CATHY’S
RELAXATION STORY
A RELAXATION SKILLS RESOURCE
FOR KINSHIP CARERS
KINSHIP CARERS ARE FAMILY MEMBERS (OFTEN GRANDPARENTS) WHO TAKE CARE OF CHILDREN WHEN THE BIRTH-PARENTS ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO CARE FOR THEM DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS ILL-HEALTH, ADDICTION, ABUSE OR BEREAVEMENT.

THE ATTACHED CD CONTAINS THE AUDIO OF THE RELAXATION SKILLS AS OUTLINED IN THIS STORY. IT CAN BE USED SEPARATELY OR ALONGSIDE THE STORY.
A relaxation skills resource for Kinship Carers
MEET CATHY AND JORDAN...

CATHY IS A WIDOW. HER LATE HUSBAND JOHN DIED WHEN THEIR DAUGHTER KELLY WAS 12. SINCE THAT AGE KELLY – NOW IN HER FORTIES – HAS STRUGGLED WITH AN ALCOHOL ADDICTION.

HI, I’M CATHY AND WELCOME TO MY STORY
CATHY’S DAUGHTER KELLY HAS A SON CALLED JORDAN. UNFORTUNATELY, JORDAN WAS REMOVED FROM KELLY’S CARE BY SOCIAL SERVICES.

HEY, IT’S JORDAN, WHAT’S UP?
JORDAN IS MISSING HIS MUM AND FINDING SCHOOL A STRUGGLE. CATHY IS FINDING IT HARD TO COME TO TERMS WITH NO LONGER BEING JORDAN’S GRANNY BUT HAVING TO BE A ‘PARENT’ AGAIN.

JORDAN, YOUR SCHOOL SAYS YOU’VE NOT BEEN ATTENDING CLASS

OH STOP GOING ON AT ME!

JORDAN! SHUT UP AND LISTEN TO ME

JORDAN!
CATHY IS AT HER WITS’ END AND DOESN’T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

WE CAN’T GO ON THIS WAY

THE EMOTIONAL STRESS IS CAUSING GREAT TENSION IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP.

JORDAN!

AAAH!
A couple of days later Cathy has been called into school to discuss Jordan’s attendance.

We’re very concerned about Jordan.

I really don’t know what to do!
ON HER WAY OUT OF THE HEADTEACHER’S OFFICE CATHY LOOKS AT THE NOTICEBOARD AND READS AN ADVERT ABOUT JOINING A LOCAL KINSHIP CARER GROUP.

OH THIS LOOKS INTERESTING
Kinship Carers Meeting at the Local Community Centre

Why not come along for coffee, cake and a chat?

Everyone welcome

And we'll have a relaxation skills session.
THE FOLLOWING WEEK CATHY DECIDES TO ATTEND THE GROUP - AFTER ALL, WHAT’S SHE GOT TO LOSE?

HERE GOES...

THE GROUP SAYS THAT THEY HAVE A RELAXATION SKILLS TEACHER COMING IN SHORTLY.
THE TEACHER EXPLAINS THAT IT’S BEST TO DO THESE EXERCISES AS REGULARLY AS POSSIBLE. FIND A QUIET PLACE AND TURN OFF YOUR PHONE, IF POSSIBLE.

THE TEACHER GIVES EVERYONE A CD WITH INSTRUCTIONS THAT WILL HELP THEM PRACTISE.

HERE’S THE CD THAT WILL HELP YOU PRACTISE THE RELAXATION SKILLS.

THANKS, I’M DEFINITELY GOING TO TRY THESE SKILLS.
THE NEXT DAY JORDAN GOES OFF TO SCHOOL AND CATHY DECIDES TO PRACTISE THE EXERCISES.

SHE FINDS A QUIET SPOT, TURNS OFF HER PHONE AND LISTENS TO THE CD.

"RELAXATION SKILLS....FIND YOURSELF A COMFORTABLE SEAT..."

YOU CAN PUT YOUR CD ON NOW...

READY? THEN LET’S BEGIN!
1. Land in the Moment

Sit in your chair.

Feel your feet on the floor.

Breathe 3 times in through the nose and sigh out through the mouth.

Close your eyes or soft and steady gaze.

Roll shoulders gently up back & down.

Feel your body on the chair. Feel the chair support the weight of your body.
NO 1 LAND IN THE MOMENT

YOU HAVE REALLY LANDED HERE IN YOUR BODY IN THIS MOMENT.

RELAX AND SOFTEN YOUR JAW & FACE

FEEL A GENTLE LIFT UP THROUGH THE CROWN OF YOUR HEAD

ONCE MORE BREATHE THROUGH THE NOSE AND SIGH OUT THOUGH THE MOUTH

BACK TO YOUR FEET - TAP YOUR TOES & YOUR HEELS...

