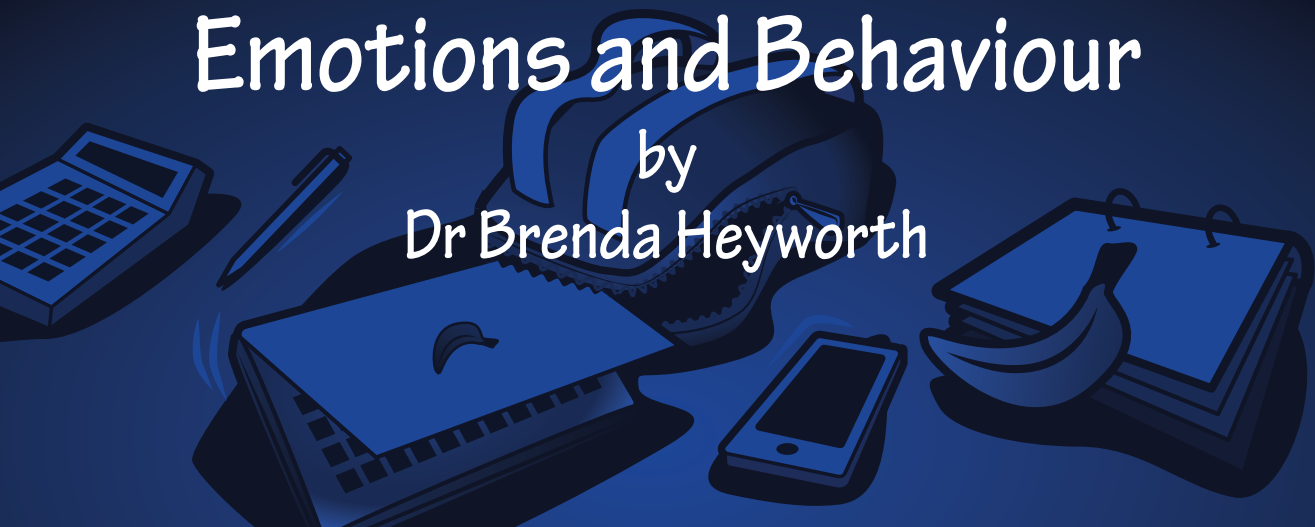


# What's Going On?



A Teacher's Guide to  
Emotions and Behaviour

by  
Dr Brenda Heyworth



The Jungle Framework strategies are provided as general information and should not be relied upon as being in the manner of a medical consultation or advice. If you have a particular concern about a student's health and wellbeing, please follow the protocol of your learning centre, school or organization.

It's a Jungle Pty Ltd  
PO Box 4961  
Sunshine Coast MC, Queensland, Australia 4560

Published in Australia in 2025

Copyright © It's a Jungle 2025

Illustrations by Chris Kennett and Joel Young  
Based on original illustrations by Chris Kennett  
Concept illustrations by Brenda Heyworth  
All illustrations copyright © It's a Jungle Pty Ltd

IT'S A JUNGLE®, Jungle Framework, Stay out of the Jungle and Inner MoE logo  
are trade marks of It's a Jungle Pty Ltd.

First published by It's a Jungle in 2025

The contents of this book are protected by copyright laws. Except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), no part of this book may be reproduced by any process, electronic or otherwise, without specific written permission of the publisher. Nor may information be stored electronically in any form whatsoever without such permission. Enquiries should be directed or addressed to the publisher: PO Box 4961 Sunshine Coast MC QLD 4560 Australia or email [info@itsjungle.com](mailto:info@itsjungle.com)

Printed and bound in Australia by Clark and Mackay



A catalogue record for this  
book is available from the  
National Library of Australia

Title: What's Going On? A Teacher's Guide to Emotions and Behaviour  
Author: Heyworth, Brenda 1969 –  
Illustrated by: Joel Young  
Featuring original illustrations by Chris Kennett  
Edition: 1st  
ISBN: 978-0-646-71797-5  
Subjects: Education, Family and Health  
Other Contributors: Kate Benfield, Norm Deplume, Christopher Doerre,  
Ann Leahy, Libby McConnell and Kate Watson

**[www.itsajungle.com](http://www.itsajungle.com)**

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Brenda Heyworth is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and author of *What's Going On? A Teacher's Guide to Emotions and Behaviour* and *It's a Jungle: A Parent's Guide to Emotions and Behaviour*. With warmth and candour, she's transformed decades of experience into the Jungle Framework, a collection of practical concepts and strategies to make sense of emotions and behaviour at school, at home, and in the workplace.

