



# **EMOTIONAL REGULATION**

## **HOW TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL PROCESSING AND ANXIETY**

Psychology in Schools Team, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Essex Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools - Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services

**How would you rate your current knowledge of emotional problems in neurodivergent children?**



**How would you rate your current confidence managing emotional problems in your neurodivergent child?**





## Looking after yourself

- Emotional topics being covered today, including self-harm and suicide
- Do what you need to look after yourself
- Recording and resources will be shared with everyone who signed up for the workshop

# Workshop Overview

- WHAT is the prevalence of emotional problems in neurodivergent children?
- WHY might neurodivergent children struggle with their emotions?
- HOW can you help your children manage their big feelings?



# Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of mental health problems

Increased risk of anxiety

Increased risk of depression

Please be aware next slide involves discussion  
of self-harm and suicide

# Emotional problems in neurodivergent children and teenagers

## Increased risk of self-harm and suicide

- Statistics indicate that the risk of self-harm and suicidal thinking and attempts are sadly higher for neurodivergent children
- For some families, helping managing risk of self-harm is an important part of supporting their neurodivergent child with their emotions

# What protects against poor mental health and wellbeing?

- Special interests
- Having a sense of shared connection
- Self-acceptance
- Neuroaffirmative approaches and language are key





## Why are emotional problems more common?

- Emotional literacy
- Emotion dysregulation
- Environment and experiences



# WHAT WE MIGHT SEE

Nauseous

Self-harm

Withdrawn

Breaking things

Crying

Eating problems

Avoiding school

Appears fine  
(masking)

