



‘Mind Gym’ Programme of Study Student’s Workbook

©Geoff Hannan 2025

This is the student workbook that accompanies my book ‘Teaching the Autistic Child in the Inclusive Classroom’ which includes the content and explains the pedagogy underpinning this programme of study.

What follows is a Programme of Study over 14 weekly, half-hour sessions for a spectrum child.

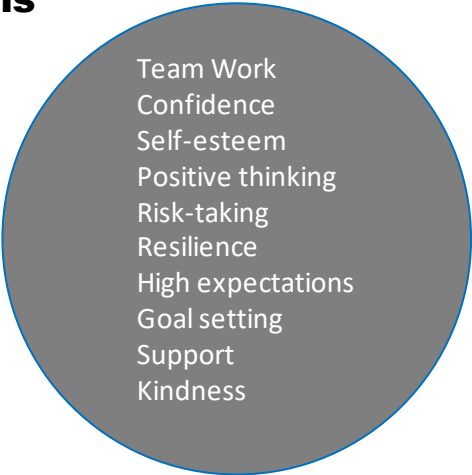
It is envisaged that the child’s teaching assistant facilitates these sessions, acting as their ‘Learning Partner’. The sessions are cumulative, and each ends with a target for the child to fulfil during the following week.

It illustrates a process and a suggested way of working and is designed to be adapted by the facilitator to the needs of an individual child. I am happy to provide free support and advice to teachers using the scheme:
geoff.hannan@btinternet.com.

Introduction for Young People

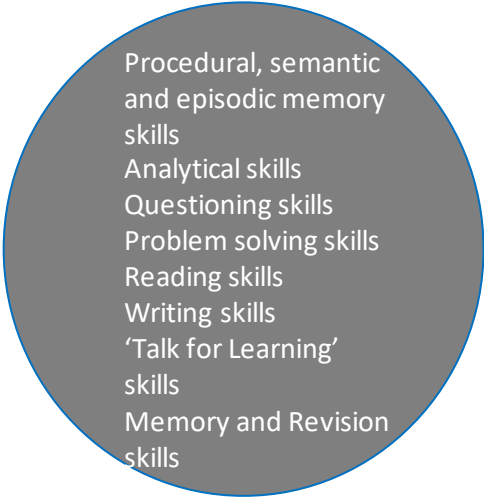
Hello and welcome to our Mind Gym book. This book is all about your empowerment. We hope you will find it to be an important and very practical book to help you to think about and develop your learning and life skills: to do well at school, feel good about yourself and happy *in* yourself.

Life Skills



- Team Work
- Confidence
- Self-esteem
- Positive thinking
- Risk-taking
- Resilience
- High expectations
- Goal setting
- Support
- Kindness

Learning Skills



- Procedural, semantic and episodic memory skills
- Analytical skills
- Questioning skills
- Problem solving skills
- Reading skills
- Writing skills
- 'Talk for Learning' skills
- Memory and Revision skills

Week 1 Activity 1

(Teacher reads, student follows...)

Part One -Descriptive

Welcome 'Learning Partners!' (That's you and me!)

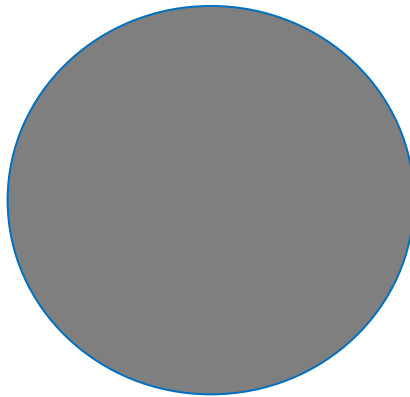
This book is designed for us to read together.

Why have a Learning Partner?

Part Two -Reflective

Well... look at the sequence of diagrams below and see you if you can explain what they mean to one-another.

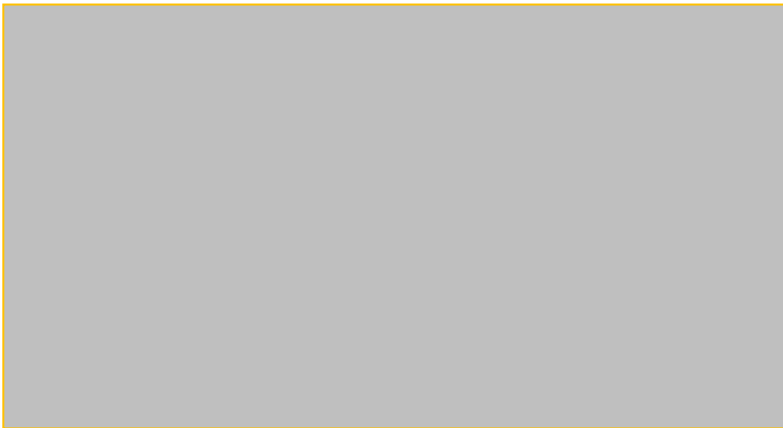
Imagine that this circle is you individually...



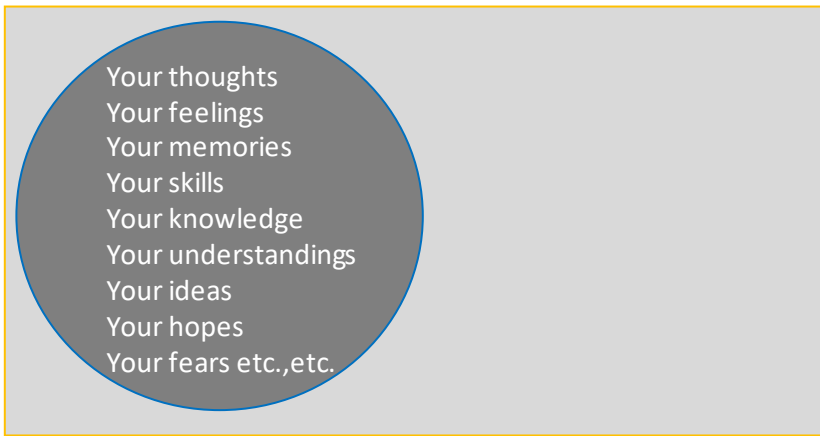
In you there is a lot happening...



Now imagine you have a problem to solve and that this problem is represented by this box...



Look how much of the problem you might be able to solve alone....



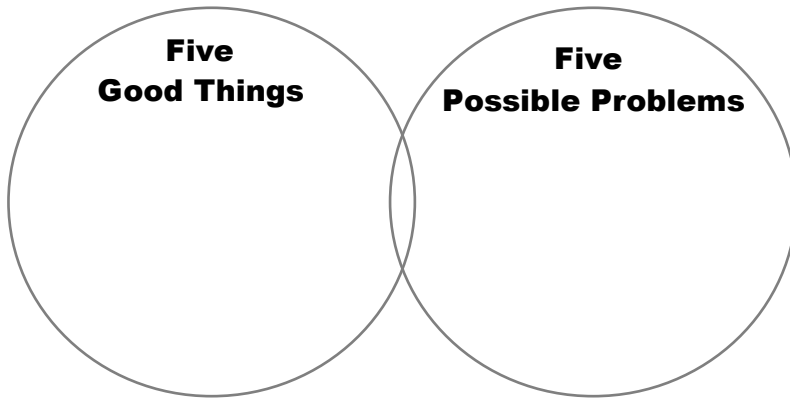
Now you have a Learning Partner....



And the same problem to solve...



With your Learning Partner see if you can find five good things about having a Learning Partner and five possible problems you might have to overcome when you are working with together? Write them in tiny writing in the circles.



Part Four -Speculative: problem solving

With your Learning Partner: for each of the problems above find a solution: a way of overcoming the problem. This will be a good way of working together if you encounter this problem!

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Part Five

Taking turns: tell your Learning Partner as much as you can about yourself in one minute. Close your eyes and think about what you are going to say first.

Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 1

(Chorus Reading: read together and out loud with your Learning Partner.)

An important life skill is the ability to get on well and work well with others. To get on well and to work well with others you need to share information about yourself and the things you think and feel. You need to listen to others and ask them questions, so you get to understand what they think and what they feel.

What do you think?

Recap: Mind Tools

✓ **Work together with others**

Collaboration helps you to develop your communication and empathy skills*.

✓ **Read out loud at times**

This helps you to read more accurately and helps you to remember things better.

✓ **Chorus read**

This helps you to improve your reading skills, especially reading 'fluency.'*

*What do the words empathy and fluency mean?



Mind Gym

Weekly Challenge 1

This week at school keep a log. Keeping a few logs periodically can help you ensure you are using and practising important learning and life skills.

My Collaboration Log

Write down every time you work well with someone or help someone to do something this week.

With whom?	Doing what?	When?
------------	-------------	-------

Week 2 Activity 2

(Chorus Read together...)

Part One -Descriptive

Count the number of times on your Collaboration Log that you worked well with or helped someone and then see if you can briefly tell your Learning Partner about **five** of these times!

Part Two -Reflective

Together with your Learning Partner solve this problem:

What do these things have in common?

