



# Managing Anxiety: A Guide for Parents/Carers

Workshop

## Fears and worries (Anxiety)

Anxiety is often used as an umbrella term for feelings of fear or worry.

Anxiety is a ***NORMAL*** reaction that takes place when our brain feels that we are in danger.

This reaction looks different for everyone and can be triggered by a variety of different situations.



## Worries in children

Age	Normative Fears
Early Childhood (3-6 years)	Imaginary creatures (e.g., ghosts, monsters, etc.), Noises, Sleeping alone, Darkness, Bodily injury, Animals, Doctors/hospitals, Thunder and other natural events.
Middle Childhood	Thunder and other natural events, School performance, Health, Death, Social competence
Adolescence	New experiences, School performance, Health, Natural disasters, Social competence

Video Link:

<https://youtu.be/eVhWwciaqOE>

## When children are anxious, they tend too..



**Overestimate the threat of something**



**Underestimate their ability to cope with it**



# What are the tell-tale signs you see in your children?

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# We might notice...

## 1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



## 5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.



## 2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



## 6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.

## 3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



## 7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.



## 4. Chandelier-ing

When a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



## 8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behaviour, it can cause others to over plan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



# Physical Effects & Sensations in our Bodies

How do they make you feel?





# The Iceberg Analogy

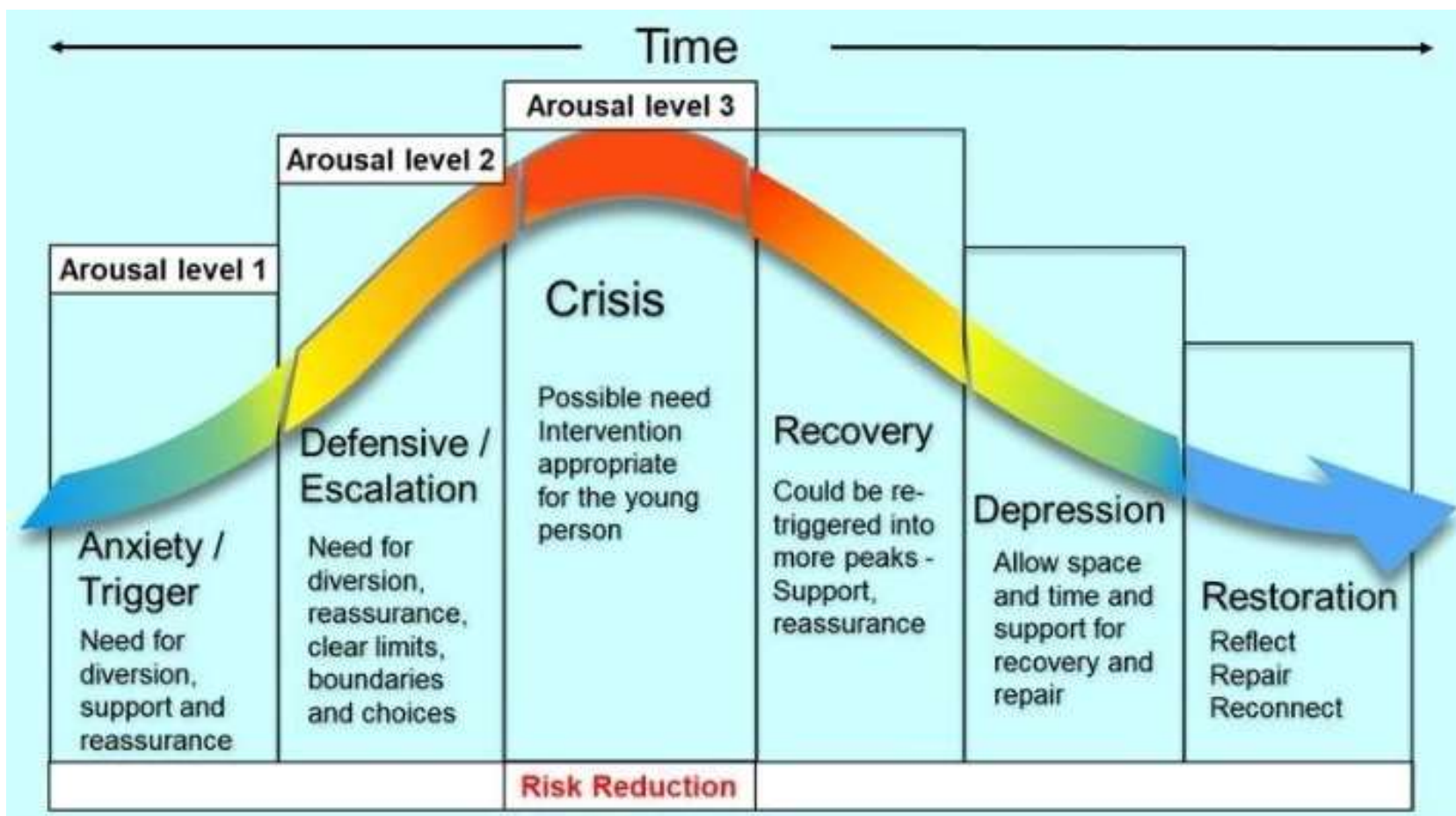
Behaviours that we see:

