

Brain Buddies-Parent Booklet

Brain Buddies is run by the Mental Health Support Team and delivered to the whole class. It is made up of 7 x 1-hour sessions which focus on teaching children about their emotions. It focuses on helping children to notice how they are feeling, understand what happens in their body and brain when they feel different emotions and introduce them to a range of skills they can use to help manage their emotions.



In each Brain Buddies session, your child will learn new skills. They will write down the skills in their Brain Buddies backpack to help them remember and practise what they have learnt. There is an overview of each session and the skills your child will learn below. It is helpful to practise the skills with your child at home so they get used to using them.

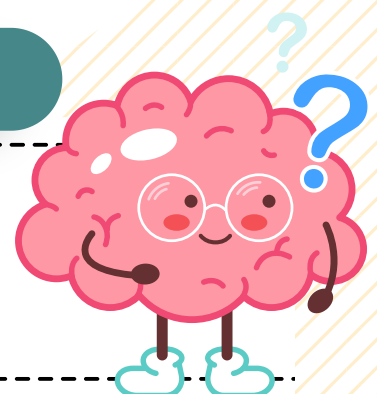
What does the evidence say?

Research shows that helping children understand and manage their emotions helps them feel happier, build better friendships, and do well in school. Teaching these skills early can build resilience and confidence, helping children handle challenges in a healthy way.



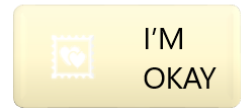
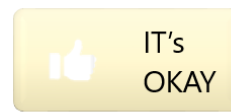
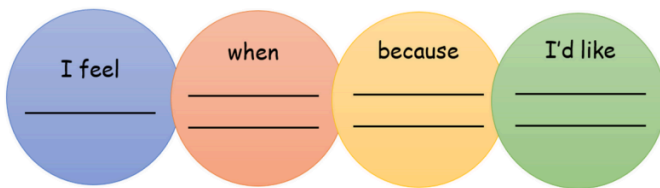
What happens next?

Your child will take part in Brain Buddies sessions at school. You can support them by asking about what they learned and practising the skills together at home. If you have any questions or concerns, you can speak to the school or MHST.



Session 1

In session 1, your child was introduced to the Educational Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs) running Brain Buddies. They were given their Brain Buddies workbooks and also looked at some goals for the class. To start off the group, we talked about the different emotions they may feel and what emotions are for. Your child learnt their first Brain Buddies skills: They learnt about 'I Statements', which is something they can use to share how they are feeling with other people. They also learnt about 'surfing the wave' - this means trying to wait until the wave of emotions has passed before deciding what to do

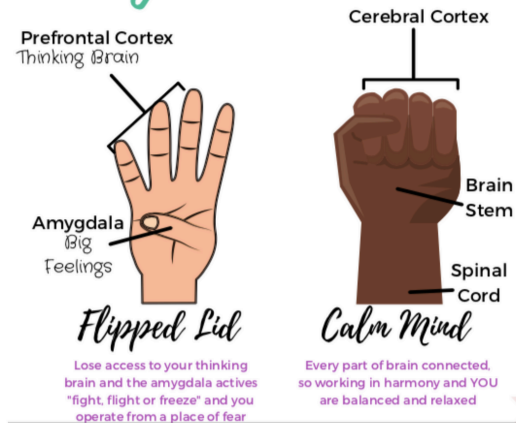


Session 2

In session 2, your child learnt about two parts of our brain: the 'guard dog' survival brain (the amygdala) and the 'wise owl' thinking brain (the prefrontal cortex) and we used our hands to understand how these parts of the brain work together. Your child learnt that our thinking brain helps us make good decisions but if our survival brain thinks we are in danger it takes over and we flip our lid, which makes it hard for us to make good decisions. We talked about how our Brain Buddies skills can help get our thinking brain and our survival brain working together.

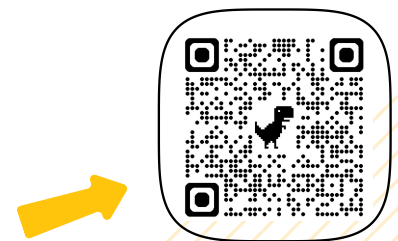
FLIPPING

Your Lid



Today your child also learnt to do a body scan to help notice how they are feeling (Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to watch a YouTube video of the body scan)

They also learnt some Brain Buddies skills to help them in times when they may have a lot of energy and need help calming down. These include doing a chair push up and giving themselves a hug

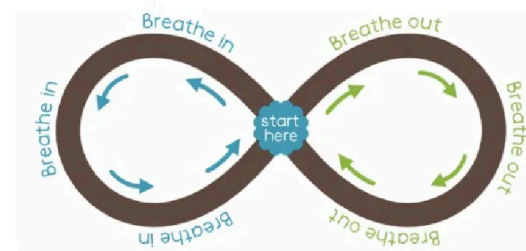
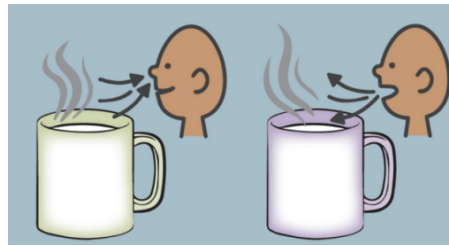
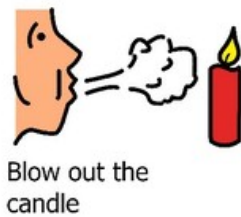


Session 3

In session 3, your child learnt about the Zones of Regulation. They learnt there is no such thing as good and bad zones but that sometimes one zone is more helpful than others, e.g. the green zone is most helpful when they are in school. We talked about using our Brain Buddies skills to make sure we are in the most helpful zone.



