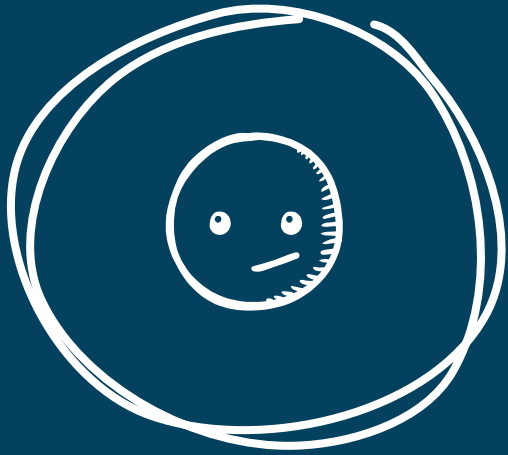




Helping Children with Fears and Worries

Parent/Carer Workshop

Aims of today's workshop



Aim 1

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



Aim 2

To understand what keeps anxiety 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?

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?





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?

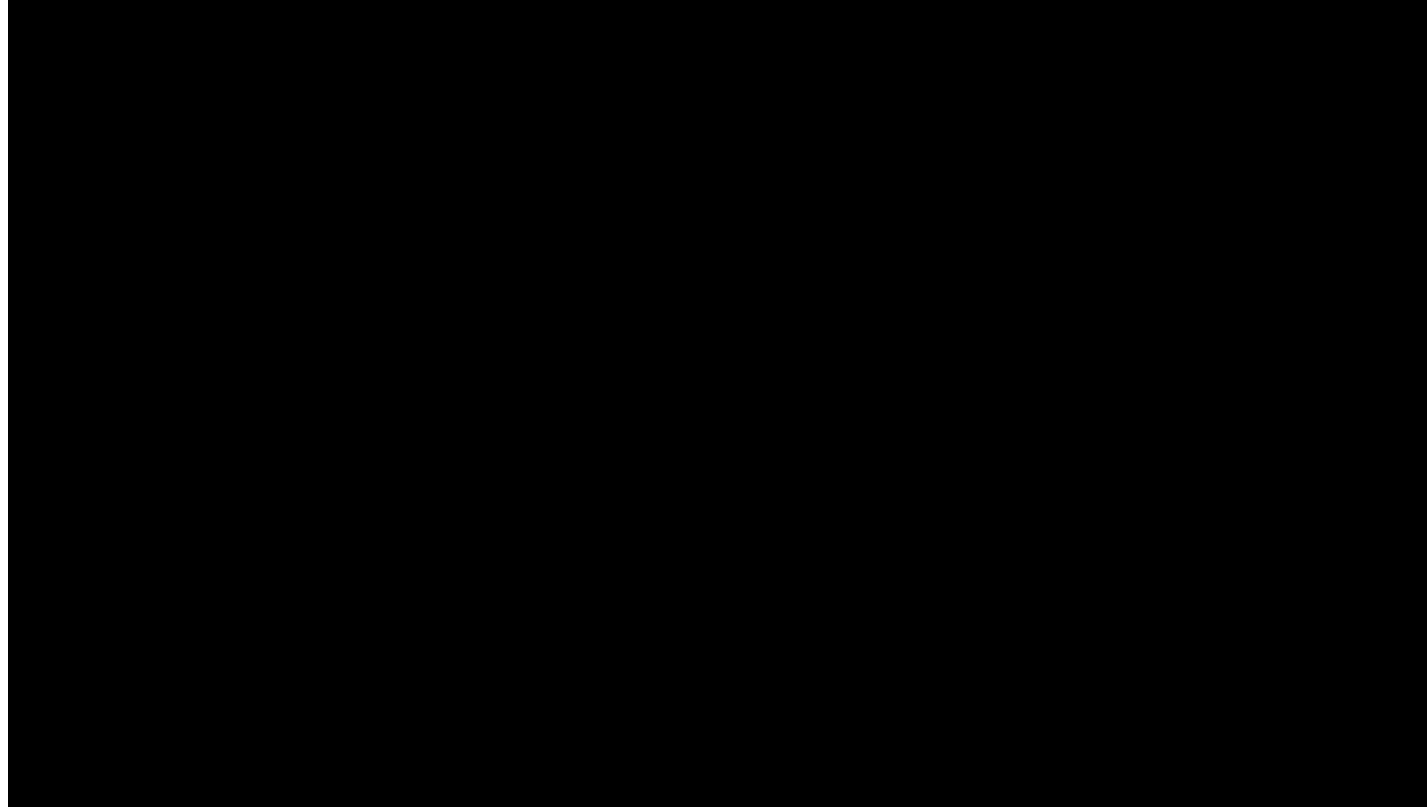
What are their **thoughts** or worries?



