

Understanding & Supporting Anxiety in Teens

Parent / Carer Workshop



Northorpe Hall
Child & Family Trust

Session Agreement



Session Structure



Part 1: Understanding
Anxiety



Part 2: Supporting
Anxiety



Resources



Evaluation

SESSION LENGTH: 1 HOUR 30



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PART 1



UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY AND THE TRIGGERS AND SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH IT

What is Anxiety?

- There is some blank paper on your tables and a pen.
- In table groups, come up with a definition for the term 'anxiety'.
- Feedback.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear that is experienced as a combination of physical sensations, thoughts and feelings.

Young Minds, 2022

WORRY	ANXIETY
Is felt in our heads	Is felt in our whole body
Tends to be specific	Tends to be more general
Creates mild distress	Can feel overwhelming, distressing and / or unmanageable
Is often caused by realistic concerns	Tends to be more irrational
Tends to be controllable	Can feel difficult or even impossible to control
Is a temporary state	Can linger and a child or young person can feel stuck in it
Doesn't impact day-to-day life greatly	Can cause a child or young person to feel isolated or exhausted, and limits the things they feel able to do

Types of Anxiety Disorder



Agoraphobia

**Separation
Anxiety**

**Generalised
Anxiety**

Social Anxiety

Panic Disorder

Phobias

**Obsessive Compulsive
Disorder**

**Rates of probable mental disorders have increased since 2017; in 6 to 16 year olds from one in nine (11.6%) to one in six (17.4%), and in 17 to 19 year olds from one in ten (10.1%) to one in six (17.4%).
NHS Digital 2021**

At some point, anxiety affects 30% of children and adolescents, yet 80% never get help (Child Mind Institute, 2018)

Untreated anxiety disorders are linked to depression, school failure, and a twofold increase in risk for substance use disorder.
Martinelli et. al

The prevalence of any anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher for females (38%) than for males (26%).
National Institute of Mental Health 2017

Children are 3 times more likely to struggle with anxiety than depression.
NHS Digital 2017

Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all led to increased feelings of depression, anxiety, poor body image and loneliness.
Child Mind Institute

Anxiety: A Summary

- Anxiety is a ***normal*** feeling and does affect children.
- Not all children will need help; some will find ways of managing this themselves.
- The earlier you start to treat the anxiety, the better the outcome.
- The first intervention that should be given is called **psycho-education**.

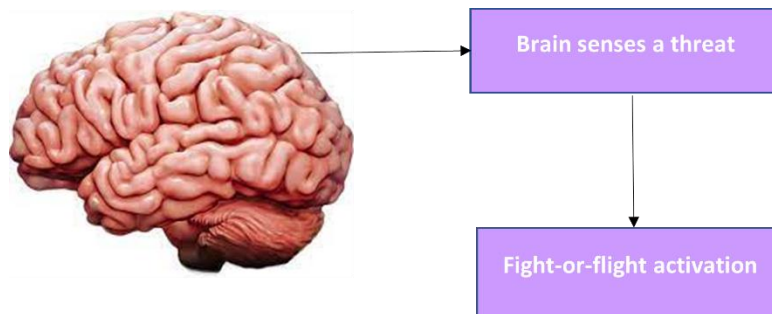


Anxiety: Psycho-Education

- Common symptoms present across the different types of anxiety disorders, but can vary in number and intensity.
- The same chain of events in the body happens each time a child becomes anxious.
- In-built threat system in the brain is activated.
- Anxiety, and the threat system, are primarily there to keep us safe – it is in our DNA.
- However, sometimes the threat system can become too sensitive and this is where anxiety can become unhelpful and negatively impact on many areas of life.

How Anxiety Works in the Body

- The threat system is also known as fight-or-flight.



- It's like an alarm being set off in our brains, telling us we're in potential danger.

How Anxiety Works in the Body

- When our fight-or-flight system is activated, it increases the levels of adrenaline and cortisol; the stress hormones.
- These hormones set off a common chain of events in the body.