- The fingers on your hand
- The toes on your feet
- The Pillars of Islam
- A computer keyboard
- The fruit and vegetables you should eat every day

You might need to do a bit of ‘Googling’ to be fully successful in this task.

Part Three -Speculative

What do Parts 1 and 2 of this week’s challenge have in common with one-another?

Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 2

(Take turns to read the following out loud, teacher start...)

Answer '5.' All the things in the Challenge are grouped in 5s: the fingers on your hand and the toes of your feet; the 5 Pillars of Islam; the most used keys on the computer keyboard are in 5 lines; a healthy diet consists of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.



Putting things or ideas into groups of 5 (or 3) helps us to remember them better.

For example, if you think of 5 steps for doing something then you will remember how to do it better and, in enough detail, to do it well.




Grouping things into 3s is best for short-term memory: If try to remember any more it may mean some items are easily forgotten.

That's why making lists to help you do and remember more things are important.

(Teacher reads on and pauses to discuss...)

-  Trying to find five reasons for something happening encourages us to think more deeply and not look for just the obvious reasons.
-  If you try first to find five possible solutions for a problem and then select the best one you are likely to

find a better solution to that problem. And you are likely to think of things you wouldn't otherwise have thought of.

-  Finding 5 good things and 5 bad things about something helps us to develop a very important thinking and learning skill called 'Reflection'. More about this later in our activities.
-  If you first plan 5 things to write about before you start to write something, then you are likely to write about it better and in more detail.
-  Our brains seem to store and hold information best in odd groups rather than even groups. That is probably why so many things are put into groups of 5 even if though we don't realise we are doing it:

The 5-point plan, The 5 food groups, The 5 weekdays, The 5 main vertebrate groups, The 5 themes in geography, The 5 themes in history, The 5-pointed star, and lots, lots more.

Can you think of some more?

Now look at the next two pages and discuss them together. They contain examples of Mind Gym 'Thinking Frames'. These will help you to focus and organise your mind, so you think about and remember things better.

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

For Reviewing and Remembering

Descriptive Step

What happened?

Firstly,
Secondly,
Thirdly,
Next,
Finally,

Reflective Step

What have I learnt from this?

1
2
3
4
5

Speculative Step

How can I use my learning? What connections can I make
with other things and ideas?

It is like

It is like

It is like

I can use this in

I can use this by

Recap: Mind Gym Tools

✓ **Go for Five**

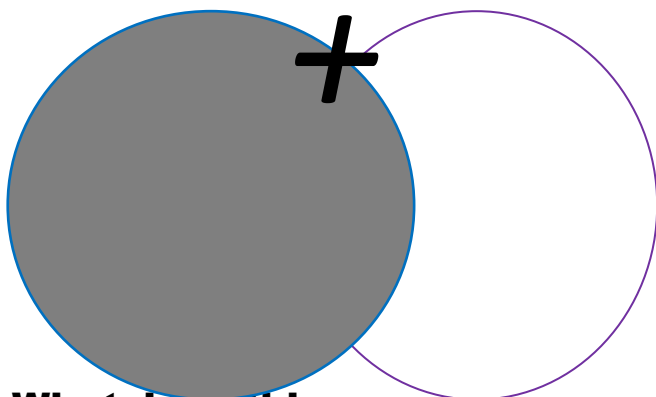
This helps you to think more deeply, make better decisions and to remember things better.

✓ **Ask yourself: what have I learnt?**

Taking a little time doing this is all about 'articulating your learning' (expressing it) which aids your understanding and recall. Keep some 'learning logs' about what you know and can do in your school subjects and remind yourself of skills, understandings and facts regularly

✓ **Make connections**

Making connections between things you do, think and learn, helps you to see the patterns which are important to your thinking and to your memory.



What does this mean?

Remind yourself of the number of ways you can use ‘Go for 5’ on the previous pages. Now try to use it 5 times this week! Also select one of your school subjects and note down 5 things you learn this week.

NB When you ‘Go for 5’ sometimes (maybe a lot of the times) you won’t be able to find 5 ideas. No problem! Using ‘Go for 5’ makes it more likely that you find more ideas than you otherwise would.

I used ‘Go for Five’

When?	Doing what?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

I learnt

Subject:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



What is happening here?

Possible Ideas?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Week 3 Activity 3

Share some of the ways you used 'Go for 5' last week and some of the things you learnt last week with your Learning Partner, then...

Part One (Speculative)

Together: **guess** the answers to these questions:

What is the average height of an 11-year-old-boy in this country? _____

What is the average height of an 11-year-old girl in this country? _____

What is the average time each day that 11-year-old girls spend online ? _____

What is the average time each day that 11-year-old boys spend online? _____

What are the differences between things that boys do online and things that girls do online?

Part Two (Descriptive)

Check your answers to find out how right or wrong you were
(Goggle or AI?)

Part Three (D/R/S) play this game...

(Each read silently and then check you both understand the task...)

Secrets

In secret, and being sure not to let your partner see, write down answers in the Secrets Boxes that follow. Taking turns, you then must try to guess your partner's answers!

If you get it wrong, then you can ask your partner just three questions to help you find the correct answer. Your partner may only answer Yes or No to your questions. Make your questions clever ones to find out their secrets!

Secrets Boxes

Write down a hope you have for the future.

Write down something naughty or bad you have done.

Write down something that scares you.

Write down the name of a person other than your Learning Partner that you really admire or like.

Write down something you worry about.

Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 3

(Read separately or take turns reading, then discuss together.)

In the activities you were asked to guess things and then find out whether you were right or not. This is a great way to learn remember things. If you guess at something first (even if you guess incorrectly) you are more likely to remember the answer. This is one of the reasons teachers ask you questions in class.

Also guessing and answering questions is a great way to build your confidence in our own ideas and develop what we call 'speculative thinking' (more about this later).

Have you noticed? Usually in class, boys guess more than girls and often have their hands up more to answer questions. Boys often seem more confident in themselves and their ideas. Girls seem to doubt themselves more than boys and frequently under-estimate their abilities. Do you agree or disagree? Why is this, do you think?

Answering questions, as well as helping your understanding, is a great way to develop your positive risk-taking skills. Why is this, do you think?

Mind Tools

- ✓ **Guess and Test**

To activate your mind and develop speculative thinking

- ✓ **Share your thoughts and feelings**

- ✓ **Ask questions- especially 'why?'**

To challenge your own thinking and that of others

Your task this week is to interview an adult. With your partner, prepare ten questions to ask them so that you find out as much as you can about their lives, their feelings and their thoughts about the world.

Our interview with_____

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Guess: what do think their answers will be?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Were you right or wrong? (Tick the ones you guessed right.)

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

The 5 Ws Method
For Asking Questions

What?

When?

Where?

Who?

Why? Always ask it.

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

For Guess and Test

I think that

I can test this by

I think that

I can test this by

I think that

I can test this by

I think that

I can test this by

I think that

I can test this by



What kind of ‘guess and testing’ might you do in science?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Week 4 Activity 4

Part One

Do this individually first then share with your partner.

Fill in these boxes:

I have won these awards, prizes and merits.

List as many as you can think of, as far back as you can remember.

Here are some awards I would award *myself*.

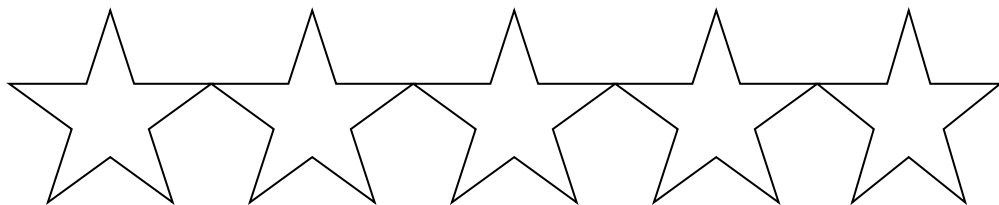
List some awards you think you should win for the positive, kind and thoughtful things you do.

Part Two **Stars**

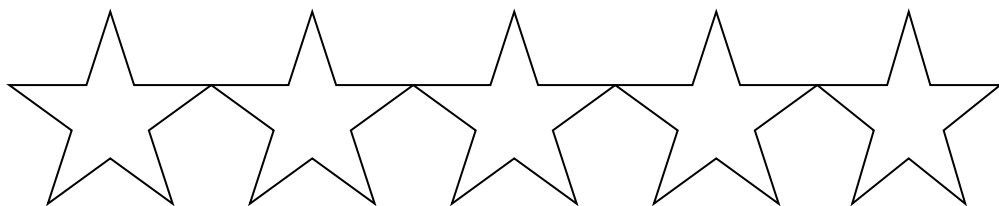
Do this individually first then share with your partner if you wish to.

Fill the stars...

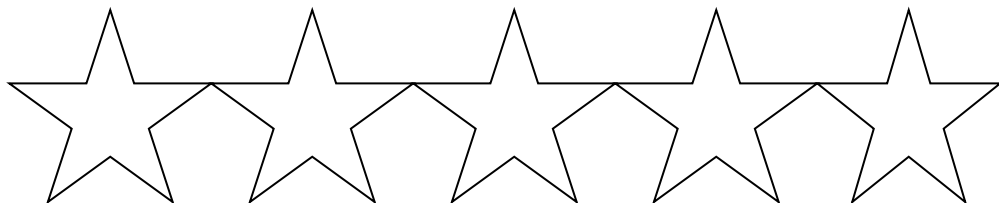
With the names of people that are important to you...



