

Supporting your Child with Anxiety: A Webinar for Parents and Carers



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Thursday 19th January 2023 – 13:00 – 14:00

Aims and Schedule

This webinar aims to give you, the expert on your child as a parent/carer, more knowledge and tools to help your child manage their worries and anxiety.

- 13:00 – 13:05: Welcome (Suzanna Cooper)
- 13:05 – 13:25: What is Anxiety? (Zoe Buxton)
- 13:25 – 13:45: How Can we Help? (Amy Haughey)
- 13:45 – 14:00 Q&A Discussion

Please note



THE SESSION WILL
BE RECORDED

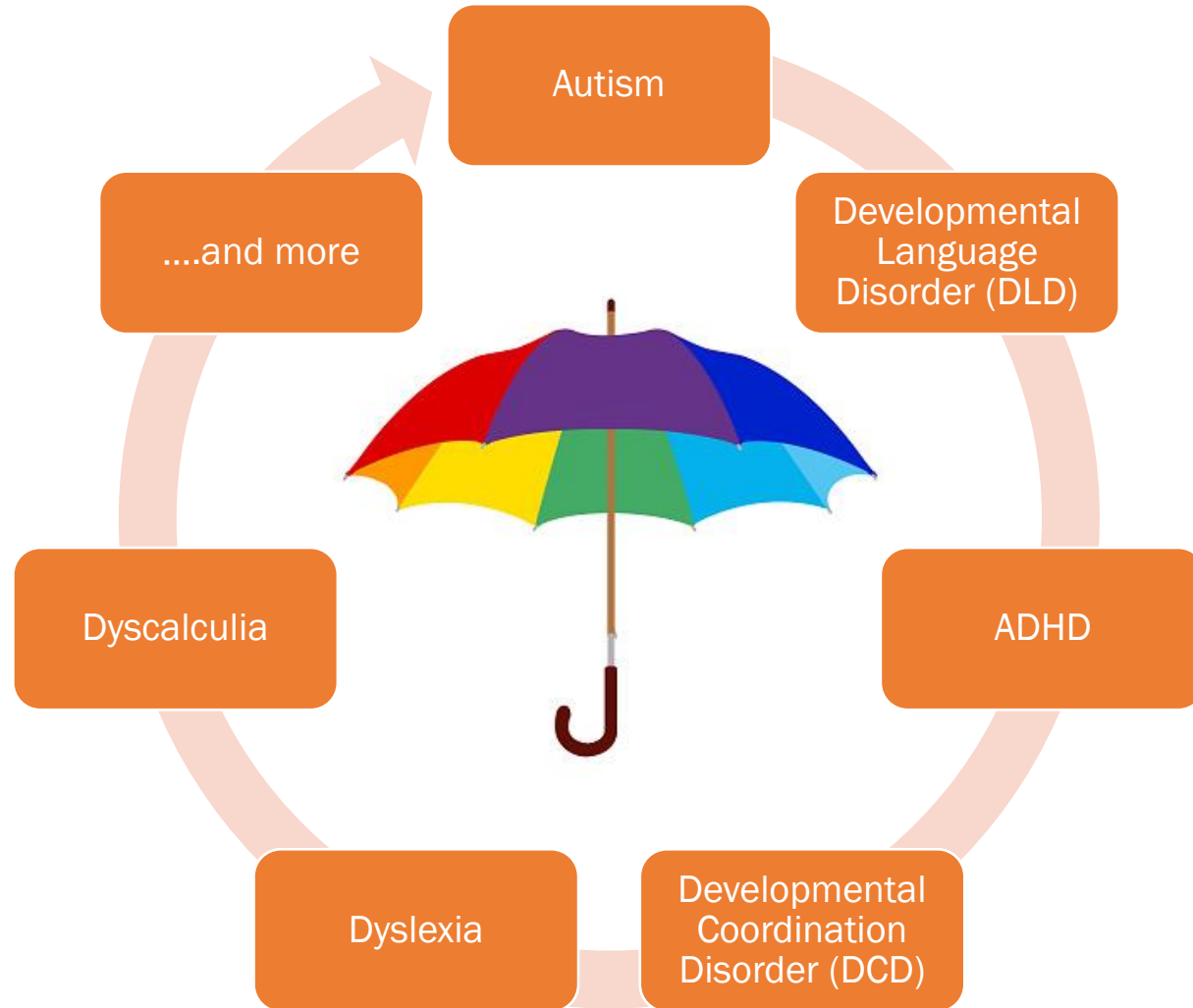


PLEASE REMAIN
MUTED THROUGHOUT



ASK QUESTIONS IN
CHAT THROUGHOUT

Neurodiversity and Anxiety



What is Anxiety?



UPSET



STUCK



TIME



Worry is our **alert** that senses things going wrong, and works to keep us **safe**



Normally, **worry works**; it notices the danger, helps us identify new problems, create plans and acts to solve these problems



Sometimes, worry can become too much of a **problem** for some children:

Feelings of distress can be too high

They may worry too often or for too long

They may feel unable to do usual activities because they are so worried

What contributes to anxiety?

