

Supporting your child to cope with anxiety

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Outline



The Mental Wellbeing Continuum



Anxiety

What is anxiety?
Biology of anxiety
Common Signs



Practical Strategies



Questions



The Mental Wellbeing Continuum

A positive sense of **wellbeing** which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life - Mental Health Foundation



- The 'Happiness Trap'
- Normalising the range of emotions
- Not trying to eliminate any emotions – learning how to cope with them
 - Knowing when to seek help



Definition of Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of *worry or fear* that we experience when we expect that a situation might have adverse consequences for our psychological or physical well-being.

(Gaigg et al., 2018, p.5)

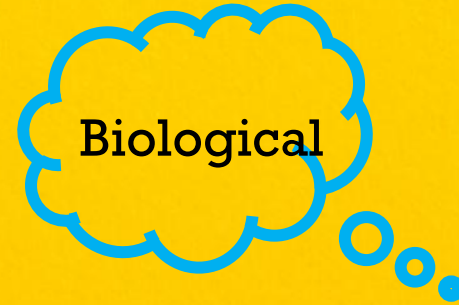
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Awful

Biological

Useful

What does anxiety mean to
you?



Biology of Anxiety



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv6HkipQcfA>

Signs/Triggers of Anxiety

- ❖ Separation anxiety
- ❖ Specific Phobias
- ❖ Generalised anxiety disorder
- ❖ Social anxiety
- ❖ Panic

THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE
Yelling, Screaming, Using Mean Words	Wanting to Escape, Running Away	Shutting Down, Mind Goes Blank
Hitting, Kicking, Biting, Throwing, Punching	Unfocused, Hard to Pay Attention	Urge to Hide, Isolates Self
Blaming, Deflecting Responsibility, Defensive	Fidgeting, Restlessness, Hyperactive	Verbally Unresponsive, Says, "I don't know" a lot
Demanding, Controlling	Preoccupied, Busy with Everything But the Thing	Difficulty with Completing Tasks
'Oppositional', 'Defiant', 'Noncompliant'	Procrastinating, Avoidant, Ignores the Situation	Zoned Out, Daydreaming
Moving Towards What Feels Threatening	Moving Away From What Feels Threatening	Unable to Move, Feeling Stuck
Irritable, Angry, Furious, Offended, Aggressive	Anxious, Panicked, Scared, Worried, Overwhelmed	Depressed, Numb, Bored/Apathetic, Helpless

WholeHearted School Counseling

ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

HOW WE EXPECT ANXIETY TO PRESENT:



WORRISOME/
NERVOUSNESS

AVOIDANCE

SADNESS

FEAR

HOW ANXIETY ALSO PRESENTS:



DEFIANCE

SLEEP ISSUES

ANGER

IRRITABILITY



Practical Strategies

- ❖ What supports are already being used
- ❖ Supporting Wellbeing
- ❖ Psychoeducation
 - ❖ Links between thoughts, feelings and behaviours
 - ❖ Physical Tools
 - ❖ Self Awareness Tools
 - ❖ Relaxation Tools
- ❖ Exposure ladder

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A hand holding a smartphone with a question on the screen.

