

managing your child's worries

**A 3 session guide for
parents/families**

Session 1

Faye North
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For all references, visit www.weheartcbt.com/references

Information for Parents/Families

The resources and strategies detailed in these booklets are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT is evidence based which is why we use it to help children and young people who are struggling with anxiety/worry – we know it can work.

These three booklets are made up of three sessions which aim to help you to help your child with their worries. It involves working openly and collaboratively with your child and needs a commitment to use the strategies repeatedly and consistently. By doing this, you can help your child to feel better.

Every child is different, and the amount of time it takes for these strategies to help with your child's worries will be different for everyone. What is important is that you stick to it. By making these strategies part of everyday life, you can start to see big, positive changes.

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Using these Booklets

The first part of each booklet provides an overview of the session including what you should do for each activity, how to spread each activity over several days and some top tips for getting the most out of each task.

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Further Help

Remember!

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Session One: Overview

When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information about the fight or flight response on the 'What is Anxiety?' sheet.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Read through the 'What is Anxiety?' sheet with your child.	Ask open questions such as: How does this relate to your feelings? Where/when do you feel this way? What symptoms of anxiety do you notice?
Day 2/3	Complete the 'My Symptoms of Anxiety' sheet together.	Use the example page if you get stuck.
Day 3	Together, create a Fight or Flight poster aimed at teaching other children about this.	There is space in this booklet to make a poster but you and your child can be as creative as you want. You might want to use some big paper and paints or create a digital poster. It's up to you and your child how you do it.
Day 4	Practise breathing techniques together using the 'Breathing Techniques' sheet.	Help your child to choose the technique they like best and practise this when they are calm. This helps them to be prepared to use this when they feel worried/anxious. When they do feel anxious, calmly encourage them to use their breathing technique and praise them for doing so.
Day 5	Complete the 'What did you learn this week?' section.	Either do this together or complete the parts separately before discussing afterwards.

What is Anxiety?

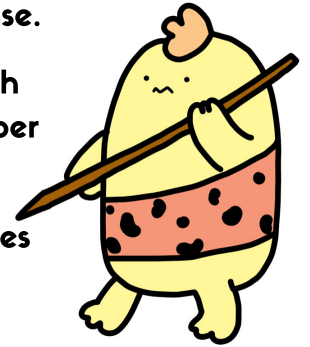
The Fight or Flight Response

Anxiety is a **normal** emotion that everyone feels at some point in their life. This is because of something in our brains called the **Fight or Flight** response.

Humans developed this response as cave men because it was a much more dangerous time to live back then (think running away from saber tooth tigers and hunting for food).



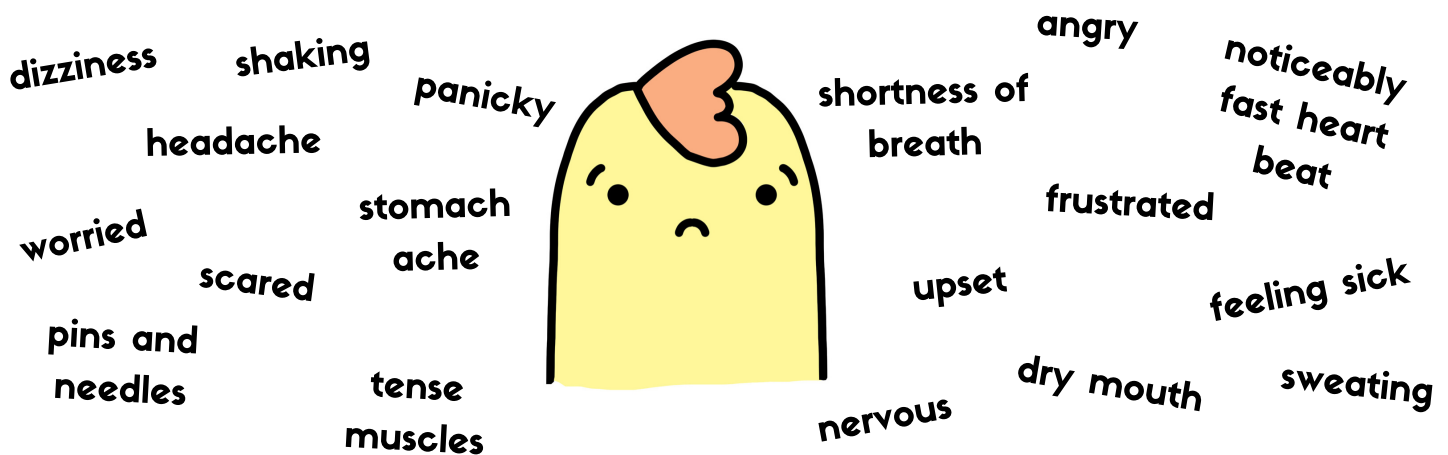
The Fight or Flight response meant that cave men's bodies went into survival mode whenever their brains sensed danger. This meant their heart rate and blood pressure would increase so they had a better chance of running away (flight) or fighting the danger (fight).



