



We are Lewisham Mental Health Support Team

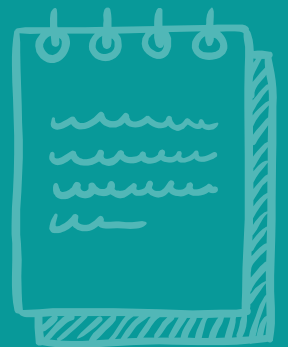
<https://slam.nhs.uk/mhst-lewisham>

NHS

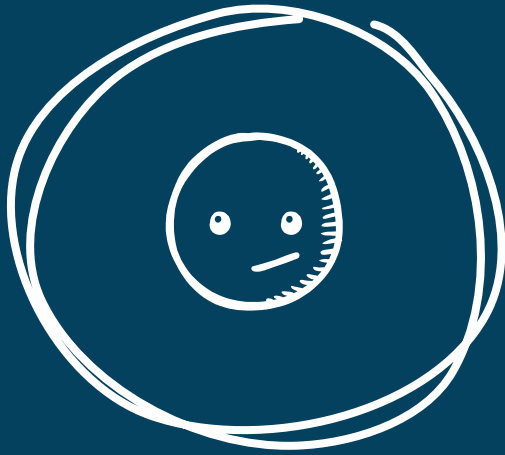
South London
and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

**Our Healthier
South East London**
Sustainability and Transformation Partnership

Supporting Children with Fears Worries and Anxiety



Aims of today's workshop



Aim 1

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



Aim 2

To understand how anxiety develops and what can keep it going



Aim 3

To have strategies for managing anxiety and building confidence.



Ground rules and working together

Have a look at the ground rules below, are there any you would like to add?

Be open with one another

Keep the conversation confidential

Try to remain non-judgemental

Only share what feels comfortable

Try not to make assumptions

Allow others to share their views

Be mindful of language used

Please ask if you are unsure

Please talk to us or use the helpful resource slide for additional help or advice



Taking care during training

- We will be talking about emotive topics that have impacted all of us to different extents.
- Please tune in to your own emotional responses and take some time away from the training if this is helpful and join again when you feel ready.



Check in: How confident do you already feel?

Supporting Primary Pupils with
Fears, Worries and Anxiety
Parent/Carer Workshop



<https://forms.office.com/e/UTvW9mzVPf>

On a scale of 1 – 10, how confident do you feel about:

1. Understanding and recognising anxiety in children?
2. Understanding how anxiety can develop in children and what can keep it going?
3. Being able to support experiences of anxiety and build confidence in children?



1
Not confident
at all

5
Somewhat
confident

10
Very
confident



Aim 1

To understand what anxiety is and what it looks like in children.

What might we see when a child is experiencing fears and worries?

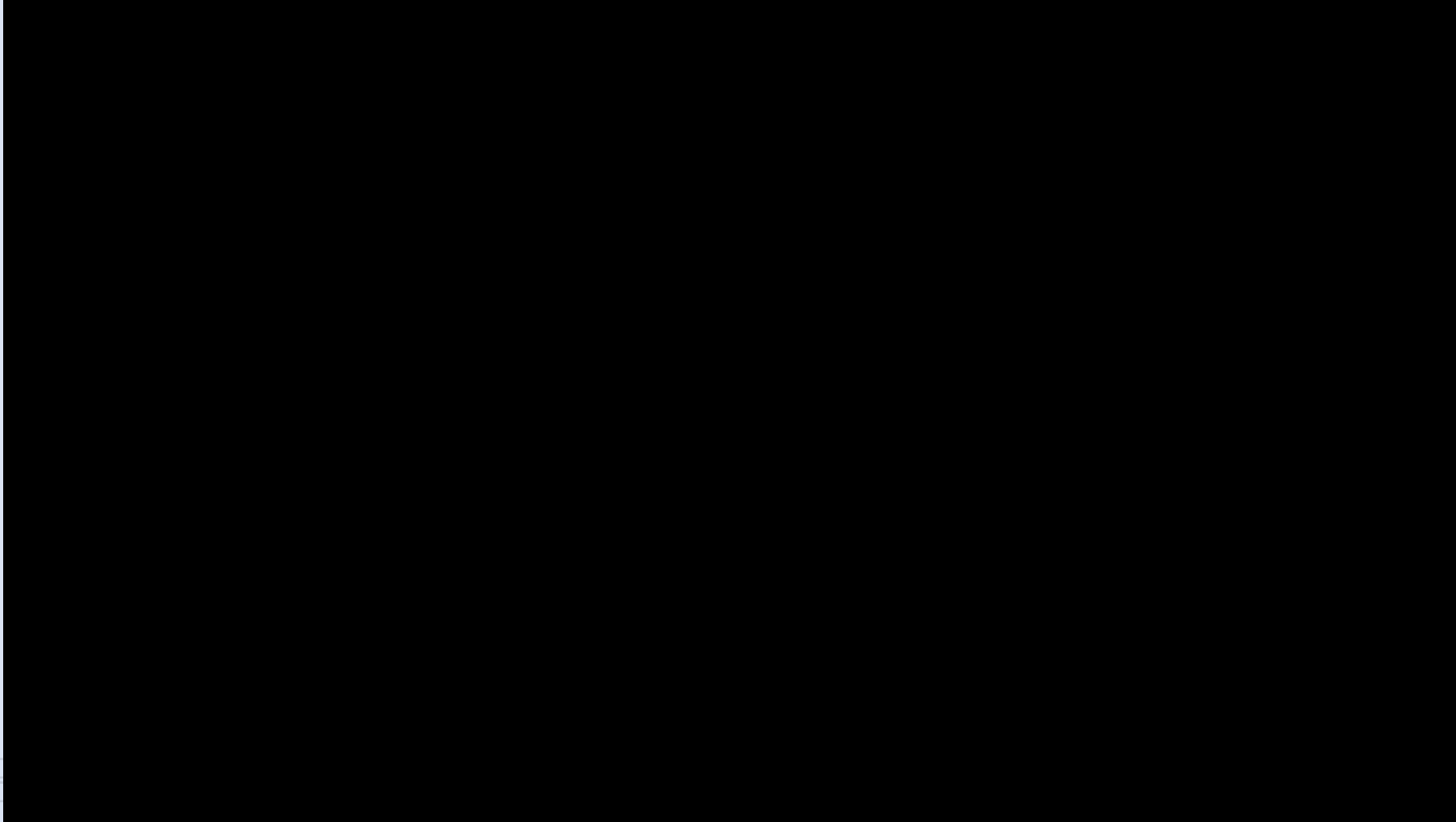
What are their **thoughts** or worries?