Violence

Irritable

Confused

Shame

**Sadness**

Low self-esteem

Sense of difference

In pain

Hunger

Friendship fall out

Seeking safety

Uncertainty

Academic problems

Tired

Bored

Feeling left out

Sensory overload

Jealousy

Embarrassed

Needing to feel loved

Hopelessness

**Anger**

Lonely

Bullying

Overwhelmed

Needing attention

**Fear**

Trauma memories

# WHAT MIGHT BE GOING ON FOR A CHILD



# The Brain House

## Upstairs brain

- The control tower

## Downstairs brain

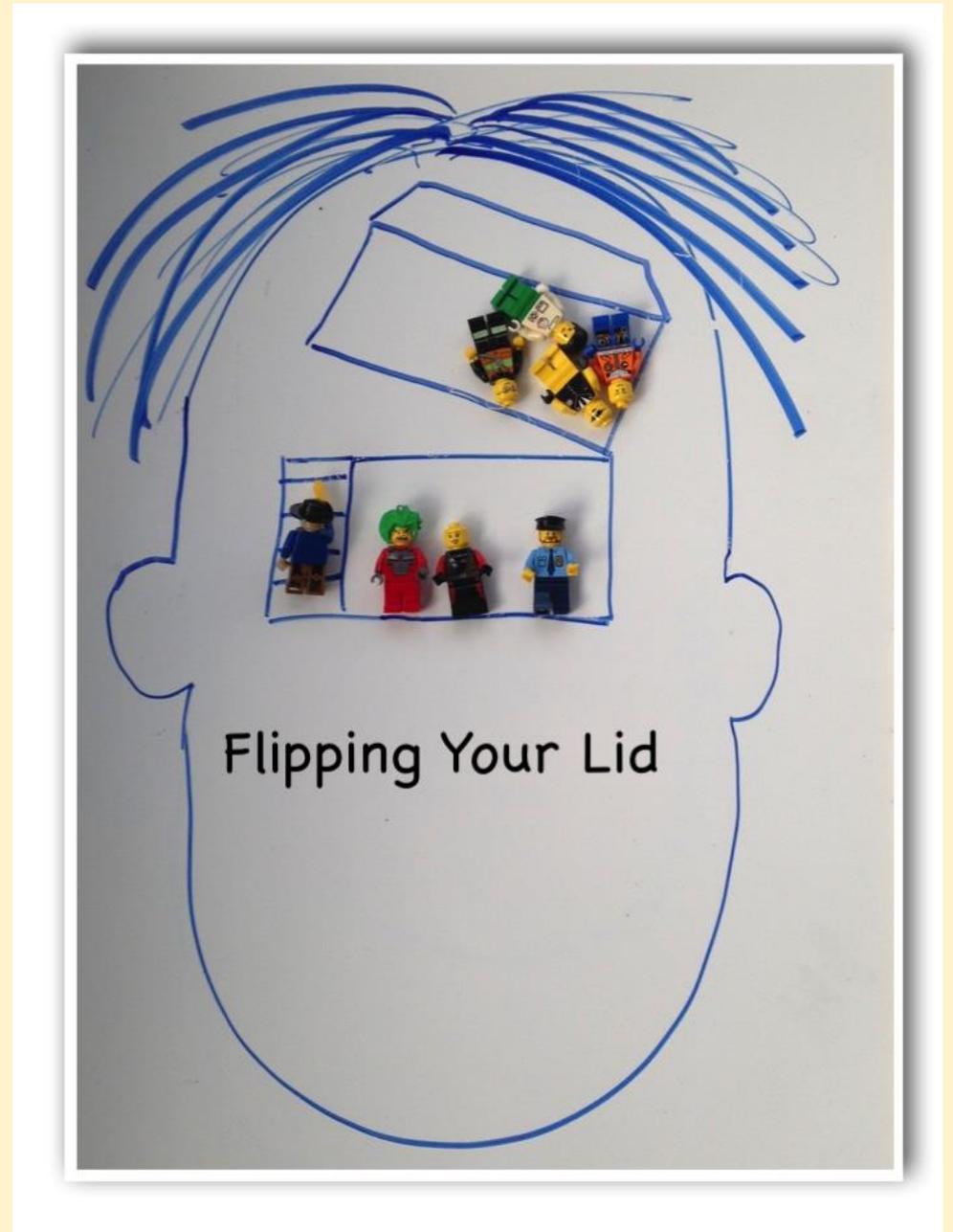
- The alarm system



*Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison*

# Flipping The Lid

- This is what happens when people get overwhelmed by big feelings
- We lose access to the upstairs part of our brain
- When this happens children no longer have access to the part of their brain that helps them to make good decisions



# Brain house in neurodivergent children

More sensitive  
to some stimuli

Impulsivity

Innate difficulty  
with emotion  
regulation

Difficulty  
understanding  
big feelings

More frequent  
negative  
experiences



## Neurodivergent Experiences

- School problems e.g. difficulty learning, sensory overwhelm, masking – trying to fit into ‘neurotypical box’ sometimes expected at school
- Social difficulties e.g. lonely, friendship problems, bullying, being taken advantage of by peers

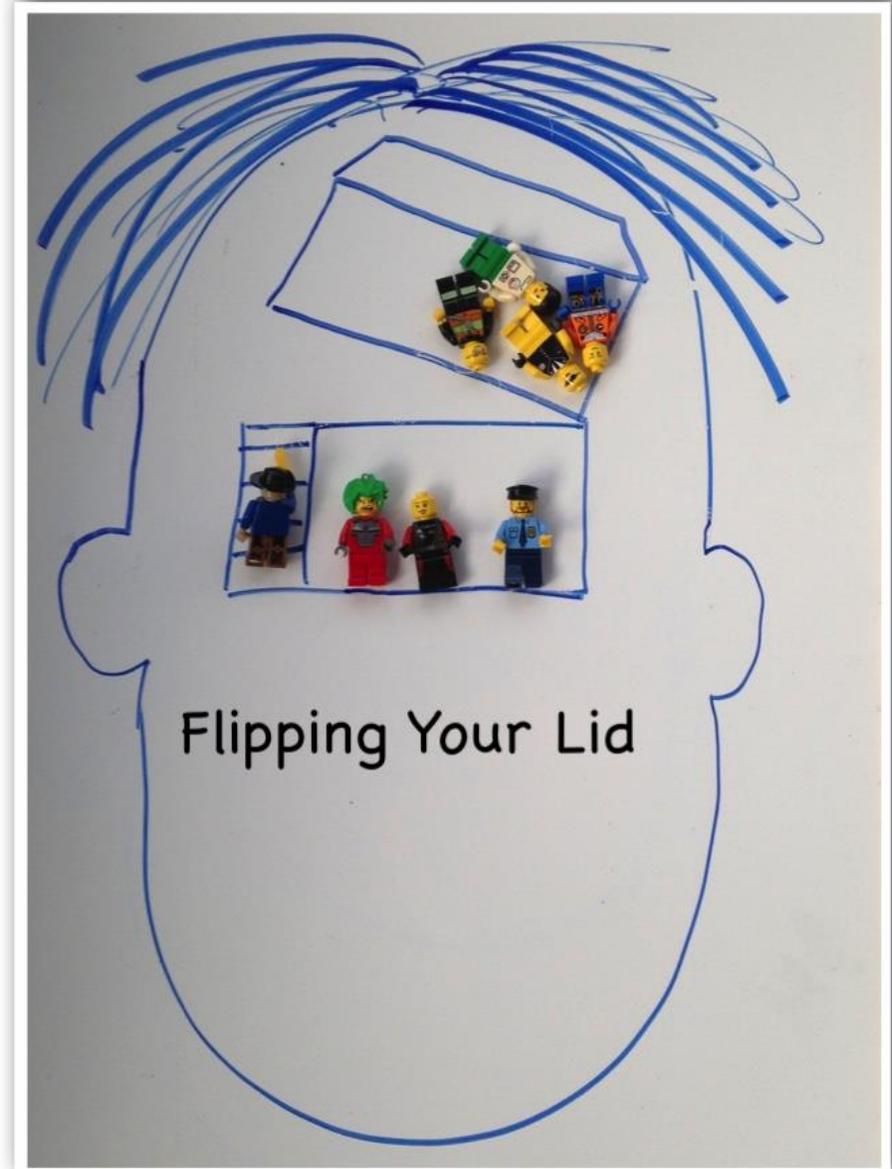
# How to help your children manage their big feelings

- Connection before correction
- Building emotional literacy
- Addressing triggers and the importance of neuroaffirmative environments
- Calming and relaxation
- General wellbeing



# Connection before Correction

- When children are overwhelmed, they will not be able to hear us until the thinking part of the brain is back online
- We can help with this by prioritizing connection over correction
- Coming alongside your child to help them regulate, becoming calm before deciding what to do next



Small group discussion: What makes it difficult for you to do this? What helps you?



# Building emotional literacy

---



# Identifying emotions



YouTube GB Search

**NAME THAT EMOTION**

Then you're ready to play Name That Emotion!

**Sesame Street**

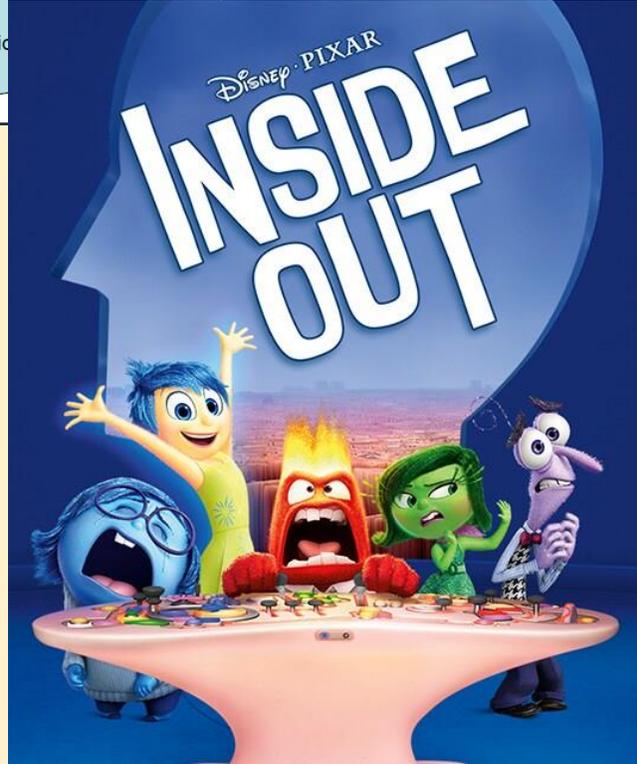
**Sesame Street: Name That Emotion with Murray!**

