



# Anxiety: Helping Your Child With Fears & Worries





# Overview

- Explore the concept of “anxiety”
- Consider how anxiety manifests in the body
- Discuss what we might notice as parents/carers
- Explore what maintains anxiety/worries
- Discuss what parents/carers can do to support their children





# Anxiety- Fight, Flight, Freeze



Cambridgeshire  
Community Services  
NHS Trust





# Anxiety- Fight, Flight, Freeze

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Any thoughts or reflections?



# When children are anxious they tend to...



**Overestimate the threat  
of something**

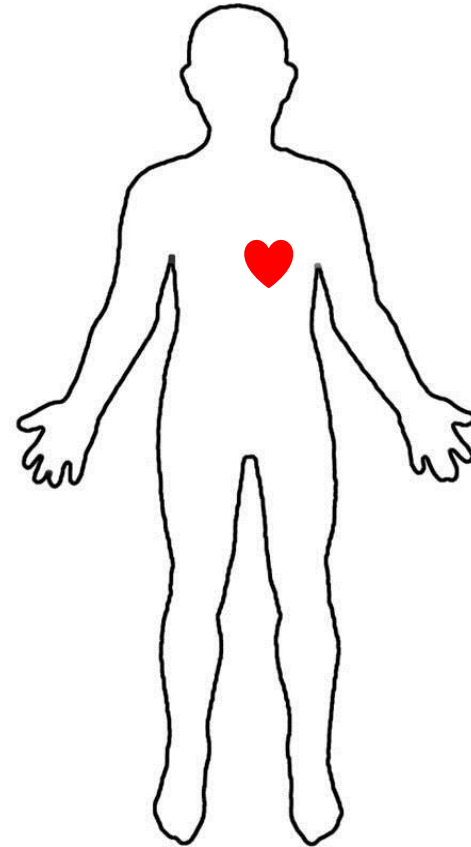


**Underestimate their  
ability to cope with it**



# Anxiety- Bodily Sensations

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# Anxiety- Bodily Sensations



