



# Educational Psychology Service

Sharing psychology to improve educational outcomes for those young people who need it most.

## **Anxiety is normal – learn how to control it. School Resource Pack**

**Fife Council Educational Psychology Service (updated 2025)**





## Guidance for Named Person/School Staff

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling of worry or nervousness that we all experience at some point in our lives. It is a normal reaction to stress in our lives. Everyday worry can cause us to experience unpleasant physical sensations, feelings and influence how we behave e.g. make us avoid situations. Usually these are linked to certain events or experiences e.g. exams and the feelings and associated symptoms go away after the event has occurred.

However, an anxiety difficulty is more than everyday worry, in that the feelings, sensations and way it makes us think and behave are more stable, intrusive and impact on our daily functioning. The intensity and length of time that anxiety difficulties are experienced for is stronger and longer than everyday worry and are often accompanied with other symptoms such as poor concentration, disconnection and feeling over-whelmed.

### How to use this pack

This resource pack has been developed to support Named Persons and key school staff to work collaboratively with young people to explore their experiences of school, particularly in relation to aspects that cause anxiety. It comes in 3 sections: assessment, intervention and a set of appendices.

**Assessment section:** This section should be completed in collaboration with a young person - individual sections of the assessment section should **NOT** be handed out to young people for them to complete individually. Careful thought, based on existing knowledge of the young person and their family circumstances, should be given when deciding which of the questions should be used in the second and third sections of the assessment section – “Individual Factors” and “Family Factors”.

**Intervention section:** This section outlines a staged intervention approach to assessment, planning and intervention at universal, additional and intensive levels. The information gathered in the assessment stage can inform solution focussed action planning at an early intervention level or be used to contribute to multi-agency assessment and intervention planning. At times, it is unlikely a young person's anxiety will reduce or there will be a positive impact on Emotional Wellbeing without also considering wider factors, e.g. home environment or supports, and this may require a multiagency response via the Child Wellbeing Pathway.

Anxiety can often be linked to poor attendance / difficulties attending school. When completing the assessment, please use the box at the end of the tool to note the pupil's attendance at that point in time. This data can then be used, at a later date, when reviewing progress and/or identifying next steps.

**Appendices section:** The appendices are intended to support staff understanding of anxiety, to inform conversations with children and young people, and to provide an introduction to some of the ways anxiety can be supported.

**Link Educational Psychologists can be consulted about the use of the tool, and training about the information and approaches in the pack can be provided by Fife Council Educational Psychology Service.**

*The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose  
one thought over another*

*James*

**Assessment – recognising physical reactions, and exploring school, individual and family factors.**

|              |                |                        |              |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Name:</b> | <b>School:</b> | <b>Completed with:</b> | <b>Date:</b> |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|

**Learning to recognise anxiety** – sometimes feeling anxious comes with physical symptoms that can feel frightening and can be a cause of anxiety in themselves. See appendices for a description of why this happens and how we can best respond to these feelings.

Use the questions below to explore how anxiety may be impacting in this way, and also to begin identifying what the young person is thinking about when anxiety occurs and how these thoughts are impacting on their behaviour. The appendices also provide further explanation of the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour relating to anxiety.

|                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| When you do feel really anxious, how does it feel? (on edge, nervous, panicky, stressed, irritable, uptight)                                                |  |
| Can you describe how your body feels? (tense, dizzy, tight chest, stomach churning, trembling, heart racing, irregular breathing, difficulty concentrating) |  |
| When you are feeling anxious what are you thinking? (worrying about something bad happening, mind flitting about, imagining the worst, hypervigilant)       |  |
| Do you notice any changes in your behaviour when anxious? (avoiding situations, pacing, snapping, flustered, talking quickly)                               |  |

## School factors

**Complete this section in collaboration with the young person: consider statements as a prompt for further exploration. You may wish to explore highest scoring statements first and return to lowest scoring statements to explore further. You may wish to discuss things by subject/class etc. Scores do not link to particular levels or types of intervention – they are designed to prompt discussion.**

These questions are to find out what school is like for you...

Tell me how comfortable you are, on a scale of 1-10, in the following situations...? (1 = least comfortable; 10 = completely comfortable)

|                                                                                                             | Score | What's tricky? | What helps? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------|
| going to school on the school bus in the morning                                                            |       |                |             |
| going home from school on the school bus in the afternoon                                                   |       |                |             |
| coming in to school in the morning, before the bell has rung, when there are large numbers of pupils around |       |                |             |
| coming in to school late                                                                                    |       |                |             |
| having to explain to a member of staff why you're late                                                      |       |                |             |

|                                                                            | Score | What's tricky? | What helps? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------|
|                                                                            |       |                |             |
| being in areas with large numbers of pupils at break/lunch time            |       |                |             |
| eating lunch in the dining hall/canteen                                    |       |                |             |
| meeting up with friends at break/lunchtime                                 |       |                |             |
| being with the friends you have                                            |       |                |             |
| having something to do at break/lunchtime                                  |       |                |             |
| taking a test or exam 'under exam conditions' with a large group of pupils |       |                |             |

