EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE WORKSHOP PACK

Wellbeing workshops

2simple

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Introduction

Overview

This session has been designed to introduce children in upper Key Stage 2 to the concept of emotional resilience and give them some practical advice and strategies. The session can be run in an hour, but we recommend allowing yourself around two hours if it's your first time. This guide explains exactly how the session works and what equipment you will need. If you haven't done so, we recommend watching the overview video on our website (2simple.com/resilienceworkshop) to get a sense of how the session looks in practice.

The session is split into two parts. The first half is spent doing practical activities and the second half is given over to discussion and reflection. Emotional resilience is something that needs to be built up over time and cannot be mastered in a day. We hope this session will act as a springboard for your school's exploration into emotional resilience.

Objectives/ Learning outcomes

1. Provide a clear definition of emotional resilience
2. Get children to reflect and engage with their own emotions during tasks
3. Make it clear to children that everybody experiences difficult times during their life
4. Inspire children to understand that they have the potential to overcome and learn from every challenge they will face
5. Explain that resilience is a skill that is built with practice
6. Give practical advice and strategies for building emotional resilience
7. Tell children who they can speak to if they feel they need help

A note from the authors

This session was designed by the education team at 2Simple and has been reviewed by several specialist educators; it has been run for over 2,000 children across the UK. We've tweaked it several times since it was first designed. We have provided notes and guidance on how we present the session, but we welcome you to make changes to suit your teaching style.

Warning

During this session, you will be asking children to reflect on their own emotions and experiences. Some children may have experienced very difficult things. We have worked with children who have witnessed violent crimes, have parents in prison, have recently lost relatives, have parents experiencing mental health problems etc. On a few occasions, safeguarding issues have been uncovered as a result of experiences shared by children during the session. Our view is that children with difficult upbringings are most likely to benefit from learning about emotional resilience, and uncovering safeguarding issues is a positive not a negative. Emotional resilience is not the same as mental illness and you do not need to be a trained mental health professional to deliver this session. However, if you do not feel comfortable around emotional issues please do not run the session. We also advise that you go back over your school's safeguarding policy before running the session and ensure you act in accordance with it.

RESOURCES

You likely already have most of the things you need for the session dotted around the school. If you don't, we have provided links to purchasing these items in the Appendix.

1. The PowerPoint presentation
2. One 'Challenge Reflection Card' per child
3. One pen or pencil per child
4. Two sets of the four challenges cards (printed on A3 and laminated is ideal)
5. Challenge station resources (see page 5)
6. A PowerPoint slide clicker (optional)
7. A whistle and stopwatch
8. Challenge Station Resources

Setup

The session works best in a big hall/room where you can have one area for sitting and another for the activities. This way the challenge resources won't distract the children when they are supposed to be listening. But it can be done in a classroom if you don't have access to a bigger space.

Put the PowerPoint presentation on a screen that all the children can see. Next, set up the challenge stations. The children will be working in groups of four, so for a class of 30 you will need to set up two of each challenge.

The images on the 'Challenge Cards' show you which resources are required. For Challenge 2 (cup stacking), it is helpful to tie the string to the elastic bands in advance. If the children are very advanced you can just give them elastic bands and string separately, but they will find it much harder.

In the Appendix you can see pictures of how each challenge station should look and the solution to each challenge.

Challenge Station Resources

The below resources are for the challenge stations. These quantities are for a class of 30 children. There are four challenge stations and four children can work on each challenge. So, for a class of 30 you will set up two of each station. If you are working with 16 children or less, you can half the resources required.

Challenge 1

2 x pads of post-it notes

Challenge 2

8x 15cm lengths of string

2x sturdy elastic band

12x plastic cups
(we recommend the big red American style cups)

Challenge 3

6x marshmallows (make sure they are big enough to rest the lollipop sticks on)

6x big lollipop sticks (make sure to get the big tongue suppressor sized ones)

Challenge 4

12x plastic cups (regular plastic dinking cups are fine, do not use the big red cups from challenge 2 as they are too big)

4x cubes (baby blocks work well)

