

# tandem toolkit



*live free*  
you're not alone

**Resources For Professionals**  
working with Child to Parent Violence

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# The Tandem Toolkit

Tandem was developed as a group intervention for parents and children where child to parent violence (CPV) and Adolescent to parent violence (APV) have been identified as a significant safeguarding issue.

The original group work was developed by Emily Alison of Protagoras consulting and the pilot was delivered by Cheshire without Abuse and the Cheshire East Youth Offending Team. The pilot was successful, with significant positive improvements for the families involved.

Using learning from that work, this toolkit has been developed to support multi-agency professionals working with families where there are issues with CPV/APV.

The toolkit contains sessions for working with parents and children and guidance for delivery. Worksheets are included and can be copied and/or printed as required.

It is important when embarking on work of this nature that you are clear, open and manage the expectations of individual family members. Managing CPV/APV involves setting and maintaining boundaries, understanding the cycle of change and that there are no quick fixes. As a professional, your involvement will be limited and will not be on-going, so the goal is to improve family communication and conflict management so that the parent/s can continue the work.

A key success factor in this work is to be honest from the start of any intervention about the goals and any potential consequences if things do not improve. We have seen real successes where the number of sessions has been clear from the start and discussed regularly.

If you wish to participate in the Tandem outcomes framework you can use our simple pre and post intervention scores for parent/s and child which can be uploaded onto survey monkey which will support our understanding of CPV/APV in Cheshire East. As long as you share your email address we will be able to offer feedback on the impact your work has had each quarter.

## Considerations for children with additional needs:

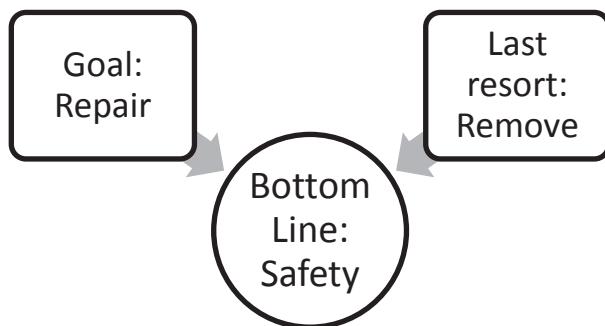
- Remember that each parent is the expert about their own child. Discuss how conditions such as ASD and ADHD might impact their capacity to focus, understand and engage.
- For children who are very literal you may want to adapt resources that involve metaphor such as the tree of me and let the CYP decide how to represent themselves.
- For children who struggle to focus it can be helpful to keep sessions to 30-45 minutes in length with a break in the middle e.g. 2 x 20 minute activities/discussions.
- Be flexible, all children are unique and respond to things differently. If you sense that a child is not in the right mind set try a Problem Free session where you go for a walk, chat about games, music or other interests they have. This can help move things forwards.

# Working with Child to Parent Violence

Working with cases of violence or abuse between children and parents presents particular challenges to safety. The complexity of safeguarding a victim from their own child for whom they also have parental responsibility can create conflicting and directly opposing goals.

Violence from a child or adolescent toward a parent can pose significant risk of harm and affect well-being for everyone in the household and particular consideration should be given to the safeguarding of other children in the household.

It is helpful for practitioners to consider these complexities when you are trying to make decisions in child to parent violence (CPV) and Adolescent to parent violence (APV) cases.



The goal of actions taken should be to repair the parent-child relationship to a point where it is stable, supportive and safe. However, the bottom line is safety. Therefore, some circumstances may require actions that separate the child from the parent temporarily. Permanent removal or actions that sever the parent-child relationship should be a last resort unless there is no viable pathway to repair and the relationship cannot be made safe.

It can be important to explain these priorities to the parent as parents often have anxieties that seeking support for CPV/ APV will result in removal of the child or young person. The parent may even have used the threat that they will 'put them in care' if they don't stop acting out. The child may assume your involvement means removal and therefore clear explanations about the reasons for this work should be shared with the child.

Conversely, the parent may have reached a stage where they think that removal of the child is the only option left. They may require encouragement to embark on strategies to repair the relationship and reassurance that they can seek support if they ever feel unsafe.

It is important parents and children work together to improve family relationships and there are sessions and tools in this toolkit to support working in tandem.

# Outline of Sessions

The sessions and tools in this toolkit can be used individually or as a complete scheduled intervention.

The first session is always completed with the parent alone and is intended to help you gain an understanding of the family dynamic. At MyCWA, all sessions are started with a check-in of how the person/s week has been, their positives and any challenges they have faced.

In addition, you may choose to re-visit strengths and challenges you have observed, any homework set or any incidents disclosed.

Each week you should review progress on parent and child goals (page 5) and discuss what has gone well and what each person is worried about.

It is useful to be clear at the start of each session that check-in is timed, no more than 10 minutes spent is on this activity. Check-in should be goal based, discussing positives and challenges, and reviewing any homework.

Additional time is taken after check-in to **settle, relax and focus** on the session. This can be by having a few moments of quiet, by **practicing calm breathing** or doing a **body scan**.

We ask parents and children to practice these techniques at the start of every session and once a day at home. It is normal to encounter resistance to this practice but this is a key tool in emotional self-regulation and is used by athletes and soldiers to manage challenging situations.

The end of each session should include a feedback form or discussion and a positive highlight from the week/day or session.

Content of Full Programme			
Session	Aim of session	Who attends?	Resources?
One	Understanding the Family Dynamic	Primary caregiver	Pens, paper, flip chart, family contract
Two	Family Rules & Healthy/unhealthy house	Primary caregiver and child	Pens, paper, house rules & healthy/unhealthy houses
Three	Communication	Primary caregiver	Wheel of communication
Four	Time-out	Child	Time-out rules, scenarios
Five	Story Boards	Primary caregiver and child	Pens, paper, flip chart, Example storyboard
Six	Knowing Me	Child	Tree of Me, Pens, paper, flip chart

# Example Session Plan

This toolkit contains four parent and child session sessions, two child only sessions and a additional four parent exercises. The intention is for professionals to develop their own support plan based on their understanding and assessment of the family's needs. It is useful to plan the sessions in advance. We have developed the example session plan below to support with planning for a range of situations.

<b>Session Plan Example – Story Boards: Parent and Child aged 14</b>			
<b>Timings</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Notes</b>
10mins	Check-in	Time-out log, Flip chart, pens	Where are we up to? Any problems since we last talked? Have you had any opportunities to use Time-Out?
5mins	Calm breathing		If there is discomfort in practicing calm breathing, discuss the reasons why. Even laughing is a release of tension so there is no need to be too strict.
5mins	Rules	Flip chart, pens	Re-visit the rules agreed at the first session or renegotiate the rules.
20mins	Story board	Example & discussion points session 5	The discussion and exploration here is important and leads into the 'thoughts, feelings, behaviour, beliefs' worksheet for the personal storyboard.
30mins	Story board	Handout, flip chart, pens	This is a heavy session and it is critical to remain calm and have parents/children listen to each other. If conflict is high then do this session as two separate sessions and then bring back together to discuss the worksheets.
10mins	Check out		Try to end on a positive note with specific praise.

# **Weekly Session Goals**

Use the GOALS worksheet (see attached) with both parents and young people. Ask at the end of every session for participants to review their goals for the week.