Resources: Teen-Friendly Psycho-Education Video

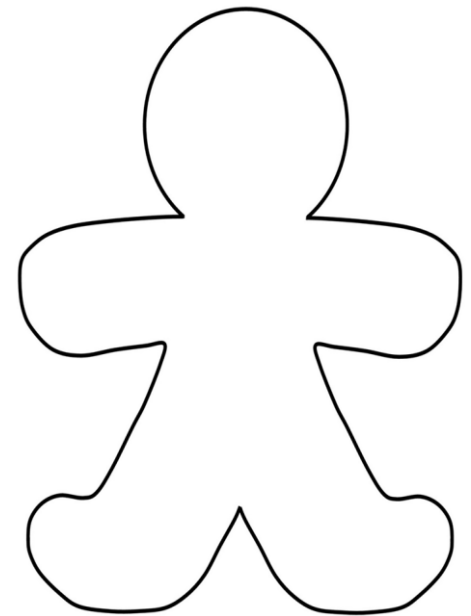


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4>

Group Exercise: 5 Minutes

In your group, write down on the outside of the person template what you think may **trigger** anxiety.

Then think about and write down what **symptoms** may occur on the inside of the template.



Triggers and Symptoms

Triggers

- School / homework
- Expectations
- Bullying
- Confrontation
- Lack of sleep
- Social media
- Social gatherings
- Uncertainty
- Relationships / not fitting in
- Family / finance / housing / stress
- Appearance and / or weight
- Significant life changes
- Traumatic events
- Transition e.g. house / school move
- Phobias
- Diagnosed / undiagnosed learning difficulties or neurodevelopmental conditions

Symptoms

- Feeling sick, dizzy or faint
- Upset tummy / stomach ache
- Increased heart rate / racing heart
- Sweaty / sweaty palms / feeling hot
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability /snapping
- Restlessness
- Feeling nervous / on edge
- Change in appetite
- Body pumps blood to limbs
- Feeling overwhelmed or full of dread
- Low appetite
- Tearful
- Dry mouth
- Trouble sleeping

Reflection / Discussion

- We are just going to have an opportunity for discussion to think about personal experiences with our own children:
 - What symptoms does your child present with?
 - Do you know what the trigger(s) is?

Fight-or-Flight System

- When the human body is healthy, one of its main functions is to keep harmony and stay in balance.
- If the body is off balance in any way, it will try to rebalance itself; a bit like a see-saw trying to get level.
- This is called homeostasis; to maintain this, the body will do things such as keep your temperature regular, keep your vitamins and hormones at the right level etc.
- The process of homeostasis takes approx. 40 minutes and is important in the role of anxiety.

Fight-or-Flight System

- We can think of the activation of the fight-or-flight system as the 'up' system.
- Homeostasis can be thought of as the 'down' system; this will do things such as try to regulate breathing.
- If breathing is regulated by your child, this will help the progress of the 'down' system.
Breathing exercises, like breathing as though you are trying to blow up a balloon, will help your child.

Homeostasis

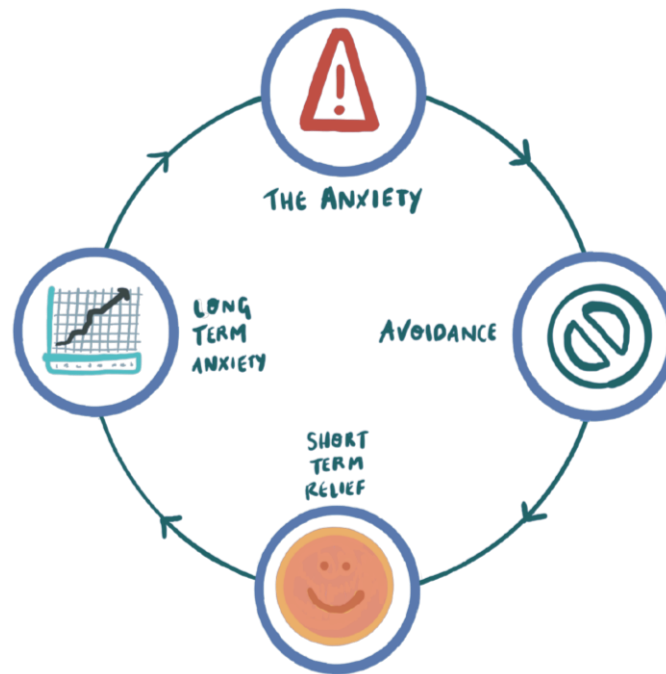
- Over the period of 40 minutes that the process of homeostasis takes, anxiety symptoms come down on their own.
- You don't have to do anything to make this happen, it is how the body is designed to keep itself healthy.
- Whilst your child may think they are anxious all day, it is not biologically possible.

