



Mental Health
Support Team
Portsmouth

NHS

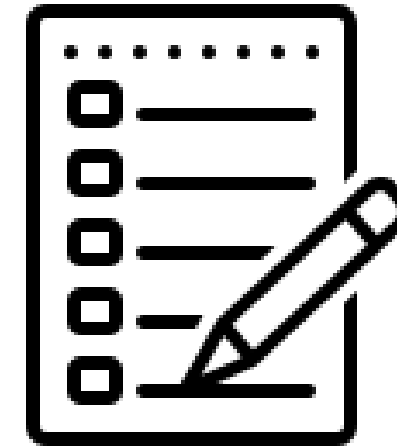
Solent
NHS Trust

MHST Parent Workshop: General Anxiety

An introduction to MHST and top tips to help
your child with general anxiety



Agenda



- Who are MHST?
- What do MHST do?
- What is General Anxiety?
- Recognising anxious children
- Top tips to support children
- Time for questions



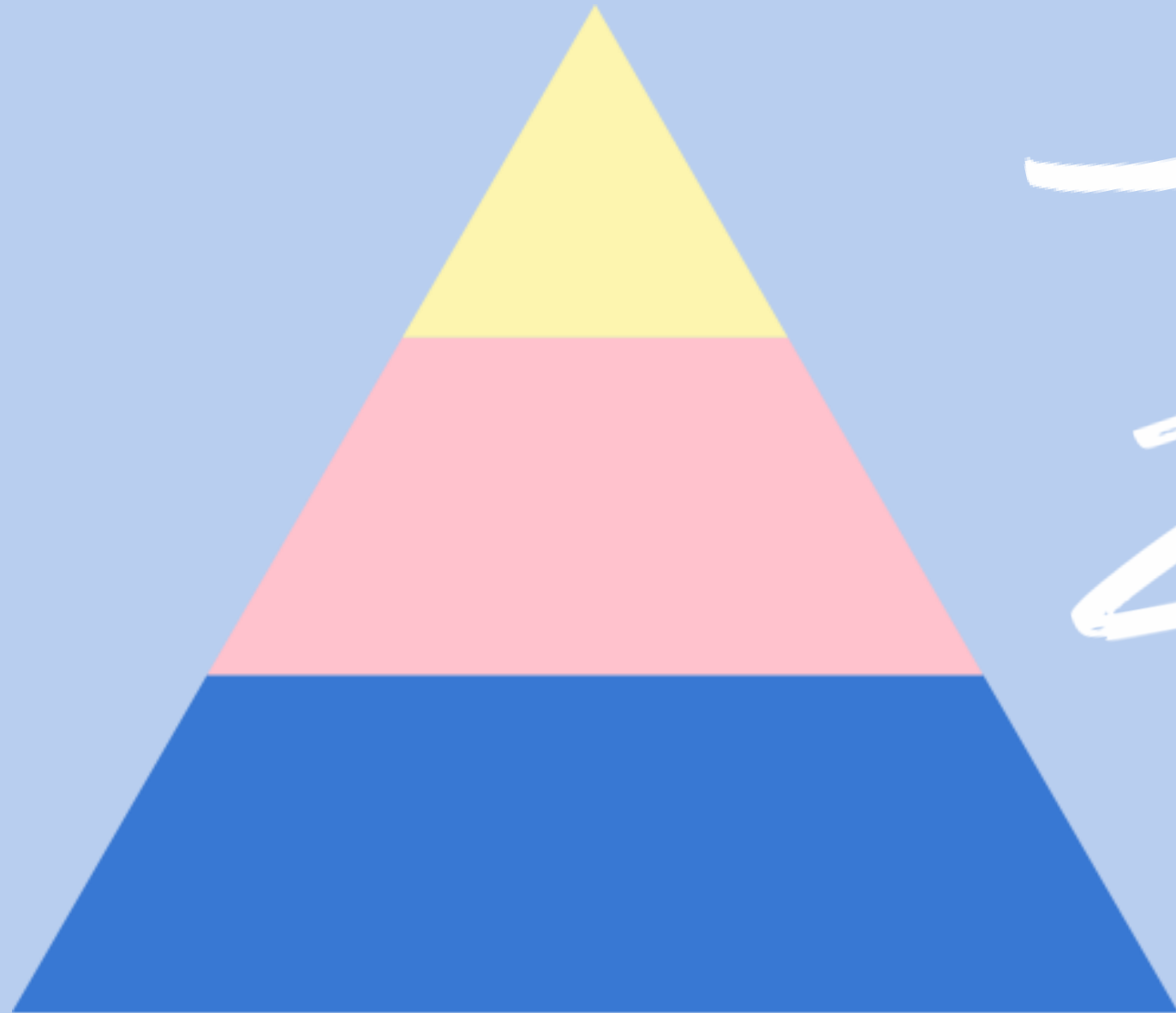
Who are MHST?

3 key aims

- Deliver evidence-based interventions to support low – moderate mental health difficulties
- To introduce or develop whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing
- To advise school and college staff and liaise with other services, helping young people to get the right support at the right time

Our criteria





Referral for 1-1 support



MHST Suggestions



Whole School Approach

1:1 work

For children aged 5-11, we offer parent led work to help manage anxiety symptoms as parents are in the best position to support.

For young people aged 12-18, we offer 1:1 work to treat low-moderate anxiety or low mood.

All of our work uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and is skills based work.



Workshops / Groups

We offer workshops for parents on specific topics.

We run groups in primary and secondary schools, including Brain Buddies and Mind and Mood.

Our parent-led support is also delivered in a group format.

What is anxiety?

How much do you think you understand anxiety and it's impact?

Is it good or bad?

How does it make us feel?

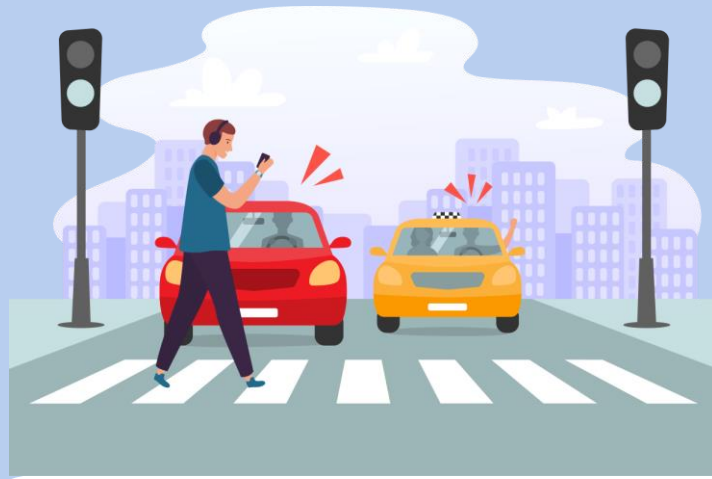
When might we feel anxious?



What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. We all experience anxiety from time to time and it is a normal emotion.
- The 'fight, flight or freeze' response gets our body ready to fight or run away when we sense danger. All the changes that happen to our body are normal and are there to help us and keep us safe. When they happen when there isn't an obvious danger, they can make us feel uncomfortable or unwell.

Child friendly video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M



When is anxiety helpful?



- Whilst the fight / flight response comes from survival and is protecting us from danger even day-to-day worries can help keep us safe or help us reach our potential. We actually perform better when we experience some challenge, as it makes us more alert and task-focused.
- If we worry about getting run over crossing the road, we might pay more attention and be safer on the roads. If we worry about an upcoming test, we are more likely to revise or pay attention in class.

When might anxiety be expected?

- During big life events
- Transitions
- Significant changes
- Increased pressures (exams)



It's important to think about what is happening in your child's life that may be influencing how they're feeling.

When is anxiety a problem?

Think about the impact!

If your child's worrying has been ongoing for a while, and is leading to difficulty sleeping, or getting to school (or anything else in their day to day life), it might be time to ask for support.



