

# Learning from Home

## TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

The following ideas will help you to set up a ‘learning-from-home space’ so hopefully, everyone’s mental health will be on the improve during these trying times of covid lockdown!

1. Make sure you have a dedicated learning space set up for your child. A pinboard in the space would be great to place reminders, notes, etc. Encourage your child to add their important ‘bits and bobs’ so it feels like ‘their’ learning space.
2. Begin the school day by asking your child, ‘What kind of day are you having today?’ They can **a)** verbally express how they are feeling or **b)** use any of the scales on **Resource Master 1** in this Toolkit. Respond with interest and empathy if required.  
**Note:** You can also use the ‘**How are you feeling today?**’ **Resource Masters 2 and 3** in this Toolkit or the children’s book *Talking About Feelings* written by Jayneen Sanders (particularly check in with your child using the pages bordered in green).
3. Ask your child ‘Are you ready to learn?’ If the answer is ‘Yes’, then go straight to point 4. Yay! If the answer is ‘No’; ask, ‘What do you need to get ready to learn?’ The answer may vary from child to child. It might be they need a glass of water, maybe a run around the yard or a cuddle with their pet. When setting up the learning space (point 1), use **Resource Master 4** or list on some paper under the heading ‘What I need to be ready to learn’ all the general ideas your child might need in order to learn. If they are old enough, they can write the list themselves and add illustrations. Display this list on the pinboard and add to it as new ideas come up.
4. Once your child is ready to learn, the teacher may have provided a ‘Tuning In’ task. This is a 3-minute task to get the brain activated and to ‘tune in’ to the lesson. If the teacher has not, and depending on your child’s age and stage, simple ideas might be using playing cards to do quick oral addition, subtraction and/or multiplication, for example: if cards 5 and 10 are selected they could be  $5 + 10 = 15$ ,  $10 - 5 = 5$  or  $5 \times 10 = 50$ . It really will depend on the main lesson specified by the teacher what the ‘Tuning In’ task could be.

5. After the 'Tuning In' task, you could provide a quick 'mini-lesson' of around 7 minutes. It might be: count as many red objects in the house as you can in 7 minutes or in 7 minutes write a silly poem about anything you like but it must include the words: orange, hat, cat, rat and mat, or for older children: dangerous, enormous, mouse and house. **Note:** ideally, the ideas created will be based upon what lesson the teacher has planned for that particular day.
6. Now it's time for the 'work period'. This is a set time where your child will need to focus on the task at hand and build up their ability to stay with the task and concentrate.
7. A child may ask for a 'brain break' throughout the day and that's okay. These are the things your child could do (and you both agree upon) to give themselves a quick break, for example, eat a healthy snack, do 10 star jumps while singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, do a few yoga stretches, run around the yard twice, throw a ball against an outside wall and catch it 20 times, etc. Attach a Brain Break list of ideas to the pinboard (you could use **Resource Master 5**).
8. Finally at the end of 'school time', reflect on what went well. Ask, 'What went well today?' If your child can't verbalise exactly what worked for them, help them out by saying, 'I thought the way you did xxxxx was great! What do you think?' Praise is always good but so are constructive and supportive comments like, 'I know you found xxxx challenging today, what might you do next time to make it a bit easier?' Always end on a positive note, for example, 'I really liked how you designed the windows in the house you drew! Let's display it on the pinboard.' Displaying a child's work shows you care and value their efforts. And please don't take it down too soon!

Make a chart (see below or **Resource Master 6**) and display it on the pinboard or write these headings on a mini whiteboard so you can both fill in the first three spaces each day to suit the lessons the teacher has specified.

**Tuning In**

**Mini-lesson**

**Work Time**

**Brain Breaks (2 or 3 minutes through the learning time)**

**Reflection**

## One More Thing!

Your child might be having a bad day and may be feeling angry, frustrated, sad or anxious. Or all of these at once! It is a good idea to list, when setting up their learning space, all the strategies they can use to calm themselves down or make themselves feel better. It might be: listen to music, go for a run, climb the tree in the back yard, hug a toy or shout into a pillow — it should be whatever works best for them. Once the list is written, display it on the pinboard under the heading 'My Calming Strategies' (or use **Resource Master 7**).

