
What is Anxiety and how you can support young people

— MHST Peterborough —

Your Presenters



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What to expect?

Part 1 - Understanding Anxiety

Part 2 - Understanding your young person's anxious thoughts

Part 3 - Coping Strategies and next steps

Pre Workshop Knowledge Check



Part 1: Understanding Anxiety



What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety is a normal and healthy emotion.
- Part of our body's defence system.
- Always on the lookout for danger, be it "real danger" or a "false alarm".

WHAT IS ANXIETY?



ANXIETY IS A NORMAL EMOTION... IT IS YOUR BODY'S DEFENSE SYSTEM TRYING TO TELL YOU THAT IT FEELS YOU ARE FACING A THREAT.

THIS DEFENSE SYSTEM ACTS A BIT LIKE A SMOKE ALARM...



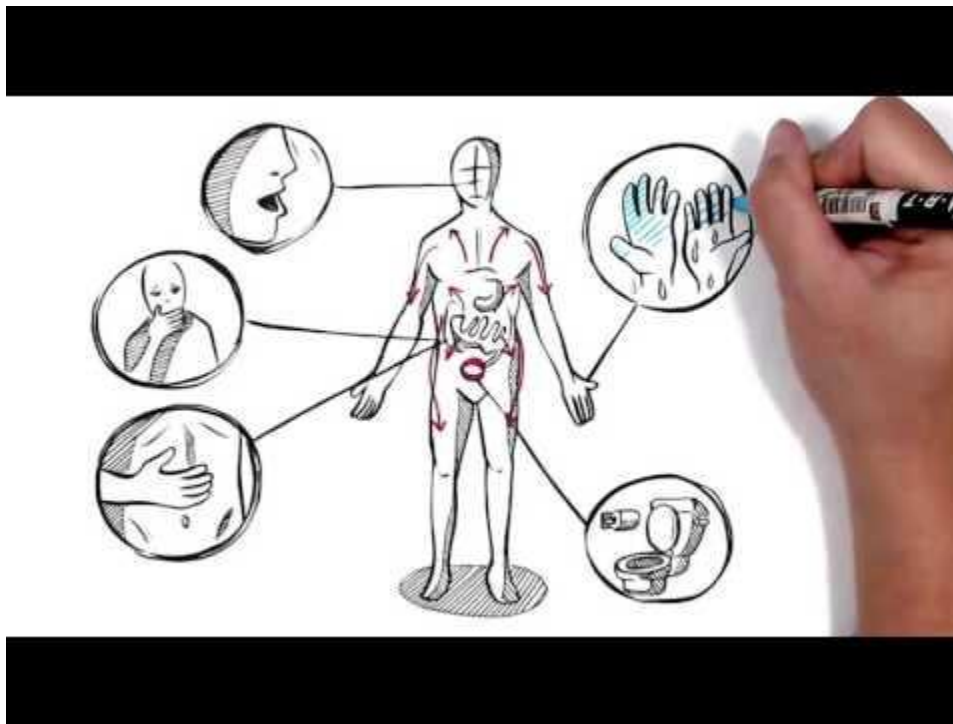
SOMETIMES IT ALERTS YOU TO REAL DANGER, LIKE WHEN A SMOKE ALARM DETECTS FIRE. THIS IS USEFUL!



SOMETIMES IT IS A FALSE ALARM... LIKE WHEN YOU BURN THE TOAST! OUR ANXIETY CAN ALSO "GO OFF" ABOUT PERCEIVED THREATS THAT AREN'T TRULY DANGEROUS. IT IS JUST YOUR BODY TRYING TO KEEP YOU SAFE.



How may we respond ? - Fight, Flight, Freeze



What Does Anxiety Look and Feel Like?

- Children might often complain of any bodily troubles right before something that makes them anxious.