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

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

What is anxiety?



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEHwB1PG_-Q

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	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 putting the news on when he's around because he's always on the lookout for something to worry about.
- He gets really wound up when his dad has to go into the city for work as he has seen stories about bombs and terrorism.
- He gets something into his head and it seems to get stuck there. Like he has a worry about a monster that was in a film. He is convinced that if he goes upstairs the monster is going to come and get him, to the point that he won't go upstairs on his own.
- He seems to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. It seems like a rare occurrence that I see him laugh or smile.



Zara

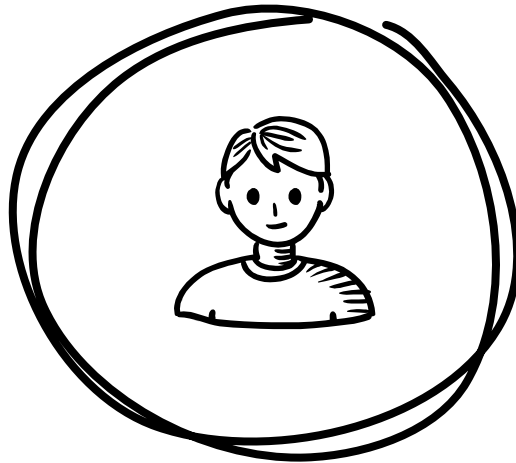
- Zara has never liked spiders. When she was a toddler she once became hysterical because she saw a bit of fluff on the carpet which looked a bit like a spider. Since then she has always had to keep away if we came across a spider in the room.
- Over time, it just seems to have got worse. Now we're finding that there are certain places that Zara won't want to go to because she thinks we're likely to see a spider.
- We went over to her granddad's house to give it a clean-up. We came across a spider before too long, and Zara got really upset and was out of the door straight away. Since then she has refused to go back to her granddad's house, so he always has to come to us to visit.
- Zara won't even put her clothes on without us checking that there are no spiders inside. It takes forever to get her out of the house in the morning.



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?

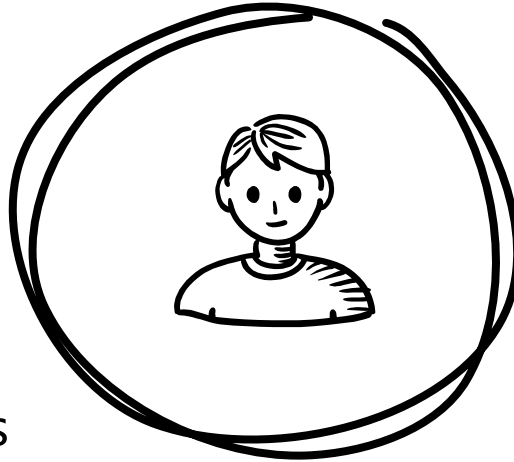


How am I behaving?

What am I feeling?

