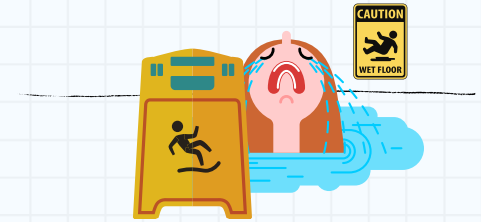
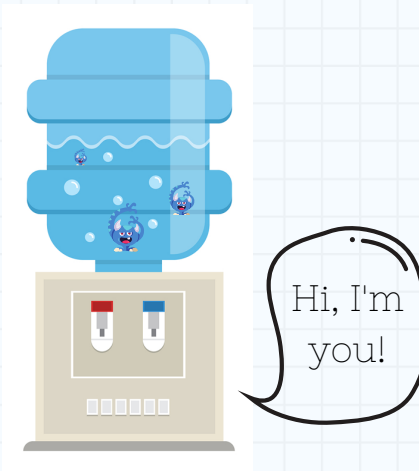
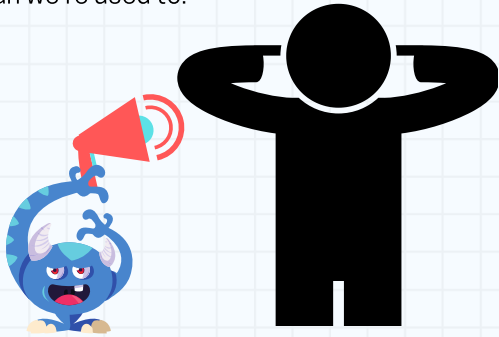


# The Water Cooler

Think of yourself as a water cooler. Your thoughts and feelings fill part of your head-space; just like the water fills the lower part of the bottle. Then there's an air pocket at the top of the bottle. This represents your breathing space - your wellbeing that helps you feel able to take on the day and cope with something like lockdown.

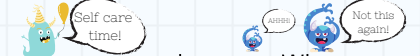
But what happens if the water keeps being topped up quicker than you can press the taps? Soon your bottle will have reached capacity - no air pocket for you to breathe and no room for you to be able to focus on your own thoughts and feelings, let alone anyone else's. Your bottle will become so full that the pressure inside builds up and either rockets off or topples off the cooler stand, or your taps break and you can't stop the water from pouring out. You can't take any more and you break.

For lots of us, lockdown has meant that without the distraction of being able to do things, our thoughts and feelings have had more time to stay with us and become louder than we're used to.



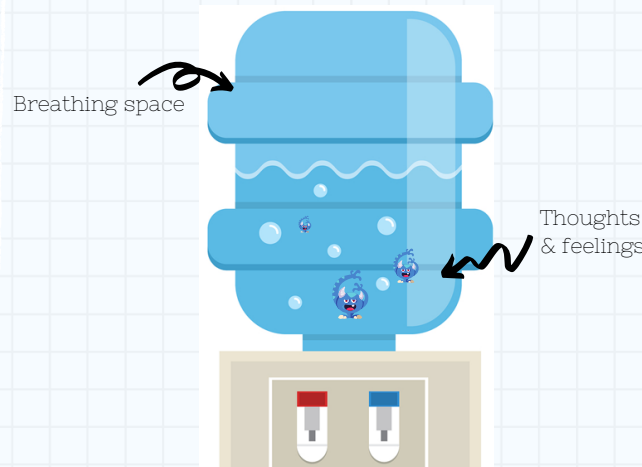
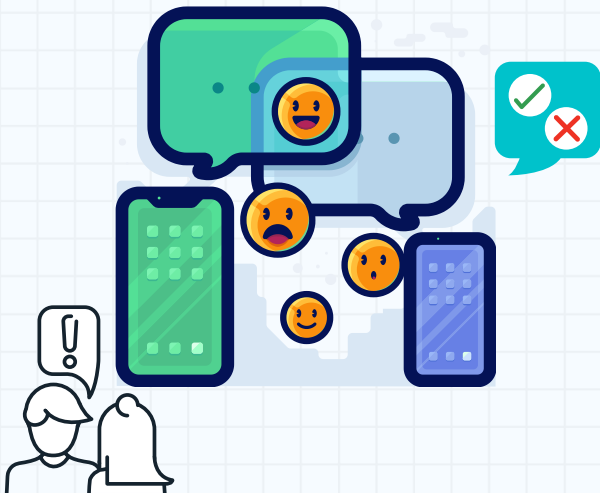
Some of us are able to process our thoughts and feelings on our own, while some talk to people they think may be able to help. Being someone that people trust enough to talk to is great, but it can sometimes become overwhelming, or distract us from being mindful of our own wellbeing.

Being someone who people come to for emotional support is not a bad thing. However, we need to be aware of our own thoughts and feelings before we listen to theirs. Being mindful of how much breathing space is in our bottle compared to how much water there is, and how much water other people are pouring into our bottle, means that we can notice when we need to look after ourselves first and take a moment for some self care.



When you deal with a problem or process through a thought or feeling, it's like you push the taps on the water cooler and let some water out. You releasing that water causes more air to bubble up to the top of the bottle; creating more breathing space for you to be able to cope and keep dealing with your thoughts and feelings in a healthy way.

Think about your water cooler taps. Who presses them to release some of the water and create more breathing space? Maybe you press them! Think about how you do that and make your breathing space bigger. Here are some ways that you can be mindful of your water and air levels, and work on balancing them back out so you don't reach capacity:



Saying 'no' when you're not in the right mindset to hear someone else	Doing something you enjoy	Exercise
Laughing	Mindfulness exercises	Treating yourself
Getting more sleep	Being kind to yourself	Talking to someone you trust
Having some 'you time'		