How does their anxiety show in their **behaviour**?
(What do they do?)

How does it show itself **physically** in their bodies?

What is anxiety?



Fears and worries linked to development

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

(Moore & Carr, 2004)

Ben

- The best way to describe Ben is as a 'worrier'. He seems to worry about anything and everything.
- We've had to stop going to busy places as he worries that people are too close to him, looking at him or talking about him. He's always on the lookout for something to worry about.
- He gets really wound up when we drop him off at the school gates in the morning, or when we have had to leave him for a couple hours with his grandparents at the weekend.
- He gets something into his head, and it seems to get stuck there. Like he has a worry about making mistakes with his work or getting messy. He is convinced that, if he gets his clothes or hands dirty, he will catch germs or if he makes a mistake he will get into big trouble. He then starts to cry and panic.
- He seems to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. It don't often seem to see him laugh or smile much anymore.



Zara

- Zara has never liked going to the dentist. When she was younger, she became hysterical because the dentist wanted to look in her mouth to check her teeth.
- Two months ago, she came across a video on YouTube with a dentist taking out someone's tooth, which really made her frightened, since then has refused to go to her appointment.
- Over time, it just seems to have got worse. On her last appointment she found several excuses to delay leaving the house. She became snappy and upset when we were walking to the dentist and refused to enter the building when we arrived.
- We had to cancel her rescheduled appointment as she refused to go.



Understanding anxiety in children

Anxiety is a normal emotion, and in the right amounts it can be useful. To help us understand anxiety we can break it down into three components.

What am I thinking?



How am I behaving?

What am I feeling?



Understanding Ben's anxiety

THOUGHTS

"This place has too many people "
" I have failed, if I get it wrong"
"I won't be able to manage on my own"

BEHAVIOURS

Refusing to go into school
Cries and starts to look out
for something to go wrong.
Needs to wipe his clothes or
wash his hands



FEELINGS/BODILY SENSATIONS

Heart racing
Sweating
Fiddling with his hands
Shaky



Understanding Zara's anxiety

THOUGHTS

"The dentist is scary "

"They are going to pull out my teeth "

"I'm going to panic"

"I won't be able to manage on my own"



BEHAVIOURS

Refusing to go

Becomes snappy and upset
with parent

Refused to enter the building

FEELINGS/BODILY SENSATIONS

Heart racing

Feeling breathless

Feeling dizzy or shaky

Turning pale



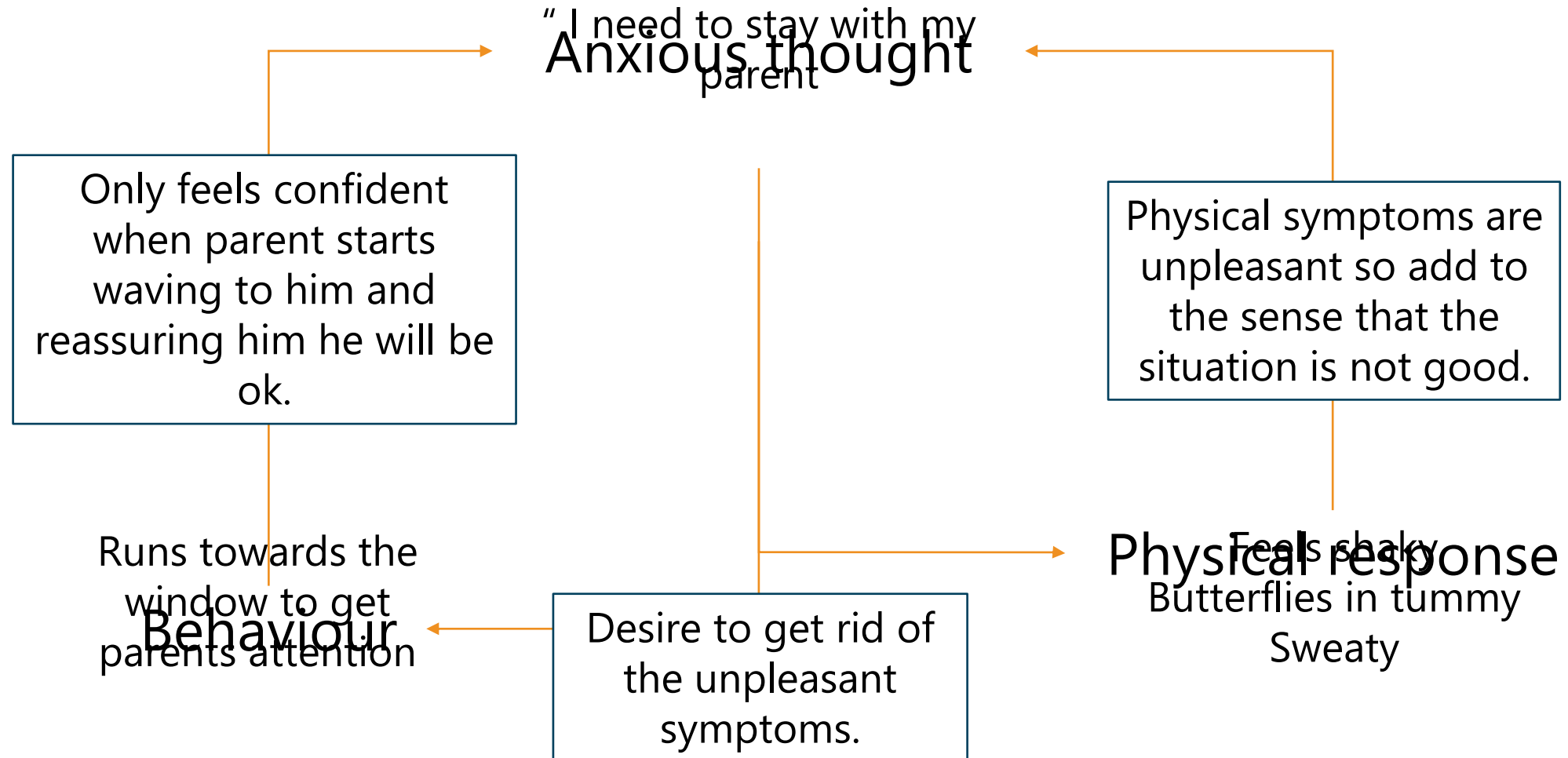


Aim 2

To understand how anxiety develops and what can keep it going

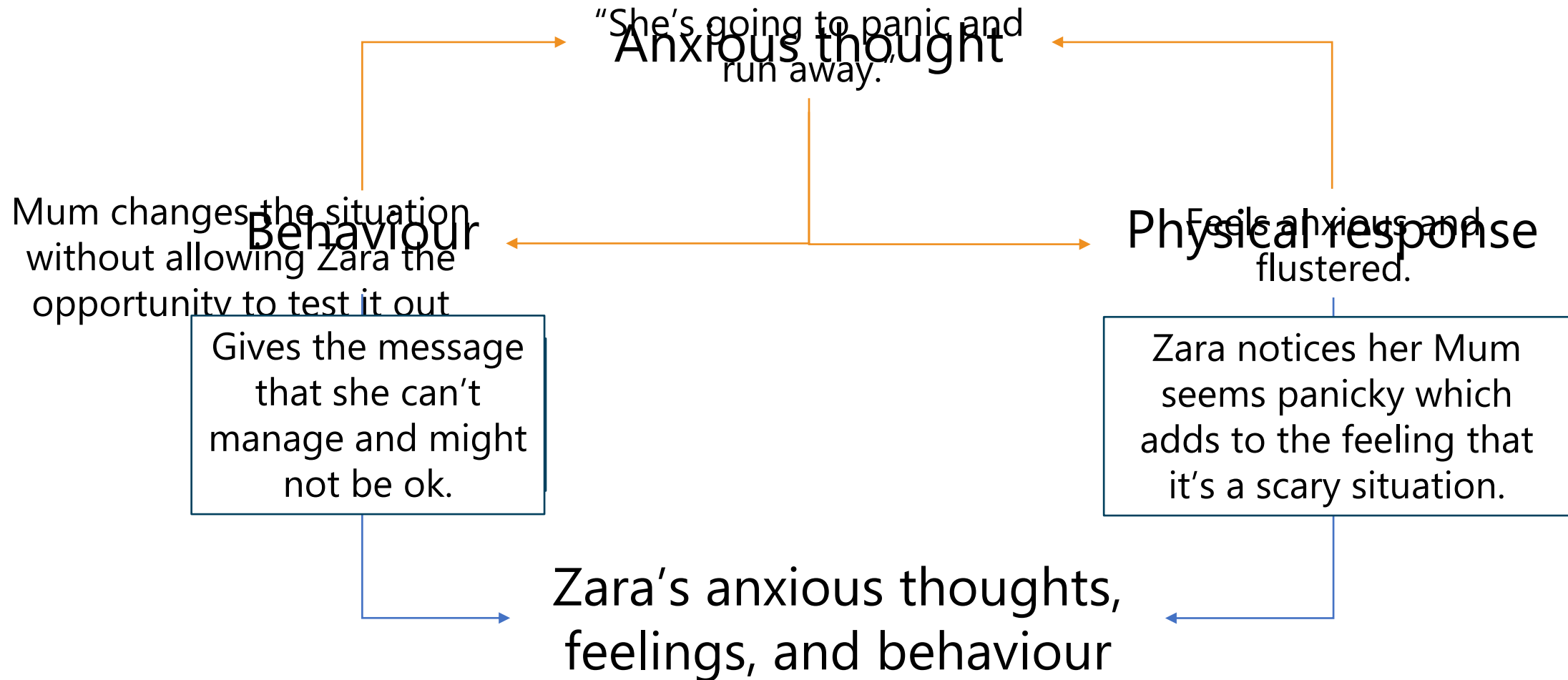
What is maintaining Ben's anxiety?

Trigger: Ben's parent remains at the school gate after drop off, to make sure he has settled, but he can still see them.



What is maintaining Zara's anxiety?

Trigger: Zara's Mum cancels the dentist appointment when Zara says she is not going.



What factors can
maintain a child's
anxiety?

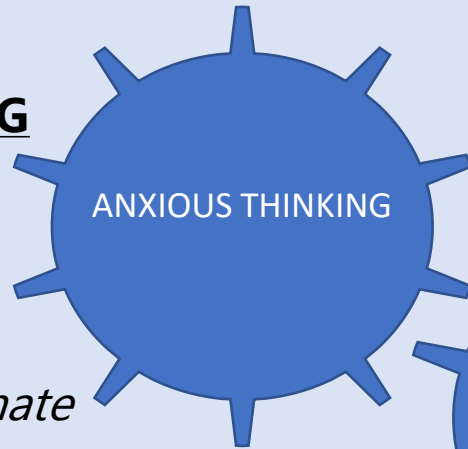


Maintaining factors - Things that children do, which can keep the problem going



ANXIOUS THINKING

- Notice/remember things that fit with worries
- Overestimate danger/underestimate coping ability



MISINTERPRET FFF/ PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- *My body feels this way so something bad must be happening*
- *I feel sick - I am unwell*



ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR

- *Look out for danger (hypervigilance)*
- *Avoidance*
- *Safety behaviours*
- *Seeking reassurance*

Maintaining factors - Things that others do, which can keep the problem going



**Demonstrate own
Anxious Behaviour**

**React in an
Anxious Way**
*Communicating to child
they will not cope*



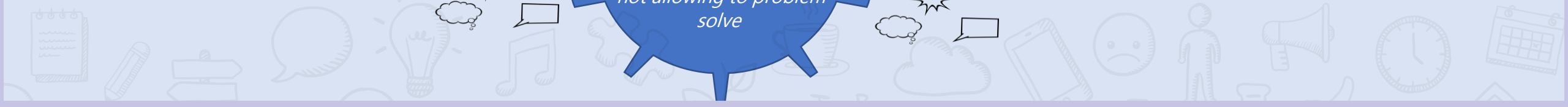
**Emotions being ignored/
not feeling safe/
not held in mind**

ANXIETY

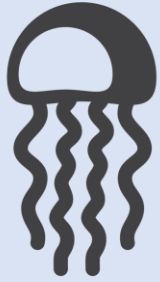
**Try to protect from
all negative experience**
*Limiting coping experiences
or independence*



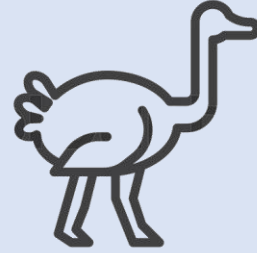
**Give too
much reassurance**
*Answering for the
child/
not allowing to problem
solve*



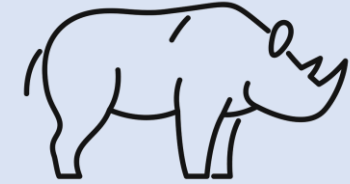
Be mindful of your own responses



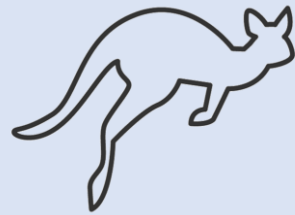
Own anxious or frustrated emotions are transparent.



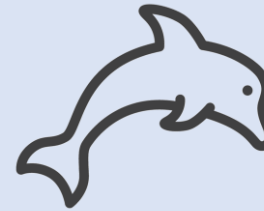
Avoids the situation as they find it hard to deal with.



Attempts to persuade by argument and confrontation.



Protects by taking over and letting the child avoid upset.



Gently encourages and nudges the child to safety.



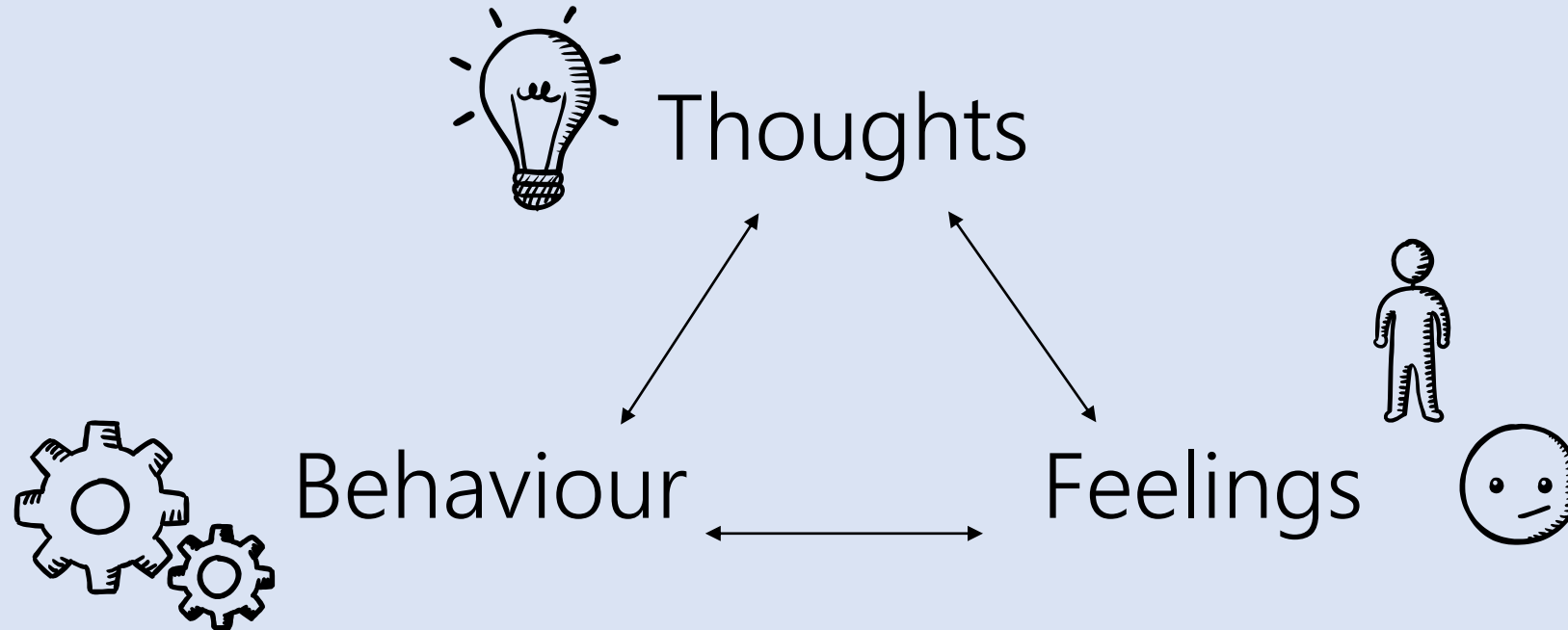


Aim 3

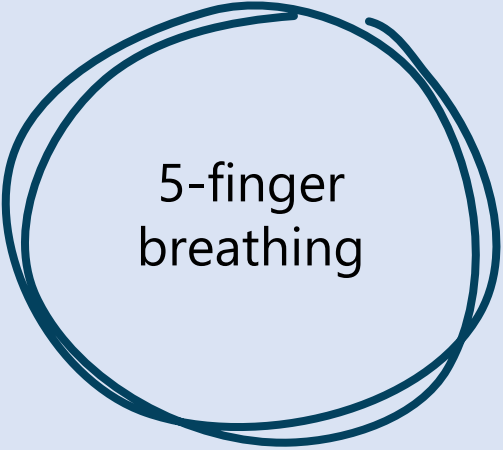
To be able to manage anxiety and build confidence in children.

Returning to thoughts, feelings, and behaviour

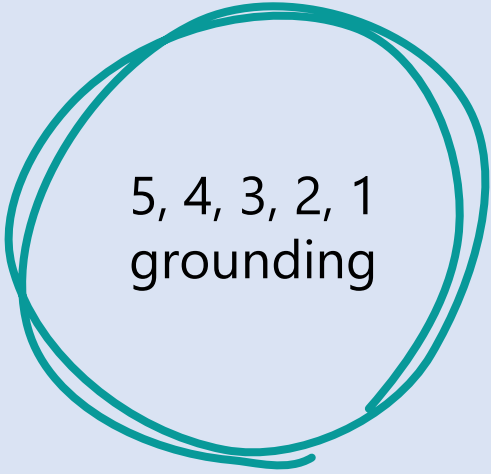
Because thoughts, feelings, and behaviour all influence each other, if we can make a change to one aspect then we change the entire cycle.



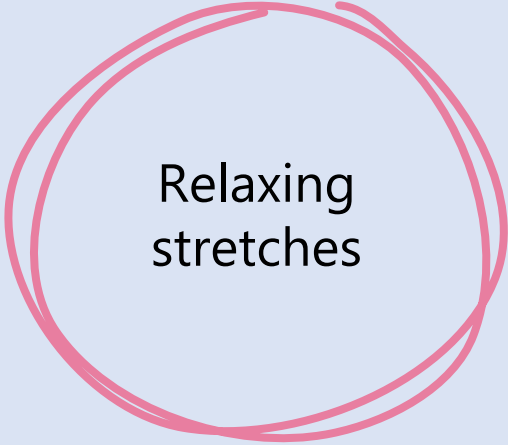
Overcoming unpleasant bodily sensations



5-finger
breathing



5, 4, 3, 2, 1
grounding



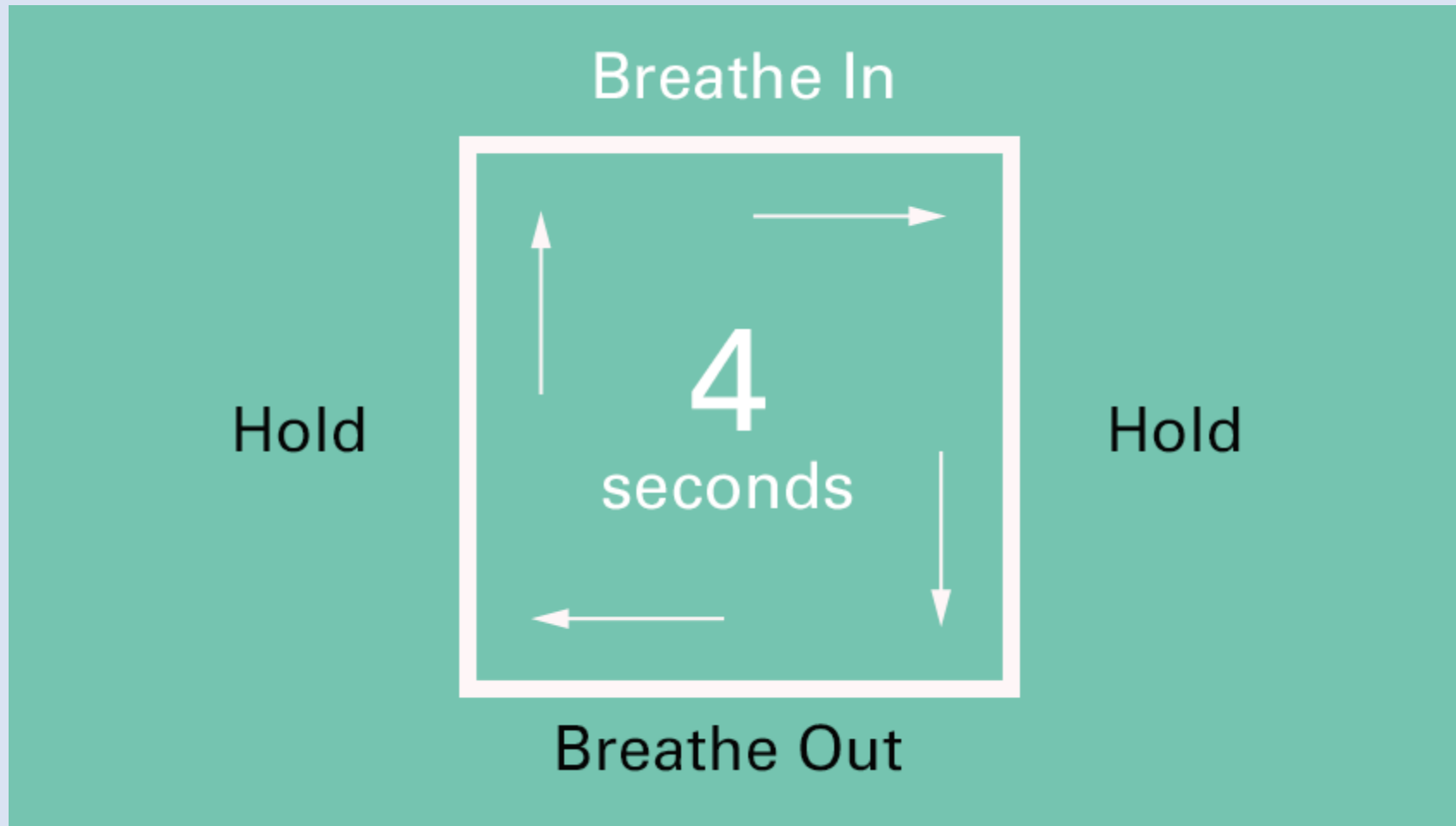
Relaxing
stretches



5 Finger Breathing



Box Breathing



Box Breathing



Questioning anxious thoughts

1. Detective work – what *exactly* is the worry? What are the child's anxious expectations?

What are you worried about?

What do you think is going to happen?

What are you scared of?

What is the worst thing that could happen?



Questioning anxious thoughts

2. Encourage the child to weigh up the evidence for and against the worry.

Has this ever happened before?

What else might happen?

Is this thought a fact or opinion?

Do you think it's likely or unlikely to happen?

What makes you think that this will happen?

Is there another way of looking at it?



Questioning anxious thoughts

3. Take perspective – get children to think objectively, or in someone else's shoes.

What advice would you give to a friend with the same worry?

What would your teacher say?

What could you do if your worry came true?

Do you think it's likely or unlikely to happen?



Facing fears

Support manageable steps to face fears and 'have a go'. These are opportunities for children to test their anxious expectations and develop coping experiences.

Instead of...	Say...
"It's ok, I'm here"	"Go on, have a go, you've done it before, and it went really well."
"It will be fine, don't worry!"	"I think you should see how it goes. I feel confident but even if it doesn't go well, we'll have an idea of what to work on next."
"Don't worry, it will all be ok. I'm sure that there's not going to be a spider."	"I really think you can do this. I was so proud of how you dealt with seeing a spider last week."

Facing fears: Step-by-step plans



Fear of asking the teacher a question in front of the whole class

Fear Rating

90%

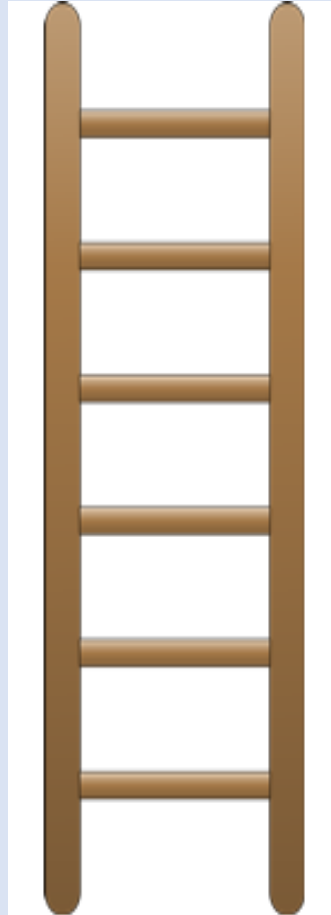
80%

70%

55%

40%

20%



Goal: To be able to ask the teacher a question in front of the whole class

Step 5 – I can answer an unplanned question in front of the whole class

Step – 4 I can answer a planned question in front of the whole class

Step 3 – I can ask the teacher a question in a small group

Step 2 – I can answer a question asked by the teacher in a small group

Step 1 – I can ask the teacher a question after class

(we always start with the step that causes us at least 20% anxiety)

Facing fears: Step-by-step plans

"The monster will come to get me. I'll get too scared and run downstairs."

Go to the top of the stairs for 5 minutes with Dad watching.

Stay in the upstairs bathroom for 5 minutes by myself.

Spend 30 minutes upstairs with Dad checking on me.

Spend 30 minutes playing upstairs by myself.

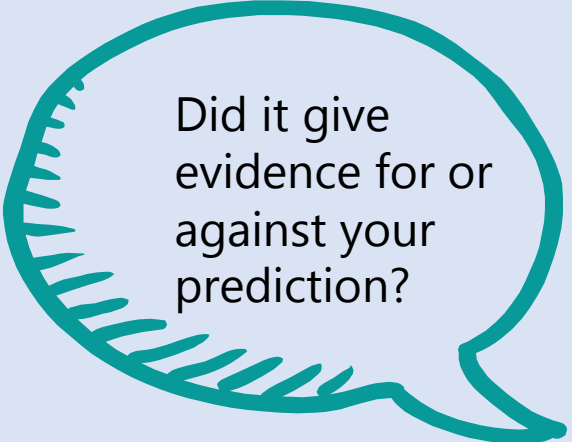
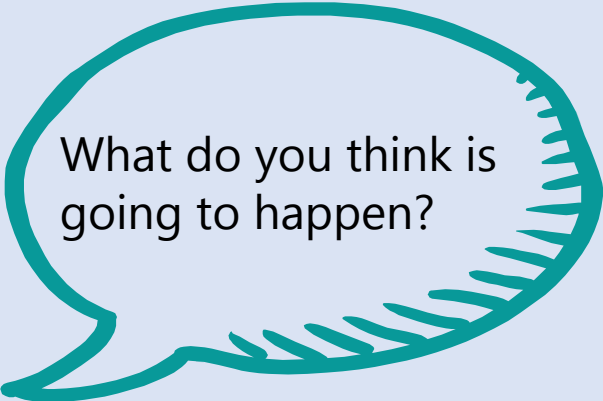
Rewards for each step:

Go to the park to play football.

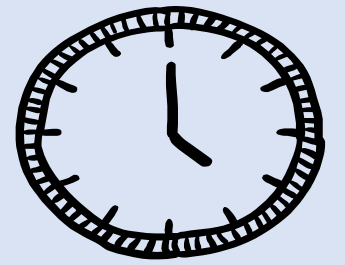
Pick a film to watch with the family and have popcorn.

Stop to buy a magazine on the way home from school.

Have Charlie to sleep over at the weekend.



Managing hypothetical worries: Worry time



- Frequent worrying can be draining! And reassurance seeking maintains anxiety rather than resolving it.
- Worry time is a scheduled daily time (15-20 minutes) dedicated to talking about worries. The rest of the day is a worry-free zone.
- If the child brings up a worry outside of worry time: acknowledge the worry, ask the child to record the worry for worry time, and then move on.
- To record worries, you could use a worry box, jar, or notebook.
- Set clear time boundaries (you could use a timer) and plan a distraction activity afterwards.
- Think about where and when worry time should take place.



Managing practical worries: Problem solving

1. Convert the worry into a practical statement, e.g. "I'm worried about getting my maths homework in on time" becomes "I need to do my maths homework by Friday".
2. Encourage the child to write down all possible solutions to dealing with the problem.
3. Write down the pros and cons of each solution.
4. Rate each solution from 1-10 based on the pros and cons.
5. Pick the best solution. Who might be able to help them? What's their plan? What do they need to do next?



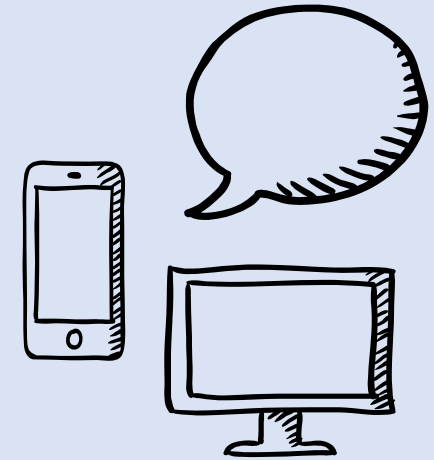
The Worry Tree



Helpful resources

If you have concerns regarding a young person:

- Your school's Senior Mental Health Lead
- Your child's class teacher
- Emergency services (999) if a young person is in immediate danger

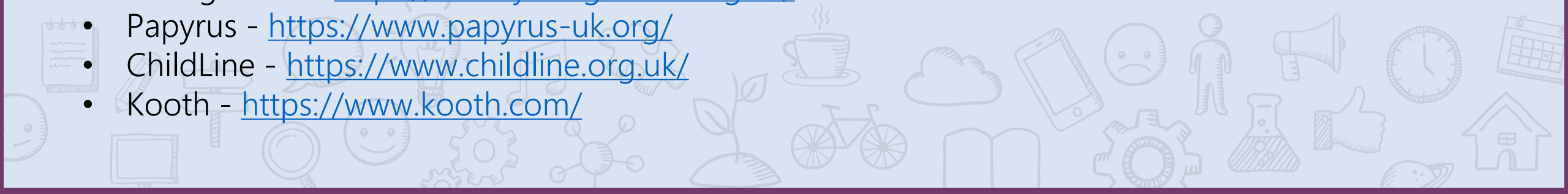


Supporting your wellbeing:

- Education Support - <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling>
- Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

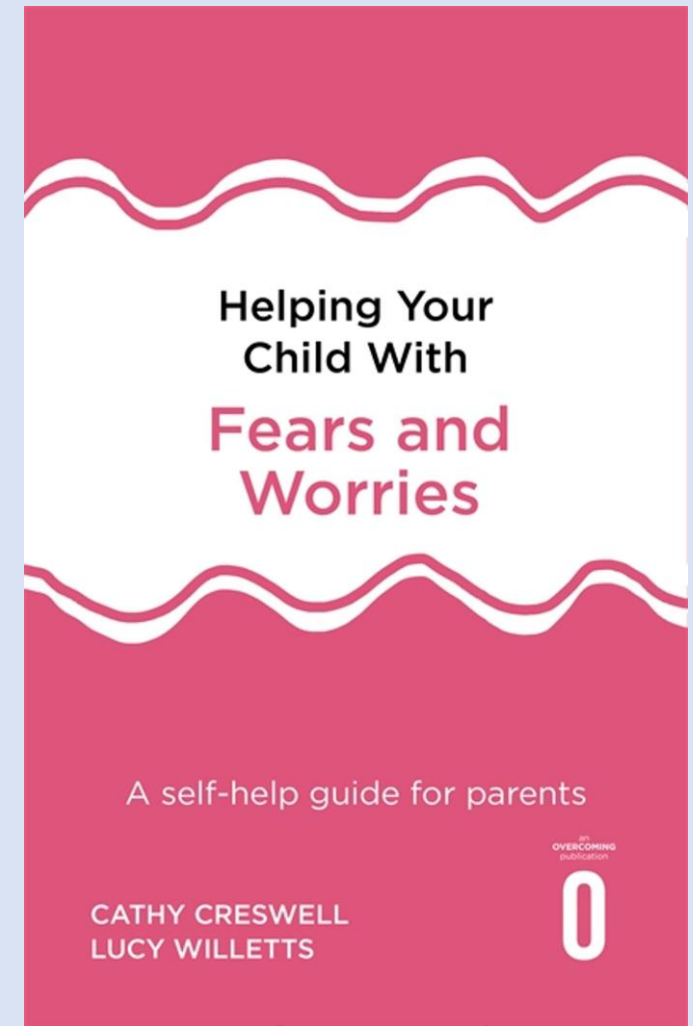
For more information:

- YoungMinds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
- Papyrus - <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>
- ChildLine - <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
- Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>



Helpful resources

This useful guide can support you in understanding what may be contributing to your child's fears and worries and support you in developing a step-by-step approach to help, alongside other practical strategies.



Referral to the MHST

If you think a child needs help with overcoming fears and worries, you can speak to your school's Senior Mental Health Lead.

The Senior Mental Health Lead meets regularly with the MHST Supervising Practitioner, who will think with the school about the difficulties the child is experiencing.

If appropriate, the MHST might offer a parent/carer-led guided self-help intervention to help the child with overcoming fears and worries. Alternatively, the MHST might help the school and parent/carers to access a different service.





Any questions from today?

Is there anything we need to think about before wrapping up today?

Check out: How confident do you feel now?

On a scale of 1 – 10, how confident do you feel about:

1. Understanding and recognising anxiety?
2. Understanding what keeps anxiety going?
3. Being able to manage anxiety and build confidence?