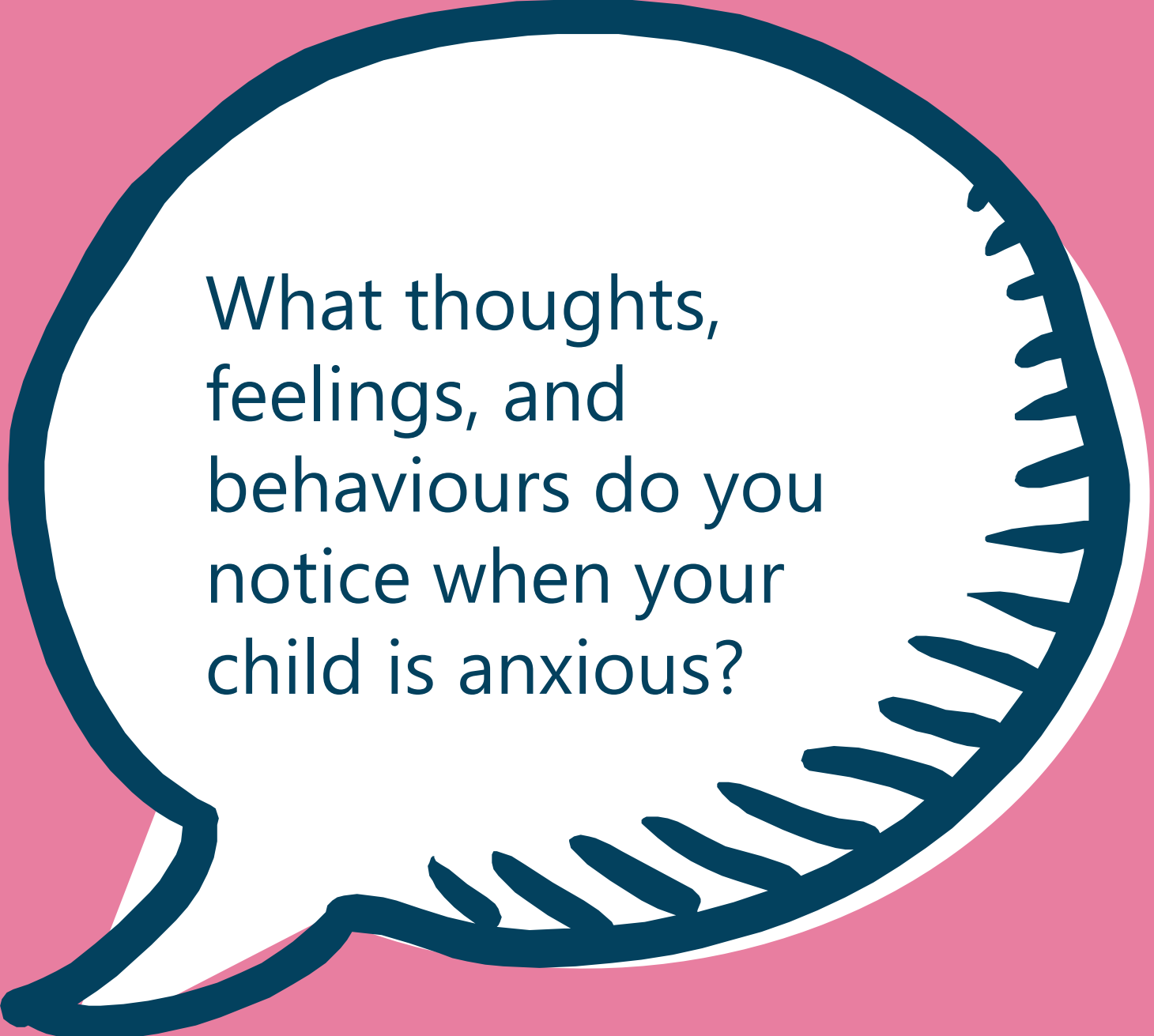
Understanding Zara's anxiety

"There's going to be a spider"
"The spider's going to crawl on me"
"I'm going to panic"
"I won't be able to manage on my own"



Refusing to go certain places
Asking people to check for
spiders
Running away

Heart racing
Feeling breathless
Feeling dizzy or shaky
Turning pale



What thoughts,
feelings, and
behaviours do you
notice when your
child is anxious?

