

Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service



Surrey and Borders Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



Anxiety Presentation for parents/carers of children in Primary school setting:

Nikki Brunton-Smith

Emotional
Wellbeing School
Nurse

Nov 2021



Aims and objectives

- .To gain an understanding of what anxiety is.
- .To gain understanding and knowledge of how our body works when anxious and why we have these bodily reactions.
- .To understand what is normal anxiety.
- .To gain knowledge and understanding how children can present when anxious.
- .To explore some how anxiety can be managed by exploring some helpful suggestions and strategies.
- .To know where to go and get help further if needed.

What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it'



Anxiety is an emotion....

Emotions are how our brains make sense of what is going on around us and move us into action.

Feeling anxious at times is **normal** especially when we experience something new and is part of every day life.

You can feel anxious because you care and want to do well or when you have to do something new or different or challenging.

Learning to accept that we can feel anxious from time to time is key to learning to manage it and understand it can be a way that we grow



Anxiety becomes a problem when....

.. it stops your child from enjoying normal life, when it affects their school, work, family relationships, friendships and social activities.....

This is when anxiety has taken over and your child has lost control



But where does anxiety come from ?

When our ancestors went out hunting for food they sometimes came across danger.

The danger would trigger an internal worry alarm system in the brain called the **Fight or Flight** response which is a defence mechanism wired into our brains to get us out of danger and stay safe.

Anxiety is a survival mechanism that still plays a role in modern times.

