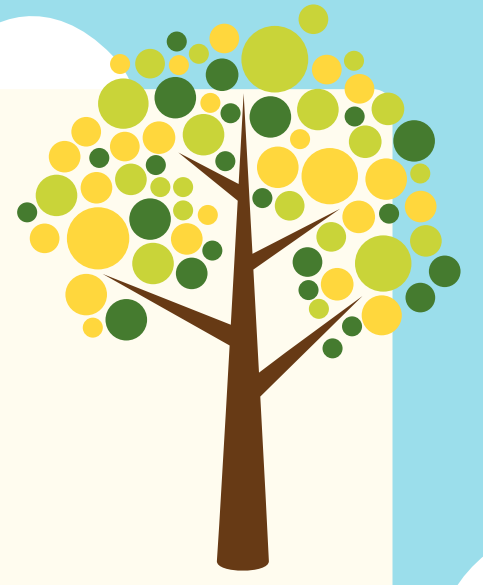


# Growing Together

## Children's Mental Health Week 7th - 13th February 2022



This year's theme for Children's Mental Health Week is 'Growing Together'. Growing Together is about growing emotionally and finding ways to help each other grow. Challenges and setbacks can help us to grow and adapt and trying new things can help us to move beyond our comfort zone into a new realm of possibility and potential. However, emotional growth is often a gradual process that happens over time, and sometimes we might feel a bit 'stuck'.

The Emotions Tree project is a creative school based project that can be used in classes or as a whole school approach to help explore emotional reflection and growth. The Emotions Tree can help children and young people to develop emotional resilience, emotional literacy skills and to help individuals identify that others might share similar feelings to them. Please see following pages for guidance on delivering this in your school.

Whether you're starting this project now or looking for some ideas on refreshing or relaunching a pre-existing project, see some ideas below on how you can link this into celebrating Children's Mental Health Week this year:

What has a hard  
time taught you?

Celebrating  
individuality &  
differences

What is a skill  
you'd like to keep  
working on?

What challenges  
have you overcome  
this year?

How do you  
feel about  
the future?

Who are you  
thankful for and  
why?



# The Emotions Tree Project

## What is an emotions tree?

The Emotions Tree is a creative and anonymous way to help children and young people develop their emotional resilience. It is a mechanism to build emotional literacy skills, allows children and young people to reflect on their own emotions, notice that emotions can fluctuate and to recognise that others might also share the same feelings as them.



## Why is it helpful to take part in the Emotions Tree Project?

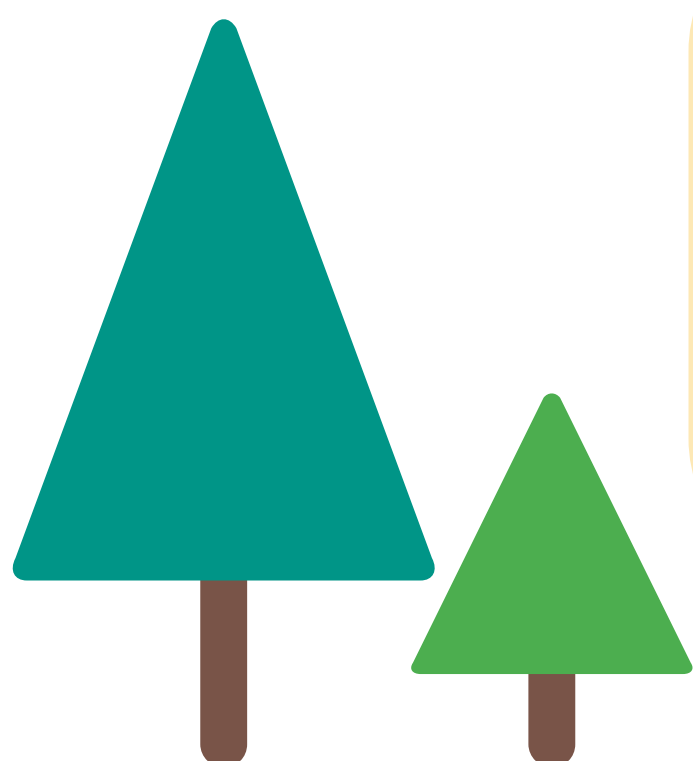
By having the worries visible in the classroom children and young people are able to normalise their concerns by being able to view those of their classmates alongside their own. It also allows schools to have a check in as to the dominant emotions within a class group to tune into what support a group might need and in doing so, interventions can be targeted to address issues that are current and affecting the most vulnerable students in school.

This step by step guide provides instructions on how it can be delivered, and how teachers and classroom staff can support children and young people to express their feelings.

It can be helpful to have some themes to give the children/young people to get them to reflect and name their emotions. This will help staff members to provide some structure and containment around issues which arise. These themes could include:

- School work
- Exams
- Sleep
- Friendships
- Coronavirus

The tree can be done with the class/school on a half termly basis. Education Mental Health Practitioners could deliver training or support around the issues that arise, either at a whole school level or on a small group basis.



### Example Display

On the right is an example of how schools can creatively use the space available to display their tree. However, get creative and think where the display will be most suitable for your school.



# Creating the Emotion Tree

## The task...

- Create a tree framework somewhere that works for your school. This could be on a classroom door, a hallway corridor, in a regulation room or simply on a large window. Try to make the tree somewhere pupils will regularly see it to remind them of the project.
- Provide each pupil with two leaves, ideally of different colours.
- Ask pupils to write down their experiences onto the leaves.
- Hang these leaves on the Emotion Tree.



### The Aim

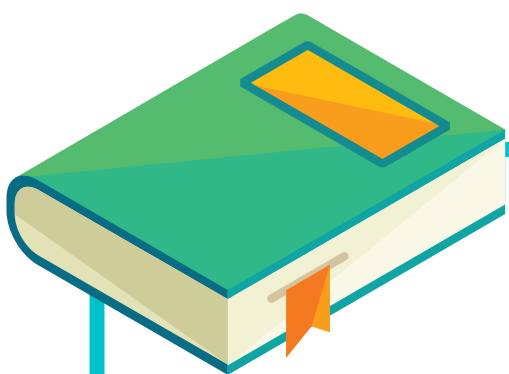
Having other pupils emotions and experiences on display will help pupils to normalise what they have experienced and develop their emotional resilience!

### Be careful

Make sure pupils know that this task is optional and they should only share what they feel comfortable to!



## Some activities to frame the task



### Story-Guided Discussion

Use a story to encourage pupils to think about how someone in their circumstances might think and feel.

An example is provided later in the booklet.

Divide the whiteboard into two columns, on the left write 'thoughts & events' and on the right write 'feelings & emotions'.

Upon reading the story, ask pupils what thoughts and events were occurring for the character in the story and how this might have made them feel.

