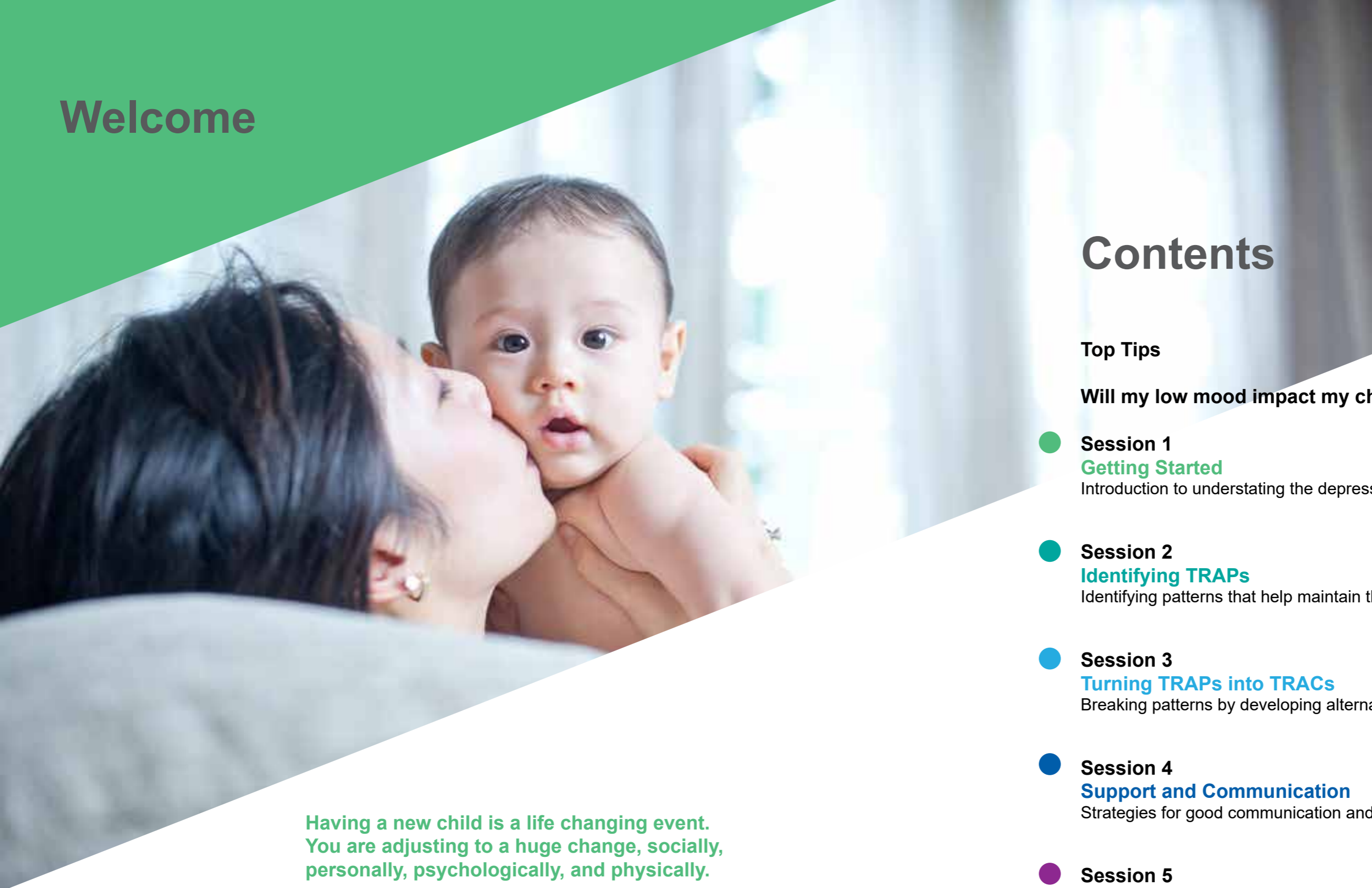




**Therapist Manual**  
**Self-help booklet**  
**for postnatal**  
**depression**

Heather O'Mahen

# Welcome



**Having a new child is a life changing event. You are adjusting to a huge change, socially, personally, psychologically, and physically.**

This type of change is enough to unsettle anyone. It can also be confusing having so many changes and not knowing whether the way you're feeling is just a normal part of motherhood or if its depression.

This booklet is designed to help you to understand, manage and overcome low mood.

There are six sessions in the booklet, which you will work through with the support of your PWP.

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# Top Tips

## Time

Do the programme at a pace that works for you.  
Even a few minutes a day is great.

## Compassion

Be kind to yourself. Try to practice speaking to yourself in a gentle and forgiving manner.

## Effectiveness

The course isn't about doing things the "right" way or "wrong" way. It's about helping you find strategies that work for you and help you.

## Curiositiy

It can be easy to predict how you think things might go - either negatively or positively. We ask you to stay curious and open about what might happen.

# Will my low mood impact my child?

## Information about postnatal low mood

Some mothers worry that their low mood may be having a negative impact on their child. A healthy relationship with your child is the best way to help your child grow up to be healthy and happy.

## What NOT to do

Don't blame yourself. Children can experience difficulties in life for all sorts of reasons, and it is not a given that your child will experience difficulties because you are depressed.

It's important not to get caught up in worrying about the impact of depression on your child. This will only get in the way of getting better! Getting the right help for your low mood puts you in the best position to give you and your baby the best chances for a healthy life. The good news is that there is always an opportunity.

## What can I do?

Building a good relationship with baby means having the energy to put into the relationship. So, it means taking care of yourself so that you are in the best position to parent.

Remember that you don't have to be a perfect mum with a perfect relationship with your child. All mothers will struggle with their children at some point. This is normal. Children won't break with the little things that go wrong. They much prefer the good moments, and are far more likely to remember those.

## So, will my low mood cause my child to be unhealthy or unhappy?

In some cases, postnatal depression may increase the risk that a child will have future emotional or behavioural difficulties.

This isn't a sure thing though. Not all children of mums with low mood experience difficulties.

If the baby has a good relationship with mum (or someone else with whom they have regular contact), even if mum has low mood, then the baby has a very good chance of growing up to be healthy a happy.

By doing this course, you are making a great step towards helping yourself and your baby.