This defence mechanism is a good thing. It is there to protect you

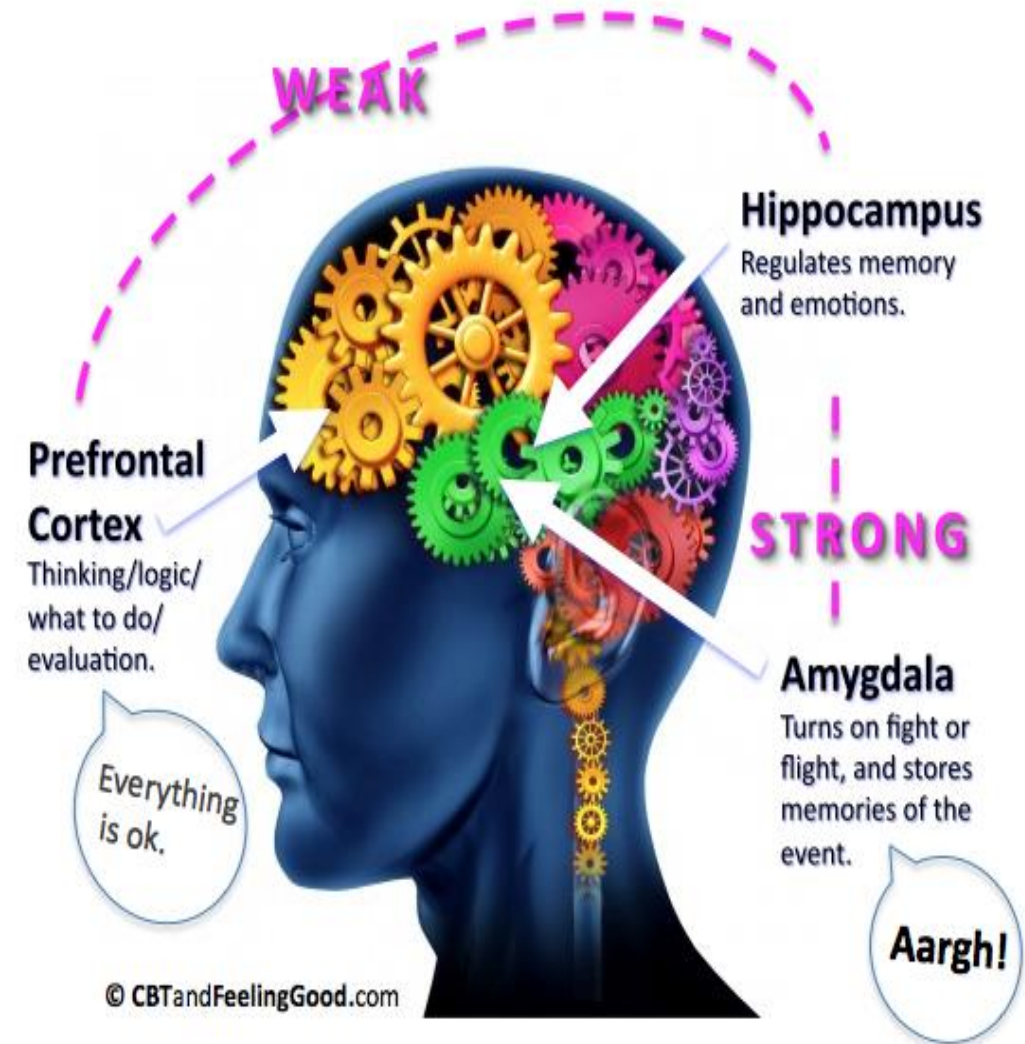


<https://cbl4panic.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-anxiety-cure-cbl4panic-fight-flight-response.png>

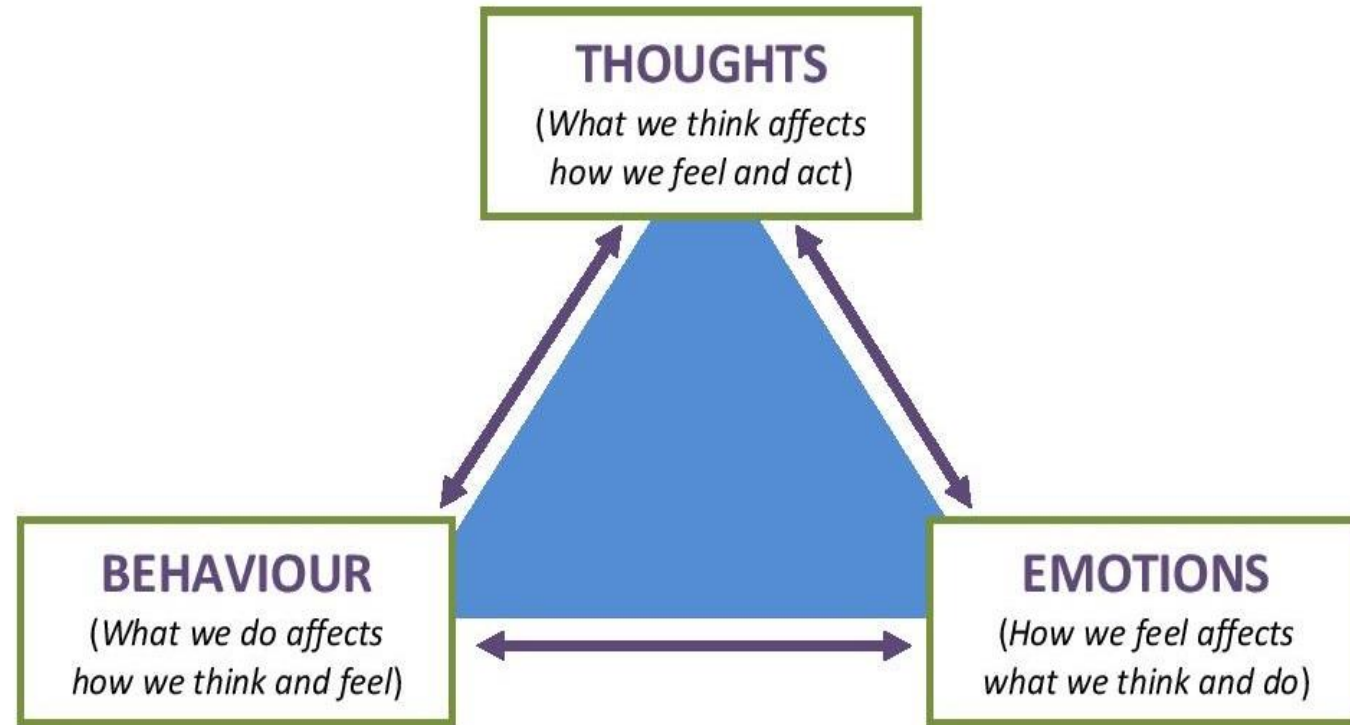
How Anxiety Works:

Your brain is made up of two main parts:

- **Thinking brain** (logical, rational, memory)
- **Feeling brain** (emotions)
- When the worry alarm is triggered, the Emotional Brain hijacks the system and takes over making it very difficult to think straight.
- It makes you act instinctively without needing to think



Vicious Circle of anxiety



How does anxiety present?