|                                                                               | Score | What's tricky? | What helps? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------|
| taking a test or exam in the classroom, with your whole class                 |       |                |             |
| taking a test on your own, or with maybe just a few pupils there              |       |                |             |
| forgetting to do your homework                                                |       |                |             |
| in class, getting told off by a teacher for something you have done           |       |                |             |
| when the bell rings, going from one class to the next when the school is busy |       |                |             |
| being asked a question by a teacher in class                                  |       |                |             |
| having to talk in front of the whole class                                    |       |                |             |

|                                                                            | Score | What's tricky? | What helps? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------|
|                                                                            |       |                |             |
| having to work with a group of other pupils in the class                   |       |                |             |
| not being sure what to do in class and needing to ask the teacher for help |       |                |             |
| going to a whole school event, like assembly or sports day                 |       |                |             |

## Individual factors

**Important – Some questions may not be appropriate and should be omitted.** Complete this section in collaboration with the young person

|                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Has anything really upsetting ever happened to you in school – for example, getting injured or hurt, something that really embarrassed you, getting some really bad news and being upset, being very ill? |  |
| Are there times when you have had negative experiences on social media that make you feel anxious?                                                                                                        |  |
| Has there been any recent or upcoming major changes, such as moving house, or a new baby being born?                                                                                                      |  |
| Do you worry about your family being able to pay bills or being able to afford the things you need?                                                                                                       |  |
| Are there issues with your neighbours or in the community that are affecting your family?                                                                                                                 |  |
| Other?                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |

**Family factors:**

*Consider questions and complete using the information you already have. Gather additional required information through consultation / discussion with the young person, their family/carers and/or the team around the child*

**Important – Some questions may not be appropriate and should be omitted**

Is there anything going on at home that you find worrying, upsetting or difficult? For example:

|                                                                                                                                                            |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Is there anyone in your family having serious health problems?                                                                                             |  |
| Has there been a recent separation or divorce?                                                                                                             |  |
| Has there been police involvement with any of your close family?                                                                                           |  |
| Have you been affected by bereavement ie has someone in your close family died, or has anyone in your family been affected by someone close to them dying? |  |
| Does your family tend to get along or are there lots of fall-outs?                                                                                         |  |

**For completion by Named Person: Current Attendance (%):**

## **Interventions, approaches and supports**

## A Staged Intervention approach to supporting children and young people with anxiety.

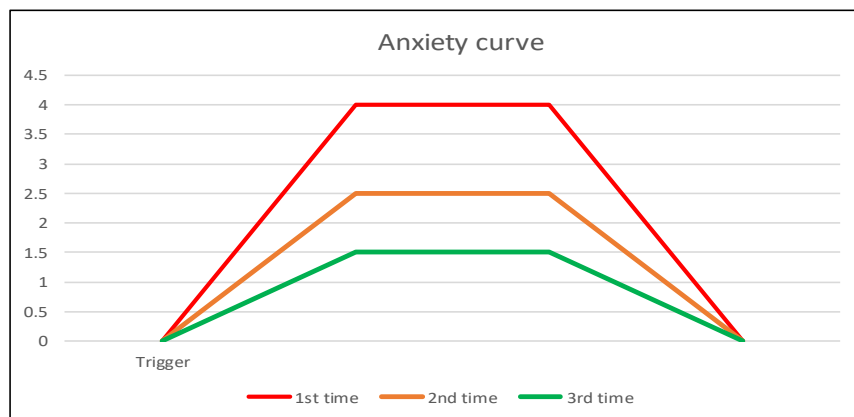
| Level of Intervention:<br>UNIVERSAL                                                                                                                                                                            | School Intervention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Parent/Carer Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Universal strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Young person (YP) presents with difficulties which are impacting on their emotional well-being and their experience of school.</p> <p>Pupils self-refer or are raised by other pupils, staff or family.</p> | <p>Initial Meeting → anxiety issues resolved as a result</p> <p>or....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following initial meeting and assessment completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ series of short catch up meetings or coaching conversations with young person set up</li> <li>→ action plan review cycle / PCP</li> <li>→ anxiety issues resolved as a result of intervention or action plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>or....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial Meeting and assessment completed → complex anxiety issues identified which raise significant concerns about the YP's emotional well-being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Additional Intervention</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low level intervention – no direct parental/carer involvement. Parents/carers informed as appropriate.</li> <li>Parents /carers informed unless YP, over the age of 12 years, requests otherwise and there are no concerns about YP's safety. Where the young person is under the age of 12, parents should be informed.</li> </ul> | <p>Someone the YP has a relationship with having a 'coaching conversation' and / or helping them to understand the possible effect of anxiety on their thoughts, feelings and behaviours and to help them identify possible strategies and solutions. Further information on anxiety and 'coaching conversations' can be provided by the link EP.</p> <p>Providing alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Times to start / finish school day</li> <li>Times to start / finish lessons</li> <li>Entrances / exits to the school building</li> <li>Places to register or start the day</li> <li>Places to eat lunch, spend breaks or meet friends</li> </ul> <p>Providing key relationships through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check-ins at regular points through the week / day</li> <li>- Meet and greet at the start of the day / after lunch, etc.</li> <li>- Providing safe places to go with consistent staff members</li> </ul> <p>Support feelings of safety and predictability through advance planning of week / day, support with organisation, etc.</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Supporting pupils to manage anxiety related to school work through study plans, study techniques, etc. See appendix 5 about exam stress</p> <p>Providing buddies (senior pupil and / or buddies within year group or classes), identifying mentor e.g. member of support staff, senior pupil.</p> <p>Use restorative practices e.g. facilitate a restorative conversation between pupils, pupil &amp; teacher, etc.</p> <p>Developing teacher understanding / awareness of anxiety and strategies to support e.g. breaks, time out cards.</p> |
| <b>Level of Intervention:<br/>ADDITIONAL</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>School Intervention</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Parent/Carer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Additional strategies</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>YP presents with more complex difficulties which are at risk of becoming entrenched. The difficulties are having a detrimental impact on their engagement with their learning and /or experience of school, as well as their emotional well-being.</p> <p>YP self-refer or are raised by other pupils, school staff, family or other agencies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle of meetings with the young person following completion of assessment. Meetings recorded</li> <li>• Creation of return to school plan</li> <li>• EP or other agency has been made aware of difficulties and is either providing consultation / advice to the named person or is directly involved in the meetings.</li> <li>• EP or other agency may undertake some individual work with the young person.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers are likely to be involved directly in meetings unless YP, over the age of 12 years, requests otherwise and there are no concerns about YP's safety. Where the YP is under the age of 12, parents should be involved.</li> </ul> | <p>As Universal</p> <p>Consideration of adapting curriculum/time-table e.g. reduce number of subjects and have break / catch up periods during day, reducing time in school through a flexi-schooling arrangement.</p> <p>Discussion with other agencies e.g. Educational Psychology Service (who can support with approaches described in this pack), Primary Mental Health Workers Team, Counselling Services, Family Support Service. A direct role may be appropriate.</p>                                                                   |