- Biological factors

Genes can determine how sensitive a child is to anxiety

- Adverse life events

Stressful things that have happened (like witnessing an accident)

- Learning from example or others' reactions

- Wider environmental factors

Children are likely to struggle as much as adults in the current climate: the pandemic, cost of living, difficult news



Types of Anxiety

Separation Anxiety

Worry and distress when a child leaves their carer, having to stay close or feeling worried about what may happen

Social Anxiety

Feeling pressured to be observed by others or perform in front of others; we may feel we will be judged or appear 'stupid'

Specific Phobias

Being very afraid of certain objects or specific situations, which prevent the young person managing certain situations

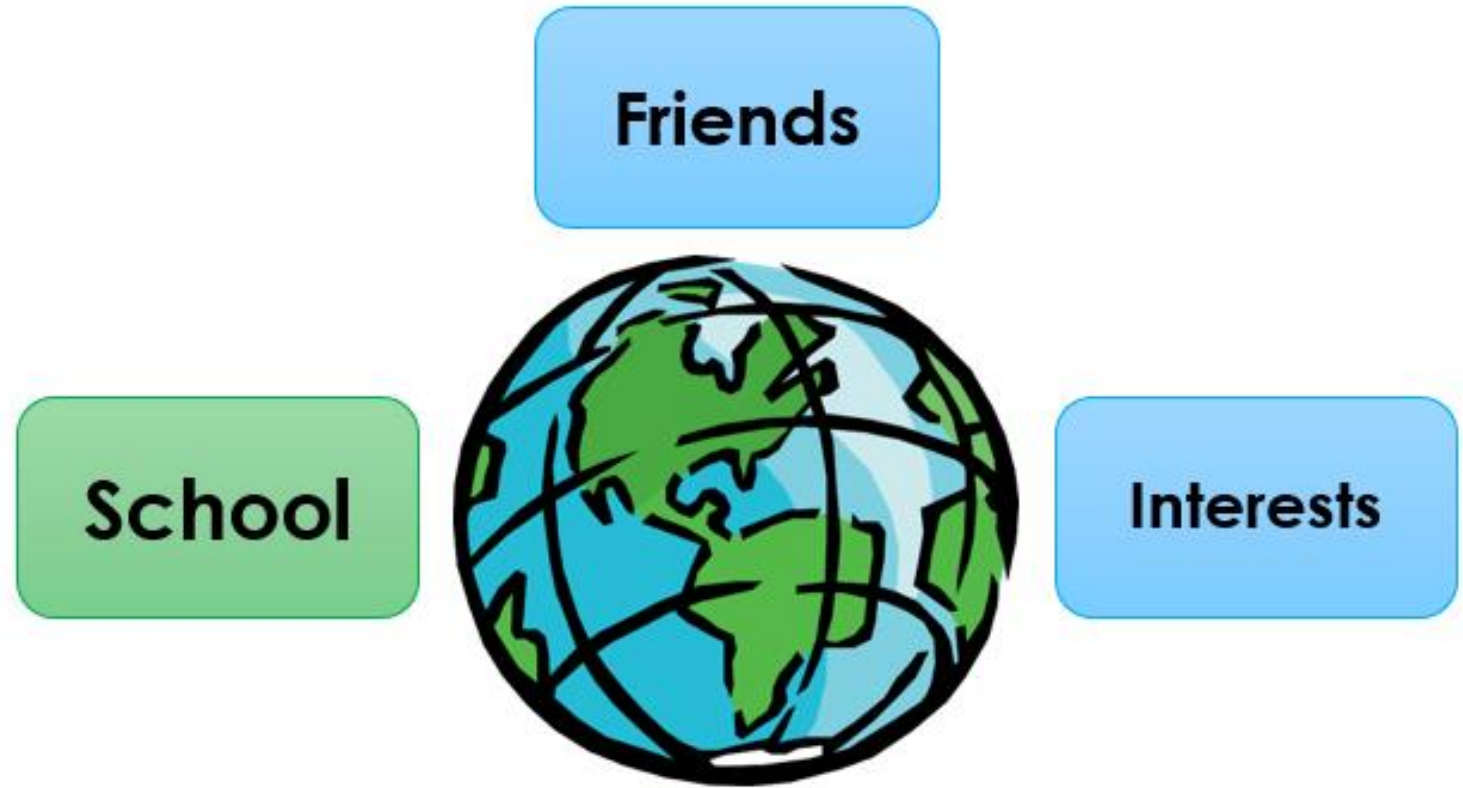
Panic

A very physical sensation where we may feel nauseous, have a hammering heart or quick breaths, may feel dizzy in the head or racing in your thoughts. Between these intense episodes, you may feel afraid that this will happen again.