- **Children are often not able to verbalise that they feel anxious, but will highlight and get investigated for physical symptoms**

- **Common physical symptoms:**

Upset tummy/stomach pains

Headaches

Trembling

Shaking

Perspiring

Shortness of breath

Dizziness



Chest pain

Flushing

Feeling sick

Wanting to go to the toilet a lot

Vomiting/diarrhoea

Stiff muscles/tension

Reported sleep problems.

Additional signs that can be seen in the younger child

They might include....

- Avoidance , crying, clingy,
- school refusal
- Easily upset, sensitive
- Change in behaviour
- Resistant to change
- Melt downs, anger
- Expecting the worst
- May affect sleep



But what types of anxiety do children of this age Experience?

- .General anxiety
- .Separation anxiety
- .Phobias
- .OCD

- .Anxiety related to trauma
- .Anxiety related to neurodevelopmental issues
- .Social anxiety – in older children
- .Health anxiety – in older children



Possible triggers or stress factors:

- . **Changes in routine-** changes to school routine, how to get to school, attending a new childminder/after school club.
- . **Significant events-** births, deaths, moving house
- . **Changes in relationships-** parental separation
- . **Even if changes are positive or exciting, the change may feel uncomfortable and precipitate an anxious response in the child**
- . **Child attachment to parents and significant others-**Anxiety as a behaviour to draw in parents/caregivers, for more care or attention



But why do some children develop anxiety?

Behavioural factors

The child's anxious behaviours may have been developed by the child to cope with the feelings of anxiety associated with certain people, environments, or situations, such as attending school. For the younger child anxiety can become a mode of expression.

Genetic influence

History of panic disorder/anxiety/depression in parents >>> anxiety disorders in children

Tentative evidence!

Temperament

Anxious infants who struggle to self soothe or self regulate may have a predisposition to later develop anxiety disorders

Neurodiversity

Intolerance of uncertainty – misunderstanding others intentions (Deliberate/accidental)
Executive function- the ability to manage some behaviours and traits ,Sensory sensitivity

What is a normal developmental fear in primary aged children?

- **Fear of the dark.**
- **Fear of danger.**
- **Tests.**
- **Peer rejection.**
- **Insects.**
- **Animals.**
- **Ghosts.**



- .Bad people.
- .Anticipating something bad will happen –
- .Parental separation etc.
- .Being home alone.
- .Sickness.
- .Dying.
- .School failure.
- .Peer rejection.
- .What others think of them.

The **Red** being the younger development years, and **Black** as they progress through Primary School.

Other general worries in this age group

- .**Separating Fantasy and Reality**- nightmares/dreams seem real
- .**Managing Rules**- 'will I get told off if an adults thinks I'm messy?'
- .**Fearing the Unknown** -new teacher, class trip
- .**Experiencing School-Related Fears**- speaking aloud, not finishing work
- Focus on Cooperation**- more aware of others and their opinion, fragile egos get easily offended by playful taunts
- .**Fears of 'individuality'** –fear of wanting to fit in and whilst being unique
- .**Fear of Change**-changes with friends/family can feel like a loss

**Okay...but what can I do to help
?**



Things to avoid.....

Avoid dismissing a child's emotions: saying 'don't be scared' can lead the child to think they are wrong and bad for feeling that way

Avoid lying to avoid an emotional reaction: 'it won't hurt' when it will may lead to a sense of distrust and increase the emotional response



Avoid shaming a child for their emotions: teasing a child may lead to a sense of shame and undermines confidence...humour can be a useful distraction but not if it minimises the child's feelings.

Avoid ignoring a child's emotions: this may tell the child that their emotions are not important and limit opportunities to learn new ways of managing emotions

Emotional regulation...the basics

- **A good nights sleep-** have a bed time routine and set bed time, avoid screens 1 hour before bed and promote quiet calm activities. Try not to talk about worries at bed time unless you have to.
- **Healthy and regular meals-** maintain blood sugars, avoid caffeine and too much sugar.
- **Be active, have lots of fun, socialise with friends but also set time to relax** (try not to overschedule your child.)
- **Be available to talk through problems and worries,** -remember to praise your child for effort, not just results.
- **Offer your child stability and clear behaviour boundaries,**-they will feel secure.
- **Have good communication with your school.**
- **Your wellbeing is vital , get some support for yourself.**



Support your child to strategize



Adapted from Butler and Hope 2007

Worry Time:



- **Allow 15 minutes per day to talk** about worries. This is time together so really make the most of talking and listening about whatever worries. **There should be no interruptions**, no TV, no telephone, no sister, or brother wanting to play or have help with their homework.
- Worry Time is the time to say whatever the child wants to say about their worries, during this time mum/ dad/ guardian should listen and try and help.