Avoidance

- Physical avoidance is something we all do; it feels like the easiest and safest option.
- When avoidance of an object / activity starts to impact on life, it becomes a problem.
- If a child avoids situations / objects that make them anxious, the anxiety will reduce. However, their level of anxiety will still feel the same on different occasions due to the same actions being taken.
- When children expose themselves to the source of their anxiety and stay with it, their anxiety will eventually lessen in severity and will occur for a shorter length of time.



Anxiety Cycle



Reassurance

- Something we should all provide for our children.
- By offering reassurance, we are providing guidance and support to help our children develop and take risks to increase their independence.
- However, reassurance in anxiety can be unhelpful.
- Too much reassurance can be counterproductive and become part of the anxiety cycle rather than reducing it.



Cycle of Reassurance

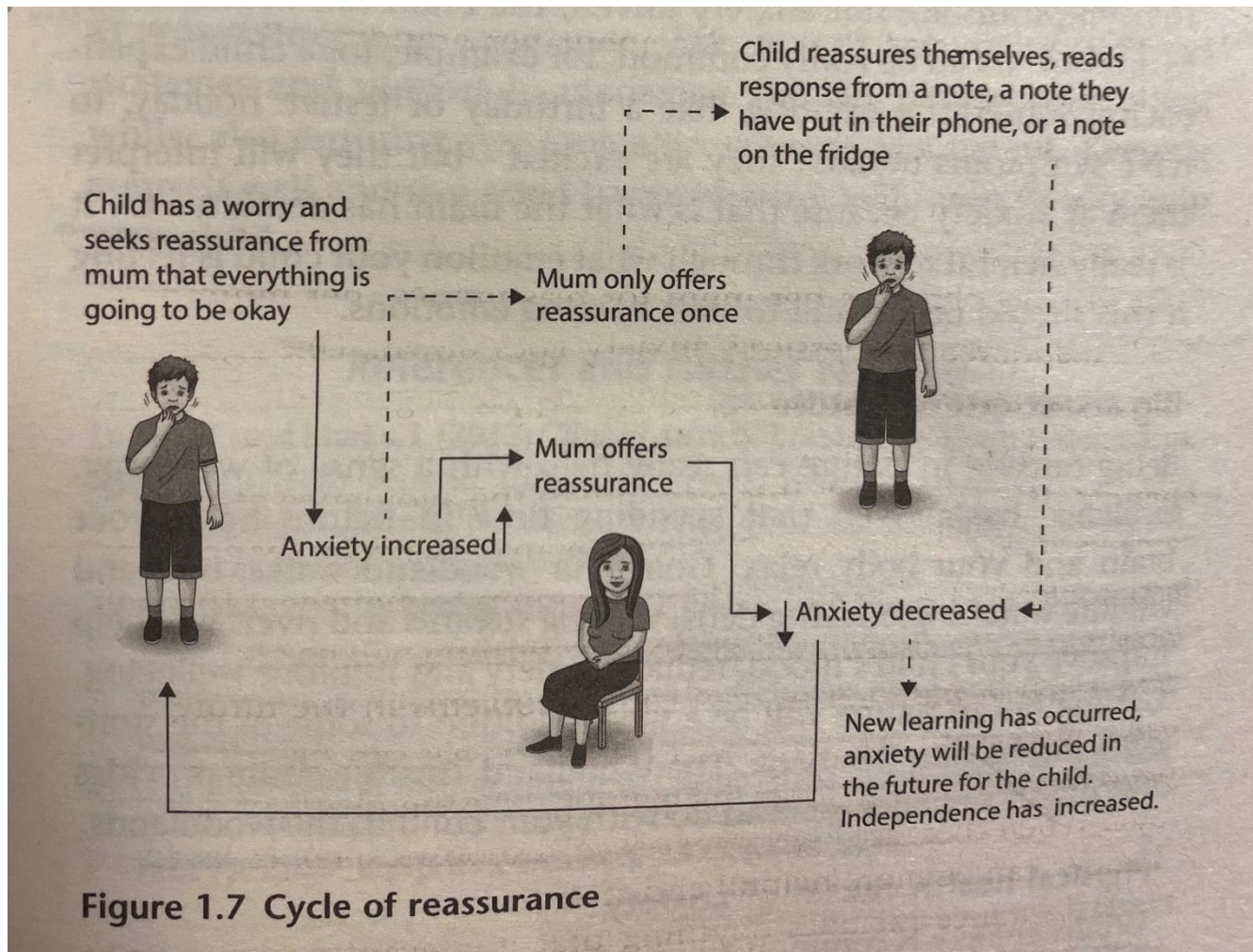


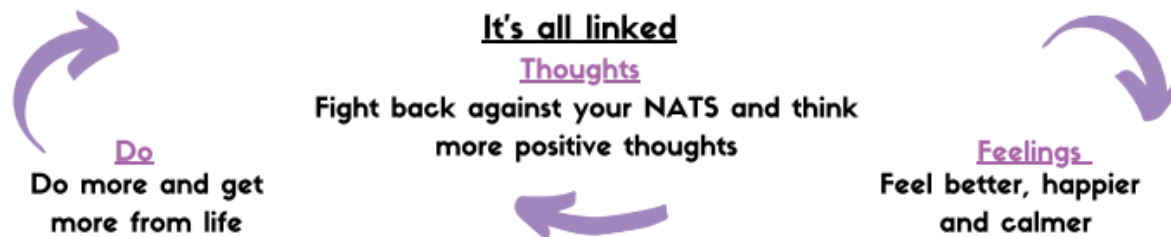
Figure 1.7 Cycle of reassurance

Reassurance Strategy

- **Offer verbal reassurance *once*.**
- After this, your child has to learn to reassure themselves.
- Support this by the changing responses you give e.g. 'What did I say to you last time?' or 'What do you think?'
- This helps the child to process and manage the worry themselves.

Negative Automatic Thoughts

- NATS are Negative Automatic Thoughts that pop into our heads and make us think unhelpful and bad things.
- It's really important to notice them and then challenge them by thinking positive thoughts instead.



PART 2



TO EXPLORE HOW TO
EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT
A CHILD EXHIBITING
SYMPTOMS OF
ANXIETY

General Strategies for all Age Groups