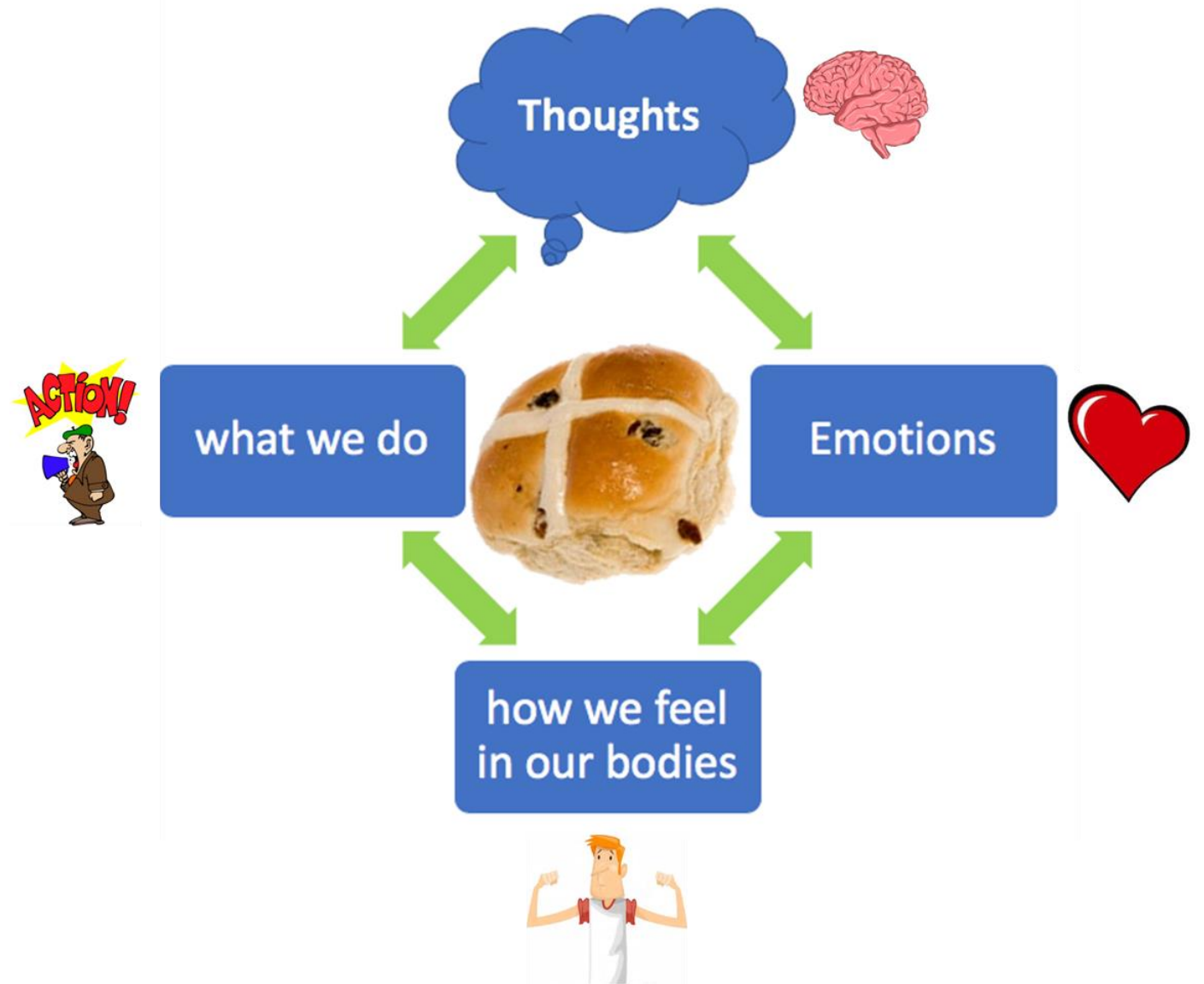
Generalised Anxiety

Feeling worried about many different things; often thinking what may go well and what won't, or becoming overwhelmed about worrying itself

Impact of Anxiety



How Anxiety Starts



What keeps anxiety going?

Anxious thinking

It can be hard to stop thinking in an anxious way.

It's like wearing glasses that make things seem scarier.

Bodily symptoms

Noticing changes in the body can trigger further thinking and worrying.

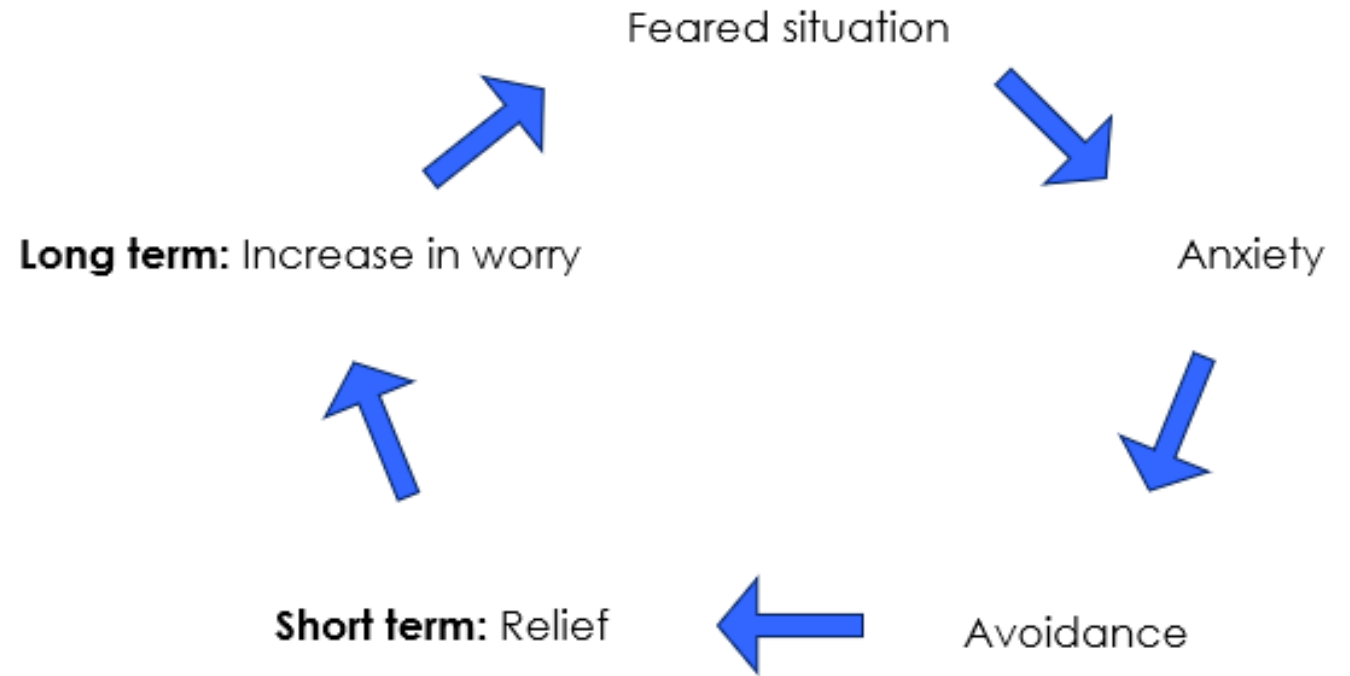
Protection

We may protect ourselves from anxiety by avoiding certain things.

