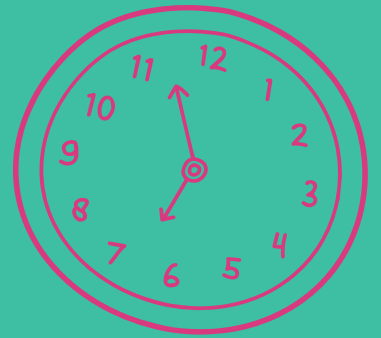


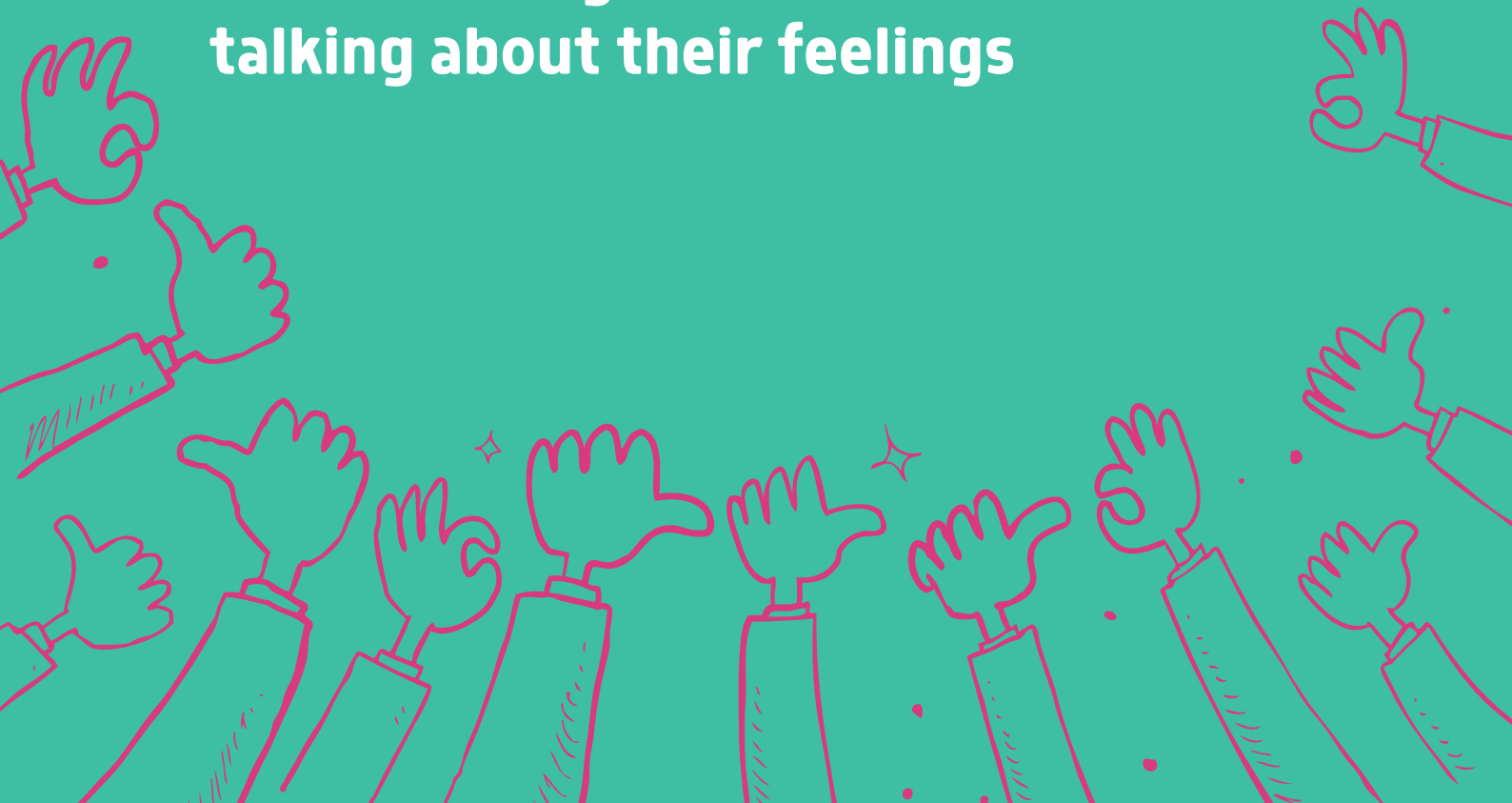


Mental Health
Foundation
Scotland



Time for US

Activities to get adults and children
talking about their feelings



Time for Us

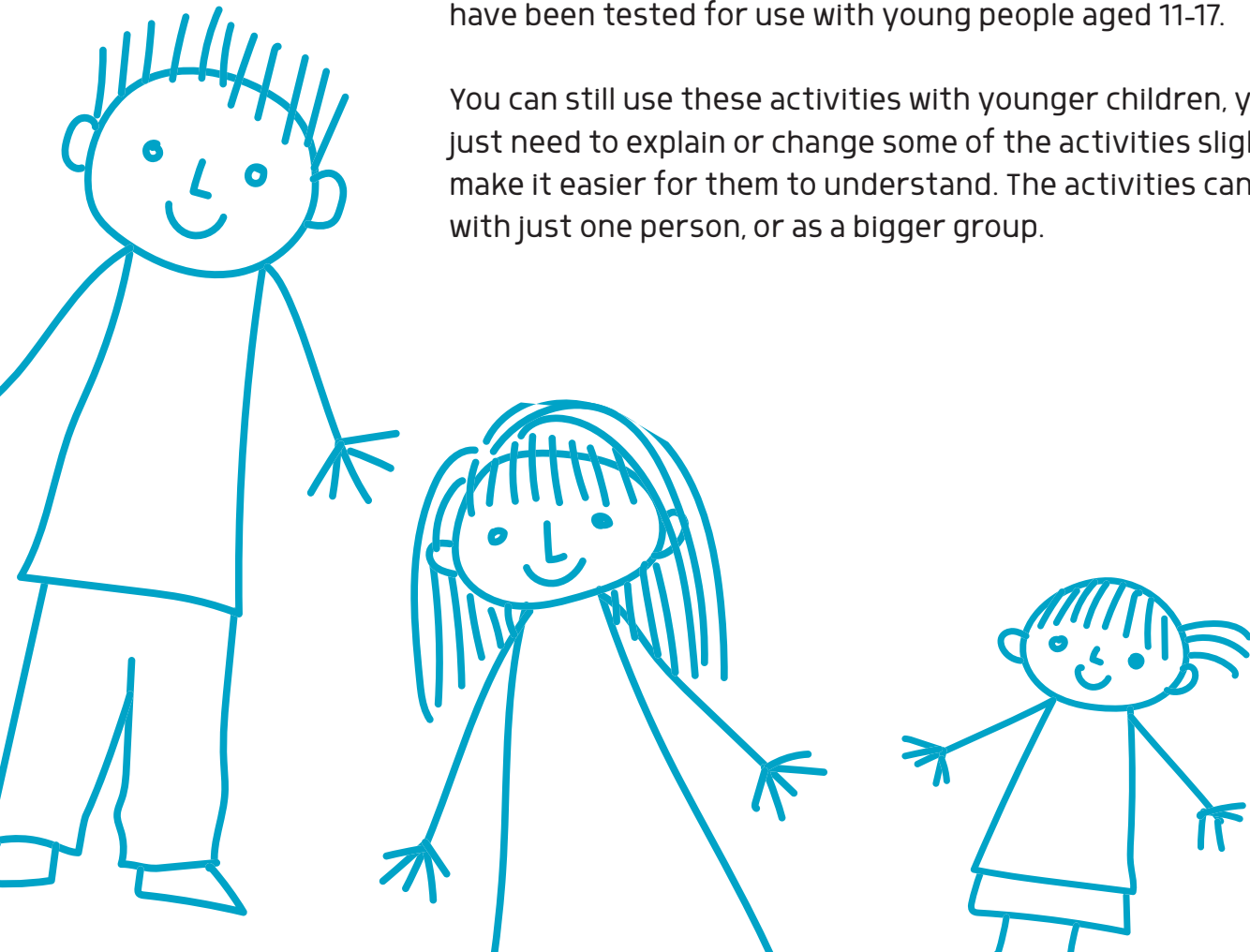
We are facing a challenging time at the moment and this can affect everybody's mental wellbeing and put a strain on relationships. We have some advice on [Parenting during COVID-19](#) on our website and this activity pack is designed for anyone with caring responsibilities for children and young people to provide some practical activities to use.

