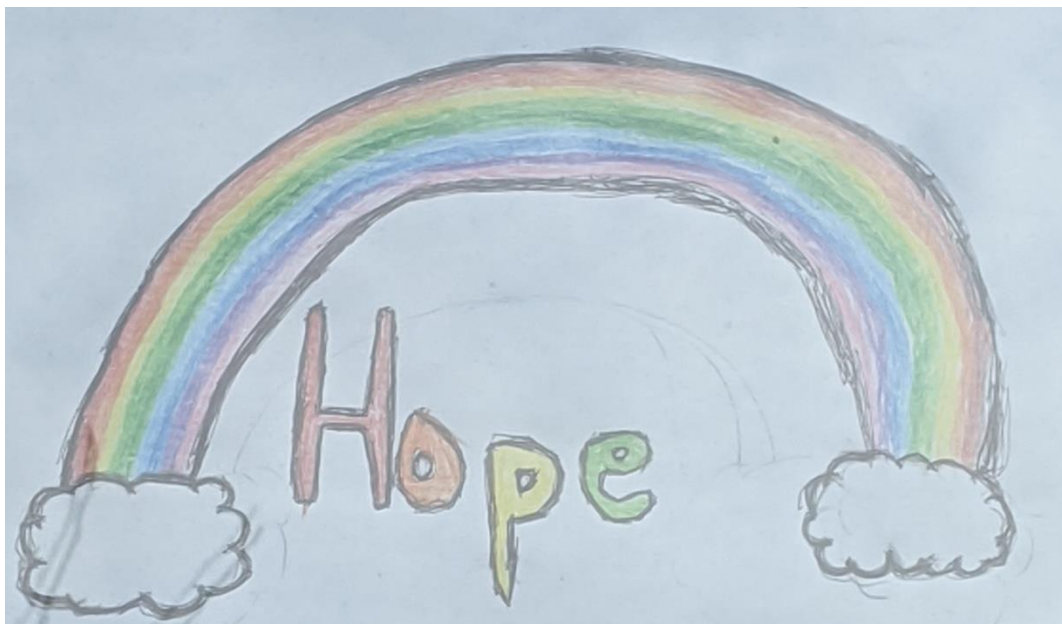


Safe!

Support for Young People
Affected by Crime



Support book for parents

About SAFE!

SAFE! is an independent charity working across the Thames Valley to support children and families affected by crime. We work with children from the age of 5 to 18 who have been harmed by crime and are finding it hard to cope with their experience. We also provide support to parents to help them to find the best ways to support the recovery of their child, and to deal with the impact the experience has had on them as parents.

SAFE! provides open access, inclusive, and free services for young people and families affected by crime, helping them overcome the effects of what has happened to them and regain their quality of life. SAFE! practitioners offer practical and emotional support based upon protective behaviours and restorative approaches that is designed to increase confidence, build resilience and improve future safety. By listening attentively and putting their needs at the heart of the process, SAFE! empowers children and young people, giving them a voice and helping them and those around them to build protective communities where they can feel safe.

Working together with parents and professionals, SAFE! promotes the rights of children, parents and families affected by crime, and by disseminating best practice guidance and resources the charity encourages any adult to feel confident in supporting a young person they know through hard times. With the rise in sexual abuse, domestic violence and internet crime the world can be a scary place, and SAFE!'s unique, innovative and compassionate service seeks to help young people live happy and adventurous lives.

For more information about SAFE! see our website www.safeproject.org.uk



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Introduction

Being a parent can be the hardest job in the world at the best of times. As our children grow and develop, they can challenge us in new ways with difficult questions, unreasonable behaviour and confusing emotions – at times it can be hard to know how to respond. Thankfully, being a parent can be an incredibly rewarding job too, and this keeps us going and trying our hardest for our kids.

We are programmed to want the best for our children, and to want to protect them from negative or dangerous experiences. So, when a child has had an experience of victimisation for whatever reason, it can be particularly difficult as a parent. Parents can find they have a complicated mix of emotions including guilt, anger, sadness or shame. Parents can feel traumatised by the experience of their child and can face similar knocks to their confidence and wellbeing. Some parents may feel angry with their child as a result of what has happened.

Just as we say to the children we support, there is no right or wrong way to feel after an experience like this. It is important to recognise that you might need time or support on your own terms to think about how you have been affected by the experience. It could be helpful to try to understand why you might be feeling a certain way. If you've ever been on a plane, you'll remember that in the event of a crash you are advised to fit your own oxygen mask before attending to your child. After a traumatic experience, you need to look after yourself in order to provide the best possible support for your child.

Every child is different, and the ways in which they respond to an experience of victimisation can vary hugely. Some children bounce back quickly after a knock to their confidence, others take a lot longer to heal. As a parent you know your child better than anyone else, and the support that you are able to give them is likely to be much more important than anything else.

This workbook is designed to help you navigate parenting a child who has been the victim of a crime. It aims to give you a structured approach to thinking about how to best support your child, whilst also giving you a chance to reflect on how this experience has impacted on you. Over the next few pages you will find a mixture of guidance and practical exercises to help both you and your child to cope and recover from victimisation. Completing these exercises could help to prepare you for any support that you might be receiving from professionals, or it could help you reflect and think about what you all need as a family to move forward.

“...Place the oxygen mask on yourself first before helping small children or others who may need your assistance.”



Protective Behaviours and Restorative Approaches

All of the work that we do at SAFE! has an understanding of Protective Behaviours and Restorative Approaches at its heart. Protective Behaviours is a practical framework for learning about personal safety which is centred around two core themes and seven supporting strategies.

Theme 1

*We all have the right to feel safe
all of the time*

Theme 2

*We can talk with someone about anything,
even if it feels awful or small*

Seven strategies

Protective interruption

Persistence

One step removed

Risking for a purpose

Theme reinforcement

Network review

The language of safety

Through practical exercises focused on these key areas, children are encouraged to build an awareness of the connections between the physical sensations in their bodies, with their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. Children learn how to recognise when they feel safe or unsafe and are given the skills and tools needed to take action and get help when it is needed.

Having a restorative approach is about ensuring communication and connection with others is non-judgmental, honest and respectful and is led by the belief that those with a problem are usually best placed to find their own solutions. By following restorative principles in your parenting, you may find that your child will feel safe and supported, and will grow in their ability to seek their own solutions.