This means the child does not get to conquer their worry.



Avoidance Behaviour



Avoidance



Children can develop habits to help reduce their anxiety, like avoiding eye contact with people when walking down the road because they might be thinking others will be laughing at them.



These are what we call safety behaviours.



Safety behaviours are things children feel they must do to keep safe. This can make them feel better in the short term, but it can cause anxiety to continue in the long term.

Unhelpful thinking styles

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

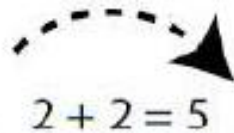
Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Over-generalizing

"everything is always rubbish"
"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

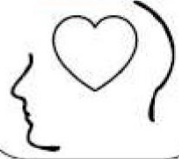
Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Unhelpful thinking styles vs Positive Self-Talk

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

**should
must**

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot*

Personalization

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault

"this is my fault"

Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault

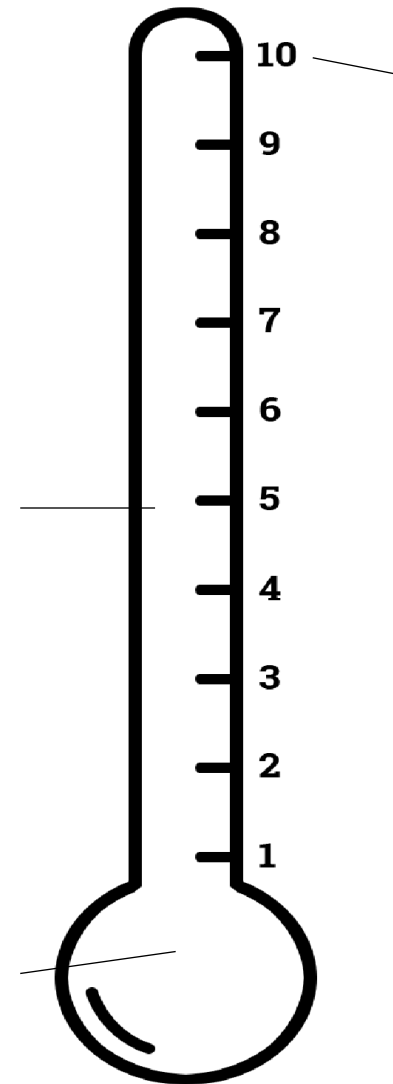
- I can learn from this and it will be easier next time
- Stop, and breathe, I can do this
- I can use my coping skills and get through this
- I can be anxious/angry/sad and still deal with this
- I have done this before, and I can do it again
- This feels bad, it's a normal body reaction – it will pass
- This feels bad, and feelings are very often wrong
- These are feelings, they will pass
- This is difficult and uncomfortable, but it's only temporary
- I can feel bad and still choose to take a new and healthy direction
- I don't need to rush, I can take things slowly
- I have survived before, I will survive now
- I feel this way because of my past experiences, but I am safe
- It's okay to feel this way, it's a normal reaction
- Right now, I am not in danger. Right now, I'm safe



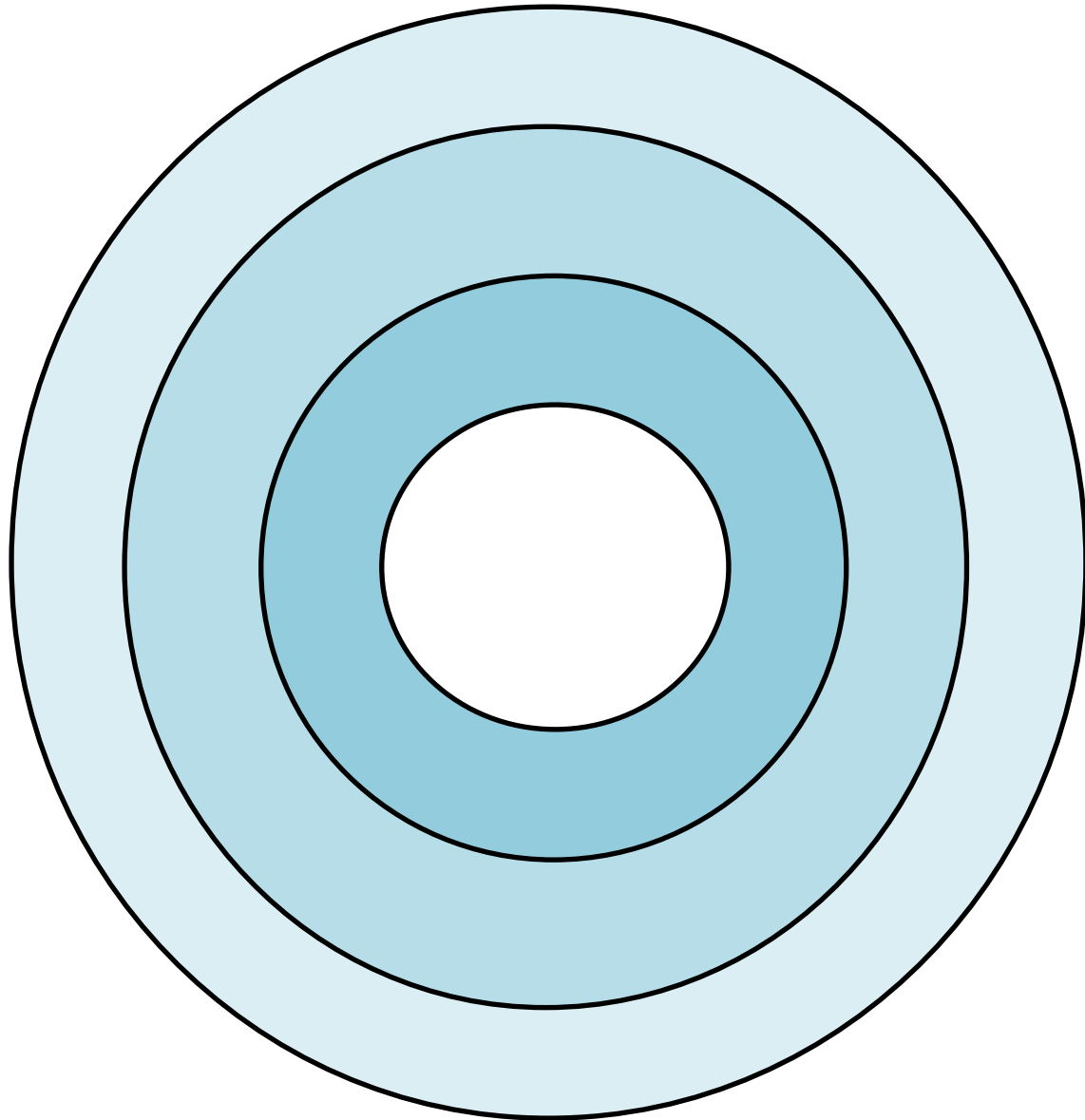
Fear Thermometer

Worried but manageable
(example: answering a question in class)

Calm (example: watching TV)



High anxiety (example: speaking in assembly)



Building a back-up team

- Emotional
- Practical
- Motivational
- Companionship

Self-care

| | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| Eating enough healthy food  | | | Getting enough exercise  | | |
| I need to do way more this | I'm doing okay at this | I'm brilliant at this! | I need to do way more this | I'm doing okay at this | I'm brilliant at this! |
| Getting enough sleep so I don't feel tired  | | | Spending time outside/in nature  | | |
| I need to do way more this | I'm doing okay at this | I'm brilliant at this! | I need to do way more this | I'm doing okay at this | I'm brilliant at this! |

Sleep

- Helps charge our body, balance emotions and build brain power!
- Sleep for enough hours
- Not lying awake too long
- Feel rested over the day
- Consider a sleep diary

Food

- Eating the right amounts, Eating the right balance of vegetables, protein, carbs...
- Drinking too!
- Less unhealthy or fatty foods

Day time activities/Environment:

- Gives us events and relaxation
- Let's us get back to older ways!
- This can combine with exercise
- See somewhere natural like natural water or a park

Exercise:

- Tires us out for sleep
- Releases endorphins & happiness
- Keeps us in shape
- Gives us events & company
- Try to walk, run, play or dance

Routine

- Building a routine with your child can support their mental wellbeing
- Make sure it's realistic/flexible
- It helps to keep their mind occupied, makes them feel more in control of everything, and helps reduce their stress levels
- Make sure you encourage your child to set aside time for activities they enjoy and find relaxing! This will help them find a balance and separate their school work and down time.
- Make sure you spend some 1-2-1 time to speak with your child everyday.

Squeeze Then Relax My Muscles
Like "Rocks & Socks" 



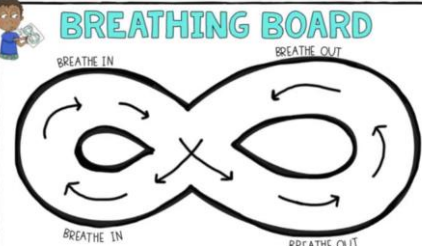
Zooming all my strength into making fists, it's like my hands transform into solid rocks. Then I release my fists, letting my hands and arms dangle like floppy socks.

5-finger Breathing



Slowly trace my hand with my finger, breathing in, as I trace my fingers going up...breathing out, as I trace my fingers going down.

BREATHING BOARD



Slowly follow the arrows with your finger. Start in the center and take a deep breath in. When you cross over to the other side, slowly let your breath out. Keep going until you feel more calm.

Relaxation

Mindfulness

Being present within the moment and focusing attention on the 'here and now'/bringing attention back when it wanders.

Explaining to children: A way of choosing where your attention is to help us relax and better manage being overwhelmed.



Mindfulness

Option 1 (attention to the senses)

- Ask your child to hold up their fingers to show how angry or anxious or overwhelmed they feel.
- Close your eyes together. 3 things you both can hear, smell, see, feel etc. whilst breathing in and out.
- Repeat holding up fingers.

Option 2 (the Noodle exercise)

- Child pretends to be an ‘uncooked noodle’ – supported by adult.
- Adult supports child to move from “stiff uncooked noodle” to “floppy cooked noodle”
- Similar to a ‘body scan’ in adult mindfulness.

