

Practical tips for parents

Jenny Langley jenny.langley@charliewaller.org



An emotionally healthy approach to GCSEs

A guide for parents

charliewaller.org

parent-guide-gcses-08-2020.pd





We're talking mental health

Our vision

A world where people understand and talk openly about mental health, where young people and those who support them are equipped to maintain and enhance their mental health and wellbeing, and have the confidence to seek help when they need it.





About us

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie took his own life. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded The Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.



Evidence based training



Positive

We take a positive approach to mental health. We focus on prevention and early intervention, and recognise the importance of offering hope.



Proven

Our consultancy, training and resources are all based on sound clinical evidence.



Practical

We give people practical strategies and tools to care for their mental health, and to support others in doing so.



Working online



Zoom Functions

- Camera off during presentation
- Mute audio
- Chat function
- Hand icon
- Chat rooms



Your Space

- Comfort
- Materials
- Minimal distraction
- Drink

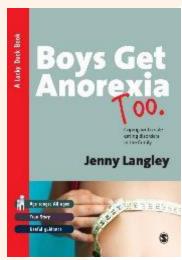


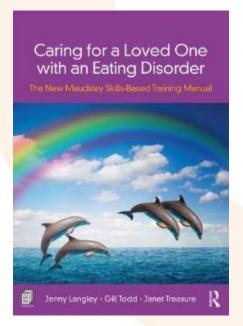
Safe Participation

- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Listen
- Opt in
- Opt out
- Support

My kids – I have been a parent to teenagers for many years/ exam seasons









Seven Practical Tips

- 1. Reflections on caring responses to the anxious/ angry/mad teenager
- 2. Acknowledge adults are not always right
- Be curious not furious explore the "benefits" of teenage behaviours
- 4. Connecting with the emotional side of the teenage brain and drip feeding affirmations
- 5. Sidestep the reassurance trap
- 6. Cognitive restructuring for a negative teenager
- 7. Using motivational language to build stronger connections with anxious/angry/mad teenagers



What causes our kids to play up?





What causes our kids to play up?

