

Supporting your Child's Mental Health and Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Outbreak & School Closures (PRIMARY)

From the Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust Mental Health
in Schools Team

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1. Introduction

Globally, we are currently experiencing a period of unprecedented events and subsequent panic and anxiety. Our normal routines have been disrupted and our activities have become limited. In the Mental Health in Schools Team (Coventry and Warwickshire) we recognise how this may significantly affect our mental health and wellbeing, and that of our children. This booklet offers a collation of resources combining general tips on supporting parent and child mental health during this time, talking to your child about COVID-19, managing school closures and a selection of activities for supporting your child's mental health. These resources can be used by any and all members of your household.

Please contact your local Mental Health in Schools Team using the appropriate contact number for any additional support required.

We hope that you find this booklet useful 😊

2. Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak

Adapted from guidance from the *World Health Organisation, 2020*

(<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>)

1. Be mindful of the language you use. Don't refer to people with the disease as "COVID-19 cases", "victims" "COVID-19 families" or the "diseased". They are "people who have COVID-19", "people who are being treated for COVID-19", "people who are recovering from COVID-19" and after recovering from COVID-19 their life will go on with their jobs, families and loved ones. COVID-19 has and is likely to affect people from many countries, in many geographical locations. Don't attach it to any ethnicity or nationality. Be empathetic to those who got affected, in and from any country, those with the disease have not done anything wrong.

2. Limit exposure to media. Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that cause you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. Gather information at regular intervals, from WHO website and local health authorities platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours.

3. Help others. Protect yourself and be supportive to others, assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper.

4. Emphasise the positives. Find opportunities to amplify the voices, positive stories and positive images of local people who have experienced the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery and are willing to share their experience. Share these experiences with your children to support their perspective taking.

5. Pay your respects. Honour caretakers and healthcare workers supporting people affected with COVID-19 in your community. Acknowledge the role they play to save lives and keep your loved ones safe. Include your children in this when appropriate.

6. Express emotions. Help children find positive ways to express disturbing feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has his/her own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process.

Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their disturbing feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

7. Keep close. Keep children close to their parents and family, if considered safe for the child, and avoid separating children and their caregivers as much as possible. If a child needs to be separated from his/her primary caregiver, ensure that appropriate alternative care is and that a social worker, or equivalent, will regularly follow up on the child. Further, ensure that during periods of separation, regular contact with parents and caregivers is maintained, such as twice-daily scheduled phone or video calls or other age-appropriate communication (e.g., social media depending on the age of the child).

8. Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible, especially if children are confined to home. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children. As much as possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialize with others, even if only within the family when advised to restrict social contact.

9. Consider how emotions will be affected. During times of stress and crisis, it is common for children to seek more attachment and be more demanding on parents. Discuss the COVID-19 with your Children in honest and age-appropriate information. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety. Children will observe adults' behaviours and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times.

10. Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Even in situations of isolations, try as much as possible to keep your personal daily routines. If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical social contact to contain the outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone.

11. Consider all of your needs. During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food. Keep things in perspective. Public health agencies and experts in all countries are working on the outbreak to ensure the availability of the best care to those affected.

Stay informed:

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

3. WHO Coping with stress guidance.

**World Health Organization**

Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.





Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.





Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



4. Tips for managing school closure

Tip #1: Structure your day

With all the changes that are happening including no work, school or nursery to go to it is easy for your day to be unstructured. By giving your day structure by doing things you usually do, you can make staying at home feel normal. By dividing your day up it may reduce the feeling of the day is dragging and keep your children busy by being productive and having fun.

Tip #2: Get up and get dressed

By getting up at usual time and getting dressed will help make things feel more normal.

Tip #3: Make a plan

Make a plan for the day/week, encourage your children to make it with you. Get creative make it colourful and fun; put it up where everyone can see it.

Tip #4: Be flexible

Having a plan is great but don't worry if you don't stick to the schedule.

Tip #5: Set specific times to do school work

For example you could do maths and spellings in the morning and arts & crafts in the afternoon.

Tip #6: Have consistent meal times

We all know how easy it is to snack when we're in the house. Keeping your kids' mealtimes consistent helps structure the day and can even help your little ones' mood - as well as stop them pestering you for snacks! (Please see information below for free school meals)

Warwickshire's Welfare Scheme Details.

If children are registered for Free School Meals parents/carers can apply for assistance to buy food whilst they are not at school. This will be through a £30 voucher per child that they will receive via text/SMS to their mobile and can be exchanged for cash at any Paypoint outlet. We are currently offering six weeks of support as we do not know how long schools will be closed for.

From Monday 23rd March 2020, our Local Welfare Scheme Team will be happy to help and parents/carers can apply using either of these methods:

- *Calling on 0800 4081448 or 01926 359182. You will be asked for each child's name, date of birth and a valid mobile number*
- *Emailing us at warwickshirelocalwelfarescheme@warwickshire.gov.uk. You will need to include each child's name, date of birth and a valid mobile number*

Tip #7: Get active and exercise

Kids need to burn off energy unless they're unwell. For example, running around the garden to watching a dance video and learning the moves. Games like musical statues are a good idea to use some energy.

