

# Supporting young people with anxiety

**Delivered by  
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TAKE CARE



OF YOURSELF



## A word of warning!

We don't want  
to turn you into  
therapists

Useful for young  
people that  
suffer with  
anxiety

For more  
moderately or  
severely  
anxious young  
people, please  
also access  
professional  
support

# Overview of the session

- ▶ What is anxiety?
- ▶ How to talk to your young person about their difficulties
- ▶ How you can support your young person
- ▶ Useful resources

# What is Anxiety?

**Overestimation** of threat and danger

**Underestimation** of one's ability to cope

It prevents children from enjoying normal life experiences e.g. impacting on school, friendships, family life.

# What the statistics say...

Anxiety is amongst the most common mental health problem experienced by adolescents, becoming more common as children move into adolescence:

- 3.9% of 5-10 year olds
- 7.5% of 11-16 year olds
- 13.1% of 16-19 year olds

Most common disorders of childhood/adolescence are separation anxiety, specific phobia, generalised anxiety and social anxiety

Around 50% of all anxiety issues in adulthood have started by the age of 15 - many children don't get the right help

Untreated anxiety in childhood and adolescence leads to an increased risk of later anxiety, depression and underachievement at school

# Ben, 12 years old

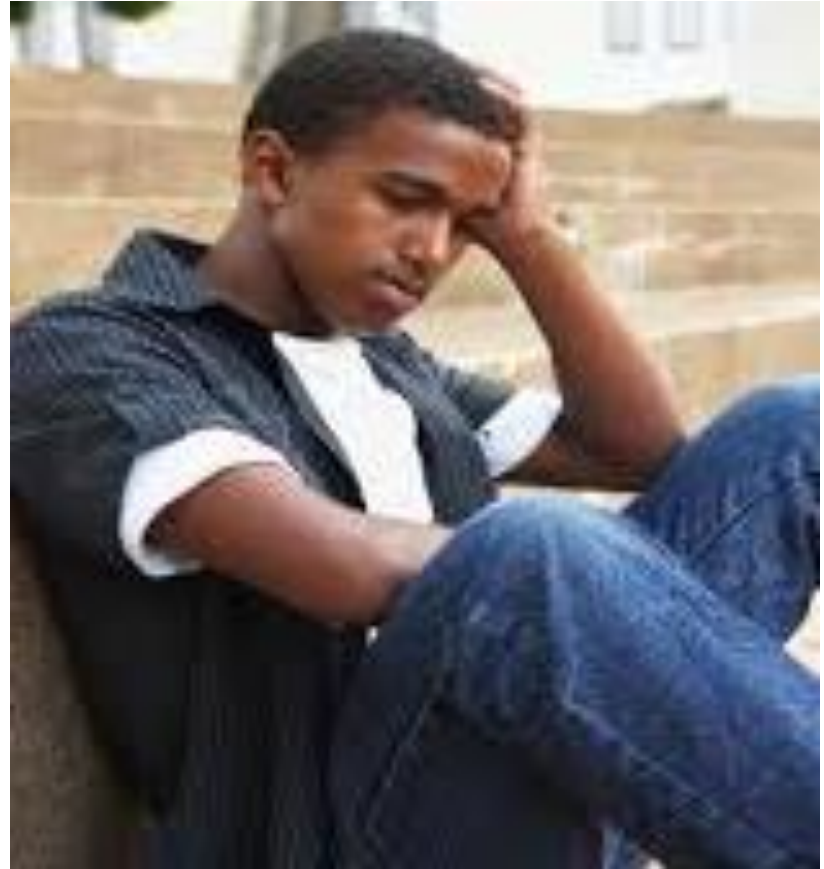
**Ben** becomes tearful each morning before school and complains of feeling sick. Although his teachers report that he is fine when he has settled in, he is most comfortable when he can meet a teaching assistant each morning when he arrives. He finds it difficult to sleep alone, frequently comes down to his parents throughout the evening and often goes to sleep in their bed during the night. If his parents go out without him he texts them frequently to check that they are okay and to find out when they will be home. He is reluctant to go out with friends or join activities after school.



# Signs of anxiety

What might you notice?

- ▶ Physical symptoms?
- ▶ Behaviour and thinking?
- ▶ Emotions?





# Some signs of anxiety...

**Physical  
Symptoms?**

**Stomach aches  
Headaches  
Fatigue**

# Some signs of anxiety...

## Thoughts and Behaviour?

Pessimism/thinking the worst  
Self-critical/over-exaggerating  
negatives  
Restlessness and irritability  
Difficulties coping with change  
Avoidance  
Sleep difficulties  
Clinginess or crying  
Perfectionism

# Some signs of anxiety...

Emotions?

Worry (about things that  
have or may have happened)  
Anger  
Irritability  
Panic

# Please note!

- ▶ All children and young people (and adults) have changes in mood, and ups and downs
- ▶ Being fearful is very common during childhood
- ▶ Adolescence is often a time of self consciousness, change and challenges

# LOVE YOUR BRAIN

## Elephant Brain

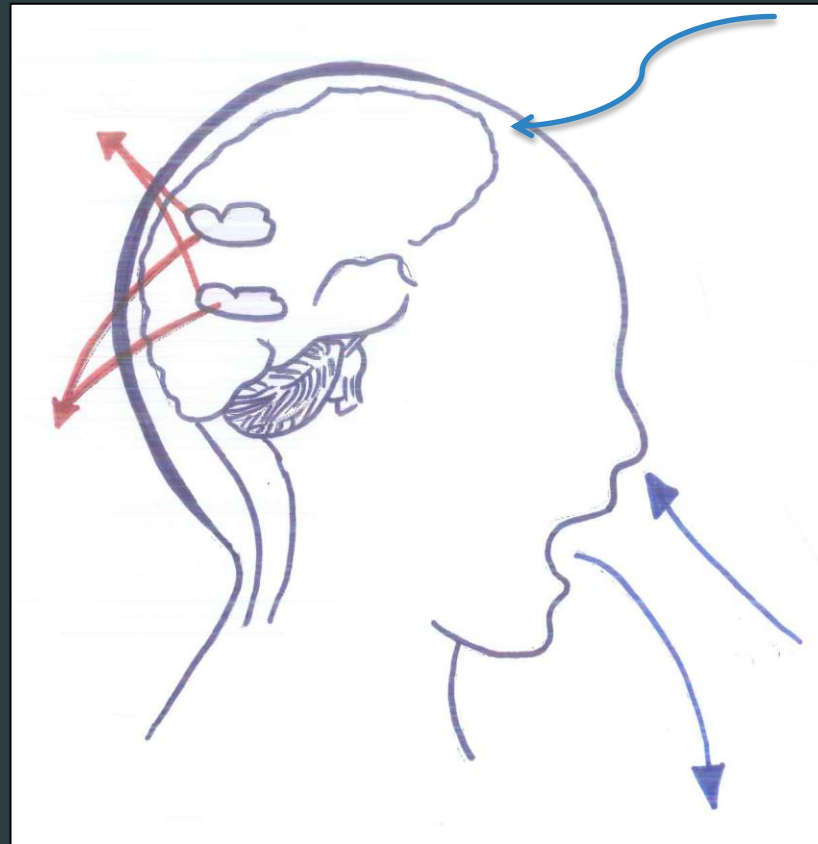
(Hippocampus)

Creates, stores and processes all our memories and important facts. It also remembers how things and people made us feel.

## Meerkat Brain

(Amygdala)

This is our internal alarm system! Whenever we feel upset or frightened our amygdala is on alert and blocks information from your PFC. The amygdala reacts to perceived danger as real danger.



## Owl Brain

(Pre-frontal cortex)

This is where we process information so we can computer, decide, analyse and reason. The catch is your amygdala needs to be calm for this to happen. It will then focus anything worth remembering to the hippocampus.

Deep breathing helps to calm the 'meerkat' and allows you to think clearly

Breathe in through your nose  
Breathe out through your mouth

Learning about our brain helps us become better thinkers, healthier and happier. By getting to know these 3 important parts of the brain, we can learn to help them work together. This helps us to respond rather than react, making us feel more confident.

# Overview of the session

- ▶ What is anxiety?
- ▶ How to talk to your young person about their difficulties
- ▶ How you can support your young person
- ▶ Useful resources

# Talking to your young person...

Listen and show a genuine interest in them as a person (not just as the 'anxious kid').

Use statements that are facts (rather than judgements).

Try and obtain some context for your young person's fears. They may be experiencing significant difficulties / real threat. Are their worries founded?

Ask 'open' questions to allow them to say how they are feeling.

Write down the things that are concerning you before you speak.

Recognise that talking about anxiety can be difficult and takes courage. Praise them for sharing their difficulties.

Encourage them to address their fears in a manageable way.

# Talking to your young person...

Normalise what the young person is feeling and going through.

Be calm and supportive and allow plenty of time.

Try to keep any anxiety you may feel to yourself.

You may also want to talk to their teacher, school nurse or another trusted adult. It is best to tell your child that you are planning to do this and include them in the conversation, so they do not feel excluded.

If you think your young person is experiencing suicidal thoughts, it's better to ask about it than ignore it.

Think about what you want to say and keep it simple.





## A word of warning!

In many cases young people won't be actively seeking help and may feel embarrassed or reluctant to talk.

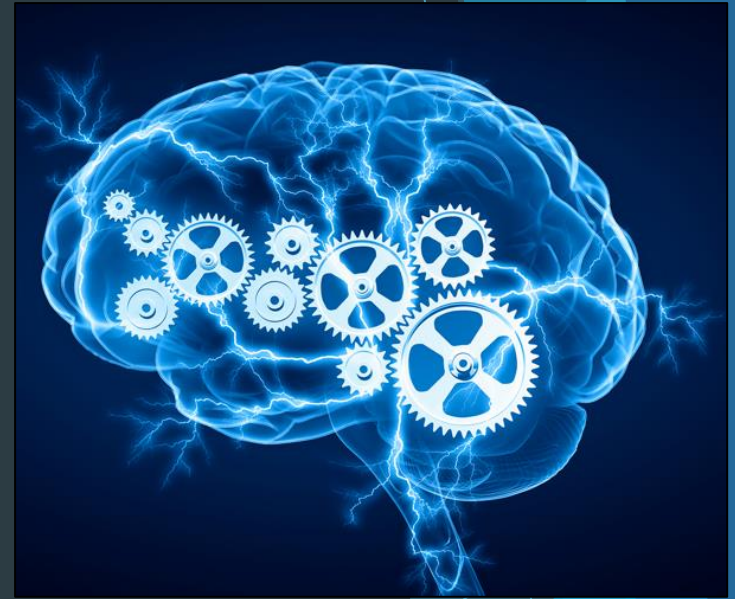
Young people may be reluctant to change if this involves going out of their comfort zone.

# Overview of the session

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# Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

- ▶ CBT is the leading evidence-based treatment for anxiety
- ▶ Studies show that around 2/3 of young people treated will be free of anxiety by end of treatment
- ▶ Most CBT through the NHS is provided by CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services)



**Imagine it is the middle of the night -  
you are at home in your bed asleep.  
You are awakened suddenly by a  
loud noise from downstairs.**

- ▶ **What do you think?**
- ▶ **How do you feel?**
- ▶ **What reactions might you notice in your body?**
- ▶ **What do you do?**

# Hearing a loud noise in the night - Scenario 1

THOUGHT	FEELING	BODILY SENSATIONS	BEHAVIOUR
The dog has knocked something over again	Annoyed	Exhausted	Roll over and go back to sleep

# Hearing a loud noise in the night - Scenario 2

THOUGHT	FEELING	BODILY SENSATIONS	BEHAVIOUR
Someone's broken into the house; we're being burgled	Scared	Increased heart rate, sweating, very alert	Hide upstairs, call the police

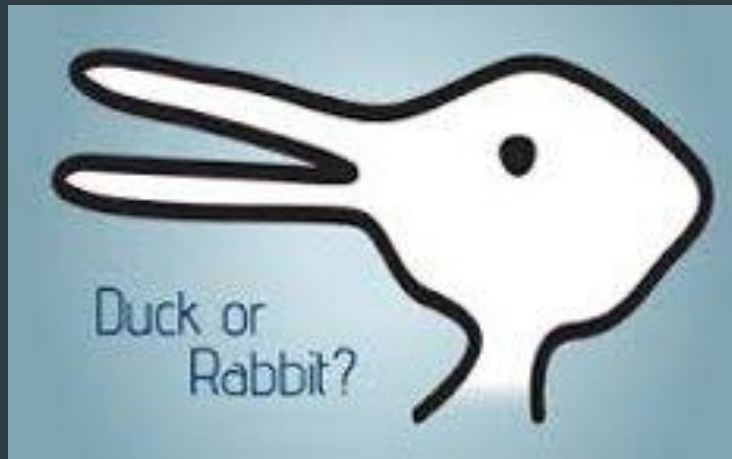
# Possible interpretations

*‘The dog has knocked something over again’*

*Or*

*‘Someone’s broken into the house; we’re being burgled’*

- ▶ How an event is interpreted determines how someone reacts to it
- ▶ The 'same' event can result in different emotions (depending on the interpretation)
- ▶ We may be able to reduce distress by helping children to change their interpretations / thoughts and behaviours







You've just arrived at a house party. As you go in the front room a small group of people turn around and look at you.

# Impact on behaviour

*'What a great party -  
and Sarah's over there -  
it's ages since I've had a  
chance to chat to her'*



*Go over and say  
hi to Sarah*

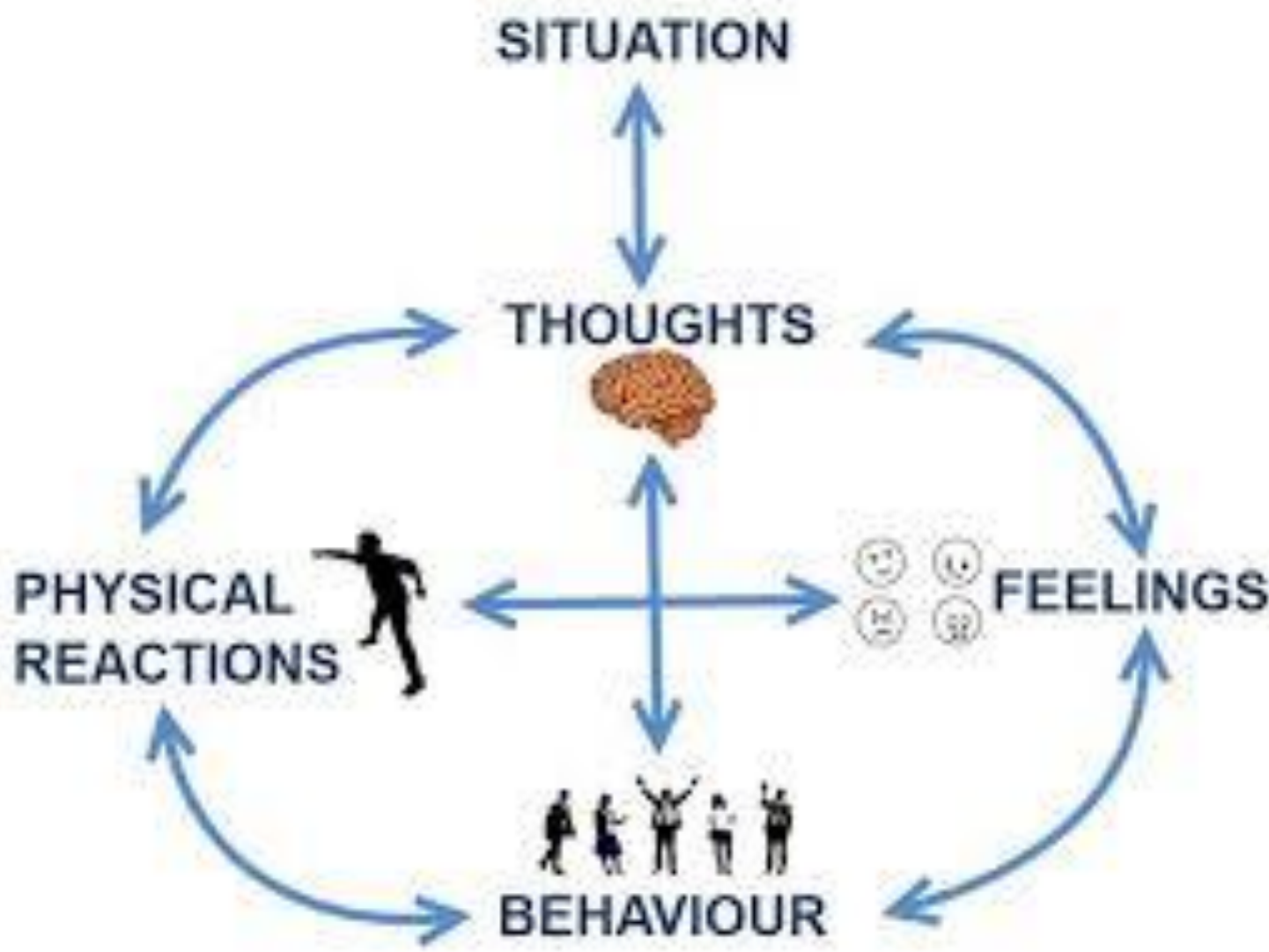


*'They are staring at me  
- I look really stupid and  
they're going to make  
fun of me'*



*Feel anxious  
and go home*







Different ways of thinking

- How realistic is this thought?
- Could something else happen instead?



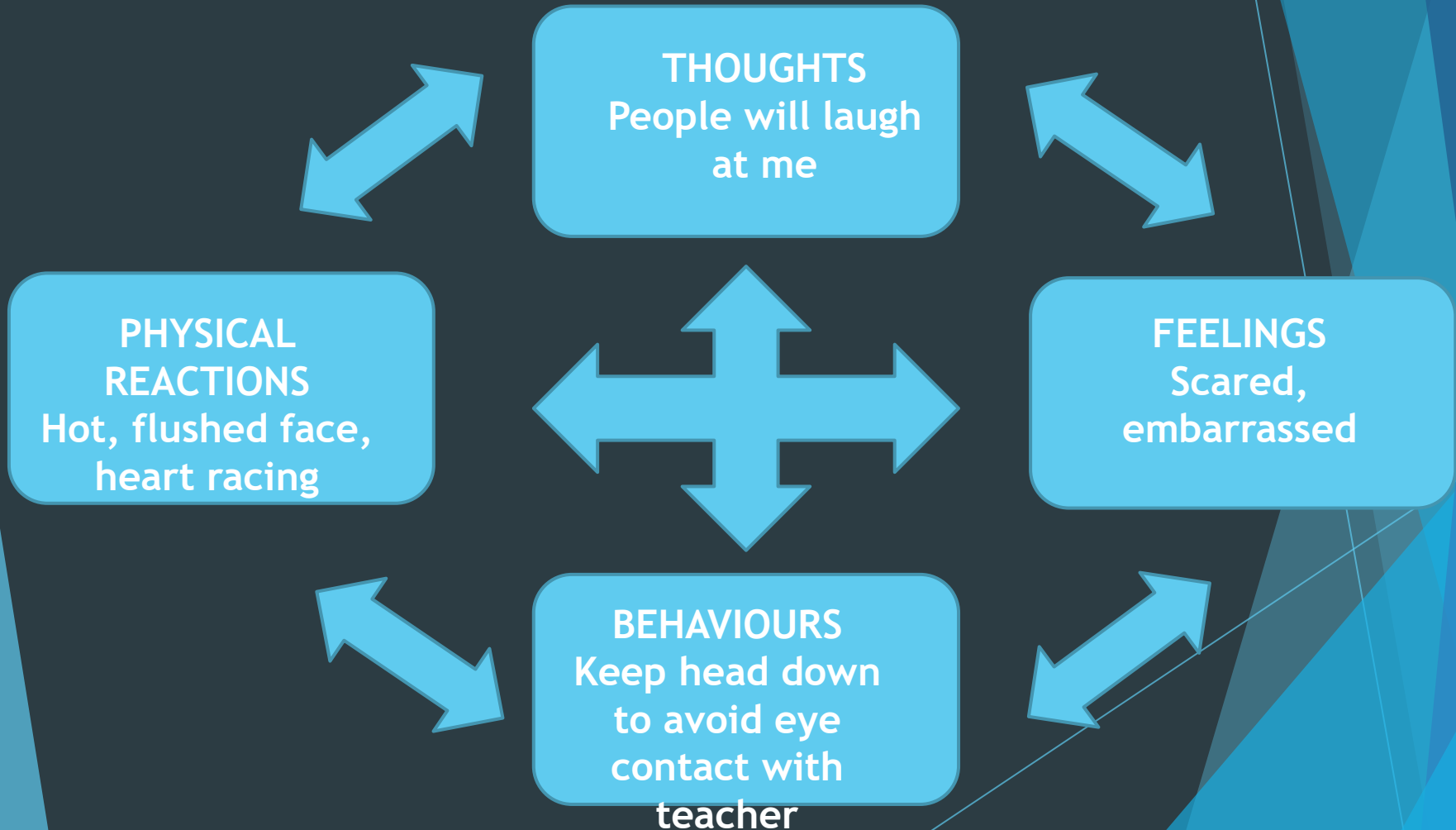
Different ways of thinking

- How realistic is this thought?
- Could something else happen instead?

Different reactions

- Respond in a different way
- Practise confronting the fear

# Feeling worried about talking to the rest of the class



- ▶ We behave in a way that is consistent with our beliefs and this can become a habit
- ▶ Therefore, we do not get the opportunity to challenge our beliefs/ gather evidence for different ways of thinking
- ▶ Behaviours may maintain our beliefs, therefore we may have to change our behaviours

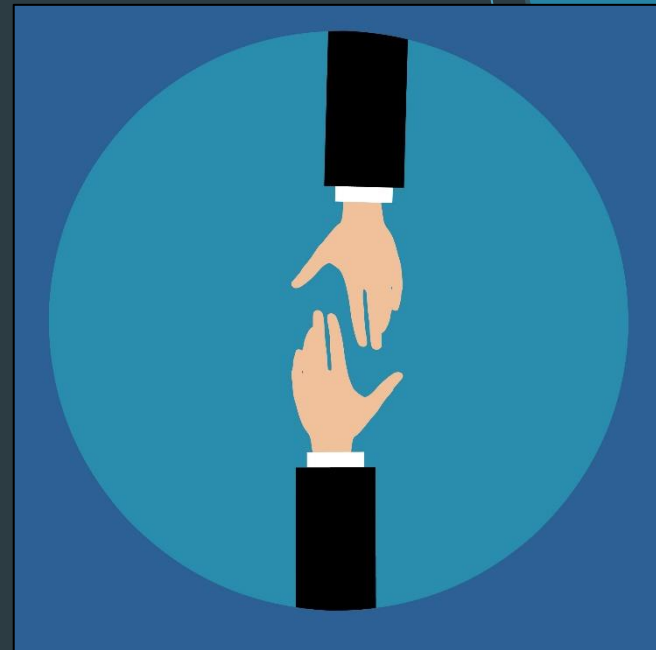


**Any questions?**



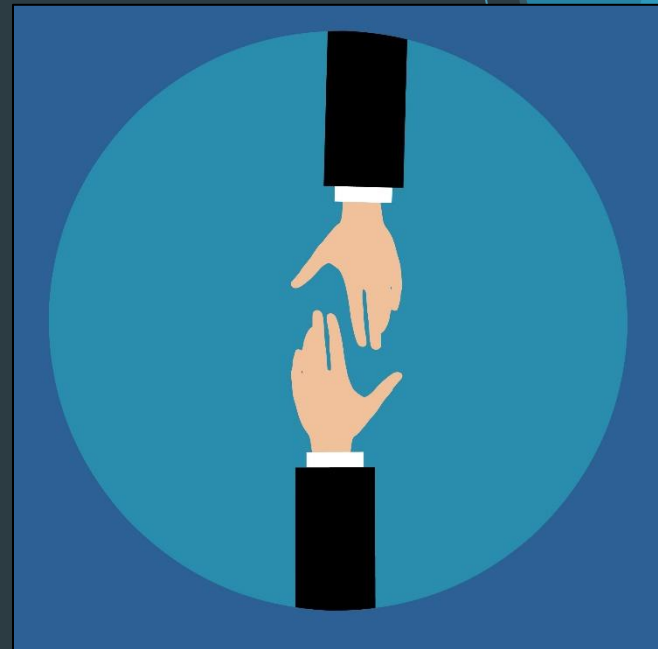
# Helpful messages you can give to your young person

- ▶ Anxiety is 'normal'
- ▶ Certain types of thoughts can maintain/increase anxiety
- ▶ Certain types of behaviour (e.g. avoidance) can make things feel better in the short term but worse in the long term

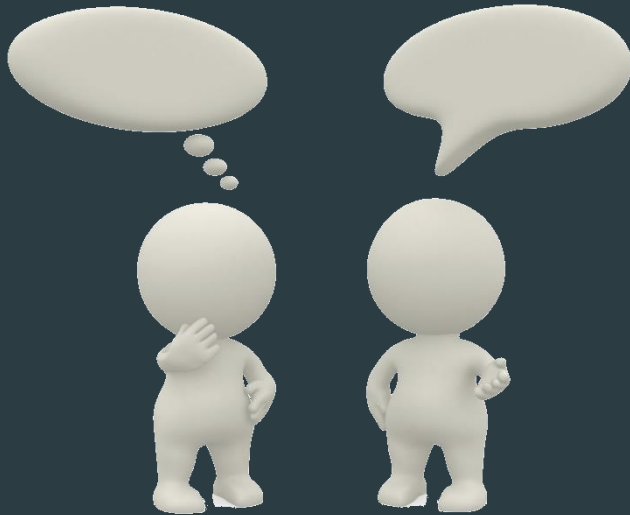


# Helpful messages you can give to your young person

- ▶ A powerful way of addressing the anxiety is to challenge anxious thinking and face fears (in a manageable way)
- ▶ Encourage your young person to be independent, face fears and give attention to brave behaviour



# Helpful techniques to try

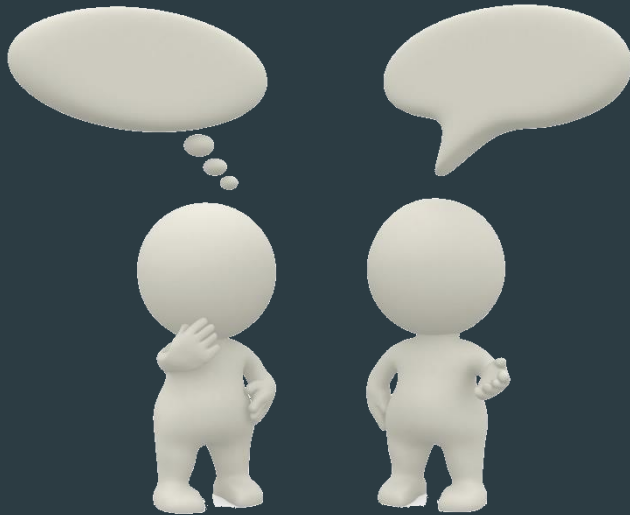


## Helping your young person to identify and evaluate their anxious thoughts:

- Is there anyone you know who doesn't feel scared in this situation? What would they be thinking?
- What would you tell a friend in this situation?
- What would your friend say to you in this situation?
- Is there a more helpful way of thinking?

# Helpful techniques to try

## Helping the young person to problem solve:

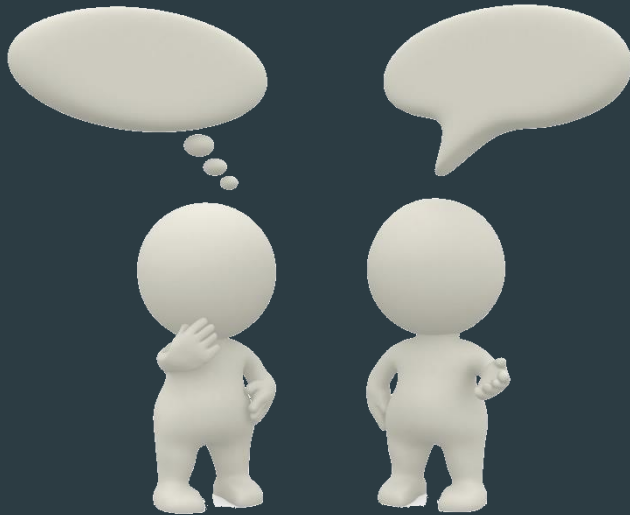


- ▶ What is the problem?
- ▶ Encourage the teenager to think of as many solutions as they can, even ones that seem crazy
- ▶ Help them to work out which solution is best - consider the pros and cons and immediate and long-term consequences
- ▶ Rate each idea
- ▶ Make a plan and have a go
- ▶ Review if something has worked - if not try out other solutions

# Problem solving example: Worrying about failing an exam

Possible solutions	Good points	Bad points	Ranking
Spend a lot of time worrying about it	Might feel I am doing something	Won't help me do better, will probably feel worse	4
Do 2 hours of revision a night	Could help	Not sure it's enough	1
Do some thought challenging	Takes time and could be revising	Might help me be less worried	2
Ask teacher for advice	Might help	There's probably no right or wrong answer	3

# Helpful techniques to try



**Helping the young person to face their fears in a graded way:**

- ▶ **Involves planning and doing things that are normally anxiety-provoking**
- ▶ **Helpful to do this in a graded way (get your YP to develop a number of steps from less to more-anxiety provoking and start with easier steps)**

# Developing a hierarchy of fears: social anxiety

Steps	Anxiety
1. Go into town on bus with mum and I pay for ticket	2/10
2. Go on bus with mum but sit on my own	3/10
3. Go on bus on my own – mum meets me in town	4/10
4. Go and pay for item in shop in town	5/10
5. Walk to corner shop with friend	5/10
6. Ask sales assistant in town a question	7/10
7. Go into town with mum and spend 30 minutes walking round shops on own	8/10
8. Go into town on bus with friends	10/10

## Parents/carers should be encouraged to:

- Understand that ‘taking over’ undermines your young person’s confidence and leads them to see themselves as vulnerable
- Support your young person to be more independent (e.g. making their own way to school, getting themselves up in the morning, taking on responsibility at school)
- Offer choices rather than make decisions for your young person
- Provide opportunities for your young person to build their confidence





## Parents/carers should be encouraged to:

- Ask questions rather than providing reassurance when it's sought
- Praise and reward brave behaviour
- Ignore / do not overly respond to anxious behaviour
- Model brave, non-avoidant behaviour themselves



# When to refer to CAMHS

When anxiety is having a negative impact on your young person's functioning (including eating, sleeping going to school etc.)

When your young person's anxiety is affecting their mood consistently

When anxiety is combined with low mood, self harm or suicidal thoughts

# Referring into CAMHS

When you speak with CAMHS, workers will want to know details of your young person's difficulties. How is their anxiety impacting upon their life?

Before making the referral, it is useful to have a clear outcome in mind- what do you want CAMHS to do? You might be looking for advice, support or a diagnosis for instance.

It is helpful if you can explain to CAMHS what you and your young person have tried already. Has anything been useful?

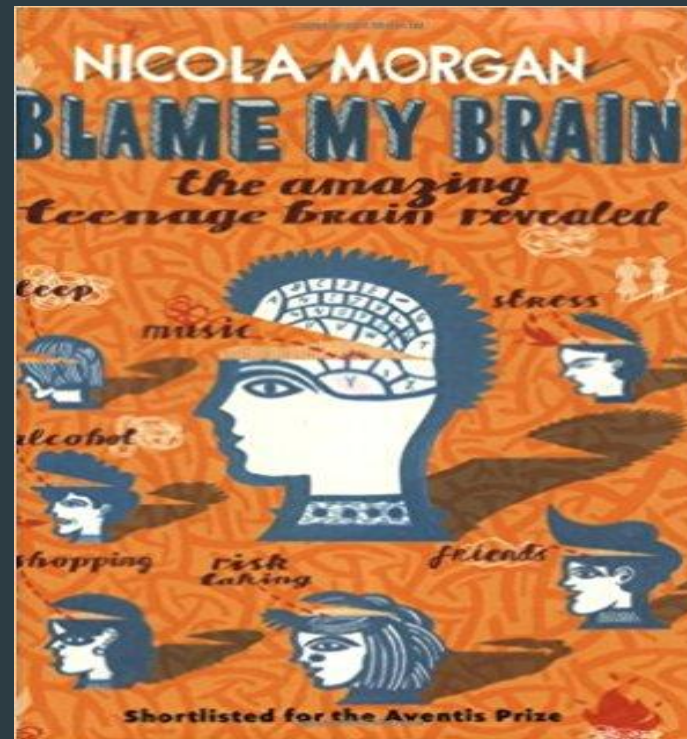
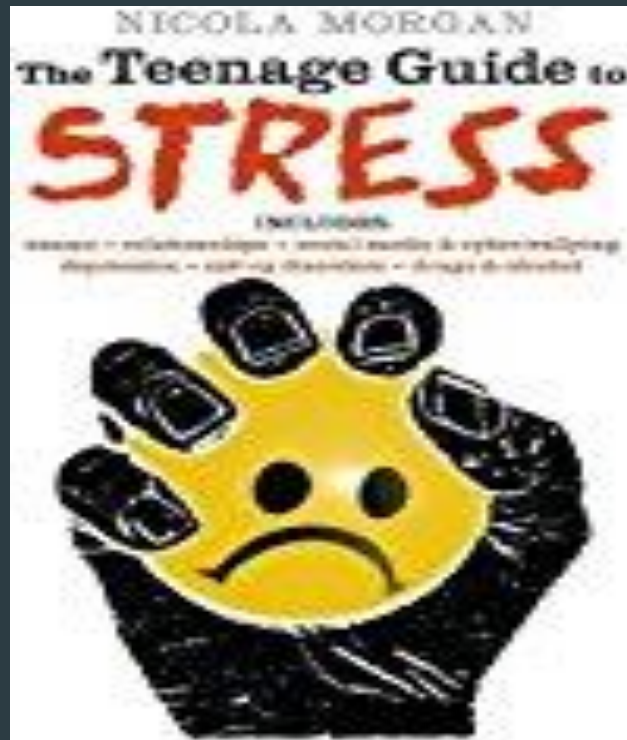
If you feel that your young person needs some support from CAMHS, you or your young person can contact the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 01865 902515 (9am-5pm Monday-Friday excl. Bank Holidays)

In an emergency, always contact 999 for immediate medical support (or 111 for non-urgent)





# Books for teenagers to read



# Evaluation

► <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=m8iadaQqc0mwSOaQO0aotuRB-A9dG6dHh9yPisrZwsFURVhBRTZWV1JaN0VPNDk2NU9ROUZIWkYxUS4u>



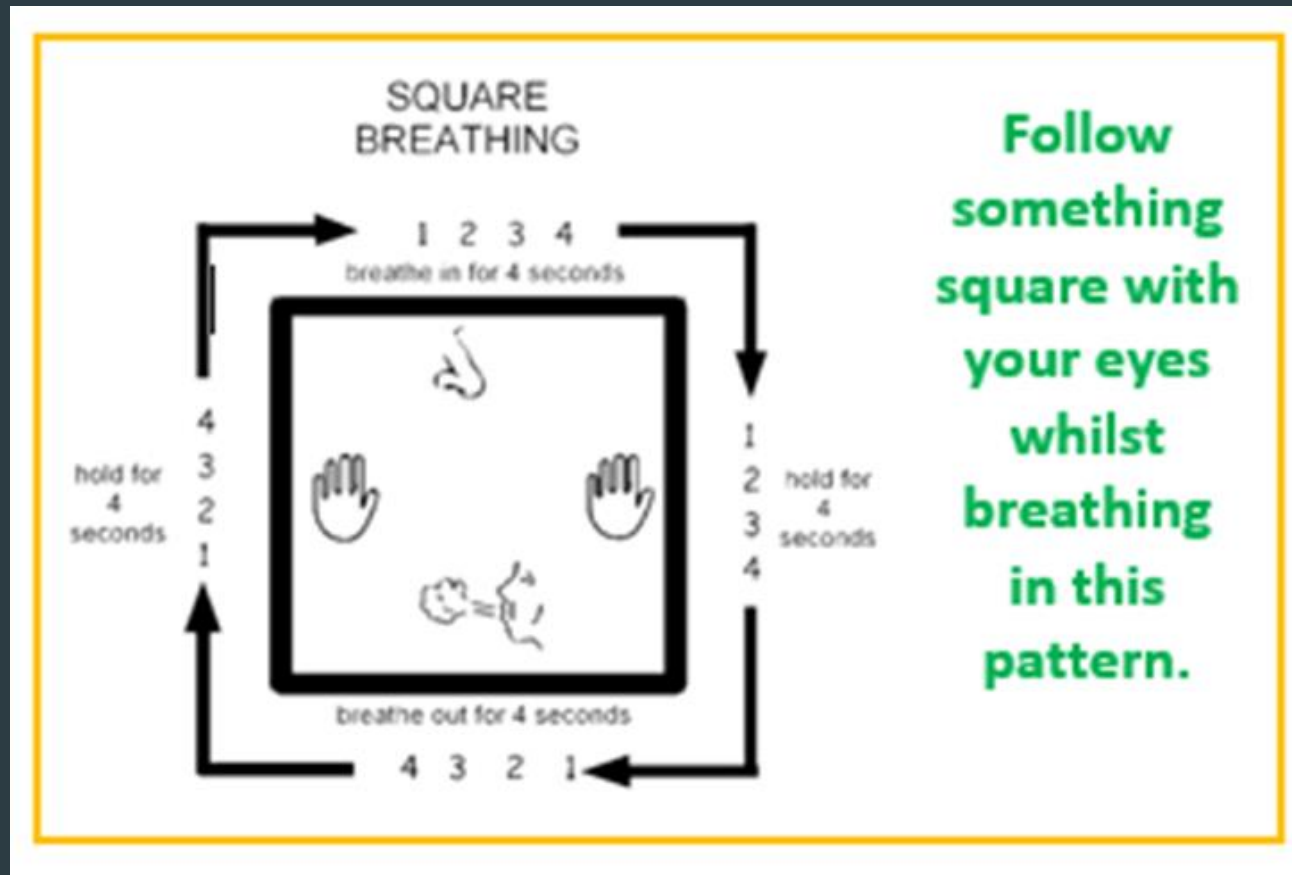




**Any questions?**



# Breathing technique



# Further Sources of Support

- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- [www.barnados.org.uk](http://www.barnados.org.uk)
- [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
- [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

# E-learning



**MindEd**

*e-learning to support young healthy minds*

# Thanks to:

The ANDY research clinic (University of Reading)

<https://research.reading.ac.uk/andy/>

