

BUILDING SCHOOLS OF GREAT BELONGING

brings you

"YOU'VE GOT THIS!" WORRY-COPING KIT

Caregiver's go-to guide to support children with worries

Everyone experiences worry, sometimes. The role of the caregiver is to help children develop skills and confidence to cope with worries. This is a journey, and this resource is your guide.

Striving towards regular school attendance for all

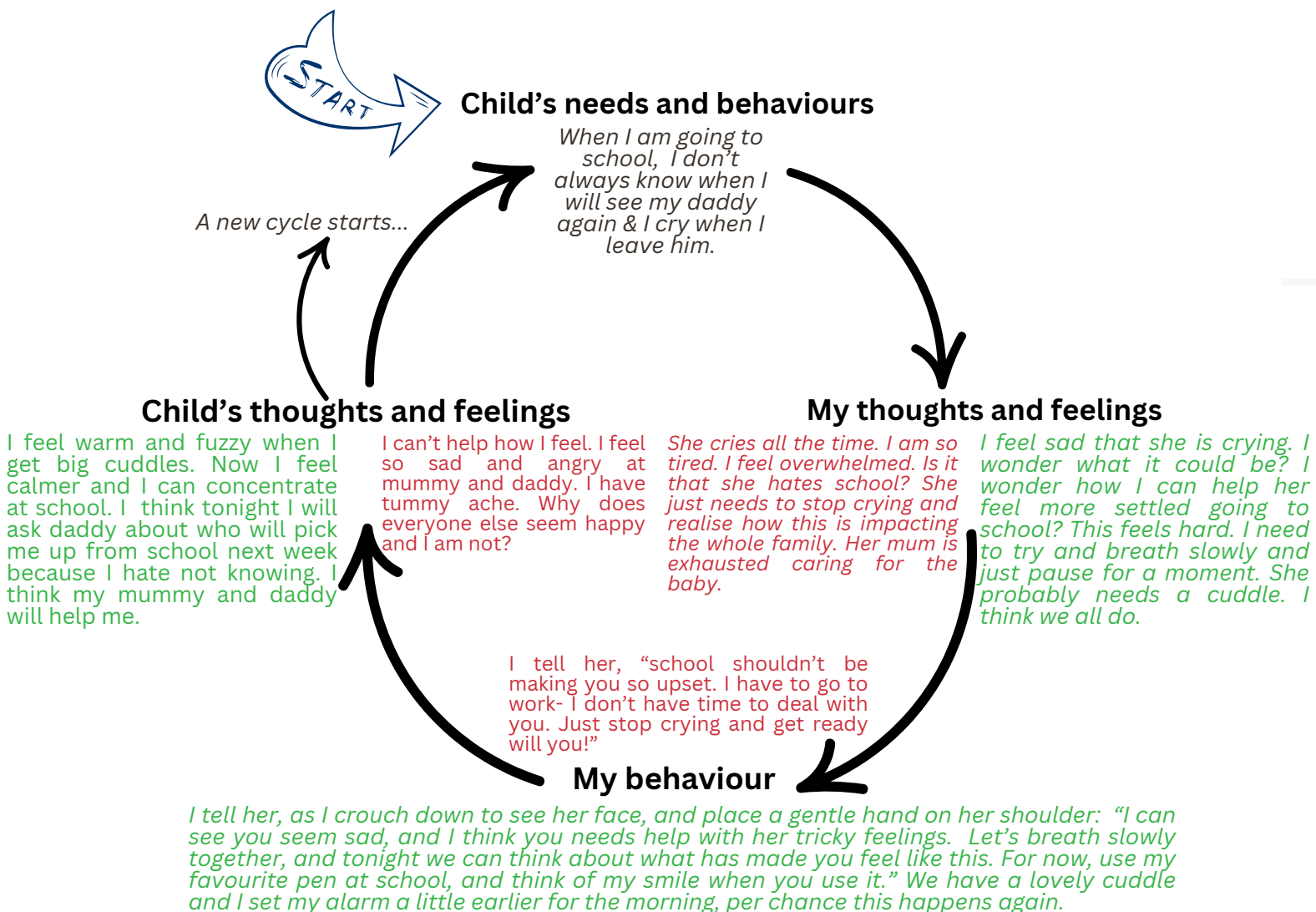
CONTENTS & OVERVIEW

CAREGIVER IMPACT CYCLE	This is your starting point as a caregiver: Your thoughts and feelings impact your behaviour and this impacts other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Their thoughts and feelings are processed by you (thoughts and feelings) and respond to (behaviour). This cycle highlights the importance of carefully responding to children's worries.
SUPER TIPS...	What can you do when children worry and it impacting their day to day life? Read the bumper 3-page Super Tips for Super-Caregivers of Super-Great Children Who Worry (or 'super tips' for short!)
SLOW BREATHING	Breathing slowly helps us calm our mind and bodies. When children feel heightened, use a slow breathing technique to help them feel calmer. They work best when practiced every day, even when feeling calm. When calm, our logical 'thinking brain' is easier to access for things like problem solving.
MY WORRY TIME	Worry Time is a focused moment where children can (with help from an adult, for some children) explore their worries including their thoughts, feelings and possible solutions. Worry Time occurs at a planned time, so that children begin to learn and accept that they are capable of experiencing a worry without needing to find an immediate solution.
WORRY TREE	Some worries we <i>can</i> do something about, and some worries we <i>can't</i> . It is helpful to support children to identify the difference between what is and what is not within our control or influence, because they require different responses. The Worry Tree helps conversations remain focused on moving forward, rather than dwelling on the worry. This can be used as a quick aide to structure an adults support for a child 'in the moment' and if calm enough to do so, or during Worry Time.
MY WORRIES TO LET GO	When we have no influence or control over something which is making us worry, we can try to learn to ' <i>let the worry go</i> '. For children, it can be helpful to imagine writing this on a balloon, and visualise it floating away.
MY WORRY JAR	When there are worries that we can do something about, add them to the jar to be looked at during Worry Time, if they do not need immediate attention. Explore the contents of the Worry Jar during Worry Time.
