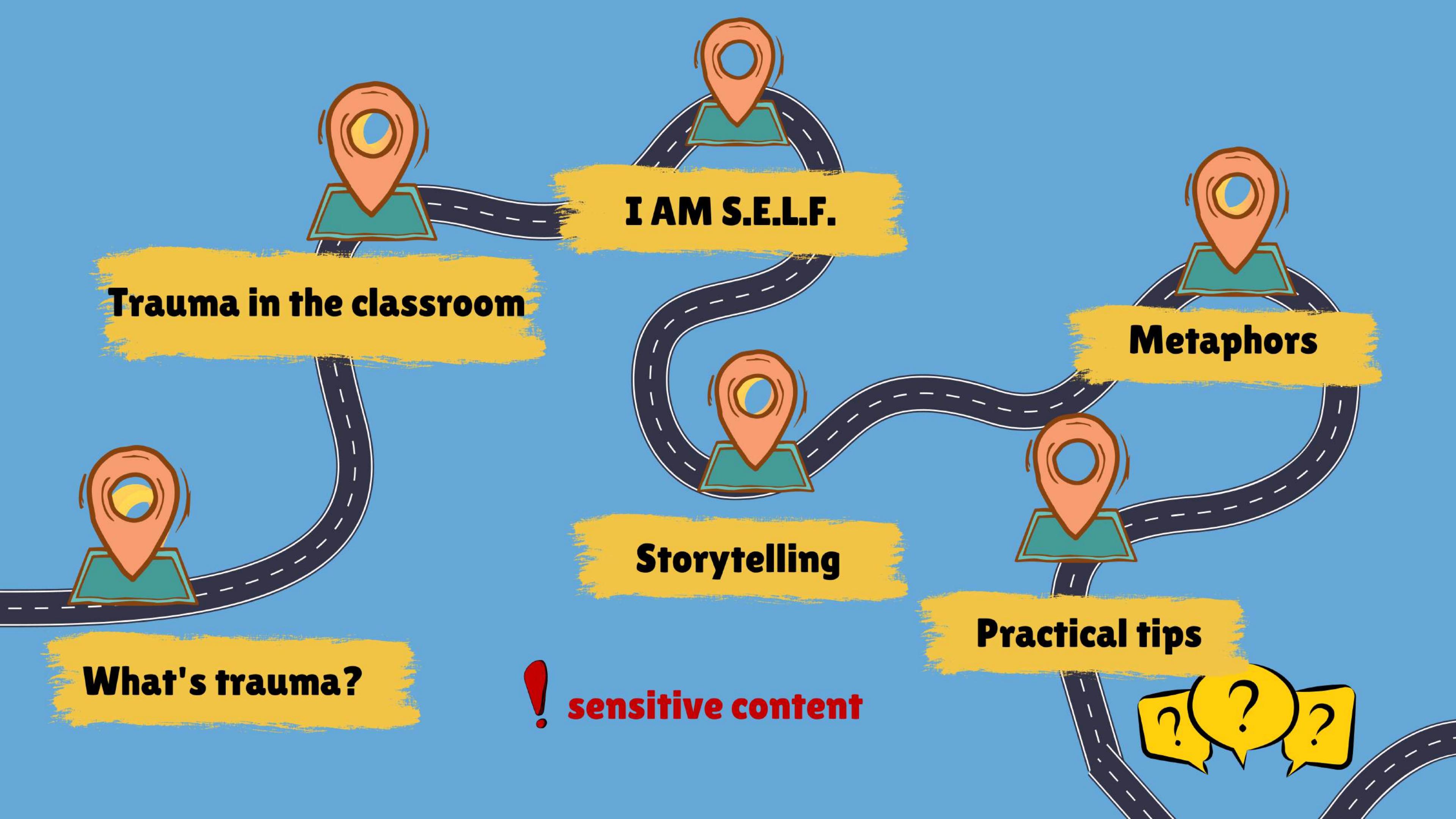




BEYOND BEING NICE: SUPPORTING ADULT ESOL LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

