

Understanding Anxiety

Information Session for Parents and Carers

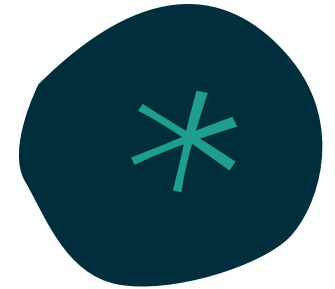
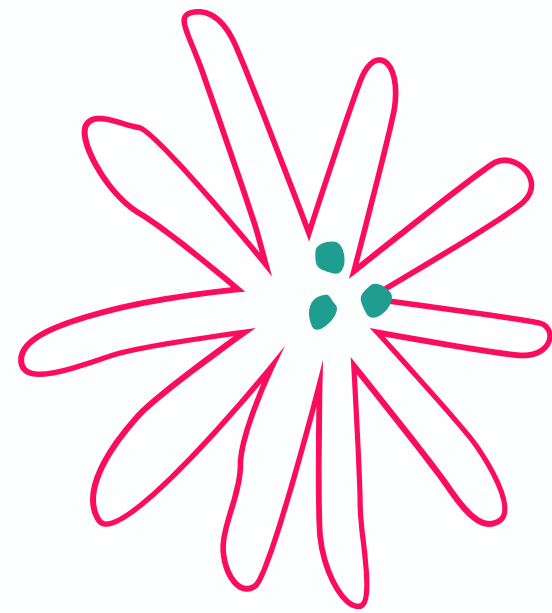


We Will Discuss

What is anxiety?

The cognitive behavioural model of anxiety.

Strategies and techniques to manage anxiety.



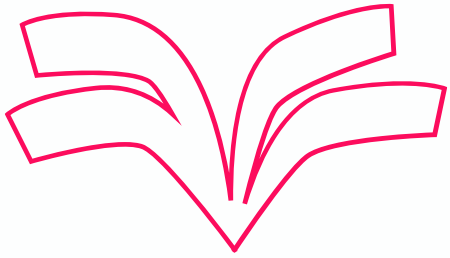
What is Anxiety?

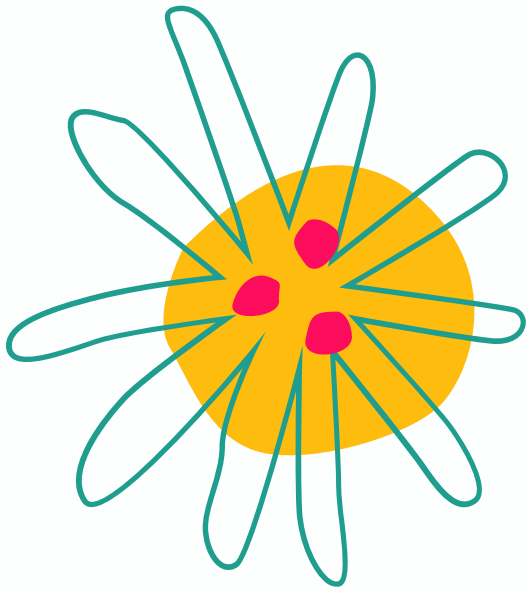
Anxiety is a normal response to a threatening situation.

This response is known as “Fight or Flight”.

It is helpful and adaptive in the short-term, but it can become distressing if the response is ‘switched on’ for too long.

Anxiety affects each of us differently.





Anxiety affects us in different ways.

Cognitively (thoughts)

Physiologically (body sensations)

Behaviourally (actions)

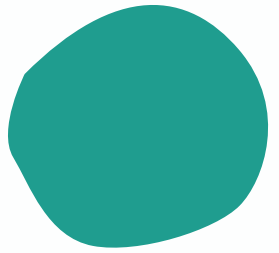


We experience anxiety, when confronted with a situation or challenge that appears threatening.

This could be a situation that poses a real threat to our physical safety.

Or a situation that poses a perceived threat to our physical safety.

Flight, Fight or Freeze



When we perceive a threat, our body prepares to deal with it.

