

SILLY LIMBIC!

A Practitioner Guide



BRIGHTER DAY HYPNOTHERAPY

What is Silly Limbic about?

- SILLY LIMBIC an exciting new 36 page picture book for 8 years+ from Bristol based Therapist Naomi Harvey.
- Having battled with anxiety and depression myself and seeing the impact my dog Harley had on me, I became a passionate advocate of pets and mental health.
- Silly Limbic! is based on Solution Focused Therapy (SFT) and is designed to help kids understand how and why they feel happy, angry and sad but also helps them control these emotions so they grow up to be more resilient in later life.
- Using principles of SFT I have transformed the complexity of the brain into 4 simple fun and lovable characters that kids can relate to and that teachers and parents can use as a tool for communication with kids.
- The main character is Limbic the dog because, just like dogs our brains deal with threat through the Limbic system and respond using flight (anxiety) fight (anger or freeze (depression/sadness) . This system is always negative as it is designed to protect us from threats- just as our dogs do.
- Limbic's owner is Oscar who struggles to fit in because Limbic keeps him away from doing things in case he gets hurt. Limbic means well, but his actions are making Oscar unhappy.
- We have evolved a part of the brain which allows us to be rational, logical and have perspective. What we see as a threat is dependent on our perception and learned experience. The good news is we can both learn- and unlearn- what we find scary, sad, infuriating.
- We can this through positive rewards such as positive action, interaction and thought- all of which deliver a chemical reward to our brains called serotonin and encourage us to repeat the behaviour- our human version of a doggy treat!
- So in the book Oscar learns how to train Limbic by listening to his worries but then being rational about it and helping Limbic see that maybe it's not as bad as he feared.

Meet the characters

Oscar

Oscar is an lovely boy who struggles to fit in because he often gets more scared, angry or sad than other kids. He has a very special friend Limbic the Dog whom he can only see. Limbic is always with him and keeps him safe.



Limbic

This is Limbic. He adores Oscar and would do anything to keep him safe. However, Limbic can be silly, he gets frightened, cross and sad over irrational things. He is always looking for potential dangers and takes his job to keep Oscar safe very seriously. He doesn't care if Oscar is happy as long as he is safe.



Daisy

Daisy is the girl next door and Oscar looks up to her. He wishes he could be more like her as she is always off on adventures and seems to act care free. But Daisy also has a secret.



Lyra

Daisy has a friend too- Lyra the dog. Just like Limbic, only Daisy can see Lyra. However, she has trained Lyra using positive rewards to help her realise when she is being silly.



Why is Limbic a dog?

- I have chosen a dog as the main character over Oscar as people love dogs and people understand dogs. We all know that training a dog means rewarding it when it performs the behaviour we want- this is the same as humans – we also learn via positive reward and negative feedback.
- I also chose a dog they are great examples of what happens when you only use your limbic system- you cannot rationalise or be logical. Just as we get irrational fears or get stuck over reacting to events inappropriately- so dogs get scared of the Hoover but not of fast cars or bark at the mailman even though he is harmless.
- Dogs and humans have a unique bond that no other species have. When dogs look into their owners eyes oxytocin is released in both the owner AND the dog. This is a reward chemical and essential to combat stress.
- Dogs need walking and exercise is scientifically proven to release dopamine, serotonin and endorphins all of which are the good stress busting chemicals we need.
- People talk to you when you have a dog. The social contact being out and about with a dog creates is hugely positive for people with mental health problems.
- Trust. For many kids with mental health issues they often stem from bullying or a bad school experience. Dogs do not judge and they offer unconditional affection- something many children in today's society lack.



Why is this book important?

- 1 in 10 school children are currently battling with common mental health issues such as depression, and anxiety.
- 75% of those children do not have access to help.
- A recent poll of more than 2,000 teachers and heads found that the majority knew pupils who suffered anxiety or panic attacks, depression, self-harm, eating disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders.
- A third had experienced behaviour indicating mental health problems in pupils between seven and 11. One in 50 teachers had seen such behaviour in children aged four and under.
- Most said these issues meant pupils could not concentrate in class, participate fully in lessons or make friends. Some started crying or lashing out in anger at school.
- These books aim to help and are designed to be used to promote discussion about dealing with stress and our emotions both in schools and communication at home.



The initial consultation

- The initial consultation with children should include the parent. The reason this is important is because the child will need support outside the consulting room and if the parents do not understand the principles of SFT they will feel unable to help and even though the child is our client, we want to empower the family as a unit.
- It is important to remind both the child and the parent, that these sessions are for the child. The confidentiality agreement is between therapist and child- unless the child says something which suggests to the therapist that the child could be a danger to themselves or others, or indeed if they reveal anything that suggests they may be the victim of abuse. In these circumstances you should seek advice from your supervisor. These parameters should be clearly stated in your confidentiality agreement which the parent should sign to give you permission to see their child.
- In subsequent sessions the parent can stay in the room but this should be discouraged as it may effect the child ability to open up- rather the parent should be invited to wait outside – the door should remain open during a session. If the parent insists on sitting in- it must be firmly agreed that this is the child's session and they are purely there as an observer.
- Where the IC with an adult is an even split of receiving information from your client and delivering an understanding of the brain. With a child, it is important to understand their world and ensure you are able to communicate on their level using references they have given you. Therefore the IC with a child is much less formal than with a client, in fact its more of a play session.
- I have included a list of good questions to help build up rapport but every child is different so while some may be chatty, others may prefer to play with objects or draw to help them communicate. You will find a few games in the tool kits which may help you break the ice.
- The explanation of the brain can seem difficult to understand but do not underestimate the ability of children to absorb information. However, I have created the characters of Daisy Oscar and Limbic to try and simplify this. Oscar is of course the child, the positive, logical, rational Daisy and the impulsive, reactive negative Limbic remain the same. Again the tool kit contains a way of using these characters to explain why we feel angry, sad or depressed and how we can use Daisy and her advice to train our inner dogs.
- If your child is creative- they may wish to draw their own personal Limbic and name it as their inner naughty dog.