| Level of Intervention:<br><b>INTENSIVE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>School Intervention</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Parent/Carer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Intensive strategies</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>YP presenting with significant difficulties which are long term and are impacting on their engagement with their learning and /or experience of school, their emotional well-being and possibly their engagement with their family / community.</p> <p>YP self-refer or are raised by other pupils, school staff, family or other agencies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment identifies significant concerns about the YP's emotional well-being which are impacting on the pupil's ability to access education.</li> <li>• Consideration of appropriate interventions or supports may include the use of Agreed Reduced Attendance arrangements to support engagement and attendance.</li> <li>• Agencies taking on direct pieces of work with the young person.</li> <li>• Other agencies (Health, Social Work) may take on the role of the lead professional.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers will be involved directly in meetings unless YP, over the age of 12 years, requests otherwise and there are no concerns about YP's safety. Where the YP is under the age of 12, parents will be involved.</li> </ul> | <p>As Universal and Additional</p> <p>Further adaptation of school day and curriculum through AFPs/flexi-schooling</p> <p>Consideration of referral to other agencies (Health, Social Work, Education, Third Sector e.g. DAPL)</p> |

## Plans and protocols

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling and we often try to avoid whatever is making us feel that way. But if we can face the things that are making us anxious the unpleasant feelings will reduce. The more times we face our fears the less anxious we will feel.



**Why might we need a plan?** Recording assessment and planned interventions means we can review progress and determine further steps or goals. It also means that we have a clear understanding of who is involved and what that involvement looks like.

**Creating a plan:** Once you have completed an assessment if there are reasonable ways to avoid stressors then make a plan to do so e.g. X felt most uncomfortable in crowded situations – lunch-hall, busy corridor, assembly and bus. Therefore, the plan involved avoiding these situations where possible – quiet supervised area to eat packed lunch, out early to move to next class and so on.

**Attendance:** Anxiety can lead to school refusers and significantly reduced

attendance. We must be mindful that if the school building itself is the anxiety trigger, then we cannot expect the child to come to the school to discuss how we can help them to overcome their fear!

**Return to school plan:** graded exposure to what causes us anxiety will usually reduce that anxiety over time. If anxiety is impacting on attendance then a return to school plan could comprise of a series of small steps – as small as suits the individual. For example: drive to school gate and leave, come to school entrance and leave, come into school for 10 minutes supported by known and trusted staff member/peers. The plan can be created collaboratively with the young person, and progress evaluated over time.

The young person will need a secure base from which to face their fear and learn to respond to their anxiety triggers – this 'base' can take the form of an identified, trusted adult and/or a safe, physical space within the school. If neither of these are easily identifiable, then developing a relationship with a key adult (and identifying a safe space) will be part of the plan. It may be that the young person's parent or carer can be part of the plan sitting in reception of the school building while the child visits, with staff.