Listen and validate their emotions e.g. 'I have noticed that you seem a little worried. Can you talk to me about it?' or 'Can you tell me how you're feeling?'.
Encourage your child to name the emotion;
Name it to tame it!

Stay calm and try not to get drawn into their emotions. It helps if you are supportive, but stay practical.
Focus on solutions.

Think about things they can do to take their mind away from their anxiety.
Use distraction techniques that help them feel calmer e.g. drawing, painting, baking or watching their favourite film.

General Strategies for all Age Groups

Find ways to face feared situations. Help plan ways for them to test out their fears gradually and set specific goals. Avoid avoidance!

Reassure once and instead of telling the child that nothing bad will happen, ask things like 'what has happened in this situation before?' This can help them to begin to challenge any negative thoughts.

Teach and practise breathing or mindfulness exercises – these help to speed up the amount of time it takes to regulate the body.

General Strategies for all Age Groups

Help the child think through what they learned about their fears and about themselves (e.g., did their worry come true? did they cope?). Parents can help children to rate their anxiety levels on a scale of 1-10, and notice that when they face their feared situation repeatedly the anxiety level goes down.

Create consistent routines and prepare children in advance.

Encourage positive self care strategies that are helpful for good mental health - physical exercise, sleeping well, eating healthily, drinking water and spending quality time with loved ones.



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General Strategies for all Age Groups

Praise and reward small (and big) successes when they face their fears. It can help them remain positive.

