

# **Primary**

## *National Strategy*

# The importance of emotions in the classroom

# The importance of emotions in the classroom

**This session will take a minimum of 75 minutes**

## Objectives

To provide opportunities for participants:

- to reflect on and deepen their understanding about emotions
- to explore how the emotions of adults in the classroom impact upon children's emotions, behaviour, attendance and learning
- to develop strategies for managing emotions (both our own and those of children) within the learning environment

## Resources

- OHTs 1.1–1.15
- Resource sheets 1.1–1.2
- Handouts 1.1–1.7
- Flipchart and pens

## Linked sessions

This session links to the following general sessions in the Primary National Strategy behaviour and attendance professional development materials:

- *Working with colleagues on behaviour issues* (1732-2005PD5-EN)

It also links to the sessions on:

- *Classroom communication* (1746-2005PD5-EN)
- *Conflict and confrontation* (1748-2005PD5-EN)
- *Positive behaviour and the learning environment* (1738-2005PD5-EN)
- *Understanding behaviour* (1743-2005PD5-EN)
- *Relationships in the classroom* (1744-2005PD5-EN)

You may want to use this session if school self-evaluation, using the Primary National Strategy *Initial review* or *In-depth audits* (1732-2005CDO-EN), has shown that relevant aspects of whole-school ethos or teaching and learning are areas the school wants to address. Many schools will want also to make links to their work on the National Healthy School Standard, and to the NHSS briefing *Promoting emotional health and wellbeing through the National Healthy School Standard* (DfES, DoH 2004).

Schools using the materials *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* (DfES 0110-2005) will be able to make links between this session and the work that staff may be doing through the Purple set materials and the work that children undertake in Theme 2 *Getting on and falling out* and Theme 4 *Going for goals*.

If you are using this session with a whole-school staff group, it will be important to be aware of linked materials that some colleagues may have used, for example, *Behaviour in the classroom: a course for newly qualified teachers* (DfES 0030-2004), *Teaching assistant file: induction training for teaching assistants in primary schools* (DfES 0460-2003) and *Self-study materials for supply teachers* (DfES 0260/2002).

## Session outline

Introduction	5 minutes
Exploring why it is important to understand emotions in the classroom	35 minutes
Four key concepts and ideas about emotions	15 minutes
Implications for school and classroom planning	15 minutes
Conclusion	5 minutes

## Information for presenters

The session is based on the following underlying principles.

- Behaviour is contextual and interactive. The choices adults make in responding to children's behaviour are crucial in influencing the choices children make about how they will behave. The more adults can be aware of and manage their own emotional responses to inappropriate behaviour, the more likely they are to be able to maintain a calm classroom.
- Children's behaviour is underpinned by the stage they have reached in social and emotional development, the level of skills they have in this area, and their emotional well-being, in interaction with the social, emotional and physical environment.
- We cannot assume that children already have the skills they need in order to manage their emotions and meet our expectations about their behaviour. We need to take active steps to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills.
- Positive recognition and reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and attendance are likely to elicit continued positive behaviour and attendance. We need to have clear, robust systems of positive recognition established in our classrooms.
- Positive relationships with children are key to positive behaviour and regular attendance.
- Participants may well already have some or all of the knowledge and/or skills to be covered in this session and we need to draw on their experience.

Some of these principles will be explored and developed in this session. Others relate to the linked sessions. It will be important for you to be aware of these principles and you may want to share them with the group using OHT 1.2.

## Introduction

5 minutes

Start by showing **OHTs 1.1** and **1.2**, sharing with the group the objectives of the session and the principles which underpin it.

### OHT 1.1

#### Objectives

To provide opportunities:

- to reflect and deepen understanding about emotions
- to explore how the emotions of adults in the classroom impact upon children's emotions, behaviour, attendance and learning
- to develop strategies for managing emotions (both our own and those of children) within the learning environment

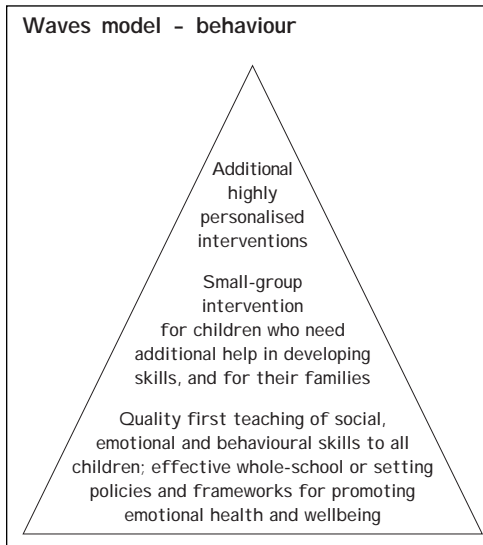
### OHT 1.2

#### Principles

- The more adults can be aware of and manage their own emotional responses to inappropriate behaviour, the more likely they are to be able to maintain a calm classroom
- Children's behaviour is underpinned by the stage they have reached in social and emotional development, the level of skills they have in this area, and their emotional well-being, in interaction with the social, emotional and physical environment
- There is a need to take active steps to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills
- Positive relationships with children are the key to positive behaviour and regular attendance
- We need in these sessions to draw on each other's experience

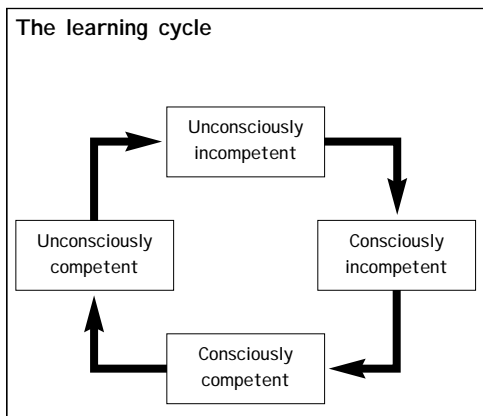
Show **OHT 1.3** and explain how the session relates to Wave 1 in this model of waves of intervention, in that it is designed to support teachers and other adults when working with all children. However, an understanding of emotions and their impact is also important when running small groups with children and working with individuals.

OHT 1.3



Emphasise that any materials for continuing professional development are designed to encourage reflection. A way of doing this is to consider the learning cycle, as shown on **OHT 1.4**.

OHT 1.4



When we start a new skill, such as teaching, we are often unaware of what we do not know – we might be described as unconsciously incompetent. This changes when we reflect upon what we are trying to do and become aware that the skill is difficult; we know what we would like to be able to do but not how to do it – we might describe this as consciously incompetent. When we learn what we need to do and how to do it we become consciously competent. When skilled and experienced we are able to carry out the skill automatically – we become unconsciously competent. This allows us to respond appropriately, quickly and effectively in the classroom. However, unless we have time to reflect we might slip into the unconsciously incompetent state as the context changes. Our skills can change without our realising it and the world in which we work may no longer be as well matched to our skills.

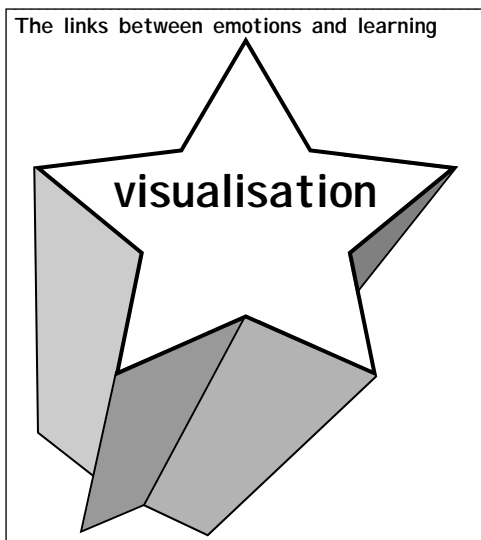
The learning cycle allows us to consider why professional development activities might be useful. Their purpose is not so much in helping us to learn new skills but in providing a framework to allow us to reflect on and evaluate the ways in which we currently behave in the classroom.

## Exploring why it is important to understand emotions in the classroom 35 minutes



### Activity 1.1: The links between emotions and learning (10 minutes)

OHT 1.5



Show **OHT 1.5**. The first activity is a visualisation (see **resource sheet 1.1**) designed to encourage initial reflection at the start of the learning cycle. It provides opportunities for participants to reflect upon their own experiences and draw from these during the session.

## Resource sheet 1.1

**Resource sheet 1.1**

**Visualisation**

Imagine you are standing outside your house looking down the road. You notice a wall you haven't seen before. In the wall there is a door. As you walk towards it you feel that you are going back in time and when you open the door in the wall you look through and you see your old school. You are standing just outside. Open the door and walk in. You walk down the corridor and smell all the familiar smells and see the sights and sounds.

You come to a classroom. When you open the door you see a lesson. It is the subject you liked least or at which you were least successful when you were at school. Look round the room. Look at the teacher. What is he or she doing? Look at the children. You notice your young self sitting in the class. What are you doing? What are you thinking? How do you feel?

*Pause*

You leave the room and are in the corridor once more. Walk along until you stand outside another classroom. Open the door and look in at the subject you liked most or at which you were most successful. Look round the room. Look at the teacher. What is he or she doing? Look at the children. You notice your young self sitting in the class. What are you doing? What are you thinking? How do you feel?

*Pause*

It is now time to go. Leave the classroom and walk down the corridor and out of the school. You find the door in the wall and when you step through you are back in this room. Look around and take in the sights and sounds of the room. Stretch if you wish and spend a little time thinking about what you experienced. You might like to talk to the person sitting next to you.

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*Note:* As a presenter, if you haven't used this technique before, you might want to practise reading the visualisation aloud so that you feel confident. In your reading you want to create a calm, quiet atmosphere. Where indicated you should pause to allow the participants to reflect.

Some participants may not be comfortable with the idea of visualisation and it is important to make clear that they can undertake reflection on their memories of school in whatever way matches their own particular learning style.

You may need to be prepared, as a presenter, for potentially strong emotional responses to the memories this activity may evoke – both excitement about positive experiences, and anger or upset about negative ones.

When you have finished, allow a little time for participants to exchange ideas or simply to reflect upon their experiences.

As a whole group you might ask for volunteers to share their experience and reflect upon the following questions.

- What were the emotions involved in your memories?
- Were there any key factors that made the two experiences different?

*Key point:* There is a strong emotional and social element to effective learning.

You may also want to ask participants to share any experiences they have had of using visualisation as a learning tool in their classrooms, and point them to relevant materials if they would like to develop their use of the technique.





## Activity 1.2: The impact of feelings on behaviour

(15 minutes)

OHT 1.6

### Thinking about our feelings

In pairs:

- think of a time when you have believed you weren't valued and didn't belong
- talk about how you felt at that time

In squares (two pairs):

- write words in the centre of the page to describe your feelings
- illustrate the way you behave when you have those feelings

Show **OHT 1.6**. This activity is designed to encourage participants to:

- reflect upon how feelings impact on behaviour and learning;
- consider a time when a social situation elicited strong feelings.

