



# COPING SKILLS: HELPING YOUR CHILD FIND THEIR CALM



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Welcome  
Introductions

# AGENDA

- 3-PRONGED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING COPING SKILLS
  - IDENTIFYING FEELINGS
  - RECOGNIZING HOW OUR BODIES RESPOND TO OUR FEELINGS
  - LEARNING COPING SKILLS WHEN FEELINGS ARE BIG
- COGNITIVE TRIANGLE
  - THOUGHTS → FEELINGS → ACTIONS
- REFRAME OR TALK BACK TO NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

\*FEEL FREE TO TAKE PICTURES OF SLIDES ALONG THE WAY

Review slide

GOAL IS FOR YOU TO LEAVE WITH SOME NEW TOOLS IN YOUR TOOLBOX TO HELP YOUR CHILD



## FEELINGS IDENTIFICATION:

- NAME IT TO TAME IT
- HELP THEM IDENTIFY WHAT THEY ARE FEELING
- MODEL!

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- In all my grades, either part or an entire lesson is devoted to feelings identification; almost all students can identify the basic feelings of mad, sad, happy, but many do not know others like embarrassed, jealous, etc..
- Important to understand different feelings because you have to be able to name it to tame it
- Esp. for young children, you may have to model or help them identify what they are feeling
  - Ex. It looks like you might be frustrated, or I'm wondering if you are embarrassed - is that right?
- And of course, model it for your child...ex. I am feeling frustrated right now because...
- The more YOU talk about your feelings, the easier it will be for them



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## HOW OUR BODIES RESPOND TO BIG FEELINGS:

- HELP THEM IDENTIFY PHYSICAL RESPONSES SO THEY CAN RECOGNIZE WHEN THEIR FEELINGS ARE STARTING TO ESCALATE AND USE A STRATEGY
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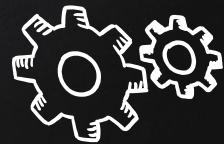
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- Help your child notice the physical responses they have to their feelings
- Just talked about it today in guidance; our bodies talk to us; cry when sad, laugh when happy, yell when angry
- Paying attention to what happens in their bodies in response to their feelings will help them recognize when they need to use a strategy, and which strategy to use

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## COPING SKILLS

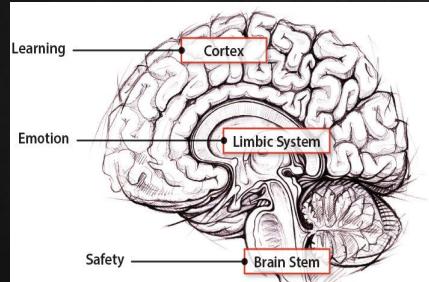
- NEED TO HAVE A TOOLBOX OF DIFFERENT SKILLS!



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- Variety of coping skills because what is helpful when I'm feeling cranky or a little frustrated is different from what I might need to use if I'm feeling furious
- What works today may not work tomorrow, so helpful to have many to choose from

# OUR BRAIN



## Cortex: Thinking Brain

INTEGRATES INPUT FROM ALL 3 PARTS. COGNITION, BELIEFS, LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, SPEECH.

## Limbic Area: Emotional or Feeling Brain

ASSESSES RISK. EXPRESSION AND MEDIATION OF EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS, INCLUDING EMOTIONS LINKED TO ATTACHMENT.

## Survival Brain: Instinctual

CARRIES OUT "FIGHT, FLIGHT, & FREEZE." UNCONSCIOUS. DIGESTION, REPRODUCTION, CIRCULATION, BREATHING - RESPONDS TO SENSATION.

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- But before we get into the strategies, let's talk a little bit about our brain;
- Very simplified version, but we have three parts: Thinking brain, feeling brain, and survival
- Most of the time, our thinking brain is in control; this is when we can make good decisions;
- But sometimes, our feeling brain takes over, and if I'm feeling angry, I am probably not going to make good decisions, so this is when I need to do something to calm down and get back to my thinking brain

## Do's

- Stay calm
- Guide them in using strategies
- Give them space if needed
- Avoid information overload
- Revisit the issue later, when you are both in a better place

## DON'T

- Expect too much from them
- Force them to look at you/talk to you
- Ask too many questions
- Give multistep directions

