

# Building Stronger Relationships Booklet for Young People

## Note of thanks

Thank you to the Barnsley Young Commissioners who have helped develop this resource to support children and young people when they are struggling with conflict between parents or caregivers.

How to cope  
when parents  
argue



**BARNSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council



## Mind Map - Best Hopes

Are there things in your life that you'd like to change? What are your hopes for the future? How would it look/feel if these hopes were to come true? Extend the thought bubbles with as much information as you want.

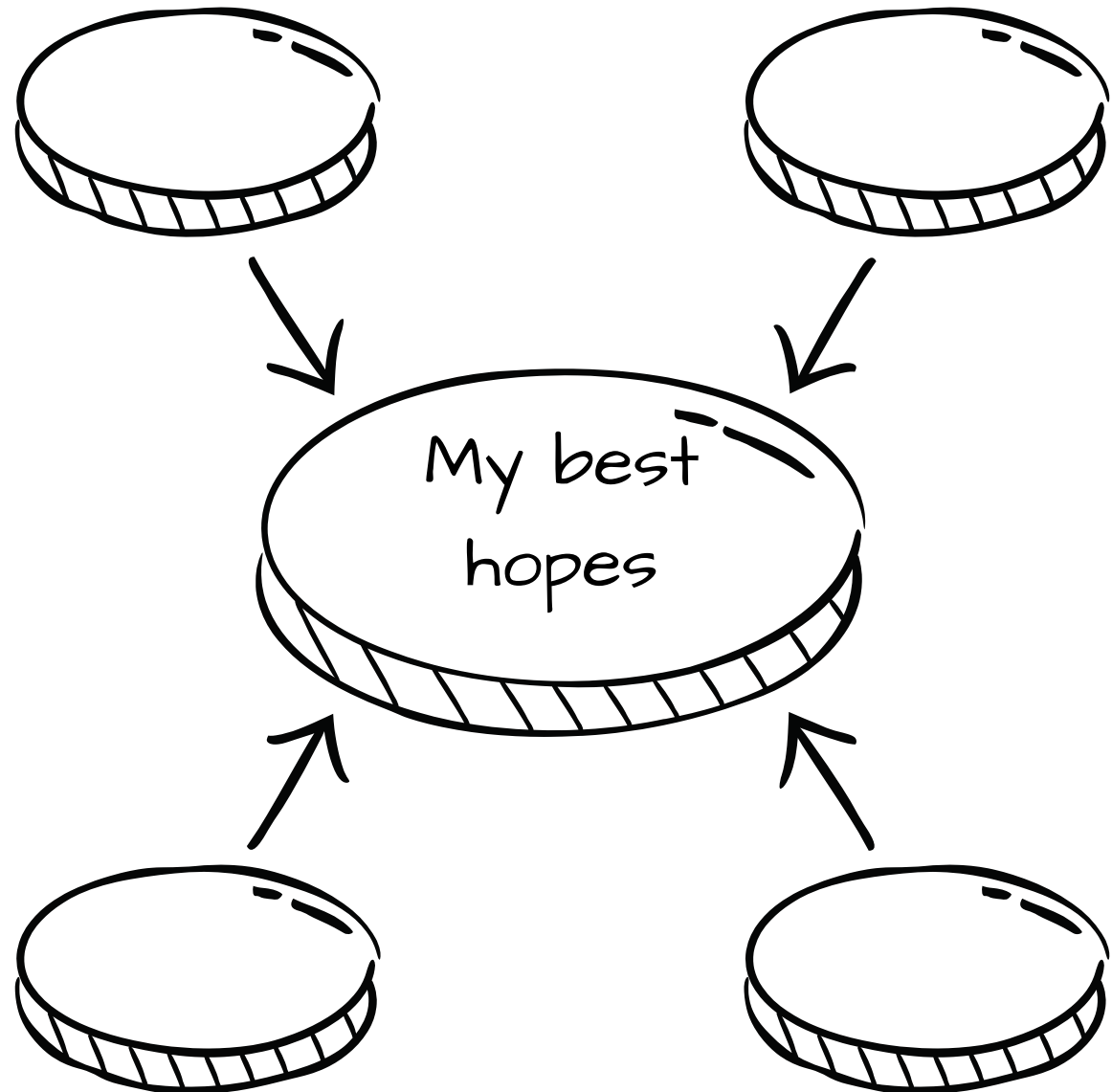
Family life won't always run smoothly and when our parents aren't getting on, we often wish things were different and it can affect young people in lots of different ways. Use the next few pages as an opportunity to explore what your hopes are for the future. You might decide to share it with your parents or another trusted adult or you might decide that it's just for you.

