



The Pili Pala Project



EMPOWERING & ENCOURAGING EXPRESSIONS

BACK TO SCHOOL RESOURCES



HEY PEOPLE RAISING LITTLE HUMANS!

First of all, we just want to say how amazing you are, and that you're doing a great job bringing up your children during this weird time! We salute you.

This COVID-19 pandemic has brought some dramatic global changes, many of which have had a huge impact on your child's education.. Now, it's time to go back to school! Whilst schools will be a welcome routine for many families and some children may be feeling excited, returning back to school for many will not be easy and can cause a whirlwind of emotions for your child.

Even though they may be feeling happy about returning to school, they may also be feeling confused due to a lot of changes that will be happening within schools! They also might be feeling sad because they don't want to leave you.

Whilst schools are doing everything they can to ensure your child is safe and supported in school, research has shown that you guys (parents/carers) play an huge role in the emotional wellbeing of children. By providing a safe space when they come home from school and providing comfort, support and honest, age-appropriate information, you can alleviate stress and calm their anxieties.

Whether you're spinning those plates like a superhero or tearing your hair out, there is no right or wrong way of handling this situation and every child is different. This guide was created to compliment your existing strategies in supporting your child's transition back to school.

We hope you find this resource useful.

With Love, Sami & Caroline

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MANAGING CHANGE

It is fair to say that our children have experienced a lot of changes recently! They have had to ditch their normal routines and are now getting ready to return to school and adapt to a new way of learning!

Returning to school is a big step for many children and it is completely natural for both children and parents to feel worried about returning and settling back into a school routine.

There will be a lot of changes and new rules in your child's school and it may take a while for children to settle in..

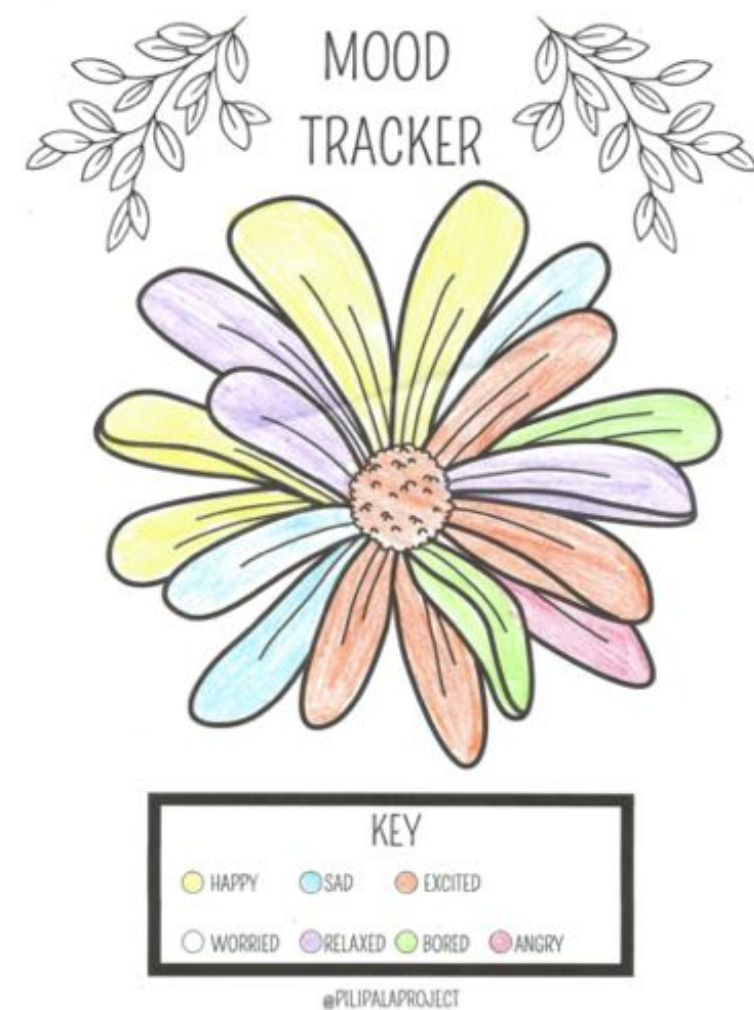
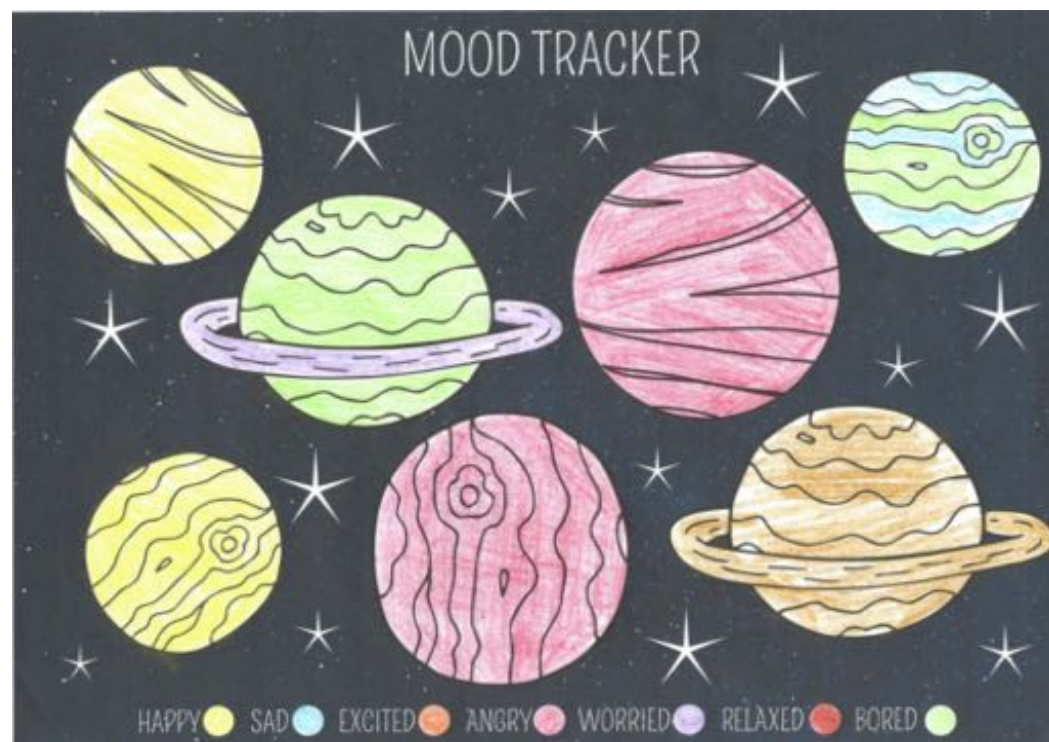
- There may be some differences to the school day routine,
- They may have to interact with their school friends in a different way.
- They may be in a different classroom.
- They may have to take their own lunch and equipment.
- They may have different teachers and/or be in a different class

These are all changes that will require a period of adjustment, which may create mixed emotions in your child as they navigate their way through these changes. .At first, they may be really excited to see their friends again but then they may break down into floods of tears, have a tantrum or refuse to go to school.. Some children may even regress and display behaviours that they had when they were younger such as wanting to sleep in your bed instead of their own.

The coronavirus has really put us on a 'Coronacoaster' of emotions, full of highs and lows! One of the most important things you can do as a parent to support your child in dealing with change is - simply let them feel sad and upset. By validating these emotions, giving it attention and patience will help your child process and make sense of these changes.

To help you manage these emotional changes, we have developed two variations of colour in mood trackers for you to use with your child. Colour-in mood trackers are a great way to support your child to navigate their difficult feelings resulting from change. Mood trackers also help children express how they are feeling simply by colouring a section. They offer a visual representation for parents to monitor and keep track of their child's feelings and provide an opportunity for discussions around why they are feeling a certain way.

MOOD TRACKER ACTIVITY



Begin by explaining that it is completely normal to feel a mixture of emotions and that everyone will be feeling some sort of emotion – especially during a pandemic! Discuss how keeping track of our emotions helps us to better understand what can trigger happy feelings and what can trigger uncomfortable feelings like anger.

Show your child the mood tracker and explain that it will help to keep track of their feelings. Explore different colours that you can use to represent each feeling. There are no right or wrong colours!

Explain that at the end of each day, they can colour one of the flower petals or planets to represent how they felt that day. If your child cannot choose one feeling, they can use more than one colour.

Allow your child some time to colour in one of the blank planets or flower petals and use this time to discuss how they are feeling and what they can do if they are struggling to manage it.

Remember to validate each feeling and avoid telling them to 'stop' or 'not to' feel a certain way.

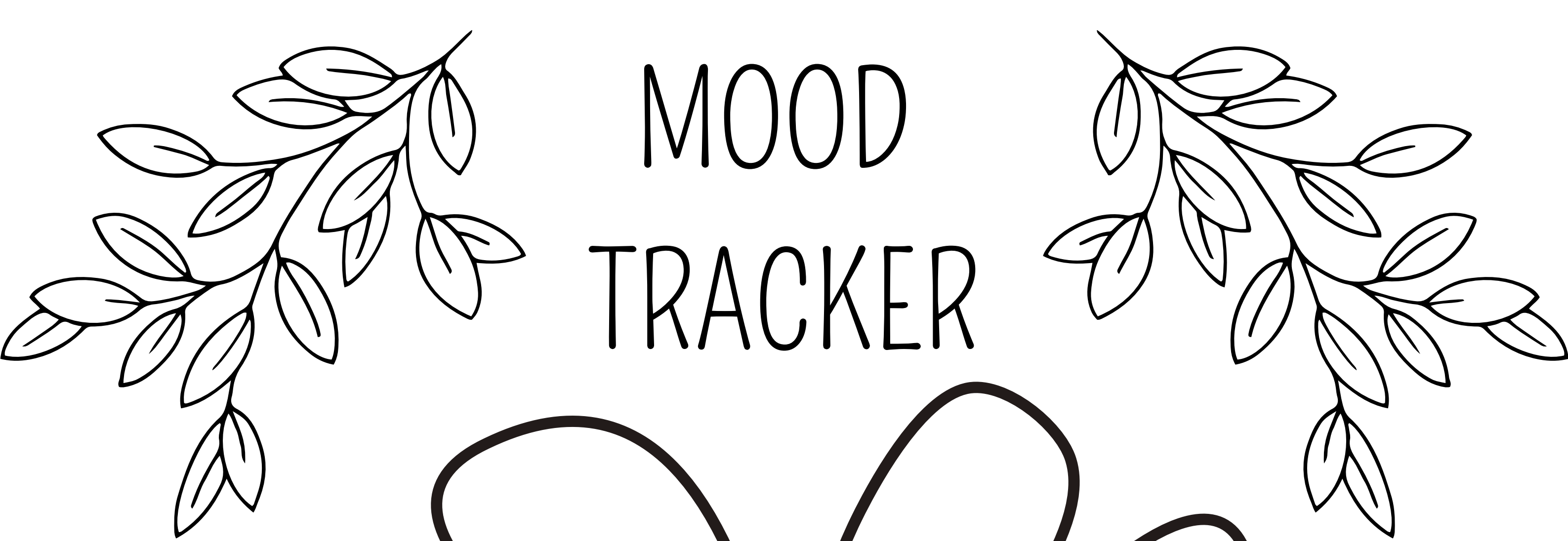
If your child responds in an expressive, cautious or avoidant manner when you try to talk to them about their feelings, don't push them into talking. Doing this exercise will be helpful enough for them to identify their feelings, even if they don't want to talk about them.

By the end of the week, both you and your child can get a clear idea of how they have been feeling during their first few days back in school.

MOOD TRACKER

- HAPPY ●
- SAD ●
- EXCITED ●
- ANGRY ●
- WORRIED ●
- RELAXED ●
- BORED ●





MOOD TRACKER



KEY

☐ HAPPY

☐ SAD

☐ EXCITED

☐ WORRIED

☐ RELAXED

☐ BORED

☐ ANGRY

MANAGING FEAR : PART 1

Many children will be experiencing a heightened sense of fear and uncertainty over returning and settling back into school.. Just a few of the worries that children might be experiencing include a fear of:

- spreading or catching the virus; being separated from their families
- schools closing again
- upcoming tests, assessments or exams that are taking place or may be cancelled again
- school not being the same or as 'enjoyable' as before
- social aspects of school not happening or being different such as playing sports
- the work they may have missed
- falling behind with their school work

As a parent, you cannot predict the future or control Coronavirus itself but what you can do is support your child through these fears. Children must have a safe space outside of school to talk openly about their school related fears and support in identifying positive coping strategies that support them to manage their anxiety.

Here are some tips and tricks for helping your children:

Create a 'worry-time'

Set aside 10 - 15 minutes after school which will be for thinking about and discussing worries. Encourage your child to write down any worries that they think of outside of this designated worry time and help them think of some coping or distraction methods they can do until worry time.

Normalise worry.

Worry is a reaction to not knowing how something will turn out. Be calm but supportive and try not to get drawn into your child's emotions.



MANAGING FEAR : PART 2

Find a coping strategy that works for your child.

Helping your child in finding and identifying positive coping strategies can help them manage their anxiety, such as taking regular breaks, doing physical activity, practising breathing exercises, talking about or expressing their emotions, having a regular routine and connecting with others.

Model problem solving

Your child will look to you to help them come with with some problem solving strategies. You can do this by talking with your child about ways they can stay safe at school such as washing their hands before and after eating, and by reassuring them that the school are putting measures in place to keep them safe.

Focus on things in your child's control

It's easy to get lost in worrying and focusing on things that are out of our control. While it's natural to have these feelings of helplessness and uncertainty, especially during the current crisis, it's important for children to feel that what they say and do matters and the strengths and the skills they can draw on will make a difference to their mood.

Praise positive behaviour

When your child is feeling calm, is able to come up with a solution to a problem or can safely regulate themselves out of an uncomfortable emotion - praise them! Praising and rewarding small (and big) successes when children and young people face their fears will go a long way in encouraging and supporting them to continue this behaviour and move away from the negative and unhelpful reactions.

We have developed a 'worry sort activity' to help you identify and explore some of your child's worries with them. This activity will help your child become more self-aware of how they are feeling and will help you initiate conversations with them and stimulate problem solving.



WORRY SORT ACTIVITY

Begin the activity by pointing out that everyone has worries.

Outline some of your own small worries so your child knows that it's normal to be feeling this way and that you are open to discuss how they are feeling.

Explain that sometimes we can have many worries that can cause us to feel overwhelmed and out of control. So you're going to complete an activity together that will help to sort out all their worries.

Begin by colouring the activity worksheet together. Whilst your child is colouring the picture, start an open conversation around worries. As your child talks about their worries, encourage them with open ended questions such as:

- Tell me more about this worry
- What do you think about it?

Validate every worry no matter how small they seem to you.

Be conscious of how your child responds to the activity and go at their chosen pace. If your child responds in an expressive, cautious or avoidant manner, when you try to talk to them about their worries, then do not force them to talk.

Encourage them to ask you questions and answer them as honestly as possible.

Identify whether each worry discussed is a worry your child can control or a worry that they cannot control. We have given you some examples below to help you identify some common everyday worries your child may be feeling in school that they can and cannot control.

Teaching your child what they can control will help build self confidence and resilience.

I CANT CONTROL

WHAT OTHERS SAY OR DO

HOW OTHERS TREAT ME

OTHER PEOPLE'S DECISIONS

THE FUTURE

WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF ME

I CAN CONTROL

HOW I RESPOND TO PEOPLE

MY SELF WORTH

MY THOUGHTS AND DECISIONS

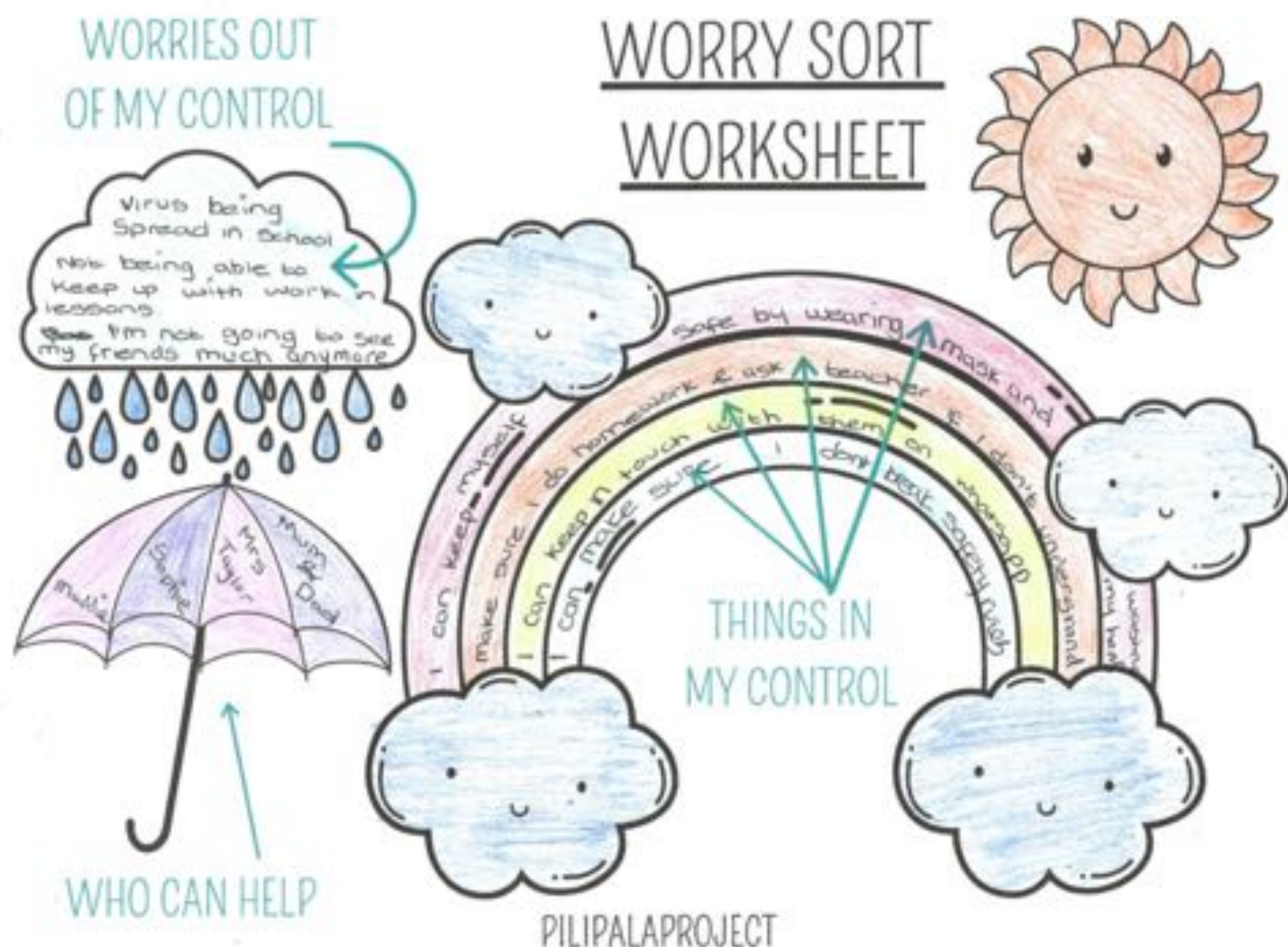
MY GOALS

WORDS I USE

Encourage problem solving abilities by asking leading questions like:

- What could you do about this worry to help you feel better?
- Who can help you with this worry?

