

Understanding and Supporting Worries

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- You are under no obligation to share personal information with the group and/or CAMHS practitioner unless you wish to do so. All information you learn about group members is confidential.
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Understanding and Supporting Worries

Why are we here today?

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

Mental Health

Mental Disorder

A syndrome characterised by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation or behaviour that reflects significant dysfunction in the psychological process underlying mental functioning.



Most diagnosable mental health disorders in children begin after the age of 14.

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.
- Their neurodevelopmental stage.
- Emotional regulation.
- In certain cases, a neurodevelopmental disorder e.g. ASD/ADHD.



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

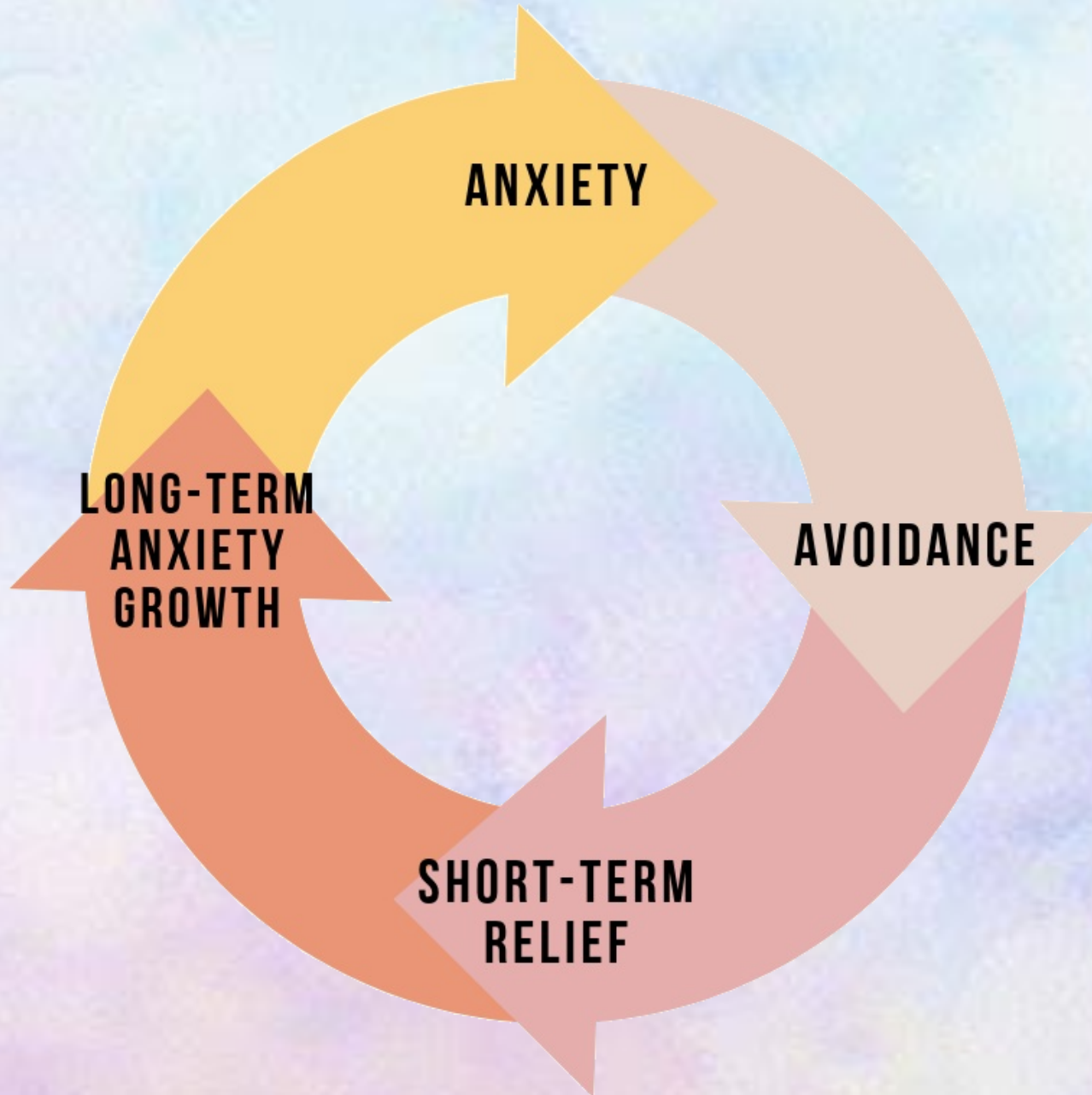
This may involve processes such as rethinking a challenging situation to reduce anger or anxiety, focusing on reasons to remain calm or be happy and containing our emotions until a more appropriate time.

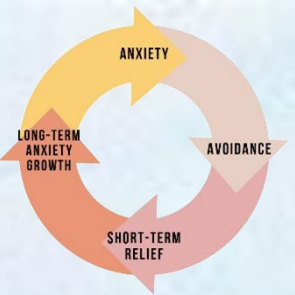


The Anxiety Cycle

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

Child is worried about going to school. Child is crying.