There is one important rule about Worry Time:

At all other times when your child feels that their head is full of worries, they must write them all down and pop them into a WORRY BOX, A BOOK, - ready for discussion later.

Get the child to question their anxiety thoughts



- Questions to ask my thoughts and worries
- 1. What am I worrying about? Have I coped with this before?
- 2. What is the proof that this thought is true or will happen? What is the evidence that this thought is not true or will not happen?
- 3. What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
- 4. What would a friend say about my thought?
- 5. Am I 100% sure that this thought will happen?
- 6. **Is this a feeling or a fact?**

Anxious Behaviours- graded exposure work

Make a plan with the child to approach whatever makes them feel anxious gradually:

1. Break the worry down into manageable chunks – write a list of what makes them anxious
2. Create a hierarchy or ‘ladder’ of their anxious situations and fears, by rating how anxious they would feel (0-10) and place them in order- 10 being worst
3. Start with no1 and practice & rehearse (repeatedly!) until the child feels less and less anxious....
 - ❖ Encourage the young person to think “*what did I think would happen?*” e.g. the anxious thought will come true, then consider “*what actually did happen?*” e.g. I coped with my worry/fear....**then move onto step 2 when ready...this process can take a while and you go at the child's pace, if you need to take a step back and redo the previous step until ready again**

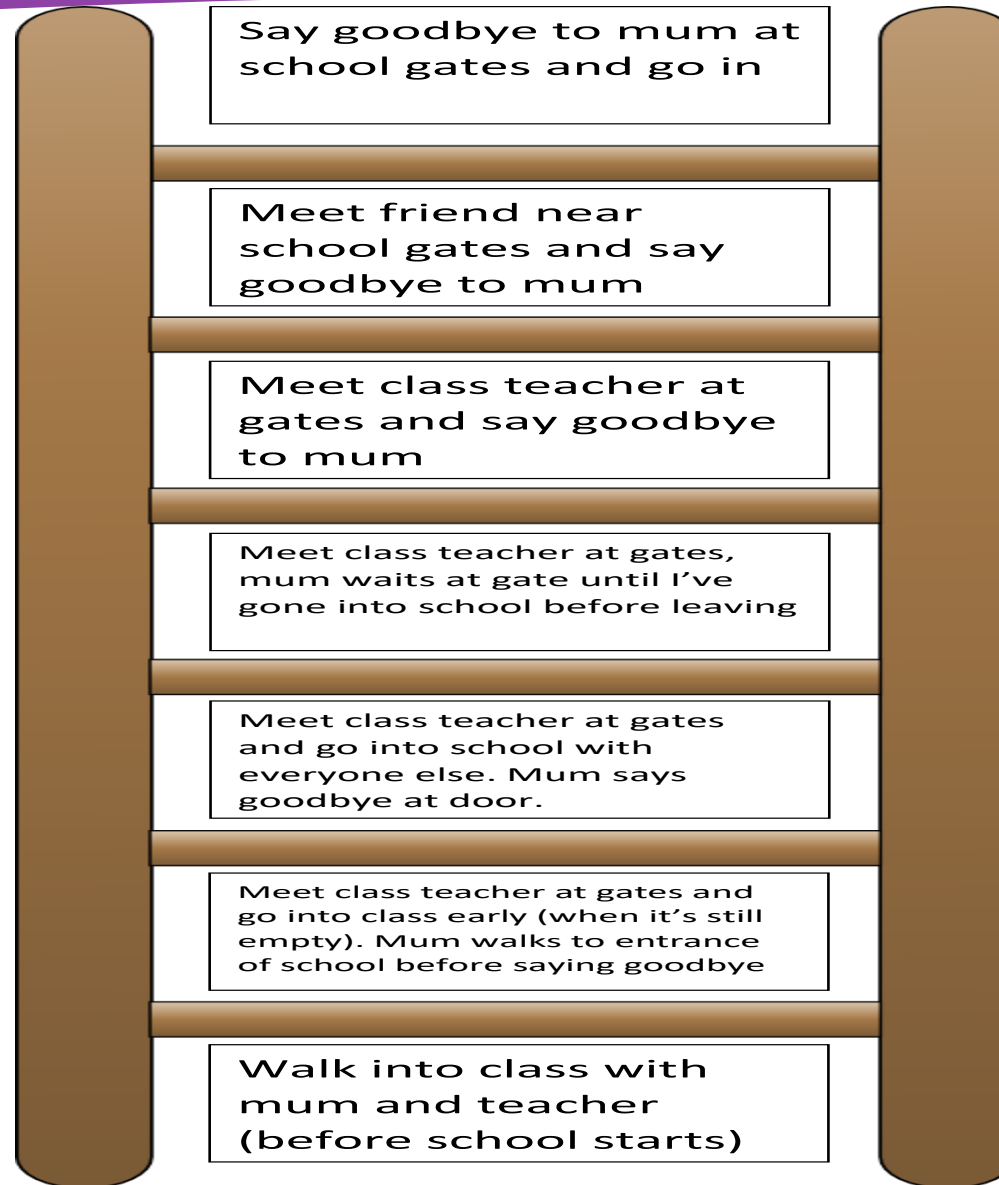
4. Reinforce the learning with praise/ rewards.