Some of the key restorative principles and values

Respectful
relationships

Honesty and
openness

Seeking our
own solutions

Minimising
harm to others

Taking
responsibility

Tolerance

Collaboration

Trust &
Integrity

Active listening

Non-
judgemental

Empowering
others

Valuing
everyone's
contribution

Exploring
meanings

Building
empathy with
others

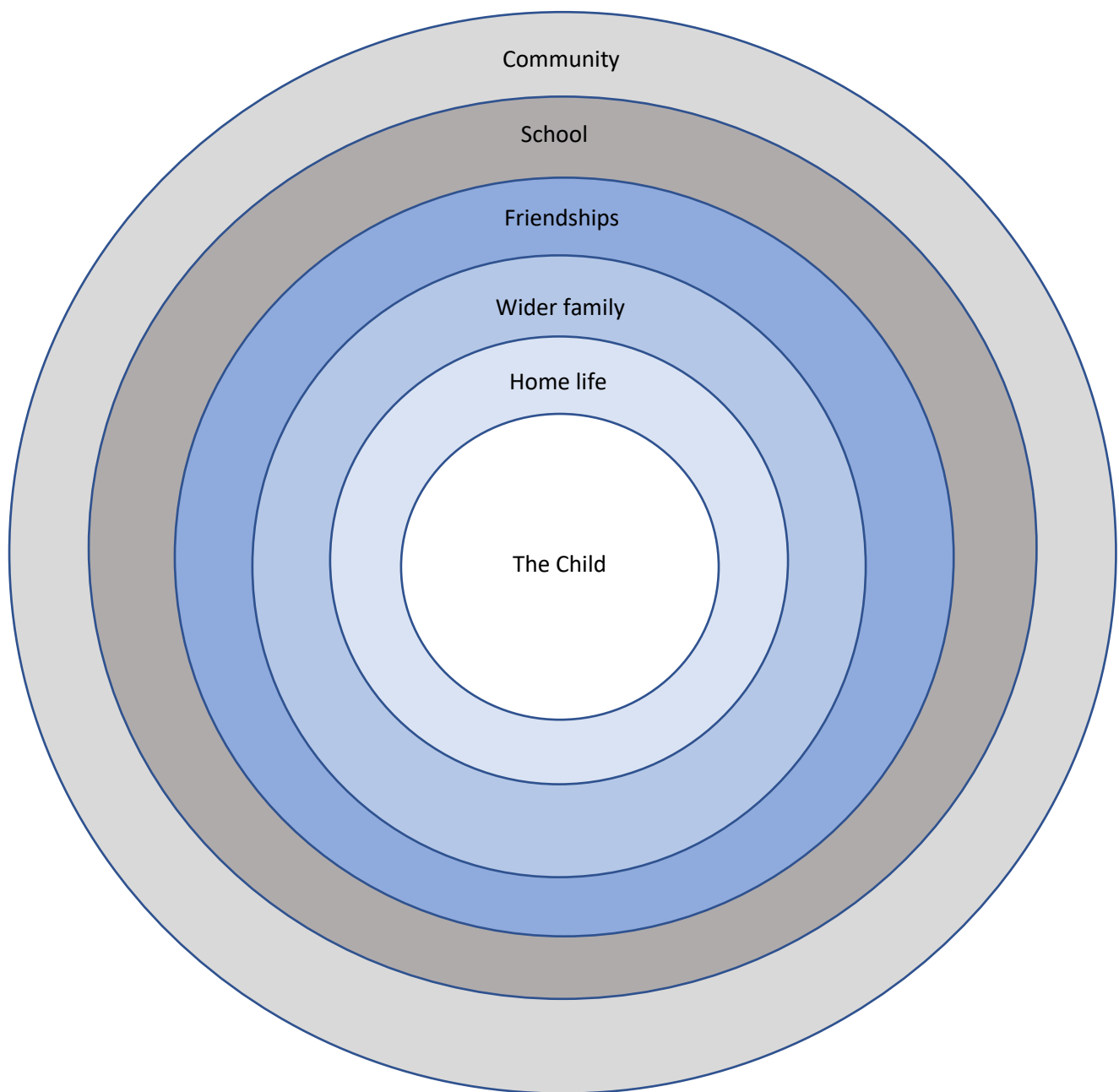
Developing
confidence

What has changed?

An experience of victimisation can have a profound impact on a child and on all of those around them. Each child is unique, and the way that they are affected by this experience will be unique to them. At SAFE! our support always starts with a focus on helping children to identify what has changed as a result of what happened, and then to think about what they need in order to move forward.

When a pebble is thrown into a pond it makes a big quick splash but the ripples from the pebble continue to disturb the water for much longer. Crime can have many wider effects, just like the ripples, and these effects may impact the child, their parents and siblings, their friendships, school and the wider community

Thinking about all of the people affected, write down some of the wider effects of the experience.



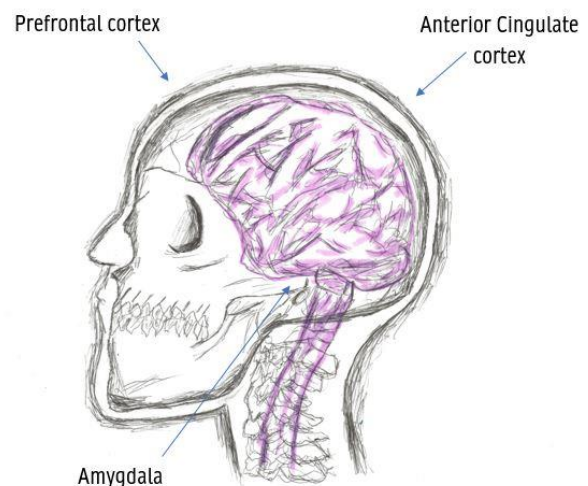
Understanding Trauma

What is trauma?

It is inevitable that at some point in our lives we may find that our ability to manage our physical and emotional response to stress is limited. This can be particularly true after a distressing or disturbing event. Trauma is the response to such an event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. This can lead to feelings of helplessness, a dip in self-esteem and confidence and cause physical ailments that can become debilitating if unaddressed.

