When to worry about your worrier Workshop

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GIG CYMRU NHS WALES
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Understanding and Supporting Worries

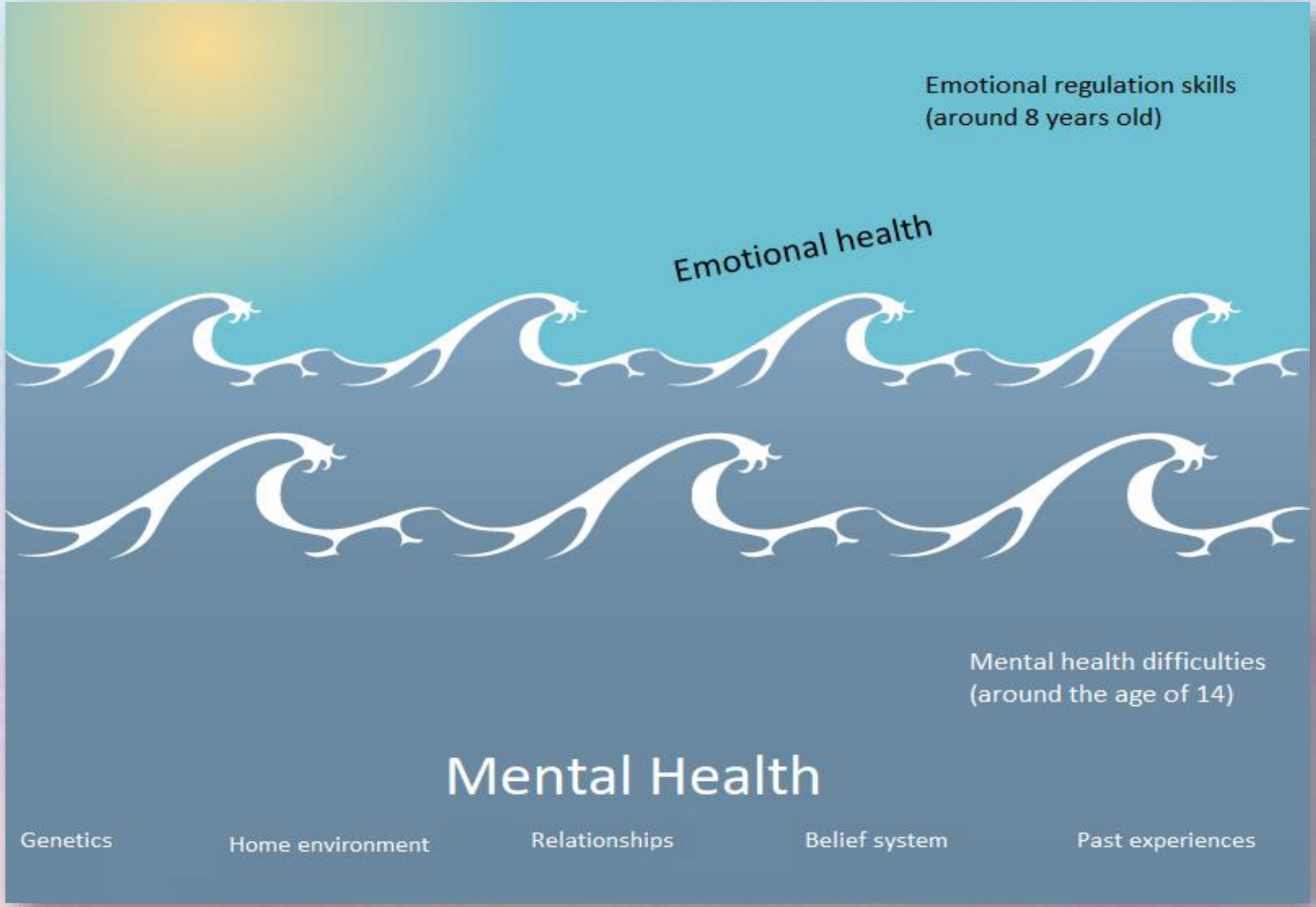
Why are we here today?

- ***Validation and Reassurance***
- ***Empowerment***
- ***Practical Strategies***

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EMOTIONAL HEALTH
AND WELLBEING


Mental
Health


Emotional regulation skills
(around 8 years old)
Emotional health
Mental health difficulties
(around the age of 14)
Mental Health
Genetics
Home environment
Relationships
Belief system
Past experiences

Emotional Well-being

At primary school age, it is likely that a child's thoughts and emotions relating to worries are much better explained by:

- Reasonable and expected responses to the environment or event
- Their developmental stage
- Emotional regulation
- In certain cases, a neurodevelopmental disorder e.g. ASD/ADHD

“Challenging the medicalisation of well-being needs”

I’m depressed.

I’m a bit OCD about it.

I have anger issues.

My anxiety is playing up.

I’m an insomniac.

“Challenging the medicalisation of well-being needs”

I’m feeling a bit sad.

I have strong feelings about this.

I have lots of worries.

I’m not sure how I feel today.

I’m a bit overwhelmed by some big emotions.



Emotional Regulation



Emotional regulation is the ability to exert control over one's own emotional state.

This may involve processes such as rethinking a challenging situation to reduce anger or worry, focusing on reasons to remain calm or be happy and containing our emotions until a more appropriate time.







Emotional Regulation

The greatest impact on psychological well-being Shenfield (2016)

Children will develop the ability to emotionally regulate at different stages. This ability continues developing well into adulthood.

A child cannot usually emotionally regulate to any great effect until **at least** the age of 8.

Without this ability being fully developed, children often display greater conflict, higher levels of stress and have difficulty in truly expressing how they are feeling.



We need to model and support emotional regulation.

Developmental Worries

Age	Typical Fears
9 months- 3 years	Sudden movements or loud noises, toilets and large objects, strangers and separation from parents/caregivers
3-6 years	Animals, dark and Monsters/ghosts, sleeping or staying alone
6-12 years	Thunder, lightening, death, Tests/ Exams, Performance anxiety
12-18 years	Social anxiety, personal appearance, and Relationships, fear of failure and future
Adulthood	Financial affairs, Death or illness

Common Worries

What are your child's top 3 worries?

Separation from parent/s

Harm coming to loved ones

Death

School



Feeling unsafe

Friendships

Health

Any change

Sleep/own bed

N.B. If your child's worries aren't noted here, it does not mean they are a cause for concern.