# You Are Working Too!

As you are probably working from home too, either home tasks and/or paid work, you will be busy. And you will need uninterrupted time.

## Here are some ideas for non-verbal communication with your child:

1. Sticky notes: passing messages to each other without talking.
2. A notebook passed between you and your child with messages and praise for each other!
3. Stoplight system: red means please come back later as I'm unavailable right now; yellow means I can chat to you for 5 minutes; green means I'm all yours. See **Resource Master 8** for a stoplight.

## Here are some calming strategies for you when you are at the end of your tether.

1. Say, 'I need 5 minutes alone right now.'
2. Relax screen time for the day.
3. Both stop work. Go outside with a snack and each describe the environment using all five senses: What do you hear? Smell? See? Touch? Taste?
4. Have an honest conversation with your child and verbalise how you are feeling (this is great modelling for your child to know you struggle at times too). For example, 'I'm really tired right now. I just need 5 minutes to get my head together.'
5. Especially for single parents, find your community and reach out for help when you need it. Again, this is good modelling for your child that they see we all need help at times.

# Helpful Organisations

If you are really worried about your or your child's mental health, seek help:

## Australia only

Resource	Description
<b>Kids Helpline</b>	<a href="http://kidshelpline.com.au">kidshelpline.com.au</a> Ph: 1800 551 800
<b>Lifeline</b>	<a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a> Ph: 131 114
<b>Reach out Australia</b>	<a href="http://au.reachout.com">au.reachout.com</a> Online mental health service for young people and their parents in Australia.
<b>The Brave Program</b>	<a href="http://emergingminds.com.au/resources/brave-anxiety-online-treatment-program/">emergingminds.com.au/resources/brave-anxiety-online-treatment-program/</a> 'BRAVE' is a free online treatment program which is based on cognitive behavioural therapy and designed for young people aged 8 to 17 years experiencing anxiety.

Resource	Description
<b>Mood Gym</b>	<a href="http://moodgym.com.au">moodgym.com.au</a> Moodgym is like an interactive self-help book which helps you to learn and practise skills which can help to prevent and manage symptoms of depression and anxiety.
<b>Child First &amp; Open Door</b>	<a href="http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams">services.dffh.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-teams</a> Child First and Orange Door provide a central referral point to a range of community-based family services and other supports.
<b>Berry Street</b>	<a href="http://www.berrystreet.org.au">www.berrystreet.org.au</a> Berry Street provides programs to more than 35,000 children, young people and families each year.
<b>Head to Help</b>	<a href="http://headtohelp.org.au">headtohelp.org.au</a> Feeling stressed, anxious or sad? Help to Help. The sooner you HeadtoHelp, the better you'll feel.
<b>Raising Children</b>	<a href="http://raisingchildren.net.au">raisingchildren.net.au</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 family guide <a href="http://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide">raisingchildren.net.au/guides/coronavirus-covid-19-guide</a> Information for parents and carers. Tips to help you and your family cope through lockdowns.</li> <li>• Wellbeing Activities <a href="http://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/wellbeing">raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/wellbeing</a></li> <li>• Mental health information <a href="http://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-health-resources">raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-health-resources</a></li> <li>• Podcasts <a href="http://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/podcasts-and-webinars/podcasts">raisingchildren.net.au/guides/podcasts-and-webinars/podcasts</a></li> </ul>
<b>headspace</b>	<a href="http://headspace.org.au/ehespace">headspace.org.au/ehespace</a> Free online and telephone support and counselling to young people 12-25 and their families and friends.

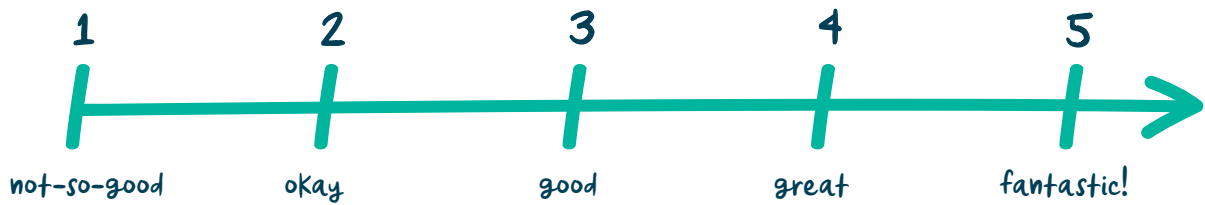
**Lastly, but most importantly, **PLAY!** Your child needs time every day to play and to imagine and create. As do you! Go easy on yourself and your child. We will get through this, and the upside will be that our resilience will be so much stronger for it.**

