



Building  
stronger  
families

**Lincolnshire BOSS**

# **Toolkit for Regulation Secondary School**

## **Maintaining Positive Behaviours in the Classroom**



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## Introduction video

For a description of the arousal curve <sup>(1)</sup> and the four stages of behaviour, as well as an overview of how to use this toolkit please access the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krJre-zol>



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# Videos

## Communication Styles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLDWHfdCITk>

## Emotion Coaching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzNQYltssEo>

## Rhythmic Regulation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeqSHjVGAbY>



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## Green stage

**While pupils are in the green stage they are functioning from their cortex-they can think ahead and reason. We can help them to stay in the green stage by threading regulating exercises throughout the day in between cognitive tasks.**

**Ensuring pupils have eaten a meal will support regulation. Elevated cortisol levels from stress drives adolescents to crave sugar. They should be encouraged to choose wisely and eat complex carbohydrates to give them a sustained blood sugar level.**

**Some examples of strategies are as follows:**

- Use of PACE - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.
  - Meet the young person where they are at emotional age rather than chronological age.
  - Have a team of identified adults around the young person, 2-3 adults who get to know them well and can offer good relational experiences. These adults should remain key adults throughout the young person's school career. Furthermore, have regular check-ins with them, either daily or weekly: Allot a 'worry time' e.g. set 10 mins daily when worries can be expressed, noted, and kept safe during day to give the young person the freedom to forget them for a while.
- **Check-in** - Each morning ask: 'How has your morning been?', 'What are your worries?', 'Have you had breakfast?'. Consider using a 5-point scale to gauge wellbeing.



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- **Check-up**, after their 'worry' lesson? At break and lunch time? 'How did you get on? What happened? What could you have done differently?' Praise any small steps the young person has made towards targets/desired behaviour.
- **Check-out**. 'How was your day?' What did that look like?' Tell me more about that?' What can we do tomorrow to build on what we have done today?' Continue to give specific praise so that the young person knows he is doing well.
- Relational, reflective listening - use of clarifying questions and authentic empathy:
  - "I'm wondering..."
  - "Help me to understand what is happening right now"
  - "If I were in that situation I might feel..."
  - "I'm not surprised you are feeling..... when..."
  - "Tell me if I got it wrong but it sounds as if you feel..."
- Reflect with the young person what worked with their strategy, help to identify anything that needs to be changed to make it more successful.
- Create emotionally expressive environments i.e. free to articulate feelings - no shut downs. Behaviour has boundaries but not emotion.
- Use of collaborative problem solving i.e. we will find a solution together rather than I will tell you what to do.
- Positive reinforcement when young person is on task and working, also when using appropriate voice levels.
- Create a strong sense of belonging i.e. ritual/routines. Having a sense of belonging makes it safe for the young person to express themselves and learn to regulate securely.
- Pre-agreed (discreet) signal for situations when the young person is struggling with tasks/feelings i.e. thumbs up, questioning look (are you ok?), small nod, shake.



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- Contingent touch.
- Match their affect i.e. if the young person is expressing themselves with high energy, speak with greater animation. This will help them to feel heard and understood.
- Validate feelings, not actions - look beyond their words.
- Share your feelings - some young people have not yet developed full 'theory of mind' and cannot understand how other people feel. Share strategies for regulation that you use yourself. This will help to normalise those bigger feelings and encourage a flexibility of approach.
- Exit plan - consistent, clear and agreed with the young person and shared amongst all key staff.
- Time to 'act' through and practice chosen strategy whilst calm.
- Focus on immediate responses that prioritise relationships - brief two minutes' conversation at the beginning/end of the lesson that is rewarding and builds a positive connection.
- Silence - avoid using too many words and filling all spaces. Allow processing time and time to calm.
- Encourage 'Stop, think, respond' strategy to reduce reactive responses.
- Remember that additional difficulties, such as, executive functioning challenges and sensory processing issues will make self-regulating harder.
- Careful seating i.e. at the edge of class rather than the middle – this would allow the young person to scan the room and not feel threatened.
- Use of a checklist to support organisation.
- Peer mentor to remind when work is due in/ be a reassuring presence.
- Building a relationship - getting to know the individual so you can use cultural and social references that the young person can identify with.

### **Sensory and Movement support to keep the cortex 'online'**

- Calm purse – e.g. lip salve, aromatherapy oils, sweets to suck.
- Photos, images that represent coping strategies - keep in planner to ground.



