



Parental Wellbeing when Caring for Young Children

Part 2

Strategies to Promote your Emotional Wellbeing

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM (MHST)
Emotional Health Service
Achieving for Children
42 York Street
London TW1 3BW



South West London
Clinical Commissioning Group



achieving
for children



Are you OK
Kingston?



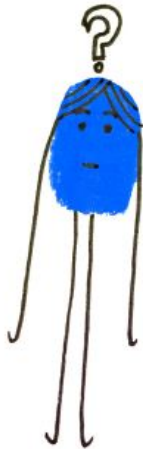
Are you OK
Richmond?



Objectives

Part 1

Understanding the
impact of parenting
on wellbeing



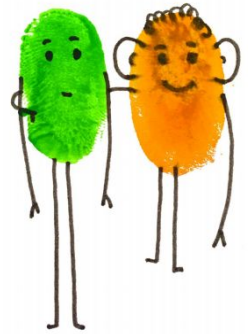
Part 2

Strategies to
promote emotional
wellbeing



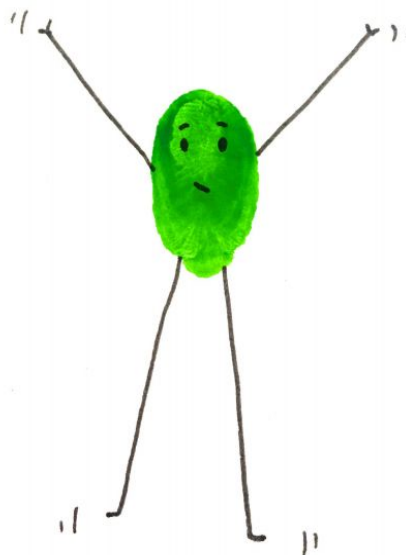


- As we learned in the previous session, most parents experience parenting stress at some stage.
- Stress impacts not only your own wellbeing but the wellbeing of your child
- We can learn strategies that support you to manage your stress, problem solve and find support and resources





What can you do?





Connect with others



Healthy relationships are important for your mental wellbeing...

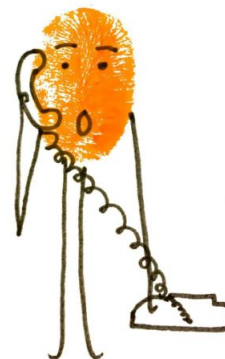
They can:

- Help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- Provide emotional support and allow you to support others

What can we do to support this?

Stay in touch with friends and family via:

- Phone
- Video calling
- Sending cards and letters
- Emails and text messages
- Meeting face to face whilst social distancing



Make it part of your routine to Skype or call people.

Take notice of your

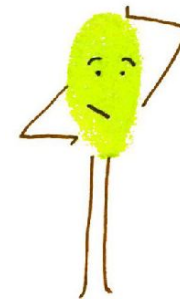


Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. You can pay attention to...

**The world around
you**



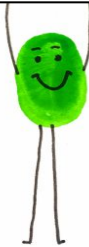
**Thoughts and
feelings**





Notice and connect to the world around you

Try it...



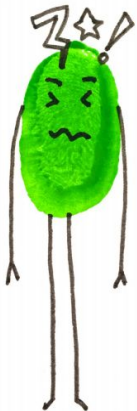
Here are some short exercises to help you increase your awareness of the world around you...

- Notice all the things around you that are the colour green
- Name all of the things around you beginning with the letter 'L'.
- Name something you can see, hear, smell, taste and feel



