

Anger and Anxiety in Boys

Coffee mornings Pre Form



Agenda

- What is anger?
- Consequences
- Understanding the underlying causes
- Relationship Building
- Self-Regulation and Self Care
- Prevention
- Responsive Strategies

What is anger?

- Anger is a natural human emotion that arises often as a response to a perceived threats, injustices , or frustrations.
- It can range from mild irritation to intense rage and, when not managed effectively, may manifest in aggressive behaviours that impact learning, relationships, and wellbeing-both for the individual and those around.

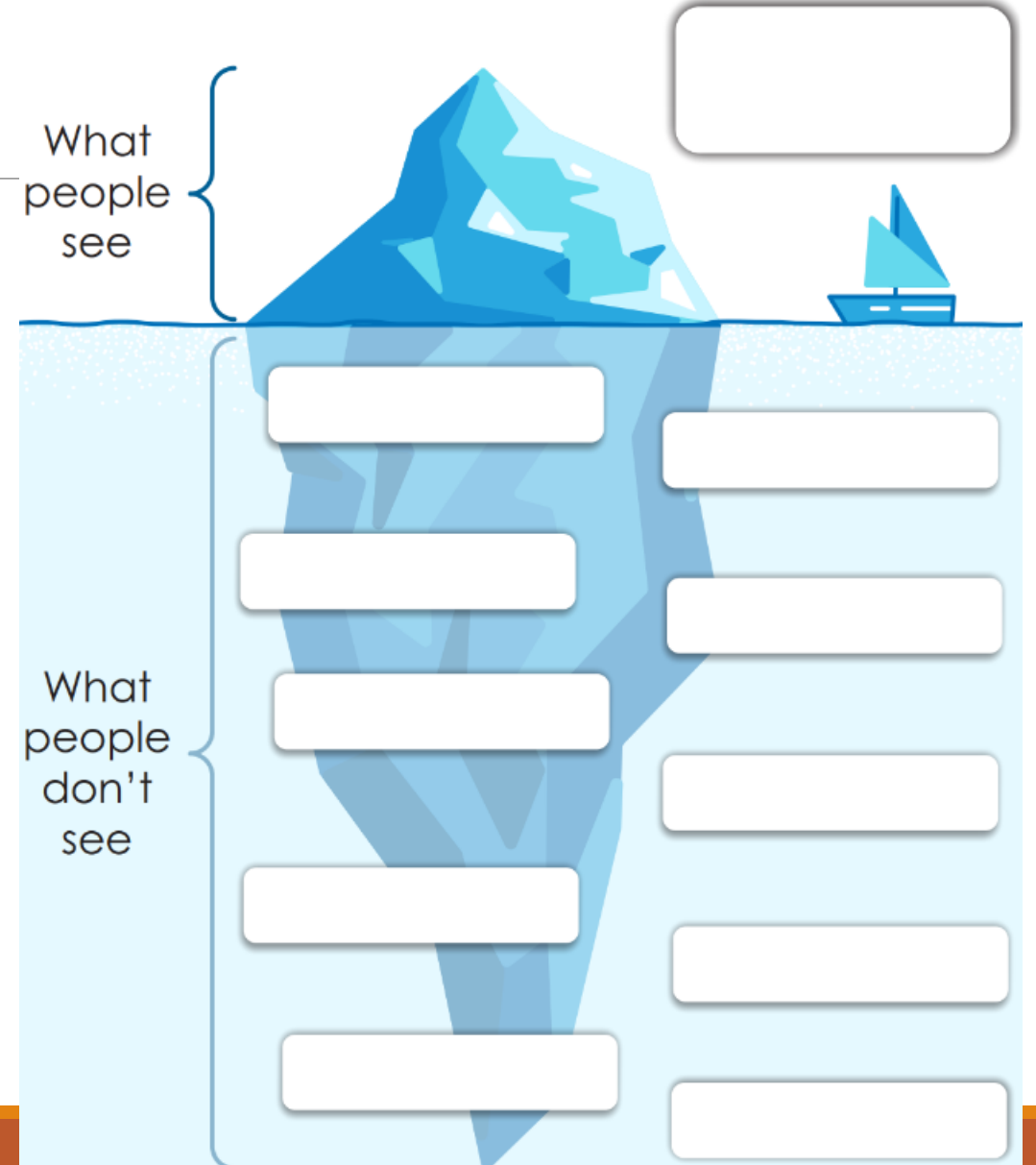
Consequences

- When a boy displays anger through disruptive or aggressive behaviour it is natural for the adults around them to respond with consequences.
- Clear boundaries and accountability are essential, however, it is equally important to recognise that consequence without understanding can miss valuable opportunities for emotional growth.
- Anger often masks other feelings such as fear or shame.
- Rather than just responding with discipline you can also give space for conversation.

