



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

MANAGING BIG FEELINGS

Psychology in Schools Team

NSFT

July 2023



Looking after yourself

- Emotional topics being covered today, including self-harm and suicide
- Do what you need to look after yourself
- Recording and resources will be shared with everyone who signed up for the workshop

Workshop Overview

- **WHAT** is the prevalence of emotional problems in neurodivergent children?
- **WHY** might neurodivergent children struggle with their emotions?
- **HOW** can you help your child manage their big feelings?



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What big feelings have you noticed in your child?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

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How do your child's big feelings affect you and your family?

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Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of mental health problems

Increased risk of anxiety

Increased risk of depression

Please be aware next slide involves discussion of self-harm and suicide

Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of self-harm and suicide

- Rates of self-harm, suicidal thinking and attempts are sadly higher for neurodivergent children
- For some families, helping managing risk of self-harm is an important part of supporting their neurodivergent child with their emotions



Why are emotional problems more common?

- Emotional literacy
- Emotion dysregulation
- Environment and experiences

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How do you think your child's neurodivergence impacts on their emotions?

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Emotional Literacy

- Difficulty with understanding what emotion they are feeling
- Difficulty communicating to others how they are feeling



Nauseous

Self-harm

Breaking things

Eating problems

Violence

Withdrawn

Crying

Avoiding school

Irritable

Confused

Seeking safety

Shame

Uncertainty

Needing to feel loved

Sadness

Academic problems

Hopelessness

Low self-esteem

Tired

Bored

Anger

Feeling left out

Overwhelmed

Sensory overload

Needing attention

In pain

Jealousy

Fear

Trauma memories

Hungry

Bullying

Lonely

Friendship fall out

Embarrassed

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What might trigger your child's big feelings?