Spend quality time together taking their mind off their worries by having fun, laughing and relaxing.

Speak to school / college staff so that they are aware.



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Resources: Exposure Ladder



8 – Eating dinner with my family at a local restaurant.

7 – Having a takeaway with my family.

6 – Seeing someone being sick.

5 – Looking at a picture of someone being sick.

4 – Hearing the word 'sick'.

3 – Making the sound of someone being sick.

2 – Writing the word sick.

1 – Reading the word sick.

Resources: Level of Anxiety Table

Minutes	Level of anxiety
0	
5	
10	
15	
20	
25	
30	
35	
40	

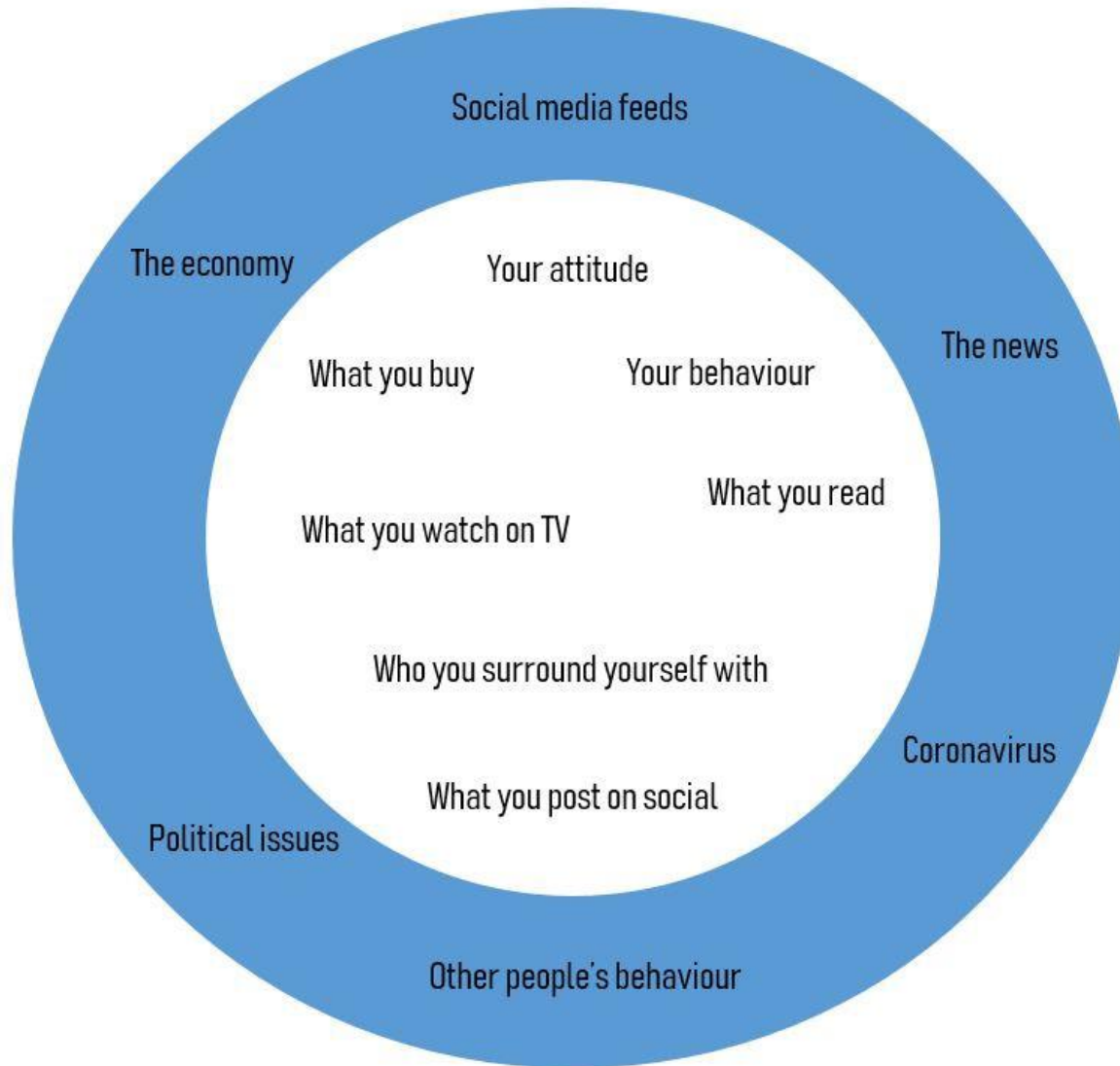
Resources: Worry Table

What was going on?	How it made me feel?	What I was thinking about?	What I did?
Didn't want to go back to school after the weekend.	Initially felt worried and stressed but relieved afterwards.	I don't like school, I feel that no one likes me. The work is too hard.	I went to talk to my Mum about it.

Resources: Worry Tree



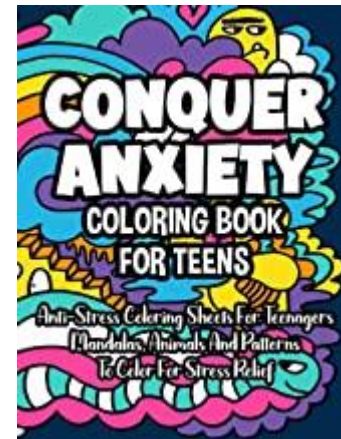
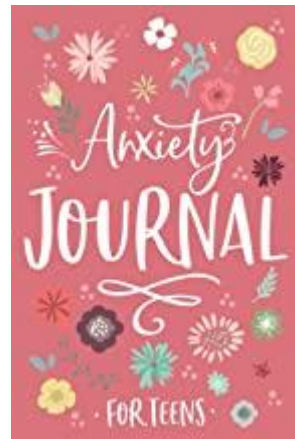
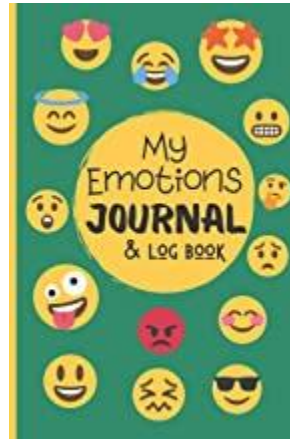
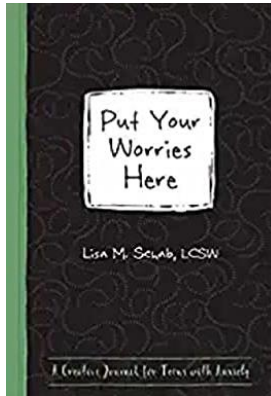
Circle of Influence/Control