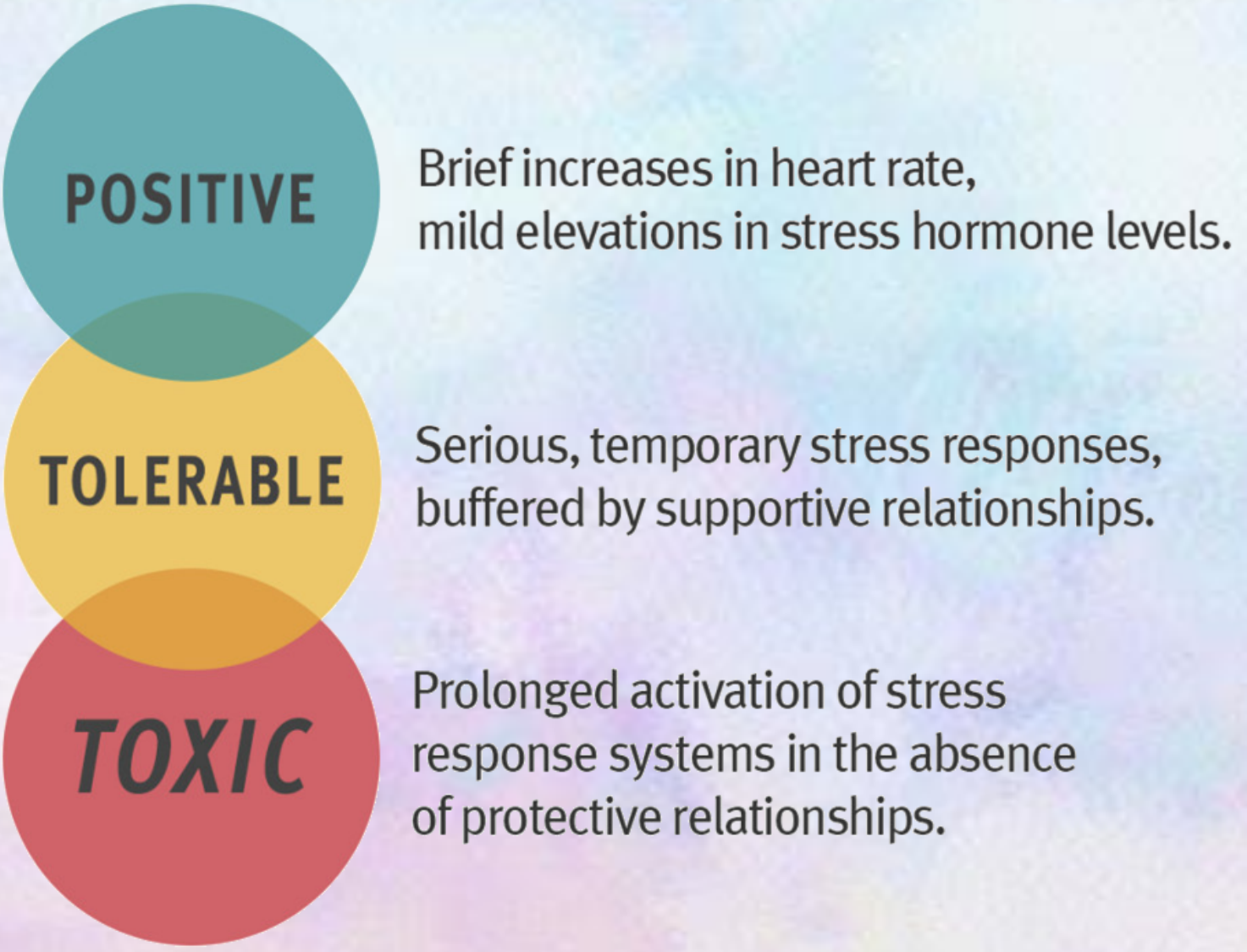
Child stays off school. Mum/Dad is also working from home.

Child learns that being off school and at home with Mum/Dad is safe and free from worry.

Child feels relief from worries and calms down.

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

Stress is a natural and inevitable part of childhood.



The diagram consists of three overlapping circles stacked vertically. The top circle is teal and labeled 'POSITIVE'. The middle circle is yellow and labeled 'TOLERABLE'. The bottom circle is red and labeled 'TOXIC'. Each circle has a corresponding text description to its right. The circles overlap in the center, creating a common intersection area.

POSITIVE

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

TOLERABLE

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC

Prolonged activation of stress
response systems in the absence
of protective relationships.

**Positive relationships
and resilience act as
protective factors for
all types of stress.**

When your child has worries...

Identify



The first step is your child trying to let you know what is worrying them. Asking them what they are thinking about or what they have coming up in the day can help them if they are unsure.

Explore



This is where you find out how your child feels. Knowing why something worries them so much can be helpful. You may want to talk about what their behaviour has been or what they have done to help themselves.

Support



This is where you facilitate your child coping with their thoughts and feelings. You may give them time to talk, strategies to calm down or you may need to help them challenge their thoughts and perceptions.

Identify

The method we use to find out what a child is worried about need to be age appropriate. Sometimes, a child finds it hard to articulate exactly what is worrying them, so we need to help them.