Common Physical Symptoms

How does your child report physical symptoms?

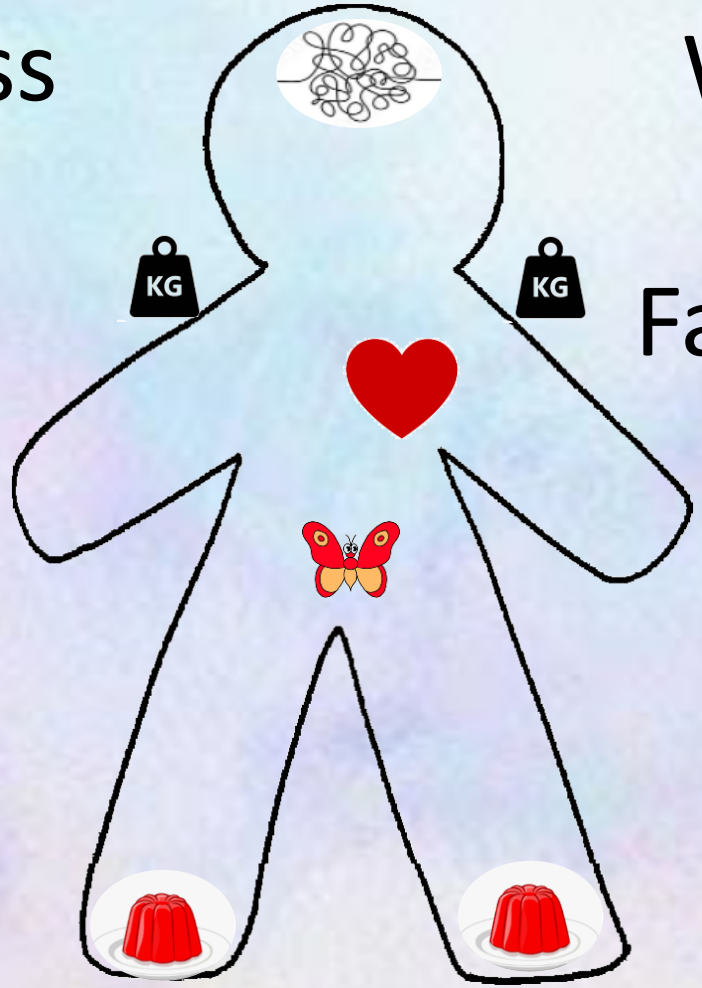
Sickness

Headaches

Bad thoughts

Feeling hot

Crying/outbursts



Wobbly legs

Faster heartbeat

Sleep disturbance

Needing the toilet

Racing thoughts

N.B. If your child's symptoms aren't noted here, it does not mean they are a cause for concern.