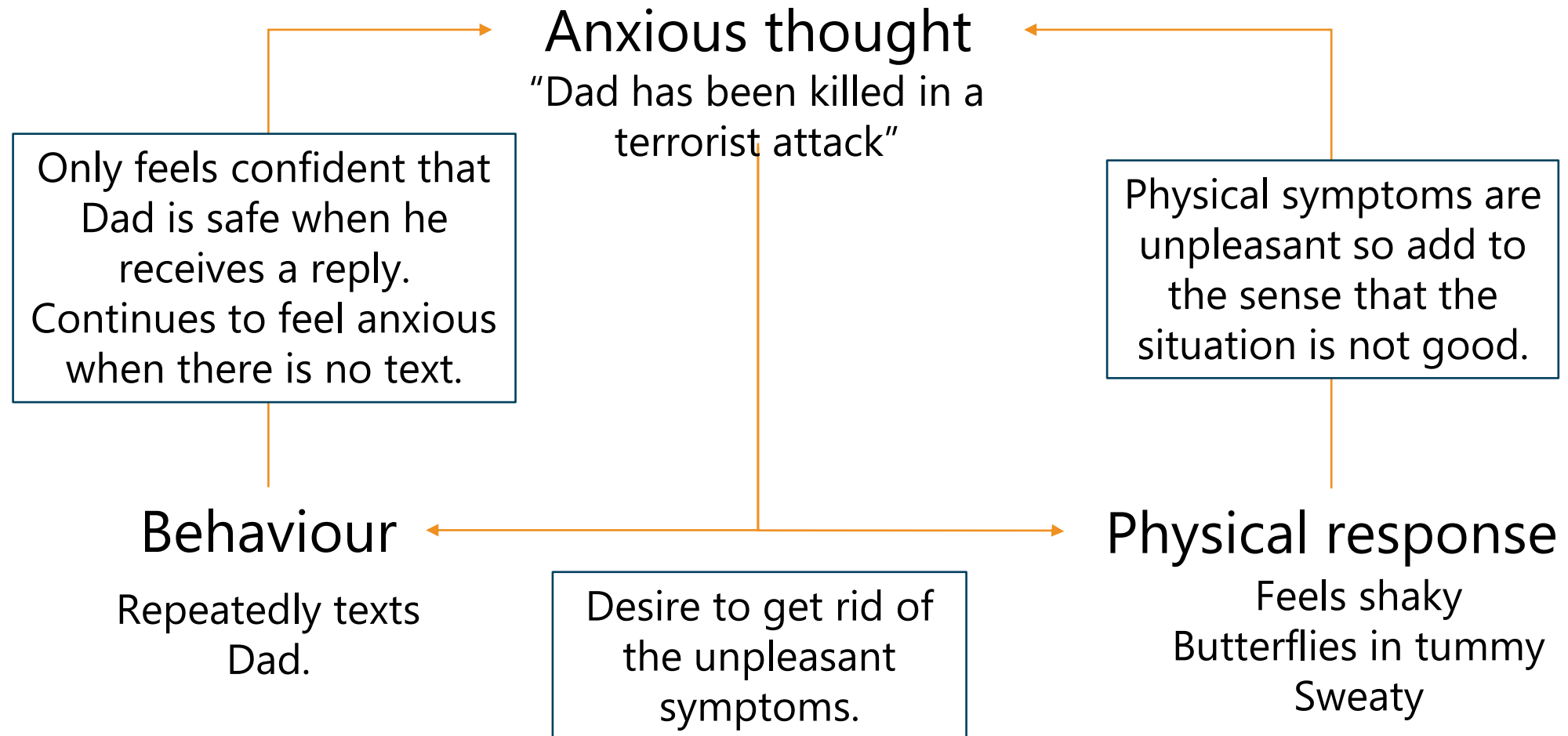


Aim 2

To understand what keeps anxiety going.

What is maintaining Ben's anxiety?

Trigger: Ben's Dad is late home from work.





What factors could be
maintaining your child's
anxiety?

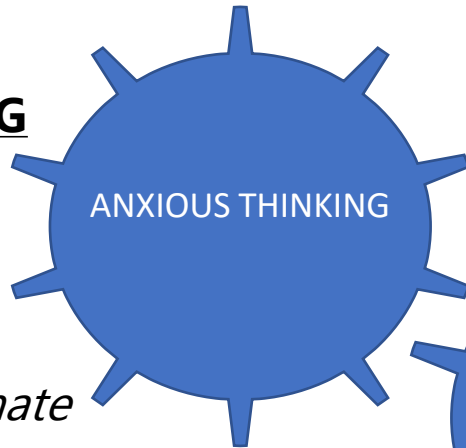


Maintaining factors - Things that **children** do, which can keep the problem going