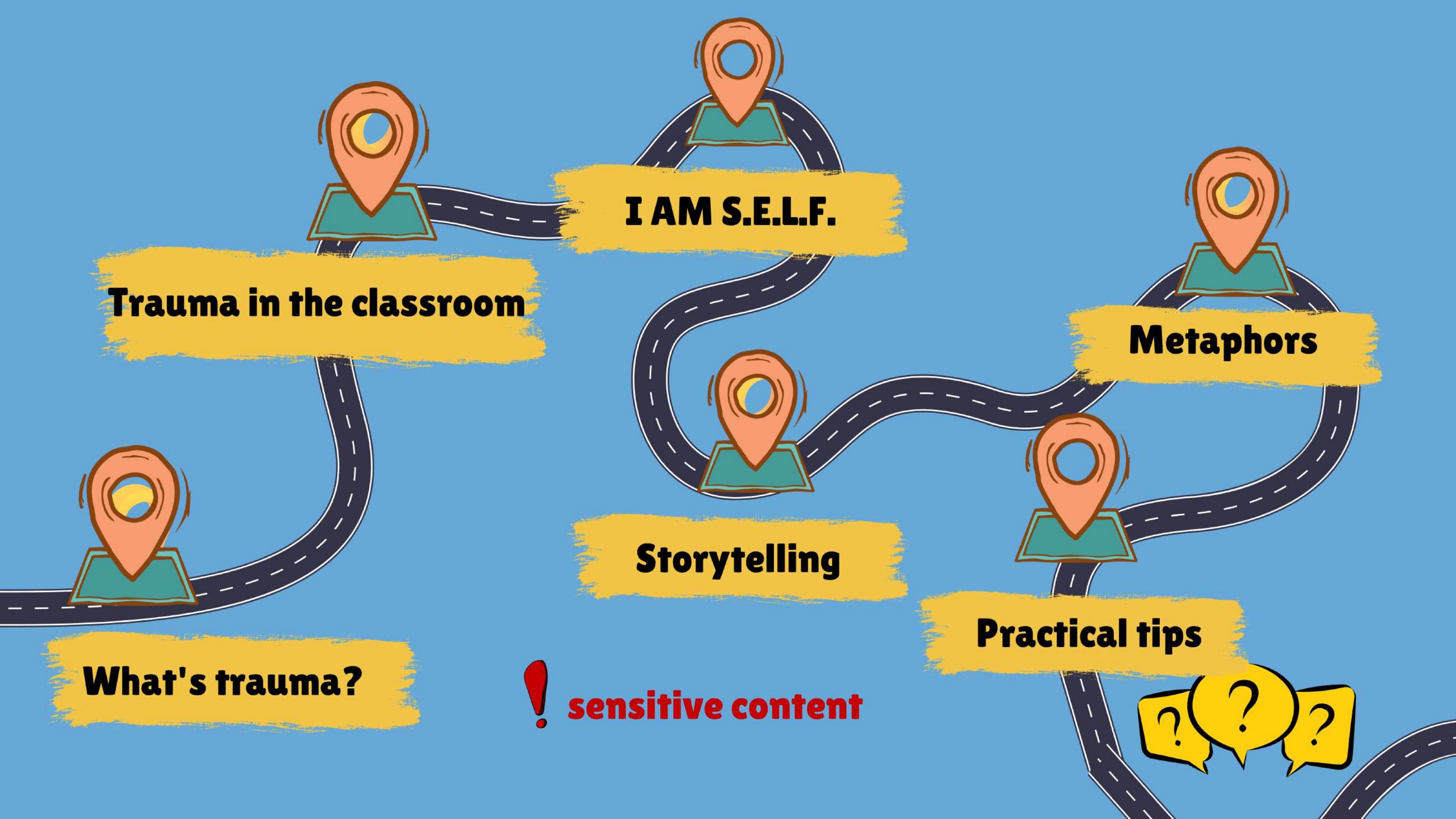
Lora Agbaso
Coleg Gwent



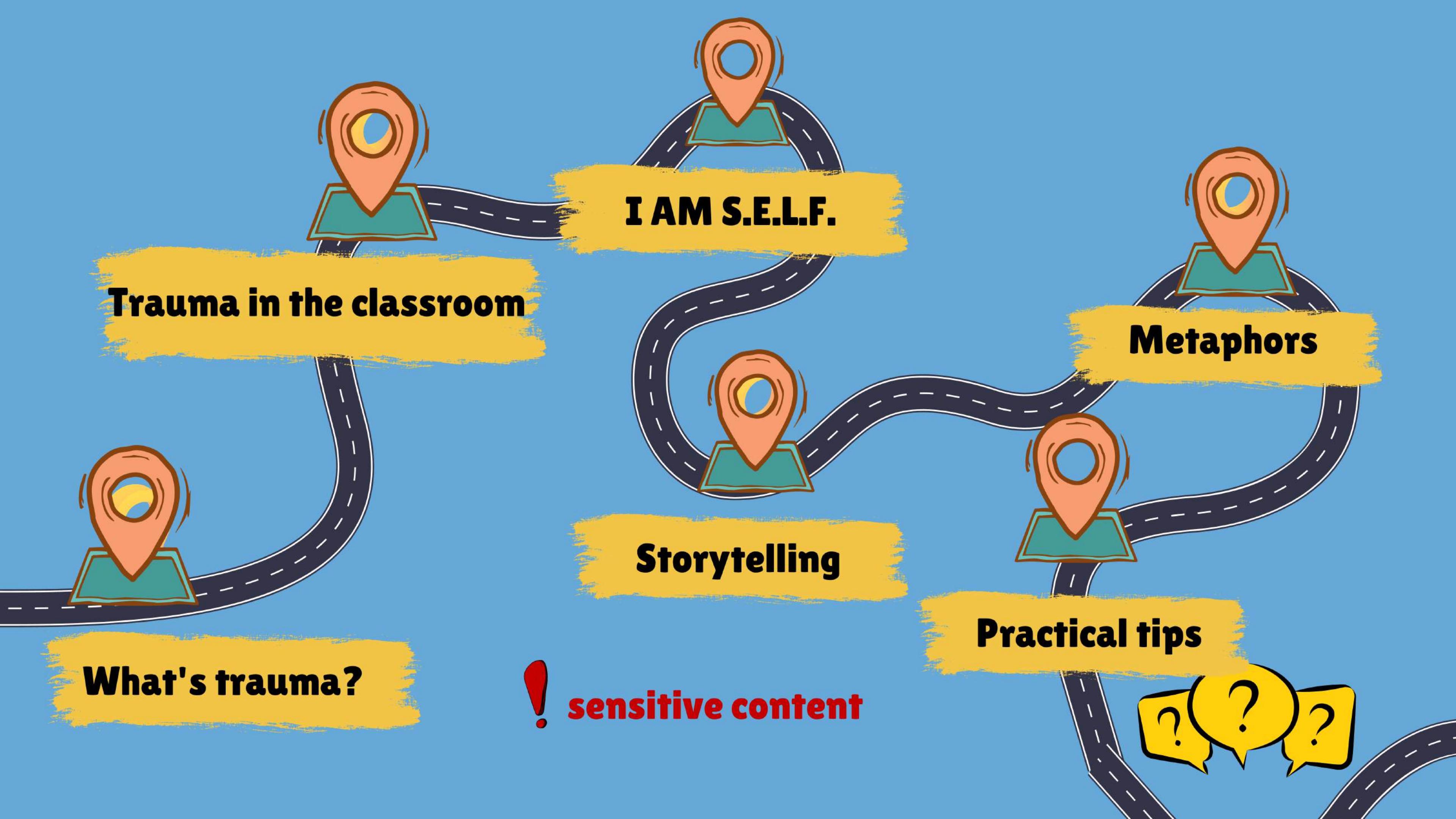
Trauma in the classroom



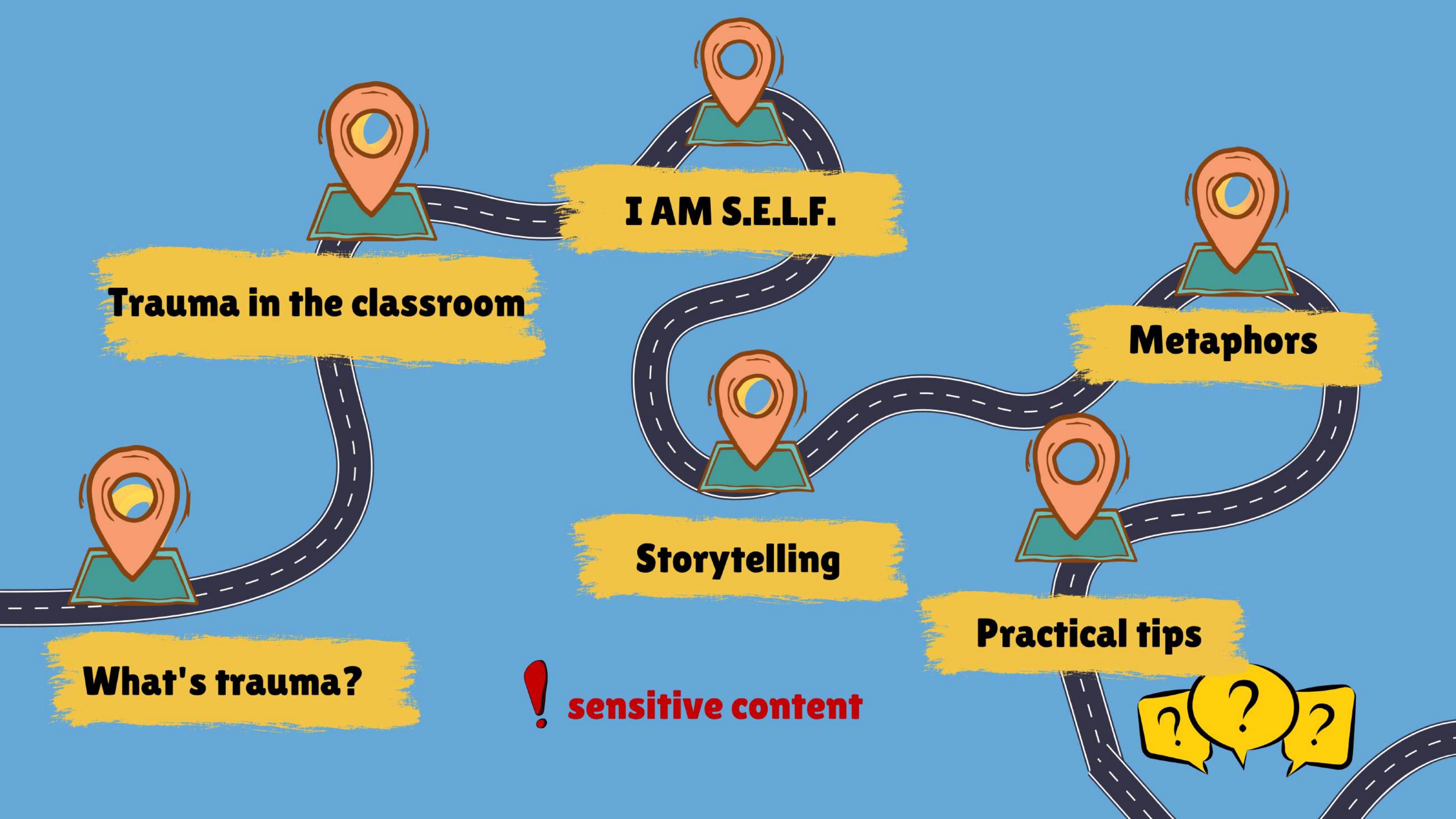
I AM S.E.L.F.



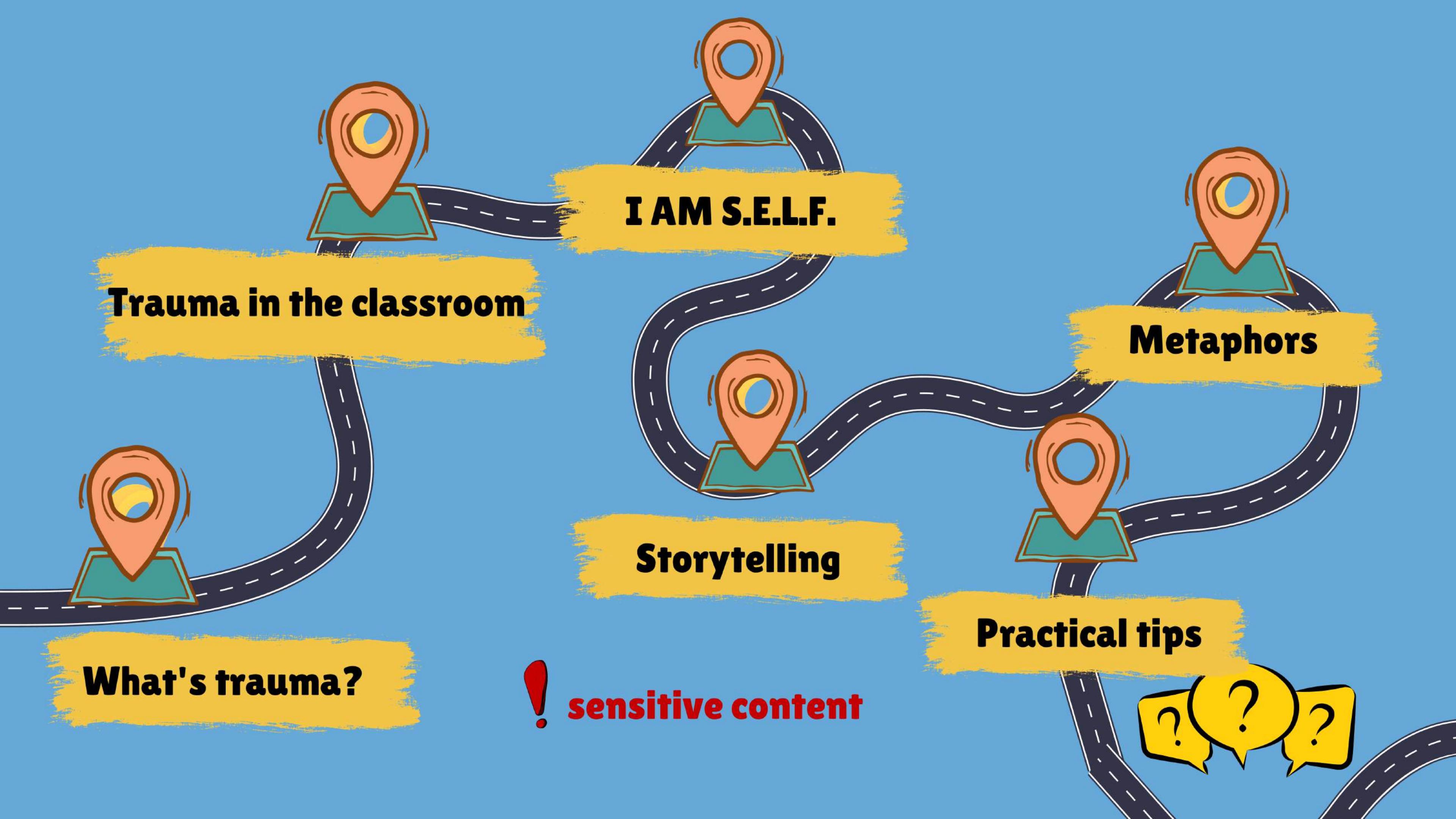
What's trauma?



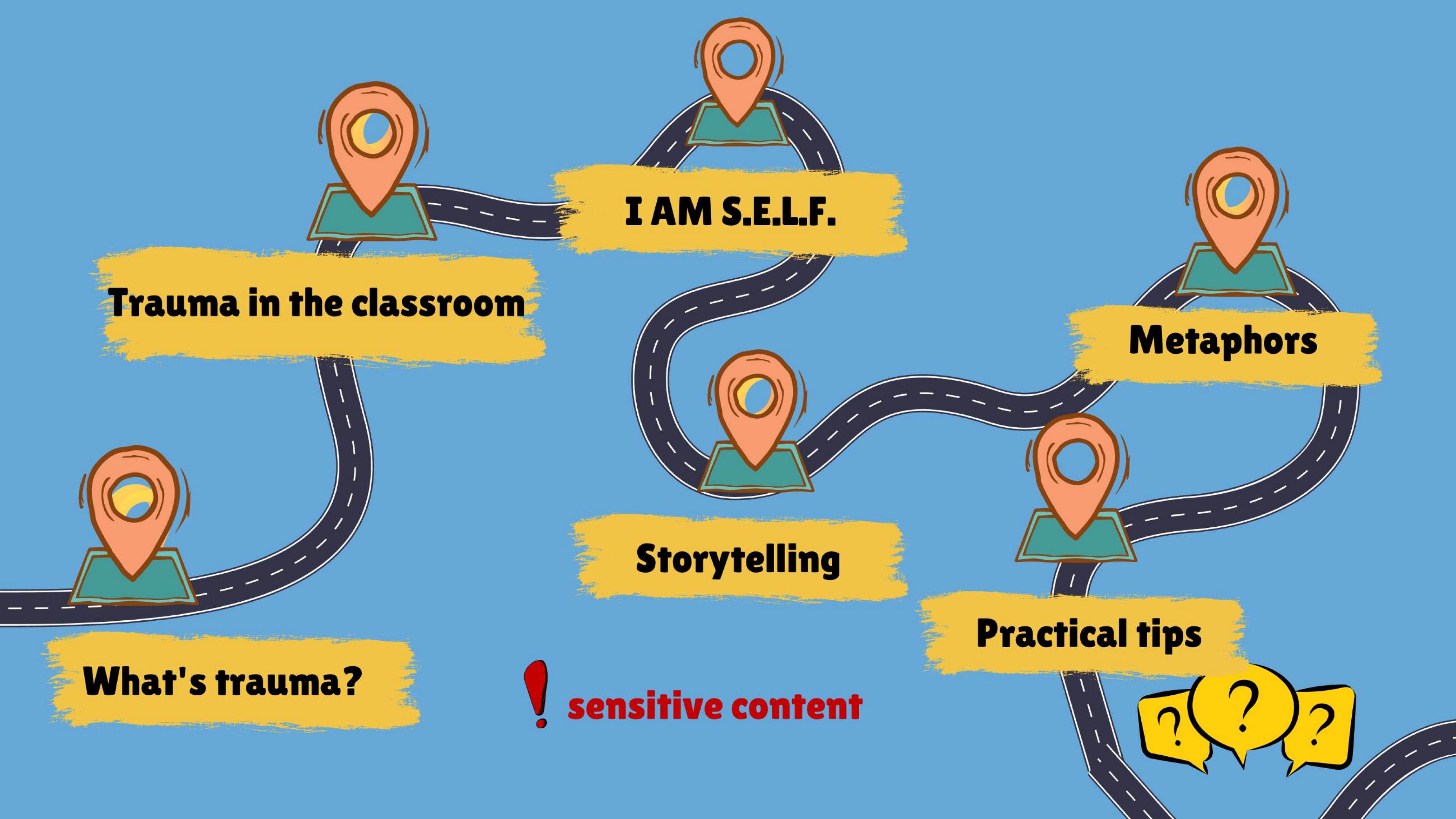
Storytelling



! sensitive content



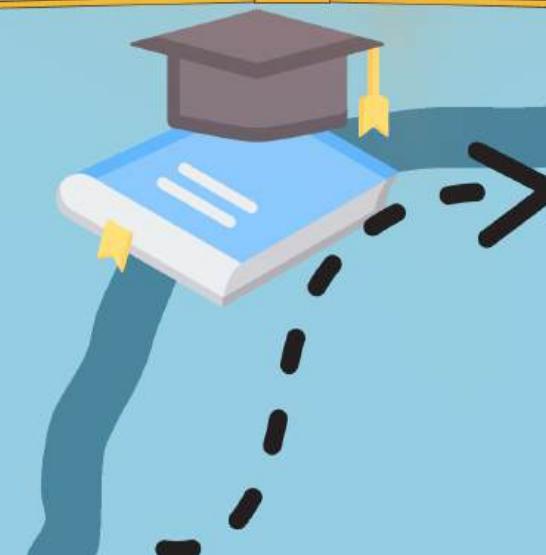
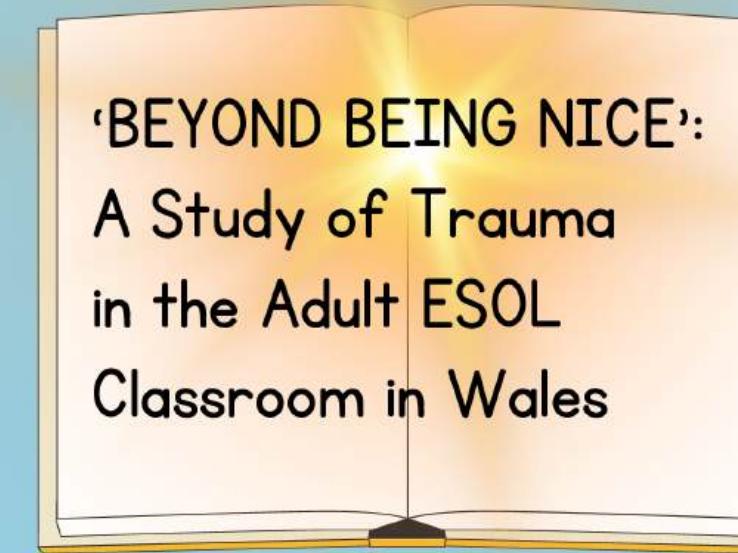
Metaphors



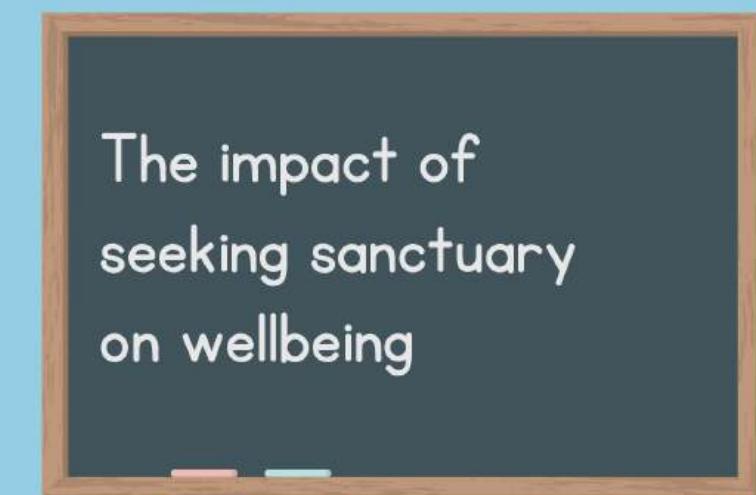
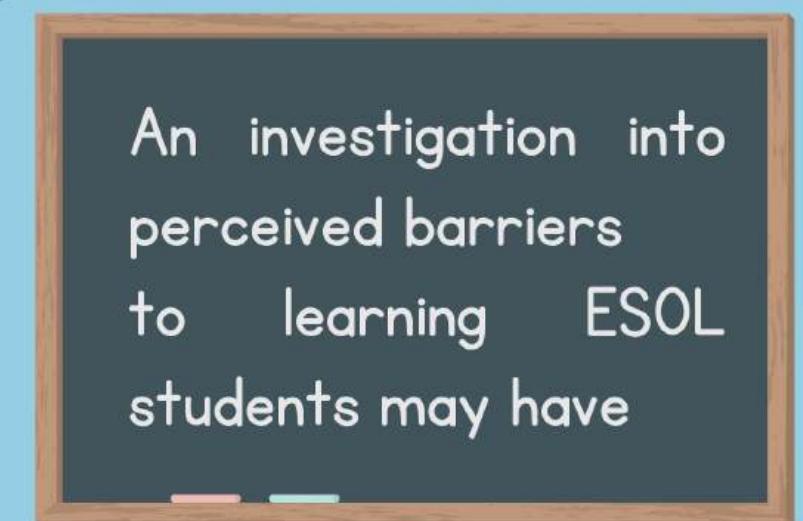
Practical tips



Who am I?