...and relax
NO 2 GENTLE MOBILITY

PURPOSE: TO GENTLY MOVE THE BODY TO-release TENSION.

ANKLES

NOTE: KEEP THE MOVEMENTS VERY GENTLE AND IF ANYTHING CAUSES OR INCREASES PAIN, DON’T DO IT.

LIFT YOUR RIGHT FOOT

IMAGINE SLOWLY DRAWING BIG CIRCLES WITH YOUR RIGHT FOOT’S BIG TOE (IN DOING SO YOU’LL GET GOOD MOVEMENT IN THE ANKLE JOINT)

THEN POINT THE TOE AND FLEX THE FOOT 5 TIMES

THEN.....SWITCH FEET
BACK & SPINE

SIT WITH FEET FLAT ON THE FLOOR.

REMEMBER TO KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT!
Gently twist torso over to the left, then over to the right, looking as far over your shoulder as possible.

Remember to twist round gently.

Repeat 10 times on each side.
WRISTS

Gently circle the wrists 5 times in each direction. Don’t worry if you hear little popping and cracking noises in your wrists - this is normal!
Gently roll shoulders up, back and down.

Repeat 5 times.
NECK

FOR THIS EXERCISE MOVE YOUR HEAD & NECK IN A GENTLE FLOWING MOTION

GENTLY TILT YOUR HEAD TO THE RIGHT SHOULDER

THEN TUCK YOUR CHIN TOWARDS YOUR CHEST

GENTLY TILT YOUR HEAD TO THE LEFT SHOULDER

TUCK YOUR CHIN TOWARDS YOUR CHEST AGAIN

TRACE BACK OVER TO THE RIGHT SHOULDER
NO 3 MUSCLE RELAXATION

NOTE: IF YOU FEEL LIGHT HEADED AT ANY POINT DURING THIS EXERCISE, STOP AND TAKE SOME NORMAL BREATHS.

MAKE A FIST WITH YOUR HANDS SQUEEZE THEM AS TIGHTLY AS YOU CAN

INHALE THEN EXHALE OUT THROUGH YOUR MOUTH

SUDDENLY!
OPEN YOUR HANDS AND SPREAD YOUR FINGERS

REPEAT 5 TIMES
CONTINUE...

SHRUG SHOULDERS UP TO EARS
SQUEEZE TIGHT

DROP SHOULDERS BACK DOWN
WITH AN EXHALE SIGH

INHALE

EXHALE

AND NOW...
TAKE A FEW MORE BREATHS AND FEEL THE WHOLE UPPER BODY AND HEAD RELAXED

inhale...and exhale...inhale

and exhale...inhale and exhale

KEEP GOING YOU’RE DOING GREAT!
The VAGUS NERVE

When we breathe at equal length of inhales and equal length of exhales we balance our whole system. Information is passed from the lungs, through the vagus nerve to our brain and back to the rest of the body. We will try to breathe like this now...
NO 4 BREATHE AND RELAX

PURPOSE: TO RELAX! OUR BREATH IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO OUR STATE OF MIND. IT’S DIFFICULT TO JUST TELL OURSELVES TO STOP THINKING WHEN OUR MIND IS RACING AND HAVING DIFFICULT THOUGHTS BUT IF WE BREATHE IN A FOCUSED AND STEADY WAY THIS HELPS TO SETTLE AND SOOTHE OUR THOUGHTS.

SIT COMFORTABLY IN YOUR CHAIR WITH YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE FLOOR AND YOUR SPINE STRAIGHT. NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL...
CLOSE YOUR EYES

THIS HELPS YOU FOCUS ON THE BREATH AND THE MOVEMENT IN YOUR BODY

AND IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN JUST LOOK AT THE FLOOR WITH A SOFT STEADY GAZE

NOTE: THESE BREATHING TECHNIQUES CAN BE USED ANYWHERE AND AT ANYTIME YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN.
IMAGINE YOUR LUNGS EXPANDING AND CONTRACTING LIKE A BALLOON AS YOU BREATHE IN AND BREATHE OUT

BEGIN TO NOTICE YOUR BREATH – BREATHE IN... AND OUT THROUGH THE NOSE. CAN YOU FEEL THE AIR COMING IN THROUGH THE NOSTRILS AND OUT THROUGH THE NOSTRILS.

AIR IS COOLER AS YOU INHALE
AIR IS WARMER AS YOU EXHALE

KEEP BREATHING IN A FOCUSED STEADY WAY
COUNTING 1,2,3...

NOTE: YOUR COUNT MAY BE SHORTER OR LONGER.