VectorStock®

VectorStock.com/2642579

**Step 1.
Break the
worry down
into smaller
manageable
steps**



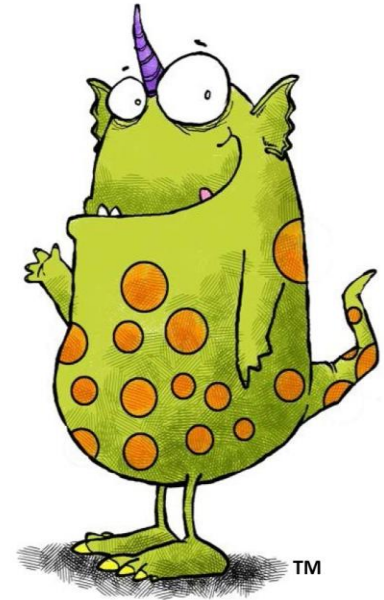
GOAL: To go into school by myself

Bringing the anxieties to life

Ignoring your worries doesn't help but bringing the worry to life and talking about it like a character can help especially for younger children.

Help the child to create their own worry monster

'The worry monster lives in the old brain that is responsible for keeping us safe when we are in danger. Of course, sometimes he can get confused and a bit out of control. When that happens we need to stop and talk some sense into him. What do we need to tell him to help him calm down?'



All rights reserved. Printed from Make Your Worrier a Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Child's Fears and From Worrier to Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Fears, by Daniel B. Peters with permission of Great Potential Press, Inc. www.GreatPotentialPress.com or Daniel B. Peters. No further re-production is allowed without permission of Great Potential Press, Inc. or Daniel B. Peters.



Do monster time!

Schedule daily monster time for at least 15 minutes per day ...








- Pretend to be a monster, dress up as a monster ...
- Make a monster mask and use monster noises for a tickle fight ...
- Colour in a print out of a monster ... change the picture so that the monster looks silly ...
- Make up a silly song about monsters ...
- Cut up a picture of a monster and stick it back together so it looks silly ...

The aim of this strategy is to take away the scariness of monsters



Make a checklist

- What do trained pilots do when they face an emergency? They refer to a checklist. Even with years of experience a pilot will refer to a checklist because when you are faced with danger you cannot think straight.
- When we feel anxious, we can get overwhelmed and not be able to think clearly.
- Drawing up a checklist of things that you know help you to calm down can be really useful.
- You can try out new techniques and evaluate how helpful they are for reference.

<p>Take a Time- out</p> 	<p>Color or draw</p> 
<p>Count to</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Take a deep breath</p> 
<p>Write in journal</p> 	<p>Listen to music</p> 

Other calming strategies

Reducing worry feeling techniques: -

'Breathe in for 7 ...out for 11'.

'5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 slow breath in and out'.

'Square breathing'

'Find items A, B, C etc'

Mindfulness activities: Breathing in as though to smell of the flower, blowing out to blow out a candle, taking a walk-in nature and noticing the present moment

Think what works for you when you are stressed/anxious?