Dr Heyworth graduated from the University of Newcastle with a Bachelor of Medicine in 1994 and is a longstanding Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. She has provided specialist assessment and treatment for thousands of families from her child and adolescent practice on the Sunshine Coast of Australia.

In 2012, Dr Heyworth founded the social enterprise, called *It's a Jungle*, with a mission '*to cultivate a culture of understanding about emotions and behaviour, that productively changes attitudes for now and generations to come*'.

An entertaining speaker, her presentations and workshops are popular amongst school staff, parents and foster carers. Her enthusiasm is infectious as she brings gentle humour and practical strategies to the serious issue of mental health and wellbeing.

In 2021, Dr Heyworth completed tertiary qualification in Learning Design and Technology from Harvard University and was inspired by a course called, *Media and Medicine: How to Tell Stories that Make a Difference*. Motivated to change society more broadly, she closed her clinical practice and now travels the country, educating and empowering adults to understand emotions and behaviour.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the school professionals who helped with this book, I am sincerely grateful for your time and your expertise. You helped me understand the nuance and realities of working in a school environment and your perspectives have been invaluable, adding a meaningful dimension to the concepts as they relate to you and your world. Thank you specifically, to Kate Benfield, Norm Deplume, Christopher Doerre, Ann Leahy, Libby McConnell and Kate Watson. (Yes, there are some pseudonyms in there, but you know who you are.)

I'm forever grateful to Chris Kennet for his original illustrations of MoE the Monkey and his antics, which came to life in the parent's guide in 2012 and are breathing anew in this teacher's version. Thank you also to Joel Young, who has so skilfully kept true to the style, while extending the ideas further with new images for this book. Brilliant idea to put a banana on the laptop!

Working with Lauren Daniels as editor, has once again been so enjoyable. I thank you for each red mark, every one of them much deserved, and a constructive step to shaping my work to be the best it can be. A big thank you also goes to Jude Lang, for the many hours of proofreading and your valuable feedback. I'm also very grateful to Rachel Chapman. Thank you for sharing the depth of your expertise as a speech pathologist, to help me describe the complex nature of language skills in the developing years.

To my family and to my fellow Tai Chi-ers, please know how much I have personally valued your support and encouragement over these many months.

And last, I want to pay tribute to Dr Ray Cash, my mentor and inspiration in child psychiatry. I will always cherish the memories of your empathy, intelligence and humour over the decades. You've inspired a whole generation of child psychiatrists and, while the world is better for having known you, we are sad that you are gone.



# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	9
<b>I - THIS IS MESSY</b>	15
1 - HOW WE SEE	17
2 - A SQUIGGLE AND A LINE	27
3 - OVERLOAD AND TRYING TO COPE, BUT...	63
<b>OVER TO YOU - PART I</b>	97
<b>II - DRAW THE LINE</b>	101
4 - STAY OUT OF THE JUNGLE	103
5 - RULE-CONSEQUENCE-FRESH START	133
<b>OVER TO YOU - PART II</b>	169
<b>III - THERE'S MORE TO THIS</b>	173
6 - WHAT'S HARD? SCAFFOLD THAT	175
7 - APPLIED EXAMPLES	193
8 - CONDITIONS	223
<b>OVER TO YOU - PART III</b>	251
<b>IV - YOU AND YOUR CONTEXT</b>	255
9 - WHAT CAN CHANGE?	257
<b>OVER TO YOU - PART IV</b>	273
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	277



# INTRODUCTION

To all the caring, intelligent and dedicated professionals who work in schools, I say thank you. You are phenomenal! Every day, despite the stress and the challenges, you're there with your students, doing what you can to help them learn about life. For all the negativity in the media (and parents' emails), I want you to know that not everyone thinks that way. Many of us see what you do and deeply appreciate you.

Of all the career options, you chose education, and that says something special about you. You stepped into this field with a determination to study and work hard for knowledge. Within yourself, you've refined a unique and incredibly valuable skillset. You've integrated your subject expertise with not just the methods of teaching, but also the relationships that matter. You care about your students and understand the challenges of a real classroom. You are the expert in how young people learn and that stuff's gold!