Tip #8: Get them to help at home

Using this time to help your child learn what it takes to run a household may be a good idea. Maybe teach them some chores or give them a specific job they can do every day or a few times a week. Encourage independence by –

- Be confident in your child – and let them know you are confident
- Allow and encourage them to be independent rather than jumping in and doing things for them
- Give your child choices, rather than choosing for them

Tip #9: Have some quiet time

Set nap times if your little one still has them, or set a time where you relax and read a story together.

Tip #10: Look after yourself

This is a strange and difficult time and you may feel so busy looking after everyone else that you forget to look after yourself. It's important that you find time for you when possible, and to look after your own wellbeing.

Remember, this situation won't last forever!

You can also find more information and advice on

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Additional Resources for Home-Schooling:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Pre-planned lessons, activities and videos here tailored to support the National Curriculum.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/live-lessons>

Educational videos.

<https://artfulparent.com/>

Creative projects for children.

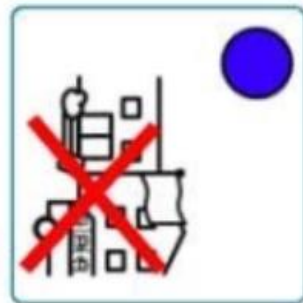
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/>

Support for parents of children aged 12 and under, including activities.

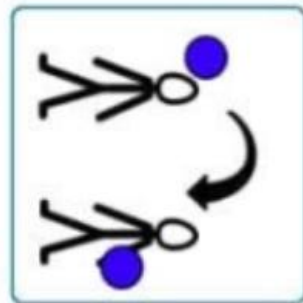
5. Age appropriate information on Covid-19

The following pages can be used to explain the current situation with Covid-19 in a child friendly way.

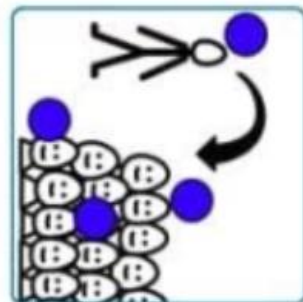
School is closed



School is closed because of the Coronavirus.



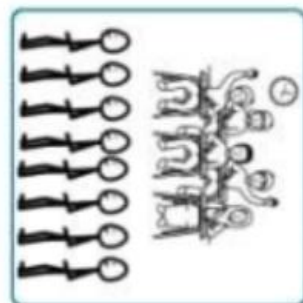
Coronavirus can pass from one person to another.



Coronavirus can pass more in big groups.



It is best to NOT be in a big group.



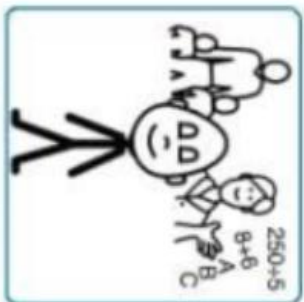
We have big groups at school.



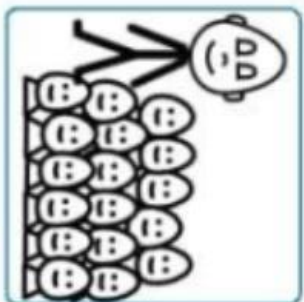
So school is closed.



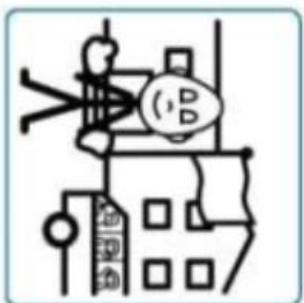
I will stay home for many days.



