



My story as a parent





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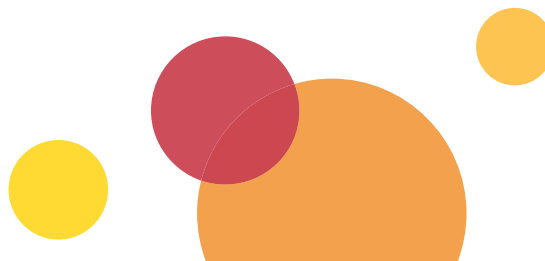
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Growing and changing

Think about the current age of each of your children and their stage of brain development.

Keeping in mind what you now understand about early brain development, think about yourself as a child at the same ages of your own children today. For instance, if you have children who are 5 years old and 2 years old, find out what you can about yourself when you were five and two.



You might like to find photos of yourself as a child and show those to your own children.



Maybe you could tell your child a story about when you were a child—or even write about yourself as a child and read what you've written as a bedtime story.

You might like to begin like this:



Chapter 1: The message centre



Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:



Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:



What might you do as a result of this chapter?



Chapter 2: Messages from the past



My parents



Think of some words you could use to describe your relationship with each of your parents or childhood carers.



Who were you closest to and why?



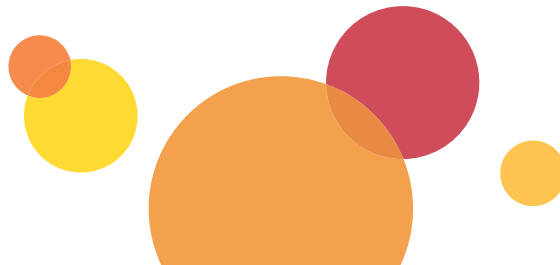
Think of some stories that show what your relationship was like with the significant people in your life when you were very young and as you grew older.



Find out what you can about your parents' lives during your early childhood.



What style of parenting was practised in the time and place of your childhood?





Once upon a time...

★ Think about some of the messages you received from the people who were important to you in your childhood as you consider these...

My mother always said to me...

My father always said to me...

Other people always said to me...

★ Did you get any mixed messages from those people?

★ Were there any unspoken messages?

★ What sort of messages do you think you are giving to your children?

★ Are they similar to those you received as a child?

★ What might your children say if you asked them about the messages they are getting from you?






Childhood memories

★ What are some of the stories your family tells about you?

★ What is your favourite childhood memory?

★ As a child, what was your favourite:

 toy? _____

 piece of clothing? _____

 present? _____

 game? _____

 food? _____

 story? _____

 TV show? _____

★ What was meal time like in your childhood home?

★ In what ways do any of those memories tell you something about your parents?

★ In what ways do any of those memories influence how you are with your own children?





Myself as a parent

★ What are your hopes and dreams for yourself as a parent?