Write these out on the board for all pupils to see, these can be used as prompts later on.



### Teacher Experience Sharing

Staff members could then share some of their own experiences of the theme. Start with neutral or even positive moments to begin with to ease into the discussion.

Some examples of topics are:

- Something you enjoyed
- Something you learnt
- Something you made

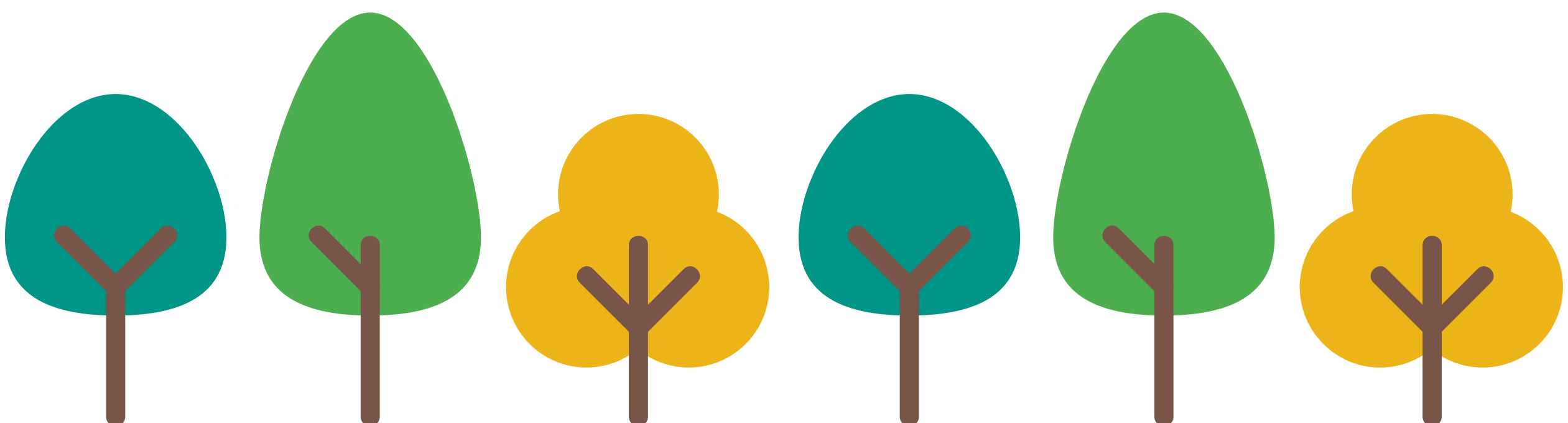
Next, focus on a challenge:

- Something you missed
- Something you found difficult
- Something you needed help to overcome

Try to highlight the thought/event and then the emotion felt.

For example:

- I spent more time with my dog Pepper which made me feel happy...
- I couldn't go into the sunshine and this made me feel sad...  
Add these thoughts and emotions to the board.



## Pupil Experience Sharing

Some pupils within the class may feel comfortable to share and discuss their emotions and experiences, however many will not. With this in mind, below are some suggestions of how you could tailor pupil experience sharing to the needs of your class.



### Write It Down

Some pupils may not want to share their emotions or experiences with others, however they may find it helpful to write these down.

Suggesting that pupils can keep these leaves anonymous may help them feel more comfortable to engage in the task.



### Circle Time

If some pupils would like to discuss their experiences in smaller groups, circle time could be the perfect opportunity for this.

This will also help to develop their emotional literacy, empathy and listening skills.



### Hands Up!

Some pupils may wish to acknowledge they have experienced something similar without wanting to share any details. Asking pupils to simply raise their hand if they also experienced something might provide this opportunity. An example phrase could be "I wonder if anyone else has felt like this.."

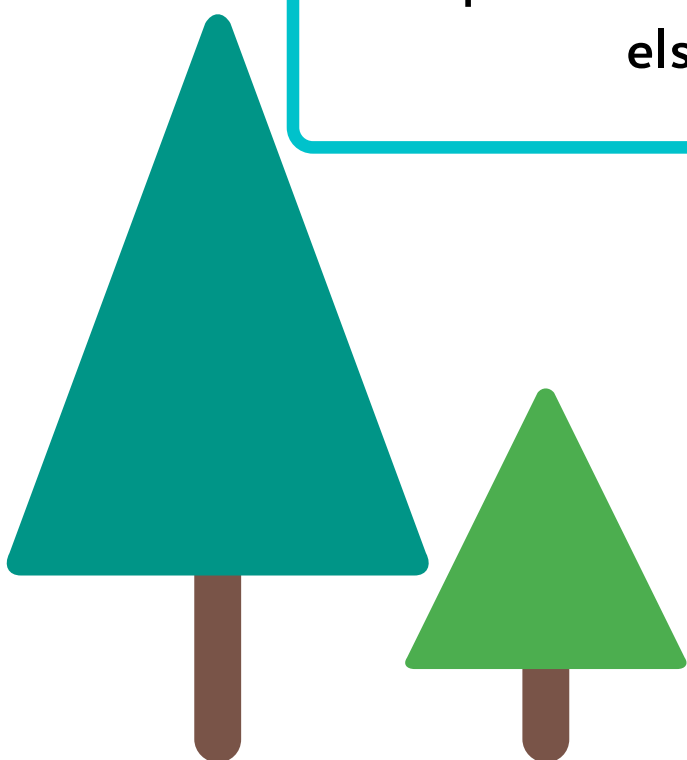


### Meditation

Meditation is a great way for children to be mindful and recognise what they are experiencing in their bodies.

Below is a link to a wonderful butterfly meditation for children. Search 'Kids Meditation Butterfly Body Scan' in Youtube or use the URL:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56\\_8aK3cLEA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56_8aK3cLEA)



# Some tips to help structure the conversation

## Attunement

Actively listen and acknowledge pupils experiences without jumping in to fill silences or by offering false reassurances which can feel minimising.

Encourage pupils to share by offering prompts e.g. "that sounds really difficult, what happened then?" or "Can you tell me more about it?"

Check your understanding by repeating back to them what you have heard; try to use some of the language they used. Make sure you have fully understood their experience before moving on.