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- Doodle/sketch pad.
- Use of a journal - record what works to soothe.
- Blu-tac to fiddle with.
- Allow music during quiet working times i.e. ear buds.
- Chair press ups, wall presses, discreet chair yoga moves.
- Allow time for movement – e.g. timetabled in sessions at the gym, encourage a lunchtime sport, running, regular resistance work.
- Music - playing an instrument, drumming, listening to music.
- Use of creative writing, drama as a form of expression.
- Teach replacement behaviour: calming strategies (breathing, counting, taking a break), using a fidget or stress ball.
- Mindfulness exercises - Mindfulness reduces negative and self-destructive thoughts, increases focus and concentration, reduces stressful thoughts and feelings, helps build better/calm relationships, improves sleep and calms the nervous system.
- Rhythmic and patterned repetitive activities i.e. repetitive meditative breathing, tapping rhythms, walking, running.
- Support the young person to practice yoga periodically and routinely throughout the day (links shared in the Apps and Useful Websites section), especially at known trigger/transition points.
- Create self-affirming statements/mantras and practice using them at least 3 times a day: "I've got this", "I am strong", "I'm okay", "I WILL feel better soon".

**Grounding exercises**-techniques below need to be taught while in the green stage so they can be used when in amber.

- Physical techniques
  - Count your heartbeat
  - Breathing techniques
  - Rhythm exercises (Please see the Rhythmic Regulation video in the Videos section)



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- Listen to your surroundings: close your eyes and listen to the noises around you. Can you hear the birds outside? Can you hear other people talking than the ones in your classroom? Can you hear your own breathing?
- Try the 5-4-3-2-1 method (5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you're looking forward to today)
- Focus on 5 things you can feel on your body e.g. watch, back of chair, etc.
- Pick a colour to focus on- how many things of that colour can you see? Close your eyes- how many things of that colour can you imagine?
- Square breathing (Please see the Square breathing section for a practice sheet) - Breathe in for 4  
Hold for 4  
Breathe out for 6  
Hold for 4 and repeat
- Breathe around your hand - run finger (or visualise), slowly around outside of fingers and thumb, breathing in and out.

- Mental techniques

- Have an internal dialogue
- Count in random order
- Label your surroundings
- Anchor yourself with a phrase i.e. "It's raining lightly, but I can still see the sun"
- Think in categories: choose one or two broad categories, i.e. musical instruments, football teams. Take a minute or two to mentally list as many things from each category as you can.

- Soothing techniques

- Sensory soothing (see, listen, touch, smell, taste)



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- Practice love and kindness i.e. “You’re having a rough time, but you’ll make it through”, “You’re strong, and you can move through this challenging times”, “You’re trying hard, and you’re doing your best”. Say it in your head, as many times as you can
- Visualise your favourite place
- Gratitude list
- Think of a time when you were happy- focus on your favourite moment, remember how you felt. Research shows that you can boost your mood by remembering a happy memory
- Clench all your muscles and breathe in slowly counting to 10. Breathe out slowly and release.



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## Amber stage

**In the Amber stage the young person is beginning to 'bubble.' Our aim is to move them back into green as quickly as possible. We can achieve this by increasing some of the strategies from Green and also adding in some of the following:**

- Look beyond the words you are hearing - what is the behaviour seen telling us about the emotional state of the student? Remember anger masks fear and anxiety.
- Communicate empathy - empathy breeds empathy. If they don't experience it, they can't learn to be empathetic. By experiencing it they feel heard and valued (please see the Emotion Coaching video in the Videos section).
- Small, silent acts from staff to show care and understanding i.e. contingent touch, pass a drink.
- Option to spend a few minutes with a key adult.
- Practice taught breathing techniques - adult can breathe loudly and do the exercise, young person may then mirror them i.e. loud empathy.
- Acknowledge that it is difficult - 'I know it is a big ask...'
- Teacher recognises bubbling and uses a yellow/red time out card. Yellow - I can see you're bubbling, use your strategies to calm. Red - you need to go out of the classroom and use outside class strategies (ensure strategies are taught first).
- Give two positive choices to help redirect the behaviour e.g. 'do you need to move? You can sit here or here. You can choose'.
- The use of pre-agreed signals.
- Use of a personal thermometer - young person can scale where their anxiety levels are, pay attention to their level. Use SOS (Julian Ford 1999).

**Slow down - sit back, pay attention to breathing, one thought at a time.**

**Orient** - pay attention to where you are, what you are doing, who you are with.

**Self-check** - how are you feeling now, how anxious or in control (score on the thermometer).

Attach strategies to the levels on thermometer to support the young person to be able to respond to their state with support.

