



LOHA Programmes

A short guide for parents and carers

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Bringing together families to improve children and young people's emotional and mental health

LOHA is a company that brings together psychotherapists, psychiatrists, clinicians, and researchers.

We work closely with parents, carers, and young people to develop a service that assists parents to help children and young people to effectively manage their emotional and mental health and respond to change.

We use the latest research and scientific evidence to inform all our work with families.

www.loha-community.com

1. Setting the scene

When a young person is struggling with their mental health, in the vast majority of cases it is due to distress.

The distress can be conscious – that is the young person knows why they are upset but they are unsure what to do about it. Or the distress can be subconscious, the young person is experiencing distress but they do not fully understand why.

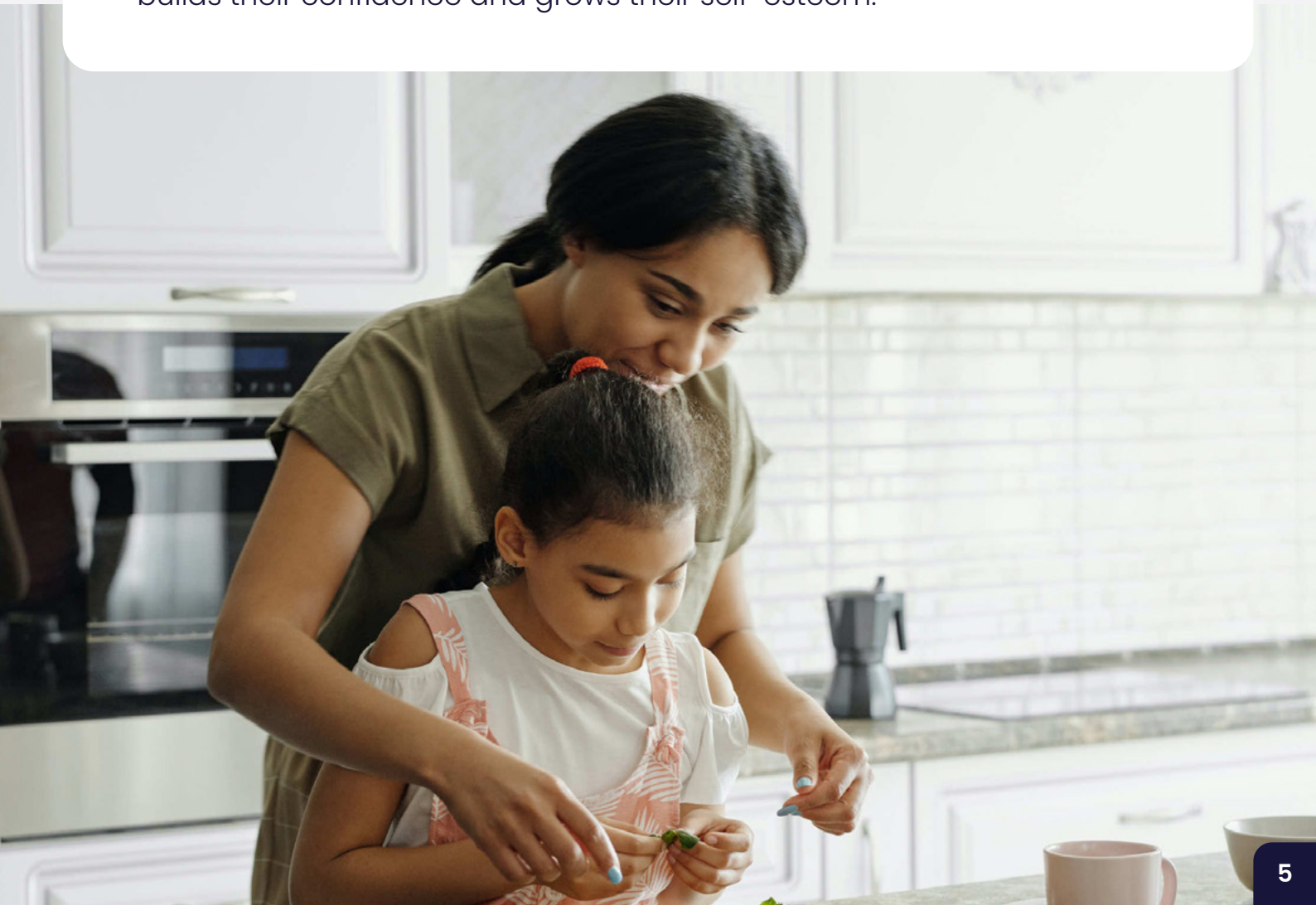
During the phase of adolescence which starts about 11 years old through to 24 years of age, the brain is undergoing significant levels of development and change due to hormones and maturation. Added to this we are living in an increasingly complex society where young people are having to negotiate a world that changes rapidly day to day. This can provoke high levels of anxiety. Therefore young people are experiencing inner conflict as they are trying to learn to navigate the complexities of modern life.



