

Social, Emotional & Mental Health Barriers

(including anxieties & behaviour)

Teacher and Parent Support Guide



If a child can do
advanced math,
speak 3 languages,
or receive top grades,
but can't manage
their emotions,
practice conflict resolution,
or handle stress,
none of that other stuff
is really going to matter.

How to nurture a child's mental health



Actively listen before offering your advice



Be patient



Share your feelings and validate theirs



Tell the truth



Model healthy behavior



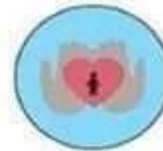
Surround them with healthy adults



Be consistent and follow through with what you promise



Teach them how to be safe



Believe them and in them



Use open ended questions



Have scheduled family time



Limit electronic time for everyone



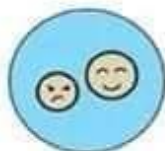
Reach out and hug them



Practice relaxation exercises together



Model forgiveness



Respond calmly when their emotions are elevated



View their behavior as a window to their needs and feelings



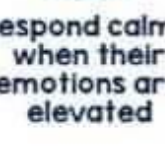
Make play and exercise a requirement



Recognize positive choices



Be present



Set and respect boundaries



what we can
CELEBRATE

for all children

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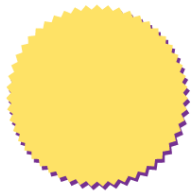
kindness



trying new things



responsibility



cooperation



setting a goal

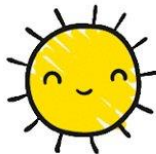


empathy

Self-Care & Mental Health for Kids



Share your own feelings to encourage self-awareness.



Set aside time for low-stress or solo activities.



Find social groups that help them feel like they belong.



Focus on articulating feelings.

"I am angry."
"I am sad."

Encourage journaling and diaries.

Encourage your child to focus on the moment.



Practice self-care for yourself to set the standard.

Establish a self-care routine.



Recognize toxic stress events.

BlessingManifesting

Cultivate interests and hobbies.



Ride a Bike OR SKATEBOARD



ASK FOR HELP



Blow Bubbles

Color Paint Draw

CREATE ART!



Listen to MUSIC



PLAY a BOARD GAME

MAKE & PLAY WITH SLIME



Practice Gratitude



WEAVE, KNIT OR CROCHET

Use Kind & Compassionate Self-Talk



Make a SCRAPBOOK OR Collage



PRACTICE YOGA



Hug or Climb a Tree

KICK BOUNCE OR THROW a BALL



JOURNAL OR WRITE A LETTER



Take Slow, Mindful Breaths



Cuddle or Play with Your Pet



Drink Water



Smile & Laugh



EAT Healthy

50 COPING SKILLS for kids

Forgive Let Go Move On



Cook or Bake



Get Plenty of SLEEP



TAKE A SHOWER OR BATH



STRETCH



Go on a Hike, Walk or Run

Use Aromatherapy (Smell something good)



Sing and/or Dance



SAY positive Affirmations

Take GOOD CARE of the Earth



Look At or Take PHOTOGRAPHS



Garden or Do Yardwork



Visualize a Peaceful Place



Try or Learn Something New



EXPLORE & DISCOVER Nature's Treasures



READ a Book or Magazine



DRINK A WARM CUP OF TEA

USE a STRESS BALL (or other fidget tool)