**Tearful / Upset**    **Seeking reassurance**  
**Clingy**    **Anger**    **Negativity**  
**Overplanning**    **Refusal or Avoidance**  
**Lack of Focus**    **Defiance**    **Issues with Sleep**

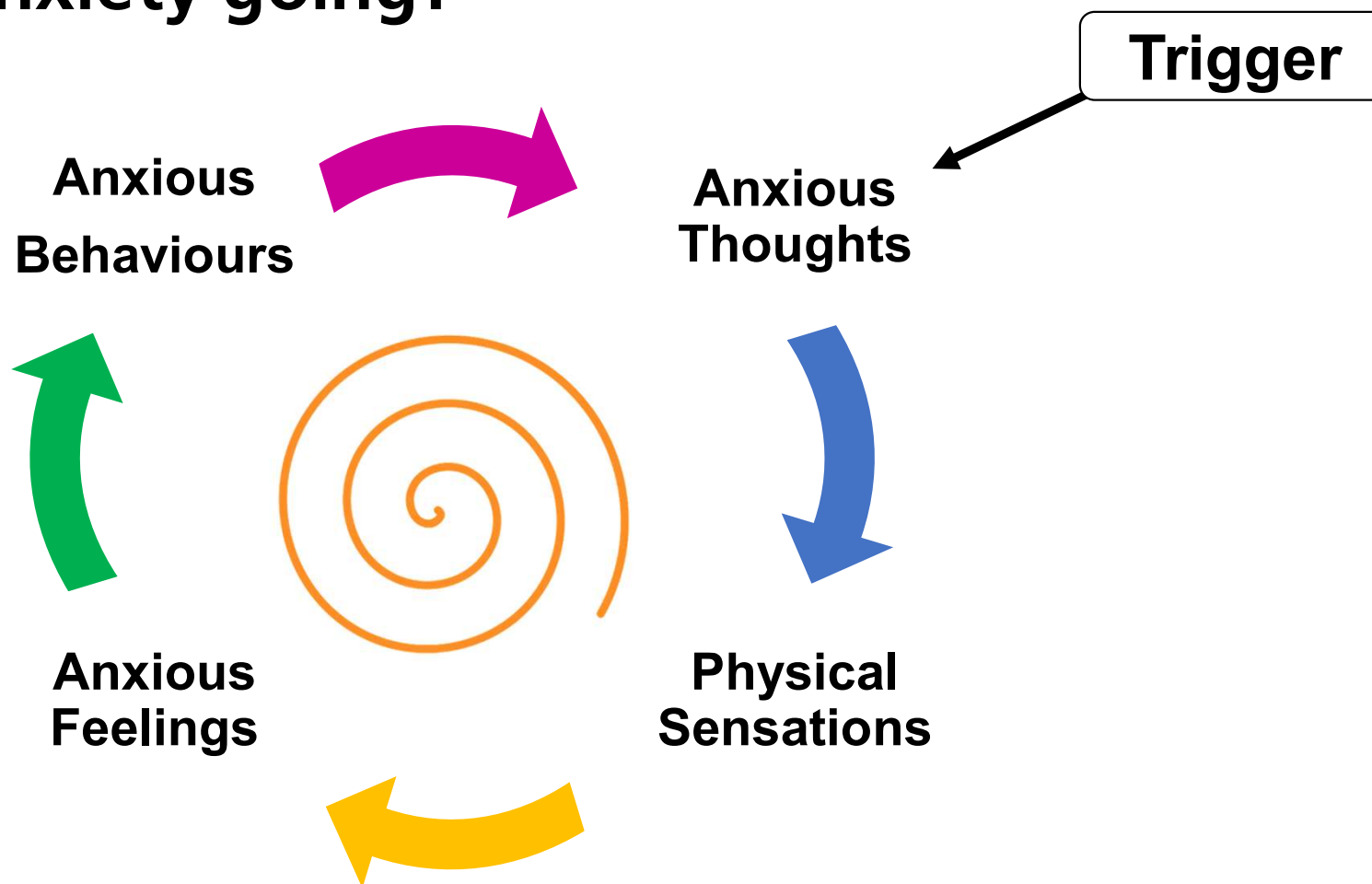
Which feelings might be beneath the surface?