Fight Flight & Freeze



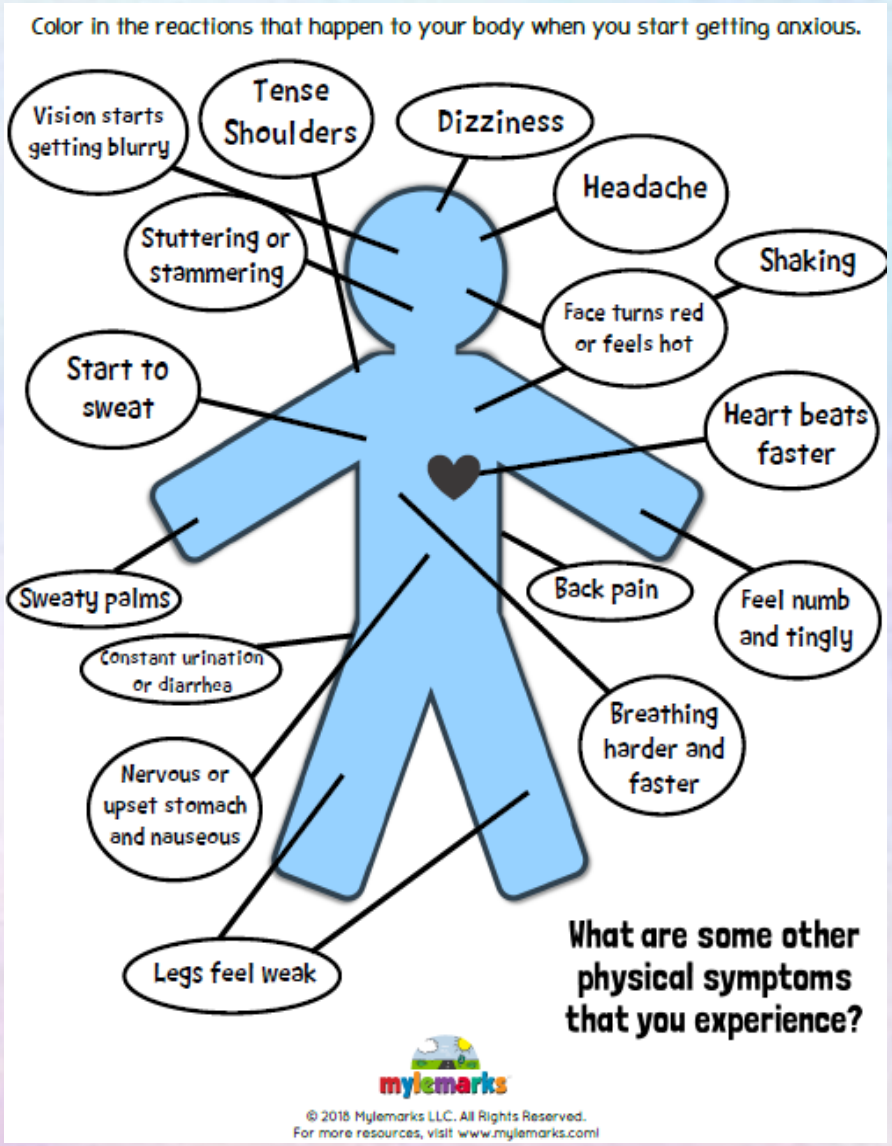
Thinking Brain



Emotional Brain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

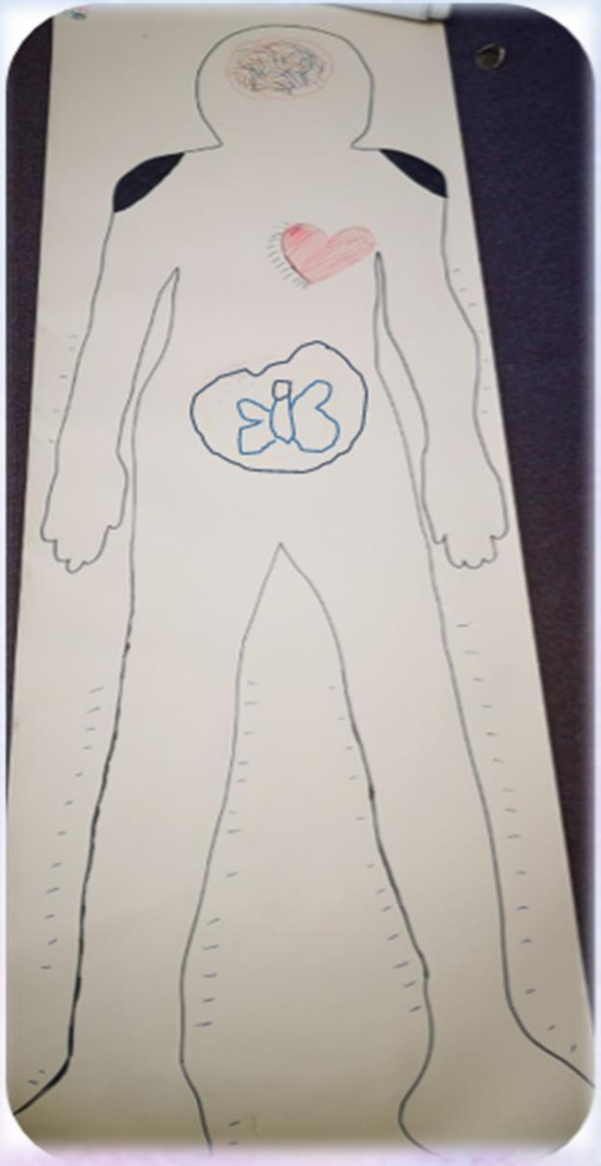
Education is Empowering



Children knowing what happens to their bodies will give them an increased awareness of the signs of big emotions.

Being aware and noticing these sensations can help them to identify when they happen and in what order.

Putting strategies in place early will help them to manage their emotions before they take over their body.






FIGHT
FREEZE
FLIGHT

Recognising Worry

Sometimes we **forget to look after our minds**, so we need to notice when we need to stop and **take care of ourselves**.



Not being able to sleep

Feeling stressed

Thinking things are ‘too much’

Feeling sick in our tummy

Finding it hard to focus

Not feeling hungry

Feeling sad

Wanting to stay home

So, when do we worry about our worrier?



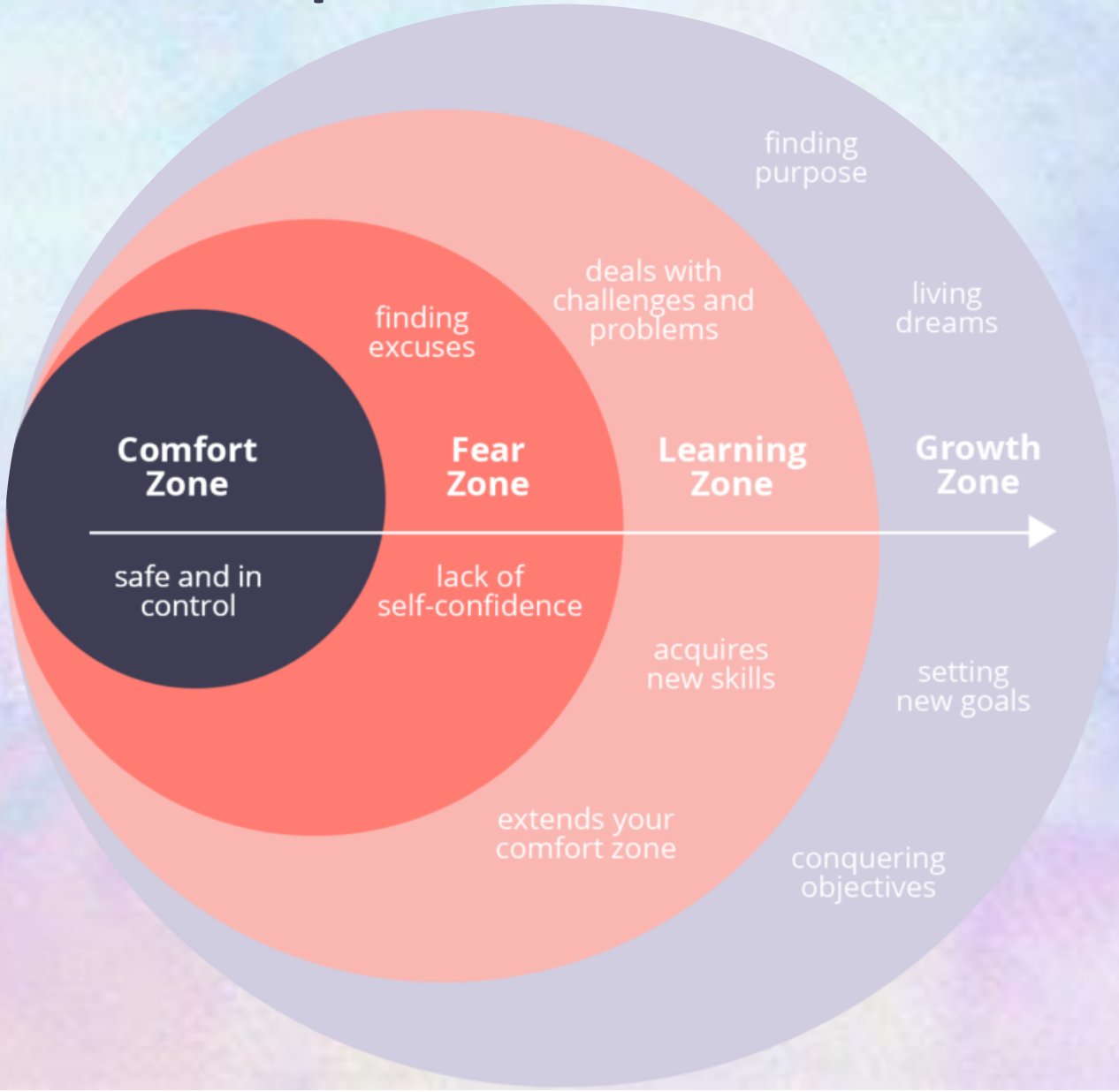
Prolonged impact on child's daily functioning

