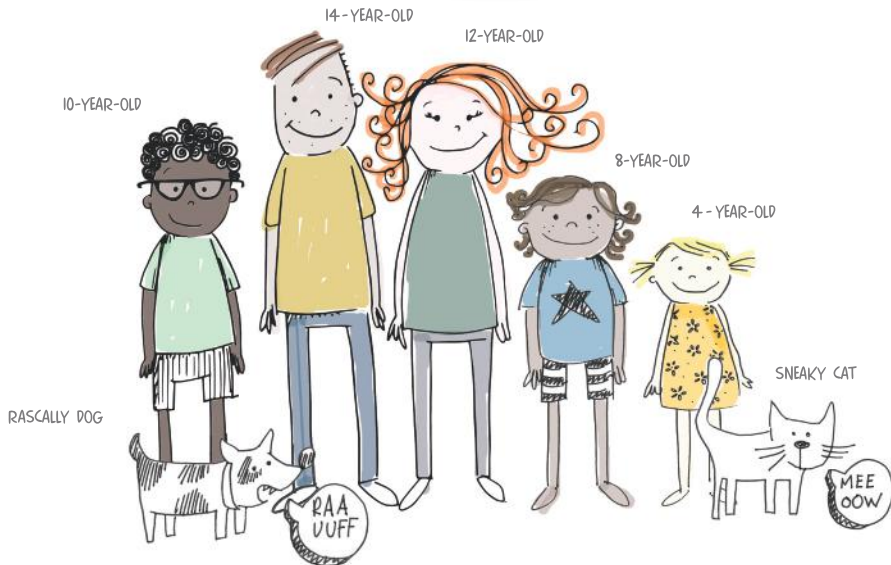


# ANXIETY SOLUTIONS FOR KIDS

50 WAYS TO RIDE THE WAVE



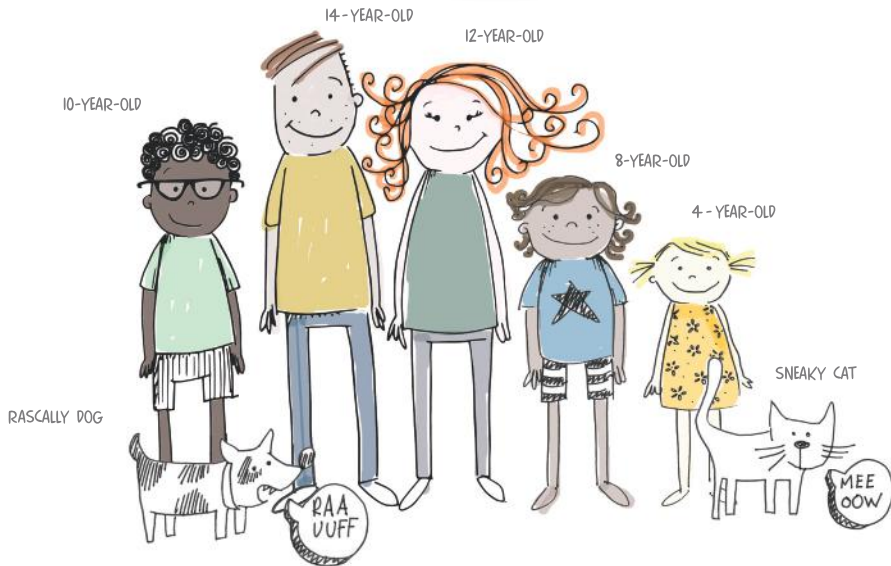
**AUTHOR: SELINA BYRNE M.A.P.S.**  
**ILLUSTRATOR AND DESIGNER: KATIE JARDINE**

**Innovative**  
Resources



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50 WAYS TO RIDE THE WAVE



AUTHOR: SELINA BYRNE M.A.P.S.  
ILLUSTRATOR AND DESIGNER: KATIE JARDINE

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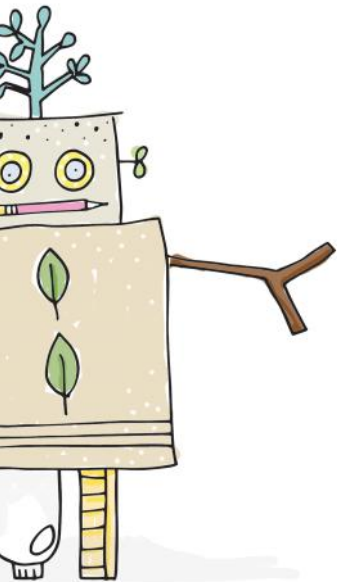
Development and editing: Karen Bedford

Innovative Resources acknowledges the Jaara people of Dja Dja Wurrung country, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our premises are located and where our resources are developed and published. We pay our respects to the elders—past, present and future—for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and other First Nations peoples. We must remember that underneath this earth, upon which we so firmly stand, this is, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.



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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE: WELCOME TO ANXIETY SOLUTIONS FOR KIDS!

*Welcome to Anxiety Solutions for Kids: 50 ways to ride the wave*—a set of cards with fifty simple, practical, fun activities for children who experience worry or anxiety from time to time—and that's every child!

### TRIED-AND-TRUE, SOLUTION-FOCUSSED, STRENGTHS-BASED TECHNIQUES

These cards are based on techniques used for many years by consulting psychologist, Selina Byrne M.A.P.S. to help children with worry and anxiety, and to build their wellbeing and resilience. They have arisen out of, or are in accord with, solution-focussed, strengths-based approaches, cognitive behavioural therapy, brain research, optimism theory, mindfulness practices, and interpersonal therapy models.

Combined with the delightful illustrations of artist Katie Jardine, these cards are for children between the ages of around three to fourteen, but will be useful for *anyone* wanting some simple strategies for riding waves of anxiety.

For most people, feelings of worry or anxiety happen every now and then and are part of a healthy emotional range. Such feelings can serve us well by warning us of potential danger and helping us 'gear up' for performance. However, sometimes these feelings remain long after the 'threat' or stressful situation has subsided and escalate into an unwanted problem, becoming what is known as 'anxiety'.

