

NEW Solutions CIC

Understanding Anxiety in Children and Young People

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www.new-solutions.co.uk

Grange Primary School

20th November 2023

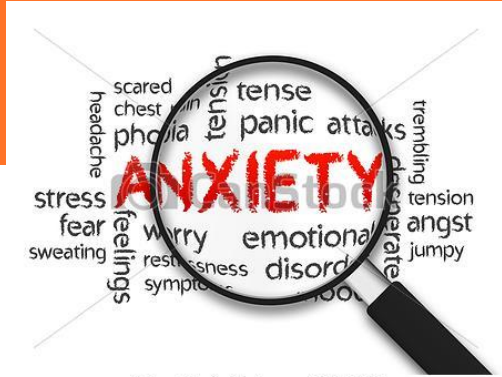
Gail Penman



Overview



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- What is anxiety
- When does anxiety become a problem
- How does anxiety work
- Signs to look for
- What causes anxiety. What maintains anxiety
- How to support an anxious child/ young person. Practical strategies
- When to ask for help. Who can help



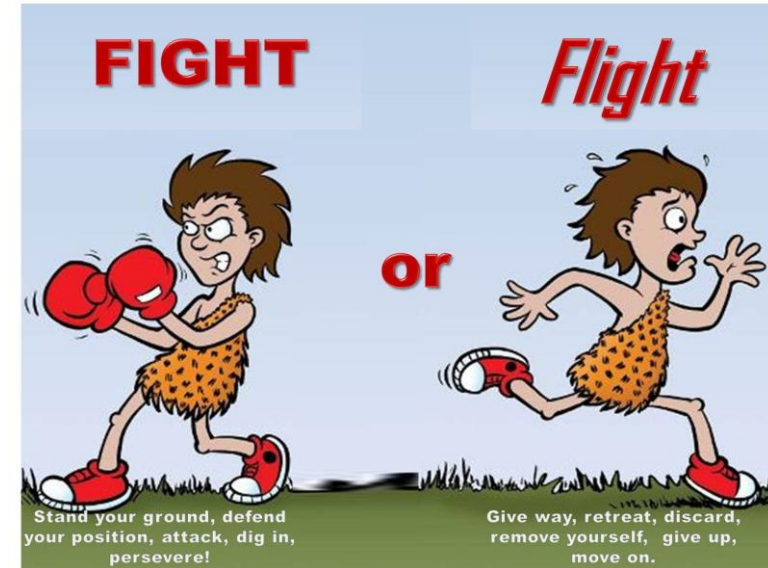
Definition

“Experiencing a state of apprehension in response to some kind of threat”



Anxiety definition

- Anxiety is normal and natural, healthy, and not necessarily dangerous
- Anxiety helps us to survive and to perform well, mostly we learn to manage thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Anxiety becomes a problem when our minds and bodies react in the absence of real threat



Stress is caused by an existing stress-causing factor or "stressor"



Anxiety is stress that continues after the stressor is gone

How does Anxiety work?



Moderate levels of anxiety can help improve performance

Moderate levels of anxiety are **NORMAL** at different developmental stages

Normal response to situations that we see as threatening to us

A feeling of apprehension, dread or fear of real or imagined threat to wellbeing

Manage rather than banish, can serve us well!



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When anxiety becomes a problem?