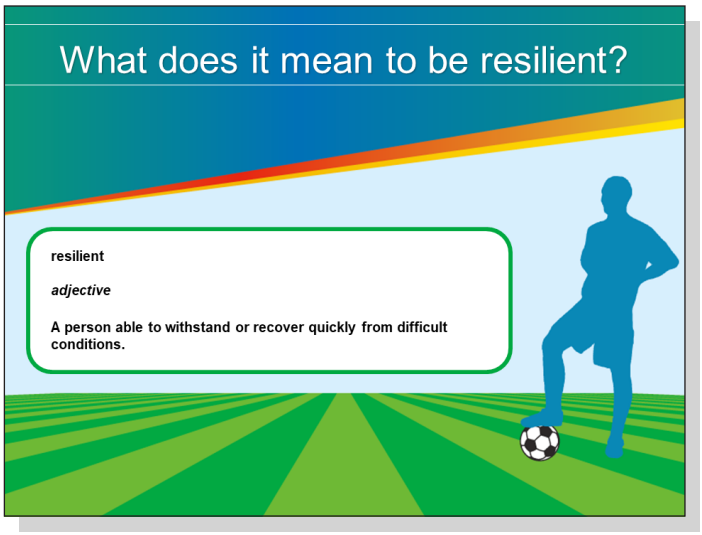
6x big lollipop sticks

Session Structure

Introduction: 5mins

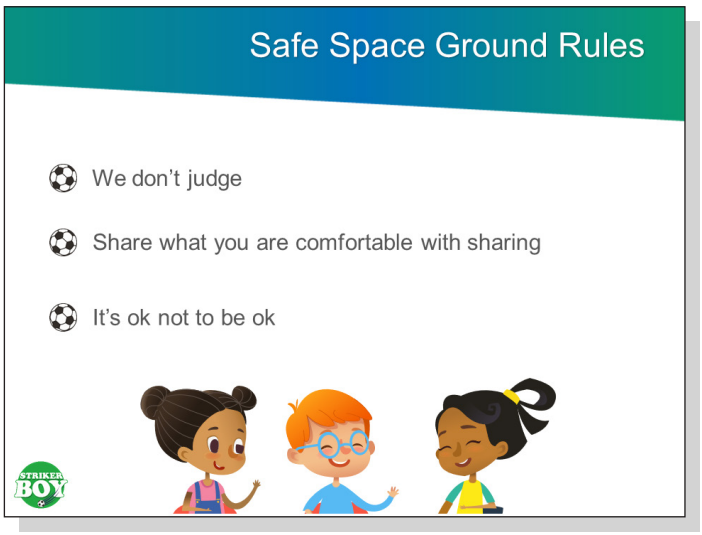
Slide 1

- Put slide 1 on the screen without the definition showing (the definition will show when your press 'next' on your clicker or keyboard)
- Ask the children what emotional resilience means and get a few responses
- To prompt the children, stretch an elastic band in your hands and tell the children that the elastic band is a 'resilient object'
- Give the children the definition of emotional resilience from the presentation. It may also be helpful to use the term 'bouncing back' to describe resilience
- Stress that emotional resilience isn't about stopping bad things from happening; it's about how we handle difficult situations when they do happen!



