

Managing my child's anxiety

Age 8-11 years



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Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools
(WAMHS)

WAMHS is run by the CAMHS Alliance in City & Hackney and is made up of:-

Partners:



Providers:

**Specialist
CAMHS**

Moderate -
Severe

First Steps

Early Intervention

**CAMHS
Disability**

Moderate- Severe
(Learning)
Disabilities

**Family
Action**

Voluntary sector
support to families
with complex needs

**LBH CFS
Clinical Team**

Clinical Team for CYP &
families known to CFS

Off Centre

Voluntary sector for
11-25s

Aims for today

To help you
understand what
anxiety in children
looks like

To explore factors
involved in the
development and
maintenance of
anxiety in children

To briefly
introduce
strategies for
managing anxiety
in children

Emotional Health
Or
Well-Being

Mental Health is a Spectrum..

Healthy

Coping

Struggling

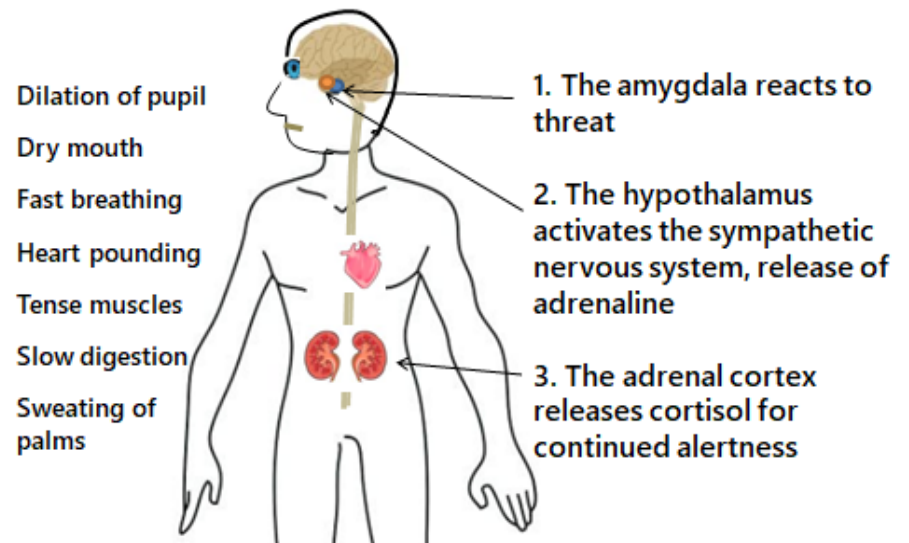
Unwell

What is anxiety?

- Normal response to something stressful
- Fears are a normal part of growing up and a sign your child is starting to make sense of the world.
- It is an adaptive response to danger. We feel anxiety when our fight, flight freeze response is triggered.

**Becomes a problem
when it causes a
problem**

The fight or flight response



Anxiety during COVID-19

- Virus/infection related anxiety
- Uncertainty and constant change
- Education and learning related anxiety
- Adapting to a new way of life
- Social isolation and lack of engagement with the outside world
- Stories and images on TV, Social Media, and in the community
- Changes in our behaviour
- Family worries

What is Anxiety?

How do we describe it?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that we all experience at times. It is a normal reaction to stressful situations. It is a word often used to describe when we feel...