How the brain responds to trauma

While reactions to trauma can vary widely and not every young person who experiences an event will develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, trauma can change the brain in some predictable ways. Understanding how the brain reacts to trauma can help you to understand how to support your child and enable them to develop effective ways of coping with the trauma responses that they may be experiencing. Trauma can impact how the brain functions in a number of ways. However, as highlighted in the diagram three of the most important changes appear to occur in the following areas:



The prefrontal cortex – Known as the ‘thinking centre’ this part of the brain is responsible for rational thought, problem solving, personality, empathy, planning and awareness. When our brain is healthy the prefrontal cortex allows us to think clearly, make good decisions and be aware of our needs and the needs of those around us.

Anterior Cingulate Cortex – Known as the ‘emotion regulation centre’ this part of the brain is responsible for helping to regulate emotion and works alongside the prefrontal cortex. When our brain is in a healthy state the Anterior Cingulate Cortex can help us to manage difficult thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed. For example, there may have been times when we have wanted to lash out at someone, the emotion regulation centre reminds us that this is not a good idea and has helped us to manage our emotions so that we do not say or do something that we may later regret.

Amygdala – Known as the ‘fear centre’ this part of the brain acts outside of our conscious awareness or control. Its primary job is to receive all incoming information. Everything you experience is being processed by the Amygdala so that it can determine whether what you are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching is a threat. When this area is activated, we feel fear which in turn creates a fight or flight response.

If your child is showing signs of trauma it is highly likely that their prefrontal cortex and Anterior Cingulate Cortex are underactive. The reason for this is that their Amygdala has become overactive as it tries to deal with constant feelings of threat. If this happens you may notice a change in your child's physical and emotional wellbeing which we will now look at in more detail.

Common trauma responses

The response grid outlined below is not an exhaustive list, however it does detail some of the most common responses to trauma that your child may exhibit. Whilst all these signs are perfectly normal, that does not mean that they are any less distressing for you or your child. Therefore, it is important to take the time to reassure your child that what they are experiencing is common and happens to a lot of people who have had a similar experience to them.

Emotional signs include: • Sadness • Anger • Fear • Guilt • Denial • Feeling overwhelmed • Suppressing feelings • Mood swings • Depression	Physical signs include: • Nausea • Faintness • Elevated heartbeat • Fatigue or exhaustion • Shaking • Sweating or shivering • Sleep disturbance • Hyperarousal • Change in appetite
Cognitive signs include: • Difficulty concentrating • Racing thoughts • Memory problems • Self-blame • Difficulty making decisions • Flashbacks • Suicidal thoughts	Behavioural signs include: • Restlessness • Argumentative behaviour • Difficulty expressing oneself • Withdrawal and apathy • Avoidant behaviours • Decreased activity level • Avoidance of events/social activities

The right support can help to alleviate a lot of these symptoms, however activities that you can do with your child such as days out, a trip to the park, baking together or simply going for a walk are equally as important. That said, should you become concerned that your child's physical or emotional wellbeing is worsening then it is important to seek medical advice from your GP.

Tip: One of the ways that SAFE! explains these responses to young people is to liken their brain to a wastepaper bin. We help the young person to understand that the paper going into the bin is a bit like all the thoughts and emotions going into the brain. If the brain is unable to sort through those thoughts and feelings it can become overwhelmed and start to fill up. Therefore, the brain must work overtime to recover which can sometimes cause some of the symptoms listed above. This analogy can also be helpful in explaining to your child why they may be experiencing bad dreams.



Secondary Trauma

Parenting a child that has experienced a traumatic event can be difficult. Families can often be left feeling isolated and unsure of what course of action to take. This can often put a strain on your relationship with your child and those around you. You may have even had a similar experience yourself and hearing and seeing your child's reaction to it may have brought back some painful memories. Being affected by someone else's trauma is often called secondary trauma. Just like with first-hand trauma, there are symptoms of secondary trauma that can often manifest. By taking a proactive approach and looking out for these signs in yourself and anyone else close to the child, you can address these before they negatively impact you and those around you:

Physical Symptoms	• Headaches • Stomach upsets • Problems sleeping • Weight gain/loss • Lack of energy
Behavioural Symptoms	• Increased drinking or smoking • Procrastinating • Feeling overly critical • Avoiding other people
Emotional Symptoms	• Frequent crying • Anxiety • Irritability • Loneliness • Depression
Cognitive Symptoms	• Inability to concentrate • Forgetfulness • Loss of humour/fun • Inability to make decisions

Parents often tell SAFE! that they do not feel as though they are deserving of support until their child has been cared for first. However, it is important to remember that your ability to provide effective support and parenting to your child may be hindered if you yourself are experiencing trauma. Therefore, if you feel that you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above please think about getting some help for yourself so that you can help your child in turn.

Understanding you and your child

We are all unique and our likes, similarities and differences can shape the way we respond to experiences. Think about yourself and your child and what makes you the people you are - take some time to fill in the boxes below.

What are their interests and favourite activities?	What do you like about them?
What do you do together?	What are their aspirations?

Diagram description: A 2x2 grid of boxes. The top-left box contains the text 'What are their interests and favourite activities?'. The top-right box contains 'What do you like about them?'. The bottom-left box contains 'What do you do together?'. The bottom-right box contains 'What are their aspirations?'. In the center, overlapping all four boxes, is a blue rectangular label with the text 'About your child'.

How do you look after yourself?	What do you find challenging about being a parent?
What are your strengths as a parent?	What are your aspirations?

