

What is Anxiety?

A Presentation to help us understand anxiety and how we can manage it

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Aims and Objectives of the Session

- Define anxiety: what does anxiety mean to you
- Recognise triggers that can cause anxiety both in yourself as a parent and in your child
- Recognise signs and symptoms of anxiety
- Explain cycle of anxiety using a cognitive behavioural model
- Explain how anxiety can be managed by exploring some helpful suggestions and solutions
- Know where to go and get help if needed

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Group Ground Rules

➤ **Health Warning!**

- What is said in the room stays in the room
- Respect each other and each others views & feelings
- Take turns to talk one at a time and listen to each other
- Questions welcomed at anytime
- No Mobile Phones (please have on silent if needed for emergencies)
- Any other ground rules?

Getting to know you

Turn to the person next to you and tell them your:

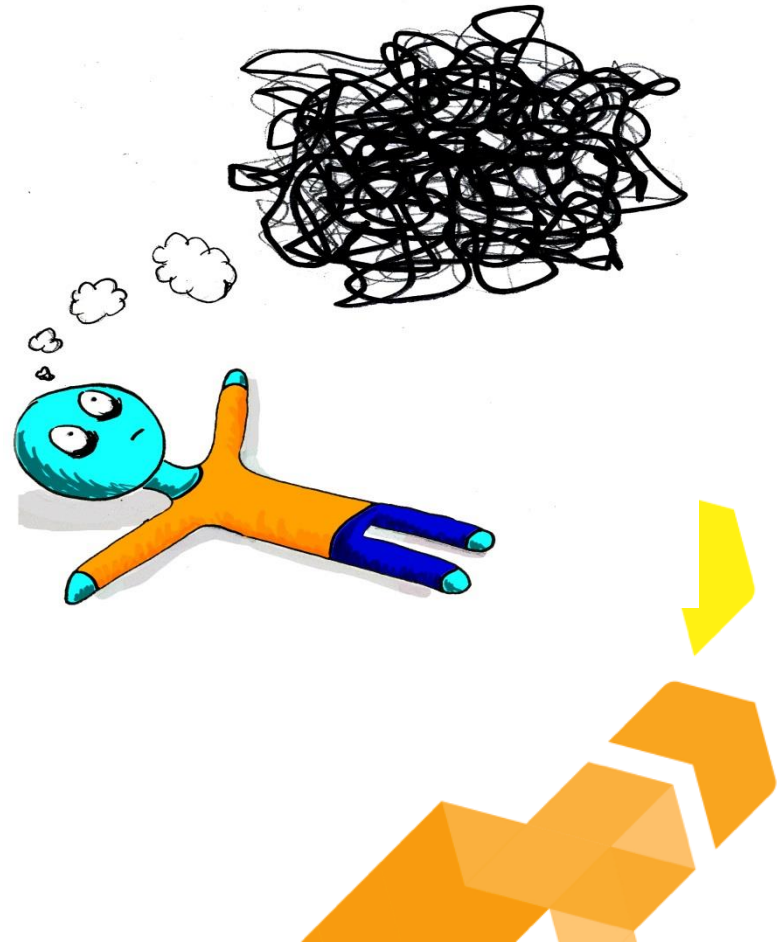
- Name
- Best hopes from today's session
- One interesting fact about yourself
- How did that exercise make you feel?



What does 'anxiety' mean to you?

Definition of ANXIETY

‘Anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it’



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an emotion.

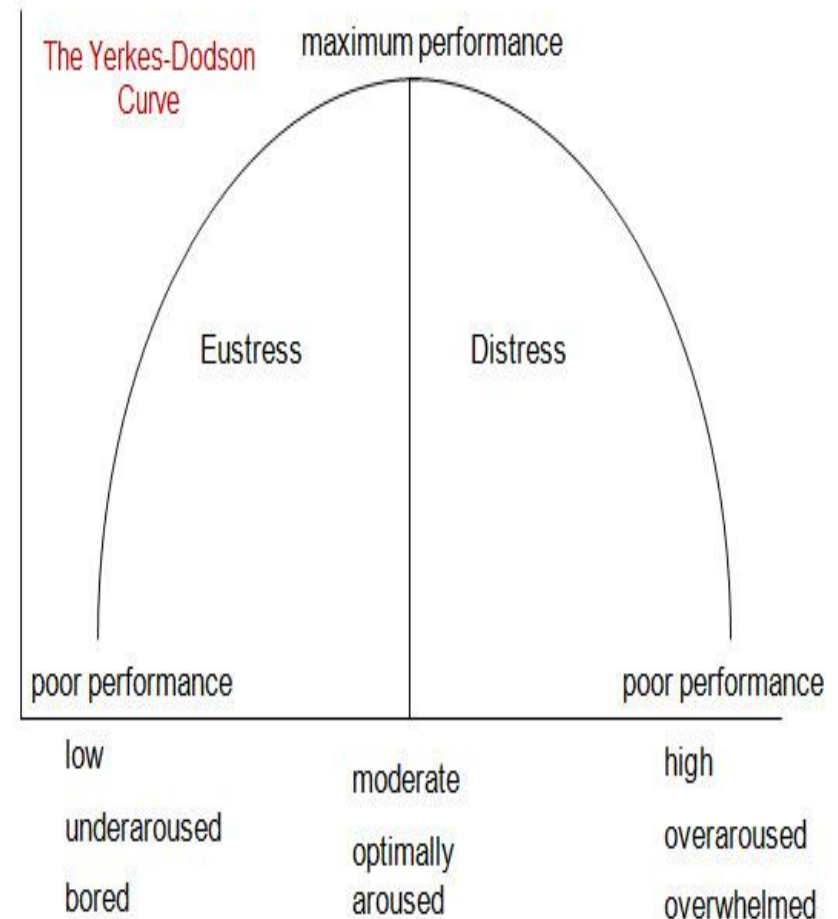
Emotions are how our brains make sense of what is going on around us and move us into action.

Emotions are constantly shifting and changing in response to our situation.

Feeling anxious is normal and is part of every day life. You can feel anxious because you care and want to do well or when you have to do something new or different or challenging.

Learning to accept that we can feel anxious from time to time is key to learning to manage it.

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Anxiety is NORMAL

We all experience worry and anxiety at times.

It is completely normal to feel anxious when we experience something new for the first time.

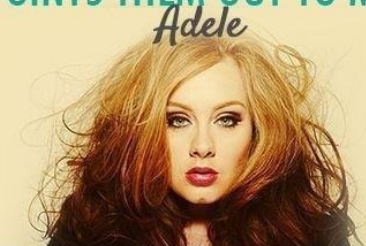
Even famous people experience anxiety from time to time:

- Sigmund Freud
- Adele (singer)
- Johnny Depp (actor)
- Barbara Streisand (singer/actor)



I HAVE INSECURITIES OF COURSE
BUT I DON'T HANG OUT
WITH ANYONE WHO
POINTS THEM OUT TO ME

Adele



Out of your
vulnerabilities
will come
your strength.

— Sigmund Freud

www.wordsonimages.com



"As a teenager I was so insecure. I was the type of guy that never fitted in because he never dared to choose. I was convinced I had absolutely no talent at all. For nothing. And that thought took away all my ambition too."

Johnny Depp

So what is Normal worries ?

Age	Normal Fear
Birth- 6 Months	Loud noises, loss of physical support, rapid position changes, rapidly approaching other objects
7-12 Months	Strangers, looming objects, unexpected objects or unfamiliar people
1-5 Year	Strangers, storms, animals, dark, separation from parents, objects, machines loud noises, the toilet
6-12 Year	Supernatural, bodily injury, disease, burglars, failure, criticism, punishment
12-18	Performance in school, peer scrutiny, appearance, performance

Where does Anxiety come from?