## **EXAMPLE GOALS:**

<b>Child/YP Goals</b>	<b>Parent Goals</b>
I will get up and get ready for school every morning.	I will not shout or raise my voice toward my child.
I will not shout or raise my voice toward my brother/ sister.	I will not swear when speaking to my child.
I will not shout or raise my voice toward my Mum/Dad.	I will ask my child about something they are interested in at least 3 times.
I will not get sent home from school for behaviour.	I will praise my child at least once every day this week.
I will make breakfast for myself and my siblings 4 mornings this week.	I will be calm.
I will help look after the baby for at least 3 hours this week.	I will make sure I get 3 hours of time for myself this week.
I will answer my phone when my Mum/Dad rings or return their call within 5 minutes.	I will help my child with something I have asked them to do (clean their room, washing up, homework, etc.)
I will not swear in front of my parents or siblings.	I will not cry in front of my child.
I will come in every night at curfew.	I will plan at least 3 hours of family time.
I will not come home drunk.	I will knock before entering my child's room.

Goals should be related to eliminating a negative behaviour or introducing a positive one.

1. Have they been successful? If yes; why do they think it worked this week?
2. If no; why not; what made it difficult or hard to achieve their goal this week?
3. If they have not achieved their goal do they want to carry it into the next week or adjust it to something more manageable?
4. If they have achieved their goal, what do they want to concentrate on next?  
What is the next step?

# My Goals

Week	Goal	Scale (0-3)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

(0 - didn't even try, 1 - tried hard but no, 2 - almost did it, 3 - nailed it!)

# **Session One with Parent: Understanding the Family Dynamic**

A clear understanding of family dynamics is crucial before embarking on an intervention for CPV/APV. Start by refreshing your understanding of the initial referral. The first discussion should be with the primary caregiver. We want to understand who makes up the family that lives in the home and who the closest family and friends are that make-up any support network. If there is parental involvement from an absent parent, be sure to discuss how the relationships function.

Our goal at this point is to understand the make-up of the family and any key support or conflict. You may choose to do a genogram or drawing on a flip chart to represent these individuals.

Next, invite the parent to share their experience and concerns about their child's behaviour. It is important at this stage not to judge or to engage in any analysis. Make notes of any key incidents as you will need these for later discussions. You can use the family conflict questions from the appendix to help discuss and understand different perspectives.

Finally, it is important to discuss the tensions safety and with a parent. Be clear that the overarching goal for the family needs to be the safety and welfare of the children within the household - including the abusing child.

This may require difficult actions by the parent- including phoning the police in response to a violent attack or threats to harm or kill made by their child. They must also ensure the safety of any other children within the household.

A family contract should be discussed with the family. An example contract is on the opposite page. The final contract should be agreed in a parent/child session and should be reviewed regularly.

## **Essential components of a family contract should include:**

- Agreement by all family members not to use abuse or violence toward each other.
- Agreement to use and respect others' use of Time-out
- Agreement that the police will be contacted if behaviours threaten the safety of other people in the household.
- Agreement of safety strategies to indicate to siblings they need to leave or go somewhere safe.
- Agreement to not use physical restraint to try and stop a child's aggressive behaviour.
- A pathway to repair- how will the situation be dealt with after it has happened? What can the young person do to make amends or set things right?

# **Family Contract**

1. As a family we agree not to be abusive or violent to each other.
2. If I someone is feeling that I may become abusive or violent, I will indicate that I need a Time-out by saying 'I need to take a Time-out' and saying where I am going I will safely leave the room I am in and stay apart from the person I am arguing with for at least 20 min. When I am calm, I will come back to discuss the issue.
3. It can be useful for the family to agree a 'code word' that indicates things are becoming abusive or too heated and everyone should take a break. Ideally it should not be something that would be a natural way to try and break an interaction (e.g. Stop; Shut up; Go to your room as these cues are often ignored or may escalate a power struggle).
4. If someone asks for a Time-out or indicates that they need a break- all family members must agree to respect this request. Everybody must agree not to impose punishments because the person took a Time-out.
5. Family members agree not to follow, restrain or stop a person who is trying to take a Time-out. Family members should agree areas in the house where each person can go and calm down if needed. These must be respected and not changed without agreement.
6. If the young person has:
  - a. Made threats to harm or kill.
  - b. Damaged property.
  - c. A weapon anywhere on their person.
  - d. Physically assaulted (e.g. hit, pushed, kicked, slapped, etc.) a parent or sibling.

The police will be phoned. This action must be taken to protect other members of the family from the young person's behaviour.

7. Parents should establish a safety plan for themselves and any other children in the household so that if a situation escalates they can safely remove themselves and other children from the property.
8. Parents should establish a code word with the other siblings that indicate they should leave the property and go to an agreed place of safety (e.g. neighbours, relatives).
9. If the parent is so concerned for their own safety or the safety of others in the household that they have to exit the property- then they should contact the police. Physical safety takes priority over rescuing any property.
10. If the young person damages property or is abusive or violent- the parent should provide a pathway to repair for them- (e.g. what could they do to make it right?).

## **Session Two with Parent and Child: Family Rules**

The aim of this session is to allow the child to share their understanding of the family situation, to introduce the family contract (a shortened version of the longer contract discussed with the parent).

Go through the 'House Rules' sheet from page 9 with the child and parent. Explain that this is a shortened version of the longer contract discussed with the parent.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do they think they can adopt these rules for the next 8 weeks?
2. Which one do they think will be the hardest to keep?
3. How can they help each other stick to the rules? (explain here that agreements should not be used against each other- don't try and catch each other breaking the rules! Support each other in sticking to them).

Give parent and child a copy of the House Rules to stick up somewhere at home. Discuss how they will be communicated to other members of the household- everybody needs to sign up for it to work.

## **Healthy/ Unhealthy House**

The other part of this session is the Healthy/Unhealthy House discussion. Parents and Young People should be shown the two diagrams (pages 9-10) and be asked which 'house' they have spent most of their time in this week.. The houses can also be used at weekly check-in to prompt discussion.