### Why might we need clear protocols?

An anxious child or young person may struggle to be on time every morning and this may increase feelings of anxiety about coming to school. Try creating a clear protocol for that pupil around what they should do if they are late and make sure all staff understand this protocol (for example; pupil does not need to explain to staff why they are late). This should be done with pupil knowledge and agreement.

## **Appendices: EPs can provide further training and support in these approaches**

- 1. Psycho-education: understanding anxiety**
- 2. Cognitive Behavioural Approaches**
- 3. Thinking traps and how to challenge them – looking for evidence**
- 4. Coaching Conversations to challenge thoughts and create a plan**
- 5. Exam stress and anxiety**
- 6. Key relaxation strategies**
- 7. Useful web-sites**
- 8. Useful books**
- 9. Useful apps**

# 1 Psycho-education

## Understanding anxiety

It can be really helpful for children and young people to have an understanding of anxiety, and that we all experience it from time to time – it is a normal experience. Some anxiety can be useful, and we should not always seek to avoid experiencing it or the situations that might trigger it. It can motivate us to act and increase our performance, e.g. revise for an exam. Difficulties arise when it is experienced in high, prolonged and intense doses.

When we are faced with a difficult situation, our bodies prepare themselves for fight or flight – this is an emergency reaction. It allows us to be able to respond quickly under threat and prepare to run away or do battle. We may experience all kinds of physical sensations (e.g. hearts beat faster, hands become sweaty, muscles tense, mouth becomes dry, butterflies in the tummy), it is helpful to be able to recognise and identify these – to recognise anxiety.

These **fight or flight** reactions were vital when we lived as hunter gatherers, in order to deal with dangerous situations. Nowadays, the stressful situations we face are very different and it's not so helpful to experience these reactions in our daily lives in a prolonged way.

Too much anxiety and stress can result in distress – we become stuck in a heightened fight or flight mode and cannot function well. The emotional part of our brain (the amygdala) stops 'talking' to the thinking part of our brain (the cortex), meaning our ability to think about and deal rationally with a situation has been hijacked by stress hormones. This is sometimes referred to as an **amygdala hijack**.

### What can we do in that moment?

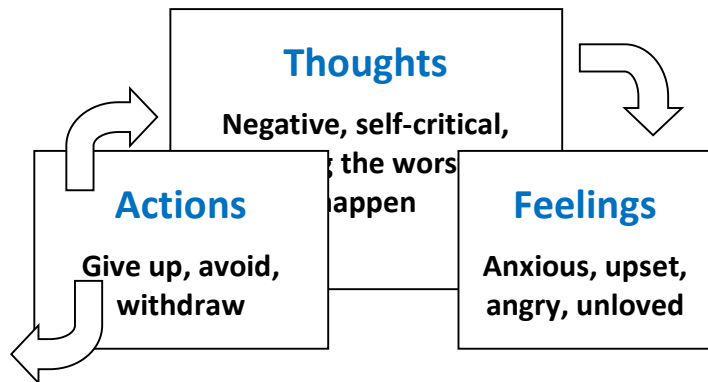
- **Name it.** Notice when you've been triggered and identify what's triggering you. Notice changes in your tone, tightness in your chest or stomach, clenching in your jaw or hands, etc. In these moments, say to yourself, "I'm feeling triggered right now."
- **Remember the 6-second rule.** It takes the hormones that are released during the amygdala hijacking about 6 seconds to dissipate. Using this time to focus on something pleasant will prevent your amygdala from taking control and causing an emotional reaction
- **Breathe.** Become aware of your breath and slow it down, breathe deeply. When you slow down your breathing and make it rhythmic, this calms down your nervous system and allows you to make thoughtful decisions in stressful times.
- **Draw on mindfulness.** Look around you and notice things in the environment. This will help you to move out of your head and back into the present.
- **Take a timeout.** If you are truly feeling out of control, excuse yourself from the situation you are in to get a hold of your emotions.

Sometimes our responses to dealing with anxiety can be the very things that serve to maintain it – for example: avoiding the stressful situation, worrying about feeling anxious and presuming the worst. It may be better to:

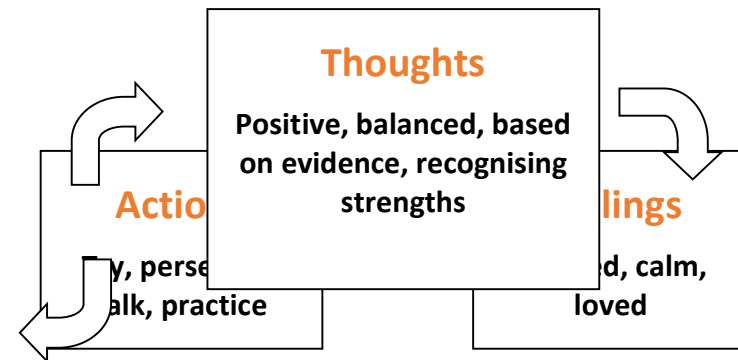
- Stop avoiding situations that cause anxiety – in most cases, practice will reduce the levels of anxiety experienced
- Talk about and challenge the way we are thinking about situations, and change the way we feel and behave