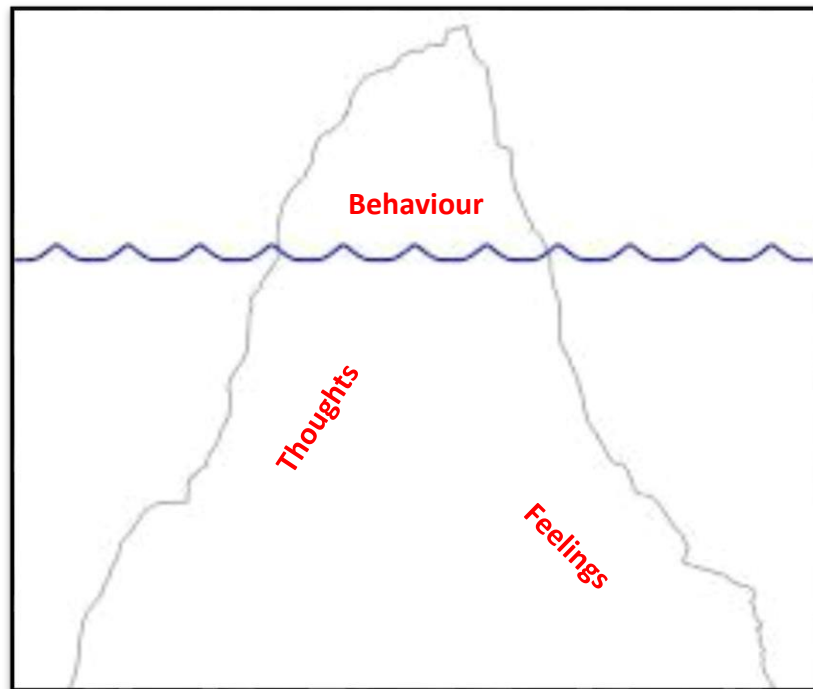
Diagram description: A 2x2 grid of boxes. The top-left box contains the text 'How do you look after yourself?'. The top-right box contains 'What do you find challenging about being a parent?'. The bottom-left box contains 'What are your strengths as a parent?'. The bottom-right box contains 'What are your aspirations?'. In the center, overlapping all four boxes, is a blue rectangular label with the text 'About you...'.

What are your current concerns and/or challenges?

Diagram description: A single large rectangular box containing the text 'What are your current concerns and/or challenges?'.

Behaviour is the tip of the Iceberg

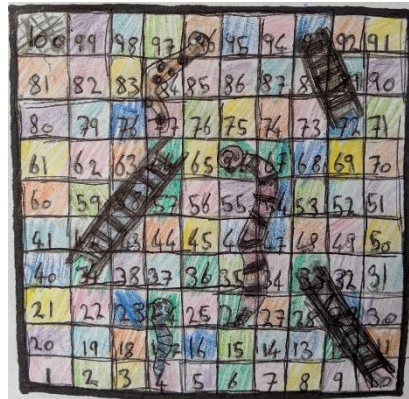
Thinking about an iceberg, what we see above the water is often just a small part of a huge block. There may be times when your child displays negative and challenging behaviours that impact on their relationship with you and others around them. The negative behaviour can be difficult to deal with and it is important to consider what is going on for the young person beneath the surface. The child themselves may not understand why they are behaving in a certain way.



One of the ways that SAFE! helps young people to reflect on how a traumatic experience has impacted them, is to help them to understand the link between their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. We sometimes use the analogy of an iceberg to help them to think about this. Completing an exercise to separate out their behaviour from their thoughts and feelings can help them to understand that whilst their behaviour is observable, their thoughts and feelings are invisible unless shared with someone close to them. This can help to encourage them to speak more openly about how they are feeling. We encourage children to consider what thoughts and feelings they may be experiencing prior to negative behaviour, then identify appropriate strategies and responses that can help.

Goal Setting

Following an experience of crime, life can change in many ways and the future can seem unclear. It is a bit like this picture of a road that is twisting ahead, with an unknown destination. Setting goals can provide a helpful focus and they can be a destination of sorts, at the end of the track. They can also remind us that there is hope and can provide an opportunity to consider a positive future. Goals can also be considered a challenge; something to work towards and be motivated to achieve.



Let's think about a goal you might want to work towards. This could be a goal you want to reach quite soon (i.e. in the coming weeks or months) or a goal that is more long-term (i.e. over several months or by the end of the year) and might be broken down into smaller goals in order to reach.

If it is difficult to think of a goal, let's use the magic wand analogy.



- ***If you had a magic wand that meant when you wake up tomorrow life would be different, what would it look like?***
- ***What changes would you, or someone from the outside, notice?***
- ***How would we know there had been a change?***

If your goal is to feel differently, think about what might make you feel differently. What would you be doing?

Example: 'I want to feel less anxious' might become 'If I was less anxious, I would be seeing my friends more like I used to, instead of sitting in the house all day worrying.'

Use the **SMART** rule to make your goal

Specific,

Measurable,

Achievable,

Realistic and

Timely.

You will be more likely to achieve your goal if you follow the SMART rule.

Using the above example, this could be made SMART to become 'See a friend once a week for a coffee and a chat, to be achieved within the next three months.'

Goal 1:

.....
.....
.....

Score /10 (1/10= I'm just starting out, 10/10= I've achieved this goal).....

If you have several goals in mind, jot them down here. Up to three goals can be manageable, without being too overwhelming.

Goal 2:

.....
.....
.....

Score /10 (1/10= I'm just starting out, 10/10= I've achieved this goal).....

Goal 3:

.....
.....
.....

Score /10 (1/10= I'm just starting out, 10/10= I've achieved this goal).....



The footprints on the road can leave an imprint or mark change on the way to these goals but these footprints can sometimes be backsteps (think of the phrase two steps forward, one step back). This is normal and can be a result of unexpected hiccups or even things we anticipate if there are times ahead that you know might cause a blip.

To help move things forwards, it can be helpful to consider what support you might need to reach them. Is there somebody that can support these steps? A relative or a teacher at the school?

Make a note of these people:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Is there something you need to keep things moving forward, like a notebook to keep reminders in or an alarm set on the phone to factor in time to dedicate to the goal?

Make a note of the things you might need:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Well done! In setting goals, you have taken the first step of your journey along the road towards achieving them. Keep working at it and don't forget to use the support around you to help reach them if you need to.

Use the next page to keep track of your goals each week.

Goal Progress

Use these tables to chart your progress towards achieving these goals

GOAL 1:.....												
Session	Date	Today I would rate my progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number)										
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

GOAL 2:.....												
Session	Date	Today I would rate my progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number)										
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

GOAL 3:.....												
Session	Date	Today I would rate my progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number)										
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Helping your child

How we help young people at SAFE!

At SAFE! we say to the children and young people we are supporting that they will not have to talk about what has happened to them, unless they want to. Instead we can address the emotions and feelings which they are experiencing as a result of their victimisation. This takes the pressure off them and can help them to have a sense of control over choosing to re-tell (or not) their story.

Sometimes children and young people tell us that they feel they need to manage their parents or carers feelings about what has happened, as well as their own, and that this can be hard for them.