Chaotic eating

Self-harm

Unhealthy relationships

> You just don't get it

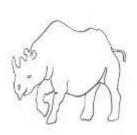
You are not listening to me

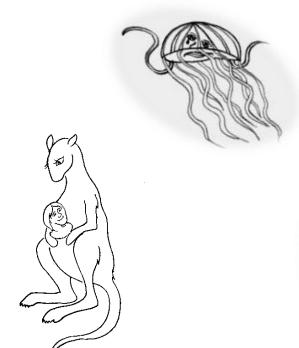
You don't care about my feelings



Tip No 1 Reflecting on caring reactions to a moody teenager

The animal metaphors

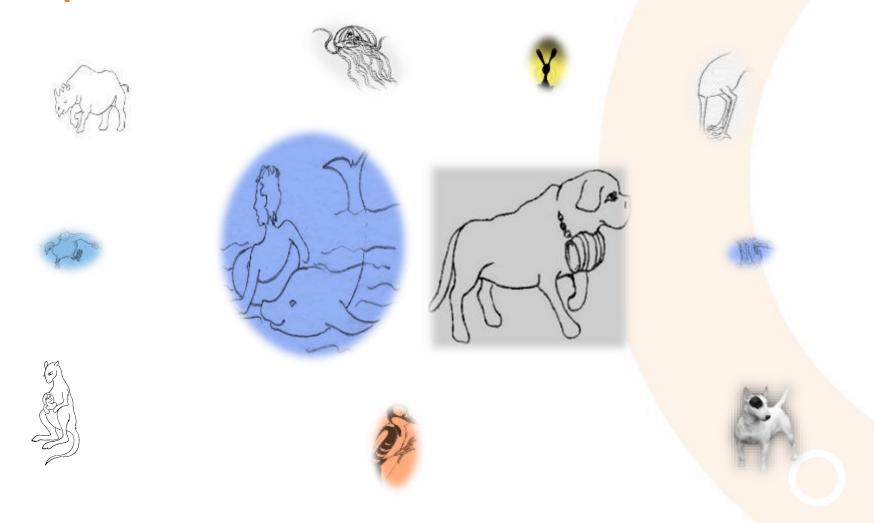








Carers quickly start to reflect on their own responses & behaviours





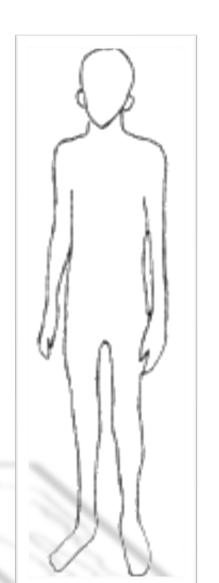
Anxiety Warning Signs

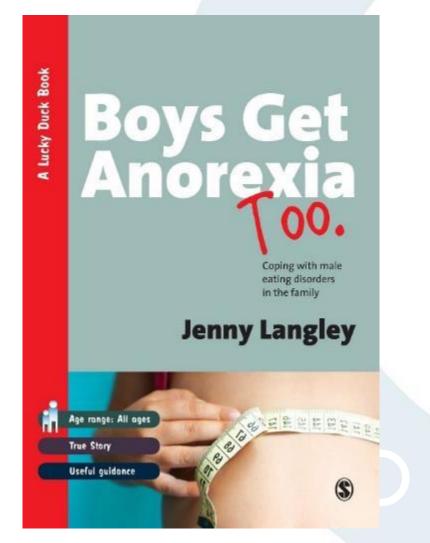




Rigid rules and Anorexia

Rigid rules around sport and exercise







Notice and then gently challenge rigid rules Rome wasn't built in a day! Support with compassion, empathy and patience

Anxious teens can thrive on rigid rules and pessimistic thoughts about breaking a rule

Rigid rules often focus on

>Exam performance

>Sporting achievements

➤ Body image

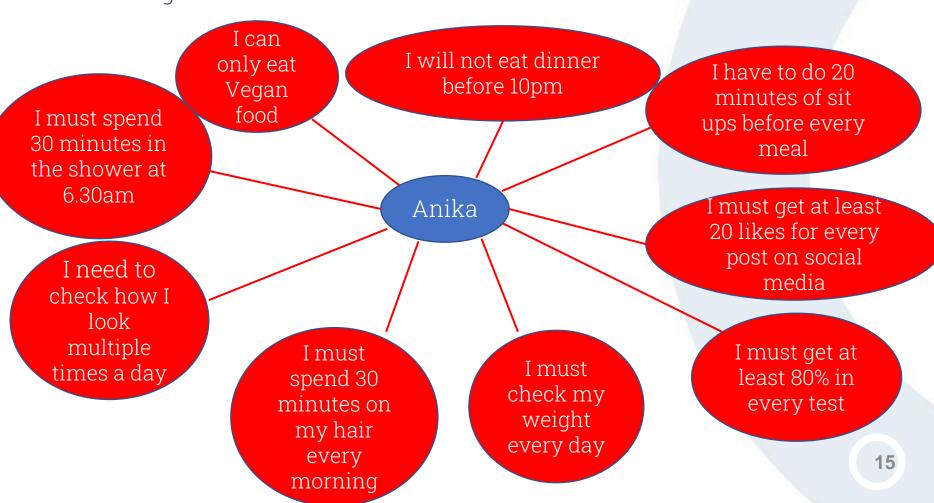
≻Diet

Rigid rules quickly become habits which are difficult to break and can be incredibly time consuming

Rigid rules become your coping strategies



Anika is caught up with endless rigid rules around food, study, body image and exercise. It has reached the stage that by the time he has finished his regular evening regime, he will never eat dinner before 10pm. In fact this has become one of his rigid rules



Anika is caught up with endless rigid rules around food, study, body image and exercise. It has reached the stage that by the time she has finished her regular evening regime, she will never eat dinner before 10pm. In fact this has become one of her rigid rules

Carer instinct – tell her to stop!

Why doesn't this work?





How would you feel if I told you not to engage in your coping strategies

Rigid rules become your coping strategies



Anika is caught up with endless rigid rules around food, study, body image and exercise. It has reached the stage that by the time she has finished her regular evening regime, she will never eat dinner before 10pm. In fact this has become one of her rigid rules. She never goes to sleep before midnight.

Anika is at risk of exhaustion, sleep deprivation and escalating anxiety as her rigid rules become more and more demanding. This could lead to clinical levels of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self harm and even suicidal ideation.