Examples –

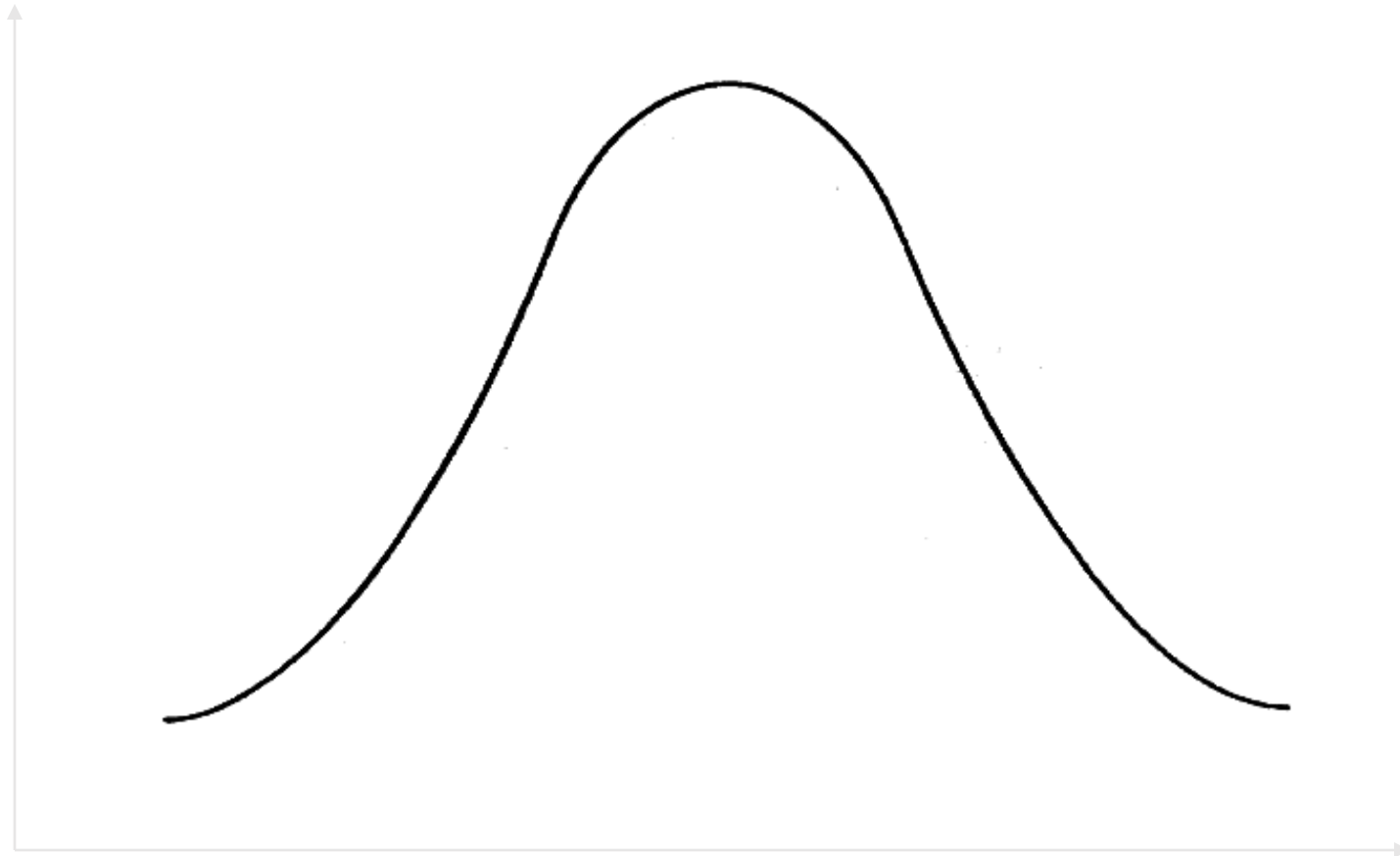
- Not wanting to participate in unfamiliar activity
- Avoiding school when specific tasks or activity are expected (sore tummy, headache)
- Avoiding school trips, extra curricular activity, sleepovers
- Worrying excessively about things that “might” happen, (what if?), no clear reason, causing disruption at home/school
- Refusal to go to school
- Specific phobias/anxiety that interfere with functioning