I'm a psychiatrist with a double dose of empathy, so I see your pain. It's because you care. Even as you work hard, apply your skills, and expand your knowledge, the problems keep getting bigger. I see the stress this causes you, the burnout, and the high rates of staff leaving.

Caring professions carry a particular kind of strain which is hard to quantify. To look after others, we have to also look after ourselves, and my training and professional experience has taught me a lot about this. After decades of working with children, adolescents and adults, I want to share what I know with you.

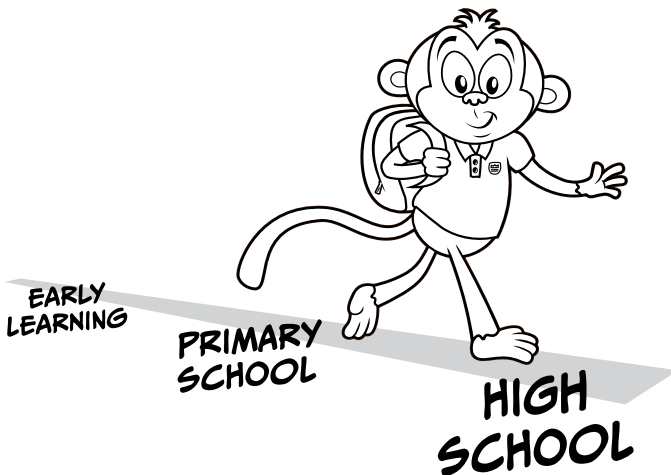
## INTRODUCTION

This book describes the concepts I've found most helpful to my work, in messy circumstances and practical ways. Together they form the **JUNGLE FRAMEWORK**, a collection of ideas to help adults make sense of emotions and behaviour. The framework applies images and phrases to conceptualise **WHAT'S GOING ON**, so we can be more practical about **WHAT TO DO**. It can also help us cope with the challenges and stress of working within a caring profession. I've applied the framework in my clinical practice over many years and I invite you to play around with how you can apply it in your school environment. It's my hope that this book will help you cope and stay motivated, for the important work you do.

I'm not a schoolteacher, so my experiences dealing with children and their parents involve a different set of challenges to teaching thirty kids at once. I give you the respect that is absolutely your due.

I also see the crossover between our professions. We work with young people in complicated circumstances and understand the need to integrate pragmatism with empathy and knowledge. I'm excited by the prospect to compare notes with you. In the following pages, you'll bring your knowledge and experience and I'll bring mine. As we weave our expertise with a bit of creativity, who knows what might come of this?

This book is for educators, whether you work with students in high school, primary school or early learning. You might be a teacher, a teacher aide, or a principal working in a public or private school.



I've written this book with the intention for you to consider what applies within your school context and what doesn't. When I describe examples from inside or outside of school, please bring your own examples to mind. As you read, ask yourself, 'How might this relate to my world?' You can translate the images of age, gender and background to suit, and the terms kid, child, student, adolescent, teen or young person are interchangeable. If you deal with teens or adults, know that the little child with swirling emotions on page 18 is still somewhere inside them, tangled with the extra responsibilities of also being an adult-work-in-progress.

From a position of genuine respect, the imagery of monkeys for children and teenagers is not a denigration. It's a tool of understanding and compassion for the overload someone is experiencing. When I slip between pronouns like they, we, us and you, it's because the Jungle Framework concepts are relevant to every single one of us. For everything this book covers about the emotions of students, I hope you'll consider it for yourself as well. We are all emotional creatures.

I encourage you to also use blank paper and a pen as we progress through the chapters. Draw, squiggle, brainstorm, go for it! Let ideas flow from your head into visual form. The illustrations in this book demonstrate how varied these visual expressions can be. Some are the skilled creations of an illustrator (adding a finessed dimension of emotion and relationship, through facial expression and body posture). Others are my own scribble (as I attempt to organise an idea). The slides I created for professional development sessions for teachers over the years are also included. Each communicates a core concept of the Jungle Framework.

This book is not a resource to use directly with students. It's written for you, the adult, as you navigate through the messiness of emotions. It's also not a book about diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders. It would be inappropriate (and unfair) to put that onto you. This is a book about emotions, behaviour and relationships, expressed in ways that are relevant to you and what you do, every day.

