Session 7 – Learning to set goals and trying new things (E = Encourage)

Concepts, skills & techniques

- Setting goals
- Trying new things
- Learning to do things one step at a time – breaking hard things down into lots of little steps (The Coping Step Plan)

Tips for parents

- Provide your child with praise every time they attempt something difficult or try something new.
- Encourage and model facing rather than avoiding difficult or scary situations. If there are certain things you avoid because you are afraid e.g. heights, model brave behaviours! A lot of the time we transfer our own fears and anxieties onto our children, because they watch and learn! Be aware of this when facing difficult tasks or situations.
- Help your child to practice saying green thoughts when faced with new situations or challenges or when they are finding a task difficult to master.
- Work together with your child to come up with a goal for them. It could be something that they want to achieve, a new skill they would like to learn, or a fear they want to overcome.
- What is a coping step plan??
  - Breaking a goal into small steps
  - Each step should be slightly more difficult than the last.
  - Practice the steps every day, moving up a step only when they feel comfortable with the previous one.
  - Reward your child at each step along the way.
- Break skills and activities into small steps. Don’t expect your child to progress to the next level until they have mastered the level below and feel confident in their ability to perform the task. Only progress to the next step once they feel comfortable with the one prior.
- Help your child practice the steps every day until they reach their goal.
- Work out with your child what rewards they will receive for climbing the steps of their coping step plan.
  - The best type of rewards are ones that involve doing things with others – not just simple tangible rewards such as food and toys
  - Explain that they can give themselves a small reward when they do a little thing and big rewards when they do a big thing

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We all encounter situations that are difficult or worrying to some degree. One possibly strategy is what we call a “coping step plan”. This is useful when a situation seems overwhelming. This involves breaking down a challenging situation into small, achievable, easy steps. Each step becomes gradually more difficult.

- Although it is hard to see your child in a situation that is difficult or a little bit scary, research shows that helping children to face their fears actually helps decrease their level of fear. Support and encourage them to make it less daunting.

Pick a goal for yourself as well (other members of the family can do the same), and come up with your own coping step plan. You could even have a family goal. You might like to put your coping step plans up on the fridge and chart your progress.

Here is an example:

Get your child to use green thoughts to help them achieve their goal!

**Remember to...**

- Help your child to think in more positive ways - catch your child’s red thoughts and help turn them into green thoughts

- Encourage your child to listen to their body clues, take time to relax, and have quiet time.

- Encourage your child to talk about their own and others’ feelings and use “thumbs up” ideas to deal with unpleasant feelings and to help others feel better

- Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.

- Catch your child being brave and praise them for it. Use your child’s brave chart!

- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!