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*

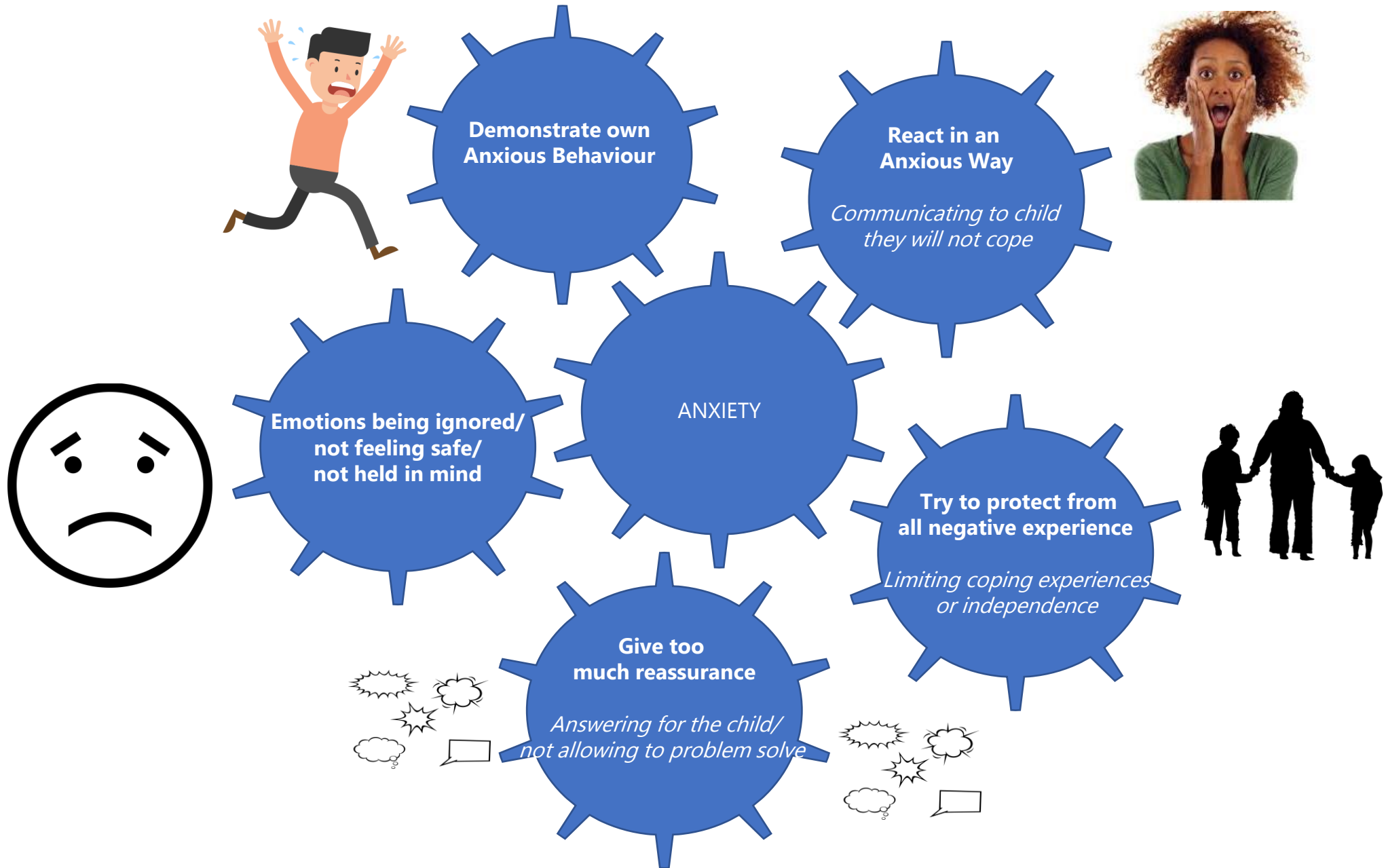


ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR

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



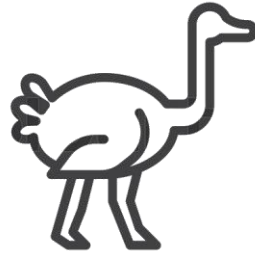
Maintaining factors - Things that **others** do, which can keep the problem going



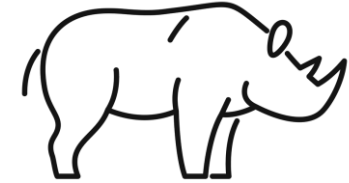
Be mindful of your own responses



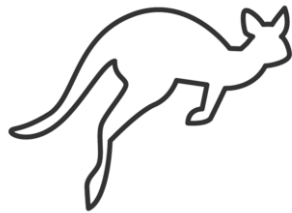
Own anxious or frustrated emotions are transparent.



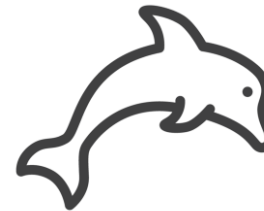
Avoids the situation as they find it hard to deal with.



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.