Embarrassed	Anxious
Ashamed	Helpless
Disgusted	Hurt
Overwhelmed	Insecure
Depressed /	Regretful
Low	Uncomfortable
Stuck	Rejected
Jealous	Sad
Disrespected	Grief
Offended	Lonely
Frustrated	Tired
Confused	

# Crisis Pyramid



# What keeps anxiety going?



# Avoidance

Anxiety can make us feel uncomfortable.

Normal to find ways to reduce or escape these feelings



## Costs/ Benefits of Avoidance and Reassurance

	Avoidance	Reassurance
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child does not have to feel anxious.</li> <li>• Reduces the child's uncomfortable, anxious feelings.</li> <li>• Parent does not have to see their child distressed.</li> <li>• Less conflict between child and parent when encouraging to face fears.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child remains settled and comfortable.</li> <li>• Child knows they will be looked after and cared for.</li> <li>• Parent does not have to see their child distressed.</li> </ul>
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child does not have the opportunity to test out their anxieties and learn that the 'bad thing' may not happen.</li> <li>• Misses out on learning new coping skills.</li> <li>• Misses out on potentially fun activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides temporary relief- the anxiety will return when next faced with the situation.</li> <li>• The more reassurance given- the more the child will crave/ need.</li> <li>• Children remain dependent- they do not learn to be brave.</li> </ul>

# How can parents / carers help?

1

Understanding your  
child's worries

2

Normalising,  
accepting, validating,  
empathising with your  
child's feelings.