THOUGHT RECORD	Unpicking negative thought patterns, by exploring 'facts' or 'evidence' can help us challenge them. The Thought Record can be used as a prompt to challenge children's thought patterns and explore positive self-talk options.

THE CAREGIVER IMPACT CYCLE

Communication is a two-way street. So let's think about this in some detail

No caregiver wants to 'make it worse' when children are showing signs of worry such as saying 'I don't want to go to school today'. However, your thoughts and feelings do have an impact on how you respond. So, be mindful of this and consider your own thoughts and feelings before or when responding to children. Be kind to yourself when you get it wrong too. No one is perfect. Children learn from watching adults learn and grow.



"BUT THEY JUST WON'T LISTEN"

When a child is feeling big emotions, such as panic, stress, sadness and worry their communication skills are impacted. They may find it harder to listen, to speak clearly, to explain how they feel or even control big emotions such as frustration. This can feel frustrating for the adult too, which may impact how able they are to communicate. This is when we can hit a communication breakdown. We understand that this can be hard for everyone involved. So, before we communicate (talk about the problem), we need to feel calm and connected. Breathing exercises are a great mind and body calmer.

FACING IT TOGETHER

If you are feeling overwhelmed or 'at a loss', we hope this kit will help. Avoidance rarely helps in these situations. If you think your child has a worry about school, we need to support them to learn that they can cope.

for SUPER-TIPS of SUPER-CAREGIVERS SUPER-GREAT CHILDREN who worry

Is your child a worrier? Is that a worry for you? Firstly...let's get prepared by following these 5 steps.

1 Get your Worry Coping Kit. Read it. Use it for your own worries if you need to (people of all ages experience worries). Seek support where you need it.

2 At a calm moment (not too close to bed time), when you have time to take things slowly, open up a conversation about worries. Explain that everyone worries and we can cope with worries but sometimes we need a little extra help when we experience them.

3 Look at the Worry Tree together. Explain about Worry Time and the Worry Jar too. Explain that avoiding dealing with worries, or thing that make us worry, doesn't help us learn how best to cope, so as a team, you will learn to cope. Explain that some worries we have to 'let go' as we cannot do anything about them. Some we can address, with a plan.