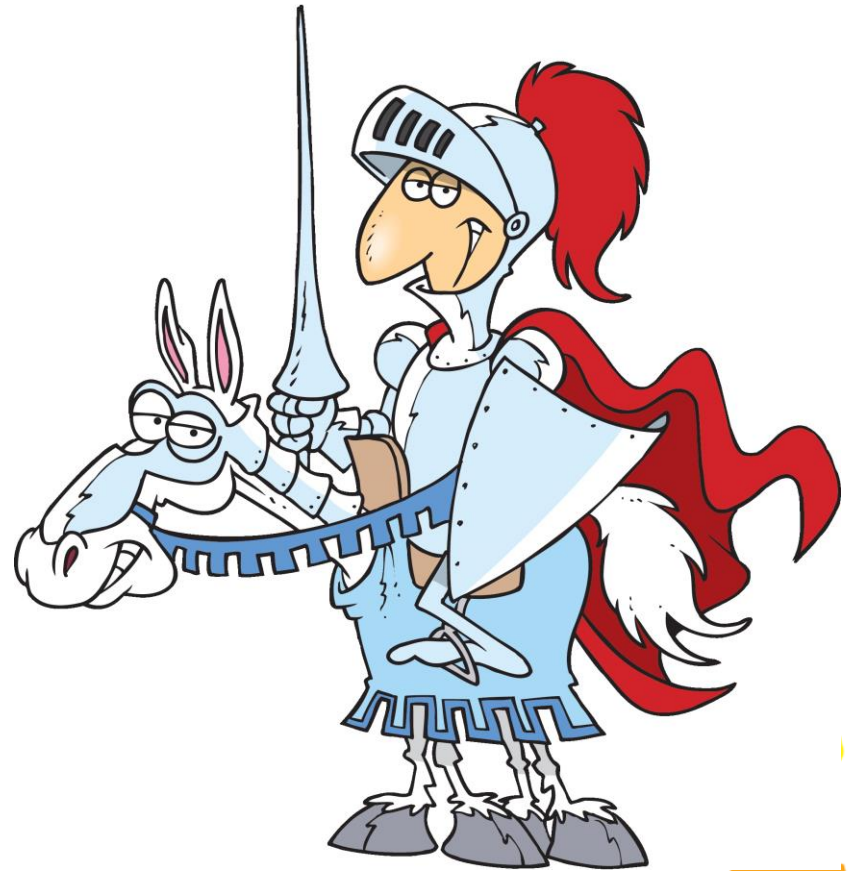
When our ancestors went out hunting for food they sometimes came across danger.

The danger would trigger an internal worry alarm system in the brain called the **Fight or Flight** response which is a defence mechanism wired into our brains to get us out of danger and stay safe.



Anxiety is a Survival Mechanism

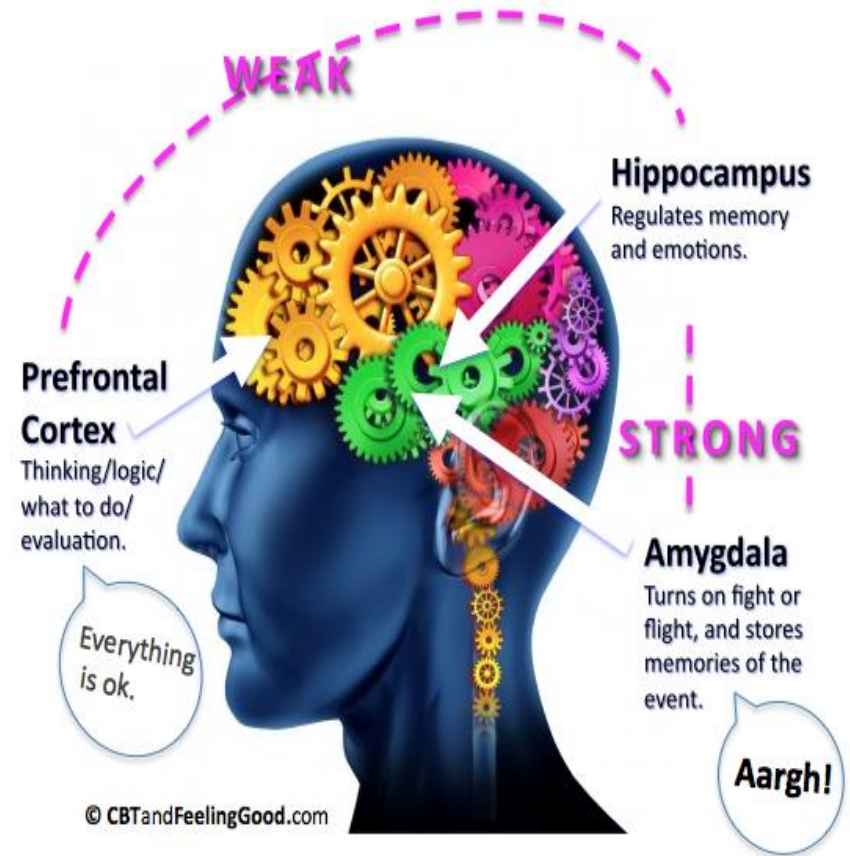
- Anxiety is a survival mechanism that still plays a role in modern times.
- This defence mechanism is a good thing. It is there to protect you.
- It can get us out of dangerous situations.
- It can give us a massive energy boost to help us escape or defend ourselves.



How Anxiety Works

Your brain is made up of two main parts:

- Thinking brain (logical, rational, memory)
- Feeling brain (emotions)
- They normally work together to help you make sense of your world.
- When the worry alarm is triggered, the Emotional Brain hijacks the system and takes over making it very difficult to think straight.
- It makes you act instinctively without needing to think.



What happens in your body

- At the same time your brain sends out a signal to release chemicals called 'neurochemicals' into the body to move it into action to help you survive.
- Your breathing gets faster and your heart speeds up pumping blood away from the systems it does not need to use such as your stomach and bladder which will make you feel sick and need the toilet, to your muscles ready to defend you or help you escape.
- Then once the danger is over and you are safe the alarm system switches off. This can take up to 50 mins.

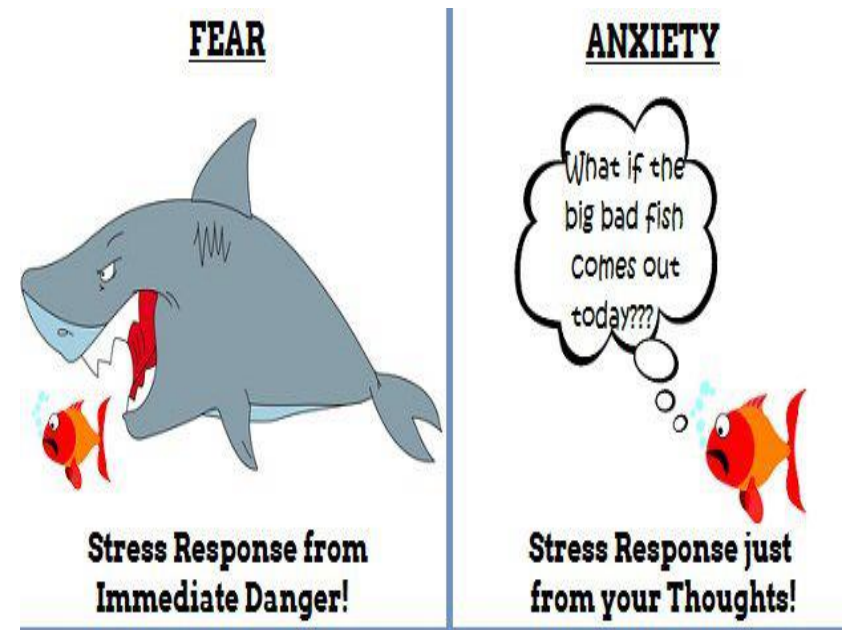
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Sometimes things can go a bit wrong.....

- The worry alarm system is there to protect us but sometimes we worry even when we are not in any immediate danger.
- Sometimes the alarm system is set off by thoughts about the future, ourselves or how we see the world around us.
- What starts off as a small worry can grow and grow until the brain becomes overwhelmed and switches on the worry alarm system which triggers the Fight or Flight response.