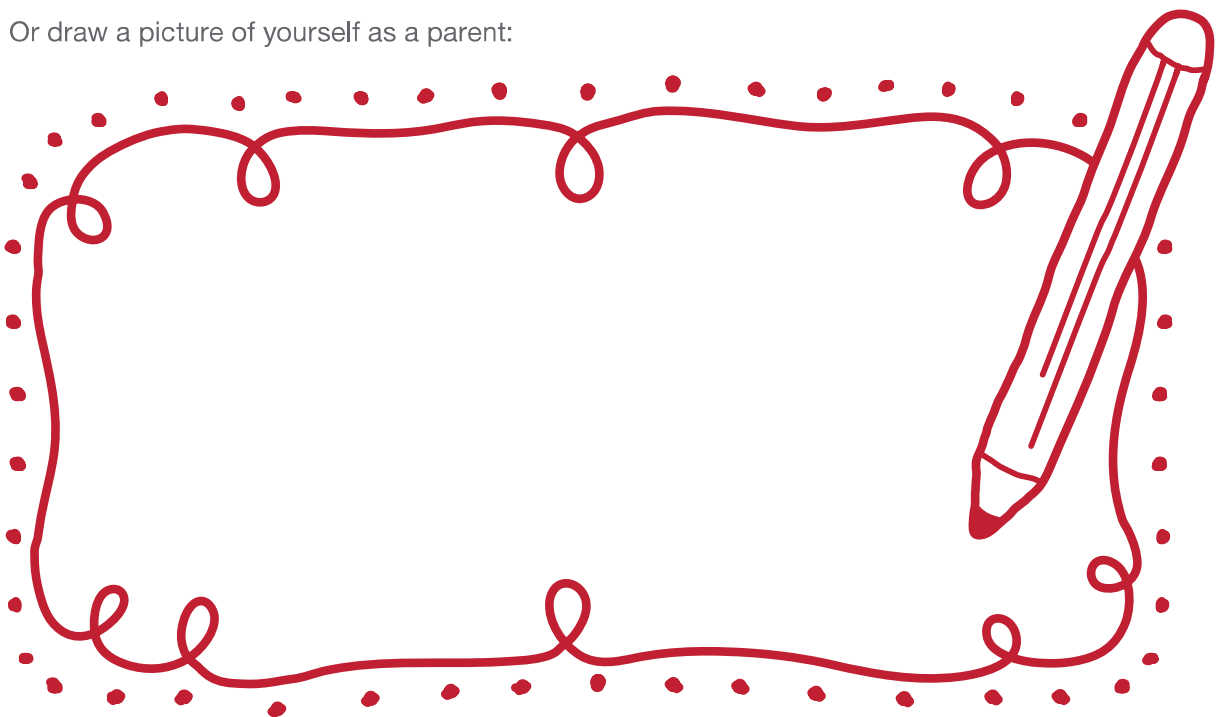
★ Which values and beliefs are most important to you as a parent?

★ Where did these values and beliefs come from?

★ Think about instances where you can see these values reflected in your relationship with your children.

★ If you were to develop a slogan or motto for yourself as a parent—something that reflects what is most important to you as a parent— what would it be?

★ Or draw a picture of yourself as a parent:



Chapter 2: Messages from the past



Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



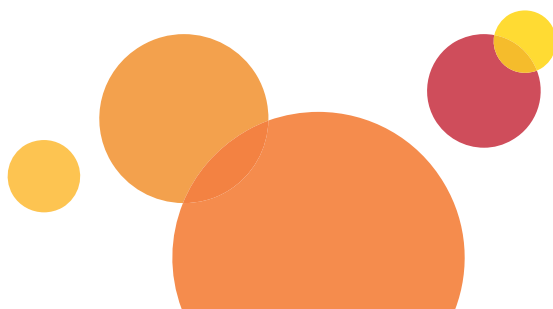
Your thoughts about this week's chapter:



Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:



What might you do as a result of this chapter?





Think about yourself as a child as you reflect on these questions:



What are some of your childhood memories of being spoken to, and listened to, by your parents?



How was that experience for you?



How did your parents communicate with you when you were happy and excited?



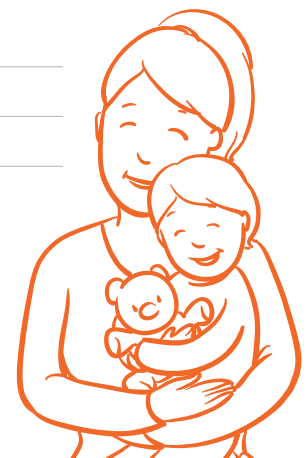
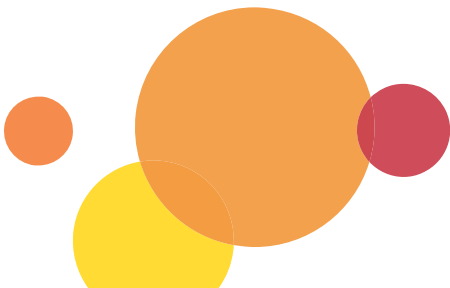
When you cried as a child, what would happen?



Think of a time when you were a child, and you had a strong reaction to feeling angry.



How did your parents respond to you then?



Chapter 3: Giving and receiving messages



See if you can remember a time as a child when you felt frightened about something. What was your parents' response to you then?



