



***“Delivering a collaborative, system-wide approach  
to support the mental wellbeing of children  
in school.”  
(DfE)***

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## Overcoming Adolescent Anxiety – Parent Workshop

TAKE CARE



OF YOURSELF

# Take Note

We recognise your role as parents and don't want to turn you into therapist

We will discuss strategies suitable for mild to moderate anxiety

We understand that all families and young people are unique and that some of strategies discussed need to be tailored to the situation

# What we want you to get out of this workshop

To develop and understanding of anxiety and how it might present in childhood.

An understanding of LI-CBT and how it support parents and young people

Empowering you as parents in being able to help support your children with their anxious challenges.

# What is Anxiety and when does it become a problem?

- Anxiety is a **NORMAL** emotion
- It can be helpful and enhance performance
- Anxiety becomes a problem when it is more **SEVERE** or **FREQUENT** and **INTERFERES** with a child's everyday life



# How is Anxiety maintained?

OVERESTIMATION – of  
the threat or danger

UNDERESTIMATION – of  
one's ability to cope

It prevents people from  
enjoying normal  
experiences – impacting  
school, friendships and  
family

# Common childhood Anxiety disorders

## Separation anxiety

- Excessive concern separating from caregivers
- Commonly expressed with difficulties attending school, social events or bedtime
- Around age 5

## Specific Phobia

- Persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable
- Brought on by the presence of Specific object or situation, e.g. dogs, snakes, wasps, lightning
- Around ages 5-8

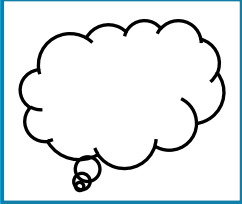
## Generalised anxiety

- Excessive and uncontrollable worry
- Often accompanied by marked physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches
- Around age 11

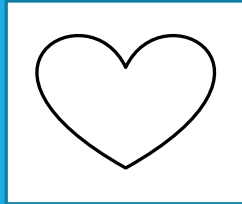
## Social anxiety

- Excessive fear of negative evaluation
- Commonly expressed by school and social difficulties, e.g. speaking in class, attending school or social events
- Around ages 12-14

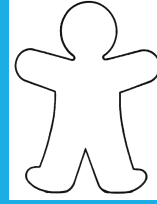
# What might give you an indication that that anxiety is a problem?



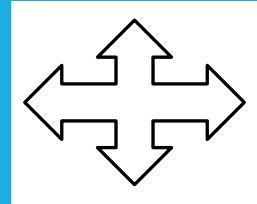
Thoughts



Feelings



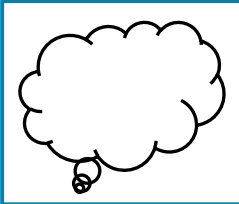
Physical



Behaviour



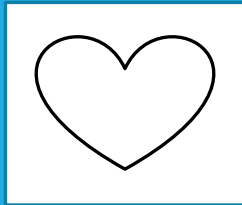
# Signs of Anxiety



Thoughts

Thinking the worst  
Self-critical  
Over-exaggerating

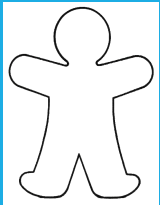
# Signs of Anxiety



Feelings

Worry  
Panic  
Anger  
Embarrassed  
Stressed  
Fearful  
Hopeless

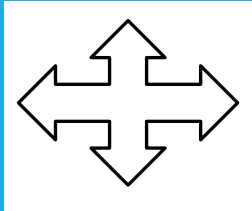
# Signs of Anxiety



Physical

Stomach Aches  
Headaches  
Racing heartrate  
Fidgeting  
Tense  
Shaking

# Signs of Anxiety



Behaviour

Avoidance  
Sleep difficulties  
Clinginess or crying  
Perfectionism  
Struggling with change  
Restlessness and irritability

# Remember:

- Anxiety is a normal emotion, everyone has changes in mood, ups and downs
- Context and whole picture is important to consider



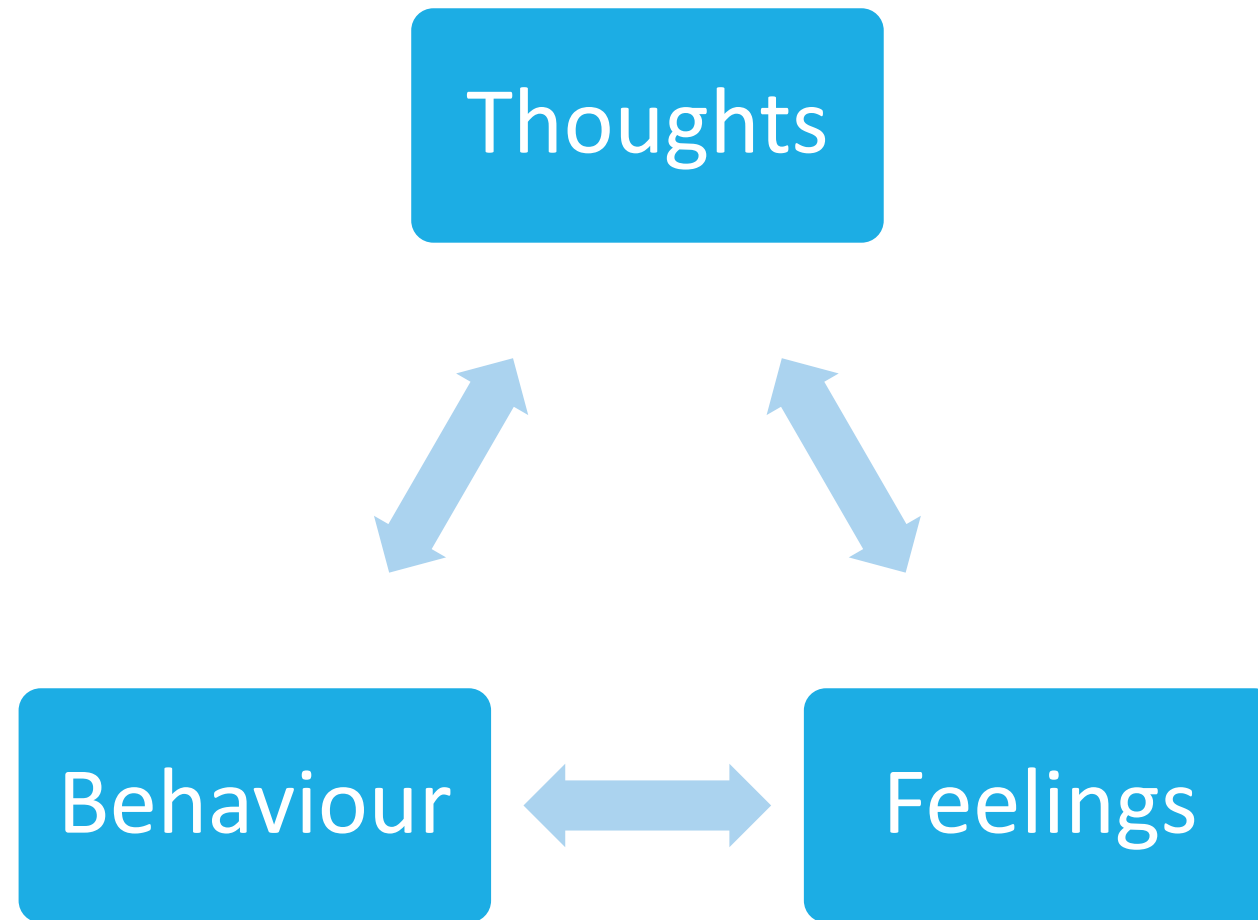
To help decide, consider the following questions:

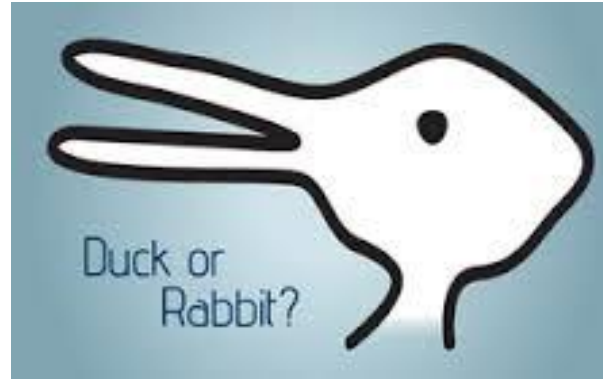
Is the fear out of proportion to the actual level of the threat?

Is there fear in the absence of actual threat?

It is difficult for the young person to settle back to a normal state?

# What is CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)?





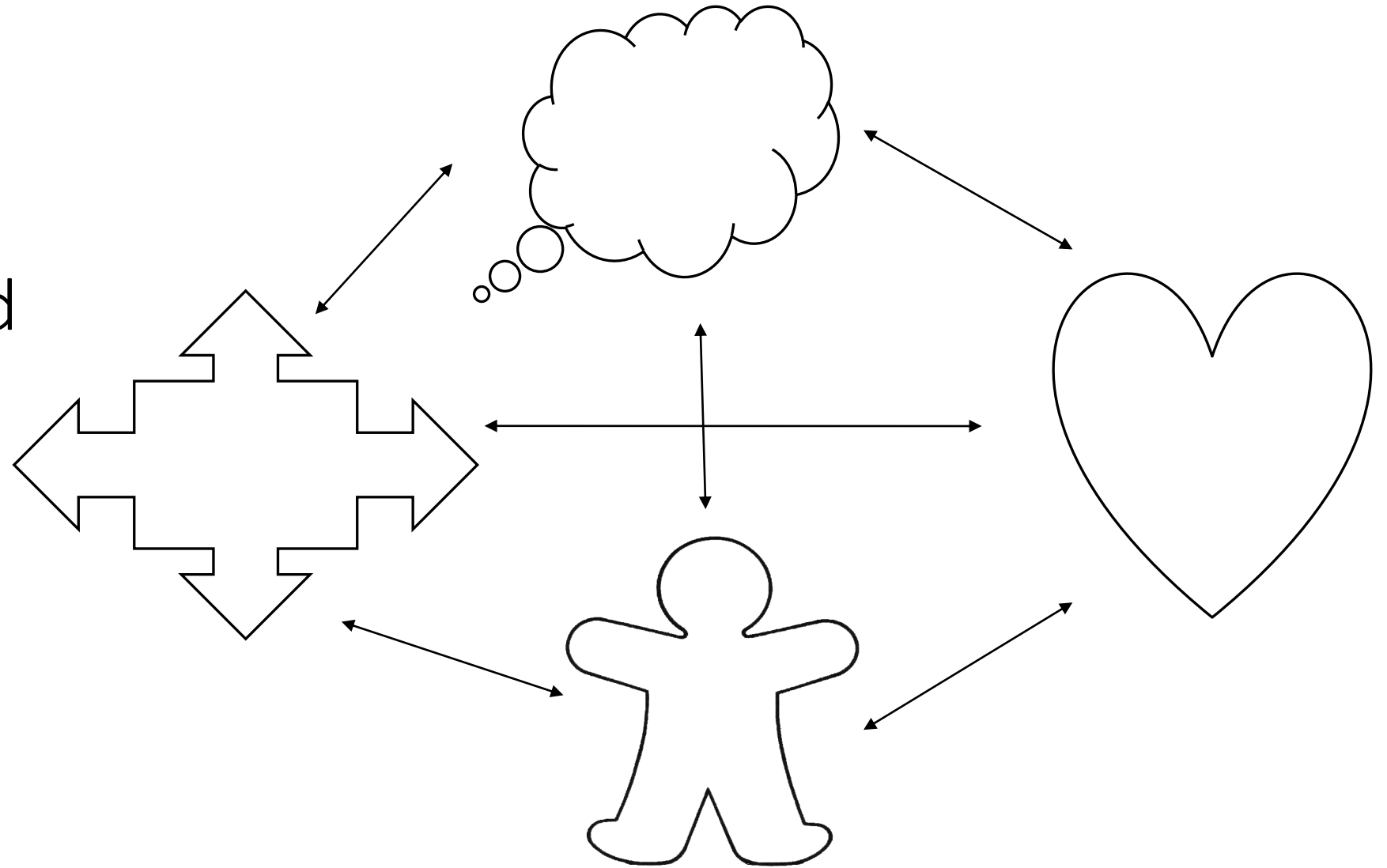
- How we interpret an event determines how we react to it.
- The “same” event can result in different emotions depending on the interpretation
- Distress can be reduced by changing interpretation



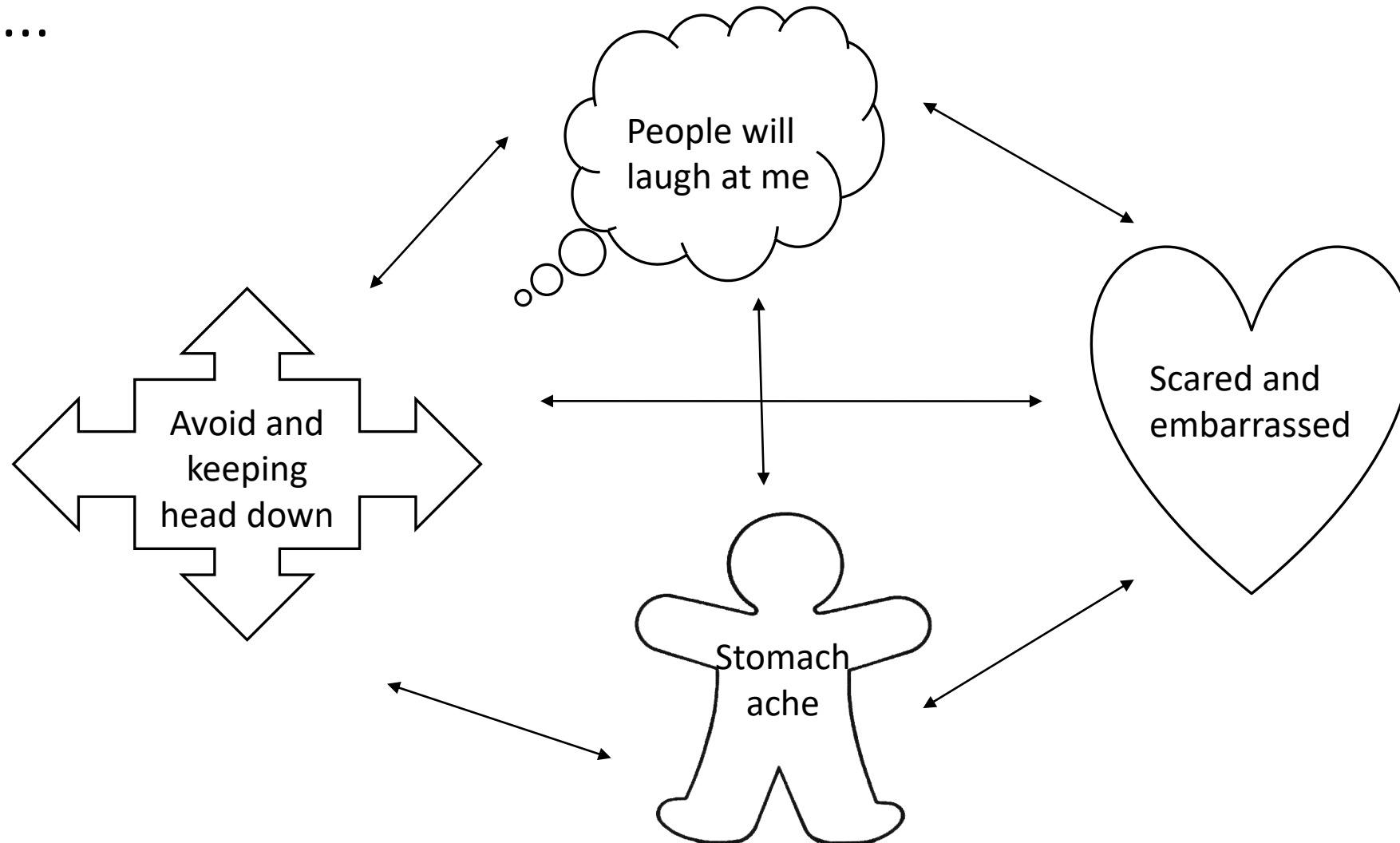
Imagine it is the middle of the night – you are at home in bed asleep – you are awakened suddenly by a loud noise from downstairs.

- What are you thinking?
  - How do you feel?
- What reaction might you notice in your body?
  - What do you do?

We can use this model to try and understand what a young person is experiencing



# Feeling worried about talking in front of the rest of the class...



# CBT – Key principals



We **behave** in a way that is consistent to our **beliefs/thoughts**  
This can then become **habit**

Therefore we do not get the opportunity to **challenge** our beliefs/thoughts

Therefore we may have to **change** our behaviour

# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
2. Share with them some key helpful messages
3. Try some additional strategies
4. Speaking with other family members
5. Seek additional support if necessary



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# When supporting a young person:



- In many cases the adolescent won't be actively seeking help and may feel embarrassed or reluctant to talk
- The young person may be reluctant to change if this involves going out of their comfort zone
- The young person may be reluctant to involve parents/carers





# How to be there for the young person

- Be observant
- Don't be scared to initiate a conversation
- Listen
- Recognise that talking about anxiety can be difficult and takes courage
- Normalise difficulties



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# What helpful messages can you give?

- 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



# What helpful messages can you give?

- A powerful way of addressing the anxiety is to challenge anxious thinking and face fears (in a manageable way)
- We can help encourage the young person to be independent and face fears
- We can give attention to brave behaviour



# How you can help

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# Strategy 1

## Helping the 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?



Asking questions rather than giving answers



# Why should we encourage *young people* to evaluate their own anxious thoughts?

- Weigh up evidence for and against their thoughts
- Come up with alternative calmer ways of thinking
- Discourage reliance from others
- Become more independent in their thinking
- Builds confidence



# Strategy 2

## Helping the young person to problem solve

1. What is the problem?
2. Encourage the young person to think of as many solutions as they can
3. Consider the pros and cons
4. Rate each idea
5. Make a plan and have a go
6. Review



# EXAMPLE: Problem solving worrying about failing an exam

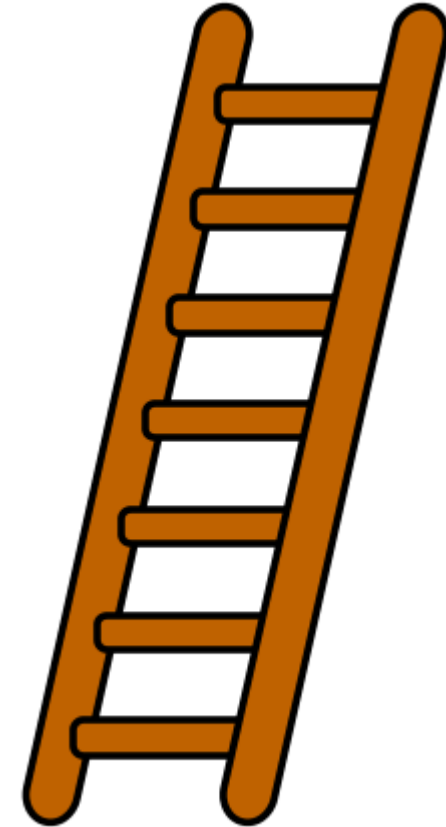
Possible solutions	Good points	Bad points	Ranking
Spend a lot of time worrying about it	Might feel I am doing something	Won't help me do better, will probably feel worse	4
Do 2 hours of revision a night	Could help	Not sure it's enough	1
Do some thought challenging	Takes time and could be revising	Might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



# Strategy 3

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 the YP to develop a number of steps from less to more-anxiety provoking and start with easier steps)



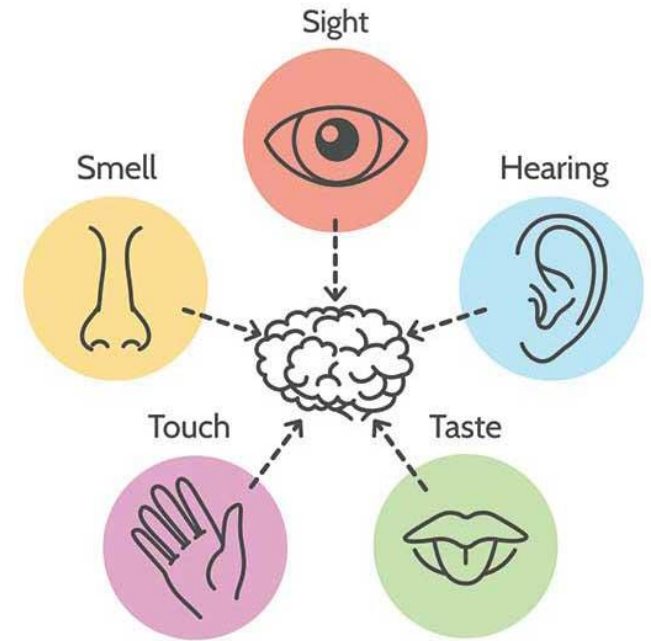
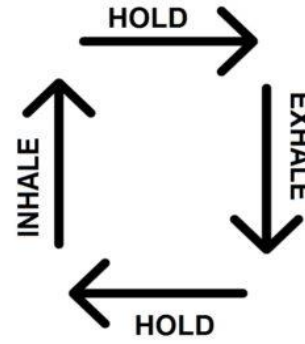
# EXAMPLE: Developing a hierarchy of fears for social anxiety

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

# Strategy 4

## Practical Skills for physical anxious responses

- 7-11 Breathing
- Box breathing
- Grounding: The 5 senses
- Progressive muscle relaxation



# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
2. Share with them some key helpful messages
3. Try some additional strategies
4. **Speaking with other family members**
5. Seek additional support if necessary



# Speaking with other family members



**Keep in mind the young person's confidentiality**

**Seek support for yourself if you need it**

**It can be helpful if everyone in the family is on the same page**

# How family members can help

- 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
- Understand that 'taking over' undermines the teenager's confidence and leads them to see themselves as vulnerable
- Support the adolescent 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 the teenager
- Provide opportunities for the young person to build their confidence

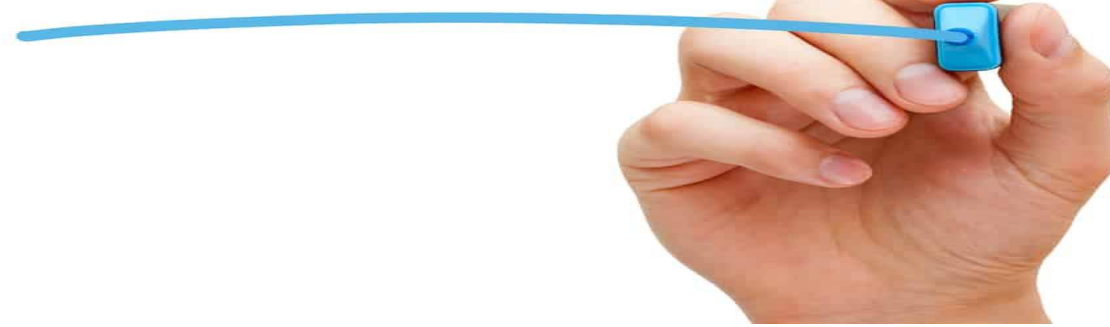


# How you can help

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# REFERRALS



If you feel your child needs specific mental health support above what is already offered by year group Student Support Officers, then please use the following emails to contact support within the school:

Karen Craig - [kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

Sheryl Paul - [spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

They can refer you to us (Mental Health Support Team).



# Referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

- Referrals for higher level and more persistent mental health needs
- If the referral is urgent, it should be initiated by phone so that CAMHS can advise of best next steps.
- Single Point of Access (SPA): 01865 901 951 8AM- 6PM Monday to Friday.
- If it is less urgent, you can email on [BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

# In summary: What can you do?



**Encourage the YP to face their fears**



**Help the YP to problem solve**



**Help the YP to think about their thoughts and behaviours**



**Recognise signs of anxiety and listen to the YP**



**Help the YP to understand what's going on**

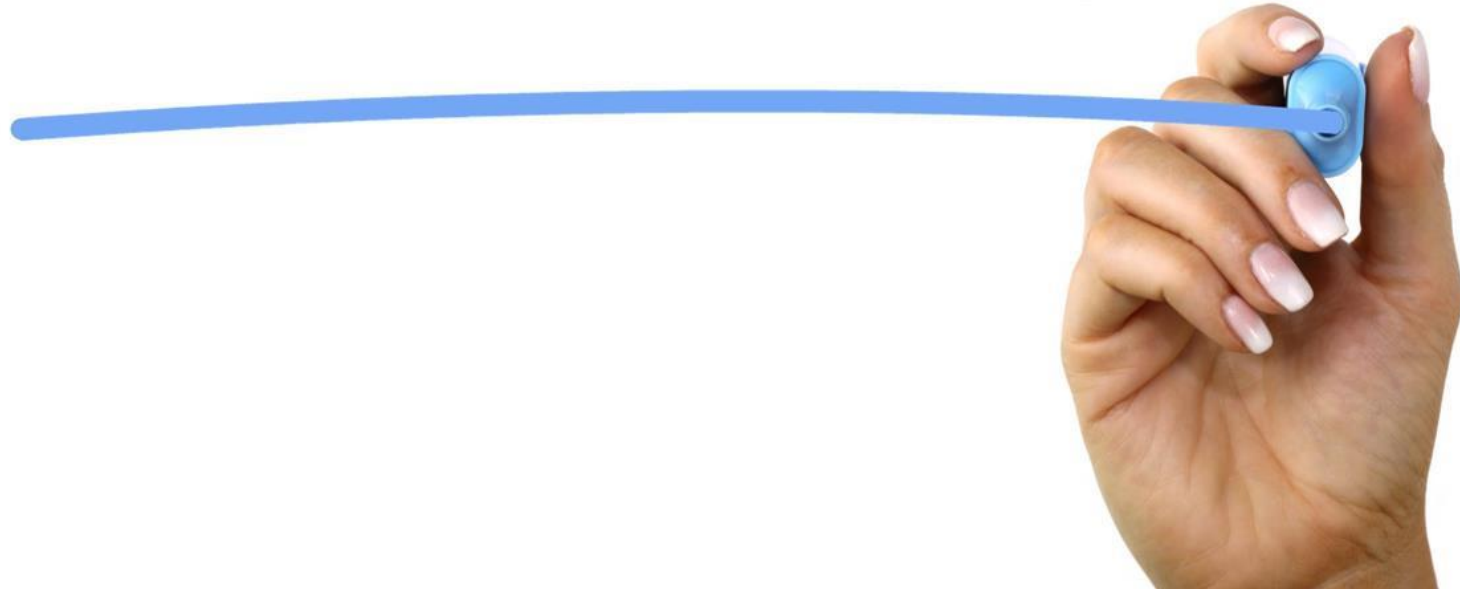


**Help the YP to think about how others may impact the situation and educate others**

# Useful Resources



# QUESTIONS



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