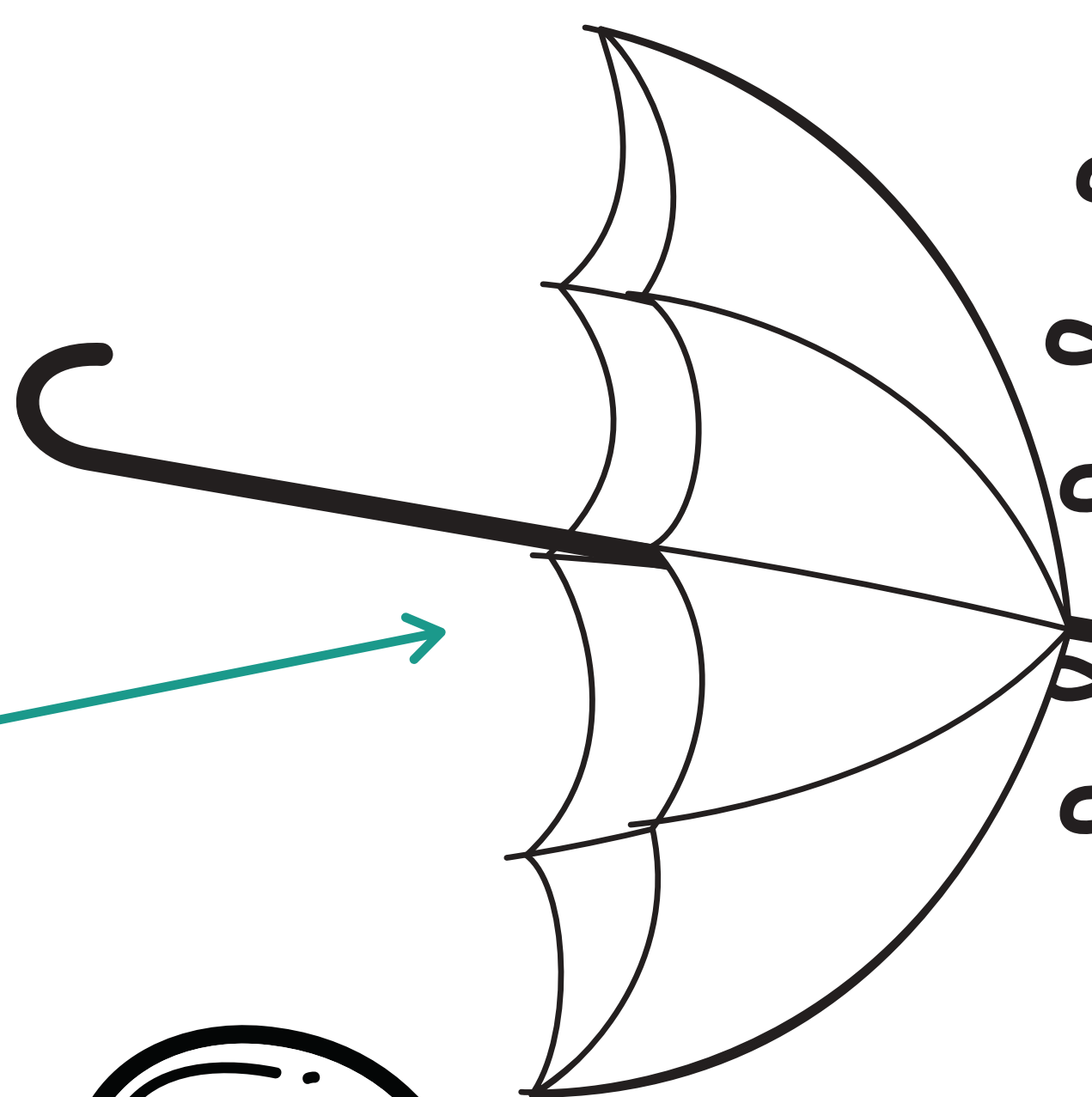
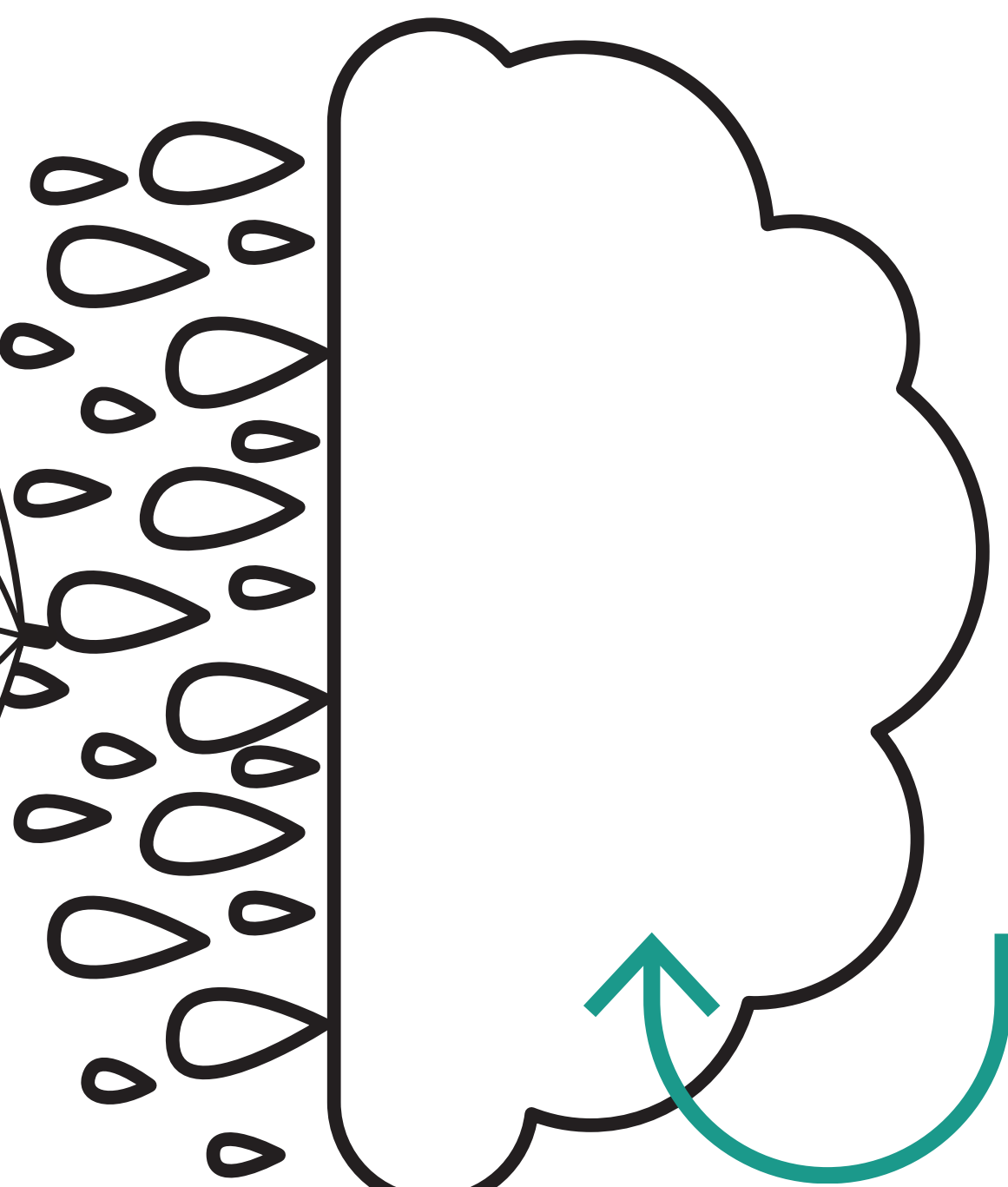
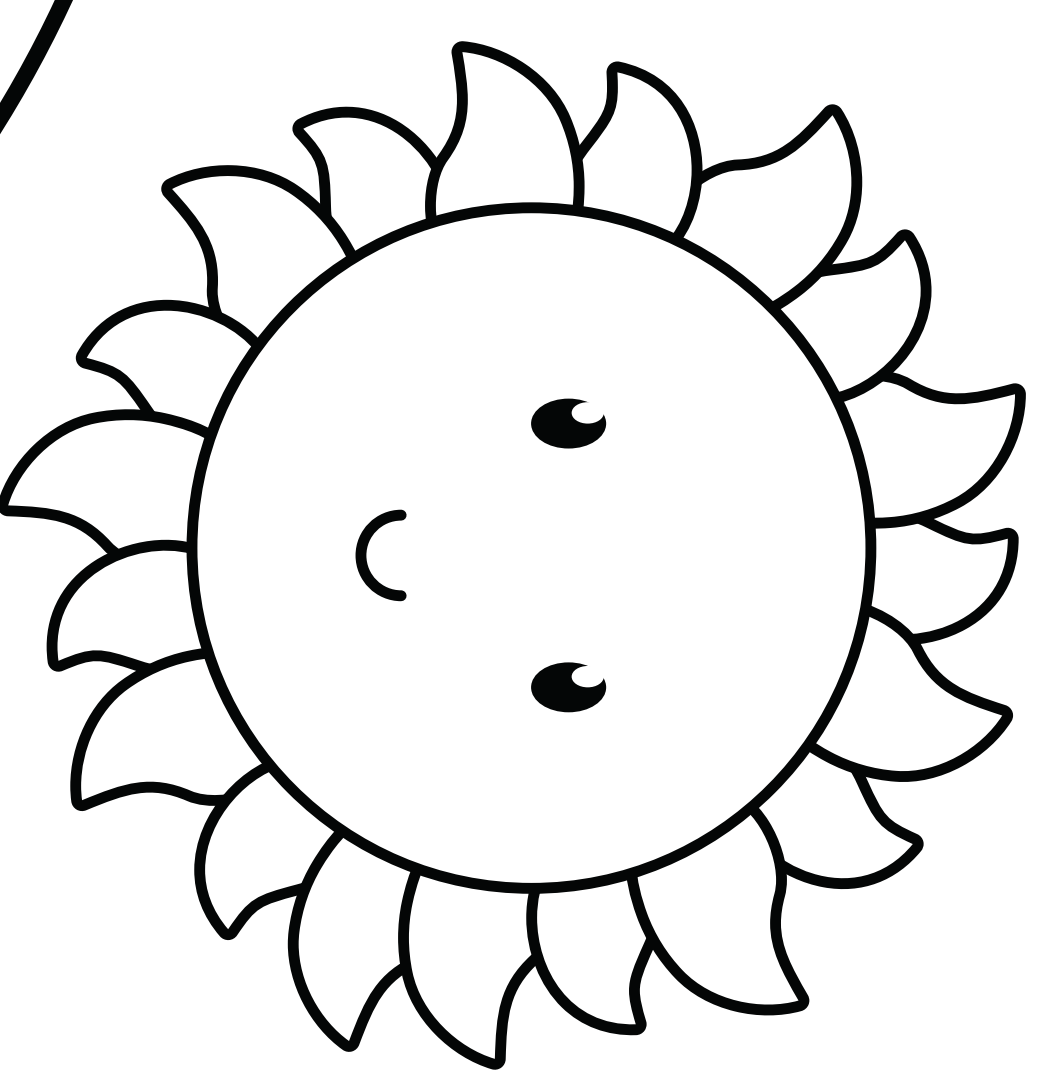
Focus on who can help with worries so your child doesn't feel isolated and is reminded that they can always ask for help.