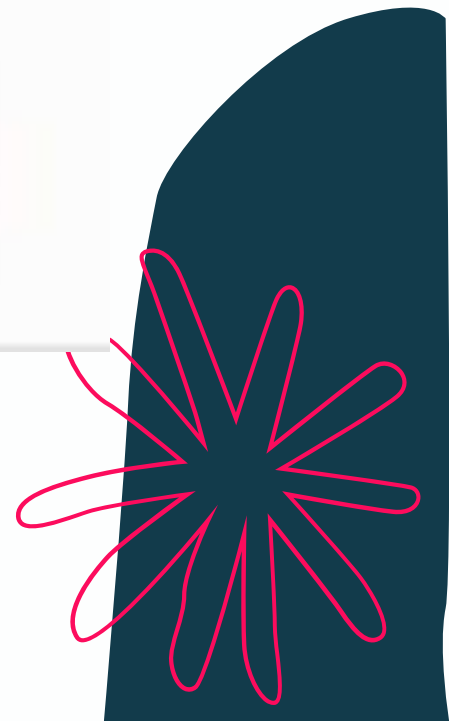
This is often called the flight, fight or freeze response.

This prepares us to run away (flight) or to confront and face the threat (fight) or remain very quiet and still (freeze) and hope we go unnoticed.

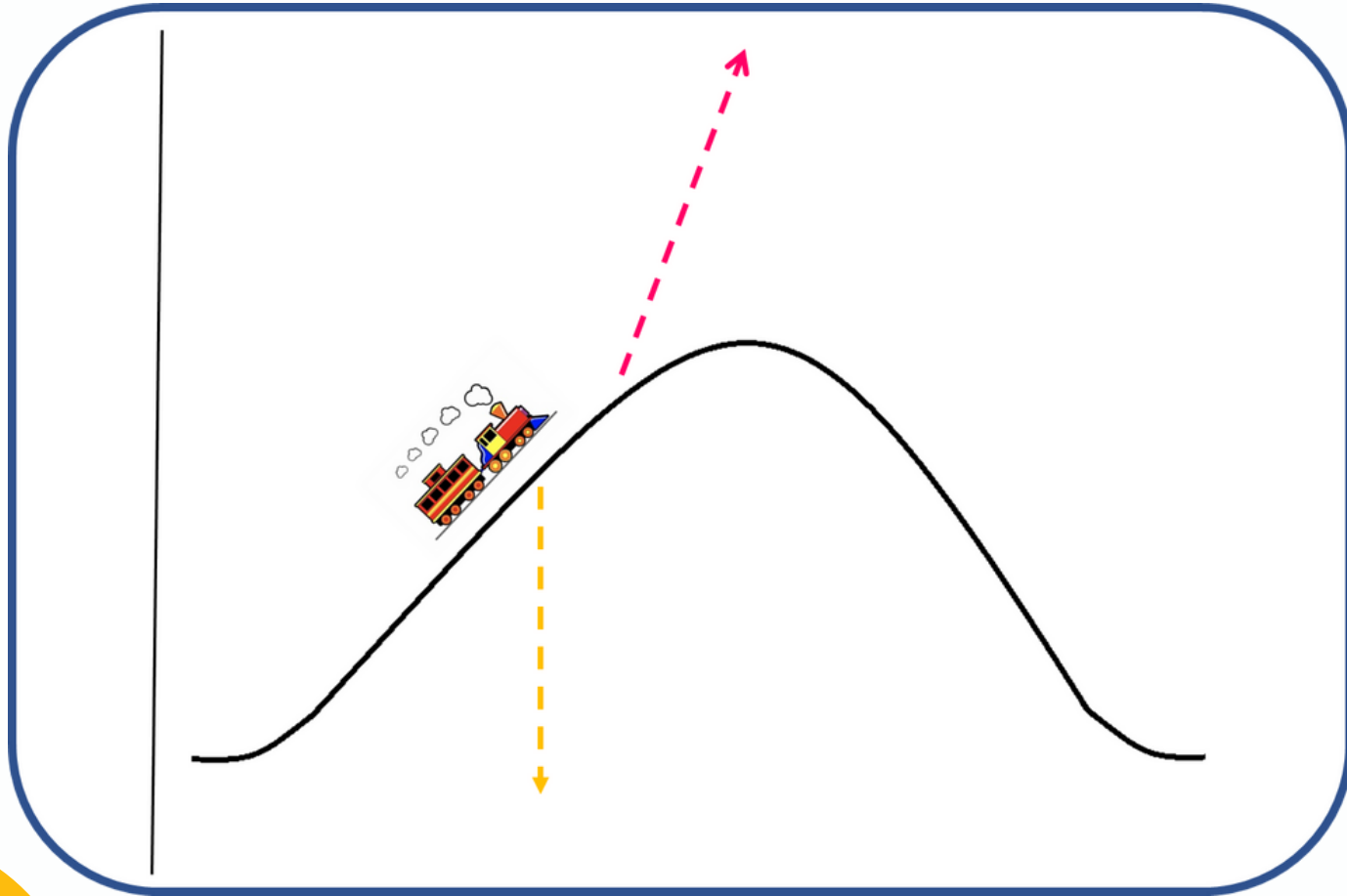
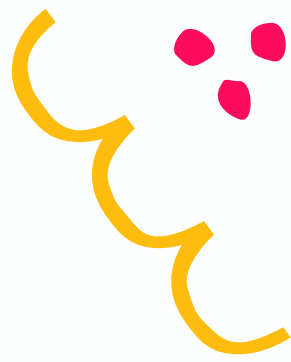




