

Use your Noodle

Early childhood is a time of rapid change – particularly for the development of a child’s brain.

The many changes that take place in a child’s brain in the early years help them to learn essential life skills.

For example, in the preschool years, they are learning how to manage multiple streams of information, filter distractions and make decisions.

Young children are also learning how to manage and moderate their behaviour and emotions.

I feel angry

I get to choose how to react to these feelings

I feel happy

I feel sad





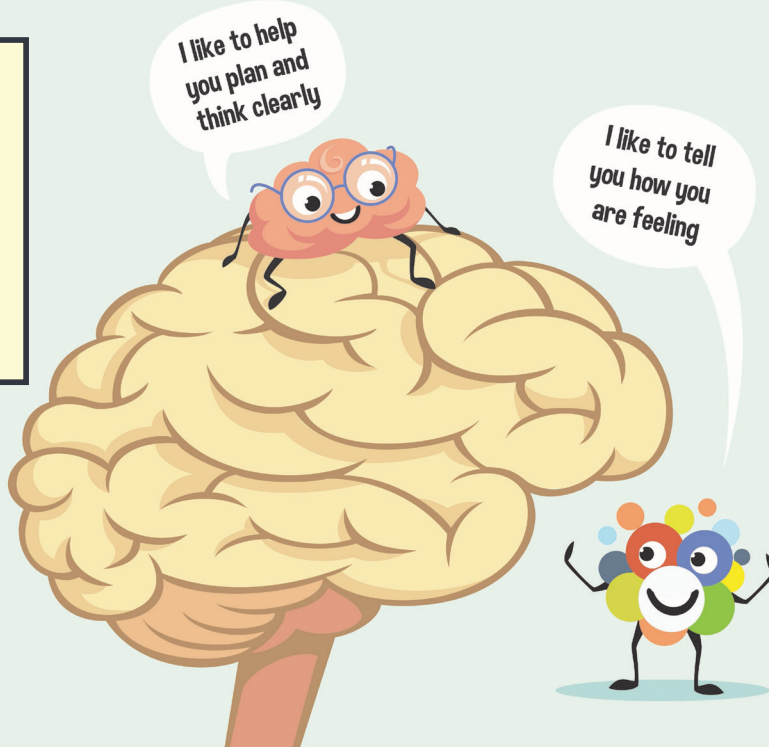
Everyone experiences emotions in their own way.

Helping young children know how they feel with different emotions helps them get to know them.

It may help to think of emotions (like anger, frustration, excitement, shame, fear, joy, happiness) as different colours, or as the weather.

Emotions come and go quickly, like waves. They pass through us, make us feel different, and then are gone. The next wave or emotion then passes through. This explains why children's moods can change so quickly.

It can help to think of the brain as having two separate characters – the MIND and the NOODLE.



The NOODLE is found at the top of the brain and likes to think, learn, plan, imagine and Create. Its proper name is the neocortex.

The MIND has many jobs – one of these is to keep us safe by producing warning signs like thoughts, feelings and emotions. Its technical name is the limbic system.

Children need to learn to use both their MIND and their NOODLE when making decisions about how to behave. This can be difficult. Inside their head their mind will be talking to them ALL the time.