*Note:* Each group will need flipchart paper and pens for their drawings.

When the activity is completed suggest that each group might like to consider whether some of the behaviours that were identified are similar to the worrying behaviour demonstrated by some learners in the classroom, or might link to poor attendance. Discussion might focus on whether understanding how children may be feeling might influence our response to behaviours we consider 'unacceptable'.

*Key point:* Children's behaviour is usually driven by how they feel about themselves or the social situation in which they find themselves in the classroom.



## Activity 1.3: The emotional response to threat

(10 minutes)

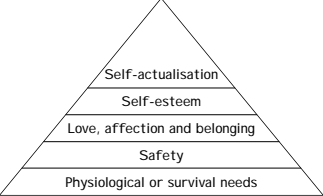
Behaviours that seem inappropriate often occur when the child feels threatened – when their basic needs are not being met. In Activity 1.2, the threat related to the need to belong and feel valued.

*Note:* Remind participants here of children's basic needs, set out on **handout 1.1**, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and discussed in the *Positive behaviour and the learning environment* session from the Primary National Strategy behaviour and attendance professional development materials.

## Handout 1.1

Handout 1.1

Maslow's hierarchy of needs



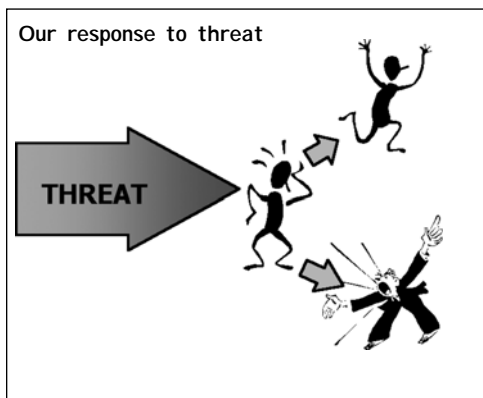
The pyramid is divided into five horizontal levels. From top to bottom, they are: Self-actualisation, Self-esteem, Love, affection and belonging, Safety, and Physiological or survival needs.

Maslow (1970) identified a hierarchy of individual needs which range from basic physiological needs (for food and shelter) through love, affection and belonging to needs which are core to how the individual sees himself/herself, namely self-esteem and self-actualisation. As educators we are trying to help children move towards self-actualisation, when they become self-motivated in all aspects of their lives. However, at all times and in all contexts, we all require the other needs to be satisfied. Once we have basic survival needs satisfied, then further needs can be satisfied only through the interaction of the individual with others. It is through our relationships with others that we derive our level of self-esteem.

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Use **OHT 1.7** to expand on the idea of threat, and our response to it.

## OHT 1.7



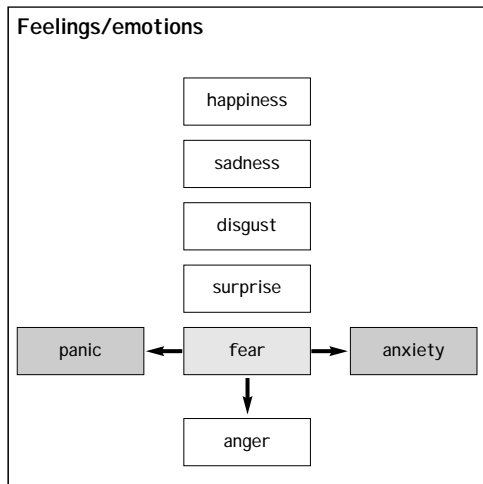
Explain that threats might be real and rational or, for some children, they might appear irrational, but either way the response is likely to fall into two main categories – fight (this might be physical or verbal aggression) or flight (this might be physical running away or emotional running away, for example when a child emotionally 'shuts down'). Each of these response types will have associated strong emotions, for example anger, fear or worry, and may lead to behaviour that gets in the way of learning.

Ask participants in pairs to consider the threats that children might experience in the classroom. You might want them to refer specifically to handout 1.1, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, to prompt their thinking. Collate a list on the flipchart, perhaps under the headings 'threats relating to learning', 'threats relating to relationships', 'threats relating to self'.

## Four key concepts and ideas about emotions 15 minutes

Explain that there are many ways of categorising our feelings, but it has been suggested that there are in fact just five core emotions and many secondary and complex emotions. Show **OHT 1.8**.

### OHT 1.8



One framework would suggest that anger is sometimes a secondary emotion to fear, as are anxiety or panic. You might like to explore this by asking participants to recall a situation from their life outside school, when they were very angry with a partner or a child – for example, for being late home. What was the feeling **before** the anger? It is likely to have been fear that something might have happened to them.

Encourage participants to look at the list of threats they generated in the previous activity and to consider, in relation to the children with whom they work:

- what feelings they might elicit;
- what behaviour might result;
- what might be the effect on attendance and learning.

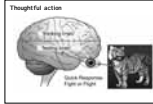
Encourage some discussion about how, as adults in the classroom, we can minimise the threats that children perceive, so as to maximise their learning.

Explain that you are now going to present four key ideas about emotions that might help us to understand what is happening in the classroom. The four key ideas are summarised on **handout 1.2**.

Handout 1.2

Four key ideas about emotions

1. The first idea is about differential response rates



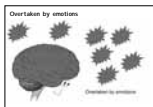
Imagine you see a dangerous animal. You will see it and respond with your 'emotional' brain very quickly. Your body prepares to respond by preparing for either fight or flight – your heart rate will quicken, your blood pressure will rise and your muscles tense. At a slower pace your 'thinking brain' might register that this is in fact a life-sized toy and you are not in any danger at all. But your body is ready and you might have already responded. This would be important if there is real danger.

Young children and those with poorly developed skills of emotional management will respond to that first 'emotional' interpretation.

*Key point:* Before responding in many situations we need to learn to stop and think.

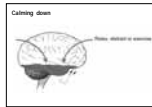
2. The second idea is about the build-up of emotional arousal

Emotion arousal can build up over time, rendering someone ready to 'explode' with aggression or another strong emotional reaction.



This can be prevented if we use strategies to help us calm down.

Handout 1.2 page 2 of 3



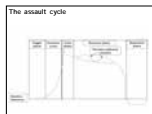
Different strategies are effective for different people but the most effective are likely to be to relax, to find a distraction or to exercise.

3. The third key idea is about the strength of emotional memory

If something that elicits a strong emotion happens to us we not only have a memory of what happens but also of the very strong emotions that were elicited. The emotional memory is very long-lasting. It can be linked to a smell, a sound or a visual stimulus that might have been experienced at the same time but be unrelated to the incident itself. If we subsequently see, hear or smell something that was present when we were once very scared, without even realising it we may again feel an element of that fear.

For example, if a child has had a bad experience when an older child frightened them near the school toilets, they might be scared whenever they go near the toilets. They might also extend that fear to any toilets or even to anywhere they smell the disinfectant that the school uses. They might be unaware of their reaction and it might take very little to prompt them into an inappropriate response. This is significant in understanding the behaviour of children and their parents or carers.

4. The fourth and final idea is that of the assault cycle



The concept of the assault cycle was devised following investigations into why police officers were frequently assaulted following an arrest. It helps us understand why small incidents of misbehaviour can escalate so easily.

Handout 1.2 page 3 of 3

Strong emotions usually have a trigger. For example, if a child is teased or called a name in the classroom, their reaction is usually immediate and can be represented by the first two sections of the graph – the rapid build-up of anger. They might respond by hitting out at the child responsible. The teacher intervenes and takes the child out of the classroom, looks him in the eye and warns him that she will tell his parents. Quite uncharacteristically, the child might then hit out at the teacher. This is a secondary incident and relates to the 'possible additional assaults' stage on the graph. It happens because of the length of time it takes for someone to start to calm down.

The time taken to calm down varies with the context, the level of arousal and the individual but might typically be at least 45 minutes. In extreme circumstances, it can be up to 24 hours. During that time there is heightened risk of further incidents where we are led by our emotions and might interpret things negatively.

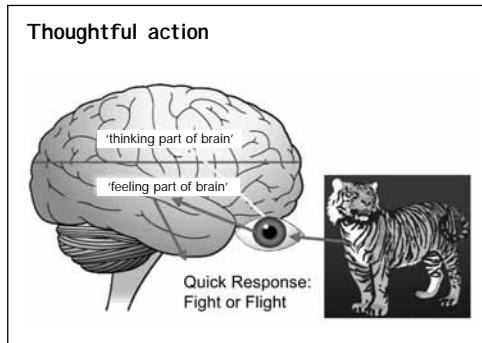
When emotions start to calm this can be quite rapid and is often followed by a short period of feeling low or depressed.

The time that it takes for some children to calm down is significant for school policy and practice.

## 1. The first idea is about differential response rates

This can be illustrated by **OHT 1.9** and the example that follows.

### OHT 1.9



Imagine you see a dangerous animal. You will see it and respond with your 'emotional' brain very quickly. Your body prepares to respond by preparing for either fight or flight – your heart rate will quicken, your blood pressure will rise and your muscles tense. At a slower pace your 'thinking brain' might register that this is in fact a life-sized toy and you are not in any danger at all. But your body is ready and you might have already responded. This would be important if there is real danger.

Young children and those with poorly developed skills of emotional management will respond to that first 'emotional' interpretation. Help the group to relate this to the children they work with by asking for examples of situations in the classroom when a child appears to have responded before they know the facts or on very little evidence.

*Key point:* Before responding in many situations we need to learn to stop and think.

Ask participants what strategies they use to help themselves, as adults, to stop and think before responding. Do they also have ways of helping the children they work with to respond thoughtfully rather than just with their 'emotional brain'?

## 2. The second idea is about the build-up of emotional arousal

Emotion arousal can build up over time, rendering someone ready to 'explode' with aggression or another strong emotional reaction. This can be illustrated by the story of Alfie (**resource sheet 1.2**).

## Resource sheet 1.2

**Resource sheet 1.2**

**Alfie's story**

Imagine that this is Alfie's brain – for the sake of this presentation we might think of it as having a thinking and an emotional part.

Alfie is fast asleep in bed. He is cosy and warm and snuggled deep into his duvet. At 8.00 his mum shouts up and says, 'Time to get up, Alfie. I've got to get to work.'

But Alfie just rolls over and continues to sleep. The next thing he knows is when his duvet is being pulled from the bed and his sister is laughing at him, saying he will be late for school. Alfie's emotional level starts to rise.

When Alfie goes downstairs his sister is just about to set off for school but before she goes she picks up Alfie's homework and says, 'This is rubbish, you're thick.'

Alfie's emotions are rising still further and do so even more as he goes to the shed and finds his bike has a puncture. Now he will be too late to meet his friends before school.

Alfie runs to school and when he gets there he sees his friends laughing at the other side of the playground. He thinks they see him but they continue to chat and laugh. He feels lonely and left out.

Just at that moment a child much smaller than he is comes running by and bumps into Alfie. This is too much. Alfie thinks this is on purpose and hits out.