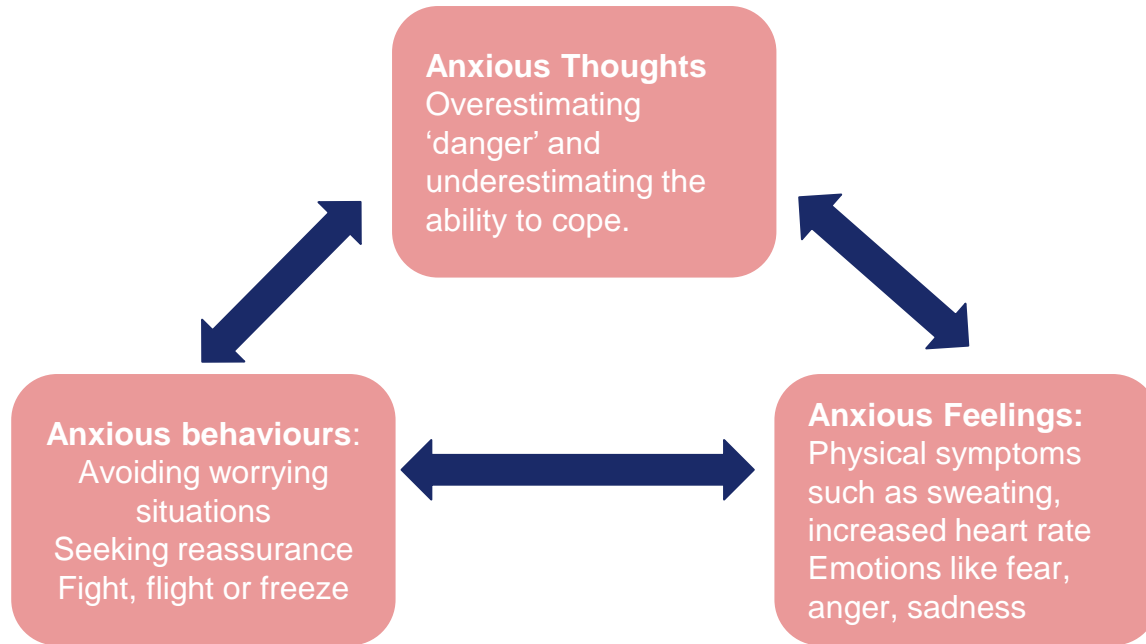
How does Anxiety develop?

There a number of different factors that may contribute to this.



- Genes
- Stressful life events
- Learning through experience
- Learning from others' reactions
- Coping strategies

How is Anxiety maintained?



Making Sense of Things.

Anxiety is normal and healthy.

It becomes a problem when it starts to affect a child's everyday life.

Anxiety is a result of our interpretation of our environment and physical reactions.

REMEMBER:

You are in a unique position to help your child manage their fears and worries.

Part 2: Understanding your young person's anxious thoughts

What are anxious expectations?

- Anxious thoughts or expectations can make children feel less able to cope
- Anxious children are often on the lookout for threat & tend to 'jump to conclusions' about threat.
- If there is some uncertainty about what is going on, anxious children may expect something bad is going to happen OR think they won't be able to cope with what might happen.
- It is important to have a good idea of what your child's fears and worries are and understand what they expect to happen
- This will help us work out what they need to learn to overcome these difficulties

What are my child's thoughts and expectations?



Some questions that can be helpful.

- "Why are you feeling worried?"
- "What is frightening you?"
- "What do you think will happen?"
- "What is the worst thing that might happen?"
- "What is it about the situation which is making you worried?"



Asking questions and not giving answers

- Some children may not be clear on exactly what they think will happen in the situation they fear OR they might find it difficult to explain.
- If it is possible to understand the child's thoughts from their point of view, this can be very helpful for us to learn what they child needs to learn in order to overcome their problems with anxiety.

Reassurance

- Many parents describe that reassurance is their usual response.
- It is a natural response AND in some situations it may reduce the distress in the short-term.



Reassurance which promotes opportunities for new learning:	Reassurance which reduces opportunities for new learning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Go on, have a go, you've done it before, and it went really well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's OK, Mummy's here.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I think you should see how it goes. I feel confident but even if it doesn't go well, we will have an idea of what to work on next. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It will be fine, don't worry!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I really think you can do this. I was so proud when you asked a question in class last week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't worry, it will all be OK. I'm sure your classmates won't laugh, and the teacher is bound to be really nice.