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www.gostrengths.com



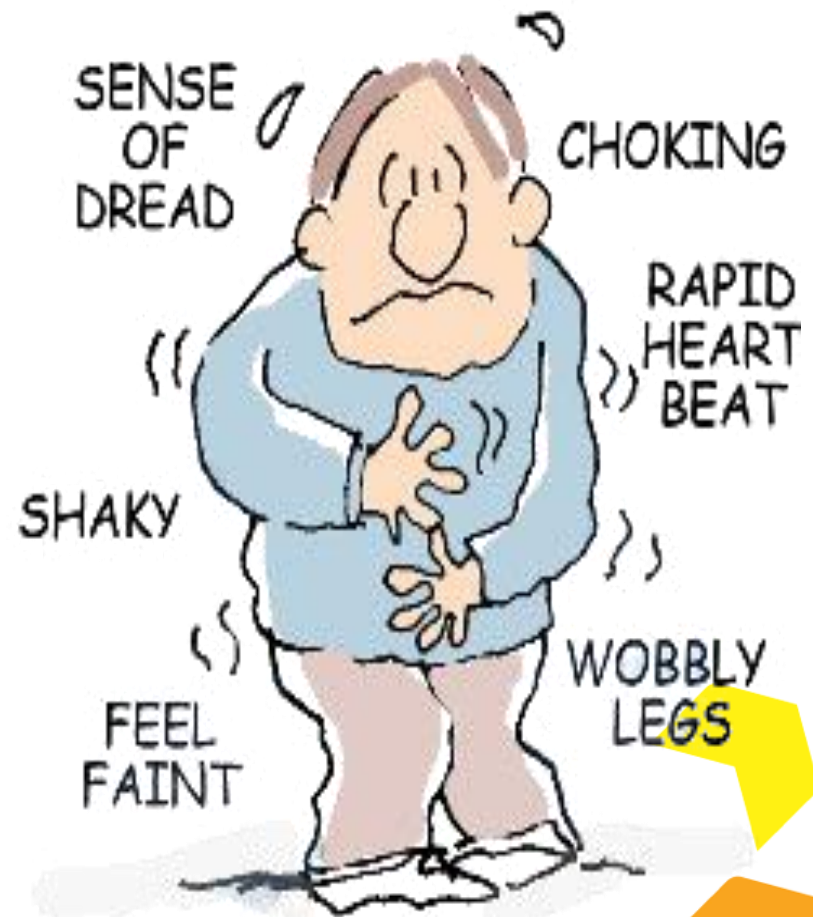
False Alarms....

The thing is if there is no actual danger to run away from there is nowhere for all those chemicals to go.

They can end up staying in your body and could make you feel

ANXIOUS

The longer the emotion is allowed to last the stronger it gets and it can make you feel unwell.



Factors that can contribute to Anxiety

Sometimes we can experience false alarms when we think we are in danger, feel out of control or when our worry thoughts take us into the unknown future.

We can also experience anxiety as a result of:

- › changes in our brain chemistry
- › how our brains are wired genetically
- › as a result of what is going on in our environment

You can't change
YESTERDAY
but you can ruin
TODAY
by worrying about
TOMORROW
§



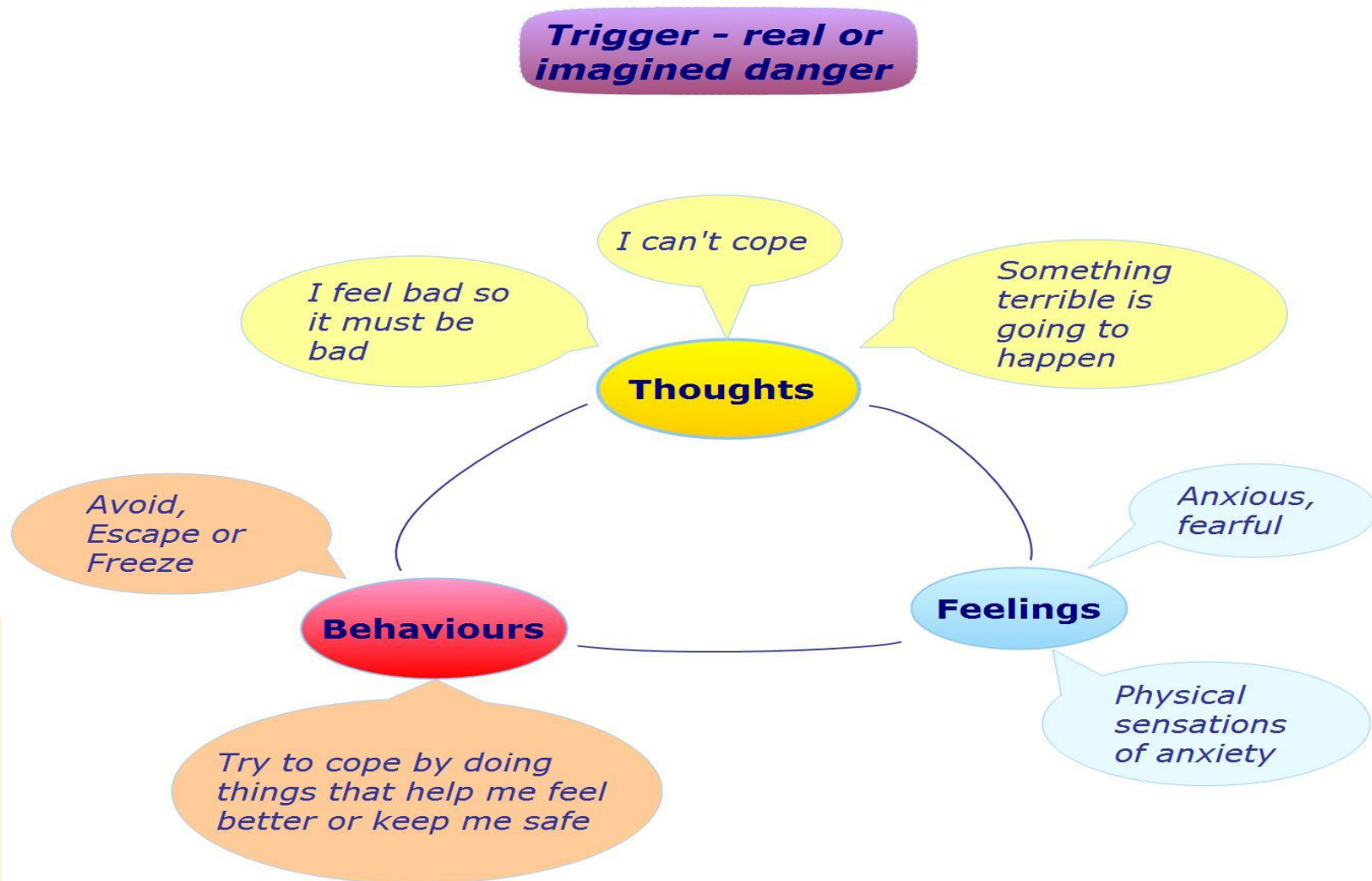
Anxiety Disorders

- Anxiety can become a problem when it allowed to go on for a long time and it stops us living and stops us doing the things we enjoy.
- As many as **1 in 6** young people will experience an anxiety problem at some point.
- This can make it difficult to concentrate in school, to remember information, to stay focused, to sit still, to bounce back from challenges, to socialise, to eat and to sleep.