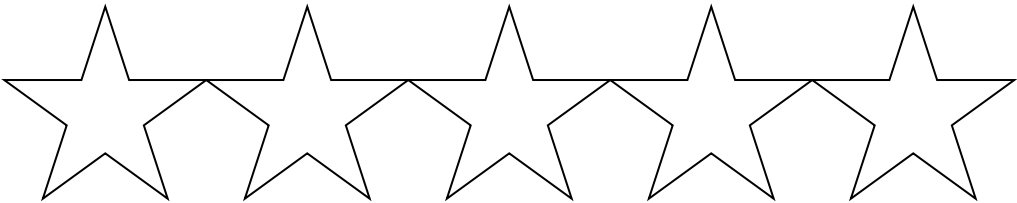
With the things you like doing...



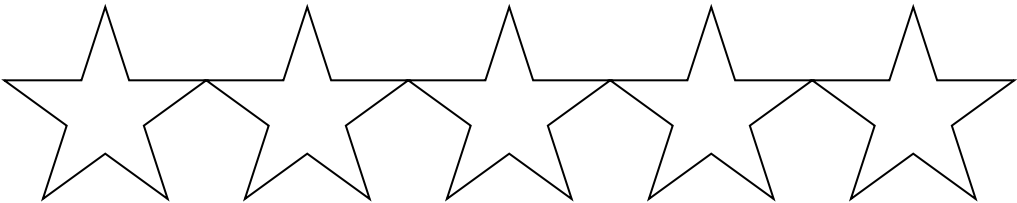
With the things that you are good at...



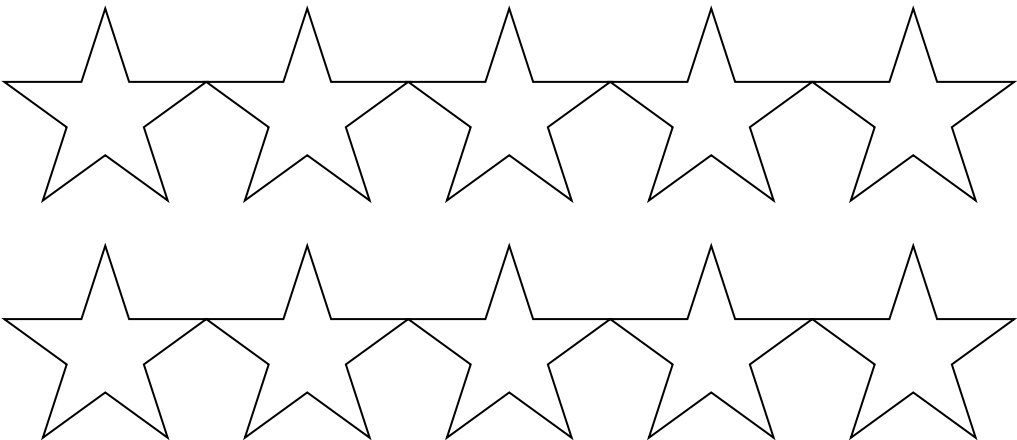
With the things you are getting better at...



With your values: the things you think are important in life...



With the things you like about yourself...



Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 4

(Read out loud to one-another by reading a paragraph each then paragraphs 3 and 4 out loud together.)

Paragraph 1: An important part of having good mental health is the ability to feel good about yourself. One way of doing so is by recognising and giving attention to your achievements. We should always try to give ourselves credit by acknowledging our own skills, successes and the things we do to help others.

Paragraph 2: We often take things for granted. At times when we are sad or when bad things happen, we frequently forget all the good things around us. Thinking about the positives in our lives and the contributions we make to the lives of others (our loved ones, our friends, the people we are kind to etc.) is a great starting point for developing a positive, 'can do' attitude to life.

Paragraph 3: A 'can do' attitude to life is very important especially when you find things difficult or have to deal with difficult feelings and situations. Developing a can-do attitude is one of the best ways to build our confidence.

Paragraph 4: When you find something difficult, say to yourself 'I can do this!' and keep saying it. You might well find it helps. Remember: you only really fail when you give up on something.

Mind Tools

✓ **Recognise and Acknowledge**

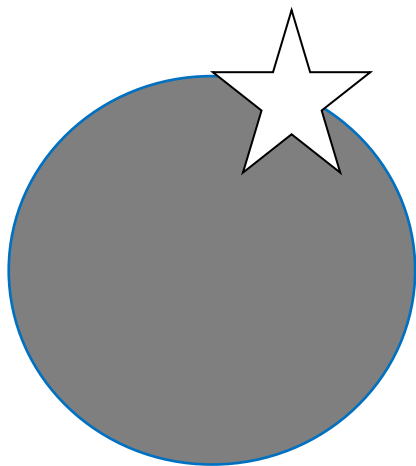
your own abilities, strengths and skills. Work to your strengths: concentrate on the things you like and are good at but try new things as well.

✓ **Be grateful for the people you love**

Expressing gratitude helps to give you a sense of well-being and self-worth. Remember: you love and are loved.

✓ **Think 'I can do this'**

Remember: confidence begins with word 'con!' Acting it can help you to become it. It is through failure and dealing positively with it (by learning from it) that you can achieve success.



Mind Gym

Weekly Challenge 4

This week at school make two logs for yourself...

My Success Log

Note down every time this week you are successful at something or did something to help someone-else.

My Keep-Trying Log

Note down every time this week you keep trying or keep doing something, even though you found it hard or boring.

Week 5 Activity 5

Work separately, with one partner finding solutions to numbers 1 to 5 below and the other finding solutions to numbers 6 to 10. Then share your ideas with one-another.

Dilemmas

Can you find a *positive* solution or opportunity in each of the following situations?

1. You are changing school and are worried about being with new people-
2. You have been invited to a party and asked to bring a friend, but you have no one to go with you-
3. There is one subject at school you find really boring-
4. You have not thought of a career that you want to do when you are older and think you should have done so by now-
5. There is one subject at school that you think you are really bad at-

6. You dislike one of your teachers-
7. You worry that someone you like doesn't like you-
8. You worry that you are not smart enough to do well at school-
9. You are worried about your exams-
10. You worry a lot about things -

Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 5

Discuss:

A great way to build your self-esteem and 'can-do' attitude is to think about, find and plan *positive* solutions to your problems; and to see problems as an opportunity for growth. Why do you think the word 'positive' is in italics? What sort of growth are we talking about?

Of course, once you have come up with a solution there is something you now have to do with this solution, isn't there? What is it?

Mind Tools

✓ **Think-Plan-Do-Review**

Find a positive solution to a problem and then implement (do) it!

✓ **Risk failure**

Worrying about failure can easily stop you doing things you want to do and should do. It can inhibit your growth in confidence and self-esteem.

✓ **Let failure drive your success**

If you fail then don't give up, learn from it. Improve your attempts in small, manageable steps.

This week at school select one thing that would make things better or happier for you. Plan how you might improve this thing and plan an action or actions to improve it.

A good way to plan is to think in advance about any problems you might come across when doing something and then plan some ways to overcome these problems if they occur.

Target Setting



Improvement I want to make:

How I am going to do it:

(‘Go for 5’ things or 5 steps perhaps)

Possible problems I might encounter:

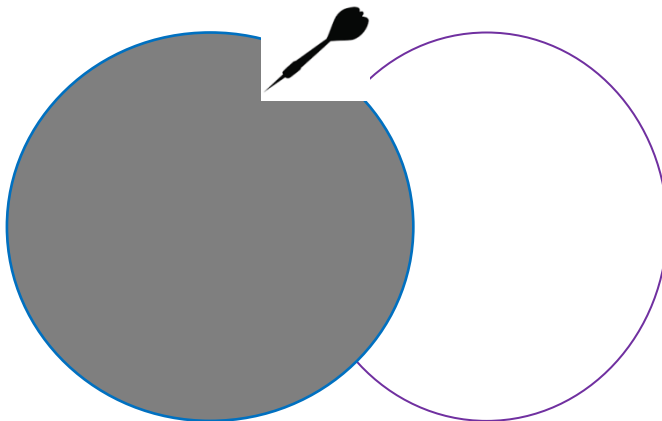
Ways to overcome these problems if they occur:

Week 6 Activity 6

Mind Gym Quiz

To recap the ideas so far, discuss with your partner:

1. Why collaborate with others?
2. Why read out loud at times?
3. Why chorus read at times?
4. 'Go for (how many)' to think more reflectively?
5. Why is it important to make connections in learning?
6. What should you do after you guess?
7. What question should you always ask if you want to really understand something?
8. What helps you to feel good about yourself?
9. What does being grateful do for you?
10. What it is helpful to think when you face difficulties or problems?
11. Plan-Do and what?
12. Risk what?