This is also extremely stressful for parents and carers who want their young people and children to thrive and be happy. Our natural reaction as parents and carers is to protect, we hate the thought of our children and young people hurting.

One of the most effective ways to prevent poor mental health and to combat it where it occurs, is open communication in high trust relationships. Where the young person can speak honestly and openly about their feelings and thoughts without fear of judgement. This builds trust and sets the foundation for strong and positive relationships throughout their lives.

Being able to have these types of open conversations where the young person feels valued and listened to, means they know they can talk to parents and carers about anything that concerns or worries them. This builds their confidence and grows their self-esteem.



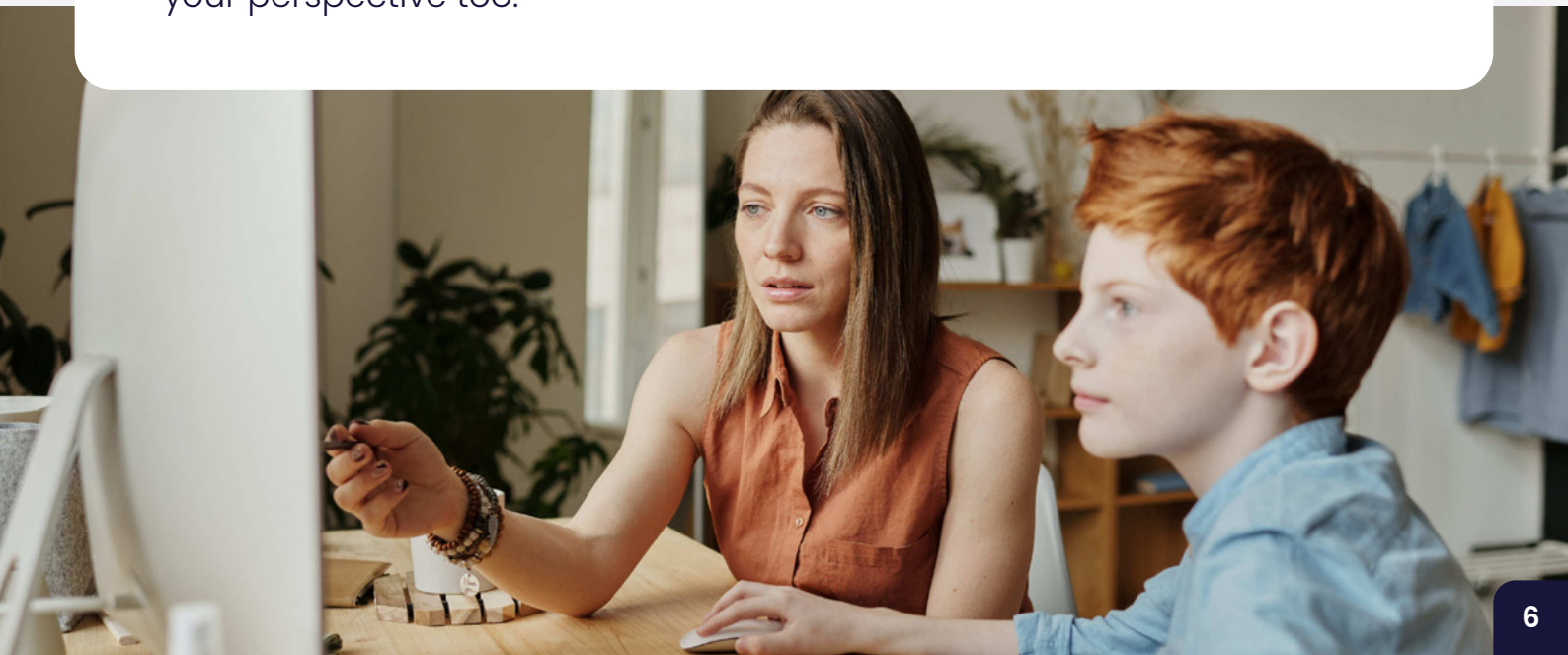
Good mental health resides in the quality of our relationships

