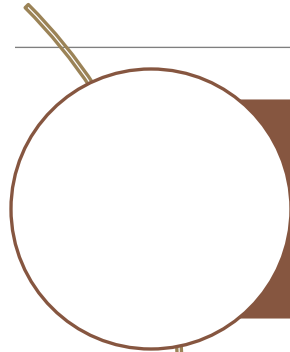


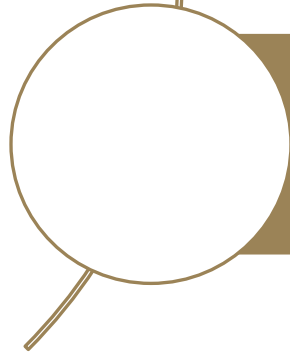
Building confidence and managing anxiety in your child



Aims for today



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



To briefly introduce ways of managing anxiety in children

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a general term for a broad range of emotions that we all experience...

Fear

Worry

Stress

Nerves

Jitters

...as well as referring to some more specific problems, such as:

Phobias

Social anxiety

Separation anxiety (fear of being away from caregiver)

Obsessive thoughts and compulsions

Is anxiety a problem for your child?

How strong is their worry?

Is it becoming hard for them/you to manage?

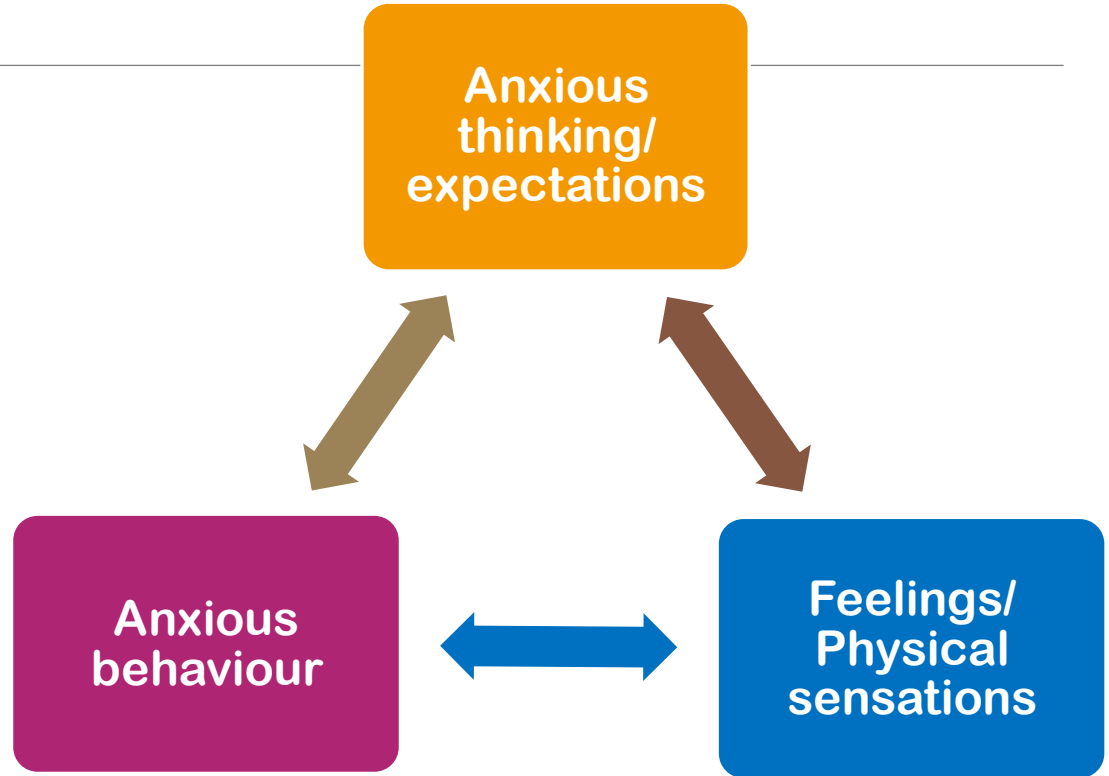
Is the anxiety stopping them from doing what they want to/should be doing?

Are they miserable/low as a result?