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Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Model of Anxiety



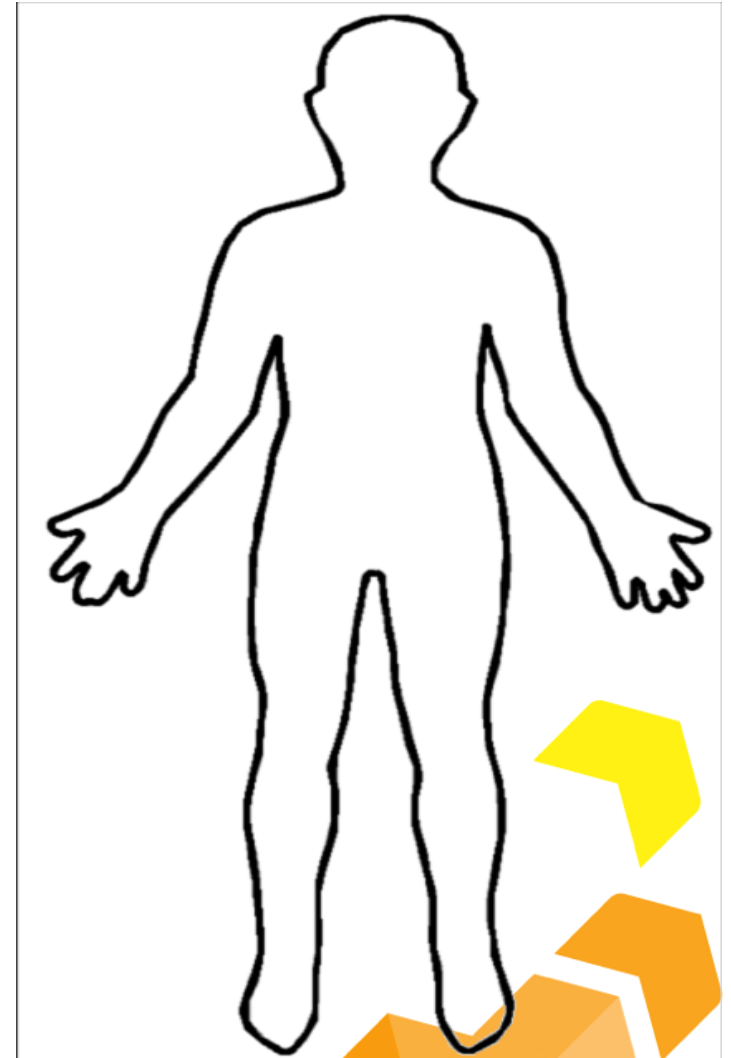
Learning to listen to our bodies

Our bodies react in exactly the same way whether there is an actual danger/threat or if the worry comes from our thoughts.

Recognising the warning signs that our bodies give us can help us in taking the first steps to switch off the worry alarm.



- Think back to the last time you felt anxious, can you recall where you felt the emotion in your body?



What triggers your worry alarm?

- Think back to the last time you felt worried.
- What made you feel anxious, worried, scared and/or frightened?
- Was it one big thing or lots and lots of little things?
- What sorts of things does your child worry about?



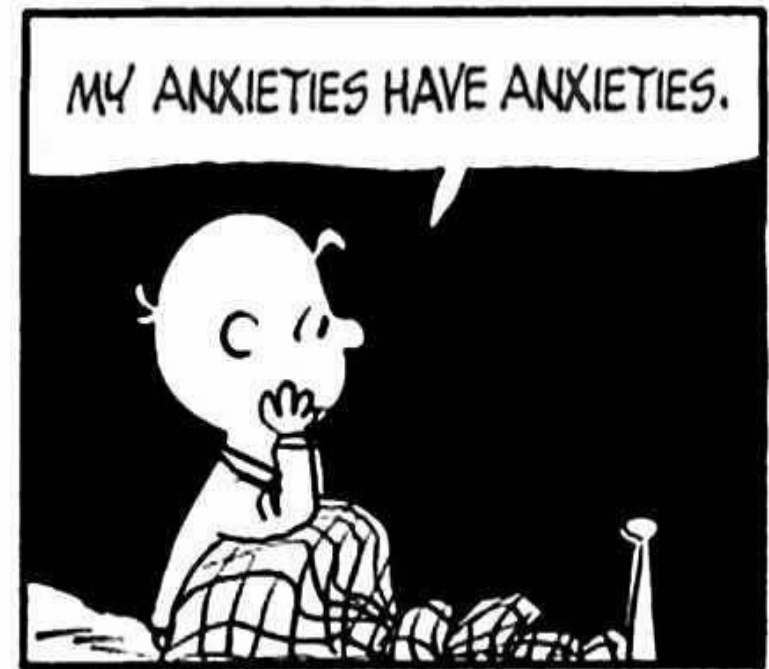
Common triggers for anxiety for ASD children

Children may not have the words to tell you what they are worried about. You may have to investigate and find out for them:

- **changes in routine** – for example, when a weekly piano lesson gets cancelled because the teacher is sick
- **changes in environment** – for example, when some furniture gets moved, there's new play equipment at the local park, or you move house
- **unfamiliar social situations**
- **sensory sensitivities** – children with ASD might be scared by certain noises or be sensitive to bright lights, specific flavours or food textures
- **fear of a particular situation, activity or object** – for example, sleeping in their own bed, going to the toilet, balloons or vacuum cleaners.

Some common worry thoughts: what if I.....

- Fail
- Not good enough
- Not safe
- Not loved
- Am powerless
- Not wanted
- Not liked by other children
- Am hungry/tired
- Do not belong in the family
- Am embarrassed/shamed
- Get hurt
- Lose something
- Have something important taken away
- Fear change
- Experience Information overload



Unhelpful ways of managing Anxiety

- The physical symptoms that come with anxiety can be unpleasant and can make us feel unwell.
- In order to avoid the feeling we sometimes develop patterns of behaviours which can in themselves make the problem worse and end up becoming the **PROBLEM**.



Being aware of what you do to cope with anxiety

What do you do when you feel anxious?

Do you:

- do you freeze?
- run away and avoid?
- get angry and hit out at others?
- What else do you do?

How is this working out for you as a coping strategy?

Have you become trapped in a pattern of behaviour every time you feel anxious?

If you do
what you've
always done,
you'll get
where you've
always got.

sprinkleofglitter



Unhelpful Patterns of Behaviour

Children and young people communicate their worries and try to manage their worries in many ways:

- Complaining of feeling ill, tired, not sleeping or eating
- They may find it difficult to separate from their parent
- Avoiding school or a certain situation
- Avoiding talking in public
- Others may develop rituals and repetitive patterns of behaviour
- Meltdowns or tantrums or panic attacks 'out of the blue'

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Making Change Happen

Sometimes its really difficult to change how we think or see ourselves, others and the world around us

By changing what we **do**, we can change how we **think** and **feel**

It is important to remember: we do not have the power to change others but we do have the power to change ourselves by **choosing** how we respond and what we do in certain situations




Being a role model

Children learn how to cope with difficult situations by watching what other people (their role models) do and listening to what those people say.

It is important to be mindful of how you act and what you say in situations that you find anxiety provoking as your children will mirror you.

Be a Positive Role Model



- Show understanding, compassion and kindness
- Be in charge of your emotions
- Use humour
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Reach out for support
- Take care of your health
- Take deep breaths when you're stressed
- Be patient
- Stop and rethink
- Let go of being perfect
- Stay positive
- Reach out to help others

Question for the group to think about over break

What do you do that helps you to feel less anxious?

Looking for Solutions

- If it works for you and is helpful, carry on doing it
- If it does not help or makes things worse, stop doing it and try something else instead!
- Remember, changing patterns of behaviour takes time and hard work.
- **When situations get tough, who can you ask for help?**
- Remember there are people around you who can help you if you ask.



Four Steps to Help Children

1. Practicing Relaxation & Breathing
2. Problem Solving Skills
3. Challenging worries
4. Manage unwanted behaviour

How to manage your child's anxiety

- As soon as you notice the warning signs, say the child's name
- Ask them to:
- **STOP**
- **ACKNOWLEDGE AND VALIDATE HOW THE CHILD IS FEELING. NAME THE EMOTION FOR THEM**
- **REMAIN CALM AND CONTAINED IN THE WAY YOU REACT AND HOW YOU COMMUNICATE**
- **ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO REFOCUS THEIR ATTENTION. GIVE CLEAR AND CONCISE INSTRUCTIONS AND TIME TO CALM DOWN**
- **REFLECT AND LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE- LOOK FOR SOLUTIONS TOGETHER**



Things to avoid.....

- **Avoid dismissing a child's emotions:** saying 'don't be scared' can lead the child to think they are wrong and bad for feeling that way
- **Avoid lying to avoid an emotional reaction:** 'it won't hurt' when it will may lead to a sense of distrust and increase the emotional response
- **Avoid shaming a child for their emotions:** teasing a child may lead to a sense of shame and undermines confidence
- **Avoid ignoring a child's emotions:** this may tell the child that their emotions are not important and limit opportunities to learn new ways of managing emotions

Bringing the anxieties to life

Ignoring your worries doesn't help but bringing the worry to life and talking about it like a character can help especially for younger children.