- Cue card – listing strategies to be used in ‘this/current’ situation.
- Peer guidance.

### **Sensory and Movement Support**

- Option to leave room and do some wall pushes, press ups, etc.
- Allow to stand and work.
- Picture of their favourite, calming/safe place in front of planner to refer to and focus on.
- Sensory snack - something that takes effort to eat i.e. something chewy, crunchy, a drink through a straw (water, milk) can be calming - orange juice would raise alertness.
- Practicing a taught mantra.
- Small piece of blue tac.
- Elastic band on wrist.
- Stress balls.
- Encourage the young person to document/explain feeling in written form i.e. creative writing, cartoon, art, doodling - allow some time to regulate.
- Allow to listen to music.
- Rhythmic and patterned repetitive activities - repetitive meditative breathing, tapping rhythms, walking, running.
- Use of a calm app.
- Draw ‘How I Feel’ exercises.
- Use of grounding physical, mental and soothing techniques taught from the green stage (Please refer to the Green Stage section).

- Practice self-affirming statements/mantras and use with breathing techniques: “I’ve got this”, “I am strong”, “I’m okay”, “I WILL feel better soon”.

## **Mindfulness <sup>(2)</sup>**

Let's begin by taking a moment to allow your body to settle into a comfortable position. You may close your eyes or keep them slightly open (3 seconds), allowing the spine to lift, the shoulders to soften (3 seconds). Today we will practice two minutes of mindful breathing (3 seconds). Begin by taking a full breath in and a long breath out (3 seconds). Allowing the breath to settle the body and settle the mind (3 seconds). Feel your chest and stomach gently rising and falling with each breath (7 seconds). We're now going to count a few breaths silently (2 seconds). So on your next inhale, counting silently to yourself, one (2 seconds) and as you exhale (2 seconds) one. Now on the next breath count again (2 seconds) two, on the exhale (2 seconds) two (3 seconds). Now continue counting your breath for a few more breaths (10 seconds). If you notice the mind is wandering, just bring it gently back to the breath (2 seconds). Perhaps feeling the passage of air through the nostrils or the movement of your chest as your inhale and exhale (13 seconds). Now with one final in breath and out breath, noticing any sensations or feelings in the body (3 seconds). And when you're ready, gently opening your eyes and returning to your day (2 seconds).

## **Visualisation**

Pretend that you have just baked some delicious cookies  
I wonder what flavour you have chosen?  
Now pretend to put your oven gloves on (safety first!)  
Open the oven  
Take a deep breath in through your nose-they smell delicious!  
They smell sooooo good don't they  
But they are too hot to eat, you need to blow them cool  
Smell the cookies, blow them cool (repeat several times).

**Read this slowly, ensure the young people know not to answer the questions until the discussion at the end.**

Imagine that you are getting a cake out of the fridge

Think about the weight of the plate as you lift it out-careful!

Is the plate hot or cold, how does it feel on your fingers?

Can you feel the muscles in your arms working?

Is it a heavy cake or is it light?

I wonder what your cake looks like!

I wonder what it smells like

What is happening in your mouth?

You take a bite and chew it slowly

What does your cake taste like?

How do you feel while you are eating it?



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## Red stage

**In the red stage the young person is no longer operating from the thinking cortex but from their limbic brain. This is the emotional part of the brain which is focused on survival-fight, flight, freeze, flop. They are only aware of the next three seconds.**

- Reduce words used - 'stay with the uncomfortable for longer than is comfortable' Louise M Bomber.
- Remember the young person is only thinking seconds ahead at this point and is emotional, not rational.
- Pause between sentences and keep them short and simple. The young person will need longer to process things when functioning from this part of the brain. Don't keep repeating yourself.
- Planned ignoring where possible.
- Use of distraction.
- Humour.
- PACE - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy.
- Remember, it's not personal - don't respond to insults.
- Do not warn about consequences.
- Stand sideways, so as to look less threatening.
- Allow more body space than usual.
- Avoid folding arms.
- Keep voice low and calm.
- Be empathetic - 'I hear you', 'I'm here with you'.
- Validate feelings. Use active/empathetic listening - once the young person feels that they are heard and that you understand their pain/point they will feel less reactive.
- Identify points of agreement.