*Written by Jayneen Sanders*

**Note:** Many of these ideas are a summary from the wonderful webinar I attended hosted by 'By Five Wimmera Southern Mallee' and 'Yarra Communities that Care'. The webinar's title was '*Supporting children during lockdown: webinar for families and carers*' and presented by Paediatrician Dr Billy Garvey, Dr Tom Brunzell from Berry Street and a range of health care professionals. Link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsTDjmKzANE>

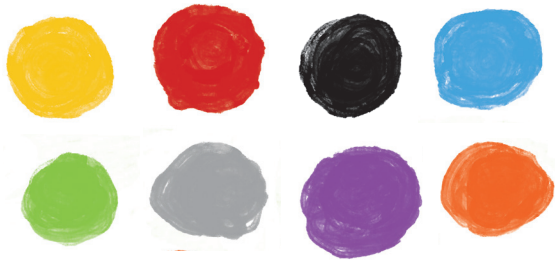


# What kind of day are you having?

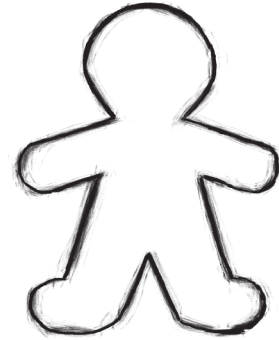


# How are you feeling today?

What colour is your feeling?

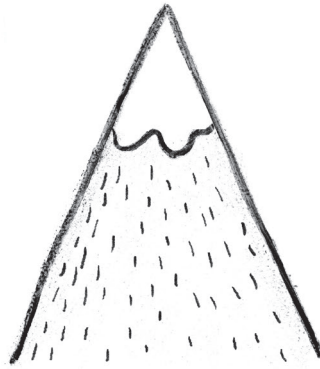


Where do you feel this colour in your body?



How BIG is your feeling?

Does it feel as BIG as a mountain?



Or does it feel middle-sized like the size of a chair?



Or as small as a button?

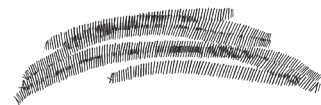
If you could touch your feeling, how might it feel?



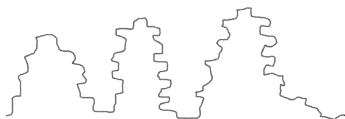
spiky



bumpy



prickly



wibbly wobbly



flat



swirly



soft



hard

What else would you like to say about your feeling?