4 Chat about what worries can make us feel sad, nervous or frustrated. Explore how it can make our bodies feel, such as experiencing tummy ache, or tense hands. Test out different slow breathing exercises and decide which one is your favourites.

5 End your chat with an example of when they or you have experienced a worry, and coped. Agree when you will have worry time (at a frequency which feel appropriate) and how you will calm the worry brain down with slow breathing and a reminder 'I will deal with this worry at worry time'.

Each time a child navigates a worry, they learn to trust their own ability to cope. However, they might need your help at first. So let's explore how to listen closely to children, how to communicate empathy and how to support them to be curious about their thoughts and possible solutions.

LISTEN CLOSELY

Think about your eye contact and how much the child usually finds this helpful, or not.

Don't interrupt children as they speak, and avoid offering to complete their sentences. Give them time to work out what they want to say.

Use verbal cues to communicate that you are listening, particularly if there is limited eye contact ('ah' 'ok').

If you are uncertain of something, clarify things by asking them 'can you help me understand by explaining a different way?'

When you are listening, don't be tempted to try and problem solve. Often, children just want to express themselves, or may even identify their own solution.

Listen to how children speak as they may use words which we place a different meaning on. For example, they may use 'hate' to express a dislike for something.

COMMUNICATE EMPATHY

"It will be fine."



"Forget about it."

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"I can see why this might feel scary."

"Stop worrying."

"I am sorry to hear this."

"It sounds like you are worried. I can see why."

"Yeah, this happened to me before, and I am fine."

"This sounds like a difficult experience."

"Thank you for sharing this with me. It sounds difficult"



ASK CURIOUS QUESTIONS

Have you felt like this before?

What might the other person have been thinking?

What might happen next if nothing changes?

Who might be best placed to help you?

What would you like to be change?

I wonder what you could do differently to help you feel better about this?

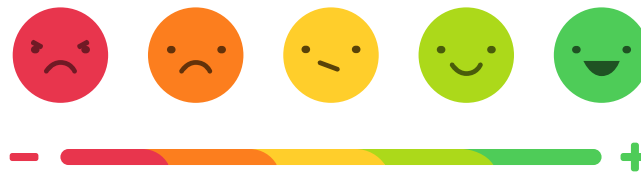
EXPLORE EXCEPTIONS

Reminding children that they have previously felt differently, or found a solution and overcome something similar by asking: *“Can you tell me about a time when the same thing happened but you felt differently? I wonder why you felt differently. How did you find a solution?”*



SCALE WORRIES

Exploring the size of children’s worries, by ordering them from big to small, or by asking scaling questions can help caregivers understand the size of the problem, as perceived by the child.



WHAT IS IN YOUR TOOL BAG?

Encourage children to consider what resources they have to problem solve, such as:

I can ignore it.

I can walk away, and take deep breaths.

I can add it to my worry jar and talk about it at Worry Time.

I can ask for help.

SIT WITH THE WORRY FOR A WHILE



Not all problems have or need an immediate response from a caregiver. Whilst we seek to help children feel free from being overwhelmed or pre-occupied by worries, we must try and do the same. Whilst not always easy, allowing time to pass can help us think and respond differently.

REMEMBER

You are teaching your child to learn to experience worries in a way which they can cope with. So, don’t rush to offer an adult-led solution, unless you feel it is proportionate and necessary.