## Emotional Regulation

Acknowledge and identify what the pupil might have been feeling e.g. "that sounds really tough...it sounds like you were feeling quite upset/anxious"

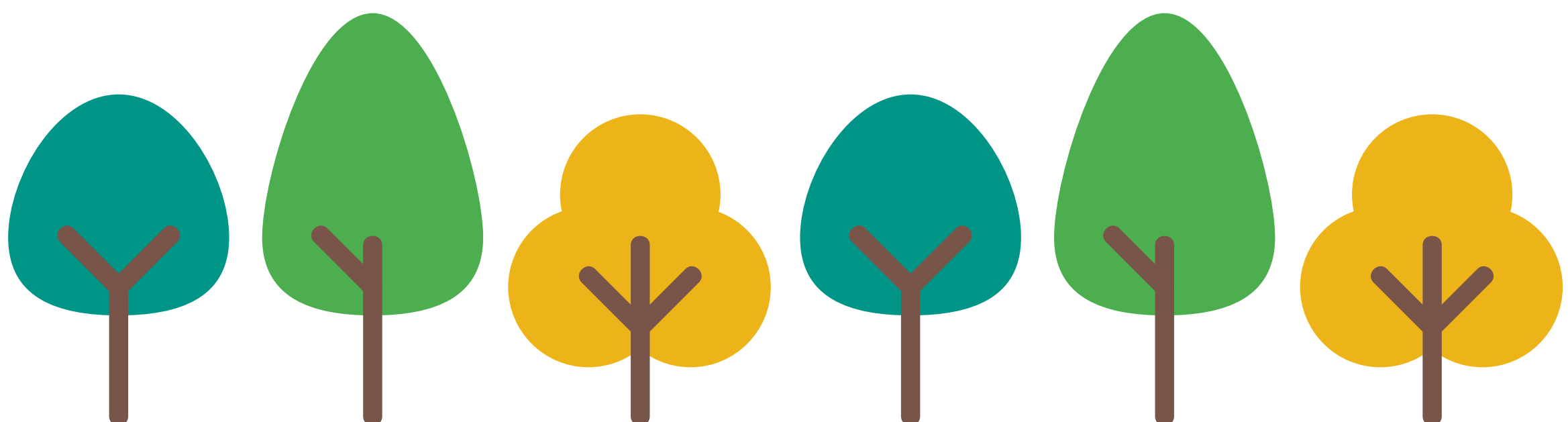
Let them tell you what emotions they were experiencing. Acknowledge that it is normal to feel a range of emotions in response to a situation.

Using the word 'and' instead of 'but' can help facilitate these two differing perspectives.

## Structure

Feel free to use this guide creatively, but here are some ideas to get you started!

- Choose from story-telling experience and teacher-guided discussion
- Then choose from the pupil sharing activities
- Create a tree from the ideas and experiences of the children and watch the shared lived experiences of the class come together to provide a sense of togetherness.



# Step-by-Step Guide to Reflection Activities

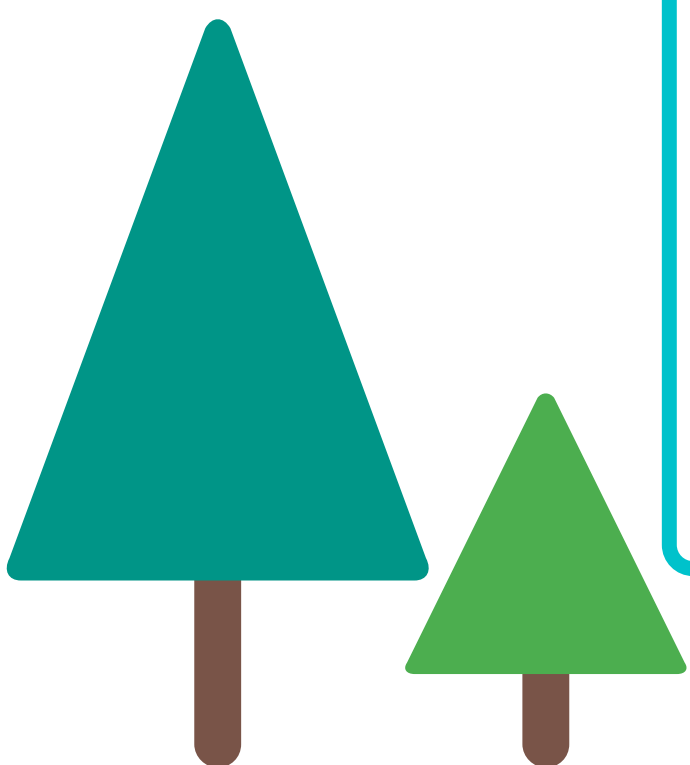


## Helping children and young people to regularly notice and reflect on their feelings

1. This activity will take 15 minutes.
2. Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to write or draw what they are feeling.
3. After 5 minutes, ask pupils to tear up the piece of paper and put it in the bin (warn them beforehand that this is what will happen).
4. Then do an emotionally regulating activity, such as the butterfly meditation (see link above).
5. Give each child a leaf template and ask them to write down some kind advice or words of wisdom they would give to a friend if they felt similar emotions.
6. Build this up as a regular task for children and young people - it will be such a valuable life skill! School staff can do the activity too.

## Helping children and young people to focus and explore specific emotions

1. This activity will take 15 minutes.
2. Start the discussion with the teacher choosing a specific emotion from the following list, such as anger, and then ask the children to name all the words we use for 'angry'.
3. Discuss how we experience anger, for example:
  - "Is it ok to feel angry?"
  - "What makes you angry?"
  - "How do you know when you feel angry?"
  - "What do you do when you feel angry?"
  - "When were you last angry?"
  - "What helps when you feel angry?"
4. Ask pupils to write down on their leaf anything they think is important to share or remind themselves about feeling 'angry'.



# List of Emotions to Guide Discussion



## Happy

Proud	Playful
Peaceful	Courageous
Loving	Confident
Hopeful	Interested
Amused	Excited
Joyful	Sensitive



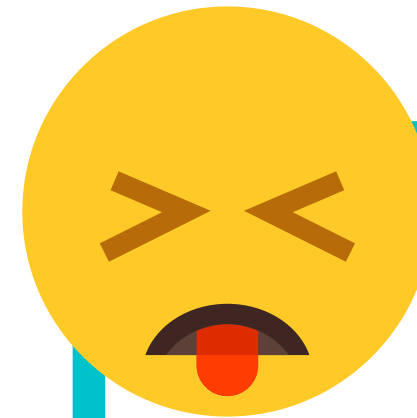
## Surprise

Startled	Eager
Confused	Dismayed
Amazed	Astonished
Excited	Energetic
Shocked	Awe
Astonished	Perplexed



## Sad

Bored	Low
Tired	Empty
Unhappy	Ignored
Guilty	Alone
Lonely	Upset
Powerless	Tearful



## Disgust

Awful	Disapproval
Disappointed	Avoidance
Hesitant	Detestable
Revolted	Revulsion
Loathing	Hatred
Judgmental	Repugnant