Recap Mind Tool

✓ **Quiz Yourself**

To help you to remember important facts and understandings, make up some quizzes and test yourself every four weeks or so.

✓ **Practise the learning and life skills regularly**

Don't try to be perfect just be yourself.

Mind Gym

Weekly Challenge 6

Use each of these Mind Tools at least once this week...

Collaboration

Used when? With whom?

Go-for-5

When?

Guess and Test

About what?

Think-Plan-Do-Review

What problem did you solve?

'I Can Do This'

When did you think it?

What positive risk did you take?

When did I successfully fail?

Week 7 Activity 7

Descriptive-Reflective-Speculative

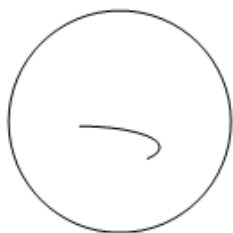
(Take turns to read, think and talk...)

After you read each of the five challenges below, give yourselves one minute thinking time before you start speaking. Then try to describe the situation in detail and try to explain why you felt as you did in that situation.

- 1 Speak about a time you felt happy.
- 2 Speak about a time you felt sad.
- 3 Speak about a time you felt scared.
- 4 Speak about a time you felt worried.
- 5 Speak about a time you felt embarrassed.

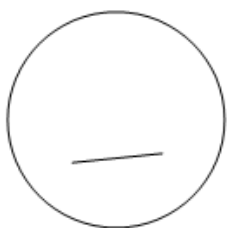
Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 7

Dealing with things that make you sad



Sadness can be a wonderful emotion. It can show that we care. It can show that we have ‘empathy’ which is the ability to imagine yourself in someone-else’s position. If you feel sad for no reason, however, and sad a lot of the time then you should TALK to someone about it. Say ‘I am feeling sad about...’ and try to explain how you feel *reflectively*. Just talking about things will help to make you feel better. Don’t feel embarrassed about talking about your emotions. Find someone you trust and ask if you can talk to them. If you have no one you feel you can talk to or prefer to talk to a trained counsellor then find a quiet, safe place and contact Childline free on 0800 1111

Dealing with things that scare you or make you anxious



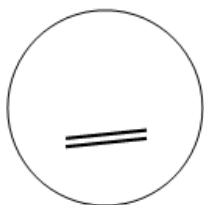
From scary movies to real life things like being bullied by others we all get scared. Scary movies can be fun because we know we are safe and can enjoy the rush that the amygdala (the fear area in our brains) gives us. Bullying, for example, on the other hand is not fun and it is time to BE ASSERTIVE.

Being assertive is about being calm, honest, open and clear about your feelings. It is about asking for what you need. It can also be about doing what you find difficult to do, for example, standing up for yourself. BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO ALWAYS KEEP

YOURSELF SAFE. So, if you feel you need to, get away from bullies; but tell an adult you trust about it.

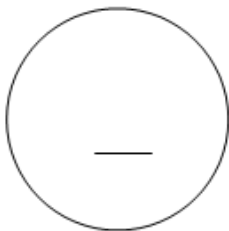
Being assertive is a really important life skill. Asking for what you need and doing what you find difficult to do help to build your confidence and self-esteem. It might be something as everyday as answering questions in class.. Answering questions in class, if you find it difficult, will help to build your confidence in speaking in front of others and in your own ideas

Dealing with things that make you angry



Quietly, calmly and assertively express your anger to someone and explain why: 'I am angry with you, because...' If you think things are unfair then complain about them. Write emails or letters expressing what you think and why you think it.

Dealing with things that make you embarrassed



Don't be afraid to admit it: 'I am embarrassed because...' or 'Please don't say/do that it embarrasses me!' But don't let embarrassment stop you doing what you really want and need to do!

Dealing with things that make you happy



Easy, yes? But, do the things that make you happy that little bit more and make a point of doing them when you are feeling down or sad (even though you might find it difficult to get started on them) this will help you to lift your mood. And, when you have done the things

that make you happy, think to yourself 'that made me happy!' Why do you think?

Mind Tools

✓ **Express your feelings**

Try to describe them, reflect upon them (ask yourself why you are feeling this way) and speculate upon a solution.

✓ **Always ask for help when you need it**

You might ask a friend but remember to ask an adult whom you trust when you need to. Asking for help is a sign of strength not weakness! It is frequently the most difficult thing to do.

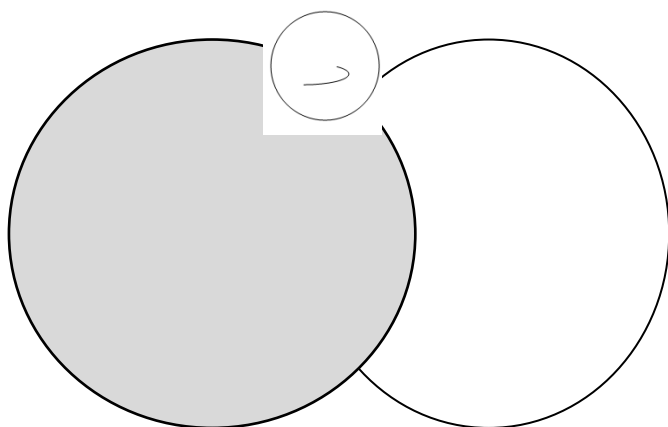
✓ **Be assertive**

Practise what you want to say and then say it

Mind Gym

Weekly Challenge 7

The 'vocabulary of feelings' is important to learn and use. Keep the feelings chart on the next page for one full week and try to express your moods and feelings by using the words from the list that fit them best.



Happy

OK

Excited

Brave

Bold

Daring

Hopeful

(about)

Eager (to)

Keen (to)

Optimistic

Joyful

Confident

In control

Enthusiastic

Curious

Affectionate

Considerate

Sensitive

Loved

Inspired (by)

Determined

(to)

Sad

Tearful

Bored

Challenged

Rebellious

Upset (about)

Angry

Lousy

Disappointed

Hurt (by)

Concerned

Insecure

Mind Gym Feelings Log

Monday

	Feeling	Why?
Morning		
Afternoon		

Tuesday

	Feeling	Why?
Morning		
Afternoon		

Wednesday

	Feeling	Why?
Morning		
Afternoon		

Thursday

	Feeling	Why?
Morning		
Afternoon		

Friday

	Feeling	Why?
Morning		
Afternoon		

Peaceful

Quiet

Secure

Peaceful

At ease

Comfortable

Clever

Surprised

Reassured

Unsure

Confused

Ashamed

Guilty

In despair

Enraged (by)

Hateful (to)

Insecure

Nervous

Anxious

Worried

Irritated

Hurt (by)

Concerned

Enraged (by)

Hateful (to)

Despairing



Week 8 Activity 8

Part 1

In this week's challenge we are going to introduce you to a really useful way of practising learning and life skills: using role play.

Firstly, you decide who is going to be 'A' and who is going to be 'B'. Below you will find a script to act out. The 'stage directions' will tell you how to act the script. OK? Let's go...

A: (SAY QUIETLY AND IN AN OVERLY NICE WAY) Please stop hitting me. You are such a nice, lovely person. I really like you. So much, in fact, I would like to give you all my pocket money!

B: (SAY IN AN ANGRY, LOUD VOICE)

You total biscuit brain! Say one more thing like that and I will stick that smile of yours where the sun doesn't shine!

A: (SAY IN A TINY, NERVOUS, FRIGHTENED VOICE) Ouch... oh please... no.... please.... no!!

B: (SAY QUIETLY AND CALMLY) Don't do that! If you don't stop doing that I will stand up for my rights and tell someone what you do to me.

A and B: (SPEAKING TOGETHER, QUIETLY AND CALMLY) In difficult situations let's try to be assertive. Being assertive is about being open and clear about your feelings. It is also about asking for what you need. It is about trying to stand up for yourself in a way that is respectful and thoughtful to others.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 1

Understanding Behaviours

'A,' in your first role play you were being *manipulative*: trying to stop what was happening to you by trying to bribe and manipulate someone who was clearly bullying you.

'B,' in your first role play you were being *aggressive*, and someone had annoyed you so much *you* were bullying them.

'A,' in your second role play you were being *passive*: just trying to beg for things to stop. Maybe you might soon have run away.

'B,' in your second role play you were being **assertive**. You were standing up for yourself and your rights without bullying the other person or putting them down.

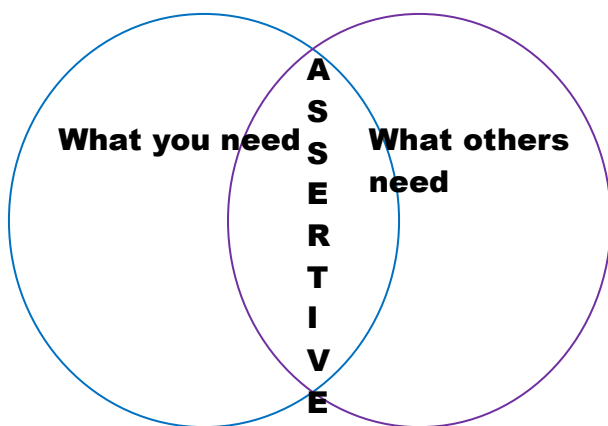
These are the three main types of behaviours that we often engage in when we find other people or situations around us hard to cope with: we tend to be manipulative, aggressive, or passive.