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The Brain House

Upstairs brain

- The control tower

Downstairs brain

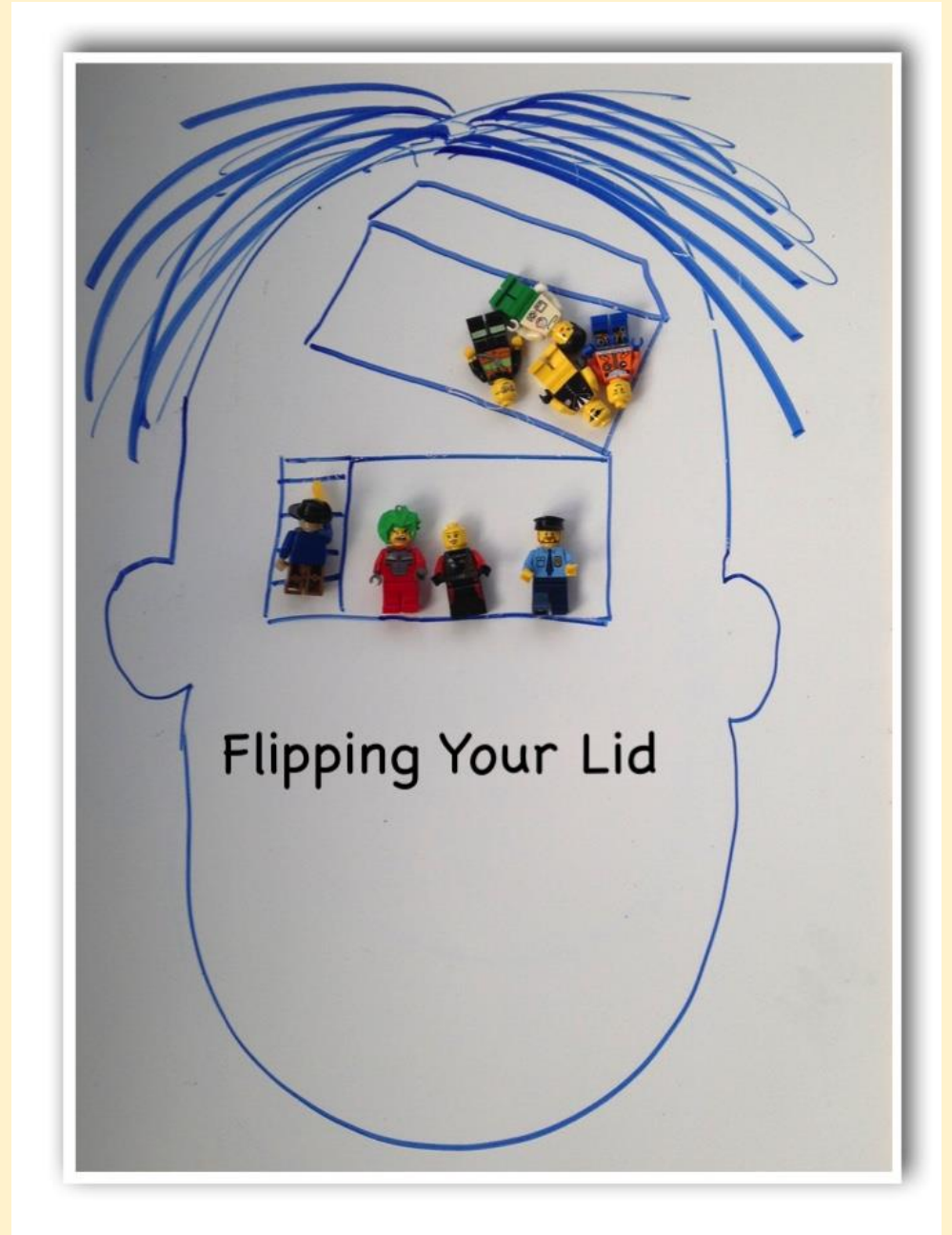
- The alarm system



Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison

Flipping The Lid

- This is what happens when people get overwhelmed by big feelings
- We lose access to the upstairs part of our brain
- When this happens children no longer have access to the part of their brain that helps them to make good decisions



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What do you notice when your child flips their lid?

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Brain house in neurodivergent children

More sensitive
to some stimuli

Impulsivity

Innate difficulty
with emotion
regulation

Difficulty
understanding
big feelings

More frequent
negative
experiences



Neurodivergent Experiences

- School problems e.g. difficulty learning, sensory overwhelm, getting in trouble, masking – trying to fit into ‘neurotypical box’ expected at school
- Social difficulties e.g. lonely, friendship problems, bullying, being taken advantage of by peers

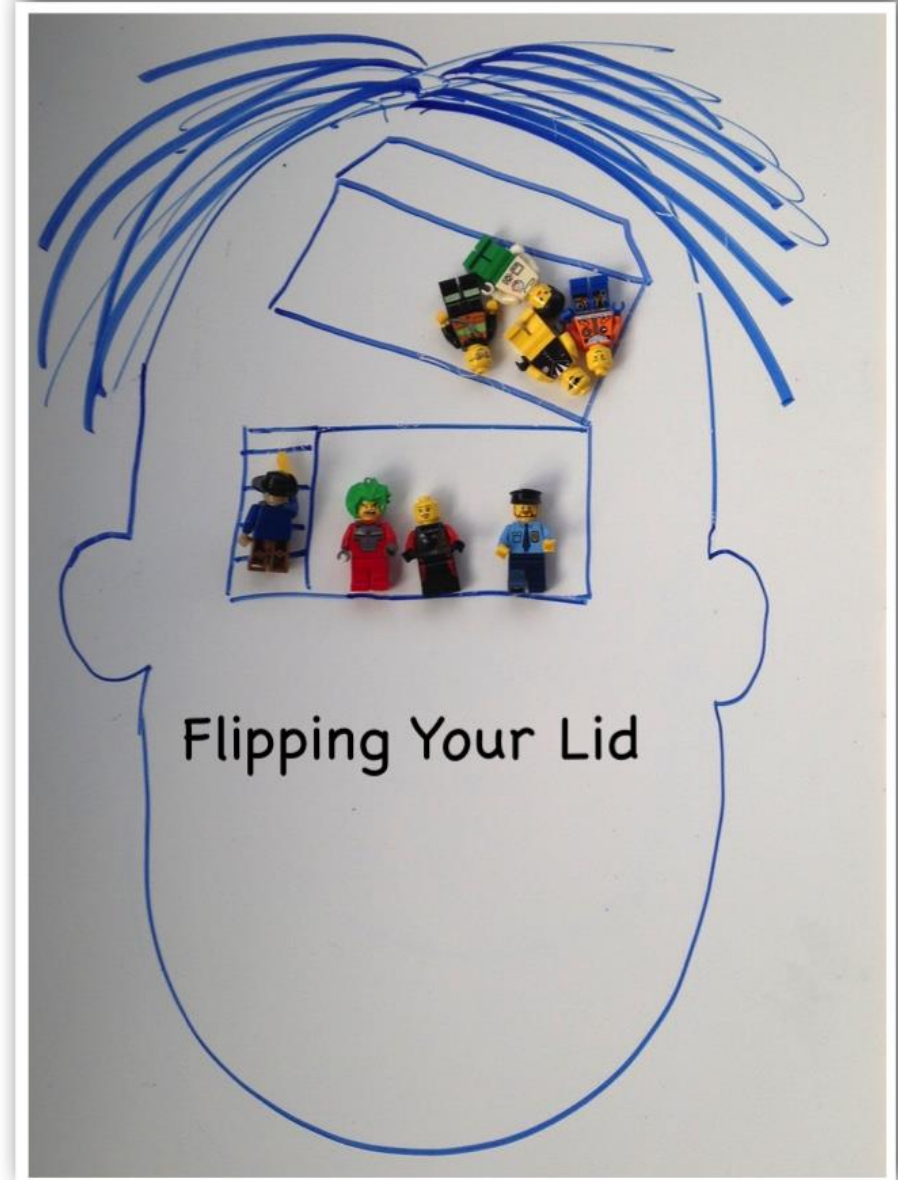
How to help your child manage their big feelings