Uptight

Irritable

Tense

Worried

Scared

Nervous

Upset

Bothered

Troubled

Apprehensive

Afraid

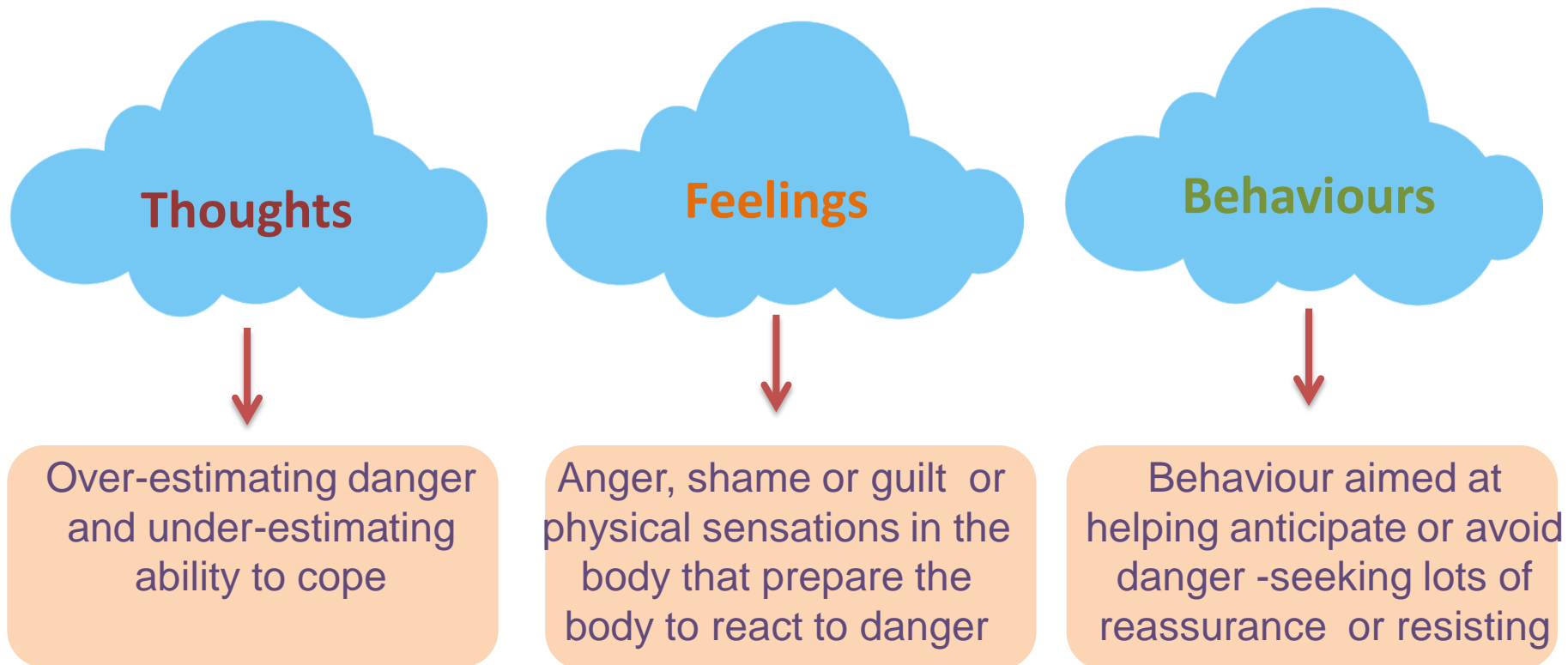
Stressed

Facts about anxiety

- Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental, emotional, and behavioural problems to occur
- About 13 of every 100 children and adolescents ages 9 to 17 experience some kind of anxiety disorder
- Girls are affected more than boys.
- About 50% of children and adolescents with anxiety disorders have a 2nd anxiety disorder or other mental/behavioral disorder
- Anxiety disorders may coexist with physical health conditions as well

What is anxiety?

Anxiety has three characteristics:



Fear of going to bed

Thoughts

*There might be a burglar in my room
Mum might not be able to hear me calling for help*

Behaviours

*Procrastinating going to bed

Asking parent/carer to go with them upstairs and to sit with them while they fall asleep*

Feelings

*Nervous
Worried
Scared
Sad*

Physical sensations

*Tummy aches
Headaches
Heart pacing
Jittery*

What is Anxiety?