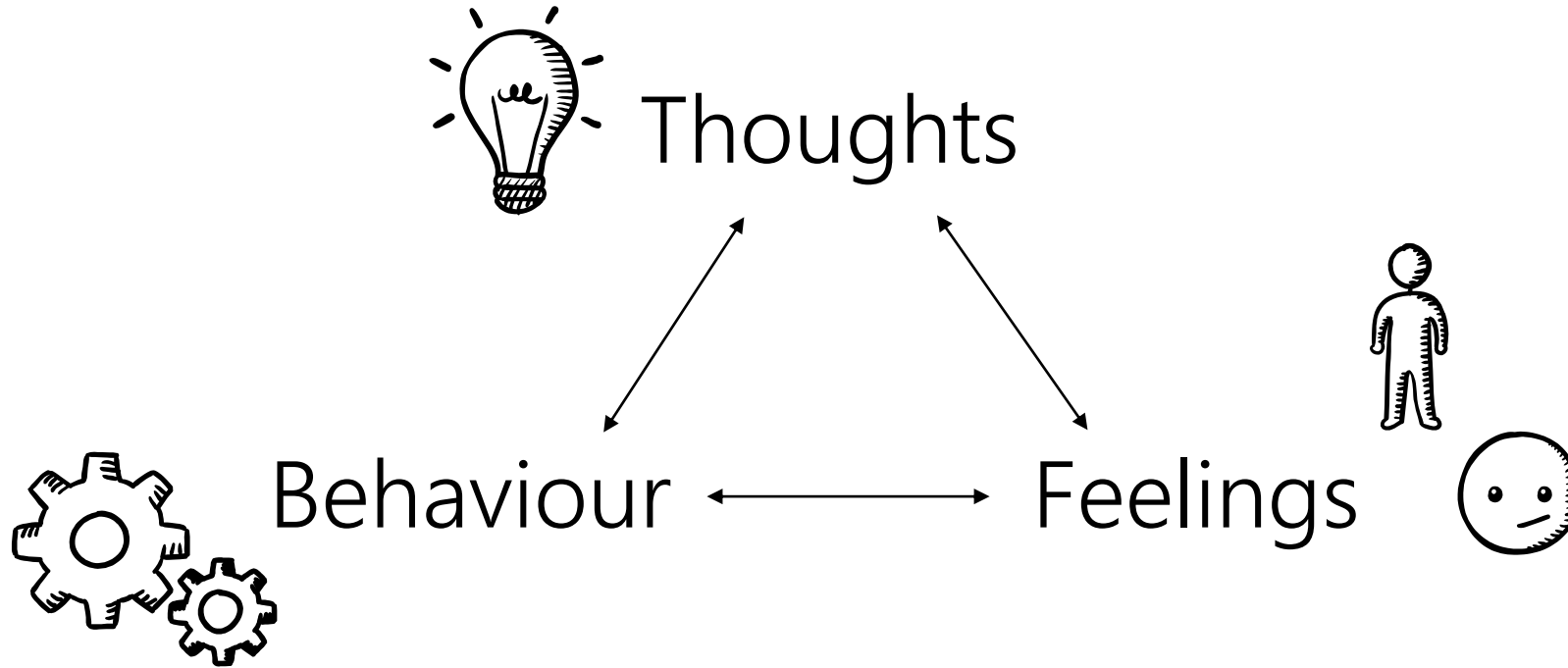


Aim 3

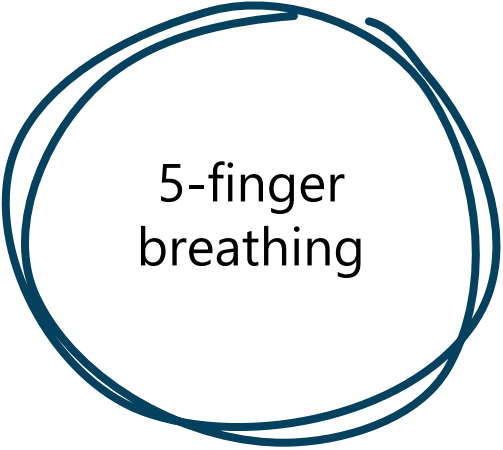
To be able to manage
anxiety and build
confidence in children.