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- Wait and Listen – let the young person speak up, do not speak for them. This can make them feel confused and misunderstood.
- Change of adult. Check- in with yourself - how are you feeling? What might trigger you here? Are you the best person to handle this right now?
- Limit the amount of adults involved, and avoid standing around talking - it will be seen as criticism.
- Where possible, encourage to young person to move to a quieter room - be aware of the immediate audience, avoid public denigration of the young person.
- Avoid 'you' messages - label the behaviour, not the young person.
- Remember - saving face is as important to the young person as the adult, suggest options of how to achieve this together. Use 'we', 'us', 'our' references in prompts of how you can do this.
- Emphasise the behaviour you want to see rather than the misbehaviour.
- Reassure that crying is emotional release of tension and lets others know we're in distress.
- Be the calm in their storm.
- Avoid out arguing the young person.
- Refer to pre-agreed safety plan.
- Do not revisit the incident.



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## Blue stage

**In the Blue stage we need to support the young person to settle and regulate. We need to be careful that our actions do not escalate the situation again.**

**Remembering Bruce Perry's words can help – Regulate, Relate, Reason.**

**Regulate** - in this stage we are concentrating on de-escalation, so this relates to the red stage.

The blue stage focuses on relate and reason as follows.

**Relate** - our relationship with the young person is what is going to help them to calm and stay calm. Talking too much can be a trigger so using as few words as possible supports regulation. You may sit and do something that you know the young person enjoys such as reading, art, or listening to music. Doing this quietly can be regulating; let the young person join in in their own time and keep words to the minimum.

**Reason** - When you feel the young person is regulated and has had long enough at the relating stage you can talk about what happened. Keep the discussion short and to the point e.g. 'We don't swear in school'. This can be enough. If we labour the point we risk escalating behaviours again.

Remember a calm area is only a useful resource if supported by a nurturing adult. The person is the safe space, not the physical space.

We can introduce grounding techniques to refocus the young person and bring him back to the present.

It is ok to allow the young person time to read/colour/draw for quite some time as they make their way back to the green state. It can take a couple of days for some to fully return to a wholly regulated state so it is worth investing in effective calming.



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# Apps and useful websites

## Free trial Mindfulness Apps

- **Headspace** - Available for iOS and Android. Designed to help you train your mind and body for a healthier, happier life and get the most out of your day. Headspace can be used anywhere. The free version of the app includes meditations and exercises that will teach you the essentials of meditation and mindfulness.
- **Calm** - Available for iOS and Android. Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners (there's a seven-day beginner's programme to get you started), but also includes programmes for more advanced users. The short, guided meditation sessions cover the basics of mindfulness and there's also a library of soothing nature sounds and scenes to use at your leisure. One great feature if you're looking to improve your sleeping patterns is the 'Sleep Stories' - bedtime stories for adults 'guaranteed to lull you to sleep'.
- **Insight Timer** - Available for iOS and Android. Entry price: Free. But you have to navigate around the subscription screen with the button that says "Start 7 Day Trial. Once you scroll past that, you can access the free content. Insight Timer has a huge library of content: over 25,000 guided meditations from around 3,000 teachers on topics like stress, relationships, creativity, and more. Features-guided meditations, music to help calm the mind, focus, sleep and relax.
- **Stop, Breathe & Think** - Available for iOS and Android. Entry price: Free. If you explore "All Sessions" you can access the free meditations all in one place. Tell the app how you are feeling and it will recommend specific guided meditations.
- **Aura** - Three minute meditations (a new one every day).
- **Mindful Gnats** - an introduction to Mindfulness.



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- **Mindshift** - free app to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.
- **Ten Percent Happier** - free trial available.
- **Daylio** - a free app which encourages you to record your moods and activities each day, this can help to identify triggers to specific moods and feelings.
- **Beat Panic** (99p) - Aims to help the user to calm and control breathing when experiencing panic.

**Apps recommended by CAMHS** <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/apps-1>

### Apps to Help Sleep

- **Rain Rain Sleep Sounds** - offers over 100 free sounds to help you get to sleep.
- **Relax Melodies** - free guided meditations, sounds, music and bedtime stories.
- **Noisli** - this app lets you choose from different sounds and create your own sleep track.
- **Calm** - as above.

