



Supporting Children with Anxiety

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Overview

What is anxiety?

How does it present?

What can we do to help?

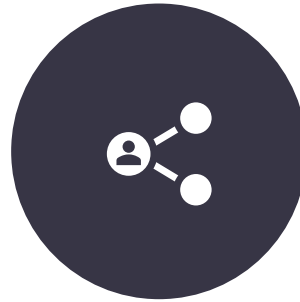
Parent Wellbeing

Resources

Disclaimer



EMOTIONAL
RESPONSES



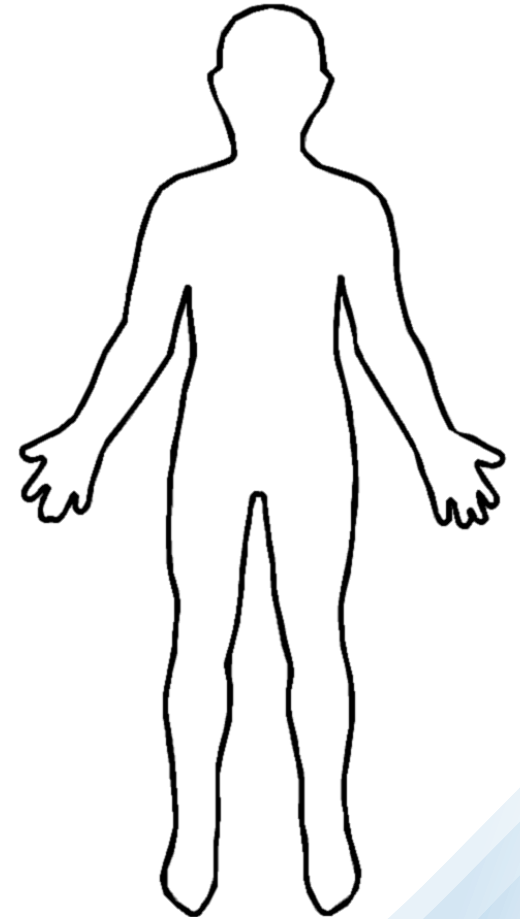
SHARING



CONFIDENTIALITY

Think about a time
when you felt stressed
or anxious...

- What does anxiety **look** or **feel** like for you?
- Where might you feel anxiety in the body?
- What might anxious thoughts or fears **sound** like?



