

# INTRODUCTION TO THIS CREATIVE CBT DOODLE THERAPY WORKBOOK

I am a qualified counsellor and mindfulness teacher to young people. I specialise in working with young people with additional needs such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression.

I noticed that there was something missing in how I delivered mindfulness style cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) workshops and this something turned out to be creativity. I now run 'Creative Mindfulness' workshops with a CBT twist for young people, carers, parents and siblings. This has proved to be very helpful for young people who would often struggle to express emotions healthily.

This book aims to bridge the gap between CBT and mindfulness and having some time out for creative fun. The exercises in the book have been created to engage young people in exploring the story of each character and then to process what the story means for them. I have developed these characters over the last few years while working with young people; they enable them to talk about their feelings without struggling to find the words.

Each of the key methods combined within this book has its own unique set of benefits!

## DOODLING

In my work with young people, I have found that doodling has helped to improve memory retention, to offer a rest for the brain when it is tired and to relieve emotional distress.

Doodling is often defined as a lot of random pictures, words and scribbles that don't make sense. In this book I refer to doodling to mean any words, pictures and scribbles which unfold within these worksheets. I am able to understand so much from a young person's doodles. What are they doodling about? Who is in the doodle? What colours are they picking and where are they using these colours within the worksheet? Our subconscious loves a creative outlet for emotional distress!

Doodling is also a great tool for problem solving. I will share an example:

I recently worked with someone who struggled to talk about a situation that they feared at school. As part of this we decided to explore the worksheets found in this book. I photocopied lots of them and laid them out on the floor. The young person chose to work with Stomper, who stomps out worries and problems. I then explored the worksheet with them using open language such as:

## CBT DOODLING FOR KIDS

‘What colours would you use to write down your problem and then why?’

‘How does that problem make you feel in your body and where do you feel these problems?’

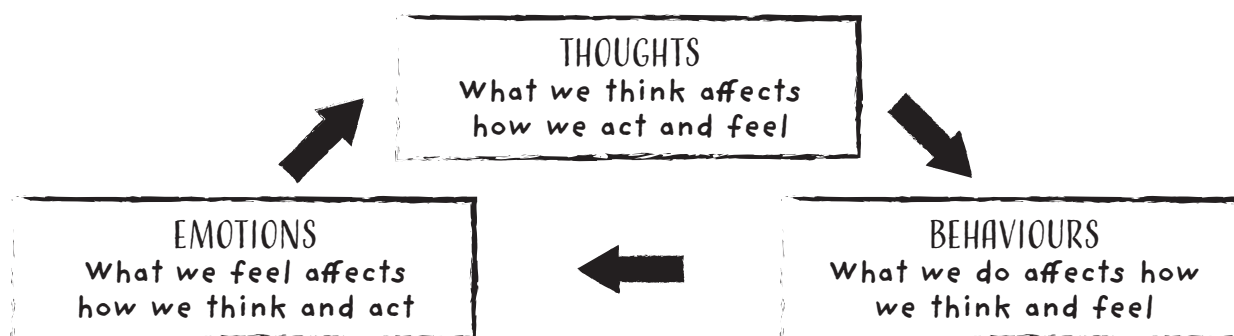
Without asking the direct question ‘What problems are you having?’ we were able to explore what was happening for the young person, in a way which enabled them to keep control over the content. This creative way of working respects the young person’s right to choose and empowers them to share only what feels comfortable at that time.

## CBT TOOLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Cognitive behavioural therapy is known as a talking therapy which has been proven to work very effectively for young people to help them overcome conditions such as anxiety, depression, OCD and anger management. In my experience, I have found that the educational element of CBT has helped young people with ADHD and ASD to better manage some of their symptoms in a more positive, integrated and healthy way.

The aim of CBT is to challenge any patterns of behaviour and thought processes that are negative, destructive or distressing and to replace them with more positive thought patterns. It works to integrate the patterns between our thoughts, our emotions and our behaviours.

### THE CBT MODEL EXPLAINED



CBT is based on the theory that it is not the event or trigger which we find upsetting, but the importance and the meaning that we associate with the event. For example, two people can experience exactly the same trigger but think and feel very differently about it.

I remember running a workshop for young people where we were exploring embarrassing things that had happened at school. A group of around five identified with tripping in the classroom. Two out of the five shared how they had felt so embarrassed about

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the incident that they now worried about this daily, even though it had happened years before. The other three shared how they had not felt embarrassed and how it had not impacted on their confidence within school. As we unpicked this, it became clear that those who identified the incident as being life-changing and affecting their confidence had ruminating thoughts about how tripping means being 'clumsy' or even 'stupid'. When we explored this further we were able to identify where these thoughts came from and to work with these unsupportive beliefs about themselves. Those who were not affected so deeply had not previously encountered these kinds of messages around tripping in school.