**BLUSHING**



**FEELING OF THE MIND  
GOING BLANK**



**MUSCLE TENSION**



**SWEATING**



**QUICKENED HEARTBEAT**



**UPSET STOMACH**



**TREMBLING**



**LIGHTHEADEDNESS**



**SHORTNESS OF  
BREATH**



**DIZZINESS**



**NAUSEA**



# Anxious Behaviours



# We might notice...

## 8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

### 1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



### 2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



### 3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



### 8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



### 4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



### 5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.



### 6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



### 7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

# We might notice...

Things we might see

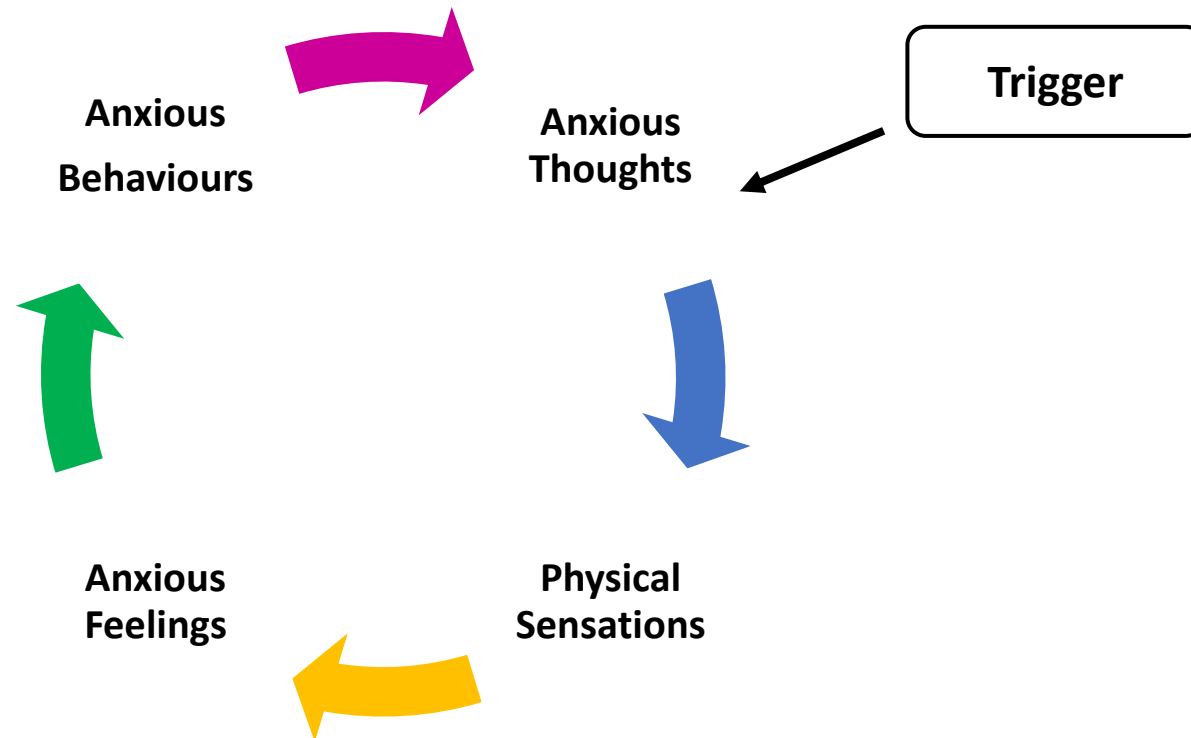


Feelings & emotions underneath





# What keeps anxiety going?



# What happens in our brain...



[Brain & amygdala hand model explains how thoughts & emotions fuel anxiety https://empoweru.education](https://empoweru.education) - YouTube



# Helpful Techniques...

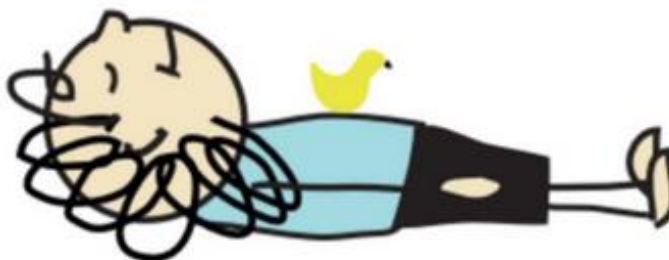
# Deep Breathing

When we feel worried our hearts can start to beat really fast. This can be quite scary!

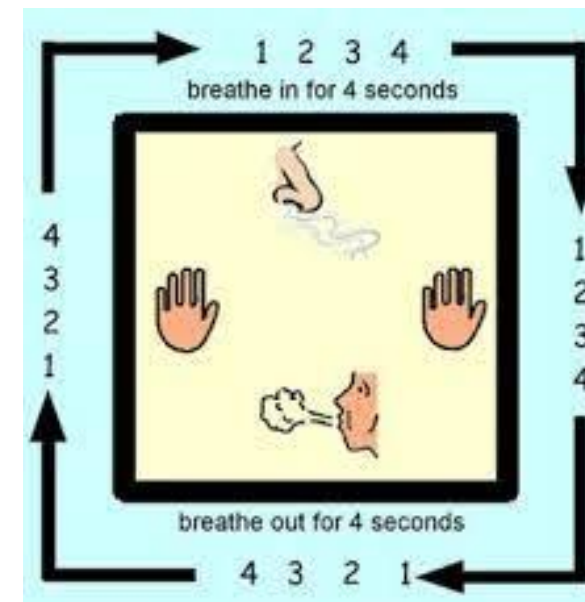
Focus on your breathing to let your heart know you are safe.



