



Parental Wellbeing when Caring for Young Children

Part 1

Understanding the impact
of parenting on wellbeing

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM (MHST)
Emotional Health Service
Achieving for Children
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South West London
Clinical Commissioning Group



achieving
for children



Are you OK
Kingston?



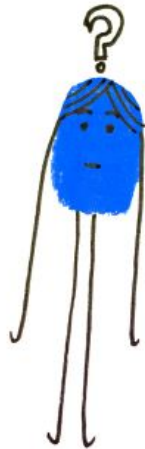
Are you OK
Richmond?



Objectives

Part 1

Understanding the
impact of parenting
on wellbeing



Part 2

Strategies to
promote emotional
wellbeing





What is parenting?

It is a challenge to find a definition which fully answers this question.
However, parenting can be defined as:

The active process of raising a child, including providing protection and care and “promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to the intricacies of raising a child and not exclusively a biological relationship.”

This workshop will consider specifically about how your role as a parent and the process of parenting impacts your mental health and wellbeing

Therefore we first need to understand what parenting involves to be able to understand how this impacts our mental health and wellbeing.

To think about parenting, we have to think about attachment.
This is because parenting is a function of attachment.



What is attachment?

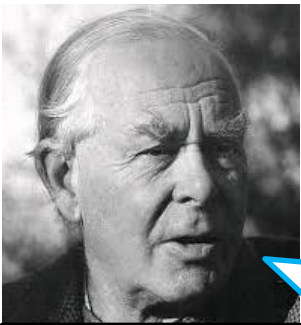
Attachment refers to the “*lasting psychological connectedness between human beings.*” Bowlby 1969

- Attachment is **co-created** between an infant and a primary caregiver
- Dependent on capacity of a caregiver to be predictable, consistent and emotionally available
- The aim of attachment behaviour is closeness or contact with the attachment figure with the associated feelings of security and safety.



The Secure Base

- This attachment relationship enabled you as the parent/caregiver to become a secure base for your child.
- You provided your infant with emotional security in fear-provoking situations
- Importantly, as a secure base, you supported your child to explore the world around them, promoting their natural curiosity about the world and encouraging social learning. They could reach out into the world, knowing you would be there to comfort them in times of need.



Bowlby, 1973

“Not only young children..., but human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and to be able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise.”



Why is this relevant?

- These early attachment experiences during infancy influence how the brain develops during the years up to adolescence.
- It shapes how we learn to calm our emotions, how we understand ourselves and how we relate to others and the wider world.

**Internal working
model**

**Template for
relationships**

Self

Others

The
world



With importance comes responsibility and often a degree of pressure and stress

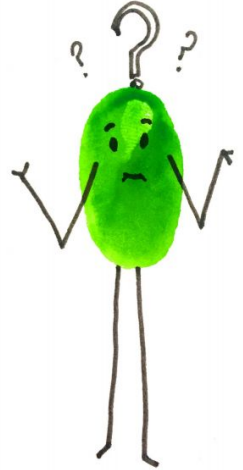
- Parenting is by its very nature stressful
- It is a full time job, 24/7 three hundred sixty five days a year with no time out!
- It requires you to constantly be adapting to the growing and changing needs of your child

Therefore it is important to be able to name and understand some of the stressors so we can best manage them, promote your own wellbeing and as a consequence best support your children.



What actually is Stress?

- A specific mental and physical response by the body to an experience/ event that disrupts or interferes with normal psychophysiological equilibrium.
- Our body responds to stressors differently depending on whether the stressor is new (acute stress), or whether the stressor has been around for a longer time (chronic stress).