Drawing

Walk and talk

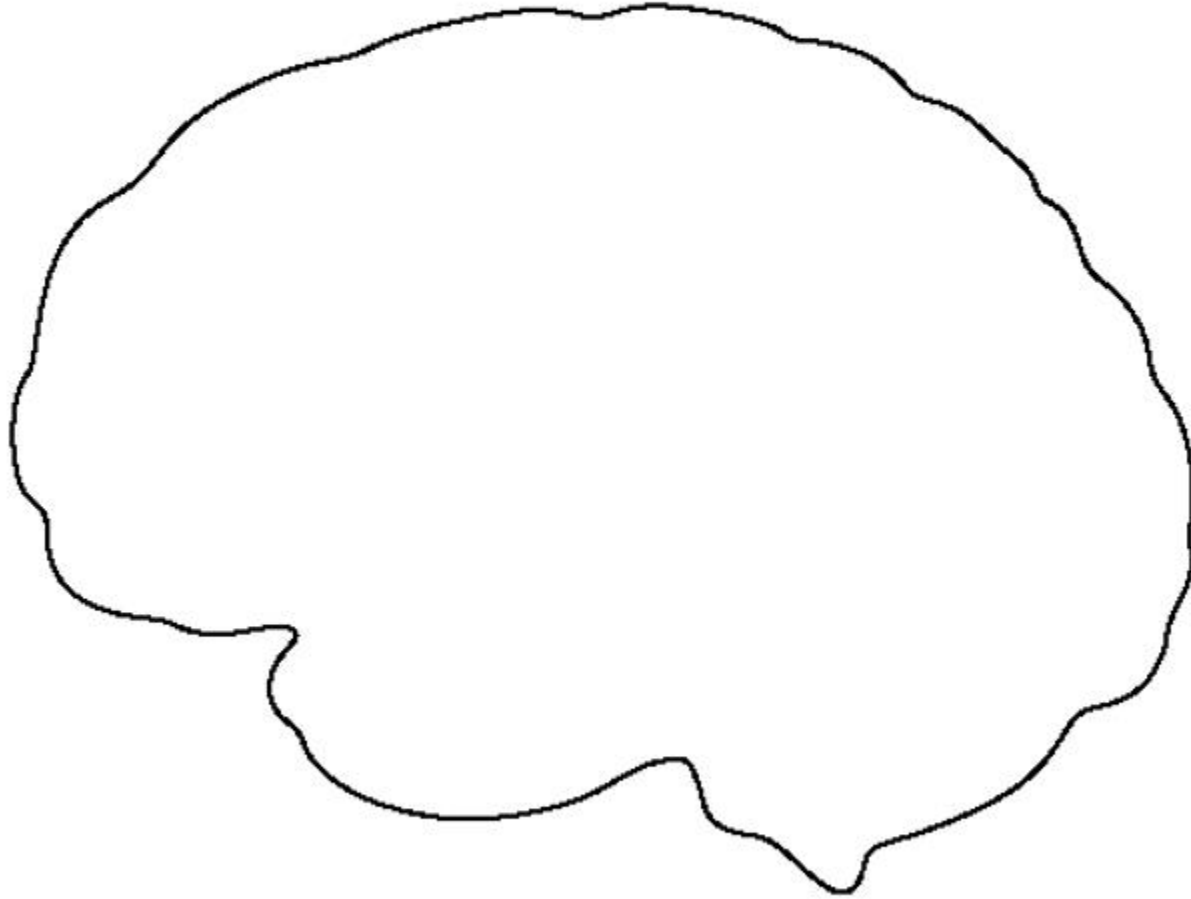
Building

Play and chat

Role play/story telling



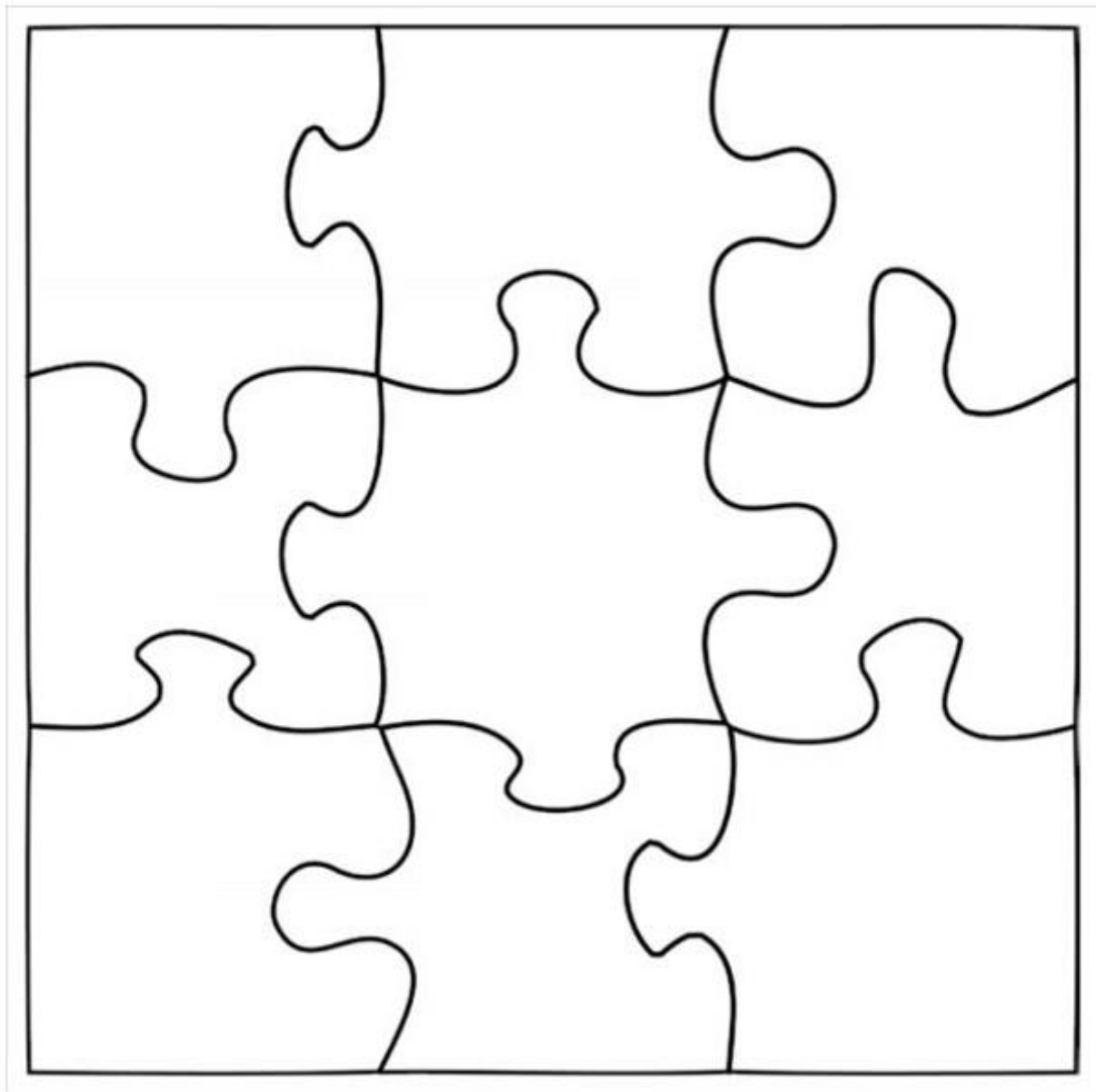
What's Inside Your Brain?

☐ _____☐ _____☐ _____☐ _____☐ _____





JIGSAW OF YOU

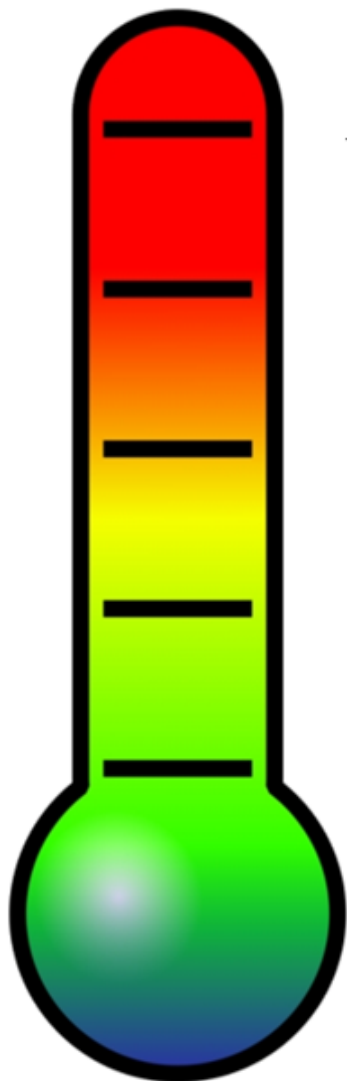




Thoughts Thermometer



Some thoughts affect our body more than others. Just like bubbles, some are small and float away easily, whereas others are really big and are hard to make go away. Think about some thoughts that you have and how much they affect you. You could also think about some activities.