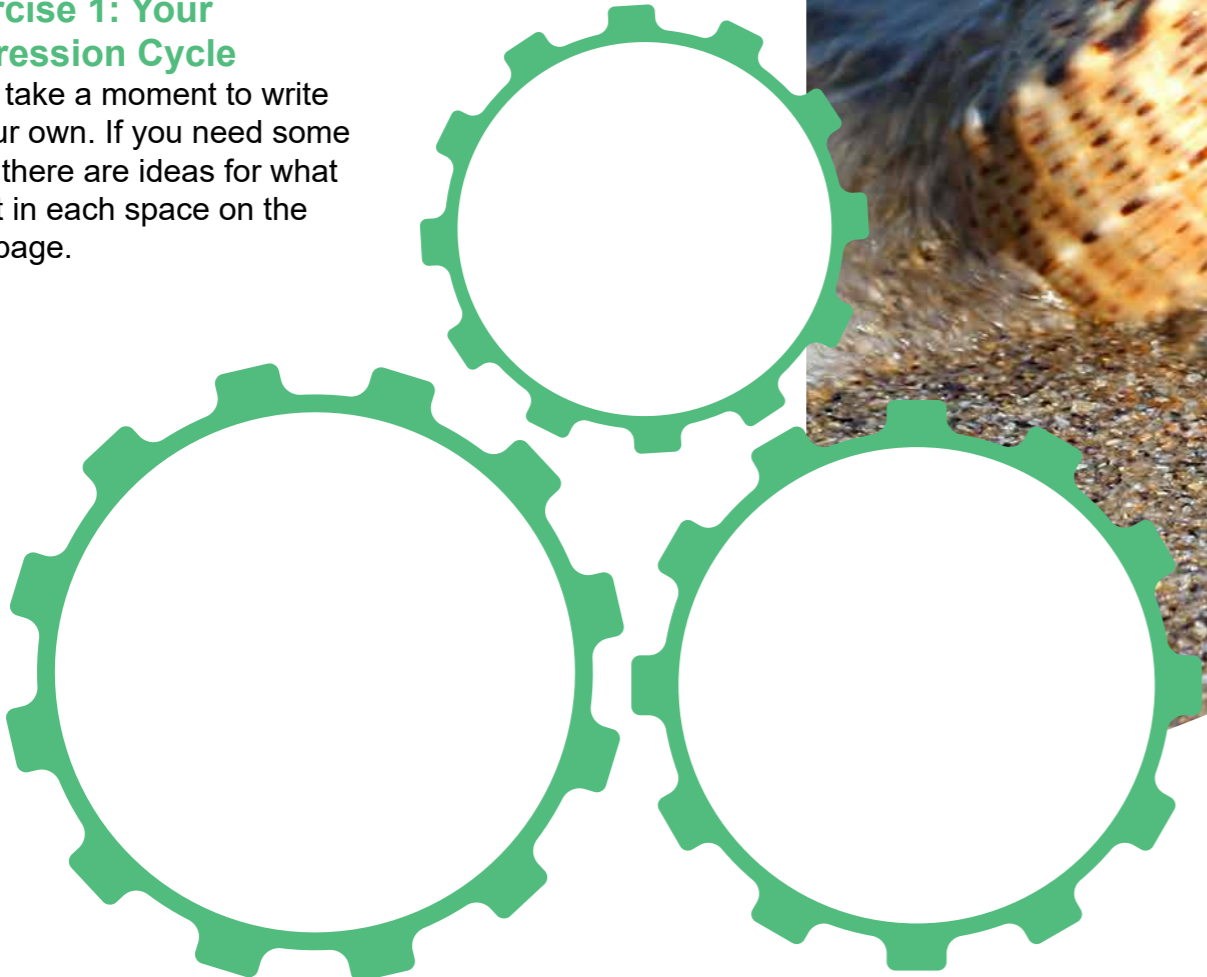
# Session

## 1 Getting Started

Introduction to understating the depression cycle



**Exercise 1: Your Depression Cycle**  
Now take a moment to write in your own. If you need some help, there are ideas for what to put in each space on the next page.



When your mood is low, you may also experience physical feelings. How you behave can change too. And these can all keep each other going.



Physical Symptoms	Feelings	Behaviours
Changes in appetite	Sadness	Stop doing activities you used to enjoy
Problems with sleeping/ Insomnia	Worthlessness	Not answer the phone to friends
Fatigue	Guilt	Procrastination (putting off important tasks by focusing on less important tasks)
Exhaustion	Anxiety	Snapping at people or having arguments
Headaches	Anger	Spacing out in front of the TV
Loss of sex drive	Irritation	Worrying
Tearfulness	Hopelessness	Eating more
Loss of concentration	Helplessness	Eating less
Restlessness	Emptiness	Doing lots of things to avoid unpleasant feelings
	Worry	
	Overwhelmed	
	Empty	
	Frustrated	
	Inadequate	
	Unable to cope	

Exercise 2:  
Mood diary

It can be helpful to track our mood, feelings and actions on a day-to-day basis to look for patterns that we may want to address in this course. Below is a Mood Diary that you can use to help you do this. You can also find blank Mood Diaries in the back of this booklet.

*“This week, put aside some moments each day to try and fill out the mood diary.”*

Date:

Time of day I felt bad / good:

What was happening?

How did I feel?

How did I respond?

What was the outcome of this response?

*“Just like when you are poorly with a physical illness, it’s important to take care of yourself when you are poorly with low mood.”*

**Pick one or two that you can do this week**

Exercise 3:  
Self-care selection

This week think of 1 or 2 self-care activities you can do for yourself. We know babies take up a lot of time! Sometimes it’s important to be creative, and think about ways to sneak in self-care even while taking care of the baby. (we give some tips below – but also don’t be afraid to think big and ask for people to help out so you get a bit of relief).

# Remember!

- What we do daily affects our mood.
- Some activities we do can maintain low mood – we can get into patterns of behaviour which keep depression going.
- By identifying these patterns using the Mood Diary you can start to identify areas that you may want to work on in this course – your personal goals.
- Be compassionate to yourself and take your time – even completing the log little but often will help.

# Session

## 2

### Identifying TRAPs

Identifying patterns that help maintain the depression cycle

#### Welcome back!

Well done for getting going with the material from Session 1. It's a big step. It takes courage to look at how you are feeling and think about changes you want to make.

In this session, we will focus on building on the material from Session 1. We will look to identify if there are any patterns of behaviour around your low mood. We'll then look to see if there are ways to work with these patterns to help you move forwards and out of low mood.

#### Homework Review

How did your exercises over the week go?  
Were you able to get anything done? If so, great!

If not, don't worry. This happens to a lot of people. It can be useful to take a moment to reflect on and write down things that got in the way of doing the exercises.

Looking at your mood diary, or reflecting back over the week, take a moment to write down any patterns in your mood and actions that you may have noticed.

## Looking at patterns a bit more in depth

When you're low, sometimes you can get stuck in patterns that make it difficult to get out of feeling low.

Sometimes when we're low we can put-off things that feel difficult.

It's normal and perfectly understandable to put-off doing things that feel difficult. When these things become a pattern though, we can get stuck in low mood.

*"I found it really difficult to ask for help. I found myself not talking to my husband about how I felt, especially as he seemed to take to fatherhood so easily. Before I used to always talk to my husband if something was troubling me but I really did not think he would understand how difficult I was finding motherhood. I know in the long term not talking to him just made things worse and made me more likely not to ask for help from him."*

Did things get in the way? If so, what were they?

# When we get stuck and how The TRAP Model

The TRAP model is one way to draw out links between mood and actions and the impact that these have on us, both short and long-term. TRAP stands for:

### Triggers

What happened?

### Reactions

What was the effect and how did you feel?

### Avoidance Patterns

What did you do, or what didn't you do?

These patterns can have an impact on us in both the short and longer term. Here are a couple of examples of patterns we might do instead of getting on with the difficult stuff.

## Sara

### What happened?

Baby waking 3 or 4 times in the night.

### Effect

Because her baby is waking up a lot in the night Sara is not getting any sleep.

### Behaviour

Sara starts worrying during the day and night about not being able to get back to sleep after her baby goes back down to sleep. She doesn't ask her partner to help with night waking.

### Short-term impact

She is able to get her baby back to sleep each time baby wakes up. Relieved that at least baby is getting back to sleep and that her husband wasn't woken.

### Long-term impact

Worried about feeling tired in the morning and could not get back to sleep. Feels irritable and has low energy during the day.

## Jeni

### What happened?

Whilst out her baby cries and she notices irritable glances from others.

### Effect

Experiences stress as a reaction to negative glances.

### Behaviour

Jenna went home and avoided going out again the next day.

### Short-term impact

By staying home, she is relieved that she hasn't had to deal with her anxiety about the possible judgements from others.

### Long-term impact

Stuck inside with no social interaction for her or her baby. Feels lonely, a little bit angry with others for not being understanding, worried about how or when she'll be able to get out again.

What happened?