The biggest cause of poor mental health in young people is distress. Most young people will experience distress. They witness many things in their lives that might cause them to feel upset, or that they don't understand or they wrongly believe are bad feelings.

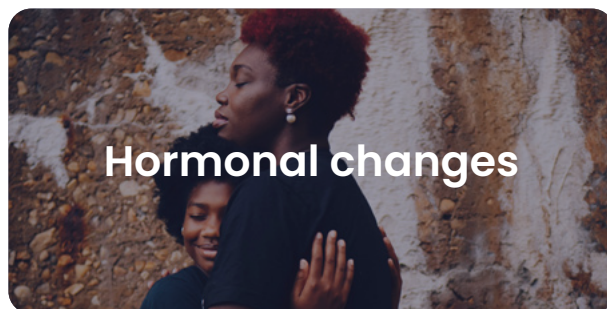
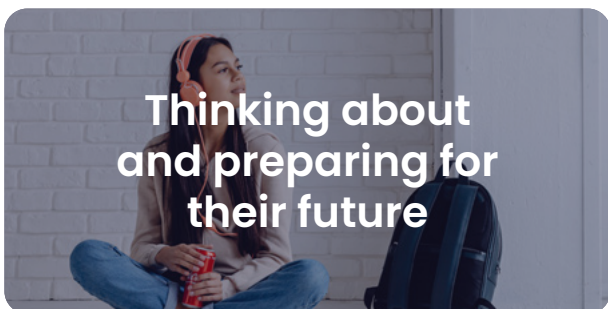
To overcome feelings of distress young people like anyone, need to process and make sense of how they are feeling. To do this, they need to be able to talk openly with someone they know and trust. The young person needs to feel validated and cared for.

Parents and carers are the most important people for providing validation and care for children and young people. Because where children and young people feel listened to and cared for, that is the biggest possible protective factor for good mental health.

You do not have to agree with your child on everything they say. They might push you away initially. However knowing they are genuinely listened to and valued, will grow their self esteem and increase their resilience. Looking at things from their perspective will role-model the behaviours you expect when you want your teenager to view things from your perspective too.



2. Stressors for Young People



Other stressors

Each young person will have many other stressors personal to them. It could be expectations, real or perceived. The young person might be navigating illness, either their own or another family member.

The young person's development stage means that their feelings can fluctuate rapidly with changes in their hormones, and often their thinking and behaviour will vary significantly depending on the situation.

There will be times when a young person is feeling anxious or distressed and they do not understand why.

Also young people might be neurodiverse and therefore they have difficulty making sense of others behaviours and expressing themselves. This takes more intense effort from parents and carers because the young person needs more assistance to understand the nuances of social interaction for themselves, and their communication with others.

The world can look a very strange place, where no-one quite says what they mean. There are hidden meanings in speech and actions, which is very confusing. In addition, the young person might have problems expressing their own feelings, explaining what they need and they might not seem to engage easily with other family members or their peers.

LOHA programmes are designed to support parents and carers help young people learn about their own feelings, thoughts and behaviour, and how to express them, healthily. Using the activities will assist in building connection, understanding, resilience and empathy; the foundations of strong relationships.

What do the programmes do?



LOHA's programmes and activities are designed around a framework we call "CURE".

Connection through curiosity

Understanding

Resilience

Empathy

The four pillars of good emotional and mental health.

The activities are grouped into programmes based upon the problem that parents or young people feel they are experiencing.

