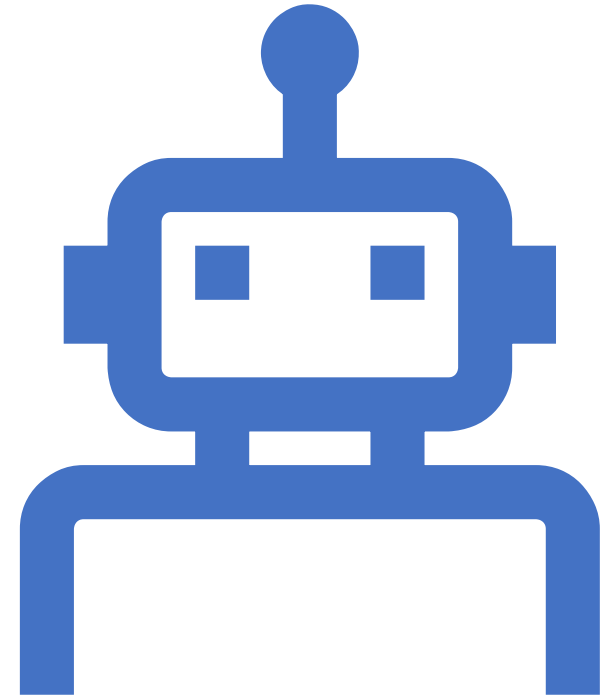


Things I Wish I'd Known as a new leader

Steve Watson
Senior Quality Engineering Manager
easyJet



Intro...



I have been in testing for many years across a variety of industries



Currently I am Senior Quality Engineering Manager at easyJet, which I joined in Jan 2023



I am a conference speaker, guested on the Testing Peers podcast, and blog at stevethedoc.wordpress.com



You can find me on LinkedIn
www.linkedin.com/in/sjwatsonuk/



When I am not testing, I present a 4-hour Saturday morning radio show on a local station in the south of England