Effect

Behaviour

## Exercise 1: Your Own TRAP

Have a go at using the TRAP model yourself. It may be useful to go back to your Mood Diary again to see if there are any examples there.

Short-term impact

Long-term impact

## Remember!

- Our behaviour and our mood are linked.
- Sometimes when feeling low we can get stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour. These patterns of behaviour then also help to keep us low.
- You may find it useful to use the Mood Diary to help identify these patterns.
- By identifying these patterns using the TRAP model you can start to identify areas that you may want to work on in this course.
- Remember –take your time – if you need to carry on working on Session 1 for a while this is fine. Doing the exercises at least a little and often will really help.

**Keep up the mood-diary.**

# Session

## 3 Turning TRAPs into TRACs

Breaking patterns by developing alternative coping strategies

### Welcome back!

Well done for starting work on the material in Session2. In this session, we will work on taking the TRAPs that you identified in Session 2, and develop alternative coping strategies.

### Homework Review

How did your exercises over the week go? Were you able to get anything done? Again, it can be useful to take a moment to reflect on any things that got in the way of doing the exercises

Have you been able to identify any TRAPs? What were they? If you're stuck, it might be helpful to look back over your mood diary from the past few weeks.

Did things get in the way?  
If so, what were they?

### Exercise 1: What were your key TRAPs?

What were the problems that came up again and again? Are there any important things that you want to work on? Pick one or two that you want to work on, and write them here.

We're going to work on turning your TRAPs around to handle situations more effectively. We call this turning your TRAPs into TRACs.

TRAC stands for:  
Trigger  
Reaction  
Alternative  
Coping

Getting started can seem like a big step. It's usually best to start with areas that are important to you, but aren't the most difficult.

**What happened?**  
Baby cried for 3 hours solid

**Effect**  
Couldn't get anything done around the house.  
Felt tired, irritable, overwhelmed

**Behaviour**  
Snapped at baby and partner.  
Cried. Didn't ask for any help

**Short-term impact**  
Felt isolated from my baby and my partner

## Example: Tamala's TRAP

Here is an example of how Tamala turned one of her TRAPs into a TRAC. She decided to ask for some help from her partner.

**Alternative coping**  
Ask partner to take baby for 20 minutes

Take some household activity upstairs (i.e. laundry) so I am not around screaming baby

**Short-term impact**  
Difficult to ask for help  
Partner was irritable and grumpy

**Long-term impact**  
Sense of relief  
Sense of accomplishment  
Later thanked partner and he was OK

## Exercise 2: Alternative coping strategies

Now try to think of some alternative coping strategies for a TRAP you would like to work on. Just brainstorm as many ideas as you can – anything goes!

The exercise area contains five large, empty speech bubble shapes with blue outlines, arranged in a cluster on the right side of the page. These are intended for the user to write down their own alternative coping strategies for a TRAP they have identified.

# Tips

Don't go for the biggest step first  
Look for achievable alternative steps

Remember that with a baby you have to think about 2 (or 3 or 4 or maybe more if you have more children) people. Things will take longer than they used to, and you may have to plan for more alternatives (for example, if you'd like to go window shopping on the High Street, you might have to plan around baby's nap and feeding times, and it may be that baby, or one of your other little ones, might be having an "off" day. What will you do if that happens?)

It's easy as a mum to think that you "should" be able to manage everything on your own – but veteran mums will tell you that no one can do it all by themselves.  
What support or help can you get?

Remember to stay balanced, and to look after yourself.  
Some women find it helpful to think of the oxygen mask analogy. On aeroplanes, should you need to use an oxygen mask because of a sudden loss in pressure, put the mask on yourself first, and then on your child. The message is clear: if you're not breathing, then you can't take care of your child. Depression is the same. It drains you of energy so that you can't take care of yourself or your child(ren) in the way you'd like to do.  
This programme will help you to "refuel."

## Exercise 3: Testing out your TRAC this week

You may have been able to brainstorm some different alternative coping strategies.

Now pick one alternative coping strategy to try.  
Think of a time when you could try it out.

How do you think you might feel at first? At first you might feel worse, but it is important to keep in mind the longer term. Try to think of ways to help you stay motivated.

What?

When?

Short-term impact:

Long-term impact:

# Remember!



- TRAPs help maintain low mood.
- To move from the TRAPs you find yourself stuck in you need to start developing alternative coping strategies – moving from a TRAP to a TRAC.
- Trying out these alternative coping strategies will be hard at first – it may mean doing things that you have been avoiding for a long time.
- It is best to commit to a time to try out your alternative coping strategy – this will help you to test the strategy out.
- Trying out alternative coping strategies is trial and error – some may work for you and some may not.
- Remember to keep doing this at your own pace and to be kind to yourself - if you are having difficulty with the exercises keep practicing.

# Session

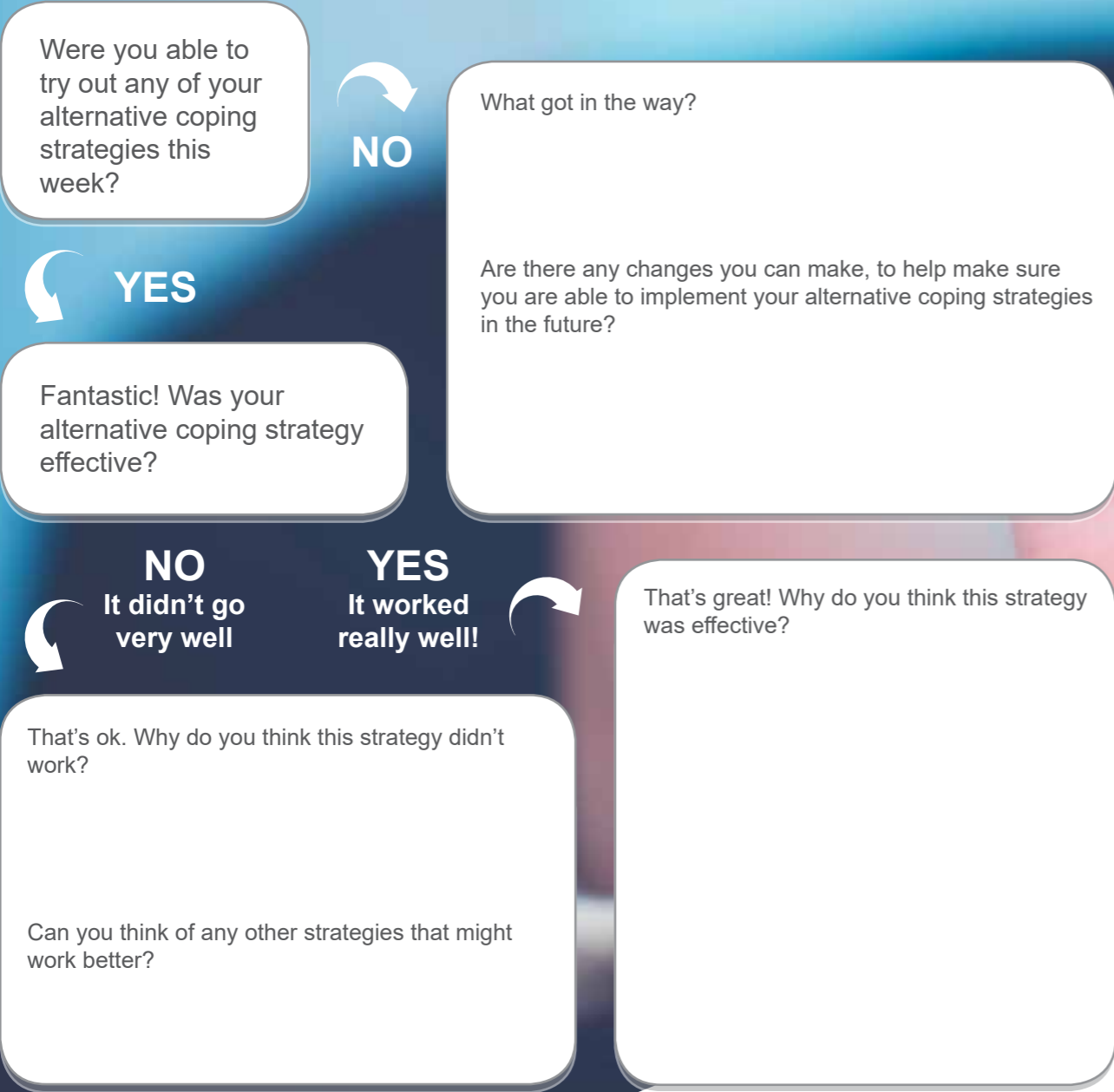
## 4 Support and Communication

Strategies for good communication and asking for support

### Homework Review

Since the last session, hopefully you've been able to try out one of your alternative coping strategies – but don't worry if you haven't. Take a moment now to reflect on how this went, using the flow chart below

