



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

SUPPORTING YOUR NEURODIVERGENT TEENAGER

Psychology in Schools Team
NSFT

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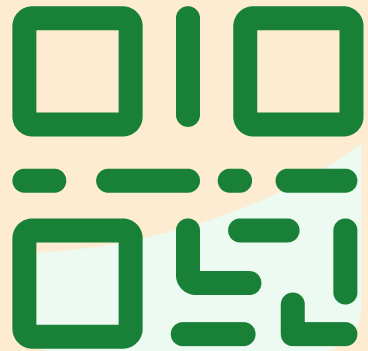
Slido will be used as our main interaction tool. We will not be able to use the Q&A function or answer raised hands.

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How old is your child(ren)?

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What stage are you at?

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How would you rate your current knowledge of neurodivergent teens?

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How would you rate your confidence in supporting your neurodivergent teen?

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TEENAGER

Psychology in Schools Team, NSFT

Particip8



What aspects of adolescence and neurodiversity do you find challenging as a parent/carer

WHAT WE WILL COVER

1) The adolescent years

Physical changes

- Brain and body

Identity changes

- Self and social

Vulnerability and responsibility

2) Strategies to support our teens



AT THE
CORE

Validated

Understood

Contained



THE TEENAGE YEARS

A big part of the teenage years are changes going on in the brain and body.

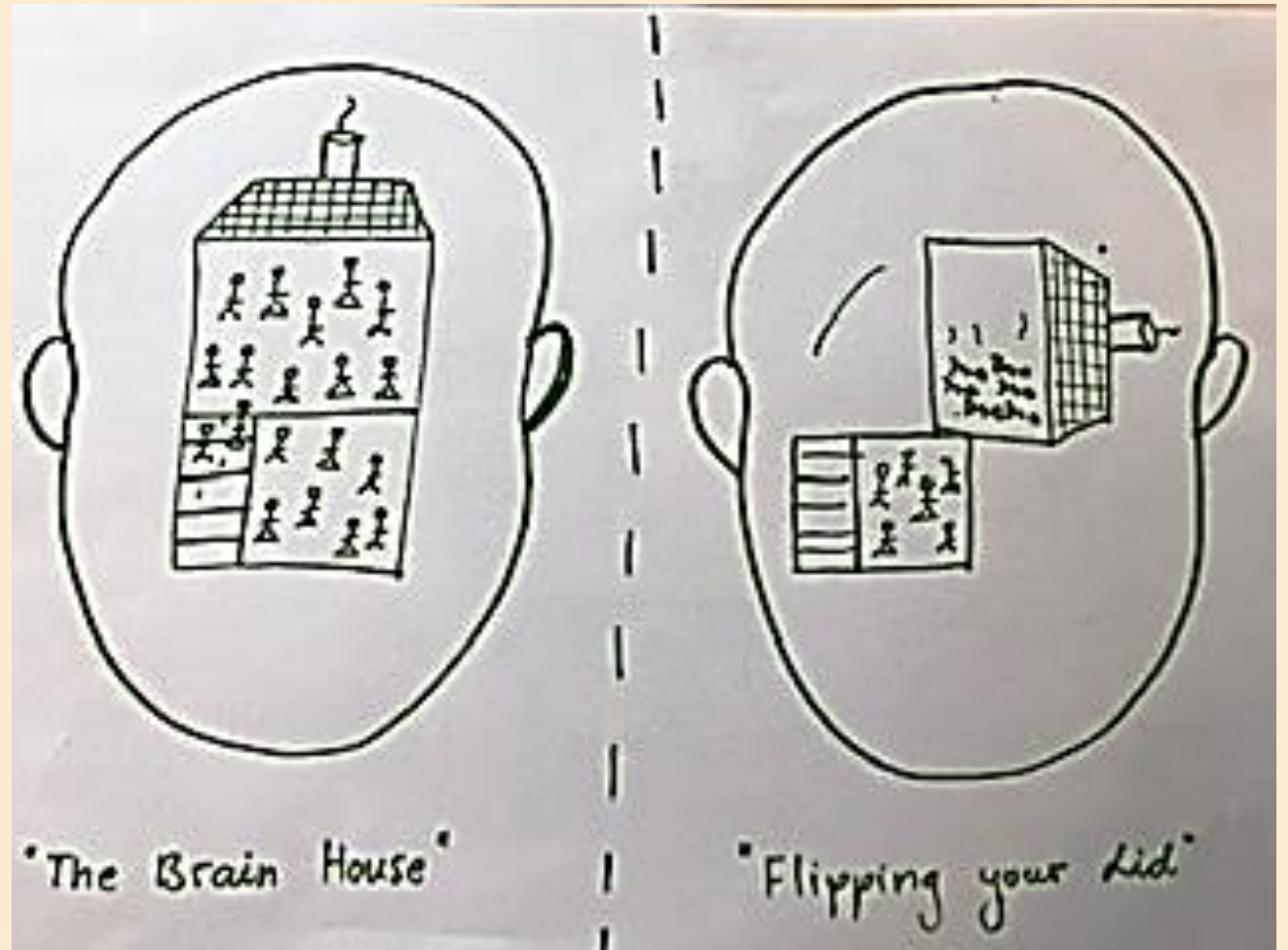
To understand this we are going to talk through some of the main changes and things to be aware of, starting with understanding the teenage brain!