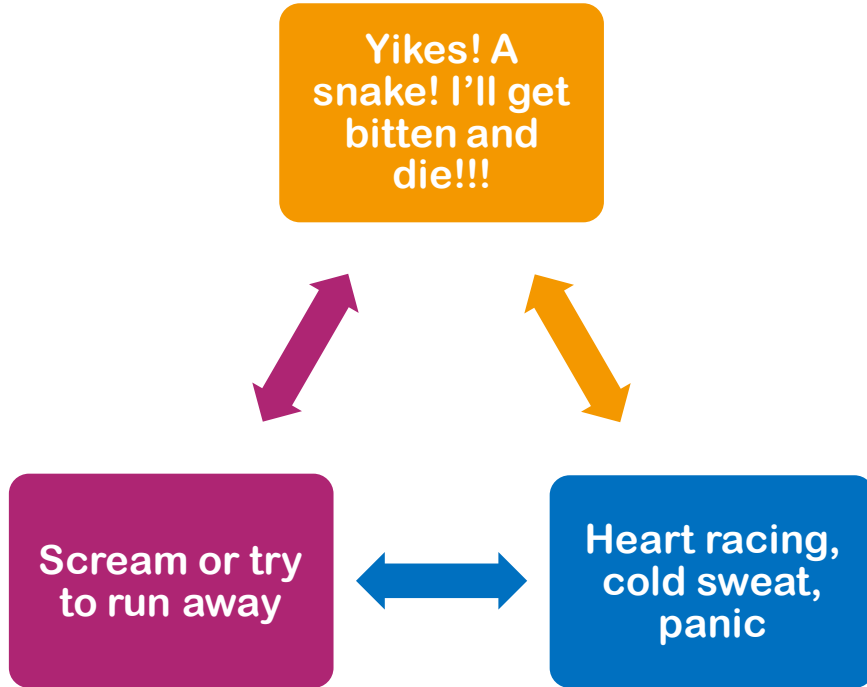
Is their anxiety stopping you from doing what you want to/should be doing?

Anxiety involves three things:

and they all
interact with each
other



Anxious thinking/expectations



Anxious thinking/expectations

Anxiety is a response to something
perceived as dangerous

We often underestimate our ability to cope

And overestimate how awful something is
going to be



Physical sensations



Yikes! A bear!
It'll eat me!!!

Get ready to
fight or run
away

Tensed
muscles, fast
breathing

Physical sensations

are caused by the **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT** response

It kept our ancestors safe and can keep us safe, too.

But it feels horrible!