Good

Performance

Bad



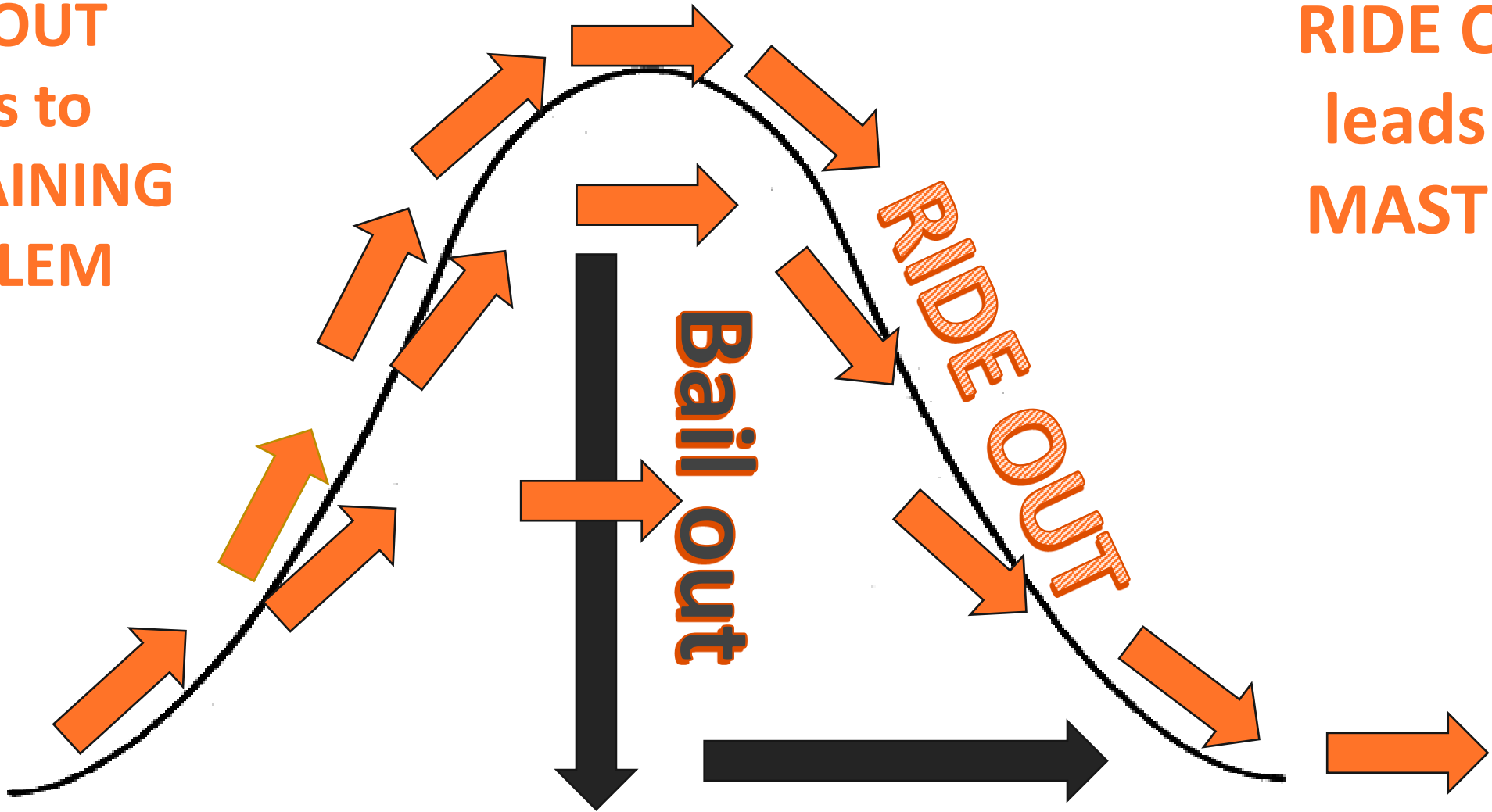
Low

Moderate

High

Anxiety

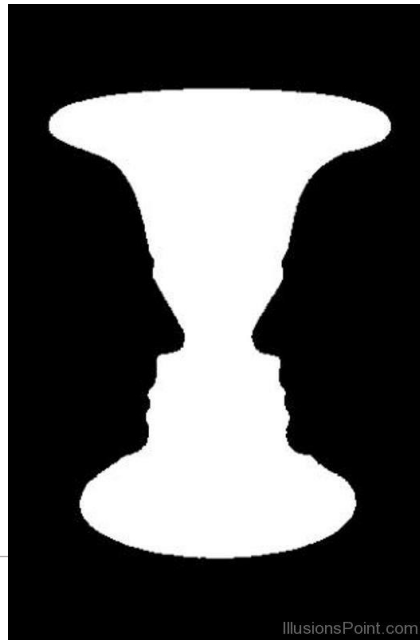
BAIL OUT
Leads to
MAINTAINING
PROBLEM

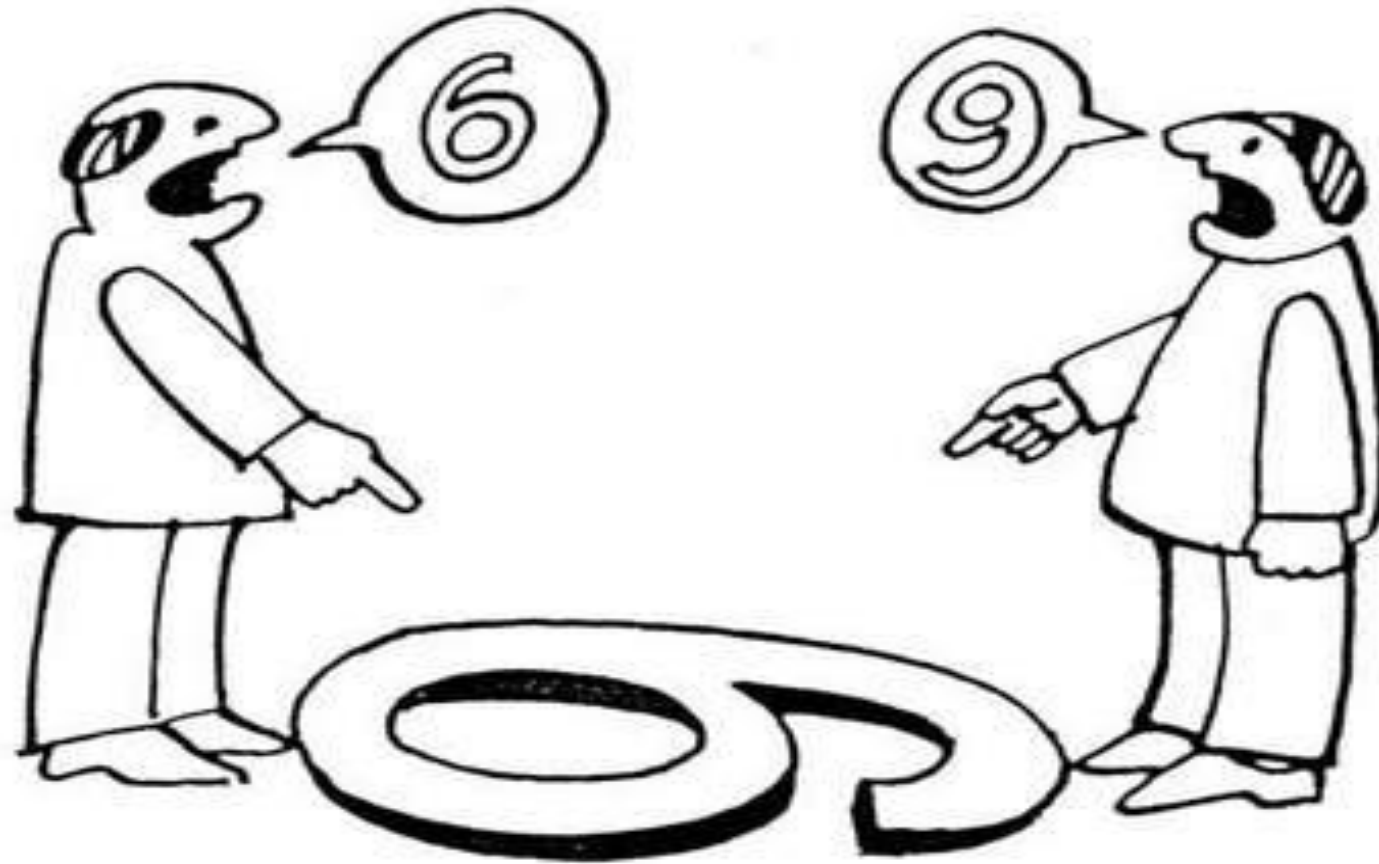


RIDE OUT
leads to
MASTERY

Understanding Anxiety

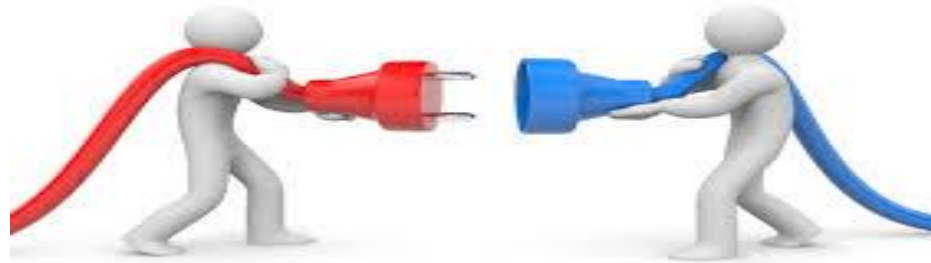
It is not just about “knowing” facts, its about changing the way you see and experience the world, (perspective)



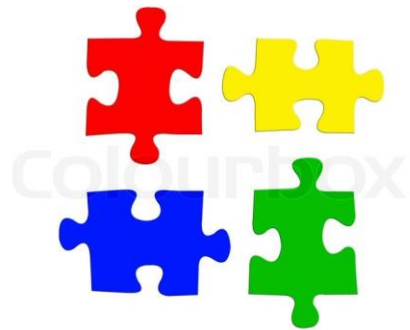


How does it work? Signs of Anxiety

Thoughts



Feelings



THOUGHTS and FEELINGS are CONNECTED!

- If I THINK I am in DANGER I will Likely FEEL SCARED
- If I THINK a will be EXPOSED, GET IT WRONG I will likely FEEL EMBARRASED
- If I THINK I am NOT LOVED I will likely FEEL USELESS
- If I THINK I CAN'T CHANGE THINGS I will likely FEEL HOPELESS

- If I THINK I am VALUED AND LOVED I will likely FEEL CONFIDENT
- If I THINK I am SAFE I will likely FEEL SECURE
- If I THINK I can TRY I will likely FEEL OPTIMISTIC

Thoughts and feelings lead to PHYSICAL and BEHAVIOURAL responses



Physical body sensations -

- Discomfort or pain in the stomach, nausea
- Feeling very hot or cold
- Rapid breathing, shortness of breath or breath holding
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Numbness or tingling
- Headaches
- Chest pains or discomfort
- Dizzy, lightheaded, or unsteady feelings
- Feelings of a lump in the throat or choking
- Feeling things are unreal