“It may be that ways that you communicated before may not work as well now.”



### In this session we will focus on communication.

Having a baby involves lots of changes and is a really tough job. Everyone needs support. The kinds and amounts of support you need may be different than before you had your baby. This makes communication really important! A lot of mums find it difficult to ask for help though. They can feel like they should be able to manage, or they be the used to being the helper, not the one being helped!

Also, because raising a baby is so demanding on your time it can be surprising how much support and help is needed. Some mums can feel awkward asking for as much support as they need. These pressures can put a strain on communication.

First, it's important to know that we all need:

#### Different Types of Support

Support can be emotional or practical.

Sometimes you just need someone to listen and understand, sometimes you need someone to help you get things done.

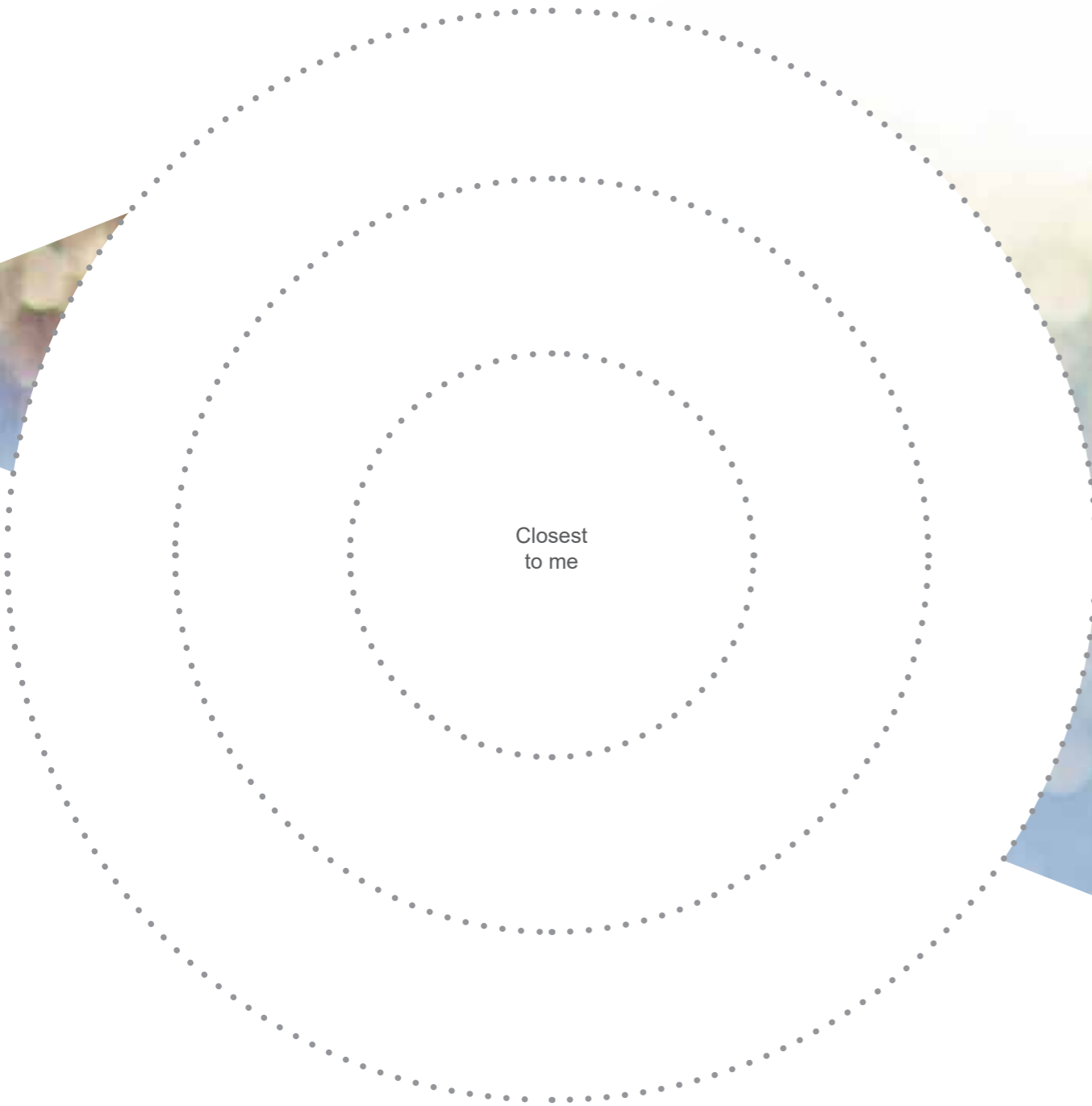
Secondly, we all need:

#### Different Levels of Support

Different people also provide different levels of support. For example, you may enjoy going to playgroup with some mums, having a really close relationship with a couple of other friends, and having some friends with whom you can go out with occasionally.

*“No one person will provide all the kinds and level of support that we need. Some people are better at emotional support, some at practical support. It can be useful to identify who is good at providing different kinds of support and approach those individuals for what you need.”*

For those you feel closest to, write their names closer to the centre of the circle and vice versa, those who are not so close, put their names further out. Remember, different people can give us different support, so have a think about emotional, practical and other types of support you need. Write down the names of the people who can give that to you, marking down which kind of support they offer you.



**Exercise 1:  
Reflecting  
on good  
communication**

All of us have our own style of communication. The most important thing is that you build on what works best for you. One good place to start is to think of things that you have done that have worked well for you in the past.

Can you think back to times in the past that you have communicated well?

What were the things you did that helped you communicate well?

**“This can also be an opportunity to extend your communication skills. It might help to think of some people you think are effective communicators, and that do things you could also do.”**

Can you think of ways that other people have communicated well that might work for you? Can you think of specific things they do? It might also help to observe them over the next week if you are able to.

Sometimes it's not just what you communicate that's important, but also when (for example, a quieter or less rushed time). Try and think some circumstances that provide of opportunities for good communication. Be realistic – it might be difficult to find these times with a baby.

## Tying it all together

Using these strategies, it can be useful to think about an area where you would like some support, to think specifically about what you might need, and to think about how you might have a conversation about getting that support. Below is an example of what this might look like.