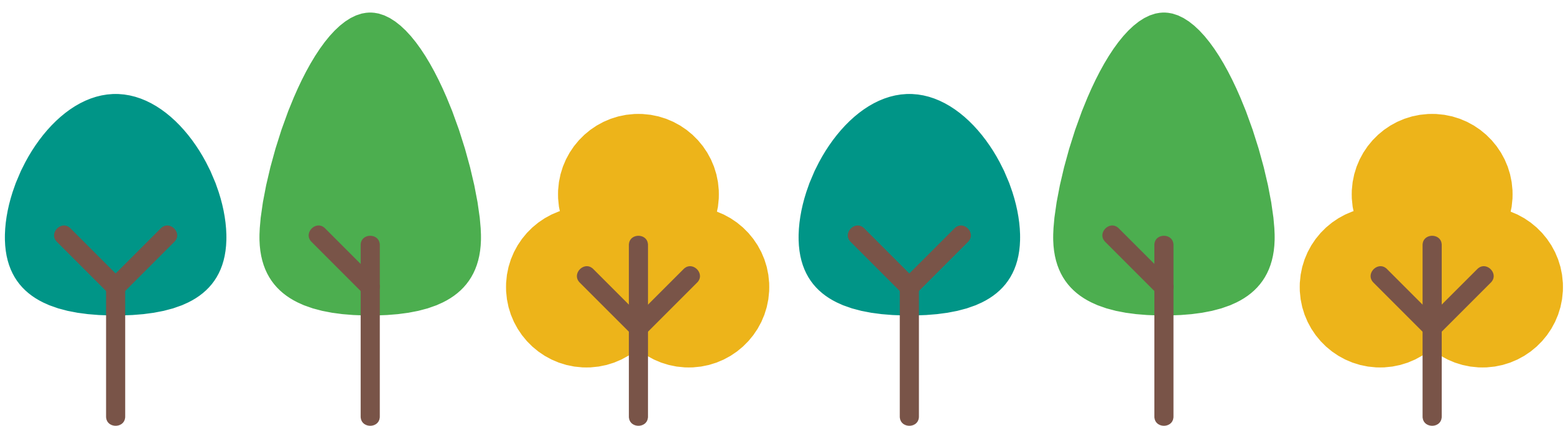
## Fear

Humiliated	Anxious
Rejected	Worried
Worthless	Scared
Insecure	Troubled
Frightened	Overwhelmed
Terrified	Alienated



## Anger

Mad	Frustrated
Jealous	Sceptical
Embarrassed	Hurt
Furious	Aggressive
Irritated	Sarcastic
Withdrawn	Critical



# Stories to Guide Discussion



## Coronavirus

By July, Ben had self-isolated for four months. He was staying at home to protect his family and following the government guidance. Ben missed not seeing his friends at school and he even missed his teachers! Sometimes Ben felt lonely as he didn't have any siblings to play with. Luckily, as it was summer the days were sunny and hot so Ben could walk his new puppy called Pepper. Ben liked taking Pepper out for a walk so he could get some fresh air and a bit of exercise. Now that Ben was spending a lot more time at home, his house felt quite small and sometimes he could overhear his parents arguing. Ben tried to keep on top of his school work and sometimes his dad would help him out with maths as he always found this subject the hardest. This week Ben had baked some cookies, painted a picture and completed two online exercise sessions. He still missed his friends and school but he had enjoyed spending more time with his family.

## Friendships

Amelia enjoys break time as she can go outside into the playground and chat with her friends. She often brings healthy snacks like grapes and fruit chews to share which her friends enjoy. She has four best friends, however this week two of her friends have started playing in a different area of the playground and whenever Amelia tries to join in they start whispering and put whatever they were playing with back inside their coat pockets. Amelia feels upset and hurt by her friends actions and can't understand why they no longer want to play with her. One day, Amelia speaks to her two best friends who haven't left her out and she finds out they also feel confused and a bit annoyed too. Amelia and her two friends spend break time together and have fun making up a new game. The next day, the two girls who had left the group come back and ask to play the game with them. Amelia acts kindly and sensibly reminding the girls it is unkind to leave friends out of games. The two girls apologise and show Amelia what they were playing with, it was a card they were making for Amelia's birthday. Amelia is relieved to find out her friends still enjoy spending time with her and they all agree to be kind and considerate of their friends feelings in future.

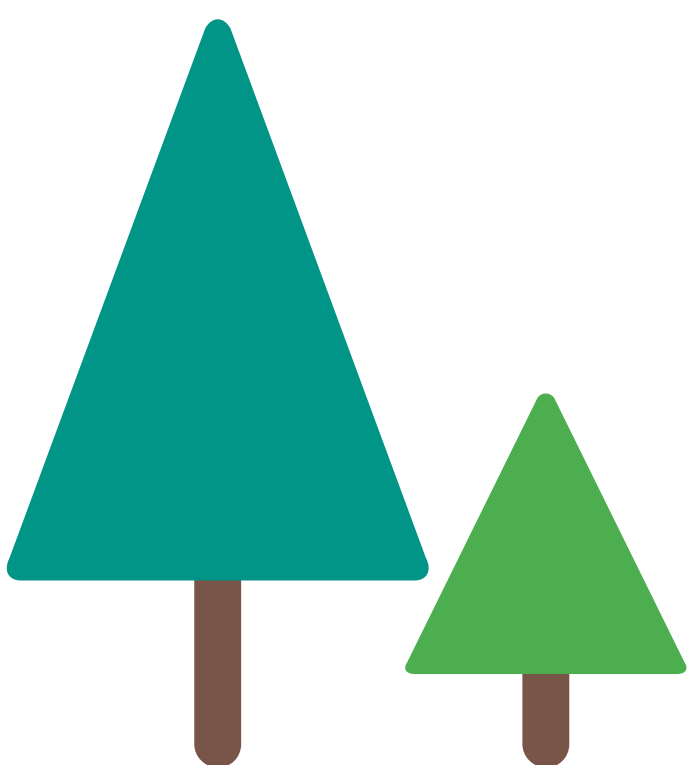
## Exams

Noah is in year six and is preparing to take his SATs exams at the end of the year. Recently he has started getting butterflies in his stomach every morning before school which puts him off his breakfast. By the second lesson, Noah is finding it really difficult to concentrate in lessons and often finds himself daydreaming. Because of this, Noah thinks he is the only one in his class struggling to keep up with the work and is worried he will fail the exams and his parents will be very cross at him. He is also scared to ask his teacher for help in case he gets in trouble for not paying attention. At break time, Noah speaks to his friend George about how he is feeling about preparing for the SATs exams. George says he sometimes feels overwhelmed by the extra pressure in year six, however he found speaking to his mum about it really helped. George explained to Noah how he got help; by speaking to his mum who spoke to school and together they made a plan of how George could catch up on his missed learning. George said this made him feel a lot less worried and even helped him to concentrate better in class. Noah felt reassured that he wasn't the only pupil in his class struggling and made a plan to speak to his dad about his school work when he got home.