**lived experience of
forced migration and trauma**



DREAM

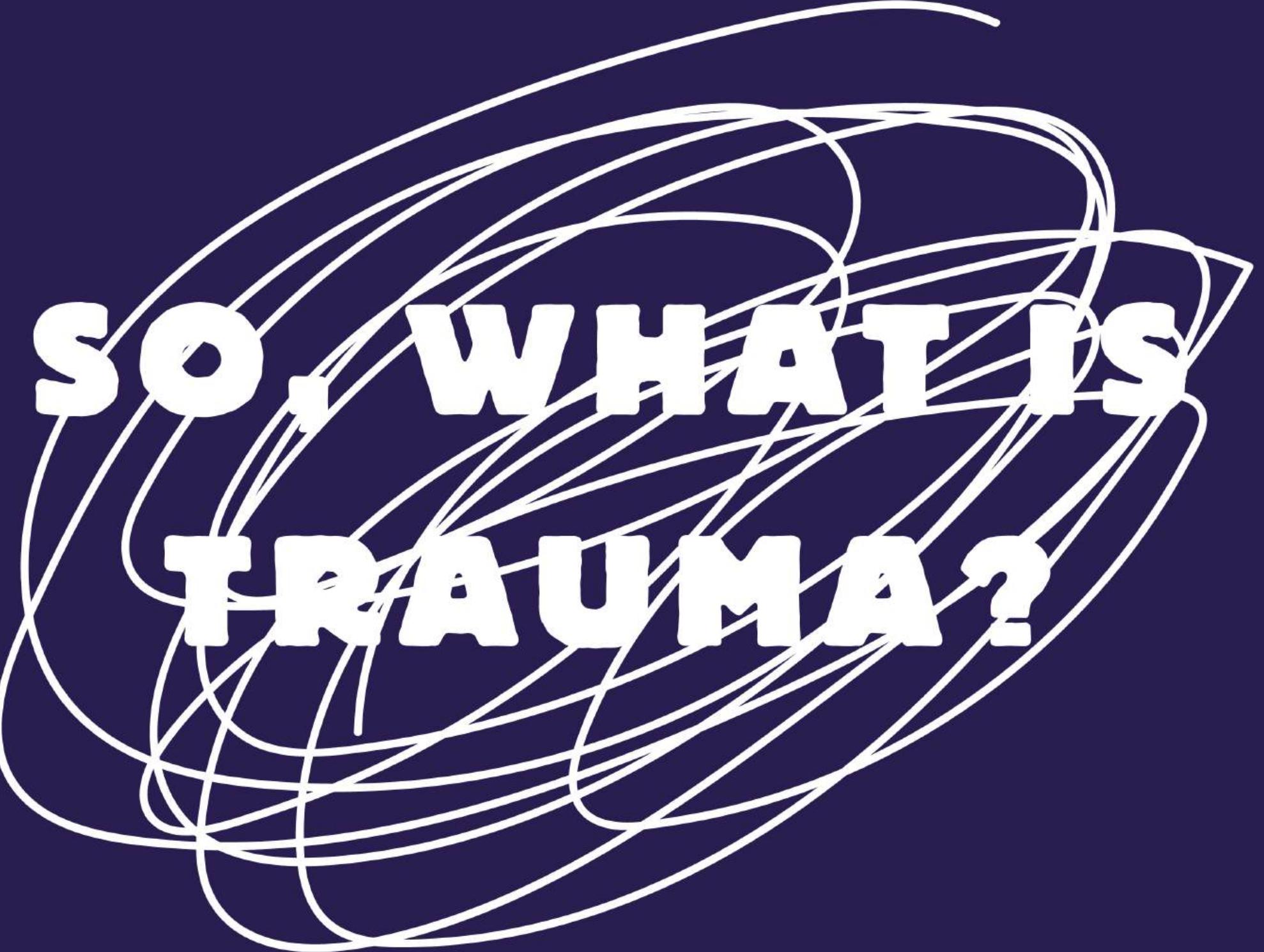


**A truly
trauma-informed
ESOL classroom**



If you had to describe it as a metaphor, how would you complete this sentence?

Working with traumatised
students for me is like ...
because ...



“

Trauma

Response to severe distress that

- **results in significant fear and helplessness**
- **exceeds one's ability to cope**
- **alters an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place**
- **destroys the individual's adaption to life, sense of control, protection, safety, connection and meaning**
- **leaves the imprint on mind, brain and body**
- **changes how we think and what we think about, and our very capacity to think**



(van der Kolk, 2015)

”

Forced migration and trauma



Home Office

legal system

hostility

education

forced poverty

exploitation

accommodation

**transformation
within family**



language barrier

new culture

fear

uncertainty

guilt

shame

triggers

ill mental health

**loss home
identity
self-worth**

'The absence of home creates a gap in refugees which makes them feel uncontained and they then look around to fill the gap, to make up for that loss, to re-create the protective and containing membrane of home.'

(Papadopoulos, 2002)





trauma responses

emotional

- difficulty to regulate emotions (*anger, fear, sadness, shame*)
- two extremes – overwhelmed or numb

physical

- hypervigilance (*sleep disturbances, responding to specific input*)
- different body system disorders
- somatic complains

behavioural

- avoidance (*people, places, situations*)
- reenactments
- self-harm or self-destructive behaviours

social

- lack of trust
- difficulty building relationships/ connecting with others
- refusing to work with other learners

trauma responses

developmental

- withdrawal and isolation
- rebellion
- reluctance to leave home
- confusion
- depression
- fear

cognitive

- alter three main cognitive patterns: about self, the world and the future (*individuals - damaged, the world - unsafe and unpredictable, the future - hopeless*)
- ability to navigate life
- feeling different from others
- triggers and flashbacks
- dissociation (*fixed eyes, long period of silence*)
- the capacity to focus and sustain attention
- the storage of new material, its subsequent retrieval
- limits the acquisition of a new language
- communicative ability altered or shut down (*loss of words or ability to express one's thoughts*)

TRAUMA RESPONSES IN THE CLASSROOM

I am an asylum seeker. Shame...

I am nothing.

Something is wrong with me.

What if a letter from Home Office comes?

I can't get hold of my solicitor.

I have no control.

I couldn't sleep for some nights.

I can't focus.

I can't speak English.
I have no words.

I can't remember the words.
Everything is so confusing and scary.

No money... How can I buy food and essentials for my family?

I am so worried about my family back home.

I feel so lonely.

I want to work on my own. I don't trust them.

I can't plan.
I can't dream.
There is no future.



Don't pity me.

I don't know why I always feel anger, fear, sadness or shame?

Memories...

It's not safe everywhere. I want to hide in a deep dark wood.

This is not my home. Anybody can come any time and tell me to leave.

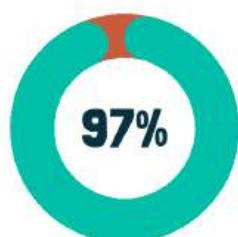
Wales, 2019
ESOL teachers

– interviews (4)
– survey (62)

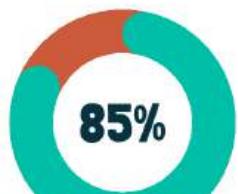
TRAUMA IN THE ESOL CLASSROOM



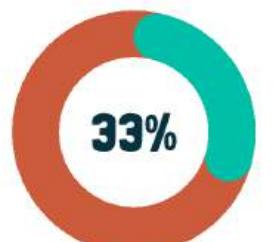
TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF FORCED MIGRANTS IN THE CLASSROOM



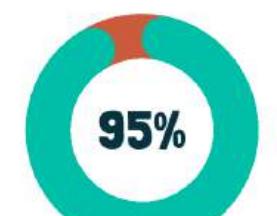
believe learners experienced trauma



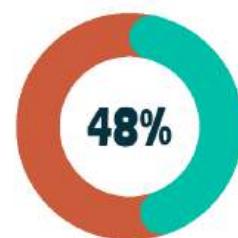
approached by learners to talk about trauma



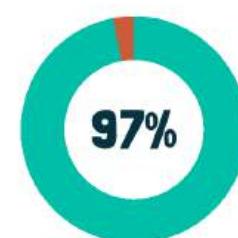
understand the impact of trauma on the brain



no trauma training



asked a colleague for advice



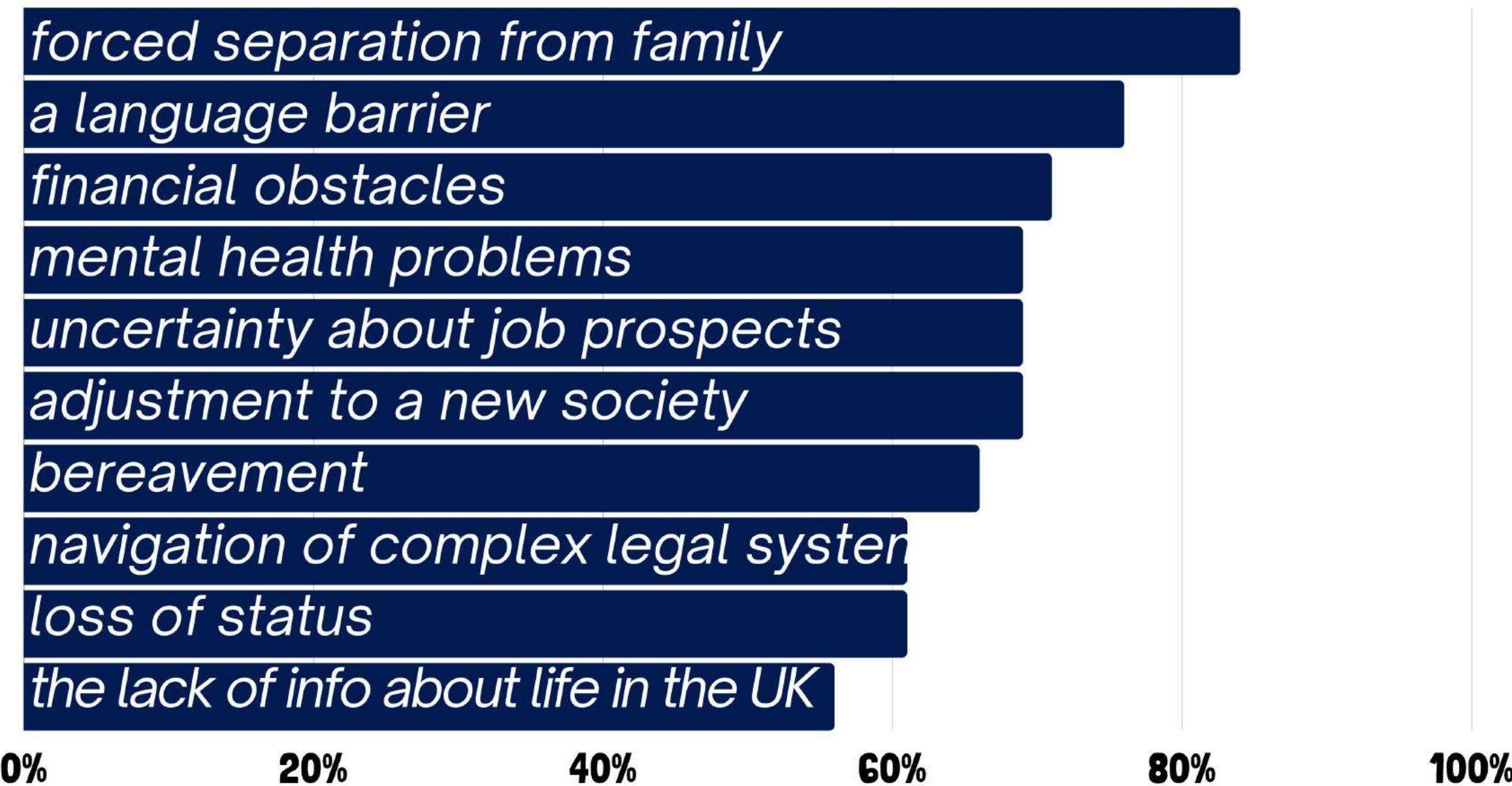
interested in receiving trauma training

“As a teacher, you are often the person that a student sees most. The trust built is incredible and disclosures can be frequent and the importance of a positive environment for wellbeing during this time is underestimated.”

