How did that affect you," "Tell me what that was like for you" or "What about that made you so mad?"

- Avoid questions you know the answer to – waiting or catching adolescent in a lie:

Don't ask: Did you skip class today?

Instead say: The school called and told me you skipped class today, I am disappointed.

- Avoid asking rhetorical questions. Too much of this and adolescent feel interrogated and manipulated.

# Be Curious

## Be curious and ask questions

- Tell me more.
- What was/is that like for you?
- What did that make you think?
- How did/does that make you feel?
- How did/does that affect you?
- What did/does that mean to you?





# Problem Solving

## 1. *Identify goals*

What is the problem we are trying to fix?

## 2. *Think of possible solutions*

Brainstorm – no idea is too silly or stupid to consider. Write them all down. Remind your adolescent of past success and how he/she handled it

## 3. *Evaluate proposed solutions based on family's values*

Is the solution fair? Will it work? Is it safe? How am I likely to feel?

How will other people feel?

## 4. *Help your adolescent choose their solution.*

# When Emotion Coaching is NOT Appropriate:

**When emotion coaching is not appropriate:**

1. When parent is pressed for time
2. When you have an audience
3. When parent is too upset or tired for coaching to be productive
4. When parent needs to address serious misbehaviour.
5. When you believe your adolescent is faking an emotion to manipulate you.



## What can we do instead?

- Notice what YOU are feeling and try to stay calm





# STOP

- Stop-- Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!
- Take a step back
- Observe -What are your thoughts and feelings?
- Proceed thoughtfully, think about how you are reacting what your goal is (what you are hoping to achieve in this moment).



# Stress Bucket





# Relaxation Strategies



★ Controlled  
Breathing ★

★ Muscle  
relaxation ★





**Shopping**  
**Do something**

**creative e.g. draw,  
paint, make, bake**

**Play on the  
PlayStation/Xbox**

**Have a bath**

**Do something physical  
e.g. go for a walk, play  
football, go  
skateboarding**

# Have Fun

**Listen to music –  
have a “relaxing”  
playlist**

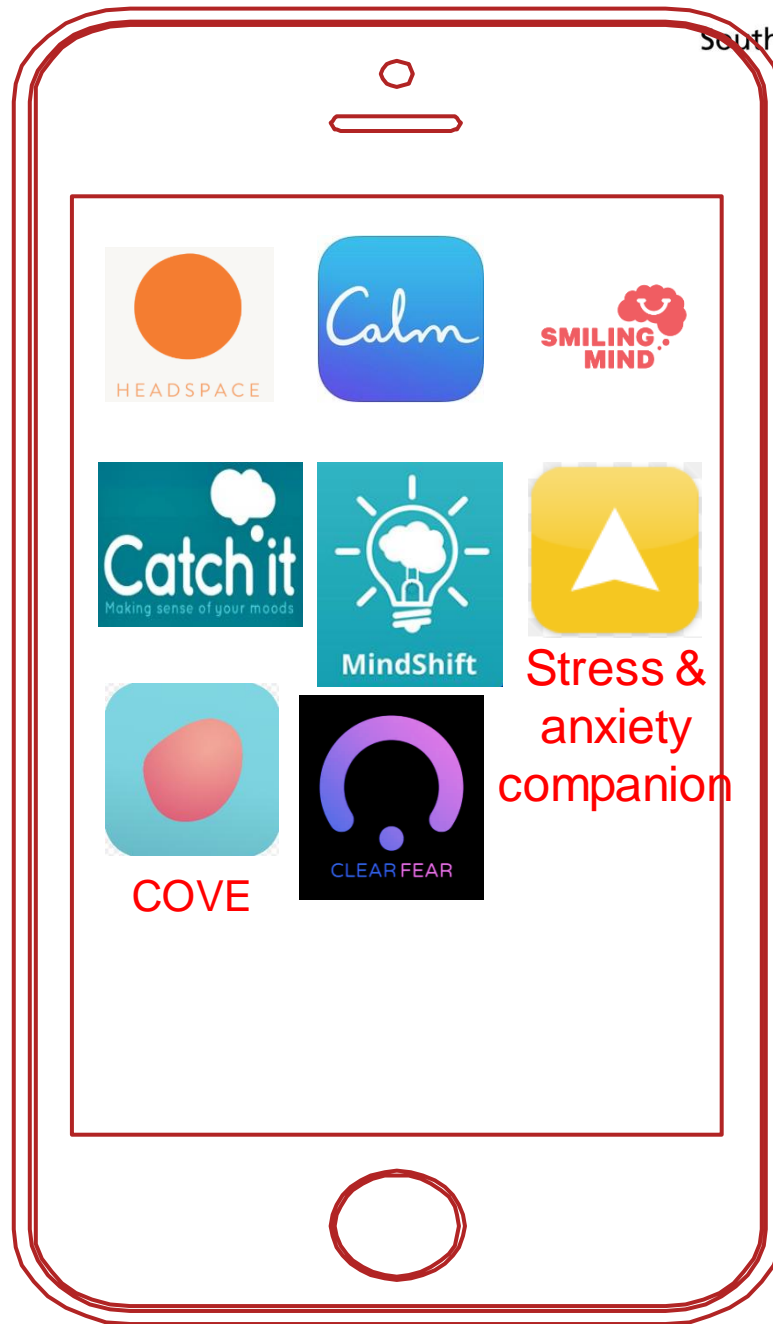


**nails/make up/face  
mask**

**Spend time  
with pets**

**Watch TV/movie**





Stress &  
anxiety  
companion



# Any questions?



## Resources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

[www.MindEd.org.uk](http://www.MindEd.org.uk)

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