Getting the best results

How you ask your child about their worries, and WHEN you ask your child can be important as WHAT you ask them.

- ✓ Empathise - help them feel understood
- ✓ Normalise - help them feel normal
- ✓ Make suggestions
- ✓ Check your understanding
- ✓ Label emotions
- ✓ Pick your moment
- ✓ Make it fun or rewarding

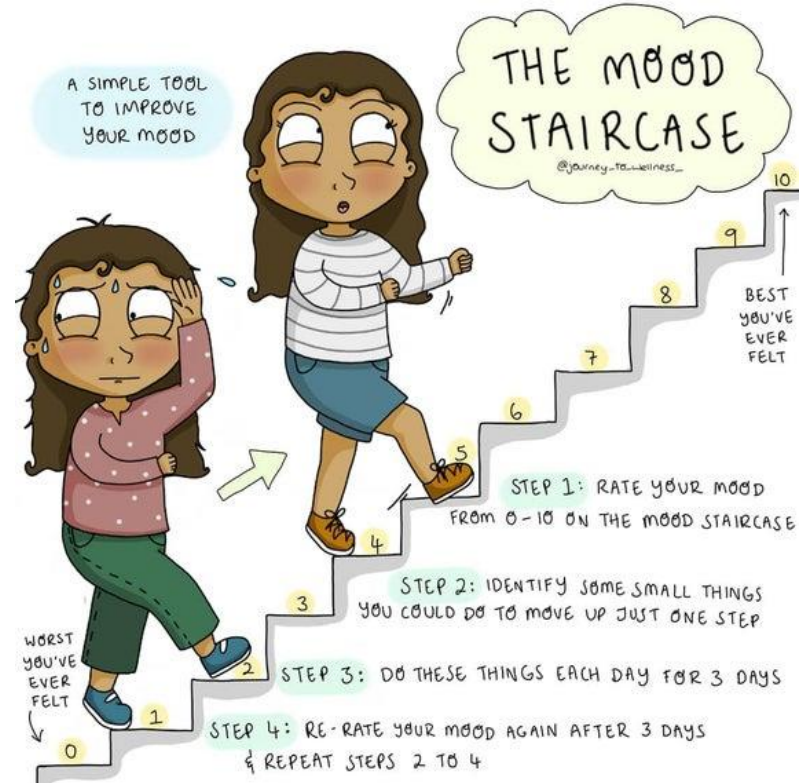
Focus on asking questions and not giving answers:

- ✓ Helps children to think for themselves
 - ✓ Puts children in control
- ✓ Prevents children feeling 'silly' / 'wrong'
- ✓ Helps children to start practice getting used to uncertainty.

Part 3: Coping Strategies and next steps

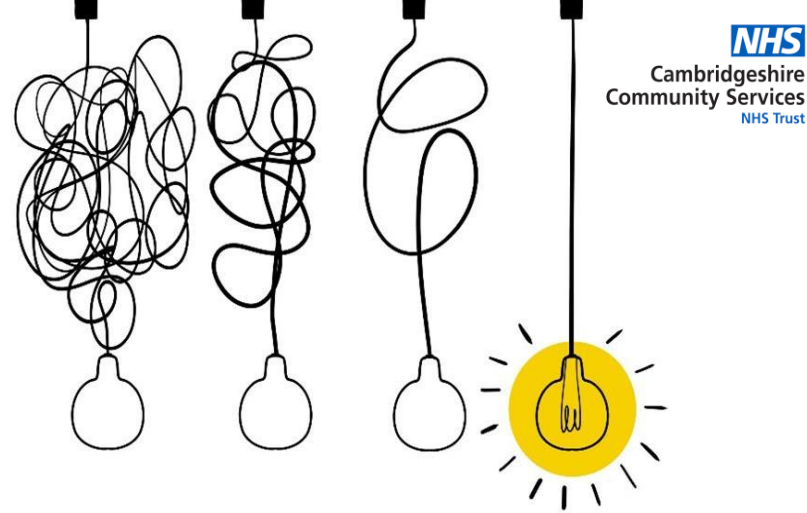
Step-by-step Plan

- ✓ A young person's fears often need to be faced gradually to give them confidence in their ability to cope, increase motivation and then they are used to testing out their fears.
- ✓ Decide what fear to face first
- ✓ Come up with an ultimate goal
- ✓ Come up with an ultimate reward to increase motivation.