Help the child to create their own worry monster

'The worry monster lives in the old brain that is responsible for keeping us safe when we are in danger. Of course, sometimes he can get confused and a bit out of control. When that happens we need to stop and talk some sense into him. What do we need to tell him to help him calm down?'

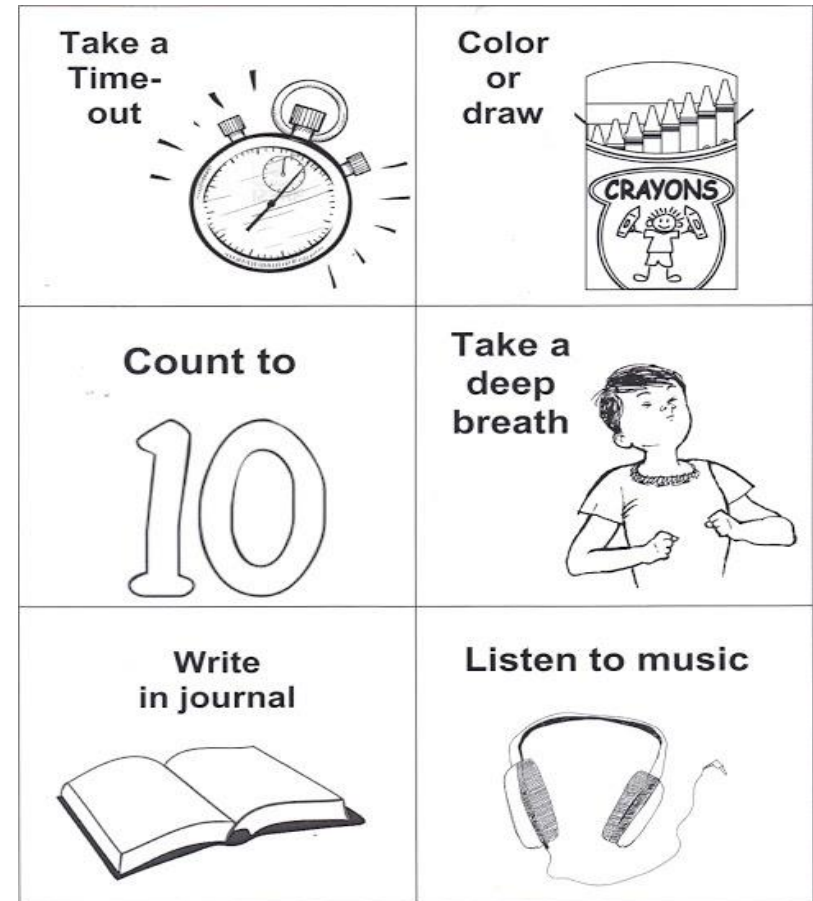
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Make a checklist

- What do trained pilots do when they face an emergency? They refer to a checklist. Even with years of experience a pilot will refer to a checklist because when you are faced with danger you cannot think straight.
- When we feel anxious we can get overwhelmed and not be able to think clearly.
- Drawing up a checklist of things that you know help you to calm down can be really useful.
- You can try out new techniques and evaluate how helpful they are for reference.



Some suggestions for your calm plan

HEAR

- › Sing a song
- › Play a musical instrument
- › Count your breath
- › Listen to music

TOUCH

- › Have a bath
- › Give someone a hug
- › Stroke your pet
- › Brush your hair
- › Wash your face/hands
- › Apply cream
- › Paint your nails
- › Rub a smooth stone
- › Play with clay/dough

TASTE

Have something to eat

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MOVE ABOUT

- › Jumping jacks
- › Run around
- › Go for a walk
- › Dance
- › Do yoga
- › Squeeze a ball
- › Ride a bike

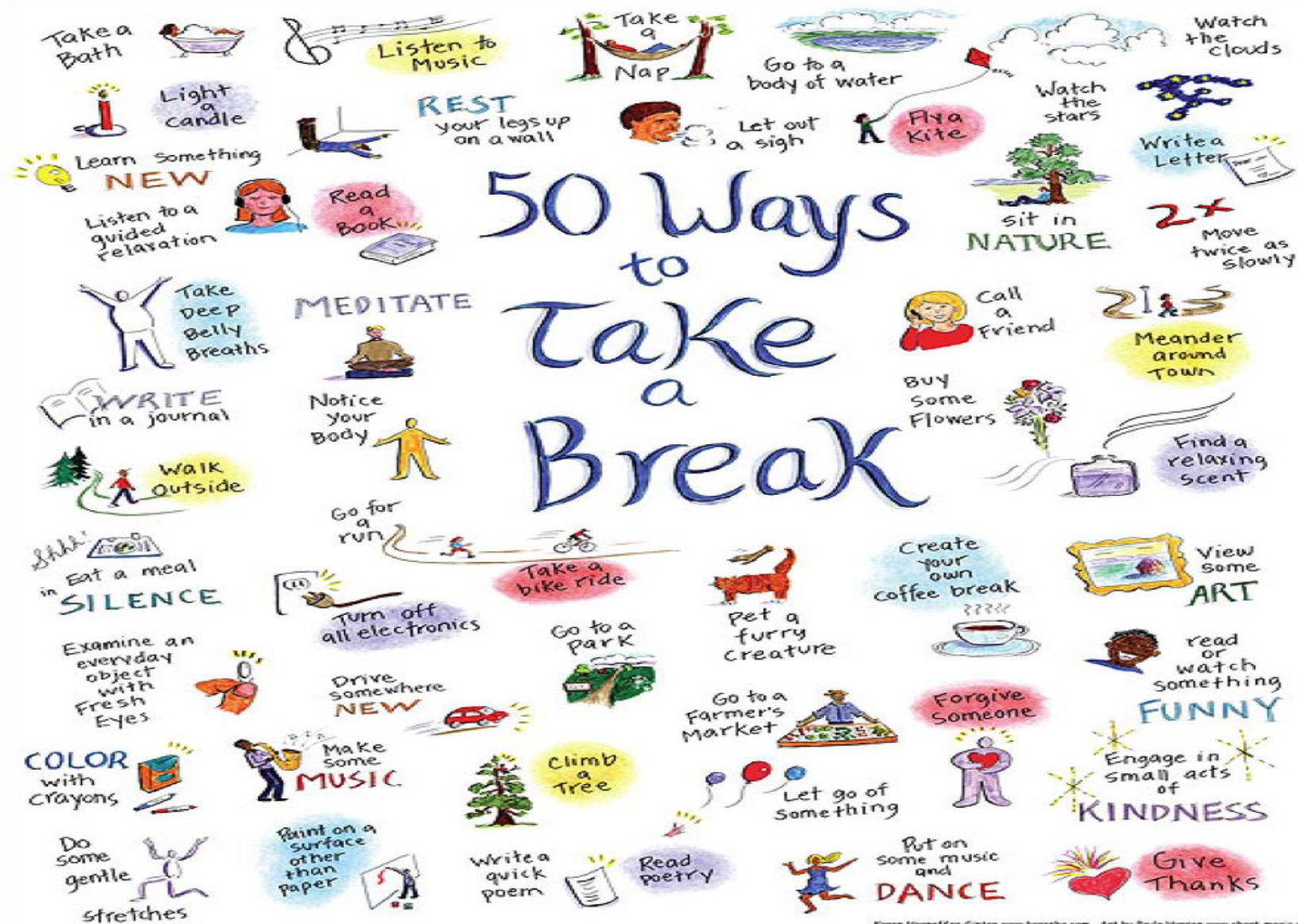
DO

- › Write your thoughts in a book
- › Colouring in
- › Play a game
- › Have a laugh
- › Make a cup of tea
- › Bake a cake
- › Rip up some paper
- › Punch a pillow