## INTRODUCTION

Whatever we DO is intricately woven from how we FEEL and what we THINK, so I ask you to picture yourself as the stick figure below. As we progress through the chapters, imagine each concept entering your thought bubble with a question mark, and take notice of what you think about it (i.e., THINK). Pick what suits you and leave what doesn't.

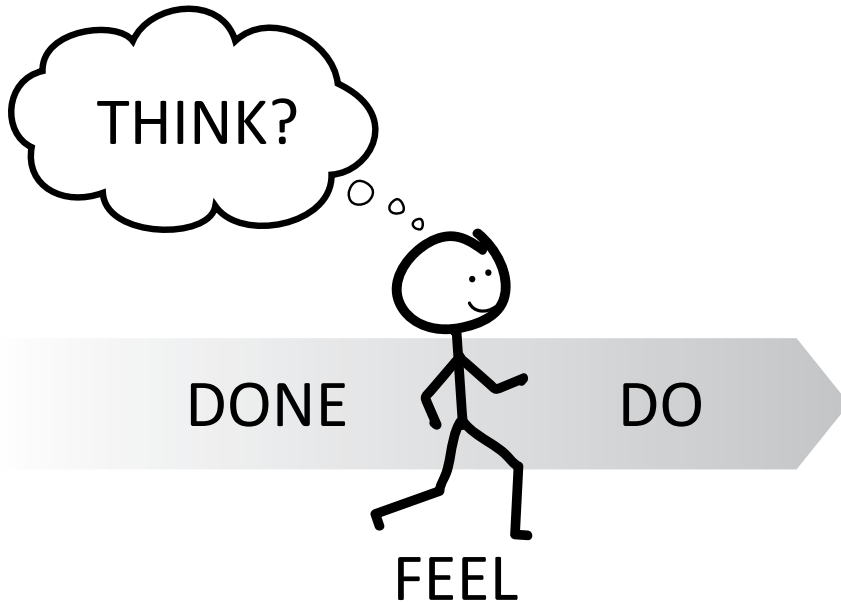


Figure 1: What do you think? How will these concepts relate to how you feel, what you've tried in the past and what's worth trying into the future?

Consider:

- Which concepts help you decide where to put student support?
- Which help you cope?
- Which have potential for you to carry forward and realistically apply in the future? To be useful, an idea needs to fit with your mind and your way of doing things.
- Which bring a constructive perspective to what you've already tried, helping to clarify why it did or didn't work for a particular student? Maybe you were on the right track, and it just needs tweaking before you try again.

At the end of each section of this book, you'll find **OVER TO YOU** examples of this process. These vignettes were written by school professionals who, like you, read the chapters and applied the concepts to their own school

context, relating them to their past, present and future. I asked them to imagine themselves as the stick figure in Figure 1 and write a short piece about what they THINK, FEEL, had DONE or would DO - on whatever they wished. They show the process of finding a constructive perspective of what's going on, to then find the possibilities of what to do. The examples are both anonymous and de-identified for privacy.

I sincerely thank the six school professionals who wrote these examples and helped me with valuable feedback on the draft of this book. They've added a crucial dimension by integrating and applying the concepts to a school context. They represent a range of perspectives from male and female educators in early learning, primary and high school environments. The group has an accumulated 80 Years' experience in public and private schools, from the city and the country, across several states of Australia, from roles including teacher aide, teacher and principal. I am so grateful for their perspectives and expertise.

You'll find more examples in the HOW WE SEE library on my website [www.itsajungle.com](http://www.itsajungle.com) which has grown from the OVER TO YOU entries in this book to become an expanding online collection for you to browse. It's a place to read about what educators, like you, are thinking, as they process the concepts for their own context. You might feel inspired to create and submit your own written pieces to be published too. I do hope so. You'll be contributing to a cumulative resource of ideas from the crossover of our professions and I'm excited to see what will come from this. Maybe you'll even start a discussion group with colleagues, and submit reflections from there too.

Whatever the reasons you picked up this book, I want to say 'Hi!' and 'Thanks for giving this a go'. You are such an important person in the lives of your students and I'm genuinely excited to see what becomes possible as you apply these concepts in your school. Let's weave together your perspective and mine.