As Alfie hits out the headteacher comes into the playground. He's also had a bad start to the day, with an angry parent waiting to see him when he arrived, and a difficult discussion with a member of staff ...

*As you read the story you should indicate how the emotional level is rising on the PowerPoint slide, or, if you are using an OHT, you might colour in the picture of Alfie's brain as you talk.*

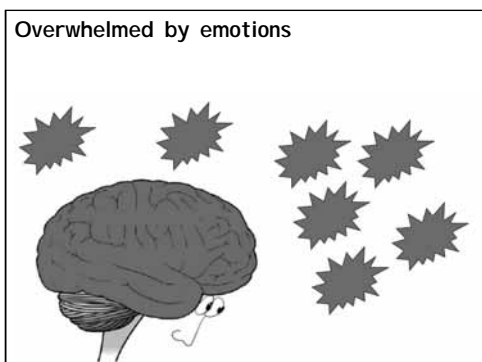
Note: Participants may have used similar stories with the children they teach, to help the children develop their understanding of emotions. You may want to invite discussion about how the children responded. It might be useful to explore any tools that participants use so that children can reflect on the intensity and build-up of feelings: a 'feelings tree' to which they (and the teacher) attach different-coloured leaves to show how they are feeling, or the emotional barometer from the DfES materials: Developing children's social, emotional and behavioural skills: a whole-curriculum approach (handout 1.3).

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The facilitator should read the story out loud and reflect that it didn't take much for Alfie to respond aggressively. His emotional arousal was high because of a build-up of experiences over the morning. Similarly, the headteacher had had a bad start to the day too.

Show **OHT 1.10** which illustrates the build-up of emotional arousal that both Alfie and the headteacher experienced.

## OHT 1.10

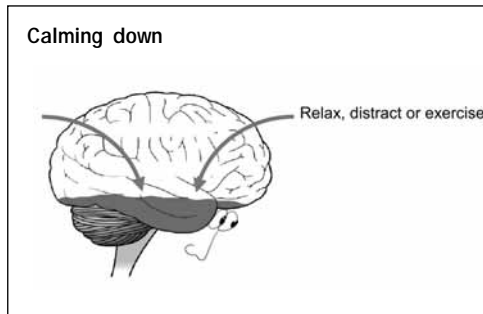


Now ask participants, working in pairs, to think about a recent situation relating to a child they work with, where there was a similar chain of events. What might have 'set the child off'? What happened? How might things have gone differently?

Return to the story of Alfie. What could Alfie have done to make things turn out better?

Show **OHT 1.11** and remind participants of the point where the smaller child accidentally bumps into Alfie.

OHT 1.11



Alfie needs to recognise that he is getting angry. He then needs a strategy to help him calm down. Different strategies are effective for different people but the most effective are likely to be to relax, to find a distraction or to exercise.

**3. The third key idea is about the strength of emotional memory**

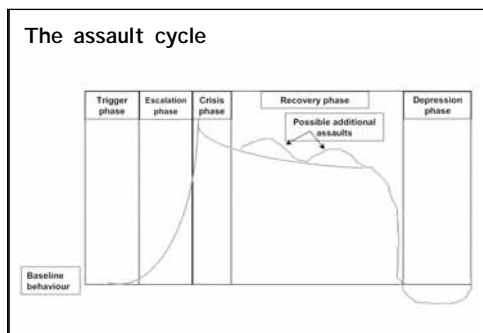
If something that elicits a strong emotion happens to us we not only have a memory of what happens but also of the very strong emotions that were elicited. The emotional memory is very long-lasting. It can be linked to a smell, a sound or a visual stimulus that might have been experienced at the same time but be unrelated to the incident itself. If we subsequently see, hear or smell something that was present when we were once very scared, without even realising it we may again feel an element of that fear.

For example, if Alfie had a bad experience when an older child frightened him near the school toilets, he might be scared whenever he goes near the toilets. He might also extend that fear to any toilets or even to anywhere he smells the disinfectant that the school uses. He might be unaware of his reaction and it might take very little to prompt him into an inappropriate response. This is significant in understanding the behaviour of children and their parents or carers.

**4. The fourth and final idea is that of the assault cycle**

Show OHT 1.12.

OHT 1.12



The concept of the assault cycle was devised following investigations into why police officers were assaulted so frequently following an arrest. It helps us understand why small incidents of misbehaviour can escalate so easily.

Strong emotions usually have a trigger. Alfie might find himself called 'stupid' by another child in the classroom. His reaction would be almost immediate and can be represented by the first two sections of the graph. He might respond by hitting out at the child responsible. The teacher intervenes. She takes Alfie out of the classroom, looks him in the eye and warns him that she will tell his parents. Quite uncharacteristically, Alfie might hit out at his teacher. This is a secondary incident and relates to the 'possible additional assaults' stage on the graph. It happens because of the length of time it takes for someone to start to calm down. The time taken to calm down varies with the context, the level of arousal and the individual but might typically be at least 45 minutes. In extreme circumstances, it can be up to 24 hours. During that time there is a heightened risk of further incidents where we are led by our emotions and might interpret things negatively. When emotions start to calm this can be quite rapid and is often followed by a short period of feeling low or depressed.

The time that it takes for some children to calm down is significant for school policy and practice.



### Activity 1.4: Sam's story

(5 minutes)

Give out **handout 1.4**. Ask participants to read the story and then discuss what might be happening for Sam and how she might feel, using the ideas explored in the previous sequence of slides.

#### Handout 1.4

**Handout 1.4**

**Sam's story**

Sam had a bad morning. She had a row with her mother again. Her mother said that if things didn't get any better she'd get Marian to come to see her. Marian was the social worker and Sam knew what that meant. Last time things were bad she had gone to live in a foster family. They were OK but Sam had missed her mum and brothers terribly.

Sam set off for school. She was keen to do well but didn't find work easy. When she got there she chatted with her friends about what they had been doing the night before. She almost forgot about the argument with her mum until it was literacy. She had to move classes and none of her friends were in the group with her. She knew it was because she found the work hard.

She sat down at the nearest table and started to think. She thought about the foster family and how nice they were to start with. That was until she started to have rows with their son. She could remember lying in bed wanting her mum so much.

It took a while for her to realise that the teacher was talking to her. He might have been talking to her for a while but she hadn't heard. He was walking towards her and now he was shouting at her and wagging his finger at her, just like her mum did. He was saying how there would be trouble if she didn't move.

Before she had even thought about it she was standing up. There was silence all around her and everyone was looking at her. Then she heard herself saying, 'F--- off, just leave me alone'. She knocked the pencil-pot off the desk as she stormed out.

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## Implications for school and classroom planning

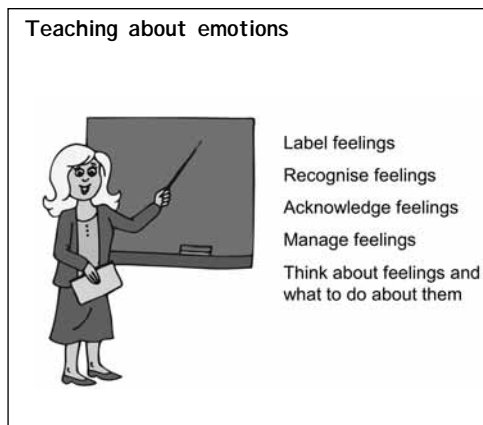
15 minutes

Ask participants for their ideas on what teachers and other adults could realistically do to help Sam and children like her. Draw out from the group the point that it is important to teach children about their emotions and how to manage them. This teaching might include:

- a vocabulary to describe feelings;
- how to recognise feelings in others and ourselves;
- that all feelings are all acceptable and unavoidable – even anger; it is behaviour that may or may not be acceptable, rather than the feelings that underlie it;
- that feelings need to be accepted and not denied; responses like ‘cheer up’ or ‘don’t worry’ are rarely helpful;
- how to acknowledge feelings – to recognise and label our feelings and to be able to say ‘I feel ...’;
- how to manage feelings – to identify ways of calming down if necessary, and to know how to access and maintain positive emotional states;
- a range of strategies to think about our feelings and express them appropriately.

Show **OHT 1.13**.

### OHT 1.13

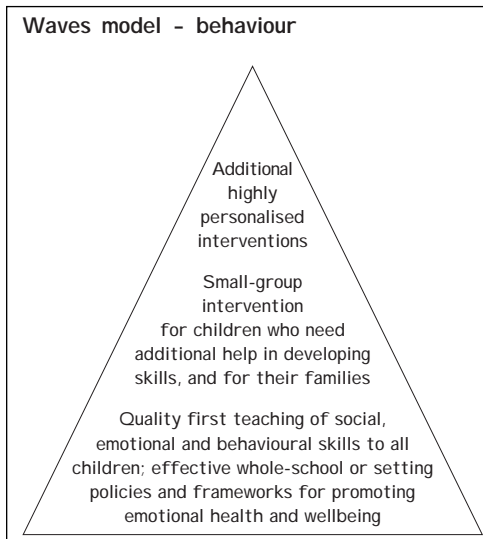


Take some quick ideas from the group about ways in which their current teaching covers these points – for example through circle time, drama, work in literacy or the humanities, teaching children the skills of peer mediation, and so on.

Participants who are using the DfES curriculum materials *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* (DfES 0110-2005) will be able to recognise that the materials are explicitly designed to help children recognise and label their feelings, and those of others, and learn how to manage them.

Over and above teaching these skills to all children, we might want to do some additional work with individuals or groups. Show OHT 1.3 again and remind participants of the Waves model introduced at the beginning of the session.

OHT 1.3



A school that really wants to address the issues raised so far in the session might try to provide support at varying levels of intensity at all three waves.

**Wave 1**

Would involve a school planning to create a socially and emotionally safe environment and providing opportunities for children to learn social and emotional skills.

**Wave 2**

Would involve providing small-group help for children with specific difficulties. This might be for children whose difficulties are short-term (for example, children going through particularly difficult life events such as bereavement, parental separation or divorce, and so on) or for children who are considered emotionally more vulnerable – for example, anger management groups, assertiveness groups, nurture groups. There are many publications that provide advice and support for this type of work.

**Wave 3**

Would involve providing individual work or support for a few children who need more intensive help with managing their feelings.



## Activity 1.5: Managing our own feelings

(10 minutes)

Give out **handout 1.5** and use **OHT 1.14** to explain the task.

### OHT 1.14

#### Peter

In pairs:

- discuss how Peter (the teacher) might feel at different points in the story
- identify five classroom-based strategies that Peter could plan to ensure that a similar incident does not occur again if he has a bad morning

### Handout 1.5

**Handout 1.5**

**Peter's story**

Peter had a bad morning. His five-year-old son had played up really badly. He often wondered how it was that he had few difficulties controlling a class of 30 Year 4 pupils when he found it so hard to get his son to hurry up and get ready for school in the mornings. When he eventually got his son in the car and turned the ignition on it had spluttered and refused to start. It took him about half an hour messing around under the bonnet before they eventually set off. During the entire journey his son moaned about having to go to the childminder's after school.