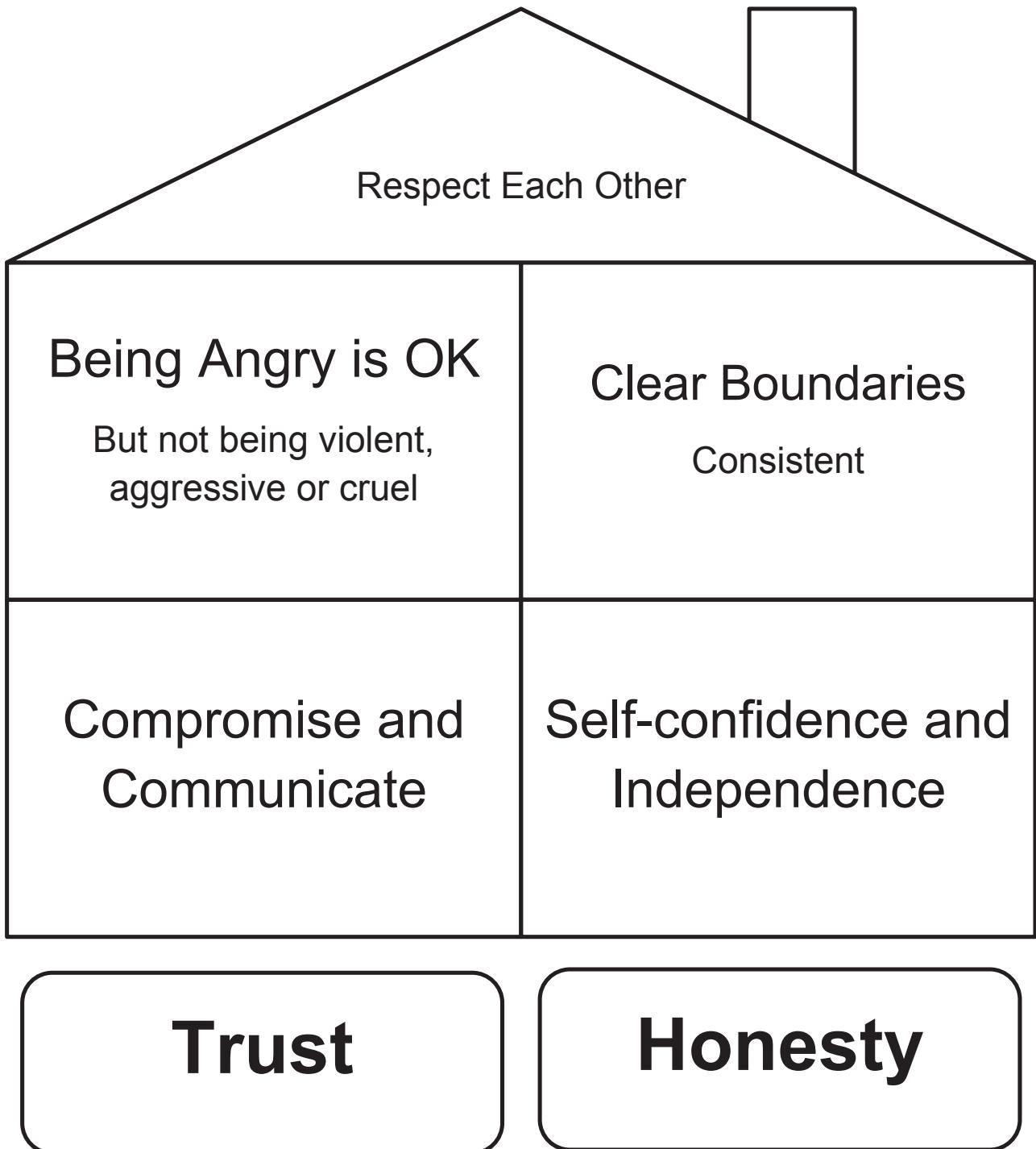
Discuss the House diagrams (see attached) and explain the content of each house. Then get the parent and young person to sort the example behaviours into one house or the other. It is not necessary to get the behaviour in the correct room of the house- just in the right house will do!

These are the sort of things they will be asked to think about each week- remind them it is easy to just focus on and remember the bad things so make particular effort to think about and remember things that are positive and healthy as well.

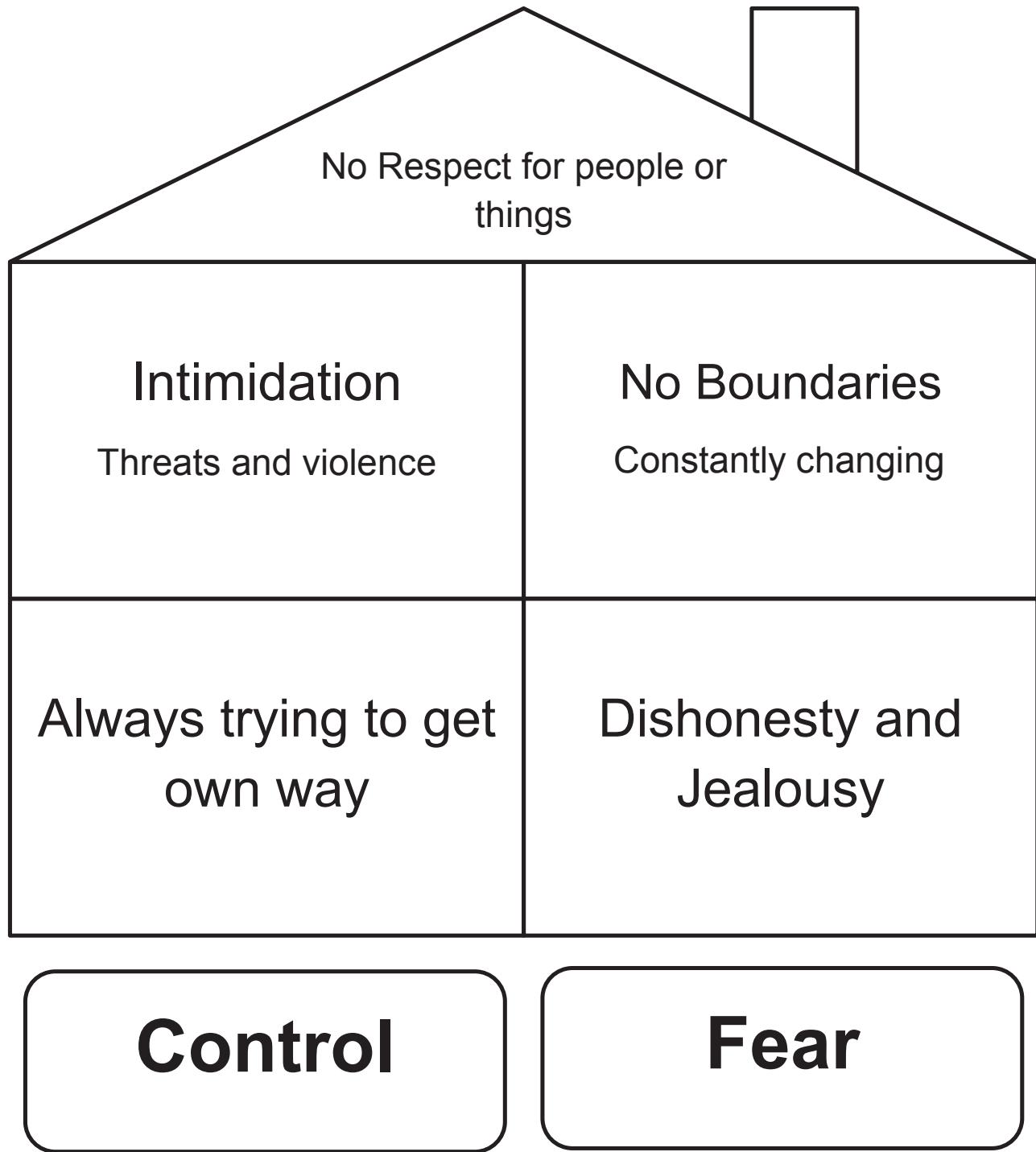
## Our House Rules

- If I swear at someone, I will apologise.
- If I shout at someone, I will apologise.
- If I get in somebody's personal space I will apologise.
- If I say something, I know I shouldn't have, I will apologise.
- I will let the other person have a break to calm down if they ask for it.
- I will ask for a break to calm down if I need it.
- I will never try to frighten somebody to win an argument.
- I will vent my anger in a way that doesn't hurt anybody (including me) or smash anything, or ruin anything in our house.
- I will NEVER, EVER hit another person in this house - this is my home, this is my family - I will RESPECT AND LOVE them.

# **Healthy House**



## Unhealthy House



## Session Three with Parent: Communication

The aim of this session is to manage expectations about change and to discuss communication styles. Explain that change is challenging for everyone but it can be achieved with the right support. Change rarely happens quickly and easily and the tools and strategies we will discuss may require a lot of practice to get right. It is important not to get too negative when things go wrong and to let their children know that the important thing is to keep trying.

Share the wheel of communication on page 12 and explain that we communicate broadly in four ways which have each been given an animal character to help describe them:

- o Friendly Monkey – Cooperation, willing to listen and discuss things, being willing to compromise, trying to work things out, being calm and friendly.
- o Angry T-REX – Hostility, being aggressive, intimidating and threatening; invading people's personal space, shouting and swearing
- o Quiet Mouse – Submissive, being a bit of a doormat, never making decisions, trying to fade into the background, being bossed around
- o Bossy Lion – Dominant- bossing people around, always trying to take charge, talking over people, doing lots of talking and not very much listening.