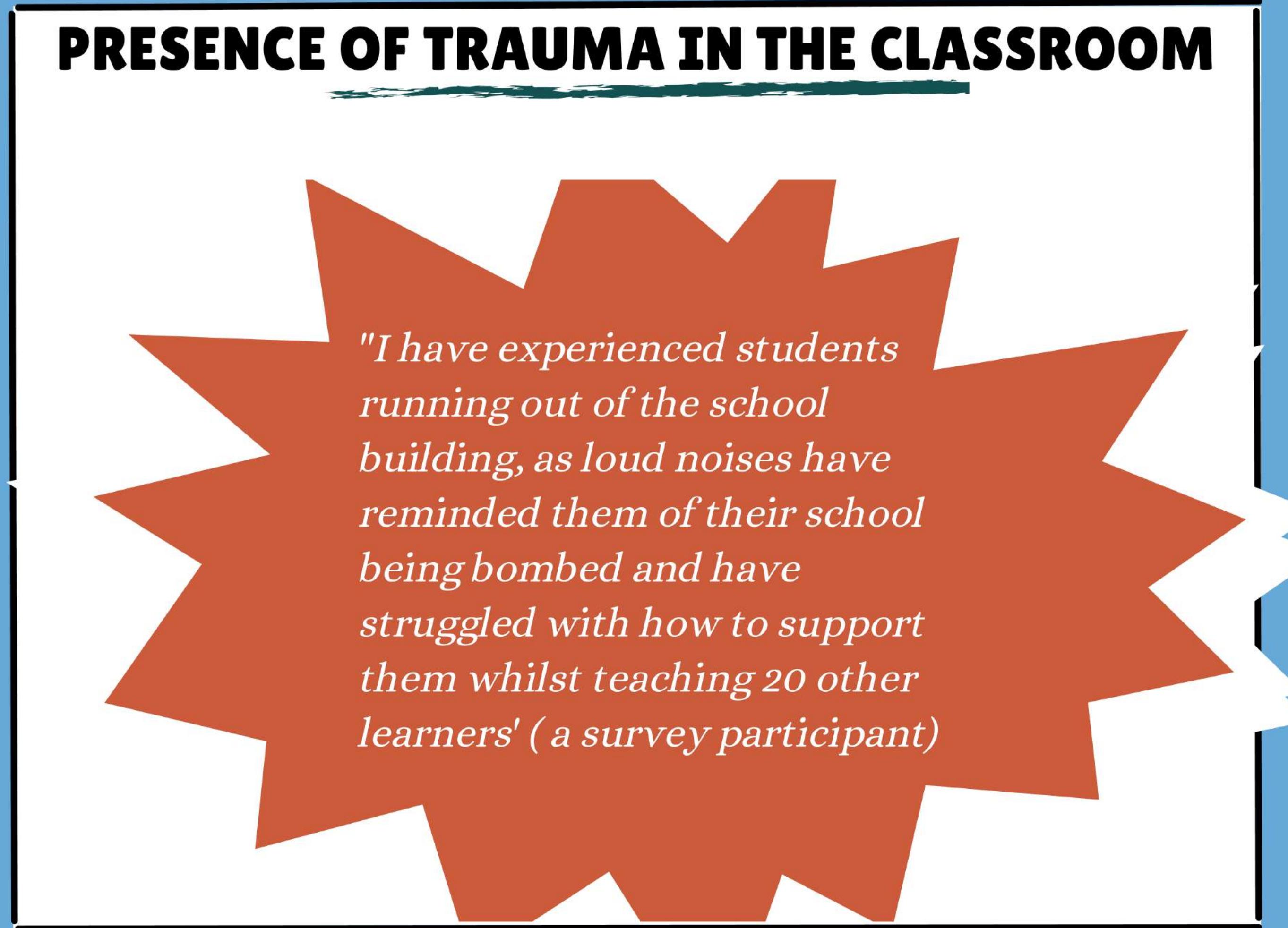
(an interview participant)

PRESENCE OF TRAUMA IN THE CLASSROOM

Discussions about frustrations

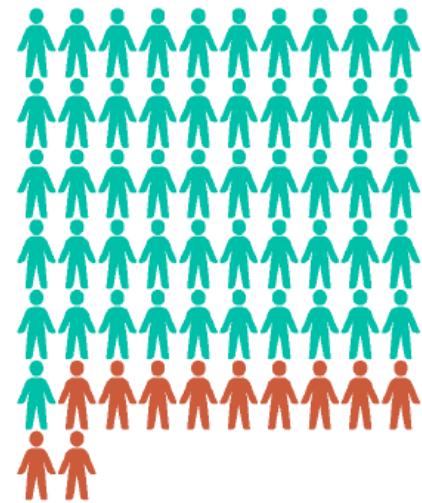


PRESENCE OF TRAUMA IN THE CLASSROOM

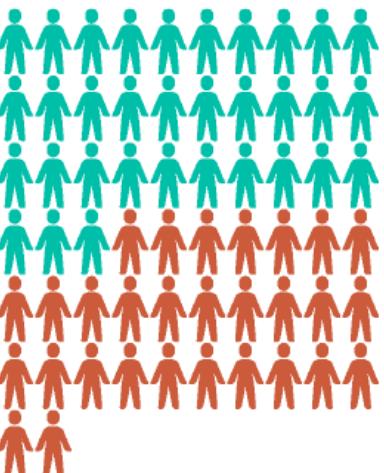


"I have experienced students running out of the school building, as loud noises have reminded them of their school being bombed and have struggled with how to support them whilst teaching 20 other learners' (a survey participant)

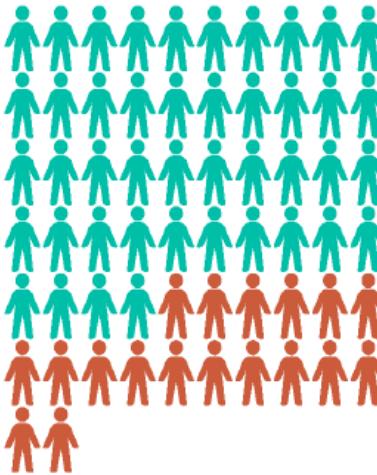
BEHAVIOURS AS THE RESPONSE TO TRAUMA



**difficulty
to focus**



withdrawal



**difficulty to
remember a
new material**



**refusing to
work with
others**



**looking
exhausted**



What about
your classroom experiences?

TRAUMA RESPONSES IN THE CLASSROOM



I AM SELF model

Identify

the signs of trauma, its detrimental impact on the brain and second language learning.

Accept

that some 'bad behaviours' can be symptoms of trauma. Integrate this into teaching practice to assist learners.

Manage

the following concepts as central in planning a course

Safety

(physical, psychological, social and moral)

Emotions

(educate about emotions, trauma and the brain, body reaction and its management)

Loss

(value a shared experience, meaning, a space for stories and learners' voice, boundaries, cultural aspects)

Future

(meaningful activities, the vision of the future, skills in daily lives, participatory pedagogy)

(Agbaso & Roberts, 2023)

Safety

Changes in the nervous system affect the perception of risk and safety (van der Kolk, 2014). It is necessary condition for learning and should be the primary goal.

Emotions

Difficulties in managing emotions and the loss of emotional control To accommodate socio-emotional needs, work with emotions, feelings and how to manage them.

Loss

Loss of home creates a sense of insecurity and an unexplainable gap (Papadopoulos, 2002). Appreciating the value of connecting with others with a shared experience, help create meaning, provide space for stories and give student a voice.



Future

Deprives the agency over lives and the hopeful vision of the future. Offer meaningful activities to build the skills of imagining the future and participation.



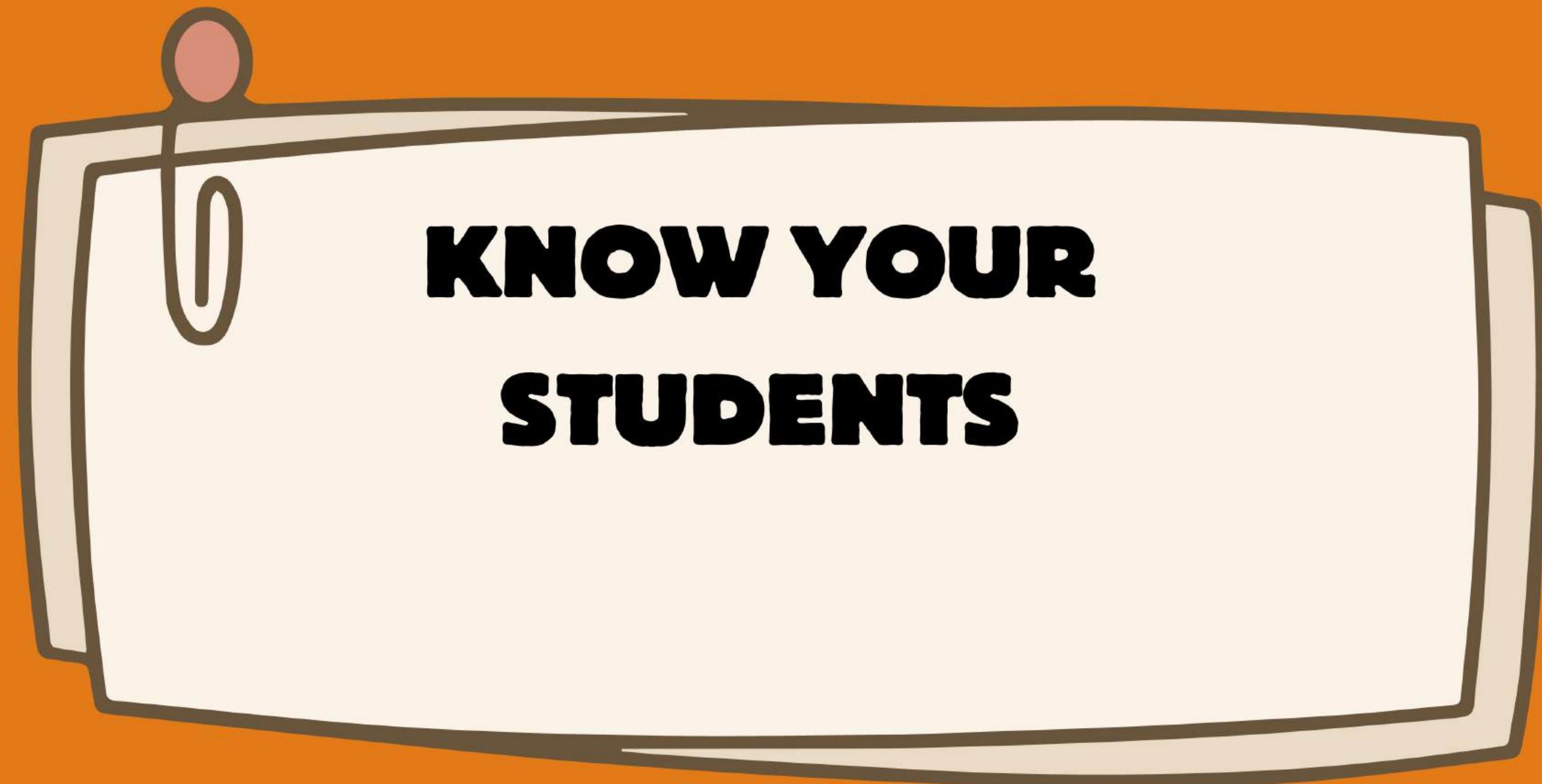
**SOME IDEAS
FROM
MY CLASSROOM**



**SAFETY
FIRST**



What does **safety**
mean to you?