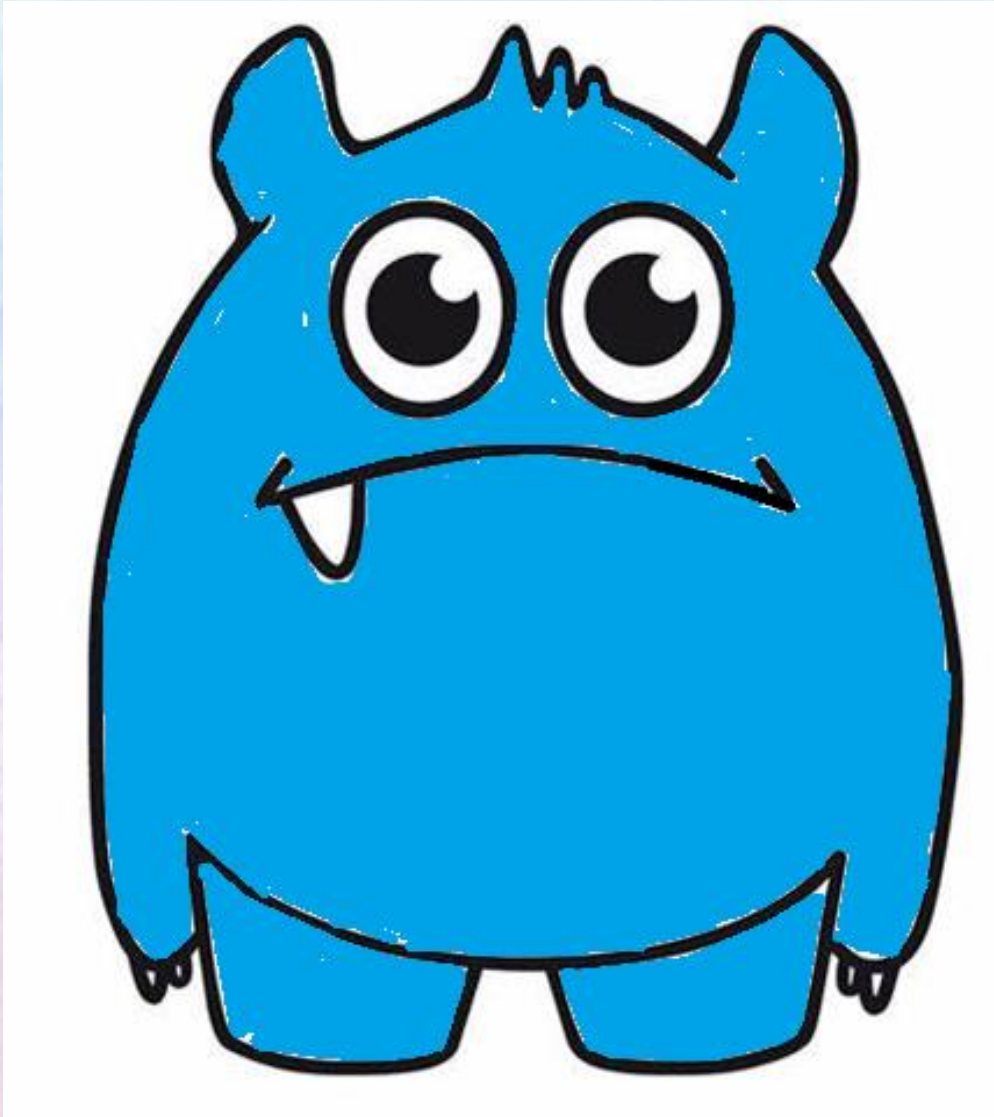
This can be a written activity or simply place on the fridge for a child to indicate how they are feeling with a magnet.

This encourages children to reflect and to share they emotional state.

A child being able to identify how they are feeling is an important skill.



Worry Monster



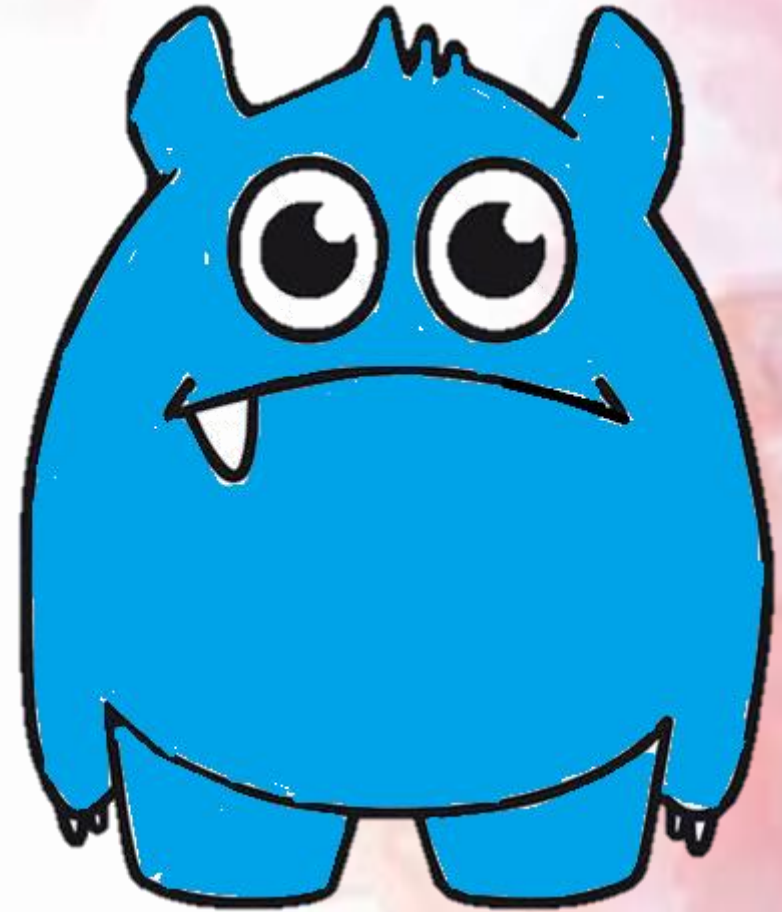
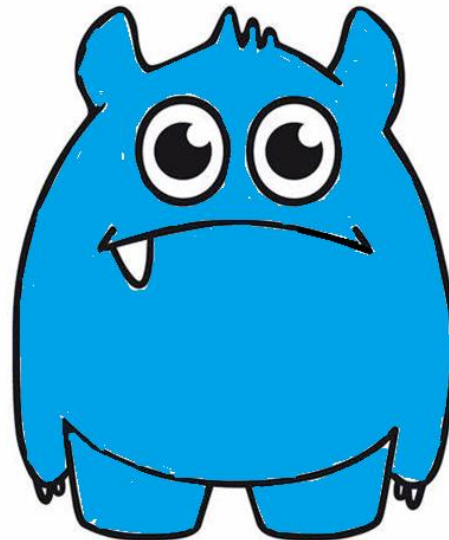
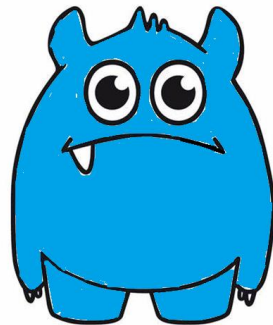
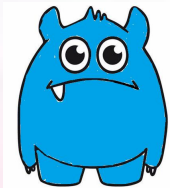
Getting a child to design, draw and even name a worry monster that is causing their worries can help them to externalise their worries.