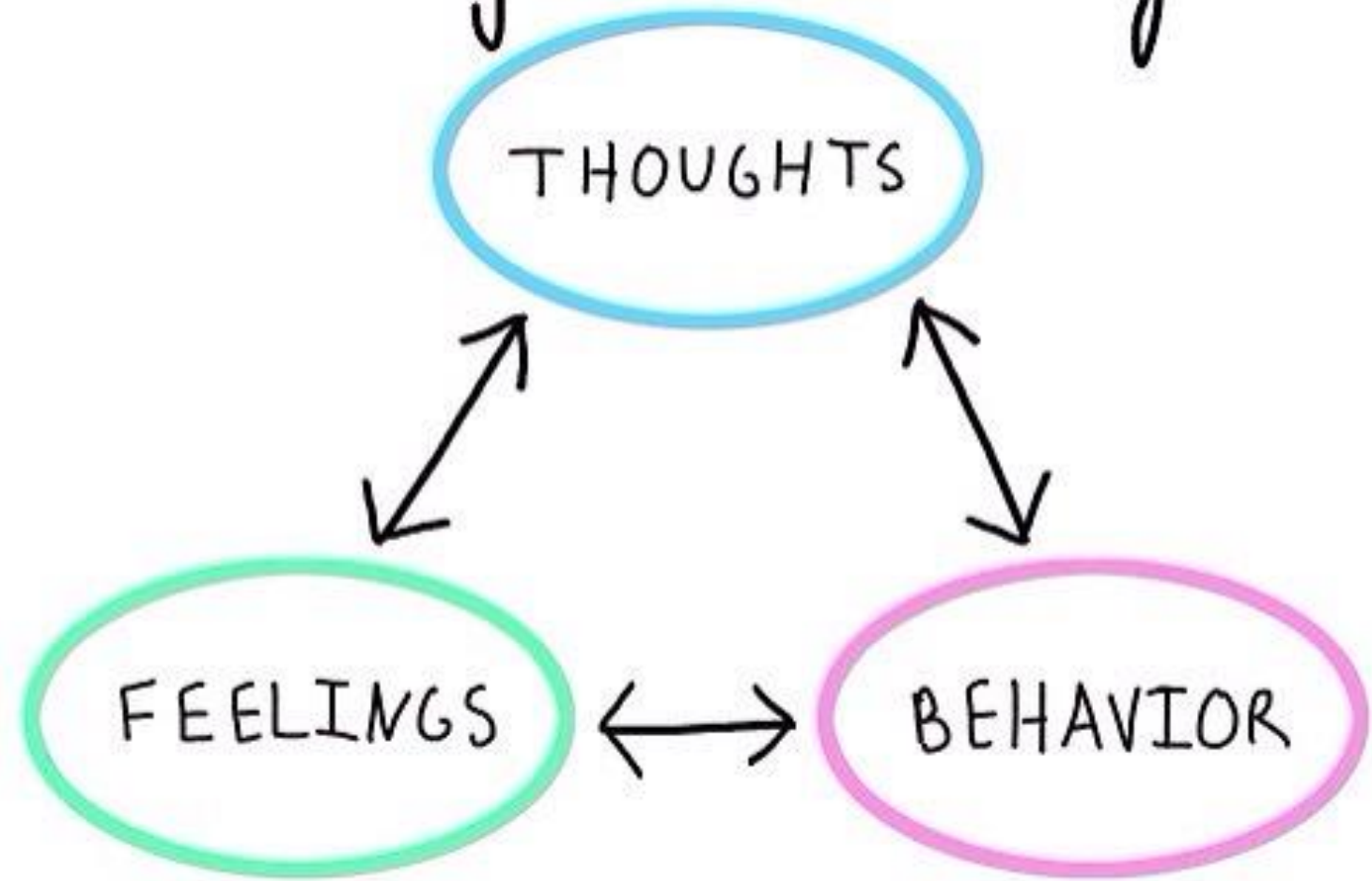



What is anxiety?

- A feeling of unease, worry, nervousness or fear
- A response to stress or a perceived threat
- A physical and psychological reaction to stress
- A normal and healthy emotion

How the body responds to stress	How the mind responds to stress
Sweating, shaking, headache, increased heart rate, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, stomach ache	Racing thoughts, worry, restlessness, low mood, irritability, avoidance