Gentle guidance and support to help Anika to consider challenging one rigid rule at a time with BEHAVIOURAL EXPERIMENTS using SMART baby steps could reverse this cycle.

SMART might be – I will reduce my shower time by one minute a day until I feel comfortable not counting the exact time

Or – I will try to eat dinner one minute a day earlier until it gets to a time that fits in with the family

Or – I will stop checking my weight on one day a week

Scenario – SMART baby steps to challenge rigid rules and increase flexibility



Her older sister Poppy is studying psychology and learns about the importance or walking alongside rather than always trying to lead.

Also about taking SMART baby/mini steps and that success breeds success.

She suggests "as an experiment could we try to have dinner one minute earlier each day for a month?"

Anika thinks she might be able to try and agrees with her sister that the worst thing that can happen is that she cannot manage it everyday.

Secretly she is pleased to have permission to challenge one of her rigid rules and that her sister is prepared to help her.(walking alongside)



Is it SMART?

Specific – one minute a day

Measurable – yes

Achievable – hopefully and Anika and her sister have discussed it might not be every day

Realistic – it seems to be

Timeframe – review after one month

After one month



Anika is having dinner at 9.40pm and is willing to keep going with this experiment

Anika and her sister reflect about what worked well and what didn't work so well

Poppy praises the effort that Anika has put in to achieve this progress

Anika is pleased with her progress and determined to keep trying. If anything she is feeling more energised as she is getting to bed slightly earlier

Anika thinks she might be able to start to consider challenging some of her other rigid rules and come up with some alternative guidelines

She shares with Poppy some of her thoughts on her social media use and that there are lots of things that really help her when she feels stressed, as well as some things she finds difficult to deal with



Social media and teenagers

Young people's rising use of social media is a cause for concern for many adults. That's understandable - children now spend over three hours a day on their smartphones on average, so parents and carers need to understand the risks that come with screen time.

Media headlines frequently warn of social media's negative impact on children's wellbeing - yet this doesn't paint the whole picture. The many positives are all too often overlooked.

The online world isn't going away, and children cannot be shielded from it. The challenge - and opportunity - for us all is to make it as safe as possible for our young people.

Together, we can build digitally healthy households, practically and positively. Let's explore how.



Understand the opportunities and threats

How to become a digital role model

Set comfortable boundaries

Building your family's digital strategy

Ten top tips for a digitally healthy household

Guidance for adults on teenage social m **Kendrick School - Online Safety Guides f**

Tip No 2: Bridging the generation gap & acknowledging adults are not always right

You are worried that your daughter Rowena, age 14 is spending too much time on line. There are so many negative stories in the press and you know she spends time on her phone before she goes to sleep. You have told her that she must leave her phone downstairs at night time from now on. She is furious.

Rowena: you just don't understand – all my friends chat online before they go to sleep. That is how we wind down. There is so much about social media you don't understand. You are so out of touch and you are ruining my life Mum: I love you darling and I want to protect you from all the negative aspects of social media. I worry about the impact it has on your mental health

Rowena: you worry too much

Mum: Well Dad and I have decided that from now on you need to leave your phone with us before you go to bed Rowena: But you go to bed much earlier than me. You are being ridiculous.

Mum: Enough. We are your parents!



Supporting positive mental health online

As adults, it's important that we take time to understand the effect that social media use, and inhabiting an increasingly online world, can have on our young people's mental health.

Many teenagers are vulnerable: they may be struggling with feelings of isolation, may have had to deal with difficult family situations, or may have experienced trauma in some form.

The online world can provide a much-needed outlet for teens; a safe place to turn to others for support and encouragement, and to share experiences. But it needs to be overseen.

Through open conversation and working together with our young people, we can set comfortable boundaries and build digitally healthy households.

Tip No 3: Connecting with the emotional side of the teenage brain and drip feeding affirmations



Significant changes in hormones:

- Sex hormones
- Cortisol
- Serotonin
- Dopamine
- Oxytocin
- Melatonin



Daily variability is much higher in teens than in adults

Hormone balance

Serotonin

- The 'feel-good' hormone
- Lower levels associated with depression
- Associated with mood, appetite and sleep
- Serotonin levels fluctuate more in adolescence
- Low levels may lead to negative thinking and hopelessness
- Natural way to boost serotonin is to eat carbohydrates



Hormone balance

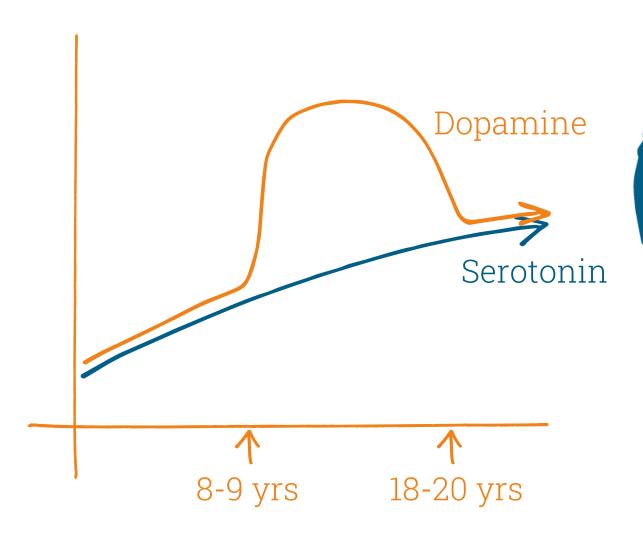
Dopamine

- Plays a major role in rewardmotivated behaviour and sensation seeking
- Adolescence brings a peak in the brain's sensitivity to dopamine





The developing teenage brain – some science



Teenagers are programmed to make high risk decisions with poor judgement

Tip No 3: Connecting with the emotional side of the teenage brain and drip feeding affirmations





Affirmations (reward) will also help to boost self esteem and connect with the child

Tip
Look for the
emotion behind
the behaviour

8-9 yrs

18-20 yrs

93%

You have told Rowena that she must leave her phone downstairs at night time from now on. She is furious and on reflection you realise maybe you acted in haste.

When things are calmer you seek to reconnect with her

ALVS is a technique that focuses on emotions, affirmations and problem solving:

Attend – Rowena, I have been reflecting on our conversation about having your phone in the bedroom and maybe I was a bit hasty and didn't listen

Label – I know you are furious with me

Validate – you are feeling this way because...... I didn't listen or try to understand your point of view. I would feel furious if

someone treated me like to Soothe – I have been talk helped me understand mo media for your age group

Tip No 4: Be curious not furious – explore the "benefits" of teenage behaviours

away is not the right answer. Can we start again? Can you help me understand more about the benefits of social media for you right now, and reasons why our new rule has made you feel so angry? I am listening now

Problem solving - the compromise (acknowledging adults are not always right)

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Rowena is much more able to calmly explain:

- I don't get tired until 12pm I learnt that melatonin kicks in later for teens than for adults
- Once I finish my homework I can relax by talking to a couple of my friends and I have xyz relaxation/ colouring/ music apps
- I sleep much better when I have had these distractions from homework

Mum asks if there are any negatives and Rowena admits that if she spends too much time on social media she starts to worry more about how she looks and if she is fitting in.

Mum offers Rowena a choice – you can hand your phone to me before I go to bed OR you can agree to leave your phone outside your bedroom after a certain time.

The compromise:

Rowena agrees to leave her phone outside the bedroom by 11.45pm Rowena and Mum will have a regular catch up about the pros and cons of social media, stories in the news, how things are going Mum agrees to talk to Dad about his incessant use of his phone at mealtimes

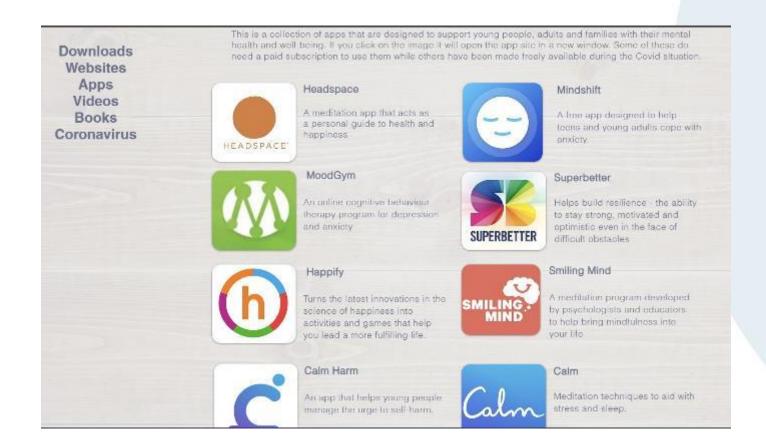
APPS | CAMHS Resources (camhs-resources.co.uk)



Focus on the positives

There are many advantages to social media. For teenagers who are vulnerable, the internet can provide a space for connection, creativity and sharing experiences with others who are facing similar adversity.

Discuss and explore with your child the positive aspects of the digital world. Focus on building healthy and nourishing online relationships and experiences, while also carefully balancing any time spent online with valuable offline experiences.



APPS | CAMHS Resources (camhs-resources.co.uk)



What's Up

Utilising same of the best USI methods to help you cope with Depression, Anxiety, Anger, Stress and more



No OCD

Holps with those suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder.



⑤ SafeSpot

SafeSpot

Arms to provide young people with access to coping strategies and resources to help better cope, with difficult situations.



My a

Help yourself and reach out to others if you are having thoughts of suicide.



MoodKit

Uses CH1 principles to help with low mood and anxiety.



НарріМе

I nee app that helps to raise selfestrem, self-confidence and happiness levels in children and young people.



Chill Panda

Ohil Pands hope chirdren beller understand deir stress and shows them ways to feel better using breating techniques, yago, exercises and celluling genes.



SAM

SAM is an app to help you understand and manage anxiety.



Stop Breathe Think

Check in with how you're teeling, and try short activities tuned to your emotions.



Virtual Hope Box

The Virtual Hape Hox (VHH) is a app that contains simple tools to help with coping, relaxation, distraction, end positive hinking



Clear Fear

Clear Fear provides you with a range of ways to manage energy.



Combined Minds

An approximate the help tamilies and triends support young people with their mental health.



Cove

Constantiate to infent emotions like joy sadness and anger to help express how you feel.



Mid2

MeetTad or a feet fully marketeful app for young acopie, which provides peer support, expert help, inbull educational and creative resultness.



Check In

The Check-in app helps take the lear out of having a conversation with a Iriand was might be struggling.



1 Giant Mind

This app is for anyone who wonts to fee less stressed, more calm and present and experience greater health and well-being



Blue Ice

Dilutice is an evidenced-based upo to help young people manage their emations and reduce larger to set-harm



Distract

The distrACT app gives you easy quick and discreet sectors to information and advice security with their south suicidal thoughts.



eQuod

The eQuan appreses adventure games designed by psychologists to help you increase your conditions. These and learn you new psychological skills.



Worry Tree

The WorryTree app sins to help you take control of worry wherever you are.



not OK

notOK App@ is a free digital panic hullen to go! you immedia to support via tox, phose call, or GPS location when you're strugging to reach out.



Stay Alive

This app is a pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.

Contact resources CVMH-Gisigmal .com



Body positive or body acceptance



Parenting teens: Dove Self-Esteem Project resources | Dove Our body confidence mission

8 out of 10 girls are so concerned with the way they look that they opt out of important activities. We want to change that.

The Dove Self-Esteem Project was created from a vision where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety. For more than 15 years, we've been helping parents, mentors, teachers and youth leaders deliver self-esteem education around the world. So far, we've reached over 60 million young people in 142 countries through our educational programmes – join us to help reach even more.

When it comes to body image and girls' self-esteem and body confidence, our mission is to ensure that young people grow up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look. That's why we're helping them raise their self-esteem and realise their full potential.

By 2030, we're aiming to have helped ¼ billion young people build positive body image and learn how to improve self-esteem, making the Dove Self-Esteem Project the largest of its kind – and we're not done yet.

Body Image – pressures to look perfect.





<u>Danny Bowman</u> now campaigns to raise awareness around anxiety and perfectionism leading to OCD, eating disorders and self harm



Pressure to look perfect - the reassurance trap

Charly is an acrobatic gymnast and has an athletic build. She is a base in a trio and needs to be strong.

Some of her squad are very slender and she has become more and more worried about how she looks in her leotard.

She constantly seeks reassurance from her parents, her gym coach and her friends. She also checks her body many times a day and weighs herself every morning

Everyone is starting to get frustrated with her constant demands and she hears one of her friends stating that she is "attention seeking"

She feels totally trapped. She doesn't want to talk to her mum or her friends and so decides to talk to her gym coach.

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Tip No 5 Sidestepping the reassurance trap

An anxious/ stressed teen is likely to constantly seek reassurance

- "Am I bigger than the other girls at gym?"
- "Will I get an 8 or 9?"
- "Have I got my homework right?"
- "Have I spent enough time on this?"
- "Have I practised enough?"
- "Will I make friends at my next school?
- "Will the extra time be enough?"

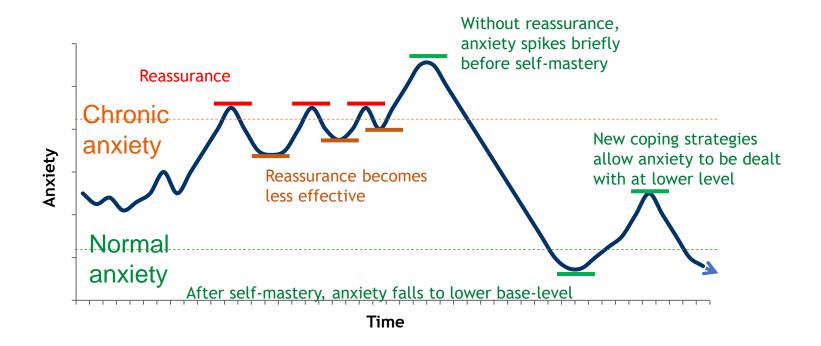
It is easy to fall in to the reassurance trap as a teacher or parent.

Over time this simply serves to fuel problems, worries, fears and anxieties and the relief is short lived.

Gently challenging vs reassurance.

Your child will learn to self soothe.....

The Reassurance Trap



How does change come about?

A little bit of discomfort can help your teen to consider making changes





Having shown Charly the chart and explained the science behind the need for reassurance: they agree useful phrases the coach could use to sidestep the reassurance trap

- "It is not helpful for me to keep reassuring you"
- "You seem very anxious/ frightened. That often makes young people seek continuous reassurance about the same things over and over, but in the long term it is not helpful."
- "You know the answer to that, I believe you can do it."
- "If I keep reassuring you it will keep your anxiety flourishing"
- "This high anxiety you are feeling right now will pass. It is like a wave. What could we do to help distract you from all these anxious thoughts? Would you like to help me coach the younger gymnasts, they really admire your talent, and enjoy your sense of humour etc"



Tapping into Charly's reward centre

Charly's coach sets Charly a task to think about before the next training session.

For the other gymnasts in your trio write down:

- 2 things they have achieved in gymnastics in the past
- 2 non gymnastics things they have achieved
- 2 character strengths
- 2 things they aspire to in the future.

Charly's coach says she will do the same for Charly and they can compare notes next time.

Charly feels she has the listening ear and support of her coach – a good start to help to start to build her self esteem.

Tip No 6 Cognitive restructuring



Pressure to look perfect - the avoidance trap

Daisy feels anxious about social interactions. Her inner perfectionist voice tells her she can't go out with friends unless she looks perfect, knows the right things to say and is in a perfect mood. Her inner perfectionist voice warns her she might embarrass herself and then no one will like her.

She has become so anxious that if she gets a text inviting her out she will turn her phone off.

This makes her feel better in the short term, but she has noticed her friends are starting to drift away

You have noticed that Daisy has become withdrawn from her friends and is spending more and more time in her room on her phone. You decide to venture in and calmly explore what is going on



Connect:

Dad: Hi Daisy can I come in?

Daisy: If you must, I don't know why you bother

ALVS

Attend – Daisy we love you and we have noticed you are becoming more and more withdrawn lately

Daisy: I am an ugly fat disgusting pig and I can't face anyone

Dad: resisting the urge to tell Daisy she is beautiful

Label – I am sensing you are feeling really anxious and sad

Validate – because....... you see all these perfect images on your phone and at the moment, it feels like you cannot be part of that perfect world

Daisy: I know they are all edited dad but I have really started to doubt myself

lately – it has really got into my head since lockdown

Dad: Thank you for telling me how you are feeling darling. So part of you knows it is not real and at the same time part of you feels totally inadequate

when you see all these images

Daisy: exactly

Dad: I read that 8 out of 10 girls feel like that at least some of the time and lockdown made it so much worse



Seligman's ABCDEF model - Cognitive restructuring when your teen is having negative thoughts

Adversity: I only see perfection on social media

Belief: I am a fat ugly disgusting pig

Consequence: I have lost my confidence and don't feel I can meet up with my friends. It feels safer to hide away at home



What not to say....



- You need to keep things in perspective, lots of girls worry about how they look
- Nobody else is worried about these things
- It's just your hormones dear
- I think you should do xyz



Disputation.....

- What would you say to a friend?
- What would a friend say to you?
- What would your drama teacher/other trusted adult say to you (or anyone else)
- What would your Dad say?
- Are there any other things that might have affected your thoughts that were outside your control?
- Is there any evidence to support your negative belief?



Disputation.....

Are there any other things that might have affected your self esteem & body confidence that were outside your control?

- People only post images that are super flattering
- Lots of images are edited, reality is very different
- Society is obsessed with stereotypes super thin for girls, super muscular for boys



Disputation.....

Is there any evidence to support your negative belief?

- The only person that is upset with my appearance is me
- The more I look in the mirror the worse I feel
- I have so much more going for me than the shape of my individual body parts
- My body and mind are strong and can do amazing things
- I am dedicated to my debating club at school and a kind and loyal friend

Seligman's ABCDEF model - Daisy's response



Disputation

Too much exposure to images on social media is bound to affect my self esteem. I have become super critical and forgotten that I am so much more than how my self look. And I can acknow loser I look in the management of the look.

o mi

can

A disappointed teen might respond well to being guided through techniques to challenge their negative thoughts and feel a lot more positive

If your teen is highly anxious they might need a bit more empathy and guidance

I am anvidual body more than the member of the debath. We lots of friends — we all value each other for so many different reasons. Kindness, respect, trust, humour, compassion — these are the things that really matter



Tip No 7 Motivational language

How to motivate someone who is reluctant to change or paralysed with fear

- Open questions: Skillful questioning style
- Affirmations: To build confidence and motivation
- Reflective listening: Skillful listening style
- Summarizing: Demonstrating you have understood
- OARS helps you row the conversation in the direction you want it to go, rather than drifting along the usual current.

"These are skills all teachers and parents should learn!" "My dad has two ears and one mouth – why doesn't he use them in that ratio?



OARS for the "you are not listening to me"

Open Question

- "Help me understand"
- "What does listening look like?"

Affirmation

- "Thank you for telling me how you are feeling"
- "You were brave to tell me that"
- "I like it when you......"
- "You are determined to"

Reflection

- "So you feel angry at....."
- "What you are telling me is......"

Using Motivational Language

Open questions

I am curious to know how I can help Help me understand what you feel your options are Perhaps I can make a few suggestions that have worked for your older siblings/ cousins

Affirmations

You are so hard working, resourceful, thoughtful, creative, inspiring 2-3

Reflections

I can see you are struggling to start/ finish this It must be tough for you trying to fit everything in You seem overwhelmed, exhausted, distressed

and noticing your feelings

Summaries

Pulling the conversation together and planning the next chat

Boost self

esteem

I am listening

Person

centred



Toolkit of Affirmations

Adaptable	Collaborative	Eloquent	Funny	Patient	Sociable
Amazing	Committed	Empathic	Hard working	Persevering	Sporty
Articulate	Compassionate	Energetic	Incredible	Popular	Strong
Artistic	Conscientious	Enthusiastic	Independent	Quirky	Talented
Attentive	Considerate	Expressive	Intelligent	Reflective	Thoughtful
Brave	Courageous	Fantastic	Kind	Resilient	Trust worthy
Calm	Creative	Fearless	Knowledgeable	Resourceful	Versatile
Capable	Determined	Flexible	Level headed	Responsible	Wild
Caring	Diligent	Fortuitous	Loving	Sensible	Wise
Clever	Driven	Friendly	Passionate	Sensitive	Zany



Daisy is still in a high state of anxiety over her body image concerns

Open Question with Empathy and Curiosity

"Daisy I can see you are currently very anxious about your body and fitting in. We have noticed you spending more and more time in your bedroom and you are not seeing your friends. How can we help?"