DO a PUZZLE



Cry



Clean, Declutter or Organize



Create ORIGAMI



Get a HUG

EXERCISE



Play Outside

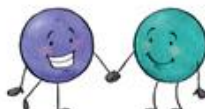


JUMP on a Trampoline



Rest, Take a Break, OR Nap

Do Something Kind



BUILD Something



TALK to Someone You Trust

THE ART OF BEHAVIOR

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WHAT WE MIGHT THINK

stubbornness, lazy, defiant

spoiled, bad parenting, selfish

defiant, difficult, manipulative

bullying, bratty, lack of discipline

immature, bullying, lack of discipline

disruptive, attention seeking, defiant



WHAT MAY BE THE CAUSE

ADHD, anxiety, depression, working memory issues, sensory overload

ADHD, anxiety, sensory processing, overactive fight/flight, OCD

sleep disorder, anxiety, depression, brain processing

communication issues, self-regulation, anxiety, fear

visual processing issues, communication struggles, self-regulation, fear

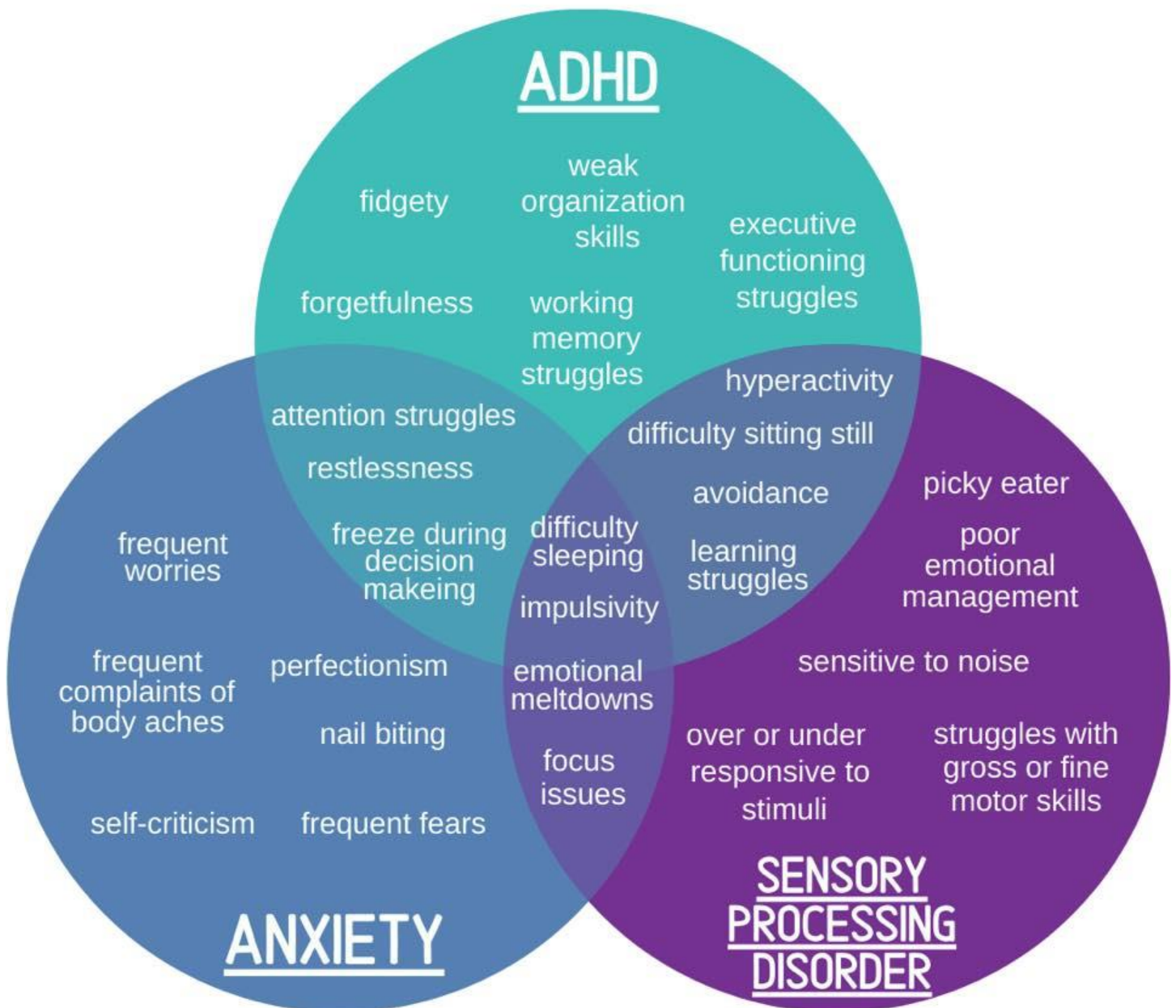
neurological immaturity, ADHD, sensory processing issues

how are you COMMUNICATING

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What can I do to help your suffering?