An important life skill is to be **assertive** when you need to be.

Part Two

Look at the diagram below and discuss it.

Then read about the scenarios below and discuss whether you think the behaviour is manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive.



Scenarios

1. Imran needs help with something in class but is too embarrassed to admit he can't do it, so he doesn't ask for help. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
2. Suzy gets called names on the bus to school and calls names back. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
3. Maryam buys her friends lots of sweets so they will like her. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
4. Noah gets annoyed by being pushed around by his sister when they play together. He pushes her back. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
5. Aaron is being called racist names in school and he decides to tell a teacher he trusts about what happens. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
6. Billy worries a lot about things. He doesn't tell anybody about this but is sulky and is rude to others because of it. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?
7. Aisha is embarrassed because Jack touches her bottom when she walks past him. She pushes him away. Manipulative, aggressive, passive or assertive?

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 2

(Teacher read slowly and leave plenty of time for discussing the points...)

This is what we think the answers should be. But what's important is for you to be **reflective** and think about what you should and could do in the above situations if something like this happens to you.

IMPORTANT: Your priority must always be to keep yourself safe.

- 1) Imran is being **passive** and really should ask if he needs help because that is being assertive.
- 2) We think it is understandable to want to call people names back if they call you them. But it is an **aggressive** response and is unlikely to stop the name calling; perhaps even make it worse. We think a better response might be to look at the person calling the name, hold eye contact with them for a moment, say nothing and turn away. That is showing that the other person is not affecting you and neither are you being passive: you are being assertive. If Suzy continues to be called names she should warn them to stop or she will take action by reporting the behaviour. This is called 'consequence assertion:' saying something like 'If you don't stop this I will complain about your behaviour'. Or you might ask them 'Why do you need to call me names?'
- 3) **Manipulative behaviour** like this is likely to lose respect not gain it. Should she really need to be liked by 'friends' who only like her if she buys them sweets?
- 4) Noah is being **aggressive**. He should be assertive and should ask his sister not to push him around. He should be reflective and explain how she makes him feel. He should maybe use consequence assertion and say he won't play with her if she continues.

- 5) We strongly believe Aaron should *not* ignore racial abuse because being **passive** will damage his self-esteem and confidence. Racism and sexism are really nasty behaviours that try to belittle others and make the racist or sexist feel good about themselves. **Racism and Sexism stem from ignorance and bigotry.** They are signs of their problems, Aaron, not yours! We think you should speak to people you trust about this abuse and seek help in stopping it happening to you. Not an easy thing to do, but we think you should reflect on how you might be assertive in these situations whilst keeping yourself safe.
- 6) Billy is being what is called '**passive-aggressive**'. Not dealing with his own issues is leading to bad behaviour to others. Billy... we all get anxious at times. Some of us are more naturally anxious than others. **It's OK to feel this way.** But don't let it get you down. Maybe speak to someone about it.
- 7) Aisha is a victim of sexual harassment! We believe she should be assertive and say something like. 'Stop touching my bottom, Jack. It's sexual harassment. If you do it again, I will report you.'

Girls and children of colour are likely to have more negative things to deal with as they grow up: racism, sexism and sexual harassment.

Try to stand up for **your** rights! Be assertive and complain when you need to.

Mind Tools

- ✓ **Be assertive**
- ✓ **Ask for what you want and need**

Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 8

This week, record some of the times you feel others are being assertive, aggressive, passive or manipulative
Record some of the times **you** are!

Aggressive behaviours I observed

Assertive behaviours I observed

Manipulative behaviours I observed

Passive behaviours I observed

Week 9 Activity 9

Part One

In turn, your challenge is to start talking and keep talking for one full minute! You can talk about anything you like but try to keep going.

Time each other.

Prompts if you need them:

Interests, hobbies, favourite TV programmes, things you like to do, things you like to eat, people you like and admire, ambitions, fears, other people, etc.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 1

Have you ever thought about how important it is to have good verbal skills? Having good verbal skills is about being able to describe and explain things well, being able to express your feelings and your ideas clearly and about being able to ask for what you need and for what you want. It is, of course, also important in our 'bonding' with other people through expressing our love, care and empathy for them.

Having good talking skills is also about talking well to ourselves: having what is termed good 'self-talk'.

Talking well to yourself helps you to find positive ways to deal with those worries and bad thoughts we all get. It helps us to think clearly about things.

Like any learning and life skill, verbal skills are improved through practising.

Part Two

Many people find that saying the statements below help them to feel positive and stay in control of negative feelings.

They are called 'affirmations.' Say them out loud- *but quietly and assertively*- to your Learning Partner:

The best person to be is me.

I have choices.

I am choosing to be happy today.

I am getting better every day.

Hold on and things will change.

I can change things.

I forgive myself for the mistakes I have made.

Everything passes.

I am brave.

I am strong.

I am fun.

All my problems have solutions.

I am wanted.

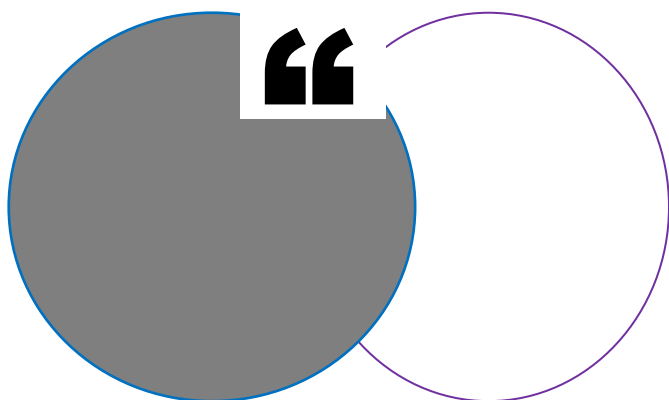
I am loved.

Some people find it useful to select a few of their favourite ones (or write their own) and write them on sticky notes on their mirror or photograph them for their mobile home screen.

Mind Tools

✓ **Talk positively to yourself**

Try affirmations



Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 9

Logs are a useful and fun way to monitor the important things you do in your learning and life skills development. Try this one, this week.

Classroom Talk

- I answered a question
- I asked a question
- I described something in detail
- I explained why in detail
- I explained my views and opinions

- I expressed my feelings

- I contributed an idea to a discussion
- I expressed agreement and explained why
- I expressed disagreement and explained why

- I asked for help when I couldn't do something
- I asked when I didn't understand something

- I talked about something that worried me
- I expressed my understanding of others' feelings

- I thanked someone
- I praised something someone had said

Tick When Used

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My Talk Targets

What should I do more of?



Great Talk Starting Points

Using What, Why, If, Because and Would

Could you help me, because I don't understand this?

Can I talk to you about...?

I think...because...

I feel...because...

What is this about?

Would you help me with this, I find it difficult because...?

How does that work?

Why does that happen?

Yes, I agree; because...

So you think...why is that?

How would it work if...?

That's a good idea because...

Do you feel...? Maybe it's because....

That's a great idea; and how about if...?

So, you think...what would happen if?

New ones to try



Week 10 Activity 10

Part One

Look at the statements below. There are three types. Can you explain what these types are?

Type One

- People are different.
- Children are younger than adults.
- Older people are older than younger adults.

Type Two

- People are different because some are taller and some are shorter.
- Children are younger because they have not lived for as long.
- Older people are older than younger adults because the older people have lived longer.

Type Three

- People are different and differences are good because we need diversity in society.
- Children are younger than adults and therefore need the protection of adults.
- Older people are older than younger adults and with age can come wisdom.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 1

(Teacher reads and discusses in detail...)

Here is an important understanding that helps us to think better, learn better and recall that learning better. Nearly everything we say or think may be put into one of three types or categories; it is either *descriptive* (Type 1), *reflective* (Type 2) or *speculative* (Type 3). Did you notice we stated these categories earlier in this book?

Mind Tools

✓ **Think: Descriptive-Reflective-Speculative**

This will help you to organise your thinking and articulate (express) it better.

This will help you to organise your writing better: describe first, then explain, then draw connections and conclusions.

This sequence will aid your reading comprehension if you use it as and after you read something.

‘Descriptive’ is **what** something is or how to do something.

‘Reflective’ is **why** something is as it is, happens as it does or the good and bad effects of something.

Speculation is thinking ‘if.’ (See the next Mind Gym Thinking Frame that follows.)

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

Using Descriptive-Reflective-Speculative Sequencing

Descriptive

The facts about something: **how** to do something and/or the **what, where, who?** ('Go for Five' for enough detail and to aid recall.)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Reflective

The understandings of something: the **why?**

('Go for Five' reasons to understand it in detail and aid recall. It might be 5 good things, 5 bad things, 5 unknown things)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Speculative

If? Evaluate, draw conclusions and make connections. What would happen if...? What is this like? What is this unlike? What do you think?

Part Two

Apply D-R-S to the following activity. Study this picture...