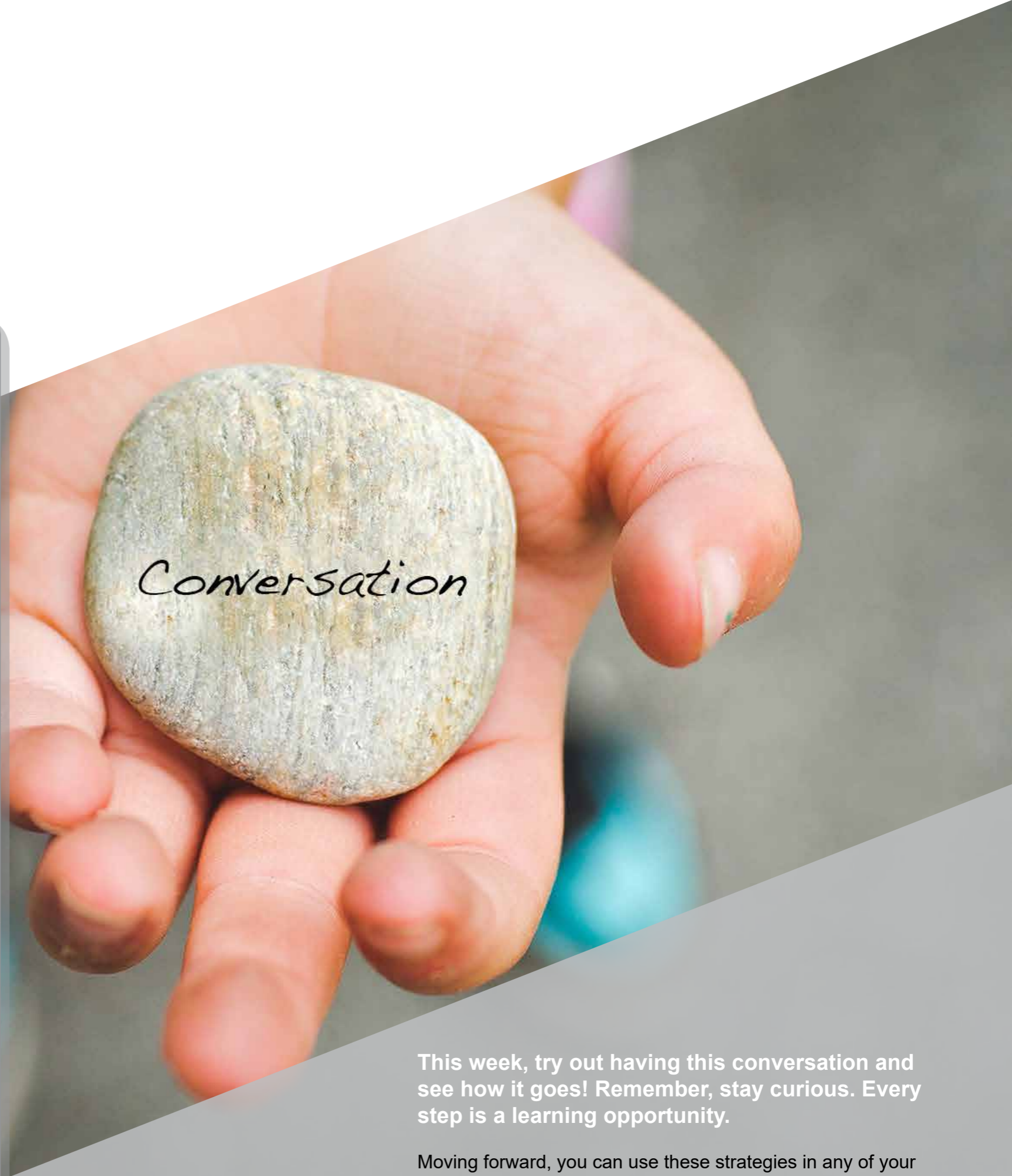
### Example: Marie's conversation

Conversation	What's going on?
<b>Marie:</b> Hi. I need you to take Daniel this Wednesday evening.	Marie starts off the conversation with a directive. She doesn't check whether it is a good time to talk.
<b>Ex-husband:</b> I can't this week as I have a late work meeting and won't be home until gone 8.	Marie's ex-husband does not offer any alternative that might help – like saying when he was free.
<b>Marie:</b> Look, I really need some support and a break here!	Marie responds in defensive tone. She does not explain why she needs some extra support, why Wednesday night in particular is important or that maybe another night may work instead.
<b>Ex-husband:</b> I really can't this Wednesday. I am having him at the weekend so you can get a break then.	This kind of comment could be perceived as unhelpful.
<b>Marie:</b> I do really need some time here – you are being really unhelpful.	Marie hasn't clarified what is important about Wednesday. She hasn't suggested an alternative evening. She labels her ex-partner's behaviour negatively.
<b>Ex-husband:</b> Marie, I really can't. Also, this is a really bad time. I am just about to go into a meeting. Plus I am taking him at the weekend!	This was obviously not a good time for Marie's ex-husband as he was at work – it would have been more helpful for him to have explained this from the outset.
<b>Marie:</b> You really are selfish. Every time I talk to you I am reminded about just how selfish you are. *Slams down the phone*	Things are getting heated here and the conversation is spiralling rapidly downwards. It would be best to take a break and both agree a time when they will return to the conversation.
	Marie ends to conversation aggressively and abruptly. Although this may make Marie feel satisfied at first, she will later worry about having a conversation again with her ex-husband. Marie's ex-husband may walk away thinking Marie was being unreasonable.

Exercise 2:  
Planning your conversation

Think of a conversation you would like to have that’s important to you, and that you think you will be able to have. Use the chart below to plan the conversation.

My aims for the conversation	
The person’s likely response	
The best time to have the conversation <i>(Some times of day are busier for people than others. It is good to pick a time when you know the other person can give you the time to listen)</i>	
Barriers/obstacle to having the conversation <i>(What barriers are there in the surrounding environment? Is there a TV blasting in the background or kids running around?)</i>	
Strategies to help me get the response I want	
How would I respond?	



This week, try out having this conversation and see how it goes! Remember, stay curious. Every step is a learning opportunity.

Moving forward, you can use these strategies in any of your TRACs that require you to communicate effectively with someone.

# Tips for good communication

## Well done for completing Session 4!

Asking for support can be really tough and thinking about conversations that have not gone very well can be too.

Different ways of communicating can feel really uncomfortable at first but with practice it gets easier.

- Have a clear idea of what you want.
- Have in mind a specific way of asking for what you want. Different people ask for things in different ways – find a way that works for you.
- Sometimes it takes persistence. It's useful to have a few different ways of asking, just in case it doesn't go well the first time.
- Perhaps try practicing the conversation with someone you feel comfortable with first.
- Make sure to acknowledge the other person's perspective and what they might want to get from the situation. Be careful not to mind read though.

### How do I know what I'm asking for is reasonable?

Some people find asking themselves the following questions useful when trying to determine whether what you are asking for is reasonable:

*If someone else was in my situation, what would they request?*

*How would I feel if someone asked this from me?*

Another helpful strategy can be to check out with someone you trust whether what you are asking for is reasonable – for example, would they ask for similar support?

## Remember!

- To make changes, we often have to ask for support – this can be really hard.
- When we have a baby the type of support that we ask for changes – and this can make asking for support really hard too!
- Remember, there is no one correct way of communicating.
- Try to think of conversations in terms of TRAPs – break conversations into TRAPs and write down the consequences.
- To turn these conversations into TRACs try to think about conversations which have gone well. These can help guide alternative coping strategies.

# Session

## 5 Being a ‘Good Enough’ Mum

Identifying your own ‘mummy goals’ and using alternative coping strategies to meet them

### Welcome back!

This week we will review how you got on with the communication exercises from last week. We will also look at balancing “mummy” activities with being healthy and well.

### Homework Review

Were you able to have your planned conversation? If not, what got in the way?

If you were able to have your planned conversation, that’s great! Now take a moment to reflect on how it went.

What went well?