These activities are designed to start some of those more difficult conversations and to help you:

- understand more about how different people are feeling
- understand how each individual copes best
- think about how you can support each other in managing some of the stresses you may all be facing

These activities have been drawn from a pack called StressLESS, which was created by the Families, Children and Young People team in Scotland. The activities are intended to be led by an adult and have been tested for use with young people aged 11-17.

You can still use these activities with younger children, you may just need to explain or change some of the activities slightly to make it easier for them to understand. The activities can be used with just one person, or as a bigger group.



How to use this activity pack



All you need to do these activities are:

- the instructions and templates in this pack
- pens or pencils
- blank paper

This pack contains four activities:

- **My Big Three** - understanding how we cope
- **Individuali-tree** - strategies for coping
- **Squad Stories** - friendships and connections
- **Campaign for Change** - helping others to help ourselves

The instructions for the adult in each activity explain:

- **WHY** you might want to use this activity
- **WHEN** you might want to do this activity
- **HOW** to do this activity
- **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT** after the activity, that might get everyone talking about how they are feeling and how you can support each other

THINGS TO REMEMBER

These are some key things to remember throughout and after the activity. You can use these text boxes around the page to help you explain the activity better.



My Big Three

Understanding how we cope

If we understand our personalities, our habits and choices, we can plan ahead to reduce stress and play to our strengths.

Why?

- Thinking about ways that we are all different can help us understand others
- Thinking about our personalities can help us figure out how we manage feelings of stress

When?

You can do this anytime, but it might be most useful when there is some conflict between individuals.

We go through many changes and experiences in our lives. Our personalities change over time or even depending on the situation and who we are with.

How?

1 Explain why this activity could be useful and what it is going to involve. You could say something like:

"We're going to spend some time thinking about the ways we are similar and the ways we are different and what we might need to stay happy and healthy. We are all made up of how we think, feel and behave - these characteristics make up our individual personality. We are going to look at three different scales with different characteristics a person might have, and think about where we sit on that scale. We see examples of other scales all the time, like hot to cold, biggest to smallest - they show us one extreme to another opposite extreme."

2 Decide how you will use the template (template is on the next page). For this activity, each person can work on their own template or you could all work from one template, giving an opportunity to compare and discuss. Although we have provided the template to copy, you may choose to get creative and use items around you to create the scale.

3 Explain that although the template highlights the two extreme ends of each scale, most people are somewhere in between.

4 Follow these steps for each scale:

- As a group, read through the descriptions and questions provided for each end of the scale.
- Either discuss as a group or individually think about where on the scale you spend most of the time
- Each person should then mark on the scale where they see themselves
- Each person, if they feel comfortable, explains why they chose that point

Each end of the scale represents the extreme version of that characteristic. Most people will be somewhere in the middle and neither end of the scale is better or worse than the other.

Things to think about

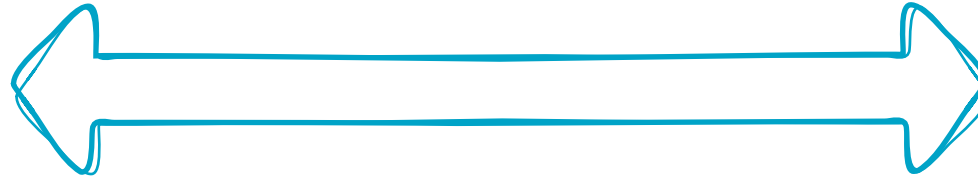
- What are my particular strengths? (e.g. I'm a great listener, I'm really organised)
- What situations do I find particularly stressful? (e.g. I find lots of noise and people stressful, I find it hard being by myself, I find it difficult when I don't know what's happening)
- What could we all do differently to help each other manage our stresses? (e.g. we could plan a mixture of time to each be alone and to do things together to make sure everyone gets what they need)

My Big Three

Extrovert

Fun loving. Affectionate. Friendly. Outgoing. Energetic.