Daisy's response

"I don't see the point. I am useless fat ugly disgusting pig and my friends don't want me spoiling their fun. It is too hard. Much better if I just stay in my room. I know I have gained weight and I need to lose it before I can go out of the house"

TASK – Use reflections and affirmations to try to gently encourage Daisy to see the wider perspective.



Reflections

- You are really anxious because you find the changes to your body to be too difficult to manage at the moment
- You are growing and are terrified of gaining too much weight, and feel that you need to lose weight.
- You think it is too hard for you
- You feel that nobody is listening to your point of view.



Affirmations

- Thank you for telling me how you are feeling.
 Some teenagers would find that difficult
- It takes courage to pick yourself up when you are feeling so down. You are such a determined and tenacious young lady. I know you doubt yourself right now. We are here to support you
- You are such a caring daughter and loyal friend. I know your friends are missing you. We miss your company when you are staying in your bedroom
- We believe you can do this with our support



Summary

"Thank you for helping me to understand how you are feeling.

Thank you for trusting me, it was brave of you to open up to me about your body image concerns

We are here to listen and help.

Perhaps we could both have a few days to reflect on everything we have talked about and let's talk about it again at the weekend. How does that sound?

Maybe we can make a plan together. You are not alone "

Step by step plan for Daisy



Goal: go out of the bedroom and then out of the house

- 1. Spend time with family members doing fun activities
- 2. Drive in the car in the dark with dad for a few minutes
- 3. Drive to the beach with dad to watch the sunrise
- 4. Gradually increase the exposure

Goal: go out with friends

- 1. Imagine going out with friends
- 2. One friend come to the house
- 3. Meet one friend for coffee
- 4. Meet two friends for lunch
- 5. Go to the cinema with three friends
- 6. Go out with a group of friends for an hour



Summary

Things to avoid:

Criticism

Hostility

Arguments

Judgement

"I think you should ..."

Instead:

Listen

Reflect back

Show empathy

Notice emotions

Drip feed affirmations

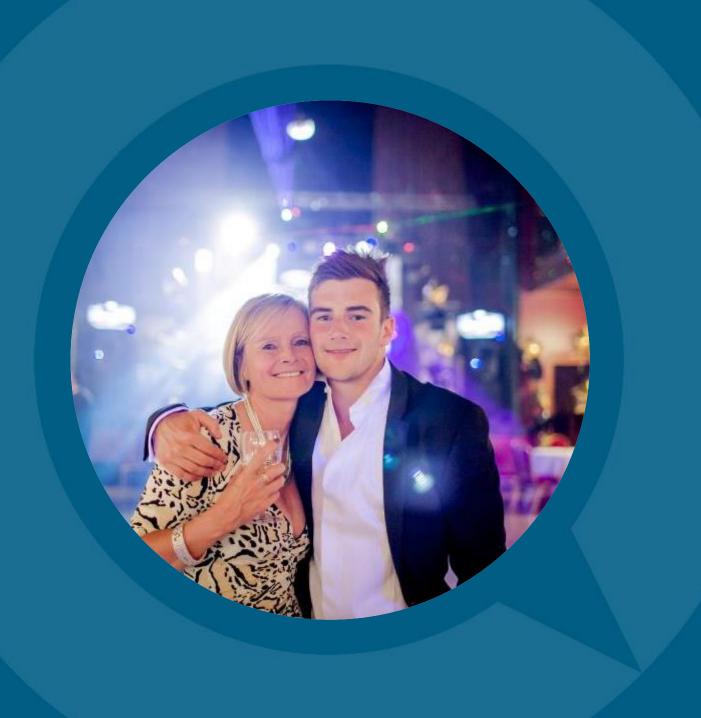
Ask open questions

Be curious not furious

Strike when the iron is cold

Give more attention to the behaviours you like ...

You can still agree boundaries and be firm with negative behaviours







Thank you for listening

The Charlie Waller Trust

First Floor, Rear Office • 32 High Street Thatcham • Berkshire RG19 3JD 01635 869754 • hello@charliewaller.org

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