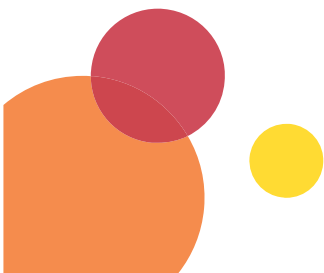
Did your father and mother each respond differently to you during these emotional times? How?



What messages do you think you got from their responses?



What do you think might have been some of the things which influenced your parents' approach to communicating with their children?





Mindful listening

To practise listening mindfully to your child, be curious about the words he or she uses. Notice facial expressions, body language and tone of voice and to try to 'read' what he or she is feeling.

Listen with the same level of attention that you might give to an Oscar-winning performance by your favourite movie star. Notice every little detail of the facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice of your child.

Avoid interrupting or making suggestions. Listen with no other agenda than to get a sense of what he or she is feeling and thinking.



Use this space to record what you heard and understood about your child as you were mindfully listening.

A large, hand-drawn orange speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside the bubble are 15 horizontal lines for writing notes.





Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



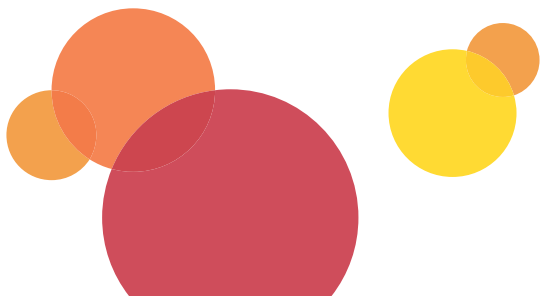
Your thoughts about this week's chapter:



Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:



What might you do as a result of this chapter?





My Notes

A large rectangular area with a hand-drawn orange border, containing 20 horizontal white lines for writing notes.

Chapter 4: The messages of behaviour



That was then...

Think of a time when, as a child, you had strong feelings about something.



What was the situation?



What were you feeling emotionally and physically?



What were you needing?



Who was there and how did they respond to you?
Were you able to communicate to anyone what you needed at that time?



How did you feel about their response?



Chapter 4: The messages of behaviour



This is now...

Think about a typical situation with your child/children that you find very challenging.



What does your child do and how do you usually respond?



How do you feel when your child behaves in a way that shows they are experiencing strong feelings?



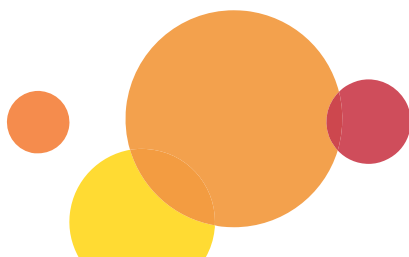
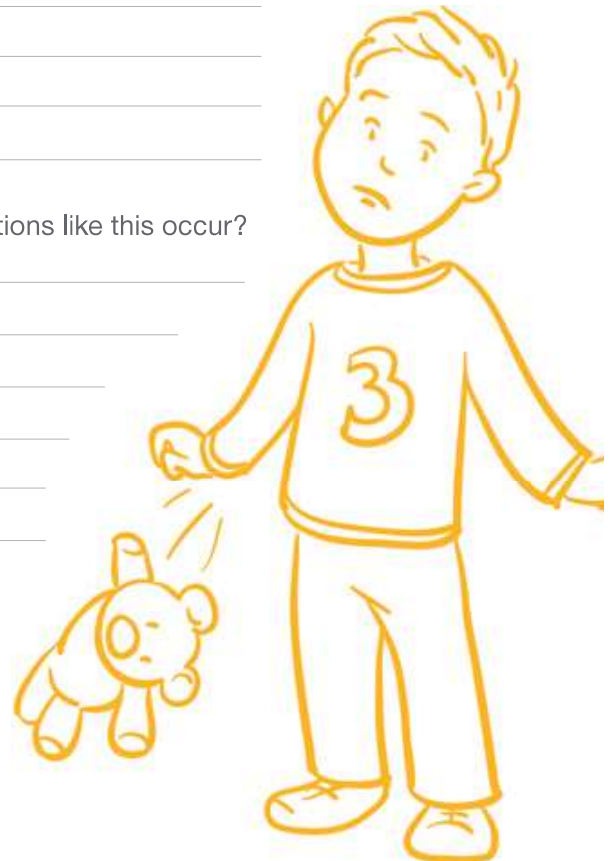
What happens in your body when you are in that situation?