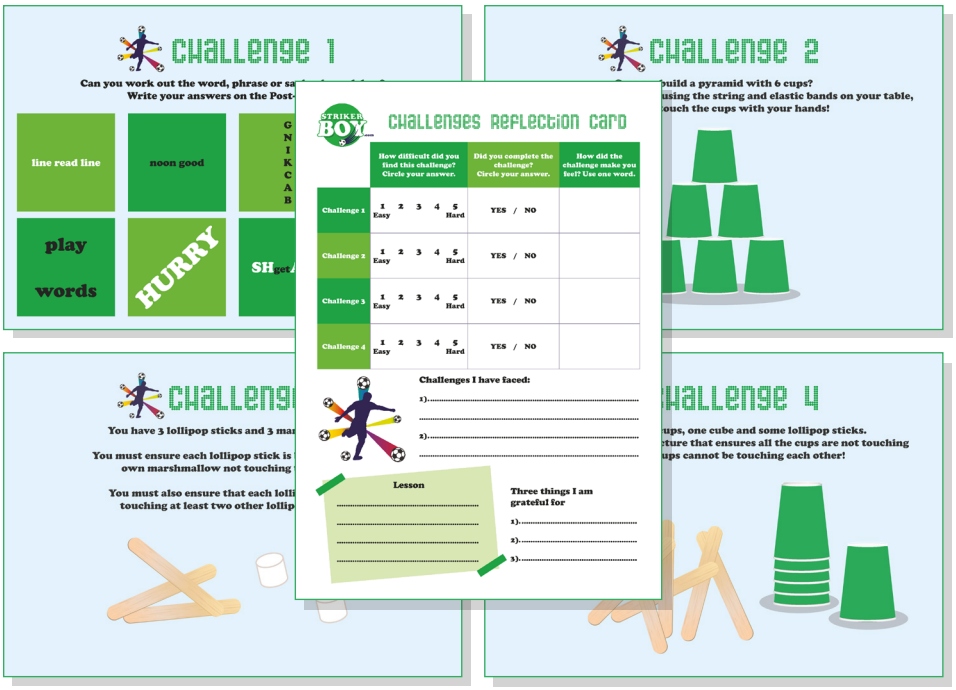
Slide 2

- Explain that during the session you will be asking them to reflect on their own emotions and experiences. Tell them that people will have the opportunity to share their thoughts and this is something you encourage but it is not mandatory
- Go through the 'Safe Space Ground Rules'
- Stress that nobody will ever be forced to share what they have written down if they don't want to



Challenge Activites: 20mins

At this point it is time for the challenge activities!



- In groups of four, the children will work their way around all the challenge stations. Make sure all the children have a 'Reflection Sheet' and a pen or pencil
- They should not write their name on the sheets as they are anonymous
- We suggest giving the children 2 or 3 minutes per challenge
- Use a whistle to indicate the start and end times and stopwatch to keep time
- At the end of each challenge the children need to fill in their 'Reflection Sheet'
  - How hard was it?
  -Did they finish 100% of the challenge?
  -One word about how it made them feel.
  You do not want words like 'hard' or 'easy', you want emotive words like 'frustrated' or 'excited'
- Make sure the children reset their challenge station neatly for the next group
- Once the children have attempted all four challenges and completed their 'Reflection Sheets' bring everyone back together

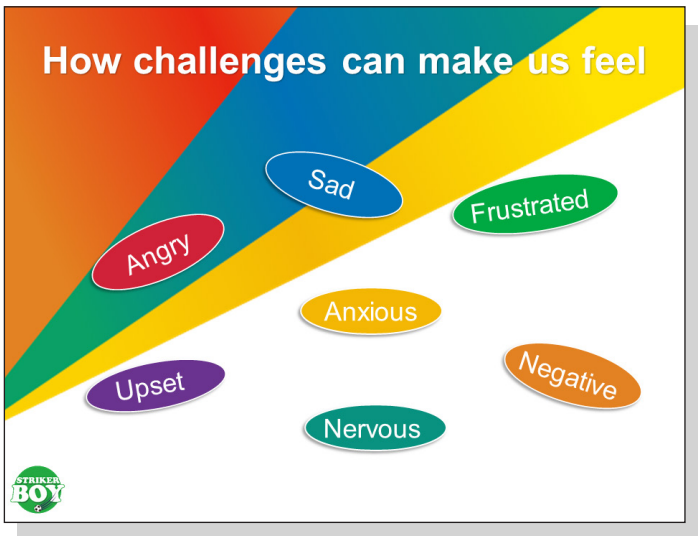
TIP!

The whole point of these challenges is that they should be both enjoyable and frustrating at the same time. No child should be able to finish 100% of every challenge. This is important, so avoid giving the children help. If a group is struggling, you can give them a prompt to get them started. You can also encourage teamwork.

Challenges & Reflections: 15mins

Slide 3

- Put slide 3 on the screen without the words in the bubbles revealed
- Ask the children how those challenges made them feel
- Encourage (but don't force) them to share the words from their Reflection Sheet
- Try to elicit a range of positive and negative emotions
- When children share a negative emotion like 'frustrated' ask the class 'Who else experienced frustration?', normally many will have
- Reveal the words in the bubbles and highlight those that weren't mentioned



Class Q & A

- **Who enjoyed at least one part of that experience (normally everyone)**
- **Who found at least one part of that experience hard or frustrating (normally everyone)**
- **Who completed 100% of all four challenges (no-one)**
- **It's important that no child gets 100% on all four challenges, so make sure not to give too much help during the challenges.**