The Cognitive Triangle

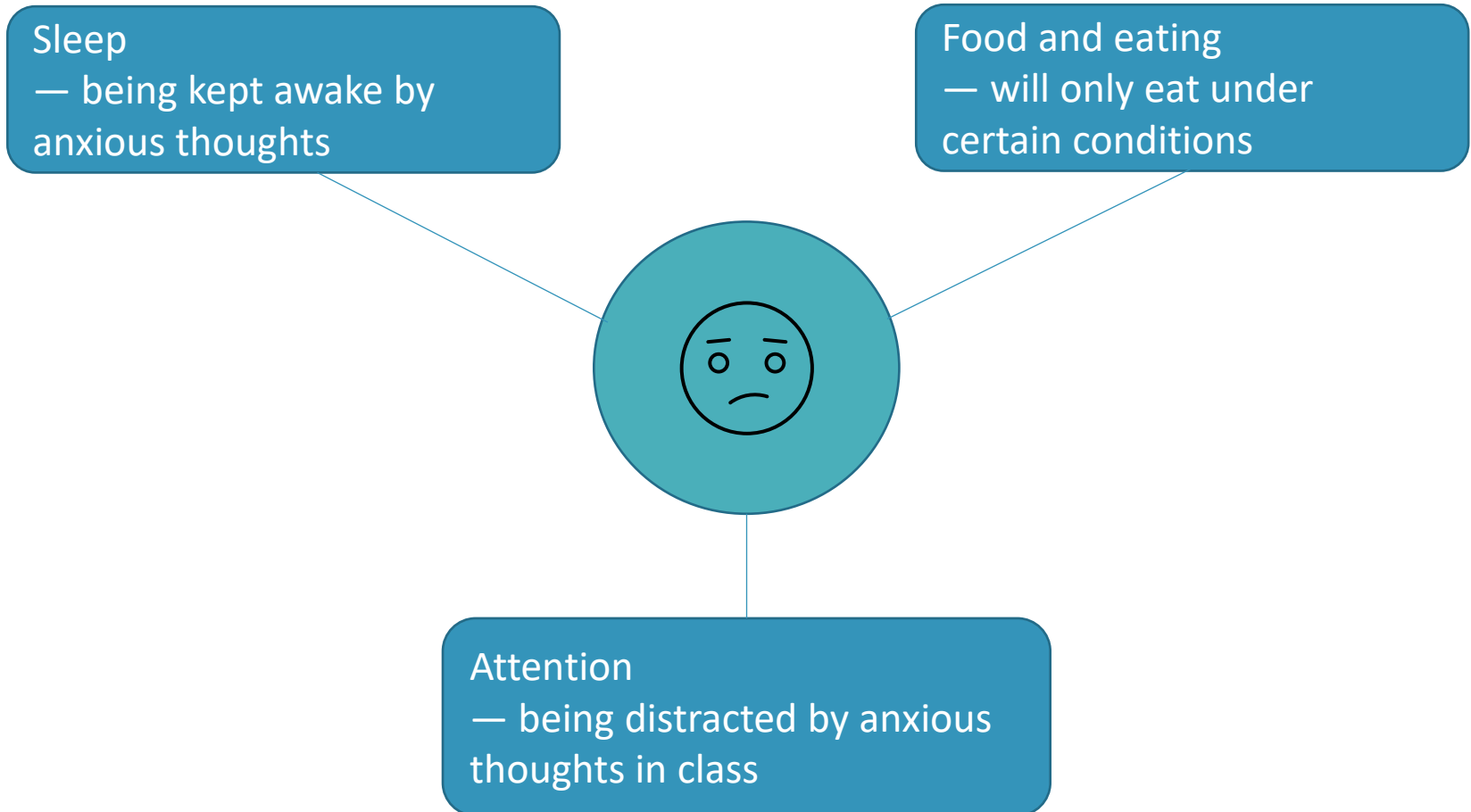




When does it become a problem?

- It is natural to feel anxious and it may have some benefits, e.g. keeping your distance from stray dogs or staying indoors in a lightning storm
- In addition, many people find stress good in terms of focusing thinking but too much stress can lead to being anxious
- There is a scale with anxiety, from being a normal part of life to it becoming unmanageable, where it can dominate thinking and interfere with daily functioning
- It can be a short-term event or it may be pervasive. It can also change from one thing to another. The type of anxiety shown by younger children can be different from what we see in teenage years

Anxiety affects aspects of daily living

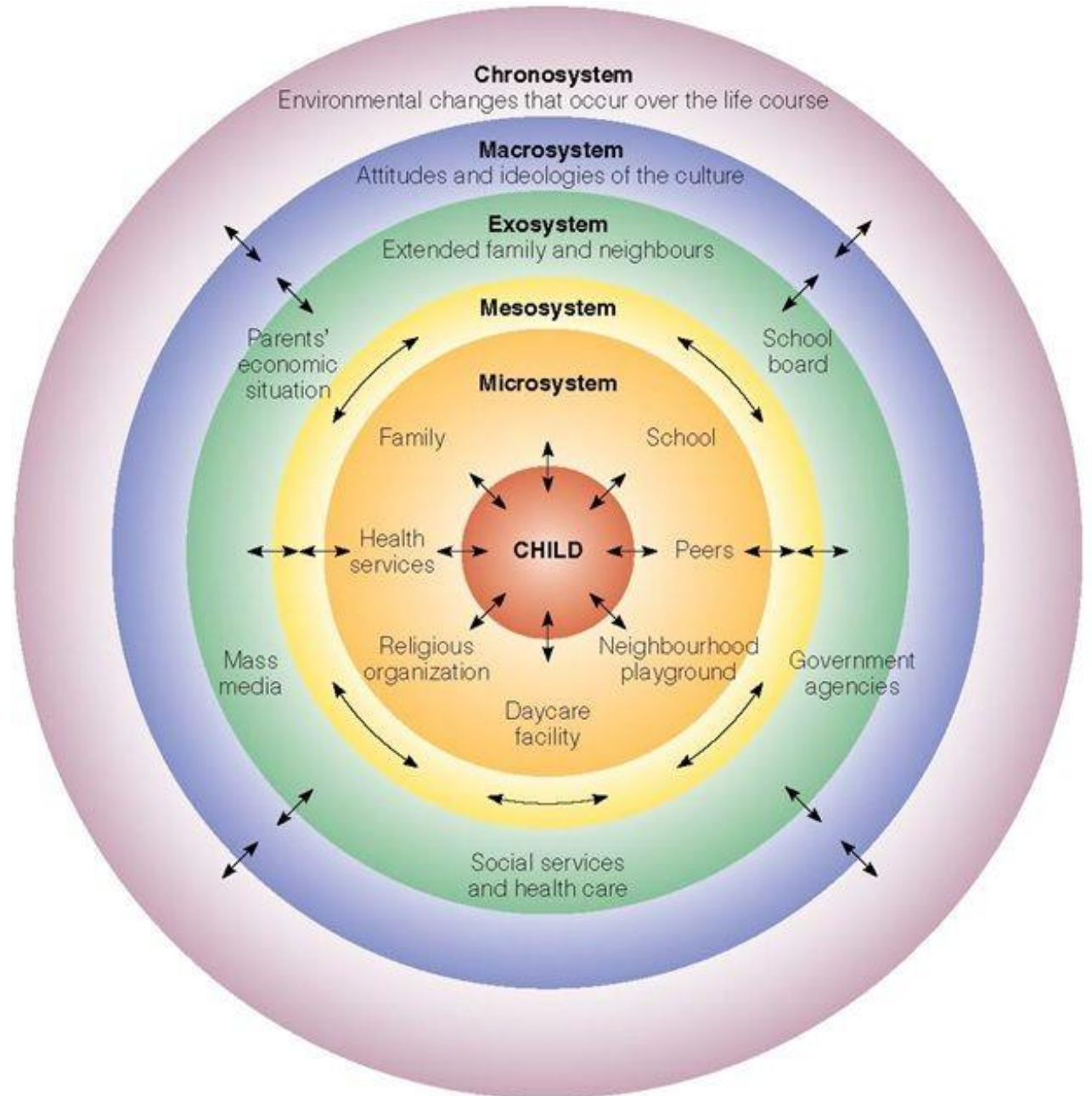



The transactional nature of anxiety

- Anxiety breeds anxiety
- A survey by the charity Education Support found that **75% of teaching staff** had experienced feelings of stress and anxiety in the preceding two years.
- *“When your child displays the anxiety behaviours that I have seen, there’s clearly something that is making him anxious and I can’t help him with, so for me, there’s a constant worry that I’m not being the super parent that I aspire to be.”*

Mother of 19-year-old male
(Tarver et al., 2020)

Contextual factors to consider





What can anxiety look like?