Can you identify where your feelings come from in those situations?



How do you think your child might be feeling when situations like this occur?



Chapter 4: The messages of behaviour



What might your child be needing in those situations?



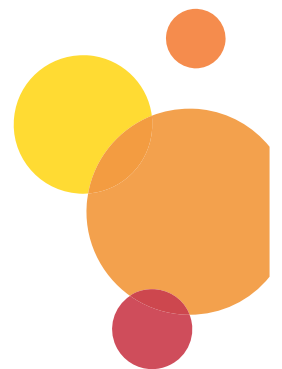
How do you encourage your children to ask for what they need?



Use this space to think about any times when you feel yourself becoming emotionally reactive with your children.

In particular, note:

- What happened to trigger your reaction?
- How did you feel?
- What happened in your body?
- Are these feelings familiar to you or reminders of situations in your childhood?
- How might situations like this influence your connection with your child?

A large, hand-drawn style orange speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside the bubble are several horizontal white lines for writing.



Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:



Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:



What might you do as a result of this chapter?





My Notes

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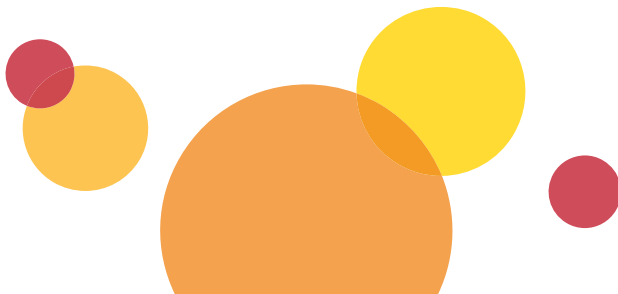


Think about yourself as a child

★ What I believed to be true about myself as a child was...

★ What were you good at as a child? How do you know that?