Sesame Street 23.3M subscribers

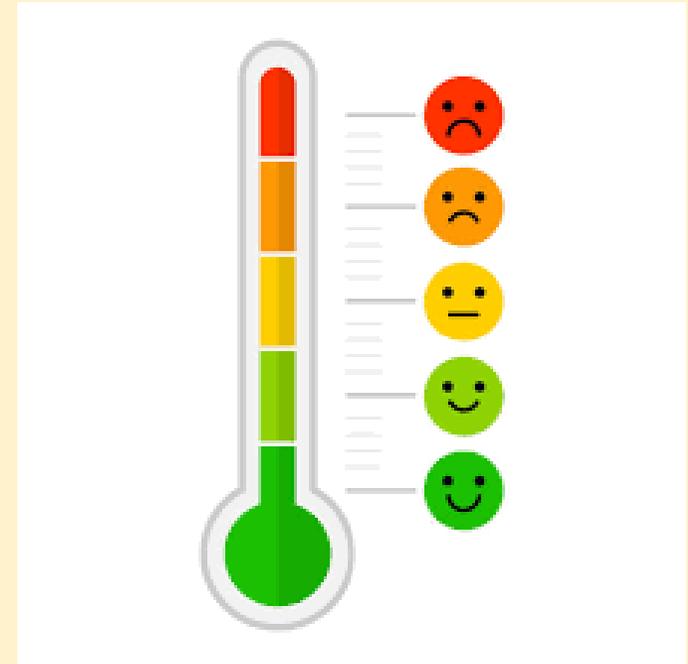
Subscribe

4.5K

Share



# Communicating emotions



# Addressing triggers

- Work out together what the triggers are
- Reducing sensory distress
- May need to support your child in navigating their friendships
- Increasing social support – clubs based on hobbies, neurodivergent communities, school mentoring/pastoral support
- The importance of neuroaffirmative environments



# Working together

- Masking at school may mean emotional problems are less obvious
- Sharing your understanding and strategies
- Consider reasonable adaptations at school – remember needs-based not diagnosis based



# Calming and Regulation

- Breathing techniques
- Grounding techniques - bringing into present moment
- Sensory regulation
- Safe space



# Positive self-talk

- Celebrating their successes and strengths
- Encouraging and modelling positive self-talk
- Being your child's champion!





## Importance of your own wellbeing

- **If you are feeling dysregulated, it's very difficult to support a young person to regulate themselves**
- **Filling up our own resource bucket first**
- **Emotional contagion**

[Find an NHS talking therapies services - NHS](#)

MIND websites access Essex:

[MN Essex Mind: Mental Health Support Services in Essex](#)

[SECE Mind](#)

[Home - Mind in West Essex](#)

# General family wellbeing

---



SLEEP



HEALTHY DIET



EXERCISE

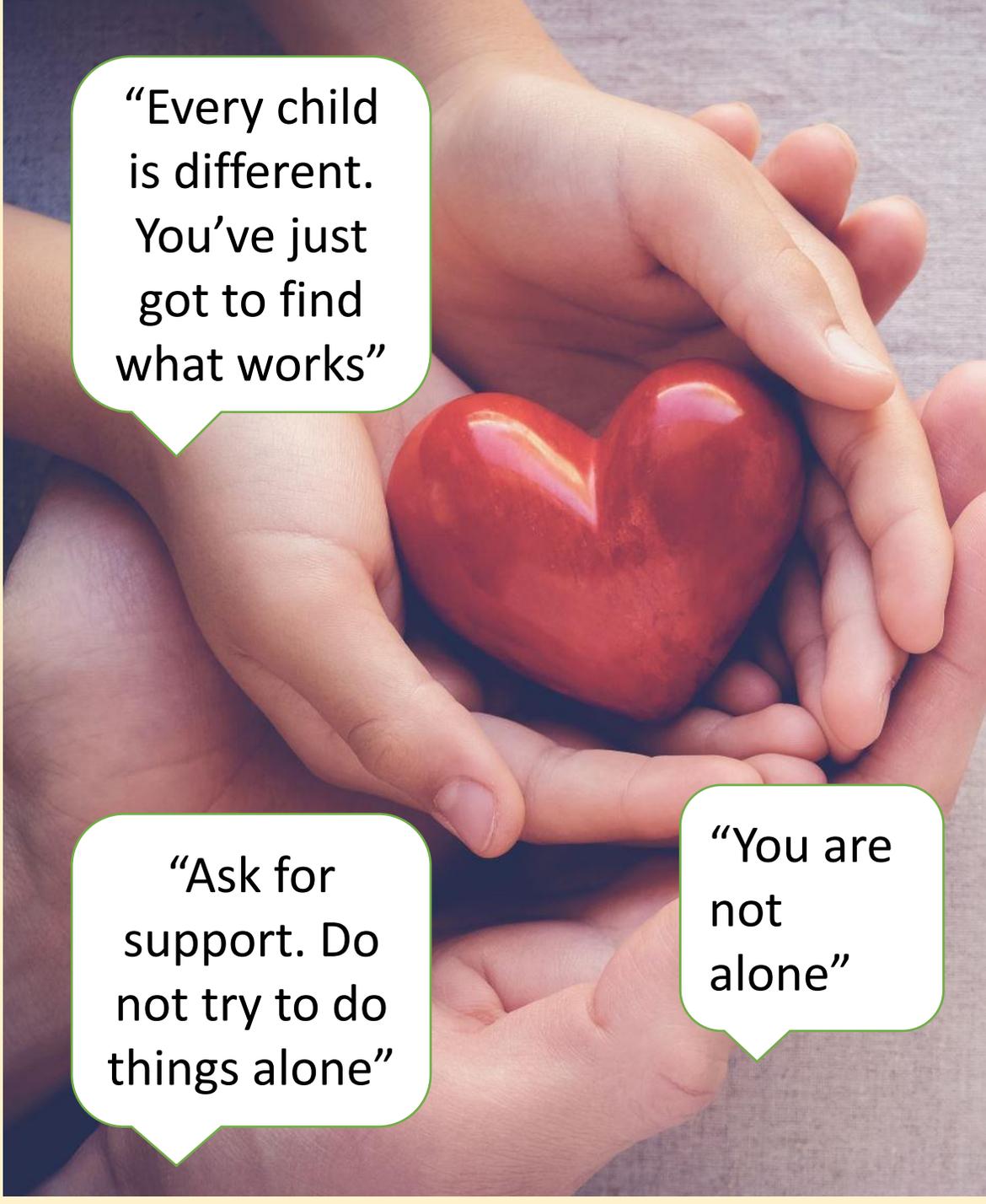


SOCIAL  
CONNECTION

## HOLDING HOPE

“Keep being curious, become the detective and stay resilient. Be your child’s Ambassador, give them a voice. Everyday is a learning day. Talk to Others and ask for support, remember to take 5 minutes for yourself. Create a WOW board, take a photo of every achievement, don’t try and solve everything at once”

“It's hard to understand how your child is feeling but try to keep calm & don't take it personally. Your child loves you & trusts you the most and therefore feels most comfortable being angry at you more than anyone else.”



