

# Mental Health and Wellbeing during the Secondary School Years

An Introduction and Overview

Merton MHST – Secondary Parents Webinar  
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# Why Talk about Teenage Wellbeing?

- Teenage Mental Health and Wellbeing is strongly linked to:
  - Their reported quality of life  
*(Reference: Sharpe, Patalay, Fink et al., 2016)*
  - Their friendships and relationship quality  
*(Reference: Long, Gardani, McCann et al., 2020)*
  - Their educational attainment and grades  
*(Reference: Smith, Marshall, Albakri et al., 2021)*

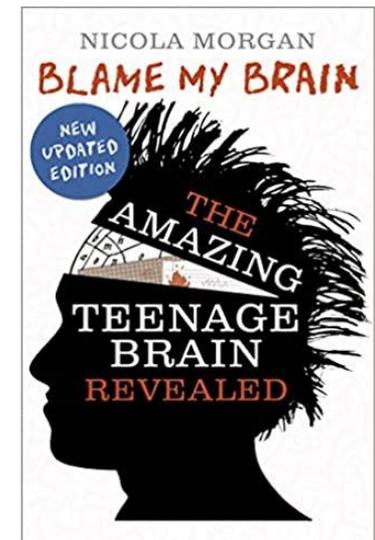
*“We all have mental health”*



## Session aims

- What is mental health, and what it's like being a teenager in modern days*
- Introducing a way of thinking about teenage wellbeing – the three areas model*
- Supporting teenagers, communication tips and options for help*

*“All parents and adults were once perfect teenagers. Model humans. They were completely in control of all their hormones and brain changes. In fact, they probably never had any hormones at all. They were calm, always smiling and incredibly polite to everyone around them, never struggling or having any difficulty. Many adults also have amnesia. That’s why they think the above paragraph is true.” – Nicola Morgan*





## Defining Mental Health

*“Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium.”*



*-Journal of World Psychiatry, 2015*



## Defined another way...

*“**We all have mental health**, just like we all have physical health. Sometimes we feel well, and sometimes we don’t.*

*Mental health is complicated because it’s **about how we think, feel and act**, and this is always **changing**.*

*When our mental health is good, we **enjoy being around other people and we feel able** to take on challenges and new experiences. But when our mental health is not so good, we can find it much **harder to cope**.”*



# Mental Health in the Media

News > Health

 INDEPENDENT PREMIUM

## Record number of children referred to mental health services, new analysis suggests

Children and young people are 'suffering terribly' as **Zoe Tidman** finds

14 hours ago | comments



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## Girls' mental health crisis was fuelled by internet use in lockdown: Report warns of children being driven down the 'dark spiral of online life'

- Girls mental health crisis fuelled by being driven down the 'dark spiral of online life' in lockdown
- Children's Commissioner issued the warning last night after survey carried out
- Survey found girls twice as likely to face mental health problems than boys



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### Young people's mental health services 'in crisis', MPs warn

By Charlotte Wright  
Political Editor, BBC South East

6 September



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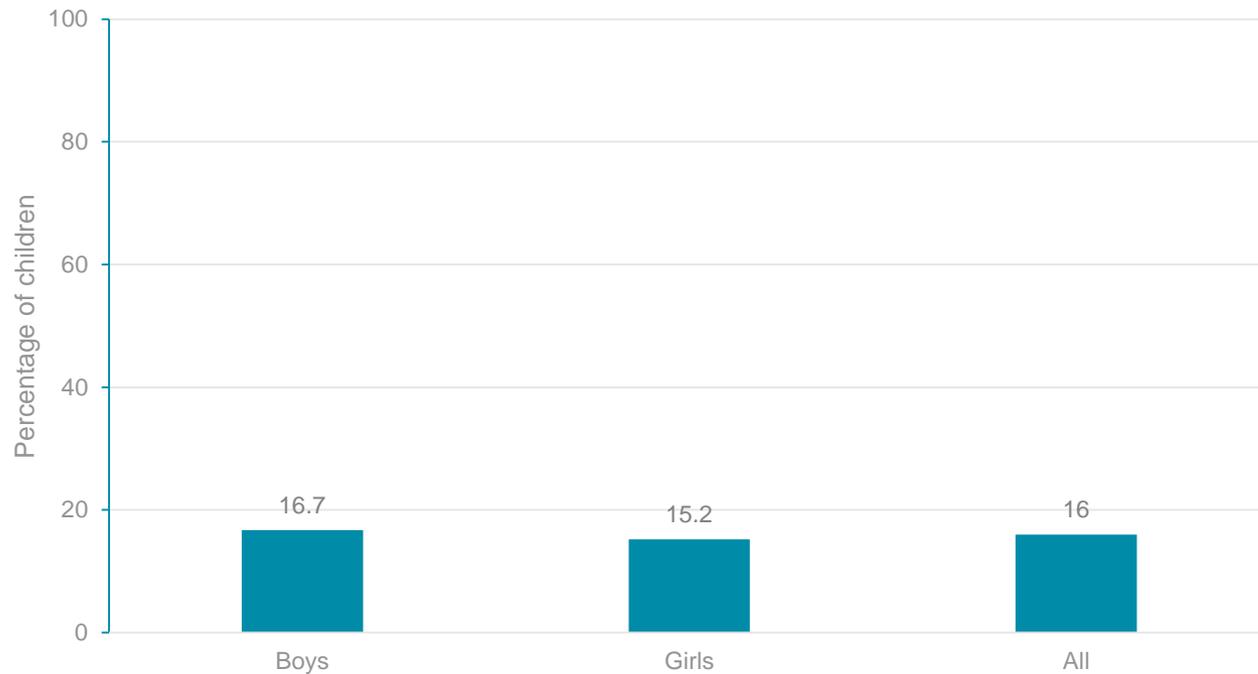
## Children face a mental health crisis, but they need more than antidepressants

*Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett*



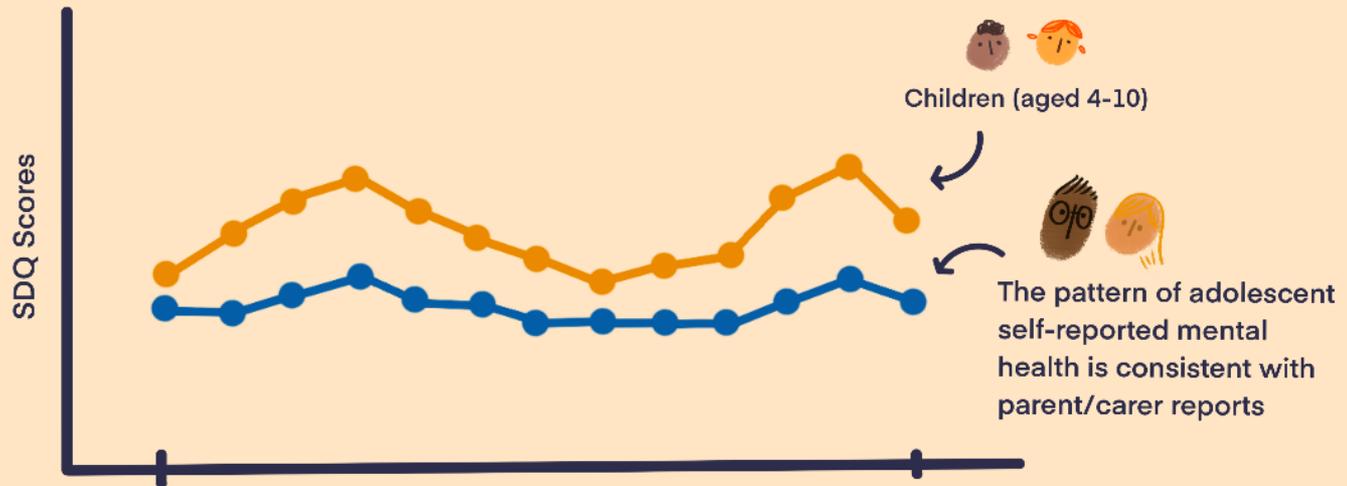
# Also, looking beyond headlines

Percentage of children and young people with probable mental health challenge



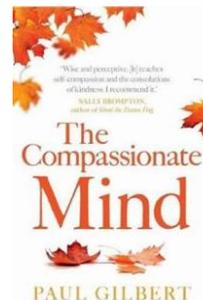
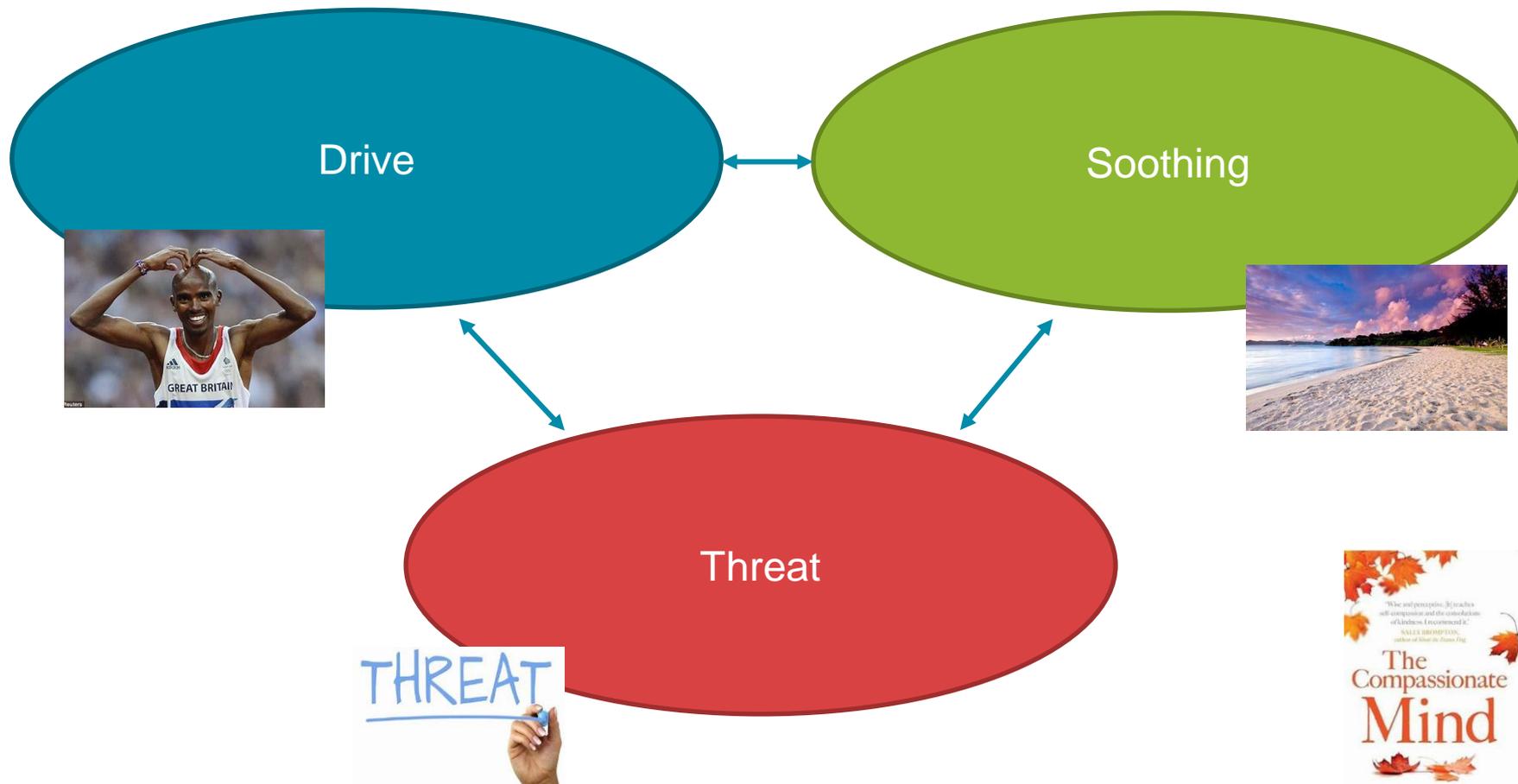
*Reference: 'Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020 survey, NHS digital'*

Overall, children (aged 4-10) have had **greater** changes in levels of mental health difficulties throughout the pandemic; levels of difficulties among adolescents (aged 11-16) have been more **stable**



Take part here: [www.cospaceoxford.org/takepart](http://www.cospaceoxford.org/takepart)