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



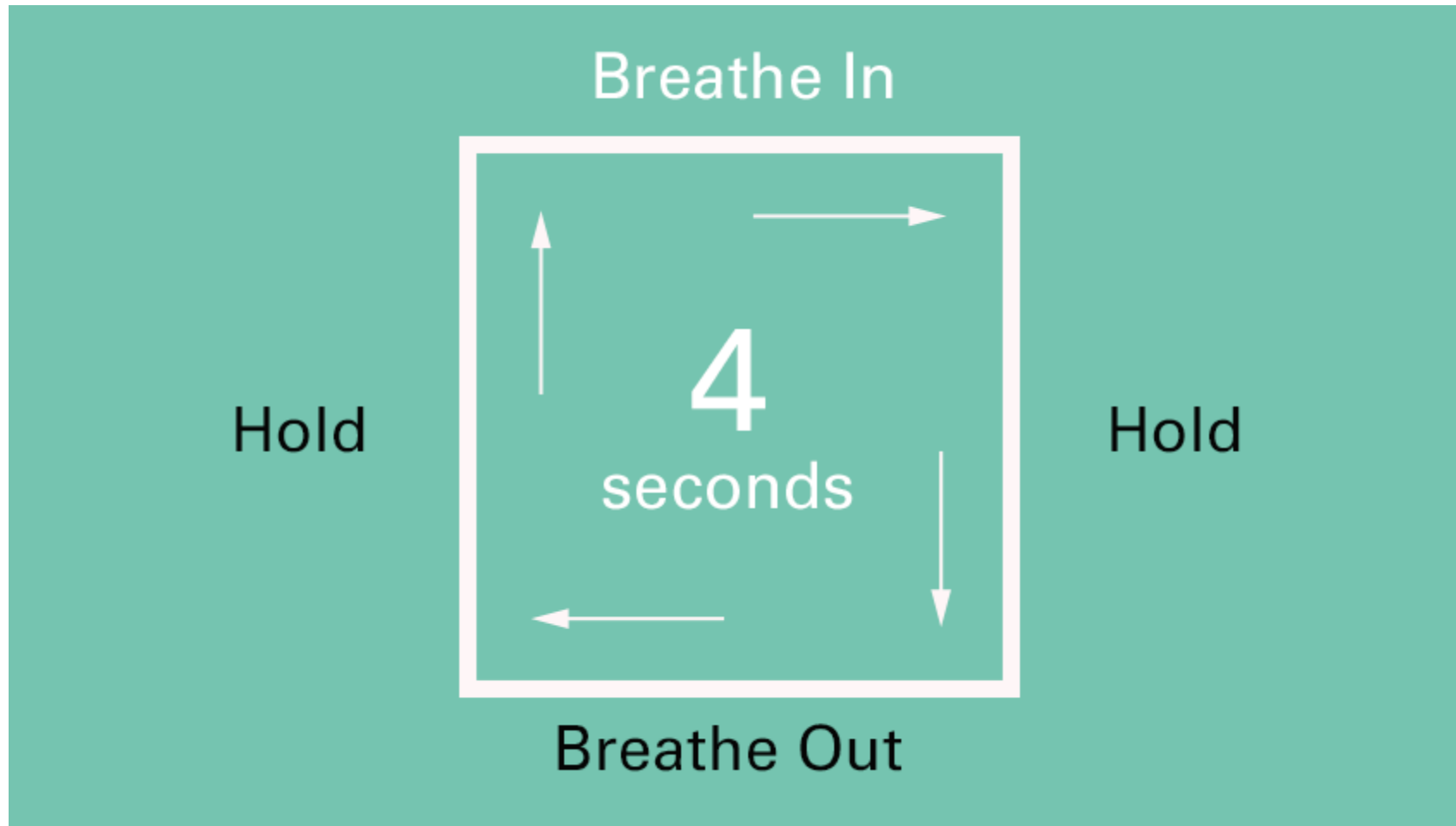
5 Finger Breathing



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ihf92iT5yOo&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fhubblecontent.osi.office.net%2F&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjY&feature=emb_logo



Box Breathing



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJfbxubDgNI&t=7s>



Questioning anxious thoughts

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

What are you worried about?

What are you scared of?

What is the worst thing that could happen?

What do you think is going to 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

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.

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.

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

What do you think is going to happen?

How did it go?

Did it give evidence for or against your prediction?

Managing different types of worry

There are two types of worry:

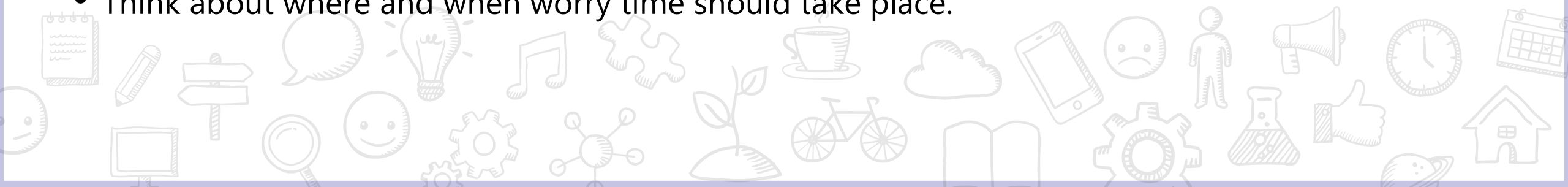
- Hypothetical worries ("what if...?") – we don't have much control over these.
- Practical worries - we can do something about.

Once we have classified the worry, we can choose an appropriate strategy.



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.



Worry time

Used to manage hypothetical worries.

- Worrying frequently can be draining
- Set up a regular time, approx. 15-20 minutes where you 'allow' worrying and use some helpful questioning techniques. The rest of the day is a **worry free zone**.
- Child can jot down worry and 'park it' to be thought about during worry time – you can use worry jars, books, monsters or worry apps.
- Be boundaried with time, and ensure a distraction activity afterwards.
- Think about where and when to place 'worry time'.



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?