It helps them to feel that their worries can be controlled and are not a part of them.

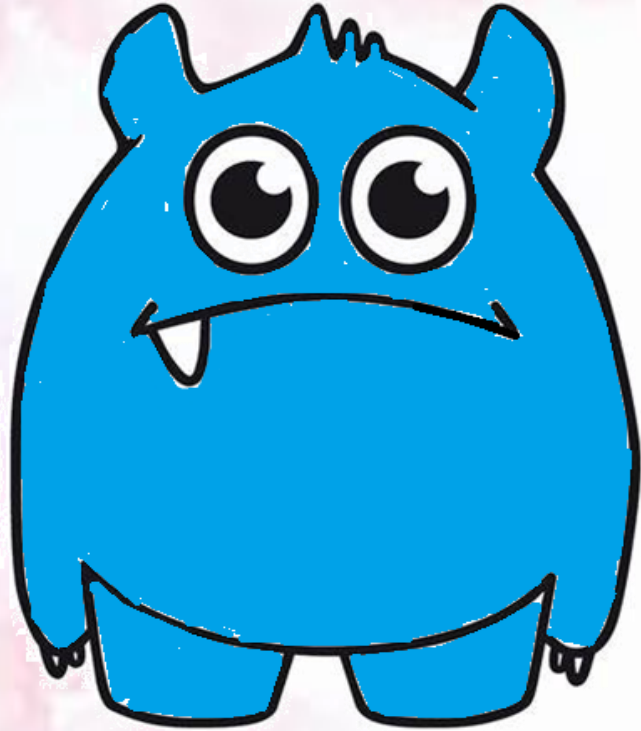
They can then write down or tell you what the monster is saying/making them do or feel.

Are your worries growing?

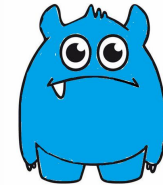
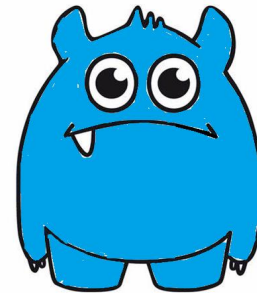
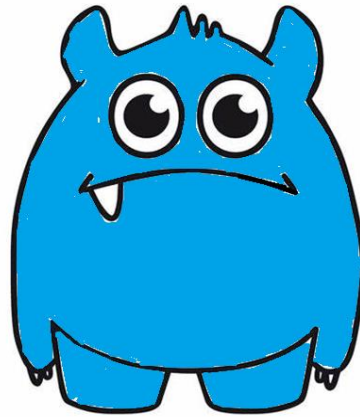
Each person's worry can be different. Everyone's worry could look different.



By feeding your worry monster they will grow bigger and bigger and bigger. We sometimes feed our worry by thinking negatively or letting the worrying thoughts go around and around in our heads.



How can we shrink the worries?



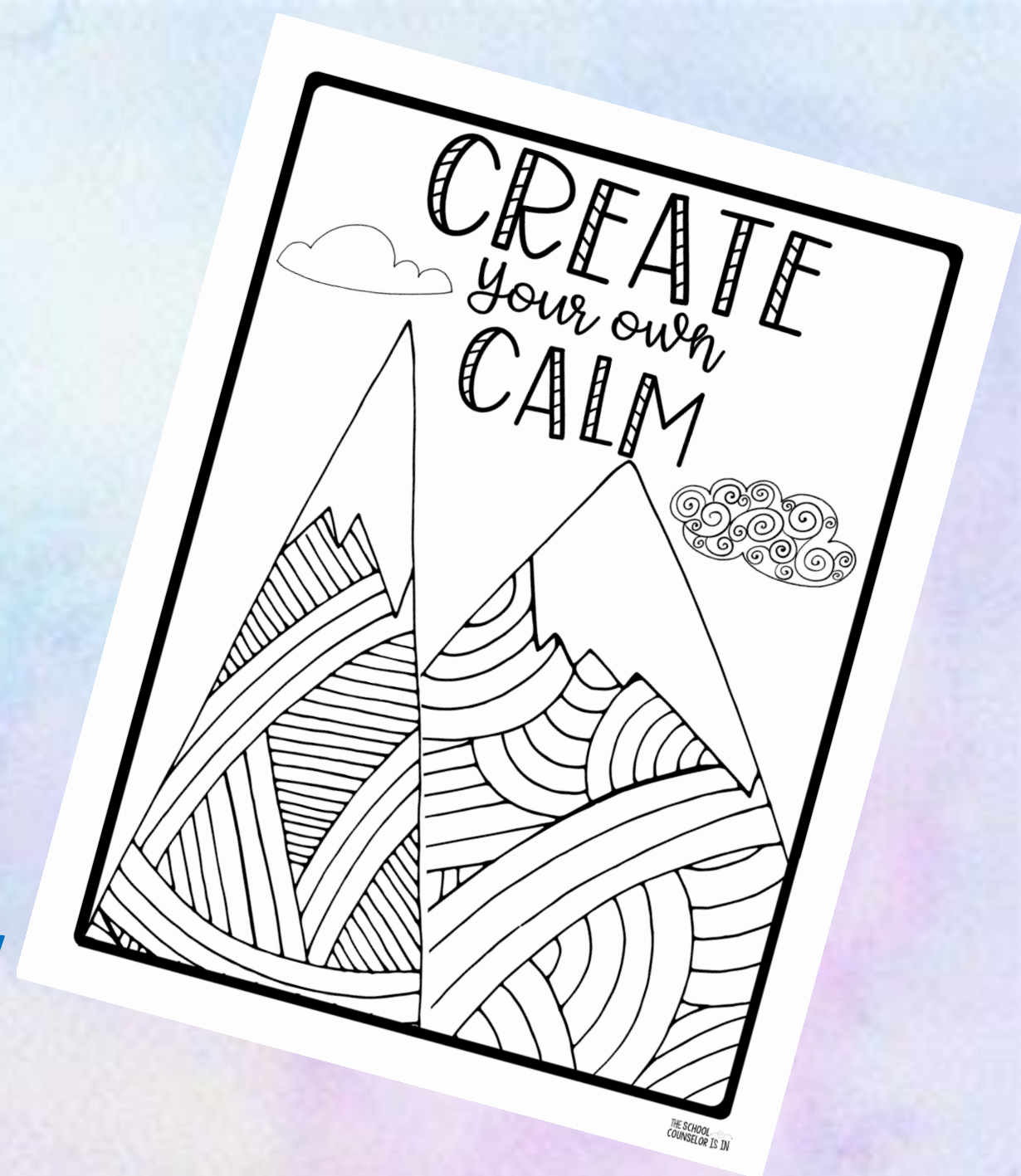
If we turn down the volume of negative thoughts, just as we turn down the volume of a TV programme or music, we can stop trying to feed the worry and make it shrink.