**KNOW YOUR
STUDENTS**

PREPARING A SAFE SPACE

PAST

Language River (find out about Sts background, use of different languages, literacy experience)

My language learning journey

Your name: _____
Your preferred name: _____
Languages you spoke as a child: _____
(How did you learn the language? What helped you?) _____

PRESENT

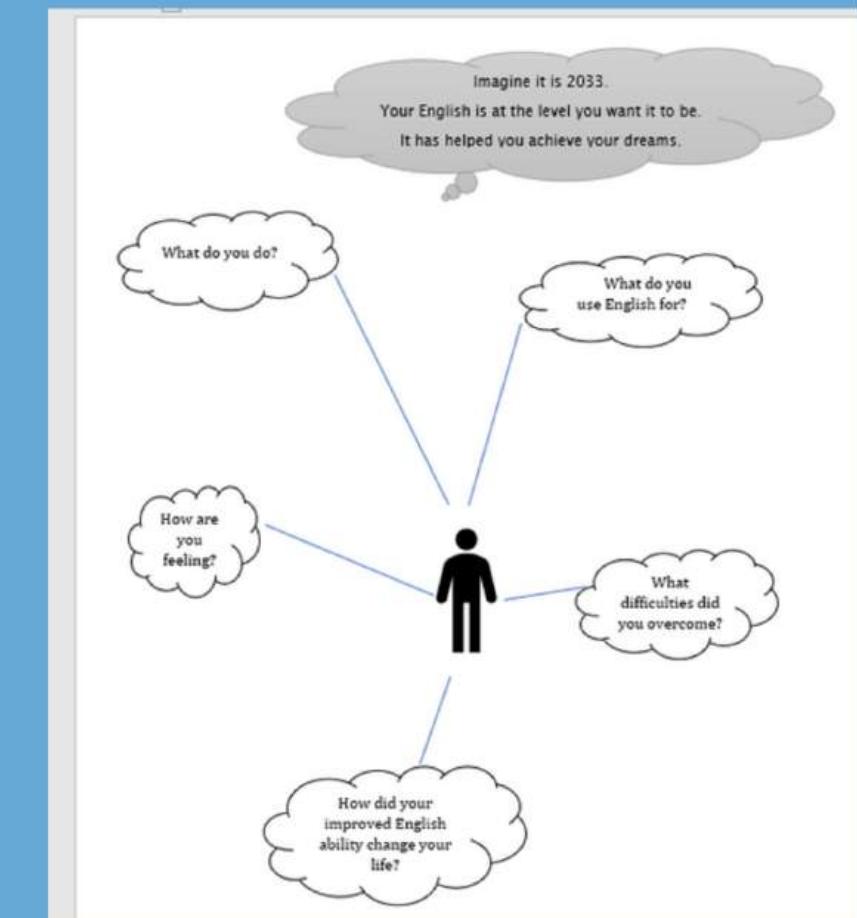
Questionnaire

A QUESTIONNAIRE

| | |
|--|----------------|
| What is your name? | |
| Where were you born? | |
| What language(s) can you speak? | |
| Why did you join this course? | |
| Do you prefer sunny days or rainy days? Why? | |
| What do you like doing in your free time? | |
| Name three things you want to talk about in our lessons | 1. 2. 3. |
| Is there anything you don't want to talk about in the class? | |
| What are your goals after graduation? | |
| What are two things you like about yourself? | 1. 2. |
| What is your favourite place in Newport? Why? | |
| Name three things you expect from this course | 1. 2. 3. |
| How do you get to college? | |