Signs of Anxiety in Children

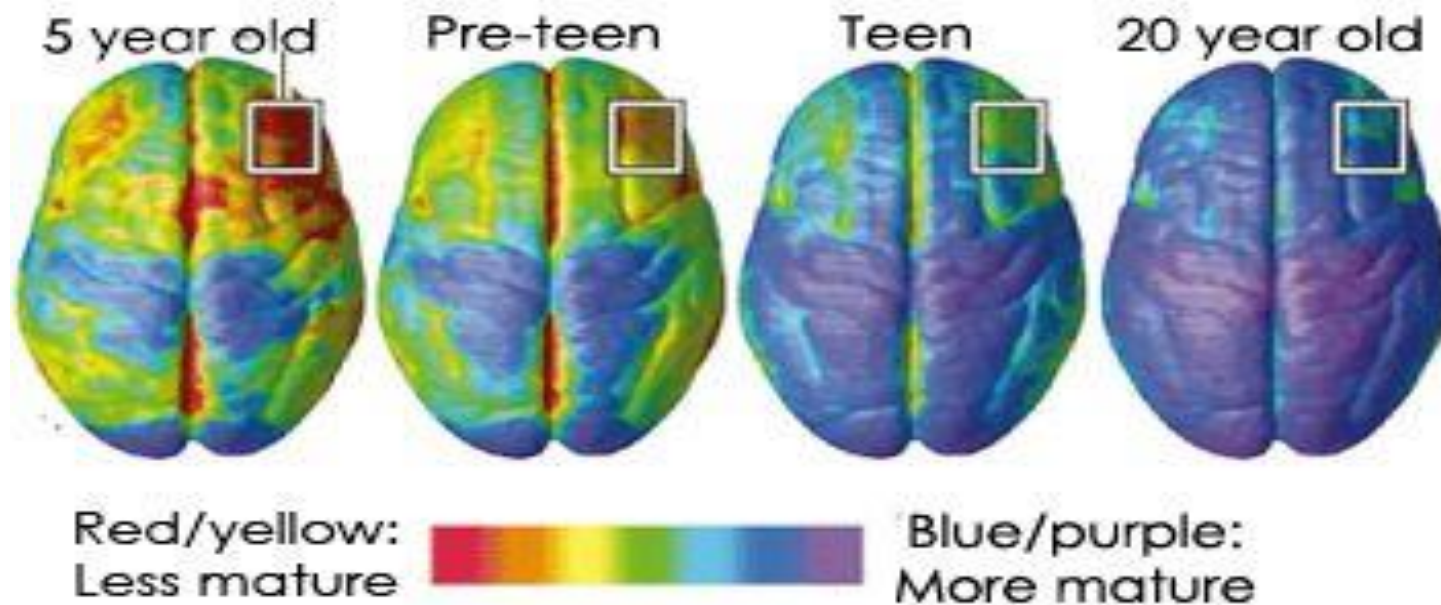
- Extremely shy, timid and clinging
- Difficulties mixing with other children
- Difficulties sleeping or nightmares
- Repeated complaints of headache or tummy ache
- Constantly asking if things are all right or other ways of asking for reassurance
- Reduced attendance at school
- Panic attacks
- Over compliance
- Restlessness, jumping between activities
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Hyper-vigilance
- Bedwetting



Development stages and anxiety

Age	Developmental stage	Fears and worries
<i>0-6 months</i>	Sensory	Strong sensory stimuli (e.g. loud noises); loss of support
<i>6-12 months</i>	Sensori-motor: cause and effect; object-constancy	Strangers; separation from care givers
<i>2-4 years</i>	Pre-operational thinking: imagination, but limited distinction between fantasy and reality	Imaginary creatures; potential burglars; the dark
<i>5-7 years</i>	Concrete operational thinking: Concrete, logical thinking	Natural disasters; injury/illness/death; animals; media-based fears
<i>8-11 years</i>	Self esteem based on academic and athletic abilities	Poor academic and athletic performance
<i>12-18 years</i>	Formal operational thinking: meta-thinking and anticipation of future dangers. Self esteem based on peer relationships	Peer rejection; world issues

Brain Development and Emotions



- As children grow up they begin to make links between the emotional aspects of their brain and their higher level logical reasoning skills.
- They are able to express in words what they feel and articulate feelings through language rather than behaviour

Common Worries or Fears

Age 8-11 Years



Anxiety: Impact on behaviour

- Avoiding doing something because we are worried about how it will turn out
- Difficulties focusing
- Making more mistakes
- Becoming more defensive
- Emotional outbursts more likely
- Reduced confidence
- Interests diminish
- Low energy
- Disrupted sleep
- Shifts responsibility to others
- Loss of problem solving skills

ANXIETY ICEBERG REVISED



Communicating Feelings

As children get older they develop in their ability to identify emotions within their body, label these and use words to express how they feel and communicate their needs to others around them.