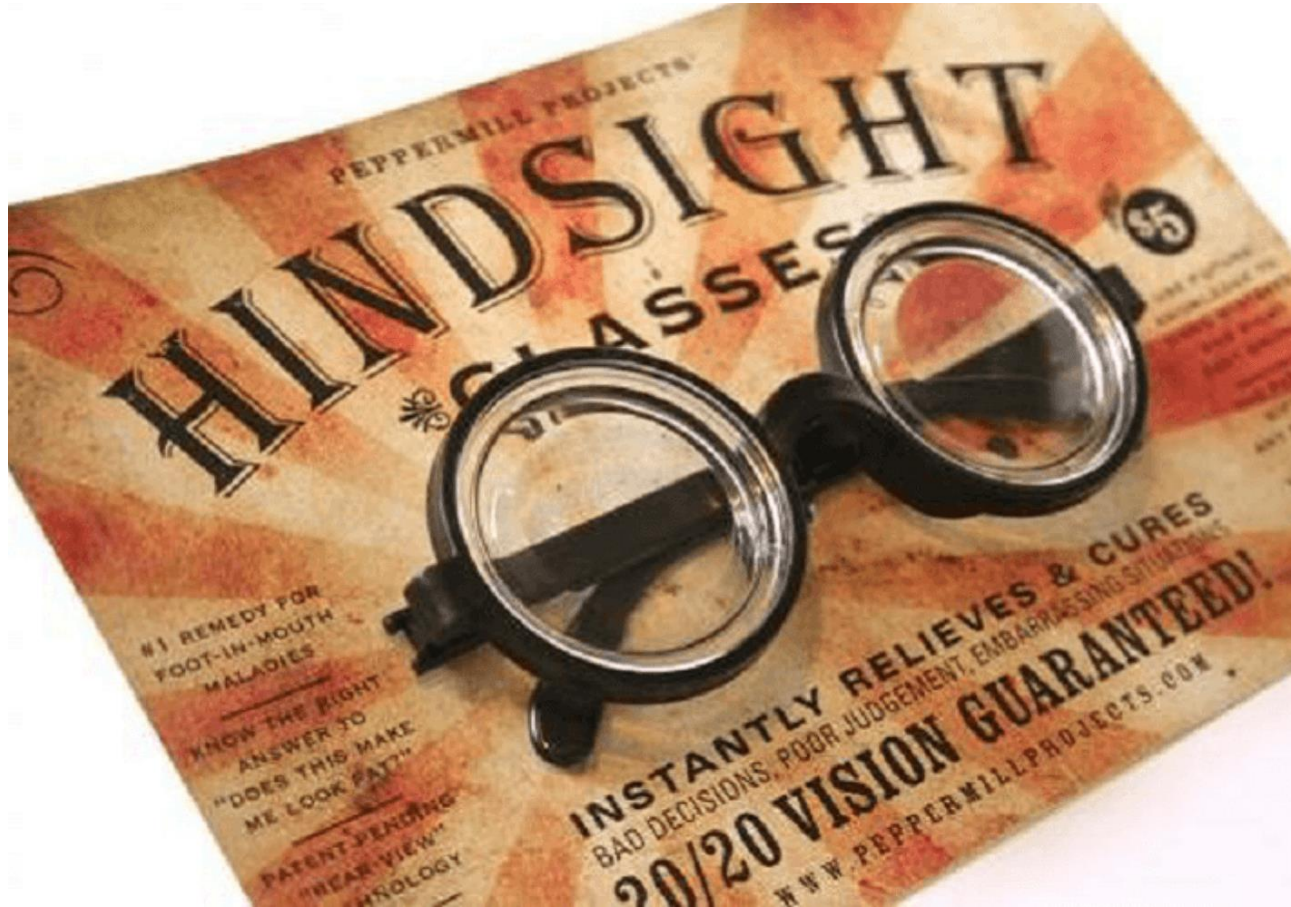


Why this topic?

An early leadership role left me in a negative place back in 2002...



Things I wish I had known...

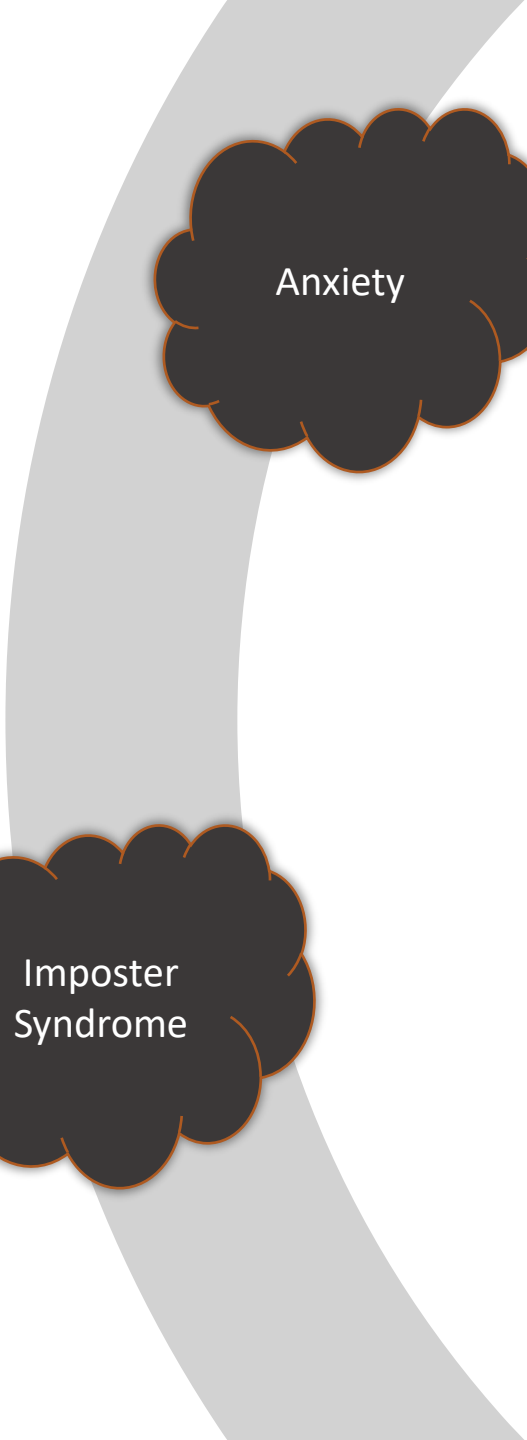


[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

From YouTube videos, Podcasts, blogs and conversations about mental health struggles

A list evolved...