Mindfulness



Mindfulness can encourage children to slow down and reflect on themselves and what they are experiencing. This can help them to notice their worries and be better able to explain them.

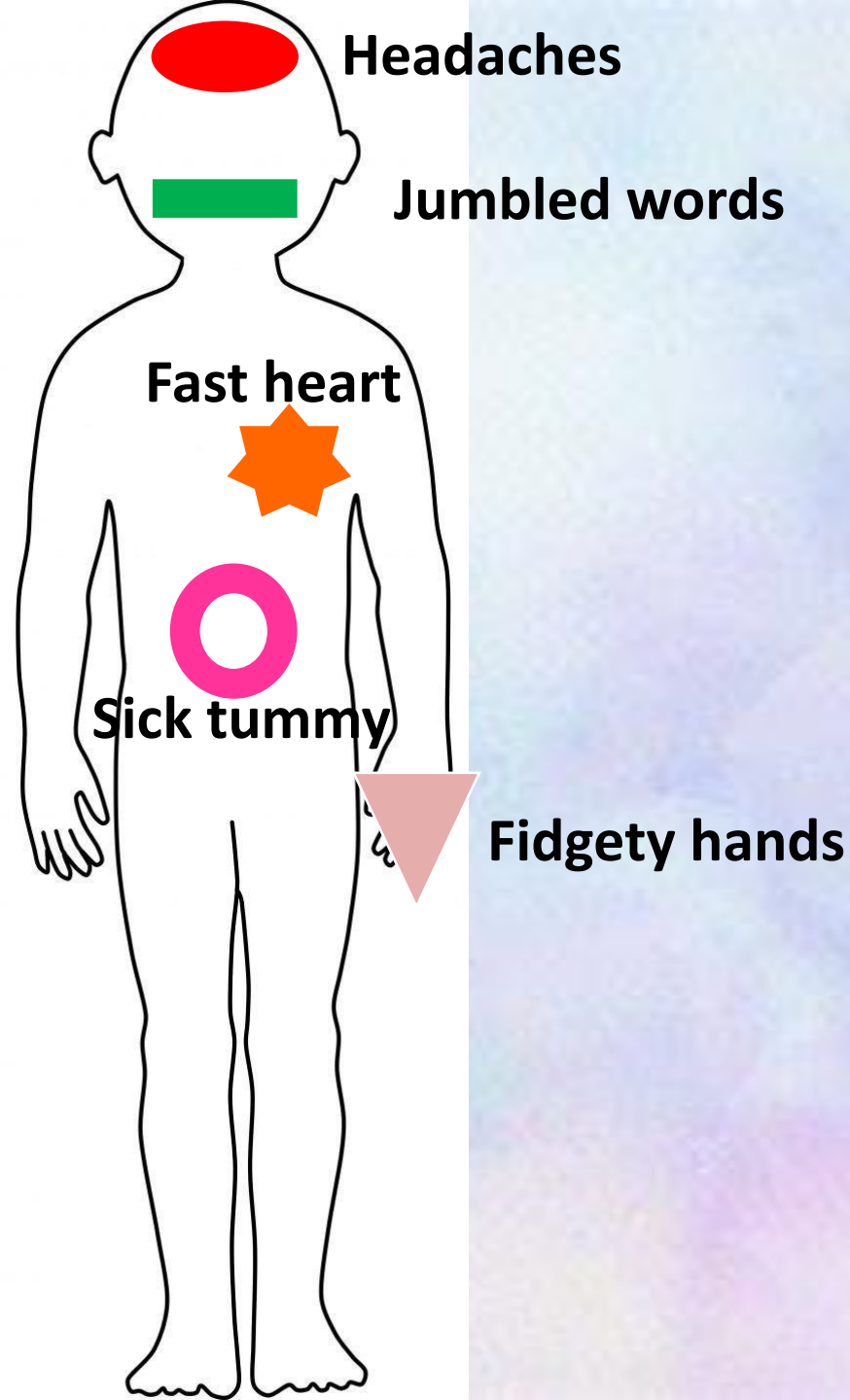




Body Map

This is an essential part of exploration for a child: understanding the impact of worry on the body.

The more understanding they have about this, the less it will bother them when they feel it.



Explore Emotions Rollercoaster



Explore **Worry Pan**



Emotional Regulation



Window of Tolerance

Everyone has an emotional cup. When we wake up, most of our cups already have something in them.

Throughout the day, emotions, events, tasks and physical need fill our cup. For some children this happens slowly, for others seemingly 'simple' events can cause the cup to fill up quickly.

Eventually the cup will overflow if we do not do things to empty our cup along the way.