By doing the activities together, parents and carers can assist young people in making sense of the feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

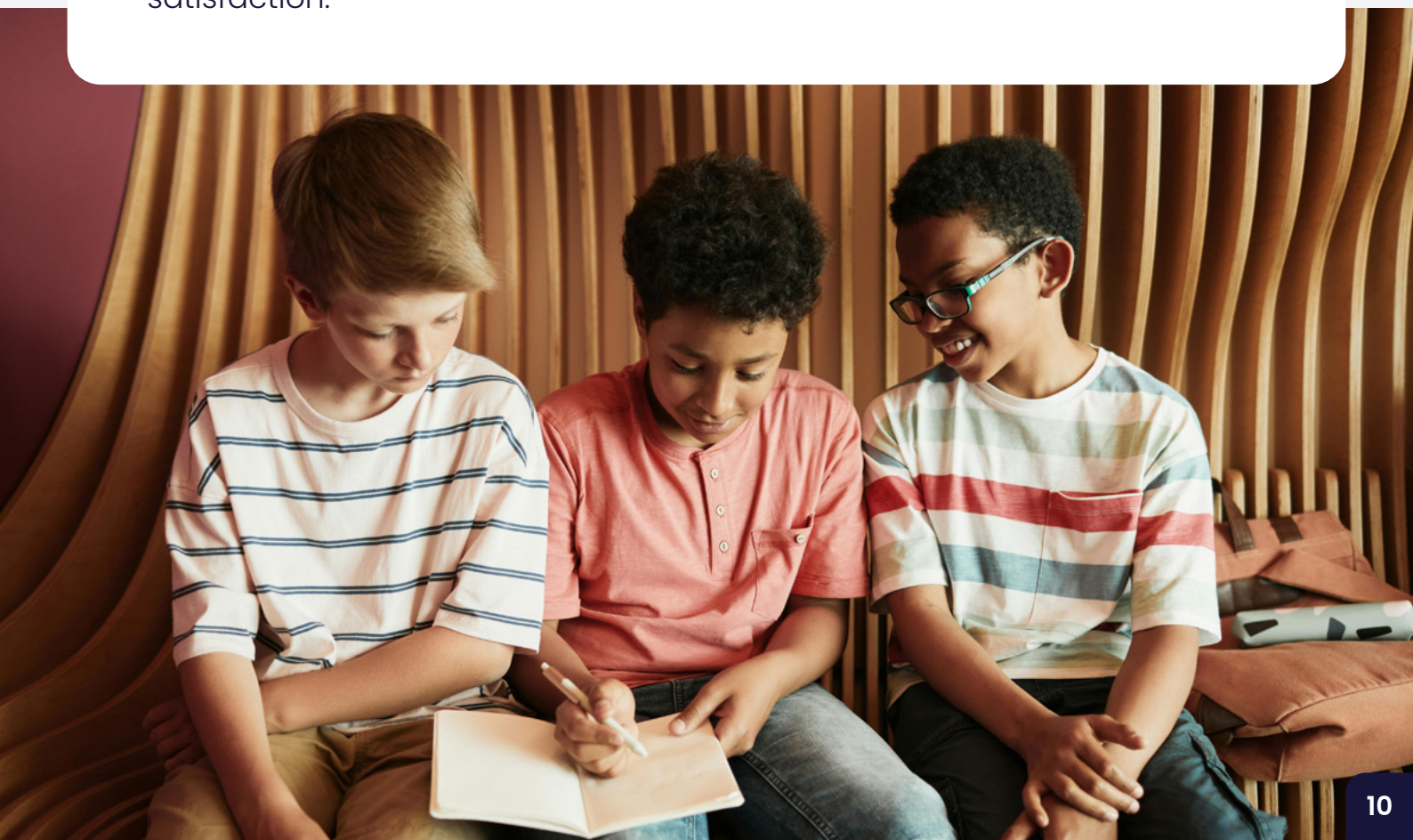
The activities help young people grow their self-esteem and confidence as they learn to make sense of their own emotions and those of other people. They learn to communicate more effectively, and there is a growth in trust that strengthens your relationship with them, whilst nurturing the development of their independence.

3. LOHA Programmes

LOHA programmes set the foundations for good mental health through helping young people develop high quality, high trust relationships with their parents and carers.

Skills to develop good relationships can be learnt like any other skill. They are also the skills that set the foundations for emotional intelligence. Skills that are so important in helping young people successfully navigate their friendships, romantic relationships and their interactions with peers and work colleagues.