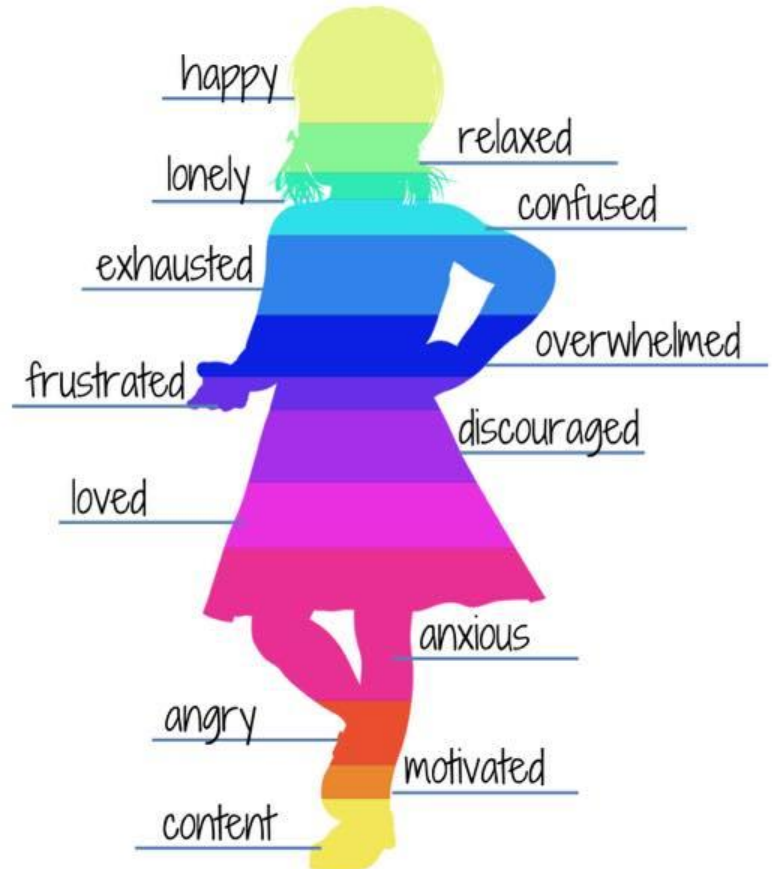


WE MIGHT EXPECT KIDS TO FEEL

VS.

HOW THEY MIGHT ACTUALLY FEEL

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PROBLEM FOCUSED

SOLUTION FOCUSED

bossy	→	natural leader, visionary
defiant	→	holds strong beliefs, bold, determined
demanding	→	knows what they want, outspoken
dramatic	→	expressive, passionate
fearful	→	cautious, careful
fussy	→	has strong preferences
hyperactive	→	energetic, enthusiastic, on the go
impulsive	→	spontaneous, instinctive
oppositional	→	advocates for a different perspective
rebellious	→	is finding their way
stubborn	→	persistent, determined, steadfast
talkative	→	enjoys communicating
tattletale	→	seeks justice, respects rules
unfocused	→	multitasks, pays attention to many things
wants attention	→	advocates for needs, seeks connection

ANXIETY IN THE CLASSROOM CAN LOOK LIKE

- Nervous about eye contact because I might be called on
- Crying in the morning due to separation anxiety
- Afraid to use the bathroom because of buttons & snaps
- Not talking because of selective mutism
- Not eating lunch or snacks because of stress hormones
- Not answering if called on because I freeze in panic

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ANXIETY CAN LOOK LIKE

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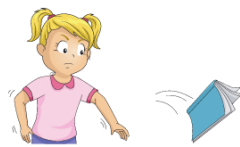
Defiance



Fear



Lack of Focus



Aggression



Avoidance



Overplanning



Physical Symptoms



Sleep Struggles



Poor Testing

Anxiety can sound like



ANXIOUS CHILDREN

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what we may expect to see



worry



sadness



fear



nervousness

what we may actually see:



defiance



irritability



difficulty sleeping



anger

WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?



BRAIN



- nervous
- anxious
- irritable
- angry
- excited
- hypersensitive

BODY

- tense muscles
- sweaty
- feeling warm
- nauseous
- quick breathing
- feeling sick



BEHAVIOR



- aggression
- avoidance
- need to control
- verbal attacks
- panic
- meltdown
- crying
- can't make a decision

Designing for users with anxiety



Do...

Don't...