### Get Creative

These stories are only a guide to get you going, feel free to embellish them with your own details and experiences.

The Emotions Tree Project can be used for a variety of themes; get creative and see which themes are important for your school. The Healthy Minds Survey reports are a great source of information here and could highlight some themes your pupils are particularly struggling with!





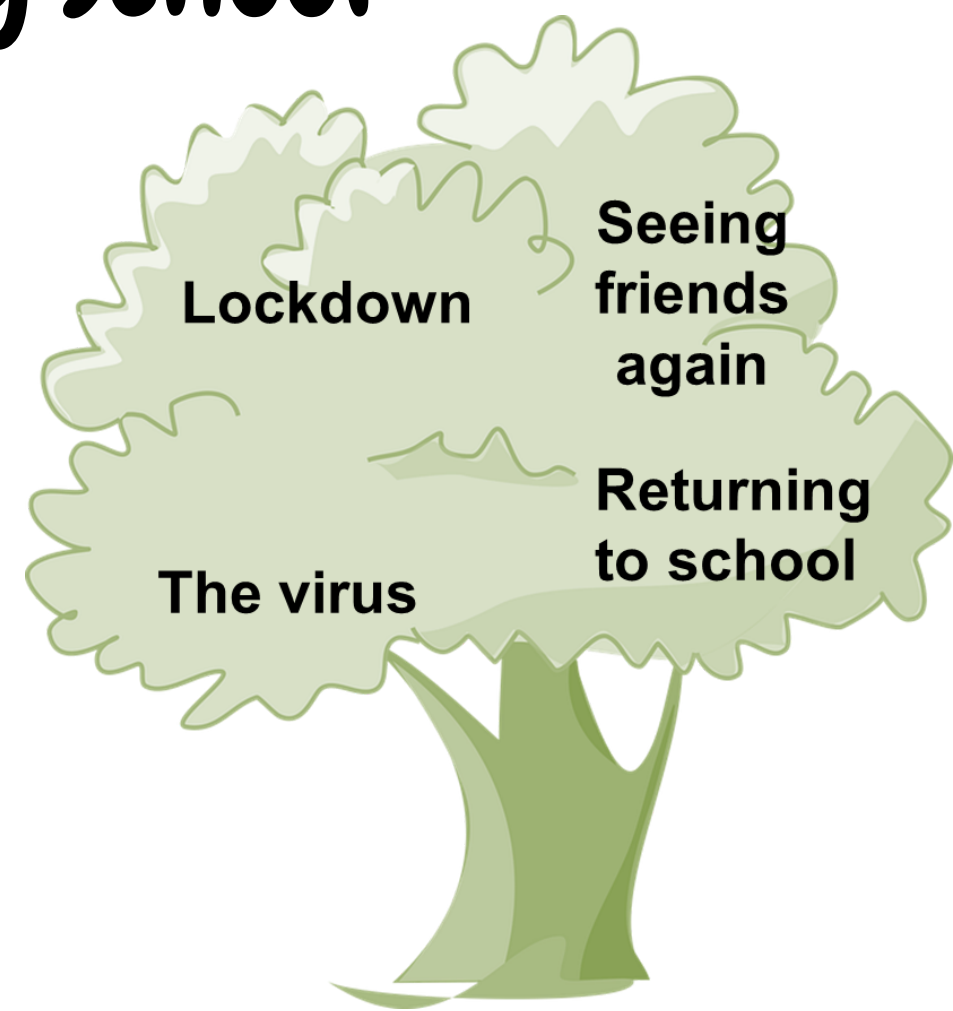
# An example from Mansel Primary School

## Developing the idea

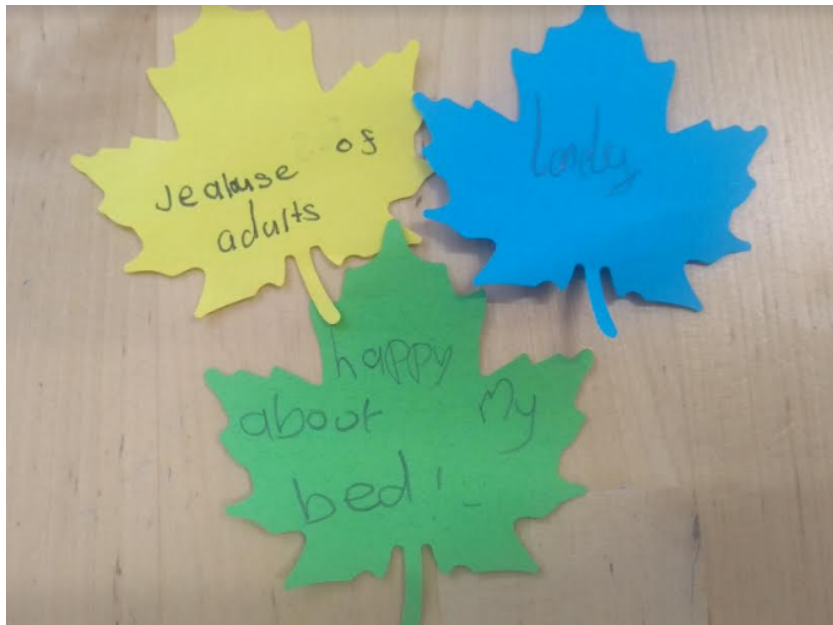
Following a meeting where the idea of an emotions tree was suggested, the schools EMHP got in touch with the lead of the school council to get them involved. This teacher was very supportive of the idea and wanted to take it forward.

The EMHP and staff member agreed on 4 themes for the tree to have (see picture to the right) and also agreed to use zones of regulation colours for the leaves as this strategy is well embedded in Mansel Primary School.

It was agreed that the teacher would do example leaves with the school council- these would be used to support an assembly that would be recorded and presented to every class to support everyone in the school to create a leaf for the tree.



## Assembly



The EMHP created a PowerPoint assembly, explaining what an emotions tree was and what the themes of the Mansel Primary School emotions tree would be. The school council then added pictures of their example leaves and recorded themselves presenting the assembly to share with the whole school. This recorded assembly was then played to the whole school on an agreed day.

During this assembly, each class was then given a selection of leaves in the colours of the zones of regulation (red, yellow, green or blue) to write on with the support of their classroom staff. Students were asked to pick a theme of the tree and then write an emotion they felt about this area (remembering to match the leaf to the zone colour).

The leaves were then collected by the school council.

## Creating the tree and future development

Following the collection of the leaves, the teacher supporting the project identified where the tree could be displayed. It was agreed that it would be next to the zones of regulation display opposite the pastoral team office. The EMHP then created the display for the school (see right).