According to the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Summary of Results, 2007, 4326.0, Canberra) anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. The results showed that on average, one in four people will experience anxiety at some stage in their life and in a twelve-month period, over two million Australians will experience anxiety.

Children, as well as adults, experience anxiety—whether it is a response to particularly challenging circumstances or a generalised, free-floating habit of worry for no apparent reason. When it becomes an intense, prolonged experience, anxiety can be excruciating and even debilitating, and no card set alone is going to suffice.

### THE CARDS DO NOT REPLACE PROFESSIONAL CARE

These cards are certainly not a panacea for anxiety conditions. They do not replace professional care. They do not constitute a professional health care plan, in and of themselves. The decision to seek professional help for a child is a crucial one, and rests with parents and carers, sometimes in partnership with teachers and other adults.

Don't be surprised, though, if you encounter these cards in the toolkits of psychologists, counsellors, family workers, diversional and art therapists because these are the kinds of strategies that many professionals use regularly.

### THE CARDS DO NOT 'PATHOLOGISE' OR 'LABEL' PEOPLE

As noted earlier, anxious feelings do not necessarily constitute the medical condition of anxiety and a child does not have to be diagnosed with anxiety to use these cards. We hope they will appeal to any child, whatever their gender, learning style or preference for activities that are inside or outside, loud or quiet, solitary or in a group. That's why we think these cards will find a place with teachers, parents, early childhood educators, mentors and anyone who supports children.

These activities can be introduced simply as fun things to do. Many of the techniques happen within the child's mind, so no one needs to know the child is doing them. This protects the child's privacy and avoids labelling them as 'anxious' or 'needing help'.

### **SOME ACTIVITIES ARE FAMILIAR, SOME STRANGE—ALL FUN!**

Some of the strategies are based on activities you know well—colouring in, making things, finding shapes in clouds, listening to a seashell against your ear. They are things kids do naturally, and looking back, they made many of us happy when we were kids. Others though, may seem a bit odd—laughing like a lion, tapping your body, imagining a conversation with a super hero.

### **TESTING, TESTING, TESTING**

Selina Byrne M.A.P.S. has used these methods extensively with children in her private practice for more than ten years. She blogs about them, speaks about them, facilitates workshops about them—and has written a book about them. In addition to clinical testing, Selina has road-tested them with early childhood educators, teachers and parents.

Innovative Resources consulted with colleagues from Anglicare Victoria, including the Parents' Advisory Group from 'Communities for Children' who provided invaluable ideas and feedback. (The 'Being Me' card was added to the set at this group's suggestion.)



## RESILIENCE SKILLS

Teaching all children the skills to manage worry, find ways to distract and soothe themselves, challenge their thinking and self-talk is very important. These are essential 'resilience' skills that will serve them for well for a life-time.

As a publisher of therapeutic tools for children and adults, Innovative Resources hopes these cards will help lay a foundation of wellbeing for children. We are delighted to have co-created this tool with author, Selina Byrne M.A.P.S. and artist, Katie Jardine. We hope that children (and parents) will enjoy experimenting with the activities and discovering that there are things they *can* do when old Worrywart drops by and outstays the welcome.

Have fun!

Karen Bedford  
Managing Editor, Innovative Resources

Master of Arts, Diploma of Counselling Psychology, author of *The Uses of Sadness* (Allen & Unwin, 2009), *The Treasure Trove* (Open Place, 2010) facilitator of therapeutic creative writing programs, co-author/editor of therapeutic tools published by Innovative Resources.



ABOUT  
THE CARDS,  
THE AUTHOR,  
AND ANXIETY



## WHAT ARE THESE CARDS AND WHAT DO I DO WITH THEM?

These cards are a packet of solution-oriented strategies to quickly re-route the brain into another zone. The idea is that we learn anxiety and we can unlearn it! By learning the art of deliberate attentional control, we can take our mind in a different direction any time we need to.

Most kids and people with anxiety think they have little or no control over how they feel or what thoughts they have, so we designed a tool that will help you learn how to take things to a new place in the brain. It's not about 'curing' or 'getting rid of' anxiety; it's all about learning how to tolerate the anxiety and to manage it in a way that makes life easier.

You can do so many things with these cards. You can learn strategies systematically, one at a time, or you can dip in and choose at random. The idea is to just do the activity according to the brief instruction on the cards and then notice which strategies the child enjoys the most, or which ones seem to have the biggest brain impact.

## WHO WROTE THE CARDS AND WHY?

The cards are written by Selina Byrne who is a Member of the Australian Psychological Society. Selina is a psychologist who works with both kids and adults to help with anxiety as well as other situations in life. Selina has used all the activities on the cards for many years with lots of people, but noticed that people need something they can have on hand, at home or wherever, to trigger a change in focus or thought.

Also, different types of people need different activities to help. Some like creative tasks, some like physical tasks, some like systematic tasks like counting or working through a list, and some like thinking-based tasks. All the activities have the same goal: to teach your brain to focus on something different and to change the way the body feels, if only briefly. If we can get a change quickly, we can build momentum and train ourselves to go there more often.

Early childhood educators, teachers and parents identified a particular need for a set of simple, fun, yet effective strategies they can use specifically with children.

## WHAT IS ANXIETY ANYWAY?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling combined with certain worried thoughts. Usually the feeling comes first, maybe a sick feeling or dizziness or tightness in the chest. And it only becomes 'anxiety' when we think it's a problem. If we think it's just a feeling, or just a thought, it may not be a problem at all. Any feeling in human experience is a mix of both physiology (something in the body) plus focus (where we put our attention). If we feel something we don't like, then zero in on it in a worried way, bam. We have anxiety.