## **2. Cognitive Behavioural Approaches (CBA) – understanding the thinking/feeling/doing cycle**

These approaches stem from the understanding that the way we think about a situation affects the way we feel about it and thus how we behave. We can get caught in a negative cycle of thinking which can leave us feeling anxious and in distress and caught in a cycle of behaviour that is likely to maintain this anxiety and distress.



**Negative cycle: maintaining anxiety**



**Positive cycle: achieving a healthy balance**

#### What can we do?

- Learn to recognise these thought cycles and the thinking traps we are getting caught in
- Learn how to challenge the evidence for our thoughts
- Use coaching conversations to make a plan
- Learn how to use relaxation strategies
- Use books, websites and apps to help

## Thinking Traps: challenging our thinking

| Common thinking traps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Example                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>Mind-reading:</b> This happens when we believe that we know what others are thinking and we assume that they are thinking the worst of us. However, we can't mind-read so we don't know what others are thinking!</p>                                                                                   | <p>"He thinks I'm really stupid/ugly"</p> <p>"She doesn't like me"</p>                                                 |
|  <p><b>Overgeneralising:</b> This is when we use words like "always" or "never" to describe situations or events. This is a problematic way of thinking because it does not take all situations or events into account. For instance, sometimes we make mistakes but we don't <b>always</b> make mistakes.</p> | <p>"I always make mistakes"</p> <p>"I won't be able to cope"</p>                                                       |
|  <p><b>Critical self:</b> Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility</p>                                                                                                                                                     | <p>"I'm stupid"</p> <p>"I'm a failure"</p> <p>"I'm unlovable"</p>                                                      |
|  <p><b>Filtering:</b> This happens when we take note of all the bad things that happen, but ignore any good things.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Looking through dark blinkers or gloomy specs – forgetting the good things</p>                                      |
|  <p><b>Catastrophising:</b> Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>"I'm dying"</p> <p>"I'll embarrass myself and everyone will laugh"</p> <p>"I'll freak out and no one will help"</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>Emotional Reasoning:</b> when we feel that everything must be really bad because we are feeling negative emotions</p>                                                      | <p>"I feel bad so it must be bad"</p> <p>"I feel anxious, therefore I must be in danger"</p>                            |
|  <p><b>Fortune-telling/prediction:</b> This occurs when we predict that things will turn out badly. However, we cannot predict the future because we don't have a magic ball!</p> | <p>"I know I will fail the exam"</p> <p>"I know we will get in another car accident"</p> <p>"I will faint/go crazy"</p> |

To avoid falling into these thinking traps it is important to; **Stop**, **Assess** and **Challenge** our thoughts.

**Stop** and recognise when you are having an anxious thought, take a deep breath before you...

**Assess** your thoughts with questions such as;

- Are my thoughts based on fact? What is the evidence?
- Am I worrying about something that is important or unimportant?
- Why am I thinking this way?

**Challenge** them by asking yourself;

- What would you say to a friend if they had this thinking?
- Try to identify some of the positive things you may have missed before?
- Where will my anxiety get me?
- If the worst thing happened, would it be that bad?
- What can I do differently to deal with the situation, instead of being anxious about it?

*Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management. ~ Kate Collins-Donnelly.*

*Think Good, Feel Good: A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People ~ Paul Stallard.*

## 4. Coaching conversations

*"A one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate."*

(Christian van Nieuwerburgh, 2012)

These are solution focused conversations with children and young people that should leave them with a clear idea or plan of how they will use their own skills, strengths, support network or script to positively manage a scenario they find emotionally difficult the next time they encounter it. They require a positive relationship between adult and child, and the adult to demonstrate active listening and attunement. Your link EP will be able to provide further information and training round this.

### **Making a plan following completion of assessment: coaching questions**

#### **Current strategies:**

- Has anything or anyone so far helped at these times?
- What have you tried so far? What has helped so far?
- Has anyone you know had a similar experience? What did they do?
- What advice would you give a friend?

#### **Exploring exceptions**

- Are there times in school when you feel less anxious? When are the times when things go a bit better?
- When was the last time that things were a little better? What was different then?
- When you aren't feeling so anxious what's different then? What are you doing differently?

#### **Goaling**

- What would need to happen to help you feel better about things?
- What are our next steps? Let's talk about how we are going to do that?
- What's the first thing we will do? Who do we need to help us?

**When will it be over / good enough? Clear picture of finish time.**

- How will we know we've succeeded?
- What will be different when things are going better?
- If things were better, what would other people see? How would they know?