Things didn't get much better once Peter got to school. It had been raining in the night and his classroom roof had sprung a leak. There was water all over his desk. Some of the children's work had been ruined. He knew this would get the day off to a bad start. After registration he had the weaker literacy group. They were a real handful. He had hoped to have everything ready for the group but now this wasn't possible.

The class came in for the literacy group. He felt poorly prepared and had the beginning of a headache. He explained about the leak but some of the children were very upset.

He asked the class to get into their small groups. After the usual disturbance, they were ready to start. Then he noticed Sam. She was sitting on an empty table and had quite obviously not bothered to move.

He walked towards Sam. She was looking at him with a blank stare and seemed to be saying 'You can't make me move.' Before he had even thought about what to do he had launched in and heard himself saying 'Get into your group or you'll be sorry.' He was shouting, too.

Sam wasn't usually too much of a problem. She didn't always concentrate in class but she usually did what she was told with a little extra prompting. But today she got up, swore at him, threw the pencil-pot on the floor and stormed out.

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Participants will soon realise that the handout tells Sam's story from the teacher's perspective. It is important as it tries to emphasise that teachers can be led by their emotions too.

End this activity by giving out **handout 1.6**, which draws together ideas from past groups who have completed the task in activity 1.5.

## Handout 1.6

**Handout 1.6**

**Ideas sheet**

**Emotions in the classroom**

**To help you start the lesson calmly**

1. Be alert to the signs of tension and stress – then do one of the following.
  - Take a few deep, calm breaths counting to three as you breathe in. Hold it for a count of three and then breathe out for three. Do this several times.
  - Tighten and then relax the muscles in your body in sequence.
  - Identify a place where you feel very calm and relaxed. Visualise it.
  - Say positive things to yourself in your head.
  - Think of your own relaxation technique and practise it.
2. Have available some beginning activities that allow the time for you to get yourself organised. For example, you might encourage children to keep a mind-map of the topic they have been learning about. The first activity might be for them to add to the mind-map, or to review what they did last time by talking to a partner.
3. Consider the routines at the beginning of the lesson – for example, children might have some individual activity they must do to start the lesson. Provide opportunities for younger learners to practise the routine.
4. Have a routine phrase or expression to encourage children to prepare for learning. With younger children this might be some physical activity.
5. Have a planned script for dealing with a child who is not ready to start the lesson. Use the least intrusive strategy first, from this list:
  - Whole-class reminder or proximal praise (praising a child who **has** shown they are ready).
  - Starting the lesson by tactically ignoring one learner and settling the rest of the class to work before talking privately to them.
  - Using a script that involves non-confrontational language and offers a choice – ‘Remember our rule...: “You can sit here next to me or ...”. Assume that the child is going to make a sensible choice by turning away and resuming the lesson. Have this conversation individually with the child if possible.

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**Handout 1.6** page 2 of 2

**Dealing with minor misbehaviour in class**

1. Do not assume the child is being deliberately provocative.
2. Focus the child on the work or try to engage the child in his/her learning.
3. Use the language of choice.
4. Imagine scenarios and practise using appropriate positive language, for example: ‘Concentrate on your work’ rather than ‘Stop messing around’.
5. Use the least intrusive consequence first.
6. If a child argues with you or insists the consequence is not fair then suggest that you will listen to his/her point at the end of the lesson but that you must get on with teaching now.
7. If a number of members of the class are feeling restless, change the activity. Have a number of strategies available. This might be just a short break or an opportunity to review how far they have got with a partner. If possible, provide an opportunity to move around. Use music to time particular activities. When the music stops the children should be ready for learning.

**Helping you to stop and think before acting**

1. Identify your own emotional triggers.
2. Identify some strategies to help you calm down – depending on the situation you might use some of those listed in the first section on this sheet.
3. Train yourself to use a distraction activity. This might be to move some equipment, tidy your papers, walk to a particular spot in the classroom and back, and so on. This provides you with a greater chance to react with your thinking brain.
4. Consider having a script in response to behaviours that tend to wind you up.
5. Check your body language – relax your body.

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## Conclusion

5 minutes

Use **OHT 1.15** to summarise key points from the session.

### OHT 1.15

#### We have covered:

- the importance of emotions in the classroom and their links with learning, behaviour and attendance
- four key concepts about emotions
- some ways of helping children to manage their emotions effectively, and of managing our own

The key points covered have been:

- the importance of emotions in the classroom, and their links with learning, behaviour and attendance;
- four key concepts about emotions: differential response rates from the ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’ brain, the build-up of emotional arousal, the strength of emotional memory, the assault cycle;
- some ways of helping children to manage their emotions effectively, and some ways of managing our own.

Finally, ask participants to reflect on the session. They could take it in turns to share with a partner their thoughts on their personal learning. You might want to collect some of these key learning points and write them down the left-hand side of a flipchart or whiteboard. Down the right-hand side record ideas for possible actions to apply what has been learned.

Suggest that participants record key points for action, now or later, on **handout 1.7**.

Handout **1.7**

**Handout 1.7**

**Key points for action from this session**

What do I want to do in my classroom in order to develop my practice?

- 
- 
- 

How will I do this?

- 
- 
- 

What is my timescale for this to happen?

- 
- 
- 

How will I know I have been successful?

- 
- 
- 

Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

- 
- 
- 

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Primary National Strategy      **59**

## Post-session activities

If you are using this session in school with all staff, identify with the group some shared follow-up tasks or activities. Some suggestions are given below. Make time, when you next meet to focus as a staff on promoting positive behaviour, for people to talk about the activities they undertook and what they learned.

Keep a diary in the classroom and jot down any times when you feel anxious, angry or fearful. Make sure you record the time, situation and context. Use this diary either by yourself or with a colleague to reflect on and problem-solve how you might manage these situations. For example, if the early morning or after breaktime often causes stress you might like to reconsider how you organise that part of the day. You might like to have some activities ready for the class so you can work with individuals. You might set the children to mind-map what they learned last time in preparation for new learning, or you might like to run a quick 'check-in' so children can express how they are feeling and put those feelings aside, if appropriate, so as to prepare for learning.

With your class you might design a way children can express their feelings. For example, a feelings tree where children can hang a happy, sad, scared or angry face to show how they are feeling, or an emotional barometer (see **handout 1.3**) – a circle with a pointer that is turned to show the intensity of their feelings, for example, from happy to very angry. Monitor the impact of using prompts like these on children's behaviour for learning, and on your own.

Look out for children who are obviously upset or angry and help them to identify and express the way they are feeling without imposing what you think. You might say: 'I guess you are feeling ... Would you like to talk about it?' How well does this form of words work for you and for the children? Is there a form that works better?

Rearrange your classroom so that there is a quiet place for children to go when they are feeling angry, upset or anxious. Monitor the use of the quiet area and the effects on learning.





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## Objectives

To provide opportunities:

- to reflect and deepen understanding about emotions
- to explore how the emotions of adults in the classroom impact upon children's emotions, behaviour, attendance and learning
- to develop strategies for managing emotions (both our own and those of children) within the learning environment

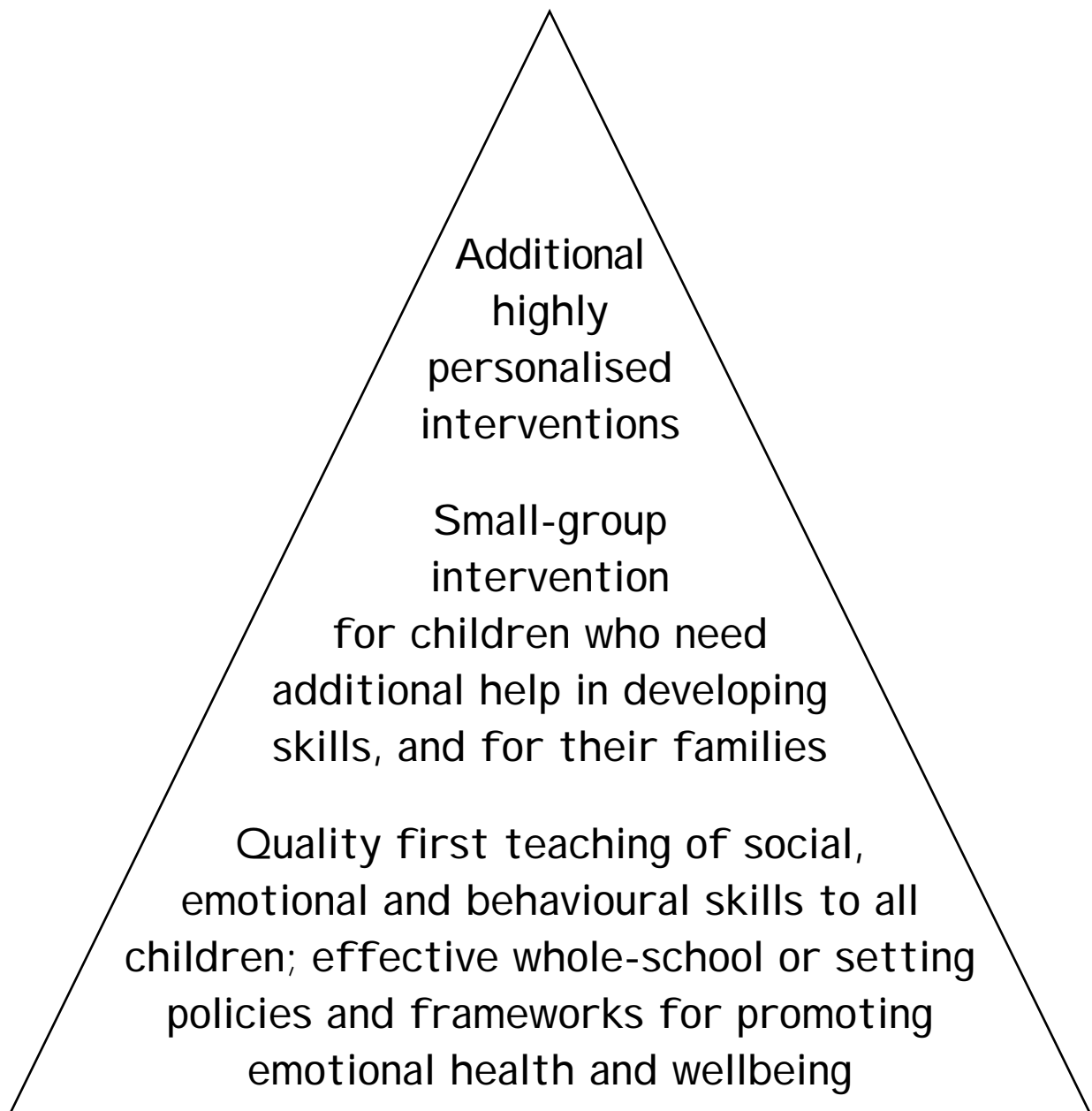


## Principles

- The more adults can be aware of and manage their own emotional responses to inappropriate behaviour, the more likely they are to be able to maintain a calm classroom
  - Children's behaviour is underpinned by the stage they have reached in social and emotional development, the level of skills they have in this area, and their emotional well-being, in interaction with the social, emotional and physical environment
  - There is a need to take active steps to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills
  - Positive relationships with children are the key to positive behaviour and regular attendance
  - We need in these sessions to draw on each other's experience
-