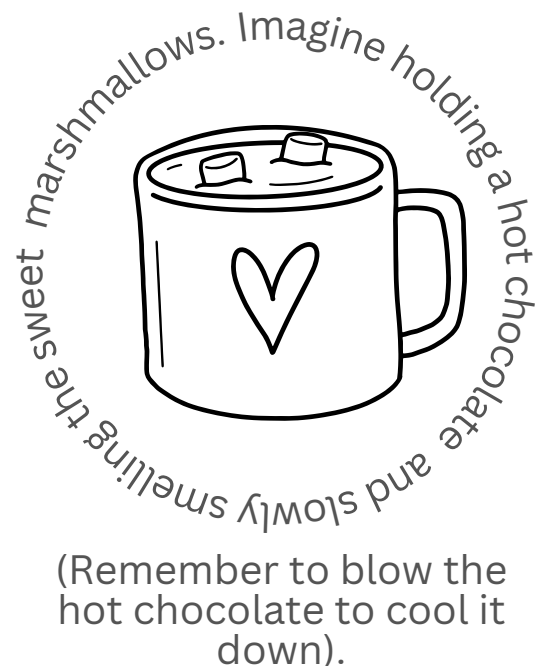
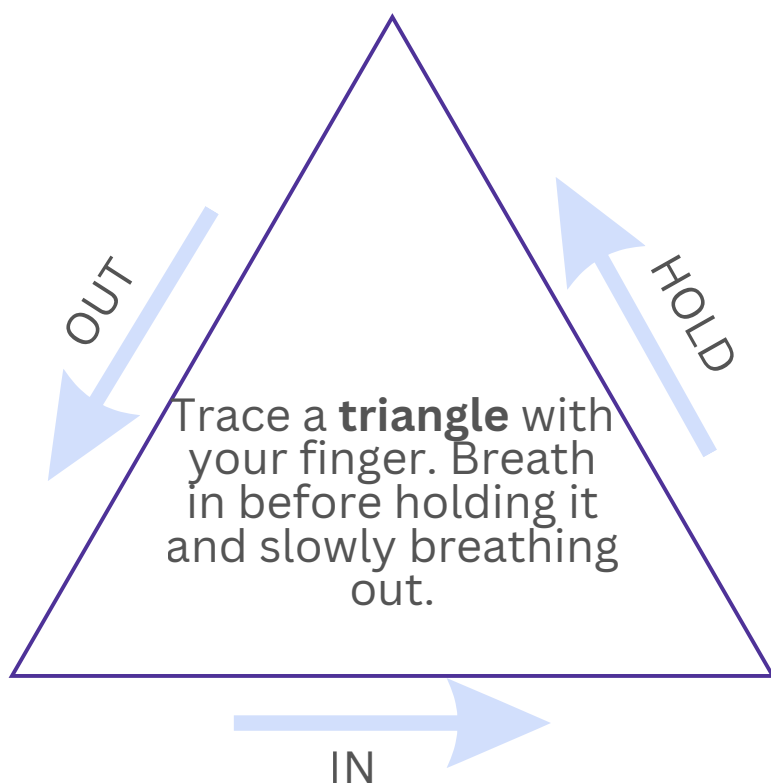
SLOW BREATHING

Slowing down your breathing can help you feel calm. It only takes a few moments, and can help you think with a calmed mind.

Try **blowing bubbles** (real or imaginary). Blow them super slow and watch them float away, one by one.



Lay down and shut your eyes. Take slow deep breaths whilst listening to your favourite chill out song.



WORRY TIME

Your time to process the worries which have popped into your head during the day



My worry time is

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WORRY TIME TIPS

- ★ Chose the same time every day, but not too close to bedtime so that you still have time to relax and unwind before you fall asleep.
- ★ Use a worry tree if you need help to work out what worries you can or cannot do anything about.
- ★ Use your most creative thinking for finding solutions to the worries which you can do something about.
- ★ Don't let your worry time last longer than 20 minutes- remember this is about learning to cope.
- ★ Use this time to 'let go' of the worries that you cannot do anything about.

WORRY TREE

Use the Worry Tree to work out if a worry is something you can do something about



What am I worrying about?

Can I do anything
about the worry?