THE ANGER ICEBERG



THE EMOTION ICEBERG



Understanding Anger in Boys - Beyond Behaviour

- Developmental & Societal Influences
 - Boys often socialised to suppress vulnerability
 - Anger as a more "acceptable" emotional outlet. (Pollack, 1998)
 - Delays in developing emotional regulation and verbal expression in childhood.
- Trauma and socioeconomic factors
 - Exposure to instability neglect or violence can influence on expressions of emotions and lead to more behaviour that is seen as aggressive due to impact on emotional regulation (Perry & Szalavitz, 2017)
- Which boys are we more likely to view as aggressive?
 - Adultification – viewing children and young people as older and less innocent. This is often down to marginalised or racialised young people. (Davis & Marsh, 2020)
 - Racial and class-based biases (Gillborn, 2008)
- Not all anger is misbehaviour it may also be a message of greater need.

Psychoeducation

Two key brain areas help manage emotions

- Amygdala → reacts to strong emotions and perceived danger
- Prefrontal cortex → planning, thinking, decision making → isn't fully developed until aged 25

When we feel calm, the prefrontal cortex stays in charge.

When we feel threatened or overwhelmed, the amygdala takes over.

The amygdala sends signals to react quickly—sometimes before we've had a chance to think.

This can lead to saying or doing things we later regret.

With practice, we can **recognise the signs** and **create a pause** before reacting.



Spotting the Signs of Anger in Young People

Reflective Questions:

How do you usually tell when your child is beginning to feel angry?

What signs—verbal, physical, or emotional—do you look for?

Are there patterns? (e.g. time of day, after a specific activity)

How do you respond in the moment?

Are there any situations where you've reflected and thought, "I could have handled that differently?"

How can we manage our own responses when we notice a child showing early signs?



Importance of positive relationships

- **Relationships are protective**

- A trusted adult can buffer the effects of stress and help regulate emotions.

- **Connection before correction**

- When a young person feels understood, they're more open to guidance and boundaries.

- **Emotional safety supports learning**

- Positive relationships help create a calm internal state.

- **Consistency and reliability**

- Even small, predictable interactions (e.g. noticing changes in mood) can make a big impact over time.

- **Mentalisation**

- Understanding what a child might be thinking or feeling helps us respond with empathy rather than reactivity.

- **Repair is key**

- All relationships have ruptures. Taking time to acknowledge and repair helps rebuild trust and models emotional resilience.

Being good role models - Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Bobo Doll (0:33-1:34)

[Social Learning Theory: Bandura's Bobo B](#)



- Children learn behaviours from the people around them, especially those they see as authoritative figures

Creating Spaces for Children to Talk

- **Strike while the iron is cold**
 - **Children will likely be unable to express how they feel when dysregulated, find a time when they are calm to revisit specific incidents**
- **Young person to take the lead**
 - **Communicate clearly with the young person that this is their space to express their feelings during a difficult episode and that no one will interrupt them for a certain amount of time ~10 mins**
 - **Adults to not ask questions or give suggestions at this point, as they may want to feel heard and not judged**
- **Ending this space**
 - **After the designated time period/a considerable amount of silence, ask if they would like more time to talk**
 - **Ask if they would like some time to regulate/ if they'd like to you to provide support**

Creating Spaces to Talk Troubleshooting

- **Be comfortable with silence!**
- **Repeat after the child**
 - **Checking understanding**
 - **Shows that although you are not leading the conversation, you are still engaged**
- **Giving suggestions**
 - **Normalise, "I often feel like this.... when I'm angry"; "things like make me feel upset"; "One time, I acted out like... because of..."**
 - **Phrase suggestions as questions after normalising statement, "... is that similar to what happened?", "is that similar to how you felt?"**
- **If a child becomes dysregulated during this conversation, regulate using breathing and grounding techniques**

Preventative - Positive self-talk

What is self-talk?

The internal voice we all have (what we say to ourselves in our minds)

Negative self-talk can fuel anxiety, anger, and low self-esteem.

Positive self-talk helps regulate emotions, build confidence, and reduce overreactions.

How adults can support:

Model positive self-talk out loud.

Prompt children with alternative ways of thinking.

Reinforce effort, not just outcome.

Common negative self-talk in young people:

“I always mess things up.”

“Everyone’s laughing at me.”

“There’s no point in trying.”

Helpful alternatives:

“I made a mistake, but I can try again.”

“People might not be thinking what I think they are.”

“This is hard, but I’ve done hard things before.”

Strategy - Emotional regulation – crisis curve.

Helpful Parent Behaviours

Rumbling Stage

- Stay calm
- Talk quietly
- Take deep breaths
- Stay close (if your child likes or wants this)
- Avoid conflict
- Don't get into a battle for power
- Be empathetic and understanding
- Use some of the suggested strategies
- Attempt to distract or redirect your child
- Be flexible; your child may not be able to.

Rage Stage

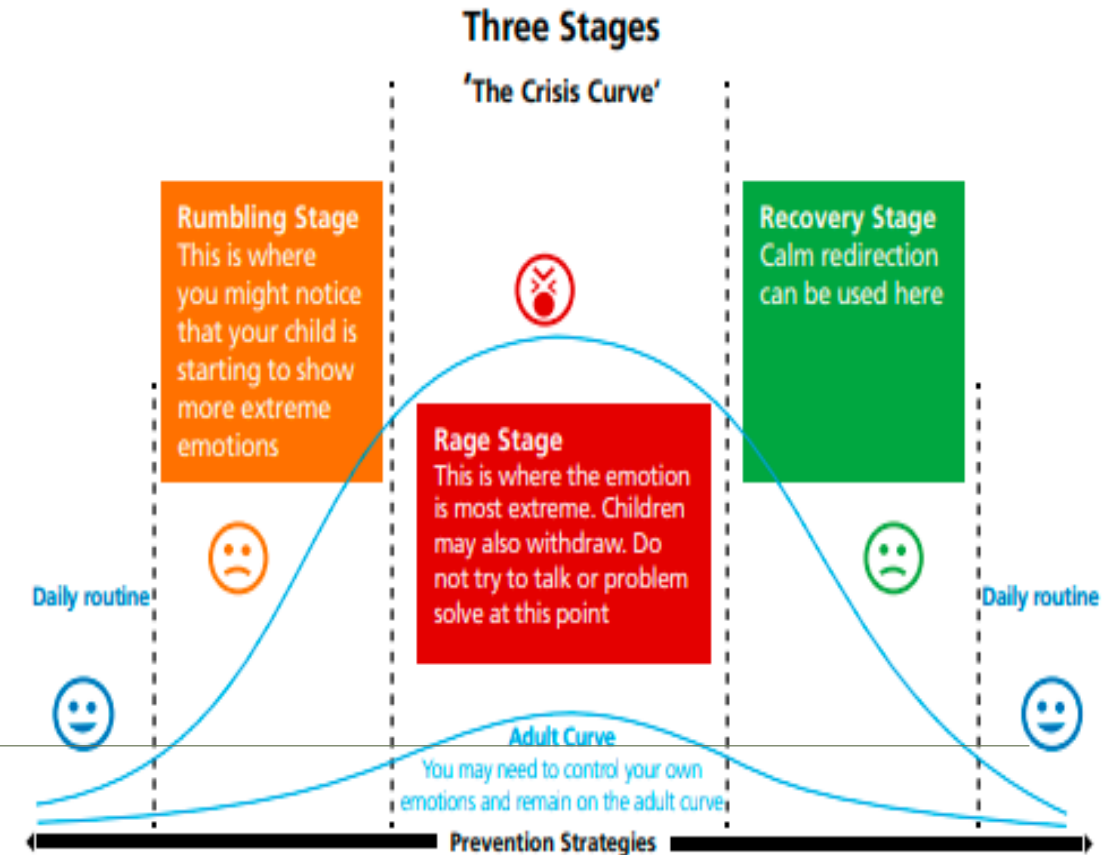
- Protect your child and others from harm
- Don't punish
- Don't take your child's behaviours personally.
- Remove any witnesses.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Avoid conflict
- Remain calm.

Recovery Stage

- Be aware that your child could go back to the Rage Stage
- Give your child time to become calm
- Offer gentle redirection and distraction
- Use calming and relaxation strategies
- Allow sleep
- Be aware that your child may become upset, embarrassed, and want to say sorry.
- Do not talk about the rage behaviours at this time unless your child wants to.

The Crisis Curve

The Crisis Curve shows the different stages your child will go through when they experience extreme emotions.