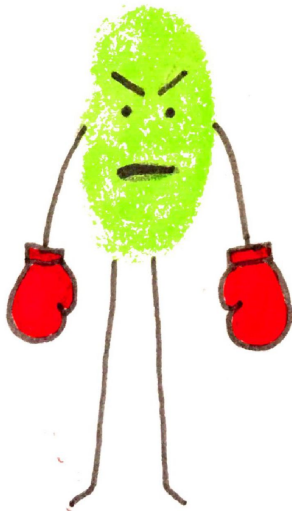
Acute
Stress

Chronic
Stress



Threat activation system

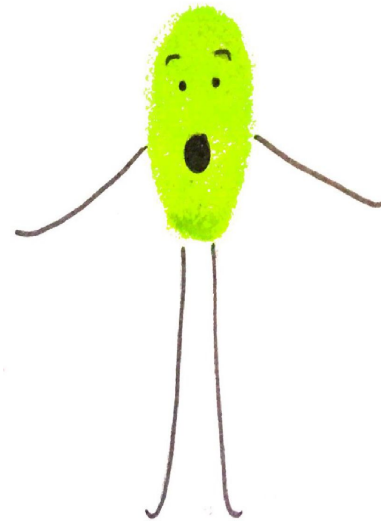
Fight



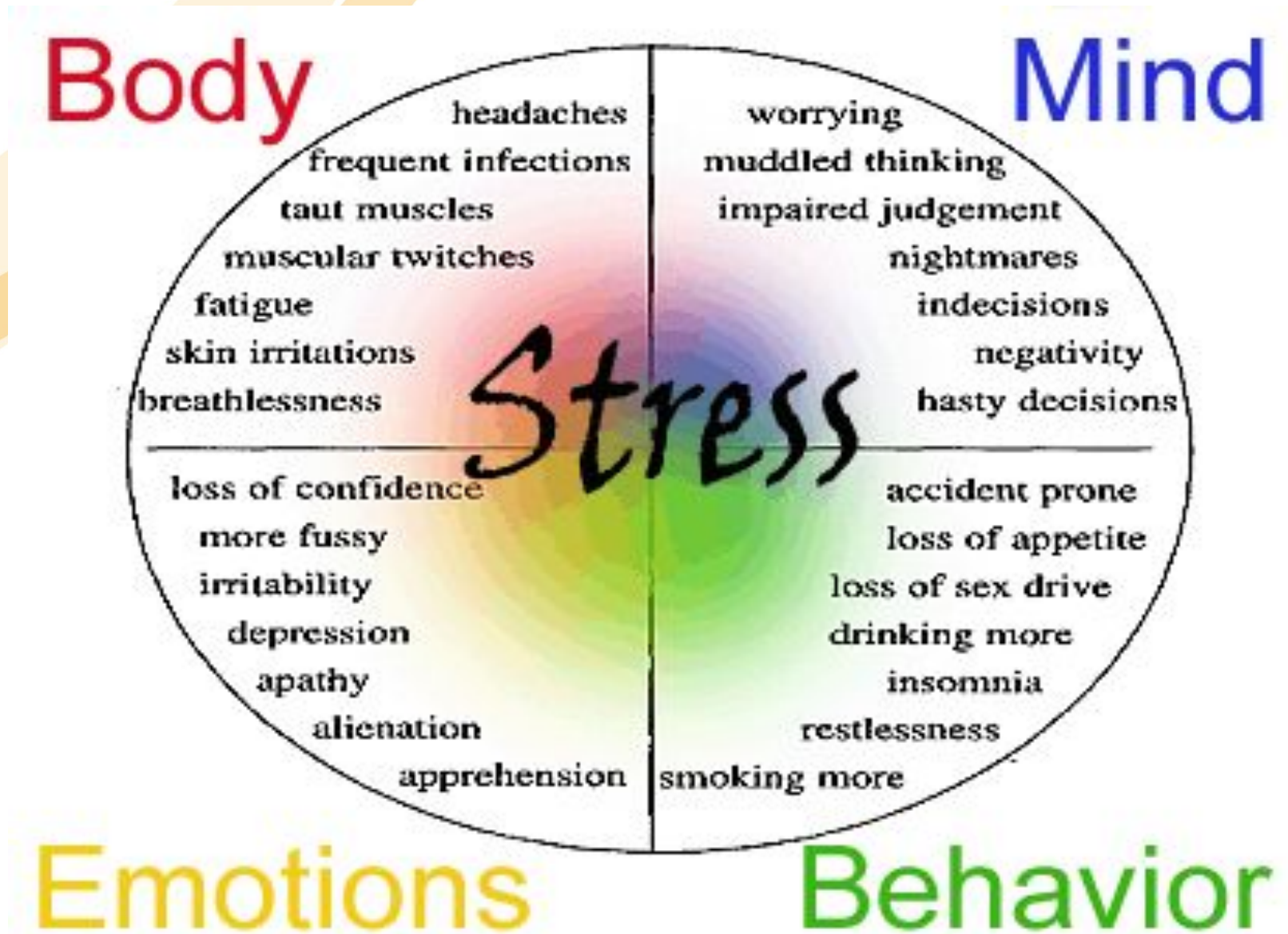
Flight



Freeze

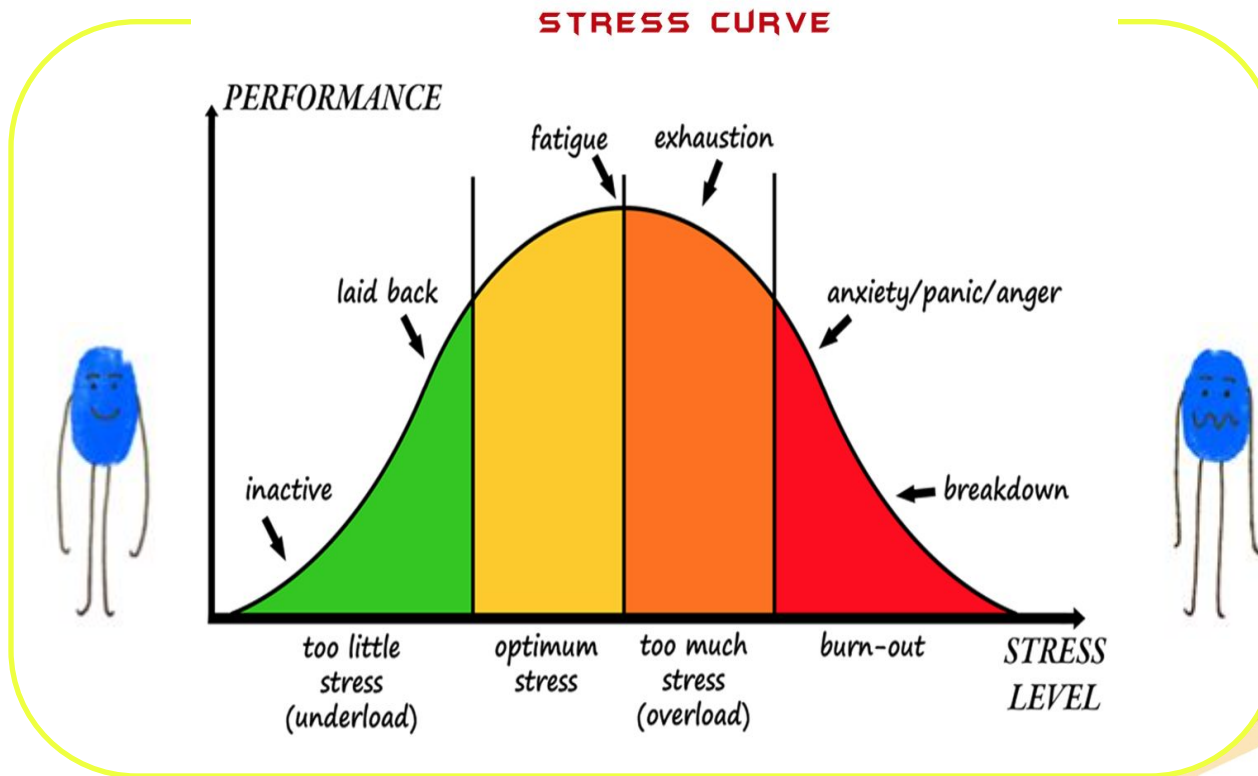


Symptoms of Diminished Wellbeing

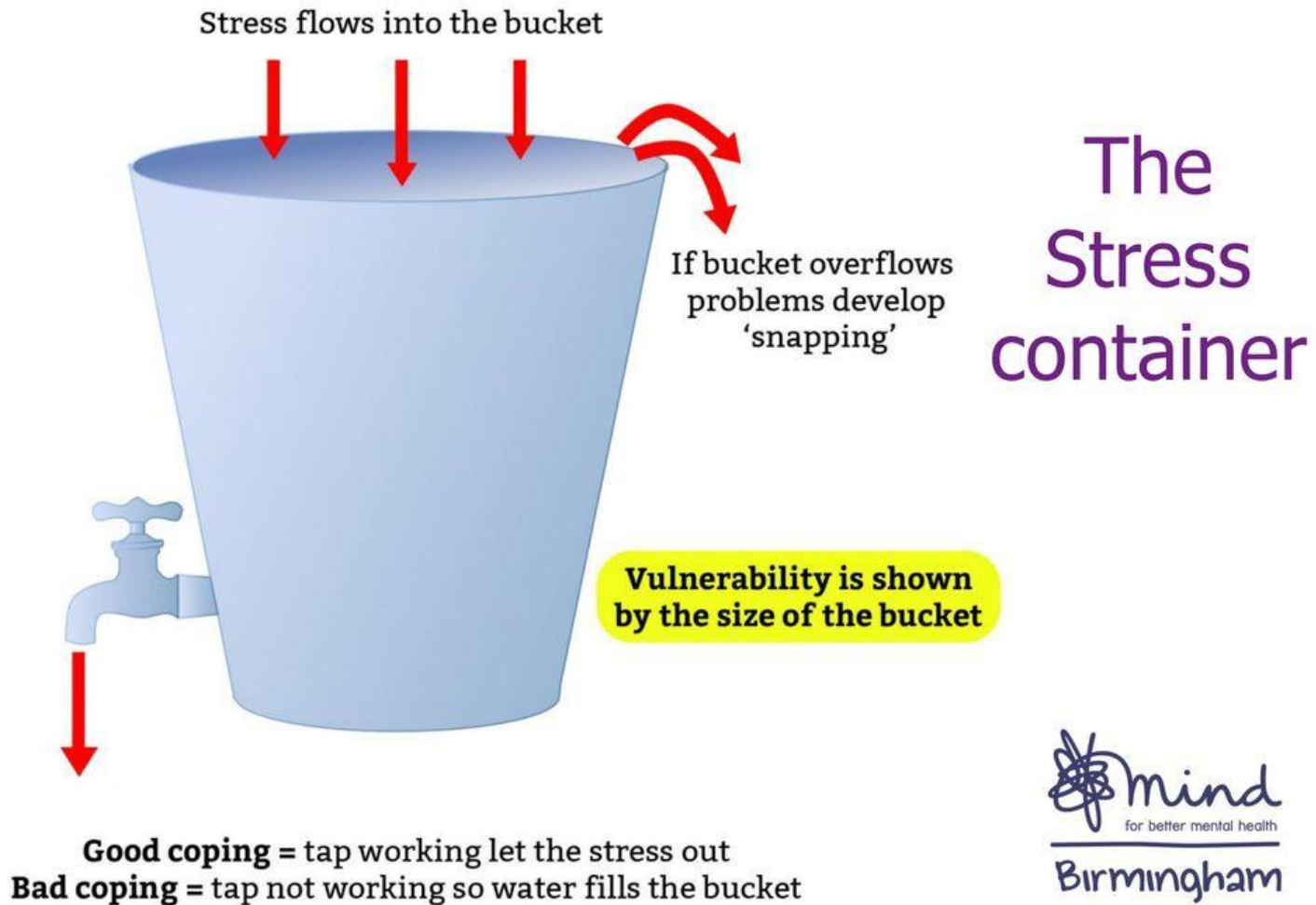


Can Stress ever be Helpful?

- Mild acute stress can actually be beneficial –Stress provides us with opportunities to “grow”.
- For us to adapt and manage change well enough, the level of stress must be high enough to prompt us to do something different, but not so high that it overwhelms us.



All parents experience stress in relation to parenting at some stage



Stress flowing into the stress container

Common worries about our children

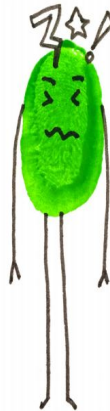
Transitions including to secondary school, new school or return to school following Covid-19

Exams- expectations, achievements, competition, grades, fear of failure or judgement