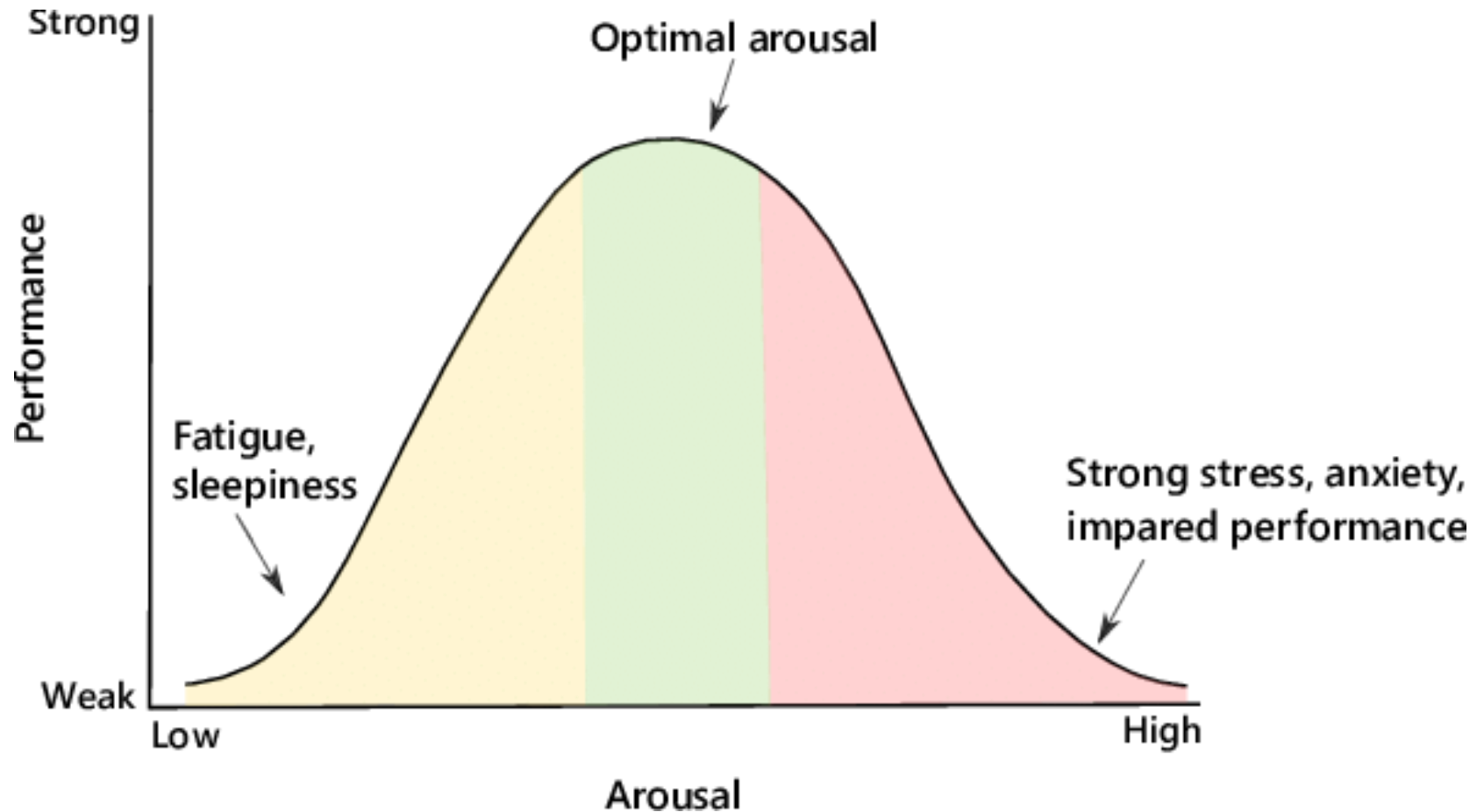
- **Physical** - headaches, nausea, body temperature changes, sweating, shortness of breath, light-headedness or fainting, rapid heart beat, and/or dry mouth.
- **Emotional** - excessive feelings of fear, disappointment, anger, depression, uncontrollable crying or laughing, feelings of helplessness
- **Behavioural** - fidgeting, pacing, avoidance, procrastination
- **Cognitive** - racing thoughts, 'going blank', difficulty concentrating, negative self-talk, feelings of dread, comparing yourself to others, difficulty organizing your thoughts

What is the impact of anxiety?

Low levels of anxiety are very common, but too much anxiety can:

- interfere with studying or revision
- impact our ability to absorb, retain and recall information
- impair our ability to reason and comprehend
- prevent us from balancing competing demands, e.g. fear of not getting things perfect
- result in difficulty learning or remembering what is needed for a test/exam

The Stress Curve



Procrastination

- Putting off—or avoiding—a task
- **Not** laziness – linked with emotional regulation
- Anxiety can drive procrastination, but can end up increasing anxious feelings
- Important to acknowledge the underlying anxiety and promote self-compassion



The Procrastination Process

1 Aversion

The unpleasant feeling or emotion created by thinking about or seeing task or activity that needs to be done.