The idea is this emotions tree will keep being developed throughout the school year. In the short term, there will be a selection of leaves by the side of the tree for students to add their experiences. In the long term, these themes (the branches) will be changed to reflect the experiences of the school year.

### Top tips

- Put plenty of time aside to do 'art admin', this includes making leaves and putting the tree up.
- Using a leaf shaped cutter/punch will save a lot of time cutting out leaves. It also allows you to use coloured paper rather than printing and cutting leaves out from a template.



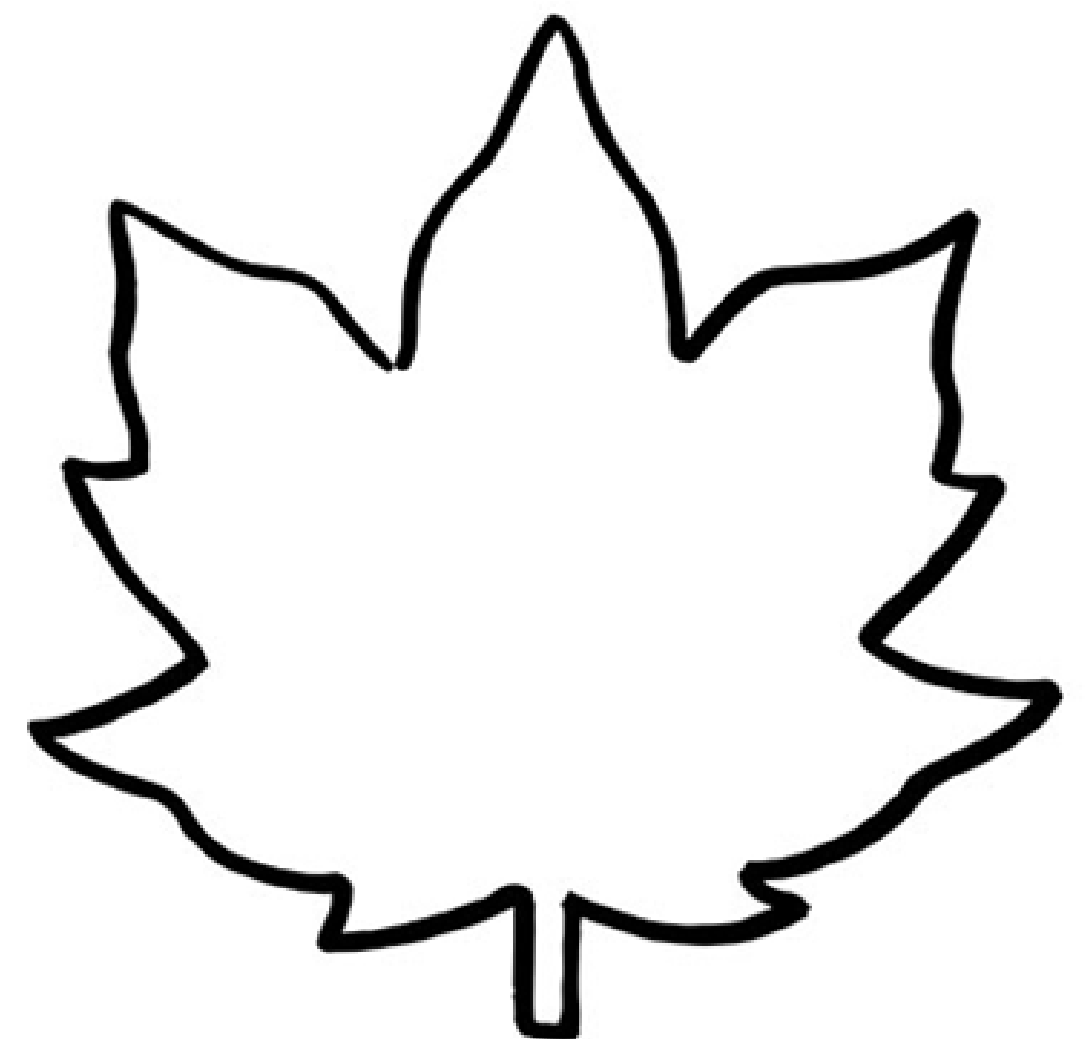
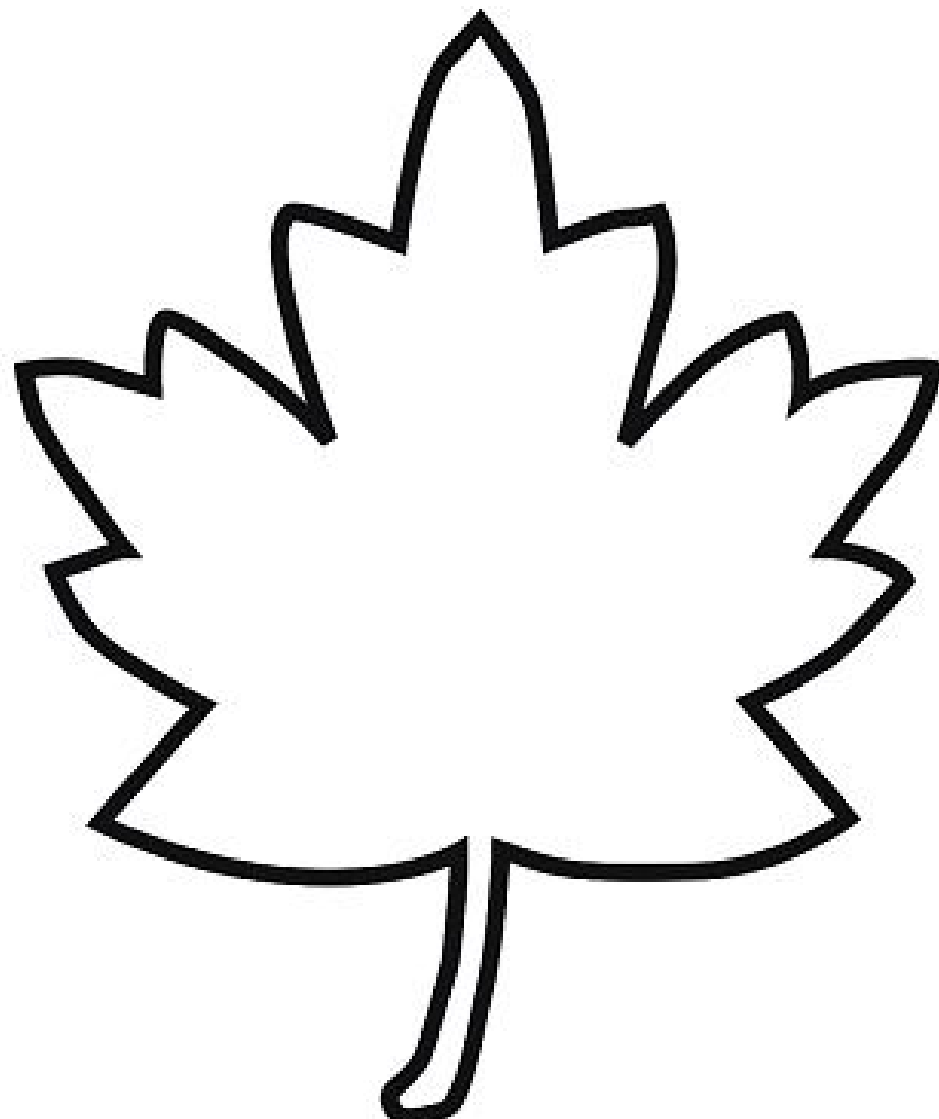
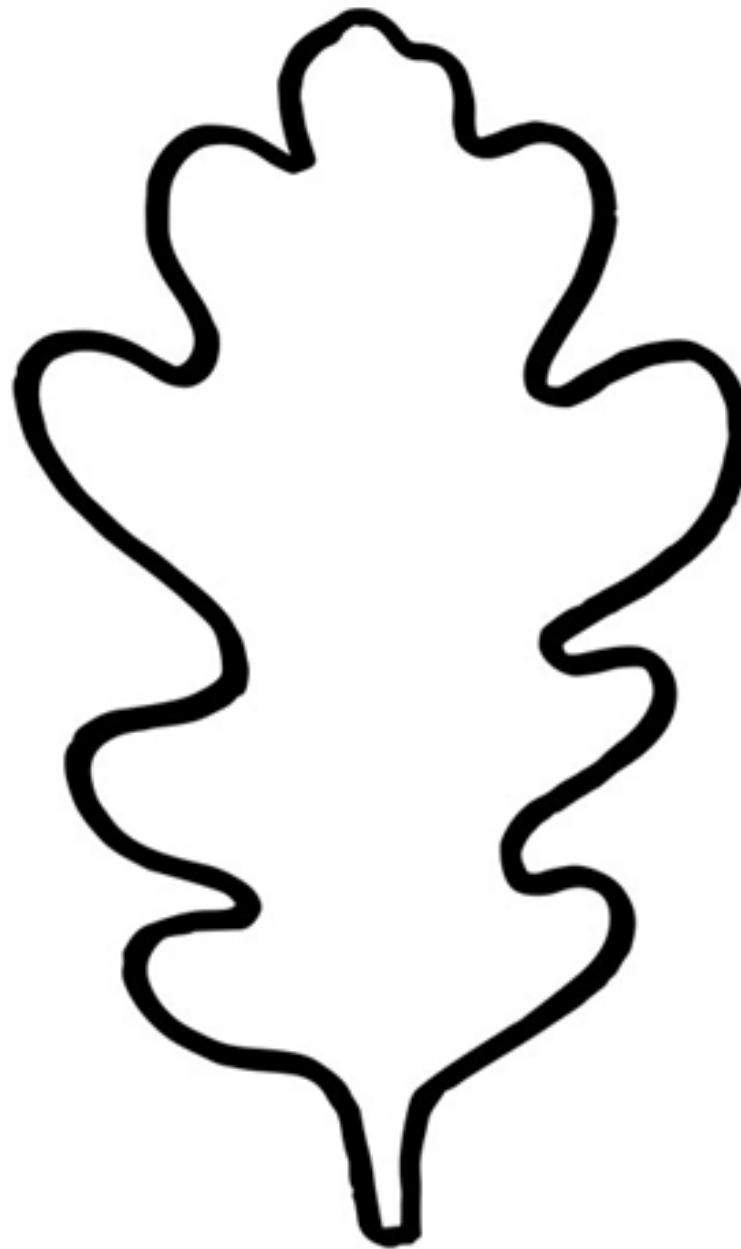
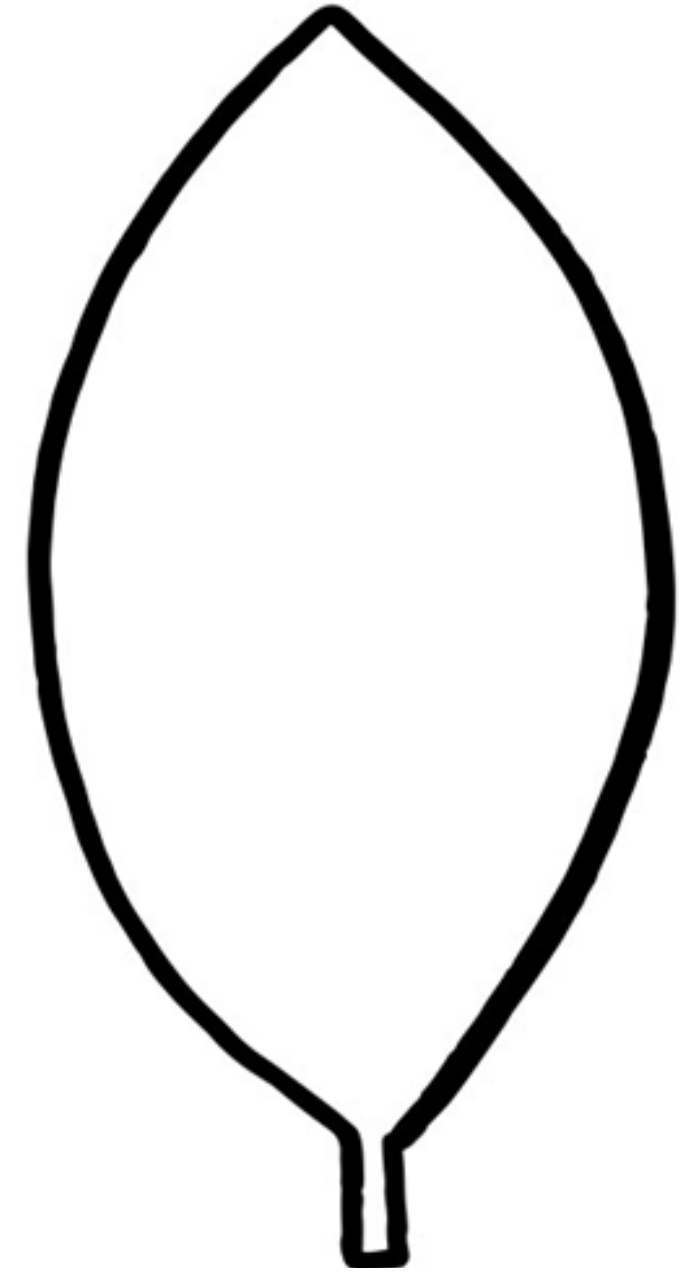
