

Dealing with Anxiety

Self-help Guide



click or scan:



Introduction

This self-help guide is intended to help those struggling with anxiety to:

- Find out if you could have symptoms of anxiety.
- Understand more about worry and anxiety.
- Find ways to overcome excessive worry and feelings of anxiety.

Some pages have QR codes that you can click or scan to take you to a helpful video.

Need urgent support?

A mental health crisis is an emergency that has a direct and immediate threat to your physical or emotional wellbeing. In these situations, it's important to get help quickly.

Try to stay calm and ask someone for help if you need it. It could help to tell someone you trust, maybe a family member or a friend. They can be with you and help you decide what to do. They can also contact services on your behalf.

If there is any immediate risk to life, contact the emergency services by calling 999.

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What is Anxiety?

Human beings have the amazing ability to think about future events. 'Thinking ahead' means that we can anticipate obstacles or problems, and gives us the opportunity to plan solutions. When it helps us to achieve our goals, 'thinking ahead' can be helpful.

However, anxiety is a way of 'thinking ahead' that often leaves us feeling worried or apprehensive. When we worry excessively, we often think about worst case scenarios and feel that we won't be able to cope.

Worries are unpleasant thoughts that you can't get out of your head. They're like annoying bugs that keep buzzing around and won't leave you alone.

It can feel uncontrollable and seem to take on a life of its own. It may take the form of thoughts or images which escalate into a worst case scenario.

When Does Anxiety Become a Problem?

- When it lasts a long time
- When it is overwhelming
- When it starts to affect the way we live our daily lives
- When it makes us physically ill
- When it stops us from doing things

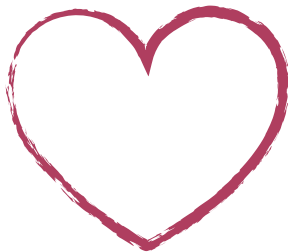
We all know what it is like to feel anxious from time to time, but anxiety can build up and get bigger and bigger. Something you might not see as anxiety provoking might provoke an extreme reaction in another.



How do we recognise anxiety? it can affect us in different ways;

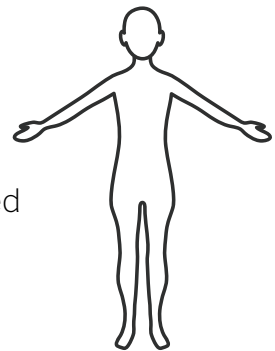
How I feel...

- Nervous
- Frightened.
- Like something dreadful will happen
- Tense
- Stressed
- Uptight
- On edge
- Unsettled
- Strange
- Woozy
- Detached
- Panicky



How my body reacts . . .

- Heart pounds, races and skips a beat
- Chest feels tight or painful
- Tingling or numbness in toes or fingers
- Stomach churning or butterflies
- Having to go to the toilet
- Tense muscles
- Body aching
- Sweating
- Breathing changes
- Dizzy and lightheaded
- Feeling sick



How I think . . .

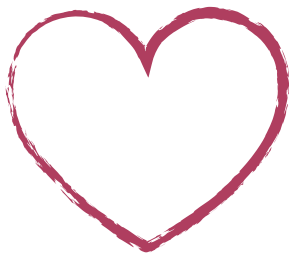
- Constant worrying
- Can't concentrate
- Thoughts racing
- Mind jumping from one thing to another
- Imagining the worst and dwelling on it
- Going over the same worries again and again



How I might react. . .

- Pace up and down
- Start jobs and not finish
- Can't sit and relax
- On the go all the time
- Talk quickly or more than usual
- Snappy and irritable behaviour
- Anger outbursts





Worrying is normal!

Everybody worries sometimes. It only becomes a problem when your worries get in the way of other parts of your life, or if they make you unhappy.

What do you worry about?

Family

School

Friends

Other

What kind of emotions do you feel when you worry?

Sad

Angry

Upset

Happy

Nervous

Anxious

Confused

Shy

Hurt

Excited

Brave

Embarrassed



Why do we feel anxious?

It's not just in your head. When you feel anxious, your body goes through lots of changes. These changes can feel uncomfortable and sometimes scary.

Have you ever wondered why your heart beats faster when you get nervous?

This is the body's automatic reaction to a scary situation. It's called the fight, flight or freeze response and it has helped humans survive for thousands of years.

Imagine you are a caveman and you come face to face with a hungry sabre-toothed tiger. You only have a few choices;

- Run away as fast as you can (flight)
- Stand your ground and fight the tiger off (fight)
- Stand very still and hope it doesn't see you (freeze)

Your body automatically prepares for these choices by pumping blood faster to your muscles and brain. You breathe faster so your body has enough oxygen and your eyes might widen so you can see better. Our digestive system also slows down so we can concentrate on escaping the danger.

Which choice do you think you'd pick?