Option 3 (apps & Youtube)

- Smiling Minds app (age 4+)
- Moshi app (sleep and mindfulness for 4+)
- Children’s sleep meditations app (calming bedtime stories for 4+)

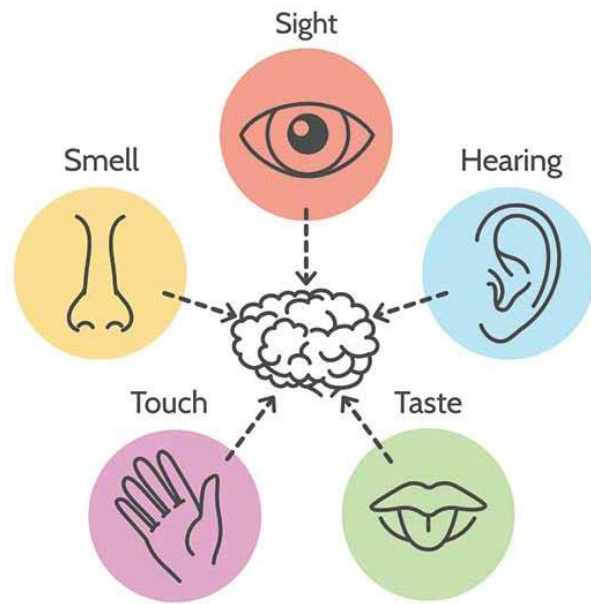
Alternatives

- Stretch like a cat, milkshake breathing, colouring, playdough, sorting cards and objects (rhythmical activities).

Other options

- Practising gratitude - writing down or talking about positive things (i.e. around the dinner table, before bed etc). These could be small things: something that made them feel happy, something they are proud of/an achievement, something they helped somebody with, something they enjoyed doing. Examples include: a time they smiled today, a question they answered, a TV programme they watched, food they enjoyed. If children struggle use curious questioning "hmm I wonder if there was anything during breakfast that went well today?" (prompt as needed).
- 365 gratitude journal app (claims suitable for aged 4+. Disclaimer: not personally tried and tested – check child safety before downloading). Pen and paper just as effective.
- Increases perceived ability to cope (McCullough, 2003).





Grounding

Toolkit

LISTENING TO MUSIC

Favourite Albums/Playlist to listen to when feeling anxious:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



5, 4, 3, 2, 1



SQUEEZE A LEMON

IMAGINE YOU HAVE A LEMON IN YOUR HAND.

SQUEEZE IT REALLY TIGHT.

THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR HANDS AND ARMS FEEL.

COUNT TO 5... AND RELAX.



POSITIVE SELF-TALK

- Stop, and breathe, I can do this
- I can learn from this and it will be easier next time
- I can use my coping skills and get through this
- I can be anxious and still deal with this
- I have done this before, and I can do it again



BREATHING

Breathe in for 4 seconds

Hold For 7 seconds

Breathe out for 8 seconds



THOUGHT CHALLENGING

What is the thought?

How strongly do you believe it? (0%-100%)

Is the thought fact or opinion?

What is the evidence for this thought?

What is the evidence against this thought?

Benefit /Cost?

Balanced thought?

Review truth of statement 0-100%?



Naming and Validating Emotions

Do:

- Ask questions - use open questions to encourage dialogue
- Encourage discussion of thoughts and feelings/sharing of emotions
- Repeat Back/reflect to validate emotions and show listening and understanding

Try to avoid:

- Dismissing or discounting feelings

Recent Behaviour – Getting praise in early or immediately will make praise more targeted

Individual – Praise should centre on the child alone, avoid comparing them to others.

Specific and Sincere – Clearly stating what is going well. Being sincere will make the praise rewarding to the child.

Every Step – Praise little steps and good starts to get your child moving towards good behaviour.

Praising Efforts

Emotion Coaching Approach

Emotion coaching is a technique that acknowledges and accepts and contains emotions. It provides children with strategies to handle their emotions moving forwards – teaches children to understand themselves and their emotions.

Emotion coaching is the best approach to take

- Disapproves of negative emotions.
- Focuses on behaviour and what to do
- Uses sanctions to remove behaviour

Disapproving style

- Encourages 'getting over' emotions quickly/distraction from emotions
- "It's no big deal you'll be fine"

Dismissing style

- Adult overwhelmed by child's emotions – evokes strong emotional responses for adult

Laissez-faire style

- Adult attuned to child's emotions and guidance about how to manage.
- Facilitates learning and self-regulation

Emotion Coaching style

Emotion Coaching: Steps Involved

Be aware

Of your own emotions
Take in subtle (and perhaps not so subtle) signs that they are experiencing different emotions e.g. frustration, disappointment, anxiety, low confidence. Use your expertise and knowledge of your child. What is happening from their point of view, what feelings could they be experiencing?

Label it

Attune to the child's feelings and connect (verbally and/or non-verbally)
Forget logic – the child has i.e. remember the Amygdala overriding the thinking brain". The child's feelings are real even if we don't agree/they seem irrational to us.
"I wonder if you're feeling....", "You seem to be feeling....because...., Show acceptance: "it's okay to feel....because...."

Describe it

Teaching children about emotions
"I can see your shoulders are...", "I can see that your face is..."
It is important to do this with kindness, acceptance and empathy. Pay attention to your tone of voice.

Model

Possible coping strategies
Model how you cope: "sometimes when I feel anxious I.....shall we try...."