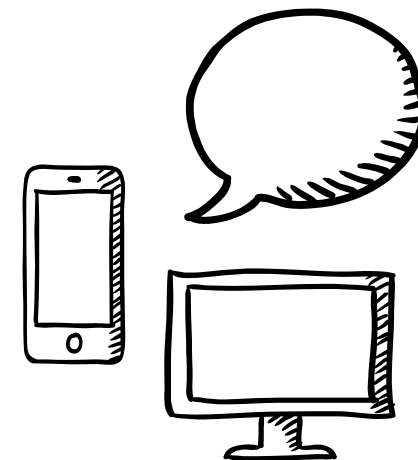
Worry Tree



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

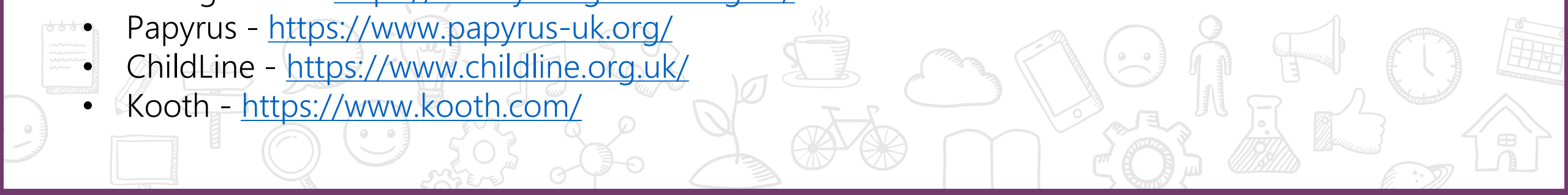


Supporting your wellbeing:

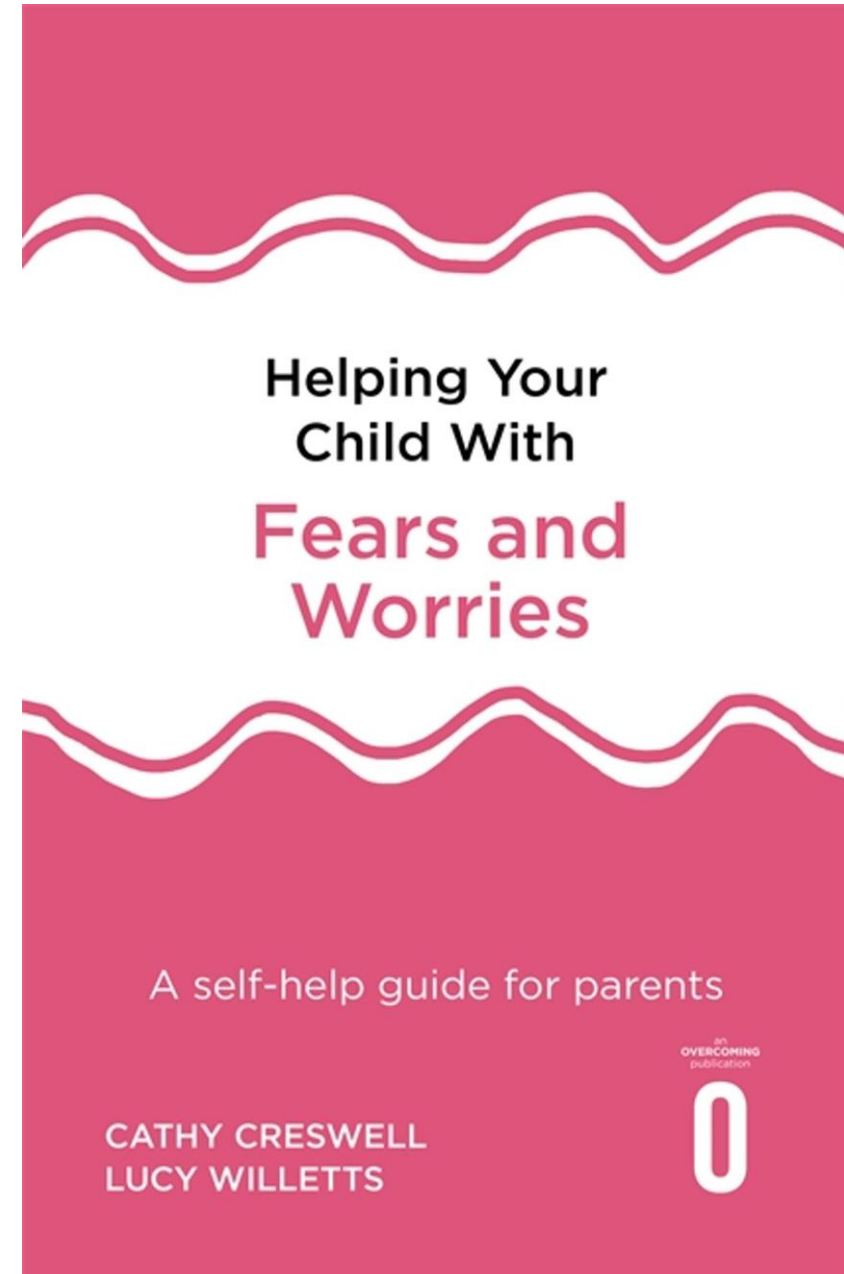
- Education Support - <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling>
- Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

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



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 an adult-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?