We all react in different ways when we feel anxious and our Fight or Flight response kicks in, but it's important to remember that it is normal!

Symptoms of Anxiety

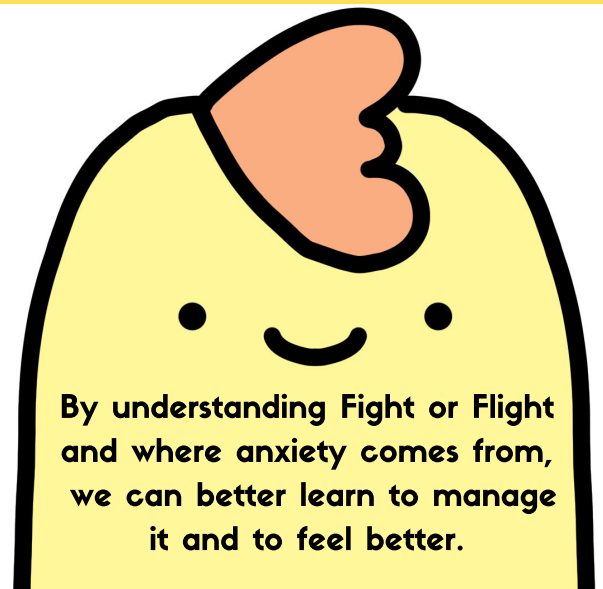
When the Fight or Flight response kicks in and our heart rate and blood pressure increases, we might notice some of the following symptoms.



It's like a Smoke Alarm



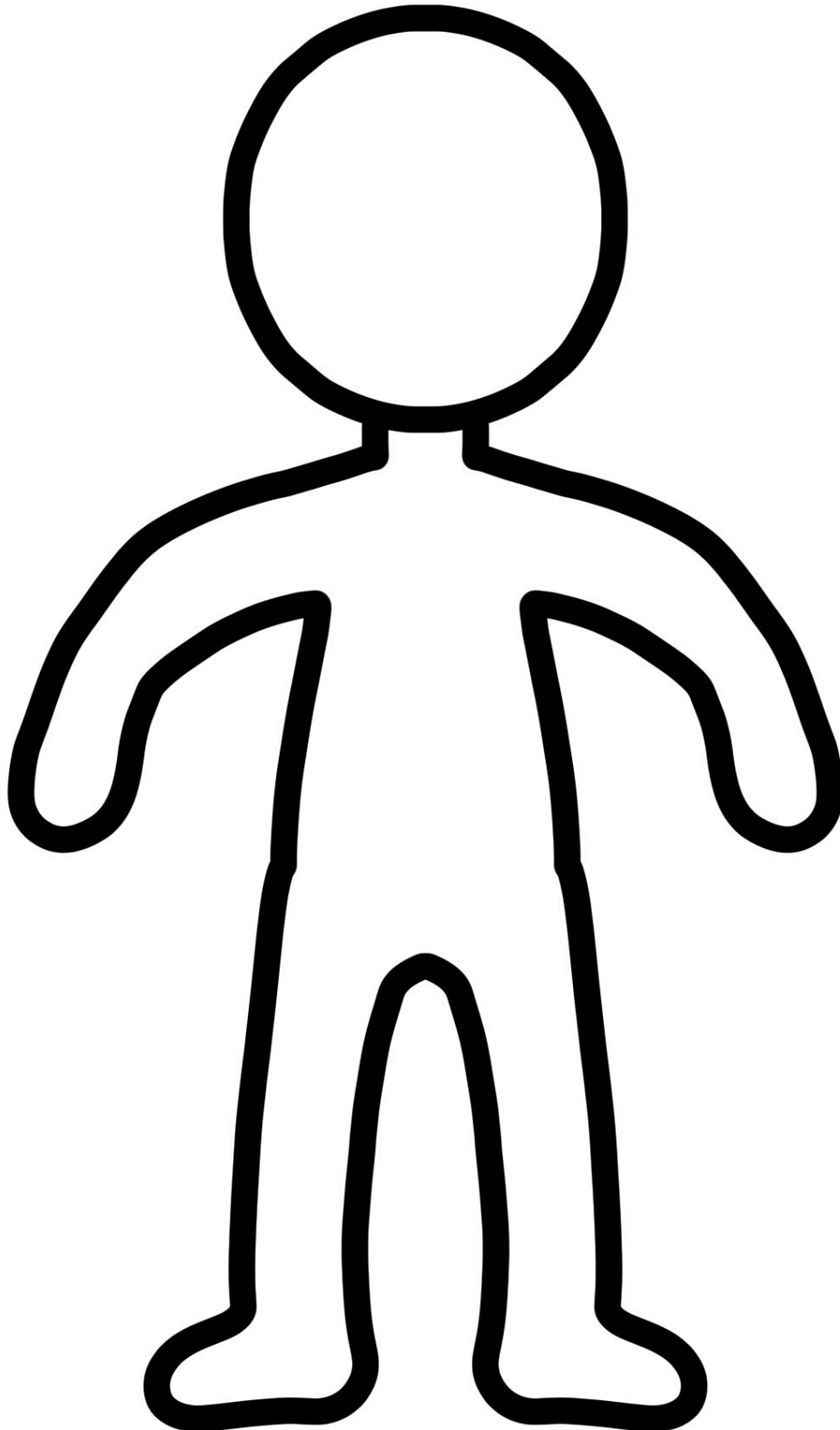
Imagine you have a smoke alarm that is overly sensitive and goes off all of the time, even when there isn't a real fire. When you have a problem with anxiety, your Fight or Flight response is just like this - it goes off and causes the symptoms of anxiety, even if there isn't any real danger.



By understanding Fight or Flight and where anxiety comes from, we can better learn to manage it and to feel better.

My Symptoms of Anxiety

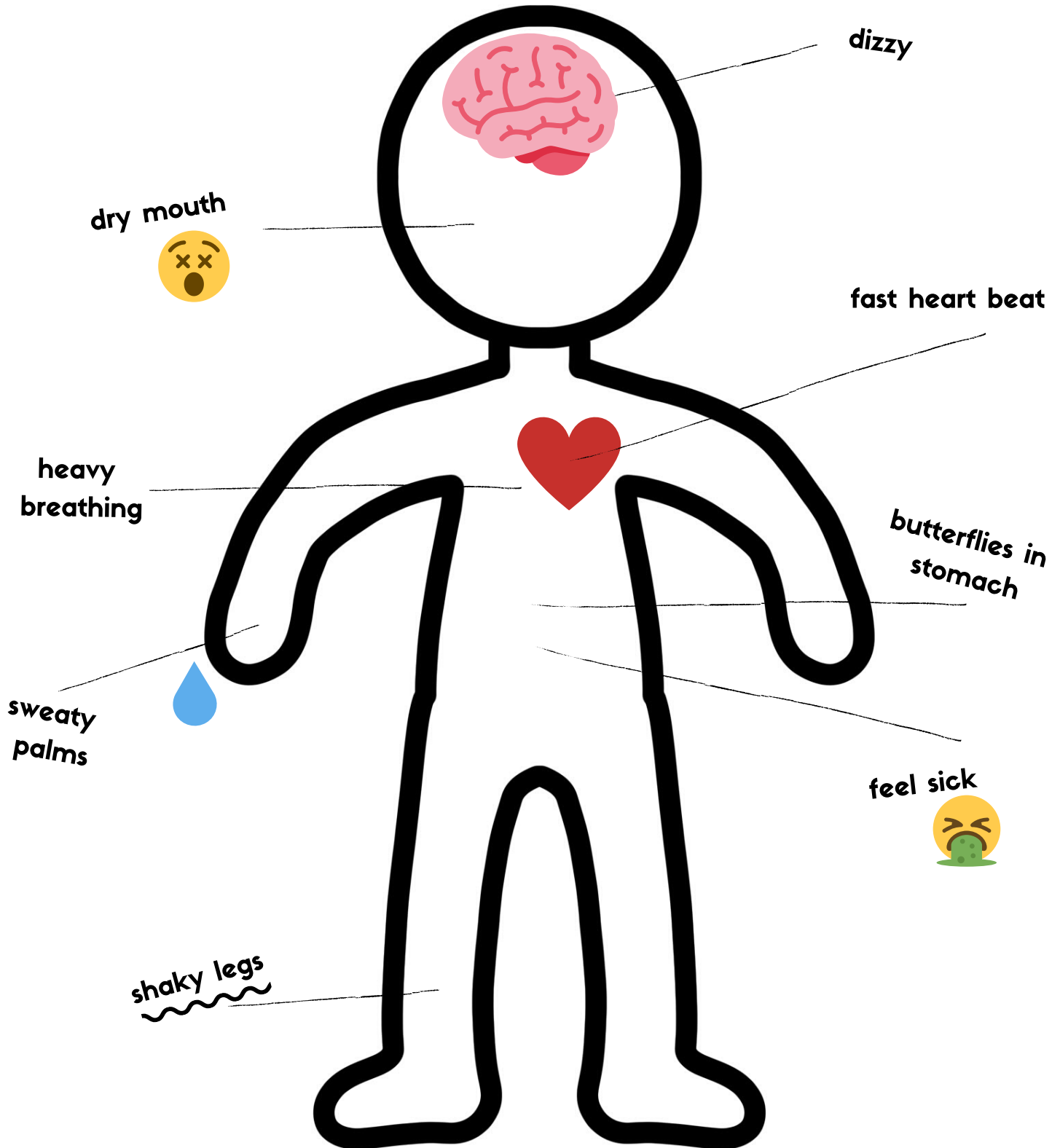
When feeling anxious, we all experience some physical symptoms which can be unpleasant and upsetting. It's important to remember that these are **NORMAL** body reactions to a feared situation that everyone experiences at some time or another. What symptoms do you notice in your body when you're feeling anxious?



Remember! Everyone's symptoms of anxiety might be different but they are **NORMAL body reactions.**

My Symptoms of Anxiety

When feeling anxious, we all experience some physical symptoms which can be unpleasant and upsetting. It's important to remember that these are **NORMAL** body reactions to a feared situation that everyone experiences at some time or another. What symptoms do you notice in your body when you're feeling anxious?



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My Poster

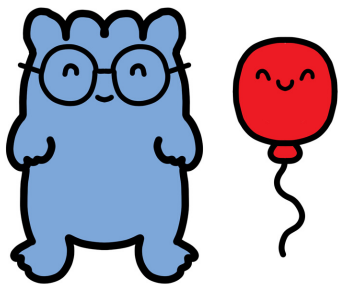
Use this space to create your own poster to tell other people about the Fight or Flight response.

A large, empty rectangular area with a thick cyan border, intended for creating a poster about the Fight or Flight response. The area is completely blank, providing space for drawing, writing, or illustrating a poster.

Breathing Techniques

When we feel anxious, upset or distressed, it can be difficult to know what to do to feel better. By using these breathing techniques, we can reduce our anxiety and lower our blood pressure/heart rate. This helps us feel calmer and more focused and helps us to face our fears.

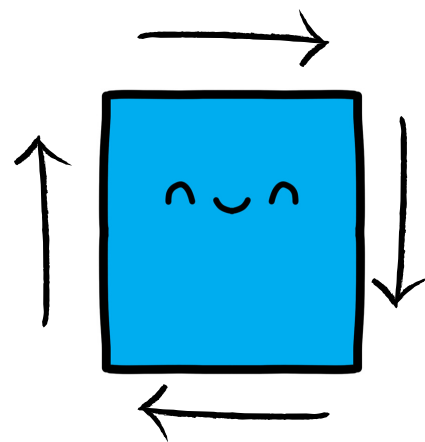
Belly Breathing



- Take a deep breath in and fill your belly like you're inflating a balloon.
- As you do this, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breath in and fill the balloon in your belly.
- Pause and then let all of the air out of your belly like you're letting a balloon deflate.
- As you do this, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breath out and let the balloon go down from your belly.