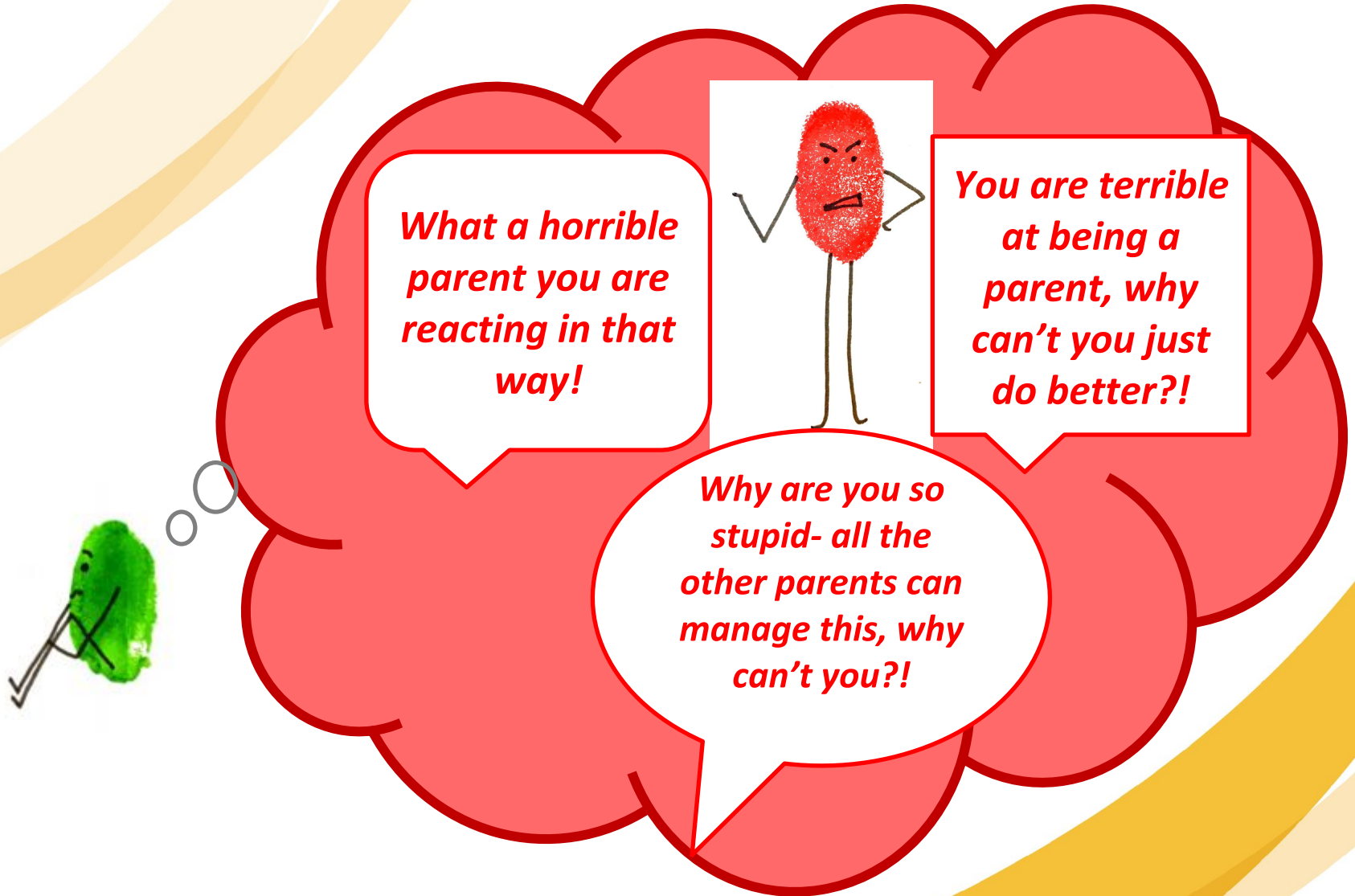
Notice your Thoughts

- We can all have upsetting or negative thoughts when we don't want to and it is understandable that we would want to try and get rid of them.
- But...the more we try and ignore them, the more frequent they are and the louder they are when they return.
- Think of them like a child who is playing up for your attention.
- We can quieten our thoughts by acknowledging them.
- This does not mean we have to agree with what they are saying





Inner Critic



Our inner critic tends to shout louder when we feel under pressure or feel stressed



Dealing with the Inner Critic

A more mindful outlook helps you to become aware of the inner critic, acknowledge the voice and accept it for what it is.

Just a voice!!!
It is not the truth

Micro-practice

Breathe in “I do my best”

Breathe out. “I let go of the rest”



Stop

Take a few deep breaths

Observe

Proceed and let go



Using positive affirmations



As we noticed, it can be easy to focus in on the negatives. When we do this too often, we can end up using a lot of negative self-talk. We might tell ourselves things like:

A dark gray speech bubble with a red border containing the text "I am not good enough".

I am not
good
enough

A light gray speech bubble with a red border containing the text "I always fail".

I always
fail

A dark gray speech bubble with a red border containing the text "I am such a bad parent".

I am such
a bad
parent

Negative self-talk or our “inner critic” reinforces low mood and makes it hard to feel like our parenting is good enough. Although it might be difficult to stop these thoughts entirely, we can balance them out by using positive affirmations.



Using positive affirmations

TAKE
NOTICE

I am
learning

I am
trying
my best

I am
capable

I am
focused

I cannot
do it
YET!