Difficulties with friendships or bullying

Worries around child becoming more independent

Access to social media and time spent using technology



Factors which increase stress

Having a child with a difficult temperament

Having a child with emotional or behavioural difficulties

Having low levels of social support or feeling isolated

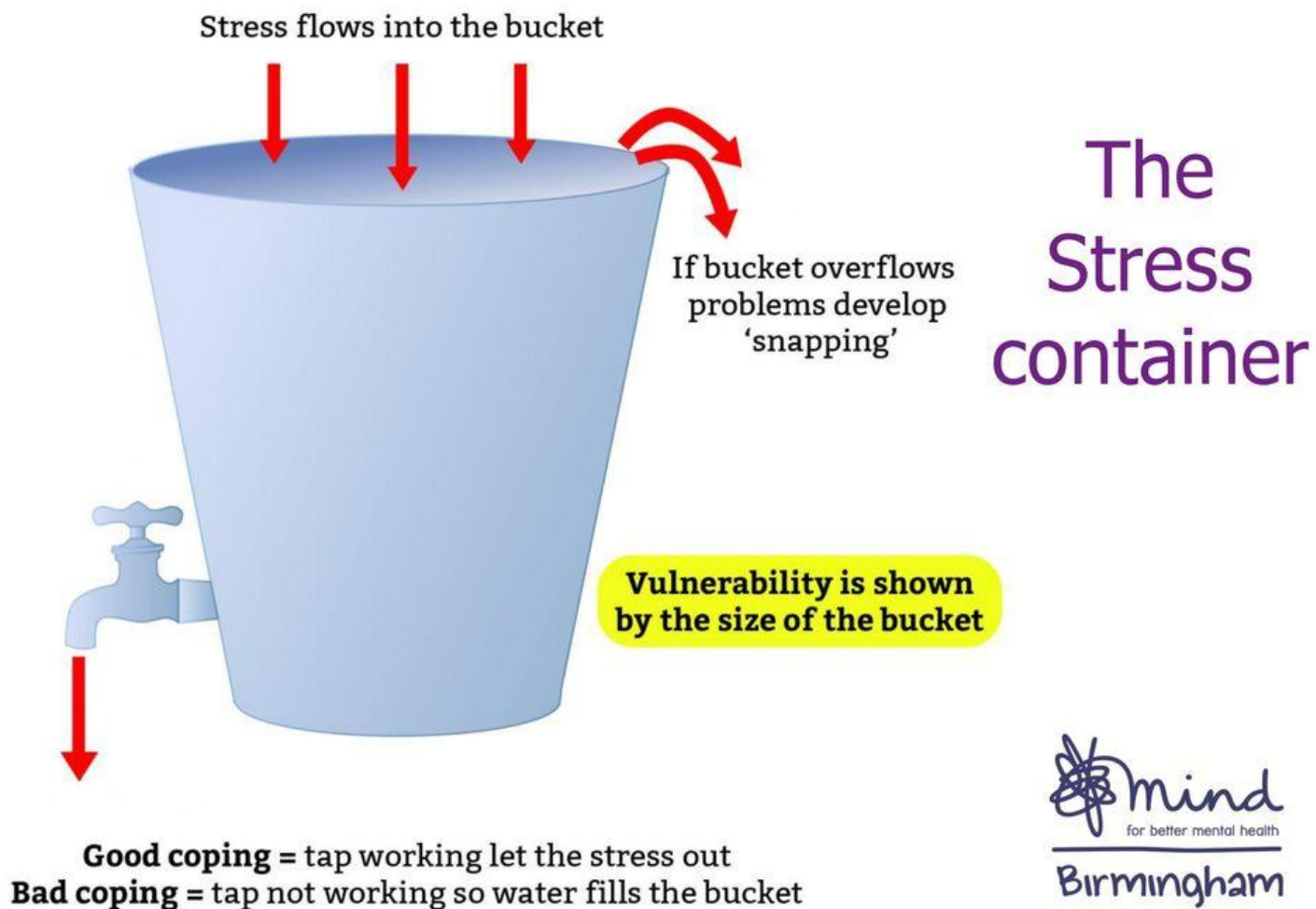
Lack of sleep

Imbalance of needs

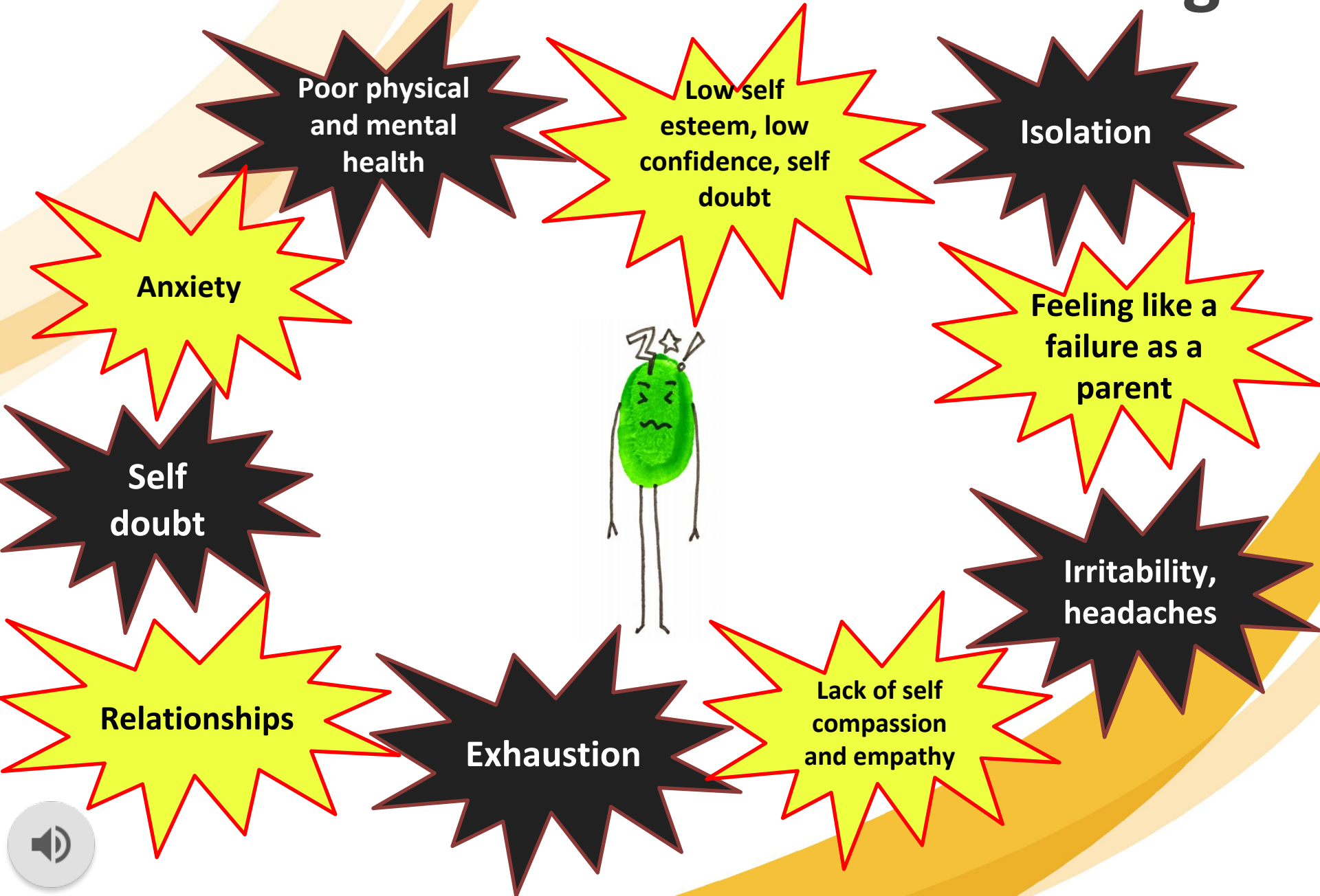
Covid-19



All parents experience stress in relation to parenting at some stage



How does this affect our wellbeing?



How does your stress impact on the Wellbeing of your Children?

Your outlook on life impacts on my outlook

You either overreact or become emotionally withdrawn and unresponsive

I fear that the world around me is unsafe

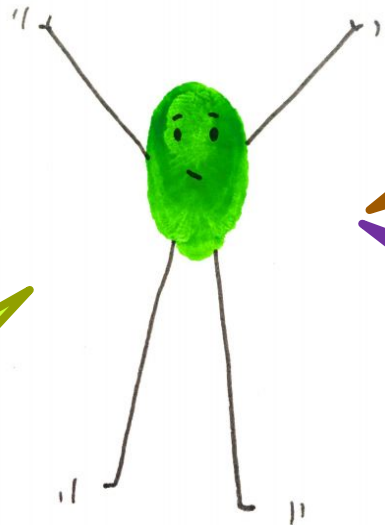
When you are stressed you are less attuned

I have not learnt healthy ways to manage my emotions.

I have not learnt how to face difficult experiences or learnt how to problem solve. I have low resilience

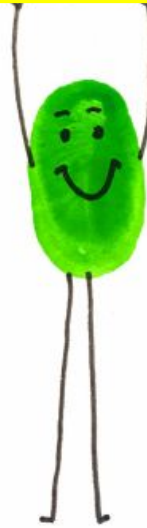
I have developed health conditions

I can not effectively communicate with others. I use my behaviour to communicate instead





**We need to focus on
wellbeing**





What is wellbeing?

“A positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society.

It is enhanced by strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment and a healthy and attractive environment.” Source: World Health Organization (WHO)





Play
*Activities/hobbies.
Work/life balance*

Creativity
*Ideas, brainstorming,
imagination, alternatives
such as taking an
alternative route to work*



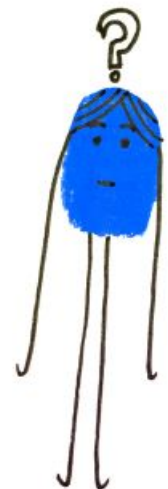
Our Needs...



