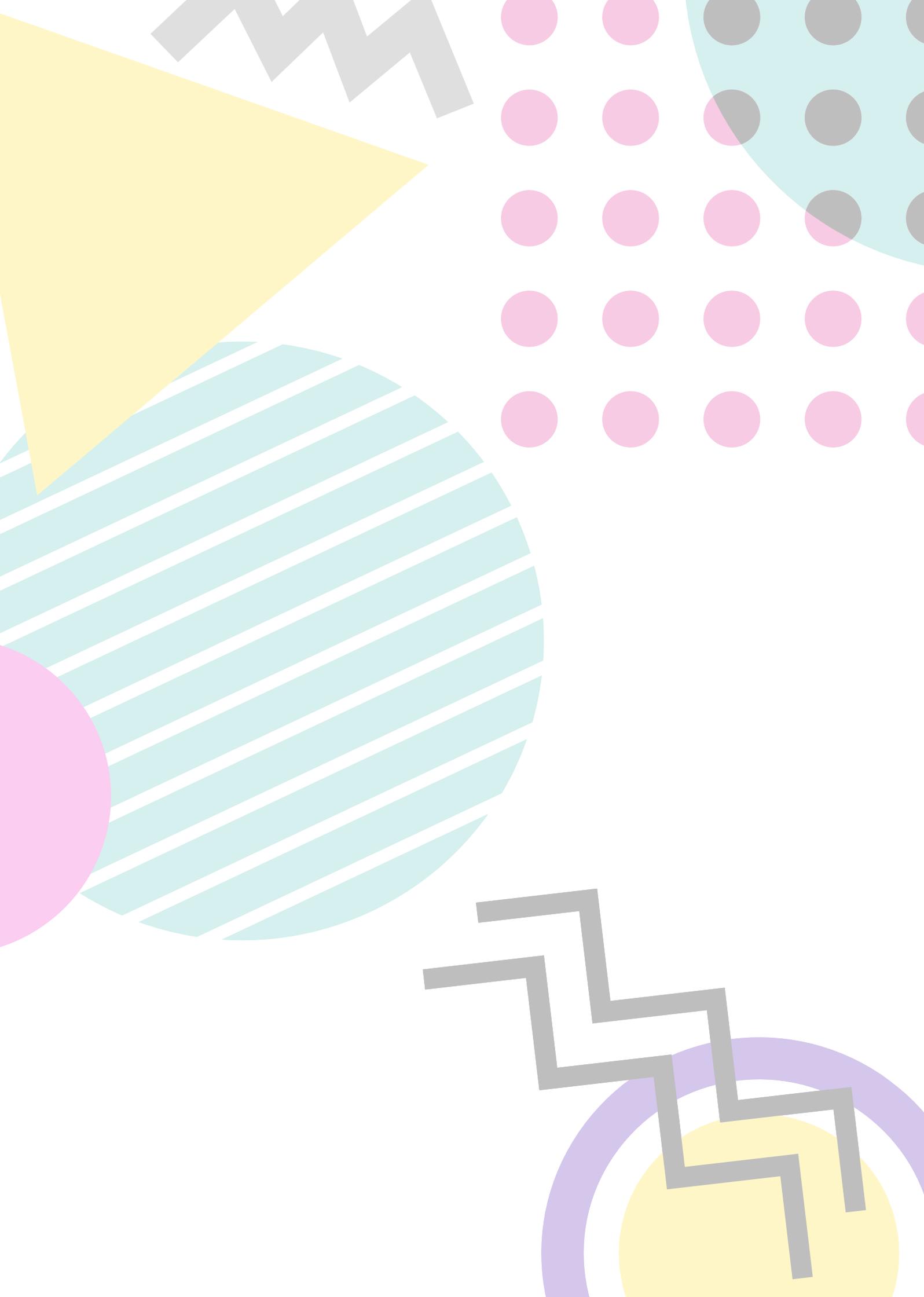


The background features a variety of colorful geometric shapes and patterns. At the top left, there is a yellow triangle. To its right, a grey zigzag line runs diagonally. The upper right quadrant is filled with a grid of pink and grey circles. A light blue circle is partially visible on the right edge. The lower left corner shows a pink circle. At the bottom, a grey zigzag line is positioned over a purple circle, which in turn overlaps a yellow circle.

children's mental health

parents' booklet



AN INTRODUCTION

TO MENTAL HEALTH

This Children's Mental Health Week 2022, your child has been completing a workbook about their right to mental health and how to claim it.

This accompanying booklet aims to give you the information you need to help respond to any conversations that might come up as a result of your child completing this workbook.

56% of parents have worried about their child's mental health as a result of lockdowns, and more than 1 in 10 primary school children have a mental health condition. UNICEF have referred to this as an iceberg that has been ignored for too long.

Through open and honest discussions about mental health, as well as more awareness about how to improve it, this iceberg can be chipped away.

We all have mental health, including parents and children. The more we all talk about, the more it can be seen as a positive thing!

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health involves emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, and make decisions. Mental health is important at every stage of life, including childhood, during which many lifelong mental health problems can develop.

Mental health is therefore not an adults-only issue.

Many people feel uncomfortable about talking to their child about mental health. However, such discussions can be extremely beneficial for both you and your child.

If children are taught at a young age to view their mental health positively, and to speak about it openly, the topic will become less stigmatised.

Through adolescence and into adulthood, your child will know how they feel is something they should never feel scared or ashamed to talk about.

DID YOU KNOW...?

AROUND THREE CHILDREN IN EVERY CLASSROOM HAVE STRUGGLED WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH. YET 29% OF PARENTS WOULD FEEL EMBARRASSED IF THEIR CHILD WANTED COUNSELLING.

THE RIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH

The right to 'the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health' is set out in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS



A child's right to mental health is also present in the UN's [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). These are rights that all children should have. All of these relate to mental health, especially the [right to health](#) in Article 24 and protection and [care that is necessary for well-being](#) in Article 3.

WHO GIVES US RIGHTS?

Because mental health is a human right, the government has a duty to help ensure no one's right to the highest attainable standard of mental health is being withheld from them. This means that the lack of proper education about mental health, or the lack of availability of resources to improve mental health, is a human rights issue.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health isn't just important because it's a human right!

Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been increasing concern for children's mental health.

56% of parents worried about their children's mental health when the first lockdown started in 2020. Around this time, almost 1 in 4 children reported dealing with feelings of anxiety.

Life-long, open and healthy discussions about mental health can improve a child's capacity to think, feel, learn, work and build meaningful relationships.

This is why talking about mental health is so important. **Mental health is positive - we all have it!** By talking openly about mental health with your child, you can help affirm that mental health is normal.

UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report 2021 included mental health for the first time. This shows an increasing positive attitude towards mental health education, but stigmas do remain.

SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

These are some behaviours which can indicate your child is experiencing mental health struggles:

Difficulties paying attention

Unexplained headaches or body pain

Neglecting themselves

Avoiding school or enjoyed activities

Irritability and 'acting out'

Excessive worry or sadness

Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits

Excessive crying

Outgrown behaviours (e.g. bed-wetting)

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Approaching the topic of mental health isn't always easy. Here are some ways to create the right atmosphere so that a conversation is not so scary:

TOP TIP!

Allow your child to take their time. Articulating scary or confusing emotions can be hard. Just letting them know you are ready to listen when they are ready to talk is a great start!

- Don't wait for worrying behaviours to present themselves - regularly check in with your child's feelings and encourage them to reflect on each one
- Be adaptable and try different forms of communication - let your child know when you are worried, or just want to hear how they are
- It's not easy to hear that people we love aren't feeling their happiest, but it's important to listen and support first, and take any needed action later

- Work with your child to help them examine and understand their feelings, and make sure they know they are not alone
- Many children feel worried about how the pandemic will affect their future. Talk honestly with your child about what is happening - answer their questions and reassure them that they are safe
- Never blame yourself. If your child is struggling with their mental health, this is not an indictment, but an opportunity to offer needed love and support
- Validate rather than judge your child's feelings - this will help them feel valued and supported, and more likely to ask for help in the future
- Reassure your child that it's okay to feel upset and scared - share any coping mechanisms that you find useful when dealing with strong feelings

REMEMBER

If you are concerned about the behaviours your child is displaying, or the emotions they are describing, there are places that can offer professional support. You can always talk to your GP if you are worried about your child's mental health.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

This week, your child has learnt some calming methods to practice when needed.

Movement is key!



Your child's workbook encouraged them to carry out calming movements when feeling nervous, frustrated and stressed. It also gave examples of big movements to encourage endorphins, along with calming breathing exercises for when feelings become too overwhelming.

If your child found these helpful, encourage them to practice these exercises at home!



Doing it together

Mindful exercises can be incorporated into your weekly routine. Doing sports, colouring and drawing, playing stimulating board games, cooking, going on walks - all of these everyday activities can improve your child's mood.

Doing these activities together can help you and your child feel more open and comfortable to discuss your feelings!

LOOKING AFTER YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH

It isn't just children who have a right to mental health. It is equally important that adults feel comfortable to talk about their feelings, and know what to do if they are struggling with their mental health. Being aware of how your own mental health affects you means you can lead by example, and show your child that mental health is a positive, not a shameful, thing.

Helping other people with their mental health can take an emotional toll. See the end of the this booklet for further resources on getting support with this.

YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH IS JUST AS IMPORTANT!



- Practice mindfulness - this can include calming activities like yoga or colouring, or having open conversations about how you are feeling with friends and family
- You never need to struggle alone. If you are concerned about yourself or your child, speak to your GP about what mental health support is available to you

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND FILMS

ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Inside
Out

Up!

Encanto

Coco

Finding
Nemo

RED: A CRAYON'S STORY

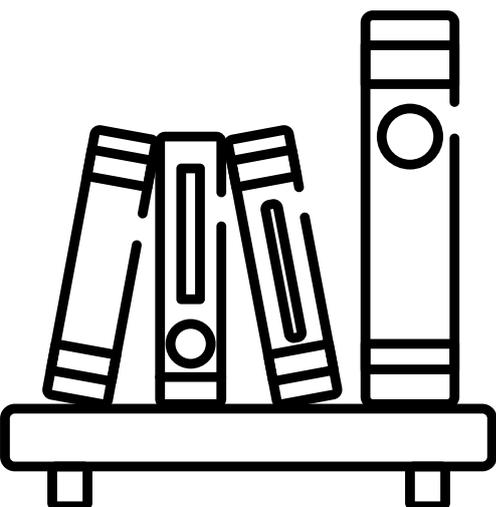
WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU
WORRY TOO MUCH

GROBBLECHOPS

DON'T FEED THE WORRYBUG!

THE HEART AND THE BOTTLE

AUBREY AND THE TERRIBLE
YOOT



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

WHERE TO GET HELP FOR YOU OR YOUR CHILD

- Young Minds: Parent Guides
[www.youngminds.org.uk/parent]
- Young Minds: Helpline (Monday-Friday,
9.30am-4pm) - 0808 802 5544
- NHS: Every Mind Matters
[www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters]
- NHS: Urgent Mental Health Helpline
(24/7 - 0808 196 6798)
- CALM: free text service (5pm-12am -
0800 58 58 58)

**WE WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF
YOU COULD TAKE 3 MINUTES TO
COMPLETE A SHORT FEEDBACK FORM
ABOUT THIS BOOKLET. THANK YOU!**

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW!