They might feel this way because the young person feels responsible for their parent/s emotions and feelings, because of what has happened to them.

Young people have told us many times that what they value most is the help from an adult who will listen respectfully, be honest and consistent and who has faith that the young person will find the strength to move forward in their recovery.

Preparing to talk

- **Acknowledge your own feelings** - It is likely that you will feel a range of emotions as a parent of a child who has been victimised. You may be feeling overwhelmed, scared, angry, or even embarrassed. One of the hardest aspects for parents can be that they often tell us they feel powerless and unable to help their child. Children and young people won't expect you as their parent to hold all the answers to their questions. We believe that you can make a positive difference for your child and, that like them, you also possess the strength to get through these difficult times and you will find the words to say.
- **Accept your own emotions** – there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel as a parent of a child who has been victimised. Your sense of empowerment can fluctuate from day to day, or even hour to hour. This is also normal, and it is likely your child feels the same way.
- **It is OK to let your child know how you feel** – You may rightly want to spare them from seeing an outpouring of your more extreme emotions, but children can be confused if they feel their parent has become 'emotionless' (hiding all feelings away) and they may worry about you or feel like they have let you down somehow. You may find it easier to simply say *"I am finding it hard to manage all my feelings, I wonder if you feel like this sometimes? It is not your fault I feel this way and it isn't up to you to do something to make me feel better."*
- **You may feel ready to talk to your child about what has happened - but they may not** – If you don't know if they want to talk about it, it is OK to ask them. Children and young people may need to see you talking about your own feelings, to give them a green light that they can start talking too. You may like to say something like *"We don't have to talk about what happened, if you don't want to, but we can talk about how you are feeling today if you want?"*

Create opportunities to spend time together e.g. cooking, watching TV or playing a game to remain connected with your child.

If they don't want to talk, you could agree a way they can let you know when they are ready e.g. hanging something on their bedroom door handle / or placing a sticker on their clothes

You could create a traffic light system or emoticons together and place them up somewhere in your home. Your child could use this to reflect if they want / don't want to talk, or to indicate how they are feeling without having to say out loud.

Preparing to talk – starts with preparing to listen

Be ready to use active listening

- **Pay attention** – remove your own distractions. Your child might feel more comfortable if they are talking to you whilst also looking at a screen, playing with a toy, or drawing with you, but make sure you are able to give them your undivided attention.
- **Show you are listening** – think about your own body language e.g. eye contact
- **Listen to understand** – If you are waiting for a gap to say what you want, you might miss an important message being said to you.
- **Reflect or repeat back what they have said** – this tells them you have heard but also means you make sure that you have understood them correctly. Parents sometimes worry about incorrectly labelling an emotion, but children will usually correct you if you've got it wrong. Just listen and try again.
- **Avoid interrupting or finishing their sentences for them** – it is better to wait for them to use their own words to explain what they are trying to say. You don't need to come up with all the answers. Don't panic if there is a silence, it doesn't always need to be filled.
- **Use open questions** – open questions naturally help conversations to start and flow more easily. *For a helpful list of open questions, you could use, see below
- **Be prepared to go at their pace** – It might be slow, it could stop and start, but acknowledge their feelings and reassure them this is OK. Agree with your child that if they don't want to talk, they won't be made to. Remind them of the agreed sign (if you have one) which they can use to let you know when talking is off-limits.
- **Be mindful of how victim blaming language might be experienced by your child** – At SAFE! we explore how we can all have unconscious biases in our own thoughts. We talk to children and young people about how these can impact on children and young people's thoughts about what has happened and even the language that people might use. We challenge these sensitively, always reassuring children and young people that they are never to be held responsible for what has happened to them. Try to avoid language which might make them feel to blame.

Unwritten rules – Think about some of the ‘unwritten rules’ which might exist in society or the media about victims of crime. People always want to understand how something happened, in trying to understand people can sometimes look for answers in the wrong way which might include ‘victim blaming’. For example, have you ever noticed comments on social media which imply that a victim of crime is in some way to blame for what has happened?

“Why didn’t they speak up earlier?”

“They shouldn’t have walked through the park in the dark.”

“Why didn’t they fight back.”

“What did they expect, going out wearing that?”

Open questions – These allow the conversation to ‘open up’, rather than naturally being closed with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. E.g. asking “Are you happy today?” only allows for a yes or no response. An open alternative to ask might be “How do you feel today?”

Some examples of open questions you could use:

- How has your day been?
- When you feel _____ is there anything you, or anyone else, can do to help you feel better?
- If you had a magic wand that could grant wishes, what would you do?
- Tell me two things we could do as a family on the weekend.

A ‘one step removed’ approach - Sometimes it can be difficult to talk directly about what has happened. It can be easier to find a character in a similar situation on TV, in a film or a book and talk about what they may be thinking / feeling and doing, instead of talking directly about your child’s personal experiences. With younger children, you could use Lego pieces, dolls or toys as the focus and to explore your child’s views. e.g. “I wonder what teddy is feeling today and what he wants to happen next?”

Some ‘top tips’ for talking about victimisation with your child:

- Think about talking in a neutral and safe space. If they have been victimised in their own bedroom, talking to them there might not feel safe.
- Children may start talking about their victimisation at any point – eg on the way to school. If you haven’t got lots of time, let them know you could like to talk later when you have more time and plan together how you would like this to happen.
- Acknowledge your child’s emotions, don’t deny or minimise it. Help them find a way to safely express it.
- Talking might be easier for your child if you are not sitting face to face. Think about going for a drive together, or taking a walk. These activities can take some of the intensity out of the situation.
- Thank them if and when they do share their thoughts with you and reassure them that they are doing well.
- Try and work together to agree on a good activity to do together afterwards. It doesn’t need to cost anything – it could involve watching a film together or playing a game.

Talking through play

Sitting down together with another person to talk about important issues is quite an adult way to manage communications. At SAFE! we find that providing children and young people with opportunities to play offers more than just a chance to have fun. Being playful with your child can help you as a parent to connect with them, something that can benefit you both deeply. It can help you both to relax, feel happier and may help create a conducive environment for your child to start talking about their feelings more openly. At SAFE! we find that often even older teenagers will enjoy playing games which are normally associated with younger children and they will normally tell you if they don't want to take part!

Parent-led activities

Ask your child if they will join a game with you. If you can't think of an activity you might like to try one of the games listed below.