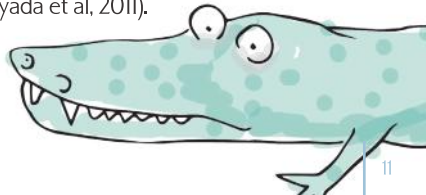
The author once had a client, a young boy, who had unpleasant feelings that his parents and she thought were anxiety-related. But he was used to the feelings; he didn't think much about them and just went on with his life. So they agreed there was no need to change anything as long as he wasn't bothered by the feelings! Many people start thinking about those feelings, though, and get worried. They talk inside their heads about

the 'awful' feelings and how to 'get rid' of them. Strangely, the more we focus on anxiety and how to remove it, the more we build fear of the feelings, which can make them more frequent or intense.

Anxious feelings are a normal part of the human experience, depending on individual tolerance, frequency and intensity of the feelings and thoughts. Some people (kids included) are more prone to anxiety due to both genetics and/or personality and need a little help re-routing the brain. Luckily, the brain is very fast at learning, and can learn to go in another direction when it has the urge to veer towards fear! These cards are designed to help re-route the brain and take it to another place.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN WHEN WE EXPERIENCE ANXIETY?

Anxious feelings activate the amygdalae (two almond-shaped groups of nuclei found deep within the temporal lobes of the brain). They are considered part of the limbic system and perform a primary role in the processing of memory, decision-making, and emotional reactions, including fear. The amygdalae cue the hypothalamus to start releasing stress hormones which cause the body's heart rate and blood pressure to increase—all part of the body's fight, flight or freeze response. Recent studies indicate that cortical areas such as the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) may also contribute to the formation of 'fear memory' (Toyada et al, 2011).



## WHY IS ANXIETY SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS A 'WAVE'?

Anxiety can be described as a wave due to the way it can build, seemingly out of nowhere. Just like a wave, it rises to a peak and eventually lessens or subsides, perhaps for a while or perhaps for longer. A wave of anxiety can range from small to large in intensity. As it is building from within and moving through us, people can feel 'deluged' 'swamped' or 'dumped', especially if they are unfamiliar with the process.

## CAN WE STOP OR CHANGE ANXIETY?

We can either tolerate the anxiety or we can do something to change or redirect the feeling. If we take the mind in another positive direction, the body will follow and we will feel different as a result. In doing this, we can learn that we do, in fact, have some control, so we don't fear the feelings as much. When we know what to do, we don't need to worry at all.

We can change it from two directions: the body or the mind. Or both at the same time! If we are distracted and thinking of something else, our nervous system changes too, and we experience more calm. Or we can change the way the body is operating, let's say by taking a walk, or by jumping up and down, and our thoughts will change too! So if we combine both body changes and mind re-directions, we can get to other feelings quite quickly and reliably. These cards have a mix of both kinds of strategies (as well as combinations of each) so you can see what works best for you.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN SKILLS NEEDED FOR MANAGING ANXIETY?

To tolerate and manage anxiety, we need the skill of noticing what is going on in our minds in response to a feeling or event. And then we need to be able to take that focus somewhere else if it's bothering us. Or we can decide to just let it be, simply allowing it to be there and to pass in its own time. Most people with anxiety aren't that happy about letting it be as it is, and so we need things for the brain to do instead while the feeling passes (which it always will).

This is called 'meta cognitive skills', which means thinking about how we think. In studying kids and adults with anxiety, we learned that most people somehow feel that worrying is the right approach, that it is somehow useful in problem-solving or prevention. Just for the record, it has been shown again and again that worrying isn't helpful at all! All it does is make us feel bad and limit our creative problem-solving!

The other thing we know about most people with anxiety is that they genuinely think and feel that they can't control their thoughts; that the thoughts or feelings just arrive by themselves and can't be changed or stopped. So the more we learn the art of deliberate 'attentional control', the more we know we can take the brain to where we want it to go rather than letting it run the show.





## THE LIST OF CARDS AND THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES

Detailed information about the practice base of each card (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Mindfulness, and so on) is available at: [www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org) (Search for 'Anxiety Solutions for Kids'.)

The cards in *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* cover a range of strategies for calming anxiety and enhancing wellbeing including:

- Breathing cards
- Gratitude tasks
- Counting cards
- Focussing or diversion tasks
- Alphabet cards
- Sounds, singing and music cards
- Imagination cards
- Affirmations and word repetitions
- Listing tasks
- Creative tasks
- Physical tasks

The strategies include techniques such as positive statements, humour, reframing, dialogue, movement, funny voices, repetition, remembering and recalling, symbols and artifacts, slow motion, tactile sensations and even hydration (how often have we heard about the importance of drinking enough water for the wellbeing of our body and mind?).

The activities on the cards are all 'solution-focussed' and 'strengths-based' in that they don't focus on 'the problem' but on simple, fun things the child (or adult) can do to build their strengths, awareness, cognitive skills, wellbeing and resilience. All of the activities use focussing and/or distracting techniques, and can assist with self-soothing and arousal control (de-escalating anxiety feelings). The cards also draw on many other practice modalities or frameworks including cognitive behavioural therapy, brain research, optimism theory, positive psychology, mindfulness practices, interpersonal therapy and focussing models. These strategies and techniques have been shown to be effective through both clinical practice and in research. (Please see the references and links to research papers at end of this booklet.)

For anyone with a favoured style of practice, or who wants to pick out all the cards that draw on a specific modality—mindfulness practices, for example—we have identified the key practice modalities of each card. This information is available at [www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org) in written and table form. Search for *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* and it will take you to the page dedicated to this resource.

While many psychologists and counsellors use these techniques in their practices, the activities in *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* have been selected because they do not need clinical supervision. They are activities that anyone can do, and many of them are activities children gravitate to naturally.

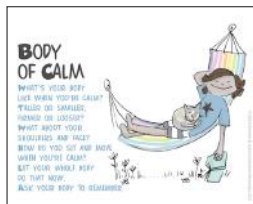
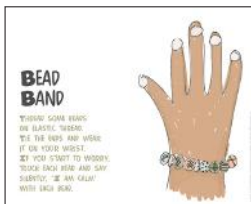
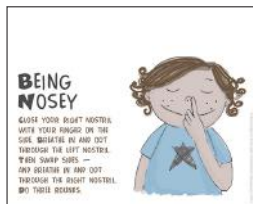
People have preferences for different types of activities. For this reason the cards contain a mix of activities including inside or outside, quiet or loud, visual or audio, focussing on the body or the mind.

