

Coffee mornings Pre Form



MANAGING FEARS AND WORRIES IN CHILDREN

ADAPTED FROM MATERIAL BY CRESWELL AND WILLETTS



Supporting Children and Young People's
Wellbeing and Mental Health

AIMS FOR TODAY



To help you understand what anxiety is and what it looks like in children



To briefly introduce ways of managing anxiety in children

DISCLAIMER

- Please only share what you feel comfortable with – try not to share personal examples
- If you need to talk to us about any specific difficulty you are having, you can come to talk to us at the end
- Respect – be respectful towards others and what they share; respect your child's privacy

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a general term for a broad range of emotions that we all experience...

- Fear
- Worry
- Stress
- Nerves
- Jitters

...As well as referring to some more specific problems, such as:

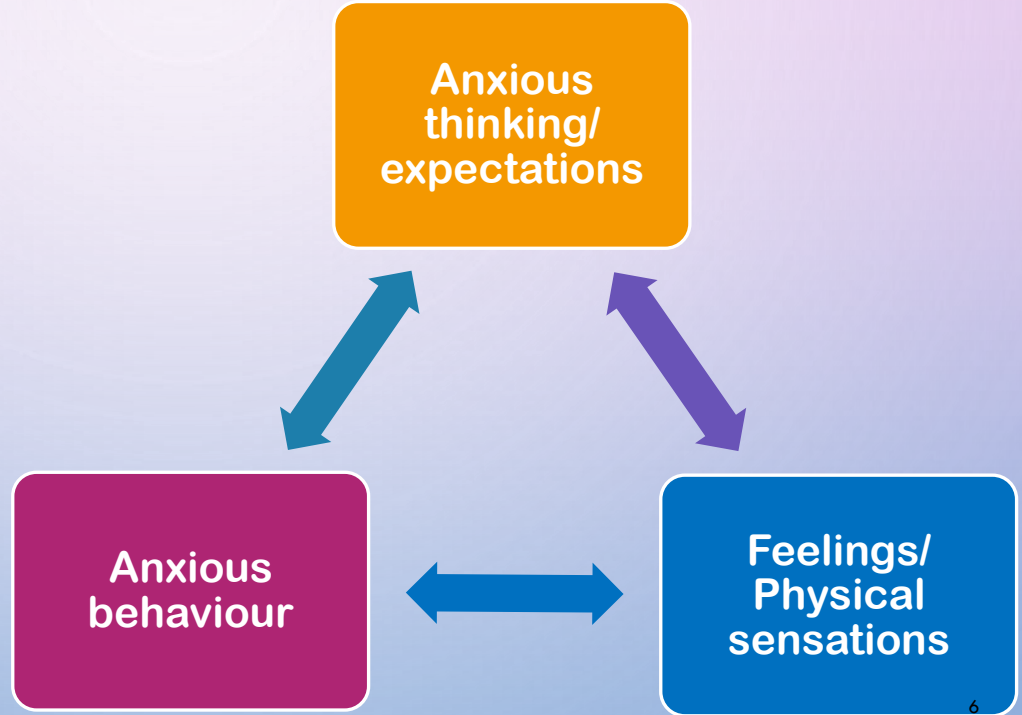
- Phobias
- Social anxiety
- Separation anxiety (fear of being away from caregiver)
- Obsessive thoughts and compulsions

Is anxiety a problem for your child?

- How strong is their worry?
- Is it becoming hard for them/you to manage?
- Is the anxiety stopping them from doing what they want to/should be doing?
- Are they miserable/low as a result?
- Is their anxiety stopping you from doing what you want to/should be doing?

Anxiety involves three things:

and they all
interact with each
other

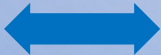


Anxious thinking/expectations

Yikes! A
snake! I'll get
bitten and
die!!!



Scream or try
to run away



Heart racing,
cold sweat,
panic



Anxious thinking/expectations

- Anxiety is a response to something *perceived* as dangerous
- We often underestimate our ability to cope
- And overestimate how awful something is going to be



Physical sensations



Yikes! A bear!
It'll eat me!!!