# What helps wellbeing during the teenage years?

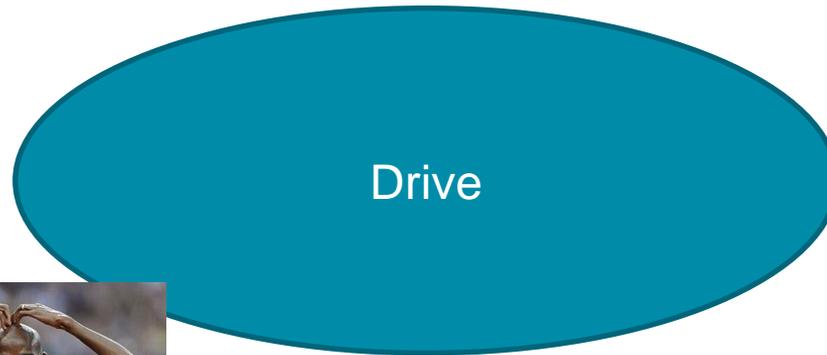




# What might active teenagers threaten system?



# What might active teenagers drive system?



# What might active teenagers soothing system?

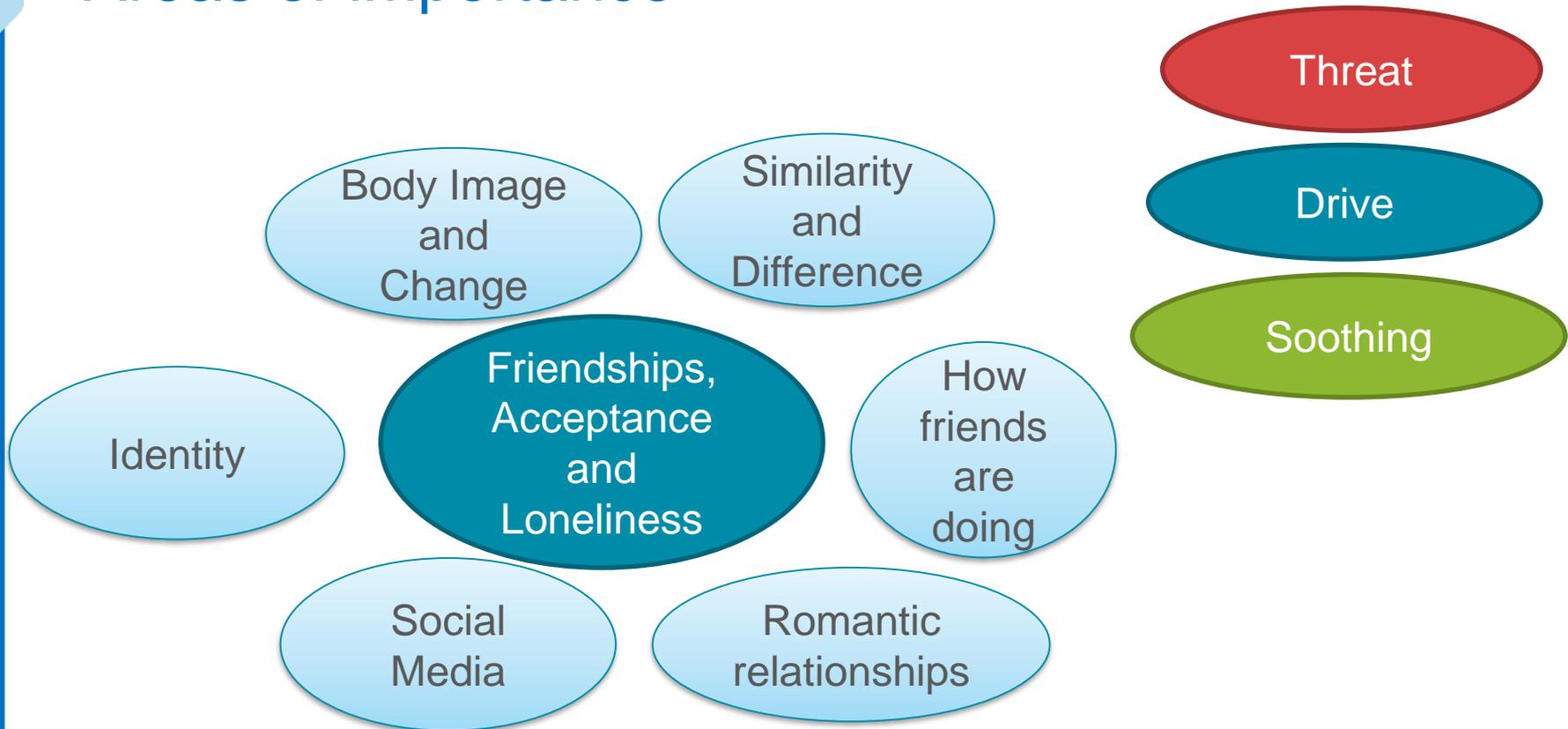


## Areas of importance



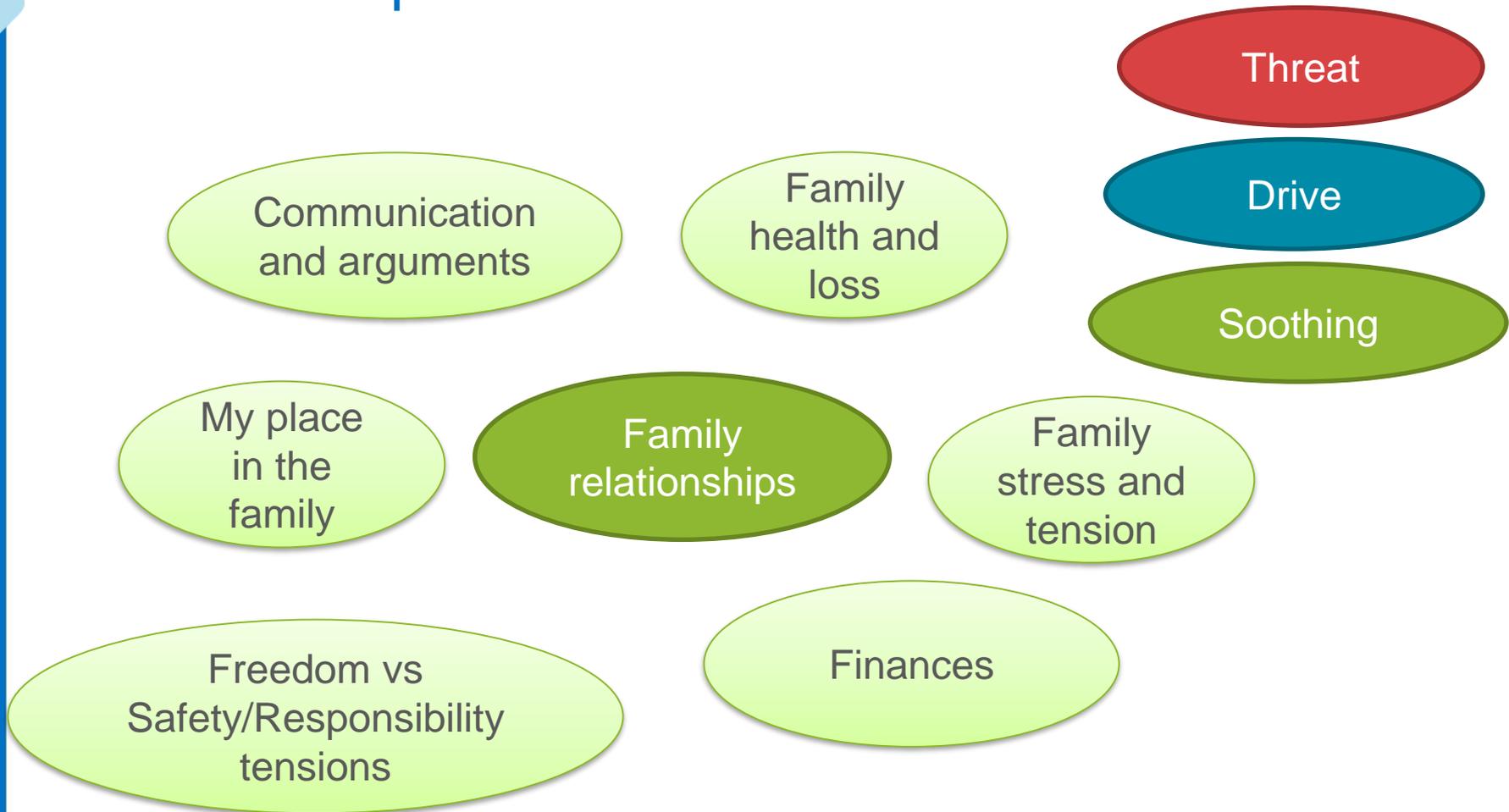


## Areas of importance

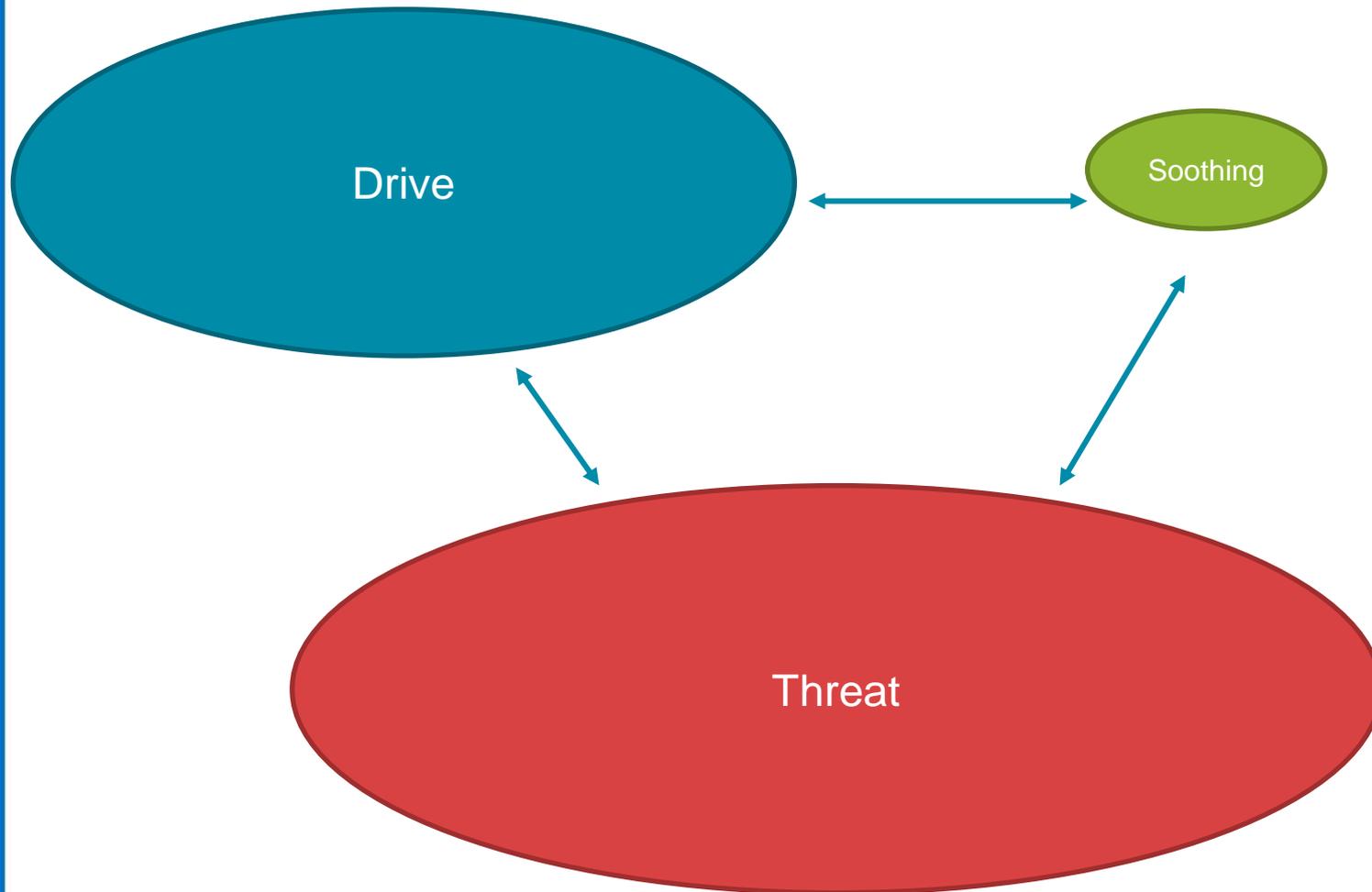




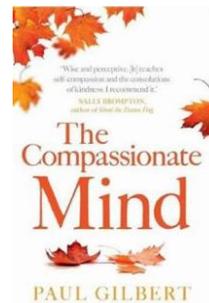
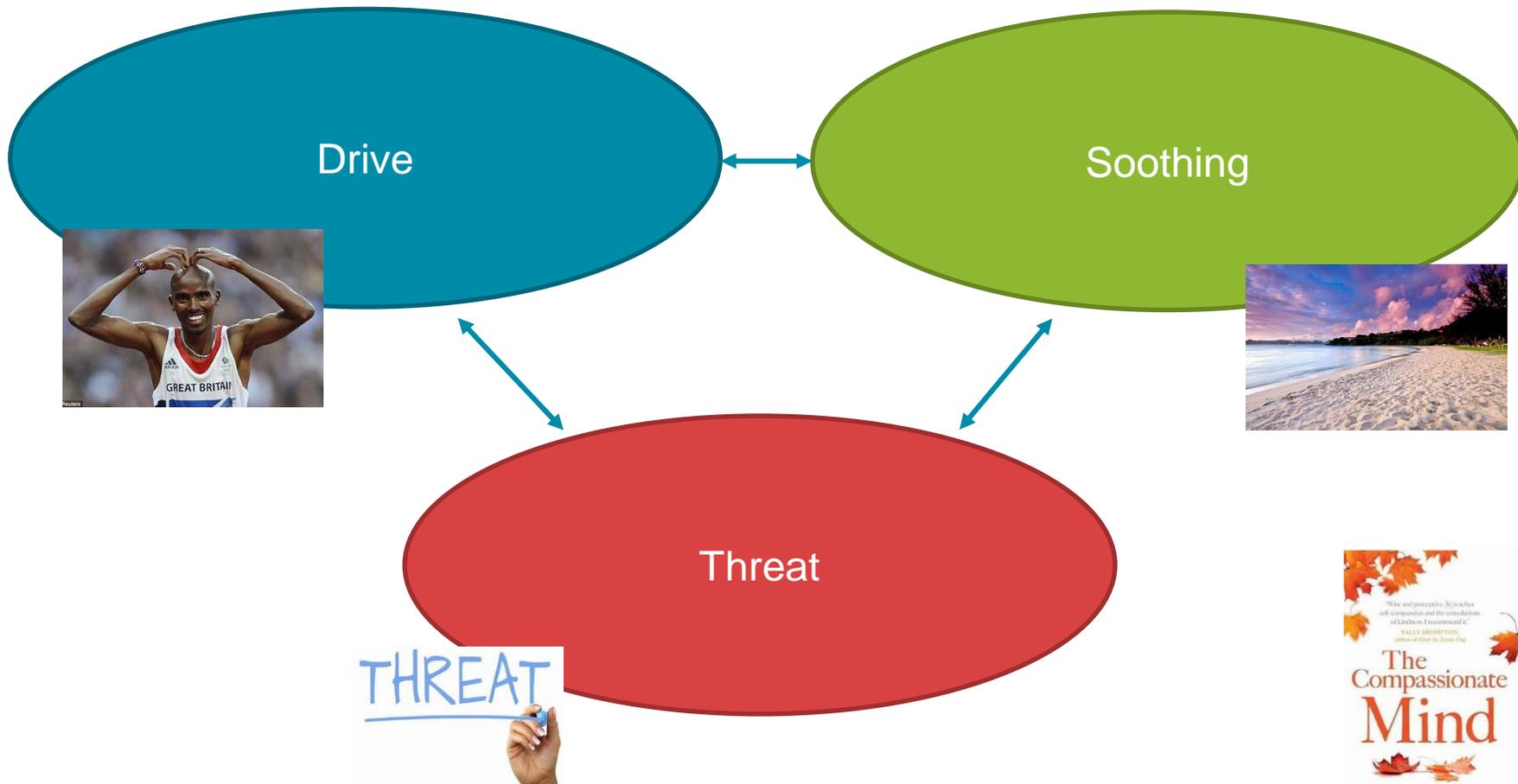
## Areas of importance