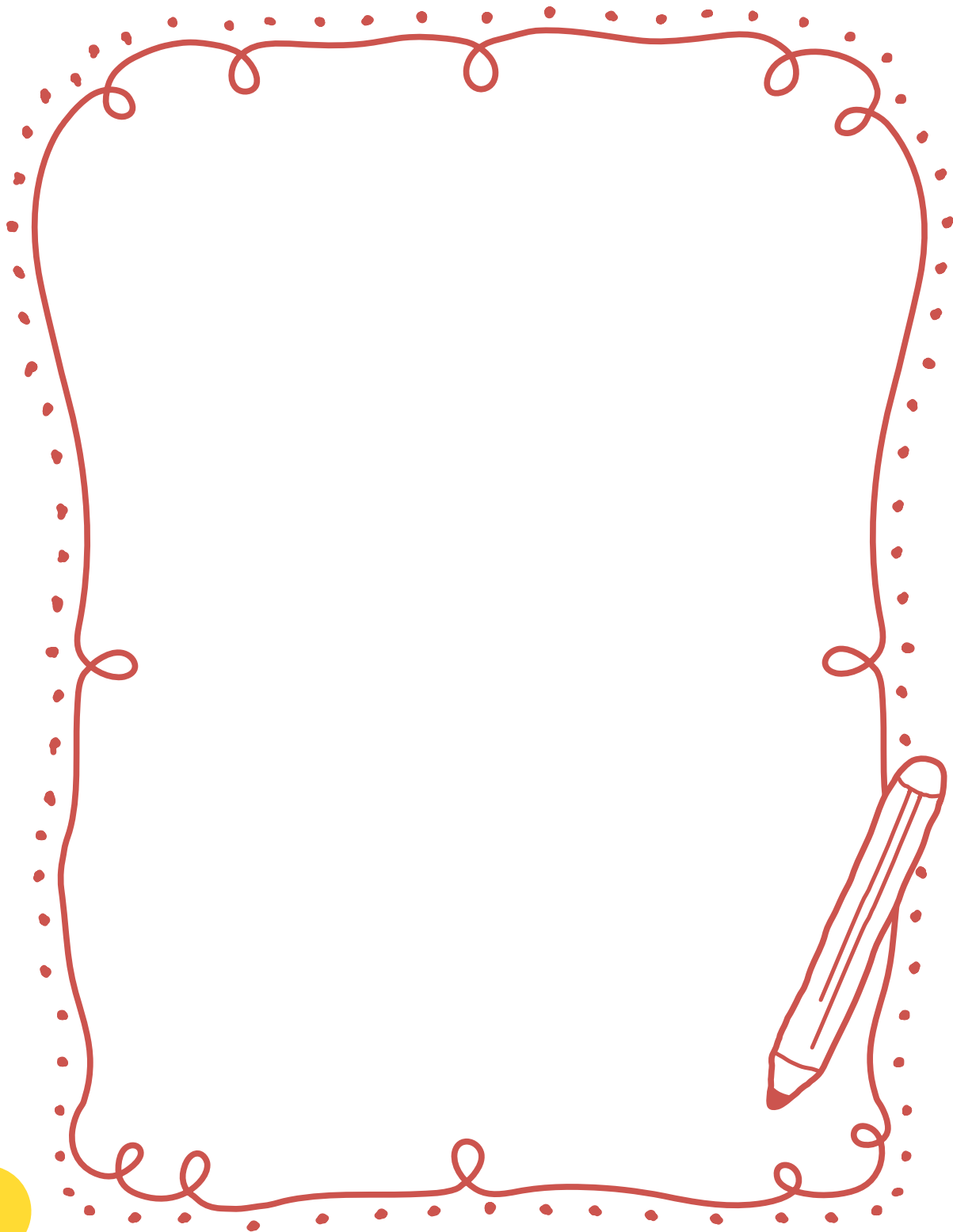
★ What did that mean for you as a child?



Chapter 5: Messages about me



★ Draw a picture of yourself as a child, find a photo, or write something about your child self.