Get ready to
fight or run
away

Tensed
muscles, fast
breathing

Physical sensations

- Are caused by the **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT** response
- It kept our ancestors safe and can keep us safe, too.
- **But it feels horrible!**



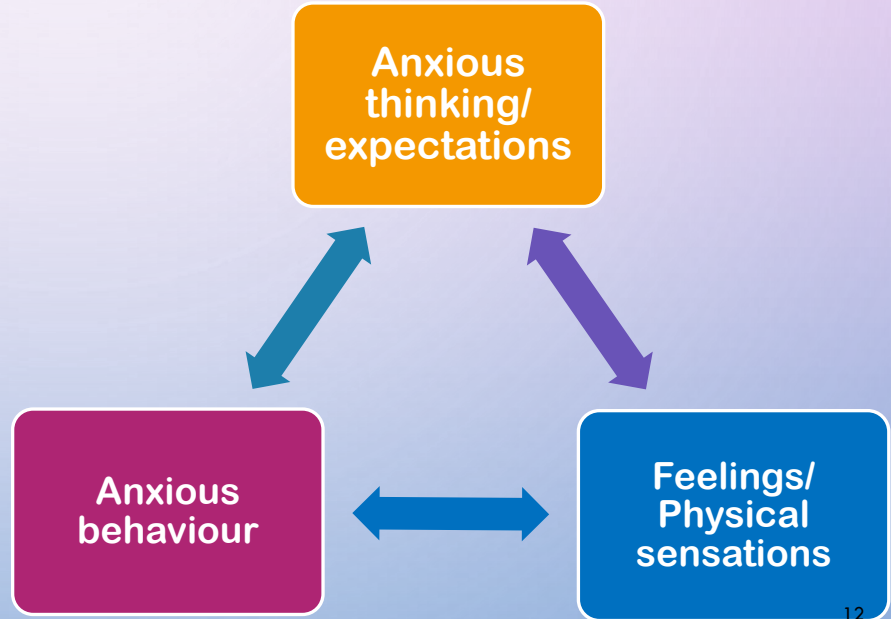
Anxious behaviour



- **Seek reassurance**
- **Avoid situations we are nervous about**
- **Dislike trying new things or taking risks**
- **Get upset easily**
- **Avoid talking or eye contact**
- **Repeatedly check things**
- **Fidget**

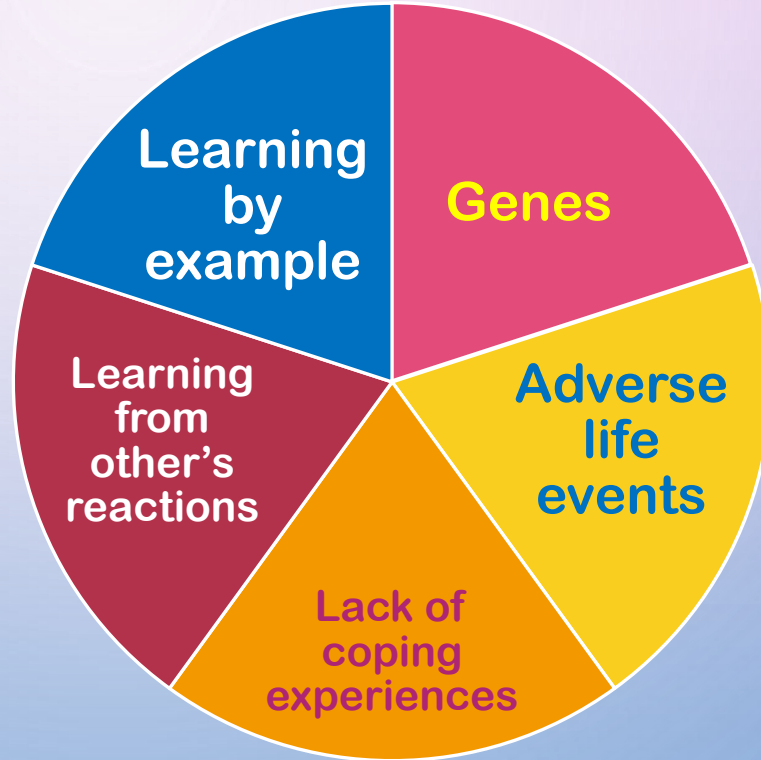
Think about a fear or worry that your child may have...

What are their thoughts, behaviours and sensations?



How do fears and worries develop in children?

Anxiety is caused by a whole range of factors:



Genes



Genes

- Anxiety tends to run in families
- It is likely that we inherit characteristics that make us more inclined to become anxious, such as:
 - How easily things make us jump
 - How generally emotional we are


Adverse life events



Adverse
life
events

- Fears and worries sometimes get worse after difficult life events.
- For some people, difficult experiences can help to build resilience
- Different people can respond to similar experiences in very different ways


Learning by example



Learning
by
example

- Children learn from watching other people
- This helps them stay away from potential danger
- But they can also learn some unhelpful responses

Learning from other's reactions



Learning
from
other's
reactions

- A parent may inadvertently behave in a way that increases the child's fear (for example, if they are worried that the child will be anxious)
- Parents may take over a task that a child is finding difficult, giving them the idea that they *can't* do it