Suggestions to help challenge worries

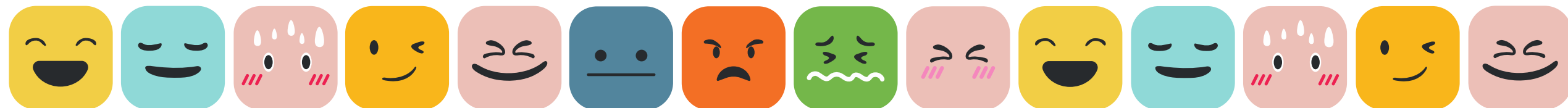
THOUGHT DIARY – write down worries and fears and contain to a book you can just shut and close off your worries and fears

CHALLENGE WORRIES Make a list of all the things that worry you. Write positive challenging statements next to your worry thoughts – “What would you tell your best friend to do”; is it a ‘fact or a belief?’

FINDING SOLUTIONS using the worry tree

TALK to someone – a problem shared is a problem halved.

Tell the Worry Monster that he cannot beat you!!



Other ways to help with Worries

Writing out/drawing out the worry

Anxious thoughts make us feel powerless, but talking back to anxious thoughts gives us control over the situation

- ❖ Talk back to the worry – telling the worry to **GO AWAY!** or “you are not helping me solve a problem right now”
- ❖ Use puppets/stories to create a character – super hero or self to challenge worries – make a script
- ❖ Thought stopping - saying **STOP!** This technique interrupts the anxious flow
- ❖ Put a big full stop on the end of the worry**FULL STOP!**

One positive from today was....help the young person identify a positive for the day.

STOPP Technique

STOPP

TAKE A BREATH

OBSERVE: What am I thinking?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?

PULL BACK: Put in some perspective. See the bigger picture. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this?

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS: What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for this situation?

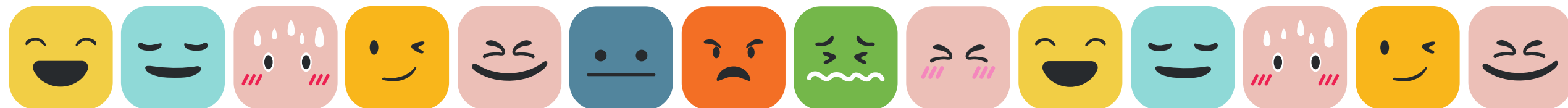


Building A Coping Kit/Toolbox

- . Have a list of strategies to use in a moment of anxiety
- . Have a list/box which includes a checklist covering different, useful strategies
 - ❖ Inside could include a stress ball, a glitter ball, a calming picture, age-appropriate instructions for deep breathing, colouring kit, etc.
 - ❖ Home could have a duplicate box.
- . The child could try to use this first before involving an adult to encourage age-appropriate independence

Summary

- Anxiety is normal and a small amount is necessary for us all to function well.
- Feel the fear and face it anyway, encourage brave behaviour.
- Encourage helpful coping strategies : they WILL work, just keep practicing
- Have a 'calm plan' prepared. Acknowledge, contain and help problem solve
- Enjoy life; do not waste your life worrying it away!
- Know where to go to ask for help if you need it



Surrey's emotional wellbeing and mental health service for children and young people



Please do look at our new website: <https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/> There is information for children, young people, families and carers about services, advice and resources, including how to ask for help in a crisis via the 24/7 Crisis Line.





A NEW free 24/7 emotional wellbeing and mental Health

Crisis line for children, young people and families in surrey

Call 0800 9154644

A professional will support, advise or signpost you. No referral needed



Websites

- **Resources for anxiety**
- **www.youngminds.org.uk** Young Minds is a UK national charity for children and parents of children with mental health problems. They offer information and advice to parents, young persons and professionals about mental health problems, how to cope with mental health problems, best practice, current campaigns, and information about child and adolescent mental health services.
- **www.ocdaction.org.uk** The OCD Action Help and Information Line: 08453906232 (UK) The website gives advice and information about OCD and related conditions.
- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/> - free online resources