[Fight Flight Freeze – A Guide to Anxiety for Kids - YouTube](#)



Up and Down the Worry Hill



Fears and Worries are Common

Around 70% of adolescents report having at least one worry per month.

Children's worries are often about their physical security.

Adolescent worries are more abstract and relate to negative outcomes.

Most worry is normal and usually doesn't require any intervention.



When Anxiety Becomes a Problem

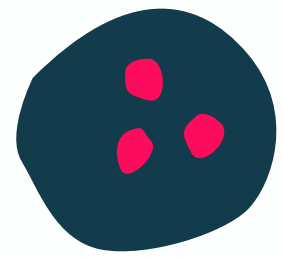
We all feel anxious for short periods of time or in certain situations, but for some people anxiety takes over.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it is:

- Persistent
- Severe
- And interferes with everyday life

When anxiety takes over, you may benefit from some help.





What is Causing the Anxiety?



GENES



ENVIRONMENT



COPING SKILLS



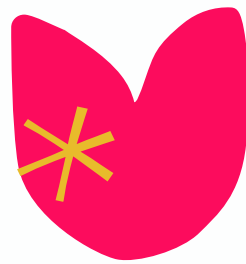
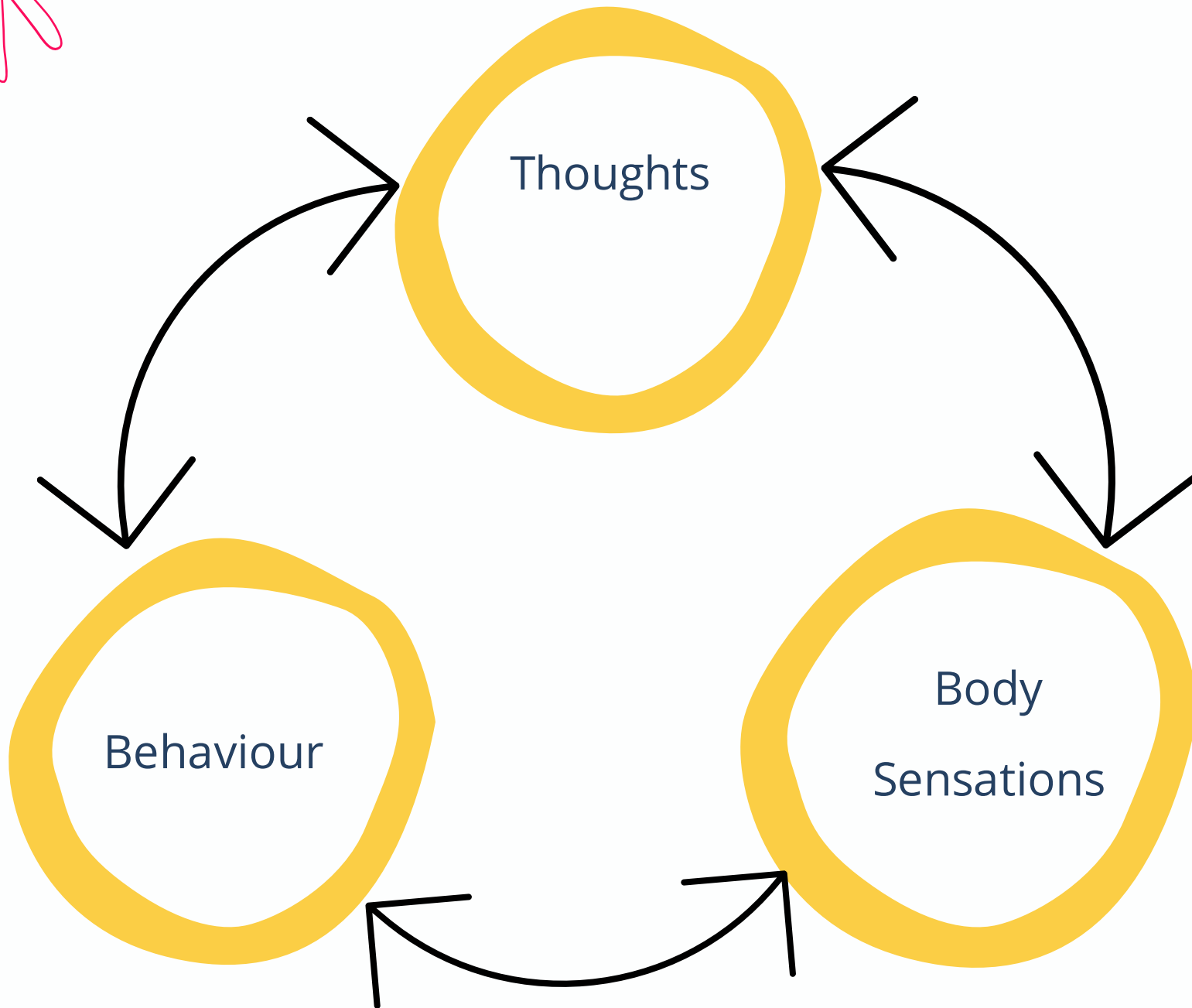
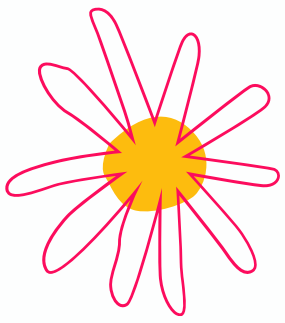
EXPERIENCES



PEOPLE'S REACTIONS



Events lead to...



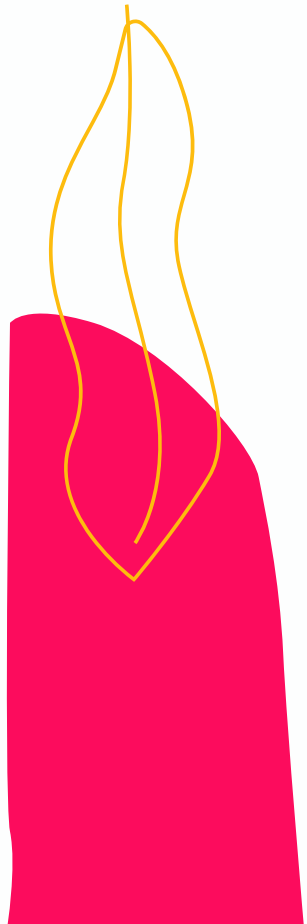
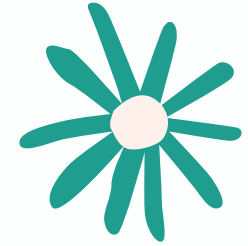
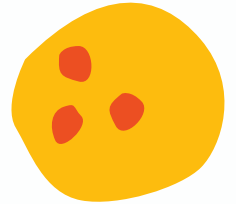
Avoidance