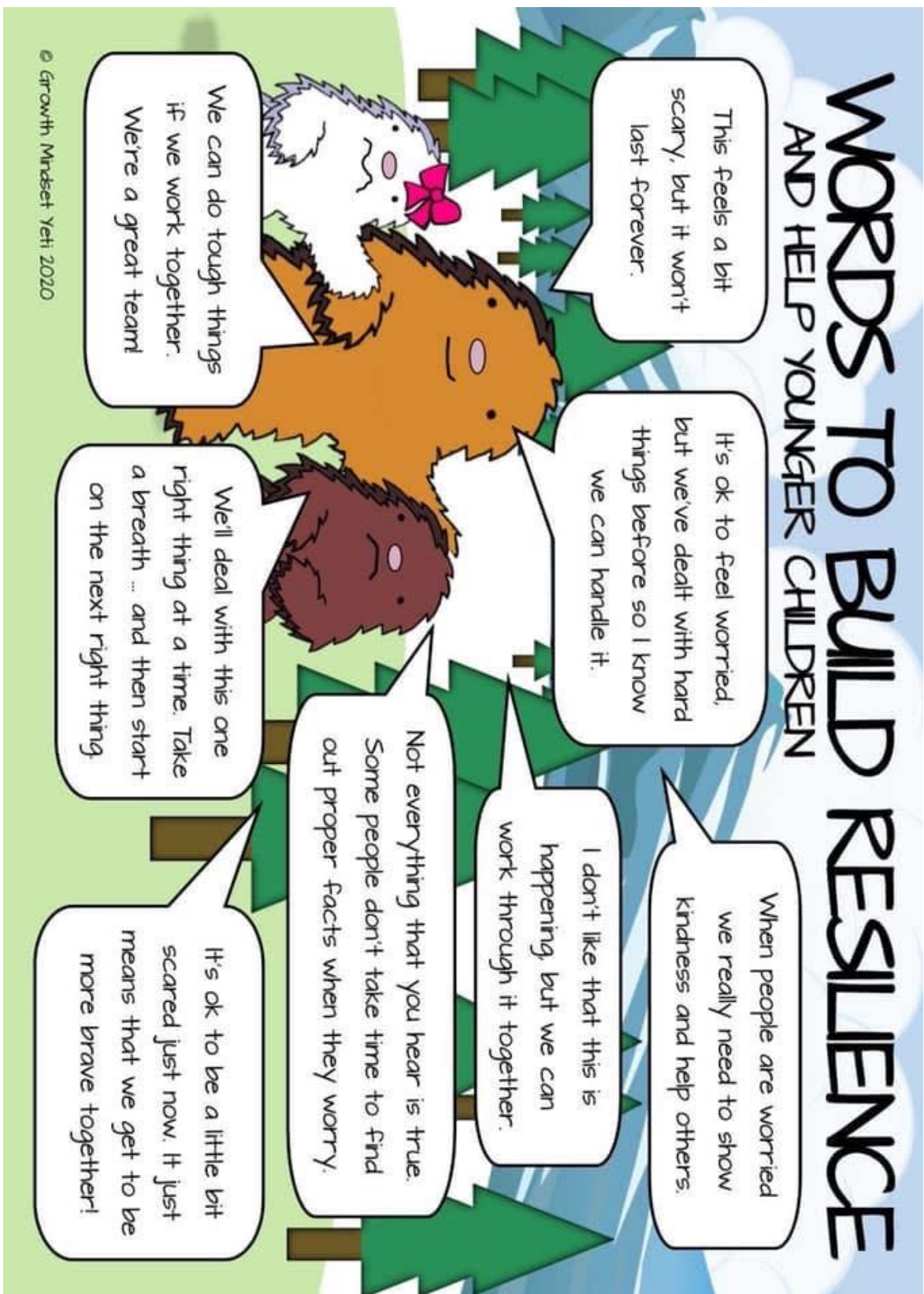
My family and my teachers want me to be safe.



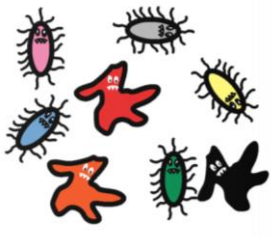
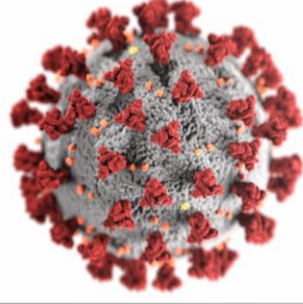
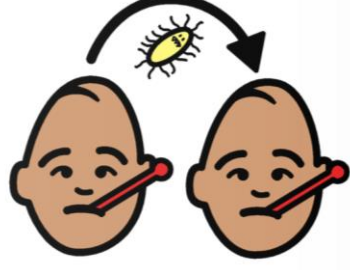





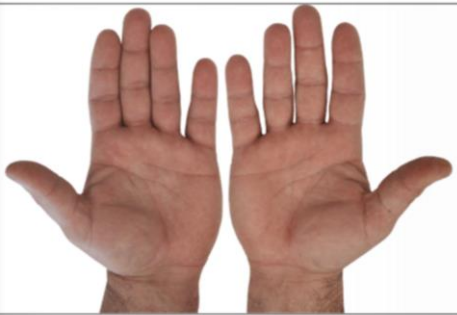
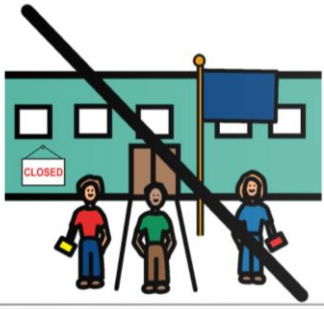


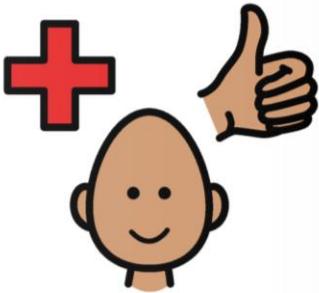

When it is safe, I can be in big groups again.