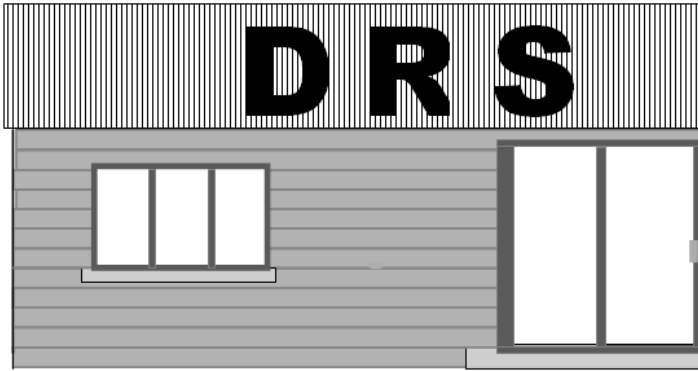
This is a photograph of someone's bedside table. **Describe** what you see on it in as much detail as you can. **Reflect:** why are the things you have just described there on the bedside table? **Speculate:** Based on what you see and what you have reflected upon, what can you guess about the person whose bedside table is like this?

When you use D-R-S, apply it in sequence. Describe first and you will reflect better. Reflection after description will aid effective speculation.

Part Three

(Chorus read and discuss in detail as prompted...)

Use D-R-S to aid creative thinking and writing:



Imagine you could build yourself a little house. It is going to be your 'Happy Place:' somewhere where you will always be happy!

What would it be made of? How would you build it?

Where would it be? When would you build it?

Who would live there with you?

Why would you build it like this?

Why would it be there? Why build it then?

Why would you like these people to live there with you?

If you were to build this happy place what would it be like to live there? What would make you happiest when you were living there? What Happy Places do you have already? Would it really be good if you were always happy?

Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 10

Use the Descriptive-Reflective-Speculative sequence for something you write and for something you read this week. Make notes while you are using it...

Writing Piece Content

Descriptive: what, when, where, who, how

Reflective: why, understandings, effects etc

Speculative: if, conclusions, evaluations, what do I think?

Reading Piece Content

Descriptive: what, when, where, who, how

Reflective: why, understandings, effects etc

Speculative: if, conclusions, evaluations, what do I think?

Week 11 Activity 11

(Take in turns to read...)

Read the following passage to yourself and then share the task after it with your partner.

Tommy was all alone at home. His mum was going to be back late tonight. She had to work extra hours now because food and groceries were getting so expensive to buy. He felt lonely and sad thinking about it and especially so today. Since today was his birthday.

He had woken up to a lovely surprise. He had found a large red, helium balloon with his age on it, an expensive looking A3- size, hard-backed drawing pad (he loved to do artwork, specially designs and cartoons), a set of multicoloured paint pens and a small, strange looking teddy bear with a big smirk on its face. But now, looking at them and mum being late back made him feel sad.

When he has one sad thought, Tommy frequently starts to think of other sad things. Like the way other children sometimes call him names because he finds reading difficult. Like the way bad things can happen unexpectedly: like Mr. Jones down the road having a heart attack. He often worried about himself getting ill and, worst of all, what would happen if his mum was unwell and had to go into hospital? Tommy's sad thoughts started to come thick and fast.

Why are people so unkind to others? Why are so many children in the world so very, very poor? Why do people fight horrible wars with so many people dying, losing everything and having to flee their homes and countries? What if this happened here to his mum and him?

As one sad thought came quickly after the next, he found himself sad and alone and with tears welling up inside him. Tommy reached out to his new, smiley teddy to grab a cuddle from him.

Much to his surprise, the teddy spoke to him!

Tommy couldn't make out what it had said at first, so he squeezed it again.

"Happy Birthday, Tommy!" teddy said. And then, much to his surprise, "Let them go!" in a strangely kind and calm voice.

Tommy was surprised and delighted. He recognised the voice immediately. It was his mum's. Teddy was one of those clever toys you can buy and record your own message.

But what did it mean, 'Let them go?'

Tommy laughed as he realised what had happened.

Teddy had made him happy again by helping him *let go* of all his sad thoughts.

Discuss

There are things in life we can't control and things in life we can.

In the story, can you recall five things that Tommy *can never* have any control over?

In the story or in his life more generally, can you think of five things Tommy, *can* have some control over?

Mind Gym Debrief of Activity 11

The Content

Learning to be able to let go of your anxieties and worries is an important skill for your mental well-being. It can be difficult to do so, especially if you are one of the many people who are naturally quite anxious by nature. Here are some techniques that might help you to let sad thoughts go. Try them now with your partner.

Activities to help you let go of worries: PRACTISE THESE WITH YOUR PARTNER.

Grounding is a way of bringing yourself away from sad and bad thoughts by getting yourself to focus on the here and now. Go and sit in front of a window. Put both feet firmly on the floor. Look around and find five things you can see. Now, listen closely: can you hear four sounds around you? Next: close your eyes and reach out your hand to touch something nearby. Feel it gently- notice the shape and the texture. Reach for two other things and do the same. Now with your eyes still closed take a slow deep breath. Can you smell two things around you? Open your eyes: look out of the window and describe the view to yourself. Notice one thing you haven't noticed before in the view.

Put Your Pain in the Box

Imagine a box and put your pain in it. Just for a while... imagine yourself closing the box. What's it like now the pain is in the

box and the lid is closed. Can you talk about it now that the pain is in the box? What does it feel like? What do you think this emotional pain is all about?

The Happiness Box

Get a box and make a collection of things that make you happy or remind you of happy events in the past. When feeling sad go to this box and look through your happy things.

The Happy Place

Close your eyes and think of a place that makes you happy. Think of doing happy things there. Make yourself a little corner of your room as a happy corner and sit there quietly when feeling sad.

Write a 'Control List'

These are some of the things you have **no** control over: other people being kind to you; other people being honest with you; what other people think of you; yourself and other people becoming ill; things that might happen in the future; things that have happened in the past.

Write a list of things you **do** have some control over, for example, things that you can do right now. Keep your list and try to add new things each time you feel anxious.

But, if you think you get worried or anxious a lot and you can't seem to get yourself out of it then be assertive and talk to someone about it, for example a teacher you like and trust. Talking in confidence to someone you don't know but can trust can also help. You could try Childline on 0800 1111 or your GP.

When it's Difficult to Talk

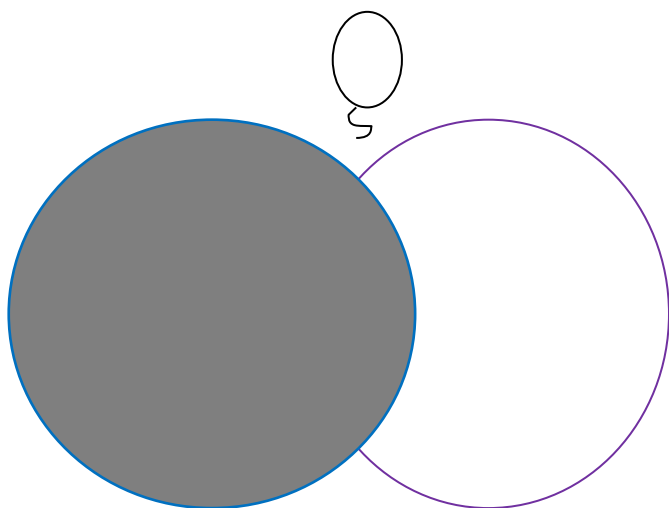
If you have to say or explain something difficult to someone, it can be a good idea to write yourself a script and practise

saying it out loud a few times. Plan when you are going to say it, work out clearly what you want to say. Don't feel you need to work out how they can help you. Sometimes just talking to someone else will help to make things better.

Remember: to make yourself better at something all you need to do is to practise it. Think, 'I can do this!' and try to do it, even though you might find it really hard. Action begins with the word 'act!'

Debrief of the Task

Do you know how important reading is? It is not only very important in your learning but also in your actual brain development! It is important because it helps in the making and strengthening of new brain connections called neurons. Reading stories especially helps to strengthen and make new connections in our Empathy Centres. These special parts of our brain help us to engage with and understand other people. Reading also helps to develop our understanding of the world around us and our own motivations and feelings.



Mind Tools

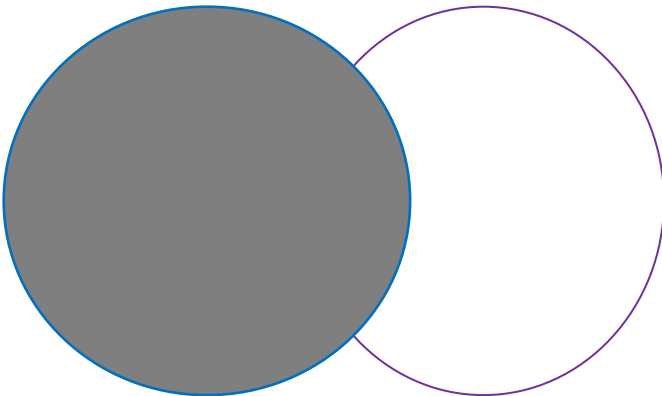
- ✓ **Let go**

Find ways to just let go of your worries.