### Website

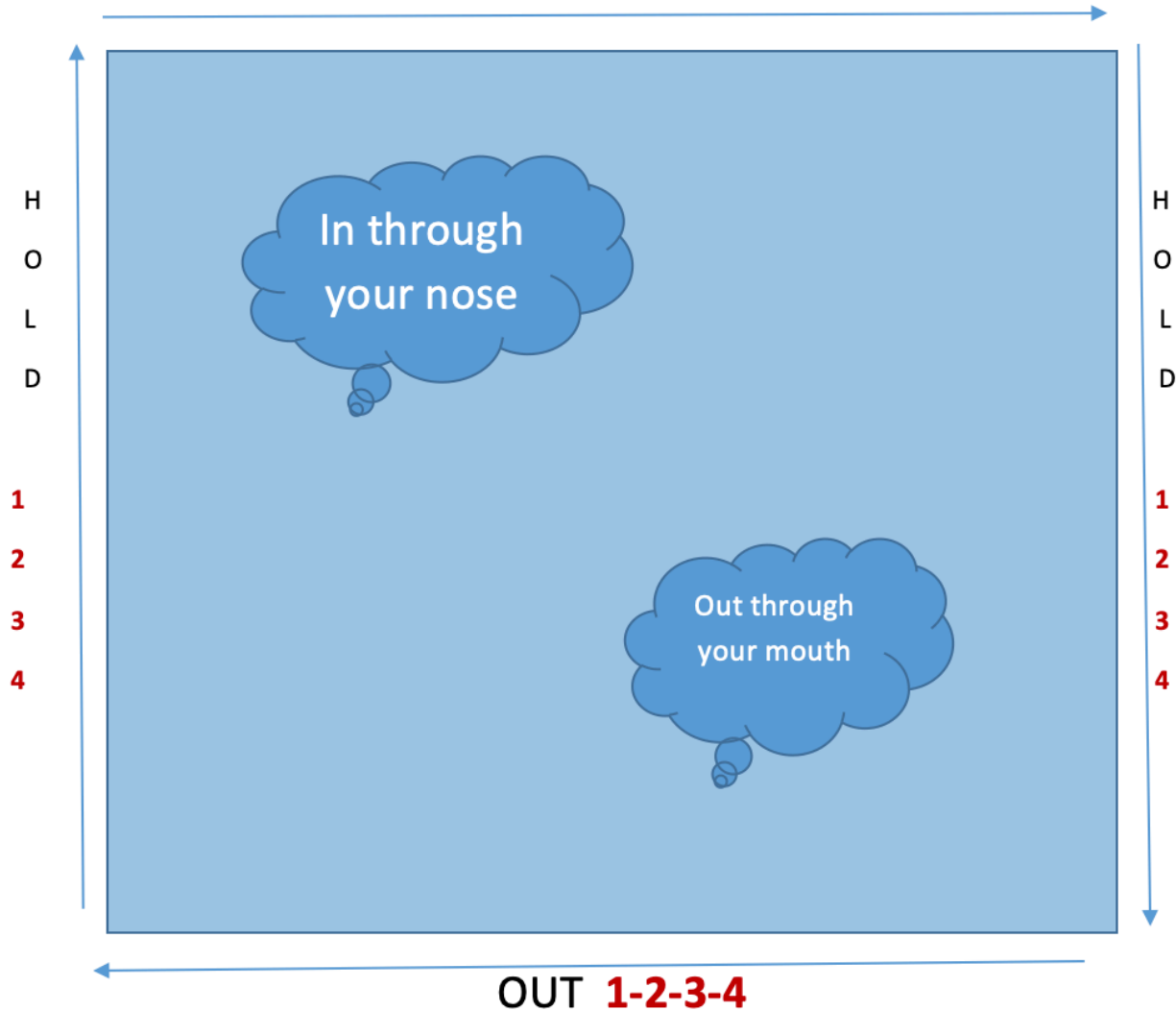
- **Change to Chill** - fun and informative videos for teens. Free guided meditations and downloadable colouring pages.
- **CAMHS resources and videos** <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/videos>

### Links:

- **Stress on the Brain (YouTube video)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhl9KLwfpbM>

# Square breathing sheet

IN **1-2-3-4**



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# 5-Point Scale

## My 5-Point Scale

5	<b>I need some help!</b> I'm not in control of my feelings, I need someone to help me.	
4	<b>I'm really upset.</b> I feel overwhelmed.	
3	<b>I've got a problem.</b> I'm losing control, I need a break.	
2	<b>Things are pretty good.</b> I am doing okay.	
1	<b>I am feeling great!</b> I am in control of my feelings.	



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## References

The following resources are not owned by Family Action and have been sourced from:

<sup>(1)</sup> The Arousal Curve

*By The Challenging Behaviour Foundation*

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/>

<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/learning-disability-files/02---Finding-the-Causes-of-Challenging-Behaviour-Part-2-web.pdf>

<sup>(2)</sup> Mindfulness activity

*By Mindfulness Exercises*

<https://mindfulnessexercises.com/>



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