Once learnt, skills for emotional intelligence last a life-time. Also, Harvard University have shown that people who have strong, healthy relationships live longer, experience fewer health problems and have the highest life satisfaction.



Programmes available

The following programmes are available:

1. Managing anxiety
2. Stopping self harm
3. Having sensitive conversations
4. Managing major life transitions: school, divorce, or bereavement.

Check the website for others coming online:
www.loha-community.com

What do I do as a parent?

Sign-up online at www.loha-community.com

Each week for six weeks you will receive a link to a new digital activity to do together as a family via your tablet or phone or laptop.

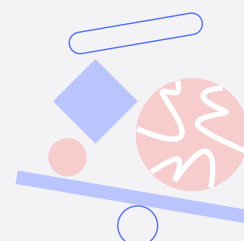


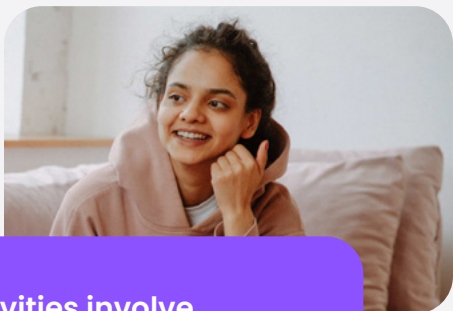
Follow the prompts

You simply follow the digital therapist's prompts and family members can take it in turns to read the instructions.

Screensharing optional

You can even screenshare to your TV and allow all the family to read the screen at the same time.



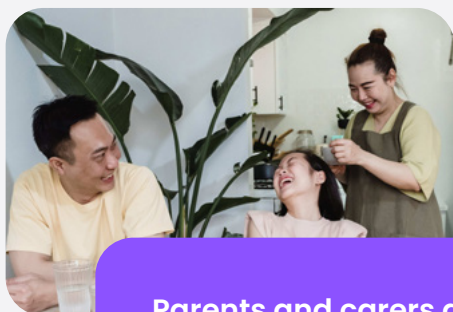


The activities involve drawing, noting, discussing, describing, reflecting, role-play, and planning.

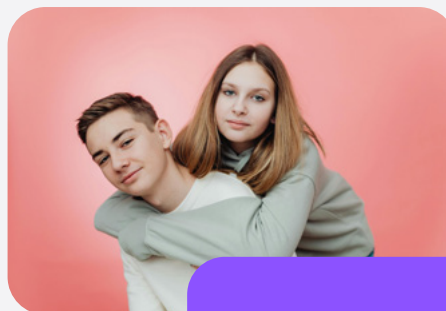


The activities encourage young people to recognise their strengths and talk more openly about their feelings.

What do the digital activities involve?



Parents and carers get more insights into how their teenager is feeling and how they can help them more effectively.



The activities build deeper connection and trust so the young person can express themselves more easily and overcome mental health challenges.

4. Online Support for Parents and Carers

Alongside the activities you do together as a family, parents or carers can join an on-line session with a systemic coach and small group of parents to get further support or advice.

Parents and carers can be anonymous on the call - its entirely up to you how much you speak, you will get a lot from listening to other parents.



At the end of six weeks you graduate from the programme.

However you are not alone.

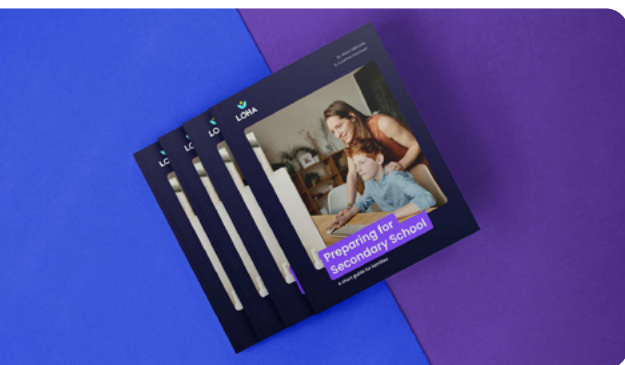
LOHA will continue to support parents so that your young person continues to maintain progress.