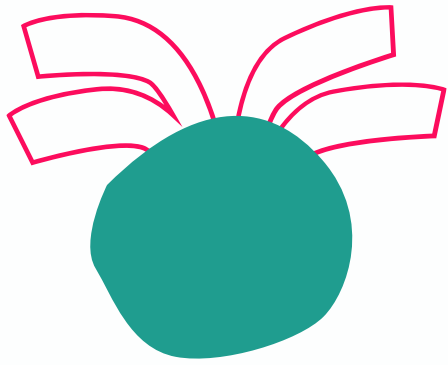
In the short term:

- You feel relieved and safe.
- You do not have to face your anxiety and the unpleasant feelings associated with it
- You remain in control

In the long term:

- You miss out
- You can't overcome your anxiety
- It maintains the thought:
'there's nothing that needs to be worked on.'





Role of a Parent

Supporting children to feel safe.

Helping and modelling how to understand and manage emotions.

Providing containment when emotions are too much.

Supporting children with challenging their anxiety.

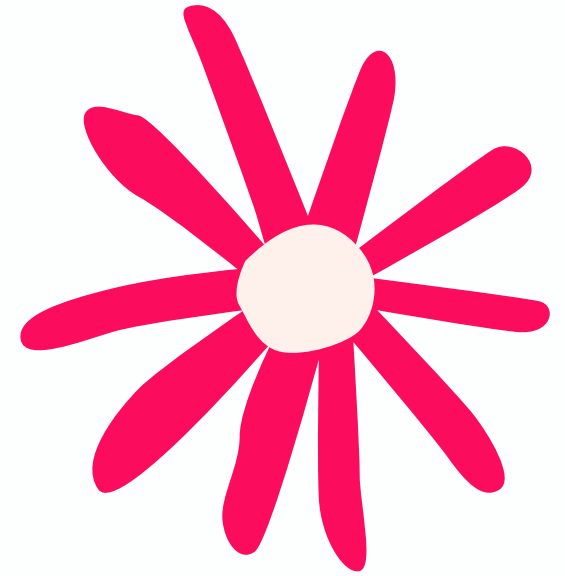
Supporting children with sleep and exercise.



How to Help a Child Feel Safe

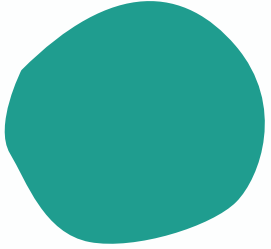
- Encourage independence.
- Express confidence in their capabilities.
- Find the balance between being warm and understanding but not being over-involved.
- Allow them to learn different ways of doing things and recognise that your way may not be their way.
- Calmly allow them to feel nervous, with the knowledge that it will be okay for them
- Suggest coping thoughts e.g. 'if that doesn't work then there are other ways to try...'





How You Can Help

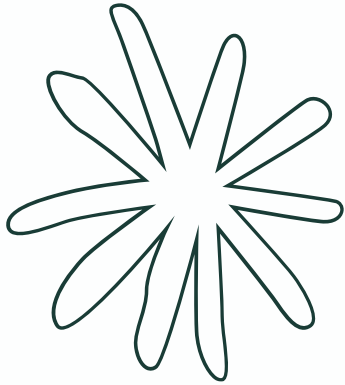
Helpful and Unhelpful Thoughts



When we are feeling worried, we often have unhelpful thoughts.

These are critical and typically biased.

Often, by questioning and challenging our unhelpful thoughts, we can change them to more helpful thoughts.



Worry...



Monsters

Make a sock monster, write down your worries and feed it to your sock monster. They think it's yummy.

Bags

Somewhere they can put their worries and you can read them over.

Worry People

Originating in Guatemala, these dolls are no bigger than a match stick. Tell them your worries and pop them under your pillow or next to your bed and they'll take them away for you.