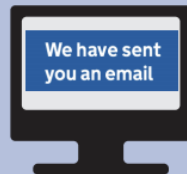
give users enough time to complete an action



rush users or set impractical time limits



explain what will happen after completing a service



leave users confused about next steps or timeframes



make important information clear



leave users uncertain about the consequences of their actions



give users the support they need to complete a service



make support or help hard to access



let users check their answers before they submit them



leave users questioning what answers they gave



Home Office



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ukhomeoffice.github.io/accessibility-posters/posters/accessibility-posters.pdf

possible sources of STRESS IN CHILDREN

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Physiological:

sensory stressors, allergies, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, hormone changes, lack of physical activity

Thoughts:

anxious of change, new experiences, uncertain future, perception of self and others



Physical:

injury, illness, sensory stressors in the environment

Social:

friendships, relationships, school anxiety, homework, family challenges

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THE STRESS RELIEF GIRAFFE



OUT OF CONTROL

SCARED OF LOSING CONTROL

NERVOUS

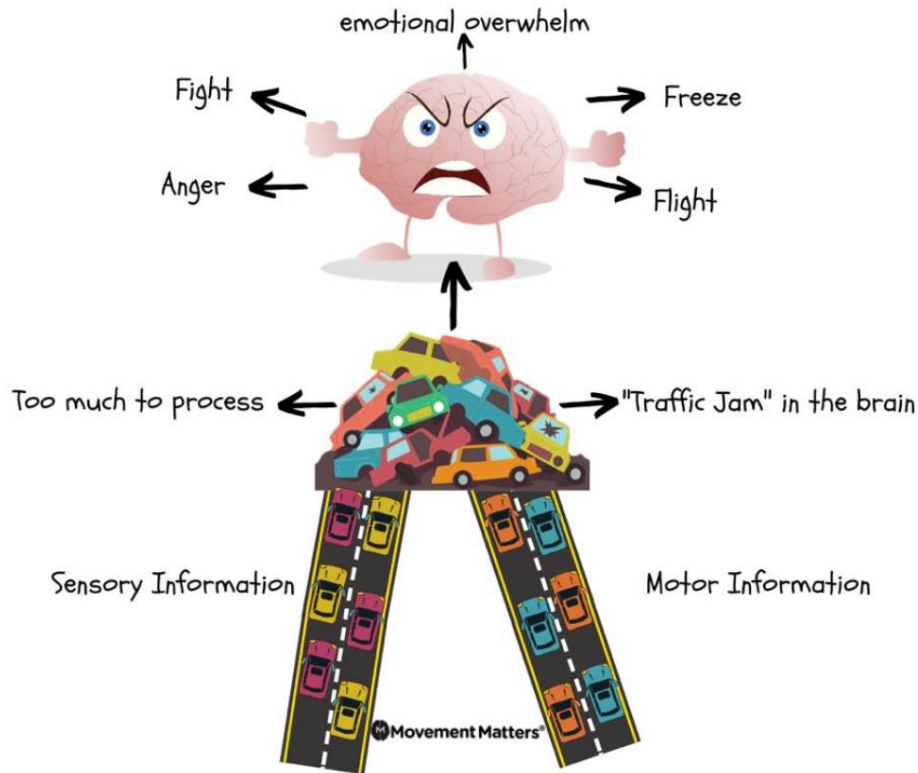
UNSURE

CALM

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO:

- Calm breathing exercises
- Use visualisation meditation techniques
- Body tightening exercises (progressive muscle relaxation)
- Sigh to become fully present in the moment
- Practice music therapy
- Change location / surroundings
- Use a stress ball / fidget toy
- Give themselves a 10-second hug to boost their mood
- Colour, draw, write, craft, etc.
- Practice positive self-talk / words of affirmation
- Exercise
- Go outside
- Play
- Hydrate with water