Child-led activities

Ask your child to choose a game to play with you or join in one they have already chosen e.g. drawing, Lego, building a tower. Get down on your child's level.

Any games require both people to consent to participate and the right to set their own boundaries, including saying 'stop' should they feel uncomfortable, which should be respected. Acknowledging when your child has said 'stop' or 'no', is great way to teach them about consent from an early age.

Playful activities for parents and children.

- **Funny Bones:** You start the activity by calling out "elbow to elbow, knee to knee," etc. and both you and your child touch the corresponding body parts together. After a few turns, let your child have a go at calling out body parts.
- **Feather touch:** You start by tickling your child with a feather. If they feel safe to do so, your child could have their eyes closed. The child must guess where their parent tickled them.
- **Bubble pop:** You start by blowing the bubbles and your child gets to pop them. Build up the challenge by seeing if they can pop the bubbles with their hands or feet or elbow, etc. You can swap with your child and let them have a turn.
- **Newspaper punch:** You hold up a piece of newspaper for your child. On the count of three, they punch a hole through the paper. Your child can then roll the paper up in a little ball and throw it in a "hoop." This could be the bin or you can challenge them, by asking them to throw it through your arms (making a hoop) over the bin.
- **Ball Play:** You start by throwing a small soft ball /bean bag or teddy to your child and anytime someone catches the ball they say something that makes them happy.
- **Block Play:** You construct a wall of building blocks and ask your child to roll a ball / throw a bean bag to knock the blocks down. You can challenge them to move farther away.
- **Ball, Straw and Cup:** Using a table or flat surface, blow down a straw and blow a foam ball / ping pong ball or a Malteser along the surface to your child. They can and the catch it in a paper cup (or in their mouth if it's a Malteser!) You can swap and take turns.
- **Balloon Pass:** Using a blown-up balloon, simply knock it into the air and pass it to each other. You can challenge each other by naming a body part to balance the balloon on to pass it round to the other person.

Protective Behaviours Activities to do with Your Child

We recommend that you try each of these activities for yourself first before completing with your child. Each activity can be as creative as you and your child want to make it.

Early Warning Signs

Equipment needed, large roll of paper (we often use a roll of wallpaper), felt tip pens.

This activity is designed to help children identify the physical signs that occur in their bodies when they do not feel safe. We call these signs, early warning signs. Once a child can identify their early warning signs, we can then work with them to help explore strategies to action when they feel unsafe.



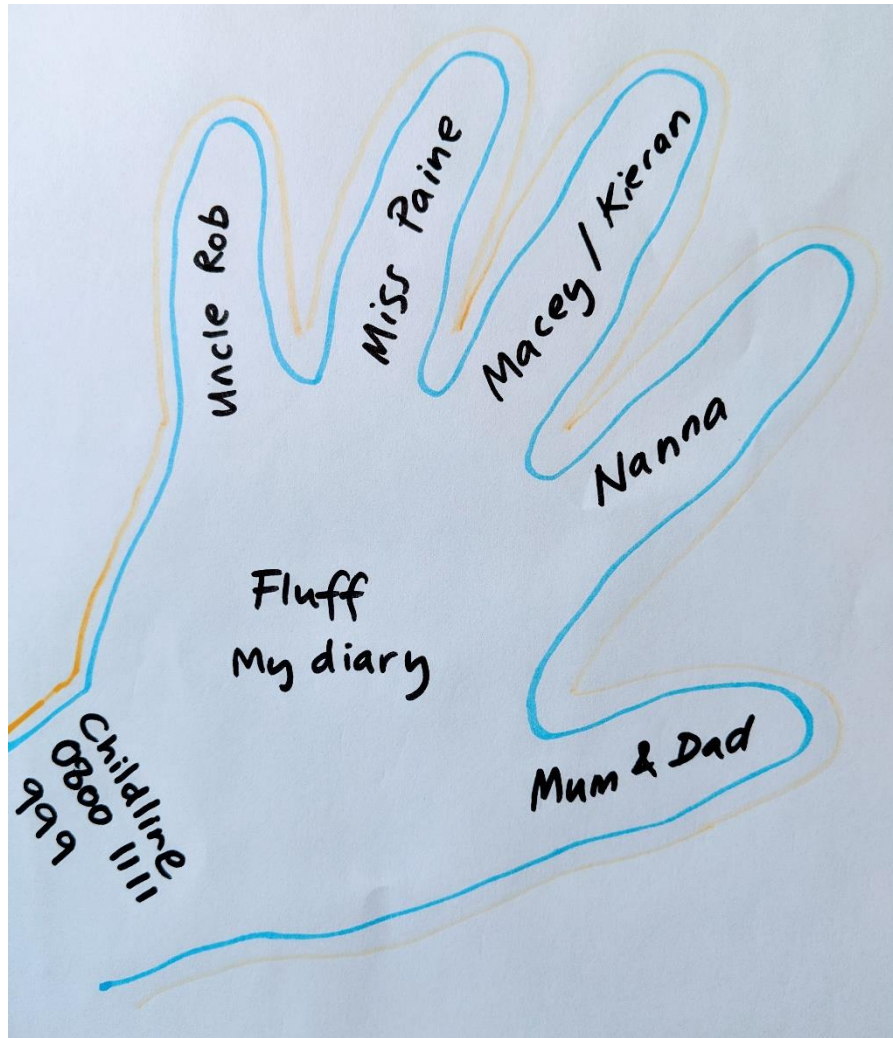
You can use the gingerbread person above, draw a large gingerbread person on paper, or if your child consents, you could roll out some paper and ask your child to lay on it and draw around them. Ask your child to think about what happens in their body when they feel unsafe. Try to help them name the signs themselves, however it may be necessary to help them with some example, such as butterflies in stomach, shaky legs, pounding heartbeat. As your child names different early warning signs, encourage them to draw or write them onto the gingerbread person. It may be necessary to revisit this activity throughout the week as your child learns more about their early warning signs.

This activity can be as creative as you want to make it!

Support Network

Equipment needed, paper, felt tip pens.

This activity is designed to help child identify whom they might be able to turn to when they do not feel safe. You can link the previous activity to this one, by encouraging your child to think about who they would like to talk to when they experience the early warning signs.