Special people

Think about a person who was special to you in your childhood.

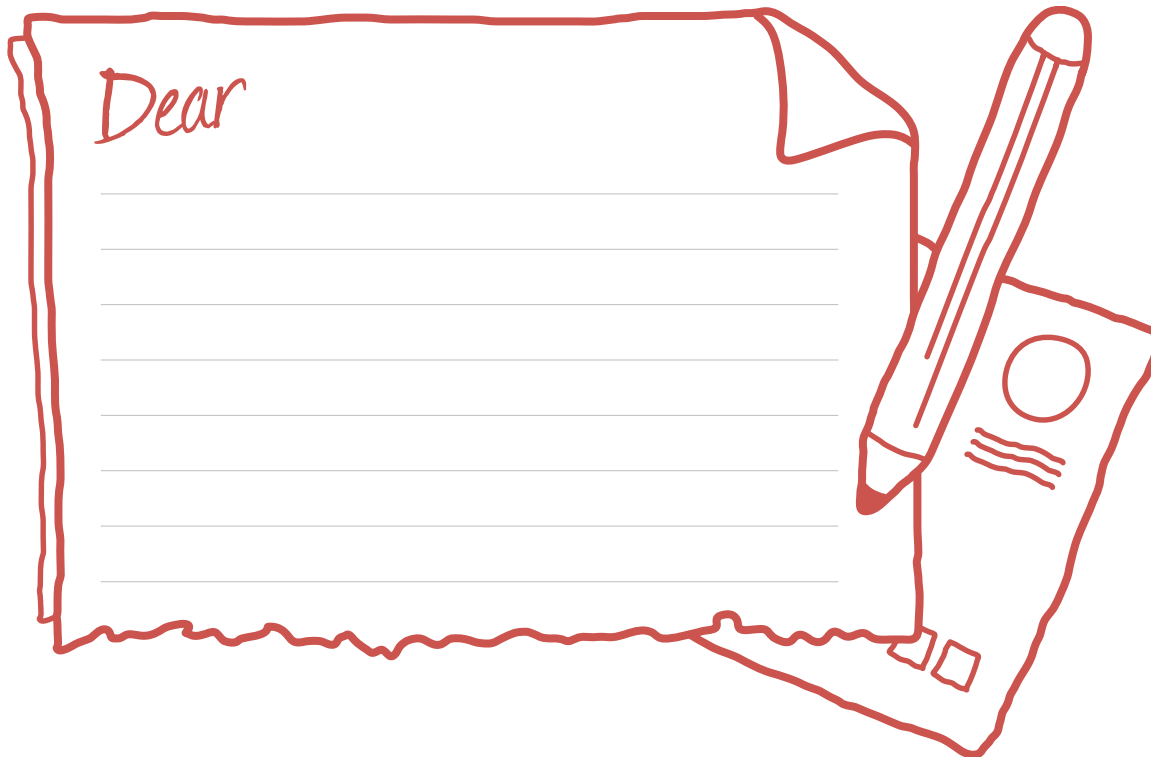
Think about a few memories that tell something about your relationship with that person.