“Every child is different. You’ve just got to find what works”

“Ask for support. Do not try to do things alone”

“You are not alone”

# Resources and support

## Mental health

- SET CAMHS – mental health support for children and young people in Essex [Southend, Essex and Thurrock \(SET\) CAMHS | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [SET CAMHS - How can I help myself? | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- Information about other support available in Essex [Mental health | Essex Local Offer](#)
- KIDS Inspire [A children's mental health charity offering trauma recovery services for the family](#)
- Kooth free online counselling for ages 11-18 in Essex [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- YoungMinds mental health charity for children and young people [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## Self-harm and suicide

- Information about crisis support is on the SET-CAMHS homepage: [Southend, Essex and Thurrock \(SET\) CAMHS | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- Alumina free online self-harm support group for 11-19 year olds [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)
- Calm Harm an award-winning app developed to help teenagers manage the urge to self-harm
- Papyrus “Supporting your child: self-harm and suicide” a guide for parents and carers [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

# Key sources of support and resources in Essex

- Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child [Neurodiversity | Essex Family Forum](#)
- Essex Family Forum [Home | Essex Family Forum](#)
- Multi Schools Council [Home - Multi Schools Council](#)
- Essex Local Offer Roadshows [Essex Local Offer Roadshows | Essex Local Offer](#)
- Ordinarily Available Targeted Support Framework [What good support in school looks like | Essex Local Offer](#)
- EXTRA [Extra Support for Families | Welcome to Extra Support for Families](#)
- MAZE [The MAZE Group | SEND Parenting Support Group in Essex](#)
- SNAP [SNAP Charity - Registered Charity No.1077787](#)
- Families in Focus Essex [Home - Families InFocus Essex](#)
- KIDS Autism Hub [Kids Autism Hub – A new support service for Essex, Southend, and Thurrock Aimed at 12–25-year-olds but families of younger children can be referred by their school](#)
- Autism Central [East of England delivered by Essex County Council | Autism Central](#)
- Essex Short Breaks [What are Essex Short Breaks?](#)
- Essex SEND IASS [Essex SEND - Information, Advice and Support Service](#)
- STRM Support [STRM Support – Send the Right Message](#)
- PACT Autism Support | [PACT For Autism | England](#)

# PSYCHOLOGY IN SCHOOLS' TEAM FREE WORKSHOPS

## From our childhood neurodiversity series

- [What You Need to Know as a Parent/Carer](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Sleep Difficulties](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Eating Difficulties](#)
- [Understanding and Managing Behaviour](#)
- [How the Brain Develops](#)
- [The Impact of Early Life Stress](#)
- [Supporting Social Relationships](#)
- [Supporting Language and Communication](#)
- [Supporting Planning Organising and Remembering](#)

## From our mental health series...

- [Building Understanding and Supporting Your Child with Tourette's Syndrome/Tics](#)
- [Understanding Self-Harm in Children/Adolescents](#)
- [Supporting your Child/Adolescent with Anxiety](#)

## Upcoming live parent/carers workshops:



[www.nsft.uk/workshops](http://www.nsft.uk/workshops)  
Eventbrite page

[Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

# Psychology in Schools' Team Free Workshops

## From our childhood neurodiversity series...

- [What You Need to Know as a Parent/Carer](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Sleep Difficulties](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Eating Difficulties](#)
- [Understanding and Managing Behaviour](#)
- [How the Brain Develops](#)
- [The Impact of Early Life Stress](#)
- [Supporting Social Relationships](#)
- [Supporting Language and Communication](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Sensory Needs](#)
- [The Benefits and Problems with Using Technology](#)

## From our mental health series...

- [Building Understanding and Supporting Your Child with Tourette's Syndrome/Tics](#)
- [Understanding Self-Harm in Children/Adolescents](#)
- [Supporting your Child/Adolescent with Anxiety](#)

## Upcoming live parent/carer workshops:



[www.nsft.uk/workshops](http://www.nsft.uk/workshops)  
Eventbrite page

[Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

Small group discussion: What two things will you try do to in the next week?



**How would you rate your current knowledge of emotional problems in neurodivergent children?**



**How would you rate your current confidence managing emotional problems in your neurodivergent child?**



## FEEDBACK FORM

PINS Feedback Survey



[Click here](#)