Fight



Flight



Freeze

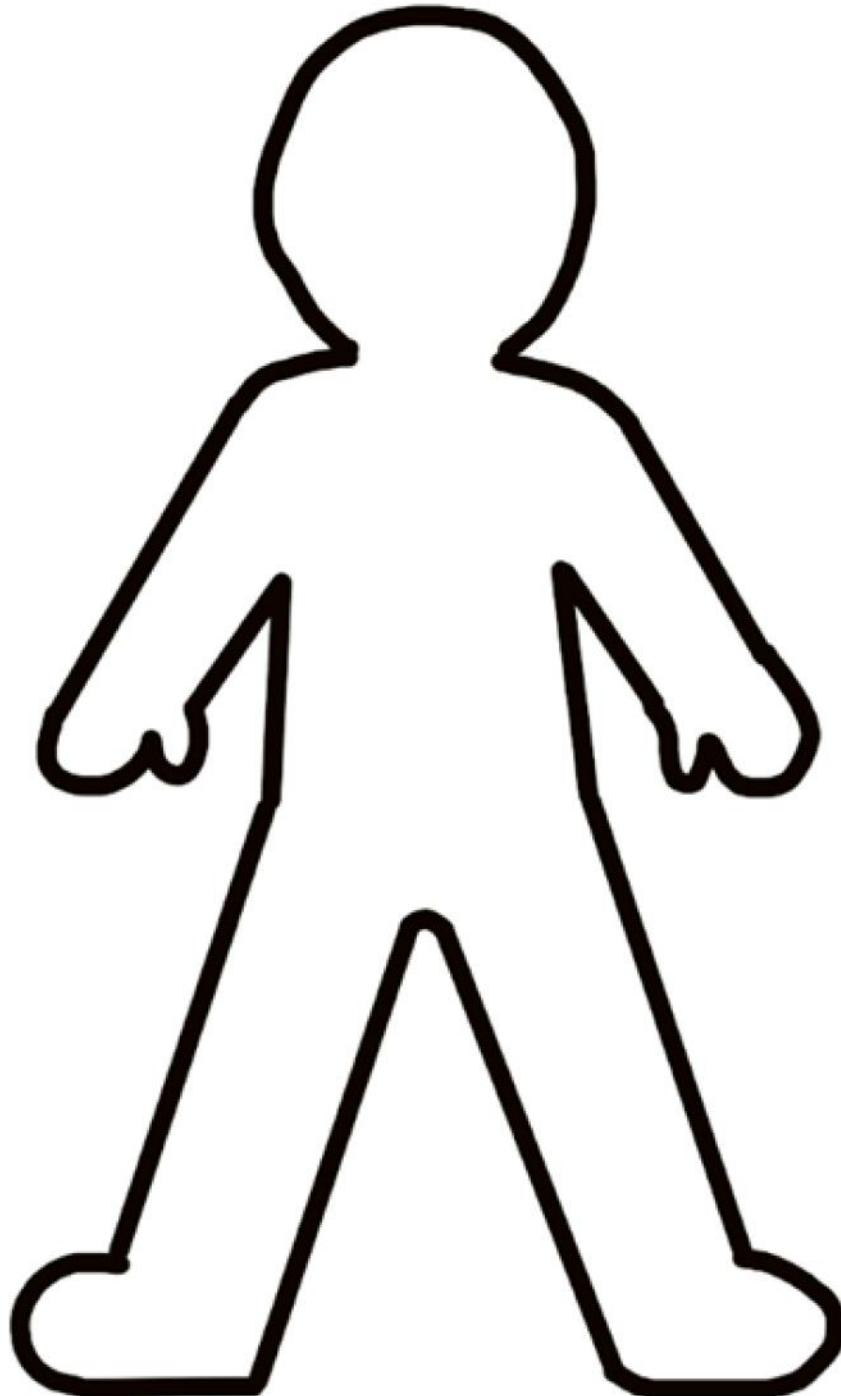
click or scan:



What does your body do when you feel anxious?

Although the fight, flight or freeze response is designed to keep us from danger, it can lead to physical feelings such as headaches, butterflies in the stomach, clenched jaw and a racing heart. This can feel uncomfortable and sometimes scary.

Can you label the picture below to show how your body feels anxious?