[Understanding the adolescent brain - Supporting our teenagers with emotions](#)



THE UPSTAIRS AND THE DOWNSTAIRS

- Control Tower (Pre Frontal Cortex)
 - Planning
 - Organizing
 - Problem solving
 - Flexibility
- Our alarm (Amygdala)
 - Safety
 - Fight or flight response

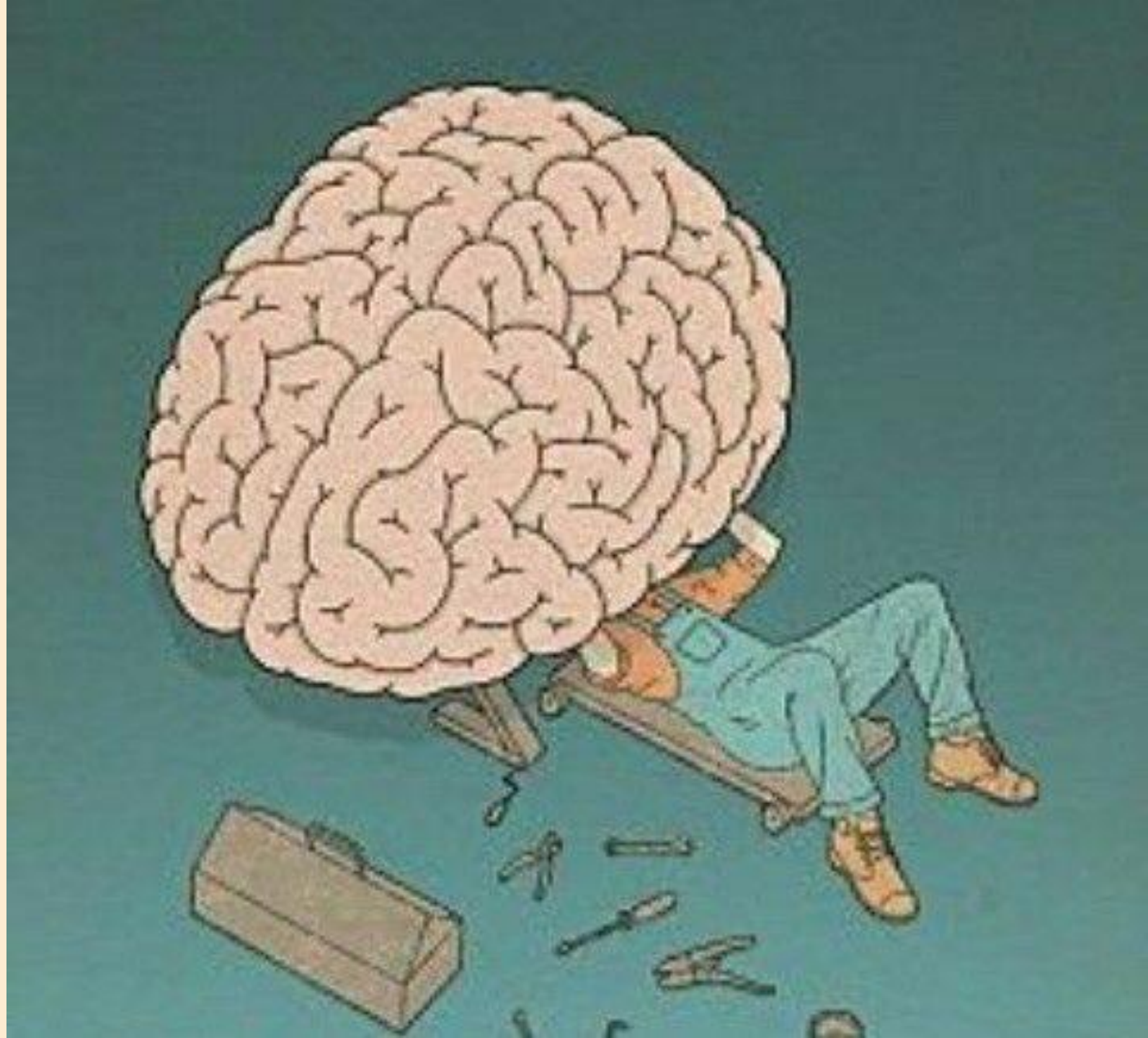


With thanks to Hazel Harrison for the Brain House illustration

A BRAIN UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Specialising
- Use it or lose it!
- Increasing connectivity
- Mind the gap
- Upstairs/downstairs reconfiguring

Professor Dan Siegel



PUBERTY

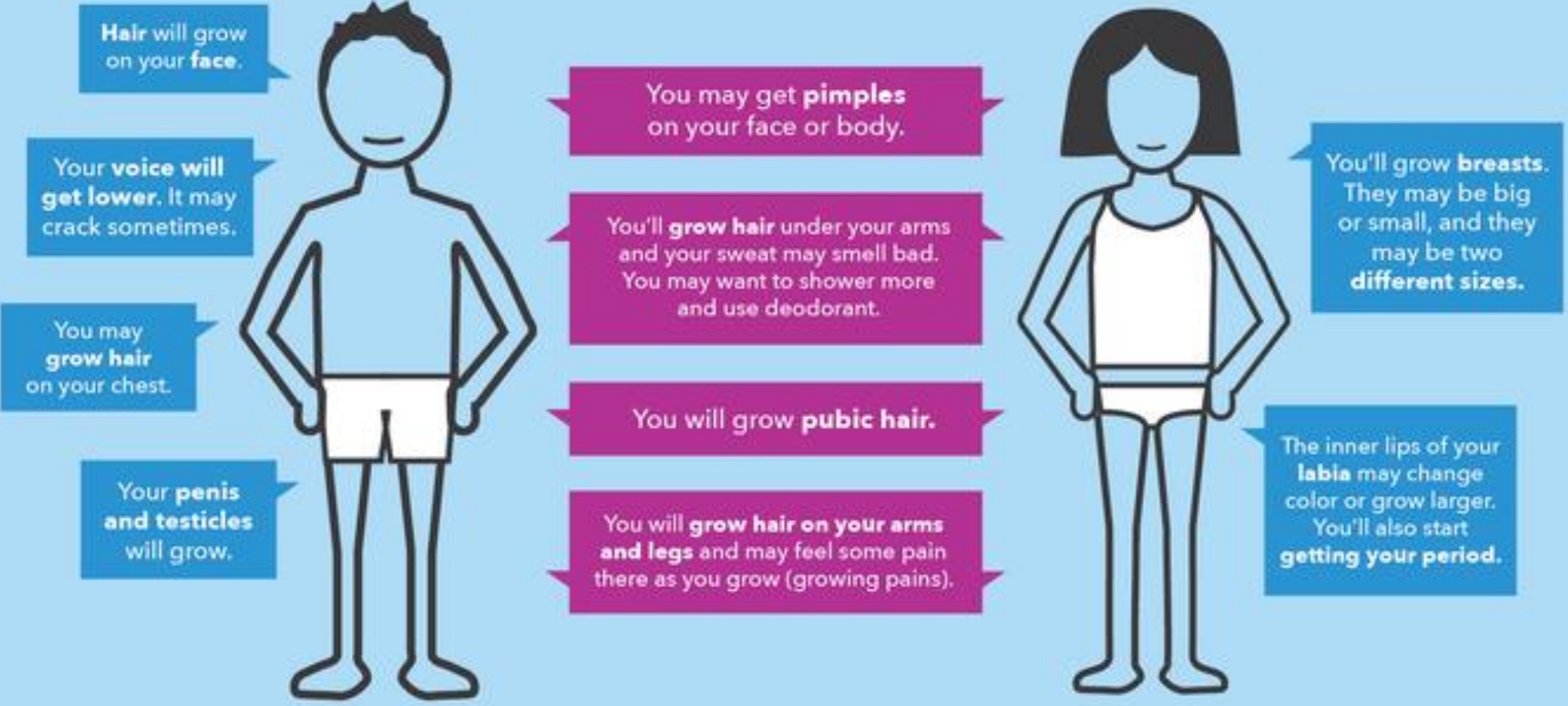


Diagram illustrating the changes that occur during puberty for males and females. The male figure is on the left, and the female figure is on the right. Both figures are standing with hands on hips. The background is light blue. The text boxes are arranged around the figures, with blue boxes for male-specific changes, purple boxes for shared changes, and blue boxes for female-specific changes.