FUTURE

Future self

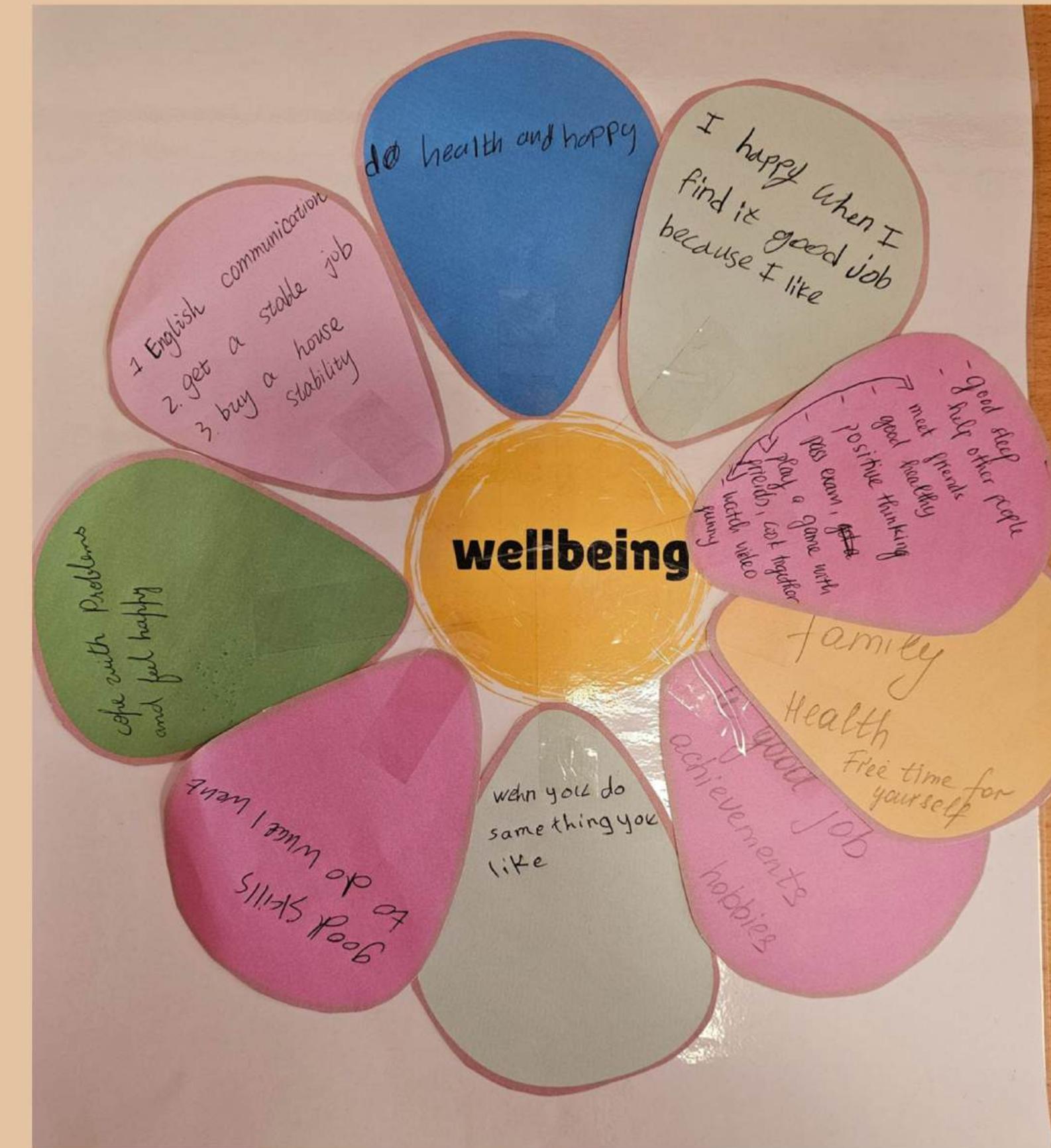


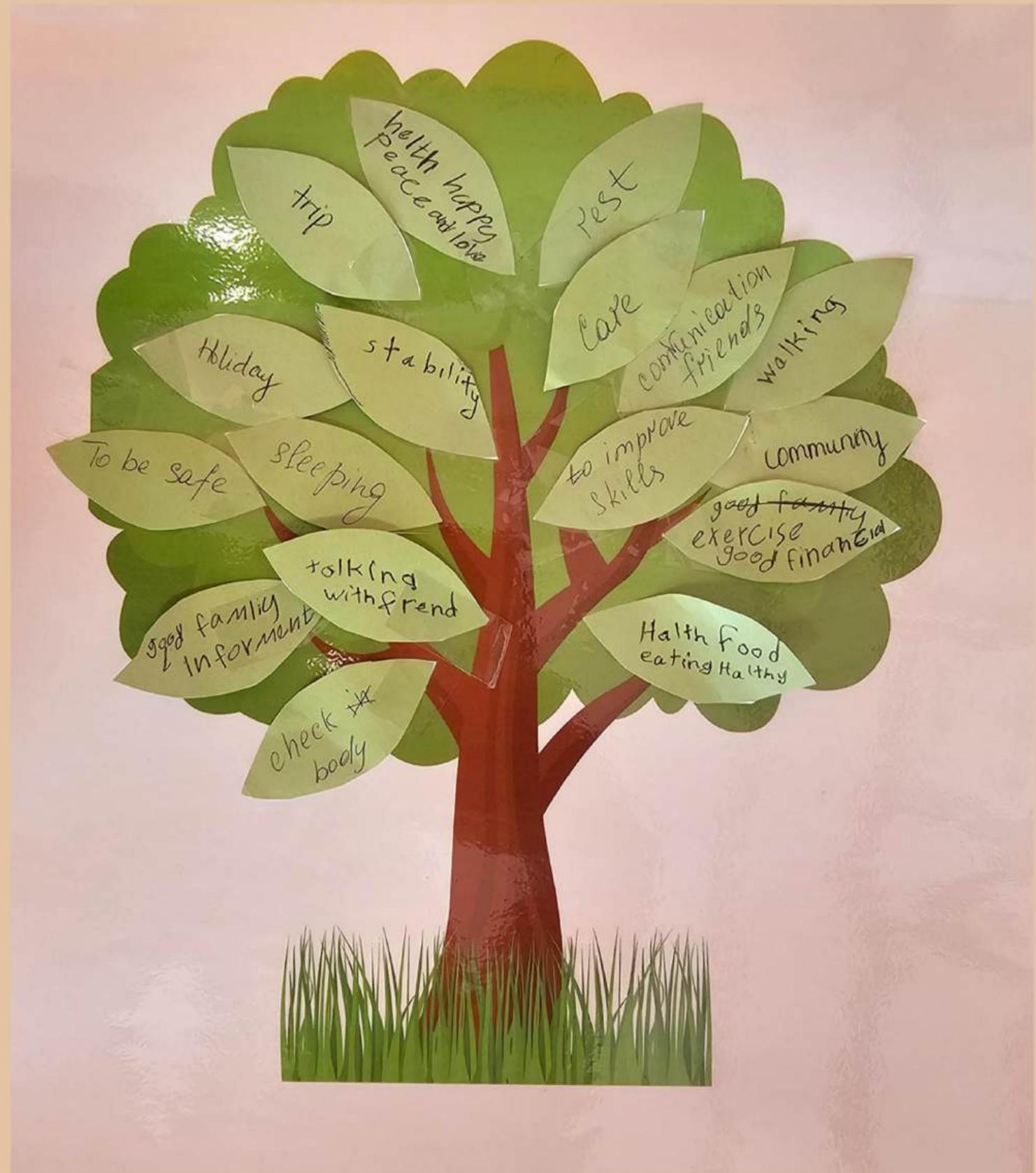


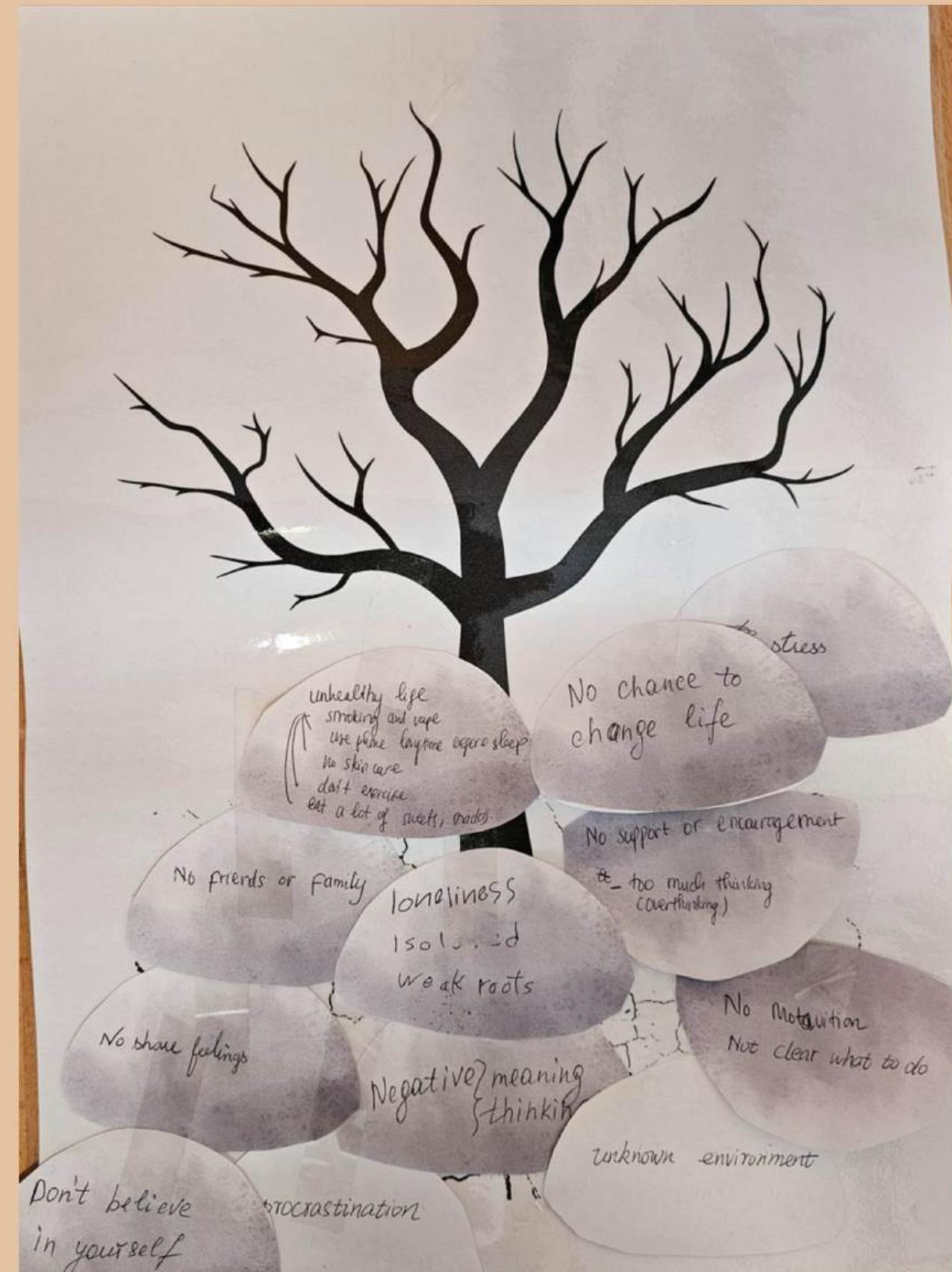
Read
your learners

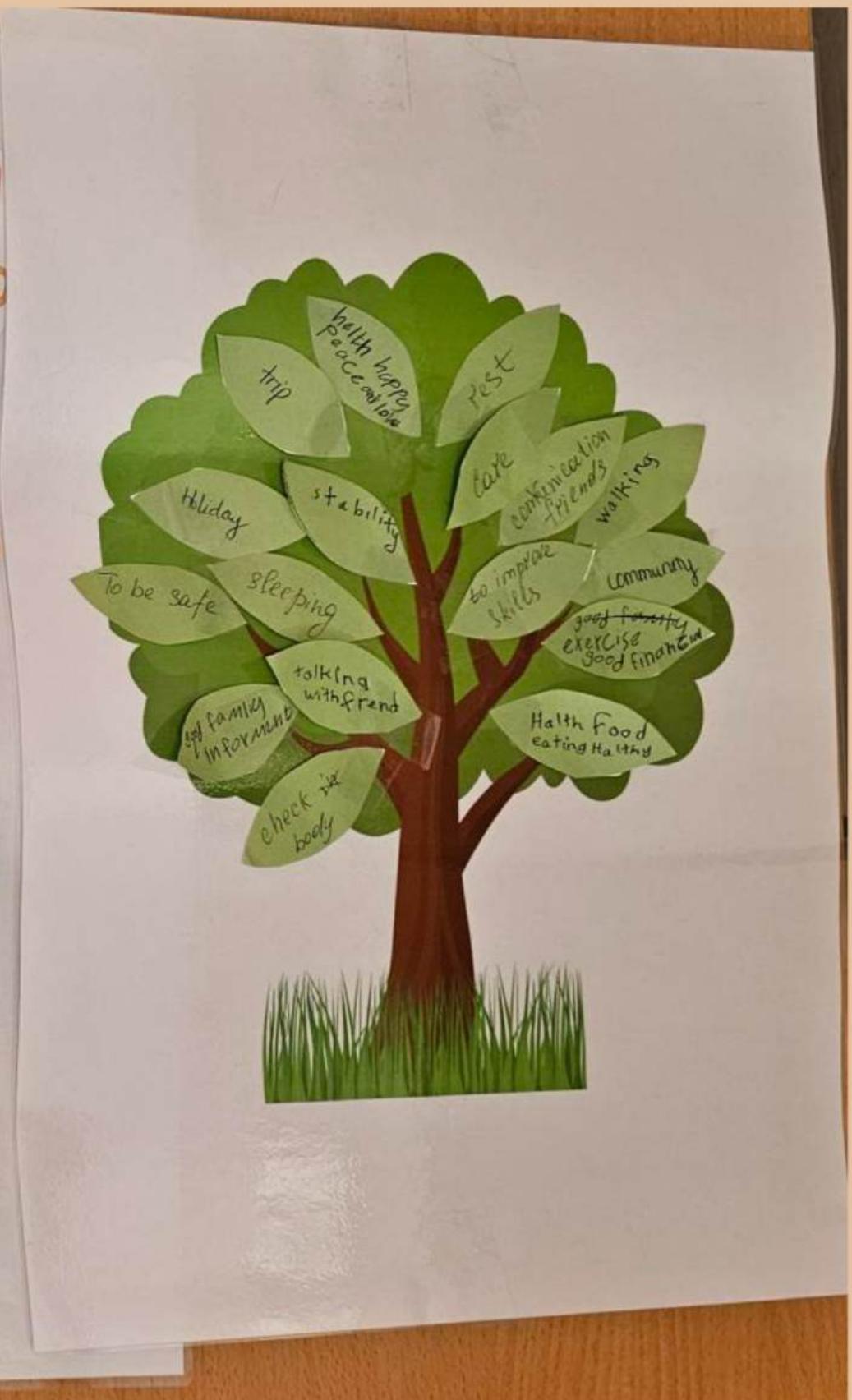
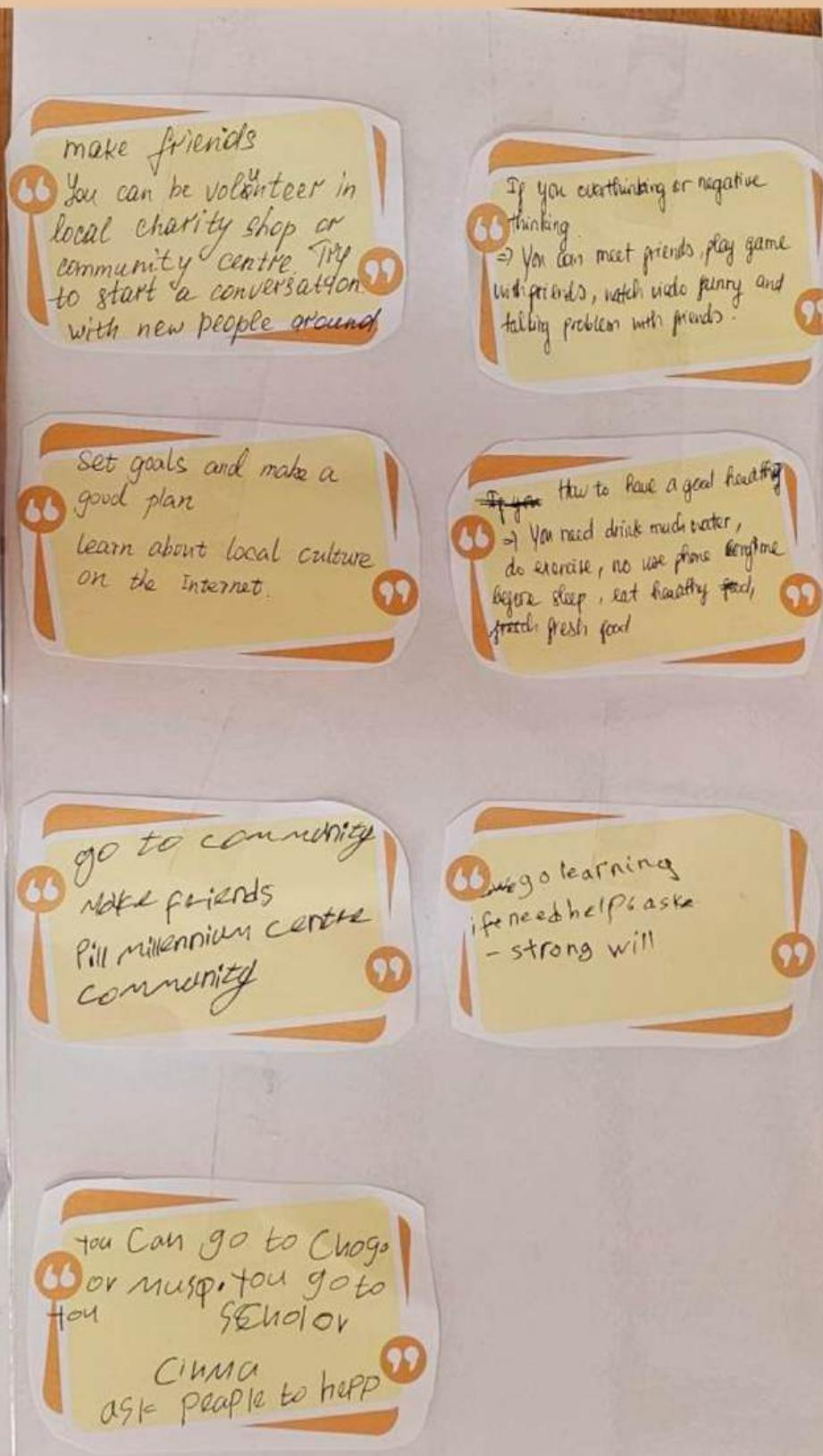
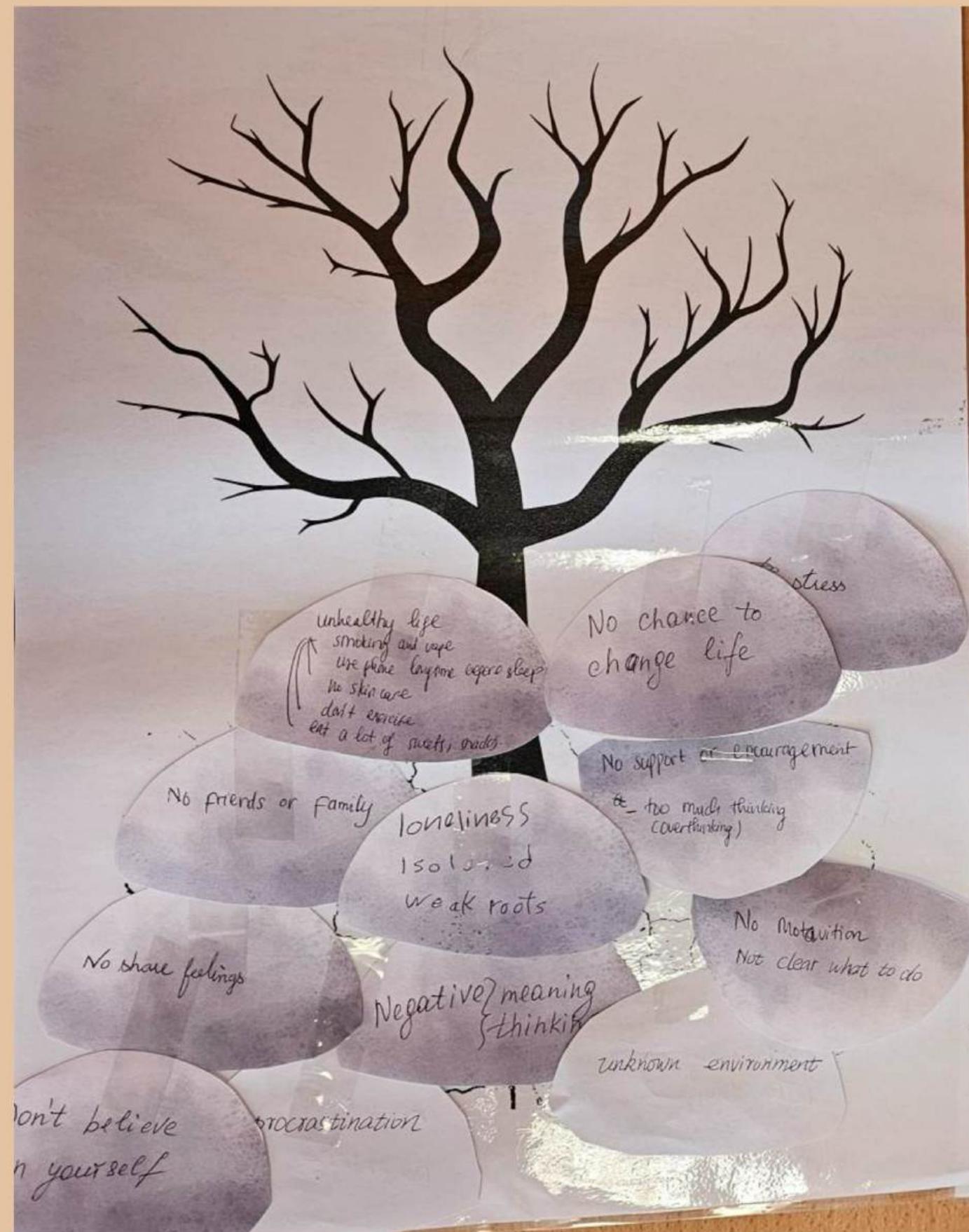


**LEARN
ABOUT WELLBEING
FROM EXPERIENCE**









OUR POSTERS

VOLUNTEER. BE BUSY.

' I try to keep active and volunteer in a charity shop. That really helps my wellbeing because I am busy. I meet new people and speak English'.

Lamaa

MAKE FRIENDS

'Don't stay at home all the time. Go to Pill Millenium Centre. You can meet people from different countries. You can play football. You can talk with people. You can find friends there'

Mohammed

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

' Find somebody you can share your feelings and your thoughts. You are not alone. Speak to people'

Ahmed



**MEANINGFUL
TOPICS**



Identity



Belonging



Culture Shock



Loneliness



Trauma



Volunteer With FoodCycle Newport

Week in, week out we invite people from all backgrounds to come together and share delicious meals made from surplus food.

Join the FoodCycle family as a volunteer and help end hunger and loneliness in your community.

www.foodcycle.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer
Registered Charity Number 1134423



Sign up



Everyone is welcome

We provide a safe, welcoming space to share food and conversation, helping to strengthen communities and enhance the health and mental wellbeing of people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

This wouldn't be possible without people like **you!**

There's a **volunteer** role for everyone and we're really flexible. Whether you want to **collect food** from local outlets, **cook** up a storm in the kitchen, **welcome our guests** as they arrive, support with **regional marketing** or maybe you'll help lead the sessions and become a **Project Leader**.

Whatever role takes your fancy, we'd love to hear from you!