SEE

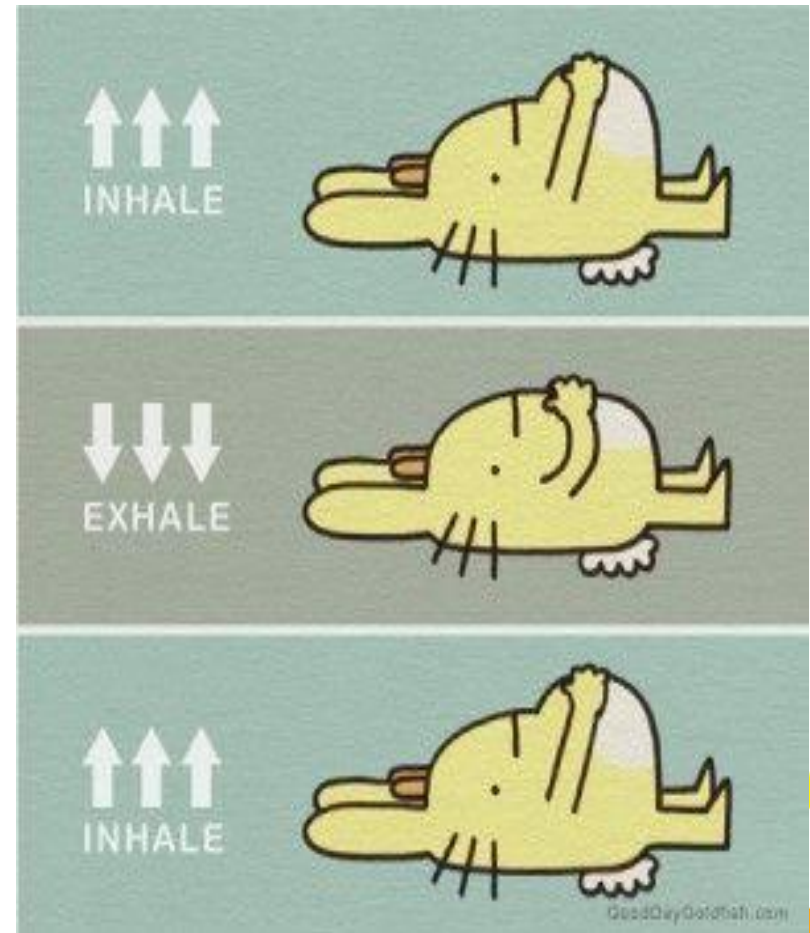
Go outside
Watch a film
watch TV
read a book/magazine
watch a snow globe
draw a picture
blow some bubbles





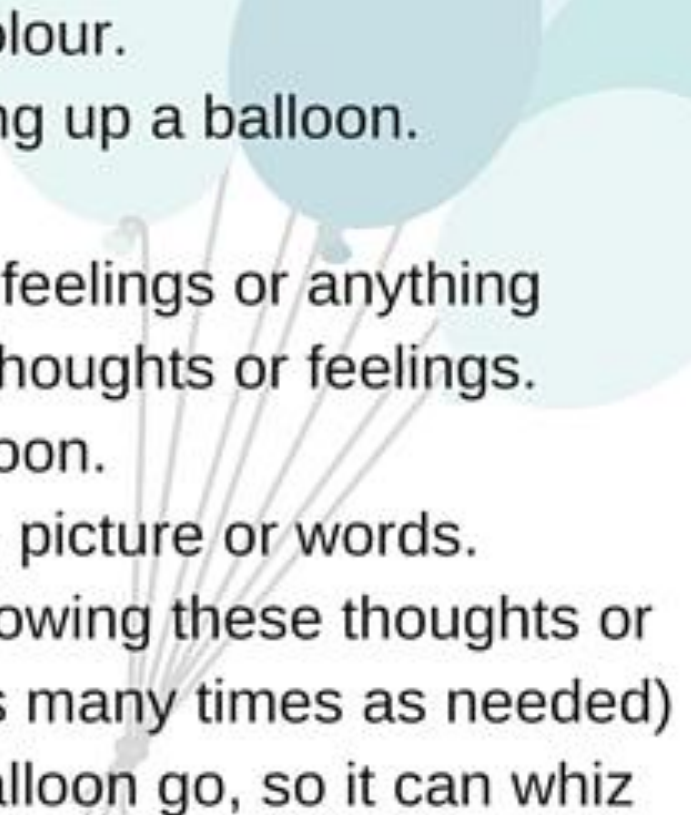
Being Mindful

- Research shows that bringing our attention back into the present using mindfulness techniques can be helpful at moving us from 'what if' to 'what is'
- One simple way of doing this is to refocus your mind's attention onto your breathing for a few minutes
- Alternatively going for a walk, sitting in a car, listening to music, kick a football outside, using visualisations.....



Balloon Breathing

Practice Often with your child. Give them these instructions and do it with them. You can sit, lie down, stand up. A good way is face to face (helps to regulate).

- Imagine a balloon – shape, size, colour.
 - Take long breath in, imagine blowing up a balloon.
 - Do this 3 times (give praise)
 - Think of anxious thoughts or fidget feelings or anything bothering or annoying or worrying thoughts or feelings.
 - Imagine blowing these into the balloon.
 - Imagine they have a shape, colour, picture or words.
 - Blow into balloon again, imagine blowing these thoughts or feelings into the balloon. (do this as many times as needed)
 - Well done! Then imagine you let balloon go, so it can whiz round room or tie knot in balloon and kick into sky!
- 

Using mindfulness to calm you

VISUALISATION EXERCISE

Go somewhere quiet or just look out the window & let your mind relax.

Take your awareness to your breath. Focus on the movement of the breath as you inhale and exhale deeply

Think of your Happy Place & let your mind take you there.....



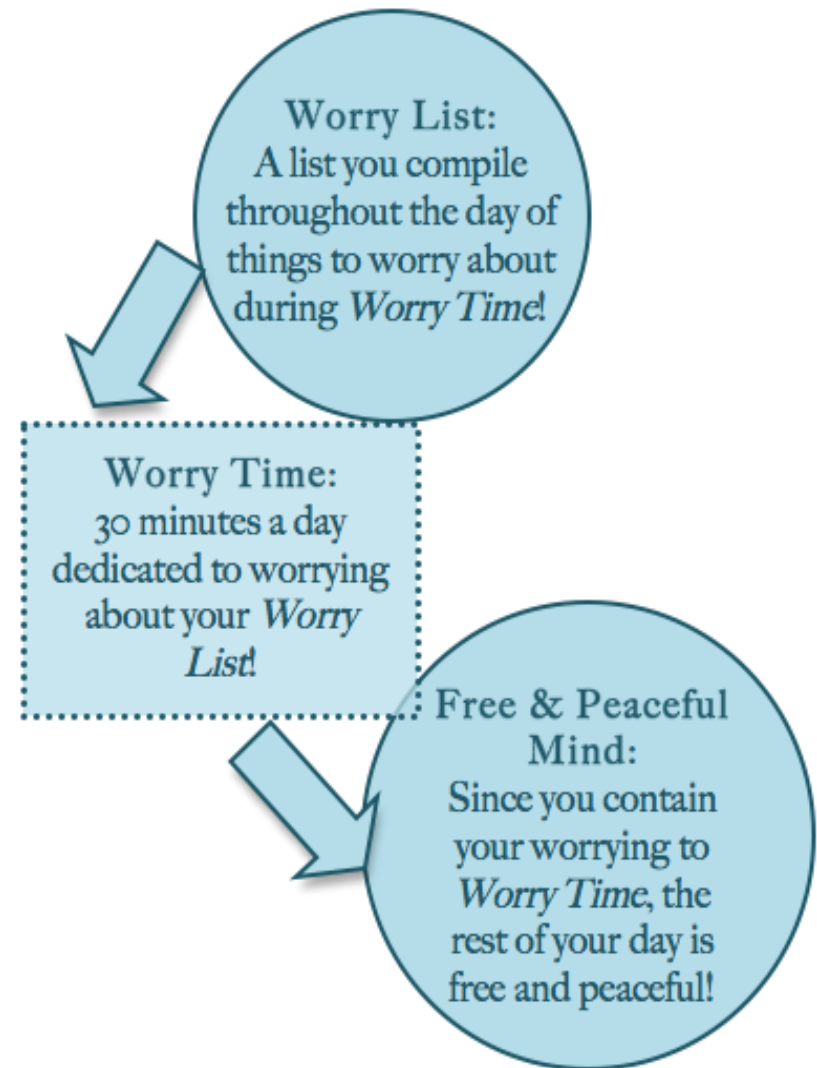
Allow yourself time to worry

As you know, telling yourself or your child not to worry only makes you worry more!!