Is there anything you would like to change?

### Exercise 1: What it Means to Me to be a “Good Mum”

Being a mum is a big part of your life now, and many mums worry if they’re doing ‘the job’ ok. This can have an impact on how you are feeling.

Many of us have strong ideas about what being a “good mum” means. Some of us may struggle with all the different ideas about what being “good mum” is. There’s so much information out there about how to parent. It can be overwhelming. It can be important to pause and think about your own ideas about being mum. Take a moment to write down what kind of mum you would like to be. If it’s hard to think of this, try to think of what kind of mum your baby might like to have.

The mum I’d like to be...

### Tamala's Example:

Tamala had a difficult relationship with her mum. She didn't want it to be the same with her own child. As the 2nd of 4 kids, she'd always been a "little mother." She liked babies, and she was always caring for her siblings. She'd pictured herself as a very patient and loving mother – the kind that was thoughtful about what her child needed and wanted. She also thought that she would really enjoy being a mum, it seemed she'd been waiting her whole life to be a mum.

Before Saleem was born, she'd read loads of baby and parenting books. The problem was, these all seemed to have different approaches to parenting, and they left her feeling a little bit confused about what the best style of parenting was. Saleem also had colic, and Tamala was exhausted taking care of him. Parenting wasn't going the way that she'd imagined it would! Sometimes she found herself wishing for her old life.

### Exercise 2: Challenges to My Mummy Idea

What challenges do you experience in trying to be the kind of mum you'd like to be?

Like Tamala, take a moment to think about the kinds of things that affect the way you'd like to parent and have a go at writing them down in the box here:

These challenges may feel big, and overwhelming. But, one way to start addressing them is to focus on one are you might like to address.

**Pick one challenge you'd like to work on.  
We'll look at ways of starting to address this.**

# What is “Being a good enough mum”?

Our ideas about what kind of mum we’d like to be can be very different from the reality of motherhood. Sometimes we can be left feeling like we’re just not living up to the “mummy” goals we set ourselves.

This can also be made more difficult by all the messages we hear about what it takes to be a good mum.

It can be helpful to know that being a good enough mum is about making sure your baby is clean, has a full tummy, is given a cuddle and talked to.

*There is no single, correct way to parent. What’s more important is that you and your baby get to know each other, and that you find ways of being with your baby that work for you and your baby.*

Even if you are not enjoying it, as long as you are sensitively responding to baby’s needs then you are doing what it takes to be a good mum.

It is also important to remember that depression can get in the way of feeling enjoyment or pleasure, and this can affect the way we feel about being a mum. Also young babies are often not fun! They can be hard work and for the first few months you don’t get any feedback from them either.

It is important to try and take things one step at a time, one day at a time – and you will get through it. It will get better!

In this session, we will help you work towards finding ways of being with your baby that work for you and for your baby, and help you to achieve your mum goals in a healthy way.

What happened?

Baby is laying on the play mat

Effect

Numb, not engaged in playing with Saleem at all  
Unmotivated  
Tired  
Drained

Behaviour

I turn on the TV and leave Saleem to lay on the play mat

**TRAPs around being a good enough mum**

Short-term impact

Distracted by the TV and relieved I don’t have to play with Saleem

Long-term impact

I feel really guilty that I don’t know how to play with Saleem. I am worrying I am not bonding with him and that he will not develop properly if I don’t play with him. I am a terrible mother.

What happened?

### Exercise 3: Identifying your Own TRAP

Effect

Short-term impact

Behaviour

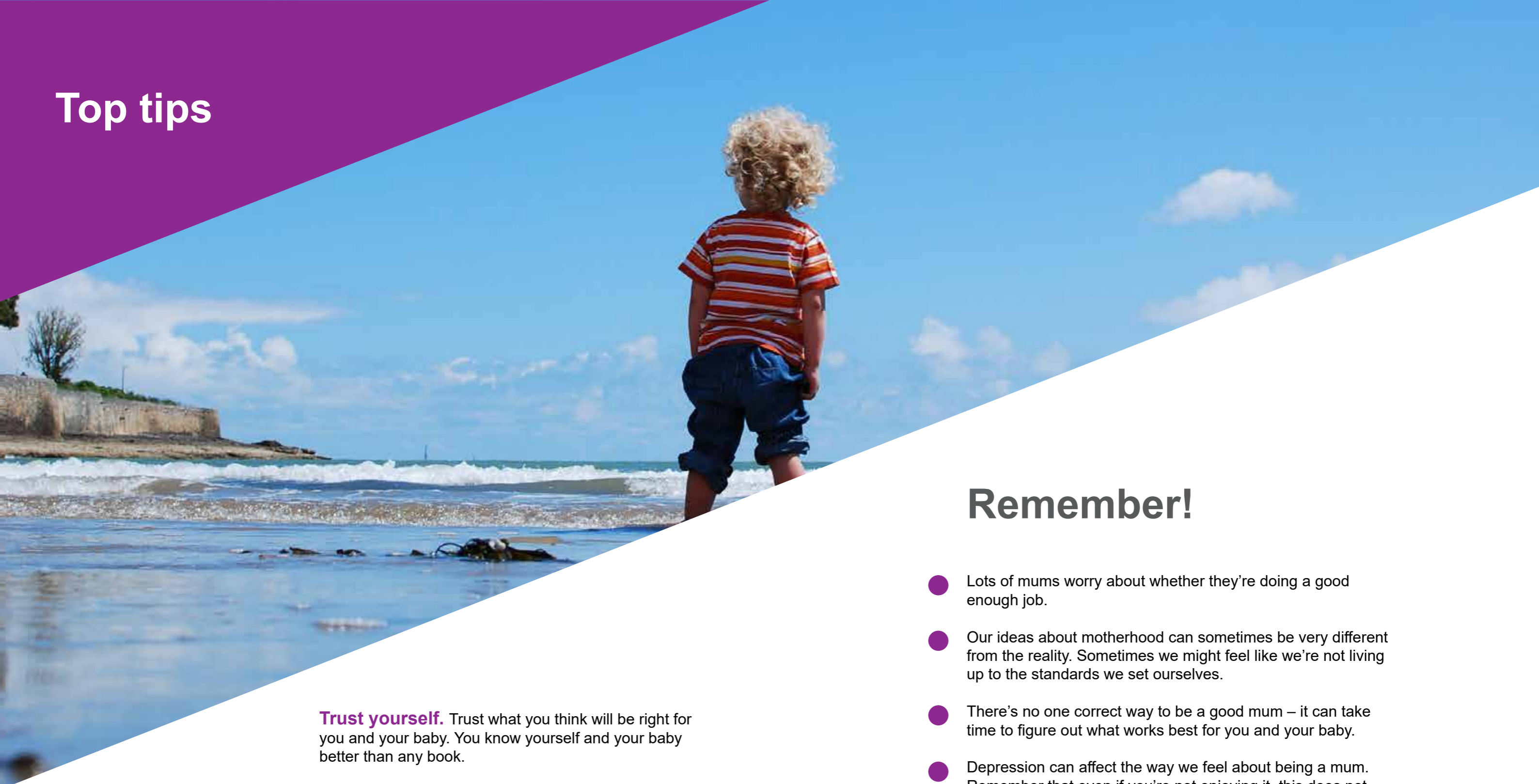
Long-term impact

Possible Alternative Coping Strategies

### Exercise 4: Turning TRAPs into TRACs

It can be useful to brainstorm some possible alternative coping strategies and pick some to try. Have a think about some of the strategies you could try out yourself:

# Top tips



**Trust yourself.** Trust what you think will be right for you and your baby. You know yourself and your baby better than any book.