Lack of coping experiences



Lack of
coping
experiences

- It is in our nature to want to protect our children
- It is normal to step in and protect them

But

- This may mean that children don't get a chance to learn coping strategies

Anxiety in child development

Ages and Stages of Fear	
Age	Fear
0-6 months	Loss of support, loud noises, sudden movement
7-12 months	Strangers, sudden appearance of large objects, loud noises
1 year	Separation from parent, strangers, injury, toilet
2 years	Large animals, dark rooms, large objects and machines, loud noises, unexpected changes
3 years	Dark rooms, masks, large animals, snakes, separation from parent
4 years	Dark rooms, noises at night, large animals, snakes, separation from parent

5 years	Wild animals, bodily injury, dark, bad people, separation from parent
6 years	Ghosts, monsters, witches, dark, being alone, thunder and lightening
7 years	Dark, monsters, storms, being lost, kidnapping, being alone
8 years	Dark, people (kidnapper, robber, mugger), guns or weapons, being alone, animals
9 years	Dark, being lost, bad dreams, bodily harm or accident, being alone
10 years	Dark, people, bad dreams, punishment, strangers



11 years	Dark, being alone, bad dream, being hurt by someone, being sick, tests, grades
12 years	Dark, punishment (being in trouble, bad grades), being alone, being hurt or taken away, tests, grades
13 years	Crime, being hurt or kidnapped, being alone, war and nuclear war, bad grades, tests, punishment
14+ years	Failure at school, personal relations, war, tests, sex issues (pregnancy, AIDS), being alone, family concerns.

Strategies to manage anxiety

Help your child recognise anxious thoughts

Problem solving

Promote and build independence

Manage your child's worries

Manage your own worries

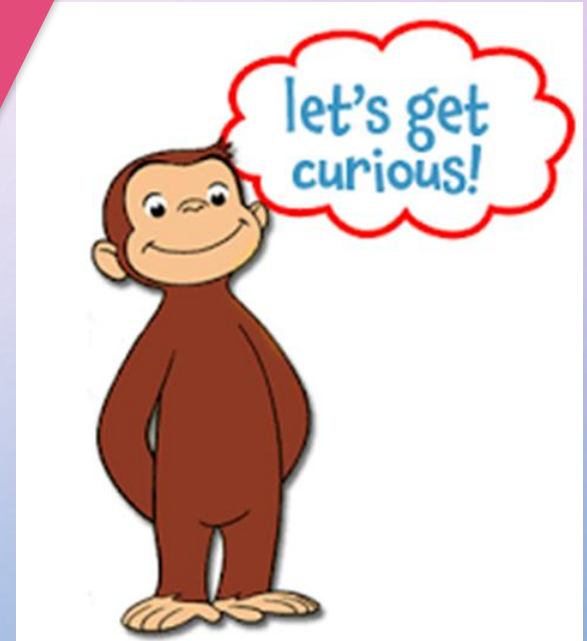
Help your child recognise anxious thoughts

- Recognise their anxious thoughts and expectations- what do they need to learn to help them overcome their anxiety?
- Pick your moment
- Make suggestions rather than giving answers
- Help them to understand their emotions by naming them
- Be empathetic, check your understanding and normalise their worries
- Use open-ended questions and be curious!

Try out these questions

- What is frightening you?
- How do you feel right now?
- What do you think will happen?
- Is there something different that could happen?
- What is the worst thing that can happen?
- What is it about this situation that is making you worried?
- What would you tell a friend in the same situation?
- What would a friend tell you?

Help your
child
recognise
anxious
thoughts



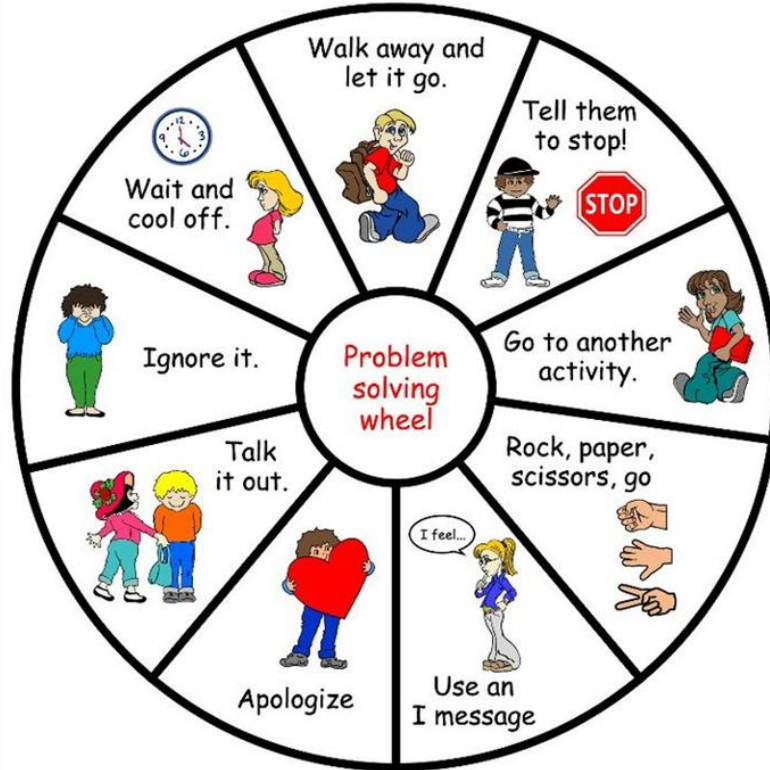
Problem solving

- All children have to face difficult situations at one time or another
- Sometimes your child's worry is realistic
- It's important that we teach them how to solve problems independently

Encourage your child to think of different solutions

Ask your child to think about the pros and cons

What can I do?



Encourage your child to try things out

The problem with reassurance

Reassurance

- All parents reassure their children, it is a natural response, which may reduce distress
- Anxious children often seek out reassurance

Persistence of reassurance

- It is hard to refrain from giving reassurance, especially when your child is feeling anxious, but giving it may help to maintain the problem
- Reassurance may become very repetitive/frequent

How to cut out reassurance

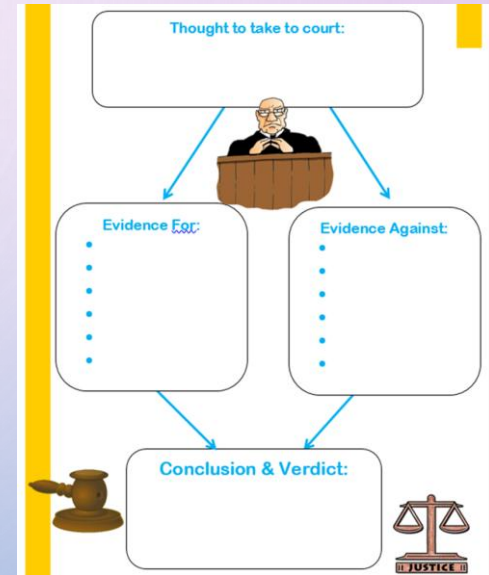
1. Empathising, understanding, connecting

2. Asking questions, not giving answers

- Gets children to think for themselves
- Helps children to remember the conclusions that were drawn because they have worked them out for themselves
- Puts children in control

3. Thinking like a judge in court:

- Identify the suspect (the thought) then...
- Investigate other suspects (alternative evidence), and then...
- Make a judgement about the first suspect; is the thought realistic or helpful₂₈



Promote and build independence

- Show your child how to be independent and do things for themselves
- Be confident in your child and let them know you are confident
- Encourage them to have an internal voice that says 'have a go- I can do this'
- Be tolerant of and respect their struggle- try to be patient and uncritical
- Slowly build up what your child can do



Usual age

Skill

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 6+ | Choosing own clothes, dressing self |
| 6+ | Tying shoes |
| 7+ | Taking a bath independently |
| 7+ | Brushing teeth or combing hair without help |
| 8+ | Putting dirty clothes in the washing basket |
| 9+ | Making breakfast or a packed lunch |
| 9+ | Packing own bag for school |
| 10+ | Choosing own haircut/ hairstyle |
| 11+ | Getting up in the morning without a reminder (using an alarm) |
| 11+ | Being responsible for own bedroom (tidiness, decorations) |
| 12+ | Arrange own transport to certain places (e.g. bike, bus) |

**Promote
and build
independ-
ence**

IMPORTANT NOTE

Parenting is a really difficult balancing act between:



**Protecting children and
keeping them safe**



**Helping children to develop the skills
they will need as they grow up**



No one gets it right every time

Manage your child's worries

Relaxing
breathing

Grounding
techniques

Worry time

Books

Relaxing breathing

Hot Chocolate Breathing



Pretend you are holding a warm mug of hot chocolate. Take in a **slow, deep breath** through your nose to smell the treat. Then **breathe out** through your mouth to cool it off. **Repeat this five times.** Deep breathing is a great tool to calm your mind and your body!



This is a lovely breathing exercise, as it:

- encourages slow and steady breathing, which can really help to get rid of the unpleasant physical feelings that anxiety can cause
- puts a pleasant and comforting image in your head

Grounding
techniques
aim...