# THIS IS MESSY

## 1 HOW WE SEE

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS WORK?	17
MY PERSPECTIVE WASN'T HELPING ME	17
SHIFT PERSPECTIVE	18
WHAT WAS MY PROBLEM?	20
WHAT HELPED ME CHANGE?	21
A JUNGLE FRAMEWORK	23
WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR WORLD?	24
YOUR ROLE IS GOLD!	25
WHAT YOU SEE AND HOW YOU SEE IT	26

## 2 A SQUIGGLE AND A LINE

SELF CONTROL IS COMPLICATED	28
A 3-STEP SCAFFOLD FOR SELF-CONTROL	31
SETTLING IN THE MIDST OF BIG EMOTIONS	35
FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE	39
HOW WE SEE BEHAVIOUR	41
TOO MUCH OR NOT ENOUGH?	46
TIME TO LEARN	48
CONNECT AND COLLECT SUCCESS	54
A GAUGE IN YOUR MIND	55
WHAT'S LEFT IN THE BUDGET	60
HOW ARE YOUR STUDENTS?	61

## 3 OVERLOAD AND TRYING TO COPE, BUT...

OVERLOAD FACTORS	63
SETTLING FACTORS	67
HOW TO READ OVERLOAD	69
PREVENT OVERLOAD	74
TRYING TO COPE,BUT...	76
THIS FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE	76
CONTROL - AVOID - INTERNALISE- EXTERNALISE	78
MALADAPTIVE METHODS	92
WHATEVER HAPPENS WE'LL MANAGE	92
A FACTORS GAUGE TO FIND POSSIBILITIES	94
NOT COPING SIGNALS	95

# DRAW THE LINE

## 4 STAY OUT OF THE JUNGLE

BENEATH BEHAVIOUR IS EMOTIONS	104
LAW OF THE JUNGLE	105
IF IN DOUBT, COME OUT FIGHTING	106
WHOEVER DOES IT BEST WINS	109
BEWARE THE TRAPS	112
WORDS vs FEWER WORDS	113
EMOTIONS vs MATTER-OF-FACT	117
LOUD vs CALM AND QUIET	119
PHYSICAL vs NOT PHYSICAL	120
RECOGNISE THE JUNGLE AND STAY OUT	121
ARE YOU TEMPTED TO SWING THROUGH THE TREES?	123
WHAT WILL GET YOU BACK FROM THE LINE?	125
YOUR ROLE IN THIS DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE	128
JUNGLE IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT	129
- STUDENT VERSION	129
- TEACHER VERSION	130
- PARENT VERSION	131

## 5 RULE - CONSEQUENCE - FRESH START

HELP THEM EXIT THE JUNGLE	133
A FRAMEWORK FOR SELF-CONTROL	135
CONFLICT IN THE REAL WORLD	138
THE GAME OF LIFE	140
BE THE REFEREE	143
RULE	145
CONSEQUENCE	147
FRESH START	156
A SCAFFOLD OF SOCIETY	160
PARENT SUPPORT	162
WHERE'S THE LINE?	164

# THERE'S MORE TO THIS

## 6 WHAT'S HARD? SCAFFOLD THAT!

WHAT'S GOING? WHAT TO DO?	175
WHAT'S THE HARD PART?	176
MOTIVATION AND CONFIDENCE NEED SUCCESS	177
SEVEN AREAS THAT REALLY MATTER	179
-EMOTIONS	180
-BEHAVIOUR	181
-LANGUAGE	181
-SOCIAL	185
-PHYSICAL	185
-EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	187
-LEARNING	190
EXPENSIVE ITEMS WITH A BUDGET TO SPEND	190

## 7 APPLIED EXAMPLES

SOCIAL SCAFFOLDING	194
JUST DO IT MOUNTAIN	200
LIST WITH REMINDERS	215

## 8 CONDITIONS

HOW I THINK ABOUT CUPBOARDS	223
AN ANXIETY CUPBOARD	225
A SAFETY AND CONNECTION CUPBOARD	229
AN ASD CUPBOARD	232
AN ADHD CUPBOARD	244
A DEPRESSION CUPBOARD	247



## Part IV

# YOU AND YOUR CONTEXT

## 9 WHAT CAN CHANGE?

YOU'RE COMING TO THE END OF THIS BOOK	257
WHAT YOU CAN CHANGE AND WHAT YOU CAN'T	258
HOPE AND A TRAJECTORY OVER TIME	260
AT THE CENTRE OF YOUR WORLD	262
INFLUENCE IN A SYSTEM	266
HOW YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU DO	270

## OVER TO YOU 273

