



Yellow  
Brick  
Road



# Big feelings

Resources for parents and caregivers  
to help their tamariki and rangatahi  
manage their emotions.

## What is self-management?

During the 'Growth Programme', tamariki and rangatahi explore different aspects of self-management. This includes:

- What they can and can't control
- Choices and consequences
- Self-regulation



**“Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results; such as wellbeing, loving relationships, and learning.”**

## Why is self-management important?

Self-management is a very useful life skill; especially self-regulation.

By learning to self-regulate, tamariki and rangatahi can become more able to develop higher self-esteem, confidence, and resilience.

This helps with being able to face the challenges of BIG feelings like stress, anxiety, worry, disappointment, frustration, excitement, overwhelm, and more.

Not all tamariki and rangatahi develop this skill naturally. It takes:

- Self-awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Positive modelling by adults

When learning about self-regulation, it is important to take a holistic approach. This means all aspects of the person are considered - physical, emotional, mental and social.

## What are big feelings?

When we think of big feelings, we often think of emotions that are overwhelming us, whether these are positive or negative.

As parents and caregivers, we are more likely to have the vocabulary to communicate what it is we are experiencing.

Children who are unable to self-manage and self-regulate, struggle with this communication.

It is the role of parents and caregivers to help children navigate BIG feelings, by modelling positive communication to express what they are experiencing.

## What are some skills and strategies for managing BIG feelings?

There are 5 different strategies for dealing with BIG feelings. These styles fit into the following categories:

- ➔ Relaxation
- ➔ Distraction
- ➔ Physical Movement
- ➔ Emotional Processing
- ➔ Sensory Input



## Here are some activities for children to try when they are experiencing BIG feelings:

### Relaxation

- Deep breathing with bubbles
- Taking a mindful walk
- Saying the alphabet slowly
- Singing a song
- Play with a Calming Jar
- '5 Finger Breathing'
- 'Grounding Using 5 Senses'

### Physical movement

- Use a stress ball
- Jump on a trampoline
- Dance around
- Play at a park
- Do some yoga

### Emotional Processing

- Write in a journal
- Draw
- Talk with someone you trust
- Create a playlist
- Write a letter to someone

### Distraction

- Write a story
- Play with a pet
- Watch a movie
- Do a craft project
- Bake or cook
- Read a book
- Hang out with a friend

### Sensory input

- Play with a Fidget toy
- Doodle or Zentangle
- Do a puzzle
- Snuggle up in a weighted blanket
- Make 'non-toxic' slime



## GIVE IT A GO...A mindful activity

There are many different ways you can let feelings go.

Five Finger Breathing and Grounding with Five Senses are both really helpful techniques to use when tamariki and rangatahi are experiencing BIG feelings.

Another exercise to try is 'Colour Breathing'. This involves giving the feeling a colour and then visualising it as you blow it away.

### Let's try!

#### TAHI:

Take a nice big breathe through your nose...and slowly blow it out your mouth.

Now imagine your BIG feeling in your mind - give it a colour. Is it red? Green? Light blue? Does it have a shape? What does it feel like?

#### RUA:

Find a comfortable place to sit. Imagine a string is stretching up from your head - pulling you up nice and tall in your seat.

Or lie on your back and stretch out fully, with your legs straight and your arms by your sides.

#### TORU:

Take one hand and place it on your belly, just below your ribs and above your belly button.

This is going to help you breathe nice and deeply.

#### WHA:

Choose another colour - a different one to your feeling. This is the colour you are going to breathe in.

Is it a calming colour? A happy colour? Does it have a shape? What does it feel like?

#### RIMA:

Now imagine your BIG feeling and its colour, sitting inside you ready to be blown out.

When you take a breath in, use your hand to feel your belly rise.

When you breathe out, let your hand sink back in with your belly.

#### TAKE A BIG BREATH IN OF THE DIFFERENT COLOUR

- feel your hand move outwards with your belly.

#### BREATHE OUT THE COLOUR OF YOUR BIG FEELING

- feel your hand sink back in with your belly. Repeat this five times.

Has your BIG feeling shrunk? Has it gone away? How do you feel now?  
If it hasn't changed, keep repeating until you feel your BIG feeling leave.

## Let's explore some BIG feelings... An activity for tamariki and rangatahi

Below is a list of feelings, choose ONE feeling and follow the exercise.

Angry - Pukuriri

Hungry - Hiakai

Nervous - Āmaimai

Bored - Hōha

Calm - Āio

Excited - Manahau

Confused - Rangirua

Cheeky - Hianga

Sick - Māuiui

Relaxed - Mauri tau

Sad - Pōuri

Happy - Hari koa

Grumpy - Kiriweti

Confident - Māia

Surprised - Ohore

Embarrassed - Whakamā

Good - Pai

Afraid - Mataku

Tired - Nge

Sleepy - Hiamoe

Use the bubbles below to describe  
what the feeling is like for you...



What does your body feel like?

What do you say to others?

What thoughts are you having?

What can you do to let this  
feeling go?

What colour is the feeling?

**It takes each of us to make  
a difference for all of us.**

**It's whānau ora, and it is the  
foundation that inspires every  
aspect of our work.**

Yellow Brick Road is a national organisation that specialises in providing support for whānau who have a loved one experiencing mental health challenges.

After 40 years of experience working with people around New Zealand, we know that if the family of a loved one experiencing mental distress are correctly supported and empowered, the path they walk leads to increased wellbeing for the whole whānau.

Positive change is our singular focus. By working together, we can help you thrive.



Supporting families  
towards mental wellbeing

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