Website with lots of different story books for anxiety

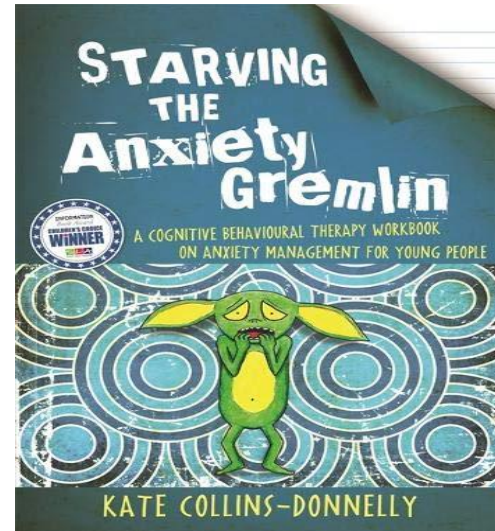
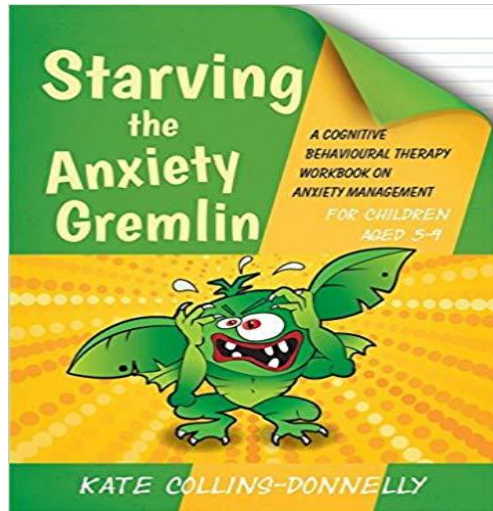
- <https://www.littleparachutes.com/>



Book References

- **Helping Your anxious Child** by Rapee, Spence, Cobham and Wignall
- **What To do When You Worry Too Much – A Kids Guide To Overcoming Anxiety**
- By Dawn Huebner
- **What To Do When You Grumble Too Much – a Kids Guide to Overcoming Negativity**
- By Dawn Huebner
- **1,2,3 Magic by Thomas Phelan** book/DVD resource which can help remind everyone of useful age appropriate strategies when trying to encourage young people to make wise choices in their behaviour especially useful for parents of children aged 2 to 12; learning to manage troublesome behaviour, encourage good behaviour, and strengthen the parent-child relationship
- **Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries** a self-help guide to using CBT Techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- **Overcoming Your Childs Shyness and Social Anxiety** a self-help guide to CBT techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- **Relax Kids Aladdin's Magic Carpet** by Marneta Viegas
- **The Whole Brain Child** by Dr Daniel Siegel
- **The Brain** by David Eagleman
- **Frazzled** By Ruby Wax
- **The Chimp Paradox** by Steve Peters
- **The Huge bag of worries** by Virginia Ironside

Book References

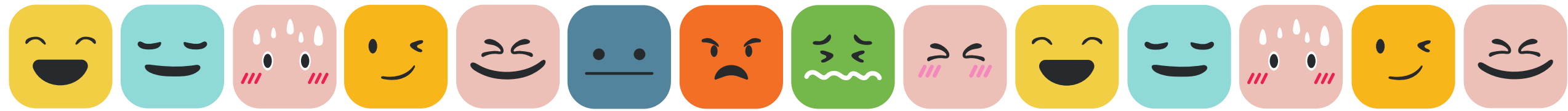


- A kid's Guide to overcoming OCD (What to do Guide for kids) by Dawn Huebner “This story guides children and their parents through the cognitive-behavioral techniques used to treat Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Revealing OCD in a whole new light, this interactive self-help book turns kids into super-sleuths who can recognize OCD's tricks. Engaging examples, activities, and step-by-step instructions help children master the skills needed to break free from the sticky thoughts and urges of OCD, and live happier lives. This is a complete resource for educating, motivating, and empowering children to work toward change”.

Resources for Parents

- **Cruse Bereavement care** Helpline: **0800 808 1677** Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- **Mind Matters Surrey IAPT** (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) is a talking therapy service for adults (18+) registered with a GP in Surrey. They provide quick and easy access to talking therapies, <https://www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk/>
- **Samaritan helpline** - Whatever you're going through, samaritans will face it with you. Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 for free <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- <https://www.qwell.io/> Online emotional wellbeing and mental health support.

THANK YOU!!!





Surrey and Borders
Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional
wellbeing and mental health service



Find out more at
mindworks-surrey.org