Problem Solving Approach

- Most of the time, young people that are anxious feel like they are not in control of difficult situations and might not be confident enough to problem solve. This is usually their perception and not actual deficit.
- It is important for child to become independent and confident in problem solving problems they may encounter.



HANDOUT 10 – PROBLEM SOLVING

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?	LIST ALL THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (NO MATTER HOW WEIRD OR WONDERFUL!)	WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I CHOSE THIS SOLUTION? (IN THE SHORT TERM? IN THE LONG TERM? TO MY ANXIETY IN THE FUTURE?)	IS THIS PLAN DOABLE? YES/NO	HOW GOOD IS THE OUTCOME? RATE 0-10	SELECT PLAN. WHAT HAPPENED?

Managing Worries

- ✓ Help your child set aside a daily Check in with themselves - Max 15 minutes, to give them a chance to write down or if they wish to, talk about anything that might be on their mind.
- ✓ Use the helpful questioning styles
- ✓ Adapt reassurance



Strategies



- ✓ Finger breathing
- ✓ Grounding Technique
- ✓ Muscle Relaxation Technique
- ✓ Worry Time
- ✓ Model talking about feelings and emotions
- ✓ Label Emotions at home "it looks like you are worried/ scared..."
- ✓ Be curious - ask questions.

Don't forget to take care of yourself!

Self-Care Tips:

- Acknowledge your own emotions and difficulties.
- Parents find it hard too
- Seek out for support
- Take time to identify how you are feeling
- Identify things/activities you can do that help you feel calm
- Have a go at practicing some of the strategies yourself!

Give yourself time...

- Do not give up
- Continuity
- These things don't happen overnight

*Keep Up the
Good Work!*



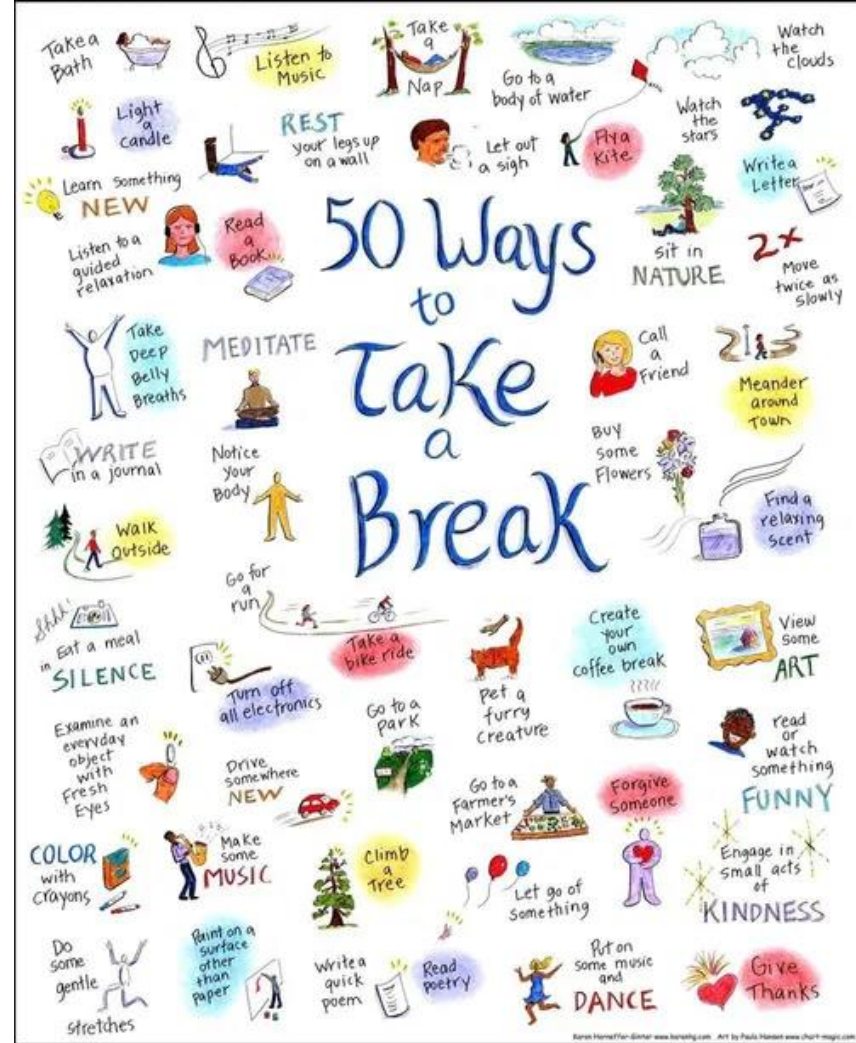
10 Practical tips for supporting a young person with anxiety from parents who have gone through it.

