



CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY

MANAGING BIG FEELINGS

Psychology in Schools Team

NSFT

July 2023



Looking after yourself

- Emotional topics being covered today, including self-harm and suicide
- Do what you need to look after yourself
- Recording and resources will be shared with everyone who signed up for the workshop

Workshop Overview

- **WHAT** is the prevalence of emotional problems in neurodivergent children?
- **WHY** might neurodivergent children struggle with their emotions?
- **HOW** can you help your child manage their big feelings?



slido



What big feelings have you noticed in your child?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



How do your child's big feelings affect you and your family?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of mental health problems

Increased risk of anxiety

Increased risk of depression

Please be aware next slide involves discussion of self-harm and suicide

Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of self-harm and suicide

- Rates of self-harm, suicidal thinking and attempts are sadly higher for neurodivergent children
- For some families, helping managing risk of self-harm is an important part of supporting their neurodivergent child with their emotions



Why are emotional problems more common?

- Emotional literacy
- Emotion dysregulation
- Environment and experiences

slido



How do you think your child's neurodivergence impacts on their emotions?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



Emotional Literacy

- Difficulty with understanding what emotion they are feeling
- Difficulty communicating to others how they are feeling



Nauseous

Self-harm

Breaking things

Eating problems

Violence

Withdrawn

Crying

Avoiding school

Irritable

Confused

Seeking safety

Shame

Uncertainty

Needing to feel loved

Sadness

Academic problems

Hopelessness

Low self-esteem

Tired

Bored

Anger

Feeling left out

Overwhelmed

In pain

Sensory overload

Needing attention

Hungry

Jealousy

Fear

Trauma memories

Embarrassed

Bullying

Lonely

Friendship fall out

slido



What might trigger your child's big feelings?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

The Brain House

Upstairs brain

- The control tower

Downstairs brain

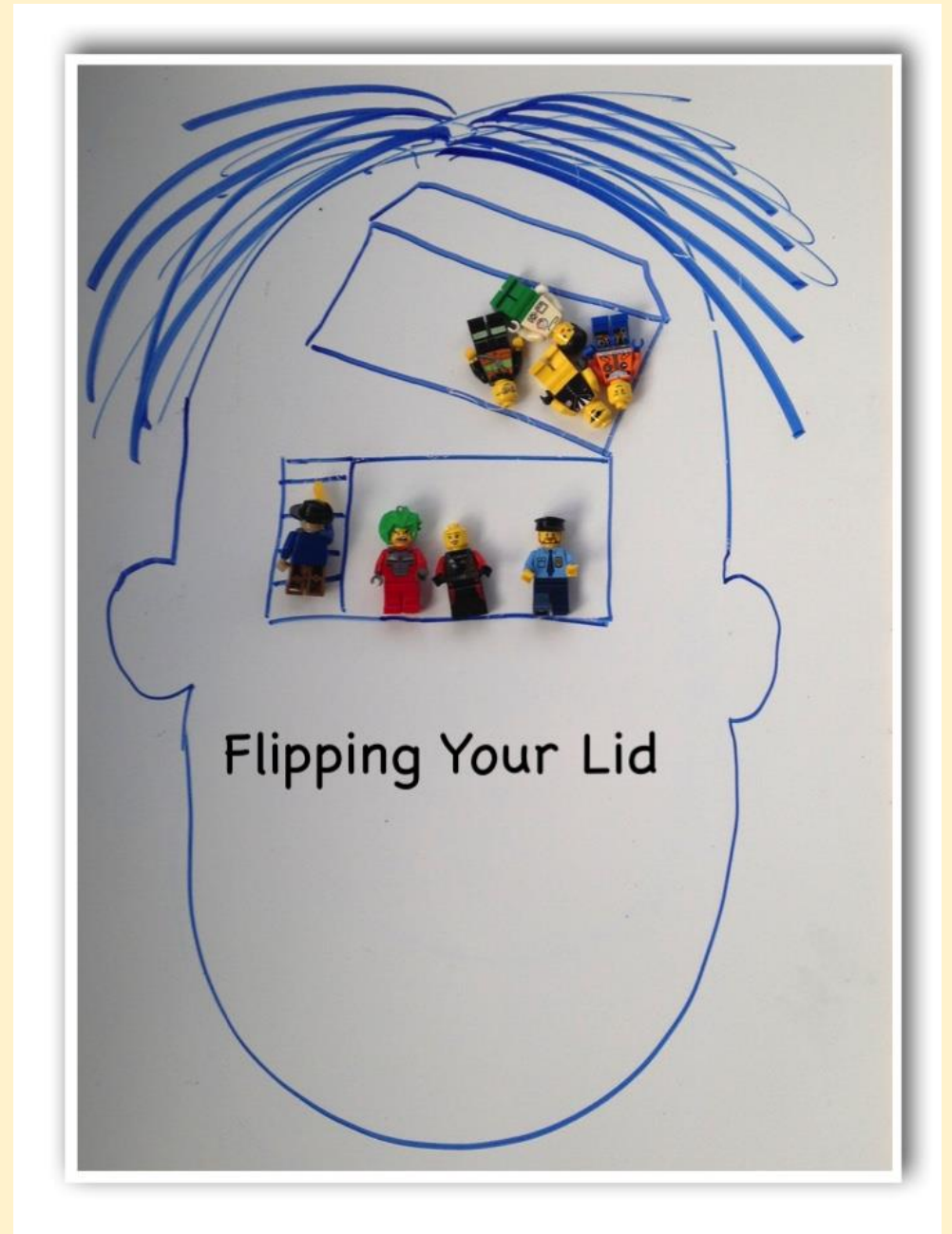
- The alarm system



Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison

Flipping The Lid

- This is what happens when people get overwhelmed by big feelings
- We lose access to the upstairs part of our brain
- When this happens children no longer have access to the part of their brain that helps them to make good decisions



slido



What do you notice when your child flips their lid?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Brain house in neurodivergent children

More sensitive
to some stimuli

Impulsivity

Innate difficulty
with emotion
regulation

Difficulty
understanding
big feelings

More frequent
negative
experiences



Neurodivergent Experiences

- School problems e.g. difficulty learning, sensory overwhelm, getting in trouble, masking – trying to fit into ‘neurotypical box’ expected at school
- Social difficulties e.g. lonely, friendship problems, bullying, being taken advantage of by peers

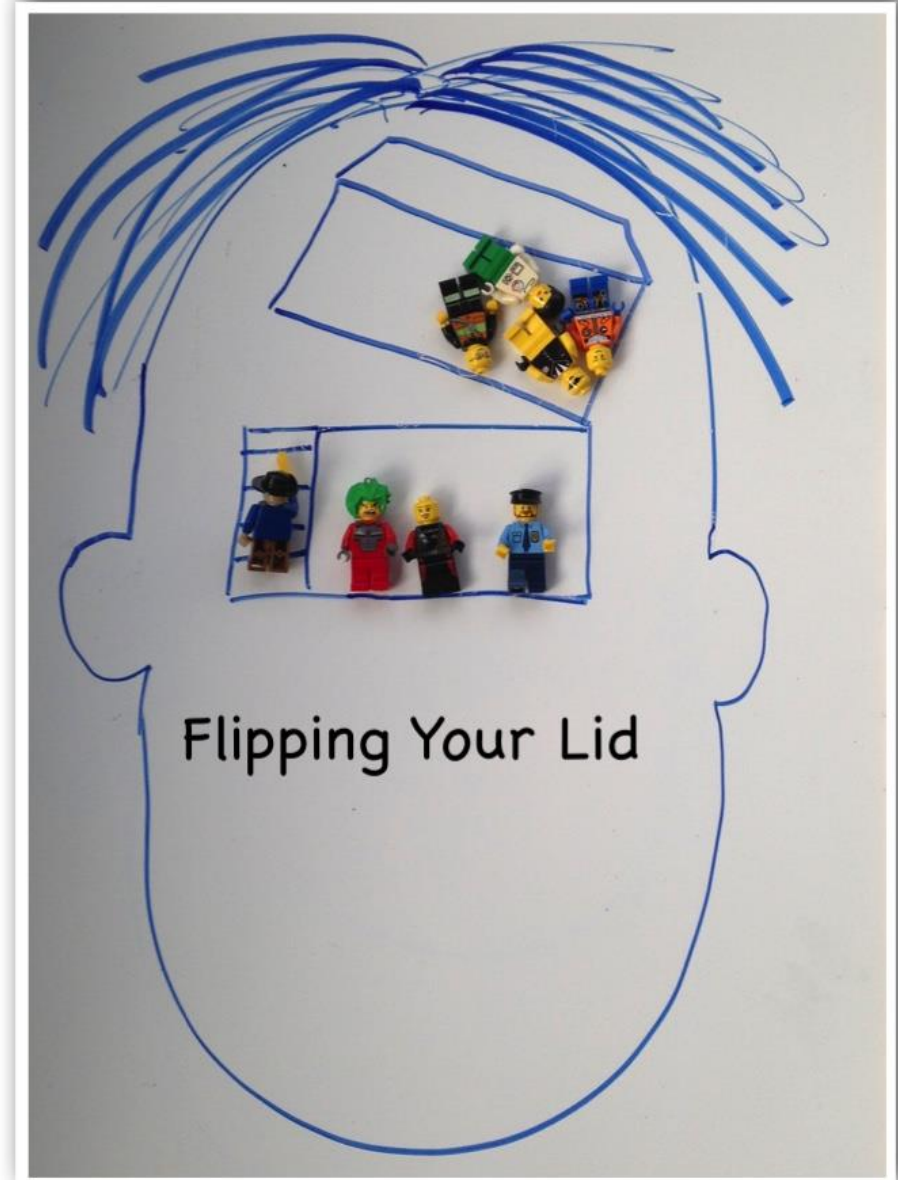
How to help your child manage their big feelings

- Connection before correction
- Building emotional literacy
- Addressing triggers
- Calming and relaxation
- General family wellbeing



Connection before Correction

- When children are overwhelmed by big feelings, they will not be able to hear us until the thinking part of the brain is back online
- We can help with this by prioritizing connection over correction
- Coming alongside your child to help them regulate, becoming calm before deciding what to do next



slido



What makes it difficult to do this?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



What helps your child when they have flipped their lid?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Building emotional literacy



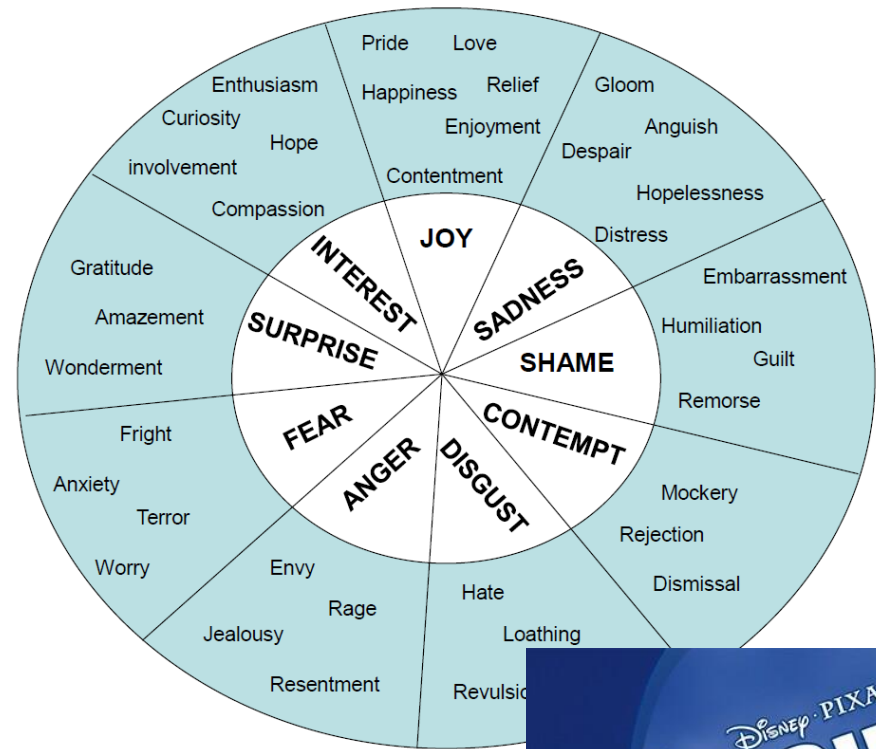
slido



How do you help your child identify and communicate their emotions?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Identifying emotions



YouTube GB Search

NAME THAT EMOTION

Then you're ready to play Name That Emotion!

SESAME STREET

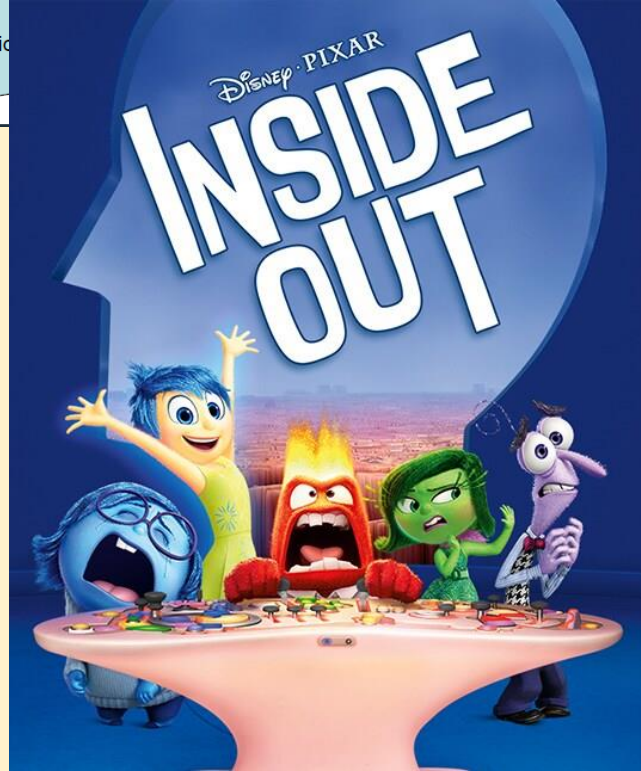
Sesame Street: Name That Emotion with Murray!

Sesame Street 23.3M subscribers

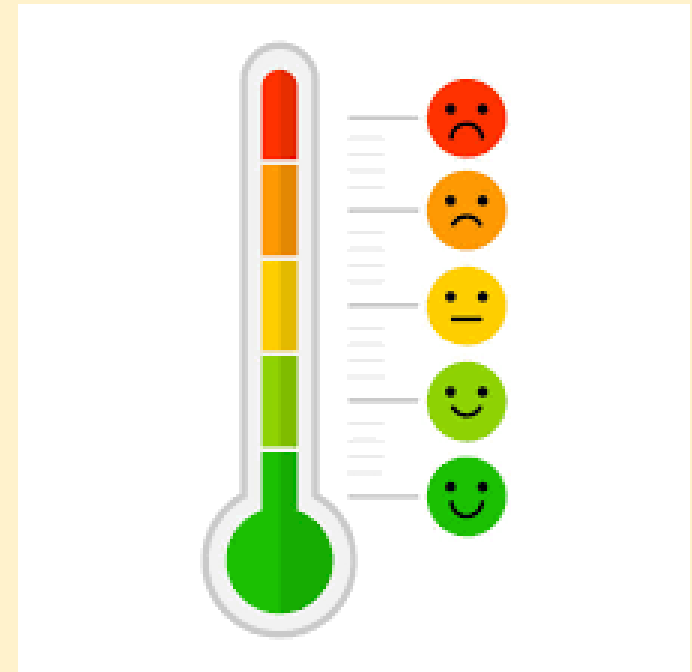
Subscribe

4.5K

Share



Communicating emotions



Addressing triggers

- Work out together what the triggers are
- Reducing sensory distress
- May need to support your child in navigating their friendships
- Increasing social support – clubs based on hobbies, neurodivergent communities, school mentoring/pastoral support



Working together with schools

- Masking at school may mean emotional problems are less obvious
- Sharing your understanding and strategies
- Discuss with school reasonable adaptations – remember needs-based not diagnosis based!
- SENDIASS can help



Calming and Regulation

- Breathing techniques
- Grounding techniques - bringing into present moment
- Sensory regulation



Positive self-talk

- Celebrating their successes and strengths
- Encouraging and modelling positive self-talk
- Being your child's champion!





Importance of your own wellbeing

- If you are feeling dysregulated it's very difficult to support a young person to regulate themselves
- Filling up our own resource bucket first
- Emotional contagion

slido



How do you fill up your own resource bucket?

i Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

General family wellbeing



SLEEP



HEALTHY DIET



EXERCISE



SOCIAL
CONNECTION

Resources and support

Mental health

- YoungMinds mental health charity for children and young people
www.youngminds.org.uk
- Apps: Headspace, Calm, Combined Mind, Sleepio, Clear Fear (anxiety), Move Mood
- The Source information and advice for young people in Suffolk
www.thesource.me.uk
- Kooth free online counselling for ages 11-25 in Suffolk www.kooth.com
- Suffolk Support and self-help guide – local services

Self-harm and suicide

- Alumina free online self-harm support group for 11-19 year olds
www.selfharm.co.uk
- Calm Harm an award-winning app developed to help teenagers manage the urge to self-harm
- Papyrus “Supporting your child: self-harm and suicide” a guide for parents and carers www.papyrus-uk.org
- [Suffolk] *if your child needs urgent mental health support you can call the First Response Service **111 option 2**, free service available 24/7*

CHILDHOOD NEURODIVERSITY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

- **How the brain develops** – Tuesday 8th August 6pm
- **Understanding and managing behaviour** – Thursday 7th September 1pm
- Other workshops dates TBC: impact of early life stress/trauma, sensory processing, eating difficulties, communication difficulties, cognitive difficulties, sleep problems, using technology and social relationships

OTHER FREE WORKSHOPS

Psychology in Schools Team

Upcoming live parent workshops on mental health:

- Supporting our young people with anxiety
- Supporting our young people with eating difficulties
- Supporting children/adolescents (11 years+) with sleep

Recorded previous workshops on NSFT YouTube:

- Low mood, school avoidance, tics and Tourette's, self-harm, emotion regulation, trauma, OCD, managing exam stress and more!

www.nsft.uk/workshops Eventbrite page

<https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops> All recorded workshops