FoodCycle Newport

Meals served every Tuesday at 6.30pm
Community House, Eton Road, Newport
NP19 0BL

Volunteer shifts available from 2.00pm

www.foodcycle.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer
newport@foodcycle.org.uk 02077 292 775



Sign up

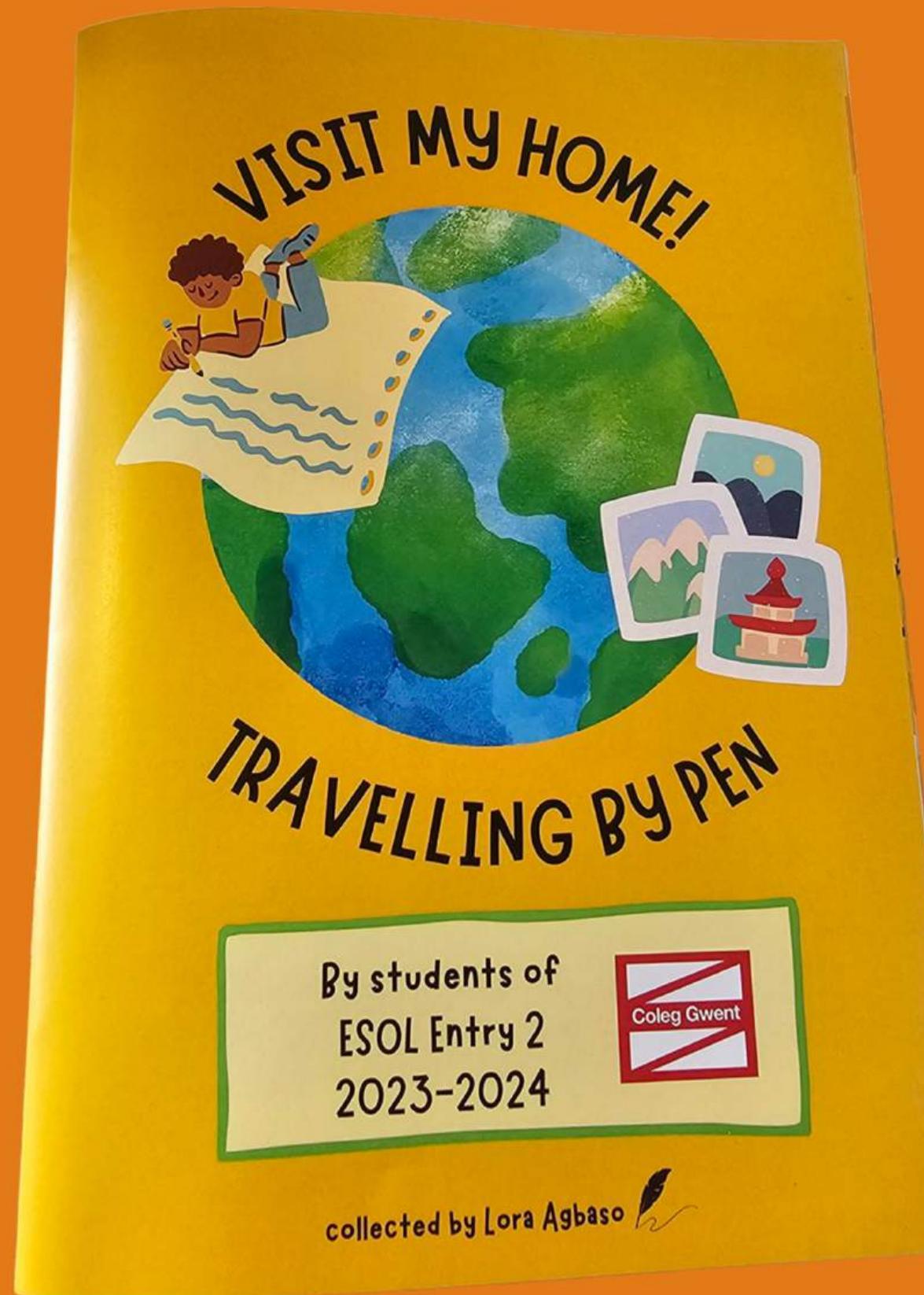




EXPERT HOUR







Country: China

TOUCH OF MY HOME

When my son was born, I bought a little bunny doll for him. I hope the bunny doll can always accompany him. When we moved to the UK we took the doll with us. I see this doll every time and I can remember many things in China. At first, this doll was bigger than my son. But now my son has grown up and he is bigger than this doll. My son holds it every time when he sleeps. It seems it brings him a sense of security. One time, he saw I put the bunny into the washing machine. He was crying. I think he regards the bunny as a friend. We have a lot of interesting things about this bunny.

SMELL OF MY HOME

I've been to the UK for eight months. I missed a lot of food made by my mum, such as lychee meat, boiled fish with pickled Chinese cabbage, and so on. Yesterday, I ate spare rib soup at my aunt's house. It reminds me of my mum's cooking in China. Making this soup takes a long time. So, I could smell the aroma of meat in the air. It seemed as if I came back to China. First, we wash and boil the spare ribs. Then we put them in cold water to stew. After that, we add salt, and a spoonful of sugar to season. Finally, we put carrots, mushrooms, and corn. It takes about an hour in total. The first spoon tastes salty, but then you will think the soup is fresh and sweet. In winter, my mum often cooks this soup, because I feel very warm after eating this soup.

SOUND OF MY HOME

I usually listen to music when I am on the bus. I can enjoy my time quietly. I listen to Chinese songs and English songs, but most of them are Chinese songs. Taylor Swift's songs are my favourite. Her songs have a strong sense of rhythm. They sound exciting. The lyrics seem to be telling stories. I used to learn English by listening to her songs in China. So now listening to her songs reminds me of the time when I was studying English hard at high school. Her songs always inspire me to move forward.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

When I go shopping, I always pass by a bubble tea shop. I always go inside to buy a cup of bubble tea. In the shop, I feel like I am in China. The shop assistant is from China, and the menu is in Chinese. The bubble tea tastes the same as in China. I feel very relaxed there. I remember the good time with friends in China. We usually order bubble tea and talk to each other to enjoy the relaxing time. There are also many kinds of drink, besides bubble tea. I also like fruit tea. If the weather is hot, the fruit tea will cool you down. The flavour of the tea in the shop makes me very comfortable. I like tea fragrance very much.

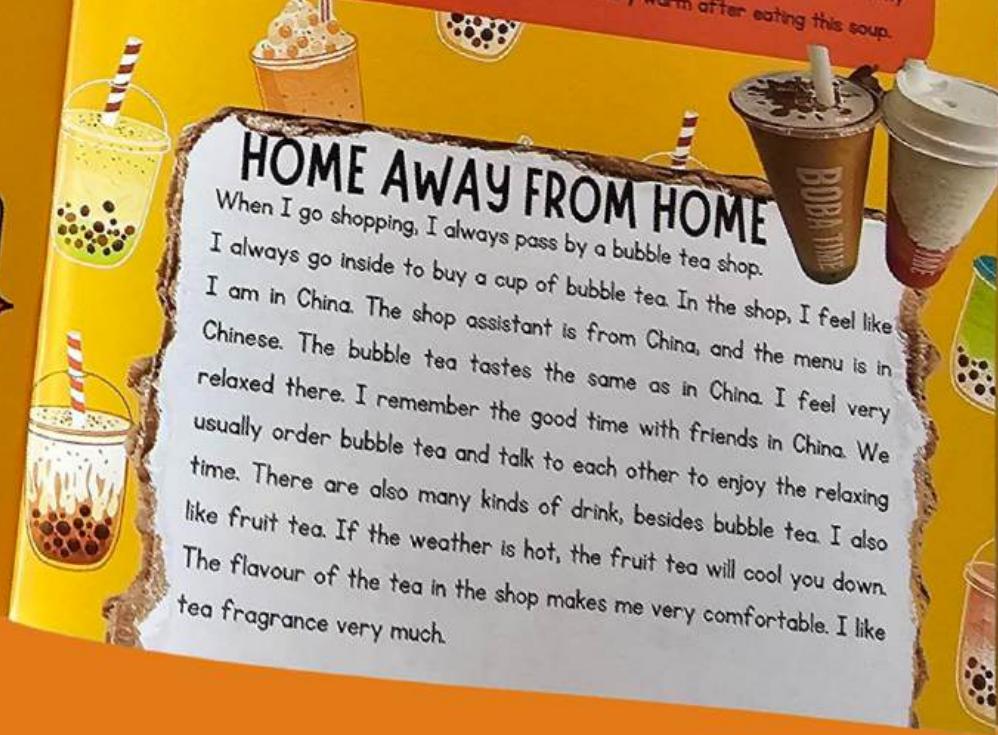
Your Guide: Jodie











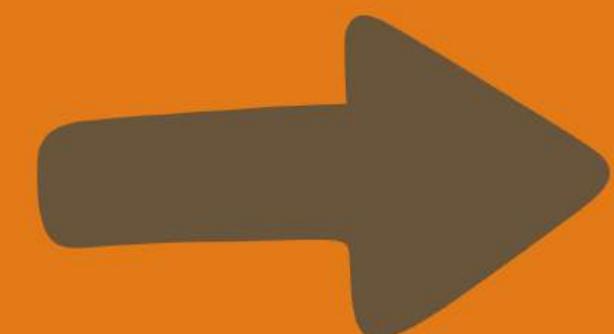
1 1 1 - 4

Newport is a great place.

It is a quiet city but it is very exciting place. There are lot of lovely things to check out in Newport. Like ~~the Tredegar~~ house, Wetland, The Roman Amphitheater, Newport Castle.

The river front ~~theatre~~ theater.

The Newport transport has good prices but not best service because people have to wait a long time for public transport.



SMELL OF MY HOME

Your Guide:
Hayad

My country's famous food is called Soor.

It is made of cornmeal. First, you can boil water with salt and olive oil, and add cornmeal. Then you whisk until the cornmeal thickens.

After that, you can make soup with meat and different vegetables. It is delicious and healthy because all the ingredients are organic.

My mom cooked this food. It reminds me of my country. Especially, when we celebrate special days.



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

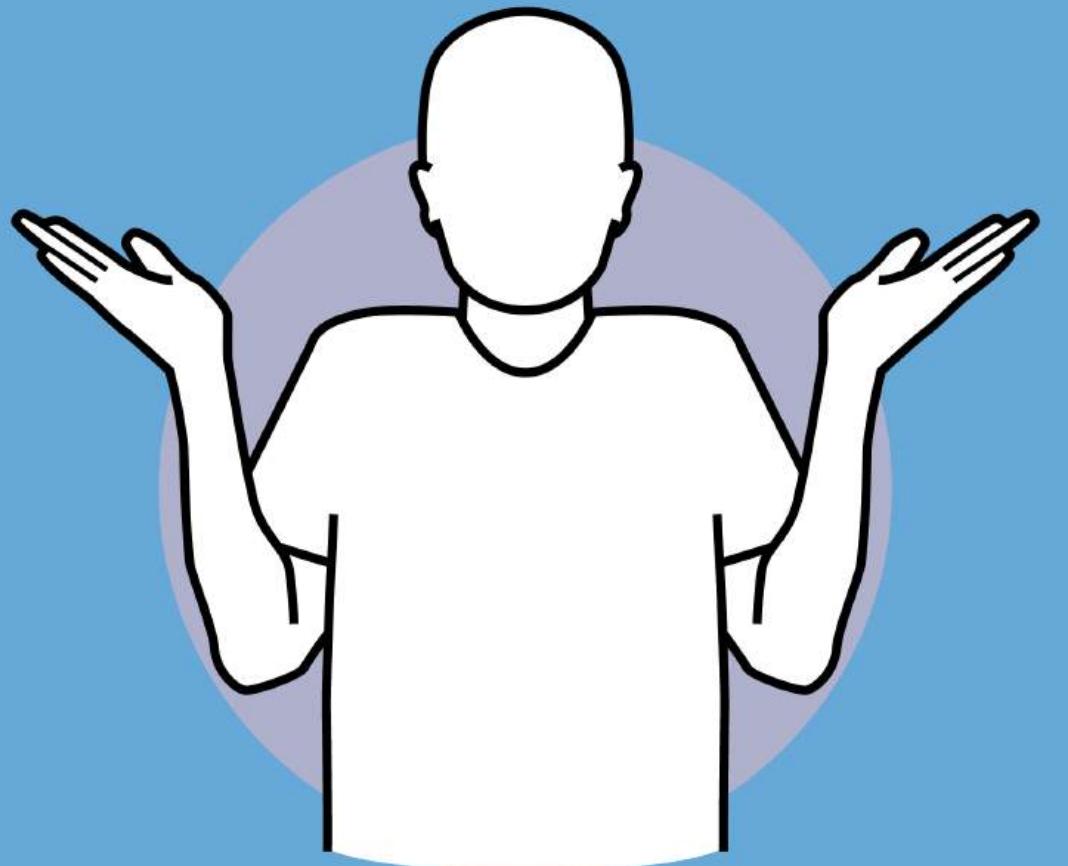


Newport is a great place. It is a quiet city but it's a very exciting place. There are a lot of lovely things to check out in Newport. Like the Tredegar house, Wetlands, the Roman Amphitheatre, Newport Castle, and The Riverfront Theatre. My favourite place is the Tredegar house because I found out a lot about the culture and history of Wales. The problem is Newport public transport has good prices but not the best service because people have to wait a long time.



erm...I think that my dad really wrote good. I've never seen his English this good. Because the last time I saw him, he didn't speak well. But now he speaks well, as me. So, I think it's great.





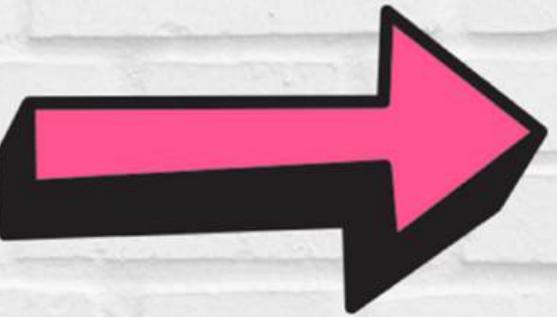
STORYTELLING !