People also have preferences for different learning styles. For predominantly kinesthetic learners, for example, activities that involve significant movement may open up the most effective pathways to ease and calm. For a child who responds best when on the move, consider picking cards containing activities that involve movement.

On the other hand, facilitators may wish to invite children to try something different. Moving away from habits and preferences and into the spirit of adventure and experimentation can be a very useful wellbeing strategy in itself!



# THE ARRAY OF CARDS



## COOL BREATH WARM BREATH

BREATHE IN THROUGH YOUR NOSE. FEEL THE COOL AIR FLOWING IN. THEN EXHALE OUT AND FEEL THE WARM AIR FLOWING OUT. DO IT A FEW TIMES, KEEP MOVING THE TEMPERATURE!



## COUNT UP AND DOWN

DO THE FIVE FINGER AND COUNT TO FIVE. THEN STAND UP AND COUNT TO ONE. DO THIS ANOTHER FOUR TIMES.



## COUNTING COLOURS

LOOK AROUND YOU. HOW MANY BLUE THINGS CAN YOU SEE? HOW MANY RED THINGS? HOW MANY GREEN THINGS?



## FAVOURITE TREE

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE TREE? CAN YOU SIT UNDER IT? WALK TO IMAGINE SITTING UNDER IT? DRAW AGAINST ITS TRUNK THINGS. CLIMB UP AND FIND A SECRET SITTING SPACE. CAN YOU DRAW IT?



## FUNNIEST THING

LOOK AROUND YOU. WHAT'S THE FUNNIEST THING YOU CAN IMAGINE SHAPING UPON? NOW? TELL SOMEONE. IF YOU LIKE -- OR MAYBE YOU WANT TO KEEP IT PRIVATE!



## HEART SAYS YES

YES! YOU AGREED. CERTAINLY ON YOUR BEST OVER YOUR HEART. WHAT SAYING: 'YES, YES, YES, YES, YES!' KEEP TAPPING AND SAYING 'YES' AT EACH 'HEARTY THUMP'.



## HELPING HAND

WHAT COULD YOU DO TO HELP SOMEONE TODAY? SEE THREE SOMETHING AND YOU COULD DO SO. SAY: 'HOW COULD YOU HELP ANYONE'S ANY?'



## I'M READY

SAY 'YES' THREE OUT LOUD. 'I'M READY TO FEEL CALM.' NOW! 'NOW SAY FOUR THINGS.' 'I'M ALREADY FEELING A BIT BETTER.' AGAIN NOW. SAY THREE TIMES. 'THIS IS REALLY GOOD!'



## INFINITY

THINK A BIG NUMBER. BLINK IN THE AIR WITH YOUR FINGER OVER AND OVER. NOW TELL THE BLINK OR ITS USE AND TALK IT SOMEONE. IN THE AIR. NOW TRACE IT ON YOUR ARM OR LEG.



## INVISIBLE INK

GO TO A WALL. DRAW A BIG LETTER IN ON IT. WASH THE TOP OF YOUR FINGER. NOW GO THROUGH THE WALLS. ALONGSIDE DRAWING BIG, SLOW LETTERS WITH YOUR FINGER.



## IT'S OK

TALK OF A TIME WHEN YOU WERE WORRIED AND SOMEONE SAID 'IT'S OK.' AND IT REALLY WAS. SAY OUT LOUD: 'I'M TALKING ABOUT IT'S OK.' BREATHE TO YOURSELF AND SAY OUT: 'IT'S OK.'



## LAUGH LIKE A LION

DO YOU HAVE A GIG? HAVE YOU GOT YOUR LAUGH? NOW SHOW YOUR GIG? SHOW US A GIG!





## TAKE TWO

WRITE DOWN OR DRAW A PICTURE OF TWO OF YOUR FRIENDS. WRITE YOUR NAME. WRITE OR DRAW THEM AGAIN WITH A HAPPY BEING THIS TIME.



## THANK YOU BOMB

WRITE 'THANK YOU' JUST UNDER THIRTY TIMES RIGHT NOW. DO OTHERS AND FRIENDS. SAY IT IN YOUR SLEEP. MAKE SURE YOU'RE SAYING IT DAY BY TEN MORE TIMES.



## THAT SAFETY FEELING

THINK OF THE PERSON YOU FEEL SAFEST WITH — JUST CONCENTRATE. IMAGINE THEY ARE RIGHT NEXT TO YOU AND THERE IS A COUCH OF SAFETY AROUND YOU NOW. FEEL THAT SAFETY FEELING.



## THE FEEL OF FABRIC

FEEL YOUR CLOTHES WITH YOUR HANDS. FEEL THE TEXTURE AND WEIGHT OF THE FABRIC. NOW FEEL IT FEEL AGAINST YOUR SKIN. IS IT SOFT OR SCRATCHY. BARELY OR LIGHT. SLEAZE OR LOOSE?



## THE COLOUR OF CALM

WHAT IS A CALM, HAPPY COLOUR FOR YOU? CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING THAT COLOUR NOW? IMAGINE YOUR HAND FEELING OF MORE THAT COLOUR. ASK YOUR BRAIN TO REMEMBER IT.



## THE 'L' WORD

WRITE THE WORD 'LOVE' TWICE. WRITE THE WORD 'LOVE' OUT LOUD THAT SOUNDS 'LOVE'. NOW DO IT AGAIN THE SAME WAY FOR 'LIFE'.



## THERE AND BACK

HOW TO BE THE HERO OF THE ROOM AND PAGE. STAY STILL AND COULD TO RUN. NOW RUN ACROSS THE ROOM AND BRING THOSE HERO THINGS. COUNTING TO FIVE AT THE END OF EACH BETWEEN YOU.



## THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

GENERATE. PUT YOUR HANDS BACK. HOLD YOUR EYES UP AND LOOK AT THE CEILING. BREATHE OUT LOUD. 'THIS IS GOOD'. DO IT SEVERAL TIMES.