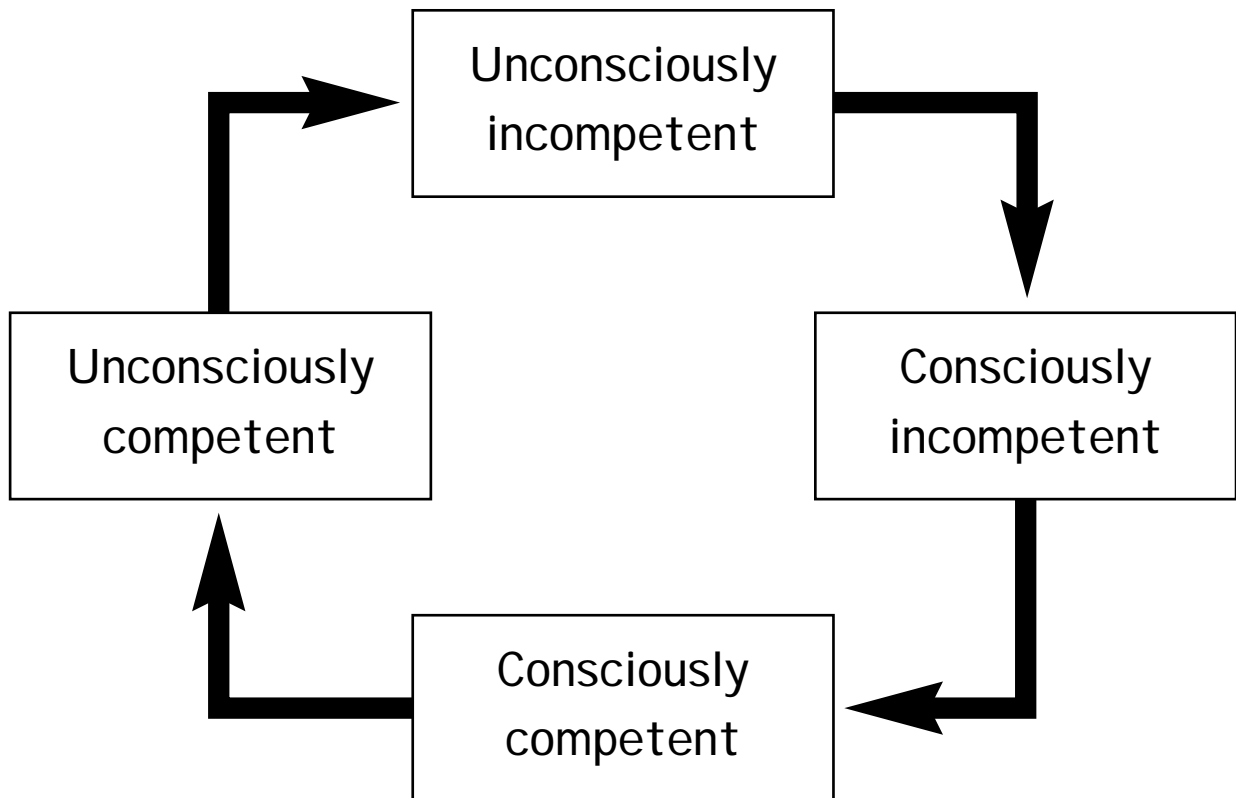
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## Waves model - behaviour



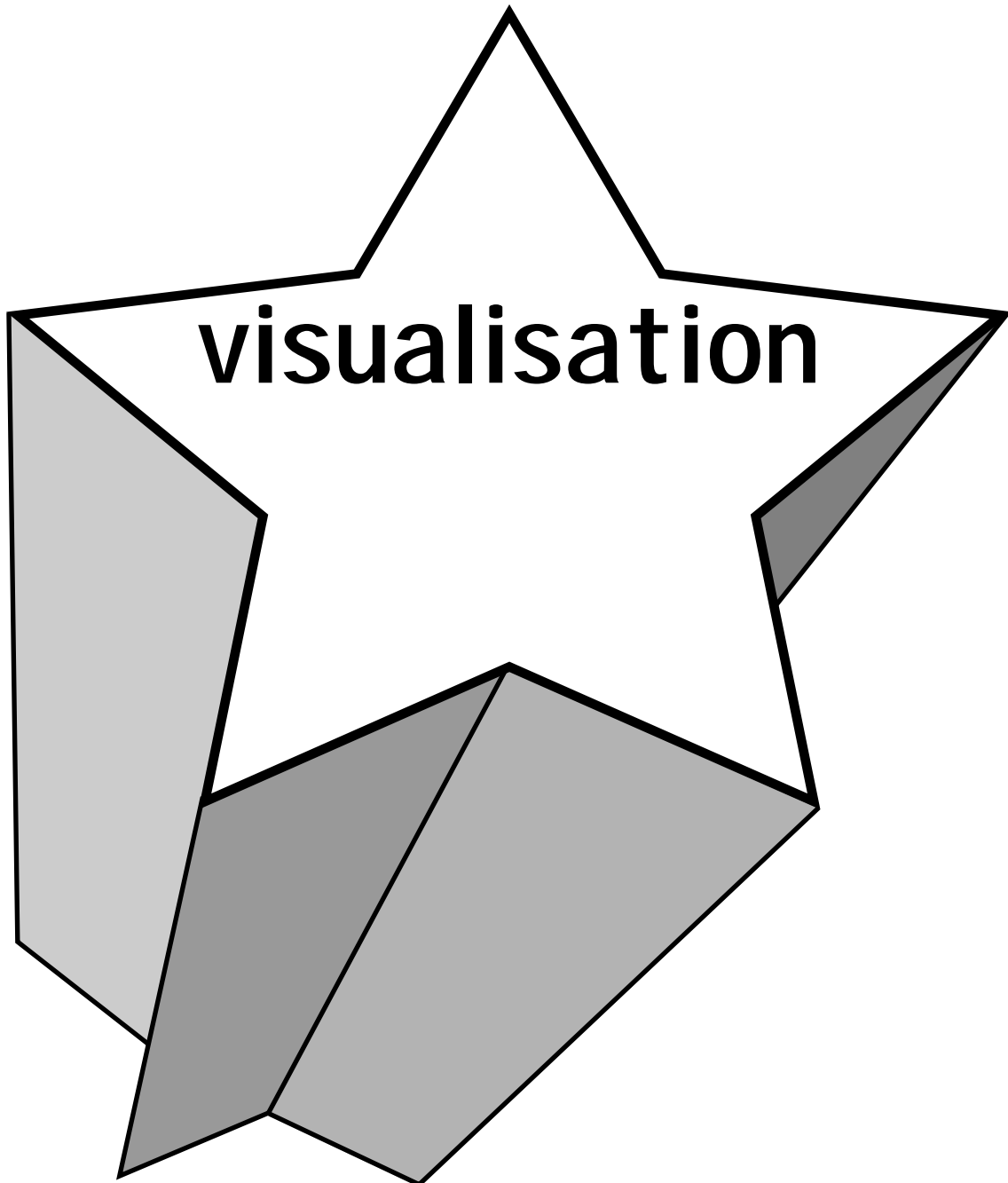
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## The learning cycle



.....

## The links between emotions and learning



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## Thinking about our feelings

In pairs:

- think of a time when you have believed you weren't valued and didn't belong
- talk about how you felt at that time

In squares (two pairs):

- write words in the centre of the page to describe your feelings
- illustrate the way you behave when you have those feelings

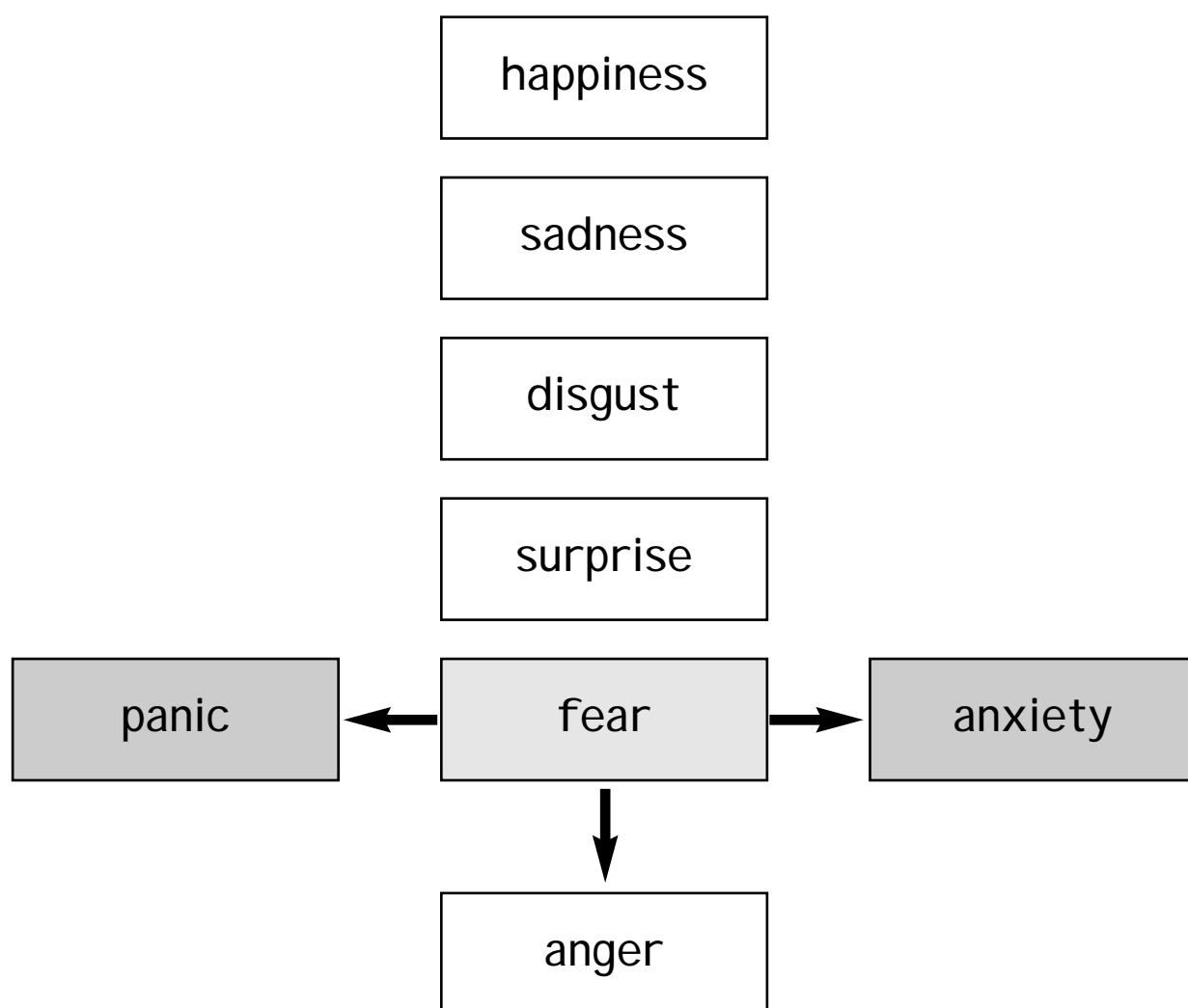
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## Our response to threat