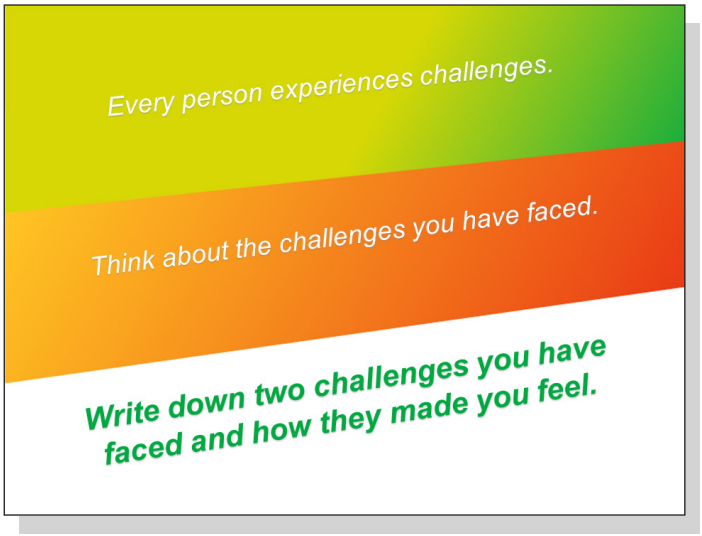
At this point, explain to the children that these challenges represent the rest of their lives. Over the course of their lives they will face a series of different challenges, often with no prior warning! They will be naturally good at some things and other things will be more challenging, but most importantly nobody in life gets 100% in everything they try. It works well to do a quick 'show of hands' with a Q&A, you can use the example on the left.

After the show-of-hands survey, explain to the children that it's easy to believe that other people are better than us, stronger than us, smarter than us, prettier than us etc. But actually, when you take life as a whole, we tend to be fairly equal; we all have strengths and weaknesses, and none of us are perfect.

Slide 4

We now move from a modelled world where the challenge activities represent the future into the real world. In a moment the children are going to be given 2-3 minutes to quietly reflect on their own lives and write down two challenges they have faced.

We have found from experience that before asking the children to do the reflection it is helpful to share some examples of challenges as a group.



- Explain to the children that as we get older the types of challenges we face change. Challenges adults face are different from the challenges children face
- But all challenges are meaningful to the people experiencing them
- Ask the children 'What are examples of challenges people of your age face?'
- Elicit some examples from the children

Watch out!

Ideas are infectious! If one child talks about losing a pet then all the other children will want to share similar experiences. Try to guide the conversation so you elicit a range of different types of challenges.

Activity

Explain to the children that you would like them to reflect on their own lives and write down two challenges they have faced. They should write these down on their Reflection Sheet. Tell the children that if they need help, they should put their hand up and you will come and talk to them. If a child cannot think of a challenge, prompt them with questions like, 'When was the last time you felt angry/sad?'

- Give the children a few minutes to write down their challenges
- You may not have enough time for all the children to finish
- Once every child has written at least one challenge you can move on with the session

The purpose of this exercise is to show children that we all face challenges. We often have no idea about the challenges our friends are facing, and it's easy to start believing that we have more problems than the people around us, but this often isn't the case.

Ask if anyone would like to share a challenge they have faced. Sometimes it can take a while for children to put their hand up, just be patient. Normally, once one child has shared a challenge others will follow.

Thank every child after they have shared an experience and ensure that all children listen respectfully. If anybody laughs at another child's challenge make sure you remind everybody of the Safe Space Ground Rules, and explain it takes bravery to share a challenge.

Try to ensure that everybody who wants to share a challenge is given the opportunity to do so. Before moving on, thank all those who shared their challenges.

Warning

Be prepared to hear something distressing! You have no idea what the children will share. Some may share something very serious and it's important you respond appropriately.

Acknowledge it's a big challenge and thank them for their bravery in sharing it.

If you believe it constitutes a safeguarding issues say, 'I think it would be good for us to talk more about this after the session'.

Always act in accordance with your school's safeguarding policy. And never ask for more details infront of the other children.