It is important to remember that children's emotional brains are still developing and they might struggle particularly with communicating big feelings. Children often use behaviour rather than words to express to us how they are feeling.

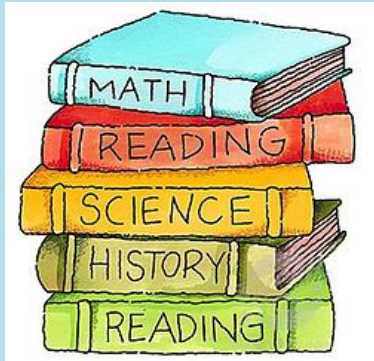
Children have four developmental needs: to feel safe, to feel independent, to feel valued and to have a sense of community. They might need your support to meet one of them.



When do you know anxiety is a problem?

We can work out when anxiety has become a problem by considering it's impact on your child's life and if it is stopping them from doing what they (or you) should be doing

Areas that can be affected include their:



Academics



Social life



Mood

What is keeping the anxiety going?

It's helpful to understand what has caused anxiety but not essential. What is more important to the treatment process is to understand what is maintaining your child's anxiety.

like a car stuck in the mud, we want to sort out what is stopping the car from moving on, not what got you stuck there in the first place.



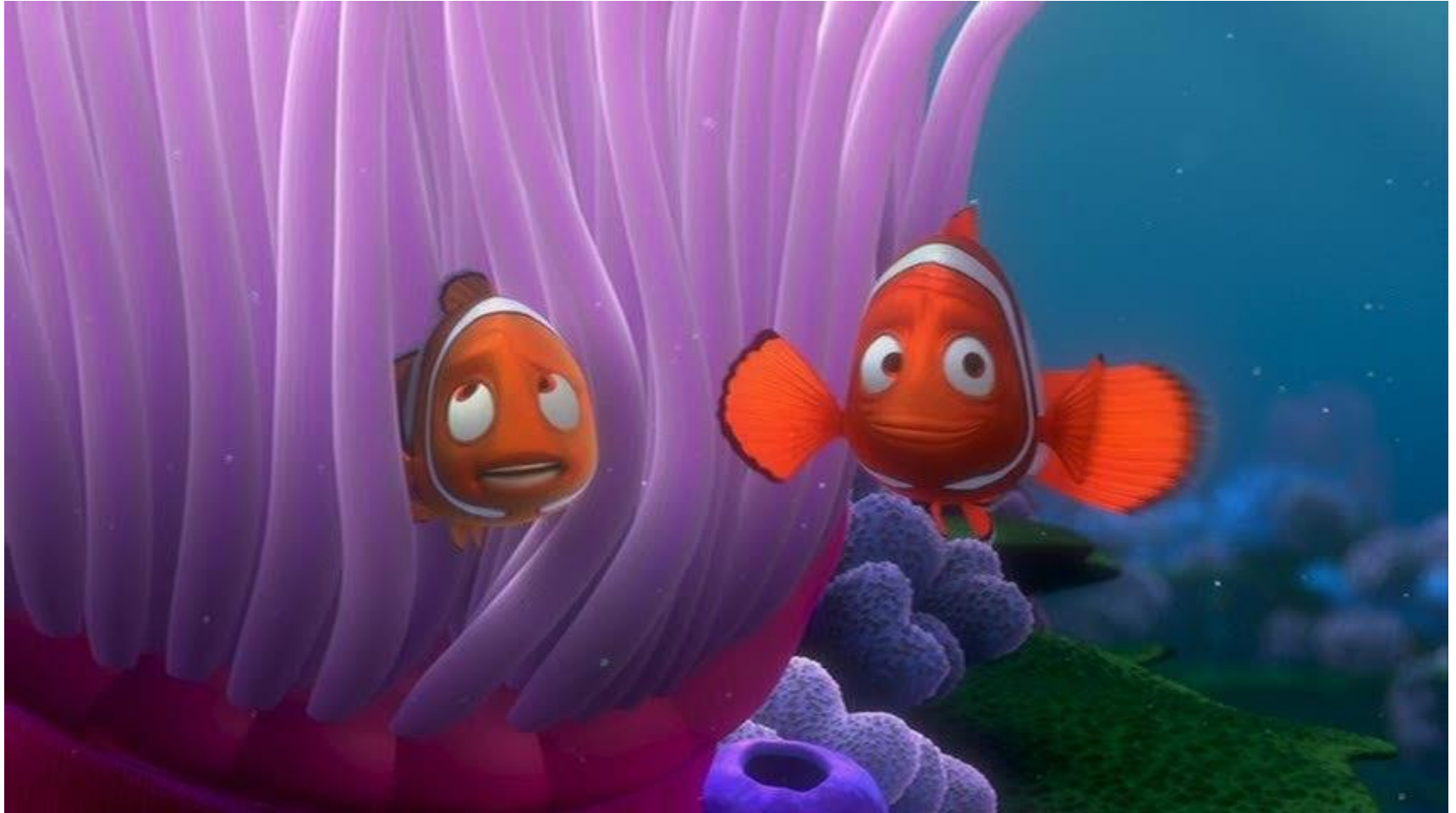
What keeps anxiety going?