- ✓ **Know what you can and can't control**

Let go of what you can't and take action to take control over what you can.

- ✓ **Read-Think-Communicate**



Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 11

Log your reading activities this week.

Reading

Purpose

For fun

For finding out/checking information

For learning how to do something

For understanding the world

For understanding people

For advice

Out of curiosity

Ways

To myself silently

To myself out loud

Paired reading taking turns

Skimming: looking to get an overview of the text

Scanning: looking for key words or info.

Chorus reading in the classroom

To

Parent/relative/sibling/carer

Teacher/ Teaching Assistant/Tutor

Pet (seriously- good for practising reading)

What

Fiction

Non-Fiction

Websites

Magazines/ Newspaper/Instruction manuals etc.

MY OWN WRITING- Do this regularly.

Tick When Used

[illegible]

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

Reading Comprehension

1. **Skim first then read** slowly and carefully, word by word, using the punctuation to guide you.
2. **Guess**, as you start to read: what is this about?
3. **Pause** whilst you read and ask yourself,
‘What do I already know about the subject?’
4. **After** you have finished reading something think back over it and prompt yourself with the 5Ws:

What was it about? What happened? Who was it about? Where did it happen?
Why?

5. **To Remember** something you read then communicate it: tell someone about it or make a few notes to remind yourself about it (you could make notes using this Thinking Frame).

1
2
3
4
5

What I could read more of? *When* could I read more?



My Reading Record

Date	Title	Author	Rating 1 2 3 4 5
Notes about It			

Date	Title	Author	Rating 1 2 3 4 5
Notes about It			

Date	Title	Author	Rating 1 2 3 4 5
Notes about It			

Date	Title	Author	Rating 1 2 3 4 5
Notes about It			

Date	Title	Author	Rating 1 2 3 4 5
Notes about It			

I want to read

Titles	Authors
--------	---------

Week 12 Activity 12

Part One

Use this Mind Gym Thinking Frame to make up a funny story about children doing something silly together. Just jot down a few words to remind yourselves of the story as you proceed...

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

Storymaking

My story starts like this:

Describe the scene:

Describe the characters in your story:

Describe their feelings:

Then this happens:

Then this:

Then this:

My story ends like this:

Describe the scene now:

Describe the characters now:

Describe their feelings now:

Discuss

(Take turns to read...)

Using the sequence **‘Think-Communicate-Write’** is a great way to write and improve your writing skills which are, of course, so very important in your schoolwork and learning.

1. Firstly, think about and plan what you are going to write and maybe make some simple notes.
2. Next, tell someone the ideas and ask them what they think about them and for any other ideas they might have. Consider using these ideas.
3. Now, write your piece of work being sure to add explanations when needed: explain ‘why’ frequently.
4. Finally read it to yourself, out loud if possible, making any corrections and additions as you go along.
5. Write a final, neat draft of pieces you like or are your most important pieces of schoolwork.

(Oh, yes ‘5’ points again!)

Part Two

(Both Learning Partners do this at the same time...)

Stream of Consciousness

Try this on your own. Find a piece of paper and a pen. Give yourself five minutes. During the five minutes just put your pen to the paper and write anything and keep writing. Try not to think too much and don't worry about what you are writing or the spelling of words etc., because no one is going to read it.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part Two

Many people find that stream of consciousness writing can help them to work out their thoughts and work through their feelings. It will also help you to be better at and more confident in the 'flow' of your writing.

Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 12

Write a 'Positive Narrative' for yourself. Seeing things that happen and events of the past in a positive way can help you become more confident and more resilient. Writing about the times you overcome fears and problems especially can build your self-esteem and optimism.

Make a note of each time *this week* you overcame a problem or succeeded in something. Then write a full paragraph about one of them: explain what you did in detail, explain how you felt whilst doing it and then how you felt afterwards.

A Positive Self-Narrative About my Week

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Mind Tools

✓ **Think-Communicate-Write**

✓ **Use Stream of Consciousness**

At times plan your writing carefully, at other times just let rip!

✓ **Build a Positive Self Narrative**

Write about how you overcame problems and stories with yourself as the hero!

You might also like to use a writing log to check the variety of the writing skills you use...

Writing

How

- On my own
- With a partner
- In a group
- Following teacher's modelling

What

- Creative writing: story making etc.
- Narrative writing
- Descriptive writing
- Persuasive writing
- Expository writing
- Notes
- Diagrams

Tick When Used

What I could write more of? How might I write better?



Keep a log of important pieces of writing. It's a good idea to number the pages of your exercise books and write a contents page at the back for review or revision.

Week 13 Activity 13

Part One

'Invent a Name' Game

Play individually and secretly, writing your responses on a piece of paper. When you have done all five then share them with one-another.

1. Imagine you are going to write a story about a photographer- choose a name for this photographer.
2. Imagine you are going to write a story about a scientist- choose a name for this scientist.
3. Imagine you are going to write a story about a dancer- choose a name for this dancer.
4. Imagine you are going to write a story about a nurse: invent a name for this nurse.
5. Imagine you are going to write a story about a teacher: invent a name for this teacher.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 1

Were you the victim of ‘stereotypical thinking’ - are your photographers and scientists male and your dancer, nurse and teacher female? They were likely to be so irrespective of whether you are male or female!

Our gender or our sense of whether we are male or female can have a big effect on how we see ourselves, what we think we should be like and what we think we should be doing in life. It might even have an effect upon our thinking in some more subtle ways, as in the activity you did. Many things we think of, we think of as being male *by default*.

This may make you think, as a girl, that a career in science is not for you. The same might be true of being a nurse or working in childcare and teaching if you are a boy.

This is called stereotypical thinking or having a stereotypical mindset.

Part Two

Gender even has an effect on our learning and how well we achieve at school. All around the world, for example, girls get better exam results than boys; although they are less likely to go to university to study engineering or physics.

In the quiz below ‘Guess and Test:’ which is true from your experience of most boys, most girls or are they both the same.

The Gender Quiz

Boys Girls Equally

1. Ask for more help in doing things
2. Doubt themselves more
3. Less inclined to guess
4. Less inclined to speculate
5. Less inclined to take risks
6. Less inclined to try new things.
7. Less inclined to take the lead
8. Are more inclined to avoid conflict
9. Read more
10. Write better
11. Are more inclined to give up early
12. Shorter attention spans
13. More easily bored
14. Weaker reflective skills
15. Don't speak about their feelings
16. Miss out steps
17. Just guess rather than think
18. Have weaker writing skills
19. Read less
20. Put less effort into work
21. Have poorer social skills
22. Talks through things less
23. More easily bored
24. Quick to get aggressive.

Discuss

Research shows that numbers 1 to 11 are more likely to be true of girls and 12-24 more likely to be true of boys. Are they true of you? Are they true of your Learning Partner? If so, then these might affect your confidence, resilience and self-esteem. Discuss how you might change things.

(Part Three)

NB Teacher: if you consider the following appropriate! If not, please remove from the Mind Gym booklet and/or adapt...

Discuss

Here are some of the most common and harmful stereotypes that have traditionally been associated with autistic people:

1. *Autistic people lack empathy* – This is one of the most persistent myths. In reality, many autistic individuals feel empathy deeply but may express it differently than neurotypical people.
2. *They don't want social relationships* – Many autistic people do want connection but may find social norms confusing or overwhelming.
3. *All autistic people are either geniuses or intellectually disabled* – Autism is a spectrum, and cognitive abilities vary widely. Most autistic individuals fall somewhere in between.
4. *They are emotionless or robotic* – Autistic people experience the full range of human emotions, though they may express them in unique ways.
5. *They are aggressive or violent* – Outbursts, when they occur, are often due to sensory overload or communication difficulties—not inherent aggression.
6. *They are obsessed with specific topics* – While many autistic individuals have strong interests, this is not exclusive to autism and can be a source of joy and expertise.
7. *They can't live independently* – With the right support, many autistic people lead fulfilling, independent lives.
8. *They all behave the same way* – Autism presents differently in every individual. No two autistic people are exactly alike.

These stereotypes can be deeply damaging, leading to misunderstanding, exclusion, and missed opportunities.

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 2

Whether or not some of the things here are true for you individually, here are some activities that can really improve your life skills:

- ✚ Take more positive risks: do what you find difficult to do since this is about building confidence and 'self-empowerment' by overcoming fears.
- ✚ Explore new activities and explore new subjects. Try things and explore topics that you think might not be for you or that you think you won't be interested in. New experiences in different areas help to develop our confidence and make us more 'rounded' as people.
- ✚ Read and read in different ways and for different purposes: reading is great for mind growth and development.
- ✚ Write and write in different ways and for different purposes: apart from it being an important learning tool, writing can also be an important tool for well-being because it helps us clarify our thinking and express our feelings.
- ✚ Avoid stereotyping: think for yourself and question the assumptions people make about you and others because of their sex, gender, race or so called 'disabilities.'

Mind Tools

- ✓ **Avoid stereotypical thinking**

Be yourself, not what others want or expect you to be. Think for yourself.