Work
*Learning new skills such as
trying a new recipe,
completing training*

Agency
*Problem solving skills and
managing our own
behaviour, making our
own choices*

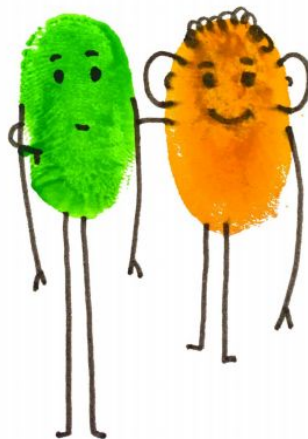
Knowledge
*Knowledge and understanding about what is
going on in the world around us such as
asking questions or exploring our
environment*





Community

Having a sense of belonging in the social group you live in



Relatedness

Having a range of relationships- intimate, familial and friendships

Our Needs...

Pleasure

Feeling good in the here and now

Spirituality

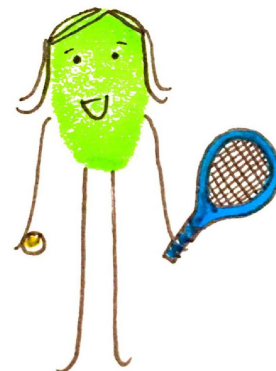
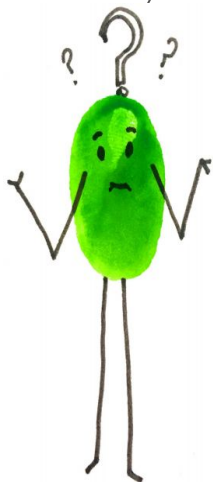
Understand our purpose in life. E.G Religion, meditation, practice gratitude

Life

Looking after our physical health and emotional wellbeing

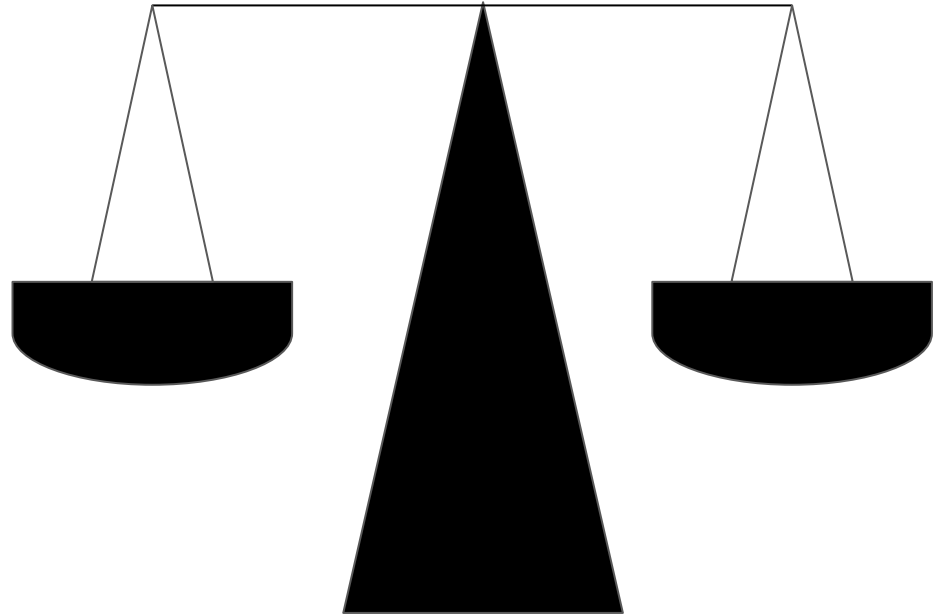
Inner Peace

Feeling safe physically and emotionally. Being free from, or having helpful strategies to deal with emotional turmoil.