Allowing your child to worry openly in limited doses can be helpful

Create a daily ritual of worry time.
Allow 10 to 15 minutes when you can openly talk and write down your worries and learn to let them go

When the time is up, close the book or box for the day and say 'goodbye to the worries'



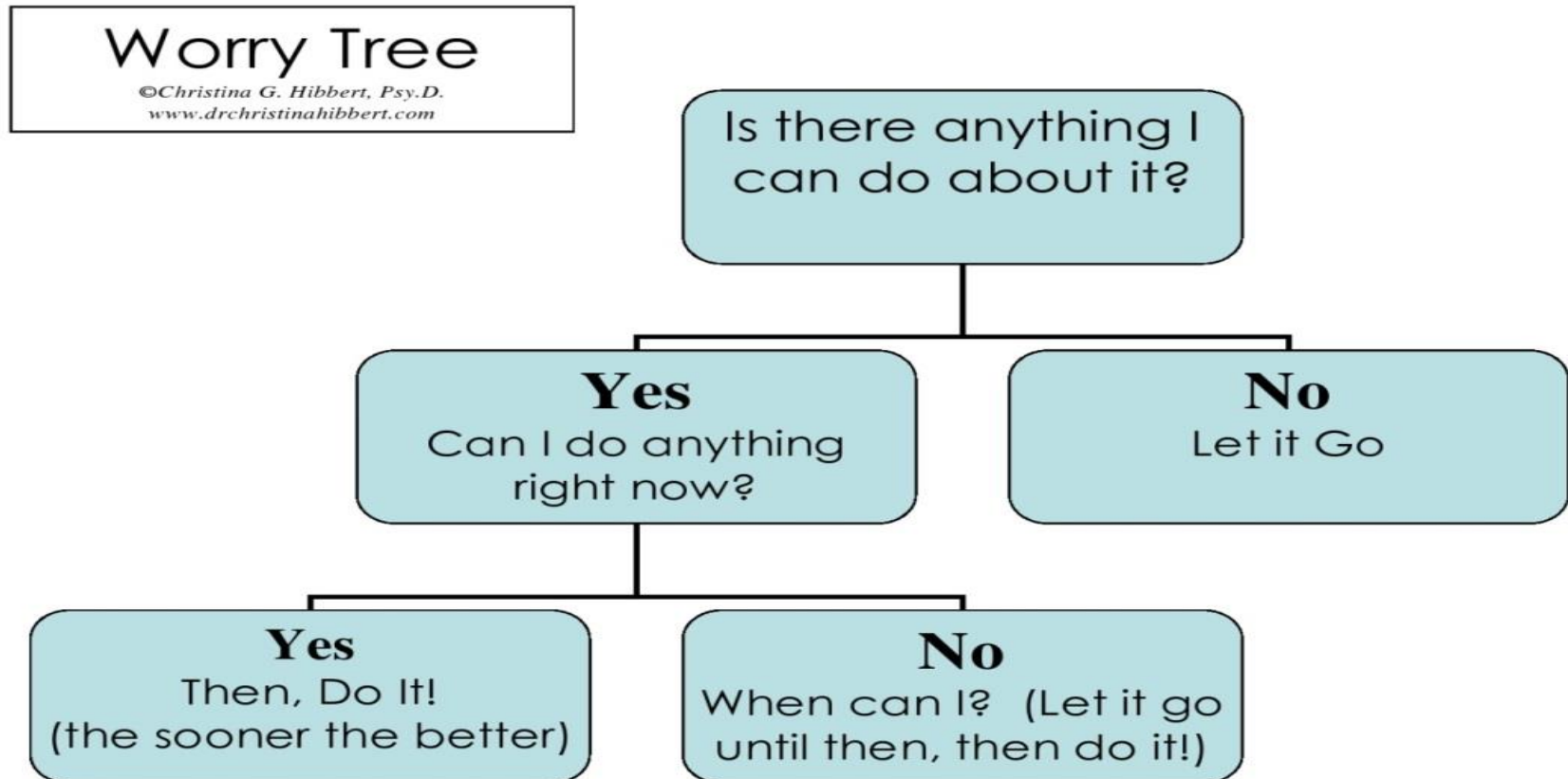
Suggestions to help challenge your worries

- **THOUGHT DIARY** – write down worries and fears and contain to a book you can just shut and close off your worries and fears
- **CHALLENGE WORRIES** Make a list of all the things that worry you. Write positive challenging statements next to your worry thoughts – “What would you tell your best friend to do”; is it a ‘fact or a belief?’
- **FINDING SOLUTIONS** using worry tree
- **TALK** to someone – a problem shared is a problem halved.



Tell the Worry Monster that he cannot beat you!!

An example of a Worry Tree



Avoid Avoiding.....

- Do you want to avoid social situations, going to school, planes, dogs, basically anything that makes you feel anxious?
- Of course you do! That's natural. The fight/flight response tells you to escape the situation that you believe to be threatening or dangerous.
- Unfortunately in the long run, avoidance makes the anxiety worse.

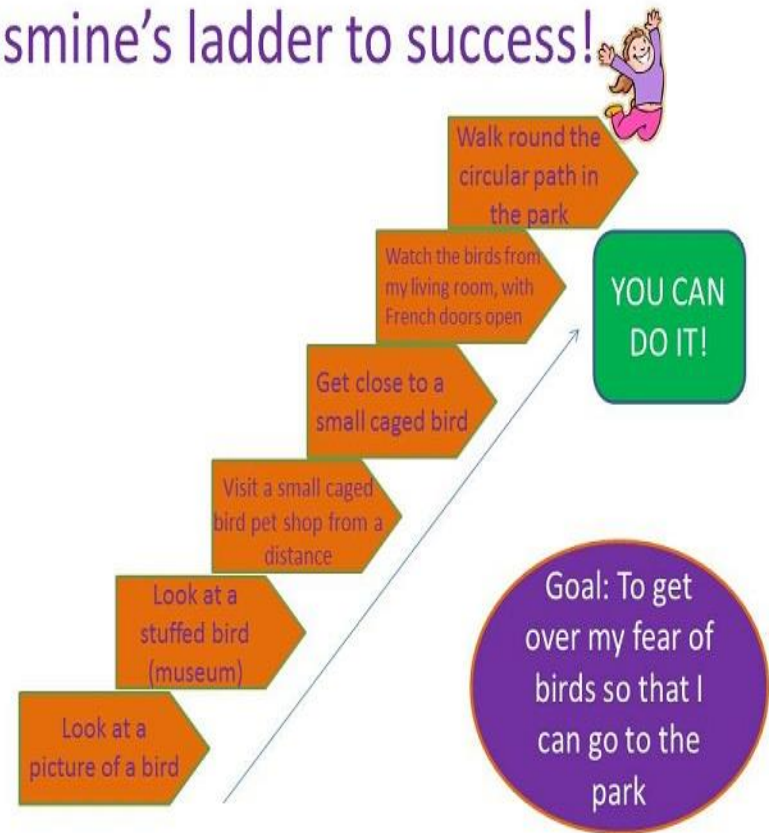


Laddering

Work with the child and make a plan together:

- Break the worry down into manageable chunks and use gradual exposure to reach a goal.
- Think of laddering as practicing and rehearsing a new skill.
- Reinforce the learning with praise and rewards

Jasmine's ladder to success!



Challenging unhelpful Thoughts

Remember, worry is the brain's way of protecting us from danger



To make sure we are really paying attention, sometimes the brain over exaggerates the object of worry.

One worry suddenly grows and grows!!

The best way to deal with distorted thinking is to check out whether it is accurate thinking.

Is it a fact or an opinion?