It is very common for young people to start to believe their negative thoughts as being absolutely true, even when there is no evidence to support this. These beliefs can become so powerful that they change how we behave. As our behaviours deeply reinforce our thoughts, a negative cycle is started.

CBT works by recognising, reframing and releasing some of the negative beliefs that a young person has. This therapy is based on the belief that we associate negative emotions with situations and events, even when they haven't yet happened. A negative cycle then begins, as our thoughts, emotions and behaviours are all interlinked.

CBT helps young people to gain control of their thoughts, reactions and emotions by exploring beliefs, challenging assumptions, encouraging healthy and confidence-boosting 'self-talk' and identifying more positive coping strategies.

My favourite question to ask young people during a session is:

'Is it already true?'

Using this understanding and questioning allows us to explore what is simply a thought passing through and creating chaos, or what is actual fact!

## CREATIVE MINDFULNESS

We have developed the first ever Creative Mindfulness programme for young people within the UK and have been running workshops and training groups to use Creative Mindfulness to increase emotional resilience in people of all ages. We love the benefits that we see when we combine creativity with mindfulness.

## HOW IT WORKS

Most of us are running through life on auto-pilot. We aren't aware of how we are feeling or are experiencing life in the present moment. Illness, anxiety and depression are at an all-time high and more and more young people are developing behavioural and emotional issues. Mindfulness takes you on a journey of rediscovery and helps to integrate awareness of your body's natural rhythms, reactions and processes.

## CBT DOODLING FOR KIDS

Mindfulness is described as paying more attention to the present moment – to your own thoughts and feelings, and to the world around you in a non-judgemental and compassionate way.

Mindfulness simply means awareness. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. Mindfulness pays particular attention to your breathing, physical reactions, emotions and thoughts. It teaches you a deeper awareness of what is happening within your body and your thoughts! This is hugely beneficial when working with young people and their families.

I believe Creative Mindfulness works because the most mindful we can be is when we are focused in the moment on taking part in something creative. While we are being creative we often don't have the head space to be worrying or focusing on negative thoughts. Instead we are in the moment and focused on the activity we are taking part in. This allows us some much-needed time out and rest. It also offers an outlet for the subconscious and unconscious mind to process and share what is happening for us.

Creativity boosts our emotional wellbeing. It helps us to process our emotions and our feelings without over-thinking. Creativity helps us to integrate our senses so that we are working in tune with our body in the moment: a mindful tune in!

The main message of this book, which I always introduce to young people, is that it is not about the outcome of what we draw, doodle or create but the *process* – the space to be in the moment and to allow some freedom from thinking and judging ourselves too heavily.

## ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR USING THIS WORKBOOK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

It is important to create a good working relationship with the young person you are supporting before you start to use these worksheets. A good relationship can be developed by offering trust, honesty, a non-judgemental approach, and confidentiality and by allowing young people to be autonomous and guide their own sessions.

I have found that the best way to use the worksheets is to have them photocopied and readily available for young people to choose from. You may be surprised which one a client chooses; however it is important to be client-led and to support your client to make their own choices, even when you feel there is another worksheet which may be more suitable. You just don't know what is going to unfold within the creative process.

Remember that our bodies have an innate ability to know what we need to explore and process. I believe that our unconscious and subconscious are playing a part in the process and are looking for an outlet to express. Support the creative process without influencing your client or making suggestions as this comes from your own understanding and beliefs rather than the client's.

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An example that I often share involves colour work. When I first started working creatively, I supported a young person to work through anger using colours. I gave the young person a red pen to add where they most felt angry within their body and they really struggled to do this. When we explored this, my client shared that they wanted to use a green for anger and that red was one of their favourite colours. I had offered red as this was a colour that I associated with anger. By doing this I hampered the creative process and this resulted in confusion for my young client and meant that they weren't able to engage fully in a relaxed way. It is so important to remain the 'watcher' and to explore what the young person creates in front of you without judgement. This is their process!

Be open to anything that arises. Explore this with an open mind and engage fully in their process. Use open-ended questions such as:

'What colours do you feel in your body?'

Instead of:

'Do you feel pink in your heart area?'

Always keep the focus on the young person's story and point of view.

If a young person starts to engage with a worksheet and changes their mind, support them to do this without nudging them to continue. Our emotional regulatory system creates our own roadblocks and defence systems, which serve an important purpose to defend us from emotional and physical harm. Sometimes we are just not ready to process something, and this is OK!

For these worksheets to have a positive impact, it is important that the young person has chosen to engage in this process. In my experience, I have found that when I have tried to introduce worksheets to someone who isn't ready they have become quite closed or their behaviour and body language have presented as anxious.

Follow your intuition and work in a way that feels open and honest!

I hope that you find this book to be a positive addition to your creative therapy toolbox and that you enjoy using it as much as I do to enhance your work with young people!