Square Breathing

- Imagine you're drawing a square with your finger in the air.
- Breath in while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the top line and then pause.
- Breath out while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the line down the side and then pause.
- Breath in while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the bottom line and then pause.
- Breath out while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the line up the side to make the square.

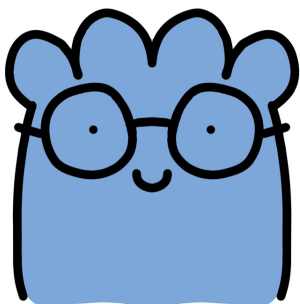


Finger Breathing



- Use your index finger to trace around the edges of the fingers on your opposite hand.
- Count 1, 2, 3, 4 and breath in as you go up the first finger.
- Count 1, 2, 3, 4 and breath out as you go down the finger.
- Repeat until you have traced up and down all five fingers, breathing 1, 2, 3, 4 in and 1, 2, 3, 4 out each time.

Top Tip! Practise these breathing techniques when you're calm so that you're better prepared to use them when you need to.



Count **slowly** when breathing in and out and **repeat** the technique as many times as you need to until you feel calmer.

What did you learn this week?

Use this space to:

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Session 2

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Session Two: Overview

When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information about hypothetical/practical worries and worry time.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Read through the hypothetical/practical worries and complete the sorting sheet together.	Use different colours or post-it notes to write down worries before putting them in the correct category.
Day 3	Plan in worry time together using the 'Worry Time' sheet and create a worry box or jar.	Create a worry box or jar to put the worries in which your child has 'caught' through the day. You could use an old shoe box or jam jar or you might want to get or make a worry monster.
Day 4	Together, use the 'Calming Techniques' sheet to practise calming and grounding techniques to help your child change their focus of attention after noticing a worry.	Help your child to choose the technique they like best and practise this when they are calm. This helps them to be prepared to use this when they notice a worry. When they do notice a worry, calmly encourage them to write it down and then use their calming technique.
Day 5	Start using worry time together based on everything you have done this week.	Use the 'Worry Time' sheet to help remember the steps for worry time. Try and stick to the same time each day and praise your child for doing it.
Day 6	Complete the 'What did you learn this week?' section.	Either do this together or complete the parts separately before discussing afterwards.

Classify your Worries

There are two types of worries: **hypothetical** worries and **practical** worries. It's important to know the difference because we can deal with them in different ways.

hypothetical worries

Hypothetical worries are worries that we don't currently have control over and can't do anything about. These can be overwhelming and tiring.

What if I get lost?

What if it rains?

What if the bus is late?

What if I get worried?

What if I feel tired in the morning?

What if the teacher asks me a question?

practical worries

Practical worries are usually worries about a current situation that we can do something about. It can be easy to put these worries off or try to ignore them all together. However, if we don't do something about practical worries, they can pile up and make us feel overwhelmed.

I don't have enough time to do my homework

I have lots of exams coming up

I have to do a presentation

I haven't seen my friends in age

I've been eating lots of unhealthy food

Worry Diary

Keeping a worry diary can help you become more aware of your worries and what type of worry they are.

Situation	Worry	How worried I feel (0-100)	Hypothetical or Practical worry?

Classifying Worries

Write down all of your worries/things that you have worried about in the past and decide whether they should go in the 'Hypothetical Worries' column or the 'Practical Worries' column.

Hypothetical Worries

These are the 'what if...' worries that we can't control.

Practical Worries

These are the real worries that we can try to solve.

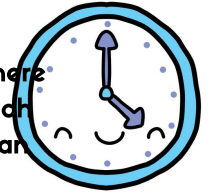


Worry Time

Worry time gives you time each day to address all of your worries. The more you use worry time, the less your worries will impact you throughout the day.

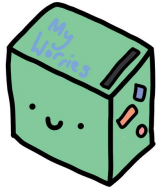
1 Plan your worry time

It's important to plan in your worry time for the same time each day. This should be a time where you can focus on the worries and not be distracted. Start with a maximum of half an hour each day. As you use worry time more and more, you may notice that you eventually need less than half an hour each day because you get better at dealing with your worries.