Ask your child to draw around their hand and then to think about people they can go to if they have a problem. Then write the name of different people on each finger. Use a finger for each part of child's life, for example, home, school, friends, extended family, staff at clubs etc. The sleeve area is a section reserved for emergencies, such as Child Line or 999. The palm section is designed to be used as a rehearsal space, so for practicing conversations, and includes pets, diary, journaling etc.

The support network is most effective if it is reviewed on a regular basis and after every time it is used. This ensures that the names on it are current and up to date.

How to make a worry box

Equipment needed, an old tissue box, felt tip pens, glue, colourful bits and pieces to decorate box. Small pieces of paper to write worries on.

Most children experience anxiety at some point in their lives and small amount of anxiety is normal. However, anxiety is not healthy if children are experiencing it on a daily basis and it is preventing them from enjoying a normal childhood. This activity is designed to give your child an opportunity to communicate their worries. If you simply tell children not to worry, you are minimizing their feelings. Through using the worry box, you are providing them with a process to work through their worries.



Work with your child to decorate an old tissue box and encourage them to be as creative as possible using coloured pens, stickers or collage paper. Explain that this box is a place for them to record any worries they might have. We recommend finding a regular time each day for you and your child to write down their worries and put them into the box. Before or after dinner can be a good time, so long as it is not too close to bedtime. We also recommend not doing this activity in the child's bedroom, so that their bedroom is not being associated with their worries. The next day you can take out the previous worries and check if this is still a concern to your child, if not you can tear it up and if it is still a concern, it can be discussed briefly and then go back in the box.

Self-Care Activities for Parents

Self-care is any activity that we do to look after our mental, emotional and physical well-being, it looks different for every individual. Sometimes when children experience victimisation parents can prioritise their children's needs and neglect their own well-being, this can result in the parent feeling overwhelmed and not being able to successfully support their child. Instead it is essential that you look after yourself alongside supporting your child, as highlighted with the oxygen mask analogy in the introduction.

In developing self-care strategies, it can be helpful to break this down into two sections.

1. Non-negotiable self-care for every day
2. Go-to strategies for when you are feeling overwhelmed

Some examples of non-negotiable self-care strategies

- A 10-minute meditation at the start and/or end of every day
- a daily walk or run around your local park
- a daily yoga routine
- doing a craft activity
- gardening
- Any hobby which you find fun
- Practicing mindfulness
- An exercise workout
- Reading a chapter of a book or your favourite magazine
- A cup of tea by yourself with no distractions

Some of these activities can also be helpful to remember if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. It is also important for you to identify your support network, so that you can ask for help or just chat with someone when you need to.

Sometimes meditation, mindfulness and breathing exercises can help if you are feeling stressed. Below are some ideas for simple exercises to practice in your own time.

Chocolate Mindfulness

This activity is a good introduction to mindfulness.

This activity can be done by yourself, with your child or with your whole family at once. Best results are produced if this activity is conducted in silence, other than one person reading out the instructions. If during the activity, participants have things they want to say, they can write them down to be discussed after.

This should take around 3-4 minutes. You will need small wrapped individual chocolates enough for one per person. Take your time facilitating this activity with pauses between each stage. There are no correct answers in this activity, just individual experiences.

Instructions:

Do not eat the chocolate yet, just hold one in your hand.

Think about the wrapper, does it make a sound as you move it around in your hand? What colour is the wrapper? Does it say anything on the wrapper? Think about where the chocolate came from.

Slowly unwrap the chocolate. Do you have an urge to eat the chocolate immediately? What physical sensations are you experiencing? What emotions are you feeling?

Look at the chocolate - Consider its texture, colour, weight.

Smell the chocolate - does the smell trigger any other senses?

Place the chocolate in your mouth but DO NOT EAT!!

How does it feel as it melts?

Where in your mouth can you taste it?

What is the consistency?

What is happening with your mouth, teeth, tongue, lips as it melts?

Move the chocolate around your mouth

Does the area of taste change?

Does the taste itself change?

What is happening to the chocolate?

How do you feel?

Swallow the chocolate, focusing on the sensation.

Is there a lingering taste?

How do you feel physically and emotionally?

Take a little while to consider the experience.

Discussion Questions.

How was this different from your general chocolate-eating experiences?

More intense? Frustrating? More pleasurable?

Were you more aware of your emotions during the exercise?

Would this change your future experience of eating chocolate?

Why?

5,4,3,2,1 Senses Activity

This activity can be done by yourself or with your child. It is a calming technique that can help you feel more grounded when faced with a tough or stressful situation.

5 Look: Name five things that you can see and say them out loud, for example “I can see the book, the fruit bowl...”

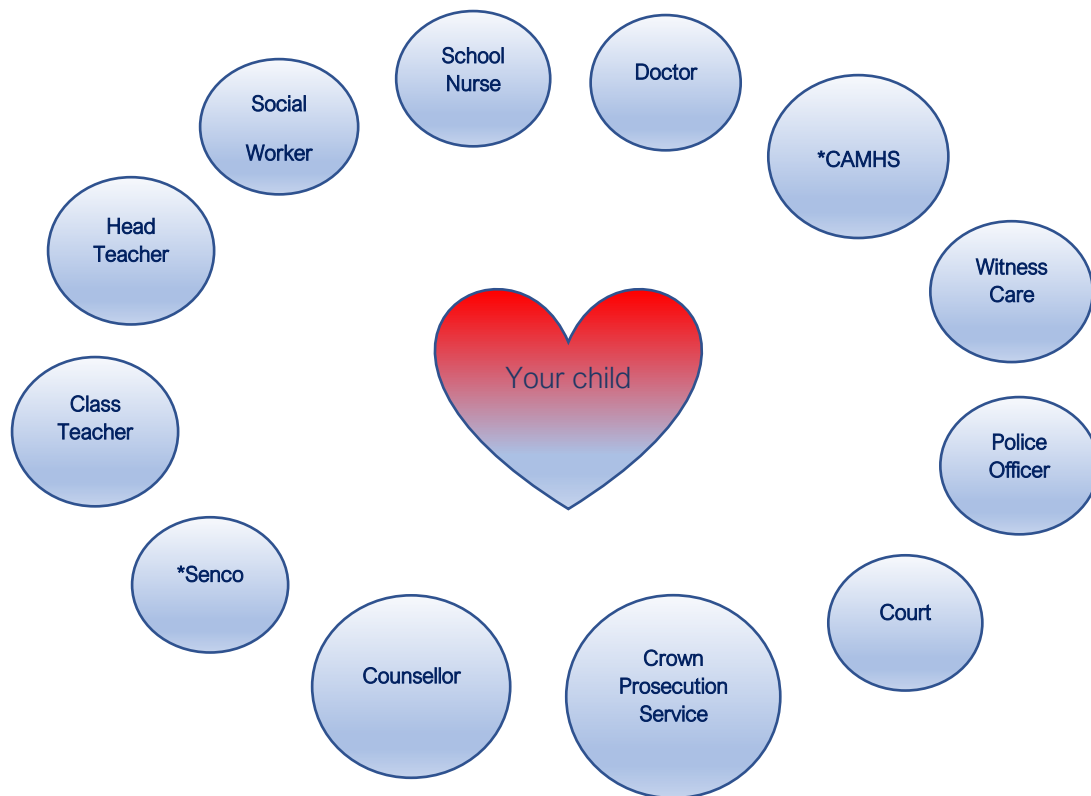
4 Feel: Name four things that you can feel, say them out loud and describe how it feels, for example, “I can feel the window and it is smooth and cold, I can feel the cushion...”