LOHA continues to provide a digital peer support network. Where you will have access to further resources including:

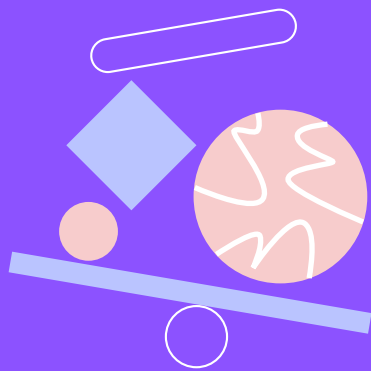


Digital Activities

eBooks



Workshops



Young people love the activities you do together. They take it as a sign you really care.

Some parents and carers worry their teenager will be reluctant to take part. What young people want is to be certain that you care...

Explain to them why you want to do the programme with them. Always provide your explanations with "because"

... I care about you

... I am worried about you

... I want to understand how things are for you

... I want to support you

... I want to find ways to help you

... I know things are difficult at the moment

5. Preparing as a Parent

Activities take 30-60 minutes each and we suggest having pens and paper ready.

Parents and carers tells us how much it helps their teenagers laugh again and also talk about more serious things that are worrying them.

This often happens gradually through doing the activities.

It will be in the days that follow the activity that your teenager or child will talk to you and confide in you.

Three essential skills parents and carers need to demonstrate:

Listening without interrupting or judging. Even if you do not agree, respect your child or teenager for sharing their feelings.

Stay curious, gently encourage your child or teenager to explain more, without interrogating them.

Role model the behaviours you expect from your child or teenager. How you behave towards other people and situations will be reflected in your child or teenager's behaviour towards you.



Active Listening

As part of the activities your child or teenager needs to know that they can tell you how they are feeling and about their experiences.

Most of the time it will be things they are worried about – or worried about how you will react to what they tell you – often it is the routine things of growing up, problems with friendships, worries about school and exams, and feeling different from their peers.

For some young people, they may be worried about talking to you about sex and sexuality, some will have experienced abuse and racism and others may have witnessed traumatic events, on or offline.

When young people talk to you – listen carefully, even if you find it hard – stay calm – give yourself time to think.

Do deep breathing exercises if you are upset by what your teenager is telling you. Acknowledge you are upset by what you have heard and say you need a minute to compose yourself.

Be clear that the young person has done the right thing telling you – explain to them you just need a moment to process it.

Breathing exercise:

Breathe in deeply counting 1-2-3-4-5

Hold your breath counting 1-2-3-4-5

Breathe out counting 1-2-3-4-5

Wait counting 1-2-3-4-5

Do the breathing exercise three times and then resume your conversation.

By doing this you are role-modelling how to stay calm and controlled, something your teenager will learn, and you and they can use it in all types of situations.

Importance of Validation

Most of the things young people struggle with are part of the transition from child to adulthood. However they can worry a lot about them and with so many stressors in their lives, they need an adult they can trust to help them make sense of things.

Therefore acknowledging and show your child you understand, talking through their feelings and how to manage them, through showing empathy - this makes the young person feel seen and heard. It grows their self esteem and eventually their confidence and they learn to deal with increasingly difficult situations and experiences.

Learning to deal with new situations and experiences, helps young people make timely and healthy adaptations to different circumstances - this builds resilience.

Whatever their feelings and thoughts treat them with care and respect so that they trust you - even if you do not agree with them. Allow them to express themselves fully and then explore different perspectives or view points that you might want them to consider.

Whatever behaviours you want to see in your child or teenager, you need to role model them in the way you listen and talk to them.

The activities will help you all with listening and talking to each other, so that you understand each other and know each of you can rely on other family members for support.

We would also encourage you to find a regular time slot to do the activities, this will help you get the most benefit from the programme, if completed regularly and within the recommended time slots.

LOHA Support

If you need help or advice following the activities or after conversations within your family. Remember you are not alone.