Ex: "I feel **overwhelmed** looking at how many dishes are in the sink.

4 Increased Stress

Feelings of anxiety and stress when encountered with the consequences of procrastinating.

Ex: Dishes have increased and there are fruit flies everywhere.



2 Avoidance

Thoughts and behaviors that help you to steer clear of an activity or task.

Example Avoidance

Thought: "I'm too busy to take care of the dishes.

Example Avoidance

Behavior: Scroll on Instagram for several hours

3 Temporary Relief

Feeling reduction of stress because of avoidance behaviors.

The **increased stress often leads to **aversion** starting the process again.

What can you do to support YP with anxiety?

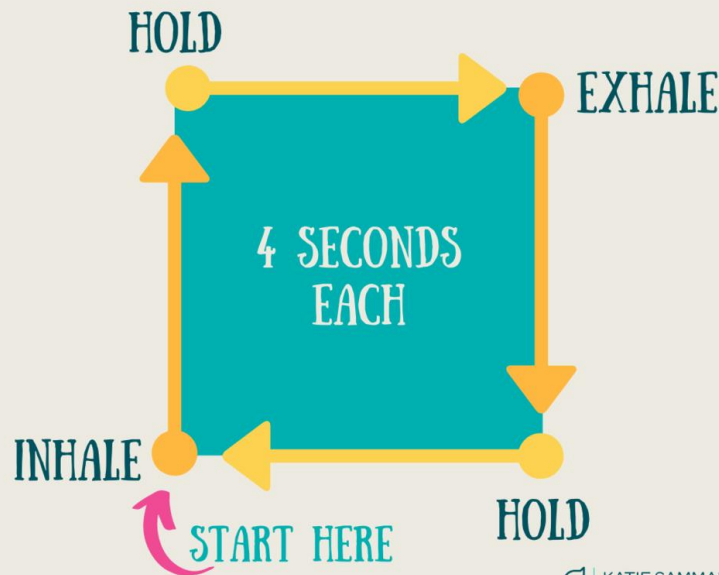
What helps when
you are feeling
stressed or
anxious?

What have you
noticed helps **your**
child?

Mindfulness Techniques

Box Breathing

BOX BREATHING



 KATIE SAMMANN
PSYCHOTHERAPY

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing
- Slowly breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth
- Make a fist, squeeze your hand tightly
- Hold the fist for a few seconds and notice the tension
- Slowly open your fingers and feel the difference. Notice the tension leaving
- Try with other parts of the body



Top Ten Tips

1. Watch for signs of stress
2. Make sure your child eats well
3. Help your child get enough sleep
4. Be flexible around challenging situations
5. Connect and offer support
6. Talk about worries
7. Encourage exercise
8. Avoid adding to the pressure
9. Make time for rest and rewards
10. Consider your own wellbeing



Worry monsters and Worry dolls

Similarly worry monsters can be used by writing down your child's worries and then feeding them to the worry monster who will take them away.



According to legend, Guatemalan children tell their worries to the Worry Dolls, placing them under their pillow when they go to bed at night.

Parent Wellbeing



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



Your time,
your words,
your presence

Five Ways to Wellbeing

Useful resources

- An Evidence Based Guide to Anxiety in Autism: <https://www.blackwellprimaryschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Anxiety-in-Autism-A5-guide.pdf>
- Not Fine in School: <https://notfineinschool.co.uk/home>
- Young Minds – Parent guide: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>
- NHS – Anxiety in Children: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/
- Action for Children – Children’s Anxiety: www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/children-s-mental-health/children-s-anxiety/

Books

- 'How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk' by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- 'What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety' by Dawn Huebner
- 'No Worries! Mindful Kids: An Activity Book For Children Who Sometimes Feel Anxious Or Stressed' by Sharie Coombes
- 'When My Worries Get too Big! A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety' by Kari Dunn Buron
- Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents by Ann Wignall et al