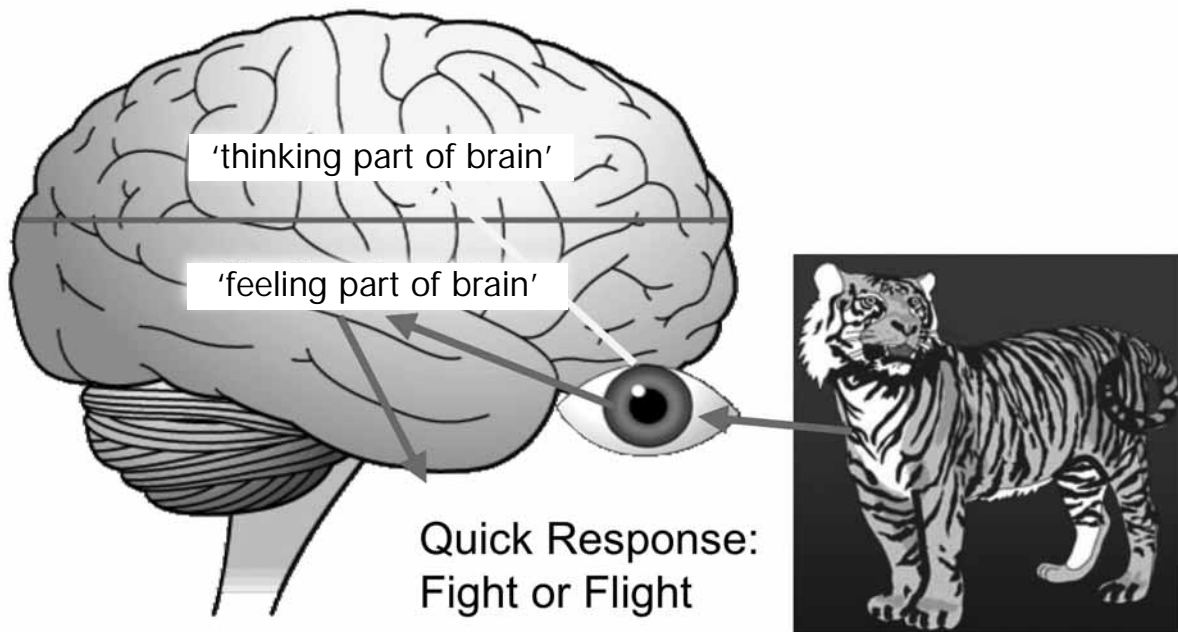
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## Feelings/emotions



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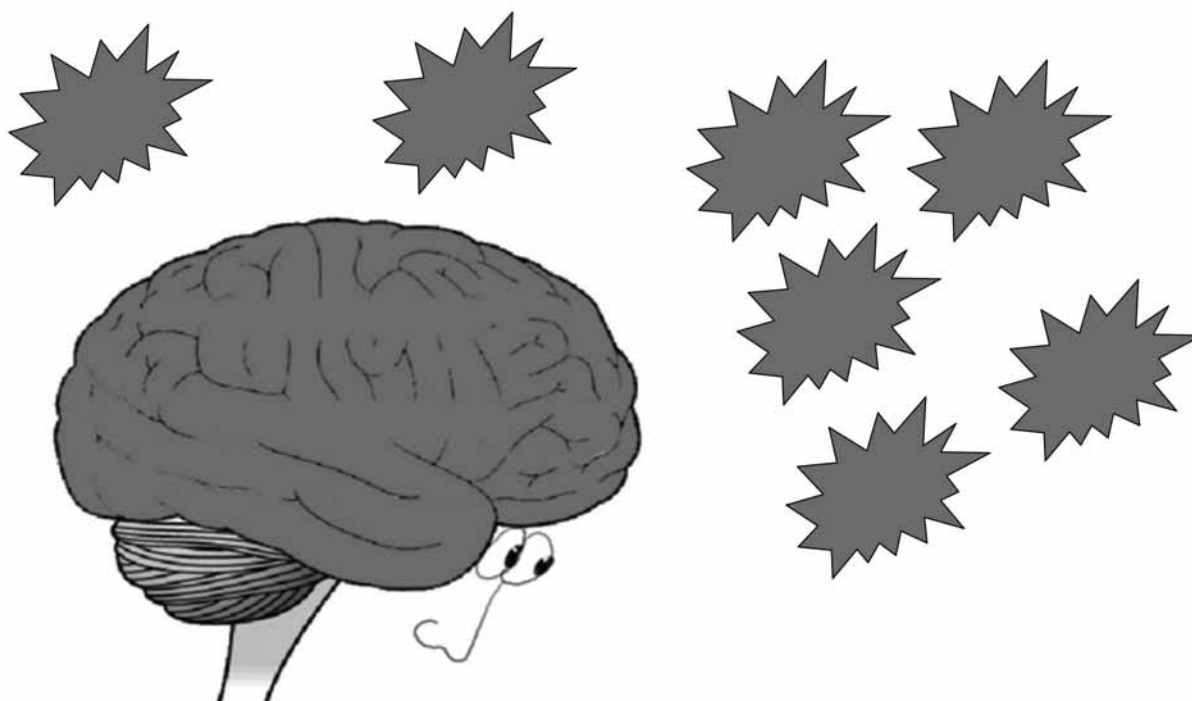
## Thoughtful action





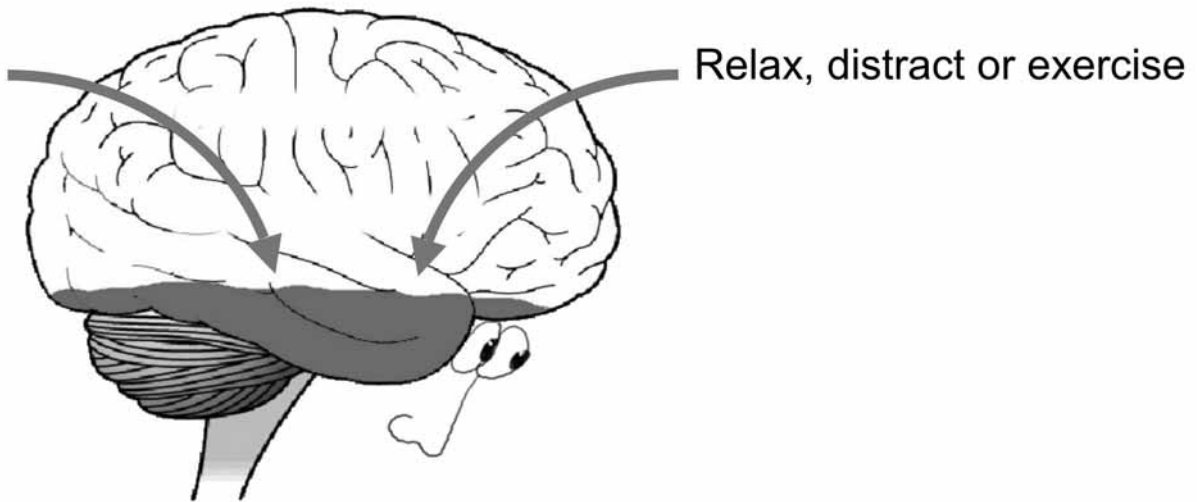
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## Overwhelmed by emotions

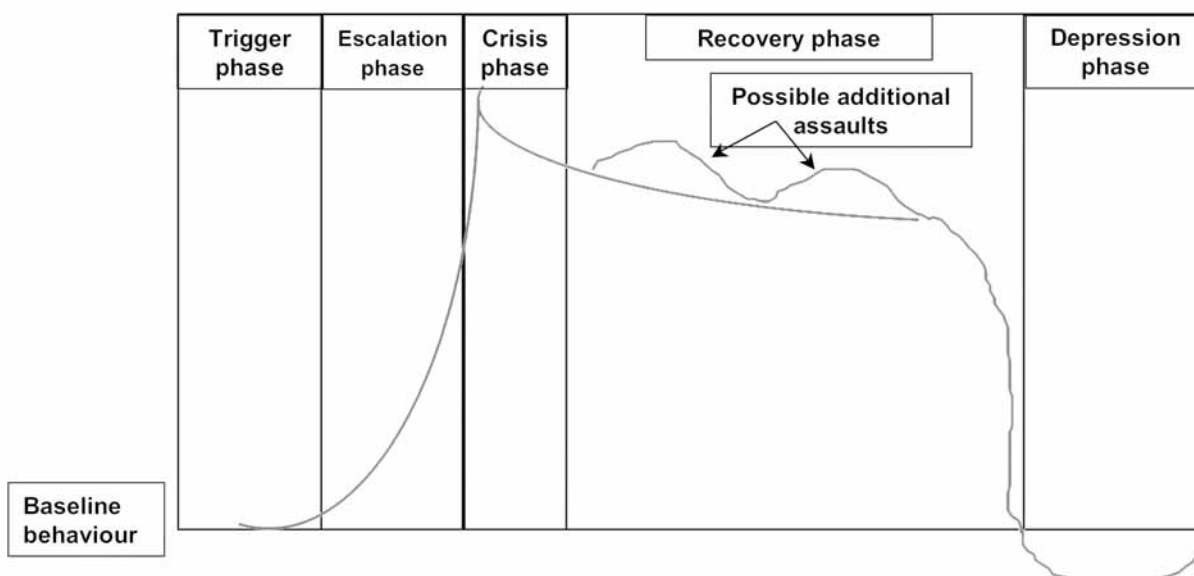


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## Calming down

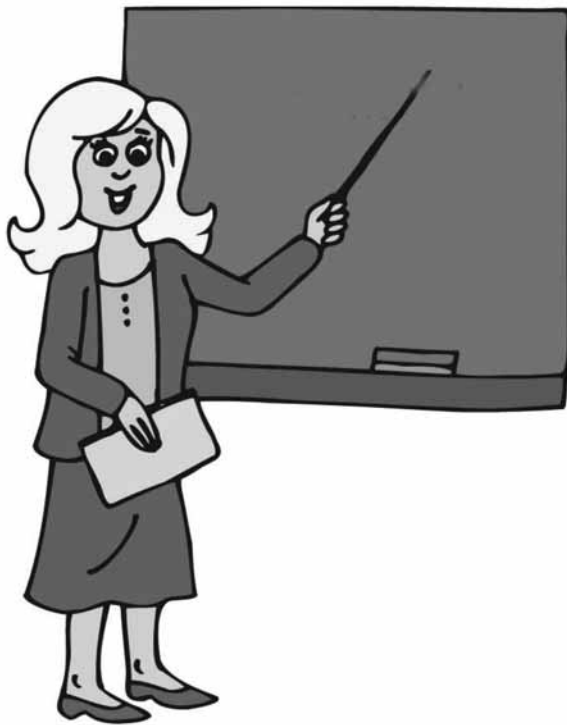


# The assault cycle



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## Teaching about emotions



Label feelings

Recognise feelings

Acknowledge feelings

Manage feelings

Think about feelings and  
what to do about them



# Peter

In pairs:

- discuss how Peter (the teacher) might feel at different points in the story
- identify five classroom-based strategies that Peter could plan to ensure that a similar incident does not occur again if he has a bad morning





## We have covered:

- the importance of emotions in the classroom and their links with learning, behaviour and attendance
- four key concepts about emotions
- some ways of helping children to manage their emotions effectively, and of managing our own





## Resource sheet 1.1

### Visualisation

Imagine you are standing outside your house looking down the road. You notice a wall you haven't seen before. In the wall there is a door. As you walk towards it you feel that you are going back in time and when you open the door in the wall you look through and you see your old school. You are standing just outside. Open the door and walk in. You walk down the corridor and smell all the familiar smells and see the sights and sounds.