Consistently tried strategies

Other people noticing a change in your child/ sudden changes

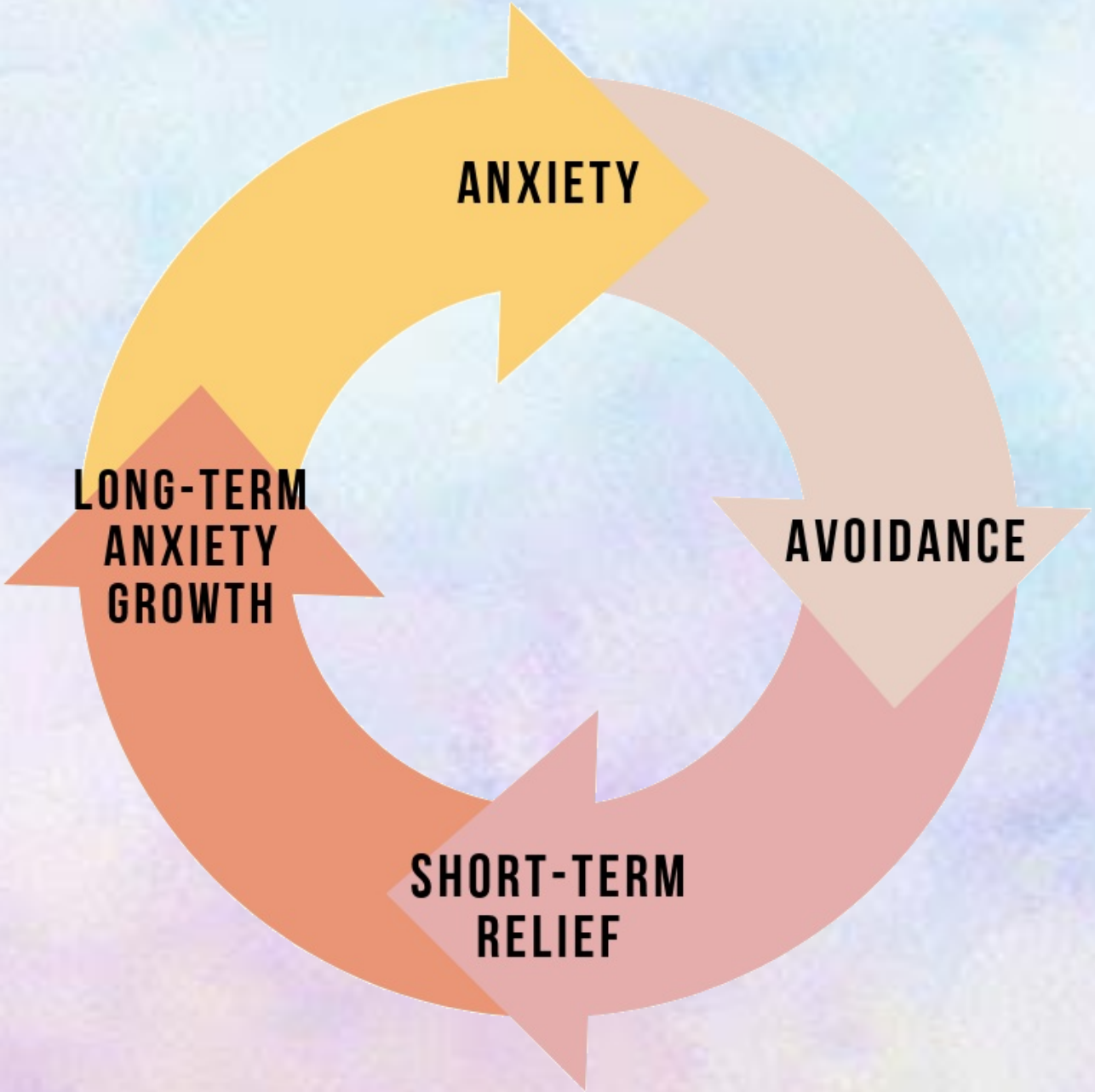
Stepped approach; trying strategies at home/ in school and seeking further support if necessary

We have to set aside our own worries and allow children to explore, take risks and experience both success and failure.





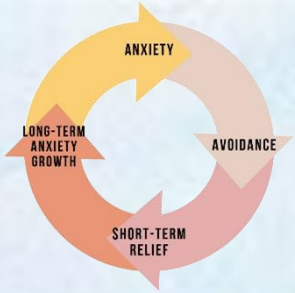




The Anxiety Cycle

Anxiety is created and maintained through the anxiety cycle.

Without realising it, we often reinforce a child's anxiety which ultimately **makes the anxiety grow and often spreads** to other circumstances/scenarios.



The Anxiety Cycle

Worry gets bigger!

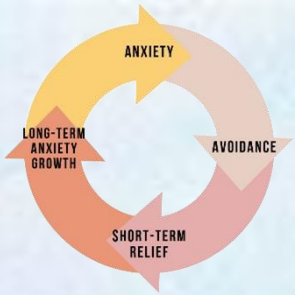
Child is worried about going to crowded places.

Child is allowed to avoid crowded places and choose where to go.

Providing a way to relieve the anxiety here has reinforced it and allowed it to embed.

Child feels relief from worries and calms down.

Child learns that avoiding crowded places and being in control makes them calm.



The Anxiety Cycle

Worry gets bigger!

Child is worried about monsters/burglars.

Parent gives verbal reassurance then checks under bed and in cupboard.

Providing a way to relieve the anxiety here has reinforced it and allowed it to embed.

Child feels relief from worries and calms down.

Child learns that they only feel 'safe' after checking behaviours and seeking reassurance.

Breaking The Anxiety Cycle

Avoidance and reassurance feed worries.



Validate Without Agreeing

I can see that you're really nervous for your test today, but you're going to go in and try your best.

I know you really worry about me, that's okay. I will see you after work.