## EXAMPLE

I hope I feel confident

How will this feel?  
What will it look like?

I'll be able to answer  
questions in class.  
I'll feel relaxed around  
new people.



## The Big Picture

### Magic Wand

Imagine you had a magic wand and when you waved it, all your best hopes came true. What would life be like? Express this in the 'Big Picture' frame below. You could add a picture or annotate it with words and phrases.



First...

“

What's the first thing  
you'd notice?

”

# EXAMPLE

Big picture:

It's a Saturday night and Me, Mum, Dad and Jack are sitting watching 'Strictly'. We've just had pizza and milkshakes and we're going to play Monopoly next.

What's the first thing you'd notice?

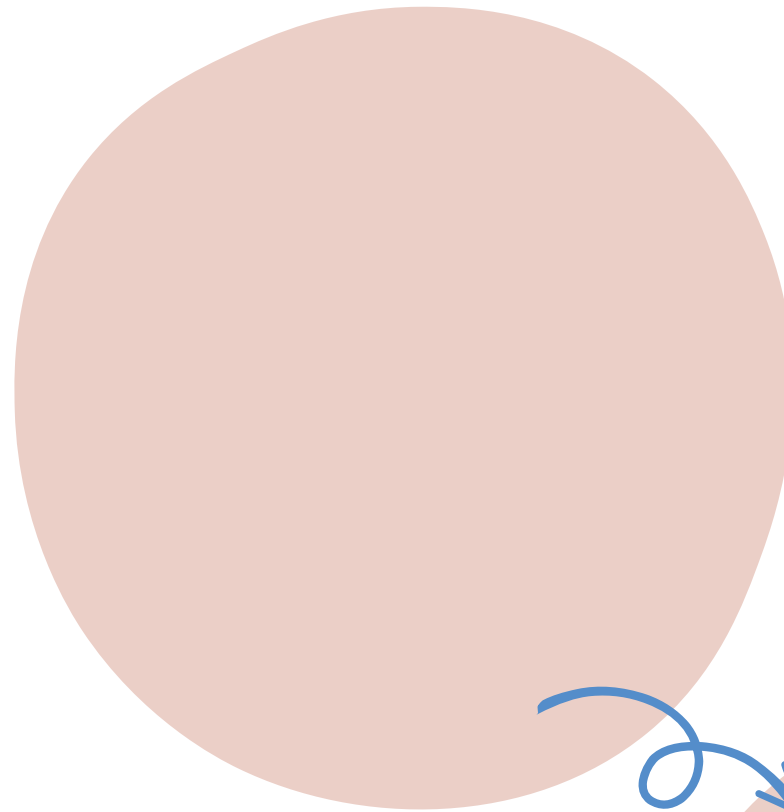
Everyone is there - altogether and no one is arguing.

How do you feel in the moment?

I feel contented, calm and happy. Not on edge.

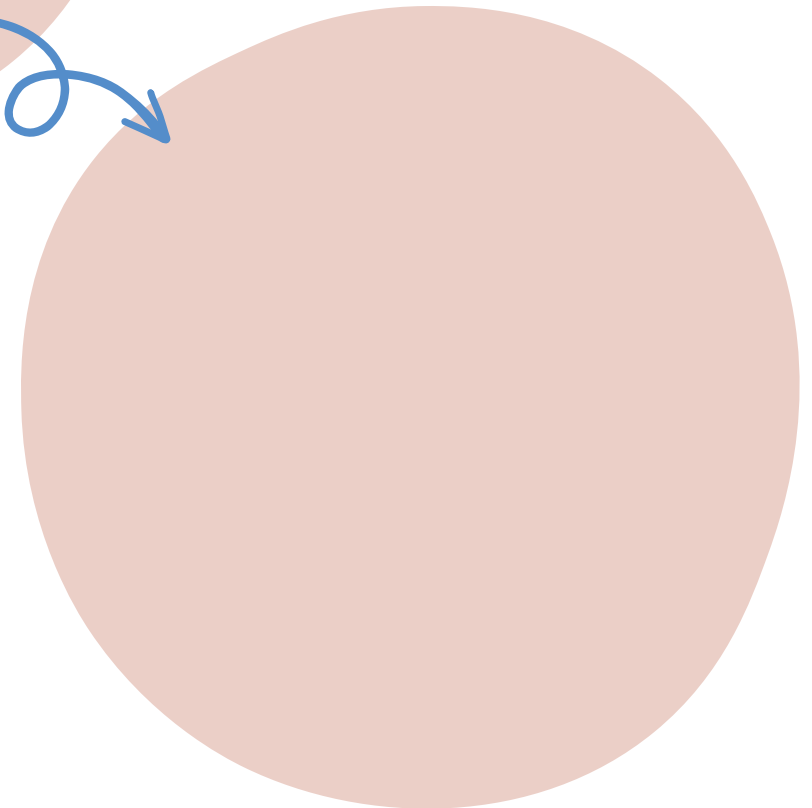
What would other people notice?