- Connection before correction
- Building emotional literacy
- Addressing triggers
- Calming and relaxation
- General family wellbeing



Connection before Correction

- When children are overwhelmed by big feelings, they will not be able to hear us until the thinking part of the brain is back online
- We can help with this by prioritizing connection over correction
- Coming alongside your child to help them regulate, becoming calm before deciding what to do next



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What makes it difficult to do this?

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What helps your child when they have flipped their lid?

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Building emotional literacy



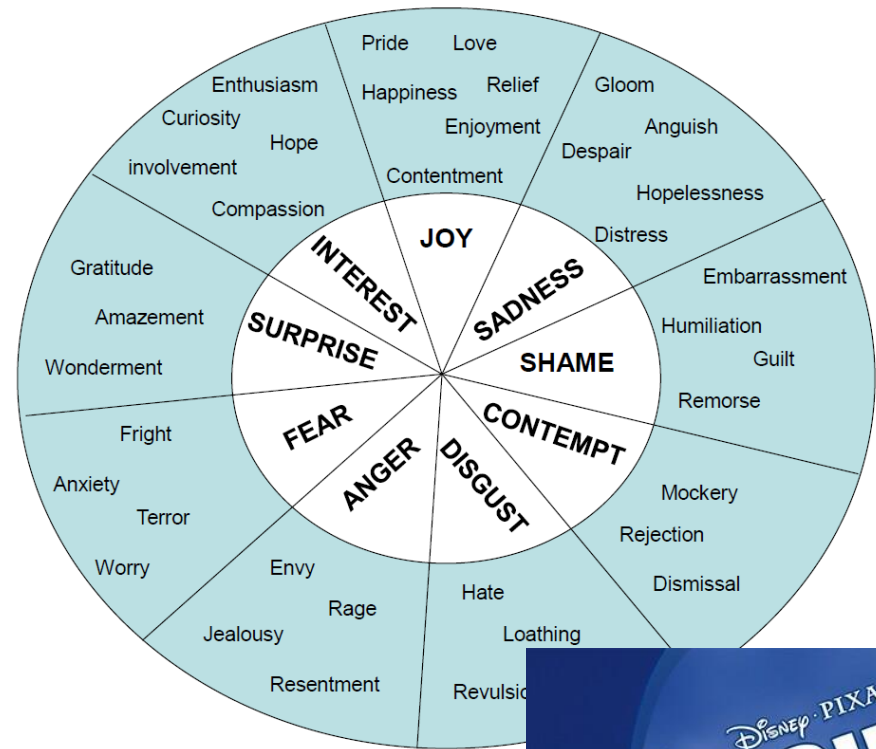
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How do you help your child identify and communicate their emotions?

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Identifying emotions



YouTube GB Search

NAME THAT EMOTION

Then you're ready to play Name That Emotion!