I can see that you don't like sleeping in your own bed. It's important that you stay in your own bed tonight.

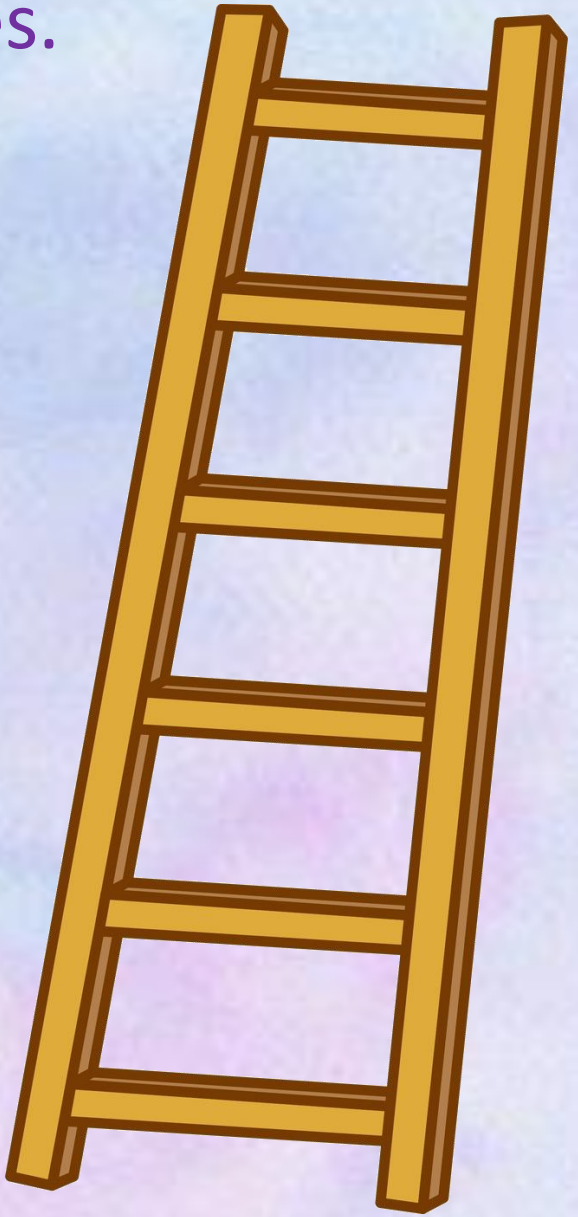
Breaking The Anxiety Cycle

Avoidance and reassurance feed worries.

Gradual Exposure

Setting small, achievable goals that aim to exposure your child to their worry will build up evidence that there is no need to worry!

Your child needs to experience success in order to reduce anxiety in a way that does not reinforce it, but instead challenges it.



Breaking The Anxiety Cycle

Avoidance and reassurance feed worries.

Exposure – Separation Anxiety

4. Child tries a sleep over at grandparents' house.

3. Parent(s) goes out but does not say what time they will come back.

2. Parent(s) goes out for 40 minutes.

1. Parent(s) goes for a 20 minute walk without child while child is supervised.



Negative Thinking Patterns

When a child adopts negative thinking patterns, they develop a **negative thinking bias**. They begin to think negatively about situations without giving themselves a chance to think positively about something.



If you wear glasses with a purple lens, everything you see becomes tainted with purple. This can make it hard to see things and colours as they really are.
The same thing happens with worrying. You begin to see all situations in life through a '***worried lens***' which can prevent you from thinking positively.

Negative Thinking Patterns

When a child adopts negative thinking patterns, they develop a **negative thinking bias**. They begin to think negatively about situations without giving themselves a chance to think positively about something.



Predicting

Thinking that you already know what is going to happen or what something will be like.



Catastrophising

Thinking the absolute worst.

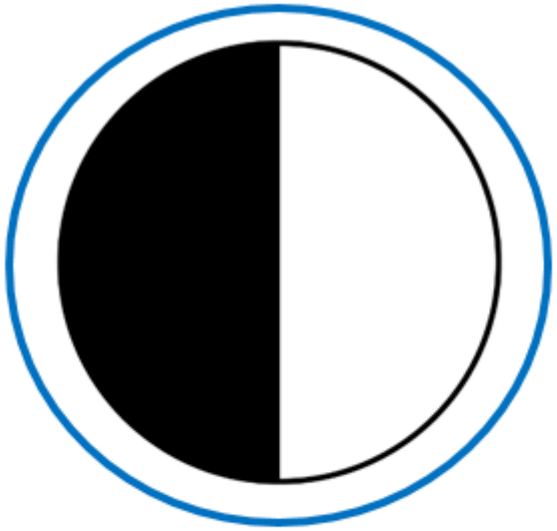


Blaming

Blaming other people or circumstances.

Negative Thinking Patterns

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All or nothing
Seeing only one point of view.



Over Generalising
Thinking that something is always a certain way.



Mistaking
Thinking that thoughts are facts.

Negative Thinking Patterns

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Mind Reading

Believing that you know what someone thinks about you or a situation.



Spiralling

Allowing one negative thought to 'suck you in' and bring more negative thoughts.

Negative Thinking Habits

When you thinking a certain way over-and-over again this can become a habit. This changes the way you see certain situations and can make you biased. It takes 21 days to break a habit, so try challenging some of these thinking habits.



Blaming
Blaming other people or circumstances.