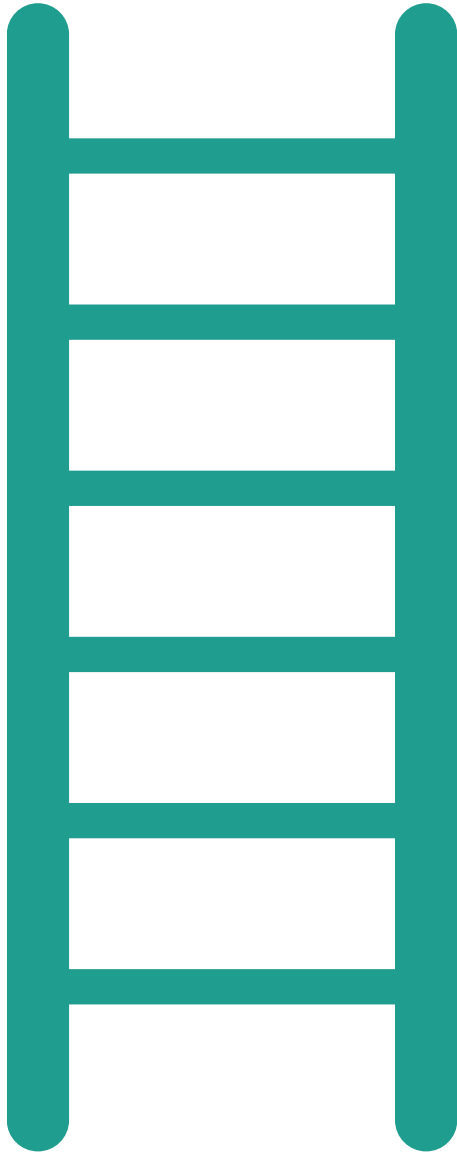
Exposure



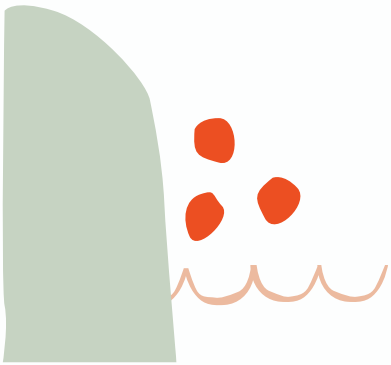
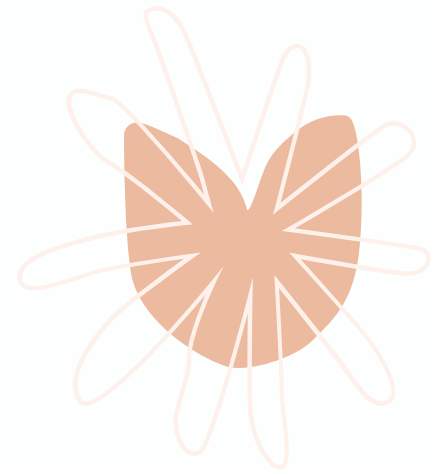
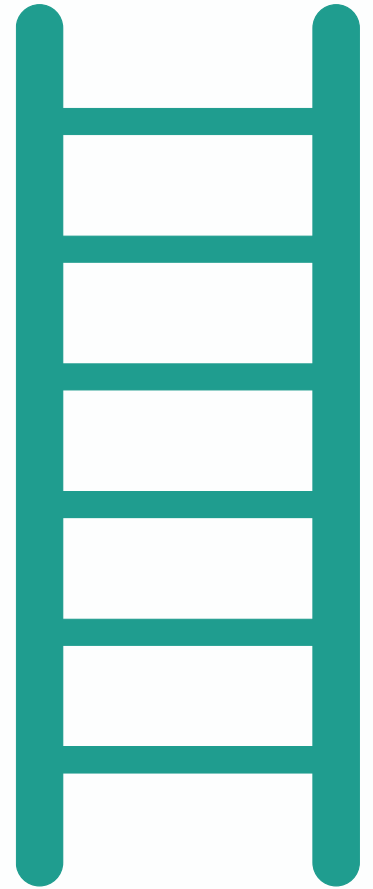
As we have learned, exposure to anxiety provoking situations can help us overcome them.

However, if situations feel too overwhelming to face at once, working up to them can be helpful.

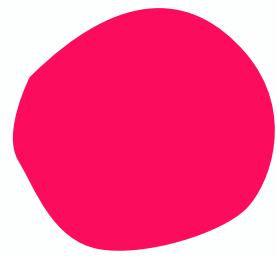
Graded exposure involves gradually moving in small sequential steps from the least feared situations to the most anxiety provoking situations.