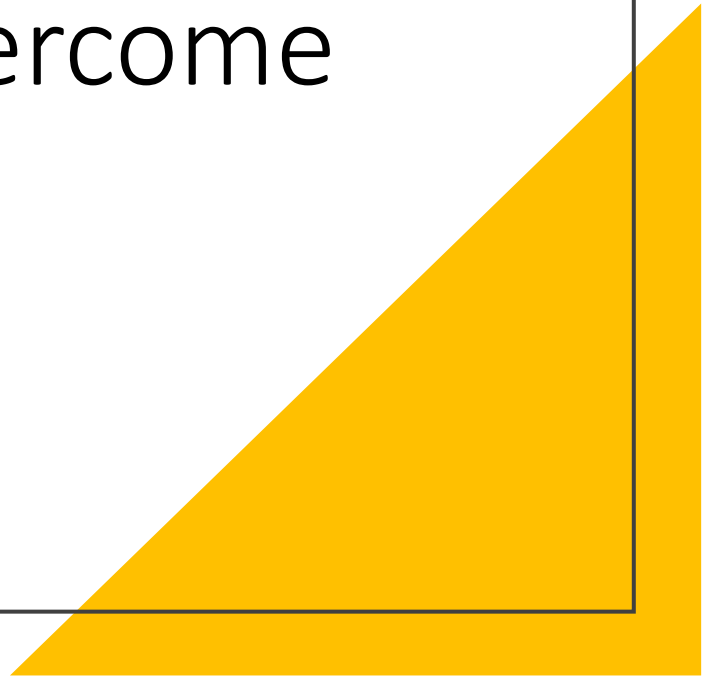
What
tools do
you use
to
support
your
child's
anxiety?



How we can support our children's wellbeing

- Belonging and Relationships
- Agency
- Success and Optimism
- Physical Health
- Routine

Psychoeducation: Education and other activities designed to help children understand their anxiety and develop appropriate coping skills to overcome this.



Links between Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviour



Next 30 seconds... try and think of anything BUT a polar bear...





7 MINUTE HIIT WORKOUT FOR KIDS

SET AN INTERVAL TIMER FOR 45 SEC OF WORK 15 SEC OF REST



FROG JUMP
Hop, hop hop! up and down like a Frog



BEAR WALK
With your hands & Feet on the Floor, hips high, walk left & right



GORILLA SHUFFLE
In a low bumbo squat, use your hands to balance and shuffle around the room.



STARFISH JUMPS
Jump up and down spreading your arms and legs wide (jumping jacks)

Physical Tools

- Going for walks
- HIIT Exercises
- Yoga
- Follow your child's interests



Self Awareness Tools

Self-Awareness Activities for Kids

www.thepathway2success.com
Graphic by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino



Write in a journal



Read positive affirmations



Research future careers



Do an emotions check-in



Make a gratitude list



Host a show-and-tell



Write self-compliments



Draw emojis for emotions

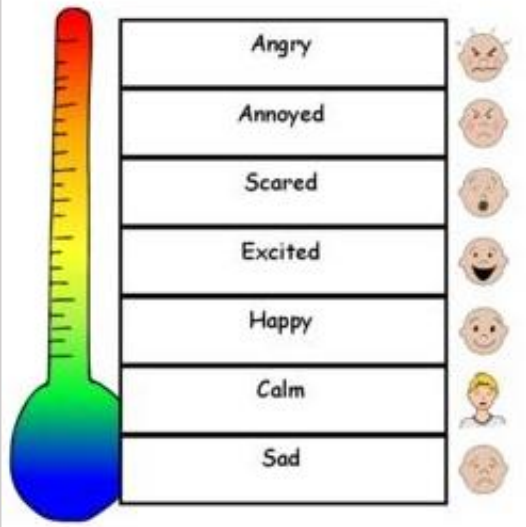









Introduce new activities



Make a vision board

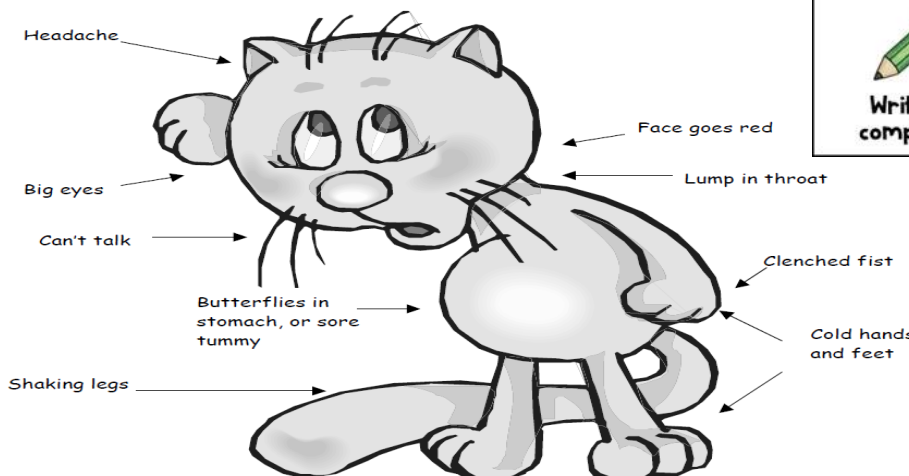
Feelings Thermometer



	Angry	
	Annoyed	
	Scared	
	Excited	
	Happy	
	Calm	
	Sad	

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Chester the Cat feels anxious!
 How does Chester feel anxiety in his body?







- Headache
- Big eyes
- Can't talk
- Butterflies in stomach, or sore tummy
- Shaking legs
- Face goes red
- Lump in throat
- Clenched fist
- Cold hands and feet

Relaxation Tools

- Relaxation Scripts
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Breathing exercises
- Yoga

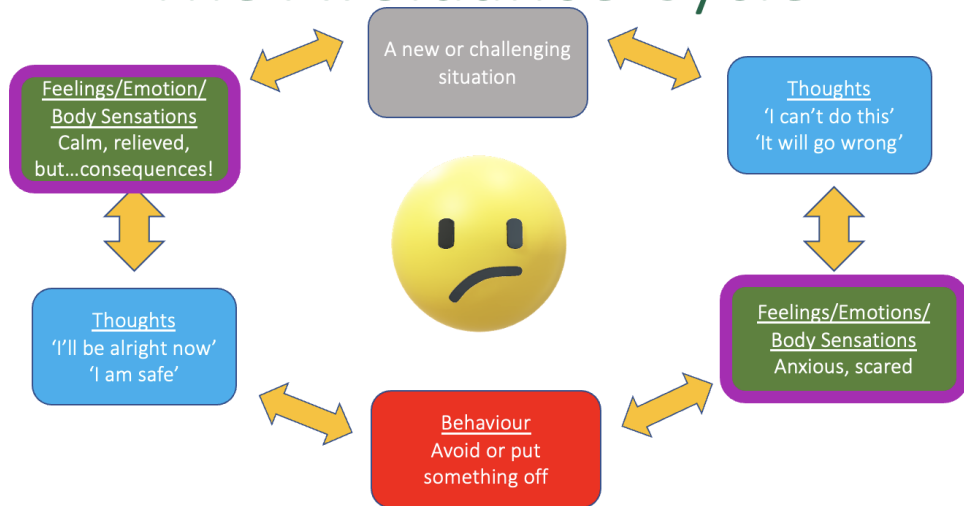


WIMMING DOWN

1		STOP
2		Smell the Flower
3		Blow out the candle
4		Relax your body

Avoidance

The Avoidance Cycle



Stepladder plan

Goal	Thought
Give a big dog a cuddle	The dog will jump up to my face and bite me
Reward	Going on a weekend horse riding trip with mum, dad, and best friend



High steps

10	Give the dog a cuddle	9	Stand close to the dog and pat the dog on their head
9	Crouch down next to the dog and pat the dog on their head	8	Stand close to the dog and touch the dog on its body

Middle steps

8	Walk up to the dog and stand close by	7	Walk past a dog >50 m away
7	Walk past a dog >10 m away	6	Step out on the street when there is a dog outside

Low steps

5	Open the front door to the street when there is a dog outside	3	Look at a dog on the street through a closed window
4	Look at a dog on the street through an open window	2	Look at videos of dogs

Remember: select a small reward every time you try a step.

Exposure Ladder

1. Rank the fear, put the highly rated one at the top, or one more manageable
2. Break it down into baby steps, easiest one at the bottom, 10 steps can be helpful
3. Reinforcing agreed rewards for completion of each step
4. Also list environmental modifications that may need to be made e.g. wearing ear buds in the town centre
5. Celebrate success, and break down if its no longer working



Questions