- ✓ **Take positive risks**

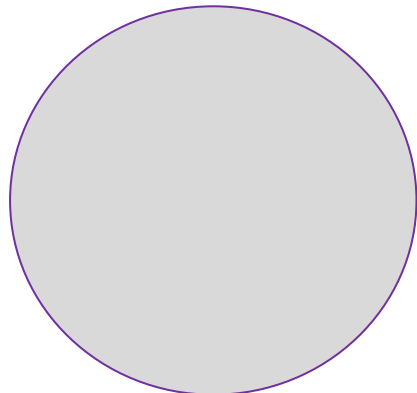
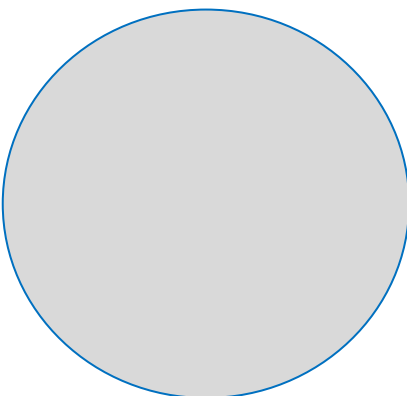
Do what you think is right and best for you.

- ✓ **Be a thinker *and* a doer**

- ✓ **Empower yourself**

Think 'I have the ability to choose my own response to things; I have the ability to choose my own actions!'

- ✓ **Value your own and other people's differences**



Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 13

Set yourself targets for this week to improve your learning and well-being at school.



Targets

What can I do more of?

What can I put more effort into?

What difficulties might I have in making these improvements?

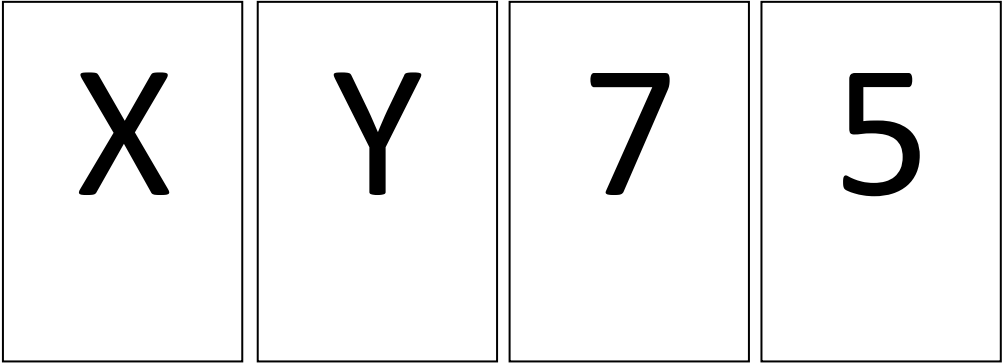
How can I overcome these difficulties?

Week 14 Activity 14

Thinking Skills

With your partner, see if you can solve the following quiz problems. Warning: they are very hard!

1. What is wrong with this statement: 'If at first you don't succeed- give up.'
2. A bat and a ball together cost £1.10. The bat is £1 dearer than the ball. How much is the ball?
3. In a garden weeds double in number every day. It will take 24 days for the weeds to cover the entire garden. How long will it take for the weeds to cover half the garden?
4. A father and his son are involved in a car crash. The father very sadly dies in the crash and the son is rushed to hospital. The surgeon says, "I am not allowed to operate on this boy because he's my son". Explain why.
5. Susy is a bright girl who is very interested in animals and issues concerning conservation and the environment. Put these statements in the most likely order: Susy has short hair. Susy has a part-time job in a pet shop. Susy has a part-time job.



6. Each of the above cards has a letter on one side and a number on the other. Which two cards should you turn over to check that the following statement is true: **if there is an X on one side there is a 5 on the other?**



7. You have a candle, a box of matches and some thumb tacks. How can you mount the candle on a wall?

Mind Gym Debrief of Part 1

Answers

1. It should be 'try again!' (See below.)
2. The bat costs £1.05 and the ball 5 pence.
3. The weeds cover half the garden in 23 days.
4. The surgeon is the boy's mother.
5. No actual one correct answer here but there is one wrong one. Option 3 must come before 2 since Susy having a part time job must be more likely than Susy having a part time job in a pet shop.
6. You should turn over the X card and the 7 card.
7. Take the matches from the tray and pin the tray to the wall to hold the candle.

You probably did badly at answering the quiz questions! But that's OK, isn't it? Making mistakes is an important part of learning and getting things wrong can help you to develop an important life skill: resilience. Failure is good so long as you learn from it. So here are some important lessons to learn about thinking.

1. We hope you got this one right! Being successful at anything can involve a lot of failure. Learn to 'fail well' by not giving up. Let go of your anxieties but not your dreams.
2. The bat costs £1.05 and the ball 5 pence. If you got it wrong, it is because you thought *instinctively* when really you needed to think a bit more about the answer. Good thinking is to think, 'Is this really good thinking?' and 'Test your answers.'
3. The weeds cover half the garden in 23 days. Well duh! Instinct again. Don't just rely on your first thoughts. Sometimes it's best to think backwards. This is an important thinking skill, for example

in planning things. Good thinking is start with the question always in mind. Good thinking is to start with your goal in mind.

4. The surgeon is the boy's mother! (Or, less likely, his other Gay father.) Look out for stereotypical assumptions and the immediate appeal of first solutions or easy ideas to believe in. Some people believe an awful lot of rubbish because they quickly jump to conclusions. Good thinking is to look for evidence before making decisions.
5. You might have been misled by thoughts of Susy being an animal lover and into environmental issues. We are always looking for connections and can easily be misled by the assumptions we make. Good thinking is to look out for the assumptions you have made.
6. You should turn over the X card and the 7 card (you probably thought X and 5 card!). Think about it... you don't need to know what the 5 card has on the back of it; only what the X card has on the back of it. If you found an X on the back of the 7 card, the statement would not be true. This is called 'Confirmation Bias.' We frequently look for things that confirm the beliefs we already have about things rather than those which might challenge them. Good thinking is to challenge your own biases.
7. The problem here is about overcoming what is called 'Function Fixation.' When we think about a box of matches, we think about its function (such as lighting the candle). Instead, we might take out the match tray and pin in to the wall to hold the candle. Be creative- think 'out of the box.'

Mind Tools

- ✓ **Watch out for your assumptions**

Don't let your beliefs get in the way of your thinking.

- ✓ **Work out what you want to achieve first**

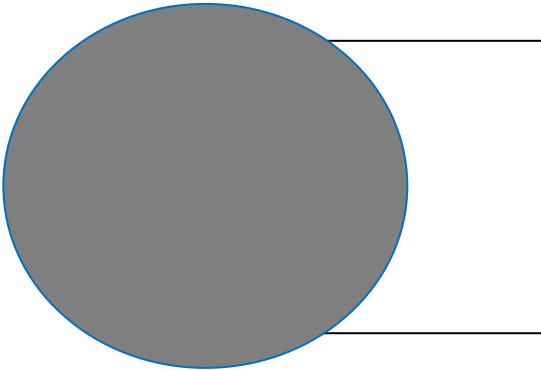
or what the question really is before you start.

- ✓ **Fail well**

by not giving up too easily.

- ✓ **Test your answers**

- ✓ **Think outside of the box**



Mind Gym Weekly Challenge 14

Testing Beliefs

Think of a belief that people commonly have and/or a belief you have. Do a survey to find out how many in your class do or don't believe it. Then write a report that explains the reasons why some people believe it and why some don't.

Mind Gym Thinking Frame

For problem solving

1. Think:

Do I really understand the problem?

Do I really understand the question?

2. Think of possible solutions to the problem:

1

2

3

4

5

3. Decide which one is best.

4. State the solution.

5. Test it. Check the Answer. Try again if wrong.

Recap and Review

Mind Gym

Learning Skills

Summary and Log

Learning Skills to Practise

Tick When
Used

Going for Five

Guessing and Testing

Using Descriptive-Reflective-Speculative

.... In planning

.... In writing

.... In reading

Reading skills

.... Using 5Ws

Writing skills

....Using Think-Communicate-Write

... Using Plan-Do-Review

... Using Stream of Consciousness

Thinking skills

Challenging Assumptions

Using Steps

Checking Answers

Recall and Revision

.... Making Prompt Cards

.... Quizzing myself

....Teaching /Explaining to others

[illegible]

Mind Gym Life Skills

Life Skills to Practise

Collaborating

.... In pairs

.... In small groups

.... In large groups

Sharing

.... Thoughts and Ideas

.... Feelings

Acknowledging

.... Your Own Successes

.... Your Gratitude for and to others

Having a Can-Do attitude

Taking Positive Risks

... Asking for Help and for what you need

Trying New Things

Engaging with new people

Failing Successfully

.... Learning from Mistakes

.... Keeping Trying when difficult

Being Assertive

Letting Go of Worries and Anxiety

Building a Good Self Narrative

.... Writing about Problems you overcome

Talking Positively to Yourself

Tick When Used

[illegible]

Geoff Hannan and Angela Hannan
Training and Consultancy International
Chartwell, Sarn, Powys UK SY16 4EY
www.hannans.org.uk