3 Listen: Listen for three sounds. It could be people talking in the next room, or the traffic outside.

2 Smell: Say two things that you can smell, for example, I can smell the food cooking. If you cannot smell anything, name your two favourite smells.

1 Taste: Say one thing that you can taste. For example, toothpaste from brushing teeth or coffee. If you cannot taste anything, name your favourite taste and take a deep breath.

Engaging with Professionals



- i) *An illustration of some of the services who may be involved with your family due to an experience of victimisation.*

**CAMHS is the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service*

The Senco is a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (based in schools)

It can be hard when it seems like there are so many people involved with your family, particularly when you or your child feel you must retell your story repeatedly to new professionals when there are personnel changes. Parents / Carers and children and young people tell us that it can become frustrating working with so many people and that it is hard when they just don't 'click' or seem to understand things from the family's perspective. However, it is important to try and manage your own emotions around working with professionals, as this can help with your overall levels of stress and those of your child.

- **You can ask questions and you are entitled to regular updates from professionals** - In the UK the information, support and services which victims are entitled to from the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is set out in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. This sets out your rights (and those of your child) including your right to be kept informed about the progress of your case, amongst others. You have the right to ask for information and challenge professionals if they are not upholding your rights as outlined in the Victims Code.
- **Try to keep your child updated about things** – It is up to you to think about what and when to share with your child, in terms of sharing information with them or updates from meetings. You will know your child best and what else they have going on in their life as to when the timing feels right. Children and young people often say that they feel 'out of the loop' about

what is happening and parents tell us that they don't want to get their child's hopes up or upset them by sharing too much. Generally speaking, it is usually best for your child to know – even if it's bad news. You can share information with them in an age appropriate way so that they can have the choice to talk to you about it and ask questions.

- **Rights under the Equality Act** – In the UK the Equality Act sets out clear expectations for local authorities and their workers in terms of ensuring that people are not discriminated against because of their age, gender, race or religion or disabilities, to name a few. Public services are required by law to make reasonable adjustments in these cases to meet yours / your child's needs. You are entitled to request support to help you to access buildings where meetings are being held, or to understand information being shared with you.
- **Make use of an advocate** – It can be useful to take a friend or family member along to meetings with you, try and ask someone who will stay calm and can help you to keep calm.
- **Familiarise yourself with complaints policies and procedures** – If people / organisations aren't doing what they are meant to be, you have the right to make a complaint. E.g. if your child is experiencing bullying at school there will be policy about how the school will manage this, including a section about how to escalate concerns if things are not being resolved.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

“Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously.”

Social Media

At SAFE! we find that many of the young people we support talk to us about social media and we hear about the impact that it can have on their self-esteem and emotional welfare. This can be due to other young people making negative comments. It can also be seeing adults having public arguments via social media or contacting young people on their behalf.

For a young person social media can strengthen and help to maintain friendships and family relationships (especially long distance), connect them to other young people that have similar interests and introduce them to a range of topics and opinions. However, if not managed properly it can also have negative effects, especially for children who have been affected by trauma. Your child will undoubtedly be given advice surrounding the use of social media and healthy relationships through their school but there are ways that you can help too.

So what can you do?

Set a good example to your child about how to use social media. Don't engage in arguments with adults or children via social media on your child's behalf.

- If you feel someone is being abusive or posting inappropriately then contact the social media platform to report them and block them (meaning you will no longer see posts from this person and they can't contact you)
- If you feel the posts or messages are threatening or indecent then you should speak to the police.
- In some cases you may feel it is necessary to remove social media completely to keep your child safe, but where possible try to compromise and understand the positives that may come from it. For example, taking away all forms of social media may make your child feel more isolated if that is the main way they speak to their supportive friends.
- Try to take an interest in what they are doing and what apps they are using online. By knowing what they are accessing you can do some research into how to use it safely and share this with them.
- Don't use social media to look up or contact people related to the crime and/or bullying that has affected your child.
- Explain why you are monitoring/ restricting their use of social media. It may feel like a punishment to them so it is important that you take the time to speak about your concerns and allow them the space to express their opinion.

SAFE! has developed another website with young people to look at some of the issues that they are facing online www.safestories.org



Further information and resources

Books for children

Virginia Ironside, *"The Huge Bag of Worries"*

Dawn Huebner *"What to do when you worry too much - A kids guide to overcoming Anxiety"*

"No Worries Mindful Kids - An activity book for children who sometimes feel anxious or stressed"

Books for parents

Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish, *"How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk"*

Eliane Whitehouse & Warwick Pudney *"A volcano in my tummy: helping children to handle anger: a resource book for parents, caregivers and teachers"*

Holly-Ann Martin & Tracey Gibbs *"A Parent's Guide to Child Protection Education: how to teach children body safety and abuse prevention"*

Books about trauma

Bessel Van der Kolk, *"The Body Keeps the Score"*

Self-care and meditation apps

Headspace

Calm

Useful Organisations

Child Line – www.childline.org.uk - 0800 1111

Child Exploitation & Online Protection (CEOP) – www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre