



Childhood Anxiety

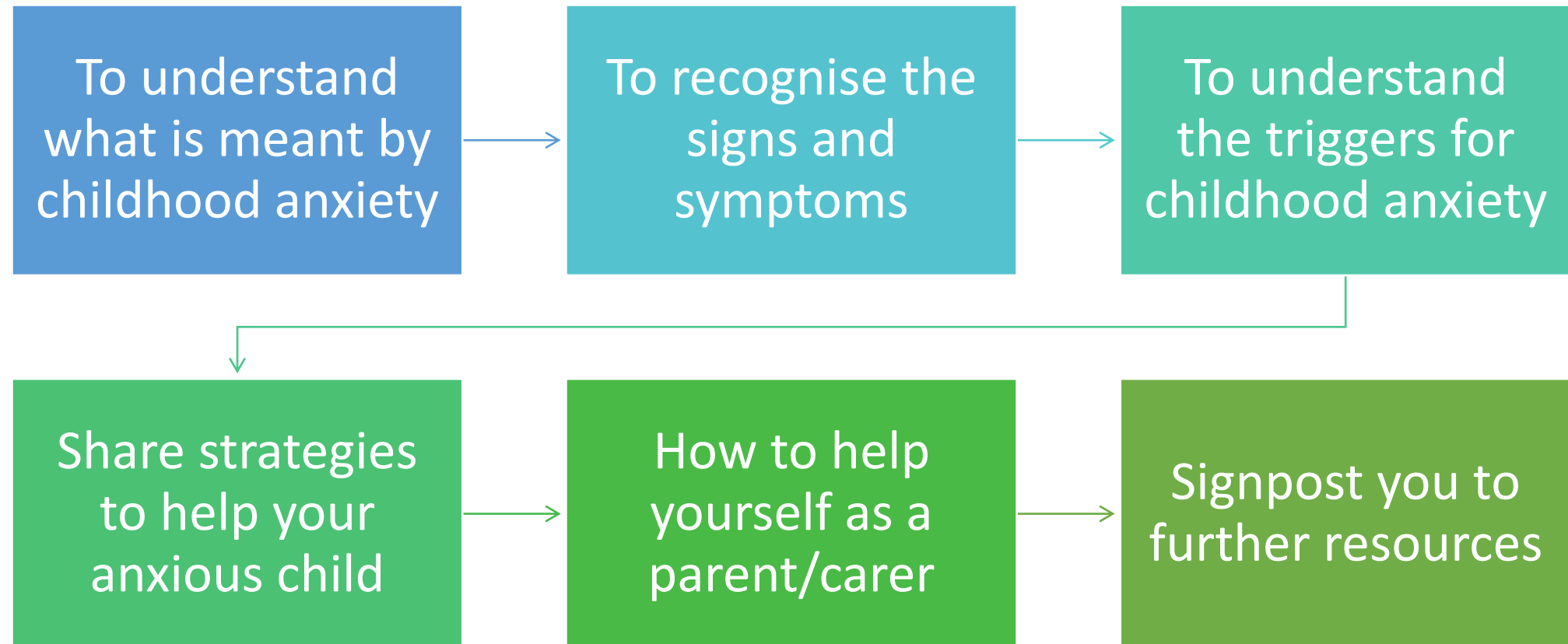


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A psychoeducation presentation for Parents and Carers of primary age children
by Jade West Senior Clinician MHST

23.05.22

Aims for the session



What do
we mean
by anxiety?

MEET ANXIETY

likes:

Routines and
structure

To be in
control

Reassurance

Being extra
careful

Being alert
at all times

To try and keep us safe
from perceived danger

dislikes:

Big crowds

Unsafe situations

Loud noises

Not being in
control

The unknown

Plans changing
at the last minute

New situations

| TheMindsJournal



MINDJOURNAL

How can I recognise it?

When **young children** feel anxious, they cannot always understand or express what they are feeling. You may notice that they:



Older Children



lack confidence to try new things or seem unable to face simple, everyday challenges

find it hard to concentrate

have problems with sleeping or eating

have angry outbursts

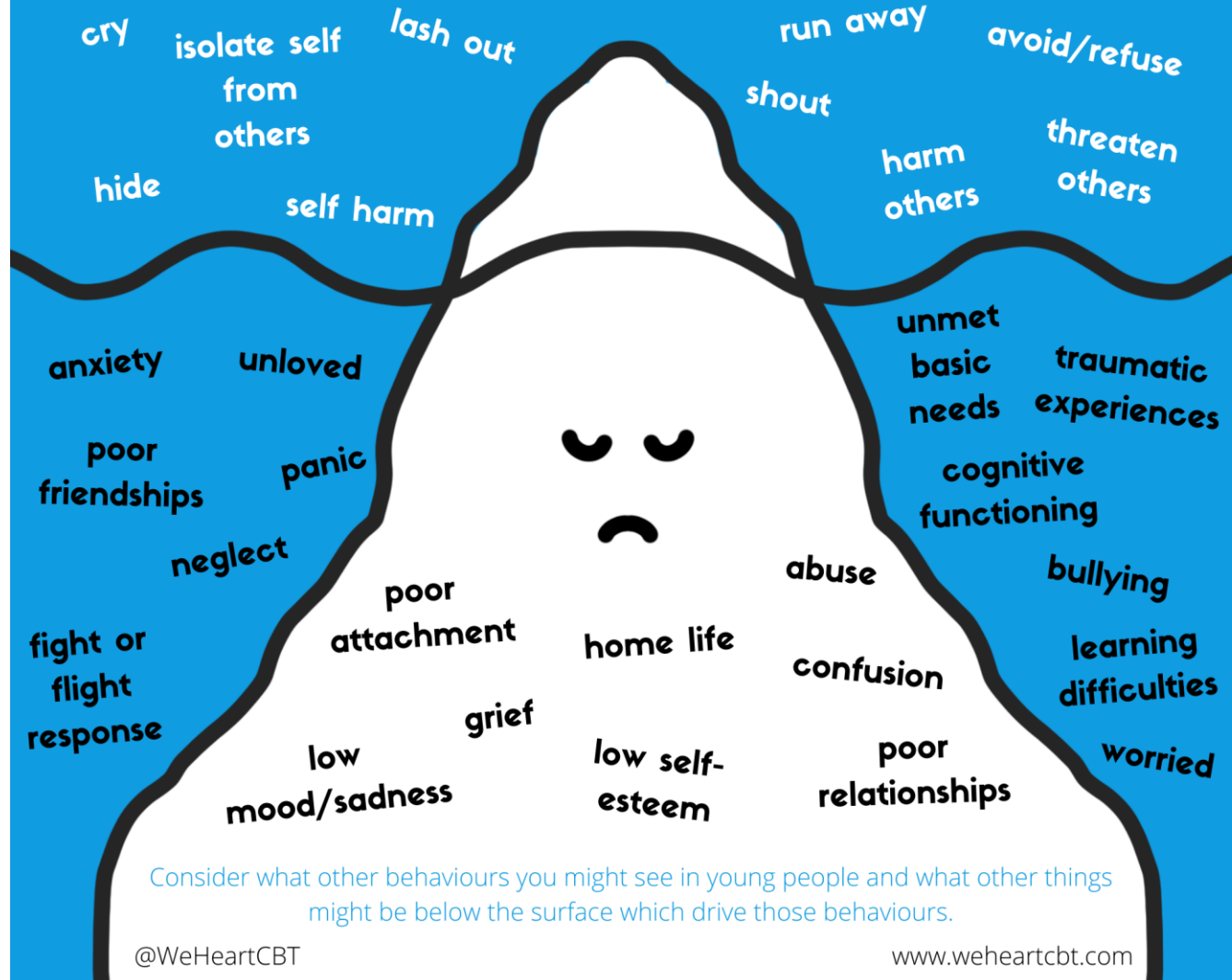
have a lot of negative thoughts, or keep thinking that bad things are going to happen

start avoiding everyday activities, such as seeing friends, going out in public or going to school

Panic attacks

the tip of the iceberg

The behaviours we see in young people are a little like the tip of an iceberg. These are the things we can see above the surface. However, it's important to consider what is lying below the surface in order to better understand how we can support and help.



Consider what other behaviours you might see in young people and what other things might be below the surface which drive those behaviours.

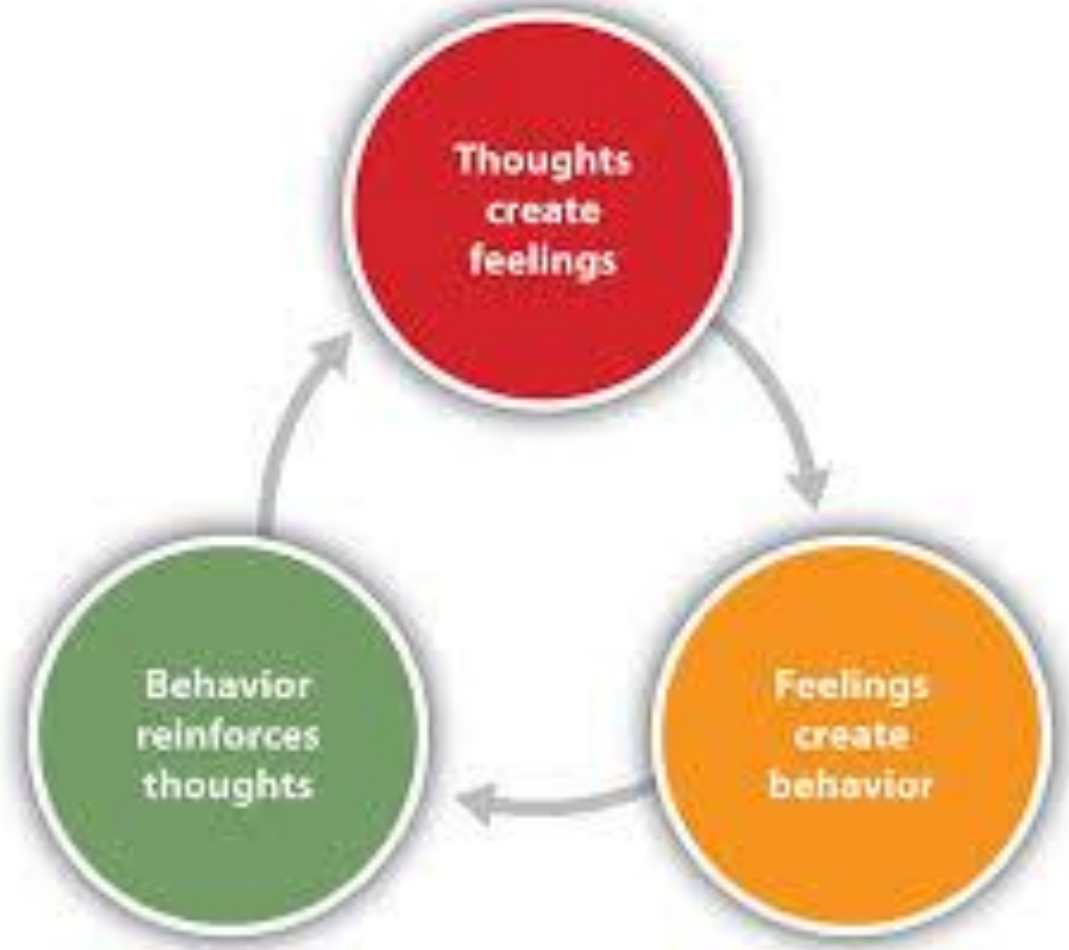
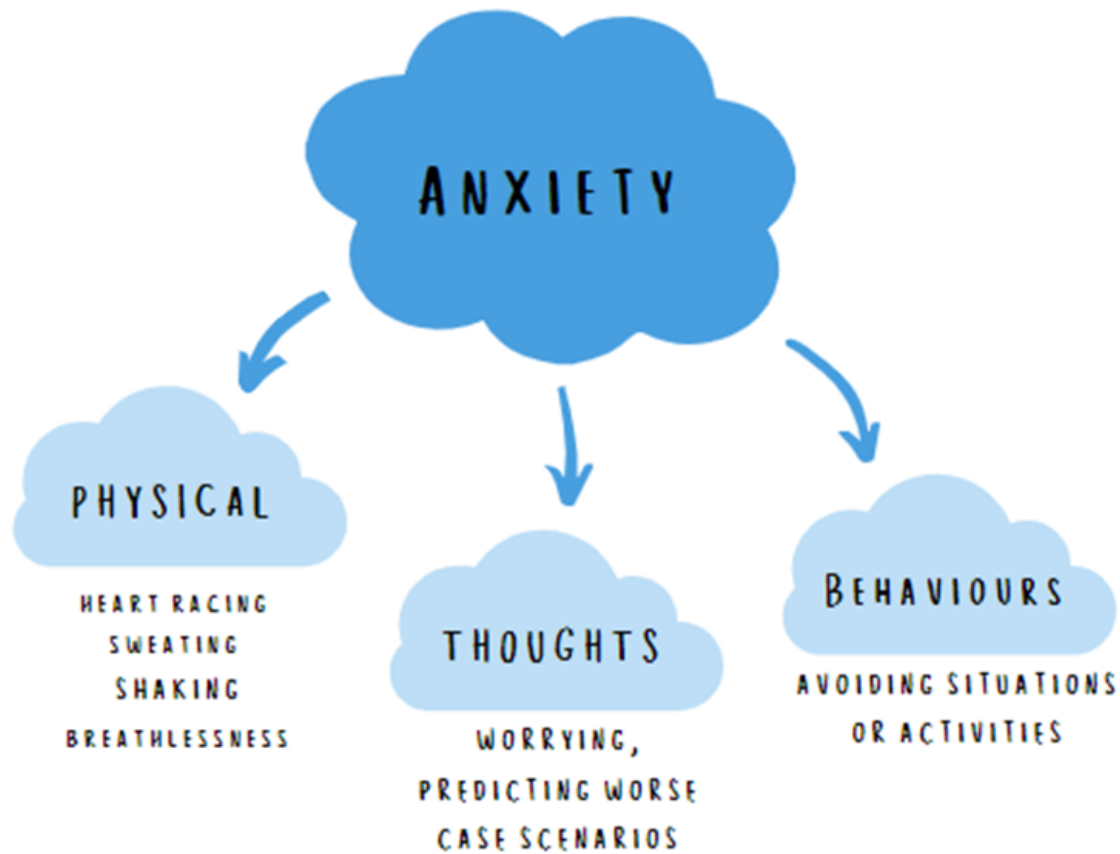
Why might my child be anxious



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How does it affect my child?



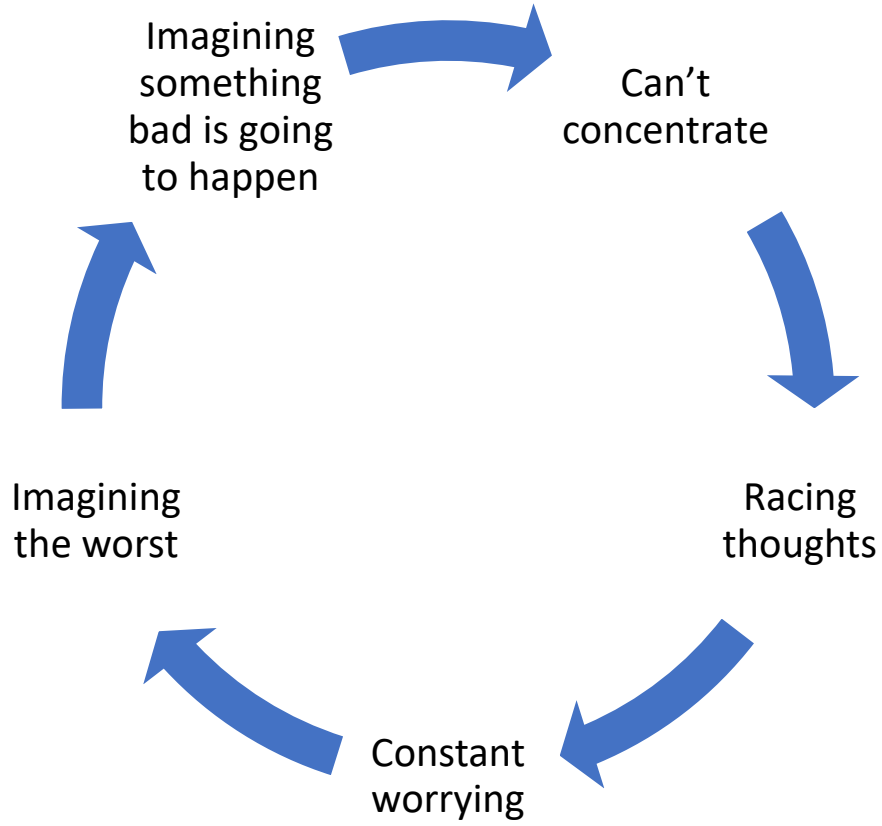
Body reactions

[Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained for Kids - Anxiety Canada](#)

- Heart beats faster/Breathing quickens
- Feeling sick or having “butterflies”
- Chest pains
- Fidgety and jumpy
- Sweating and shaking
- Muscles tense ready for action
- Body aching
- Dizzy, Light headed



Thoughts



Feelings

- Anxious, nervous, worried, frightened
- Panicky
- Scared but don't know why
- Embarrassed

Behaviours

- Avoids situations, people or places
- Unable to sit still
- Increased/decreased appetite
- Pacing up and down
- Sleeplessness
- Withdrawing or shutting down
- Behavioural outburst
- Refusal
- Need for constant reassurance
- Crying



How do I support my child

- Acknowledge, Validate and empathise
- Normalise and reassure
- Try to understand
- Use your strategies
- Relax and distract
- Keep reviewing and adapting



Normalising and reassuring

- Show you can see how that must make them feel worried
- Label their emotions for them to help them understand
- Model that you can feel worried too sometimes and share what you do to help yourself
- Remind them of the body map and how our bodies go into fight, flight, freeze
- Remind them everyone can feel like this at times and it can get better



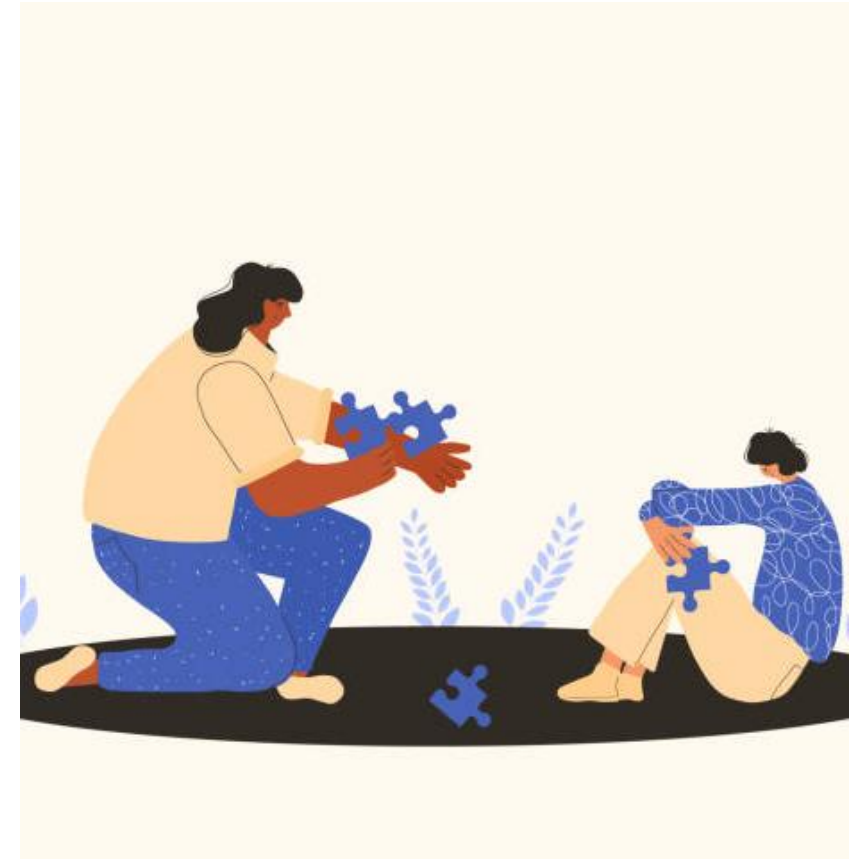
Trying to understand

Be curious, be nurturing and be brave! Not discussing emotions gives them power, ignoring them does not make them go away. If we dismiss and deny the child's thoughts and feelings we risk enraging and engraining the anxiety!

Do not try to persuade them that they are not really anxious. Accept their experience and help them understand it

Ask them:

- Why are you feeling worried?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen if you ...?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about (this situation) that is making you feel worried/frightened?



13 Powerful phrases

"I am here, you are safe"

"Tell me about it"

"how big is your worry"

"what do you want to tell your worry"

"Can you draw it?"

"lets change the ending"

"what other things do you know about"

"Which calming strategy do you want to use?"

"I'm going to take a deep breath"

"its scary and .."

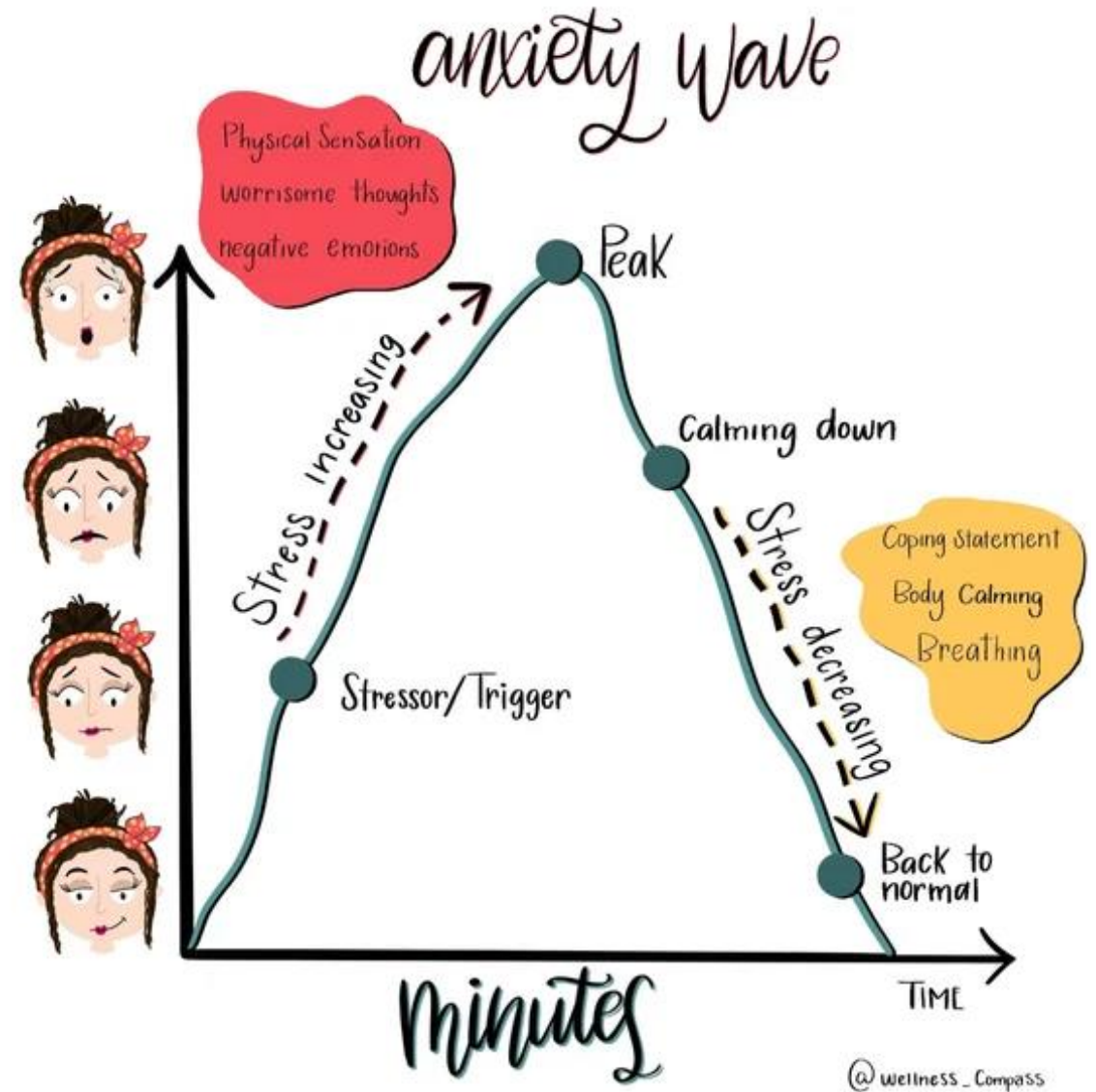
"I cant wait to hear about it"

"what do you need from me?"

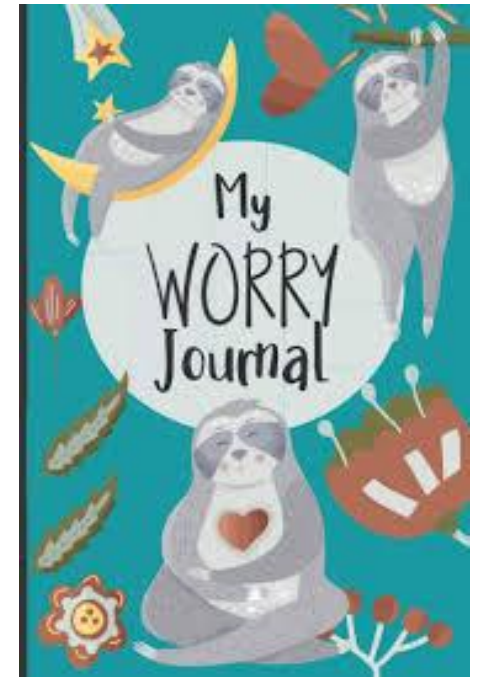
"This feeling will pass"

Strategies

- Anxiety can lead children to want to avoid- its our job as adults to not let that continue! Strategies are a way of helping this process. The process of riding the wave of anxiety.
- Understanding emotion
- Worries and what to do with them
- Relaxation
- Making plans and having a go

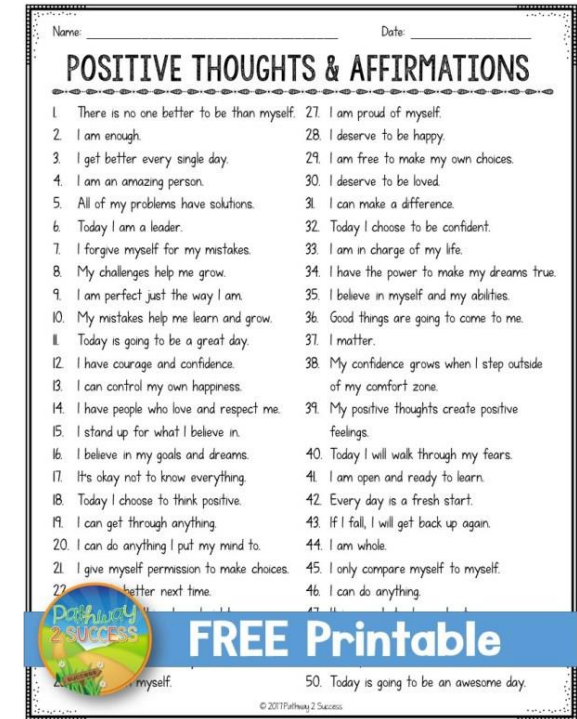


What to do with worry/anxiety



Tackling thoughts

- Often the negative thoughts that come with anxiety can affect a child's self esteem and confidence. They believe that the worst will happen and that they are not good enough.
- Practicing positive self talk and hearing that from you can help build up their confidence and drown out the difficult thoughts.



Positive thought

Everything is fine I am ok

This feeling will pass

I am strong I can do it

Having a go

- Break down what the child wants to achieve and make a step by step plan to achieve it

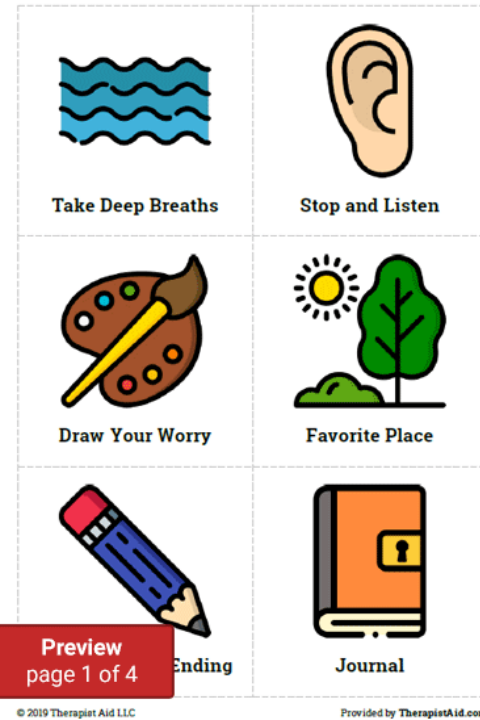


	Child	Parent/Carer	School
What I want to achieve	Walk into classroom independently Go into classroom quickly Put my stuff away and start work	Be able to drop off quickly with no crying/resistance No delay in me leaving the school Stop feeling guilty/awful	Child coming into school independently No need for me to be involved in encouraging to come in Settling without resistance to starting task

Relaxation

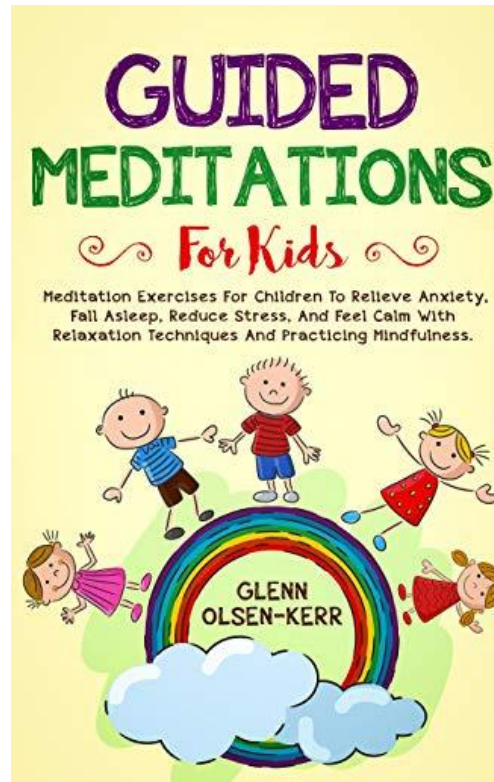


Worry Coping Cards



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7 Steps of Relax Kids

MOVE

Warm up exercise for energy & fun

PLAY

Activity games for vitality, creativity & joy

STRETCH

Stretching for balance, inner strength & power

FEEL

Peer/Self massage for self awareness, empathy and respect

BREATHE

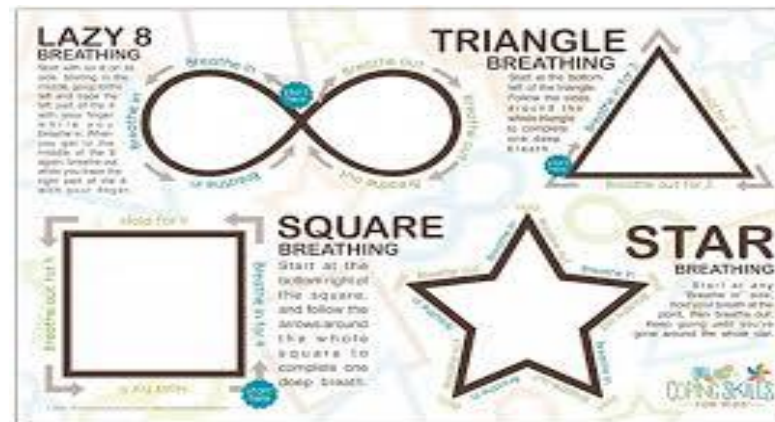
Breathing exercises for improved health, anxiety & inner calm

BELIEVE

Affirmations for self esteem, confidence & positivity

RELAX

Visualisations for deep relaxation, imagination & peace



Top tips

- teach your child to recognise signs of anxiety in themselves
- encourage your child to manage their anxiety and ask for help when they need it
- children of all ages find routines reassuring, so try to stick to regular daily routines where possible
- if your child is anxious because of distressing events, such as a bereavement or separation, look for books or films that will help them to understand their feelings
- if you know a change, such as a house move, is coming up, prepare your child by talking to them about what is going to happen and why
- try not to become overprotective or anxious yourself
- practice simple relaxation techniques with your child, such as taking 3 deep, slow breaths, breathing in for a count of 3 and out for 3. You'll find more guidance for helping children with anxiety on the [Young Minds website](#)
- distraction can be helpful for young children. For example, if they are anxious about going to school, play games on the way there, such as seeing who can spot the most red cars
- turn an empty tissue box into a "worry" box. Get your child to write about or draw their worries and "post" them into the box. Then you can sort through the box together at the end of the day or week
- The goal isn't to eliminate the anxiety just to help manage it.



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Remember the basics

Sleep

Eat

Having a safe place

Supporting peer relations

Considering parental stress/need

Doing nice things

Gaining a sense of mastery

Tasks to improve self-confidence

How do I help myself to help them?

- Communicate with friends and family about what is happening. You may find you are not alone. If others know what you are experiencing, they can try to understand how its affecting you and your family.
- This can also apply to work; you may need to adjust hours or have a reduced workload if things get too much.
- Keep change to a minimum until things are settled to minimize additional stress.
- If you can then tag team at home, one of you may be more needed at trigger times such as bedtimes so have someone else to help.
- Be kind to yourself about what is realistic, you will likely take longer to do the thing you usually would. Treat the anxiety as an illness, we all need to slow in order to recover.
- Still do things for yourself, you will need those moments of “filling up your cup” to keep building your resilience for working through your child's anxiety.
- Don't make accommodations for them with their siblings, its important everyone in the family is able to express themselves.
- Practice positive self talk- you will be doing your absolute best everyday but know that your “best” may look different.
- Forgive yourself if you have a blip, they are to be expected.



When is anxiety a problem for my child?

When it gets in the way of their every day life therefore it is severe, persisting.

If they are avoiding things they have previously managed or enjoyed

If it is consistently affecting their emotional and physical wellbeing

If you have been unable to find ways to support them with suggested strategies



What do I do if I think we need further help and support?

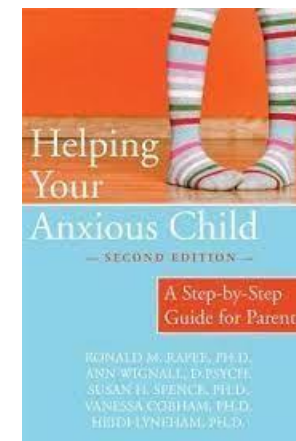
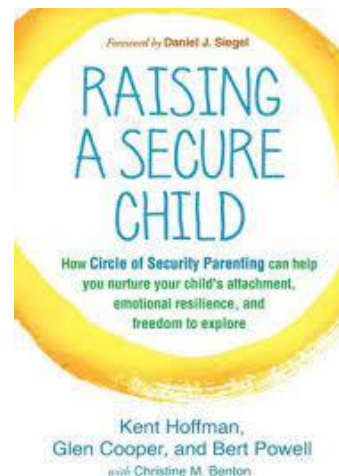
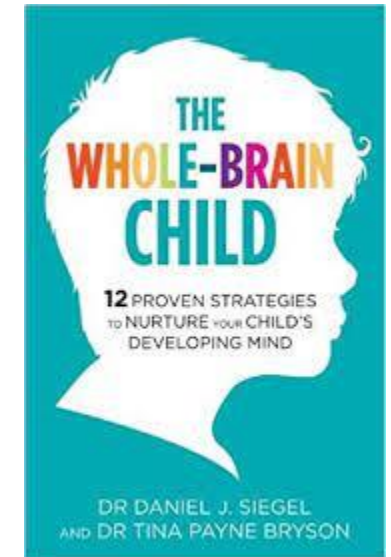
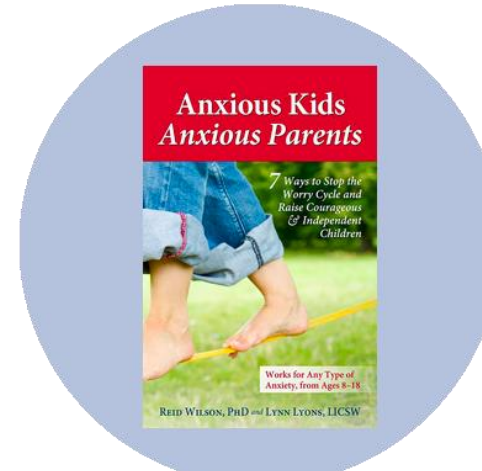
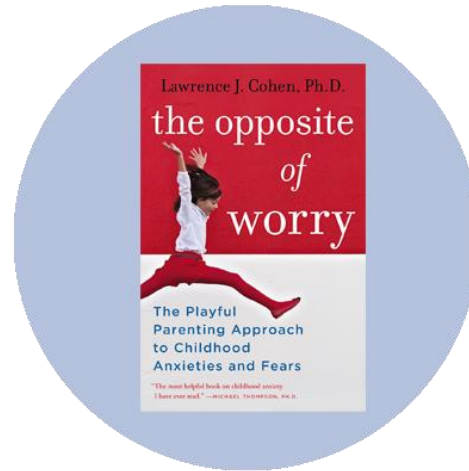
- Recognise and document what you see and what you are worried about
- Talk to your child's school to see if they have noticed any changes, ask what support may be available in school to help them.
- Talk to your GP about accessing further support



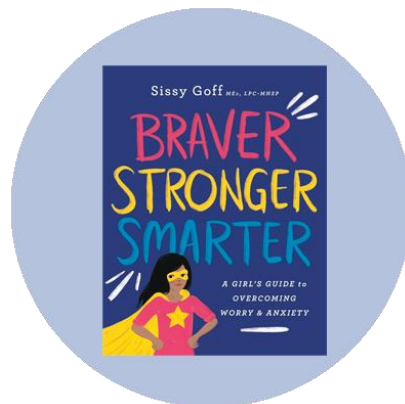
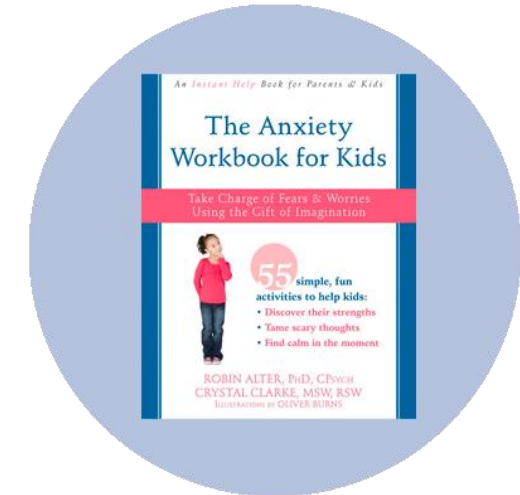
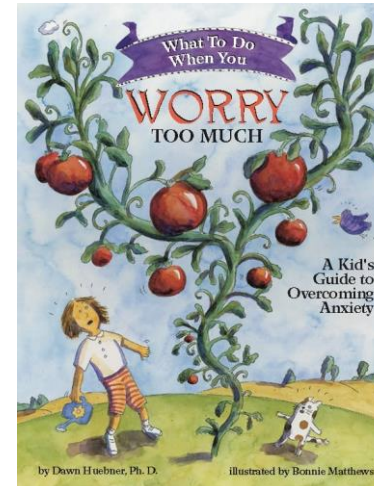
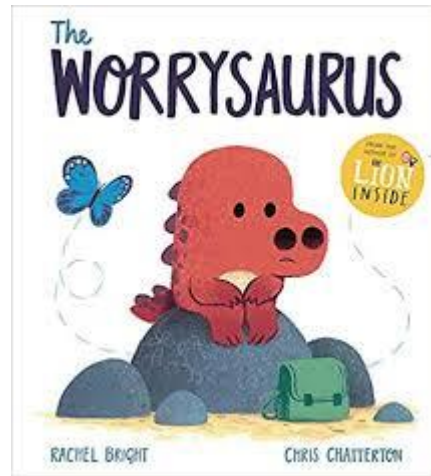
Further resources and signposting

- [YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- [Keep Your Head Mental Health Service \(keep-your-head.com\)](#)
- [Mentally healthy schools | Primary, secondary school and FE settings mental health resources \(annafreud.org\)](#)
- [Resources for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants - ELSA Support \(elsa-support.co.uk\)](#)
- [Digital help | CPFT NHS Trust](#)

Books for parents



Books for children



Questions



References

- [NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges](#)
- [anxious_child.pdf \(mentalhealth.org.uk\)](#)
- [Anxiety in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Mental Health Statistics UK | Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- [How-to-Talk-to-Children-about-Freeze-Flight-and-Fight.pdf \(makingsenseoftrauma.com\)](#)
- [Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained for Kids - Anxiety Canada](#)
- [helping-your-child.pdf \(education.gov.scot\)](#)
- [13-Helpful-Phrases-You-Can-Say-to-Calm-an-Anxious-Child.pdf \(parkwoodgreenps.vic.edu.au\)](#)
- [6 Relaxation Activities That Can Help to Calm Kids During Times of Anxiety | Save the Children](#)
- [Overcoming-your-Childs-Fears-and-Worries-Handout-with-reference.pdf \(oxfordhealth.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Anxiety in Children & Young People: \(ipswichandeastsuffolkccg.nhs.uk\)](#)



Please take a couple of minutes to give some feedback on your session today