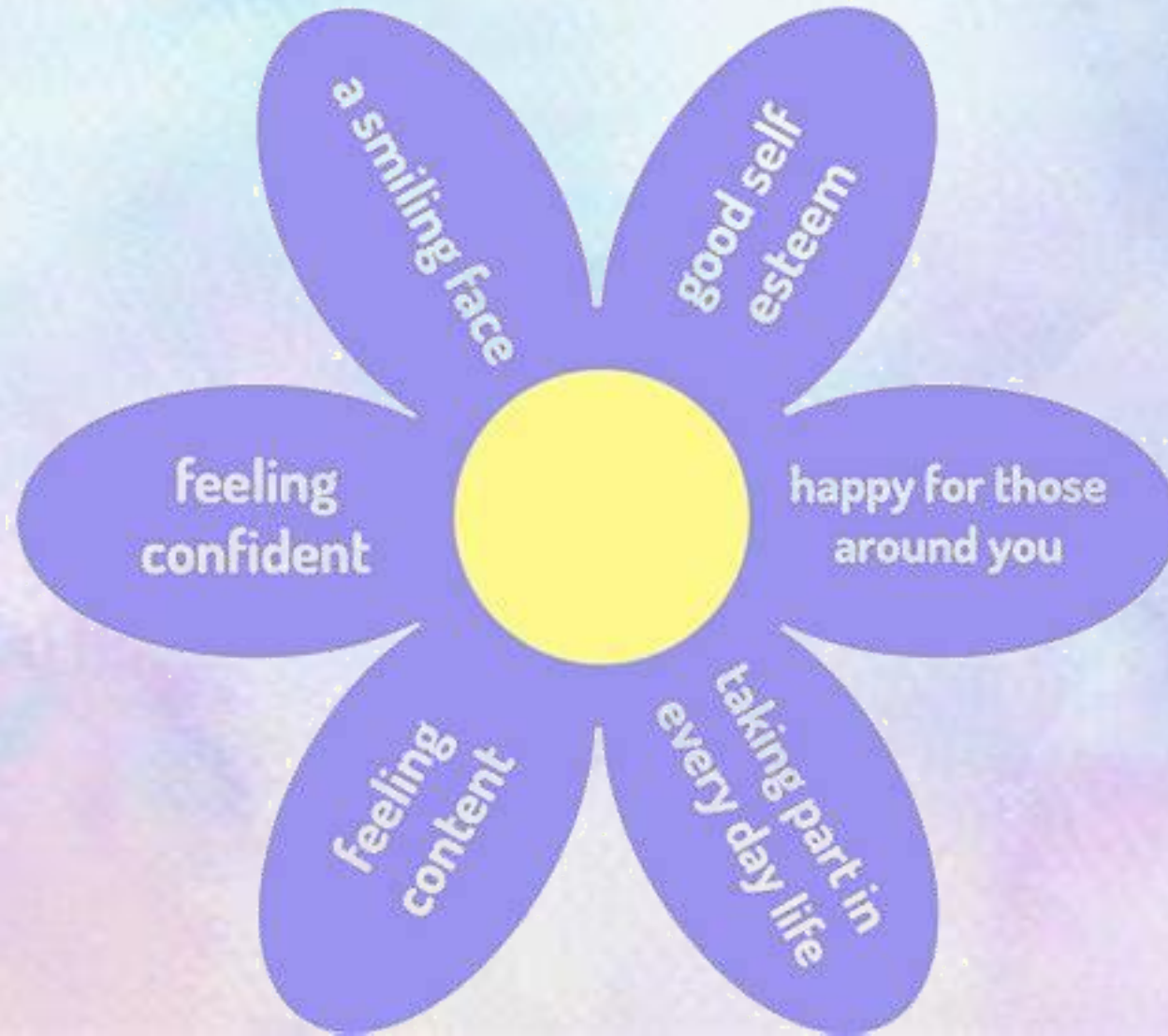
Support

This can look very different for each child.

We need to remember **not to reinforce the anxiety cycle** which allows worries to embed and grow.

The ultimate goal here is to facilitate your child being able to **manage and cope with their emotions themselves**. Until this is the case, we need to help them.

Empower Children to Take Ownership of their Emotional Wellbeing



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.



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.

Challenging thoughts verbally and cajoling a child to see an alternative view is a simple way to try to alter their thought process. It shouldn't be a case of "I'm right, you're wrong" rather "*Okay, you could be right, but what if I'm right?*".

Negative Thinking Patterns

I don't want an award in assembly, I'd have to go to the front.

Okay, what would happen if you went to the front?

Well, everyone would look at me.

What would be so bad about people looking at you?

If I got nervous, everyone would see me and know.

Okay, why would that matter? What would you do?

I'd have to leave and go to the toilet.

Well, that would be okay wouldn't it?

... I suppose so.

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.



All or nothing

Seeing only one point of view.



Catastrophising

Thinking the absolute worst.



Mistaking

Thinking that thoughts are facts.



Predicting

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



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.

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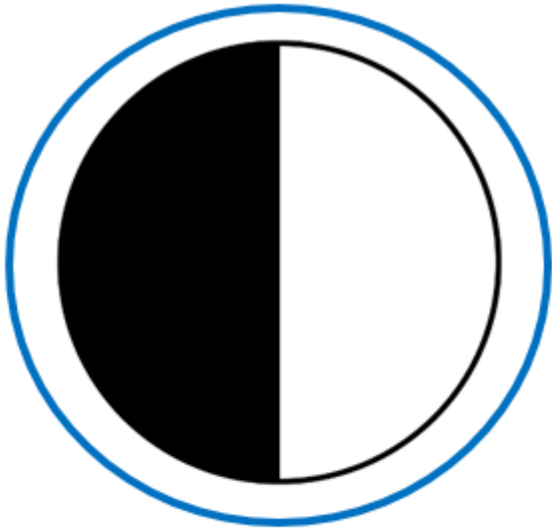


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Mind Reading

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.

POW!

Is there another way to see this?

What evidence is there?

How would someone else see this?

BAM!

Is this helpful?

What advice would you give someone else?



Challenging Negative Thoughts

Is this fact or opinion?