- When you are with friends, would you be the centre of attention and chatting to everyone?
- Would you volunteer to answer questions in school?
- Do you enjoy taking the lead in situations?



Introvert

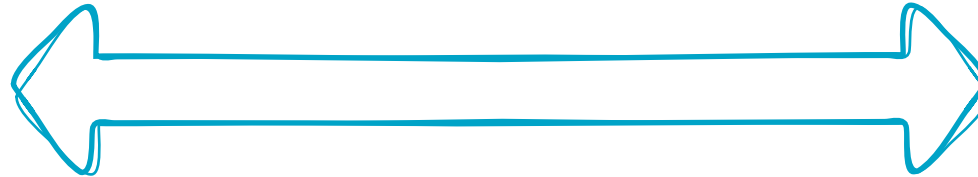
Shy. Soft Spoken. Quiet. Solitary. Introspective. Calm.

- Do you prefer spending time alone or with a small group of people?
- In school, do you prefer not to speak in front of the class?
- Do you find it hard meeting new people?

Open

Creative. Curious. Imaginative. Loves trying new things.

- Do you like surprises in your day?
- Do you say the first thing that comes into your head?
- Do you enjoy change?



Cautious

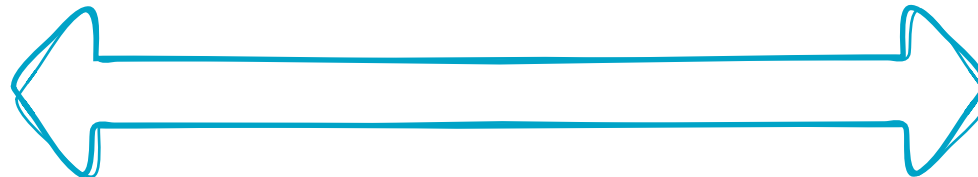
Moderated. Plans ahead. Logical. Restrained.

- Do you prefer to plan things ahead of time?
- Do you get agitated when your plans change at the last minute?
- Do you prefer to take your time to think before speaking?

Emotional

Self-critical. Nervous. Timid. Easily Upset. Worried often.

- Do you panic under pressure?
- Do you find yourself worrying about things day to day?
- Do you find it difficult to relax?



Even-tempered

Calm. Level-Headed. Secure. Balanced. Patient. Relaxed.

- Do you thrive under pressure?
- Can you stay on your work when you feel sad or upset?
- Do you usually feel relaxed?

Individuali-tree

Strategies for coping

It is okay that everyone has different things that stress them out and make them feel calm or energised.

Why?

- We are facing lots of stress at the moment
- We all have different ways of coping with stress
- Remembering ways we have coped in other stressful situations can help us now
- Other people might have good ideas for coping that we haven't thought of

When?

This activity could be helpful when young people are bored, feeling low and finding it hard to stay positive.

How?

- 1 Explain why this activity could be useful and what it is going to involve. You could say something like:
"We have all been feeling a bit stressed and low recently, so we are going to think about how we can make ourselves and each other feel a bit better"
- 2 Print or draw a copy of the tree template onto blank paper (template is on the next page). You could do one each or do one together as a group.
- 3 Fill in each of the four sections of the tree with words or drawings. If you are all contributing to one tree, you might want to pick a different colour for each person. You could talk through each of the four sections in turn before you start. The sections are:
 - **Stresses** - fill the roots of the tree with things that you find stressful
 - **Chill me out** - fill this branch and its leaves with things that help calm you down
 - **Energise me** - fill this branch and its leaves with things that lift your mood and make you feel more positive
 - **Check me out** - fill this branch and its leaves with things that make you think 'check me out!', the things that you are good at and are proud of
- 4 Once you have filled in the whole tree, you could put it up somewhere as a visual reminder of the coping strategies you all have for dealing with stressful situations. You can add to it if you think of new things or even start each day by making a plan based on things you have put on your tree.

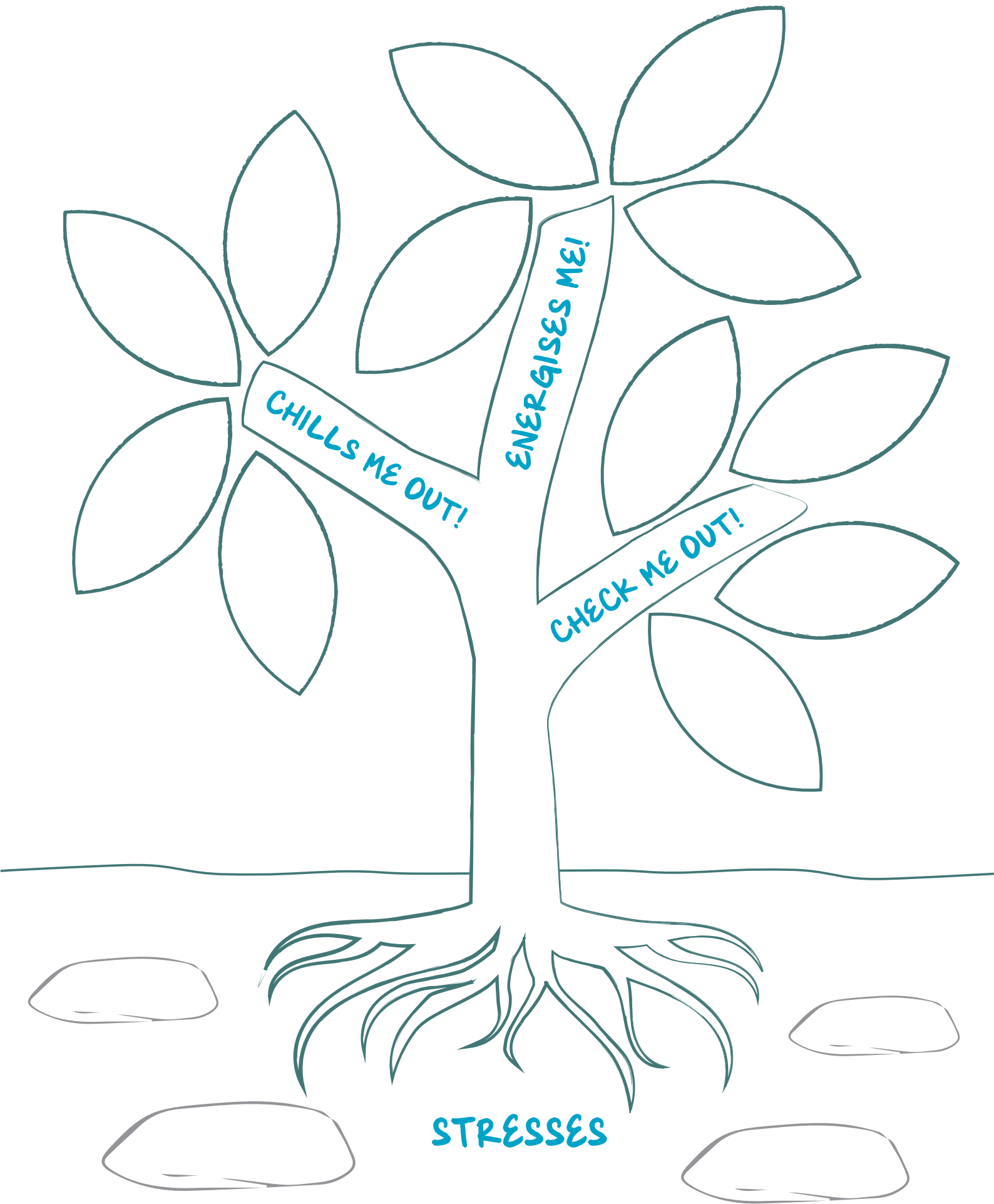
It is important to figure out what works for you as a person, both in the moment to calm you down or to make sure you are in a good place to deal with anything that comes up.

Things to think about

- Are there gaps in my/our tree that I/we need to fill? (e.g. I don't really have things that I am good at and that I'm proud of, but I do have lots of ways to calm myself down)
- How can I make sure I remember to use these things when I need them most? (e.g. if music is a way to help lift my mood, maybe I can make some new playlists to listen to)
- What can we do to help each other find new ways of coping with stressful situations? (e.g. we could start the day by planning what we will each do to chill out and to energise ourselves)

Some of our usual ways of calming down or lifting our mood might not be available to us right now so we can help each other find new ways to cope.

Individuali-tree



CHILLS ME OUT!

ENERGISES ME!

CHECK ME OUT!

STRESSES

Squad Stories

Friendships and connections

What matters is that the friendships we have are positive and make us feel good.

Why?

- The positive relationships we have in our lives are really important for our wellbeing
- Celebrating the people we feel connected to can lift our mood
- We don't have the same opportunities we usually have to see our friends and family so we can use this time to think of new ways to keep in touch

When?

This activity might be helpful when young people are missing seeing friends and family and are feeling lonely.

It can be really good for us to take some time to remind ourselves about the connections we have.

How?

- 1 Explain why this activity could be useful and what it is going to involve. You could say something like:
"We are all missing our friends and family right now, so we are going to spend some time thinking about them and about how we can still connect with them even though things are different right now."
- 2 Explain that you are doing to think about all of the people you have around you - friends, family, neighbours, teachers etc. Imagine you are part of a sports team and these people are your fellow teammates and your supporters. This is your squad.
- 3 Using a blank sheet of paper, draw a big sports field. Draw pictures or write names of your squad onto your sports field - get creative, draw your field or court however you imagine it!
- 4 Print or draw a copy of the template onto blank paper (template is on the next page). Pick out one person in particular who you are really close with. On the main part of the template, draw them or write their name.
- 5 Fill in the boxes at the bottom of the template about this person:
 - **Player Since** - when did you first meet or connect with this person?
 - **Skills** - what qualities do they have? What do you like about them? Why are they a good friend?
 - **Training** - how do you keep your friendship with this person? How do you stay in touch?
- 6 You can complete this template for as many members of your squad as you like. You might want to share these with the people in your squad to make them feel special.

Friendships take effort - sometimes we need to be bold to make a new friend, other times we need to keep in touch with an old friend.

Things to think about

- What opportunities do I have right now to **make** a new friend? (e.g. I could help out one of our neighbours)
- What opportunities do I have right now to **be** a good friend to someone I am already close with? (e.g. I can make sure I am there for them if they need to talk)
- What opportunities do I have right now to **keep** connections with people who mean a lot to me? (e.g. I could organise a video call quiz night for my close friends)



MY SQUAD



MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

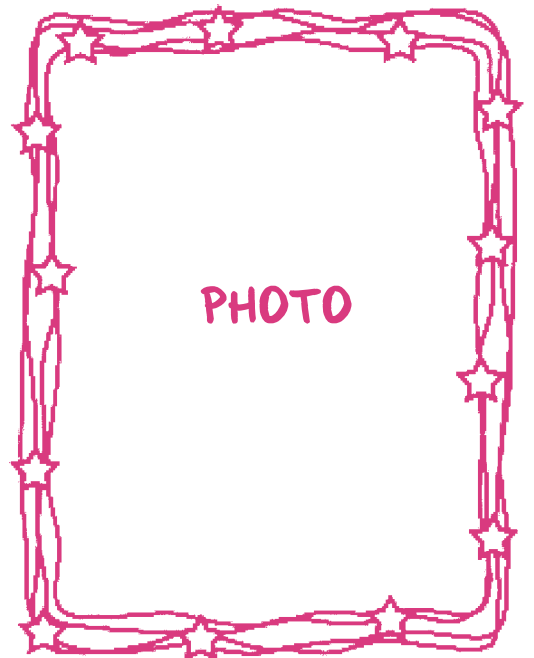
NAME:

PLAYER SINCE:

SKILLS:

TRAINING:

.....



Campaign for Change

Helping others to help ourselves

Why?

- Thinking about and helping others can make us feel good
- Being part of a group or project can help us feel like we belong

When?

This activity might be useful when young people are feeling overwhelmed with news and conversations about coronavirus and need to focus on something beyond it.

We spend a lot of time talking about how to care for ourselves, but we also know that it is good for our health to care for others.

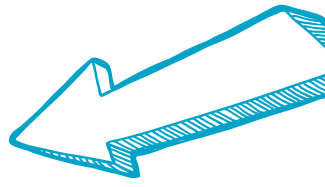
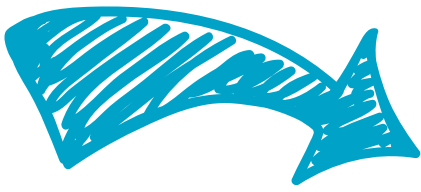
How?

- 1 Explain why this activity could be useful and what it is going to involve. You could say something like:
"We have all been thinking a lot about ourselves lately, how we can stay safe and happy at home. It can also feel good to think about other people, so we are going to spend some time imagining ways we can help others."
- 2 Think about examples of adverts or posters you might have seen that have been raising awareness about a cause and asking for help - this is usually part of something called a campaign, often from charities, to get support for an issue they have noticed. If you are able to use the internet or have some magazines or newspapers, use these to research some examples.
- 3 Think about what stood out about these particular campaigns and what made them memorable.
- 4 Decide on one person to imagine that they have a pot of money. The aim of this activity is for the others to convince this person to give them some of that money to support a cause that they are passionate about.
- 5 Ask everyone to think of a cause that they feel passionate about - this could be a problem you have seen or experienced for yourself, something in your community or wider world.
- 6 Each person should print or draw the template onto blank paper (template is on the next page). Using the template - but please get creative and have fun with it! - complete the sections using the descriptions below to create a campaign for your cause:
 - **Campaign Name** - find a name that is short and snappy
 - **Our Slogan** - come up with a slogan that is catchy and tells everyone what the campaign is about
 - **Why you should care** - think about the reasons why this cause is so important, what issues it raises and why you need the money the most
 - **Image** - draw a logo or cut and paste some images that show what your campaign is about
 - **What we'll spend the money on** - think about what you would spend the money on, do you have solutions to the problem you have noticed, how can you fix it?
- 7 Each person takes turns to present their campaign to the person with the pot of money and have them judge it. At the end, they decide who gets the money for their cause.

Things to think about

- How did it feel thinking about what I could do to make an impact on something I care about? (e.g. I felt positive, like I could make a difference)
- What could we do to help other people or a cause during this time? (e.g. we could check in with our elderly neighbours and help them with their shopping)

Caring about others and the world around us is good for our self-esteem. It reminds us of a bigger picture and helps us to feel valued, knowing that we matter and have an effect on other people.



CAMPAIGN NAME!

“OUR SLOGAN!”

Why you
should
care...

IMAGE

WHAT WE'LL SPEND THE
MONEY ON!



Additional Resources and Information

There is a lot of information out there about looking after yourselves and those around you during this time. We have included some useful links below to guidance and sources of support for our mental health and wellbeing:

- **Mental Health Foundation:** coping with Coronavirus - a guide for young people
- **Mental Health Foundation:** how to look after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak
- **Mental Health Foundation:** a range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health
- **Young Scot:** information about the current Coronavirus outbreak and what you can do
- **Childline:** counselling service for children and young people
- **British Government:** guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- **Scottish Government:** Clear Your Head - tips and ideas to help get you through the Coronavirus outbreak
- **NHS & Every Mind Matters:** looking after children and young people during the Coronavirus outbreak
- **Anna Freud - National Centre for Children & Families:** COVID-19 support for families, children, young people and professionals
- **See Me:** talking about mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak
- **SAMH:** Coronavirus mental health information hub



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