There are two common maintenance cycles in anxiety:

1. Things **children** do to help and protect themselves
2. Things **people** around them do to try and help and protect them

What others do

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Kd43>



firstSTEPS

early intervention & community psychology service

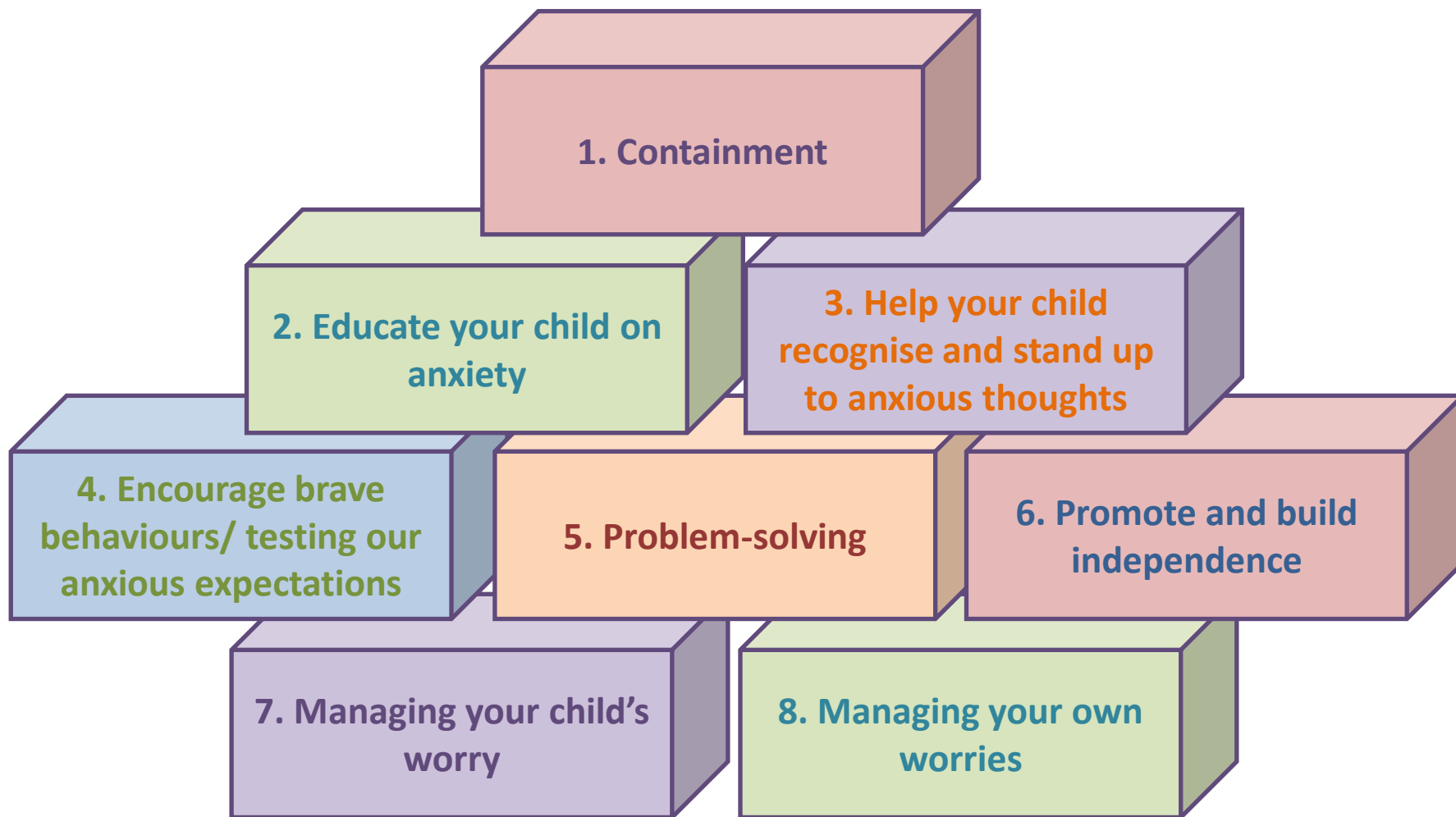
NHS

Homerton University Hospital

NHS Foundation Trust

**What can we do to
support Anxiety?**

Strategies to manage anxiety



Helping children to understand and express their feelings



- It can be helpful to encourage your child to identify how different emotions feel within their body.
- Once we have identified an emotion we can use words to describe how we feel.
- Help them to have words for different emotions through talking about your feelings and naming your own emotions.
- Try to help your child to name what emotions you think they might be experiencing. Sometimes validating emotions in the moment can help but sometimes it's best to wait until things are calm.

If a child finds it hard to talk..



Happy



Sad



Silly



Proud



Annoyed



Surprised



Excited



Angry



Worried



Scared



Love



Sick



Calm



Bored



Sleepy



Hungry



Embarrassed



Ashamed



Jealous



Worn-out

Containment

- Containment is where a person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it and communicates this back to the other person. This process can restore the ability to think in the other person.
- Our role may be to help children contain their anxieties and stresses.



Helping children with their worries

- Be aware of your own anxieties
- Try to understand their worry
 - Be curious, ask questions, listen carefully
- Acknowledge their fears
- Help them to feel understood and that worries are normal