## THREE BIG TICKS

WRITE THE NAMES OF THREE PEOPLE YOU LOVE. WRITE THEIR NAME. WRITE THREE THINGS YOU LOVE ABOUT THEM AND PUT A BIG TICK NEXT TO EACH ONE. NOW WRITE YOUR NAME AND THREE THINGS YOU LOVE ABOUT YOURSELF. PUT A BIG TICK NEXT TO EACH ONE.



## YOU ARE GREAT

WRITE YOUR NAME. WRITE YOUR NAME WITH YOUR FACE GREAT AND YOU CAN DO HAPPY THINGS? LET'S GO! WRITE DOWN TEN THINGS. 'I AM GREAT' AND I CAN DO HAPPY THINGS. NOW WRITE DOWN FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO.



## YOU CAN MAKE IT

MAKE SOMETHING USING PAPER, GLUE, CLAY, CUTTED STICKS — ANYTHING! YOU CAN MAKE A CAR. COLLECT PICTURES AND ILLUSTRATE A MAGAZINE COVER OR SIGN. MAKE YOUR OWN SIGN. SHOW SOMEBODY YOUR THING WHOSE LIKE TO SEE IT.



## YOU'VE GOT CHARACTER

THINK OF A PERSONS CHARACTER FROM A MOVIE, BOOK OR GAME. WHAT WOULD THEY SAY TO YOU RIGHT NOW ABOUT GETTING DRINKER AND OFFER? CAN YOU SAY IT JUST THIRTY SECONDS THE THING BASIC. AS YOU READ-FAT THEM IN YOUR MIND!



## WORD FLASH

WRITE THE WORDS RELEASED AND CALM ON YOUR PAPER WITH A PINK BLANK THE WORDS AT YOURSELF THE TIMES BY REPEATING AND CHANGING YOUR HANDS. MAKE YOURSELF ANOTHER? THROUGHOUT THE DAY. (PRACTICE YOU'RE SURPRISE!)



## TAKING CARE BEFORE YOU BEGIN



While the activities in these cards have been selected because they do not need professional supervision, common sense and care are always needed before involving children in any activity.

Please keep in mind that people of any age are particularly vulnerable when trauma or high levels of anxiety are present. They may not want, or be able, to concentrate on things such as selecting a card, reading the text, or doing a particular activity.

Please also be aware that, for anyone at any time, even a light-hearted image or seemingly innocuous activity can cause unexpected emotions to surface.

For the above reasons, it is important to consider questions such as the following:

- **Your own reaction to the cards.** Do they work for you? Do you like the illustrations and the 'feel' of the cards? It's great to try these activities yourself first. What did you notice when you did the activity?
- **Your knowledge of the cards.** How well do you know each card? Are all the activities suggested on the cards appropriate? Are there any cards you might want to leave out? Are the materials needed for the activities on the cards available for participants to use?



- **Your knowledge of those using the cards.** Do you think the cards will be a good fit with the literacy level and cultural background of the child or group? Is support needed to read the text on the card and do the activity? Is the child physically, mentally, emotionally and developmentally able to do the activity?
- **The safety of the setting.** If you intend to use the cards within a group or classroom, have you created a 'safe space' for the activity and for any conversation that might arise? Is it likely that there will be respect in the group? Is the timing right? What if the cards elicit strong emotions? How will you ensure that individuals can be supported appropriately, and that their privacy and dignity are respected? In a group setting, how will you make sure that everyone gets an equal turn to speak, and that a person can 'pass' on an activity if they wish to?
- **Introducing the activity:** How will you introduce the cards? Will you say that these are strategies for relaxing and feeling calm? Or that they are great to help with worry? Or will you simply say they are fun activities? Or ... ?
- **Plan B.** Sometimes an activity simply doesn't work, and knowing when to adjust the activity on the fly or abandon it altogether and go to Plan B, is a very useful skill.

While care is crucial, stepping out of our comfort zones and trying something different can be fun and may open up a useful way of managing worry and anxiety that can serve someone for their whole life!

## TWO BROAD METHODS FOR SELECTING CARDS

While there are countless creative ways of using cards with children and adults (see the next section for some ideas), they all fall into two broad methods—deliberate choice or random selection.

### DELIBERATE CHOICE

This method involves spreading the cards out on a table or other surface and inviting participants to look them over and make a selection based on a question or prompt such as:



**Pick a card for something you like doing.**



**Pick a card for something you have never tried before.**

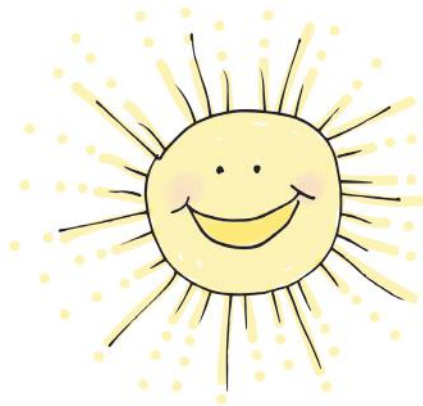
Even if a child can't read, they can still pick a card based on the picture—and an adult can then read the card and help them with the activity.

Spreading the cards out on the floor can also be lots of fun. Children or adults get a bird's eye view of the cards, and they can walk around them or follow a path of cards. The cards can also be displayed on a wall, window or noticeboard. What about putting them up along the school corridor?

## RANDOM SELECTION

Random selection includes activities such as shuffling and dealing, placing the cards face down on a surface and asking people to choose 'blind', playing games that involve hiding and finding cards, lucky dips, selecting a card from a fan of random cards, and so on.

It is amazing how meaningful random selections can be; time and again people see significance and synchronicity in 'their' randomly-picked card. An element of whimsy and playfulness enters the room when cards are randomly picked. These activities can help set a tone of adventure right from the start. People tend to relax and open up when they are having fun, so let your imagination come into play and have some random selection games up your sleeve!



## IDEAS FOR USING THE CARDS

Many people find that once they land on one simple way of using the cards, lots more ideas naturally occur to them. Getting started is the key!