**Feedback of main points at an appropriate pace.**

- Agreement of each person's actions
- Who you will both share the information with?
- When will we review?

## 5. Exam Stress/Anxiety

Excessive worry about upcoming exams is experienced by many pupils and when we talk about stress reducing techniques here **it's not the aim for you to feel no stress at all**. Some stress is helpful to us to do well and stay motivated. The stress response we are talking about is only bad in large, intense doses. Exam stress is manageable if you follow a plan of helpful suggestions....

### Positive Thinking

- Tell yourself *"I can do this"* and *"if I work hard I will succeed"* because believing in yourself has the power to change your behavior and reactions.
- Remind yourself of all the hard work you've done and that your best is good enough.
- DON'T expect perfection!
- Instead of thinking "they are better at this than me" think "If they can do it so can I"
- Keep things in perspective – although exams are important, in the grand scheme of your life they are only a tiny part.

### Preparation

- **Stay healthy** – try to eat a balanced diet. Cut down on caffeine, sugary and junk food.
- **Exercise**
- **Have a balanced life** – make sure you get a good night's sleep, do something to 'switch off' like watch a movie, talk to your friends, have a laugh.
- **Don't keep things bottled up**. Talk to someone you trust. Ask for help and support from them.
- **Plan your study time**. Too much material + too little time = Anxiety/stress. Plan your studying with regularly scheduled study sessions about 50 minutes long separated by 10-minute breaks (you can get apps like "be focused" to help you with this) Make a timetable so you can track your progress and ensure you have time to cover the whole course at least once.
- **Take steps to overcome problems**. If you can't remember or don't understand some of your notes on a course don't panic. Highlight it and go to your subject teacher for help.

- **Study effectively – DON'T** just try to memorize the textbook; make sure you understand what you are reading (read it, turn it over and try to summarize it in your head) and always make revision notes/diagrams/flow charts/mind maps as you go through each topic. Use highlighter pens, index cards, etc.
- **Make sure your study style works for you.** Try different study methods to find out what works for you. For example, you could use visual methods (such as writing revision notes and drawing diagrams) or auditory (make up rhymes or engage in group discussions). *Ask your Guidance Teacher about different study methods.*

### Managing Stress During the Exam

- **Avoid panic.** Remind yourself it's okay to be nervous.
- **Focus on yourself** and ignore what others are doing around you.
- **Use relaxation techniques** - a quick way to reduce stress is to relax your hands, close your eyes and take several long slow breaths. Use a counted 7 in, 11 out, breathing technique. Breathing in this way calms your whole nervous system. Use a relaxation technique that you've practiced beforehand and that works for you.
- Read through all the questions before starting writing and make sure you are clear how many questions you must answer.
- Make sure you read the questions properly. Sometimes it helps to underline the instruction word in a question, e.g. Compare working conditions in Victorian Britain with those today. You could also highlight the key words in the question.
- Plan how much time you'll need to answer each question, noting how many marks are allotted to each.
- Start by answering the question you think you can answer the best.
- If you are stuck on a question, go on to the next and you can come back to it later.

**After the exam.** Try to avoid the post mortem and go and do something enjoyable as a reward for all your hard work!

## 6. Key relaxation strategies:

These strategies help us focus on something other than the thoughts that are making us feel anxious and can help our brains get out of the fight / flight / freeze state by sending it the message that the danger has passed. This restores our ability to think and problem-solve. Try the following strategies out to see what works best for you:

**Grounding:** Take notice of 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. Try to do this slowly, one sense at a time.

**Counting backwards:** count backwards slowly from 10. Repeat. Doing this in a foreign language is extra challenging.

**Deep breathing:** Inhale through nose and hold for count of 5, push breath out slowly using whole body. Repeat 5 times. Put your hand on your stomach and imagine that you are inflating a balloon – this ensures that you are breathing deeply rather than holding the breath in your chest.

**Visual imagery:** Visualise calm place or picture – imagine the sounds, smells, textures, heat etc.

**Visualising confidence:** Visualise yourself successfully coping with or overcoming the thing that is worrying you. Imagine how this will look and feel.

**Verbal rehearsal:** select a verbal reminder to repeat to self as a reminder to keep calm. You could store this in your bag/diary to read when you need it.

**Body scan:** scan your body for areas of tension then consciously release e.g. soften your forehead, wiggle your jaw, drop your shoulders, release a slow breath and roll your neck in a circle.

**Muscle relaxation:** starting from your toes, purposefully tense, then relax your muscles working up to your shoulders and face.

**Smiling:** Smiling can boost the release of chemicals associated with happiness and reduced stress in the brain, even if the smile is initially forced. Laughing will have a similar effect - you could speak to your friends about something funny that has happened, or watch a funny video.

**Listen to music:** Listen to a song that you love and that makes you feel good. Try to give it 100% of your attention by listening for the different instruments, lyrics etc, and sing along either out-loud or in your head.

**Get Active:** Do something active to help your body burn off some of the adrenaline that may have been released while you were feeling anxious.