- The main outcome of the IC should be to leave the session with a better understanding of the child and to set a goal they wish to gain from seeing you. You can help them shape it into a realistic and attainable goal but that goal must be set by them. It is also highly likely to change over time.
- You can use P.A.W.S to get to the miracle question- ask them to close their eyes, slow down their breathing and imagine themselves after they have achieved that goal- ask them to describe the scene they see in as much detail- from what they see, what they look like, how they feel in that picture, make it as detailed and vivid as you can.
- We want them to start thinking positively- training that dog. So the next step is to get them to consider how they can achieve that using the 3 P's Positive action, Positive interaction, Positive thought.
- As the final one is the hardest, so you can give them a 3 good things book. In this they should try to write or draw three good things that happened that day- or simply 3 things that made them smile. They should do this at bedtime before they sleep listening to the CD.
- For the other 3 P's you may like to get them to consider what things they could do to make a small step to making that picture they dreamt of themselves a reality. They do not have to report back on this or implement it- it is up to them to make that step and if they do not manage it we do not want to make them feel they have failed in some way as they may have made other amazing steps forward, however, to have it in their mind is useful moving forward.
- Some people like to scale their clients- this is also a tool you can use. I personally find it arbitrary as it can change so dramatically however, if it helps you chart their progress then there is no harm.
- Finally I like to give them a fun pack containing colouring in sheets to help remind them of daisy, Oscar and limbic, a 3 good things notebook and charm of a paw. This can be attached to their keychain, bag, mobile phone etc but the idea is to tell them to see it as a daily reminder to think pawsitively. And remember to take control of that inner dog.



SESSION STRUCTURE

- Check in- the start of each session should be checking in- how are they feeling today? Try to help them expand on feelings. If they say good- ask them what good feels like? How do they know they are feeling good- or
- As their homework has been 3 good things- you could kick this off with what 3 good things have happened this week?
- If they are struggling, just start them playing some games. there are some games in the tool kit.
- If they mention they overcame any obstacles- focus on how they think they managed that, what was different and if they were to come across that situation again next time what would they do?
- Putting in the context of oh 'dear ..your inner dog has been running the show haven't they- why do you think they did that? What do you think Daisy would do that might be different in that situation? Be aware that we are hoping to develop resilience, life is tough and sometimes it is ok to be sad, angry, scared- it helps us survive- so be sure to keep this in context- talk about big feelings and little feelings. So can they draw what it feels like to be cross as opposed to angry or upset vs depressed. What might they do to feel better if it's a small feeling and who is their safe person to go to if it's a big feeling?
- If they mention something good- make sure you ask them if they have told mum or dad about it- encourage them to share the positive improvements as often parents can miss them because life is busy. It is important to let them know the smallest thing to them could be a huge step for their child.
- End the session with a P.A.W.S and positive visualization of where they want to be in as much detail as possible. Followed by a quick story- aka language pattern- they can either lie down for that or engage themselves in drawing as both will induce a trance and help their brains find solutions.
- At the end of the session ask them what they are looking forward to this week and wish them well saying you can't wait to hear all about it!



About me

NAOMI HARVEY HPD, MNCH (Acc), DSFH, BA Hons I am fully qualified Solution Focused Psychotherapist (HPD) practicing in SFT Hypnotherapy (MNCH).

I have spent the past 10 years working in Development as a producer and was the creator of Channel 4's Rescue Dog to Super Dog which is soon coming to the USA on Animal Planet

Between Psychology and working in the Media I have spent the past decade listening to people's stories. One thing it has taught me is that everyone has a story to tell.

As we move through life, our story and our character grows and develops with us. However, some of us can get stuck re-reading old chapters and become fearful of turning the page to see what comes next.

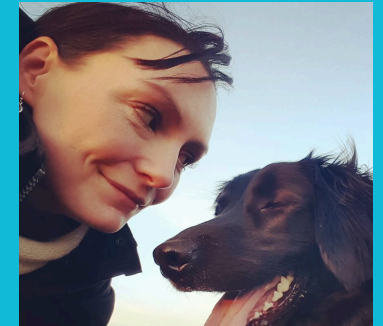
In my clinic I help people to reclaim their story, to write their own endings and to get excited again about their future. I have personal experience of depression and anxiety so I know how debilitating and how lonely it can feel. It is why I decided to pursue a career in Hypnotherapy as it helped me and I wanted to help others.

My passion in life is to help people achieve their best possible version of themselves and to help promote mental first aid. Especially with young people and children.

We don't think twice about applying a band-aid to a cut, taking a pill to cure a headache or eating a healthy diet to change our body. But when it comes to healing and maintaining our minds we all too often disregard the most basic and simple things we can do to help ourselves.

I am also a dog owner and my furry best friend was my inspiration for Limbic as no matter how tough life gets- he is always pleased to see me and will always make me smile.

I am fully insured member of the Association for Solution Focused Hypnotherapy The Complimentary National Healthcare Council, Anxiety UK and the National Hypnotherapy Council.



*stay pawsitive
Naomi xxx*