A simple starting point is to spread the cards out and invite the individual or group to pick a card that appeals to them for any reason at all. Maybe they like the illustration, maybe they like the title, maybe they would like to try the activity, maybe it's the card nearest them! From that simple starting point, the conversations and activities can unfold.

In this section of the booklet you will find lots of ideas for using *Anxiety Solutions for Kids*. While the ideas are arranged under headings ('for parents', 'for teachers' and so on) this is not meant to be restrictive or directive. These are simply ideas and not instructions for practice. Decisions about what is appropriate for a particular individual or group rest with the facilitator. For these reasons, please feel free to choose any activity below that resonates best with you, the children using the cards, and the circumstances. Also feel free to adapt or discard any of the ideas altogether. Take note of the ideas and cards that seem to trigger the greatest change in mood or feeling. Most of all, we hope these ideas will be a springboard for creating your own favourite ways of using the cards.

## HOW CAN TEACHERS USE THE CARDS?

Here is a great activity to do regularly after lunch or prior to something that may cause students some stress (for example, a test):

Prepare equipment and materials needed, for example, music with headphones and a range of writing and craft materials. Make sure there are a number of spaces set up inside and/or outside the classroom where students can go and complete a card by themselves. This can be done as an individual after classwork is completed, when feeling overwhelmed, or as a whole class activity. For example, students can be invited to sit in circle with cards placed face up in the middle of the circle. Each student selects an activity (a card) they would like to try by themselves or with a partner. Once students have all selected a card they can then complete the activity. If the activity is finished quickly they can select another activity until the time is up (ten minutes is probably enough). Students then come back together as a whole class and discuss what they thought of the activity. (They can also show what they made, if the activity involved making something.) Teachers can ask them to write a short review of their activity and give it a 'Calm Rating' out of ten.

Appropriate cards can also be used for meditation or relaxation sessions in class (for example, Rock It, Animal Magic, Cool Breath Warm Breath, Body of Calm, Favourite Tree) with one student choosing a card each session or the teacher can choose what they consider most helpful on the day.

Other activities for students include:

- Choose a card and research the internet for related quotes, poems, or song lyrics.
- Also, older students can research about how anxiety affects the body and brain, and how calm does the same.
- Brainstorm words to describe 'calm' and 'worry' and associated 'body signals' so they develop their vocabularies for describing feelings, and their capacity to recognise them in the body (part of developing emotional intelligence).
- Choose three or more cards and use them as prompts for creative writing such as story writing, poetry, or storytelling.
- Choose individual cards as a theme of the day or week. For example, 'Thank you Bomb' could be a card that introduces the theme or practice of gratitude; 'Infinity' could be a card that introduces the theme of infinity and raises related questions such as: What are the origins of the infinity sign? What does infinity mean to you? What is the scientific definition of infinity?
- Choose a card and create your own drawing or painting for it.
- Choose a card and rename it.
- Choose a card that relates to a goal or dream.
- Create an entirely new card showing a relaxing thing you love to do.

Teachers may also want to build the activities on the cards into school camps, excursions and other times when students may be anxious about being away from their routine. They are also great for lunchtime clubs and quiet times in the classroom.



## HOW CAN PARENTS USE THE CARDS?

Some situations can be particularly strong triggers for anxious thoughts and feelings in children such as on the way to kinder or school and when the parent leaves (separation anxiety) or when a routine is interrupted (such as a change of teacher), or in social situations such as birthday parties, or when a child is away from home such as on excursions and school camps.

Children express their anxious feelings in different ways, for example, some children may become quiet and withdrawn, and others may become loud, angry or agitated. As a parent you can become very skilled at noticing the signs that your child is beginning to feel worried, and you may find it very helpful to have some mindful, relaxing, distracting or soothing activities already in place in the daily routine.

Encourage your child to select a card each day or week, preferably around the same time of the day. (It may be overwhelming to put out all the cards so you may want to select four or five for the child to choose from.) Doing it regularly helps develop a habit and an expectation—a calm, fun time where you do something together which changes the focus and teaches the skills of self-soothing. It could be a time when the child is most likely to feel anxious or unsettled in the day, such as just before bed. Complete the activity on the card together.

After the activity, you can discuss with your child how you could do it in a different way. For example:

- **The Colour of Calm:** What about the sound of calm? The smell of calm? The feel of calm? Can you find a crayon or paint colour that best matches your calm colour?
- **The Feel of Fabric:** How else can you explore the fabric with your senses? Smell it? Feel it with your feet? What is your favourite piece of clothing or fabric to touch or wear (for example, a favourite pair of socks, a pillowcase, a soft toy, an old shirt, a mohair blanket)?
- **Remote Control:** Draw or make out of cardboard your own remote control to 'dial down' worry and 'dial up' calm? What buttons would be on your remote control for your body and brain?

Always ask your child for their ideas first and give them a go!

Other activities for children include:

- Choose your three favourite cards. What do you like about them?
- Can you make up your own names for these cards and draw your own pictures?
- Choose cards for things you have done before. When did you do these things? Who with? Did you like doing them? Do you still do them? If you have stopped, are there any activities you would like to start doing again?
- Choose cards showing things you have never done before. Can you be a scientist and conduct an experiment to try them out? See how you feel while doing each of these the activities or just after! (Parents can support the child in trying something new by doing the activity with them, if the child wants that.)



Parents can also place a relevant card in a child's lunchbox, or on their pillow, or on a noticeboard as a gentle reminder. Try the 'Better Than Before' card. This activity is great for children who may find it hard to name something they are good at, but they may be much more able to name things they are 'better at than before.' This helps them see that they are learning and growing all the time. Also, 'Being Me' is a very good card for those children who may be feeling anxious about being different. This activity encourages children to celebrate their own uniqueness and be inclusive of others' differences as well.

Even though these cards have been designed with kids in mind, many of the strategies for managing anxiety are essentially the same for adults, so you may want to do these activities alongside your children, or pick some to do later in your own time!



## HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGISTS AND COUNSELLORS USE THE CARDS?

Spread cards face up or give them to your client and ask them to select two cards that they like. Give them plenty of time to explore the cards.

- What appeals to you about the activities on the cards you selected?
- Choose one card we can complete together now. (Before completing the activity on the card, ask the young person to rate their level of anxiety (stress/unhappiness/sadness/discomfort) on a scale of one to ten. After completing the activity, ask them to once again to rate their level of anxiety and then give them the option to complete the other card now and/or choose it for their 'homework'.)

Other ways of working with the cards include:

- Can you sort cards (or rate cards) from your least favourite to most favourite card or activity?
- What appeals to you about your top three activities?
- How often would you do a similar activity at home?
- Choose one of your top three activities or create a similar one that you could either do in the session, at home with your family, or at school.
- Choose a card and try that strategy out at least once a day for a week. Write in your journal or diary each day about when and where you did it, and what effect you noticed in your mind and body.
- Did it change over the week?
- How did you remember to do it?
- Did it get easier to do as you got used to it?

- Was it useful having a strategy to call on?
- Did anyone know you were doing it or did you want to keep it private?
- Think of someone you admire. Can you choose a card that matches them in some way—perhaps it is an activity you think they would be very good at, or would like. Why?
- Can you choose a card that relates to a goal or something you would like to become good at, or better at?
- Do you know anyone who has already reached this goal or is already good at this? Is there something about what they do that you could copy?
- How will you know when you have reached this goal?
- Will someone close to you notice a change in you when you have reached this goal?
- What simple step could you take today or tomorrow towards that goal?
- How will you celebrate or acknowledge yourself when you have achieved this goal or taken steps towards it?

Many psychologists and counsellors will recognise the strategies on the cards as transcending age—they are used for assisting adults to manage anxiety as well. And many adults enjoy whimsical illustration and playful activities as much as children do. Why should children have all the fun?! For this reason, consider building these cards into your practice with older teens and adults too.

## HOW CAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS USE THE CARDS?

While trialling the strategies on the cards, early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers identified a strong need for simple, fun activities that will help children with anxiety. These cards can be used in story time, show and tell, and group time as well as using a card per day or week to link to other curriculum activities. For example, teachers choose a drawing-based activity card (Big Note It, Infinity, Invisible ink, My Special Place) to link to another drawing task, or a garden-related task (Favourite Tree, My Special Place) when following a gardening theme.

The outcomes in early childhood settings focus on all children feeling a sense of belonging in the world around them. By using the cards one-on-one with children, teachers can tailor the learning to particular individuals, ensuring that different styles of thinking and communicating are not only heard but valued. This gives all children a voice, and gives teachers prompts for many alternative approaches that are inclusive of young children who may feel overwhelmed in traditional group sharing games such as show and tell.

These cards also enable early childhood educators to introduce appropriate meditation, mindfulness and relaxation techniques to young children.

In early childhood classrooms, the arts are valued strongly. Music, art, dance, and drama are often woven together in order to teach with an awareness of what is known as the 'Reggio Emilia Hundred Languages of Children' (Edwards et al. 2011).

Rather than worksheets and strict lesson plans, there has been a recent push for a more organic way of working with young children. Educators are asked to observe children and then plan according to their interests. These cards give a starting point for teachers that can provide for a more creative and emergent group time or a calm end to the day. For example, rather than resorting to games like 'dead fish' or 'musical statues' to keep children 'in control', educators will be able to use these cards to appeal to the way young children love to move, talk and transport themselves to imagined worlds.

### **OUTCOME 1:**

Children have a strong sense of identity.

### **OUTCOME 2:**

Children are connected with, and contribute to, their world.

### **OUTCOME 3:**

Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

### **OUTCOME 4:**

Children are confident and involved learners.

### **OUTCOME 5:**

Children are effective communicators.



## HOW CAN KIDS USE THE CARDS?

Kids can use the cards either with an adult or by themselves, if appropriate. As well as the many ways mentioned throughout this section of the booklet, kids can flick or read through the cards for ideas. They can choose one per week, or one per day or one in the morning and one in the evening, or choose a strategy to practise while going to sleep if nighttime anxiety is an issue.

If kids are going away to camp, they can take the cards with them, if needed. They can choose their favorites and maybe think of other ideas that link to the cards. For example, sports-oriented kids could think of sporty activities along similar lines, and musically-inclined kids could find musical tasks.

Those who wish, can write about their experience of the strategies in their personal journals or diaries, or make collages or draw pictures related to the activities or to calmness.

Encouraging kids to make the cards and the strategies their own is the aim. For this reason, parents may wish to give the card set to children or encourage kids to keep the cards in their bedroom. You never know when they might look through them on their own even if they give a pretty good impression of not being interested when others are around. It is empowering and great for children's resilience and mental health if they come to know that there *are* things they can do when a wave of anxiety hits, that they *can* take action on their own behalf, they *can* come to their own emotional aid—as well as access the support of the adults around them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Selina Byrne M.A.P.S. is a consulting psychologist and clinical nutritionist specialising in developing individual wellbeing solutions. In addition to her educational and corporate conferences and staff seminars, Selina conducts a private practice offering individual counselling, fatigue and energy management, mood issues (anxiety and depression), nutritional approaches, clinical hypnosis, food-related concerns (food psychology strategies), career development and managing workplace and personal relationships.

Selina holds a Master of Social Science (Addiction), Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology, Graduate Diploma in Clinical Nutrition, Diploma in Clinical Hypnosis, Graduate Diploma in Equal Opportunity and Bachelor of Arts (Psychology). Selina has presented many seminars and keynote addresses in various high-profile organisations and has been interviewed numerous times in the media in relation to her work with individuals and groups.

Selina is the author of *Optimism Boosters*, a card set published by Innovative Resources in 2004 with a new edition in 2017. She is also the author of a book called *Daily Psych Bites: hundreds of quick installations for optimism and energy* published in 2016 and available on Amazon, and a blog published at:

[www.selinabyrne.com.au](http://www.selinabyrne.com.au)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SelinaByrneWellbeingSolutions/>

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Katie Jardine is a master of juggling; illustration, graphic design, three boys, husband (a bit heavy), gardening, studying teaching degree (primary school), reading, making chocolate cake and basically having fun!