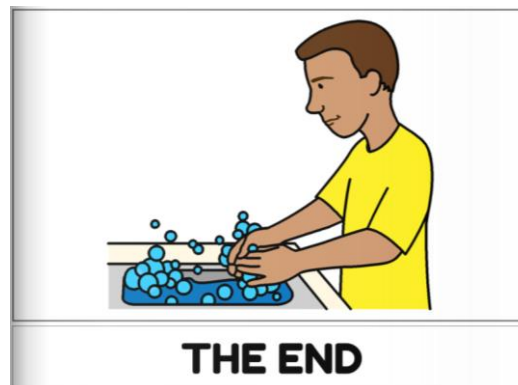
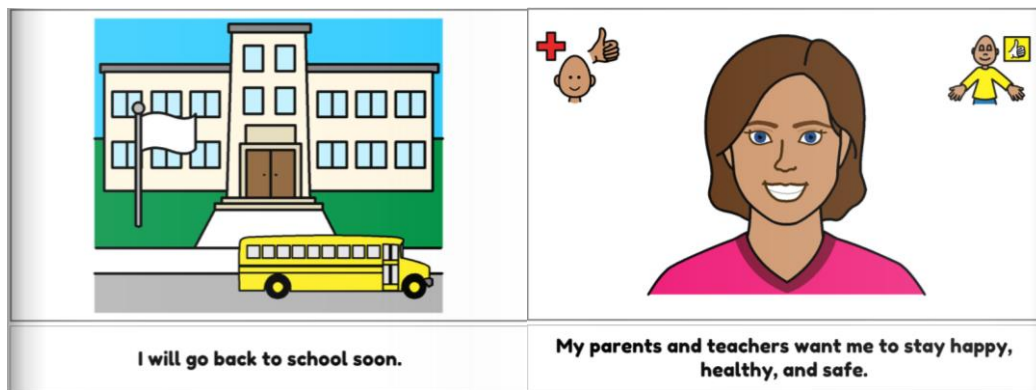


When it is safe, school will be open again.



<h2 style="text-align: center;">My Coronavirus Story</h2>  <p style="font-size: small;">The Picture Communication Symbols ©1981-2020 by Tiddi Dynamics. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used with permission. Boardmaker® is a trademark of Tiddi Dynamics.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Sometimes people get sick.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">When someone gets sick, it is because of germs. Germs are tiny things that live all around us.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">There is a new sickness called the Coronavirus.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">The Coronavirus germs spread VERY easily.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">If a bad germ sticks on me, I can get sick.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">I need to wash my hands A LOT so that I can stay healthy.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">When I wash my hands, I can sing "Happy Birthday," or count to 20!</p>

 <p>This will make sure my hands are clean and I stay healthy.</p>	 <p>Sometimes, so many people get sick that my school might need to close.</p>
 <p>If my school closes, they will clean it to get rid of all the germs!</p>	 <p>While they are cleaning my school, I will stay at home.</p>
 <p>I will stay safe and healthy at home.</p>	 <p>I will do fun things at home!</p>
 <p>My teacher might have sent me some things to work on while school is closed.</p>	 <p>This will keep my brain working hard!</p>

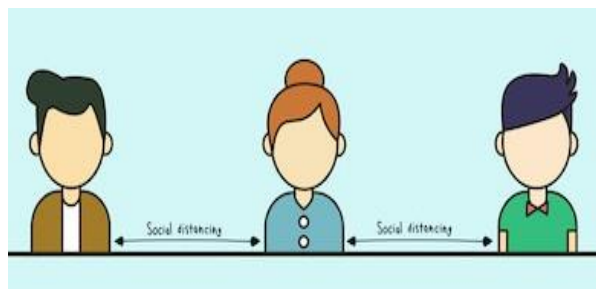


6. Things I cannot control

Support your child to write down all of the things that they can and cannot control in this situation. Encourage them to use relaxation activities to help them when they are worried about things they cannot control, emphasise focussing on the things they can control.

How long this will last for

If other people are following the rules for social distancing



The actions of others

I cannot control

(so, I can LET GO of these things)

What will happen in the future?

The amount of toilet paper in the shops

What is happening in the supermarkets?



Things I can control

Turning off the news

Finding fun things to
do at home



My positive attitude

I can control

(so, I will focus on these things.)

Limiting my social
media



My own social
distancing

My kindness and grace

7. Relaxation and Distraction Techniques

Calm Breathing

When we get anxious or worried our breathing may become very fast and shallow. Learning how to slow our breathing down and ensure that we use all of our lung capacity can be a really helpful way of calming down and reducing feelings of general anxiety and stress. It's really important to practice this skill when you are in a calm and quiet place. Once you have practiced it a lot and feel confident, it is then much easier to use to help you calm down at times when you are anxious or stressed.

Find somewhere comfortable to sit or lie down.

- 1. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.*
- 2. Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose for 7 seconds; both your hands should rise gently as you breathe.*
- 3. Hold the breath for 2 seconds.*
- 4. Release the breath slowly for 11 seconds.*
- 5. Repeat*

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique can help you recognise how different your body feels when you are tense and when you are relaxed. Learning to relax your muscles when thinking of a key word, such as relax, can help at times when you feel stressed and anxious. Tense each muscle in the series below for 5 seconds and then release the tension whilst thinking of the word "relax". Notice how different it feels when you relax the muscles.