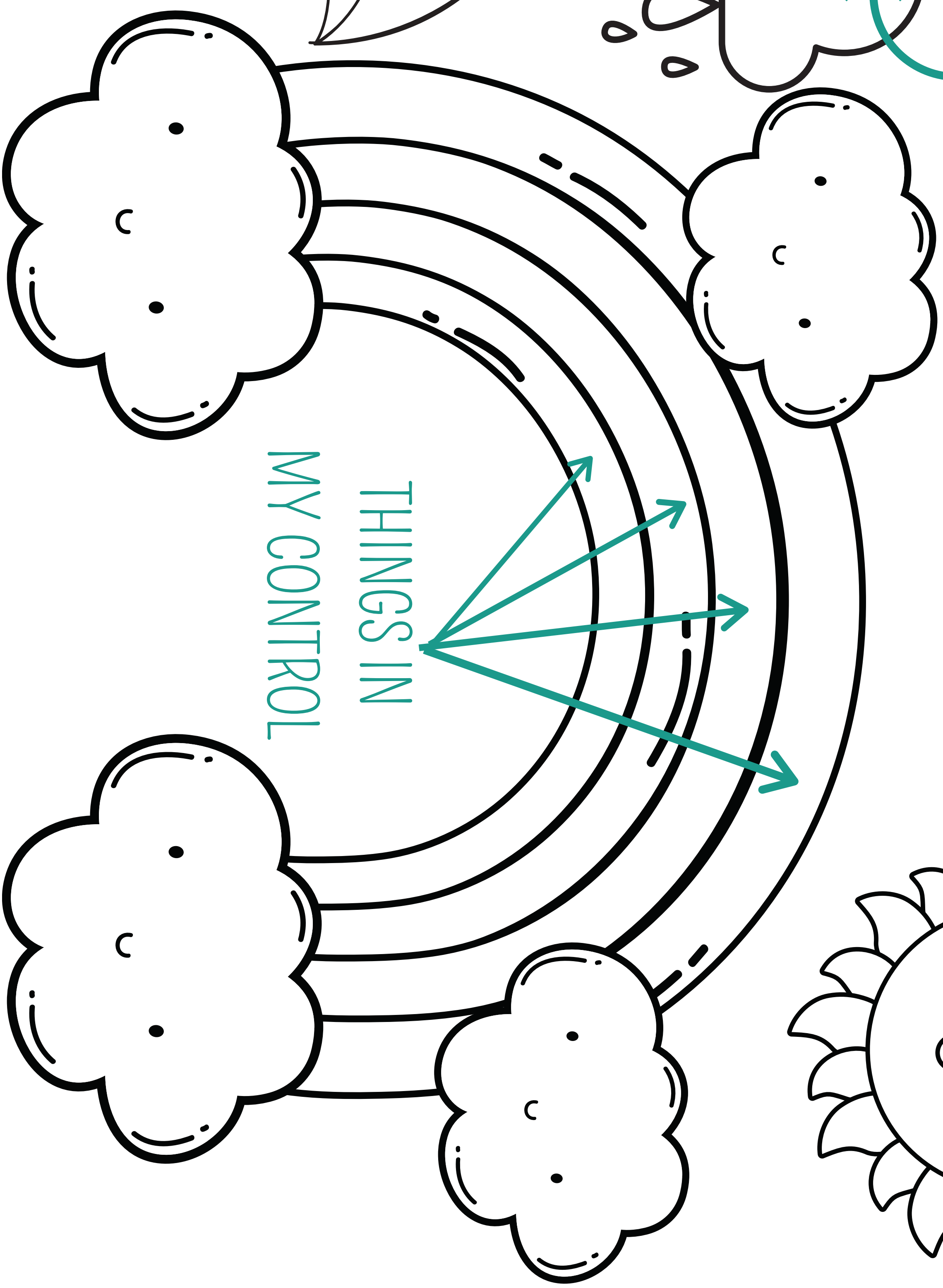
WORRIES OUT
OF MY CONTROL



WORRY SORT WORKSHEET



WHO CAN HELP



THINGS IN
MY CONTROL

MANAGING SEPARATION ANXIETY

During lockdown, your child may have become used to having you around all the time. Now they are returning to school, they may feel lonely or frightened without you there.

It's not uncommon for children to worry about being separated from their parents despite reassurances and every parent will experience protest behaviours from their children at some point. This can include behaviour like whining, crying, clinging, pleading, or refusal to leave you.

Few parents know how to deal with protest behaviour especially when you feel like your child should not be in a 'normal' age to be displaying these behaviours. It's important to know that these protest behaviour are not a reflection of 'bad parenting'. In fact it is the opposite - children protest because they feel safe with you. That's why children's behaviour can often be different in school and at home. Teachers are used to these types of protest behaviours and can also support you with this.

Below are some preventative and reactive tips to support your child's separation anxiety:

- LISTEN & REASSURE
- ENCOURAGE PROBLEM SOLVING
- VALIDATE & REVISIT

You may feel like you want to hold and soothe your protesting child, especially if they appear distressed. However, these well-intended parental responses gives unhelpful attention to the child's protests .

Reassure your child that they are okay.

But don't hand around for longer than necessary or respond to protests with additional explanation or negotiation otherwise you will undermine your parental presence.

It's also important for you not to be drawn in to your child's heightened emotions - particularly if the your child is feeling angry. It's ok to feel worried and anxious for your child but if you try to reinforce and discipline protests in the moment, it will likely make the protests worse and harder for your child in the long term..

To support you with this, we have developed a 'hide and seek hug' activity for you to use with your child to help reassure them when they are in school and away from you.

HIDE & SEEK HUGS

Print out the paper hug tokens on the following page and cut them out.. Fold the arms across the circle so they open and close.



HOW TO USE

Begin by explaining that it is completely normal to worry about family members and not want to leave them or for them to leave – especially during a pandemic!

Discuss some people that you miss as a result of social restrictions. Make sure you provide a positive example of problem solving for each person that's mentioned. For example:

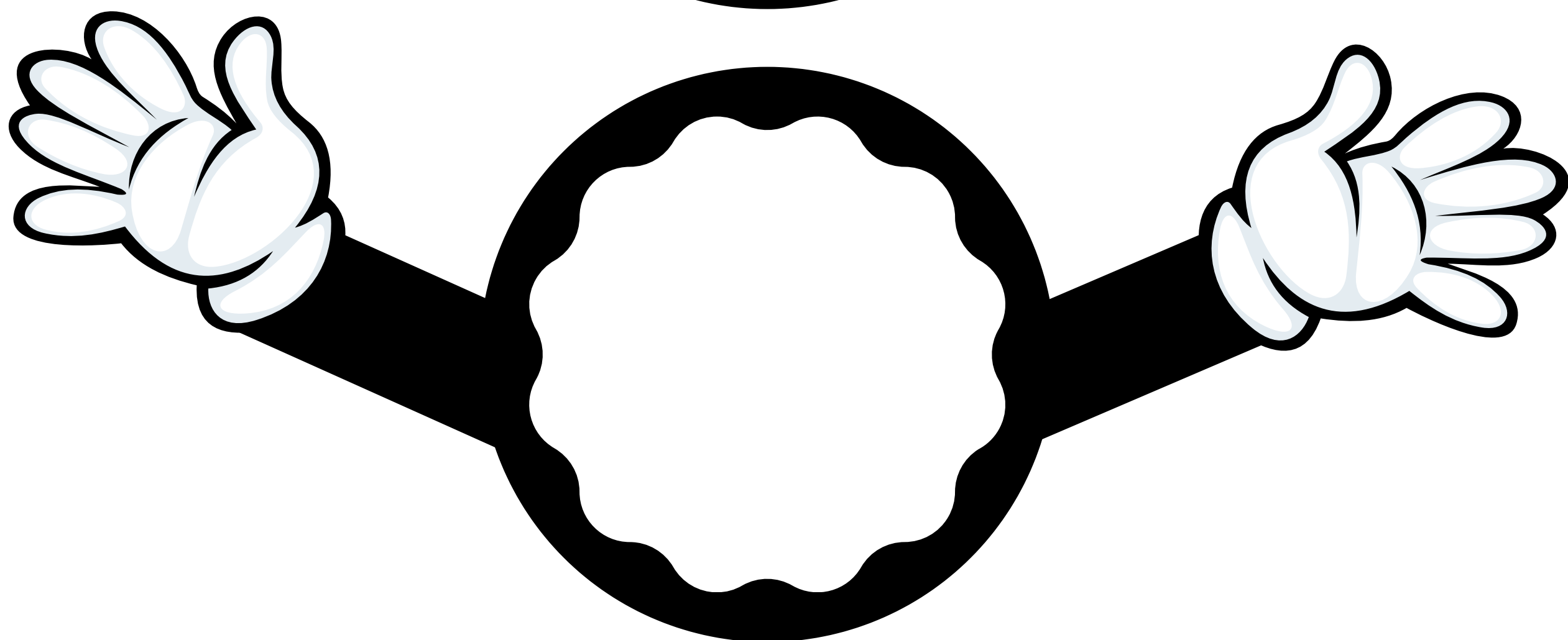
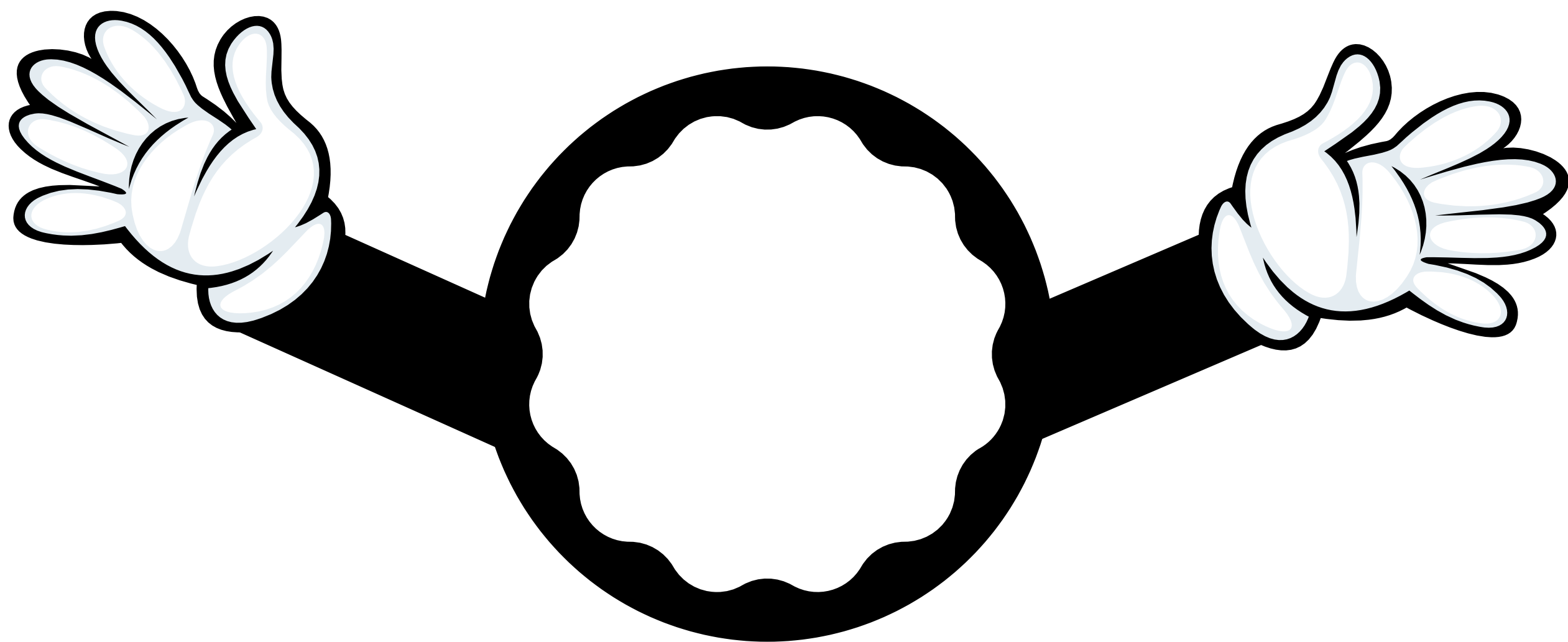
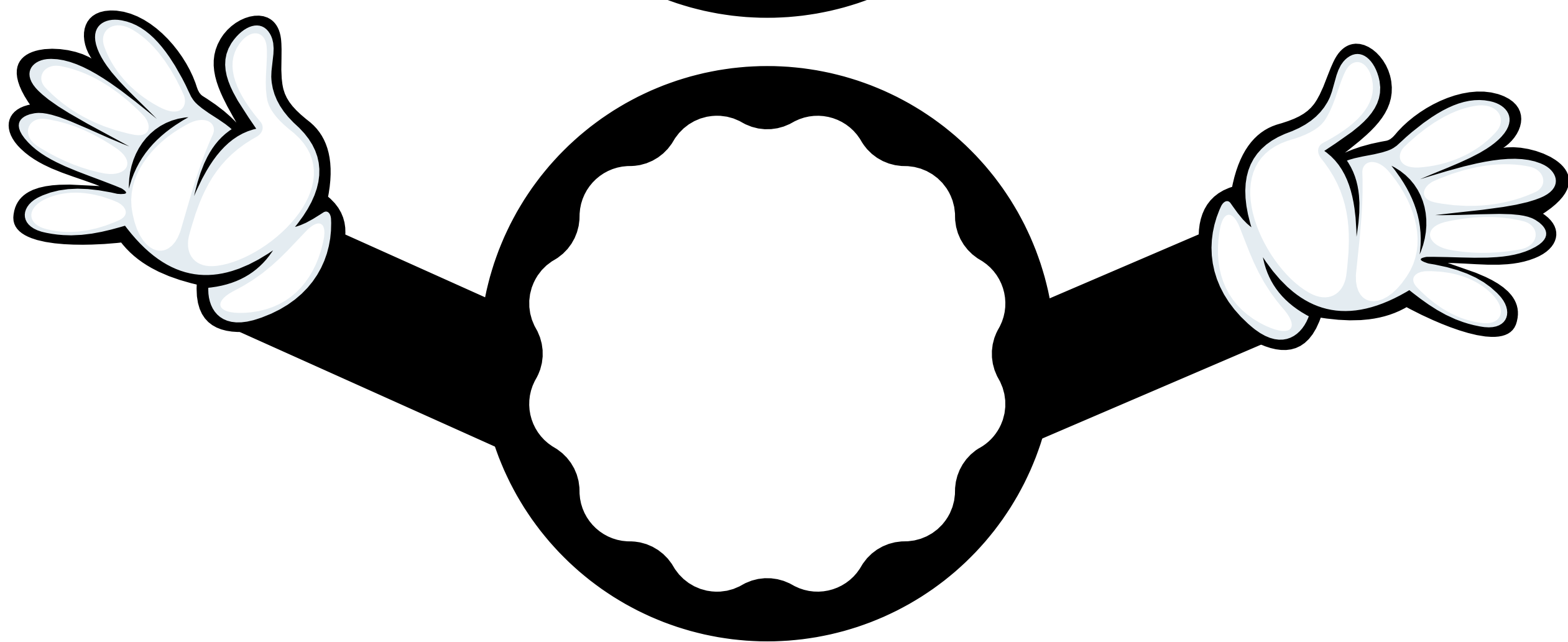
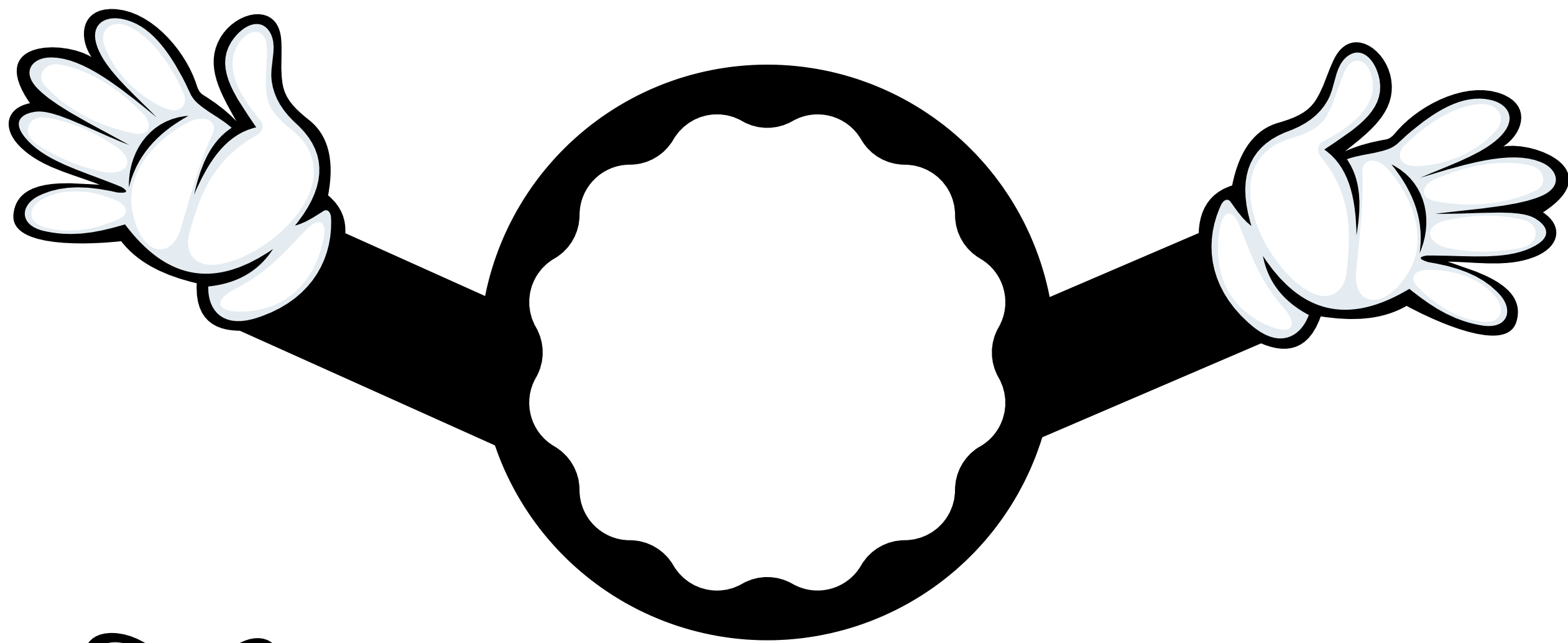
"I miss and worry about your Auntie because I cannot visit her. But I know that she is safe and washing her hands a lot. I phone her all the time to check in and tell her that I miss her."

Explain that this game called hide and seek hugs to help alleviate anxiety when you are missing each other.. Show your child the pre-cut hug tokens and explain that you are going to each write a nice note for them on one of the tokens and encourage your child to do the same.

Once you have both wrote your little note on the token, explain to the child that you will hide your hug token somewhere amongst your child's school belongings – this could be in your child's lunch box, or in your child's school bag. Encourage your child to hide their token somewhere within the home.



During the school day, your child will hopefully find your hug and you will hopefully find your child's within the home. The hugs will remind you both that you are thinking of one another.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you need further advice or more specialised support your child's emotional wellbeing or your own emotional health, here are some additional resources:

[Mental Health](#)

[Mind](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Samaritans](#)

[Breathing Space](#)

[NHS](#)

Your local GP

- TOGETHER, WE CAN RAISE AN EMOTIONALLY
INTELLIGENT WORLD -