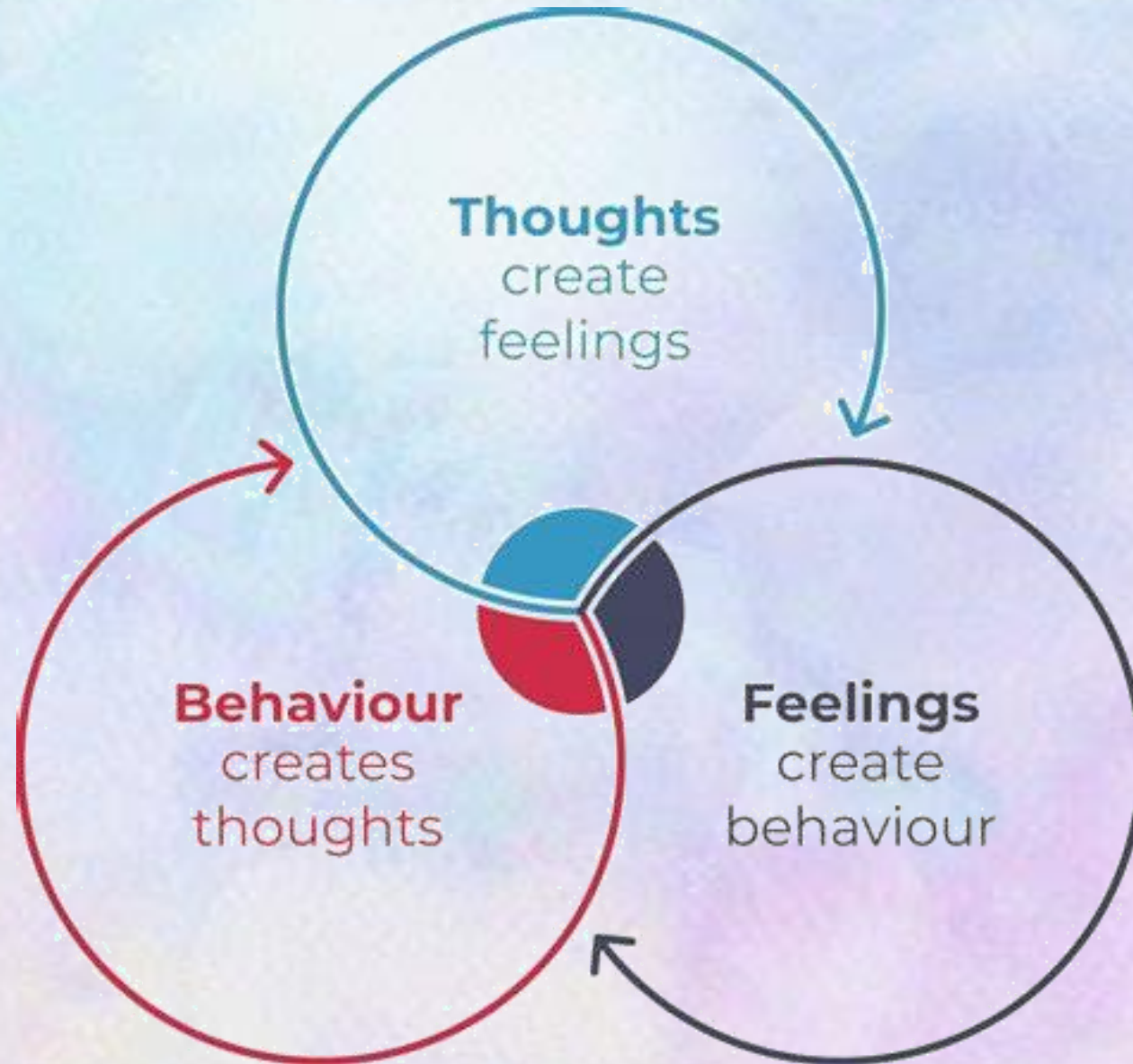
First **identify the thought** – you need to know your challenger!



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

Negative Thinking Patterns

CBT Cycle





I can make it work.

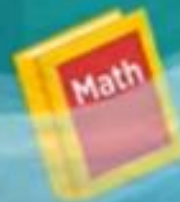
I'm so bad at algebra.

What is the point of trying?

When we are surrounded by our thoughts, it's easy to get caught up

I need to buy

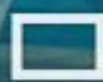
cause zits?



Don't stress!!!
HEALTH



0:57 / 4:00



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.



Normalising Worries



Everyone has Emotions

Without emotions, life would be pretty boring!



We need to realise that humans are **not robots**, and all emotions are okay to feel.

Learning to **manage your emotions** is part of growing up – even some adults are still getting the hang of it!

‘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 that they started with.

I find that balancing these questions works well to change their outlook.

'What If?' Land – Balancing their questions

Having a new class teacher

What if they're
really strict?

What if the work
is too hard?



What if they let
you do your
favourite things?

What if I enjoy
the work?

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

‘What If?’ Land

Sometimes, the simple act of writing things down is enough to make worries shrink.

Worries can often be irrational, so logic is their biggest weakness.

What Could Happen vs. What Will Happen

When you are worried about something, it's easy to imagine the worst thing that could possibly happen. In reality, these worries may never come true. What **could happen** isn't the same as what **will happen**.

 What is something you are worried about?

Thinking about what **will happen**, instead of what **could happen**, can help you worry less. Whenever you start to worry, answer these questions:

 What are some clues that your worry will *not* come true?

 If your worry *does not* come true, what will probably happen instead?

 If your worry *does* come true, how will you handle it? Will you eventually be okay?

 After answering these questions, how has your worry changed?

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?



Where will I go to be safe?

A large, light green rounded rectangle intended for writing a safe location.

How will I manage my emotions?

A large, light pink rounded rectangle intended for writing strategies to manage emotions.

Who will I speak to?

A large, light yellow speech bubble intended for writing the name of someone to talk to.

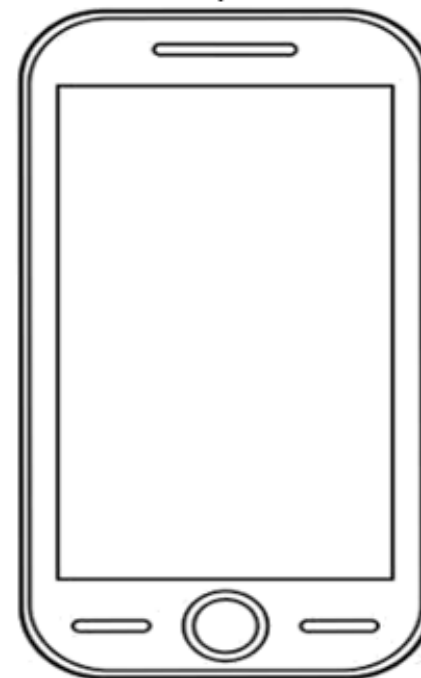
What can I do on my phone to help me?



MoodGym



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.

Color in the reactions that happen to your body when you start getting anxious.



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Education is Empowering

Complete a 'body map' with your child and help them to understand the impact that worries can have in their body.

YouTube videos of fight, flight and freeze – this is your body's way of preparing to face a fear but sometimes it makes a mistake and over reacts!

An Emotionally Open Home

Open discussions
around all
emotions.

Emotion 'check ins'.

Self-reflect.

Feelings chart on
the fridge.

Good sleep/eat
routines.

Time to talk through
thoughts and
feelings.

Modelling how to
emotionally
regulate.





An Emotionally Open Home

- Rate the Day
- Triumph and Challenge
- Appreciation Post
- One thing I would change...



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!



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



We live in a world filled with technology!



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!



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.



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

Understanding and Supporting Worries

Key Points

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

Thank You

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