Behaviour –

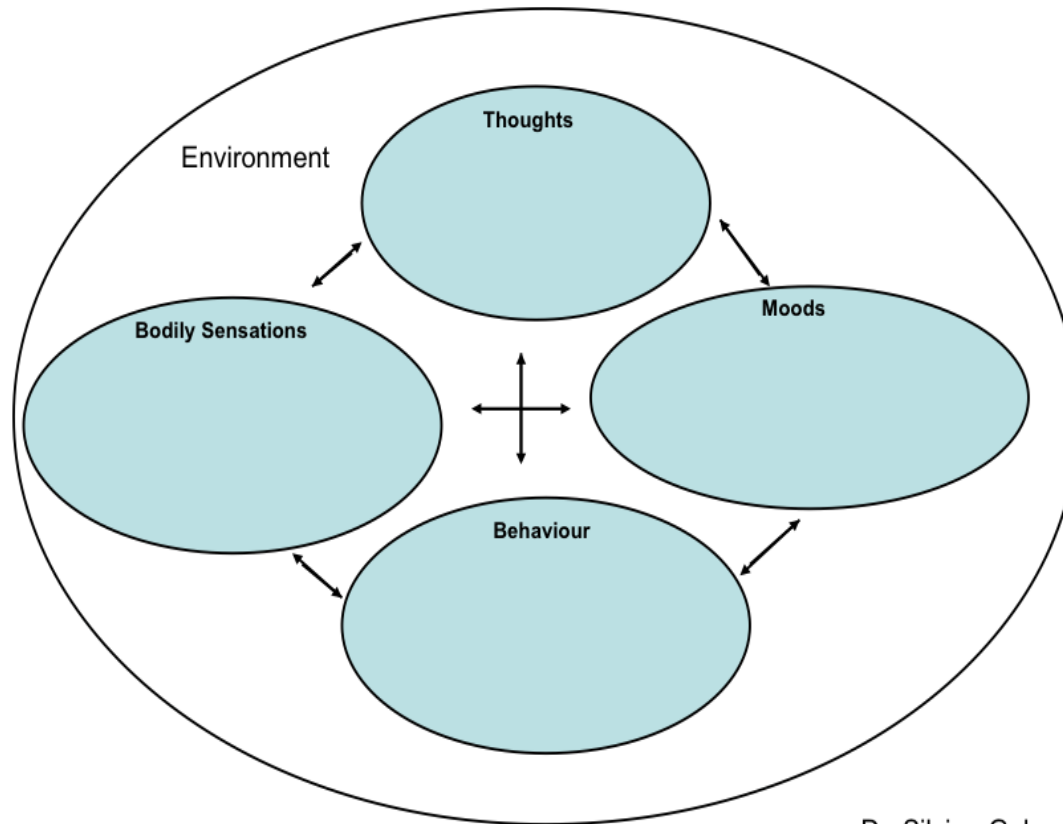
- Talking about body sensations
- Avoidance of feared situations
- Frequent reassurance seeking
- Confrontation
- Clingy/ tantrums when separating
- Fidgety/aggitated
- Withdrawal/not get noticed
- Safety behaviours

Cognitive Model



Situation: _____

Cognitive Model



Dr. Silvina Galperin

Situation

Where? When? Who with? What happened? How?

Padesky 5 Aspects. 1986

Thoughts & Images

What went through my mind at that time? What disturbed me? If I had those thoughts/images/memories – what did that say or mean about me or the situation?

Body / Physical sensations

What did I notice in my body? What did I feel? Where did I feel it?

Moods / Emotions

What emotion did I feel at that time? What else? How intense was that feeling? (0 – 100%)