- 1. Above all, accept and try to understand your child's difficulties – educate yourself as much as possible about your child's mental health challenges.**
- 2. Be kind to yourself. If you don't look after yourself first, you won't be able to look after your child.**
- 3. Ask for and accept help from professionals, family members or support groups – you don't have to do this alone.**
- 4. Until your child has the right help and support in place, remember that many of their everyday behaviours may be driven by their mental health needs.**
- 5. There is no one right answer. It takes time to work out the best support and interventions that will work for your family. Be patient.**

10 Practical tips for supporting a young person with anxiety from parents who have gone through it. (cont..)

6. Find simple little things to help you cope - meet a friend for a coffee, play a sport you love, go for a walk. Giving yourself permission to take time out for yourself will help you care for your child.
7. Forgive yourself if you say or do the wrong thing. You will be learning alongside your child and doing the best that you can.
8. There are times when you need to trust your instinct – remember that you know your child better than anyone and that you are a crucial part of their support team.
9. It's okay to feel however you feel - sad, angry, upset, numb. Go with it, but if the negative feelings last for too long, get help.
10. Hold on to hope, no matter how difficult things seem. Just being there, listening and offering hope is the most important thing you can do.

50 Ways to Take a Break



To summarise...

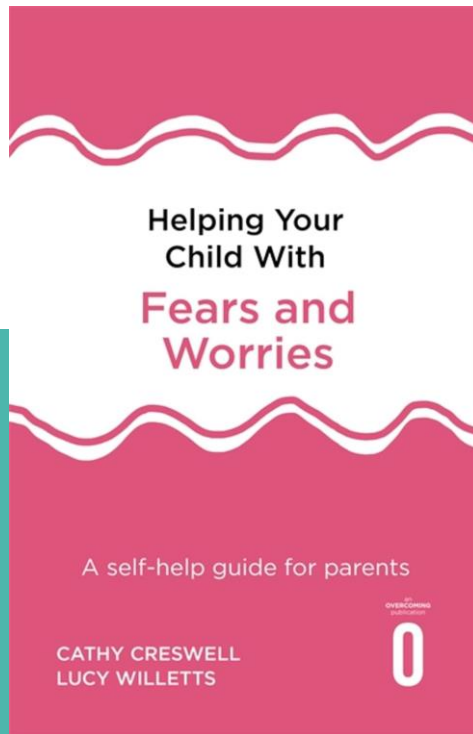
- No single factor causes anxiety
- As parents, you are able to support your child in the way they think and behave
- Consider breaking down a big goal into smaller, achievable steps to help motivate your child to work towards their goal
- Parents are key in supporting change.
- There are lots of strategies - not all of them will work but you will find one that does
- Be consistent and do not give up, things take time.

Next Steps

- If you are still worried, speak to your child's teacher/mental health lead.
- Referral to MHST within your child's school for further support.
- Process:
 - Referral made
 - Initial Assessment
 - 11 years old and older: 1:1 interventions (Worry Management)



Recommended book



For any other questions please email us on: ccs.mhst@nhs.net

Post Workshop Knowledge Check



How did we do?

Please scan the QR code and
leave us some feedback.

**THANKS
FOR
LISTENING**