Anxious behaviour



Seek reassurance

Avoid situations we are nervous about

Dislike trying new things or taking risks

Get upset easily

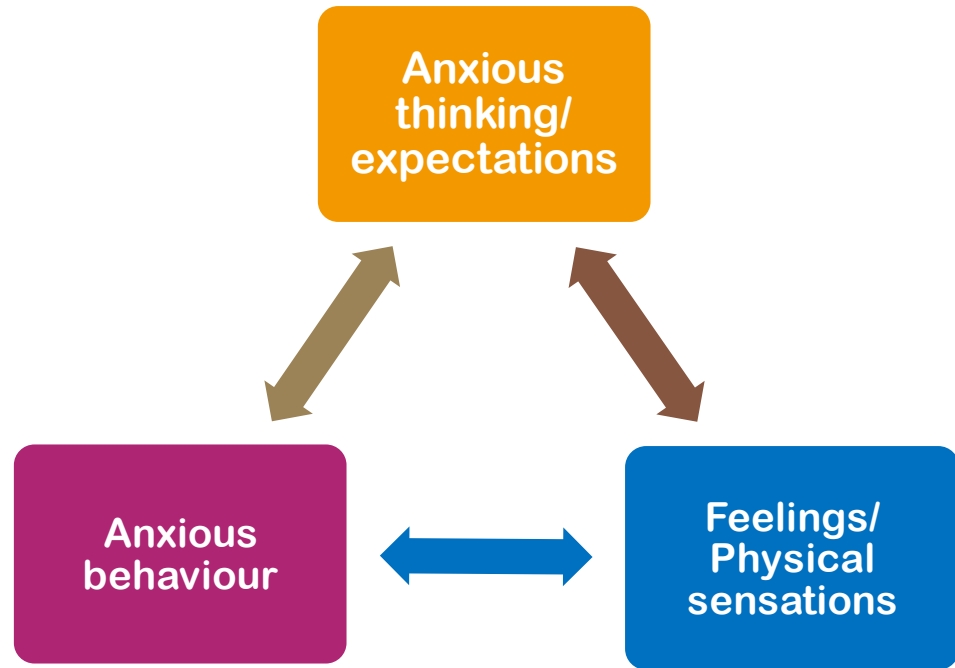
Avoid talking or eye contact

Repeatedly check things

Fidget

Think about a fear or worry that your child may have...

What are their thoughts, behaviours and sensations?



How do fears and worries develop in children?

Anxiety is caused by a whole range of factors:



Genes



Genes

Anxiety tends to run in families

It is likely that we inherit characteristics that make us more inclined to become anxious, such as:

- **How easily things make us jump**
- **How generally emotional we are**

Adverse life events



Fears and worries sometimes get worse after difficult life events.

For some people, difficult experiences can help to build resilience

Different people can respond to similar experiences in very different ways

Learning by example




Learning
by
example

Children learn from watching other people

This helps them stay away from potential danger

But they can also learn some unhelpful responses

Learning from other's reactions



Learning
from
other's
reactions

A parent may inadvertently behave in a way that increases the child's fear (for example, if they are worried that the child will be anxious)

Parents may take over a task that a child is finding difficult, giving them the idea that they *can't* do it

Lack of coping experiences



Lack of
coping
experiences

It is in our nature to want to protect our children

It is normal to step in and protect them

BUT

This may mean that children don't get a chance to learn coping strategies

Strategies to manage anxiety

Help your
child
recognise
anxious
thoughts

Problem
solving

Promote
and build
independ-
ence

Manage
your
child's
worries

Manage
your own
worries

Help your child recognise anxious thoughts

- Recognise their anxious thoughts and expectations- what do they need to learn to help them overcome their anxiety?
- Pick your moment
- Make suggestions rather than giving answers
- Help them to understand their emotions by naming them
- Be empathetic, check your understanding and normalise their worries
- Use open-ended questions and be curious!

Try out these questions

- What is frightening you?
- How do you feel right now?
- What do you think will happen?
- Is there something different that could happen?
- What is the worst thing that can happen?
- What is it about this situation that is making you worried?
- What would you tell a friend in the same situation?
- What would a friend tell you?

Help your
child
recognise
anxious
thoughts



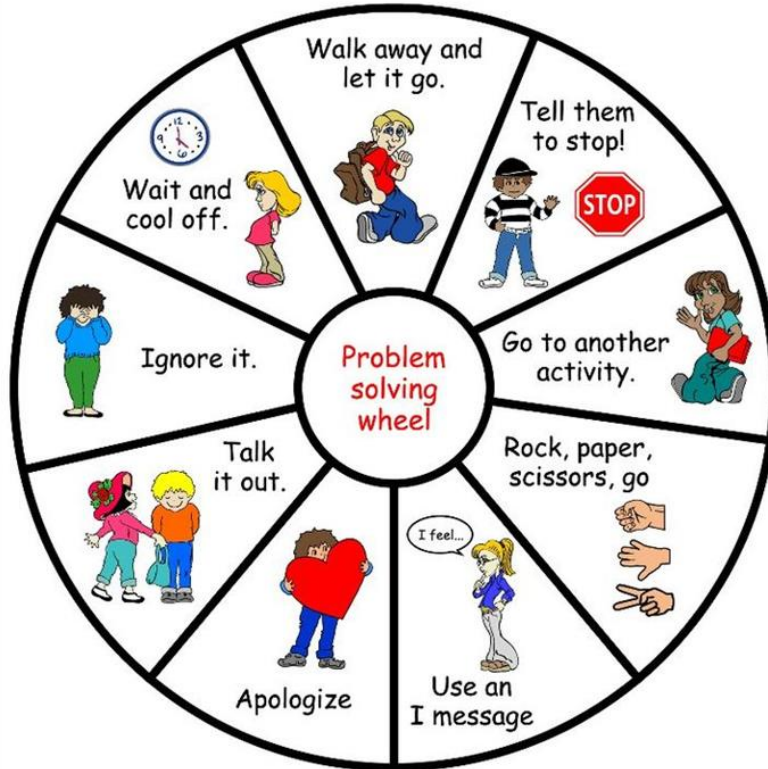
Problem solving

- All children have to face difficult situations at one time or another
- Sometimes your child's worry is realistic
- It's important that we teach them how to solve problems independently

Encourage your child to think of different solutions

Ask your child to think about the pros and cons

What can I do?



Encourage your child to try things out

Promote and build independence

- Show your child how to be independent and do things for themselves
- Be confident in your child and let them know you are confident
- Encourage them to have an internal voice that says 'have a go- I can do this'
- Be tolerant of and respect their struggle- try to be patient and uncritical
- Slowly build up what your child can do

Usual age Skill

| | |
|-----|---|
| 6+ | Choosing own clothes, dressing self |
| 6+ | Tying shoes |
| 7+ | Taking a bath independently |
| 7+ | Brushing teeth or combing hair without help |
| 8+ | Putting dirty clothes in the washing basket |
| 9+ | Making breakfast or a packed lunch |
| 9+ | Packing own bag for school |
| 10+ | Choosing own haircut/ hairstyle |
| 11+ | Getting up in the morning without a reminder (using an alarm) |
| 11+ | Being responsible for own bedroom (tidiness, decorations) |
| 12+ | Arrange own transport to certain places (e.g. bike, bus) |



**Promote
and build
independ-
ence**

IMPORTANT NOTE

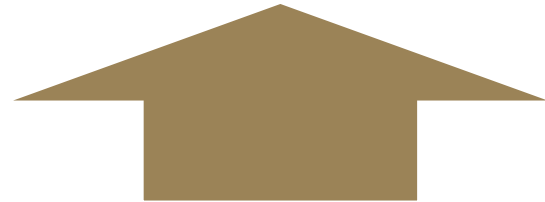
Parenting is a really difficult balancing act between:



Protecting children and
keeping them safe



Helping children to develop the skills
they will need as they grow up



No one gets it right every time

Manage your child's worries

Relaxing
breathing

Grounding
techniques

Worry time

Books

Relaxing breathing

Hot Chocolate Breathing



Pretend you are holding a warm mug of hot chocolate. Take in a **slow, deep breath** through your nose to smell the treat. Then **breathe out** through your mouth to cool it off. **Repeat this five times.** Deep breathing is a great tool to calm your mind and your body!



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This is a lovely breathing exercise, as it:

- encourages slow and steady breathing, which can really help to get rid of the unpleasant physical feelings that anxiety can cause
- puts a pleasant and comforting image in your head

Grounding
techniques
aim...

...to bring
you
back...

...into the
present
moment.