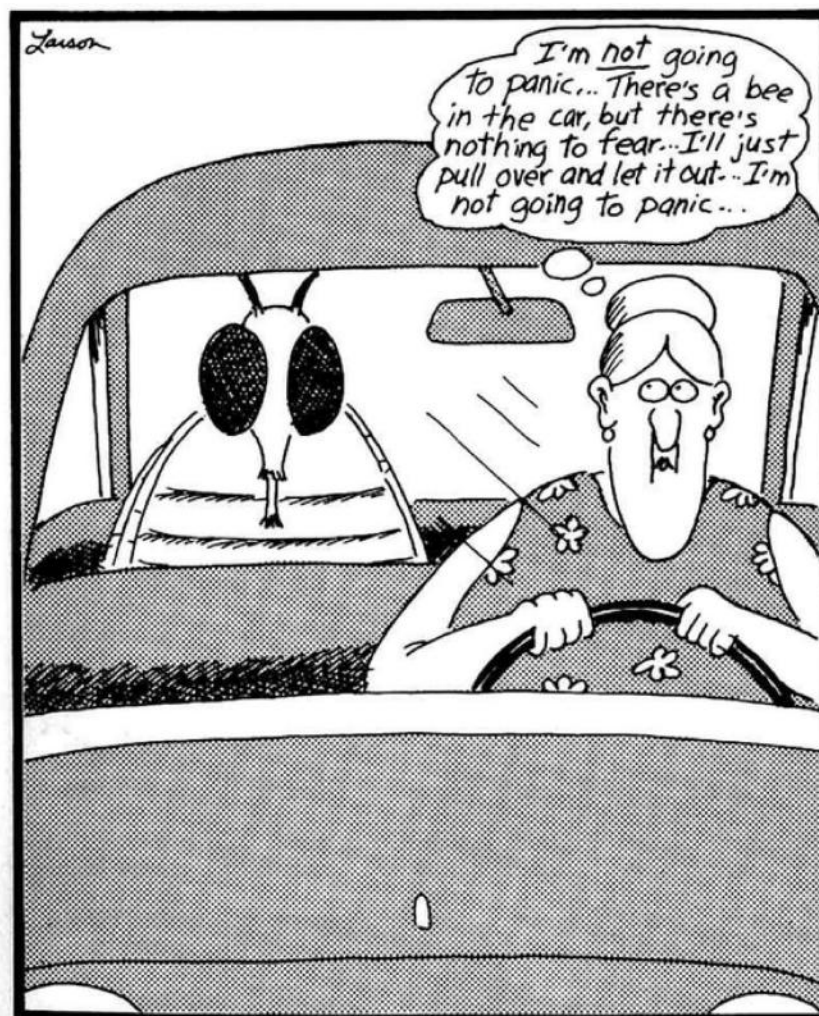
Automatic thoughts

Our thoughts are automatic, they pop into our heads whenever they choose and can be hard to ignore. They can be happy or helpful thoughts but sometimes they can also be unhelpful, upsetting and worrying.

We can't control what thoughts pop into our heads but we can control what we do with them. Nobody else can hear our thoughts and unless we tell them, they won't know.

Automatic thoughts can be words, images, memories, sounds or just a sense of knowing. We tend to believe our thoughts automatically, without thinking.

Our thoughts can also be repeated over and over. The more this happens, the more we might believe them and the worry can feel stronger.

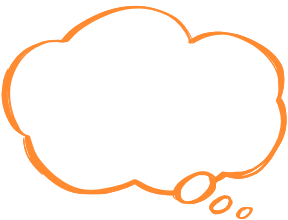


Unhelpful Thinking styles

Over time, our thoughts can get stuck in an unhelpful pattern. Which ones sound like you? When we are aware of our unhelpful thinking styles we can try to challenge to them.

The following thinking styles are taken from weheartcbt.com

 <p>predictions</p> <p>I will fail the test</p> <p>I make negative predictions about what might happen in the future even though I have no way of knowing this.</p>	 <p>judgements</p> <p>They looked at me funny</p> <p>I make judgements about things even though there is no evidence or facts to back this up.</p>	 <p>catastrophising</p> <p>The car will crash</p> <p>I always think that the worst thing or that something really bad is going to happen.</p>
 <p>perfectionist</p> <p>I have to get everything right</p> <p>I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well and set unrealistically high expectations for myself.</p>	 <p>negative glasses</p> <p>Today has been terrible</p> <p>When I have my negative glasses on, I only see the bad things and don't notice any of the good things.</p>	 <p>feelings</p> <p>I feel bad so that means today will be bad</p> <p>If I notice negative feelings in myself or by body, I automatically think that it means something bad is happening.</p>
 <p>mountains & molehills</p> <p>I can't believe I only got 8 out of 10</p> <p>I tend to take more notice of the negative things in a situation and down play the positive things.</p>	 <p>memories</p> <p>Something bad happened here so something bad will happen again</p> <p>Some things trigger my negative memories which makes me think something bad will happen again now.</p>	 <p>black&white thoughts</p> <p>This day is ruined now</p> <p>I usually think things are either really good or really bad with nothing in between.</p>
 <p>mind reading</p> <p>They think I look silly</p> <p>I assume I know what other people are thinking and this is usually negative things about me.</p>	 <p>compare & despair</p> <p>They are so clever, why can't I be like that?</p> <p>I notice positive things about other people but then compare myself negatively to them.</p>	 <p>self critical</p> <p>I'm stupid</p> <p>I am very critical of my own abilities and about myself.</p>



Fact or opinion?

Our thoughts aren't always true, most of the time they are just our opinion.

Do you know what the difference is?



Can be proven to be true.
A fact is the same for everyone, it doesn't change.

A person's thoughts, feelings or belief on something.
It can be different for each person.



Circle the opinions below:

The bike is yellow.

The bike has two wheels.

Yellow is the best colour.

Bikes are fun.

The bike has a seat.

I hate bikes.

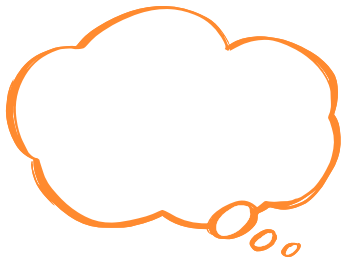
Remember, our thoughts aren't always true!

They are usually just our opinion which means we can challenge them to think of an alternative way of thinking.

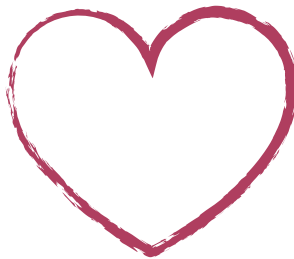


For example:

Situation: You're in a Maths lesson and it's hard.



Our thought is
"I never get anything
right in maths"



We might feel stupid,
upset, angry,
ashamed, fed up



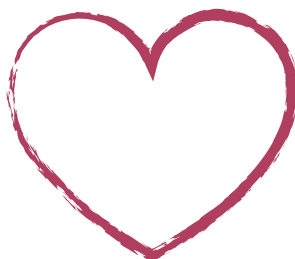
Our action: We may
give up and choose to
avoid anything Maths
related.

Overall, this is an **unhelpful** situation and doesn't make us feel great. Our **unhelpful** thought has caused us to feel bad and choose to do **unhelpful** actions.

The alternative:



Our thought is
"I've got things right
before, I can learn this
if I keep trying"



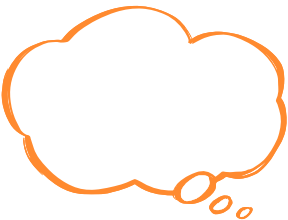
We might feel
motivated, excited,
pleased, and strong..



Our action: We might
ask for help and keep
trying our best.

Our thoughts are powerful. They influence how we feel and what we do.

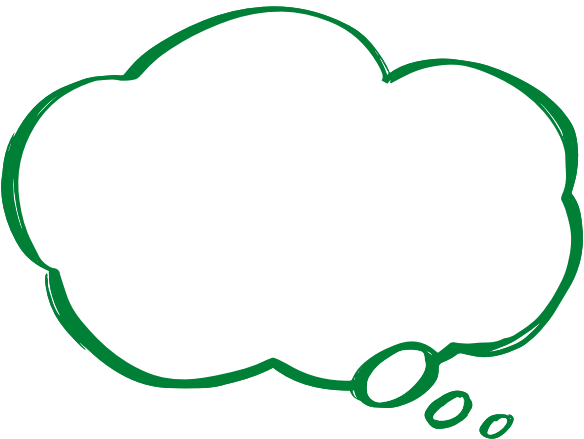




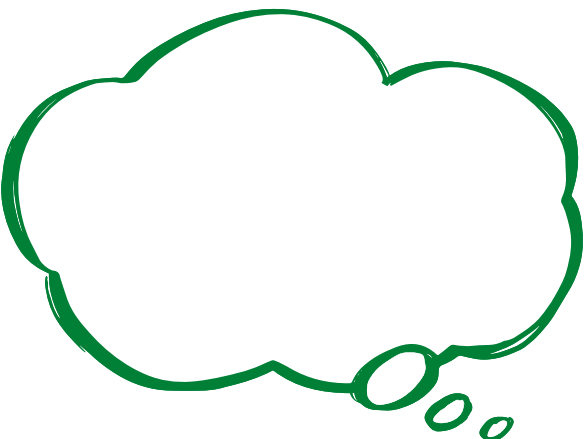
Thought Challenging

Rather than believe our **unhelpful** thoughts, we can try to flip them to become more **helpful**. Can you flip these unhelpful thoughts into something more helpful?

I can't do this!

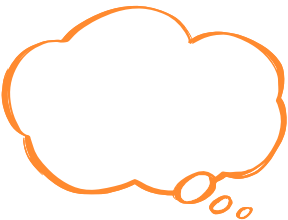


Nobody likes me!



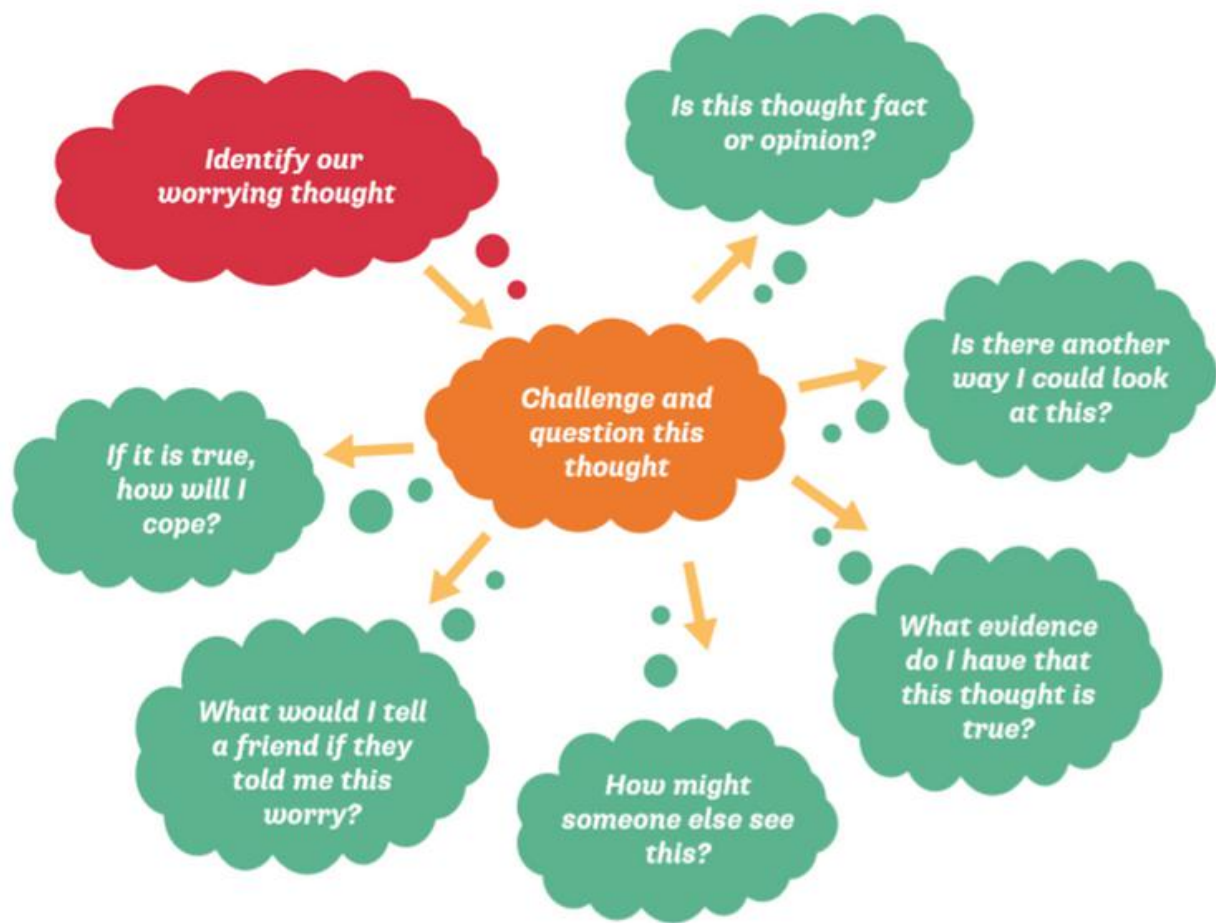
I'm useless!





Thought Challenging

To help flip your thoughts into a helpful positive thought, try and ask yourself some of these questions:



Thought Court

Another way to challenge our thoughts is to imagine you are in a court room.



The accused:

What thought are we putting on trial?

The defence:

What evidence is there that this thought is true? Remember, only use evidence that is fact not opinion.

The prosecution:

What evidence is there that shows this thought is not true 100% of the time? What would a witness say if you asked them?

Closing statement:

Based on the evidence, is the thought fact or opinion? Should we believe it? What is a more realistic and balanced thought?



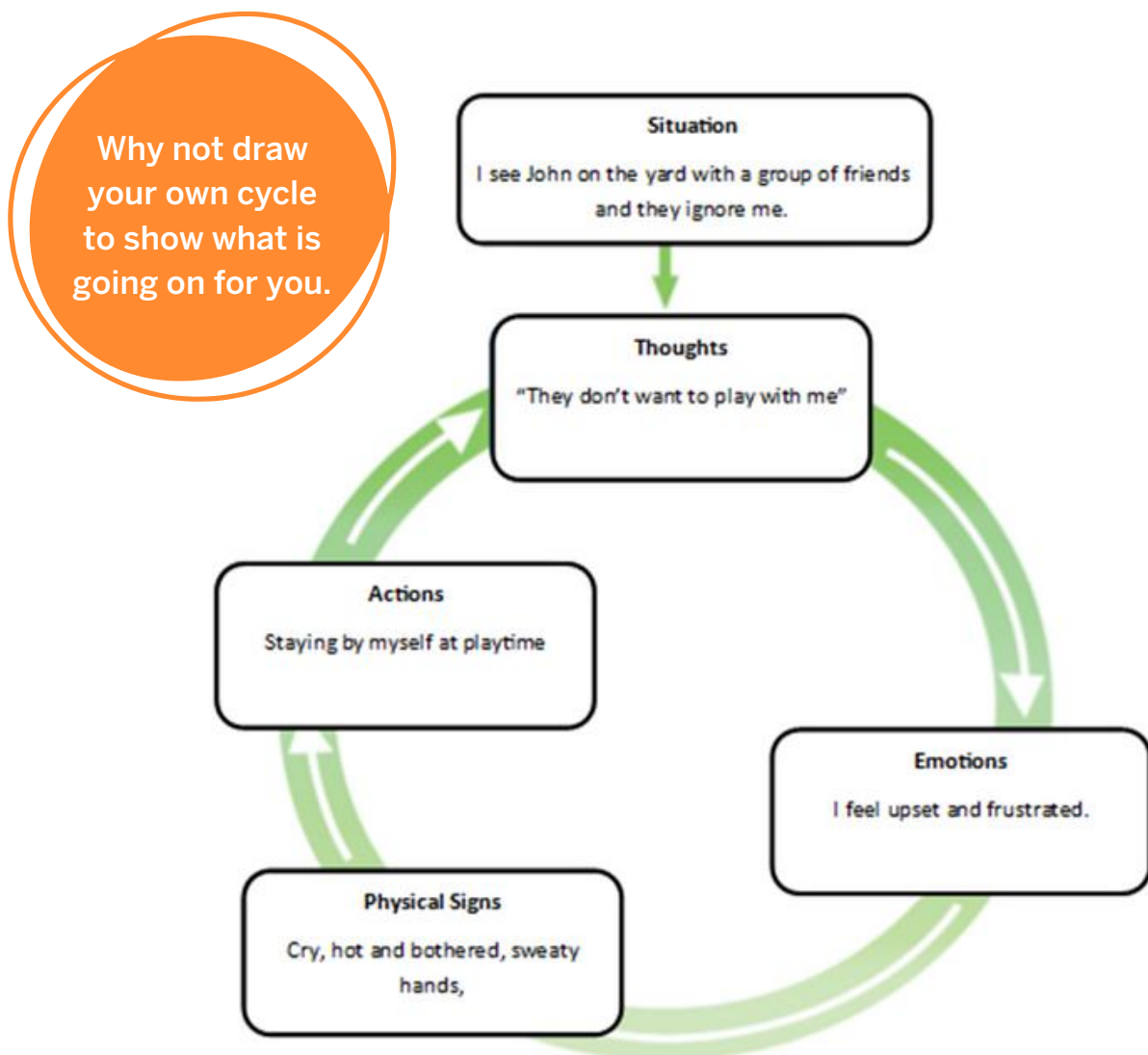
Situations, thoughts, feelings and actions are all linked together

What to do . . .

The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety, it's to help manage it and develop a tolerance for it.

Focus on the positives:

- Try not to avoid the situation completely
- Express belief in your ability to cope
- Facing fears gradually will reduce anxiety over time
- Shorten the anticipatory period (the time you find out about it to the time you will carry it out)
- Support rather than validate "I know you're scared and that's ok, I'm here to help you get through this."



Simple Thought Record

Try to capture your thoughts, feelings and behaviour when you feel anxious.

Situation What happened?	Thoughts What were you thinking?	Feelings How did you feel? This can be physical feelings too.	Behaviours What did you do?



What can we do with our worries?

After using the Simple Thought Record sheet on the previous page, you'll have a better understanding of what worries you have and the thoughts, feelings and behaviours behind them. Now you can start to explore what kind of worry you have. There are two types of worry: Practical and Hypothetical.

Practical Worries

Practical worries are usually about a real life situation that is happening right now or that will happen soon. For example; "I'm running out of time to complete my homework". We can feel overwhelmed by these worries and try to ignore them but this just means they pile up and get worse. However, we can do something about these worries by finding a solution.

Hypothetical Worries

Hypothetical worries are usually about the future and what might happen. For example; "what if the bus doesn't come and I'm late?" Usually, they are about things we don't have control over. We can find ourselves getting overwhelmed and stuck in a cycle of worrying about things we can't control. Often these worries begin with a 'what if' statement.



Worry Diary

It can be difficult to know what our worries are. Keeping a diary can help you to pinpoint exactly what makes you feel anxious. Here's an example:

Is it a hypothetical or practical worry?									
Intensity (Rate your worry on a scale of 0-100)									
Worrying Thoughts What were you thinking?									
Situation What happened?									





Managing a worry

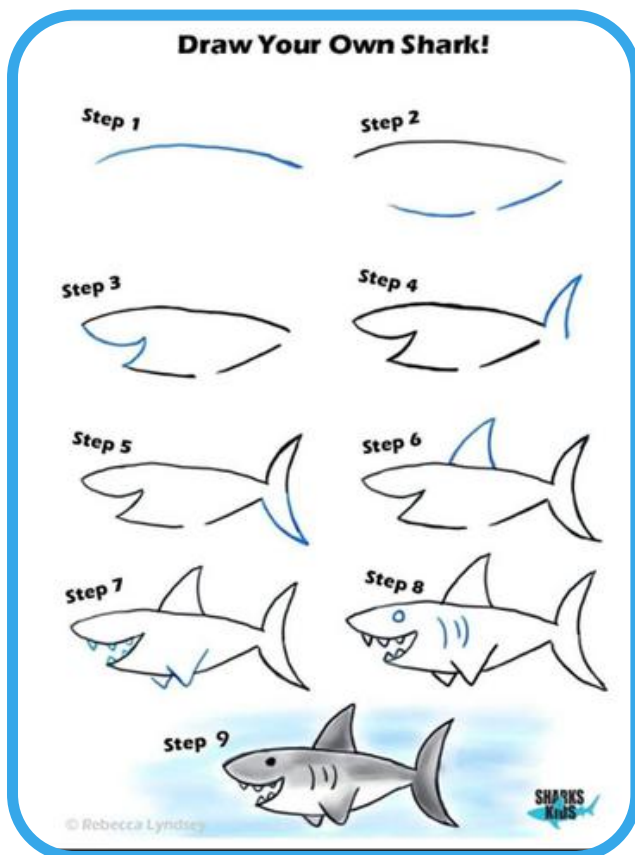
Now you know what your worries are, you can start deciding what technique will help.
Using a worry tree can help us do this:



Practical worries

If you notice lots of your worries are 'practical' worries, the best technique for you might be problem solving. Problem solving involves choosing one problem and breaking it down into manageable steps. For example; imagine I asked you to draw a shark. That might seem hard at first but we can make it easier by breaking it down into easier steps.

Have a go yourself. How easy or difficult was it using the instructions below?



Problem Solving

1

Identify the problem

Be specific – it's important to focus on one worry at a time. Be clear about the situation and what makes it worrying/a problem for you.

2

List all possible solutions

List as many as you can think of. Don't worry if you don't think they are 'good' or helpful solutions at the moment, just focus on getting as many ideas down as you can. There is no wrong answer! Can you think of 10 solutions?

1)

6)

2)

7)

3)

8)

4)

9)

5)

10)



Problem Solving

3

Choose your top 3 solutions and list the advantages and disadvantages for each.

Think about which solutions are achievable and which ones may work. Discount any that aren't helpful to the problem.

Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages



Problem Solving

4

Choose a solution

Review the advantages and disadvantages of each solution and choose one you feel will have the best chance of a positive outcome. This may be difficult and you may become worried that it won't work. Try to remember that you have gone through the advantages and disadvantages of each one. This might help give you some confidence in your choice. And don't forget, if it doesn't work, we have lots of other solutions to try next!

5

Make an action plan

Let's break it down step by step to make it easier, just like drawing a picture. Each step you take brings you closer to the solution. Think about what you have to do, where you will do it, when you will do it, who will be involved? Try to be really specific.

Step	Action
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Problem Solving

6

Carry out your plan and review it

Ask yourself these questions:

Did it work?

What went well?

What didn't go well?

What could you do differently?

If it didn't work, can you use this review to make some small changes and try again?

Do you need to go back and try another solution?
If so, return to step 4 and choose an alternative to try.



Hypothetical worries

If you notice most of your worries are hypothetical then problem solving won't be very helpful. Instead try using one or a combination of these techniques;



Practising mindfulness can help improve your mood. Check out our [YouTube playlist](#) for guided meditations.



Try relaxation strategies such as yoga and deep breathing.



Challenge unhelpful thoughts and think more positively.

Be kind to yourself.



Talk to someone: trusted friends, family, school staff or contacting a helpline can help when we struggle



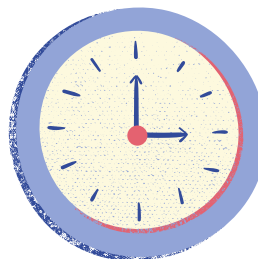
Try a flow activity. Flow is a state of mind that occurs when a person is totally immersed in an activity. E.g., reading, drawing, colouring or exercise.



Music can be a powerful way to change feelings. Why not make an uplifting playlist, sing, dance, play an instrument.



Make a worry monster, write down any worries and feed them to the monster



Worry time – chose a specific time of day to talk or write down your worries ([see next page](#)).



If you can, try to be active every day. Is there a sport or exercise you enjoy? This can start in small ways such as taking the stairs rather than the lift. Or stretching after long periods of sitting.



Worry Time

Worry time involves setting a specific time each day to worry. It works by empowering you to take control of your worries so they don't take over your day. You don't dismiss your worries, instead you simply put them on hold for later.

You'll need a jar or box to put your worries in - you can make your own out of card or paper and decorate it any way you choose.

1

Choose a specific time to worry

Ideally not close to bedtime. Stick to the same time each day so you build a routine. Choose how long you will need – 15, 20, 30mins? This may reduce over time.

2

Capture your worries

As you notice a worry write it down. If you made a worry box, keep it in this. You can use a notebook, your phone, bits of paper etc as long as you keep a log. If you notice this is a practical worry, use the problem solving technique outlined previously.