**Use trial and error.** Stay on the path, but be flexible and adaptive if you need to. How do I know what to do?

If you're struggling to come up with strategies, it can be useful to talk others for ideas, such as:

- Your PWP
- Via trusted chat rooms
- Trusted non-judgemental others

**This week try using some of these strategies to turn your TRAP into a TRAC.**

## Remember!

- Lots of mums worry about whether they're doing a good enough job.
- Our ideas about motherhood can sometimes be very different from the reality. Sometimes we might feel like we're not living up to the standards we set ourselves.
- There's no one correct way to be a good mum – it can take time to figure out what works best for you and your baby.
- Depression can affect the way we feel about being a mum. Remember that even if you're not enjoying it, this does not mean you are not a good mum.
- We can apply the TRAP model to situations that challenge our ideas about being a "good mum". Once you've identified your TRAPs, you can use alternative coping strategies to changes these into TRACs.

# Session

## 6 Staying well Strategies for staying well in the future

### Welcome back!

The “staying well” session is the final session of the course. This session is focused on helping you with top strategies for staying well in the future.

In previous sessions you have been introduced to a number of strategies to help promote feeling better. Research shows that these strategies are effective and helpful ways to cope with unhelpful and negative emotions.

But, just using these strategies on a one-off basis won't give you lasting results. It's all about building new habits. The more that you use these strategies and make them part of your daily life the more the strategies will work for you and help you to stay well in the future.

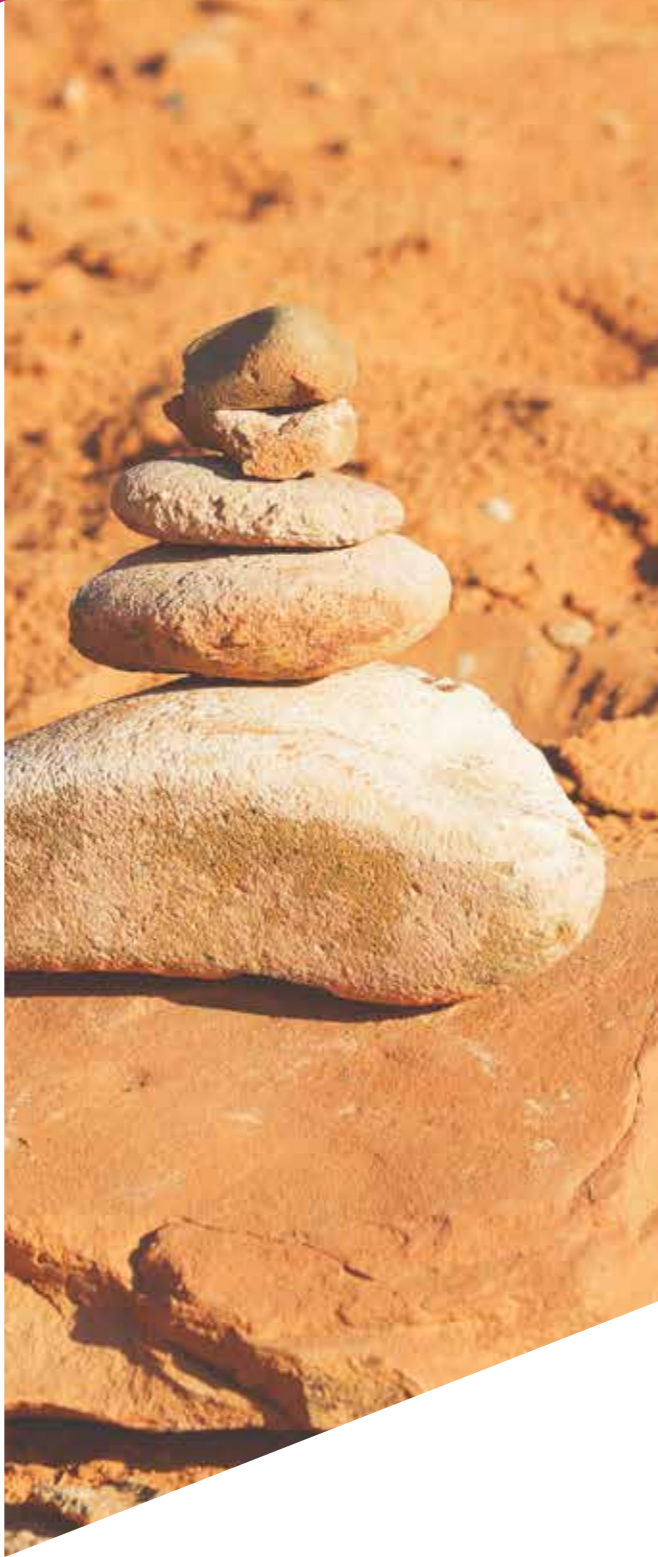
### Resilience

*Resilience is the ability to weather difficult times and to “bounce back”.*

Making it through depression is an example of resilience.

Working through this course is also a sign of resilience.

In this session we will look at ways to help you strengthen your resilience against depression in the future. We will help you to put together a set of skills that work for you and are easy to reference back to when you are feeling vulnerable.



Which exercises/strategies did you find particularly helpful? Were there any approaches that seemed to work well for both you and baby?

What was helpful about these exercises/strategies?

### Exercise 1: Looking back

It can be helpful to look back over the course and identify times when you felt effective, fulfilled or absorbed in what you were doing.

As a mother, it can also be helpful to think about strategies that worked for both you and baby (and your other kiddos too).

Doing this can help you to identify what strategies were most helpful for you.

In the future, you can use this as tips to help you get back on track.

Take a moment to reflect back on which sessions and exercises you found particularly helpful and why.

Exercise 2:  
What Was I Doing Differently?

Now have a go at brainstorming what it was that you were doing differently that made you feel more effective/absorbed/fulfilled and how you can keep doing this in the future.

What were you trying to do that helped you feel more effective/absorbed?	
What would you do in the future to improve your opportunities to act effectively/be more absorbed?	
How did baby respond to you during this time?	
Where was your focus of attention when you felt more effective/absorbed?	
Was there anything that you did with baby that helped you to accomplish your goal?	



Planning  
for  
setbacks

Planning for setbacks is important. Life will often present unavoidable challenges, uncertainties and painful emotions, and parenting is certainly full of uncertainty and moving forwards, back and forwards again. Therefore it is important to think about how you can respond effectively to these circumstances if they occur.

In order to do this, it is really important to understand your “warning signals”, which may indicate that you are not coping as well as usual. It can also be useful to think about your baby’s needs. Are there particular circumstances that seem to unsettle your baby? These may change over time, but as you get to know your baby’s developing personality, keep an eye out for baby’s “warning signals” as well (e.g., does baby find new situations unsettling? Do you have a high energy older baby who gets frustrated if s/he doesn’t have a lot of activities to do during the day?)