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FACT	OPINION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fact is something you can prove to be either true or false.• You <u>cannot change</u> a fact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An opinion is how a person or thing feels about something.• You <u>can change</u> an opinion.

Challenging your thoughts using the 3 'Cs'

- **Catch your thoughts:** imagine your thoughts floating in a bubble above your head. Now catch your worried thought. What does it say? (no-one at school likes me)
- **Collect evidence to challenge your thought:** Feelings are not facts: 'I had a hard time finding someone to sit with me at lunchtime but Claire and I do our homework together. She is my friend'
- **Challenge your thoughts:** lets look at the evidence. Is it a fact or an opinion?

When to be concerned

When there's been a change in their normal behaviour, its impacting on their functioning & it has been persistent for a period of time.

- Avoiding certain situations
- A drop in academic performance
- Change in sleep pattern
- Change in appetite/eating patterns
- Weight loss or gain in a short period of time
- Complaining of physical symptoms
- Not caring about self, others and things
- Relationship or Friendship difficulties
- Lack of motivation
- Low self esteem



Where to go for Help

It's Ok to ask for help and advice.
Here are a few suggestions of where
you can go to get help:

- GP
- School
- School Nurse
- Health Visitors
- CAMHS

www.healthysurrey.org.uk/your-health/mental-wellbeing/camhs/about-camhs/camhs-services



How to make a referral to CAMHS

For any concerns in regards to a child's mental health please contact CAMHS One Stop:

Tel: 0300 222 5755

(Opening hours :8am-8pm Monday to Friday and 9am-12pm on Saturdays)

Professionals may make a referral via:

Via Secure email: **sabp.nhs.uk/mindsightsurreycamhs**

Or by

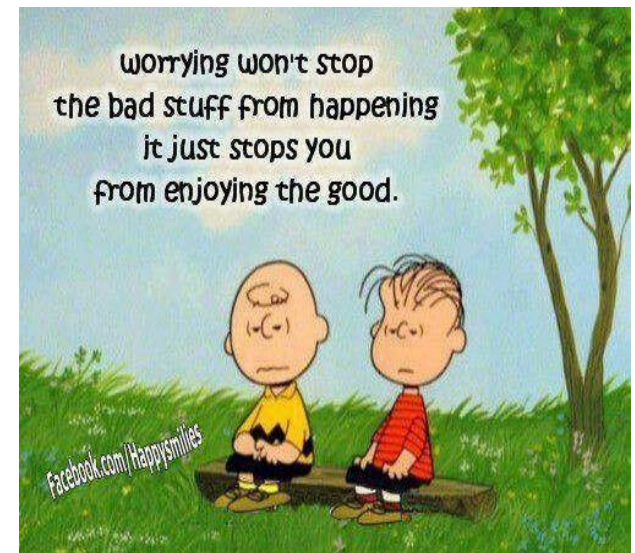
Post: **CAMHS One Stop 18 Mole Business Park, Leatherhead,
KT22 7AD**

Urgent help

- If you are concerned about a child or young person and believe there may be a risk of harm to themselves or others, contact CAMHS One Stop on **0300 222 5755** between the hours of 8am and 8pm, seven days a week, including Bank Holidays.
- Outside of these hours, and if there is immediate risk, please use the appropriate emergency service.
- For urgent physical or medical problems that need immediate assistance please arrange for the child or young person to go to their nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department, or call 999 for an ambulance.

Summary

- Regain control of anxiety. Do **not allow** anxiety to control you
- Keep the issue in proportion
- Feel the fear and face it anyway
- Use coping strategies : they WILL work, just keep practicing
- Have a 'calm plan' prepared
- Enjoy life; do not waste your life worrying it away!
- Know where to go to ask for help if you need it



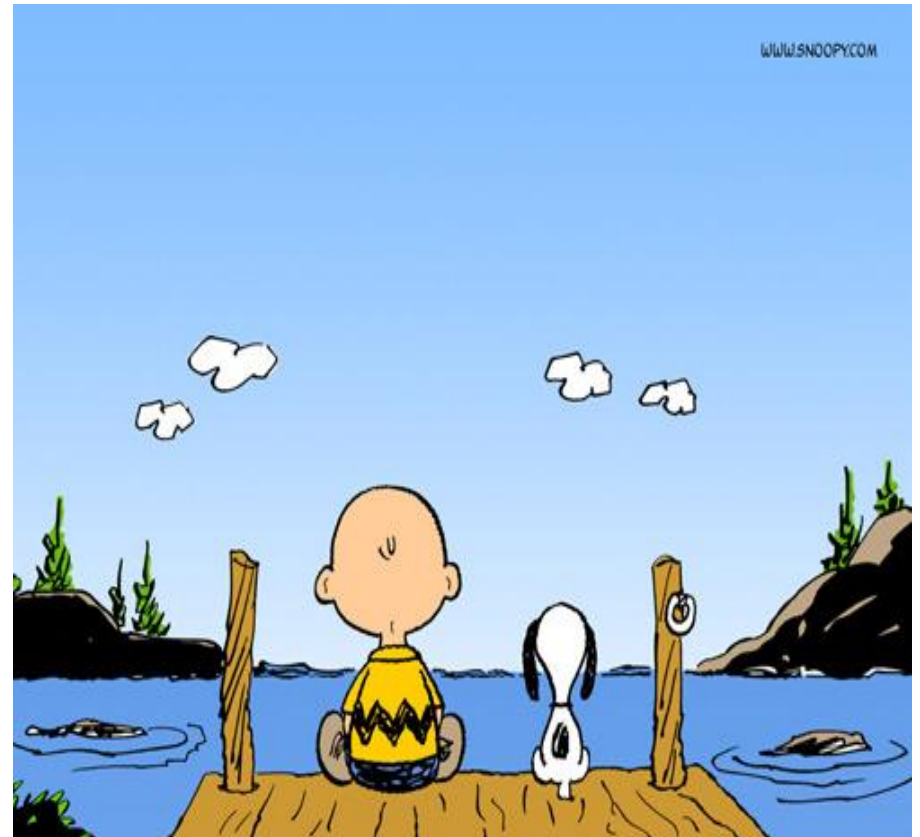
“Obstacles don't have to stop you.
If you run into a wall, don't turn
around and give up. Figure out how
to climb it, go through it, or work
around it.”

~ Michael Jordan

obstacles

www.backskinnyjeans.com

Questions and Answers



Useful Websites and Contacts

Phone Childline: 0800 11 11

Phone Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90

Or visit for more information:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Phobics Society

www.phobics-society.org.uk

Get self help

www.getselfhelp.org.uk

ASD emotional regulation website: <https://www.middletonautism.com/fs/doc/publications/mca-bulletin-8.pdf>

<http://psychology.tools/download-therapy-worksheets.html>

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/autism_spectrum_disorder_anxiety.html/context/1390

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Book References

- Helping Your anxious Child by Rapee, Spence, Cobham and Wignall
- What To do When You Worry Too Much – A Kids Guide To Overcoming Anxiety
- By Dawn Huebner
- What To Do When You Grumble Too Much – a Kids Guide to Overcoming Negativity
- By Dawn Huebner
- 1,2,3 Magic by Thomas Phelan book/DVD resource which can help remind everyone of useful age appropriate strategies when trying to encourage young people to make wise choices in their behaviour especially useful for parents of children aged 2 to 12; learning to manage troublesome behaviour, encourage good behaviour, and strengthen the parent-child relationship
- Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries a self-help guide to using CBT Techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- Overcoming Your Childs Shyness and Social Anxiety a self-help guide to CBT techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- Relax Kids Aladdin's Magic Carpet by Marneta Viegas
- The Whole Brain Child by Dr Daniel Siegel
- The Brain by David Eagleman
- Frazzled By Ruby Wax
- The Chimp Paradox by Steve Peters
- The Huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside

Lets imagine.....

- Imagine your best friend is feeling really anxious about going for a job interview, what would you do to support them?
- Imagine you saw a work colleague you didn't know well and they appeared worried, How would you handle it?
- What are the things that people do or say that annoy you when you are feeling anxious?
- Out of these solutions which ones do you think could work the best for managing difficult feelings of anxiety for yourself and/or your child?