You come to a classroom. When you open the door you see a lesson. It is the subject you liked least or at which you were least successful when you were at school. Look round the room. Look at the teacher. What is he or she doing? Look at the children. You notice your young self sitting in the class. What are you doing? What are you thinking? How do you feel?

*Pause*

You leave the room and are in the corridor once more. Walk along until you stand outside another classroom. Open the door and look in at the subject you liked most or at which you were most successful. Look round the room. Look at the teacher. What is he or she doing? Look at the children. You notice your young self sitting in the class. What are you doing? What are you thinking? How do you feel?

*Pause*

It is now time to go. Leave the classroom and walk down the corridor and out of the school. You find the door in the wall and when you step through you are back in this room. Look around and take in the sights and sounds of the room.

Stretch if you wish and spend a little time thinking about what you experienced. You might like to talk to the person sitting next to you.





## Resource sheet 1.2

### Alfie's story

Imagine that this is Alfie's brain – for the sake of this presentation we might think of it as having a thinking and an emotional part.

Alfie is fast asleep in bed. He is cosy and warm and snuggled deep into his duvet. At 8.00 his mum shouts up and says, 'Time to get up, Alfie. I've got to get to work.'

But Alfie just rolls over and continues to sleep. The next thing he knows is when his duvet is being pulled from the bed and his sister is laughing at him, saying he will be late for school. Alfie's emotional level starts to rise.

When Alfie goes downstairs his sister is just about to set off for school but before she goes she picks up Alfie's homework and says, 'This is rubbish, you're thick.'

Alfie's emotions are rising still further and do so even more as he goes to the shed and finds his bike has a puncture. Now he will be too late to meet his friends before school.

Alfie runs to school and when he gets there he sees his friends laughing at the other side of the playground. He thinks they see him but they continue to chat and laugh. He feels lonely and left out.

Just at that moment a child much smaller than he is comes running by and bumps into Alfie. This is too much. Alfie thinks this is on purpose and hits out.

As Alfie hits out the headteacher comes into the playground. He's also had a bad start to the day, with an angry parent waiting to see him when he arrived, and a difficult discussion with a member of staff ...

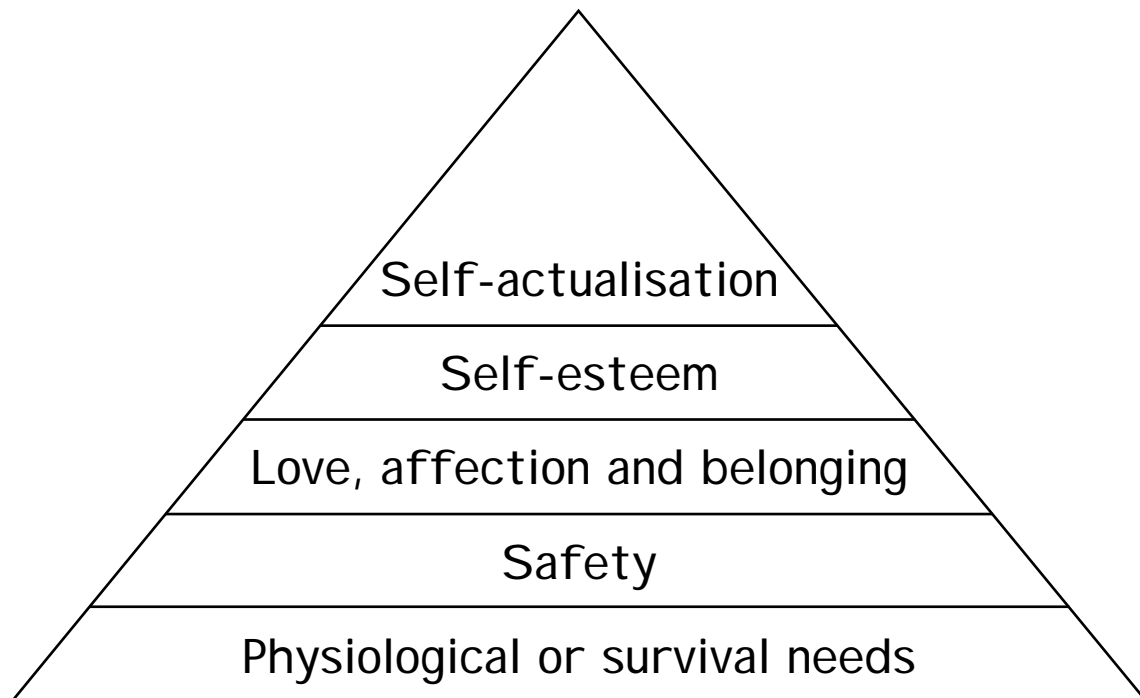
*As you read the story you should indicate how the emotional level is rising on the PowerPoint slide (or, if you are using an OHT, you might colour in the picture of Alfie's brain as you talk).*

*Note:* Participants may have used similar stories with the children they teach, to help the children develop their understanding of emotions. You may want to invite discussion about how the children responded. It might be useful to explore any tools that participants use so that children can reflect on the intensity and build-up of feelings: a 'feelings tree' to which they (and the teacher) attach different-coloured leaves to show how they are feeling, or the 'emotional barometer' from the DfES materials *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* (handout 1.3).



## Handout 1.1

### Maslow's hierarchy of needs



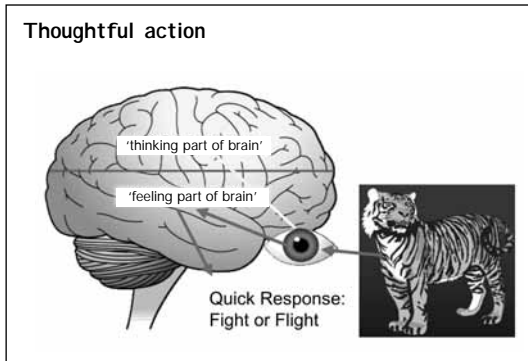
Maslow (1970) identified a hierarchy of individual needs which range from basic physiological needs (for food and shelter) through love, affection and belonging to needs which are core to how the individual sees himself/herself, namely self-esteem and self-actualisation. As educators we are trying to help children move towards self-actualisation, when they become self-motivated in all aspects of their lives. However, at all times and in all contexts, we all require the other needs to be satisfied. Once we have basic survival needs satisfied, then further needs can be satisfied only through the interaction of the individual with others. It is through our relationships with others that we derive our level of self-esteem.



## Handout 1.2

### Four key ideas about emotions

#### 1. The first idea is about differential response rates



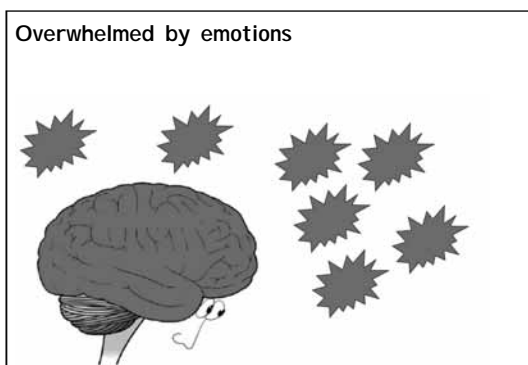
Imagine you see a dangerous animal. You will see it and respond with your 'emotional' brain very quickly. Your body prepares to respond by preparing for either fight or flight – your heart rate will quicken, your blood pressure will rise and your muscles tense. At a slower pace your 'thinking brain' might register that this is in fact a life-sized toy and you are not in any danger at all. But your body is ready and you might have already responded. This would be important if there is real danger.

Young children and those with poorly developed skills of emotional management will respond to that first 'emotional' interpretation.

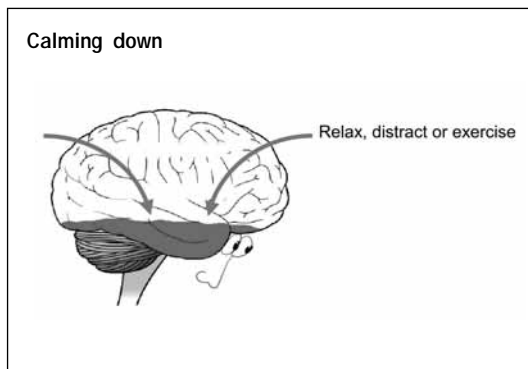
*Key point:* Before responding in many situations we need to learn to stop and think.

#### 2. The second idea is about the build-up of emotional arousal

Emotion arousal can build up over time, rendering someone ready to 'explode' with aggression or another strong emotional reaction.



This can be prevented if we use strategies to help us calm down.



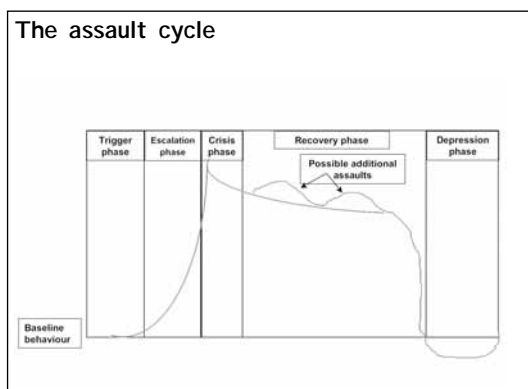
Different strategies are effective for different people but the most effective are likely to be to relax, to find a distraction or to exercise.

### 3. The third key idea is about the strength of emotional memory

If something that elicits a strong emotion happens to us we not only have a memory of what happens but also of the very strong emotions that were elicited. The emotional memory is very long-lasting. It can be linked to a smell, a sound or a visual stimulus that might have been experienced at the same time but be unrelated to the incident itself. If we subsequently see, hear or smell something that was present when we were once very scared, without even realising it we may again feel an element of that fear.

For example, if a child has had a bad experience when an older child frightened them near the school toilets, they might be scared whenever they go near the toilets. They might also extend that fear to any toilets or even to anywhere they smell the disinfectant that the school uses. They might be unaware of their reaction and it might take very little to prompt them into an inappropriate response. This is significant in understanding the behaviour of children and their parents or carers.

### 4. The fourth and final idea is that of the assault cycle



The concept of the assault cycle was devised following investigations into why police officers were frequently assaulted following an arrest. It helps us understand why small incidents of misbehaviour can escalate so easily.

Strong emotions usually have a trigger. For example, if a child is teased or called a name in the classroom, their reaction is usually immediate and can be represented by the first two sections of the graph – the rapid build-up of anger. They might respond by hitting out at the child responsible. The teacher intervenes and takes the child out of the classroom, looks him in the eye and warns him that she will tell his parents. Quite uncharacteristically, the child might then hit out at the teacher. This is a secondary incident and relates to the ‘possible additional assaults’ stage on the graph. It happens because of the length of time it takes for someone to start to calm down.

The time taken to calm down varies with the context, the level of arousal and the individual but might typically be at least 45 minutes. In extreme circumstances, it can be up to 24 hours. During that time there is heightened risk of further incidents where we are led by our emotions and might interpret things negatively.

When emotions start to calm this can be quite rapid and is often followed by a short period of feeling low or depressed.

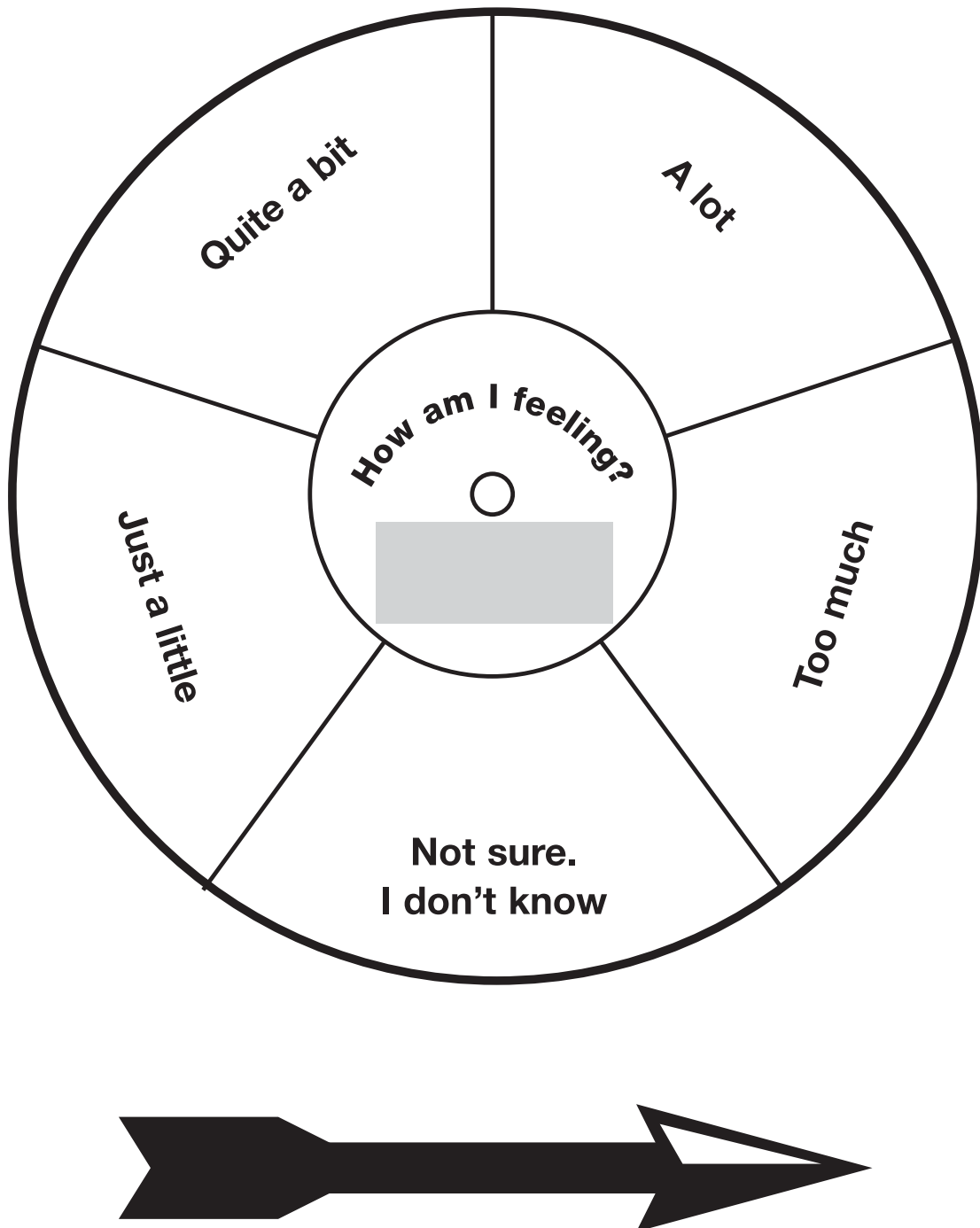
The time that it takes for some children to calm down is significant for school policy and practice.





## Handout 1.3

The emotional barometer:  
a template



### The emotional barometer: feeling words



Happy	Frustrated
Sad	Guilty
Unhappy	Jealous
Cross	Relaxed
Shy	Embarrassed
Scared	
Worried	
Cared for	
Excited	
Proud	
Relaxed	
Brave	
Hopeful	
Surprised	
Accepted	
Forgiving	
Bored	
Interested	

## Handout 1.4

### Sam's story

Sam had a bad morning. She had a row with her mother again. Her mother said that if things didn't get any better she'd get Marian to come to see her. Marian was the social worker and Sam knew what that meant. Last time things were bad she had gone to live in a foster family. They were OK but Sam had missed her mum and brothers terribly.

Sam set off for school. She was keen to do well but didn't find work easy. When she got there she chatted with her friends about what they had been doing the night before. She almost forgot about the argument with her mum until it was literacy. She had to move classes and none of her friends were in the group with her. She knew it was because she found the work hard.

She sat down at the nearest table and started to think. She thought about the foster family and how nice they were to start with. That was until she started to have rows with their son. She could remember lying in bed wanting her mum so much.

It took a while for her to realise that the teacher was talking to her. He might have been talking to her for a while but she hadn't heard. He was walking towards her and now he was shouting at her and wagging his finger at her, just like her mum did. He was saying how there would be trouble if she didn't move.

Before she had even thought about it she was standing up. There was silence all around her and everyone was looking at her. Then she heard herself saying, 'P--- off, just leave me alone'. She knocked the pencil-pot off the desk as she stormed out.



## Handout 1.5

### Peter's story

Peter had a bad morning. His five-year-old son had played up really badly. He often wondered how it was that he had few difficulties controlling a class of 30 Year 6 pupils when he found it so hard to get his son to hurry up and get ready for school in the mornings. When he eventually got his son in the car and turned the ignition on it had spluttered and refused to start. It took him about half an hour messing around under the bonnet before they eventually set off. During the entire journey his son moaned about having to go to the childminder's after school.

Things didn't get much better once Peter got to school. It had been raining in the night and his classroom roof had sprung a leak. There was water all over his desk. Some of the children's work had been ruined. He knew this would get the day off to a bad start. After registration he had the weaker literacy group. They were a real handful. He had hoped to have everything ready for the group but now this wasn't possible.

The class came in for the literacy group. He felt poorly prepared and had the beginning of a headache. He explained about the leak but some of the children were very upset.

He asked the class to get into their small groups. After the usual disturbance, they were ready to start. Then he noticed Sam. She was sitting on an empty table and had quite obviously not bothered to move.

He walked towards Sam. She was looking at him with a blank stare and seemed to be saying 'You can't make me move.' Before he had even thought about what to do he had launched in and heard himself saying 'Get into your group or you'll be sorry.' He was shouting, too.

Sam wasn't usually too much of a problem. She didn't always concentrate in class but she usually did what she was told with a little extra prompting. But today she got up, swore at him, threw the pencil-pot on the floor and stormed out.



## Handout 1.6

### Ideas sheet

#### Emotions in the classroom

##### To help you start the lesson calmly

1. Be alert to the signs of tension and stress – then do one of the following.
  - Take a few deep, calm breaths counting to three as you breathe in. Hold it for a count of three and then breathe out for three. Do this several times.
  - Tighten and then relax the muscles in your body in sequence.
  - Identify a place where you feel very calm and relaxed. Visualise it.
  - Say positive things to yourself in your head.
  - Think of your own relaxation technique and practise it.
2. Have available some beginning activities that allow the time for you to get yourself organised. For example, you might encourage children to keep a mind-map of the topic they have been learning about. The first activity might be for them to add to the mind-map, or to review what they did last time by talking to a partner.
3. Consider the routines at the beginning of the lesson – for example, children might have some individual activity they must do to start the lesson. Provide opportunities for younger learners to practise the routine.
4. Have a routine phrase or expression to encourage children to prepare for learning. With younger children this might be some physical activity.
5. Have a planned script for dealing with a child who is not ready to start the lesson. Use the least intrusive strategy first, from this list:
  - Whole-class reminder or proximal praise (praising a child who **has** shown they are ready).
  - Starting the lesson by tactically ignoring one learner and settling the rest of the class to work before talking privately to them.
  - Using a script that involves non-confrontational language and offers a choice – ‘Remember our rule ...’ ‘You can sit here next to me or ....’ Assume that the child is going to make a sensible choice by turning away and resuming the lesson. Have this conversation individually with the child if possible.



### **Dealing with minor misbehaviour in class**

1. Do not assume the child is being deliberately provocative.
2. Focus the child on the work or try to engage the child in his/her learning.
3. Use the language of choice.
4. Imagine scenarios and practise using appropriate positive language, for example 'Concentrate on your work' rather than 'Stop messing around'.
5. Use the least intrusive consequence first.
6. If a child argues with you or insists the consequence is not fair then suggest that you will listen to his/her point at the end of the lesson but that you must get on with teaching now.
7. If a number of members of the class are feeling restless, change the activity. Have a number of strategies available. This might be just a short break or an opportunity to review how far they have got with a partner. If possible, provide an opportunity to move around. Use music to time particular activities. When the music stops the children should be ready for learning.

### **Helping you to stop and think before acting**

1. Identify your own emotional triggers.
2. Identify some strategies to help you calm down – depending on the situation you might use some of those listed in the first section on this sheet.
3. Train yourself to use a distraction activity. This might be to move some equipment, tidy your papers, walk to a particular spot in the classroom and back, and so on. This provides you with a greater chance to react with your thinking brain.
4. Consider having a script in response to behaviours that tend to wind you up.
5. Check your body language – relax your body.

## Handout 1.7

### Key points for action from this session

What do I want to do in my classroom in order to develop my practice?

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How will I do this?

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What is my timescale for this to happen?

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How will I know I have been successful?

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Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

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