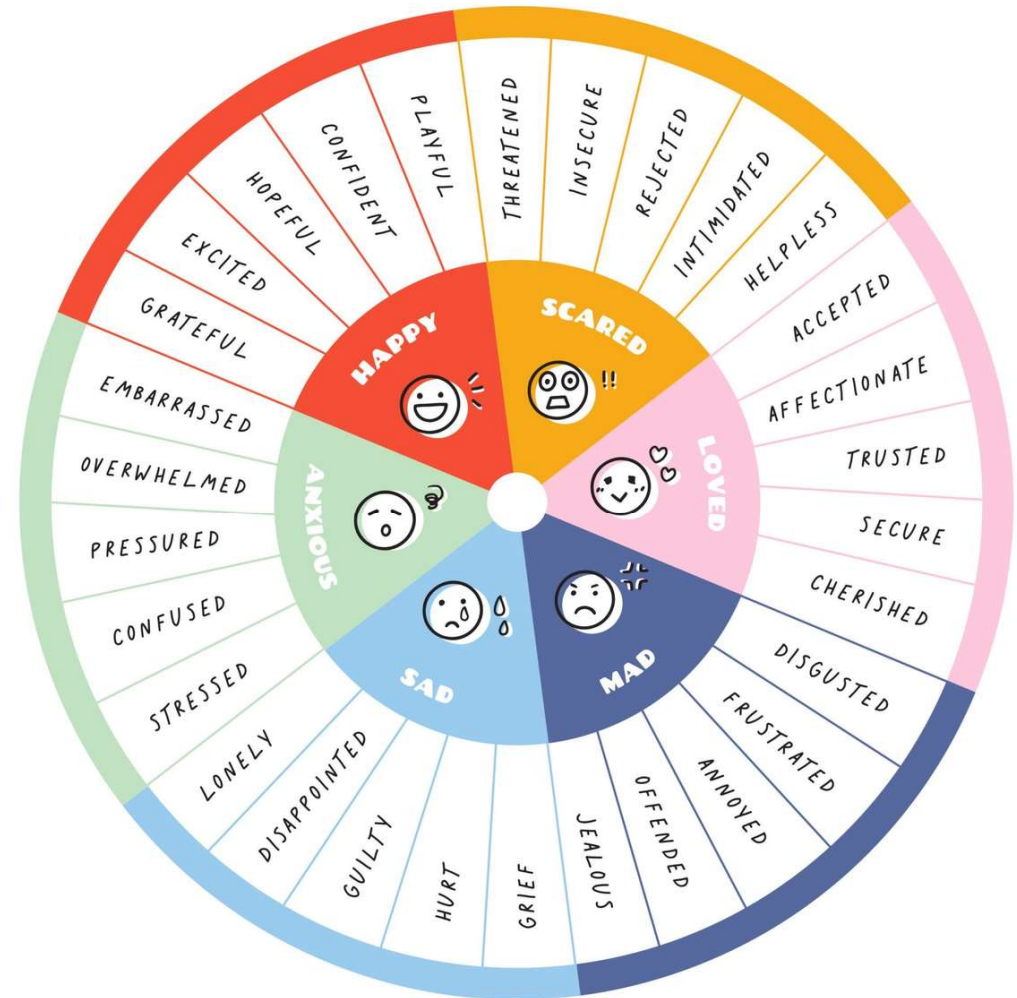
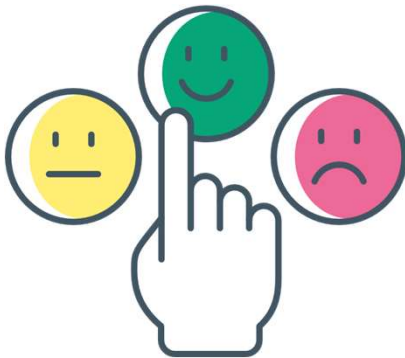
3

Encouraging  
independence  
(building confidence).



# Recognising Emotions

- Name and normalise your own emotions!
- Encourage use of emotional flashcards
- Films and clips such as 'Inside Out' can create good conversations around emotions.







## WINE

**W – Wonder**

**I – Imagine**

**N – Notice**

**E – Empathy**

I **wonder** if you are feeling sad today because Jimmy didn't play with you at school. I can **imagine** that make your heart hurt a little and because of that I am **noticing** that you are quite angry with me this evening. I am so sorry that your friends didn't play with you today that must be so painful (**Empathy**).



# Curious Open Questions

- What is making you feel worried/scared?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about [this situation] which is making you worried?
- How does this make you feel?
- When does [this situation] this feeling become worse?
- What would you change?
- Take me thorough what happened.
- What is going in your mind?
- What are you feeling in your body?
- If there was one thing that would help, what would it be?
- What's the hardest part about that?
- Are you thinking about anything bad that might happen?
- Do you know why you feel upset about this, or do you just feel upset?
- On a scale from 1-10, how worried/upset/mad/scared/hurt are you about this?
- Okay, so how about compared to this other thing?
- When do you most think about this?
- Is there any times you feel better about this?
- What things trigger that off for you?
- If you could change anything about that, what would you change?
- Is there anything you can do to change that.
- What can I do to help?
- Why do you think that made you so mad/upset/worried?
- What are you thinking might go wrong here?
- What makes you feel a bit better about all of this?