\*GOAL IS TO HELP THEM GET BACK TO THEIR THINKING BRAIN

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### DO's

- Here are some Do's and Don'ts to help you when your child is not in their thinking brains
- Stay calm - easier said than done!
- Your job is to guide them in using their strategies; you may have to be clever;
- Give them space if needed ; physical space, or the option to cool off in another room
- Revisit the issue later, when you are both in a better place

### DON'Ts:

- Expect them to be rational; when they are escalated, possibly even in their survival brain, they are not capable of being reasonable; in the moment, have you ever asked your child why they did something and they say they don't know - they may really not know!
- Don't make them look at you, or answer every question; talk quietly, and ask them to give you a signal so you know they are listening; might even give them the option of writing down what is bothering them
- Don't ask too many questions or give multistep directions
- GOAL IS TO HELP THEM GET CALM DOWN AND GET BACK TO THEIR THINKING BRAIN!

# COPING SKILLS – YELLOW ZONE

(FRUSTRATED, WORRIED, NERVOUS, SILLY, OVER-EXCITED, EMBARRASSED)

- ✗ Take 3–5 slow, deep breaths
- ✗ Get a drink of water
- ✗ Go for a walk
- ✗ Get a hug
- ✗ Count backwards
- ✗ Do 3–5 Wall Push-ups
- ✗ Draw



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- Yellow zone - when feelings are starting to escalate, and we're starting to lose control;
- Feelings like: frustrated, worried, nervous, silly, over-excited
- The beginning stages of escalation
- My go-to for the yellow zone is slow, deep breaths - breathing is free, can do it anywhere, no one even has to know
- I often will model it with students that I'm trying to get to do it
- If they aren't in a place to choose a strategy on their own, then remind them of some of their options

# COPING SKILLS – RED ZONE

(ANGRY, FURIOUS, TERRIFIED)

## GROUNDING:

- ✗ Means to bring your focus to what is happening to you right now physically – either in your body or in your surroundings – by using your senses
- ✗ Helps you stay, or get back to, the present moment
- ✗ Distracts your brain from the thing that is making you feel upset
- ✗ Once the dust has settled, then revisit the issue

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- I consider the red zone the danger zone; this is when they are really escalated and out of control; they cannot access their thinking brain
- When feelings are high, I like to use grounding strategies; (read slide)
- Grounding is bringing your focus to what is happening to you right now physically - either in your body or in your surroundings, by using your senses
- It helps you get stay, or get back to the present moment, so I'm not worried about what happened 5 minutes ago, or what might happen tomorrow
- It also helps distract your brain from the thing that is making you feel upset; often we get hyper-focused on the thing that is upsetting us, and it's hard to move past; grounding can help with this
- Then, once things have settled down, you can revisit the issue later



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- This is my go-to grounding skill for students; I've had great success with it and sometimes I'm surprised at how well it works and the change it can bring about
- I usually ask them what their favorite color is and then to name (not just point) to at least 5 things they see;
- Then we may do another color or move on to shapes
- If they do not respond, then I will either start naming my fav color, or guess theirs - they will usually correct me!



- GIVE ME FIVE:
- This is similar, but uses all your senses
- 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you feel, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste
- When I get to feel, they are usually starting to come down; here I try to get them to describe how the object feels (soft, warm, etc..), and then move on
- This is a good one to practice when they are in a good place, as it makes it easier to access when you need it;
- Make it into a game, and help them really focus on their body sensations
- Could even use this with a favorite memory; ex. the beach and go through the five steps

## Alphabet Brain Games



Pick a category (animals, food, boy's names, etc.) and name one for each letter of the alphabet. – OR –

Say a girl's name, boys name, place and thing. EX. Amy name is Annie, my husband's name is Andrew, we live in Alabama, and we sell apples

\*To make more challenging, do the alphabet backwards.