Resources: Worry Box / Jar



Resources: Journals



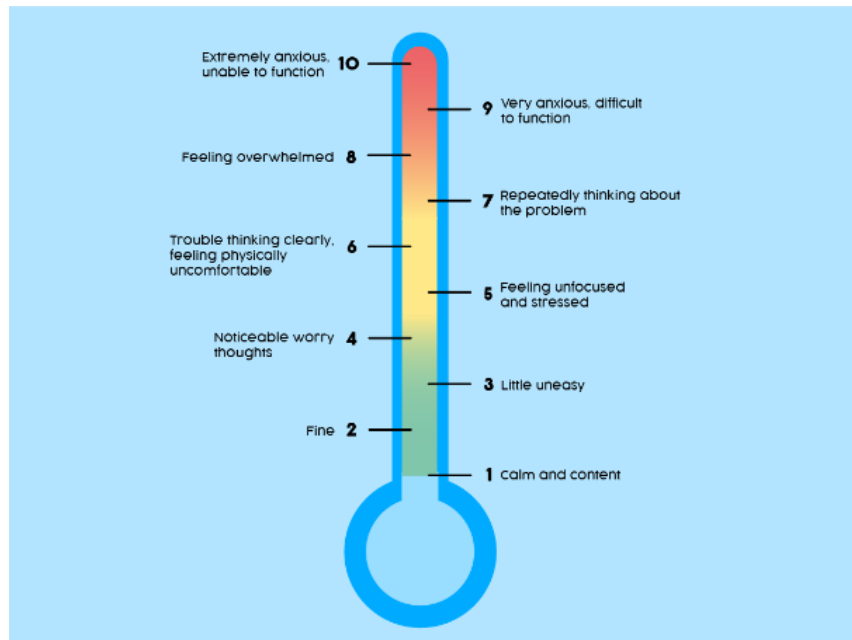
Resources: Self Soothe Boxes



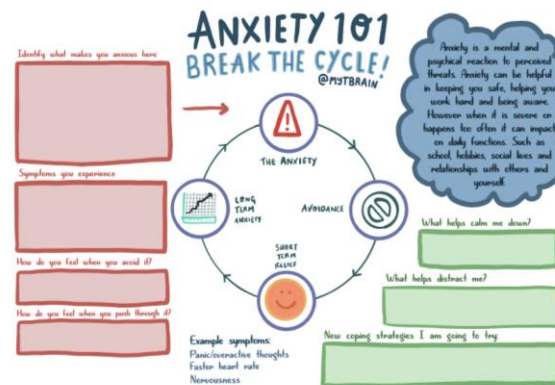
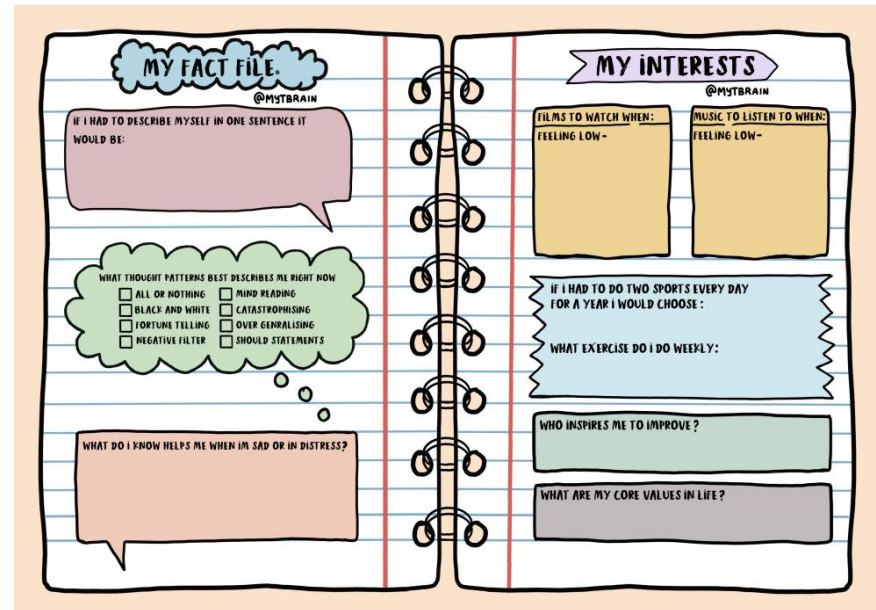
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyfgodSSdV4>

Resources: Anxiety

Thermometer



Resources: MyTBrain Resources



Other Strategies

- ✓ Worry time
- ✓ Limit use of social media and / or take breaks from it periodically; connect with people in real life
- ✓ Decrease stimulation e.g. phone on silent
- ✓ Cultivate their strengths
- ✓ Don't helicopter parent – allow some failure
- ✓ Take a break and go outside
- ✓ Visualisation / Grounding / Relaxation exercises
- ✓ Look at recovery stories from other teens
- ✓ Get support from your own friends / family; sometimes your teen may benefit speaking to someone other than their parents

Useful Apps



Tellmi – 11+



For age 10-18



For younger children



Mindshift – teens and young adults

Useful Websites / Resources

Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>

Anxiety UK - <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

No Panic - <https://nopanic.org.uk/>

OCD Action - <https://ocdaction.org.uk/ocd-youth/>

The Mix - <https://www.themix.org.uk/>

Childline - <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Kooth - <https://www.kooth.com/>

Night Owls Overnight Listening Service:

Tel: 0800 1488 244 or Text: 07984 392700

Free workshops for young people:

<https://chewsnews.northorpehall.co.uk/workshops.php>

Feedback Forms

Please complete the feedback form on
your table.



Many thanks for your time 😊