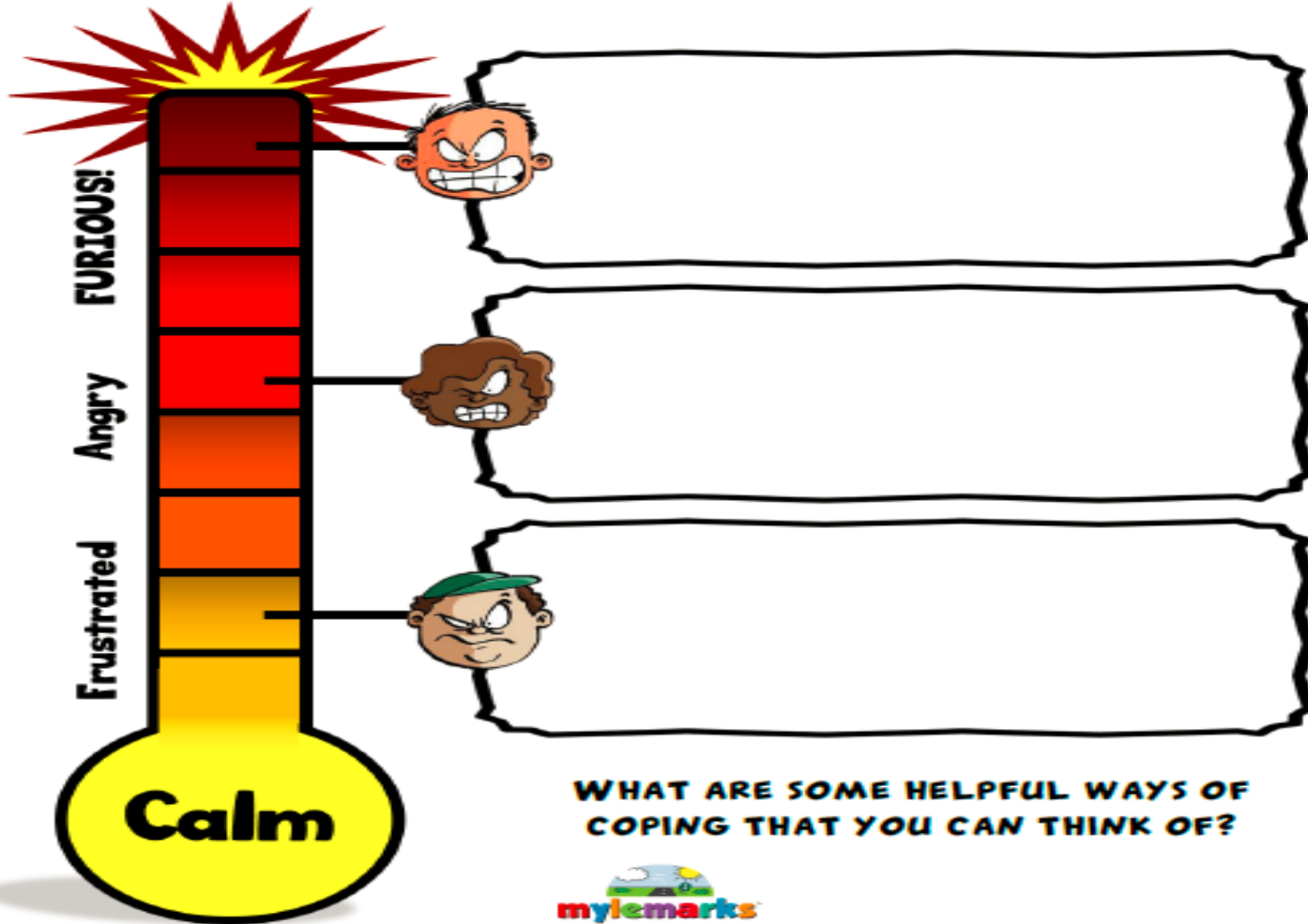
How can you help yourself?

| The BLUE zone | The GREEN zone | The YELLOW zone | The RED zone |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| How might you feel? | How might you feel? | How might you feel? | How might you feel? |
| sad tired bored moving slowly | happy okay focussed ready to learn | nervous confused silly not ready to learn | angry frustrated scared out of control |
| What might help you? | What might help you? | What might help you? | What might help you? |
| Talk to someone Stretch Take a brain break Stand Take a walk Close my eyes | The goal of this exercise is to get to the GREEN zone. What can you do to be happy, calm and ready to learn? | Talk to someone Count to 20 Take deep breaths Squeeze something Draw a picture Take a brain break | Stop what I'm doing Make sensible choices Take deep breaths Ask for a break Find a safe space Ask for help |

Strategy
Zones of
regulation

ANGER THERMOMETER

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS OR SITUATIONS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL FRUSTRATED, ANGRY, OR FURIOUS?