Much love,

Tanja xx

P.S. We love to inspire people to live their most happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. If you would like to stay in touch or find out more, you can visit our website here:

[www.confidenthearts.com](http://www.confidenthearts.com)

# JOOST

Joost likes a good happiness boost. When you feel happy, you have lots more energy to spend time doing stuff that brings you joy. Share and doodle what makes you happy and remember to celebrate all that you have in your life!



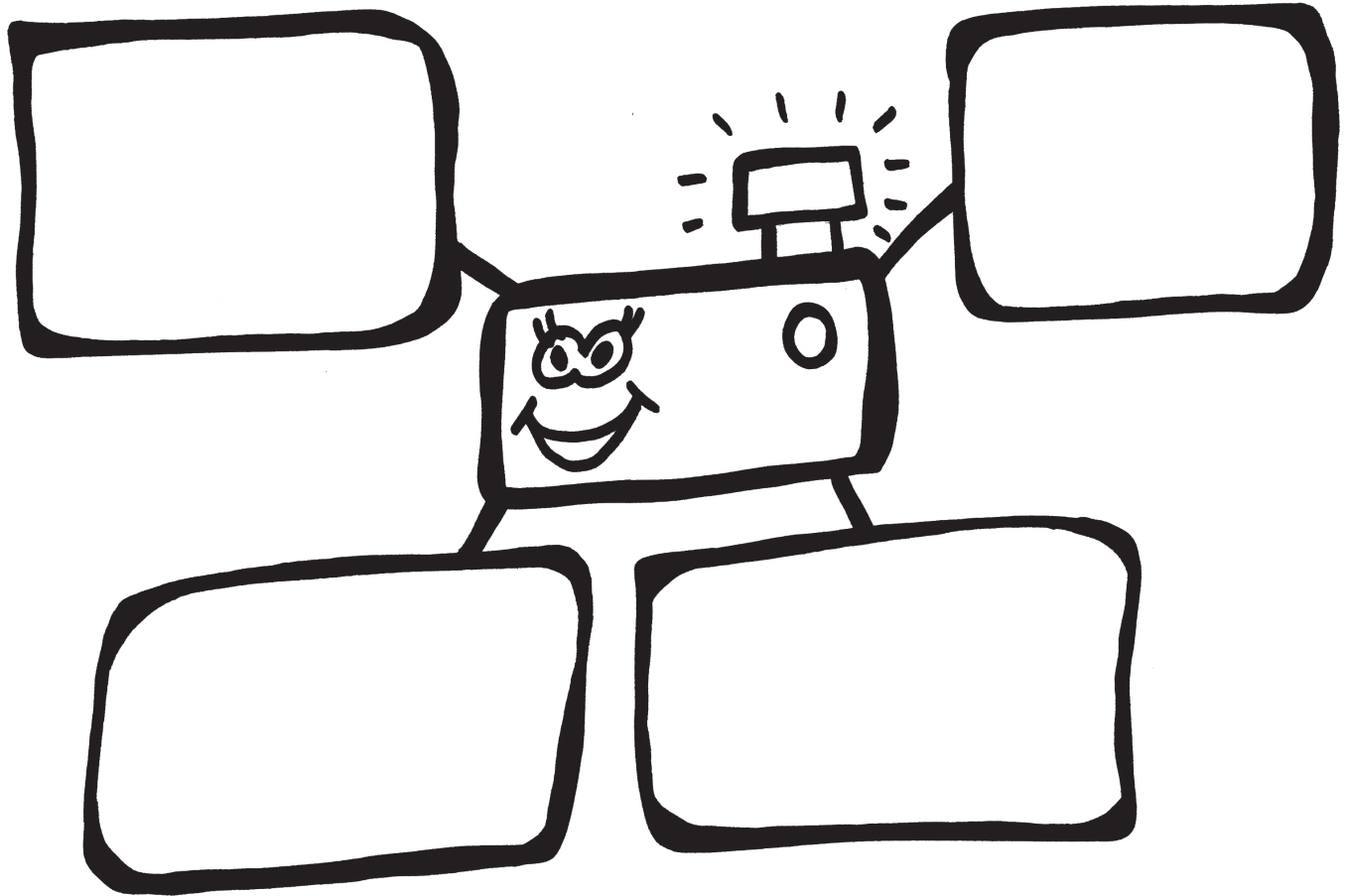
# HELLALAH

Hellalah loves to feel calm. When you feel calm you make lots of good chemicals in your body, which helps you to sleep, gives you good energy and makes you feel happy. Close your eyes and think of all the things that help you to feel calm. Then doodle these onto the sheet!



# SNIPS

Snips loves to store happy memories. Thinking about the good stuff helps you to feel good. Think about your favourite memories and doodle them in the boxes!



# LUCY

Lucy helps you to get rid of the stuff that you don't want in your life. Letting go of the stuff that makes you unhappy helps you to make space for more good stuff. Think about what you want to let go of and doodle these thoughts all around Lucy!