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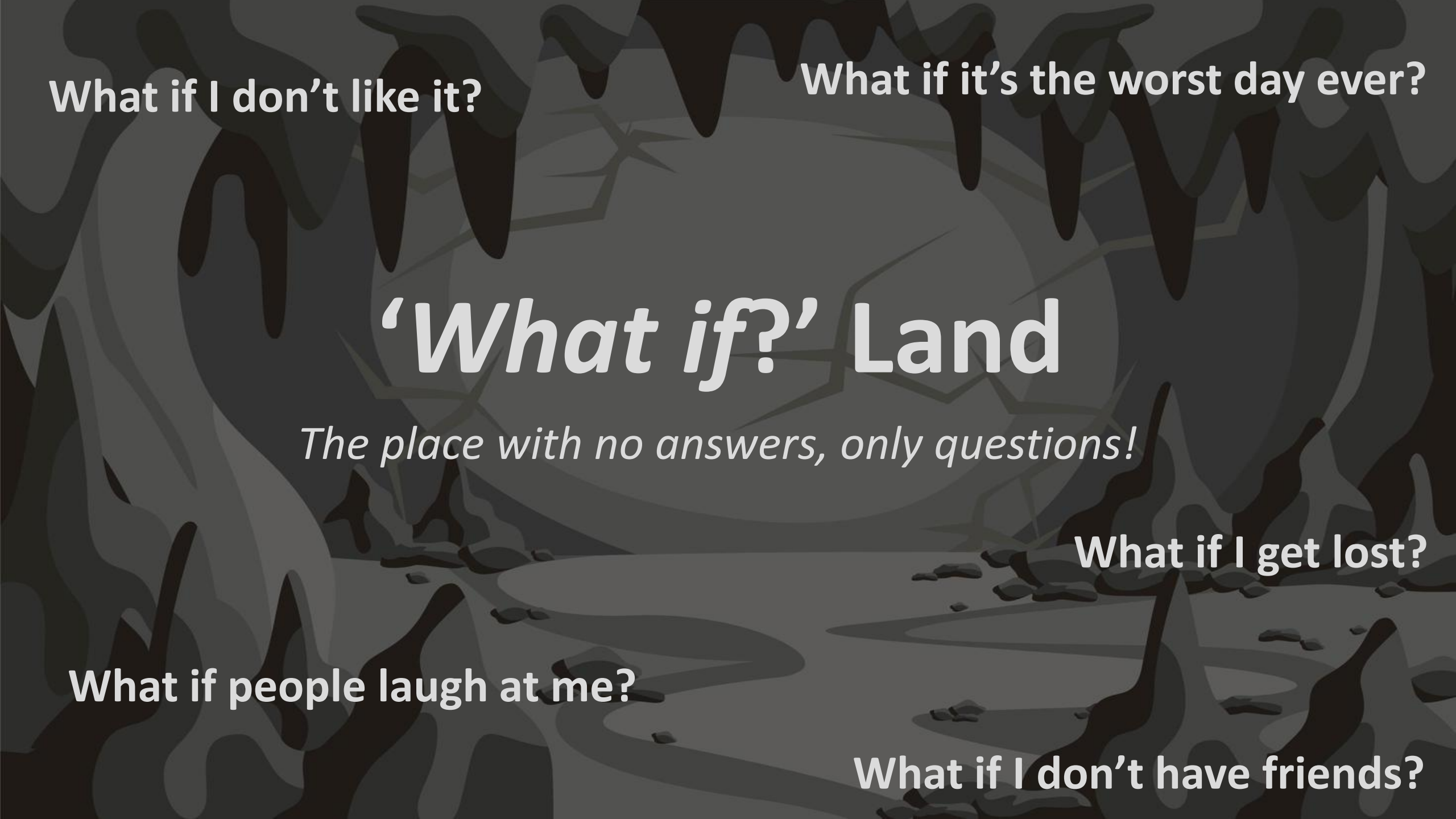


Over Generalising
Thinking that something is always a certain way.

Allow your child to become familiar with these thinking habits.

Point out to them which thinking habit they are doing and help them to realise it is simply exacerbating their worry.

Sometimes, the simple realisation that they are doing this is enough to destabilise their thought.


What if I don’t like it?
What if it’s the worst day ever?
‘What if?’ Land
The place with no answers, only questions!
What if I get lost?
What if people laugh at me?
What if I don’t have friends?

‘What If?’ Land



Many children express their worries through using ‘what if?’ questions.

This can exacerbate their worries as they often get no answers and only find themselves with more questions than they started with.

Balancing these questions works well to change their outlook.

'*What if*?' Land - balancing their questions

The place with no answers, only questions!

What if I lose my friends?

What if I make new friends?



What if I make mistakes?

What if I learn something new?

Having a neutral 'what if' question is often more realistic and believable for a child.



What evidence is there?

How would someone else see this?



Is there another way to see this?



What advice would you give someone else?

Is this helpful?

Is this fact or opinion?



First **identify the thought** – you need to know your challenger!





Defeat the negative thought by coming up with a new, more positive one!

Acceptance

Thoughts are like bubbles; they float around us and often distract us. Just like bubbles, thoughts often swirl around inside our head but then float away. Thoughts are not facts, let them float away and not bother you anymore.



Managing Worries not Eliminating Them



Resilience is a skill that we all need in life.

It is very likely that your child will face many challenges throughout their childhood and, of course, as an adult too.

We need to equip children with the **tools that they need** to face worries and know how to **manage them** rather than thinking they will never have worries again.

Abbie's Action Plan

Sometimes, when we're feeling low or having lots of negative thoughts, we need to do things that make us feel better. We might not want to, but it's a good way to help to change our mood. Planning what we will do while we are in a 'good' mood can help us later on.

What will I wear to feel better?





How will I manage my emotions?

Who will I speak to?





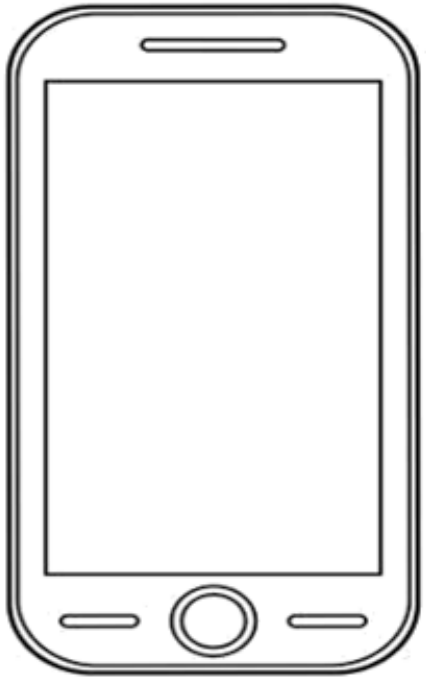
Where will I go to be safe?

What can I do on my phone to help me?

MoodGym

What's Up?