No

Yes

Take some big deep
breaths

Talk about it with a safe adult

Identify things which
help you relax and
feel happy, and do
them often

Make a plan about
your worry, with
help if you need it

Has this
helped?
If not, try the
steps again

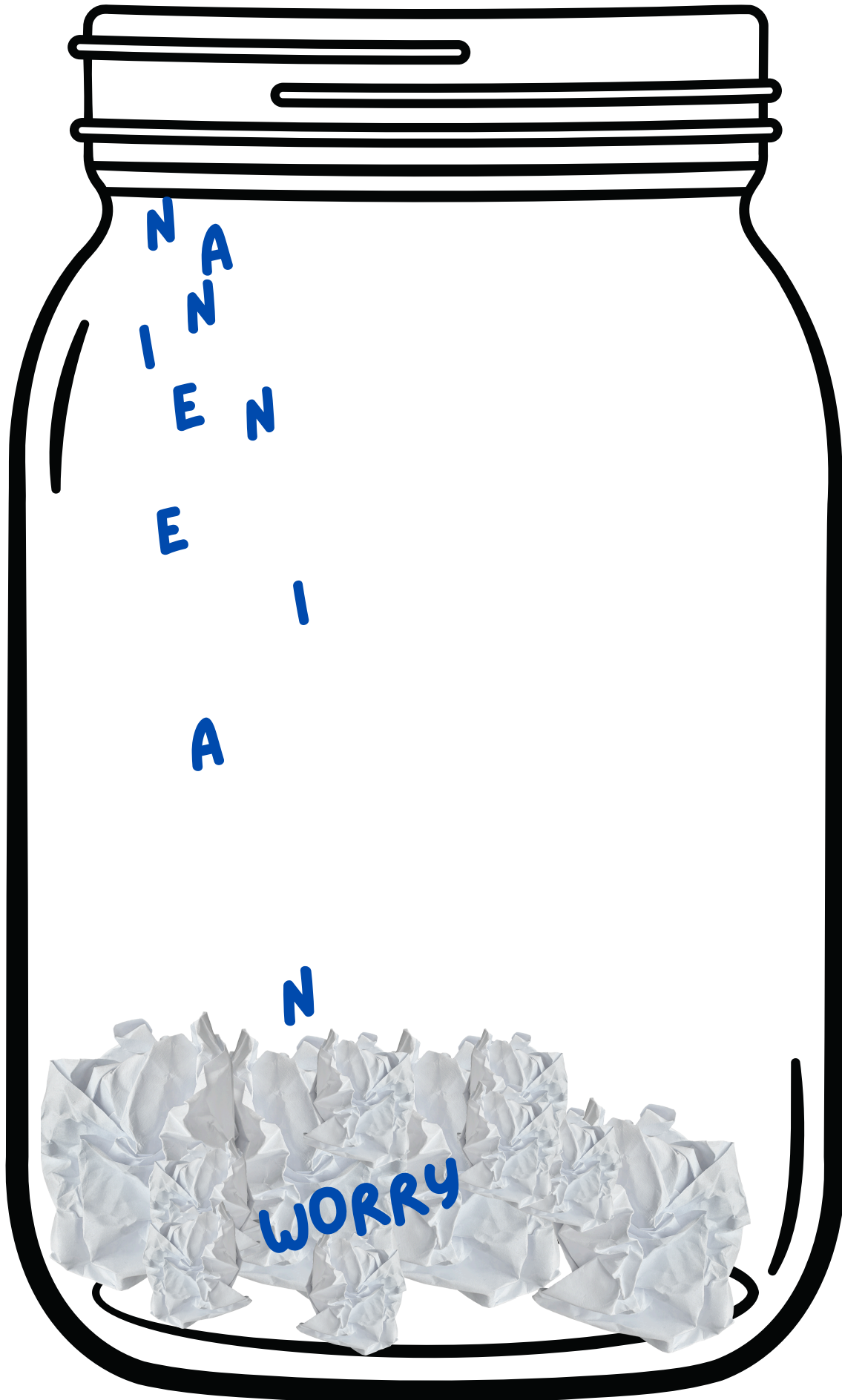
WORRIES TO LET GO

In the balloons, write down the worries that you cannot do anything about,
and let them go...



WORRY JAR

In the jar, write down the worries that you need help to address.
At Worry Time, design a plan to address the worries.



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THOUGHT RECORD

Working out what your thoughts are based on can help us work through them.

What is your thought? What are you thinking?

How did you feel at the time? How do you feel now?

What makes you think this? What is the evidence?

What other ways can you think about this?