- If the worry is excessive/unrealistic, help the child to challenge it
 - A worry is a thought not necessarily a fact
 - Gently correct any misunderstandings they may have
 - Help the child to evaluate the anxious thought and generate a more realistic, helpful one
 - E.g. What exactly are they worried about? How likely is it that their worry will happen? What else might happen? If their worry did come true what would that mean? What could they do to cope with this? How would other people be able to help?



- Is this worry something they can do anything about?

Yes....

- Help the child to feel in control where they can
- There may be practical steps they can take; problem-solve together
- If their worry is realistic, think about what they can still do and what others are doing to help

No....

- “Worry means you suffer twice”
 - Support them to gradually learn to tolerate that worry and focus on other things
 - Let them know it’s not their responsibility - adults are working on it
 - Help them distract themselves in fun and absorbing activities
- Look out for unhelpful behaviours: gradually reduce, small steps
 - Highlight the good things and their strengths

Children might find this difficult!

Top tips to help...

Pick your moment

Be empathetic, check
your understanding
and normalise their
worries

Be curious- ask
questions and make
suggestions rather
than giving answers

Make it fun and
rewarding

Help them to
understand their
emotions by naming
them

Helpful Responses

Why don't we try
and do it again
together?

How are you feeling?
Are you feeling
worried about
something?

How is this
making you feel?

I know it feels scary, why
don't we plan how we're
going to say hello again
when I pick you up?

Less helpful responses



Tell me what's wrong, what is it!