STAY FOCUSED AND DON’T EVER FORCE THE BREATH TO BE LONGER.

BREATHE IN

BY ENCOURAGING A FULLER BREATH INTO THE LUNGS WE HELP OUR SYSTEM TO BALANCE AND RELAX.

KEEP FEELING THE BODY MOVING GENTLY WITH EACH BREATH. RELAX YOUR BODY AND FOCUS SOFTLY ON YOUR STEADY BREATH.

BREATHE OUT
TAKE A MOMENT

NOW TAKE A DEEPER BREATH. FEEL YOUR BODY SITTING ON THE CHAIR.

THINK ABOUT SMILING TO RELAX THE FACE

FEEL THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR FEET AND FLOOR

FEEL ANY SENSATIONS ON YOUR SKIN LIKE TEMPERATURES & TEXTURES AND LISTEN TO NOISES AROUND YOU

LIGHTLY TAP YOUR TOES AND HEELS ON THE FLOOR
...THEN OPEN YOUR EYES.

I DID MINE, NOW WHEN ARE YOU DOING YOURS?

OH THAT FEELS GOOD
PRACTISE THESE EXERCISES REGULARLY TO FEEL THE BENEFITS. YOU CAN DO IT. KEEP COMING BACK EVEN IF YOU’VE BEEN BUSY AND HAVEN’T MANAGED TO DO THEM FOR A WHILE.

WHY NOT START PLANNING YOUR RELAXATION EXERCISES...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>DIARY FOR MY RELAXATION EXERCISES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY</strong></td>
<td><strong>TIME</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUE 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WED 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THU 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRI 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUN 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CATHY HAS A ROUTINE OF PRACTICING THE SKILLS AT LEAST 2 OR 3 TIMES A WEEK. IN ADDITION TO HER REGULAR PRACTICE, CATHY HAS BEEN USING THE SKILLS TO DEAL WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE...

CATHY IS SITTING UP WAITING FOR JORDAN AS HE’S LATE HOME FROM A PARTY.

WHERE IS HE?
IT’S REALLY LATE

I THINK I’LL TRY THE RELAXATION SKILLS

CATHY LISTENS TO THE RELAXATION SKILLS CD TO HELP HER RELAX.
CATHY BEGINS TO REALISE THAT SHE IS FEELING MORE ABLE TO LEAD THE TONE OF THE INTERACTIONS WITH JORDAN.

JORDAN EVENTUALLY ARRIVES HOME...

Hey Jordan, are you ok? I was worried.

Funny you should ask! I’ve been doing some relaxation exercises.

You feeling ok Granny? Cus usually you’re shouting & screaming at me!

Let us have a look then?

Let us have a look then?

CATHY BEGINS TO REALISE THAT SHE IS FEELING MORE ABLE TO LEAD THE TONE OF THE INTERACTIONS WITH JORDAN.
A FEW DAYS LATER JORDAN COMES IN FROM SCHOOL. CATHY ASKS “HOW WAS YOUR DAY TODAY JORDAN?”

OH SHUT UP! WHAT WOULD YOU CARE?

CATHY WOULD NORMALLY HAVE SHOUTED BACK TO JORDAN...“DON’T TELL ME TO SHUT UP” - BUT SHE DOESN’T THIS TIME. SHE TRIES TO ENCOURAGE JORDAN TO SPEAK TO HER AND TELL HER WHAT’S WRONG.

JORDAN, DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT? MAYBE I CAN HELP?
AT FIRST CATHY TOOK A BIT OF TIME TO THINK OF THE RIGHT WORDS TO START A CONVERSATION WITH JORDAN...

CATHY NOW FEELS ABLE TO APPROACH EACH INTERACTION MORE OPENLY - HER RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN IS MUCH BETTER.
A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER, CATHY BUMPS INTO HER FRIEND FIONA WHO SAYS SHE’S STRUGGLING WITH HER FAMILY LIFE AND DOESN’T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

HI FIONA, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU?

SUPERMARKET

OH CATHY, I’M REALLY STRESSED OUT. THE KIDS ARE DRIVING ME CRAZY. I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO

I KNOW WHAT MIGHT HELP. THESE RELAXATION EXERCISES HAVE REALLY HELPED ME

OH THANKS CATHY, I’LL DEFINITELY TRY THESE
THE END

KINSHIP CARERS

CHEERIO
YOU CAN DOWNLOAD THIS STORY AND THE RELAXATION AUDIO FOR FREE AT:

KINSHIP.SCOT

PARENTINGACROSSSCOTLAND.ORG

YOU CAN CONTACT US AT: RELAXATIONRESOURCE@MENTORUK.ORG

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS RESOURCE
YOU CAN’T POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP...