Mind Maps

Background

Mind maps are a visual way of organising information, using a combination of text, images and colours.

Who are they for?

Mind maps are used by a wide variety of adults and children to help learn and remember information. They can be an invaluable tool for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), especially those with vocabulary or memory difficulties.

How do mind maps help?

Mind maps help children learn and remember more information about words by using an organised lay out, colours, symbols, pictures and words. They help children group words together into categories, helping them learn more information about words and retrieve them more quickly.

How to create a mind map

- Mind maps are most meaningful and useful when children are involved in creating them.
- Adults should firstly explain to the child what a mind map is and why it will be helpful.
- Adults will need to give children support initially but should reduce this over time so that the child can create them more independently.

What does a mind map consist of?

- A word/picture or object in the centre to represent the topic or theme
- Colourful 'branches' coming off the central word to represent the major categories
- Thinner branches with information/words and pictures

Key points to remember:

- Make it visual! Use pictures, symbols, photos or your child's drawings to represent words & information
- Use a range of colours, choosing one colour for each 'branch'.
- Mind maps do not have to be on paper. You can lay out objects or images and paper headings on the ground or in colourful hoops/baskets.

Ways to use mind maps at home:

- Firstly mind map a topic your child is really interested in (e.g. space, Lego, dinosaurs etc).Encourage them to add ideas to the mind map as they learn new information over time.
- Explore what they know about a topic before they start learning
- Check what they have learned near the end of the topic
- Label words in your home language. Your child can develop their understanding in their home language and then learn the English label for words at school.

Stages to Create a mind map: (Information adapted from 'Language Builders, Elklan 2012)

Stage	Supporting strategies
1. 'Brainstorming': Think of words related to a topic	- Help your child think of relevant words for the topic. You can explore books or materials related that topic together to help come up with your list. - Play a 'sorting game' e.g. give your child objects/pictures/words which are related with the topic vs. some that are not. Your child will have to use thinking skills to select appropriate words. - Make the above activity interactive and motivating though games and activities e.g. 'binning' words that are not relevant, posting games, putting words on beanbags and throwing them in different coloured hoops etc.
2. Group/ categorise the words	- Tell your child you are going to try and find words that go together or make 'groups' (depending on their understanding). Underline written words in different colours or place pictures on different coloured paper. - Choose coloured pages/hoops and tell the child what 'group' they will represent. - Ask the child to write, draw or place the groups/things that go together on the different pages or in coloured hoops.
3. Draw the branches	- Provide a large sheet of paper. - Some children may find it difficult to lay out their branches on the page, so you can draw them on if needed. - Have your child colour each branch the same colours that were used on the coloured pages/hoops for sorting the words.
4. Add the images and words	- Encourage drawings/symbols and pictures which are meaningful to them. Real objects can also be used. - Write or stick words beside the pictures to encourage word-picture recognition. - Create mind maps on computer-generated programmes.

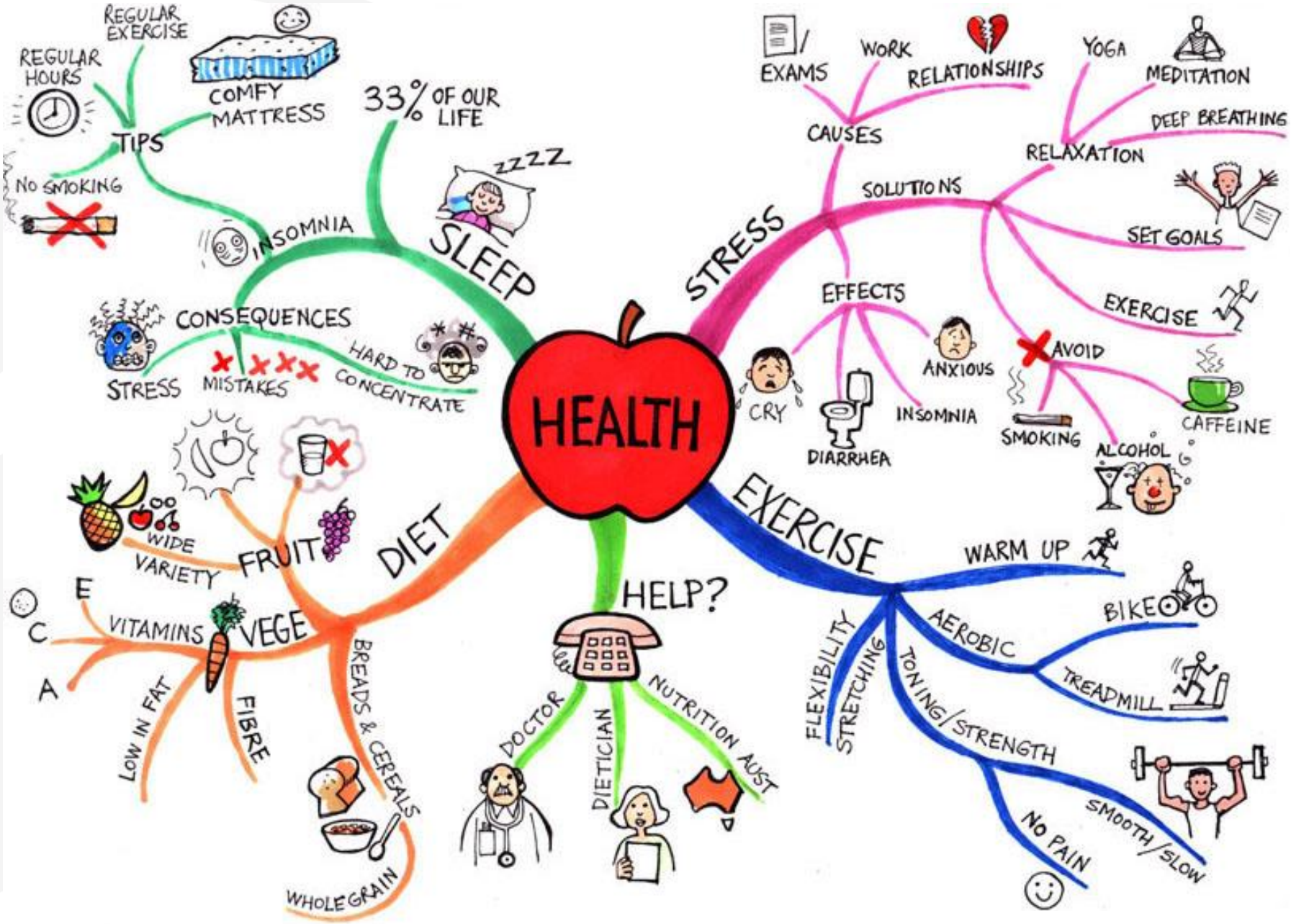

Image credit: Jane Genovese, Learning Fundamentals, 2024