## Encouraging stretching outside comfort zone

- Encourage your child to face feared situations and 'have go'
- Praise any attempts of facing fears
- Be aware of your own response and how you are feeling.

# Helping children's anxiety with school

- Work with your child to set goals
- Work with your child to develop a plan to test out fears and gain knowledge.

- Make a step-by-step plan, it may simply be too difficult, in which case break it down into smaller ones.
- Be open and explicit with school so that you can work together.
- Meet with school to review progress regularly.

- Find ways to motivate and reward your child.
- Facing fears is hard work (and they may not always show you how hard they are finding it)!

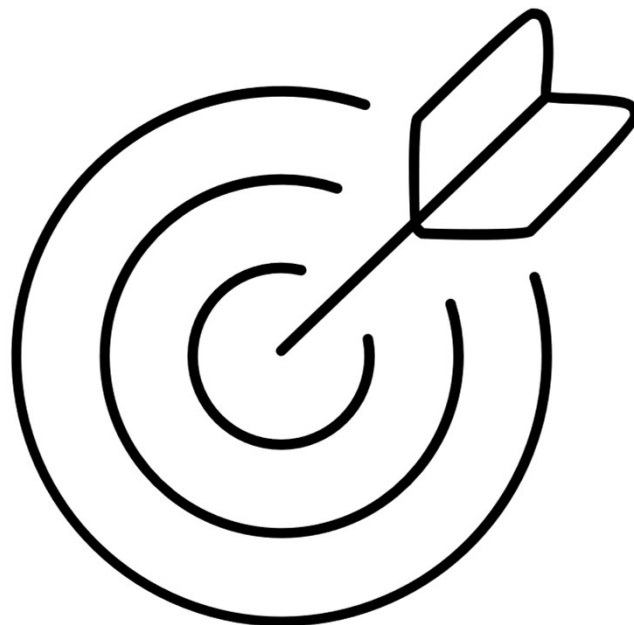


## DO'S

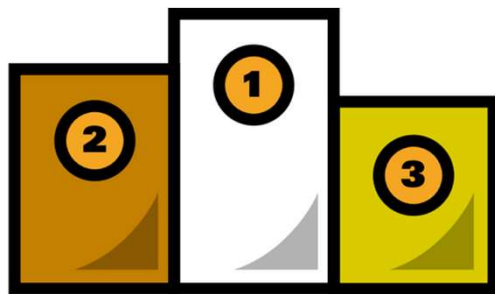
- Be positive and praise the child (having a go is still an achievement).
- Be prepared for setbacks (they always happen, try again the next day/ week).



# Strategies



# Problem-Solving



## Soothing Toolbox

A self-soothe box is a collection of items designed to help you feel more relaxed during anxiety by engaging your five senses.

- 01 Sight**  
Lighting, colours, pictures, colouring books, collages, videos.
- 02 Touch**  
Soft things: teddies, cuddly things, hot / cold things, different textures, squeezey items.
- 03 Sound**  
Calming noises, headphones, natures sounds, mediation, binaural beats, music playlists.
- 04 Smell**  
Aromatherapy, time outside, candles / incense, flowers, fresh air, a smell that reminds you of something.
- 05 Taste**  
Something yummy, eat slowly, strong flavours, warm drinks, nostalgic flavours, something healthy.

## 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Grounding involving the five senses.



**5** Things you can  
**SEE**



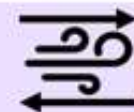
**4** Things you can  
**FEEL**



**3** Things you can  
**HEAR**



**2** Things you can  
**TASTE / SMELL**



**1** **DEEP**  
Breath in and out



# Hand Breathing



# Balloon Breathing

- Sit back and relax. Close your eyes.
- When you breath in, imagine blowing up a balloon inside your belly. What colour is it?
- Hold your breath when you have taken as much oxygen as you can.
- As you blow out your breath imagine the balloon deflating. Imagine the squeaky sound and visualise the balloon whizzing around inside your belly.



# Turtle Technique



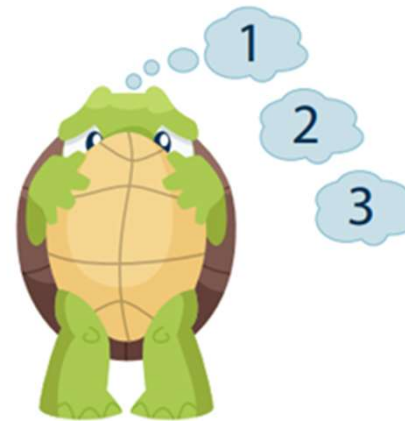
**Step 1**

Recognise your feelings.



**Step 2**

Stop your body.



**Step 3**

Tuck inside your shell and take three deep breaths.



**Step 4**

Come out when you are calm and think of a solution.

## Snake Breath

- Pretend you are a snake!
- Inhale (breathe in) through your nose with your mouth closed
- Exhale (breathe out) through your mouth with a soft low hissing sound.



## Bunny Breath

- Just like a bunny in the garden,
- Take three quick sniffs in through the nose
- One long exhale (breathe out) through the mouth.



## Bumble bee Breathing

- Sit comfortably
- Inhale (breathe in) through your nose with your mouth closed)
- Make a quiet humming noise (like a bumble bee) as you exhale (breathe out)
- You can cup your hands around your ears to amplify (increase) the buzzing sound.













## Worry Tree

Why is it important to classify worries?



# Thinking Traps – What are they?

Exaggerated or irrational negative thought patterns that can lead us to believe things that aren't necessarily true.

	<p><b>Overgeneralising bad memories:</b> Thinking that because something happened once it will happen again.</p>	<p><b>Catastrophising</b> Thinking that the worst thing is going to happen.</p>	
	<p><b>Jumping to Conclusions</b> Thinking something is true without stopping to try it or check the facts.</p>	<p><b>Black &amp; White Thinking</b> Defining situations in extremes, as either best or worst (no middle ground).</p>	
	<p><b>Mind Reading</b> Assuming we know what people think about you (usually negative).</p>	<p><b>Filtering</b> Focusing on unhelpful parts of a situation and filtering/discounting out all the positive.</p>	
	<p><b>Tunnel Vision</b> Focusing on one detail out of context.</p>	<p><b>Perfectionism</b> Putting lots of pressure on yourself to do well, with unrealistically high expectations.</p>	
	<p><b>Personalisation</b> Blaming yourself for anything bad.</p>	<p><b>Fortune Telling</b> Trying to predict the future.</p>	



# Other Grounding Techniques/Ideas

Meditate



Go somewhere you enjoy



Take a shower/bath

Be with a pet

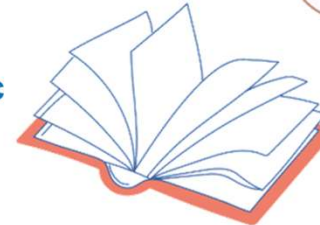


Find something funny

Gaming



Listen to music

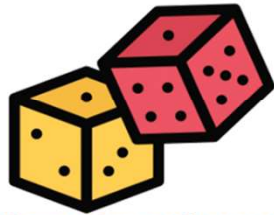


Read something you enjoy



Enjoy a food drink or smell

Talk with someone you trust



Play a board game with others



Bake or make something you like

THIS WILL PASS

Imagine a safe place



List items in a category / or recite something in order



Hold some ice



# When is support needed?

## **When did the symptoms develop?**

Are they a “normal” response to something that's happening in their lives e.g. starting school? Keeping a diary/note may be useful for this.