# How are you feeling today?



worried



proud



calm



happy



sad



brave



angry/frustrated



scared



disappointed



confused



lonely



ashamed



guilty

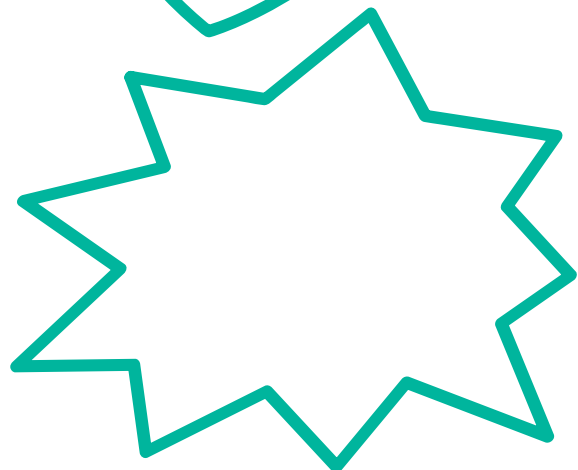
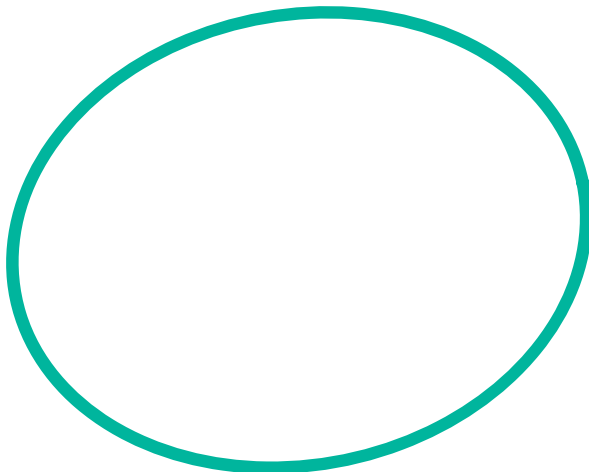
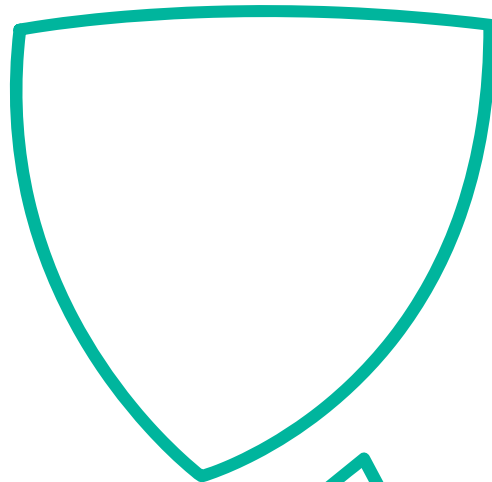
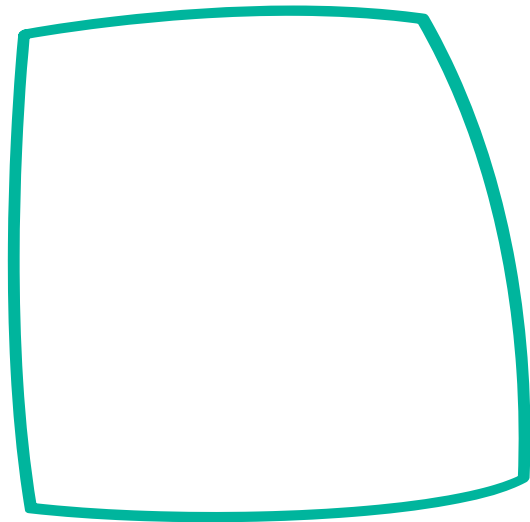


embarrassed

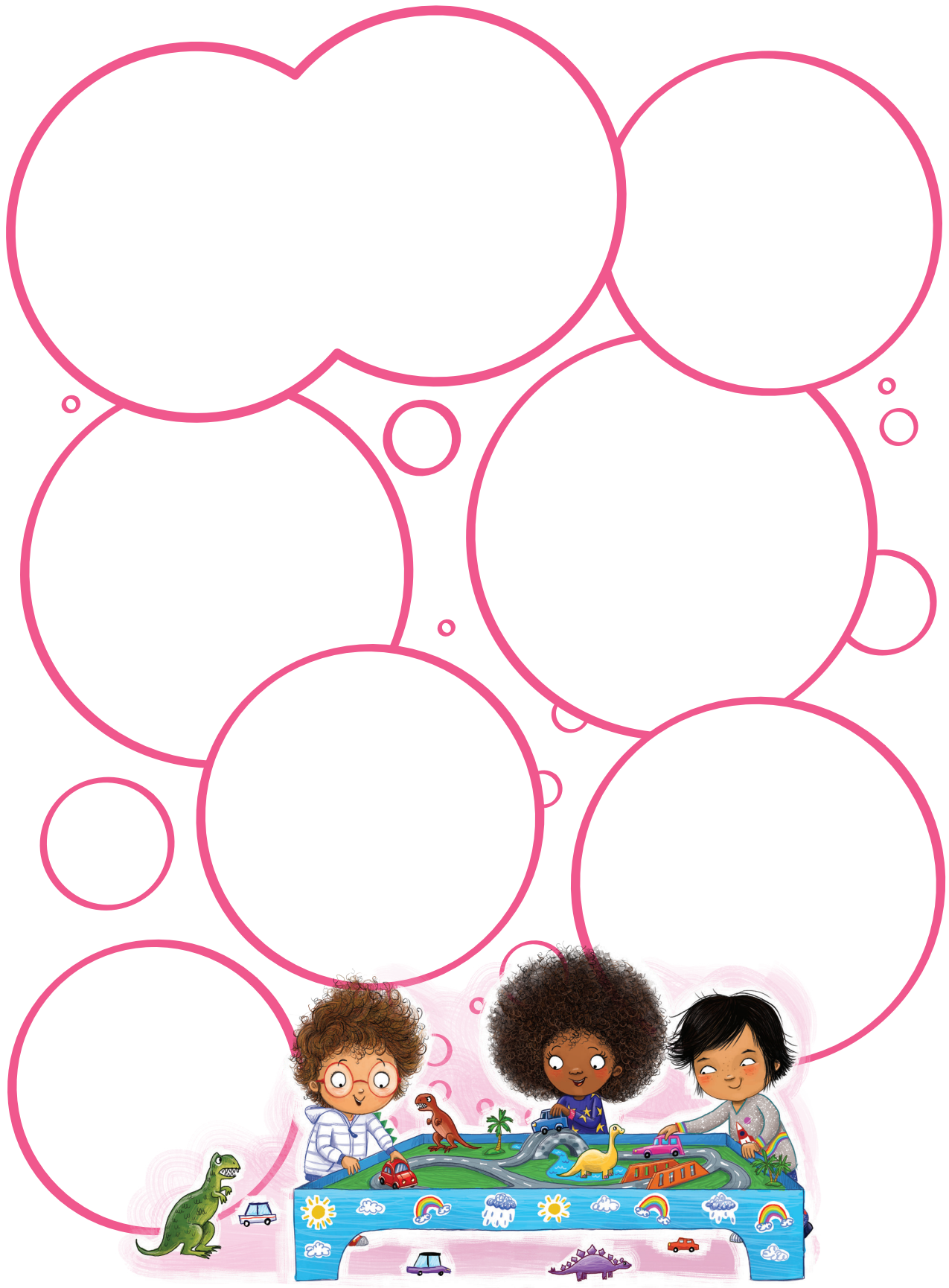


excited

# What I need to be ready to learn



# Brain Breaks



# Tuning In

# Mini-lesson

# Work Time

# Brain Breaks

# Reflection

# My Calming Strategies

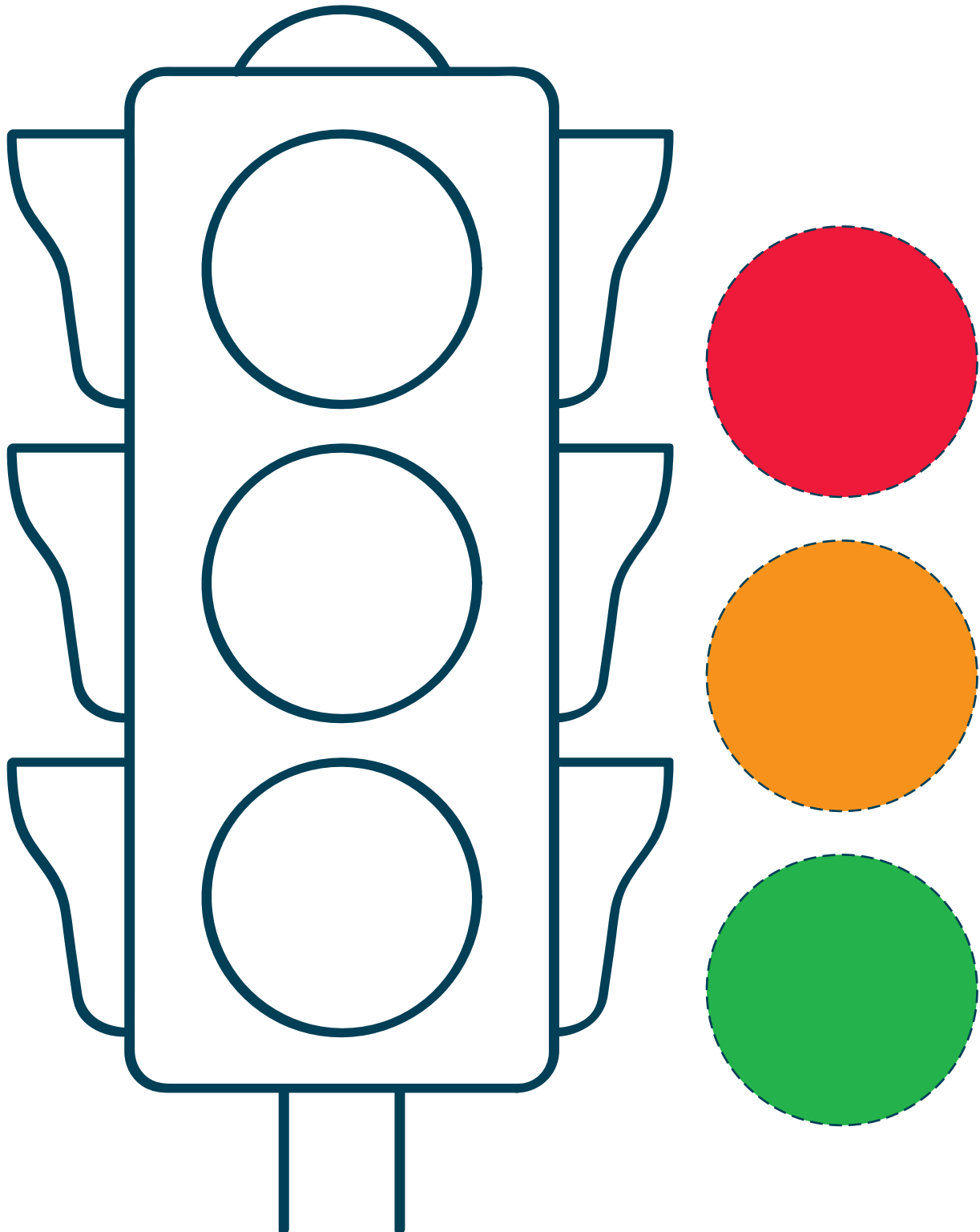




# Stoplight

Cut out the stoplight and the coloured circles.

Use Blu Tack to attach the circle that suits.

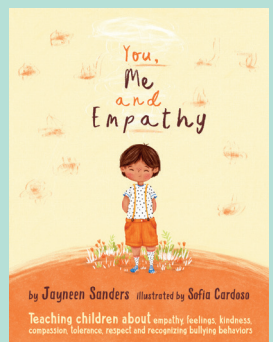
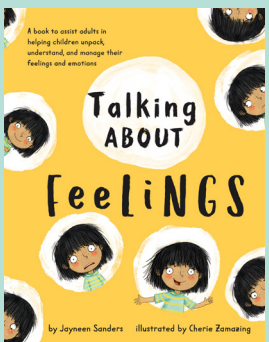
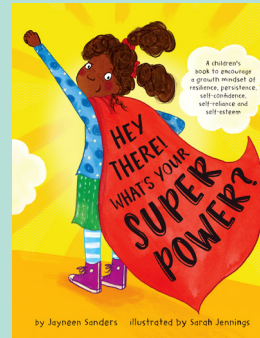
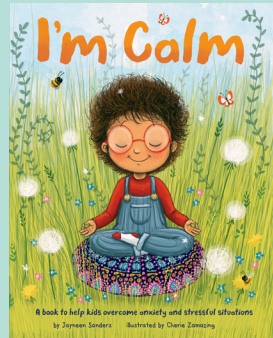
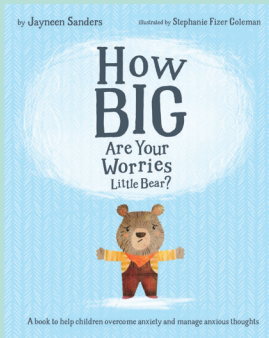




# SUGGESTED BOOKS FROM

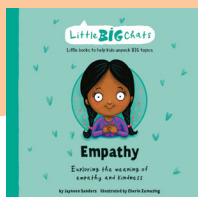
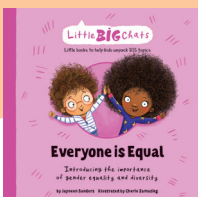
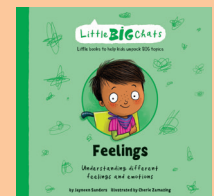
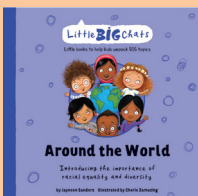


## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BUNDLE



# LittleBIGChats

12 Little books to help kids unpack BIG topics



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