...and a talk was born



Anxiety

Expectations

Self-standards



Imposter Syndrome

Difficult people

Vulnerability

...about Anxiety

- I am not the only person to have anxieties
- Many people who look confident actually aren't!
- People wear 'personas'
- I would tell my younger self:
 - *I am not the only one*
 - *Comparing myself to others doesn't help*
 - *When did something go wrong that I THOUGHT would do?*
 - *Plan ahead, how could I mitigate those worries*
 - *Talk to someone and get a different perspective*



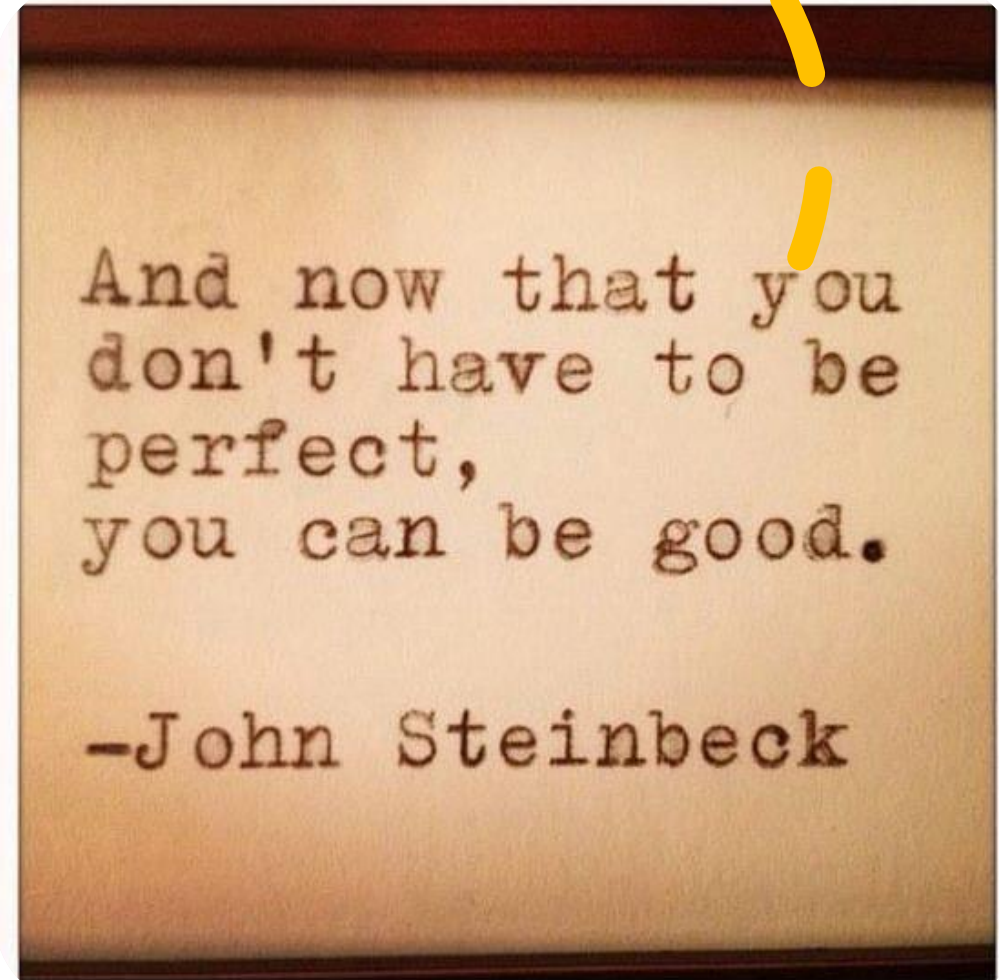
...about Expectations

- Making assumptions or not clarifying people's expectations is stressful
- As is trying to over-deliver
- Conflicting or unrealistic expectations are not my problem to own
- Its ok to ask about priorities and for guidance
- I would tell my younger self:
 - *Clarify!*
 - *Don't assume Gold level when Bronze will do*
 - *Push back if its unachievable – saying 'No' is ok*
 - *Set my expectations of them*
 - *Confirm anything said in writing*



...about Unrealistic self-standards

- No-one is perfect – everyone makes mistakes
- Making mistakes is ok (mainly) – but not every manager/work culture is supportive
- ‘Perfect is the enemy of good’ - Voltaire
- People are wary of perfectionists
- I do not need to be my own harshest critic! I need to be my own advocate
- I would tell my younger self to:
 - *Be realistic in what I can expect from myself*
 - *Share mistakes and learnings to show I am human*
 - *Think about the attitude I show my team*



...about Imposter syndrome

- It is very common, especially in a new leadership role
- People I never suspected have struggled with it, senior leaders and politicians!
- It is classic behaviour to revert to what we are comfortable with
- It will come and go, based on confidence levels/mood
- There will be good and bad days
- I would tell my younger self:
 - *Its normal to have doubts – reflect on what I DO know, not what I don't*
 - *I was put in the role for a reason, someone believes I can do it*
 - *I don't need a comfort blanket*



...about Imposter syndrome

- Imposter Syndrome is not a negative thing!
- It's a chance to use it as a springboard
- There are those who seek it out by taking on new things!
*[See the YouTube Podcast by **Steven Bartlett** from UK TV programme 'Dragons Den' – called Diary of a CEO]*
- Life is meant to be a challenge 😊
- I would tell my younger self:
 - *Step outside my comfort zone to grow in my career*
 - *Identify the gaps*
 - *Plan how to plug them, and who to ask for guidance*



...about Difficult people

- Difficult people are everywhere, and we can't change that
- Its normal to want to avoid toxic people and situations
- Leaving things to fester doesn't work
- It leads to anxiety and stress
- It's not my fault – the behavioural problem lies with them

- I would tell my younger self:
 - *Plan what outcome I would like*
 - *Ask a mentor to help frame the discussion, and rehearse the conversation*
 - *Speak to HR or my line manager for guidance*
 - *Remain professional and polite*
 - *Don't let them dent my confidence*



...about Vulnerability

- Opening up to others is a strength, not a weakness
- Not everyone will judge or criticise
- It sets a good example
- Its helps build character

- I would tell my younger self to:
 - *Admit to myself I don't know something or need help*
 - *Find someone that I trust to speak to*
 - *See it as a growth opportunity*
 - *Show my humanness to my team and encourage them to ask for help*



It's getting better!

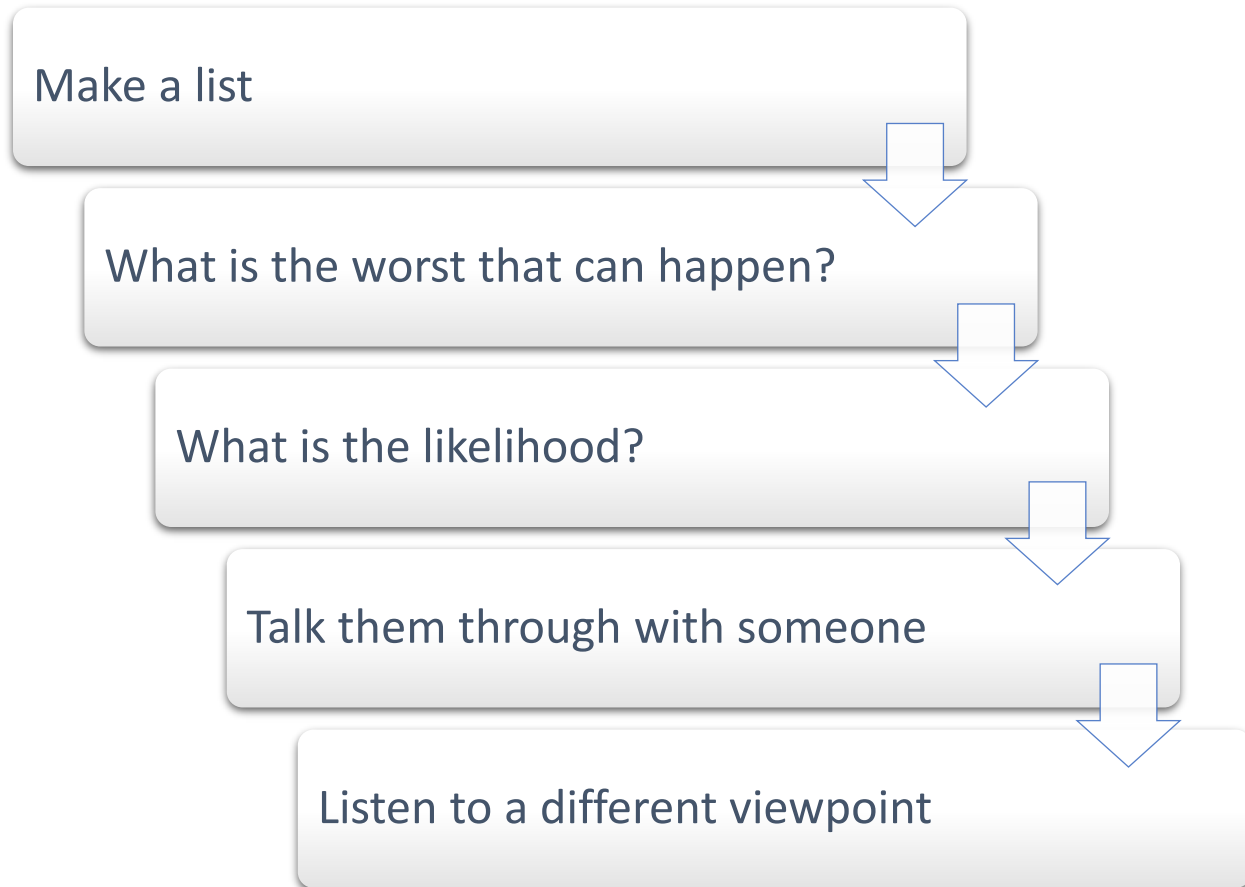
- Society has changed
- We are more open about mental health struggles
- Everything isn't 'fine'
- Being open is seen as a strength
- It shows you know yourself and your limitations
- *We don't need to pretend that all is well*





Dealing with
today's struggles
– some practical
advice

Manage your concerns and anxieties



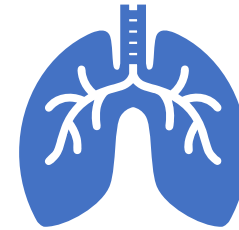
Manage your own and other people's expectations



Don't assume anything

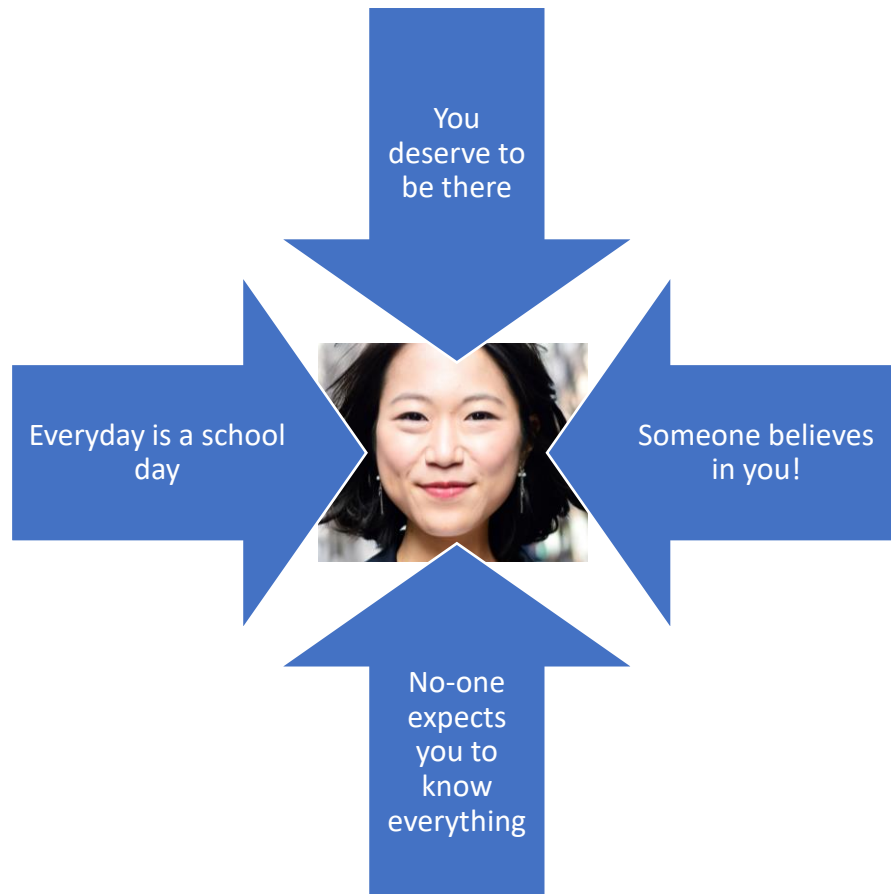


Are you giving Gold service when Bronze is enough?



Remember – you can only do so much

Banish Imposter Syndrome



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

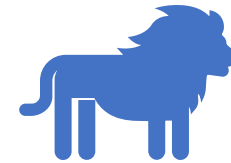
Be open and honest



Admit to yourself what
you don't know

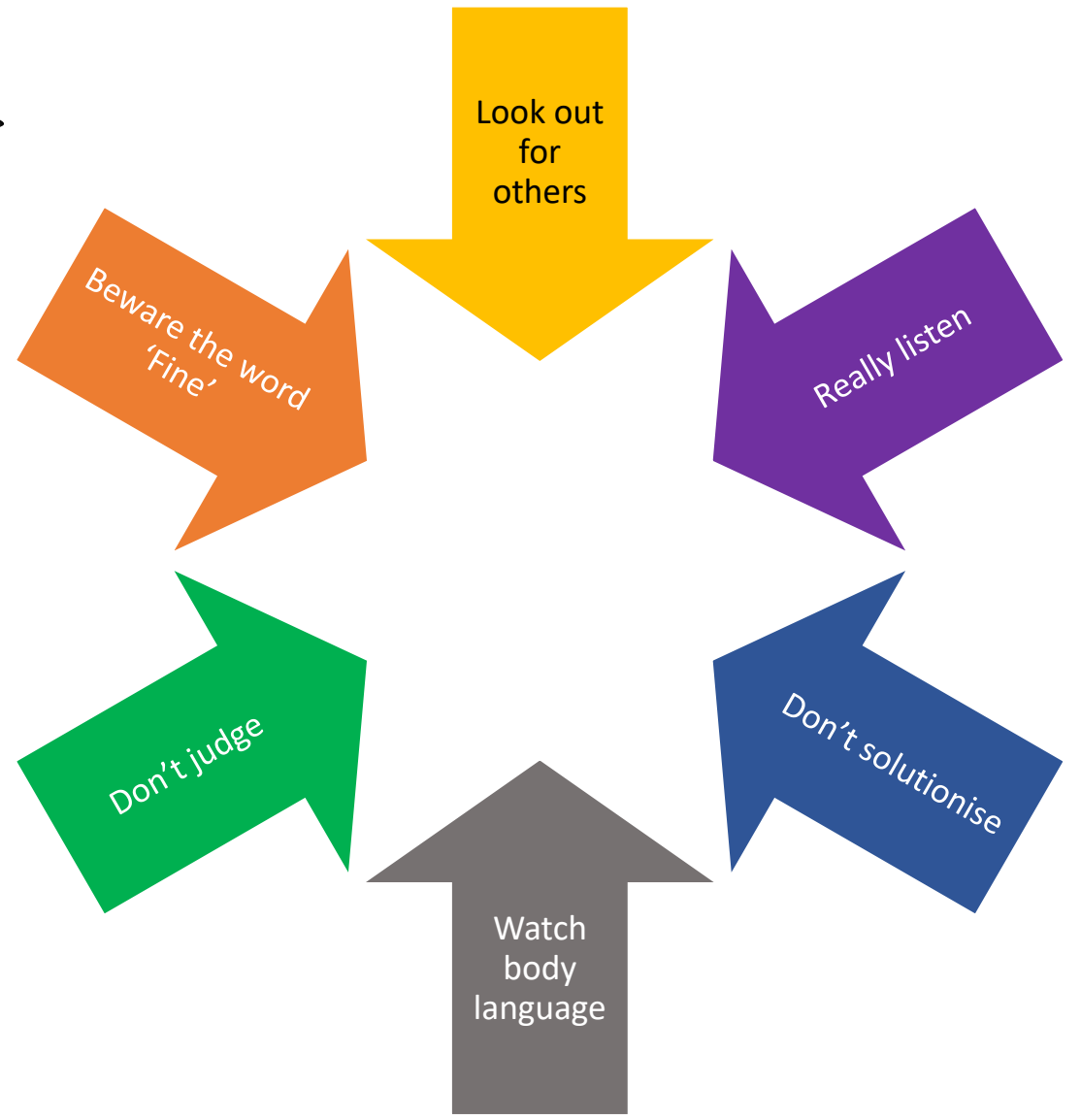


Find someone you trust
Listen to their point of view



Don't be too proud to
accept help

Be an ally...





Take-aways

- ✓ Talk about mental health struggles
- ✓ Role model the behaviour
- ✓ Create an open culture
- ✓ Be a more compassionate leader
- ✓ Be an ally to others



Thank you. Any questions?