Hair will grow on your **face**.

Your **voice** will get **lower**. It may crack sometimes.

You may grow **hair** on your chest.

Your **penis** and **testicles** will grow.

You may get **pimples** on your face or body.

You'll **grow hair** under your arms and your sweat may smell bad. You may want to shower more and use deodorant.

You will grow **pubic hair**.

You will **grow hair on your arms and legs** and may feel some pain there as you grow (growing pains).

You'll grow **breasts**. They may be big or small, and they may be two **different sizes**.

The inner lips of your **labia** may change color or grow larger. You'll also start **getting your period**.



What do you think of when you consider the social impact of the teenage years?

SOCIAL IMPACT OF TEENAGE YEARS

Friendships

Peer pressure

Social Media

Sexuality

Interests changing

Understanding
new social rules

Navigating
high school

Navigating new
sense of freedom

Gender identity

Values

Family roles



Do you feel the need to protect your child as they enter adolescence and why?

MASKING

Loss of Self



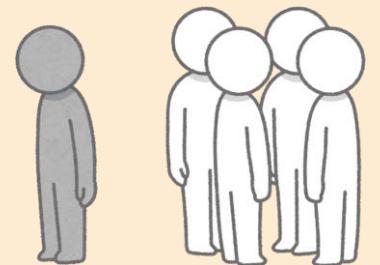
Mental Health Challenges



Identity Confusion



Feeling of Not Belonging



ACTIVITY

Think of three integral parts of yourself: maybe your favourite thing to do, family members etc.

Answer the following questions in your head without giving the answers to the three questions away:

- Tell me a bit about yourself?
- What are you doing this weekend?
- Who do you like to spend time with?



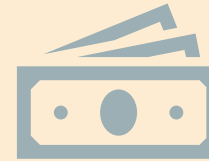
VULNERABILITIES



County Lines



Impulsivity
and reward
seeking



Managing
and
protecting
money



Staying safe

INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY

- As your child moves into adolescence, there is a big jump in responsibility placed on them
- Things like expectations to be able to remember more, do more.
- For all young people this can be overwhelming, but this can be especially overwhelming for neurodivergent teens



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STRATEGIES

- [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting, Planning, Organising and Remembering](#)
- [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting Social Relationships](#)
- [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting your child with anxiety](#)
- [Childhood Neurodivergence: Supporting Your Child with Low Mood](#)

SUPPORTING
IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT

Validated

Understood

Contained

6 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- Strike while the iron is cold
- I statements
- Be specific
- Have a few solutions in mind
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Don't give up



From: Young et al. 2016, Interpersonal Psychotherapy – Adolescent Skills Training

Principles also discussed in Dr Mosley's book called "Happy Families"

NOURISHING – SPECIAL INTERESTS

There is great value in focusing on your child's special interests:

- Emotional wellbeing
- Confidence
- Social and communication skills
- Sense of purpose
- Learning and future hobbies/careers



MANAGING EXAM STRESS

- Hold in mind the differences in executive functioning
- Preparation and planning is key, consider a plan for each stage of the exam process:
 - Revision
 - During the exam
 - Post exam life

[Exams: A guide for Parents and carers](#) (NAS)

[adhd-teenagers-guide.pdf](#)

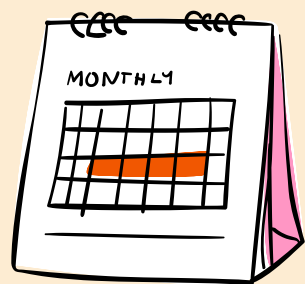


TALKING ABOUT PUBERTY

Social stories



Pictures



Visual strategies

Books



Videos



PREPARING FOR A PERIOD

- Preparation is key
- Talk about when to change products/how to throw them away.
- Using apps/calendar to give a sense of planning to counteract uncertainty

Consider what's needed in the school/other context



SUPPORTING WITH MASKING

Increasing awareness
and acceptance



Empowerment



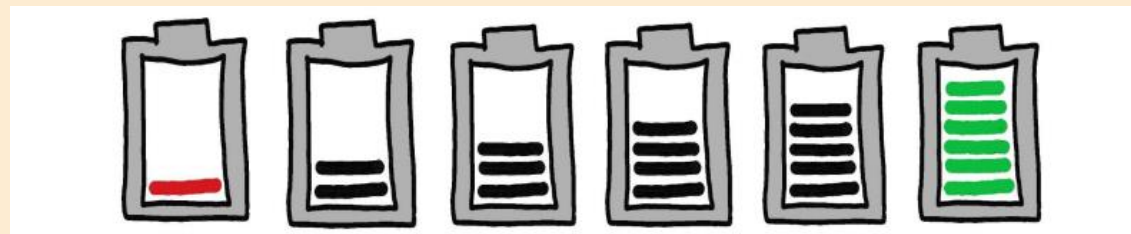
Support for burnout



“I think having a trusted adult who listened without judgment, explained things clearly, and believed in my strengths would’ve made such a difference. I needed more emotional support, not just discipline or advice. Spaces where I could be myself without masking, and where I didn’t feel like the “difficult one,” would’ve helped me feel less alone”

“Looking back, I wish there had been more support in helping me understand my brain, more freedom to be myself without masking, and more adults who celebrated my differences instead of trying to “fix” them”

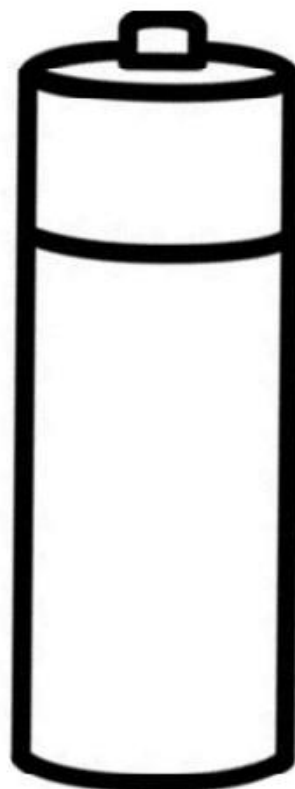
ENERGY ACCOUNTING



Things that use up my energy

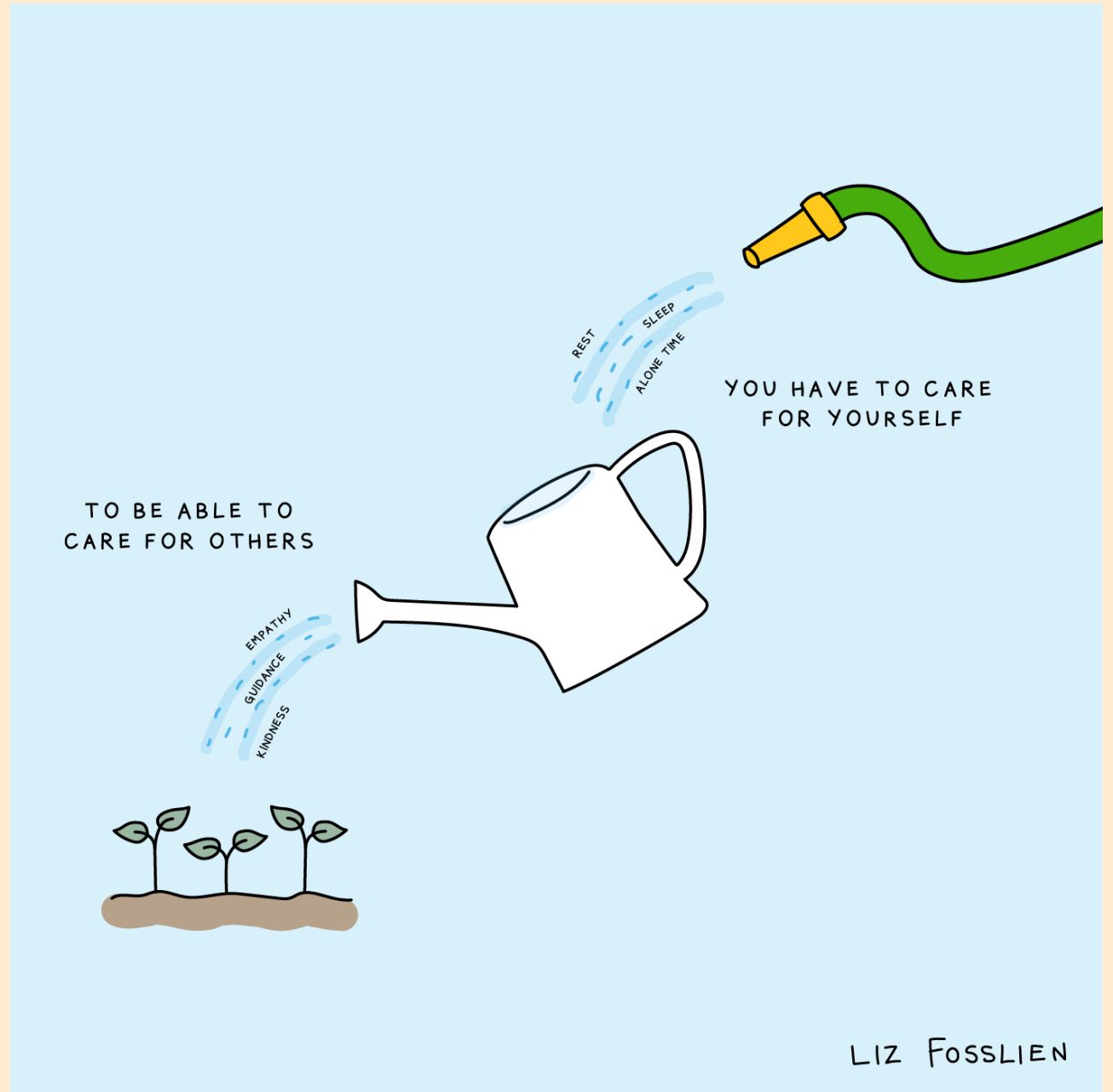


Things that recharge my battery



YOUR BATTERY

A gentle
acknowledgment that
this also applies to
your battery supply!



KEEPING SAFE – MANAGING VULNERABILITIES

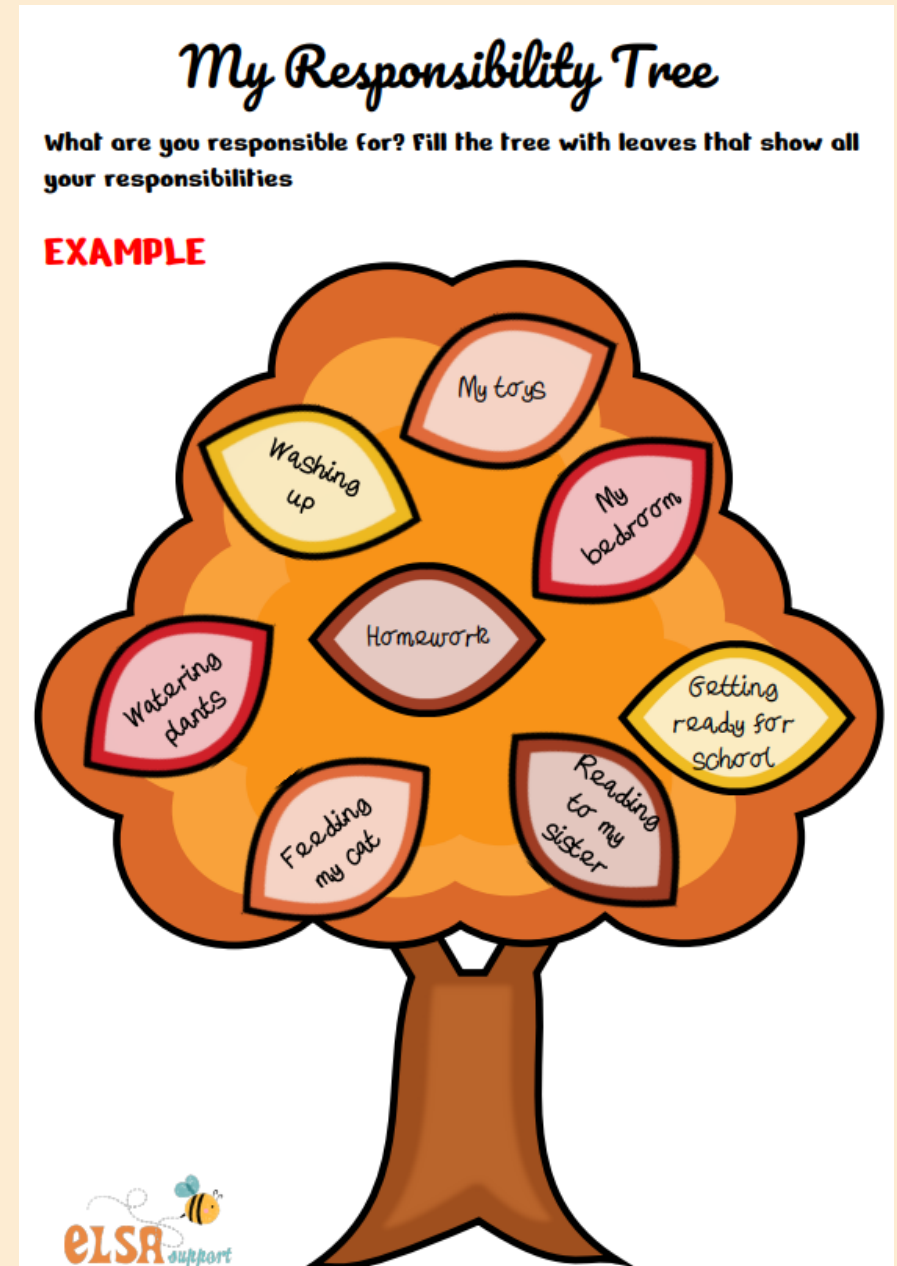
- Money: ([Managing money e-learning module-NAS and moneysupermarket](#))
- Social media use: [TechSafeSendSocialMedia.pdf](#)
- Relationships and sex: [Sex education - a guide for parents](#)
- Educating yourself on signs of exploitation: [#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)
- Practical ways to stay safe



SUPPORTING RESPONSIBILITY TAKING

- Negotiable and non-negotiable responsibilities
- What would the young person like to be on the tree that's not currently on there?
- Breaking down steps in working towards more responsibility in areas

[NAS Know Yourself Series Moving Forward](#)

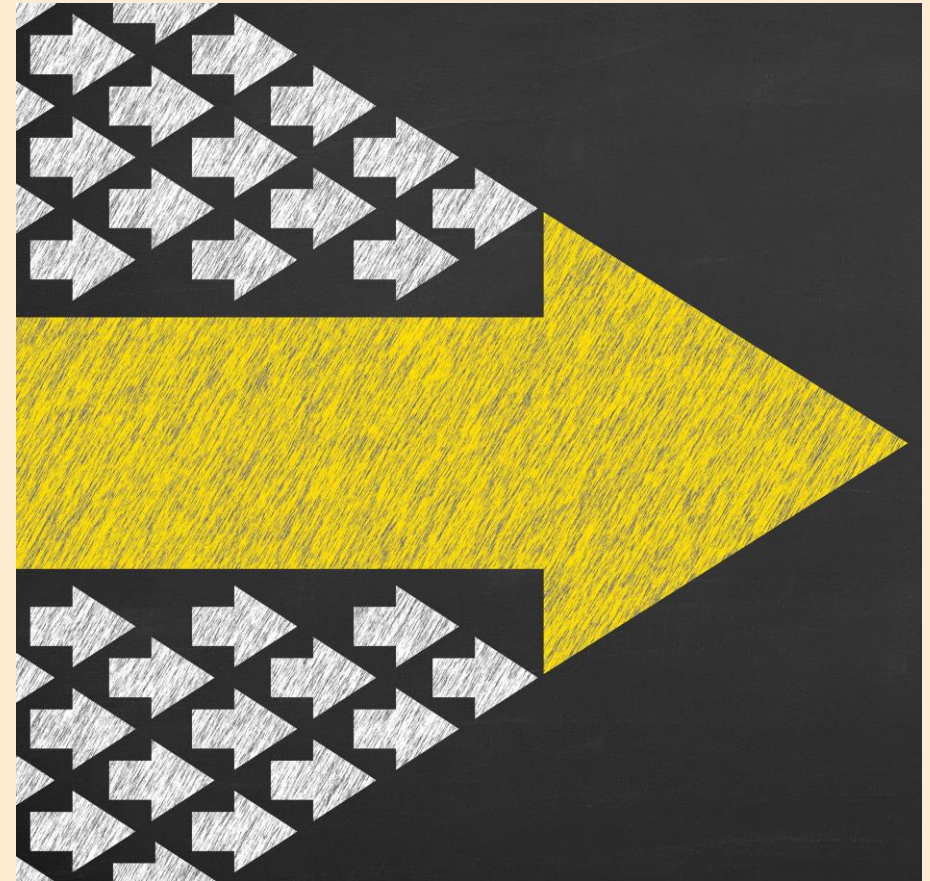




In what ways could you support your child to take more responsibility?

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT AROUND YOUR TEEN

- Consider who is part of your teenagers support network
- It's a time in their life they want independence from parents
- We want to support them/ prepare them for adulthood



MESSAGES OF HOPE

‘it definitely gets better.’

‘it’s part of their natural right
of passage as being a
teenager’



'The teenage years are tough, but they can also be a time of discovering your unique strengths — if you're given the right space and support.'

'Please know that even though it might not always look like it, I am sure any young people you support, love you dearly. Whether they are neurodivergent or not, they are probably going through a very difficult time right now, and the irony is that if they are shutting you out or screaming about how you are the worst person in the world, they are probably terrified inside and need you more than ever.'

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Two key things I will take away from this workshop are...

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**I have found today's
workshop helpful**

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**One thing that I would
Improve about this workshop
is...**

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Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting Your Neurodivergent Teenager



RESOURCES

[Resources for autistic teenagers](#): National Autistic Society: NAS_Know Yourself Series- main webpage for the series with lots of helpful resources and links

[National Autistic Society: NAS_Know Yourself Series_Moving Forward](#) booklet for discussing some of the trickier aspects of teenager years with your autistic teen

[Healthy London Partnership and ADHD foundation- The neurodiversity charity- adhd-teenagers-guide.pdf](#)

[National Autistic society: Help and support](#)- Parent to parent emotional support helpline

[Parents' Guide to Looking After Your Mental Health | YoungMinds](#)

CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERGENCE PARENT/CARER WORKSHOP SERIES



[Neurodiversity online parent/carer
workshops - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

KEY RESOURCES IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR YOUNG PERSON

- **Young Minds parent helpline** 0808 802 5544 (9am -4.30pm M-F) and webchat service: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>
- **111, option 2 crisis support**
- **Papyrus – Prevention of Young Suicide**
[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/)
- **Psychology in Schools Parent Workshop: Understanding Self Harm in Children/Adolescents**
[Understanding Self-Harm in Children/Adolescents \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [MIND urgent help](#)



PREVIOUS RECORDINGS IN THIS SERIES

Childhood neurodiversity what you need to know as a parent/carer

Watch here: [Childhood Neurodiversity: What You Need to Know as a Parent/Carer](#)

Childhood neurodiversity: supporting social relationships

Watch here: [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting Social Relationships](#)

Childhood neurodiversity: supporting your child's education

Watch here: [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting Your Child's Education](#)

Childhood neurodiversity: supporting your child with anxiety

Watch here: [Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting your child with anxiety](#)

Childhood Neurodiversity: Supporting Sleep Difficulties

Watch here:

[Childhood neurodiversity: Understanding and supporting sleep difficulties workshop](#)

Childhood Neurodiversity: Parental Carer Stress

Watch here:

[Childhood Neurodivergence: Managing Parental/Carer Stress](#)

PSYCHOLOGY IN SCHOOLS: FREE LIVE WORKSHOPS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

Upcoming LIVE Parent/Carer
workshops on mental health
www.nsft.uk/workshops Eventbrite



Recorded previous mental health workshops on a range of topics:

- School Avoidance, Tics and Tourette's, Self-harm, Managing Behaviour, Social Media, OCD, Exam stress and more!

www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops

Recovery College



Recovery College

Open to all those interested in mental health recovery in Norfolk and Suffolk, the Recovery College provides free educational courses to equip you with the skills and strategies to move on with your recovery and/or to support others.

[Recovery College | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

Discovery college

The Discovery College offers free educational online courses and webinars on mental health topics for 16 - 25 year olds. The courses and webinars are designed so that 16 - 25 year olds can become an expert in discovering themselves and their self care alongside others their age.

[Discovery College | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)



EXPLORING LANGUAGE PREFERENCES



If you were to attend a workshop to support your young person with behaviours you may find difficult, which of the below descriptors would you prefer we used to describe your experience?

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if other, please specify

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what are your thoughts and feelings on the word 'resilience?'

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