2 Catch the worries

As you notice worries during the day, catch them so that you can come back to them later at worry time. You can do this by writing them down, drawing a picture or making a sound recording. You could use a diary, sticky notes, your phone or any other way you can think of to catch the worries as they happen.



3 Refocus your attention

Once you have caught the worry, it's important to focus on something different. Pay attention to whatever it is you're doing at that moment OR do something totally different. You can also refocus by using calming/grounding techniques.



4 Worry time

Use worry time to go back and address all of the worries you have caught that day. For each worry decide whether it is a practical worry or hypothetical worry.

- For **practical worries**, use **problem solving**.
- For **hypothetical worries**, **let the worries go**. You can do this by ripping up, scribbling out, deleting or scrumpling up and throwing away the worry.



Some worries might not even be worries anymore! For these, you will learn that a lot of worries may seem big at the time but later they will seem much smaller and manageable.

Let's Do It

My worry time will be at (time):

It will last for (number of minutes):

I will do it with (will anyone help?):

I will catch my worries by (what will you use?):

Top Tip

To refocus your attention, try to take deep breaths and think: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. This gives you chance to calm down before focusing on a current or new task.

Keeping Calm

Calming or Grounding techniques are a good way to reduce our heart rate/blood pressure when feeling worried or anxious. It helps us refocus our attention and overcome those unpleasant feelings so we can feel better and do more.

5 4 3 2 1

Take notice of your senses by thinking of:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can feel/touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste



Facts

Think about and name facts about what is going on right now. For example, think:

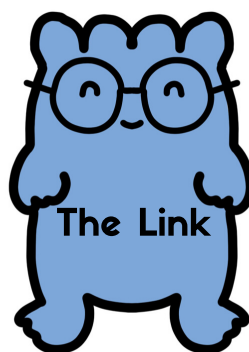
- My age is...
- My name is...
- I am wearing...
- The weather is...
- I am in...



Room Search

Think of a category and search the room for it. For example, look for:

- Everything that is a ... colour
- Everything that is a ... shape
- Things that feel of...
- Things made of ...



The Link

By **thinking** about things to help us calm down we can then **do** the things we want/need to do and **feel** better and happier.

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Session Three: Overview

When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information about problem solving and the worry tree.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Complete the problem solving sheet together based on a current practical worry or a practical worry from the past.	You can fill in the sheet or you can get creative - follow the steps on the sheet and use colours and big paper to write down what your child comes up with.
Day 3	Look at the worry tree together and discuss how you both now use these steps to manage worries. Make your own worry tree.	You might want to draw, paint or colour a worry tree or you could even make a 3D model. The important thing is to make sure all the steps are clear and it is put somewhere your child can look at when it's done.
Day 4	Complete the 'What did you learn this week?' section.	Either do this together or complete the parts separately before discussing afterwards.
Next steps	Continue to use all of the strategies you have learned from these sessions and remember to encourage and praise your child for doing so. The more you use these strategies, the better your child will manage their worries and feel better.	Go back through these booklets and recap any of the strategies any time you need to - think of them as tools in your toolkit which you and your child can now use over and over.

Problem Solving

If you're struggling with a practical worry, use this step by step guide which helps to break the problem down and solve it in a more manageable way. Practical worries can feel overwhelming and it's easy to put them off. However, it's much better in the long run to solve the problem today rather than put it off until later.

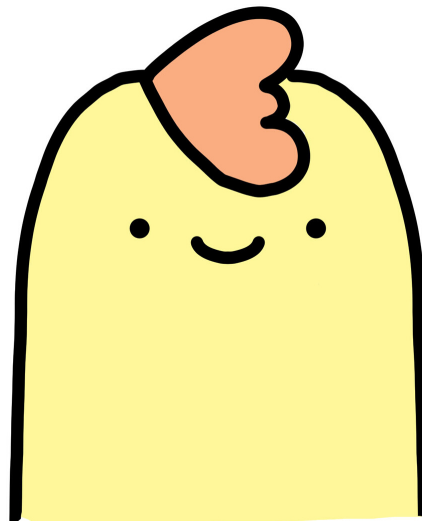
(You'll need some paper and pens/pencils)

- Step 1** Write down your problem in 1 or 2 sentences.
- Step 2** Write down all the ideas you can think of to solve the problem (no matter what they are!).
- Step 3** Make a table and write down ALL of the good things and ALL of the not so good things you can think of for each of your ideas.