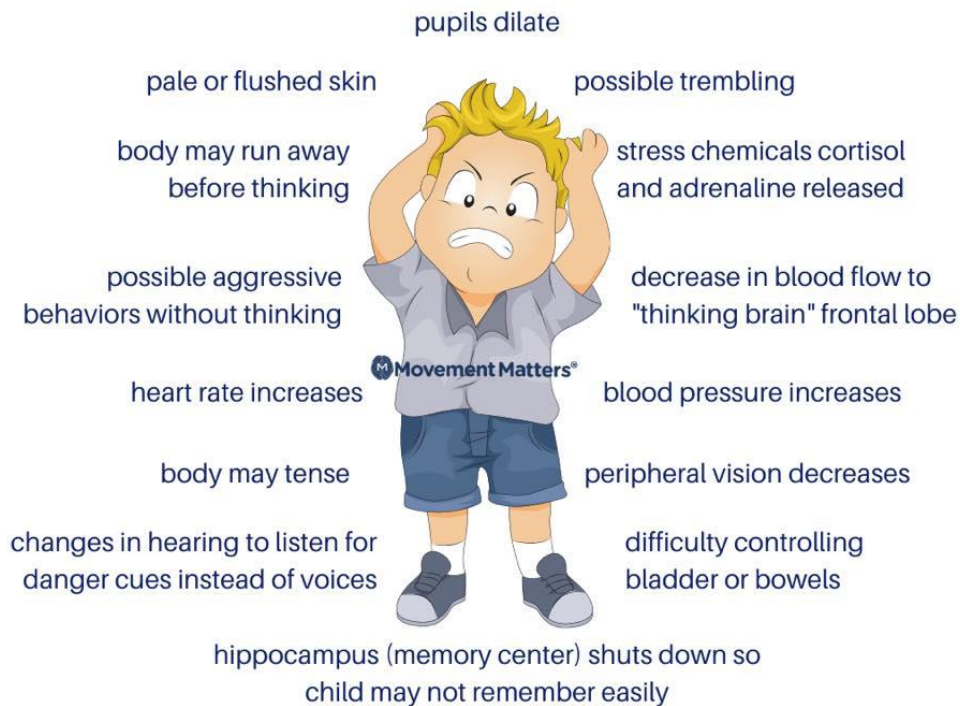
Anatomy of a MELTDOWN



what happens when we are

EMOTIONALLY FLOODED

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TANTRUM vs. MELTDOWN

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related to a need not being met or not getting what they want

related to a physical/environmental trigger leading to overwhelm

can recover once need/want is met

takes much longer to recover

often able to remember why they were so upset

often unaware as to what triggered the behavior

typical during toddler years

can happen throughout lifetime

often related to a specific event occurring before

unrelated to a specific event occurring before



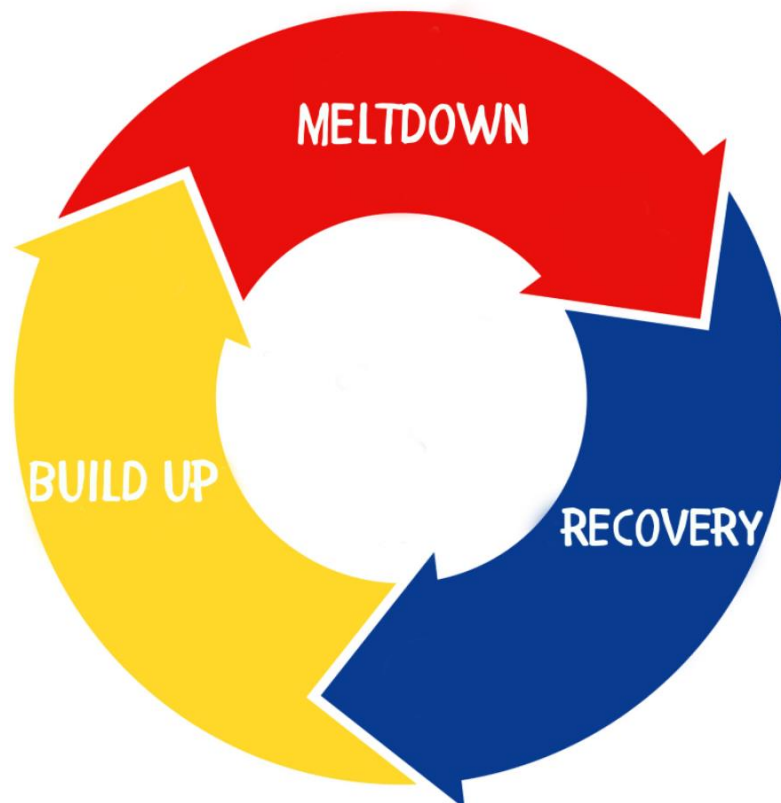
doesn't mean you are a bad parent

doesn't mean you are a bad parent

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PHASES OF A MELTDOWN

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BREATHE.

As I zoom my attention to my breathing, I will take extra long out-breaths.

Squeeze a stress ball or use another teacher-approved fidget.



Think of at least 3 things I am grateful for.



Tell my teacher I would like to help or take on a classroom responsibility.



Ask to deliver books to the library or another class.



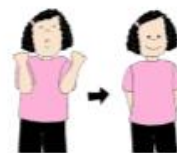
Imagine a peaceful and calming place.