## 6. Useful websites

| Title                                 | What is it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Who is it for?                                                                                             | Link                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Our Minds Matter                      | Guidance on how to support your emotional wellbeing                                                                                                                                                                                | Mental Health Information for Young People in Fife                                                         | <a href="#">Our Minds Matter - Mental Health Information for Young People in Fife - Wakelet</a>            |
| Hands on Scotland                     | Web-site providing help and practical advice for supporting children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing                                                                                                      | Parents, carers and people who work with children and young people in Fife                                 | <a href="http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/">http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/</a>                          |
| SHINE Support Group                   | 6 session group which shares helpful coping strategies                                                                                                                                                                             | Course available for young people aged 12-17 in Fife experiencing anxiety                                  | <a href="#">Shine - learn about anxiety and find helpful coping strategies - Access Therapies Fife NHS</a> |
| Mood Cafe                             | NHS Fife website for mental health- link gives a description of what anxiety is and highlights how normal it is.<br><br>Contains useful links to guides on relaxation, dealing with worry, panic, stress and understanding anxiety | Resource for teachers to inform own thinking.<br><br>Resource for high school pupils and adults to access. | <a href="#">Mood Cafe   Home</a>                                                                           |
| Fight, Flight Freeze video – You tube | An explanation of what anxiety is, how it is beneficial, what is happening neurologically, physically, emotionally and behaviorally                                                                                                | Appropriate for late primary and high school pupils                                                        | <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp0lpKTWrp4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp0lpKTWrp4</a>      |

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| Kooth                        | An online platform providing free, safe, anonymous mental health support through chatting with counsellors, podcasts, joining mini-activities and journalling                                         | 13+ years old                                                                                                          | <a href="#">Home - Kooth</a>                                                                              |
| Mood Juice                   | NHS website guide to anxiety- explanations and helpful thought training tools to help prevent catastrophising.<br><br>There is other useful content in the main website e.g. problem solving handouts | High school or adults to use                                                                                           | <a href="https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Anxiety.asp">https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Anxiety.asp</a> |
| Scottish conflict resolution | Information for young people about brain chemistry – and what is going on in the brain when you are experiencing different emotions, including anxiety                                                | Late primary/teenagers with good level of literacy                                                                     | <a href="https://scottishconflictresolution.org.uk/">https://scottishconflictresolution.org.uk/</a>       |
| Anxiety Canada               | Information about anxiety and approaches to support.                                                                                                                                                  | Interactive sections for children and for young people (particularly upper primary / teenagers), and one for educators | <a href="https://youth.anxietycanada.com/">https://youth.anxietycanada.com/</a>                           |

## 7. Useful books

| Title and author                                                                                                     | What is it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Who is it for?           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| "Beating Anxiety: What Young People on the Autistic Spectrum Need to Know." Davida Hartman                           | A book that explains Anxiety and what it means for children with ASD characteristics. It provides helpful strategies to practice as part of your daily routine                                                                                                                        | Young people with Autism |
| "How to Fix Almost Everything in 4 easy steps: Young Person's edition" Dr Chris Williams                             | Book to teach how to tackle problems one step at a time. This book is part of an 8-session online course at <a href="http://www.lttfyp.com">www.lttfyp.com</a> and part of the Living Life to the Full series of books                                                                | 12- 18 years             |
| "Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management" Kate Collins-Donnelly | A workbook to help understand the different types of anxiety and how to manage them. Based on cognitive behavioural approaches; linking thoughts, feelings and behaviours.<br><br>Activities and real-life stories to be completed independently, or alongside parents/ practitioners | 10+ years old            |
| "Banish your self-esteem Thief" Kate Collins-Donnelly                                                                | A workbook that explores what self-esteem is through stories and activities. This book helps young people to change how they think and act in order to build their self-esteem.                                                                                                       | 10+ years old            |
| "Think Good, Feel Good: A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People" Paul Stallard.         | CBT based workbook, covering basic theory and rationale behind CBT approaches. Resources for primary and secondary education.<br><br><a href="#">Think Good - Feel Good : A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People</a>                                    | 10+ years old            |

## 8. Useful Apps (all available through IOS and Android compatible phones/devices)

| App name                                                                                                          | Cost & Privacy Info                                                                  | Age range                                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <a href="#">CALM</a><br>         | Free 7-day trial.<br>Annual subscription costs £39.99 or £399.99 for lifetime access | All ages                                      | <p>A guided meditation app with a wide range of 5-20 minutes sessions, covering anxiety, focus, stress and more. Calm also offers expert and celebrity masterclasses and sleep stories.</p> <p>As part of the premium subscription, you get Calm Kids meditations for age groups from 3 to 17, in association with Disney, Thomas the Tank Engine and others</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <a href="#">Smiling Mind</a><br> | Free                                                                                 | Offers different programs for different ages. | <p>Has sample meditation that you can do without creating account or logging in.</p> <p>Once you create account – gives you access to multiple relaxation programs, including 'digital detox' one. There is also a 'mindfulness in the classroom' program and different programs for different age groups</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <a href="#">Mindshift</a><br>   | Free                                                                                 | Teens (13+)                                   | <p>Allows you to pick a situation you would like help with from a list (e.g. tackling social fears), then read the facts about social anxiety, before rating the severity and selecting all the physical symptoms that apply.</p> <p>There are a range of situations available including dealing with intense emotions, sleep, managing worry, test anxiety, social fears, performance anxiety, dealing with conflict, panic, and perfectionism. The app then supports you to create a plan, breaking it down into steps to tackle avoidance.</p> <p>The app enables you to collect a folder of favourite coping thoughts and chill out tools (including calm breathing audio)</p> |