Ask parents to come up with the sorts of behaviours they think go with each type of communication. Do they know anyone who acts like a particular type? Do they think they have a particular style of interacting with other people?

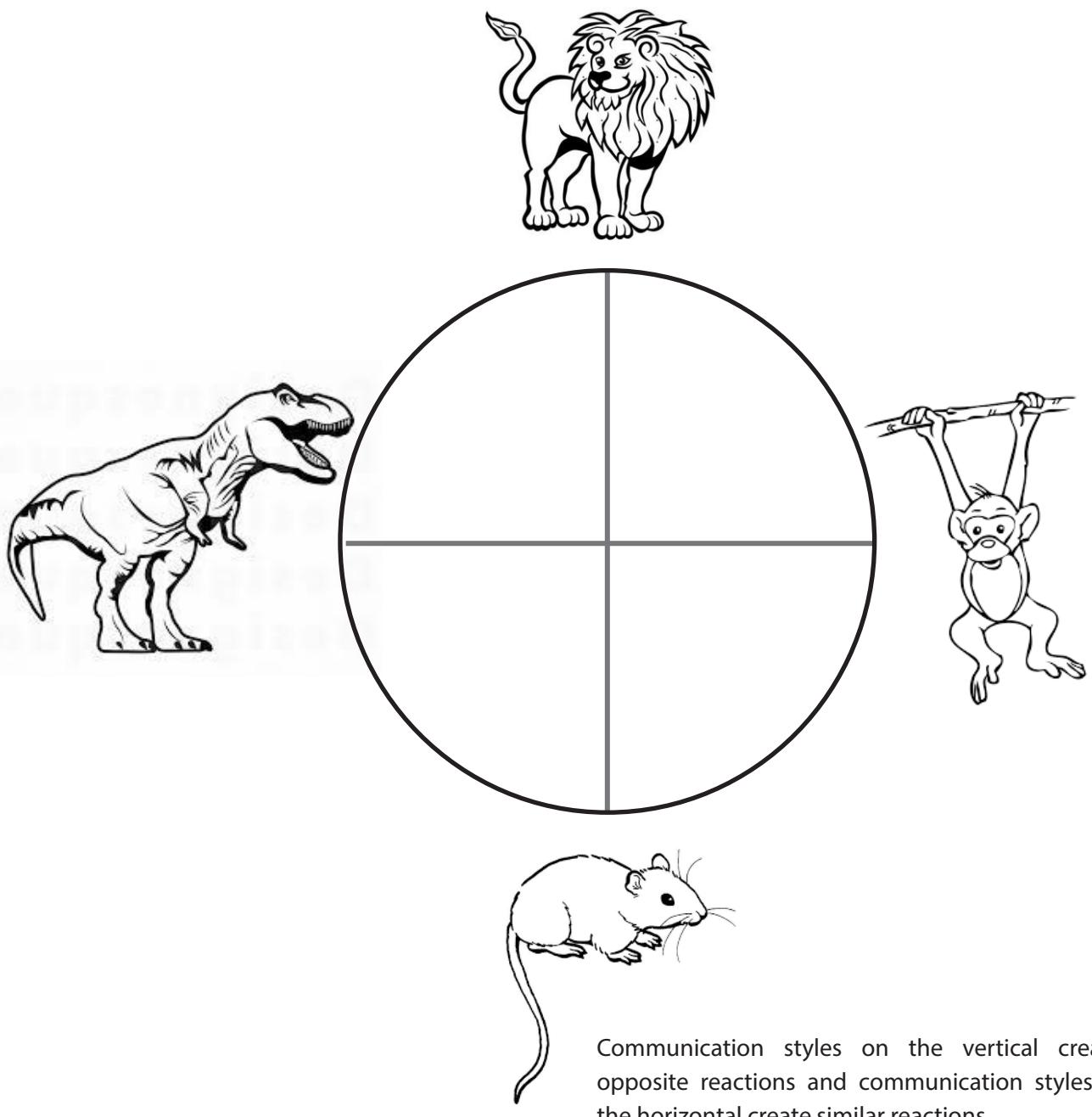
The wheel of communication is useful to help us understand that the way we approach a situation can elicit a predictable reaction from the other person. On the vertical axis you will create an opposing response from the other person and on the horizontal axis you will garner a similar style of communication.

This means that if you are dominant, you are likely to get others being submissive. (i.e. talking loudly to make everyone else listen). If you are submissive, you actually push others into a role of dominance. (i.e. if you say 'I'm rubbish at doing the pots, I don't know what I'm doing', someone else may take it on).

If you are hostile you elicit hostility from the other person. (i.e. if you start shouting or swearing in an argument, the other person is likely to take things up a notch as well and start shouting or swearing). If you are cooperative, you are more likely to get cooperation from other people. (i.e. if you ring somewhere to make a complaint, and the individual is very friendly and pleasant you are much more likely to remain calm).

At the end of this session discuss Time-out (session four) with the parent and agree ground rules for how it should work.

# Wheel of Communication



# 1. Additional Parent Exercise: Communication – The Power of Praise

This exercise can be introduced as part of the communication session or can be used as an extra exercise. Ask the parent/s for examples of things that they praise their children for, either now or in the past. What effect did this have?

How do they feel themselves when they receive praise? It is very common for some of the parents to say that they feel uncomfortable receiving praise, and/or that their child reacts negatively to praise.

Begin this section on using praise effectively by demonstrating praise– first giving very clear, specific labelled praise, then vague praise and lastly praise with a “negative hook”.

Specific praise:

*You've got a really lovely demeanour - you are so approachable and enthusiastic, and you never shy away from a task given to you.*

Vague praise:

*You're so nice.*

Praise with a negative hook:

*You are a very warm nice person - it's just a shame you're so disorganised and forgetful.*

Discuss why specific praise is the most effective.

Ask the parent to come up with a list of things that they would like to see their child/teen do more of – these should be things that they do from time to time already.

Give parents 5 minutes to create a list then 10 minutes to work together to come up with things they could say next time their child does this by way of specific, labelled praise. Check that the agreed phrase is specific (i.e. it says what was good) and is praise (i.e. is wholly positive – no negative hooks!).

# Ways I can Praise my Child

What I would like to encourage my child to do more of:	How I can use praise:	What I would like to encourage my child to do less of:	How I can use praise:
<i>Example: Bring dirty dishes downstairs</i>	<i>Thank you so much for bringing those down - it means a lot to me when you help out.</i>	<i>Example: Leaving homework until the last night before it is due</i>	<i>Even if you leave something until the last minute, you always make sure it gets done. Is there a way we could do it that's less stressful?</i>

## **2. Additional Parent Exercise - Communication – Empathy Building**

Parenting adolescents can be challenging. Even when children have made relatively smooth transitions at earlier ages, adolescent years can stretch the limits of parents.

Few parents are prepared for teenagers who are violent and abusive and often feel devastated when faced with teenagers who have used any form of violence against them. Violence and abuse are not a part of “normal” adolescent development. However, it is not unusual for adolescents to use challenging behaviours, such as arguing, complaining, and getting angry, as they struggle through the transitions of the teenage years. It is important for parents to distinguish between what are abusive behaviours and what are just difficult teen behaviours.

When parents recall their own teenage years and remember how they were treated by their parents and other adults, they are able to feel more empathetic toward their teenagers and remember what responses from their parents were effective and what responses were not. Reviewing the characteristics and developmental changes of adolescents helps parents understand the significant physical, mental and emotional changes their teens are experiencing. Parents need to make significant changes in their parenting to meet the challenges of the teen years.