Devising Step Plans

It is important to:

- Avoid making assumptions about what the child is anxious about
- Work on a step plan that the child finds motivating
- Be guided by the child's anxiety ratings in designing steps
- Be flexible and adapt the step plan as necessary
- Deliver rewards as promised



From Rapee et al.'s Cool Kids Programme

Looking after yourself



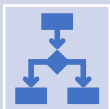
Supporting your child with their emotions can be difficult



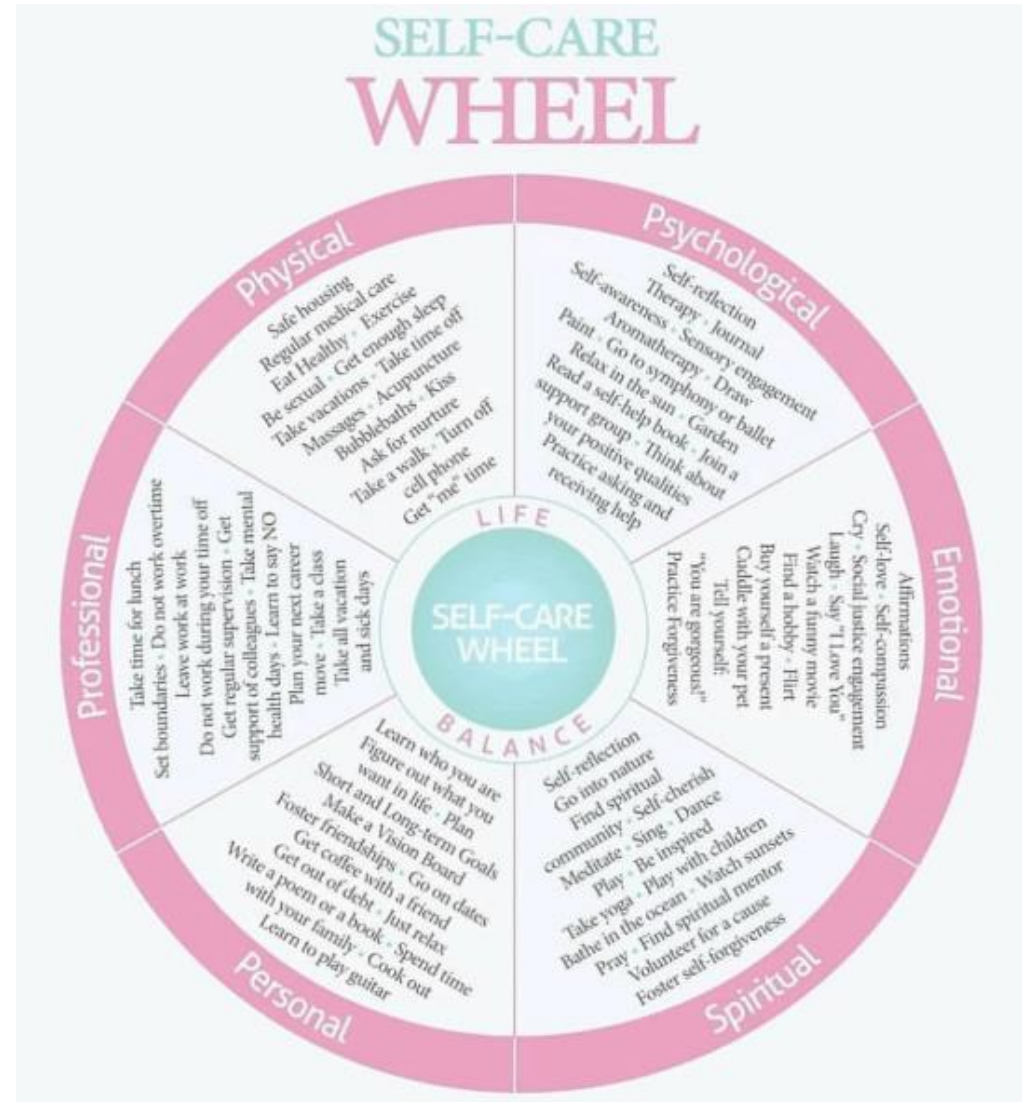
Can you find something to look forward to (even for a short while)?



Have a coffee, listen to a song, go for a walk, pay attention to nature, make a smoothie, have a snack, read a book, spend 5 minutes with a pet, reframe the moment...

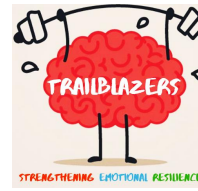


What can you do to look after yourself each day, week, month?



Q&A Discussion

We will now answer questions from the chat – please ask more in the chat if you like



Haringey
LONDON

NHS
Barnet, Enfield and
Haringey Mental Health
NHS Trust

- Please use the QR code to provide feedback about this session
- Your feedback will help us to deliver more support in the future
- There is also a link in the chat and on your screen



<https://tinyurl.com/4zccw7wu>

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.

Early intervention is important.

The result of a complex interaction of factors (often home, school and pupil factors).