Out for evening	10/10
Out for morning	9/10
Out for dinner (one hour plus)	8/10
Out shopping for one-hour	7/10
Go to newsagent for 30mins (no phone calls)	6/10
Go 'somewhere' in house for 15mins	6/10
Go out to the garden for 15mins	5/10
Go up into the attic for 15mins	4/10
Go into the next room for 15mins	2/10



Let's relax



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Involves tightening up the muscle groups and then letting them go - tensing then relaxing.

Deep Breathing

Drawing in a deep breath, hold it for 5seconds and then very slowly let it out.

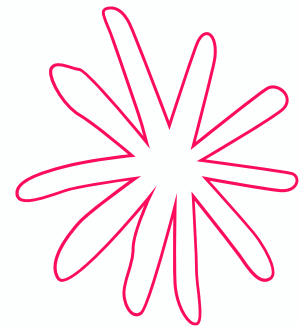
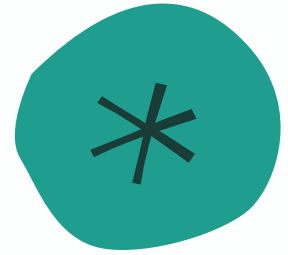
Visual Imagery

Simply imaging a relaxing scene, and feeling the resulting relaxation.



Review of Parent Role

- Nudge one notch above comfort zone
- Discourage avoidance and escape
- Foster self-calming skills by practicing relaxation with your child
- Create your own positive self-talk phrases
- Rewards and Praise, praise, praise!
- Label emotions, allow and create open conversations
- Avoid auto-assisting, redirect to self-assist
- Empower and foster confidence
- Problem solve
- Encourage reasonable risks
- Reflect on how your reactions may have influenced a situation
- Support sleep and exercise



Let's Introduce Anxiety Management

LIAM is an intervention available in some schools for mild anxiety aimed at helping children and young people learn about anxiety and coping strategies.

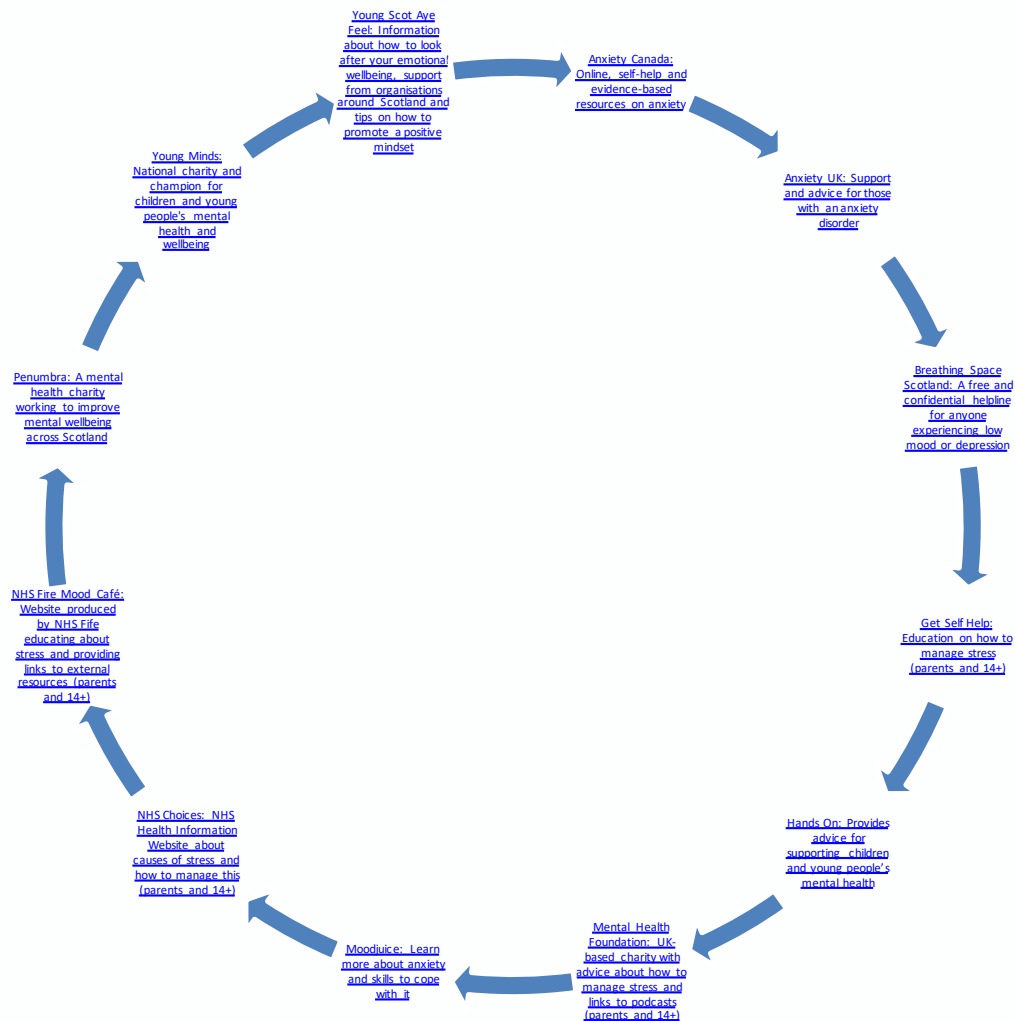
A structured approach, where a child or young person works through modules with someone in school is used.