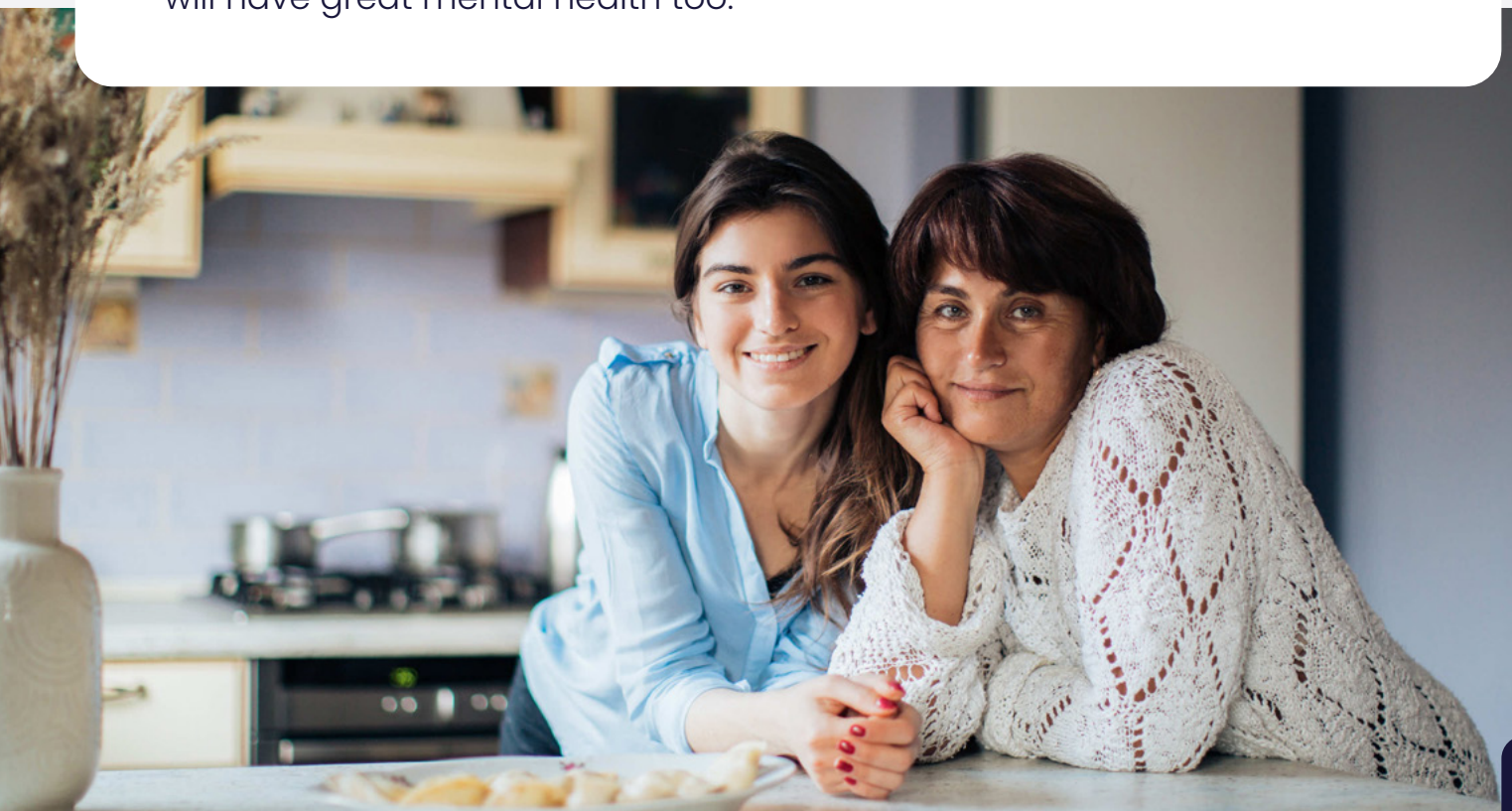
You can always join a parent and carers online session, ask questions, share experiences and learn from others in similar situations.

It is up to you if you turn on your camera, or give your first name only.

Once your programme is completed you will have the opportunity to maintain all the great work you have done as a family, and you can join the LOHA community to maintain progress and continue to provide support for your children and young people as they mature and come across many different situations and experiences on their way to independence and adulthood.

You will have provided your teenager with life's most important skill set - emotional intelligence, which means despite many of life's up and downs they will always find a way of managing their mental health.

What's more - your grandchildren will learn from their parents, and they will have great mental health too.



6. Frequently Asked Questions

You might have other questions for us and that's great.