# Systems out of balance



# Systems more in balance





## Things to look out for – ‘downward spirals’

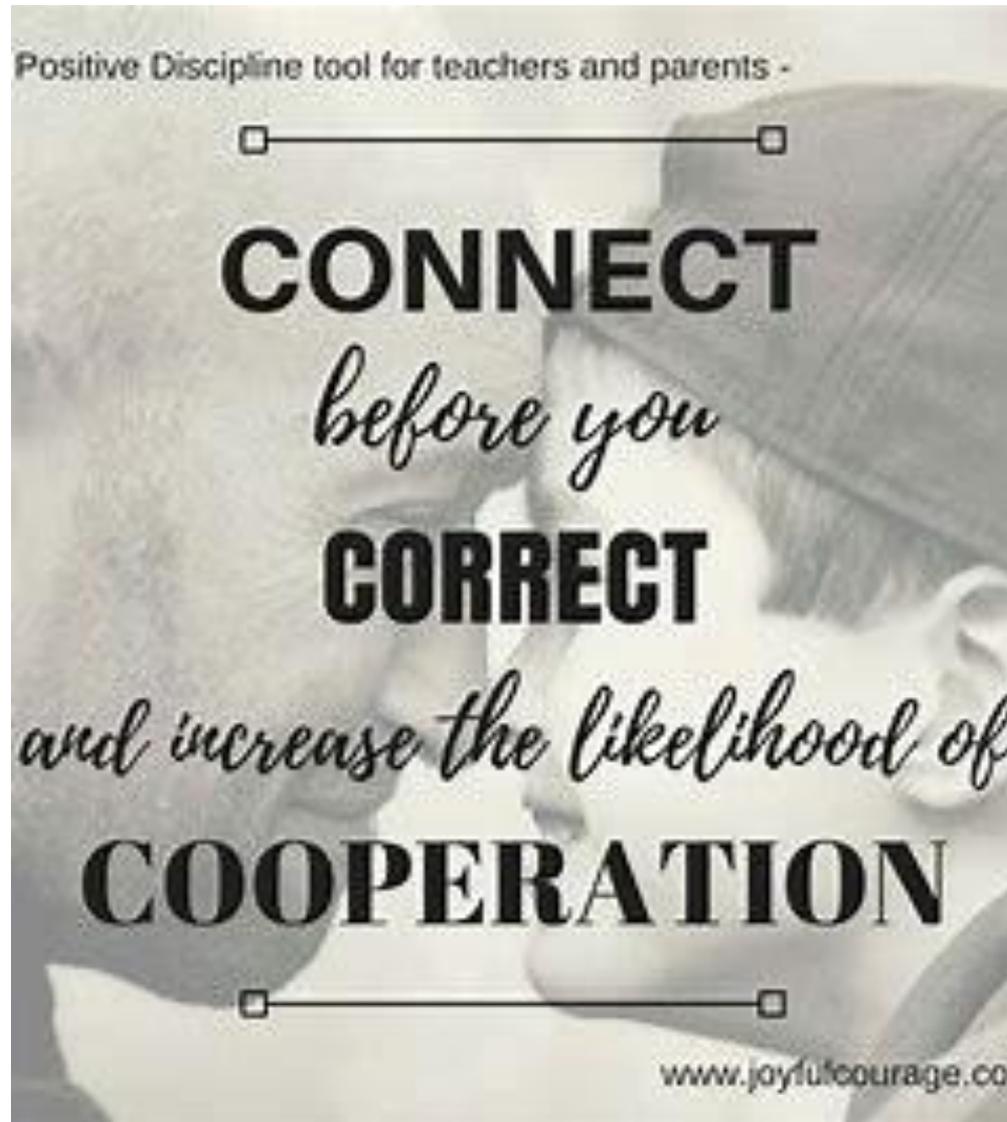
- **Emotional changes:** Feeling sad, anxious, angry or looking flat most of the time – directing this towards others/self
  - Hopelessness, helplessness, struggling to see positives in life/wishing didn't exist
- **Relationship changes:** isolating self from friends/family, changes in communication (snappiness, overcompliance)
- **Self-care changes:** hygiene/appearance, eating changes, sleep changes
- **Risk-taking changes:** increased risk taking and impulsivity (including desire to harm self/others)