## Identifying Warning Signals

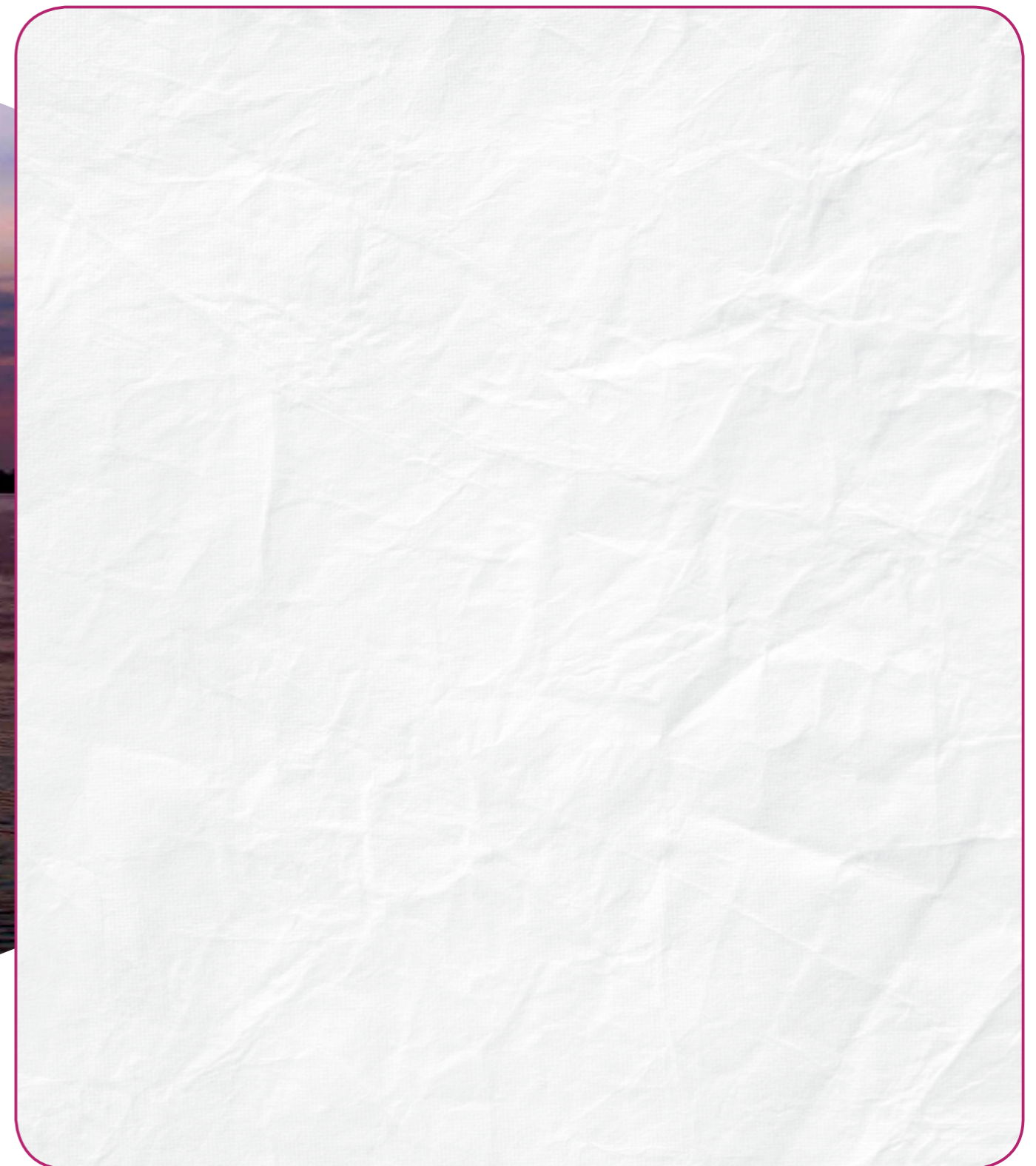
*“Warning signs” are signals that things may not be going as well as you’d like, and you may need your coping strategies.*

These “warning signs” may be changes in your (or your baby’s) physical feelings, emotions and/or behaviours that tell you that things aren’t going as well as you’d like (e.g., a few nights of bad sleep, feeling low/anxious/irritable, avoiding things you find meaningful).

It can be helpful to write your warning signs down – this can help you to recognise these triggers early on, and the earlier you recognise them, the earlier you can address them effectively.

## Exercise 3: Your Warning Signals

Have a think about what you and your baby’s warning signals are. How do you know when things aren’t quite right? (e.g., mood, your body, thoughts, what you’re doing, or what you’re not doing). You may find going back to Exercise 1 (Your Depression Cycle) in Session 1 useful here



# Planning Ahead

Often different warning signals occur at different levels of feeling low or depressed, e.g., one warning signal may signify that you are starting to feel a little low but other signals may indicate that you are starting to become depressed again or that you are experiencing depression.

*It is important to try to identify early warning signals and also signals that you are experiencing low mood or depression, as well as strategies that will help you at each of these different levels.*

Remember, low mood (or even positive mood!) aren't necessarily signs that things are very wrong, or that you are headed back towards depression. We will all feel low mood at times, and it's often a normal feeling. It can also be a sign that we need to take steps to be effective in our lives.

## Exercise 4: Planning Ahead Chart

The Planning Ahead Chart can help you to identify your warning signals at different levels of low mood, and think of different strategies to help you feel better.

It is useful to think of 0 as a starting point – to represent when you are feeling ok. The scale then runs from – 1 to – 10. -1 represents when you start to feel low and -10 represents feeling depressed.

Some people find it helpful to start out with anchors around -2, -4 and -8 points to begin with and then to fill out more around these points.

	Warning signal	Strategy to feel better
Mood level		
0		
-1		
-2		
-3		
-4		
-5		
-6		
-7		
-8		
-9		
-10		

# Remember!

## For the Future: Resources

- Life can be full of set-backs – it is important to keep using the skills you have learnt during this course to enable you to continue building resilience to low mood.
- It is important to be aware of warning signs that could point to low mood (sometimes it can be hard to know what these are – you may find that going back to your first exercises from Sessions 1 & 2 will help).
- Different warning signals may occur at different levels of low mood – you may also find that different strategies work at different levels – it is important to try and identify these so you can use the most helpful strategies at the right time.

There are many available resources to help mums, but it can be difficult to know which ones are helpful. We have a few tips:

- **Chat rooms:** The internet can be a good place to find information and chat rooms can be interesting places to gather information. If you go to a chat room, look for chat rooms that are moderated by a knowledgeable person. Moderation can keep conversations kind, and can reduce unhelpful input or can clarify information that may be more about the way people feel and less about what has been shown to be helpful or not.

\* Example of a moderated chat room: Netmums.com

- **Gathering information** health and well-being information. There's so much health well-being information out there, and much of it is based on opinion or personal experience. For high quality information, try to use websites of organisations that are recognised for their expertise.

\* Examples of recognised websites: NHSChoices, Medline, Mayo Clinic, NICE, Royal College of Psychiatry, BABCP Perinatal, Centre for Women's Mental Health at the University of Massachusetts.

- **Getting parenting information.** This one is tricky! There is so much advice you can go by. Remember that the most important thing is that you find strategies that help you and your little one. If you find materials or websites that are very rigid in their approach, then this may be a sign to seek out other materials or advice.

\* Example of a gentle, flexible approach with infants: The No Cry Solution: Elizabeth Pantley. This approach works best for babies who can settle into routines. (how do you know if your baby is one of these babies? Give the approach a good go. If it doesn't work for your baby, then you may need another approach).

# Congratulations!

**Well done for  
completing the  
course!**

We hope that you continue to go back to the sessions regularly, especially if you find yourself in a difficult situation or if you have unhelpful thoughts and feelings. You might find it helpful to schedule some times to look back over the materials from this booklet.

\* Example of a progressive sleep approach for babies with sleep problems. The strategies in this book aren't for everyone, but numerous well-conducted research studies have shown that they work for babies who are struggling with sleep problems. The book also has lots of helpful additional tips on things like weaning older babies off night-feeding, etc. "Solve your infant's sleep problems" Richard Ferber. And, don't worry, research has also shown that using these strategies doesn't hurt baby's attachment to mum, nor does it produce a stressed baby.

\* There are of course many other examples out there – just remember, although the books and websites may suggest there is only one way to do it, most mums actually end up doing what works. That means that most mums will borrow bits and pieces from a number of different approaches, and that's fine. It's most important to find strategies that are effective for you, baby and your family.