Ask my teacher for help if I feel upset or overwhelmed.



Count to 10 and back in coordination with my breath.



Squeeze my fists together as hard as I can...hold...then relax my hands.

Invent a secret hand signal with my teacher that communicates I need help.



Push against the wall as hard as I can and then relax my body.



Doodle, draw, or color.



Ask to work with a buddy.

Use 'I-statements' to express how I am feeling, what I need, or what I hope for.



Move away from the distraction or person who is bothering me.



Write down my thoughts or questions if my teacher can't address them right away.



When I feel upset, sad, or unfocused at school I can:

Stretch.



Place my hands over my ears and breathe slowly & deeply, listening to the sound that my breath makes.

Volunteer to help clean or organize the classroom.



Drink water.

Ask permission to take a short walk down the hallway or up & down the stairs. And then return.



Tell my teacher I need help with the assignment or lesson.

Devise a secret code word or signal with my teacher that means time to get back on track.



Rest my head on the desk for a moment or two.



Tell myself a positive affirmation or mantra.



Think of or write a list of 3 positive things in my life.

Give myself an arm and hand massage.



Go outside during recess and notice the sky, trees & sounds from nature.



Talk with my school counselor.



Help a classmate or my teacher.

Listen to calming music with headphones.



Remind myself it's ok to make a mistake.



Visualize a person who supports me and cheers me on.



Zoom in on my senses: noticing 5 things I see, 4 things I feel, 3 things I hear, 2 things I smell & 1 thing I taste.



Ask if I can do my work standing up.



Cross my arms in front of me and do the arm pretzel.



Read in a quiet spot.



Take a 3-5 minute break in the designated classroom peace corner.



Slowly trace my hand with my finger, breathing in, as I trace my fingers going up...breathing out, as I trace my fingers going down.

Do an act of kindness.



Eat a healthy snack or tell my teacher I am hungry.



Journal or write a letter.



Ask my teacher to break down the assignment into smaller chunks so it's not so overwhelming.



Use a 'break card' to let my teacher know I need a break and then use a timer to remind me when to return.

Rub or tap my temples.



Smile or laugh, even if I have to fake it.





Like, love, embrace & accept yourself.

Show RESPECT towards others and yourself.



Use good posture. Stand tall as you are.

Treat yourself with kindness & compassion, even & especially when life gets hard.



Follow your curiosities & learn! Try or create something new.

See MISTAKES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN.



Remember That NO ONE IS PERFECT.



Don't compare yourself to what you see in the media.



Focus on the things you have control over & can change.



Choose friends who treat you how you want to be treated.



Create. Build. Cook. Bake. Garden. Do Art.

Do more of what helps you feel good about yourself.



Look in the mirror & tell yourself, "I love you."



BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

Make choices that stay true to what you value.

Learn & practice healthy ways to cope with stress.



Don't compare yourself with others. You are unique!

READ!



Laugh! Play! Have fun! Get silly!

Say positive affirmations.



50 Ways to Build SELF-ESTEEM for kids



Get to work on the chores & other responsibilities you have been putting off.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE



FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES & BE OPTIMISTIC



FORGIVE OTHERS. FORGIVE YOURSELF



Take slow, mindful breaths.

Eat healthy food.

exercise!



Practice daily hygiene.

Resolve conflict peacefully & use I-Statements.



ASK FOR HELP & SUPPORT

HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET.



Remind yourself that your bravery is stronger than your fear.

FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS, NOT PROBLEMS.



TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

Set goals & work towards them, step by step.



Get enough sleep.

Say what you want, need & hope for.



Try again when something doesn't work out the way you hoped it would.



Be responsible for your choices at school & at home.



SAY, THANK YOU WHEN SOMEONE COMPLEMENTS YOU.

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER.

Give yourself a hug.



Start a new hobby or sport. Join a club at school.



SPEND TIME WITH CARING ADULTS

Limit how much time you spend in front of screens.



COMPLETE YOUR SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS.



HELP OTHERS



DO random acts of kindness.



AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS



WAYS TO CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

What is a more helpful thought?

What is another possibility?

What would the people who care about me say?

What is the worst that could really happen?

If my friend had this thought, what would I tell them?

Can I be 100% sure this is true?

If the worst really did happen, what could I do to deal with it and who could help me?

What is the best possible outcome?