Behaviours / What I did or didn't do

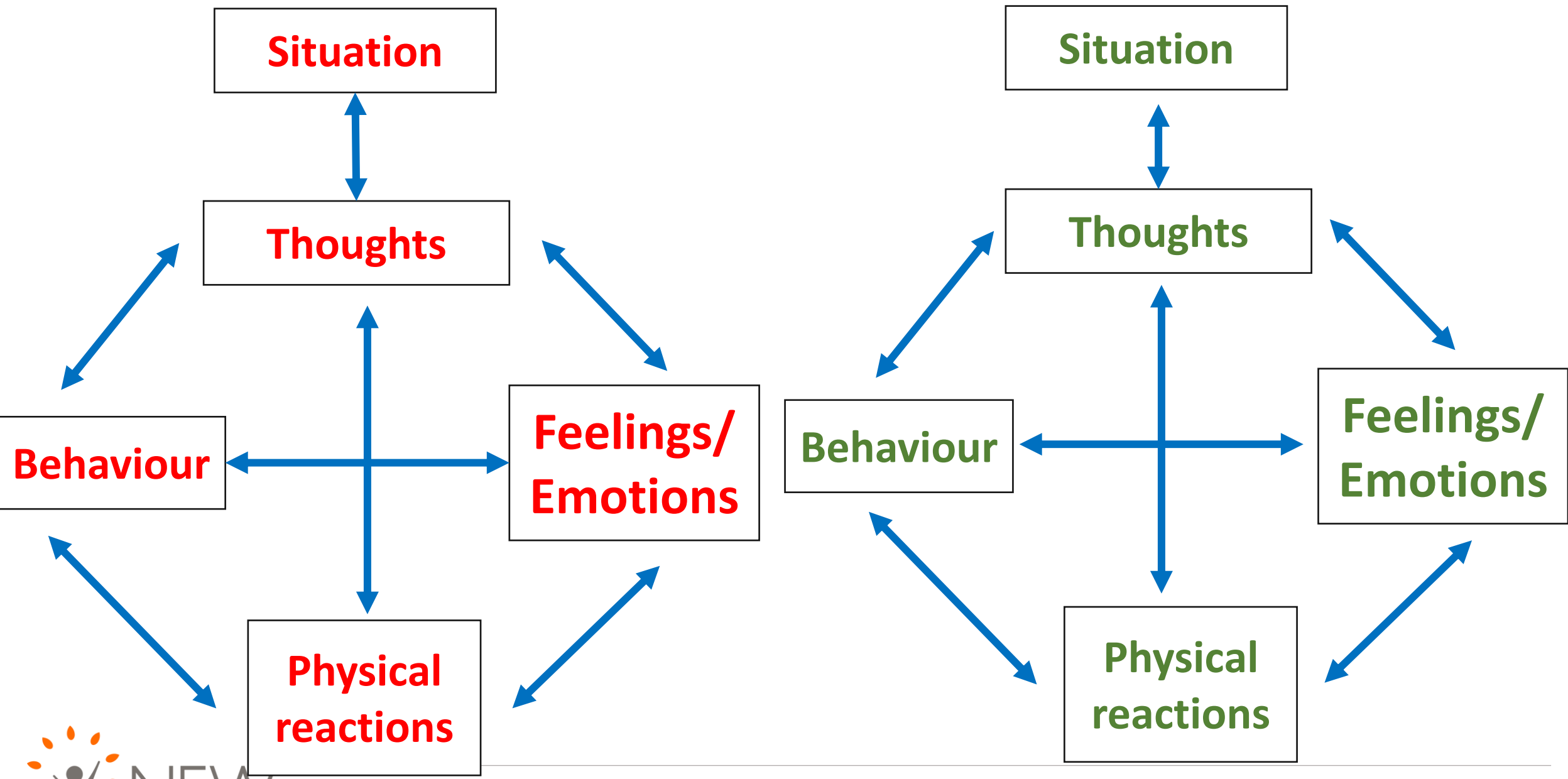
What helped me cope and get through it? What didn't I do or what did I avoid doing? What automatic reactions did I have? What would other people have seen me doing?

PERSPECTIVE

**UNHELPFUL
THINKING**



**HELPFUL
THINKING**



What keeps anxiety going?

- **Providing reassurance may maintain the problem**
- **Telling the child what to do(Problem solve together)**
- **Colluding with the young person**
- **Allowing avoidance**
- **Becoming impatient**
- **Ignoring the problem**

How to respond to an anxious child

- Establish structure, consistency and predictability
- Don't expect them to 'snap out of it'
- Encourage emotional intelligence /problem solving
- Reward brave, non anxious behaviour
- Breaking down tasks into small achievable steps
- Teach them how to manage worries, normalize anxiety
- Model non-anxious coping behaviour