Discussion: My Teen Years:

1. What was important to you?
2. What did you enjoy doing?
3. What was difficult or stressful for you?
4. What were some of your behaviours that concerned your parents?
5. How did your parents respond to these behaviours?
6. Were these responses helpful? If not, what would have been more helpful to you?
7. What were some of your feelings as a teenager?
8. What was one wish or goal you had as a teen?
9. What similarities do you see between your child and yourself as a teenager?

## Session Four with Child: Time-out

Discuss the concept of Time-out – a ‘safe’ place to be angry and to switch off your ‘emotional brain’ and switch on your ‘rational brain’.

- Explain the Time-out skill (using the hand-out provided).
- You can place each of the R’s on a stepping stone (sheet of coloured paper or post it) - Talk through each step and give some examples.

Then you can get the participant to move a paper clip or small toy to each step and describe how they would apply it to themselves.

- a. RECOGNISE you are angry (what are their personal warning signs/ what are their parent’s/ child’s).
- b. REFEREE- how will you say you need a Time-out? F£%\* Off is not an appropriate way to say you need to go calm down....
- c. REMOVE- where can you go to take your Time-out? Have more than one option- what if it is midnight- you can’t walk the dog. What if your usual spot is taken up by something or someone else?
- d. RELAX- name physical things that can help burn out the anger but that don’t elevate it (punch bag is fine if you are calm by the end but not if you are imagining punching the person who’s made you angry, similarly violent computer games do not help to calm down).
- e. REVISIT- discuss that they can’t use Time-out to avoid discussing things or accepting a telling off. They may need to go back and work it out- calmly. How can they do this?

Highlight using the MISUSE of Time-out scenarios some of the ways it can be used inappropriately (e.g. to get out of the house, to get out of lessons, because you can’t be asked to discuss whatever the other person wants to discuss). Get participants to identify a personal place of retreat/ Time-out activity by the next session and ask them to report back if they use time-out and feedback how it went using the Time-out Log.

### Varying Time-Out for individual needs

The Time-out focus is slightly different dependent on the age and maturity of your participant(s). For participants who are under 14 or have very poor emotional regulation skills, they need to feel able to vent and off-load the emotion raging inside them - particularly the physiological effect of anger on their body. There is less focus on using calming thoughts and more focus on distracting the mind from negative ones until they are physically calmer.

# The Time-out Steps

## Step 1: RECOGNISE YOU ARE ANGRY

- Determine what your own personal warning signs are that you are starting to lose control. These might be how you are feeling (shaky, breathless, upset) or how you are behaving (shouting, swearing, glaring).

## Step 2: REFEREE

- Declare a Time-out. Practice how you will actually say- 'I need a Time-out'- being able to say 'I have to go calm down. Try to ask for a Time-out before you reach a point of anger where you don't feel in control- telling someone 'Leave me the f... alone is not an appropriate way to 'declare a Time-out'.

## Step 3: REMOVE YOURSELF from the SITUATION

- If you are not there, you can't kick off. You need to find a place that you can go that will help you calm down. Try and have several options- what will you do if you can't go to the first place? (have some backups for different places and times of day) What can you do if someone won't let you leave? (Time-out in your head).

## STEP 4: RELAX- FIRST EXTINGUISH THE FIRE

- If you go and punch something or swear or shout- you may continue to feel wound up.
- Burn the fire out with something PHYSICAL but NOT VIOLENT- push-ups/ press-ups/ go for a run or a stress ball/ doodle pad.

## STEP 4 (PART 2): RELAX AND DISTRACT (minimum 20 minutes – maximum 1 hour)

- Do something that chills you out and calms you down- perhaps have a go at making a distraction box or notebook where they write down a number of different things they enjoy doing. When they are in the heat of the moment- they should go to this for an idea of what to do to distract them.
- Try to take your mind off whatever made you angry (video games, reading books or comics, watching TV).
- If you start obsessing on what made you angry, purposefully try and distract your brain from it again for the full 20 min.

## STEP 5: REVISIT- RESOLVE or RELEASE

- After you are completely calmed down, think about whatever it was that made you angry in the first place.
- Are you still angry? (remember, ANGER is fine- it is VIOLENCE that is not OK)
- Can you do anything to resolve the problem? If you can't resolve it, can you let it go? Can you move on without hanging on to it?
- Make sure the Time-out hand-out is sent out or shared with parents/ teachers.

# **Misuse of Time-Out**

A critical aspect of Time-out is realistically thinking through how you will apply it in the heat of the moment. It is a constructed interruption- it will not feel natural. To prepare yourself to actually use it, you need to think of hurdles or obstacles that may get in the way of you using it appropriately.

Professionals should describe the following scenarios (or others based on the family or different age groups) where Time-out is misused or used incorrectly. After each one, children should identify how Time-out was misused and any of the steps that were forgotten or ignored.

## **Scenario 1: GET OUT OF ARGUMENT FREE CARD**

Owen gets a phone call from his best mate asking him to come round but he has just told his Mum he's going to start his homework.

Owen picks a fight with his Mum by complaining about the state of the house and having to help look after his little brother. Once his Mum gets upset, Owen says he's having a 'fucking Time-out' and that he is going out and will be back later.

## **Scenario 2: PASSING THE BUCK**

Owen comes in two hours after curfew on a Wednesday night. His Mum starts telling him off for being so late and not answering his phone. He just ignores her and goes up to his room. She follows him- now shouting at him and demanding that he hand over his phone for the rest of the week.

Owen rolls his eyes at her, and says 'I think you need a Time-out Mum- you're being a complete cow. Get out of my room and go have a Time-out.'

## **Scenario 3: BREAKING THE NON-VIOLENCE CODE**

Owen and his Mum are arguing about him coming home drunk the night before. The argument builds, and Owen (appropriately) says he is getting too annoyed to talk about it anymore just now- he needs to have a Time-out and then come back to it.

Owen turns to leave, and his Mum moves in front of him and blocks the door. 'Get out of my way' he says. When she won't move, he grabs her arms and pulls her away from the door and goes out.

## **Discussion:**

Each of these scenarios should prompt discussion about how Time-out is being misused and what alternative strategies could be used in each scenario to try and achieve the same wants/ intentions. Highlight, (in particular after Scenario 3), why it is so important to have Time-out agreed and discussed before you need to use it in the heat of an argument. Reinforce that Time-out is a de-escalation skill for THEM to apply- even if they feel it is the other person who needs to calm down.

## Time-out Log

Remember - some signs you might be misusing Time-out:

- You use it to avoid discussing problems.
- You use it every time anyone tries to discuss something with you.
- You don't feel any calmer when you use it.
- You force the other person to leave the situation instead of you.
- You try and use it in inappropriate situations: to try and avoid discipline at home, at school, or with the police.

An example of when I used Time-out:

What happened?			
My place to calm down /relax was			
What worked well?			
What didn't work well?			

The important thing is to think about how to keep practicing Time-out until it feels natural and not to give up if it hasn't worked perfectly. Time-out is a skill and all skills require practice.

# **Session Five with Parent and Child: Story Boards**

Storyboards are an extremely useful technique to review both current and/or past incidents with the parent or child. The goal is to allow them to process the situation more fully and to unpick how it developed and what caused it to escalate to abuse or violence.

It is also a very useful tool for generating perspective-taking and empathy so that the parent and child attempt to see things from each other's point of view rather than just their own. As a facilitator, it is important for you to guide this process but not to leak any judgement or view about who was in the wrong or the behaviour that occurred. You are there to help them become more self-aware. Avoid advice giving or problem-solving and most importantly, do not take sides. If the situation is high conflict, you might want to consider doing the personal storyboards as separate session.

To generate a storyboard you will need to divide a piece of flipchart into six panels. In the first two panels, draw events that immediately preceded the abuse or violence. In the middle two panels, draw the abusive or violent behaviour that occurred. In the final two panels draw the aftermath and consequences of the incident.

## **WORKED EXAMPLE**

Facilitators should present a worked example of a storyboard to the group based on the following scenario:

### **Top two panels:**

Lisa told her son, Shawn, that he needed to do the dishes before he went over to his friend's house. Shawn started arguing with her about how he didn't have time and that he wasn't her slave and how his brother never had to do the dishes. Lisa argued back about how he was nowhere near being a slave because he didn't do any work around the house and that his brother had done the dishes several times that week.

### **Middle two panels:**

Shawn started yelling at her and picked up one of the dishes and threw it at the wall. It smashed into pieces. Lisa started screaming at Shawn and told him he couldn't go anywhere for a month.

### **Final two panels:**

Shawn went to his room and slammed the door. Lisa did the dishes, upset and angry.

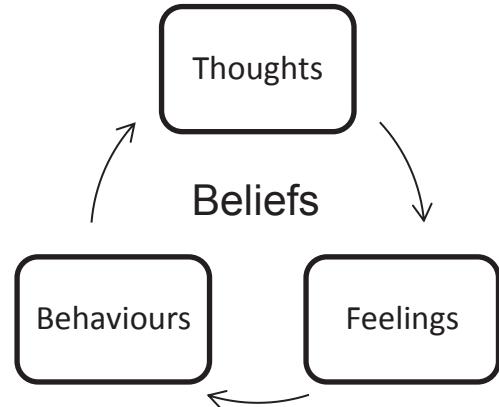
Roughly draw out the description of this incident or something similar. You could also use a video clip from Coronation street (Leanne and Simon storyline) or from another programme such as World's Strictest Parents. Whatever you choose, draw out the interaction in a storyboard as it allows you to move about the timeline during discussion and add in important elements such as thoughts, feelings, and beliefs which will link to the next session.

Discussion: Participants should consider if they can add any of the following to your storyboard:

- 1) Thought balloons- what was Lisa thinking at various points in the story? What do you think Shawn might have been thinking? Insert these as thought balloons.
- 2) Feeling hearts- what were they feeling at various points in the story? Insert these as hearts with the emotion written inside.
- 3) Beliefs- what beliefs might have been driving the behaviour in the story? Write these on the back of the storyboard.
- 4) Intentions- what do they think Shawn wanted to happen? What did Lisa want the end panel to look like, rather than what it did look like?
- 5) Consequences- what were the consequences of what happened? They can circle these on the storyboard or write them in.

Before moving on to the personal storyboards, discuss what each person in the example could have done differently. It is important not to guide this discussion too much as the parent and child needs to think through solutions together.

It's useful at this point to discuss the interaction of thoughts, feelings and behaviours and how important it is to take control of our feelings and behaviours using rational thinking. We will look at this cognitive behavioural model of thoughts, feelings and behaviours when we review the personal storyboards.



## Personal Story Boards

Ask the participants to think of a situation between them and their parent/ child that was abusive and where the child 'lost control' of their behaviour or went too far.

Complete a storyboard/ script about this situation:

- B- What were the behaviours? (put these in boxes on each panel)
- F- What were they feeling at the time? (put these in hearts next to who was feeling it)
- T- What were they thinking at the time? (put these in thought bubbles next to who was probably thinking it).

Are there any beliefs that they think underpin their behaviour?

Are there any beliefs they have that conflict with it? (e.g. you should never hit people; you should treat your Mum with respect; violence isn't worth it) but they still did it anyway?

Gentle challenge and follow up is appropriate at this stage but you should follow the motivational interviewing '3 prompt' rule. If you revisit a point three times and the participant is still avoiding/ resisting/ justifying the issue then you should move on.

## Problem Solving

Ask participants what they could have changed their self-talk to that might have helped calm them down or stop the situation ending up the way it did. Is there a point in the story where they could have used Time-out or distraction to help them cope?

Ask participants to consider points where they could have changed the end of the story- how would they do it differently if they had it to do over?

What was the ending that they wanted? (Draw or write this out on a new sheet and paste over the panels in the first one).

What behaviours/ thoughts/ feelings would have to precede the new ending? What would they have to change to get the result they really wanted? Does it mean eliminating the violence and abusive behaviour from the middle panels?

How difficult do they think it would have been for them to do the revised behaviour on a scale of one to 10?

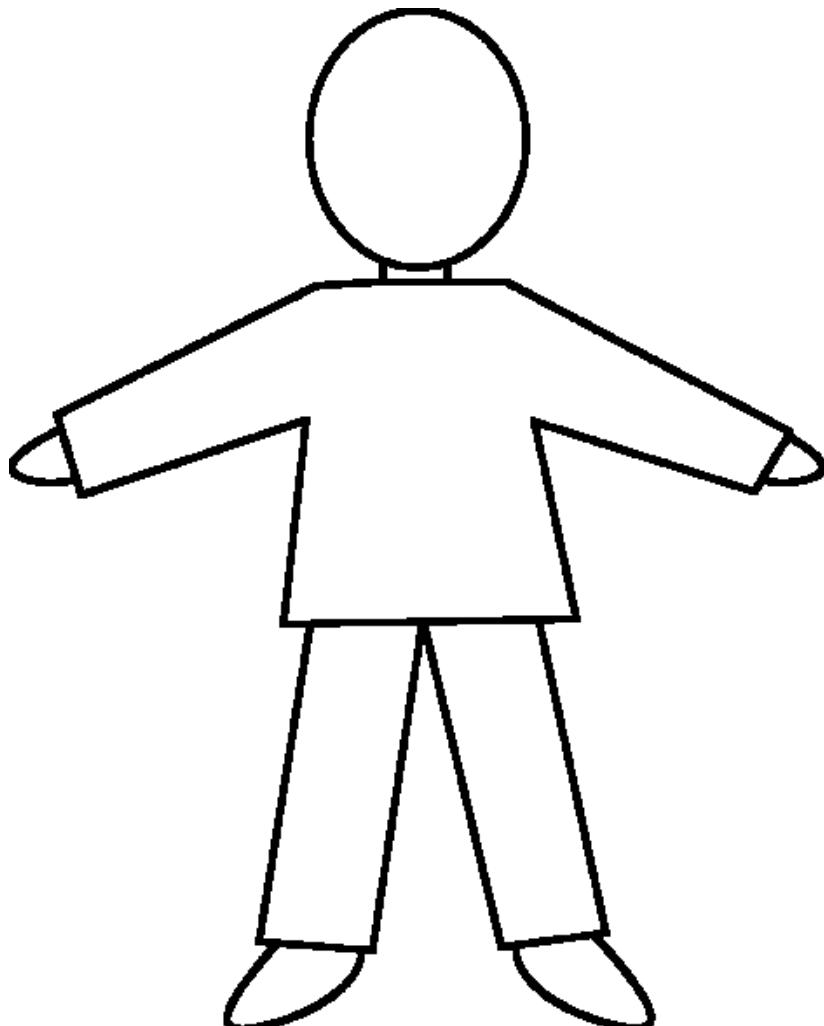
This is a very difficult and draining exercise so try to leave some time at the end of the session to debrief how they are feeling and end on a positive note with praise for their involvement.

# Storyboard discussion sheet

Thoughts	Feelings
 Behaviour	
What did you want the outcome to be?	
What was the outcome?	
What could you have done differently?	

### **3. Additional Parent Exercise - My Child – Warning Signs**

- 1) Get parents to draw a silhouette of their child on a flipchart or use the drawing below
- 2) Ask them to indicate all the signals they get from their child when they are getting ready to 'lose it'.
- 3) Be sure to highlight overt visual/ auditory signals with more subtle things they know about their child (going quiet, hiding in their room, picking fights with siblings, etc.)
- 4) Ask parents to draw a silhouette of themselves next to their child. Consider what their own warning signals are that they are starting to 'lose it' with their child- are they similar or very different?
- 5) Ask parent to think about how long or short their fuse is when they are angry - how does it compare to their child's? Do they escalate alongside their child or do they stay calm much longer than their child?



## **4. Additional Parent Exercise - The Emotional Tank**

Draw a tank on the flipchart or use the handout provided. Explain that at the bottom of the tank are deeper things in life that may have caused us upset or distress. These things remain bubbling away- such as loss, being bullied, experiencing domestic violence, divorce, etc.

In the middle, sit the things that are not as deep but tend to be demands on us regularly in our lives, such as bills, maintaining the house/car, managing family relationships, etc. At the top, are situational triggers or things we might not be able to predict or anticipate that cause us stress. This might be coming home to a mess, being asked the 8th time what's for dinner, or arguing with your child about doing their homework.

These things can all build up in the tank and can lead to negative behaviours when they overspill. We may overreact to small things, because we have no more emotional coping capacity to manage them.

The tank has a valve we can turn on to let out some of the angry feelings so we don't get over angry and overreact to situations.

Using a piece of flipchart each and ask them to draw their own emotional tank.

1. What is bubbling permanently at the bottom?
2. What sorts of things do you get angry/upset/anxious about that come into the top of your tank?
3. What impact can this have on you?
4. What impact can this have on your relationship with your teenager?
5. How can you release the pressure and turn on the overflow tap?

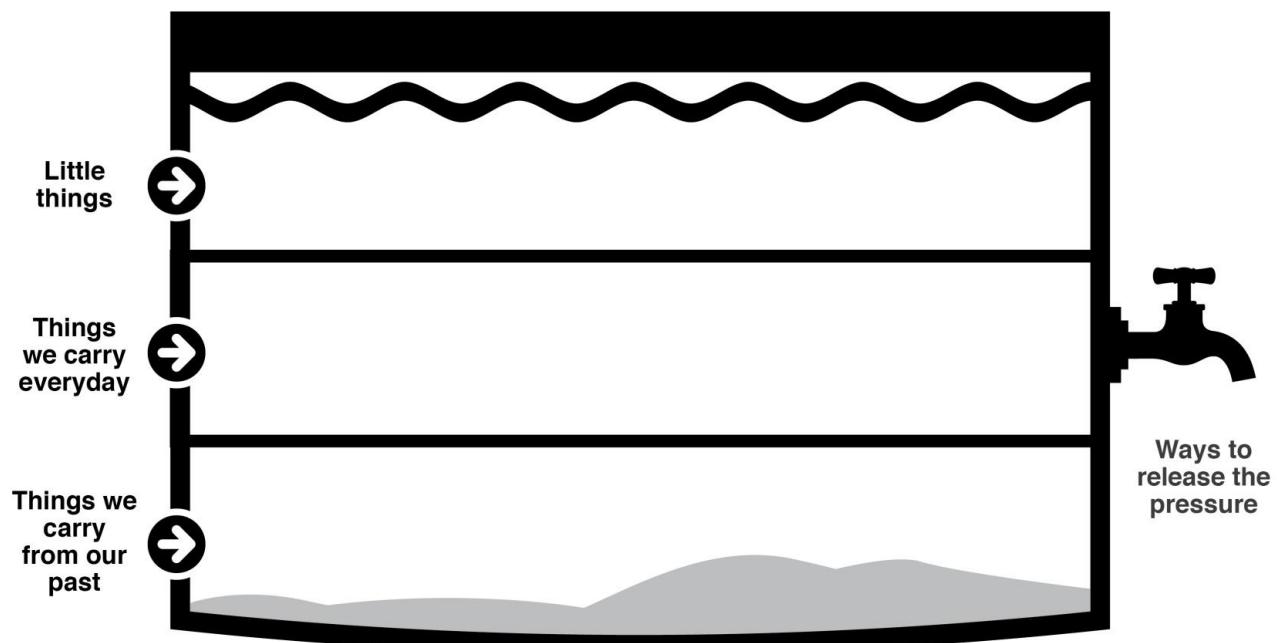
Make sure they have at least one or two realistic positive things they can do to release the pressure.

Suggestions: Use calming/ coping/ and distraction strategies. Take Time-out. Go and talk to a friend, listen to music, play sport, go for a walk, read a magazine, have a bath etc.

Get them to consider their child/teenager's emotional tank. How different are their worries and concerns? Can they remember how important some things seemed at that age?

Homework: Come up with ways with your child that you can both take time to relax, recover, and build up your resilience to cope with whatever life is throwing at you (schoolwork, relationship drama, arguments with friends, bullying coach, etc.). Talk about the emotional tank with your child and identify if their worries are the same as you anticipated.

# The Emotional Tank



# Session Six with Child – Knowing Me

## Tree of Self Knowledge

### Task 1: ME

- Identify 2 things that you think you are not very good at or that you don't really like about yourself
- Identify 4 things that you think you are good at or that you do like about yourself
- Write each of these things on a separate 'leaf' on your tree

### Task 2: OTHERS

- Identify 2 people who usually make you feel angry, upset, sad or annoyed.
- Identify 4 people who usually make you feel happy, calm, or excited.
- Write the name of each person on a separate 'leaf' on the tree