3

Refocus

Once you have captured your worry, it's important to refocus on the present. This may be difficult at first but remember, you will come back to the worry later. To do this, you can try some of the following:

1. Pay close attention to the activity you were doing before the worry occurred.
2. Try a grounding technique – 5 senses grounding
3. Do something you enjoy (listen to music, read a book, draw a picture, exercise)

4

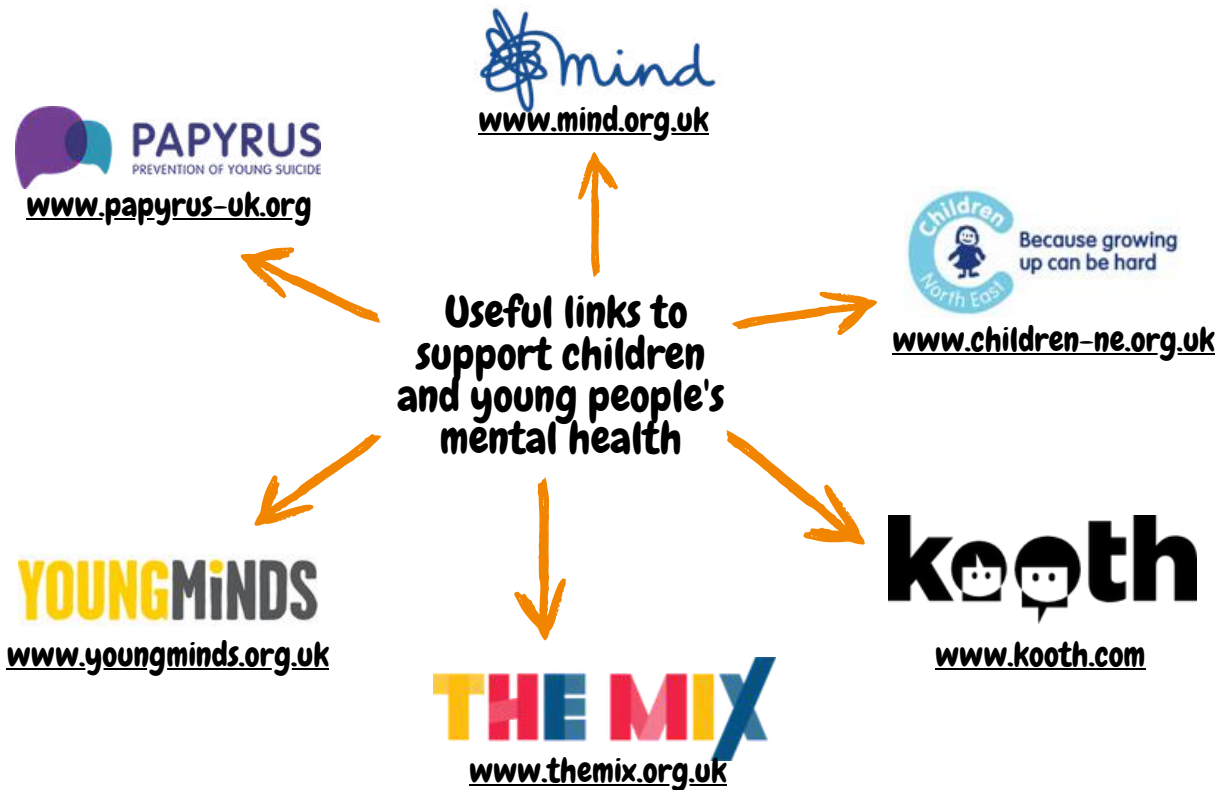
Worry Time

Time to worry! Get out your list of worries and choose one to start with. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How did you feel when you wrote the worry down and how do you feel now? Has this changed?
- Did the thing you were worrying about happen? If it did, how did you cope?
- Are any of these worries no longer a problem?
- If I had worried about this all day, would it have made a difference?
- Can I challenge this worry by thinking about it a different way?

Once your worry time is over you can rip up the worries and throw them in the bin. Practice some more relaxation techniques to end.

Further Support and Information



Apps



Headspace
A meditation app that acts as a personal guide to health and happiness.



MoodGym
An online cognitive behaviour therapy program for depression and anxiety.



Smiling Mind
A meditation program to help bring mindfulness into your life



Calm Harm
An app that helps young people manage the urge to self-harm.



ThinkNinja
Designed for children and young people (10-18 years old) to help with anxiety and low mood.



Clear Fear
An app that helps you face your fears and reduce the physical responses to anxiety.

Finding Help - Crisis Support Services

Need urgent support?

A mental health crisis is an emergency that has a direct and immediate threat to your physical or emotional wellbeing. In these situations, it's important to get help quickly.

Try to stay calm and ask someone for help if you need it. It could help to tell someone you trust, maybe a family member or a friend. They can be with you and help you decide what to do. They can also contact services on your behalf.

If there is any immediate risk to life, contact the emergency services by calling 999.



NHS

- Mental health services are free on the NHS. Check with your school to see if there are any Mental Health Support Teams such as RISE in your school. Talk to your GP about a mental health referral.
- To get urgent medical help, use the NHS 111 online service, or call 111 if you're unable to get help online.



Shout

Shout is a 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.

Text 85258 for immediate help.



Samaritans

You can access confidential emotional support at any time from Samaritans either by:

- Calling 116 123
- Emailing jo@samaritans.org
- www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/



Childline (www.childline.org.uk)

Childline is a free, private and confidential service that you can access online and on the phone. They can provide help and support for people up to their 19th birthday.



HOPELINE (www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-hopelineuk)

HOPELINEUK is a confidential support and advice service for:

- Children and young people under the age of 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide
- Anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide

Call 0800 068 4141 any day 9am - 12am (midnight)