What do you notice if your child is worried?



What might it look like?

- Difficulties separating from parents/carers.
- Excessive worries/ lots of 'what if' questions.
- Thinking about the future and expecting bad things to happen.
- Phobias or fears where the child avoids coming into contact with their fear.
- Avoids going to friends houses - friends always have to come to their home.
- Problems sleeping - The child still sleeping in their parents bed.
- Experiences lots of physical symptoms - and then worries about these

What keeps anxiety going?

Anxiety inducing situation

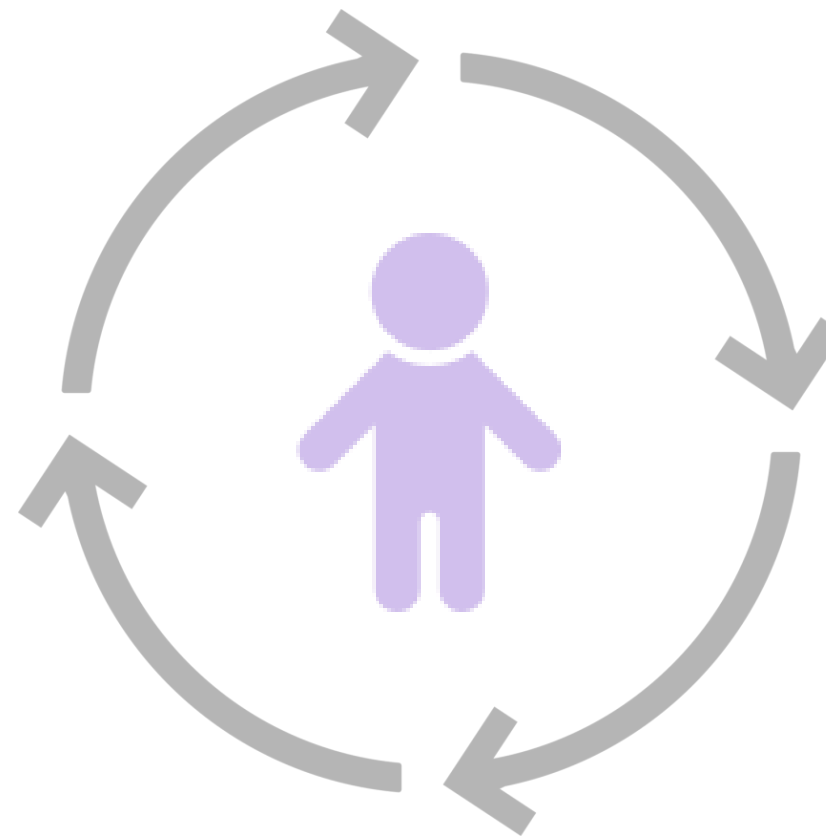


Thoughts:

Worst case scenarios, what if worries, negative predictions about the future

Behaviour:

Avoidance, relying on others



Body:

Breathing changes, toilet, heart racing, sweating, fidgeting

Emotions:

Anxious, nervous, worried, frustrated

What keeps anxiety going?

Before school

Thoughts:

I won't have anyone to play with
I won't be able to ask for help
in class.

Behaviour:

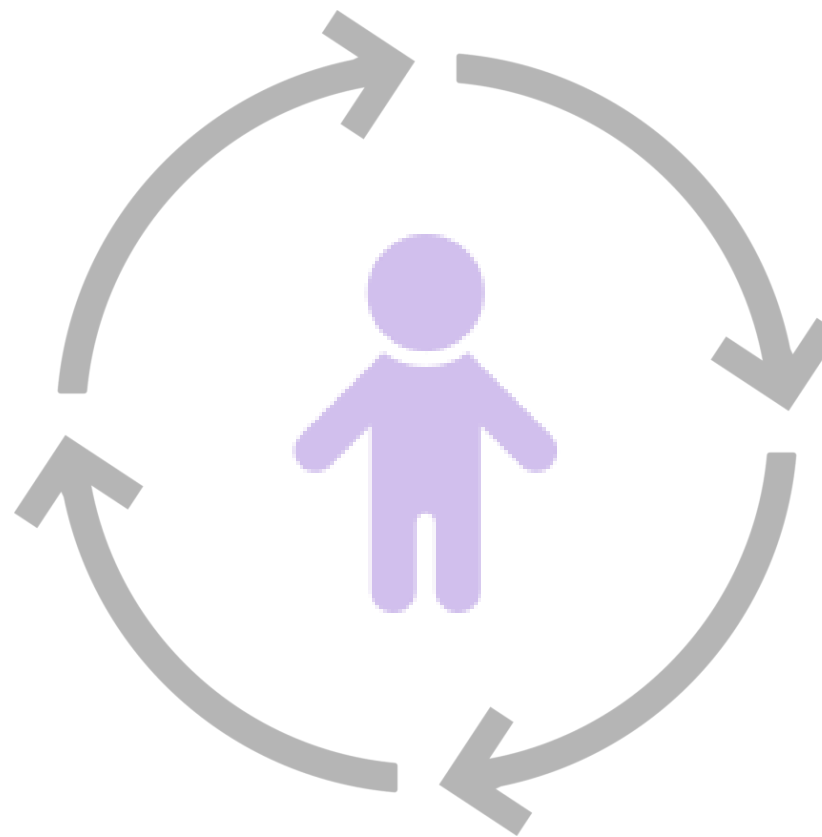
Refusing to get ready
Lashing out

Body:

Tummy hurts
Feeling sick
Heart racing

Emotions:

Nervous



How does this impact my child?

Before school

Thoughts:

I won't have anyone to play with
I won't be able to ask for help
in class.

Physical symptoms make us
feel that something bad
is going to happen.

Behaviour:

Refusing to get ready
Lashing out

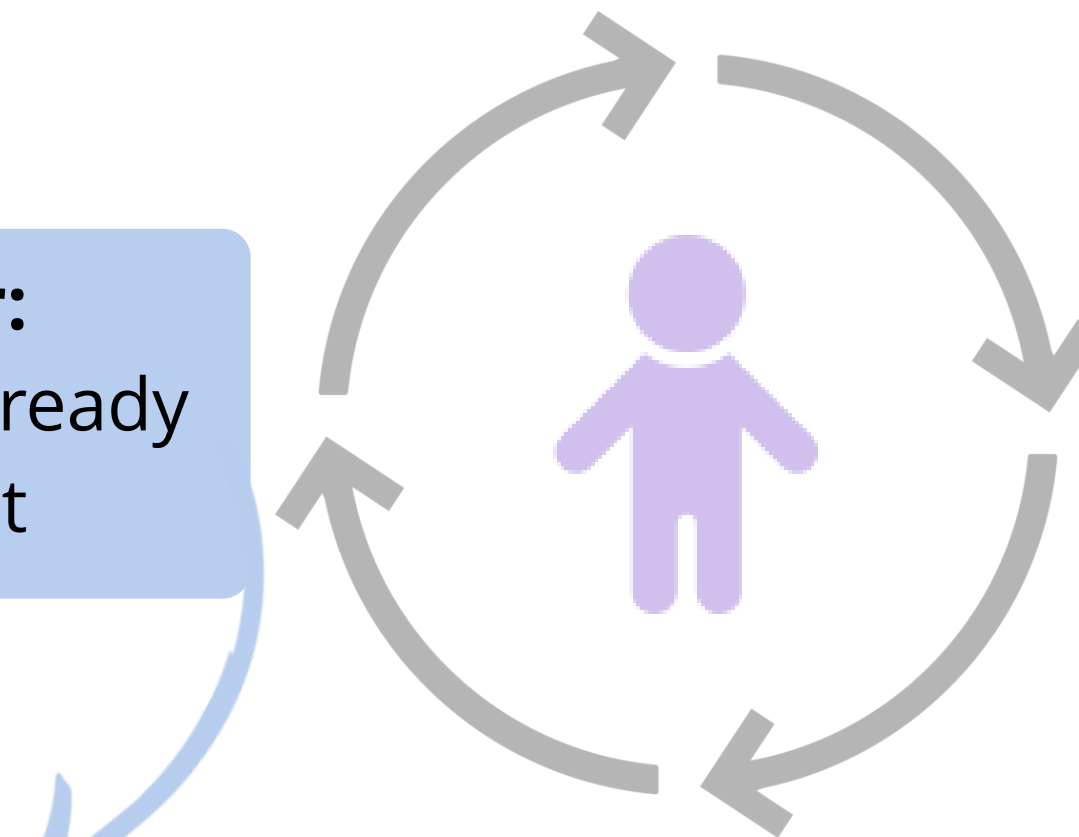
By avoiding the situation we
aren't allowing ourselves
opportunity to learn new
information and test how we
might cope.

Emotions:

Nervous

Body:

Tummy hurts
Feeling sick
Heart racing



Others responses to anxiety

Before school

Parent thoughts:

They are going to struggle to get to school this morning.
Its going to be stressful, we are going to be late

Behaviour:

Reassure them that it will be okay. Lose patience and allow them to avoid the situation.



Body:

Feeling tense
Heart racing

Emotions:

Nervous

Others responses to anxiety

Before school

Parent thoughts:

They are going to struggle to get to school this morning.
Its going to be stressful, we are going to be late

Children pick up on everything, if they sense you are worried or stressed this sends the message that there is something to be worried about.

Behaviour:

Reassure them that it will be okay. Lose patience and allow them to avoid the situation.

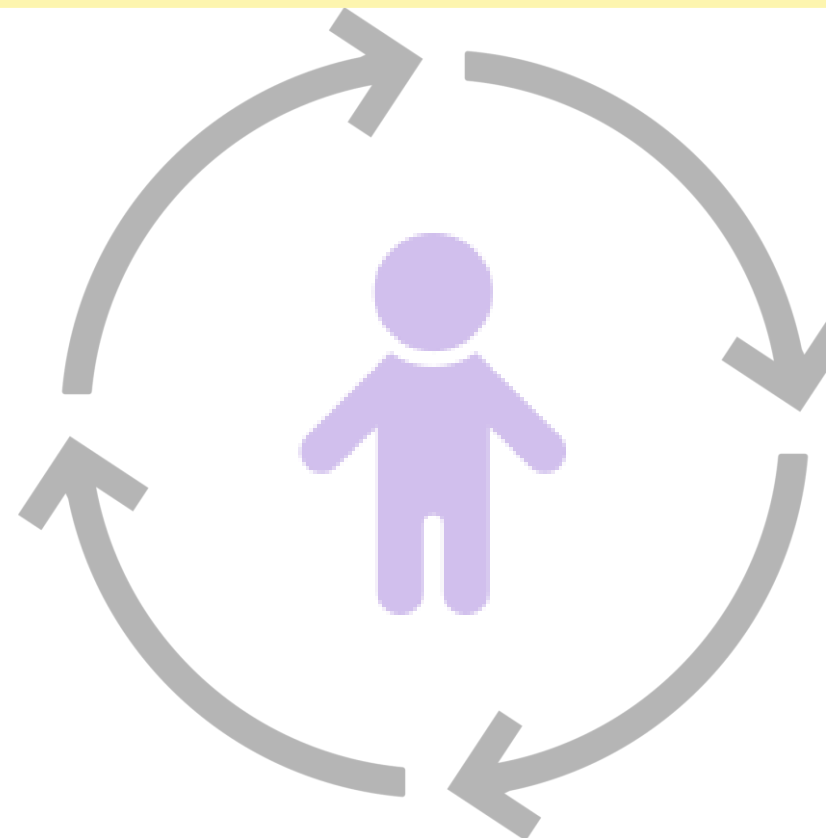
Reassurance doesn't validate or normalise their worry and doesn't explore what is worrying them. Helping them to avoid the situation increases their anxiety.

Emotions:

Nervous

Body:

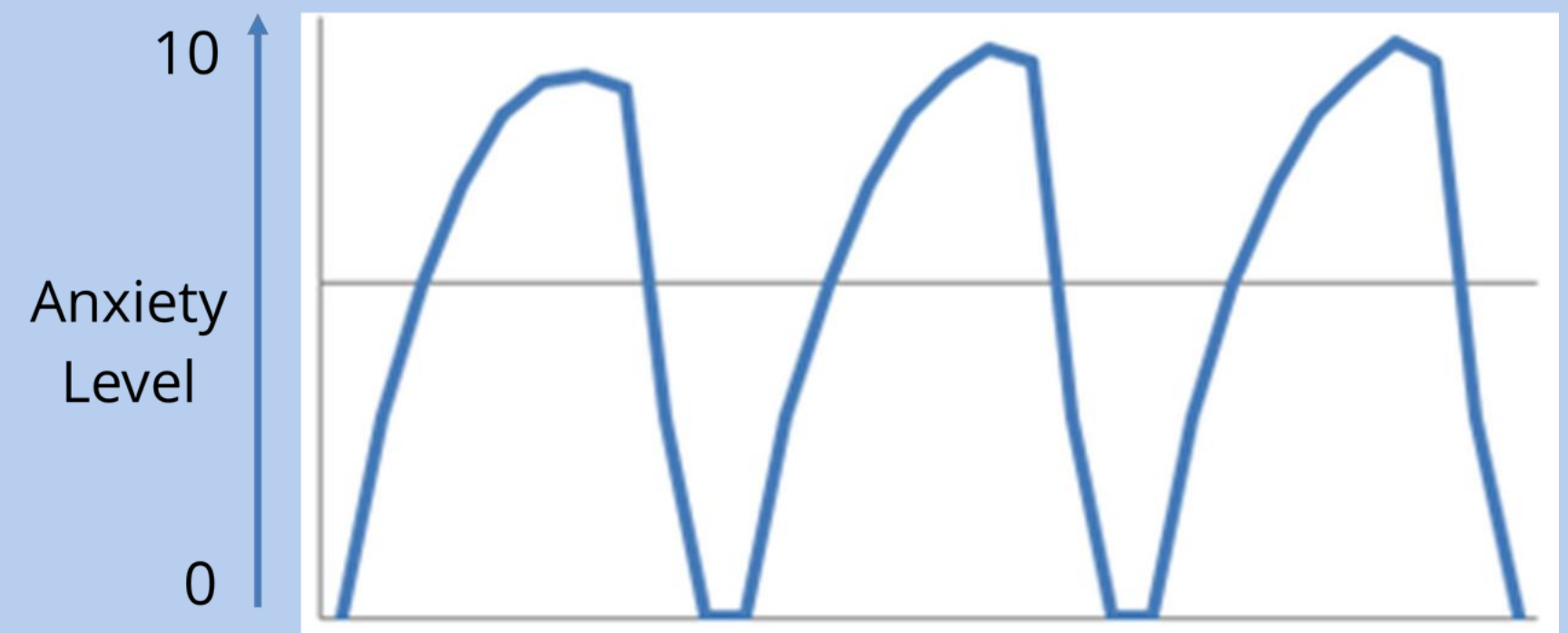
Feeling tense
Heart racing



How avoidance keeps it going

Avoidance = instant relief from anxiety and fear.

However, when we are faced with that same situation again, we feel just as worried or scared. We are encouraged to avoid the situation, given the relief we felt last time. Nothing will ever change, as we haven't had the opportunity to learn whether the situation is going to be as bad as we fear, or if we can learn how to cope with it.



Facing the situation...

Familiar things get boring!

Our body can't physically stay at a high level of anxiety, so by exposing ourselves to the situation, our anxiety naturally reduces. This happens at a slower rate than if we were to avoid the situation, so the unpleasant feelings can last a while, but each time we face the situation our peak anxiety level will be less and less until we no longer feel worried or scared.



Reassurance

- Reassurance is a natural instinct response to anxiety. If we see someone struggling, we might want to say "it's going to be ok, don't worry".
- Reassurance can prevent children from learning that they can cope independently, becoming dependent on reassurance means that the child doesn't learn their own skills to cope.



What to do when a child is seeking reassurance



From this...

I don't want to go
to school...

Don't worry, you will
be fine, it's going to
be a good day!



To this...

I don't want to go to school...

I had an argument with my best friend yesterday

I might not have anyone to play with

What is it about going to school that is worrying you?

Oh that does sound tough, what do you think will happen today?

Is there anyone else you can play with if they don't want to play?



Problem solving



Review!

Did it work? If yes... complete the steps for the next problem. If no... return to step 4 and pick another solution to try.

Worry time

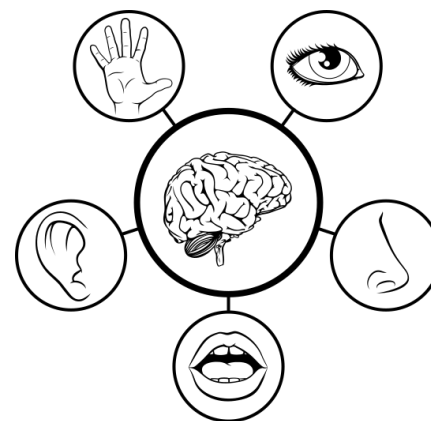
1

Record their worries as they come up. This could be written down by them, you, or recorded in another way. This helps you to remember what to bring to worry time and gets it out of their head.



2

Encourage your child to refocus on something else or distract them from the worry. Until worry time, we want to "let the worry go". You might want to use grounding or distraction games.



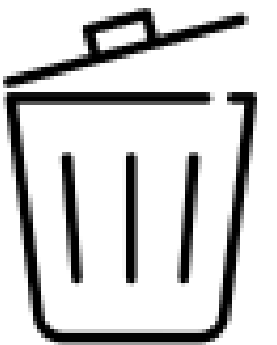
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Worry time:
Go through the worries & ask these questions:
Did what I was worried about happen?
If yes, how did I cope?
Was it as bad as I expected?
What advice would I give to a friend if they had this worry?



4

Let the worry go!

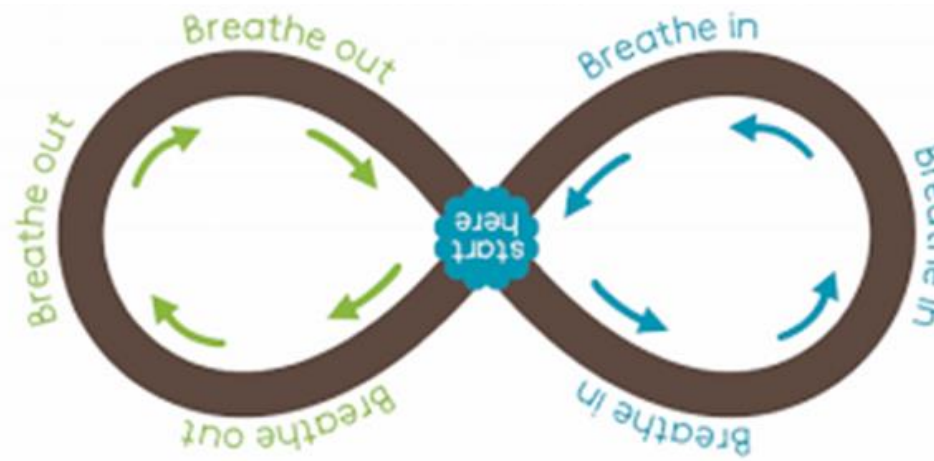


Distraction techniques

5, 4, 3, 2, 1

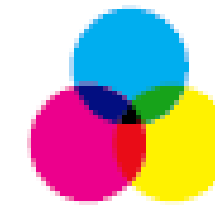


5 things you can see,
4 things you can touch,
3 things you can hear,
2 things you can smell,
1 thing you can taste.

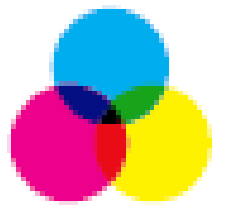


Place your finger in the middle of the 8 and begin slowly tracing your finger around it.

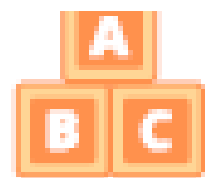
Repeat several times.



COLOURS



Find 5 items in the room which are a certain colour (eg. 5 items which are blue).



ABCD...

Think of a subject and name something to do with that subject for each letter of the alphabet (eg. name animals: ape, bear, cat...)

<input type="checkbox"/>	
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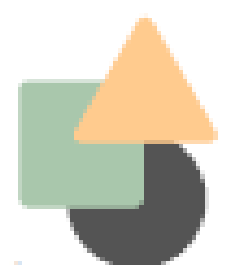
Think of your favourite film/tv series and list 10 characters from it.

Think of your favourite football team and list 15 players.

Think of your favourite band and list 10 songs.



SHAPES



Find 5 items in the room which are a certain shape (eg. 5 items which are square).

Have a go behaviour

Going on the balance beam at the park

Thoughts

What if I can't do it and fall off?
I can only do it with Mum there

Behaviour:

Won't go on it

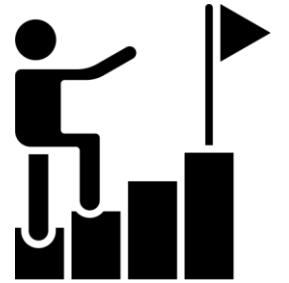
Body:

Heart racing
Face going red

Emotions:

Nervous

Challenge your child to go on the balance beam



Agree a reward for 'having a go'

Get them to make a prediction of what they think is going to happen.

Have a go!

Follow through with reward.
Review what actually happened.

I am brave

Calm kit

WHAT SHOULD I PUT IN IT?

Any items which can help you to feel calm or self-soothe.

It can be useful to think of all your senses:

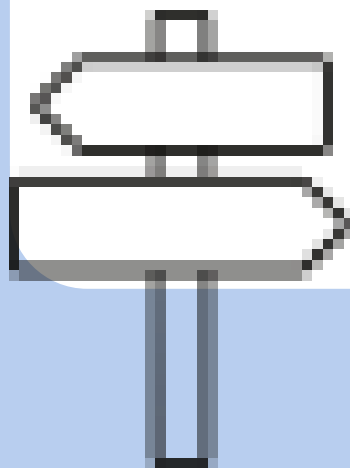


Where else can I go for further support?

Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries
Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts

This is a self-help guide for parents/carers which has lots of information and strategies to use for young people struggling with anxiety.

This book is used to support MHST parent-led sessions.

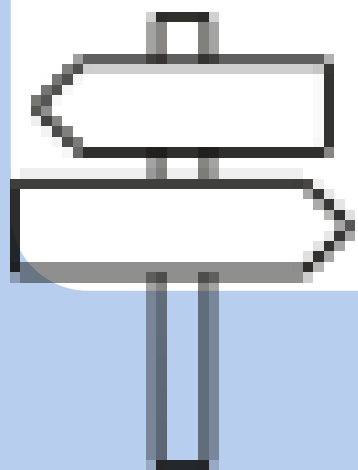


Where else can I go for further support?

It might be helpful to seek further support if:

- Anxiety is increasing
- It is limiting daily activities
- If you are concerned about safety

Talking to a member of staff at school, or booking an appointment to see your GP can be a good first step.



If you need to talk to somebody right now, these organisations can help:

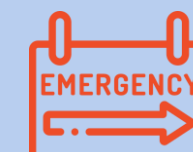


NHS
111

ChildLine
0800 1111

Shout
85258

Samaritans
116 123



In emergencies, call 999

Any questions?



Feedback