I can
relax
and
breathe

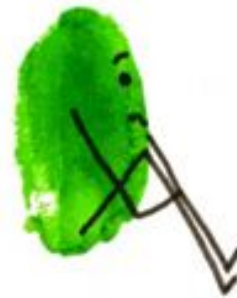
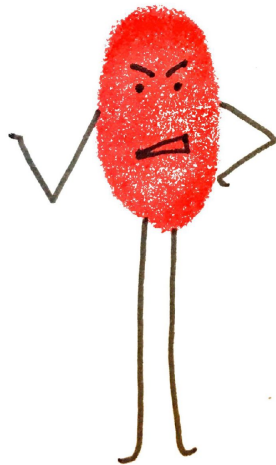
I can
have
another
go

I can
take my
time

I trust
myself

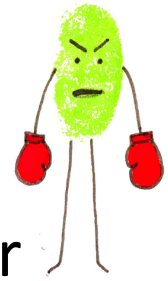
I put in
the
effort

Another strategy we can use to manage stress is to take notice of our reactions to our children, in particular when they appear to be out of proportion to the current situation. Understanding this can contribute to reducing stressful interactions with your children and increase our confidence in your approach to parenting





Triggers



- **Trigger-** Something that significantly impacts your emotional state and that can influence your behaviour and your thoughts.
- **Reaction-** Is often automatic and can feel out of proportion.
- It takes lots of practice to control how we react, but it is really **positive** that we can learn to recognise our ‘triggers’ and control our reactions, as it promotes healthy wellbeing and a stronger and more healthy attachment with our children
- By exploring your triggers you are addressing **your core needs** as parents rather than transferring this onto your child



Why do we have Triggers?

Triggers are different for everybody.

You are not responding to the child's behaviour, you are responding to **what their behaviour means for you**, as a result of your own past experiences

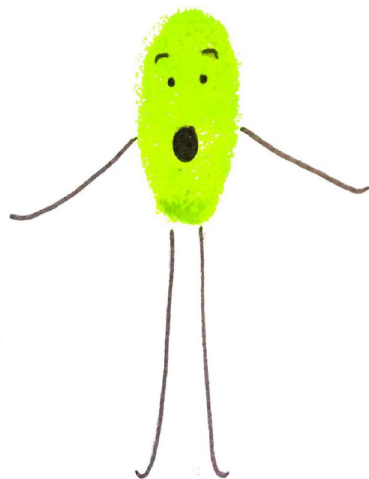
Common triggers include:

- **Emotions**- when we feel like we don't know how to handle them
- **De-skilled as a parent**- perhaps when your usual strategies fail and you are unable to manage your child's behaviour you may react by needing to be in control of the child, the activity or others involved.
- **Protection**- Things you want to protect them from as a result of your own negative experiences or fears

Let's look at an example...

Parenting challenge:

Child is clinging to you and crying because they don't want to go to school



Your child's emotional expression may trigger your own experience of dependence and vulnerability and how the adults around you responded to your needs when you were a child.

Yell at your child to stop being so silly and to stop crying

Continue cycle by being hard on yourself.
No self compassion and so reduced compassion for child

Realise that you are yelling, Inner critic comes out and tells you 'You're such a rubbish parent'



What can you do?

- **Identify Triggers**

Note down when you have strong reactions to certain behaviours- notice any patterns.

- **Understand Triggers**

How do you feel and what does this remind you of? What past memories does it bring up for you?

- **Focus on Unmet Needs**

What do you need? Take time for yourself, even if it is for 5 minutes

- **Re-parent Yourself**

Practice self compassion and understanding

- **Take Time**

Be kind to yourself. Change takes time.



Top Tip



Remember that learning to manage your triggers takes time...

It can be important to find a way to press the **pause** button so that you can **respond** rather than **react**.

If you feel like you are being triggered, you could take a deep breathe, or take yourself somewhere private like the bathroom to have a few moments to calm yourself

It can be helpful to communicate with your child by saying 'I'm finding this difficult, please give me a moment'.

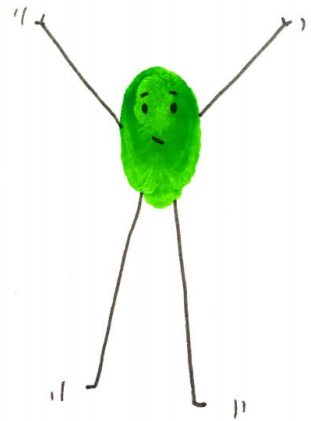
Take notice of your body

TAKE
NOTICE

Listen to your body as well as your mind

Taking notice of meeting your basic needs:

- Get a good night's sleep – on a regular basis!
- Have a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly

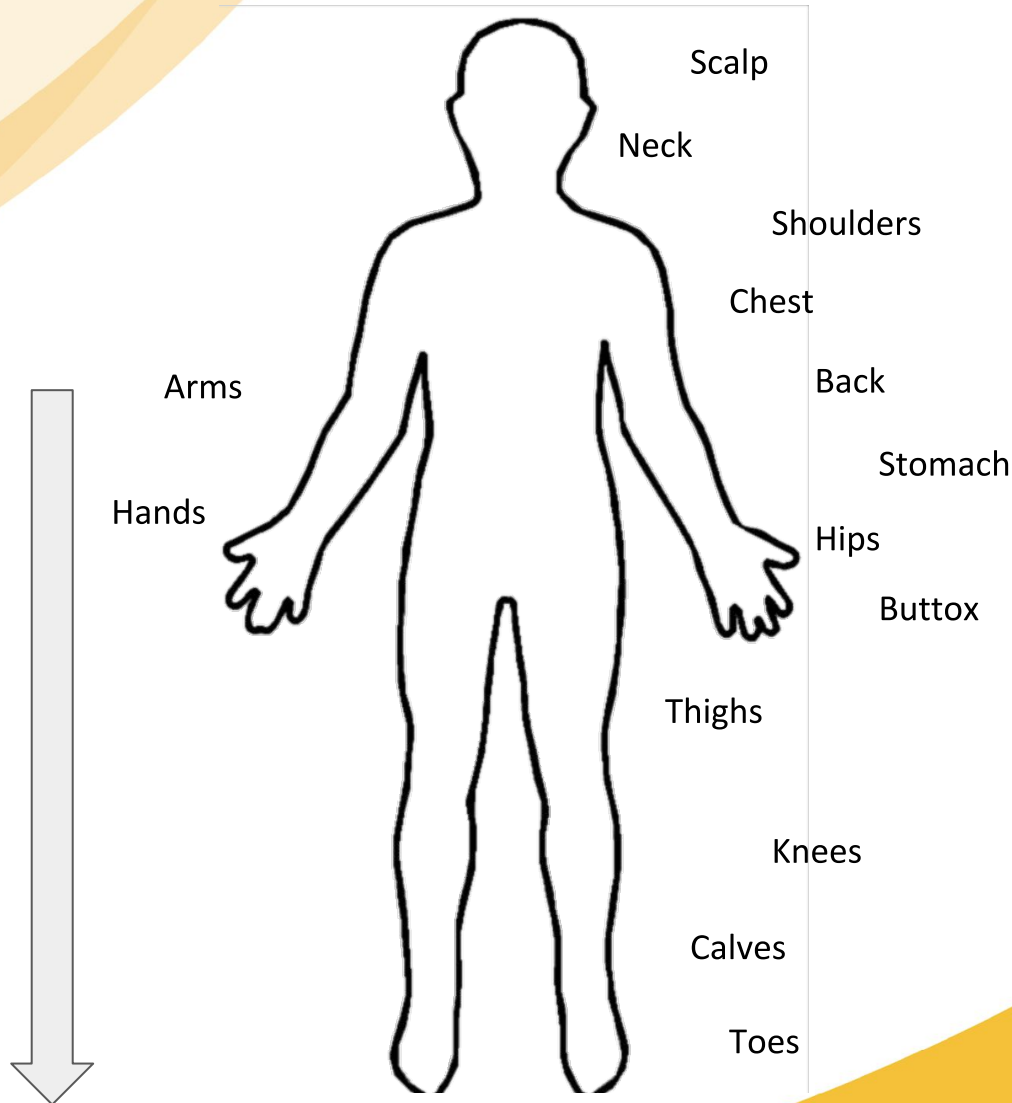


This can help you feel more in control and more able to cope

Take notice of your body

TAKE
NOTICE

Try a body scan



Try it...





Getting active:

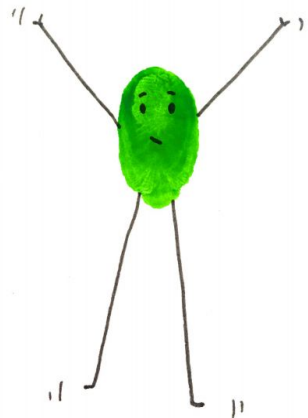


Research has demonstrated how exercise supports mental wellbeing...

Physical activity can help people with mild depression. Evidence shows it can also help protect people against anxiety.

Physical activity is thought to cause chemical changes in the brain, which can help to positively change our mood.

Improves wellbeing because it brings about a sense of greater self-control, motivation and the ability to rise to a challenge.