### Task 3: EVENTS

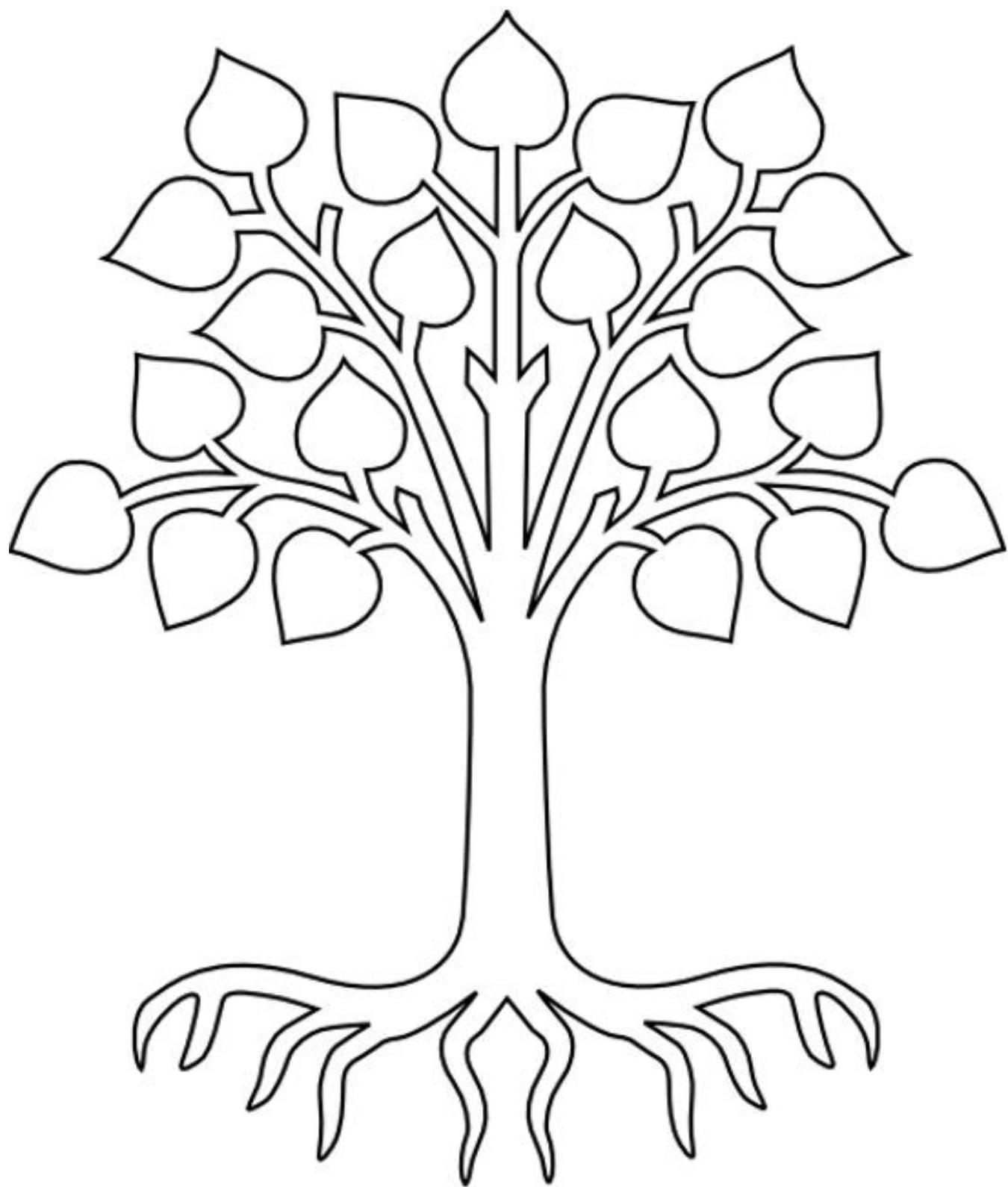
- Identify 1 thing that happens in your life that makes you feel sad/ angry/ upset
- Identify 2 things that happen in your life that make you feel happy/ calm/ content
- Write each of these things on a separate 'leaf' on the tree

### Task 4: TURNING OVER THE LEAVES

- Take look at your tree and think or write down how it makes you feel
- Now select the top three most important 'good' leaves to you that you want to keep in your life and place them at the top of the tree.
- Now select the three 'bad' leaves you MOST want to 'turn over' or change about your life, and turn them over or take them off the tree
- Look again at the tree and say or write down how it makes you feel now-does it feel any different?

### Task 5: DISCUSSION

- Discuss with the participant the things they choose to turn over
- Consider whether it really is possible to eliminate these things from their life. If it isn't, is there a way to change the effect it has on them or for them to learn to cope with the negatives?
- Now focus on the positive things they selected- why did they choose those particular items? Is there a way to make these things stronger in their lives? Can anyone take these things away from them?



## Closing the Work - Moving Forwards

Ask the young person to identify all of the important people in their life, family, friends, workers, teachers, acquaintances or any other people they have contact with quite regularly. This can be mapped on a flip chart, written as a list or put onto cards or post-it notes.

On a large piece of paper ask the young person to draw themselves or an image that represents themselves, this could be a stick person, it could be an item of clothing they like to wear, or just the word ME! It can be as simple or complex as they choose.

Around this image ask the young person to choose one of their identified people and write down how they think that person sees them, what words would that person use to describe them if they were talking to someone else, for example you...the facilitator. Ask the young person to continue this for all identified people until you have a full picture of how the young person feels others view them.

Discussion during this exercise should include asking why the young person feels that person views them that way. Have they acted in a way that led to this or did someone they were with do something and they got labelled too?

Once this is complete ask the young person to write down on themselves or the image they chose to show themselves how they would like other people to see them, what words would they like other people to use to describe them? Is this reflected in how others view them or do they feel something has to happen before this can be achieved.

Revisit the My Goals handout and update it with the new plans for moving forward.

Close this session on a positive note by:

- Offering specific praise for the work done during the sessions.
- A reminder that new ways of being need practice and won't always work perfectly first time.
- Getting them to make a commitment to their family relationships.

# Useful Contacts

If you have any concerns about what is happening in your family, the following services will treat you with respect, ensure confidentiality and provide advice and support to talk things through with you.

**Family Information Service** A one stop service for young people, parents and carers to tell you about all services that are available to you locally, regionally and nationally. Tel: 0300 123 5033  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/FIS](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/FIS)

**Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)** is the 'front door' for access to services, support and advice for children and their families, from early help and support through to safeguarding and child protection. Tel: 0300 123 5012 (option 3) If you need to contact someone out of hours and you believe it to be an emergency that can't wait, please call our Emergency Duty Team on: Tel: 0300 123 5022

**Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub (CEDAH)** is a single point of contact, for families affected by domestic abuse and those who support them - formally or informally Tel: 0300 123 5101  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

**Cheshire East Support for Families** <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/care-andsupport-for-children.aspx>

**Cheshire Without Abuse** From crisis accommodation, practical support and a 24-hour helpline, to counselling, recovery programmes and behavioural change therapy, CWA offer a whole family service to adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse. [www.mycwa.org.uk](http://www.mycwa.org.uk)

**Family Action** – A national charity offering family support. Tel: 0808 802 6660  
[www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)

**Family Lives** (formerly known as Parentline Plus) – A national charity offering help and support in all aspects of family life. Tel: 0808 800 2222 (helpline) [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

**Men's Advice Line** – Advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse.  
Tel: 0808 8010327 (helpline) [www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

**National Domestic Violence Helpline** 24hr service offering advice and support to anyone experiencing domestic violence and abuse. Tel: 0808 2000 247

**Relate** – Information leaflets and support for parents of teenagers Tel: 0300 1001234 (helpline)  
[www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers](http://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers)

## **Services for Older Children**

Cheshire East Youth Support Service YSS is for young people aged 13-19 years (25 with a learning difficulty). The YSS Participation Team offers opportunities for young people to have a voice on issues that affect them and on services they access. To be part of these groups or Cheshire East Youth Council then contact 01625 384320 Youth Hub numbers: Crewe 01270 686923 Macclesfield 01625 384320 Find us on Facebook: Crewe Hub Macc Congleton Handforth Yss Participation Yss DofE Cheshire East

Kooth is free, safe and anonymous online support for young people. [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Visyon If you are a child or young person, Visyon can help you improve your mental health so that you feel better about yourself and the things that happen in your day-to-day life. If you are a parent, grandparent or carer, you can come to us to gain the skills to give your child the support they need [www.visyon.org.uk](http://www.visyon.org.uk)

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

YouinMind is an online platform helping you find mental health and wellbeing services in Cheshire. [www.youinmind.org](http://www.youinmind.org)

Just Drop In is a free, friendly, walk-in support service for 12 – 25 year olds, no referral or appointment necessary Phone: 01625 665079 Text: 07718425405 Email: [hello@justdropin.co.uk](mailto:hello@justdropin.co.uk) Visit: 14 Duke St. Macclesfield SK11 6UR

## **Emergency Services**

Police / Fire / Ambulance Tel: 999

Samaritans Crisis intervention & counselling, support & information for those experiencing feelings of distress or despair Tel: 08457 909 090

Childline Telephone counselling for children & young people Tel: 0800 1111

NSPCC (National Child Protection Helpline) Child Protection

## Notes

## Notes



info@mycwa.org.uk



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