## **How strong is the worry?**

Is it becoming hard for them to manage? Using scales may support this.

## **Is the worry stopping your child from doing what they want to or should be doing?**

Is it impacting on their social life, school attendance or performance, mood?

## **Is the worry stopping you from doing what you want to or should be doing?**

Are you changing or adapting your plans around the child to help them cope?





# Look after yourself!

To be able to effectively care for others we must first look after ourselves.

If you are struggling, reach out, talk to someone, seek support.



<https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/norfolk/>  
0300123 1503 (8am - 5pm)



<https://www.qwell.io/>  
Free, digital mental wellbeing support for adults





# Stress bucket

Imagine there's a bucket you carry with you which slowly fills up when you experience different types of stress.

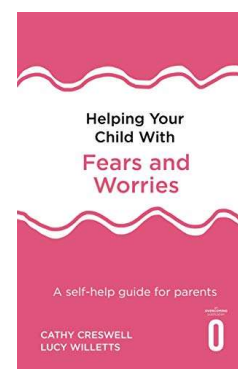
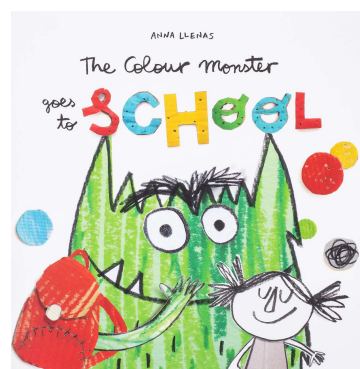
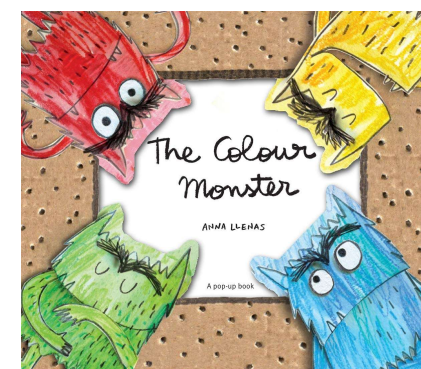
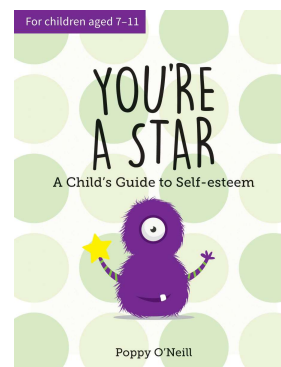
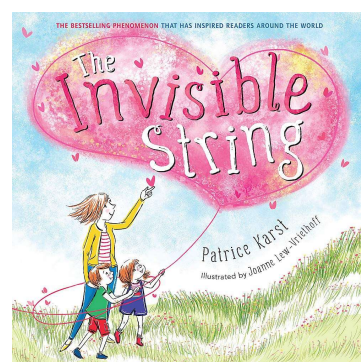
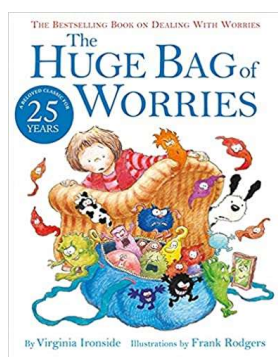
Sometimes you feel strong enough to carry a lot of stress, but it's important to find activities which help you lighten the load.

**What helps you reduce stress?**

**How can you keep those activities going when other pressures build up?**



# Books!



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# Thank you

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**Mental Health Support Teams in Schools  
Norfolk and Waveney**

**Contact:**                    [ccs.mhstlowestoft@nhs.net](mailto:ccs.mhstlowestoft@nhs.net)



# Children & Young People's Health Services

JustoneNorfolk.nhs.uk

Norfolk & Waveney

0300 300 0123

# YOUNG MINDS

The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing



In a  
mental  
health  
crisis?



## childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME  
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111