It's quiet - there's no shouting. Mum and dad are smiling at each other.



“  
How do you feel in the moment?  
”

“  
What's the first thing other people would notice?  
”



## Communication with parents

Being around parents who argue can be a confusing and upsetting time. The young people of Barnsley have told us that communication between parents and children is key. But how much is too much? And when is it not enough?

### Over sharing

If parents involve you in every detail of their arguments or disagreement, they can overshare personal information that you don't need to know.

### Under sharing

If parents refuse to talk to you about their arguments and pretend they haven't happened, you can be left confused and worried.

### Getting the balance right.

You know your parents have had an argument, right? You'll feel better if they talk to you about it but you don't need all the gory details, just enough to make you less worried about the future.

You'll never guess what your mum's gone and done now.

He's spent all the food shopping money again on football bets.

I didn't know she was dating Terry. She told me they were just friends. She's always lying to me. Did you know?

It might sound like this...

Don't be so silly. We weren't having a row.

I'll talk to you about it when you're older.

It's none of your business what we were talking about. Stop being nosey!

Write or draw how it feels for you in each situation

Over sharing

Under sharing

How to talk about this with  
your parents

I'm not comfortable hearing that.

It's makes me feel worried when you  
involve me in your arguments.

I'd appreciate if you could stick to the  
facts. I'll feel better if I know what will  
happen next.

I know it might be hard for you to talk about  
this to me but the argument I heard last night  
worried me.

I feel scared becuae of the argument you had  
with mum. Can you tell me what might happen next?

I'm not sure how to act around you and dad when  
you've argued. I'm scared you might be mad at me too.

### Understanding my stress

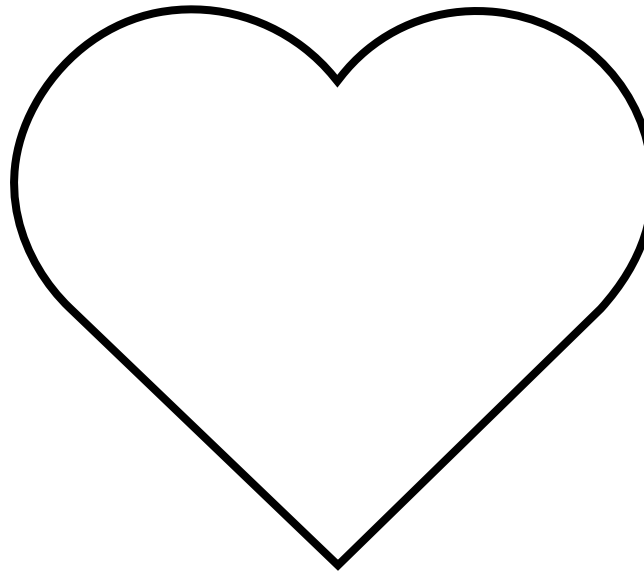
Draw or write your responses in each symbol to help you recognise when you are feeling stressed. Then have a think about how you could use one of the coping strategies from the poster the next time your parents argue.