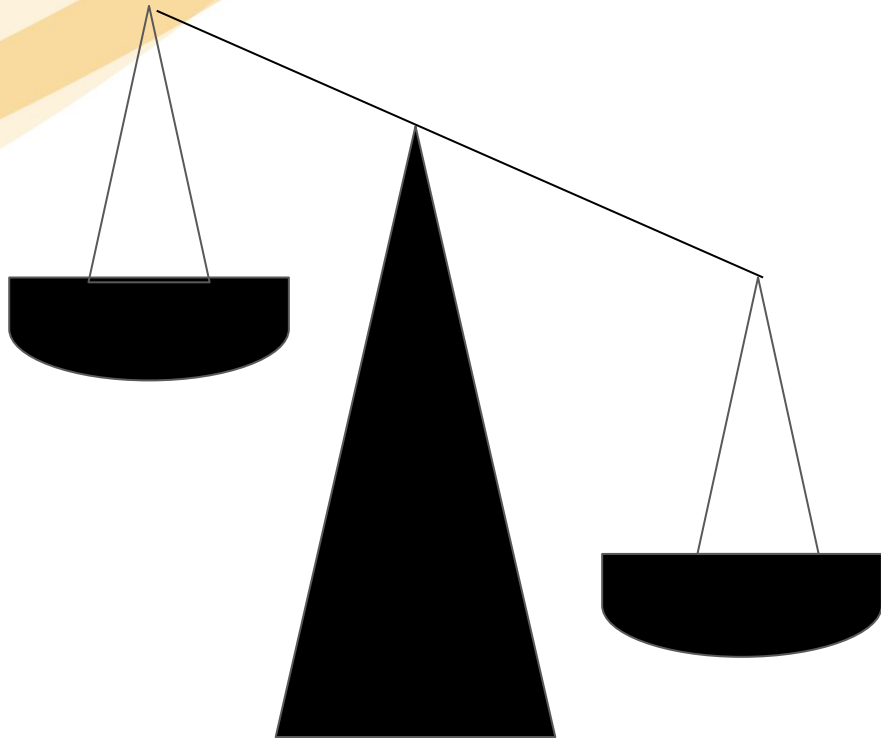




**Balanced Needs=
Healthy wellbeing**



**Out of balance=
Poor physical and
emotional wellbeing**





Try it...



Take a few moments now to go through each of the basic needs (there is a copy on the next 2 slides) and consider:

- 1) How would you score your **satisfaction** for each of them- low, medium or high?
- 2) Notice which of your needs are the most **fulfilled** and which of them may need some more of your attention.
- 3) What could you do this week to start **integrating** one of these more into your life?

E.g Take 10 minutes to read that book you've started

Eat a healthy lunch

Call someone for a chat

Try a breathing exercise

Play your favourite song



Play
*Activities/hobbies.
Work/life balance*

Creativity
*Ideas such as brainstorming,
imagination, alternatives
such as taking an alternate
route to work*



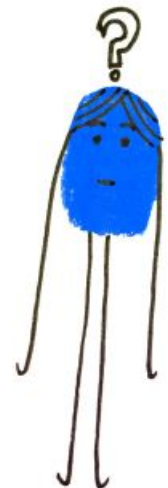
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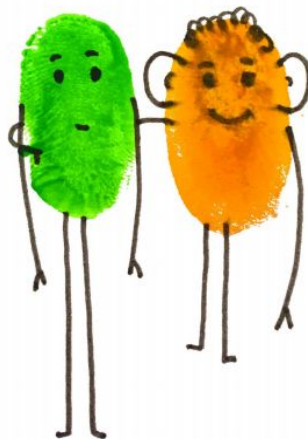
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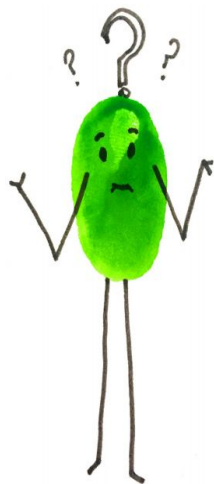
Understand our purpose in life. Pray, meditate, practice gratitude

Life

Looking after our physical health and emotional wellbeing

Inner Peace

Feeling safe physically and emotionally. Free from emotional turmoil or knowing how to deal with this if it arises





Indicators of Healthy Wellbeing

Body

- Exercise
- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthily and having a balanced diet
- Physical health

Mind

- Positive self talk
- Focused
- Motivated
- Having a sense of purpose
- Adaptable and flexible
- Keep Learning

Emotions

- Content with self
- Demonstrate empathy towards others
- Self compassion
- Recognise and express emotions

Behaviour

- Asks for help or support
- Boundaries
- Positive relationships with others
- Communicate with others
- Connection with others
- Making time to relax



What We've Learnt

- Parenting is both rewarding and challenging
- **You are not alone...** All parents experience stress as an integral part of the role
- Small amounts of stress can be helpful, but **too much is toxic** to our health and we need to learn to manage this
- **Parenting increases stress** particularly when your children are going through a difficult experience or transition.
- There are lots of things that can impact on your wellbeing and lots of ways that these can present physically and emotionally.
- Wellbeing is about a healthy **body and mind**
- You and your children **influence each other's** wellbeing. You need healthy wellbeing in order to promote your child's wellbeing



Next time

As we have now better understood the nature and impact of parenting stress, and the importance of wellbeing, the next session will focus on...



**Strategies to reduce stress and
promote wellbeing**



Remember...



Try and take five minutes this week to meet one of your needs and maintain balance!

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