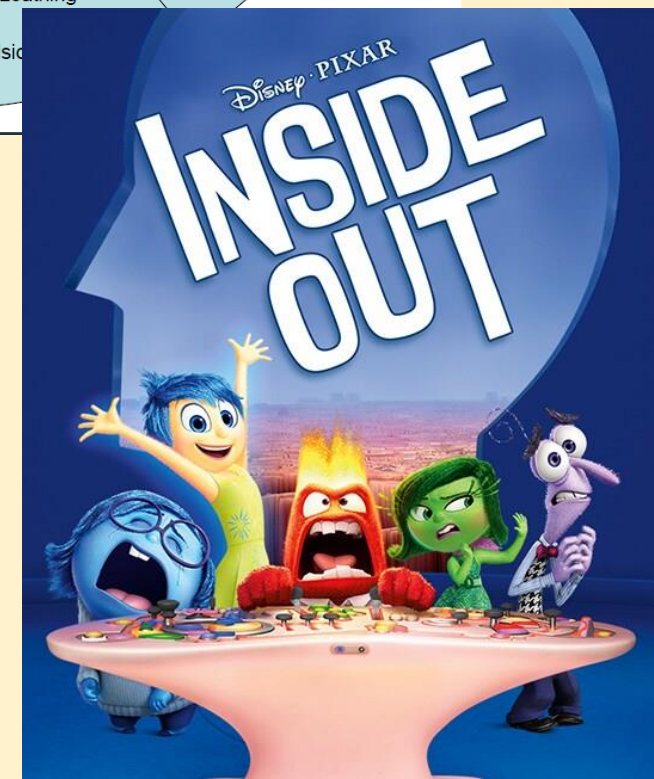
Sesame Street

Sesame Street 23.3M subscribers

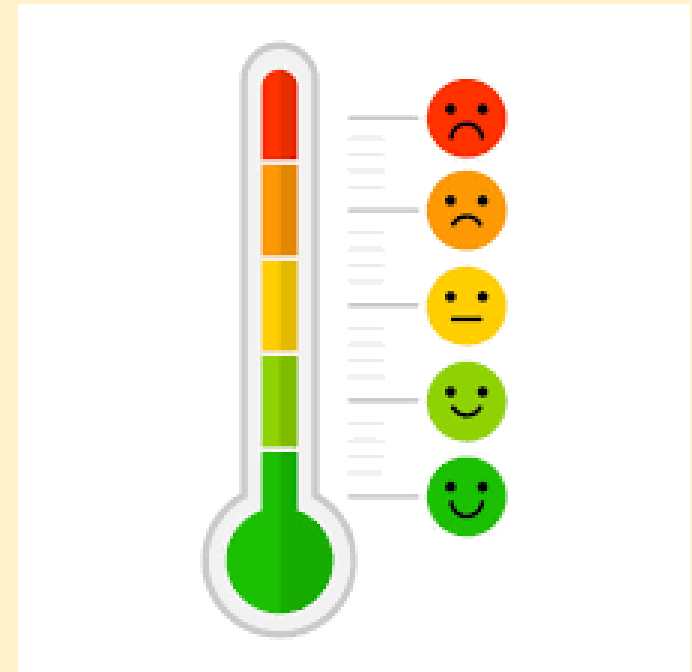
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Share



Communicating emotions



Addressing triggers

- Work out together what the triggers are
- Reducing sensory distress
- May need to support your child in navigating their friendships
- Increasing social support – clubs based on hobbies, neurodivergent communities, school mentoring/pastoral support



Working together with schools

- Masking at school may mean emotional problems are less obvious
- Sharing your understanding and strategies
- Discuss with school reasonable adaptations – remember needs-based not diagnosis based!
- SENDIASS can help



Calming and Regulation

- Breathing techniques
- Grounding techniques - bringing into present moment
- Sensory regulation



Positive self-talk

- Celebrating their successes and strengths
- Encouraging and modelling positive self-talk
- Being your child's champion!





Importance of your own wellbeing

- If you are feeling dysregulated it's very difficult to support a young person to regulate themselves
- Filling up our own resource bucket first
- Emotional contagion

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How do you fill up your own resource bucket?

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General family wellbeing



SLEEP



HEALTHY DIET



EXERCISE



SOCIAL
CONNECTION

Resources and support

Mental health

- YoungMinds mental health charity for children and young people
www.youngminds.org.uk
- Apps: Headspace, Calm, Combined Mind, Sleepio, Clear Fear (anxiety), Move Mood
- The Source information and advice for young people in Suffolk
www.thesource.me.uk
- Kooth free online counselling for ages 11-25 in Suffolk www.kooth.com
- Suffolk Support and self-help guide – local services

Self-harm and suicide

- Alumina free online self-harm support group for 11-19 year olds
www.selfharm.co.uk
- Calm Harm an award-winning app developed to help teenagers manage the urge to self-harm
- Papyrus “Supporting your child: self-harm and suicide” a guide for parents and carers www.papyrus-uk.org
- [Suffolk] *if your child needs urgent mental health support you can call the First Response Service **111 option 2**, free service available 24/7*

CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

- **How the brain develops** – Tuesday 8th August 6pm
- **Understanding and managing behaviour** – Thursday 7th September 1pm
- Other workshops dates TBC: impact of early life stress/trauma, sensory processing, eating difficulties, communication difficulties, cognitive difficulties, sleep problems, using technology and social relationships

OTHER FREE WORKSHOPS

Psychology in Schools Team

Upcoming live parent workshops on mental health:

- Supporting our young people with anxiety
- Supporting our young people with eating difficulties
- Supporting children/adolescents (11 years+) with sleep

Recorded previous workshops on NSFT YouTube:

- Low mood, school avoidance, tics and Tourette's, self-harm, emotion regulation, trauma, OCD, managing exam stress and more!

www.nsft.uk/workshops Eventbrite page

<https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops> All recorded workshops