Katie holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Graphic Design) specialising in illustration. Katie has been lucky enough to have scribbled artwork for various publishers and now three wonderful projects with Innovative Resources including *Strength Cards* and *Wonderful You*.

The opportunity to create the artwork for *Anxiety Solutions for Kids* resonated with Katie, particularly 'Funniest thing'. The last time Katie went to a doctor's appointment the 'Funniest thing' came into mind; wouldn't it be funny if I just jumped up and started energetic dancing in the waiting room! I wonder if anyone would look up from their magazine or would they just look out of corner of their eye? Anytime Katie now has an appointment or has to go somewhere where she is anxious she just thinks of 'Funniest thing' and a smile fills her face.

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[www.facebook.com/katiejardineartdesign](http://www.facebook.com/katiejardineartdesign)  
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## ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, one of Australia's leading community service organisations providing child, youth, family and community services throughout Victoria and New South Wales.

Innovative Resources publishes card sets, stickers, books and picture books, as well as digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, stories and goals. Our resources are for all ages and bring colour and creativity to therapeutic and educational settings all over the world. They are used by counsellors, psychologists, teachers, trainers, social workers, managers, mentors, parents, teams, supervisors ... and anyone who works with people to create positive change.

Innovative Resources also offers highly-engaging training in 'strengths-based' approaches to working with people where change arises out of a focus on strengths and 'power-with'. We also offer 'tools' workshops on ways of using resources to invigorate human service work. Our workshops respect different learning styles and the power of images and storytelling to connect with children and adults alike.

[www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org)

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## LINKS TO RESEARCH STUDIES AND PAPERS

Studies and scholarly articles relating to the methods used in the card activities (NB: these links are live in the online version of this booklet found on our website):

Study with athletes on how the brain is altered by meditative or mindfulness activities:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201306/how-does-meditation-reduce-anxiety-neural-level>

Effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques on anxiety in children and adolescents:

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anne\\_Albano/publication/8443795\\_Cognitive-Behavioral\\_Psychotherapy\\_for\\_Anxiety\\_and\\_Depressive\\_Disorders\\_in\\_Children\\_and\\_Adolescents\\_An\\_Evidence-Based\\_Medicine\\_Review/links/0fcfd513e14cf4fcc5000000/Cognitive-Behavioral-Psychotherapy-for-Anxiety-and-Depressive-Disorders-in-Children-and-Adolescents-An-Evidence-Based-Medicine-Review.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anne_Albano/publication/8443795_Cognitive-Behavioral_Psychotherapy_for_Anxiety_and_Depressive_Disorders_in_Children_and_Adolescents_An_Evidence-Based_Medicine_Review/links/0fcfd513e14cf4fcc5000000/Cognitive-Behavioral-Psychotherapy-for-Anxiety-and-Depressive-Disorders-in-Children-and-Adolescents-An-Evidence-Based-Medicine-Review.pdf)

Research findings on the effect of fear on the brain by Toyoda et al (also cited in the references above):

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2011/813749>

Mental imagery research:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1878929313000091>

Effectiveness of guided imagery in assisting with childhood anxiety:

<http://alfredadler.edu/sites/default/files/Hanish%20MP%202012.pdf>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2011/813749> (link for Toyoda et al journal article cited above)



Some examples of guided imagery for children can be found here:  
<http://www.themindfulword.org/2012/guided-imagery-scripts-children-anxiety-stress/>

Focusses on the effectiveness of distraction techniques:  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1976131713000662>

Focusses on the effectiveness of distraction techniques:  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277608300\\_The\\_effects\\_of\\_three\\_different\\_distraction\\_methods\\_on\\_pain\\_and\\_anxiety\\_in\\_children](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277608300_The_effects_of_three_different_distraction_methods_on_pain_and_anxiety_in_children)

Italian study with undergraduates showing the positive effect of 'metacognition skills' on anxiety:  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cpp.520/abstract>

Research projects on the effectiveness of mindfulness techniques in schools:  
<http://mindfulnessforchildren.org/research/>

Mindfulness in Schools Project in association with the University of Exeter's Mood Disorders Centre: evidence for the impact of mindfulness on children and young people:  
<https://mindfulnessinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MiSP-Research-Summary-2012.pdf>

Evidence (based on hormones and inflammatory markers) that mindfulness techniques may imbue resilience to 'stressful psychological challenges':  
<https://www.madinamerica.com/2017/02/research-shows-mindfulness-can-decrease-anxiety/>

Social anxiety disorder and regulating emotions with mindfulness-based therapy:  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4203918/>

A literature search of studies on the effect of mindfulness-based therapy on anxiety and depression:  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2848393/>

## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OR INFORMATION (IN AUSTRALIA)

Beyondblue

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Depression and anxiety information and support service.

1300 22 4636

[www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport)

Lifeline

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

13 11 14

Access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

mindhealthconnect

[www.mindhealthconnect.org.au](http://www.mindhealthconnect.org.au)

Access to mental health care services, online programs and resources.

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## WITH THESE CARDS CHILDREN (AND ADULTS!) CAN LEARN



50 FUN STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING  
ANXIETY AND PROMOTING WELLBEING

MOST CHILDREN OR ADULTS EXPERIENCING WORRY OR ANXIOUS FEELINGS THINK THEY HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL OVER HOW THEY FEEL OR WHAT THOUGHTS THEY HAVE, SO AUTHOR, **SELINA BYRNE M.A.P.S.**, ILLUSTRATOR, **KATIE JARDINE**, AND PUBLISHER OF STRENGTHS-BASED TOOLS, **INNOVATIVE RESOURCES**, GOT TOGETHER TO DESIGN A TOOL THAT CAN GIVE CHILDREN SOME SIMPLE, FUN ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR MOOD, FIND SOME RELIEF AND ... CHANGE THEIR BRAIN!

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