Practical Strategies

- **Psycho-Education, (we will manage better what we understand)**
- **Relaxation (learning to BREATHE), body awareness**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Distraction techniques**
- **Modelling**
- **Positive reinforcement**
- **Communicating to the young person that you are confident in their ability to manage**

When to ask for help

- **When anxiety starts to cause considerable distress and interference in everyday life e.g. refusing to go to school or social isolation, change in presentation.**
- **When the strategies discussed have been tried but are not working – consider community resources, e.g. GP, school nurse/doctor, health visitor, educational psychologist, NEWSolutions where available, CAMHS teams.**

Disorder

The Four D's of Disorder

A rule of thumb that parents and professionals can use to decide whether a child's anxiety is reaching the level of a disorder that warrant The Four D's of Disorders further assessment or treatment

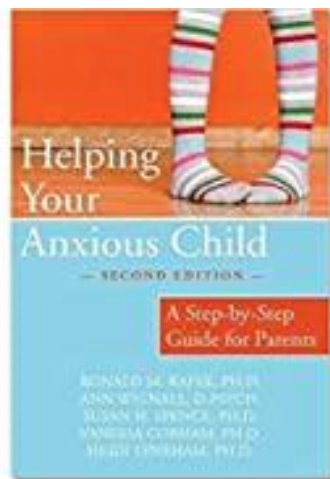
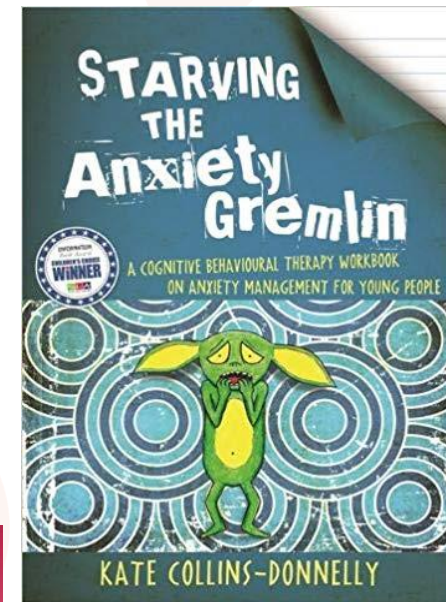
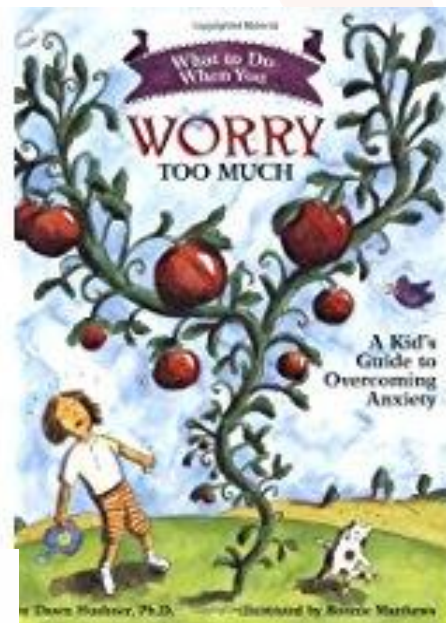
Disproportion

Disruption

Distress

Duration

Resources



Therapist Recommended

**CATHY CRESWELL
& LUCY WILLETTS**
**OVERCOMING
YOUR CHILD'S
FEARS &
WORRIES**
*A self-help guide using
Cognitive Behavioral
Techniques*

'I loved the no nonsense, practical approach which will be an empowering relief to parents, themselves paralysed by the anxiety of their own child's anxieties.'

Dr Tanya Byron, Consultant Clinical Psychologist,
House of Tiny Tearaways, BBC TV

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Resources

- www.handsonscotland.co.uk
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvise
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Dawn Huebner – What to do when you worry too much**
- **Ronald Rapee et al. – Helping your anxious child**
- **Kate Collins-Donnelly – Starving the Anxiety Gremlin**
- **Virginia Ironside – Huge Bag of Worries**