	Good things	Not so good things
Idea 1		
Idea 2		

- Step 4** Choose one idea that looks like it could work (if you struggle, see which one has the most good things). Ask yourself, is my idea realistic? If it isn't, choose a different idea.
- Step 5** Make a plan! Write down the answers to these questions to create your plan of action!
- 1) What will you do?
 - 2) When will you do it?
 - 3) How will you do it?
 - 4) Who will you do it with?
 - 5) Could there be any difficulties? If so, what could you do to overcome these?

Step 6 DO IT!



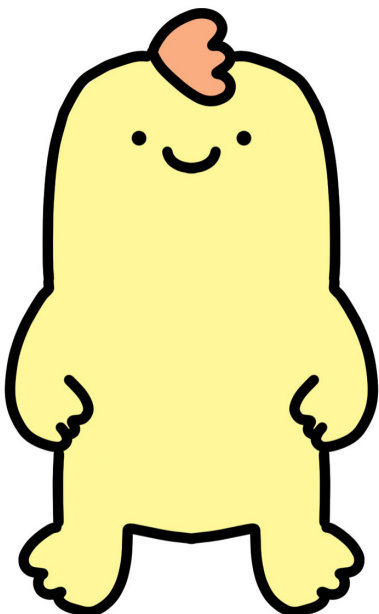
After you've done it...

Well done for giving your idea a go and for trying to solve your problem! Now, think about how it went.

Review it

Answer the following questions to help you reflect on how it went.

- 1) Was it helpful?
- 2) Did you achieve what you wanted to?
- 3) If not, could you do something differently/change something next time?
- 4) Did you achieve anything (no matter how small) towards solving your problem? Even tiny steps forward are big achievements.
- 5) What did you learn?



Remember...

Whether your solution worked really well or whether it didn't quite go as you'd hoped, you should be very proud of yourself for giving it a go! Well done!

The Worry Tree

The Worry Tree can help break down worry management into simple steps. Start at the top and follow it down to find out the best strategy to use.



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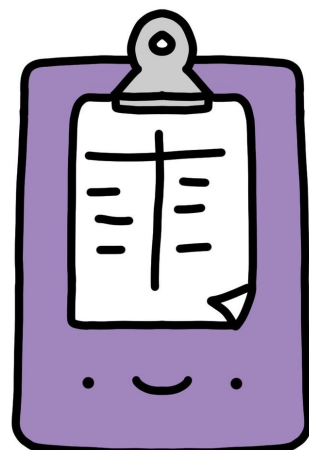
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Top tips for managing worry

These tips can help you feel calmer so you're better able to manage your worries. But, **REMEMBER**, don't use these as a way to avoid or put off doing something about your worries as this makes them even more difficult in the long run.

- 1 **Create a worry box**
- 2 **Tell someone about your worries**
- 3 **Go to a yoga class**
- 4 **Download a mindfulness app**
- 5 **Meditate**
- 6 **Spend time with family or friends**
- 7 **Draw or create something**
- 8 **Go for a walk or jog**
- 9 **Take a relaxing bath**

Or, create your own list!

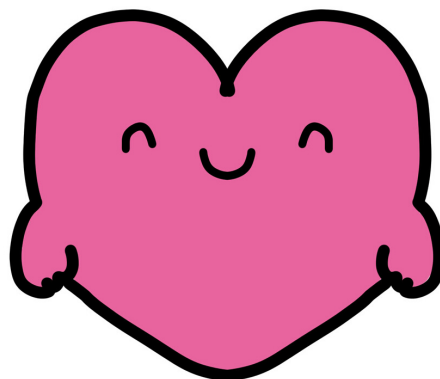


Next Steps

It's important to continue to put all of these strategies into practise to help your child manage their worries. Make a note of the things you will continue to do or things you are going to do next.

Be Proud of Yourself!

As a parent, it can be difficult knowing what is best for your child when they are struggling with worries and anxiety and many parents report feeling overwhelmed. Be proud of yourself for taking the time and effort to put these strategies in place - a HUGE well done! Take some time to reward yourself and recognise that you are doing the right things by making changes to help your child feel better.



Don't forget! If you continue to feel your child needs support with their mental health, you can make a referral to access this by visiting your GP or contacting your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).