Don't be silly



Let's not do that again

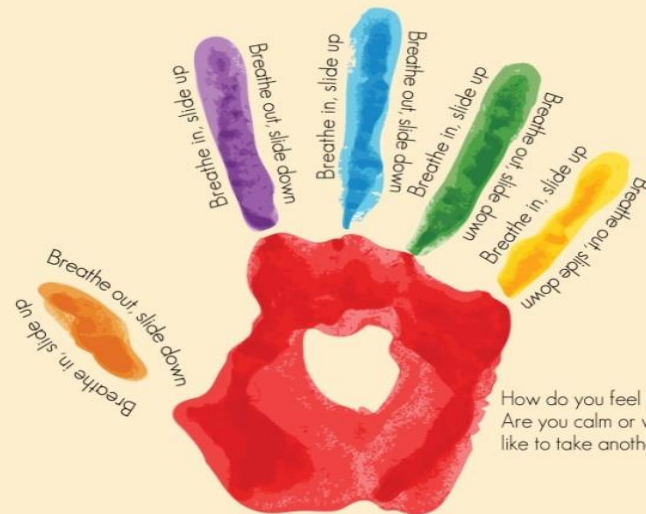


You'll be fine

Strategies to help reduce anxiety

CALM DOWN WITH TAKE 5 BREATHING

1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly ~ slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose ~ out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down.
Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



How do you feel now?
Are you calm or would you
like to take another 5 breaths?

Mindfulness

Stay Grounded Using Your 5 Senses


Relax Your Body, Take a Few Deep Breaths and Focus on the Following...

5 Things You Can See 

4 Things You Can Feel 

3 Things You Can Hear 

2 Things You Can Smell 

1 Thing You Can Taste 

Sitting Still Like a Frog Activity Book

75
Mindfulness
Games for
Kids



Includes
• stickers
• crafts
• coloring pages
• recipes
• stories
• & songs

Eline Snel

With illustrations by Marc Boutavant



Strategies to help reduce anxiety

Balloon breathing: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/breathing-balloon>

Belly Breathing

1. Stand, sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.



2. Close your eyes and loosen any tense muscles. Make sure to relax your shoulders.



3. Place one hand on your upper chest and another on your belly button.



4. Breathe in slowly through your nose for *three seconds*. Feel your stomach expand. Your chest should remain still.



5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for *three seconds*. Feel your stomach move back.



6. Repeat steps 4 and 5. Gradually increase the time you take to breathe in and out.

Four seconds in and four seconds out, five seconds in and five seconds out.....

Strategies to help reduce anxiety

Sensory Bottles or Calming Down Bottles

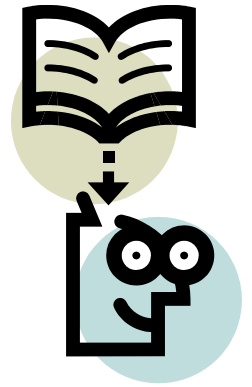
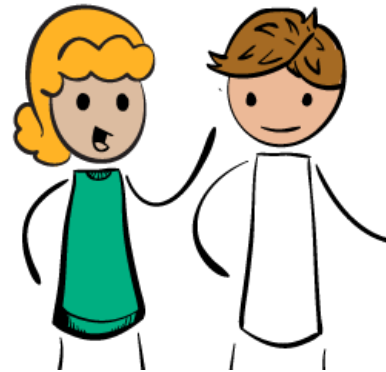
A sensory bottle can offer a valuable focus or distraction to a child whilst they calm down from an overwhelming emotional experience.



Strategies to help reduce anxiety



3 minute
moan



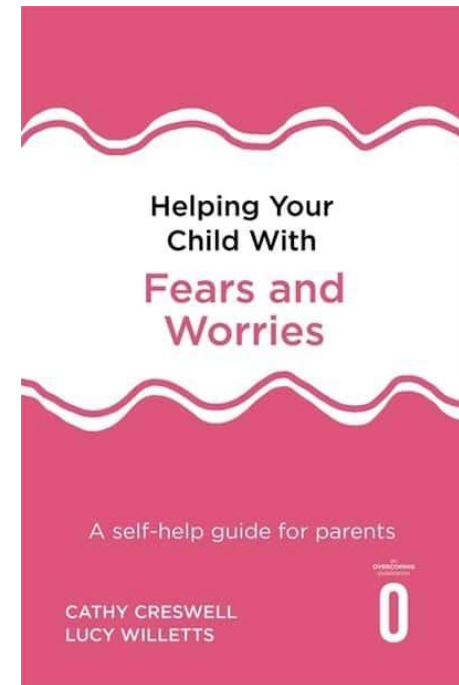
Cosmic Kids Peace Out Guided Relaxation for Kids - Starfish