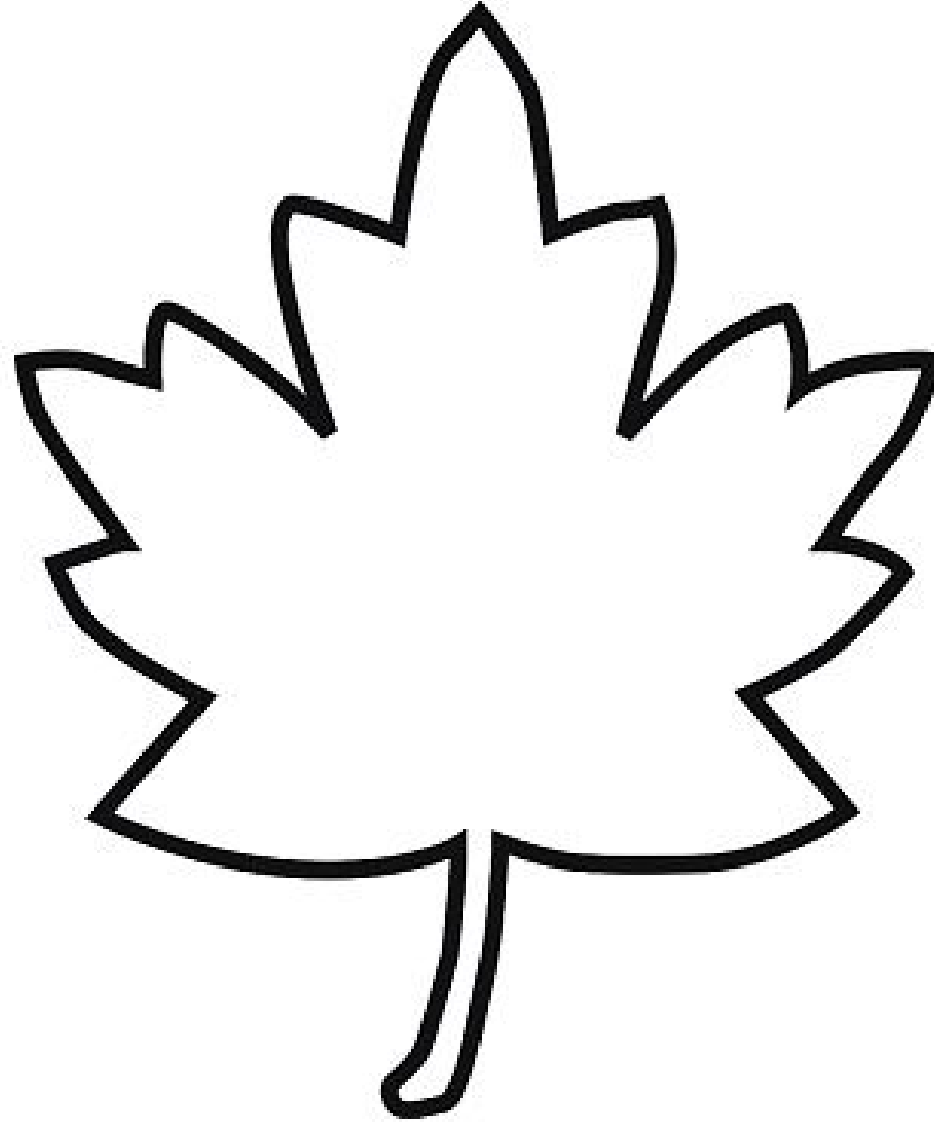
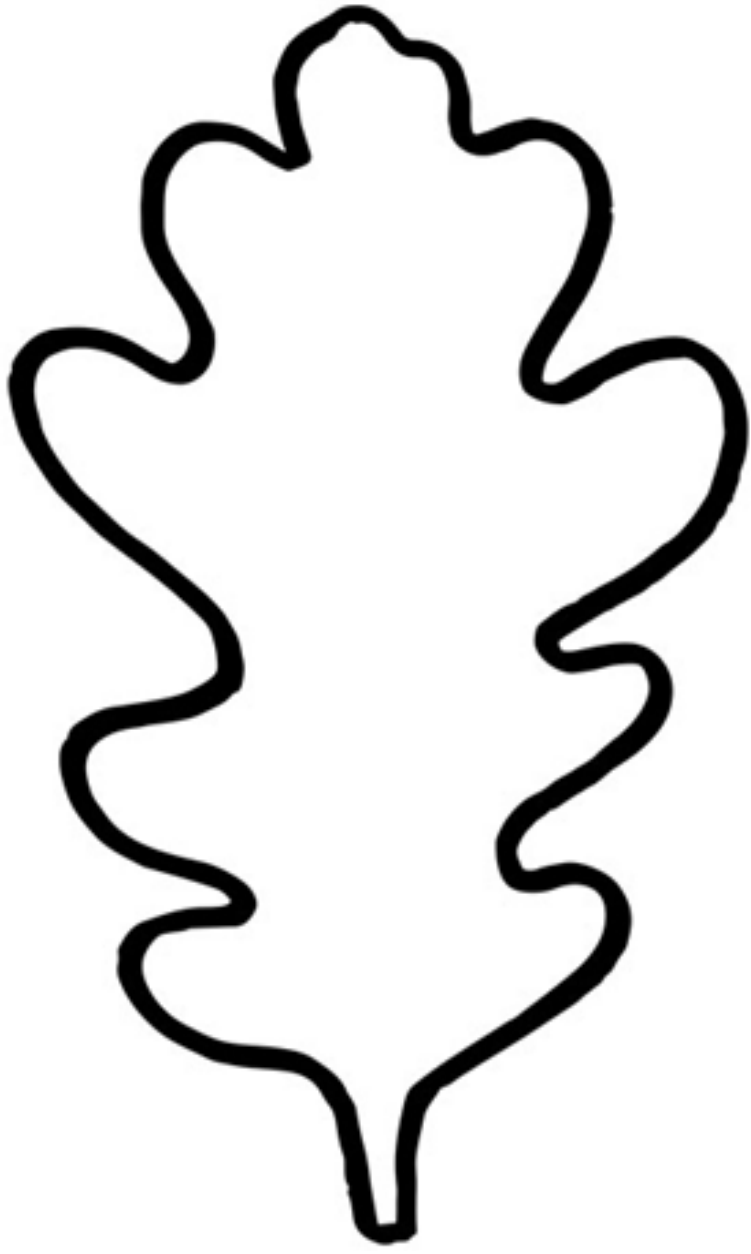
## Leaf Templates



### Notes

You could use these stencils for your leaves and either ask pupils to colour them in or print this page on different coloured paper.

For an alternative way to make leaf stencils- see the example from Mansel Primary School where a leaf cutter was used.



# Zones of Regulation Leaf Templates