What was it about that person and the way he or she interacted with you that made your relationship special?



Write a letter to your special person telling him or her about your thoughts here.



And now



How might the special relationships you experienced as a child have influenced your relationship with your own children?



Every child is unique

For each of your children:



Name 4 words to describe him or her.



Name 4 words to describe you.



Who does your child remind you of?



In what ways is he or she different from you?



Name 10 things that you love about your child.















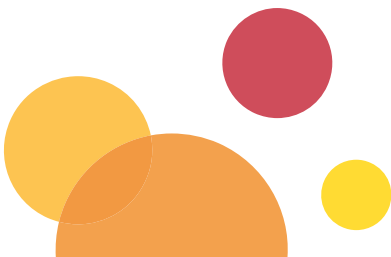








How do you show your children that you love them?





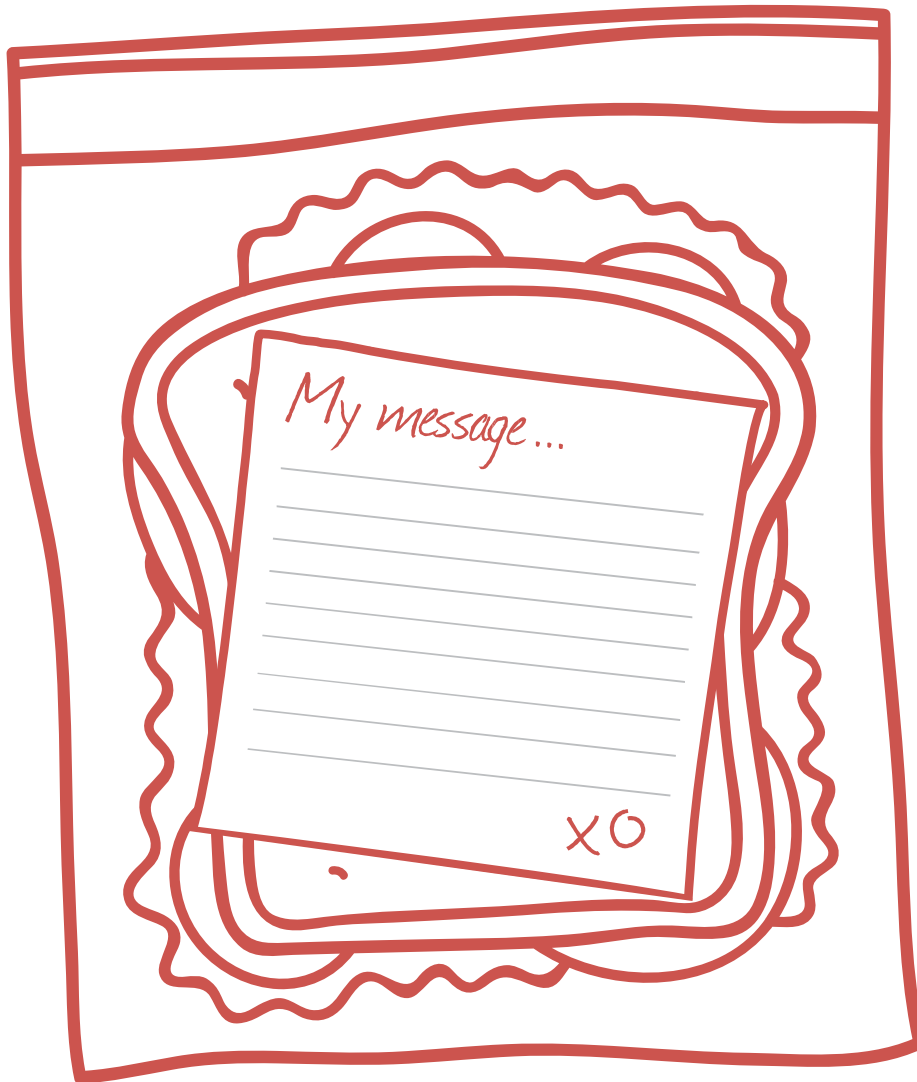
Message in a lunchbox



What sort of messages about themselves would you like your children to take from their childhood?



You could write a special message to your child—maybe a Post-It note — and put it in his or her lunchbox.





Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:

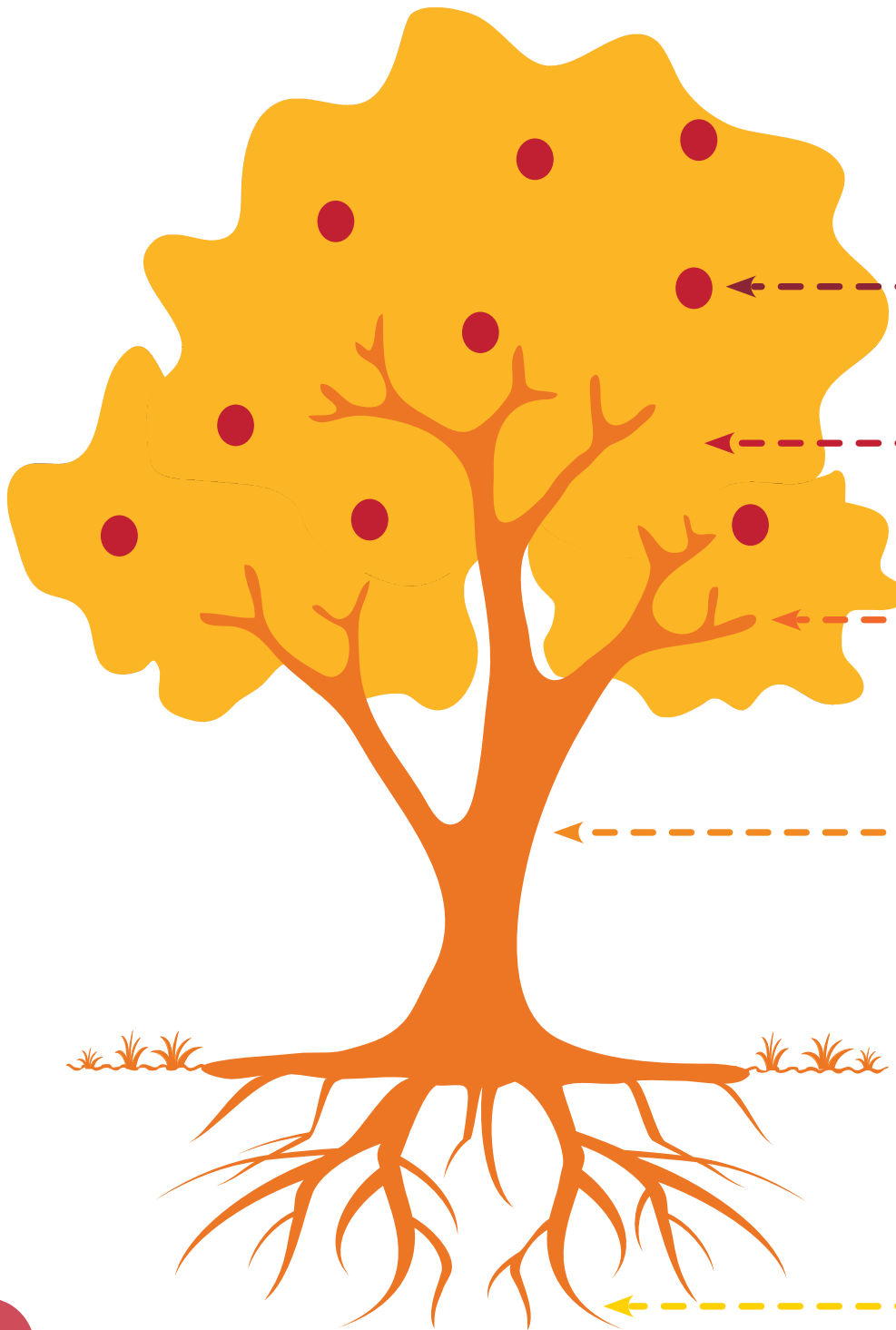


Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:



What might you do as a result of this chapter?





The Fruits

represent your children.



Draw them on your tree in a way that says something about each child.

The Leaves

represent your values and your skills.

The Branches

represent your hopes and wishes for your children.

The Trunk

represent your strongest supports.

The Earth

represent all those things which keep you 'grounded' and make you feel stable and strong.

The Roots

represent where you have come from, your family history and important places and people from your past.

Chapter 6: Passing on messages



The Fruits



If you think about your children as gifts that you will pass on to the next generation what are some of the messages you would like them to take with them?

The Leaves



What are your values and your strongest skills? Who did you learn these from? Think about how you are passing those values and skills on to your children.

The Branches



What are your hopes and wishes for your children? Where did they come from?

The Trunk



Who are the people or organisations you feel comfortable to turn to for help when you need support?

The Earth



Write about the things that you do to nurture yourself to make you feel good and to keep you calm.

The Roots



Think about the people from your childhood who were most important to you. Who were they and what are some of the most important messages they gave you?



Asking for help

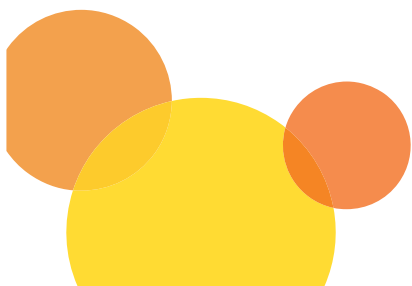
★ How easy do you find it to ask for help?

★ When you are upset or having problems, are you more likely to go away by yourself to try to solve the problem, or to talk to someone else?

★ How do you feel when you leave your child in the care of someone else?

★ How well do you think your cries for help were answered when you were a child?

★ What might have got in the way of people meeting your needs as a child?





Asking for help

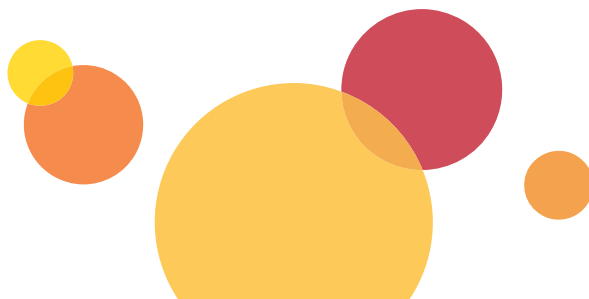
★ How do you feel about these statements?

'It's my job to look after my children, no one else's job.'

'It takes a village to raise a child.'

'Every parent needs help at times.'

★ Who do you feel comfortable to ask for help with your children?





Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:



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What might you do as a result of this chapter?





Contact us

PO Box 3335, Richmond Vic 3121

Phone 1300 381 581

info@bringingupgreatkids.org

bringingupgreatkids.org



**Australian
Childhood
Foundation**