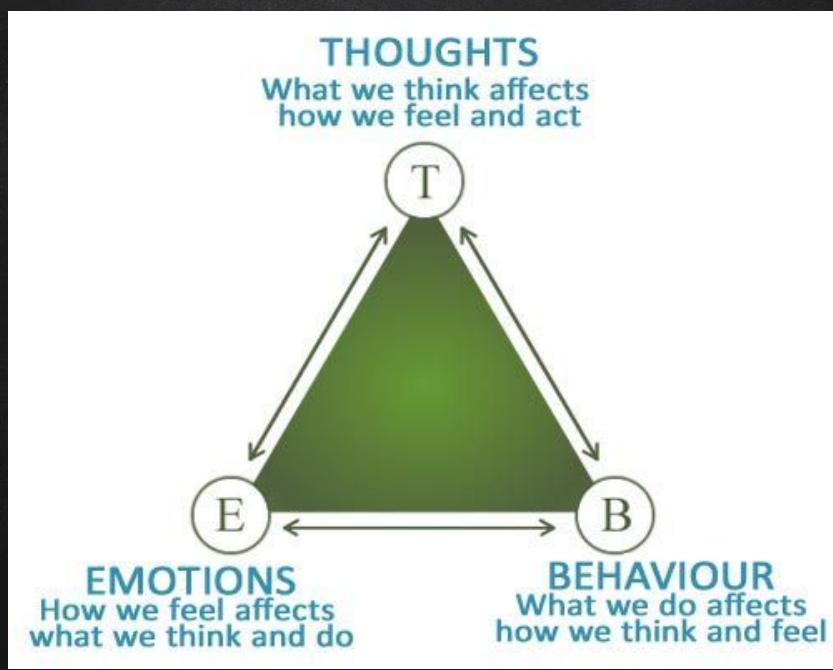
- ALPHABET BRAIN GAMES:
- I often use this after they have calmed down, but are still anxious or having a hard time letting go of the thing bothering them
- Sometimes, if they won't do it with me, I start doing it and then try to get them to join in
- What we often find, is that by the time we get half-way, they have really calmed down
- Again, make this into a game and play it in the car



QUESTIONS?

Questions so far?

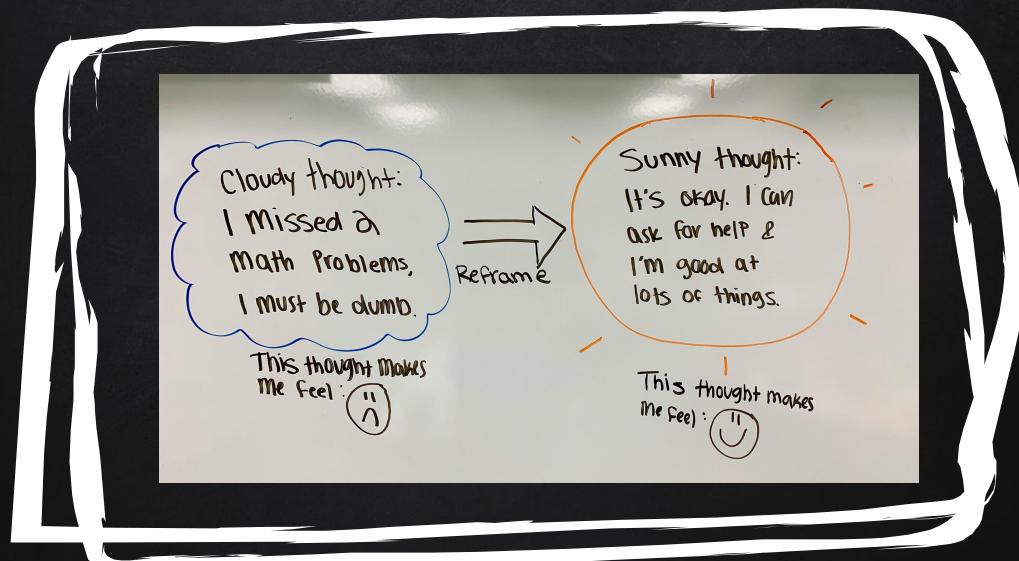
TRANSITION: Once they are in a calm state, then it's helpful to explore the issue; often, we find the root of the issue is negative self-talk, so I am now going to turn it over to Ms. Moore for the next part of our presentation.