### What is stress?

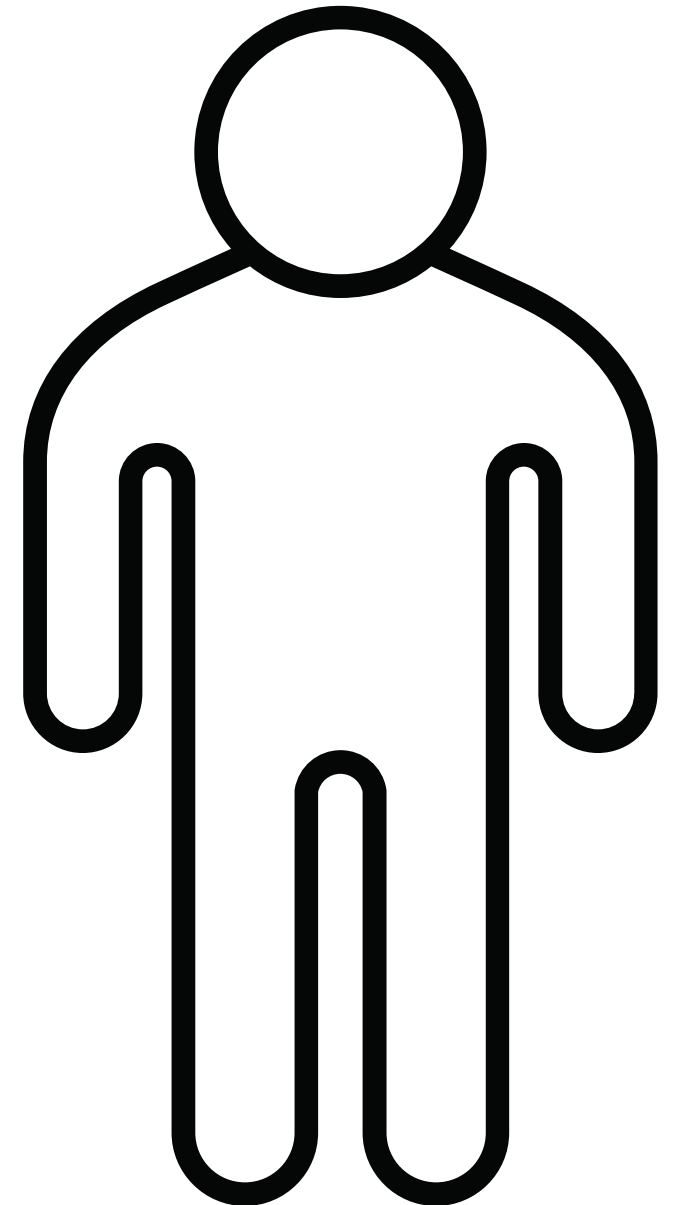
Stress is our bodies natural response to uncomfortable situations. When parents argue, it can cause stress for other family members. It's best to recognise the signs of stress in our bodies sooner rather than later so we can take steps to help us feel more comfortable.

When I hear my parents argue...

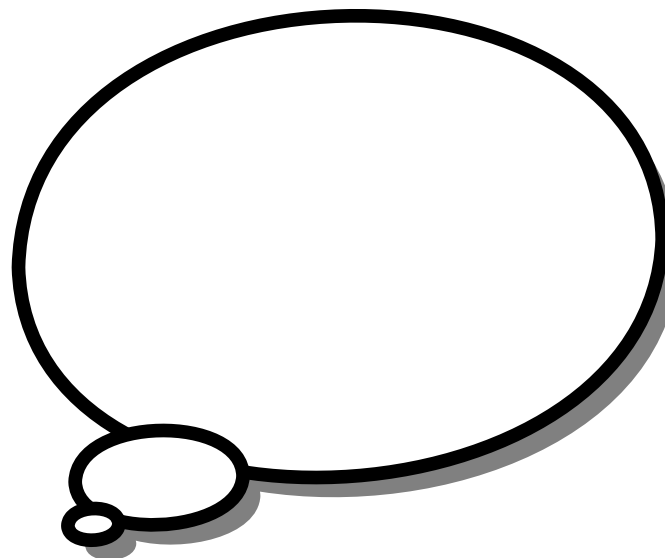
I feel



my body



I think





# HOW TO COPE WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARE ARGUING



## Remain Neutral

Don't take sides in an argument. If your parents ask you to, call them out on it and say they shouldn't be involving you.

## Feel Good

Do something positive that you enjoy - movie, play a computer game, read a book or exercise. Anything that'll make you feel better.

## Talk

Find someone you trust and open up to them. Let off some steam. It could be a face to face, text email or phone conversation. It doesn't matter how you do it, just that you keep talking about your feelings.

Childline 0800 1111

## Go Somewhere else

If you are able to, go out. It won't completely stop you thinking about your parents' arguing but it might take your mind off it. Go to a friend's house or a relative's or even the library or basketball court.

## Safe Space

Find a safe space in your house, preferably where you can't hear your parents. Put your earphones in, find a comfy blanket and know that you are safe. Don't be tempted to eavesdrop; it'll only make you feel worse.