## Conversation starters

- **Private spaces** – on a walk, in a car, doing an activity.
- **Just ask!** “There’s so much in the media at the moment about teenage mental health, I was wondering how you / your friends / people at your school are doing?” “Is it something that’s talked about much?”
- **Checking-in** with your teen directly – stress and coping – “*I wondered how you’re doing. What helps your mental health at the moment? What sort of stress you’ve got going on?*”
- **Don’t panic**, any talking/texting is good, think together about ideas and solutions..





# Problem solving – Thinking together

1. Note what the problem is
2. List all possible next steps and ideas, even if some feel silly at first.
3. Note pros and cons of each solution – how practical? How helpful? What might this lead to in the short/long term?
4. Is the plan doable? What could get in the way? Any help needed for this plan?
5. Rate each plan from 0-10 in terms of how good you think it is
6. Choose the plans and ideas, set a time to do it
7. Review what happened, did it help? If not, what other options can we think about next

# What is the problem?: I am overwhelmed about an exam

List all of the possible solutions	Pros and Cons of each solution	Is the plan do-able? Yes/No	How good is the plan? Rate 0-10	what happened ?
Keep it to myself and push myself	I might study really hard I might get too stressed and feel I've got to do it on my own I might not get advise or support	No	3	
Talk to my parents and a teacher	They might ignore me They might give bad advise They could help me and give me advise and let me know where I can get more help/advise	Yes	6	
Make a revision timetable to start	This might help me be motivated and know what I have to do each day It can be hard to make one	Yes	8	
Take breaks and self-care	It can be hard to make the time and give myself a break I can feel better and if I set an alarm	Yes	8	

# what is the problem?: I am worried about a friend who is self-harming regularly

List all of the possible solutions	Pros and Cons of each solution	Is the plan do-able? Yes/No	How good is the plan? Rate 0-10	what happened ?
Keep it to myself	I don't mess up the friendship They could get really hurt They won't get any professional help	Not really	2	
Tell someone at school	I don't know how they'll react I can plan the conversation They might get help soon I should be able to stay as their friend	Yes but hard	7	
Get some advice from the internet	There might be bad advice on the internet Some advice might be good	Yes	5	
Tell the friend to stop self-harming	It might not work I feel like I'm trying to help	Yes	1	
Try to help them on my own	It might affect my wellbeing I might not be able to fully help I feel like I'm being a good friend I feel like I'm keeping it secret for them	Not really	3	

## Roles of Parents

- Steady presence during the ups and downs of adolescence – holding on!
- Quality time in new and different forms
- Knowing you're there - an open-door policy to discuss and offering times to talk, accepting possibility of being pushed away
- Keeping an eye and checking-in





# Sometimes it can help to get support with our mental health

*Just a few of our local support options for mental health include...*



Pastoral Care at school – speak to a member of staff

Kooth offers online counselling support – self-referral @ [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)



Off the Record professional counselling can self-refer [www.talkofftherecord.org](http://www.talkofftherecord.org)



Education Wellbeing Practitioners offer early help wellbeing support to students for stress, anxiety and low mood that is research-based. Complete an application form on your own or with someone else (available via school)



CAMHS provides mental health support for students. They provide different evidence-based treatment options for a range of mental health difficulties. School or your GP can refer you.



*There is always someone here to listen and help...*



*Speak to any staff or your pastoral team within school if you want more information about any of these support options...*



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Children & Young People's Wellbeing Service:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrRKV84lb8Jr69Z7ZhjSjCg>



# Thank you for joining us in this conversation – Questions and Feedback

*“We all have mental health”*

Short feedback survey:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ZCPRohN7h0O\\_7iTewf29s3fxx3vKRjFNmbHHHY3MdlxURVpDUVIwWVRQMUJTQUVTREVOVjRVQjILMS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ZCPRohN7h0O_7iTewf29s3fxx3vKRjFNmbHHHY3MdlxURVpDUVIwWVRQMUJTQUVTREVOVjRVQjILMS4u)

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