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| <a href="#">Catch it</a><br>                      | <p>Free</p> <p>Requires you to set 4 digit pin.</p> <p>Asks for permission to anonymously share diary entries with Liverpool University – you can refuse</p>                                             | <p>Secondary school age</p> | <p>Helps users better understand their mood through the use of an ongoing diary.</p> <p>Record mood, including rating, when it was experienced and where you were and what you were doing. Asks you to identify your thoughts, and asks you to take an alternative perspective – what would you say to a friend? Then asks you to re-rate your mood. You can also share your diary via email.</p> |
| <a href="#">Headspace</a><br>                     | <p>Free to download &amp; complete basic module – can delete app and re-download to regain access to basic module.</p> <p>Monthly subscription (£9.99) after this or annual subscription for £49.99.</p> | <p>Secondary school age</p> | <p>Free Basics module has 10 (10-minute) exercises teaching the essentials of mindfulness. Completing one unlocks the next in the series.</p> <p>Monthly subscription provides access to several modules including specific Kids Headspace with modules on sleep, kindness and balance.</p>                                                                                                       |
| <a href="#">Daylio – Diary Mood Tracker</a><br> | <p>Free trial for 7 days then £20.28 per year (equivalent to £1.69/month) Free version provides access to most of the key features. No information is collected.</p>                                     | <p>Secondary school age</p> | <p>Pick your mood and add activities you have been doing during the day. You are able to set reminders to log your mood during the day.</p> <p>Asks you how are you feeling and what you have been up to. It also lets you see a monthly mood chart. Can help you to understand links and triggers, with the app suggesting connections.</p>                                                      |

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| <a href="#">SAM: Self-help for Anxiety Management</a><br><br> | Free                                                                              | Secondary school age | <p>Developed in collaboration with a research team from UWE, Bristol.</p> <p>Offers a range of self-help methods for people trying to manage anxiety including relaxation exercises, anxiety tracker, psycho-education and online forum.</p>                                                                                                                                                    |
| <a href="#">What's Up – A Mental Health App</a><br><br>       | Free –asks for voluntary donations and provides users with a theme for their app. | Secondary school age | <p>Incorporating CBT &amp; ACT methods to provide coping strategies for depression, anxiety, anger and stress.</p> <p>Good section on 12 unhelpful thinking patterns, metaphors and 10 simple ways to manage worries (e.g. turn your worry into a movie).</p>                                                                                                                                   |
| <a href="#">Breathe 2 Relax</a><br><br>                      | Free                                                                              | Secondary school age | <p>Teaches you diaphragmatic breathing as a relaxation technique. Guided deep breathing audio with visual, allows you to shorten or lengthen your exhale. Also includes demonstration video.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <a href="#">Fear Tools – Anxiety Aid</a><br><br>            | Free to use                                                                       | Secondary school age | <p>Basic psycho-education about different types of anxiety (not very child friendly). Includes questions which provides score and indication of severity of anxiety. It has a good fear hierarchy where you can set your own goals and rate the anxiety level. Simple diaphragmatic breathing visual.</p> <p>Useful for symptoms related to generalised anxiety, phobias and panic disorder</p> |

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| <a href="#">Safe Spot</a><br>                            | Free | 10+ years old            | Developed by 2 CAMHS Psychiatrists. Asks at the beginning whether you are an adult or child, then you create an avatar. Audios include muscle relaxation, breathing, mindfulness and guided imagery. Contains comprehensive directory of useful contacts. |
| <a href="#">Learn To Meditate — 1 Giant Mind</a><br>     | Free | 11 + years old           | 12-step course to learn to meditate                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <a href="#">Sorted Teens – Sorted Mental Health</a><br> | Free | Aimed at 10–15-year-olds | Audio tracks to develop self-esteem, resilience and goal focused motivation.                                                                                                                                                                              |

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| <a href="#">Home - Clear Fear App</a><br> | <p>Free</p> <p>No personal data collected and passcode can be set up to protect the self-monitoring section</p> | <p>Aimed at 11–19-year-olds</p> | <p>Funded by a UK teenage mental health charity, the app provides ways for young people to manage symptoms of anxiety. The app describes different ways that anxiety shows and provides resources.</p> |
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