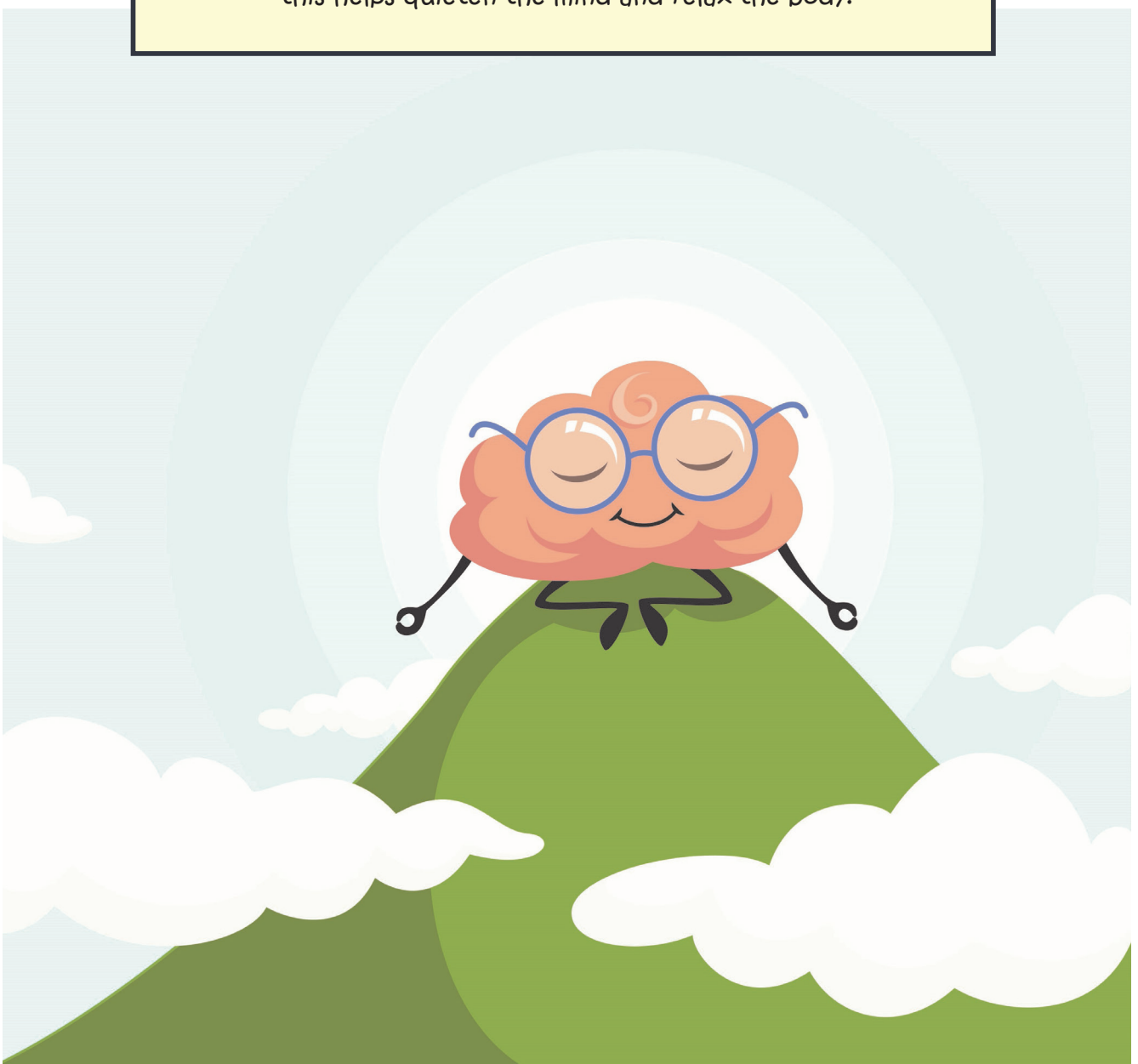
It talk talk talks, Chatter Chatter chatters...

It tells them what they like, what they don't like and how they are feeling. It is easy for children to listen only to their noisy mind.



The NOODLE likes peace and quiet, and time to think.

Young children may need to **STOP** what they are doing to hear their noodle. It helps if they take a deep breath in and out, as this helps quieten the mind and relax the body.



The MIND is often warning us of things and preparing the body for danger when there is no need. When young children recognise these warning signs in their own brain and body, their noodle will help them decide whether they could be in danger, or not.



When children are feeling such strong emotions, it can be difficult for them to STOP and use their NOODLE. Their mind and body are telling them to fight or run away, But, the more they try, the easier it gets.

As children develop, they learn that they can choose how to behave by using their MIND and their NOODLE.

Supporting young children's emotional and mental health starts early in life. When adults respond to babies' babbling, speaking, gestures and facial expressions, they help them develop important life skills like the ability to cope with emotions and stress.

And as babies grow into toddlers and preschoolers, adults can help children by labelling different emotions, modelling appropriate responses to difficult emotions and encouraging appropriate behaviour in a range of situations.



When young children have positive emotional and mental health, they can develop essential life skills.

Positive mental health means children are able to cope with big and small changes in healthy ways.

It is up to all of us as a community to create the types of environments and experiences that are needed to support the mental health of each and every child.

Good mental health in the early years helps children to thrive – now and in the future.