LIAM referrals and progress are discussed with a CAMHS practitioner. Speak to someone at your child's school if you think this might be helpful for them.



Resources

These links can be shared with you upon request.



More Resources

Available at various libraries as part of the Healthy Reading Scheme

Blame my brain: The amazing teenage brain revealed

(2007) by Nicola Morgan

Helping your child with fears and worries: A self-help guide for parents

(2019) by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts

How to stop worrying

(2009) by Frank Tallis

The anxiety survival guide for teens:

CBT skills to overcome fear, worry and panic

(2015) by Jennifer Shannon & Doug Shannon

The huge bag of worries

(2004) by Virginia Ironside

Think good, feel good: A CBT workbook for young people

(2002) by Paul Stallard

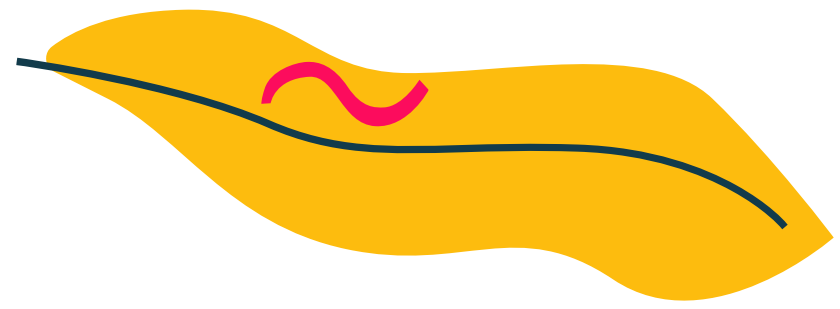
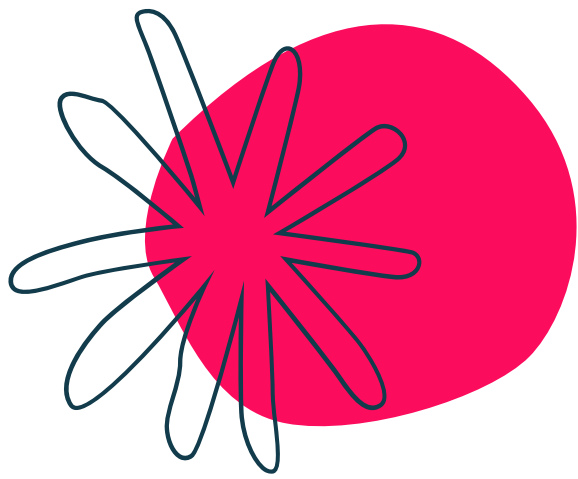
What to do when you're scared & worried: A guide for kids

(2004) by James J. Crist

Willy and the wobbly house: A story for children who are anxious or obsessional

(2003) by Margot Sunderland





Thank You

Any questions?