Your child then learnt some breathing exercises as this week's skills. Your child also learnt about the importance of taking care of ourselves and thought of self-care activities they can do to help themselves feel good



Session 4

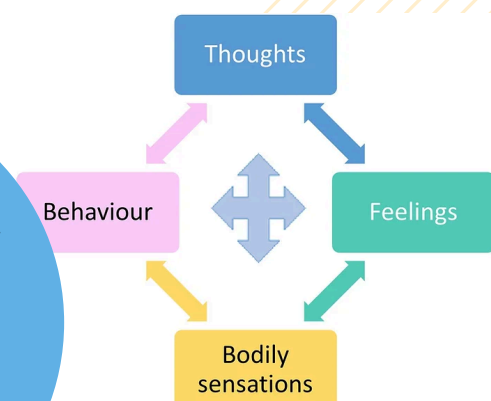
In session 4, your child learnt some additional skills for their Brain Buddies backpack - imagining a safe space and distraction games. Your child also learnt that our thoughts, feelings and actions are all linked and that our 'self talk' can affect how likely we are to flip our lids. Your child then learnt that we can challenge our unhelpful self-talk by asking ourselves if our thought is helpful and realistic.



Distraction games

- Count backwards from 60 in 3s
- Spell your name backwards

Think of an animal for every letter in the alphabet



Session 5

In session 5, your child learnt more about the difference between helpful and unhelpful thoughts. They learnt that helpful thoughts focus on positive things, our strengths and achievements, whilst unhelpful thoughts are mostly negative and critical. Your child was then introduced to the 'brain basher' who likes to prey on unhelpful thoughts! Your child learnt how to chase away the brain basher and zap away the unhelpful thoughts using the 4 C's. Finally, your child was asked to think about the people in their life who is in their support team who can help them use their Brain Buddies skills when needed.

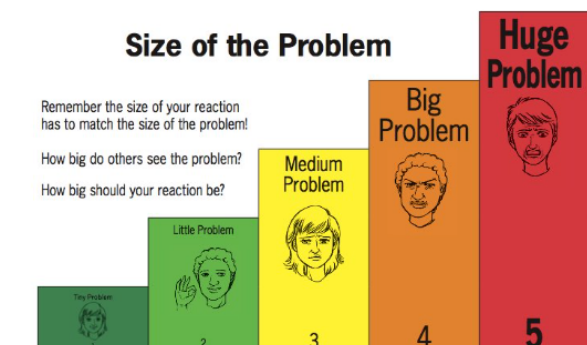
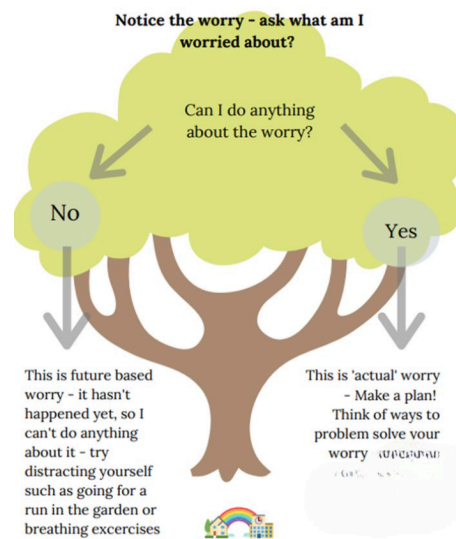
Example: <i>I came last in a race on sports day.</i>	
A helpful thought: <i>'I can try again next time.'</i>	An unhelpful thought: <i>'I am rubbish. I am never going to take part in sports day again.'</i>
If I had this thought I would: <i>Say well done to the winner and practise for next time.</i>	If I had this thought I would: <i>Get angry and refuse to do more races.</i>



-  **CATCH IT** Notice – it's one of those pesky unhelpful worry thoughts again
-  **CHECK IT** Take a step back – Am I sure things are actually as bad as I feel they are? Are my worries realistic?
-  **CHALLENGE IT** - is there any evidence this thought might not be 100% true? Is there another way of looking at this?
-  **CHANGE IT**
What is a more helpful way of thinking about this?

Session 6

In session 6, your child used the 'worry decision tree' to learn that sometimes we have worries we can't do anything about so it can be helpful to use our distraction games Brain Buddies skill to get our brains focusing on something else. However, sometimes we can do something to solve our worries and can put a plan in place to help us manage the problem. They learnt about identifying how big the problem is which can help us recognise what reactions are appropriate. They then learnt about the ABCDE approach to problem solving.





Session 7

In session 7, your child recapped all the skills learnt in Brain Buddies. You can continue to remind your child to use their Brain Buddies skills and support them in practising them.



Tips for supporting your child to use their Brain Buddies skills:

- Practise them together (even when your child is feeling calm)
- Ask open-ended questions to help your child think about their emotions and the skills they can use e.g. what zone do you think you are in now? what Brain Buddies skill could help you?
- Model talking about emotions and how they feel in your body