HappiMe



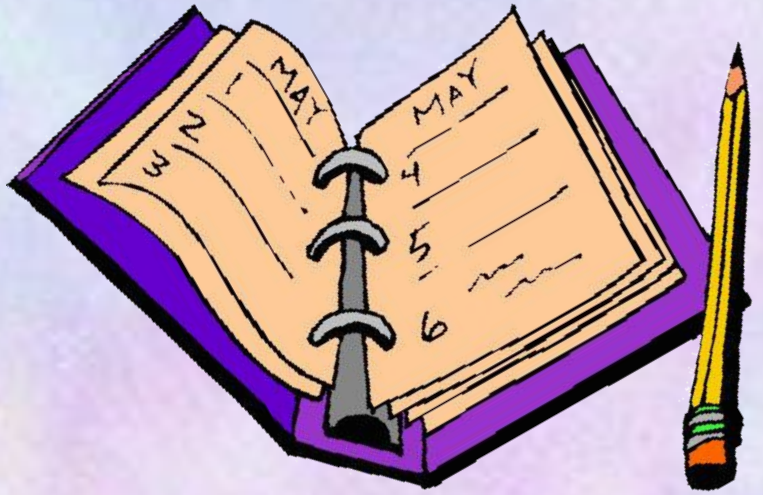
Worry Time











Breathing Strategies

A brilliant way to manage your anxiety symptoms is to use different **breathing strategies**.
I know we breathe all the time so it might seem silly, but breathing in certain ways can bring down the feelings in your body and help you to **take control of your body**.



Volcano Breathing

Stand up nice and tall with your arms by your side. Take a deep breath in through your nose. As you do this, bring your arms up above your head and reach for the sky.
Breathe out through your mouth and push your arms back down towards your body.
Repeat 5 times or until you feel calm.



Cake and Candle Breathing

Bring both your hands up near your face with the palms facing you.

Imagine that you have a delicious cake in your left hand and a candle in your right. Bring your left hand to your nose and smell the delicious cake. Now bring your right hand to your face and blow out steadily through your mouth to blow out the candle.

Repeat 5 times or until you feel calm.



Star Breathing

Use your pointing finger to slowly trace the outline of the star.
Follow the breathing instructions on each edge of the star, remembering to pause and hold at each tip of the star. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Trace around the star until you get back to where you started!



5 Finger Breathing

This is similar to star breathing but may be easier as you always have a hand with you!

Put one hand out in front of you with your fingers stretched wide. Take the pointing finger of the other hand and place it on the tip of your thumb. Now move your finger and trace the outline of your hand. As you trace down a finger breathe out through your mouth, and as you move up a finger, breathe in through your nose.

Do this until you have done the whole outline of your hand. You can do both hands if you need to!

Breathing

Shallow, upper chest breathing is part of the stress response. This type of breathing can exacerbate the symptoms of worries and add to a feeling of panic.

Controlling this will be a good step to taking control of the situation.

An Emotionally Open Home

Open discussions around all emotions.

Emotion ‘check ins’.

Self-reflect.

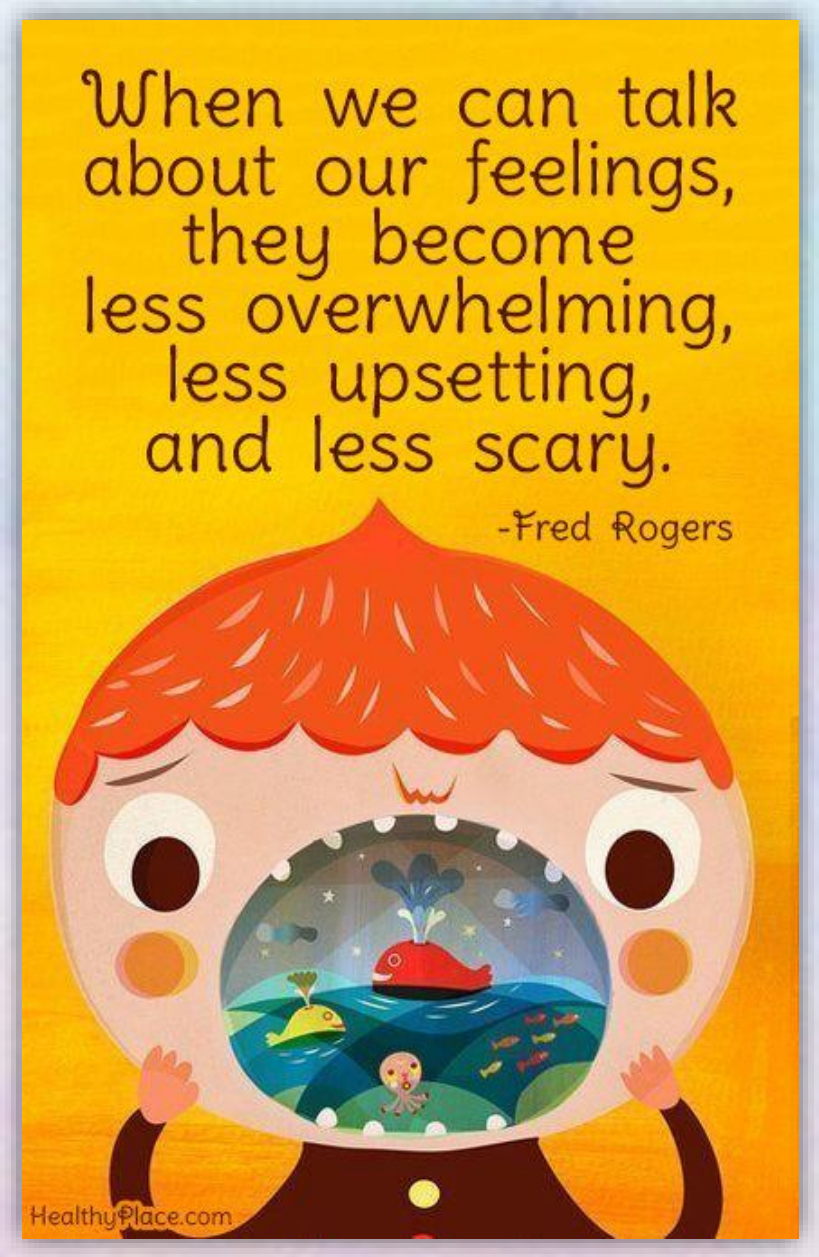


Feelings chart on the fridge.

Good sleep/eat routines.

Modelling how to emotionally regulate.