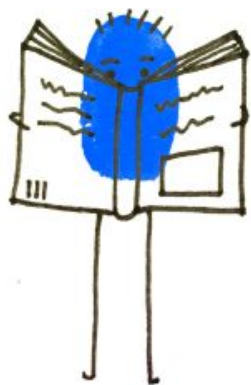


Keep learning



Research shows that learning new skills can improve our mental wellbeing by:

- Boosting self-confidence
- Self-worth



Some of the things you could try include:

- Cooking a new recipe
- Work on a DIY project
- Try out a new hobby
- Reflect on your feelings and experiences
- Read a self help book

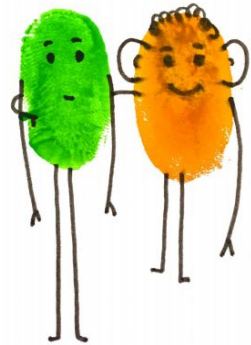


Give



Research suggests that acts of giving, kindness and gratitude can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- Improve your relationships and interactions with other people
- Build resilience
- Improve self esteem



Another way to give, is to give yourself a break!



What We've Learnt

- We can **CONNECT**, **NOTICE**, **BE ACTIVE**, **KEEP LEARNING** and **GIVE** as ways to support our wellbeing
- We can **notice and focus** on the present moment to manage worried thoughts
- Our **inner critic is untruthful** and casts harsh judgements. We can use positive affirmations to challenge it
- We can support our well being by incorporating some of these strategies into our daily routines for just a few minutes a day
- Change doesn't happen instantly but **you can learn** to do things differently



Remember..



To do a body scan

-

To use the environment to reconnect to present moment

-

Most importantly...remember you deserve to have healthy wellbeing!

Resources

Mental Health Foundation

Has info on mindfulness and an online course at its dedicated website Be Mindful, see www.bemindful.co.uk. This includes a free 'stress test' and an introduction to its online course.

Young Minds

Provide support for carers on a range of topics including mental health and life events which may impact on your children's' lives.

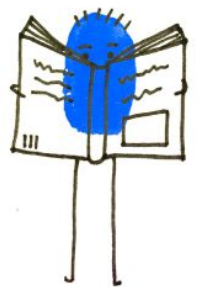
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/>

Parenting

- <https://www.parentingscience.com/parenting-stress.html> Provides helpful information on parenting stress
- <http://www.understandingchildhood.net/posts/the-childs-experience-of-primary-school/>
- <https://www.racheous.com/respectful-parenting/triggered/>

Books

- **'The Whole Brain Child'** by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- **'Parenting stress'** by Kirby D. Deater-Deckard
- **'Kids Pick Up On Everything: How Parental Stress Is Toxic To Kids'** by David Code



Resources

<https://www.rethink.org>

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>

<https://www.depressionalliance.org>

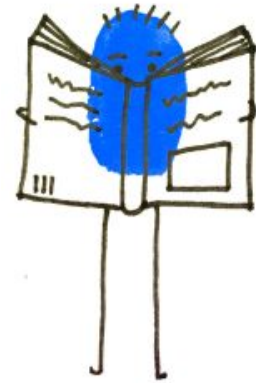
<https://www.samaritans.org>

CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: www.thecalmzone.net



Smartphone Apps



Oak

Oak is designed to fit into your busy life. Guided meditations starting at just 5-minutes in length. If you're on the go, decompress with breathing exercises that can be practiced anywhere. For those with trouble sleeping, fall asleep to our background sounds like distant rain, crackling fire, white noise and many more.



Headspace

Offers 10 free mindfulness exercises with audio and excellent graphics. Advanced exercises require subscription fee. Sessions fit into everyday life, and app offers reminders and a personal progress page. Recommend for anyone experiencing mild to moderate stress, anxiety or low mood.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihO02wUzgkc>



Stop, Breathe, Think

A straight forward app that provides short mindfulness and meditation exercises with good graphics. User can choose different audios depending on mood, and rate mood before and after. Recommend for anyone experiencing mild to moderate stress, anxiety or low mood.



Calm

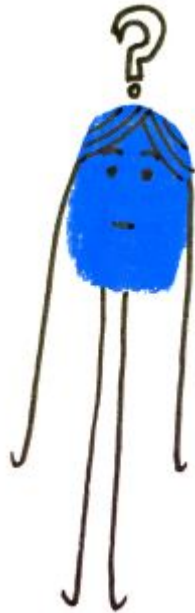
A user-friendly app that provides guided audio meditation, relaxation and mindfulness tracks & exercises. App opens with view of sea and sound of waves. Suitable for people experiencing stress or mild anxiety or low mood



SAM

SAM will help you to understand what causes your anxiety, monitor your anxious thoughts and behaviour over time and manage your anxiety through self-help exercises and private reflection.

Questions - Ideas - Feedback



MHST@achievingforchildren.org.uk