Slide 5

After the group has shared their challenges put Slide 5 on the screen. Normally, these issues will already have come up during the sharing session

Explain you made this list ahead of the session as you weren't sure if people would be willing to share their own challenges. Go through the list quickly, acknowledge the issues that were already mentioned and give a little explanation of those that weren't

Losing people that we love

This is the most serious challenge any of us will face and it is worth highlighting this fact. Explain that being alive is a wonderful gift but that it also means we will inevitable experience loss. All people experience loss and whilst we hope it doesn't happen until we are older it can occur at any time. Losing someone doesn't always mean they died; it could be experienced when a parent moves out of the home or you are separated from you siblings etc.

Emotional Resilience: 20mins

Slide 6

Up until this point the session has been focused on getting children to understand that life is hard and full of challenges. The remainder of the session is focused on how we overcome challenges and build emotional resilience.

Tell the children you have some good news and some bad news, and that you're going to give them the bad news first.

Then say a version of the below:

The bad news is that every single person, no matter how rich, pretty or smart they are, will experiences difficult challenges in their lives, it's unavoidable. Some of those challenges will push us to our absolute limits and there will be times we question our own ability to get through them. That is the bad news. The good news is that every single person in this room has what it takes to overcome every single challenge that is put in front of them. And not just to overcome them, but to learn from them and be a stronger person as a result. And it is that ability to overcome our challenges that we call Emotional Resilience.

The answer is that they are training. Run through the Q&A. Professional footballers are people born with the highest levels of natural ability, natural agility, natural speed etc. And yet still they understand that if they want to be good at something they need to practice every single day. The same is true of emotional resilience.

Tell the children that you can see from their performance in the session that they already have the raw skills needed, the only thing that matters now is how much they practise.

Class Q & A

- Who thinks emotional resilience is something you're born with?
- Who thinks emotional resilience is something you learn?
- Explain to the children that both answers are right. It is helpful to use the example of professional footballers. Ask the children:
- Why we are here now, what are the [insert name of local team] players doing?

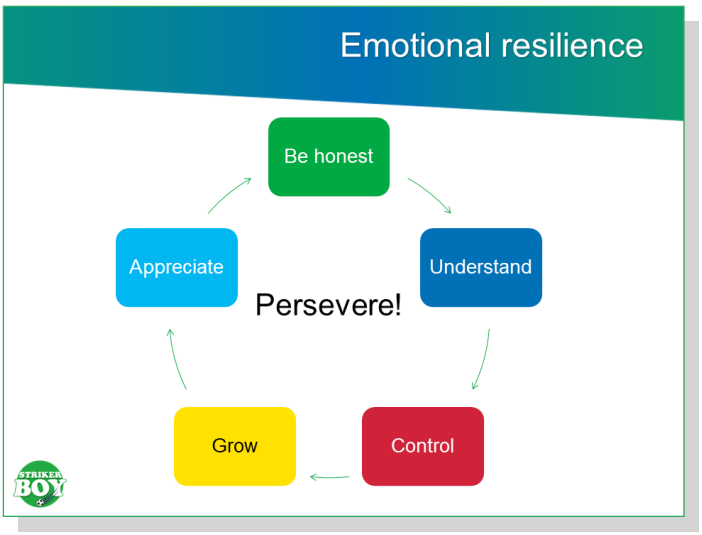
Be honest

Slide 7

This is the most important part of the session because it's where you are going to give the children practical advice and strategies for building emotional resilience.

Explain to the children that they are surrounded by people who love them and want to help them. But when it comes to emotions it's not always obvious when people need help, and that is why it's so important that we are honest with ourselves and with other people.

The example to the right works well to demonstrate this point.



Emotional honesty is the first step to developing emotional resilience!

Imagine there is a game of football going on in the playground. One child has the ball and is running down the wing. Another child does a horrible leg-breaking tackle. It's terrible, the bone is sticking out and there is blood shooting everywhere. It's obvious here that this is someone who needs our help! So we call the teacher, and the teacher calls the ambulance, and that child gets the help they need. Now imagine one of your friends is feeling very anxious, or very sad, or very stressed. That isn't always obvious is it? Most of us are really good at feeling one way and acting another. We might feel sad but we could still be smiling. People want to help you, but they can only help you if they know you need help! That is why it's so important to be honest about how you are feeling.

Understand your emotions

Explain to the children that emotions are good; they are what make life so beautiful. We don't want to turn ourselves into robots with no emotions. Explain that certain situations will always make us feel a certain way.

The term 'Hangry' (hungry and angry) works well to demonstrate this.

Class Q & A

- Who has ever been hungry before?
- Who has ever been angry because they are hungry?

Certain situations will always make us feel a certain way. Being tired will make us feel grumpy, having to perform in-front of lots of people who always make us feel nervous, playing badly at football will always make us feel frustrated and someone kicking us under the table will always make us feel angry!

We cannot always control our emotions, but we can control our actions!

Control

Explain to the children that it is our actions rather than our emotions that dictate the course of our lives. Actions have consequences! And people who aren't able to control their actions often end up on a downwards spiral. A good example of this is footballers that lash out after they get fouled and end up being sent-off.

Often all we need to do is control our actions for a few short moments and the negative emotions will pass. Ask the children:

Class Q & A

- What is the best way to stay calm under pressure?
- You can prompt them by asking what footballers normally do before taking a penalty?
- The answer is breathing! Breathing is an excellent tool because:
  - We can all do it
  - You don't need any equipment
  - It's free!

Activity

Explain to the children that controlled breathing exercises are an excellent way to stay calm under pressure. There are lots of controlled breathing exercises, but we suggest the simple 6-3-6 method. Breathe in for 6-seconds, hold your breathe for 3-seconds and breath out for the 6-seconds. Make sure to count the seconds in your head and repeat the cycle until you feel calmer.

Get the children to practise the 6-3-6 method together.

Q & A

- **Why do breathing exercises work?**

The answer is very simple, they give us something else to focus on! You can also explain that they help regulate the oxygen in our blood. When we are under pressure, our breathing increases and we take in too much oxygen. This can make us feel dizzy and out of control.

Suggest to the children that the next time they feel like they are losing control to try the breathing exercise

Growth

Now that we can understand our emotions and control our actions, we are in a position to turn negative experiences into valuable lessons. Explain to the children that every negative experience is an opportunity to grow. Experiencing challenges is unavoidable but it's up to us whether we choose to learn from them.

Activity

Ask the children to reflect on the personal challenges they wrote down earlier and write down something they can learn from each challenge. Give the children a few minutes to complete the exercise. They can write their answers on the Reflection Sheet.

As before, tell the children that if they need help they should put their hand up and you will come and speak to them. After a few minutes bring the group back together and ask if anybody would like to share one of their lessons.

Suggest to the children that in the future they take time reflect on new challenges as they occur, to see what they can learn from them.

Appreciation

Explain to the children that when it comes to happiness, it doesn't matter how much 'stuff' we have. What matters is how much we appreciate the things we do have. Explain that it is very easy (especially as we get older) to focus on the things we don't have and lose sight of how lucky we actually are. For example, all the things we take for granted like clean water, education, clothes, food, and toys, are things that millions of other people don't have.

A strong sense of gratitude has been shown to be the most important factor in developing an optimistic outlook in life.

A very simple and effective way of achieving this is with Gratitude Journals. A gratitude journal starts off as any notepad or journal, decorated in any way you please! What makes it special is that at the end of every day you write down three things you are grateful for from that day. They can be little things, like having fish fingers for dinner, or big things like being grateful for your parents.

We cannot always change what we have, but we can decide to focus less on what we don't have and more on what we do have!

TIP!

Prepare your own Gratitude Journal to show the children. Read out the three things you wrote down for the previous day.

Slide 8

Activity

Ask the children to reflect on their lives and write down three things they are grateful for. Give the children a few minutes to complete the exercise. They can write their answers on the Reflection Sheet.
After a few minutes bring the group back together and ask if anybody would like to share something they are grateful for. Children are normally very forthcoming with ideas at this point and it's an upbeat way to end the session.

Suggest to the children that they start their own gratitude journals tonight.

Conclusion

Quickly go back over the five points (be honest, understand, control, grow, appreciate), highlighting what the children have learnt. For example:

"That's it, just five simple steps! So going forward we know it's important to be honest about how we are feeling. To understand that certain situations will always make us feel a certain way. But that with practise we can learn to control our responses and actions. We can learn something from all of our challenges and we can focus on what we do have instead of what we don't have."

Explain to the children that you cannot become an expert at anything in an hour. You have started them on their journey towards emotional resilience but now it's up to them to put it into practice.

Slide 9

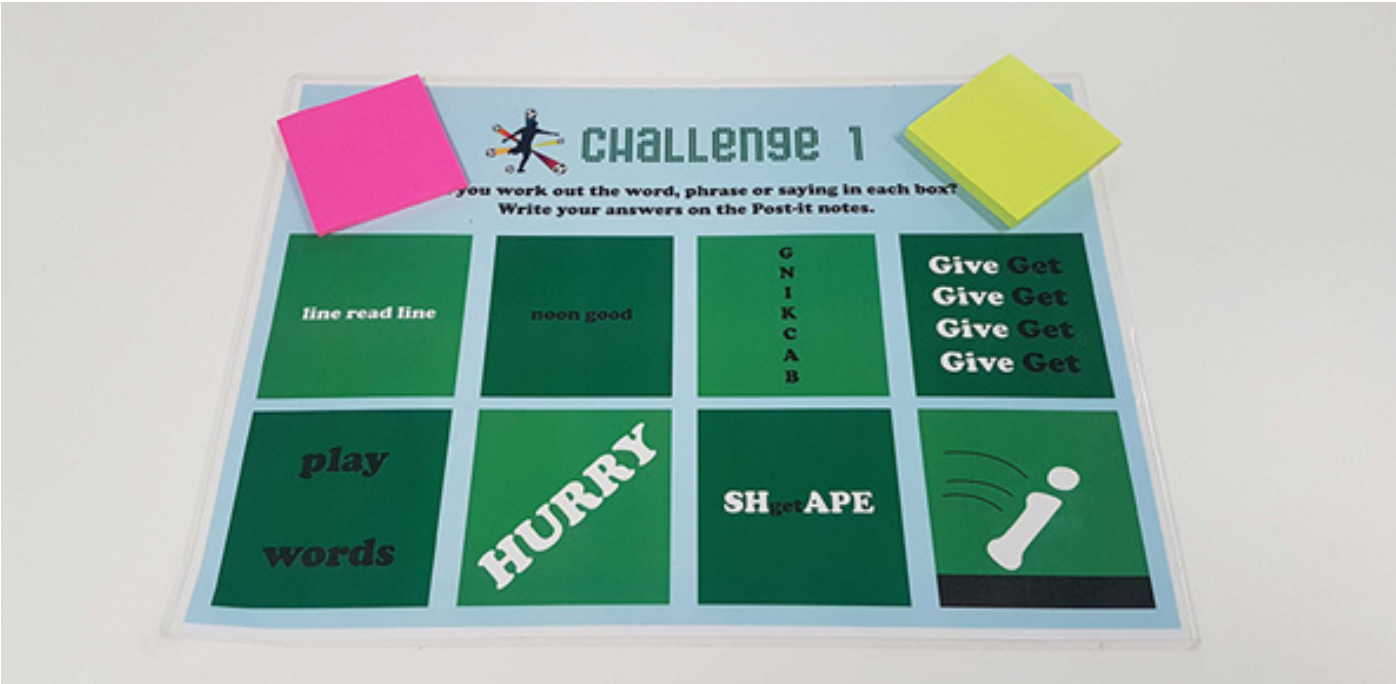
End the session by telling the children whom they can speak to if they need help.

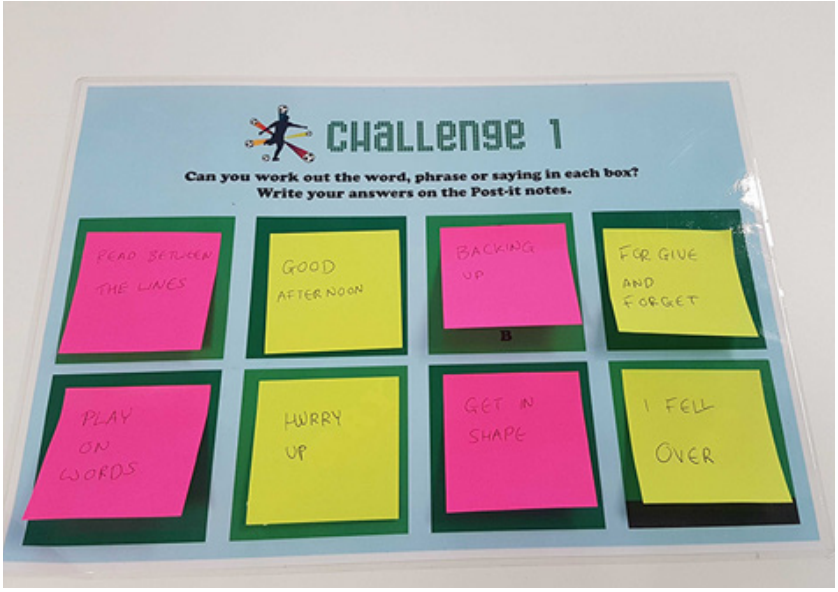
The simple answer is any adult they trust, for example a parent, guardian, teacher, or Doctor.