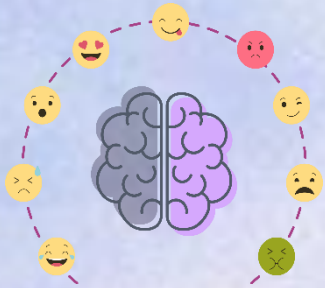
Time to talk through thoughts and feelings.



Studies have shown that recognising and naming an emotion reduces the effect that emotion has on the body, which in turn allows us to manage our behaviours.



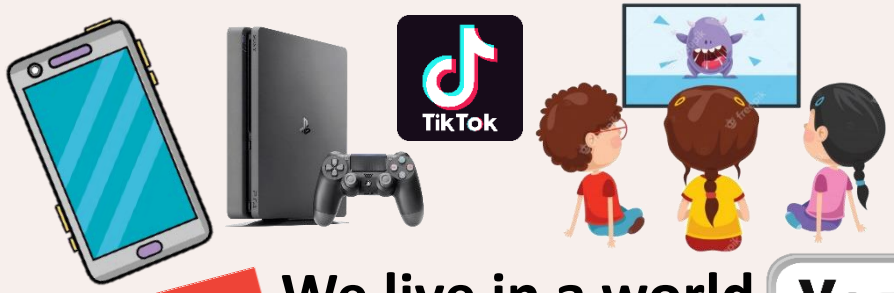




When an emotion is recognised and spoken about, its power is lessened. Studies of MRI scans of the brain show that the activity in the amygdala lessons and there is greater activity in the frontal lobe. The thinking brain overpowers the emotional brain and looks for ways to manage the feeling.



73% of your brain is water. So, to make sure we can think clearly, solve problems, understand our emotions and make memories, you need to drink plenty of water!



NETFLIX

We live in a world filled with technology!





Our brains need looking after! Talk to people if you are worried or something is bothering you. Practise the strategies we have learned.



It can be amazing, however too much screen time can affect your mental health! If we watch screens too close to bedtime, it can stop us from sleeping due to blue light. Make sure you have limits.







Spending time outdoors has been proven to increase your physical and mental health! Scientists have found it reduces stress and increases happiness. Try to get out every day – even in the rain!



Headspace | Meditation Tips | Letting Go of Effort



Headspace | Mini Meditation | Let Go of Stress



10 Minute Sleepcast: Rainday Antiques from Sleep by Headspace



Headspace | Meditation | Underlying Calm



10-Minute Meditation to Reframe Stress



Sunday Scaries? Identify Anxious Thoughts with this Mini-Meditation



MoodKit

Uses CBT principles to help with low mood and anxiety.



HappiMe

Free app that helps to raise self-esteem, self-confidence and happiness levels in children and young people



Chill Panda

Chill Panda helps children better understand their stress and shows them ways to feel better using breathing techniques, yoga, exercise and calming games.



SAM

SAM is an app to help you understand and manage anxiety.



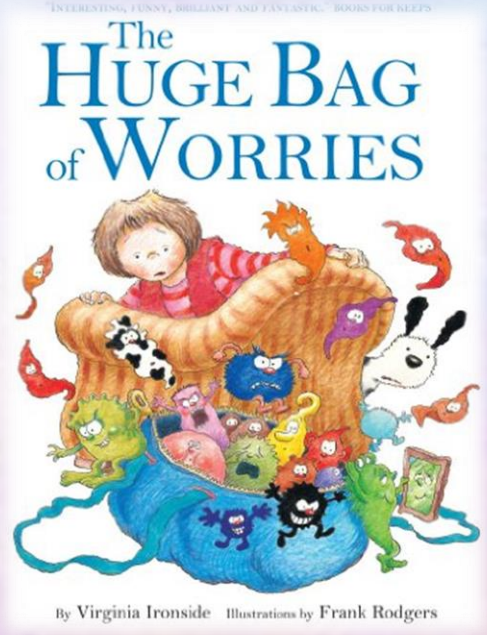
Stop Breathe Think

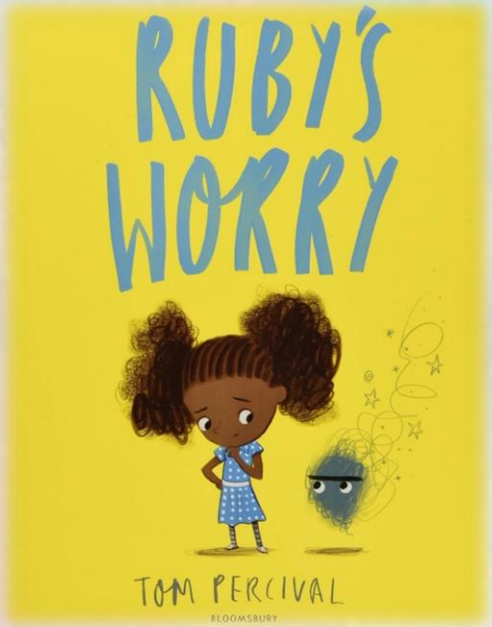
Check in with how you're feeling, and try short activities tuned to your emotions.

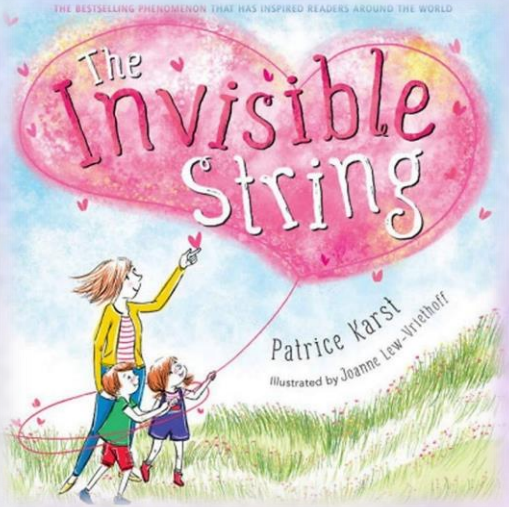


Virtual Hope Box

The Virtual Hope Box (VHB) is a app that contains simple tools to help with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.







Useful books, apps and clips

When to worry about your worrier

Key Points

- Avoid medicalising emotions.
- Strive to break the anxiety cycle.
- Challenge negative thinking patterns.
- Manage anxiety with practical steps.



www.camhs-resources.co.uk

www.tidyminds.org

www.elsa-support.co.uk

www.kooth.com (age 11+)

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