5 finger breathing



Belly breathing



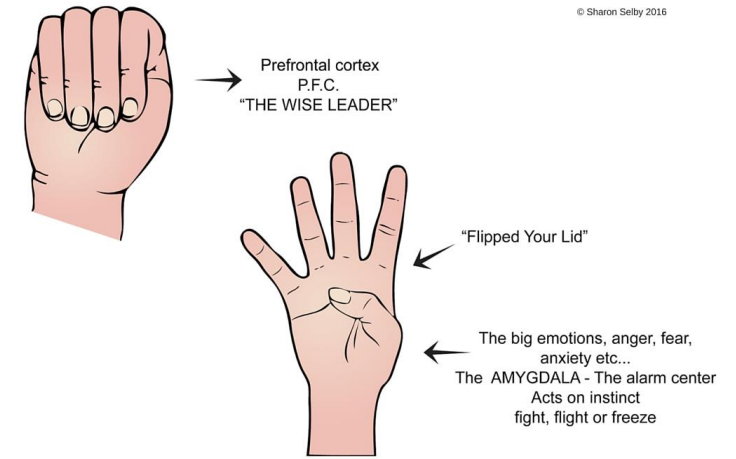
Square breathing

# 5 Senses



Grounding technique that stimulates the rationale part of our brain. Helps us to be in the present moment.

- Warmth and empathy supports us in putting our “lid” back on
- Prioritise connection over correction. Choose moments to reflect.



Adapted from Dr. Daniel J. Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain found in *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (Bantam Books, 2010)



## WIN(E)

- I Wonder...if you are worried about going to school today
- I Imagine...that must feel overwhelming for you
- I Noticed...you looked angry/sad/anxious
- Empathy



# Moving from Reassurance to Self-Assurance



1

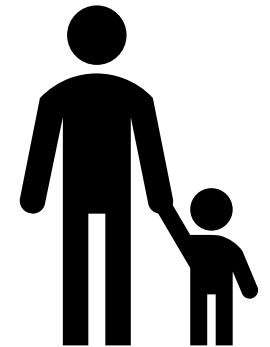
Understanding your child's worries

2

Normalising, accepting, validating, empathising with your child's feelings.

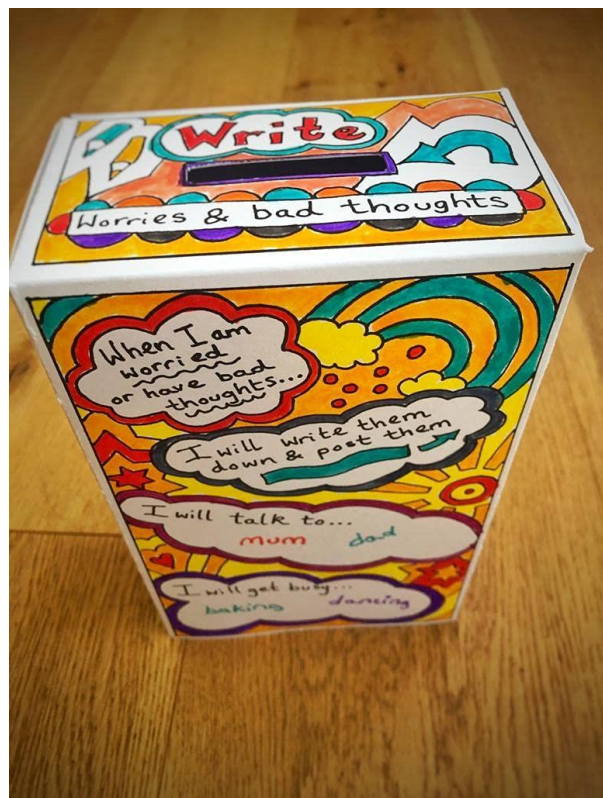
3

Encouraging independence (building confidence).



# Containing Worries

## Worry Box



## Worry Time

SET ASIDE  
15 MINUTES  
DURING  
THE DAY



Create "worry time" earlier in the day to help your child process anything that's troubling them *before* bedtime comes around! They'll sleep better for it!

# Distraction





# Further Resources





# Thank you for listening



## Any questions?