Some practical tips

- Classroom configuration (light/ door/ obstacles)
- Start a session with creating a sense of community
- Predictability (routine, a daily agenda)
- Every opinion matters
- Observe your listeners
- Small groups to divert attention from individuals
- Opting out (SKIP button)
- Preview materials for appropriateness
- Self – care modules
- Safeguarding issues
- Work with emotions
- Balance boundaries – structure – freedom
- Involve learners to co-produce/ use their lived experience, initiative and resourcefulness
- Give practical information
- Authenticity
- Meaningful activities to
 - help restore control over lives in the present
 - develop aspirations/ discover ambitions for the future
 - set new life goals (can be small)
 - draw upon learners' own experience
 - share the skills and personal strengths
 - basic needs before academic needs and content goals



We are not botanists
but we have enough gardening skills to



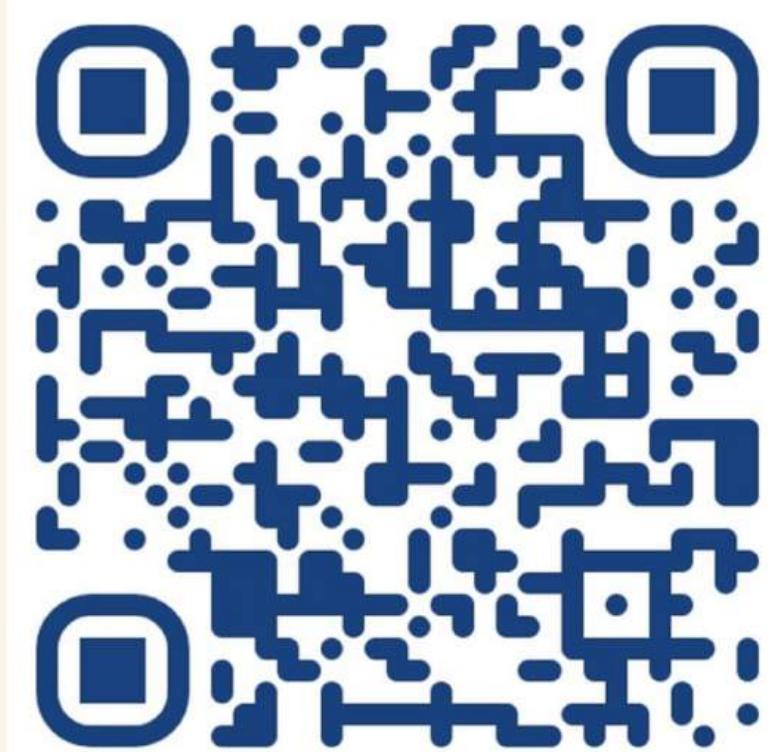
We are not therapists but...

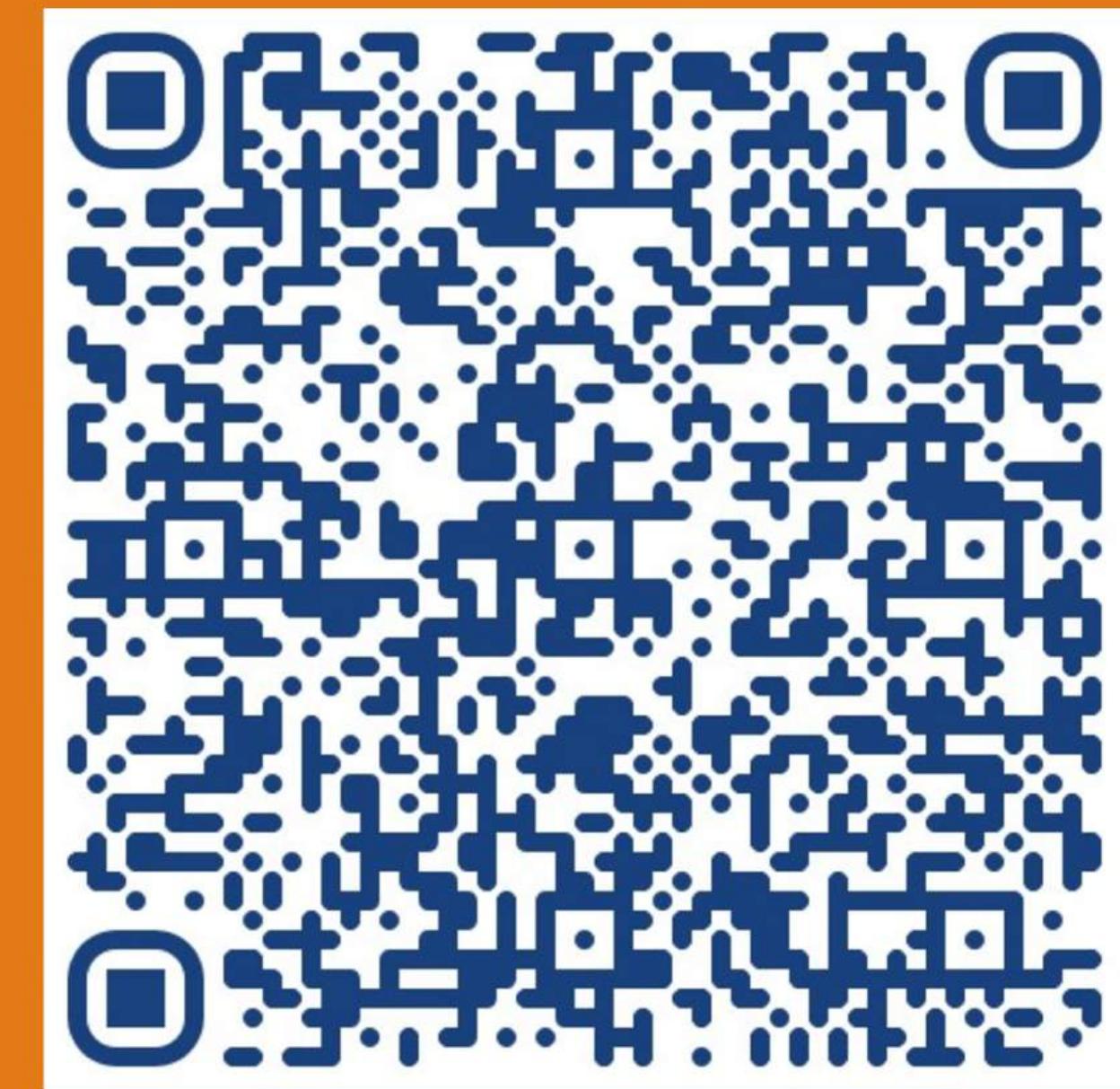
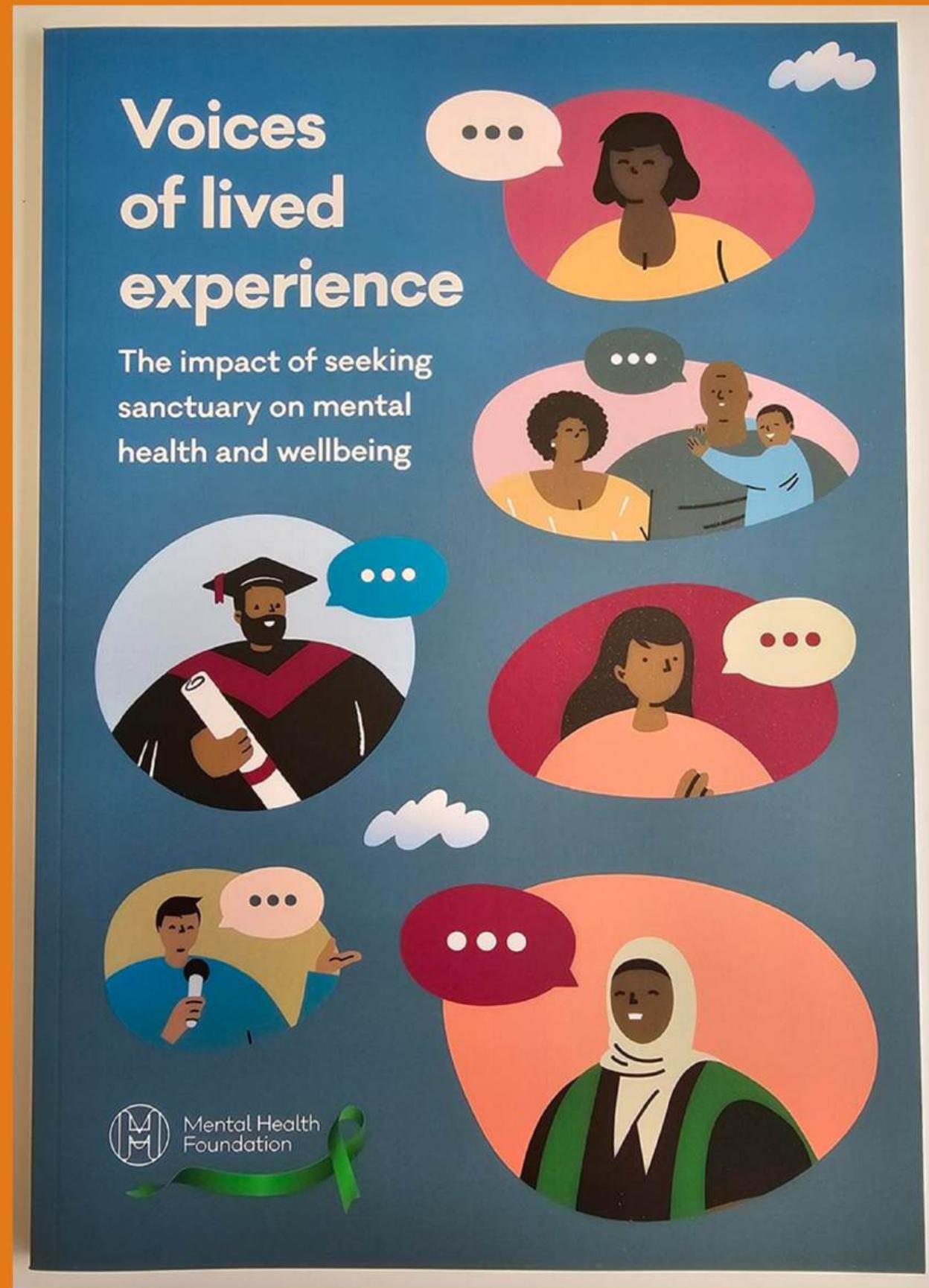


**Become a light
for your
learners**

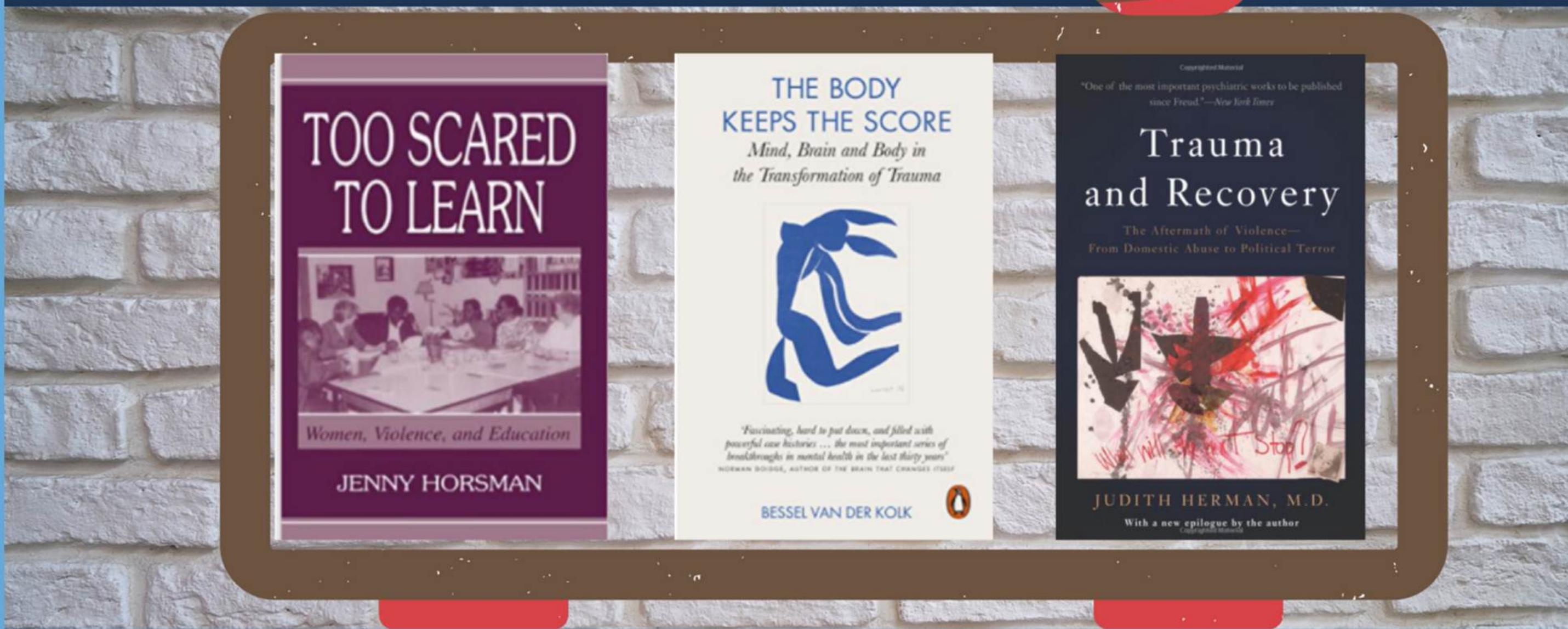


**Trauma-informed
practices**





THE HANDY BOOK SHELF



Thank You!



agbasolora@yahoo.com



[lora_agbaso](https://twitter.com/lora_agbaso)