Hands – *clench your left fist and then relax, do the same with your right.*

Arms – *bend your elbows and tense your arm and bicep and then relax.*

Neck – *press your head back and roll it from side to side slowly. Feel the tension moving and then bring your head back into a comfortable position.*

Face – *focus on the jaw and forehead. Lower your eyebrows into a frown and then raise them. After 5 seconds relax them and clench your jaw for 5 seconds and then relax.*

Chest – *take a deep breath and notice your chest rising. Hold it for 5 seconds and relax.*

Stomach – *tense your stomach as tight as you can and then relax.*

Legs – *straighten your legs and stretch out as far as possible. Bend your feet up towards your face. After 5 seconds of tensing, wiggle your toes and relax.*

Grounding Techniques

The aim of the strategies below is not to distract you from your thoughts or replace those thoughts but to help you focus on what is happening around you and where you are, rather than focusing on your body sensations or your thinking. If you do experience anxious or upsetting thoughts while you are doing the exercises, just notice they are there, let them go and try to focus back on the things you are trying to describe.

5 things you can see right now



4 things you can hear right now



3 things you can touch right now



2 things you can smell **or** like the smell of



1 slow, deep breath. Then focus on your breathing



Now shift the focus of your attention onto something different....

Categories

Find and name 3 things in the room that are a certain colour for example. Or use different category:

Films

Sports teams

Countries

Books

Characters from films

Cereals

Fruits and vegetables

Famous people

Animals

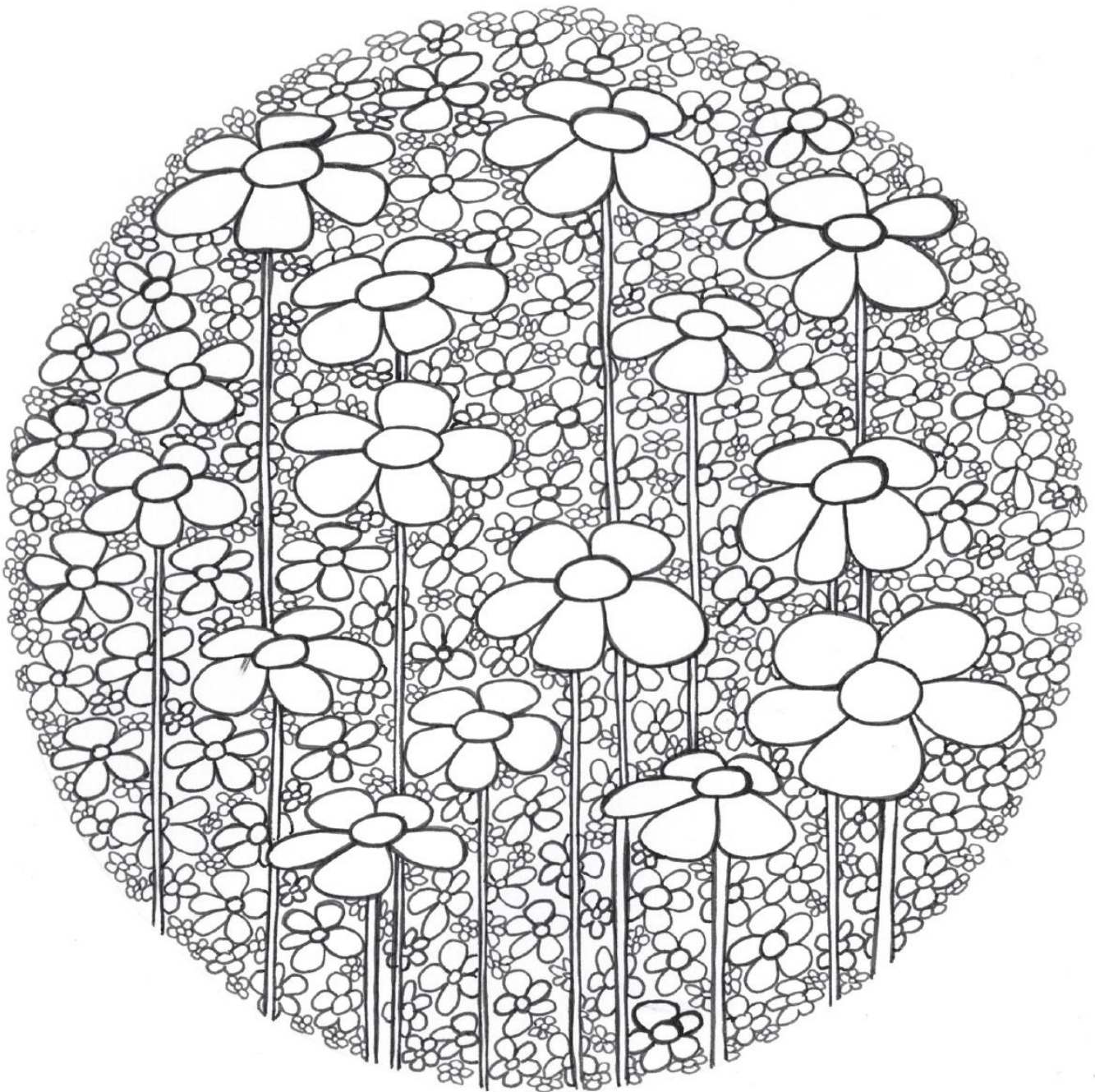
Distraction activities

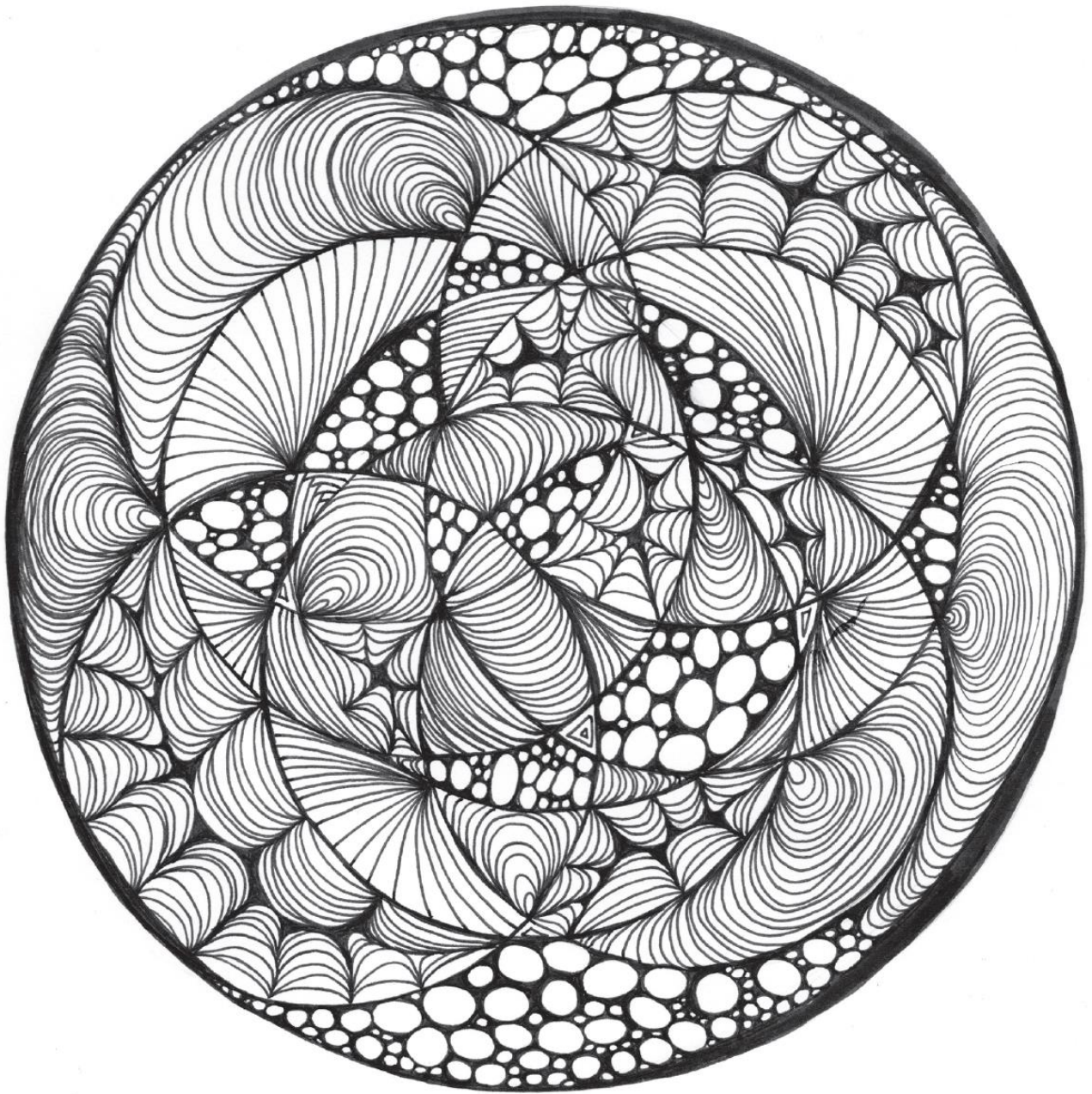
1. Listen to soothing music
2. Cuddle with pets
3. Eat your favourite snack or have a cup of tea
4. Take a long walk
5. Exercise
6. Do yoga
7. Play some sports
8. Read a book or magazine
9. Writing and journaling
10. Draw, sketch or other artistic activities
11. Colour adult colouring books
12. Watch TV/films
13. Play games/video games
14. Take a shower/bath
15. Cook or bake
16. Clean or do the washing up
17. Garden
18. Take a nap
19. Solve a puzzle
20. Talk to family/a friend

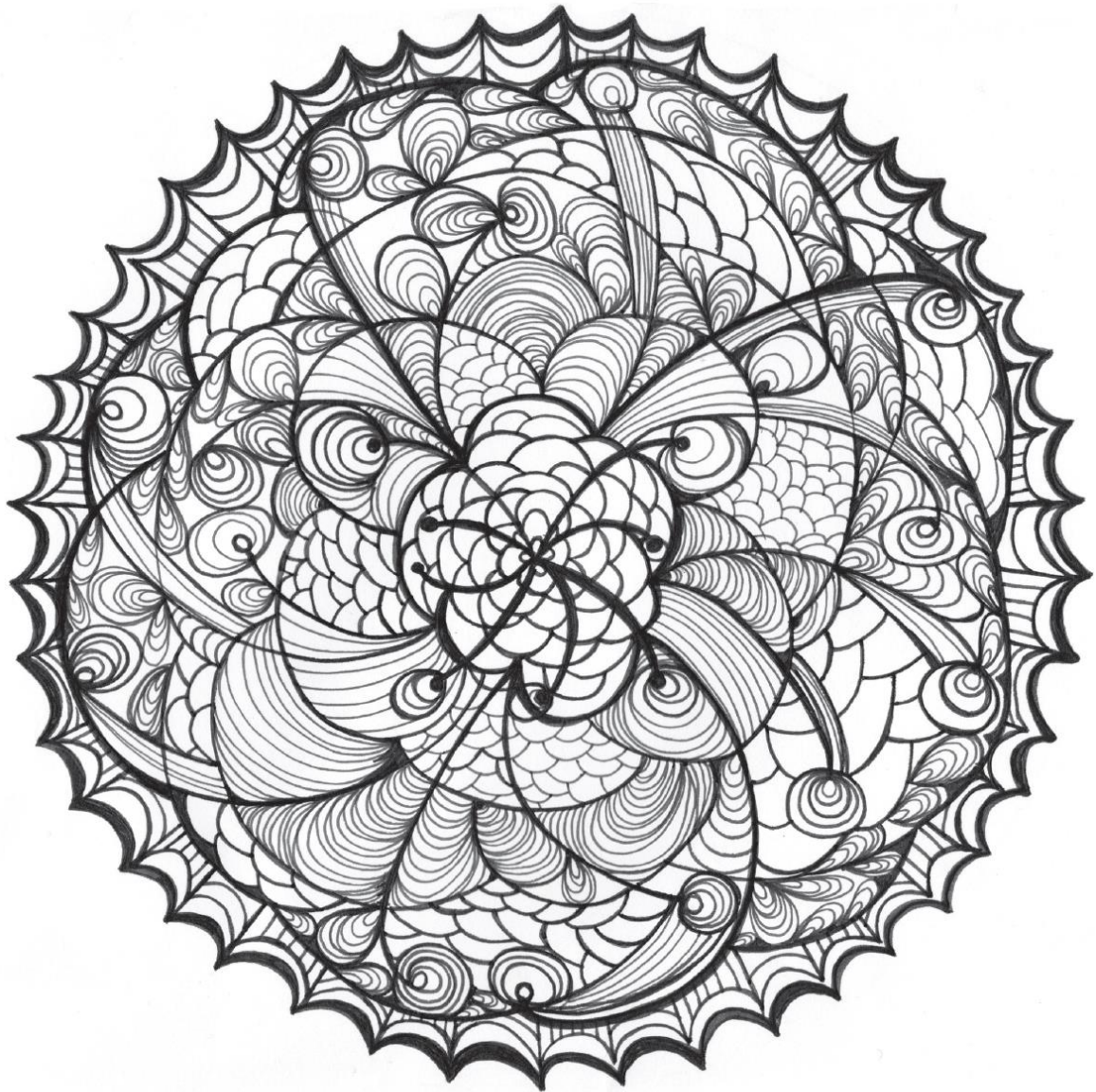
8. Mindfulness Colouring Sheets (for relaxation).