...to bring
you
back...

...into the
present
moment.

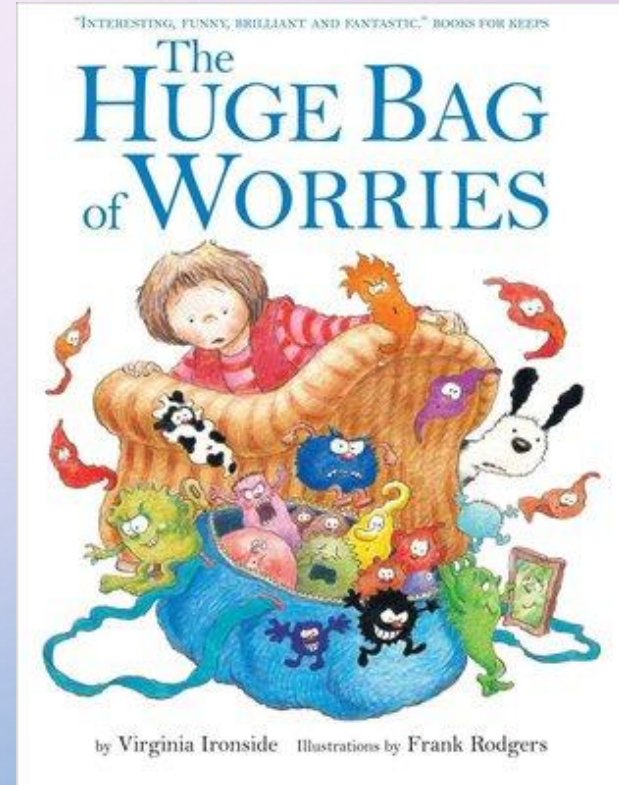
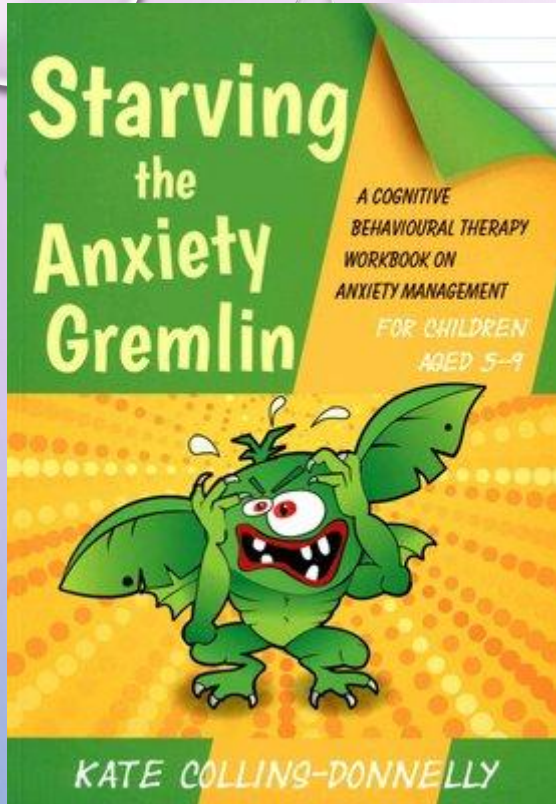
- 5** things I can see
- 4** things I can hear
- 3** things I can touch or feel
- 2** things I can smell or like the smell of
- 1** slow deep breath

Worry time

1. Decide on the worry time period when you and your child can talk about their worries
2. Set aside worries when they arise during the day – use a notebook or a worry jar
3. Use relaxing breathing or grounding techniques to return to the present moment
4. Use the designated worry time to discuss the worries

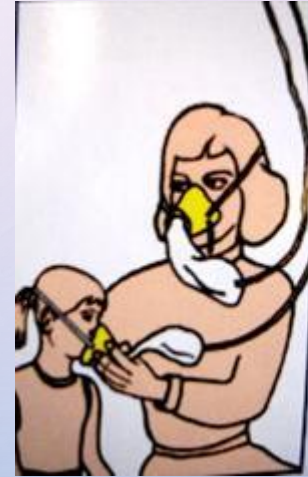


Books



Manage your own worries

- Be aware of your own anxiety responses
- Be aware that your child might well notice when you're anxious
- Try and think of ways to manage your own anxious feelings, such as the techniques described above
- Sometimes this just isn't possible, so problem solve another way round it e.g. can your partner or a friend help out?
- Be kind to yourself. Being a parent is hard!



Put on your own
oxygen mask
before helping
those around you.

**THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING**

Any questions?

Coffee mornings- Post forms



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