Changes in school performance

A lack of curiosity, interest or enjoyment in life and usual activities (changes in mood, appearance or engagement)

Reported anxiety and/or finding it difficult to transition to school e.g., Sunday evenings, mornings (including lateness)

Significant increase in time spent alone

Inability to cope with daily problems, activities or changes to usual routines

Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits

Excessive complaints of physical ailments e.g., stomach pain, headache or other illness

Changes in outbursts of anger and defiance (anxiety can present as anger)

Consider masking in particular pupils

EBSA as a Spectrum

Attending school whilst experiencing anxiety

Attending school with some avoidant behaviour

Attending school with some avoidant behaviour and lateness

Sporadic absences – “patchy attendance”

Repeated absence with some school attendance

Absence from school for period of time

Prolonged absence leading to complete absence from school for an extended period

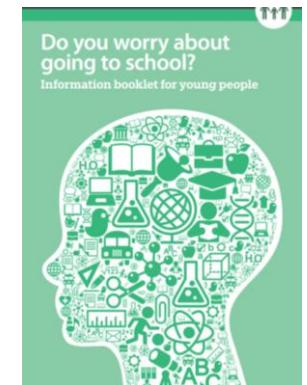
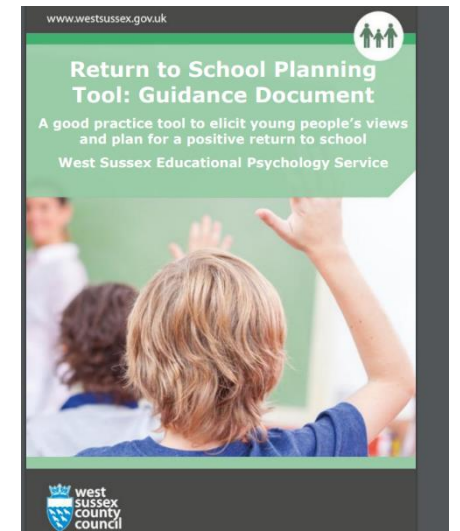
Important to intervene early to prevent escalation

What can parents/carers do?

- Curious wondering/open questioning – “I’ve noticed that....” “I’m wondering if...”
- Communicate your concerns early to school.
- Jointly come up with a stepped plan (child, home and school together). See link on the next slide.

EBSA West Sussex Guidance Documents

- [Emotionally Based School Avoidance | West Sussex Services for Schools](#)
 - A document outlining what parents can do to help, a return to school planning tools including exploration of factors that ‘push’ and ‘pull’ children towards attending or not attending school – can be helpful to explore in a joint meeting (child/young person, home and school as ‘a team’).
 - Regular communication and reviews between home and school – to problem solve obstacles – assess, plan, do, review.



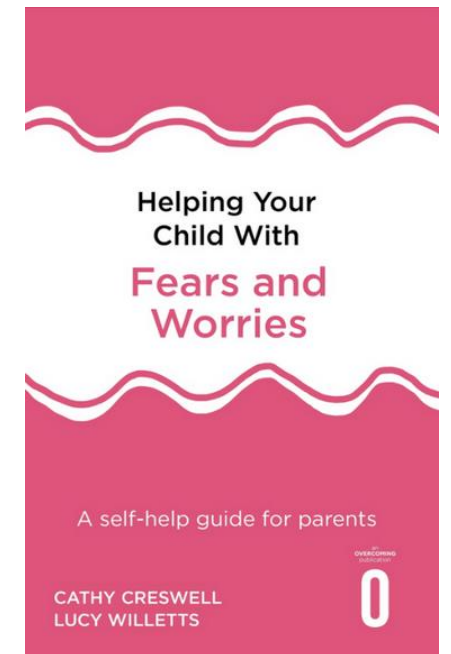
Further Support

- Haringey Choices –CYP up to age 17
- Open door – voluntary sector counselling and psychotherapy service – CYP aged 12-24.
- School-based pastoral support
- Educational Psychology service (schools buy in this service) – discuss with school SENCo.
- 40 minute consultation with an Educational Psychologist – parents can book via Markfield.
- EPS currently devising a tiered approach to EBSA.

Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries 2nd Edition: A self-help guide for parents

By Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts

Recommended for parents of children aged up to 12





MindShift is a free app with advice managing anxiety and relaxation methods.



Clear Fear is a free app to help with managing anxiety.



Shout is the UK's first free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.



The Mix are there to help anyone under 25 take on any challenge you're facing – from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. The website has lots of helpful resources.



MeeTwo helps teenagers talk about difficult things.



Catch it: Uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to help users learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression. Users can record and rate their mood, helping them to keep track of progress and identify triggers to their symptoms.



Stress & Anxiety companion: helps users handle stress and anxiety on-the-go. It provides tools like breathing exercises, relaxing music and games. Goals is to help users change negative thoughts to help them better cope with life's ups and downs.



SAM (Self-help for Anxiety Management) has games and tools to help you understand and manage anxiety.



Kooth is an online counselling service for anyone aged 10-25 in Hertfordshire. You can access a chat/messenger service, discussion boards, goal setting tools and a journal and a magazine containing a number of articles

Haringey Youth Space: <https://www.youthspace.haringey.gov.uk/>

Youth Space is for young people in Haringey who are aged between 11 and 19.

Haringey Warm Welcome: <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/community/haringey-warm-welcome#nearest>

These spaces provide a warm, safe place for residents to go, meet new people, and in some cases, get some refreshments, and take part in fun activities.

Haringey Support Fund: <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/community/here-help-financial-support-residents/haringey-support-fund>

Help residents who are struggling financially. They give one-off payments to help with basic living needs and to make sure items remain in your home or when moving homes.

Haringey Community Food Network: <https://www.hcfn.org.uk/>

The Haringey Community Food Network (HCFN) is a network of food growers, suppliers, emergency food providers, food banks, community kitchens, and food delivery services.

Gingerbread: <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/>

Charity for single parents, who provide expert advice and practical support for single mums and dads in England and Wales. You sign up and then they add you to a WhatsApp group of other single parents in your local area to offer support and share experiences and resources.