WHAT ARE SOME HELPFUL WAYS OF COPING THAT YOU CAN THINK OF?

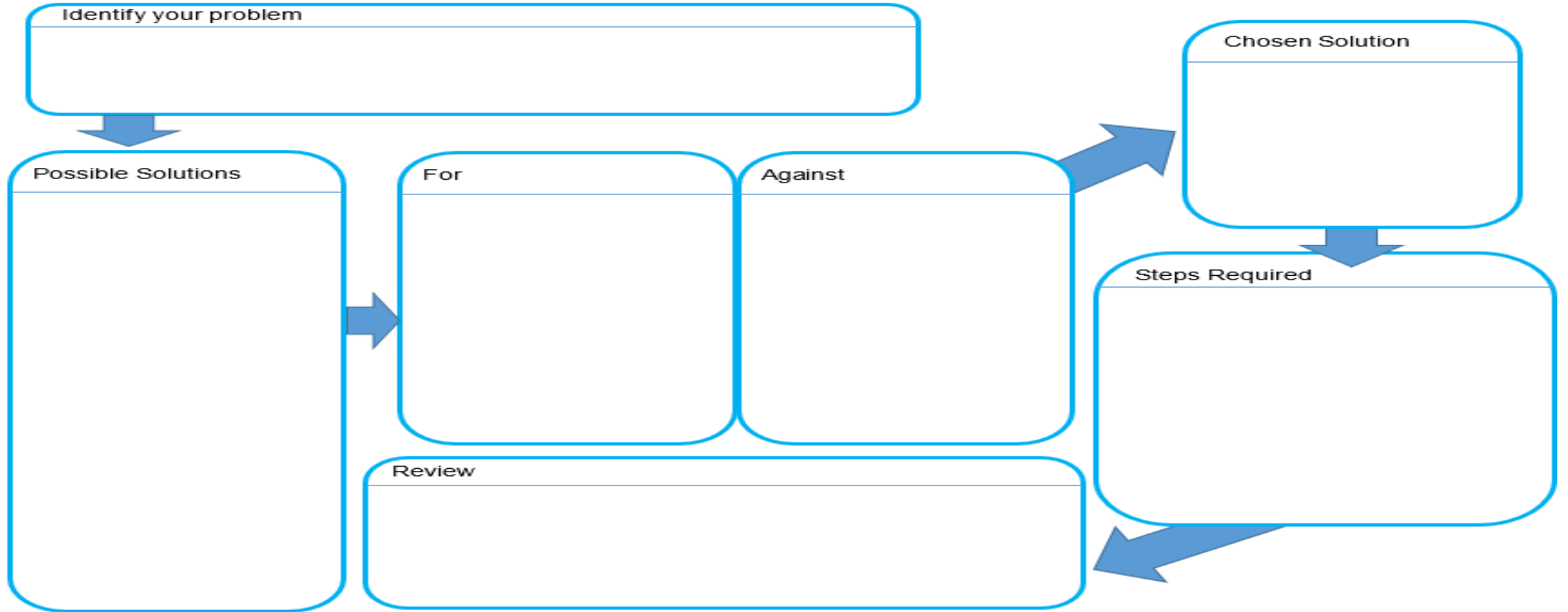


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Adapting strategies

Problem solving

Problem Solving



What you can do in the moment

- **Stay calm and grounded yourself**

Your tone, body language, and pace can help de-escalate the situation.

- **Give space, not silence**

Step back if needed, but reassure them: “I’m here when you’re ready.”

- **Use short, clear instructions**

Avoid long explanations—focus on safety and clarity.

e.g. “Let’s step outside for a breather.”

- **Name what you see (not how they feel)**

Say what’s observable, without judgement: “I can see you’re clenching your fists.”

- **Avoid ‘why’ questions in the heat of the moment**

These can feel blaming or provoke more anger.

- **Offer regulation tools if appropriate**

Breathing exercises, movement breaks, or a quiet space *only if* the student is receptive.

- **Defer the conversation until calm returns**

Focus first on helping the young person feel safe and regulated.

Signposting

[Barnet Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association](#) (for younger children aged 8-10)

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/anger/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/when-emotions-explode/>

<https://boysinmind.co.uk/>

<https://solutions.brighthorizons.co.uk/resourceroom/teen-parenting-blogs/mental-health-issues-in-teen-boys>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/boys-men-and-mental-health>

Coffee mornings- Post forms



Evaluation