Explain that if they really don't feel there is an adult they can speak to about their problems, they can ring Child Line on 0800 1111.

Challenge station setups and solutions

Challenge 1



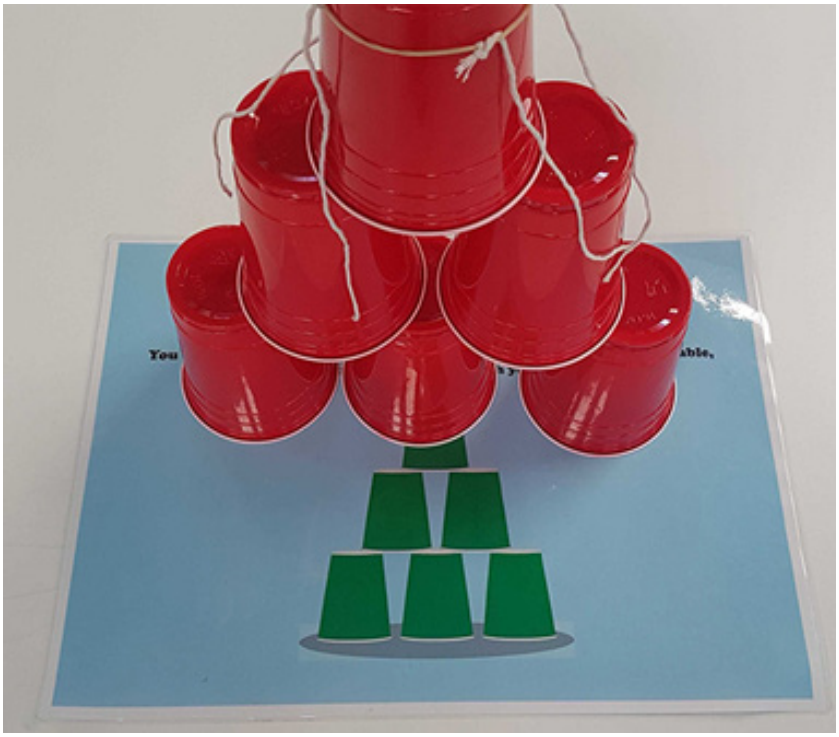


ANSWER

Read between the lines
Good afternoon
Backing up
Forgive and forget
Play on words
Hurry up
Get in shape
I fell over

(It doesn't matter what colour Post-it note children use.)

Challenge 2



ANSWER

The children move the cups using the elastic band. They need to pull the string to widen the elastic band and fit it over the cup. They then contract the elastic band and use the string to lift the cup. This challenge is about team work.

Challenge 4

ANSWER

The trick here is to lay the sticks so that each stick is both over and under another stick.

Challenge 5

ANSWER

This picture shows the ideal solution, but you can accept other structures that meet the requirements given on the card.

Resource Purchasing Links

We strongly recommended looking for these items around your school before ordering anything. If you are only running the session once you will not need these quantities. You may be able to find smaller quantities elsewhere. All these products are from Amazon and we cannot accept any responsibility for their quality.

A whistle and stopwatch: £8.99
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/37ga63g

Post-it notes: £4.39
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/jfbf3Sq

A ball of string: £4.99
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/dI5C0bJ

Sturdy elastic bands: £6.95
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/gQXO6NH

Sturdy Plastic cups: £5.45
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/8UP73h1

Marshmallows
These can be purchased from any supermarket.

Big lollipop sticks: £6.99
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/94VlFub

Small plastic cups: £10.95
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/8CQh1vb

Cubes (building blocks): £11.91
Link: http://amzn.eu/d/8d8rgN2