<https://youtu.be/a1dgkivX9-A>



Useful reading:

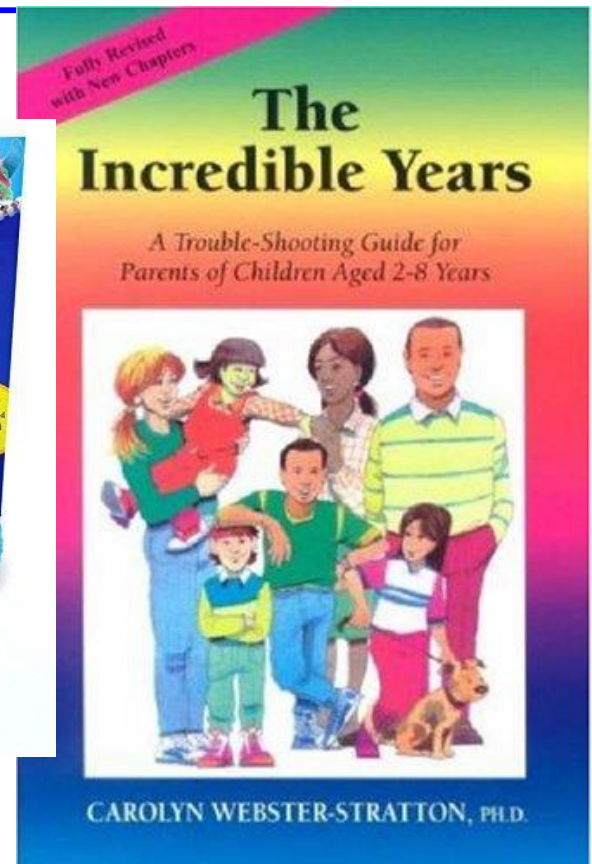
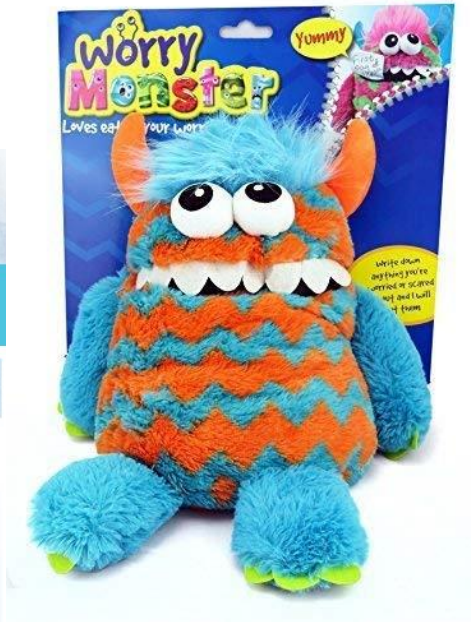
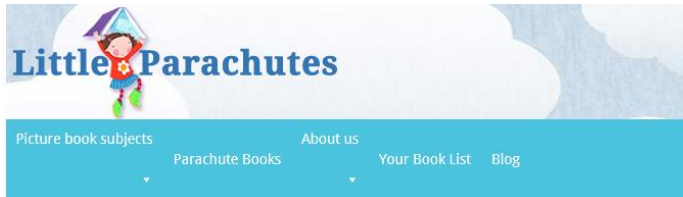
Creswell, C. and Willetts, L (2019). *Helping your child with fears and worries: A guide self-help guide for parents*. London: Robinson.



Resources

Little Parachutes – www.littleparachutes.com

The Incredible Years
Worry Monsters



Who else can help?



YOUNGMiNDS



firstSTEPS

early intervention & community psychology service

Thank you for coming!

firstSTEPS

early intervention & community psychology service



Homerton University Hospital

NHS Foundation Trust