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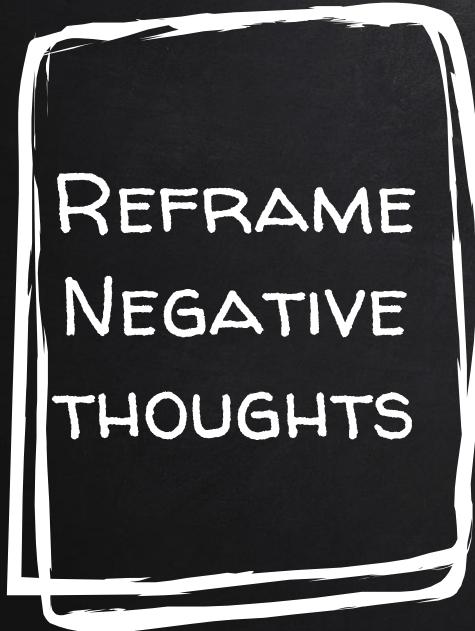
- Once the child is in a better mental state, we will be able to come up with ideas to help them so they don't become elevated again.
- CBT is a theory that states our thoughts influence our emotions, which influences our behavior. If we can learn to control what we do with negative thought, we can in turn change how we feel and what we do.
- Ex: If I see two girls whispering and looking at me, I might assume they're talking bad about me. That thought of them talking bad about me makes me feel upset, which might lead to me acting out. However, if I could tell myself that they're saying something nice about me, I'm less likely to feel sad, so I would act nicely towards them.

## CHANGING CLOUDY THOUGHTS TO SUNNY THOUGHTS



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- This is a visual that shows the negative thought patterns and how they can change to a positive thought.
- Thinking that I'm dumb leads me to feeling sad, but I can reframe that thought into something that makes me feel happy.



### THINGS YOU CAN SAY WHEN YOUR CHILD IS BEING NEGATIVE:

- “Reframe please”
- “Try that again”
- “What would you say to a friend? Be your own friend.”

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- When you hear your child saying a self-defeating idea, instantly stop it.
- You can stop it by saying the bullet points above.
- Most children won't say mean things to their friends because they know it is wrong, so question why the child is talking to themselves that way. They need to be their own friend and say nice thoughts.



## Perfectionist Panda – black and white thinking – I either have it perfect or it is wrong

Count Batula  
–discounts the good and the  
positive to only point out the  
bad



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- This idea is thinking trap animals. This can be visualized by puppets, print outs, or drawings.
- You place a character with a specific negative thought and teach your child to talk back to the character. Your child will start to recognize the negative thoughts. How can I talk back to perfectionist panda? Teaches positive self talk at a young age so that when they're older, they already have the skills in place to help their negative thinking.
- Count Batula only sees the bad in the days, not everything good that has happened. What should you say to Count Batula to show him that the day wasn't all bad?



Fair Falcon

Thinking things are unfair for you or believing unfairness is directed at you creates resentment and anger.

**"It's not fair that I am always getting stuck doing the work."**



Puffer Fish

proportion.  
small

Seeing things out of  
Either way too big or way too

Mental Filter



ONLY PAYING ATTENTION TO CERTAIN TYPES OF EVIDENCE.

NOTICING OUR FAILURES BUT NOT SEEING OUR SUCCESSES.



General Ostrich

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event.

Being overly broad in drawing conclusions

- More examples of thinking patterns.
- You could also come up with positive thinking animals - maybe the Wise Owl can come out to combat General Ostrich.
- The idea behind these is that your child is learning how to say positive things to themselves when they are having automatic, negative thoughts.

# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: COPING SKILLS

GRADES 3-5

Wake County Public Schools supports the development of the whole child through social emotional learning. Counselors at all elementary schools will be teaching a series of lessons in 3rd-5th grade to teach children life skills that can keep them safe and help them to make good decisions as they mature. Empowering students through exposure to positive coping skills will assist their success at home, school, and in the community.

## Lesson 1: Managing Emotions

- strength of emotions
- strategies to manage strong emotions and how and when to use
- sequences that lead to poor coping skills and how to change them

## Lesson 2: Confident Problem Solving

- connection between feelings, thoughts, and behaviors
- problem solving sequence to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in a constructive way

## Lesson 3: Review and Seek Resources

- Review self discipline and coping skills
- Practice coping skills
- Identify resources at home and school



# SEL GUIDANCE LESSONS FOCUSED ON COPING SKILLS FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 2-6, & 8

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Just want to let you know what we're doing to support SEL for students in Wake County

- County developed SEL guidance lessons for students in grades 2-6 & 8; we started them two years ago, for grades 3-5, and they've been adding more on each year
- Focus on identifying feelings, developing coping skills, and identifying resources
- Even though the county has not written lessons for kindergarten and 1st grade, I have created my own, which are similar in focus
- These lessons align with much of what we have discussed tonight



# THANK YOU!

Survey: <https://forms.gle/Y6ghSHqJBosNWk1R9>

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