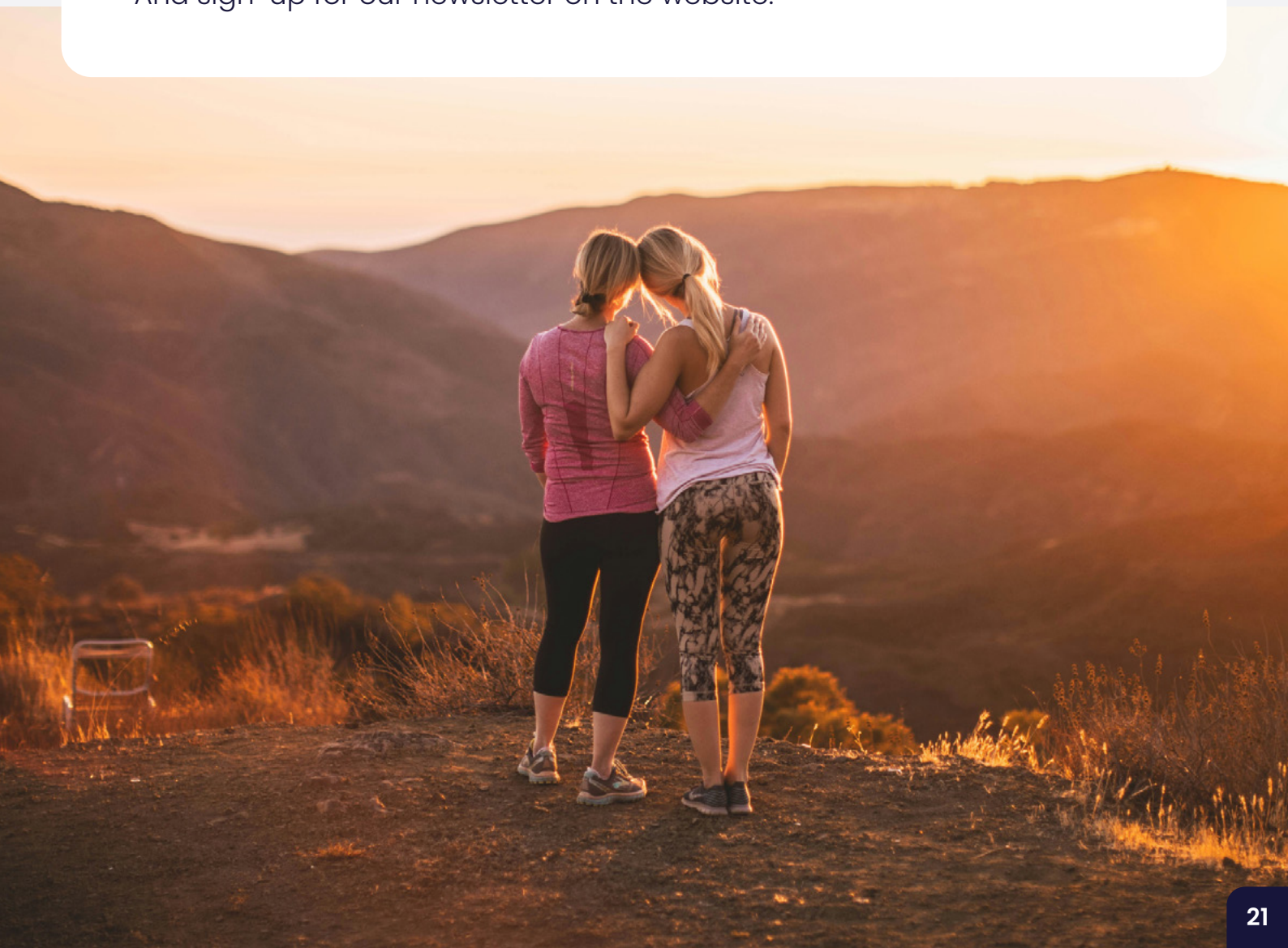
You can find the answers on our website, www.loha-community.com.

via our Chatterbot

or our [FAQ page](#).

You can also email us: info@loha-community.com.

And sign-up for our newsletter on the website.





7. Join LOHA

We look forward to welcoming you to our community.

www.loha-community.com

You can get lots of free advice because we want to help and have lots of experience.