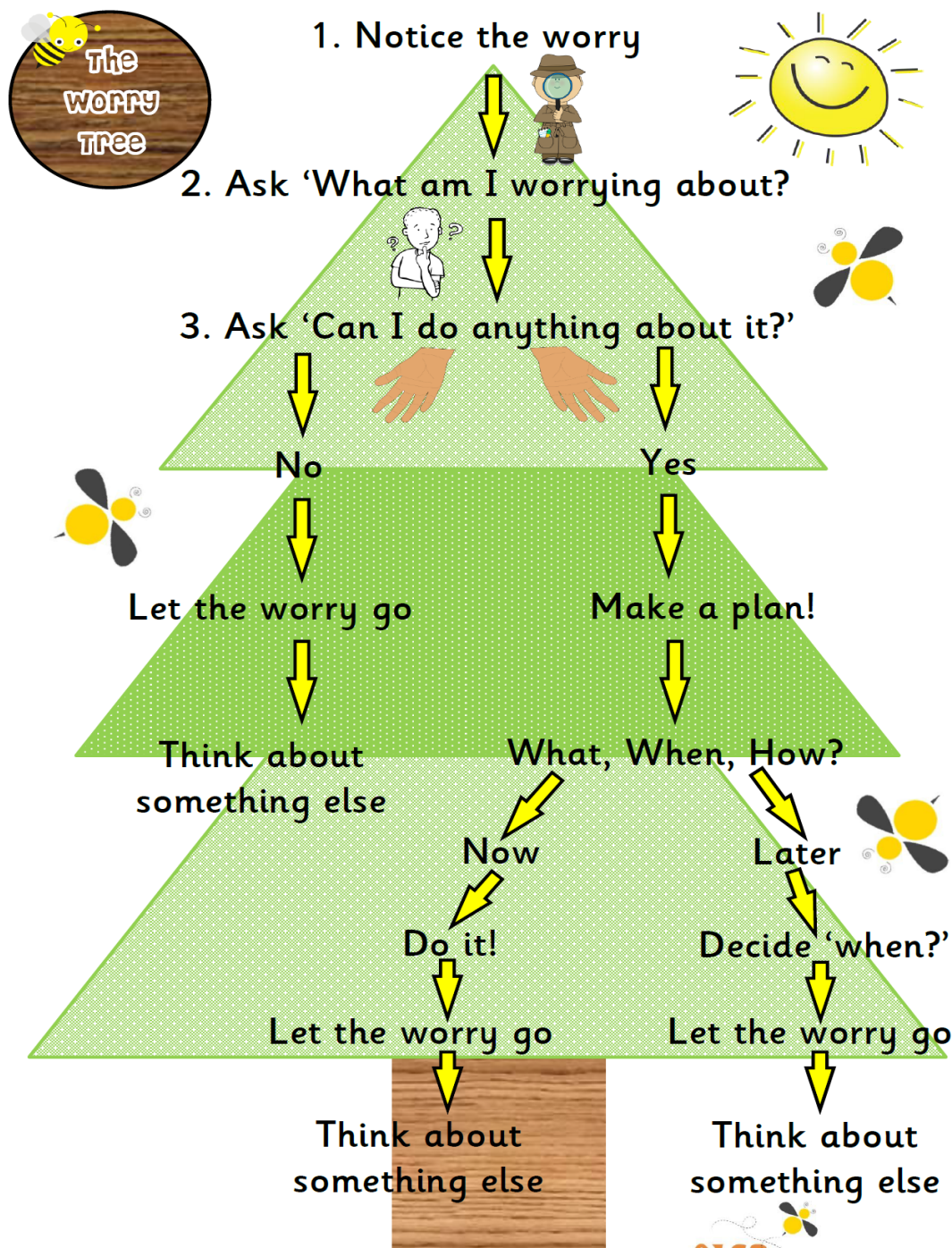






9. Additional Resources

The worry tree helps us effectively deal with worrying thoughts. Once you have noticed your worry, ask yourself if it is a worry about a current problem or a hypothetical situation (what if worry) or can you do anything about this right now. Follow the arrows down the worry to help manage your worries.



Adapted from Butler and Hope 2007

Additional Covid-19 / Coronavirus Resources

British Psychological Society guidance - <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>

BACP guidance around managing anxiety - <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/>

Anna Freud links - ***Supporting schools & colleges: A guide to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and students during periods of disruption*** There are also three videos, one for **school staff**, one for **parents** and one for **children and young people**.

Liverpool CAMHS resource - <https://wakelet.com/wake/564d7bc8-4bc9-462f-a9e1-2deb03150c3>

National Autistic Society – guidance and helpline for parents', young people and staff: [https://www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/vanguard/news/2020/march/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-advice.aspx](https://www.autism.org.uk/services/nas-schools/vanguard/news/2020/march/coronavirus-(covid-19)-advice.aspx)

Mencap - Easy Read guide to Coronavirus:
<https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20SS2.pdf>

Place2Be – Guide to helping parents answer questions from their children and to support family wellbeing: <https://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-information-for-children/>

Young Minds - Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

Carers UK - Guidance for carers: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Covibook – an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

Amaze - information pack for parents <https://amazesussex.org.uk/faqs-about-the-coronavirus-for-parent-carers-of-children-with-send-brighton-hove/>

Public Health England have produced an easy read version of their Advice on the coronavirus for places of education. You can download it here: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020->

[03/V4%20Coronavirus%20advice%20for%20schools%20poster%20020302%20EDU15.0.4%20%282%29.pdf](#)

FACE COVID – How To Respond Effectively To The Corona Crisis 1-

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

Relaxation Videos

Below are some links to relaxation videos you can do together with your child at the start or end of the day.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>

Progressive Muscle Relaxation- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaTDNYjk-Gw>

Body Scan- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIC-lo441v4>

Guided meditation for kids- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWOHcGF1Tmc>