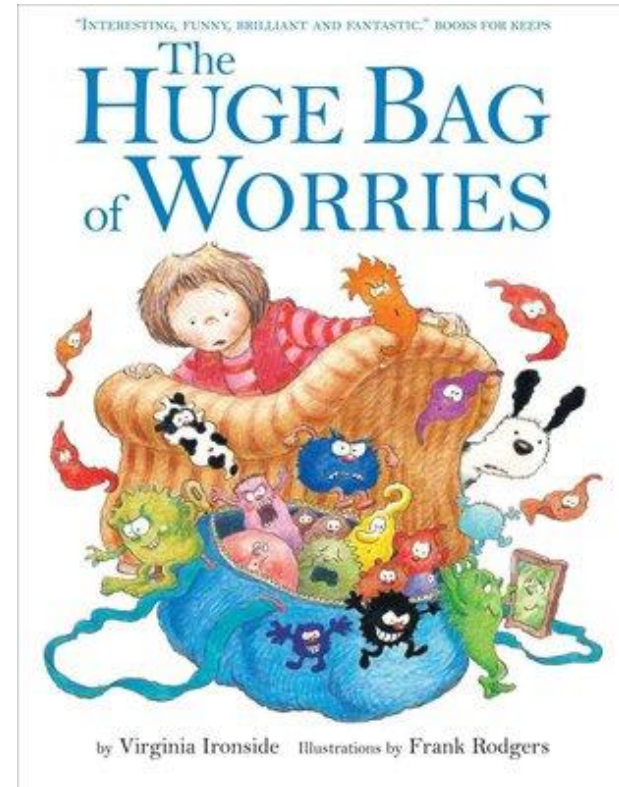
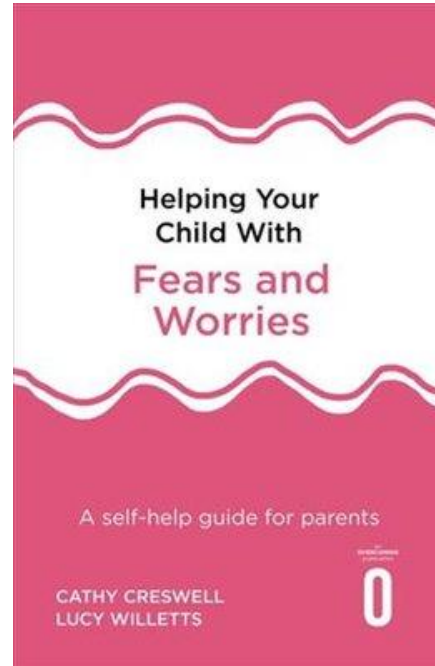
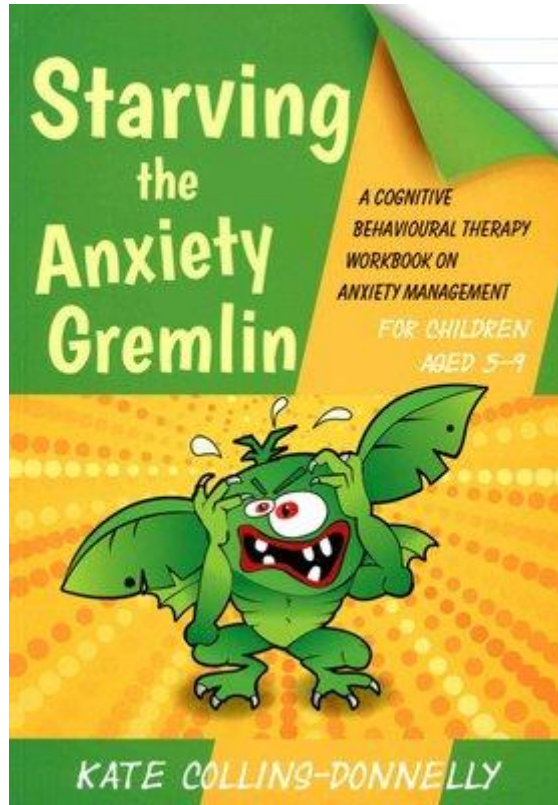
- 5** things I can see
- 4** things I can hear
- 3** things I can touch or feel
- 2** things I can smell or like the smell of
- 1** slow deep breath

Worry time

1. Decide on the worry time period when you and your child can talk about their worries
2. Set aside worries when they arise during the day – use a notebook or a worry jar
3. Use relaxing breathing or grounding techniques to return to the present moment
4. Use the designated worry time to discuss the worries

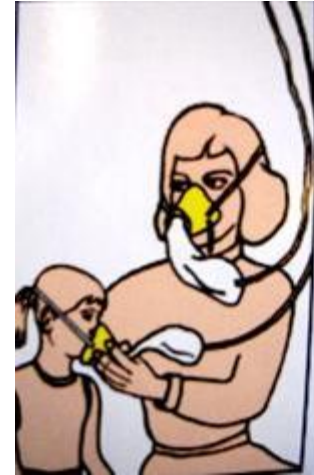


Books



Manage your own worries

- Be aware of your own anxiety responses
- Be aware that your child might well notice when you're anxious
- Try and think of ways to manage your own anxious feelings, such as the techniques described above
- Sometimes this just isn't possible, so problem solve another way round it e.g. can your partner or a friend help out?
- Be kind to yourself. Being a parent is hard!



Put on your own
oxygen mask
before helping
those around you.

