



Connect-Ed

Mental Health Services for Schools

**Understanding and managing
my child's anxiety**

Bring up a photo of
your child(ren) on
your phone and
think about all their
qualities and
strengths



```
graph TD; CCS[Catholic Children's Society] --> SFC[St Francis Family Centre]; CCS --> CF[Crisis Fund]; CCS --> SP[Stay&Play]; CCS --> R[Rainbows]; CCS --> CE[ConnectEd];
```

Catholic
Children's
Society

St Francis
Family Centre

Stay&Play
A place to thrive 0-5

Crisis Fund
Emergency support for families in crisis

Rainbows
Guiding Children and Young People
Through Life's Storms.

ConnectEd
Mental Health Services for Schools



Check-in: Which biscuit best describes you right now or as a parent



Aims of the workshop

- Introduction to anxiety
- Different types of anxiety
- Signs and symptoms of anxiety
- What can cause anxiety?
- Strategies to help my child manage their feelings of anxiety

Introduction to anxiety

Introduction To Anxiety

Mental Health Foundation

- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.
- 10% of children and young people (aged 5 to 16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental problem
- yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

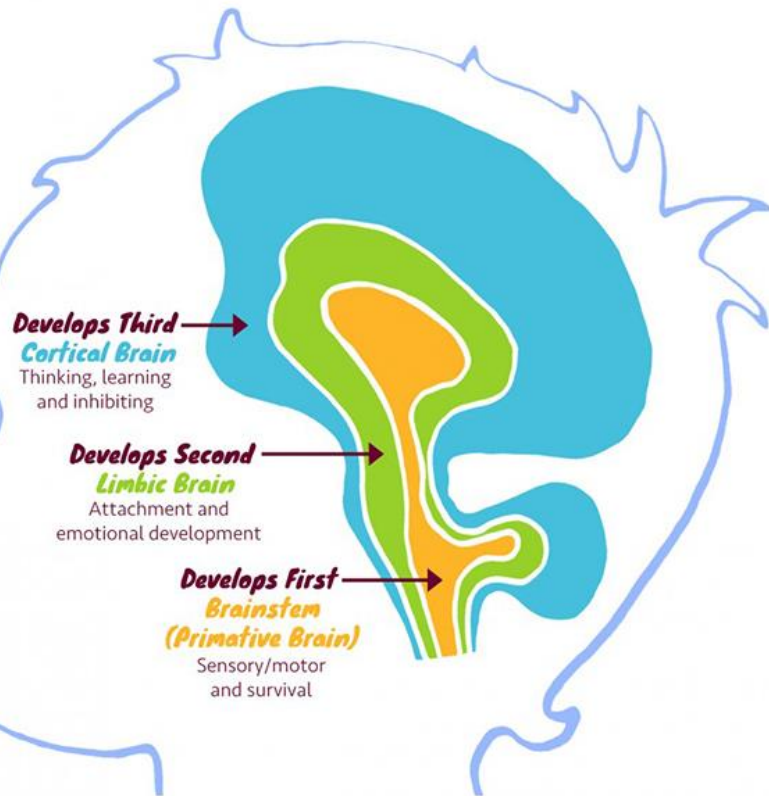
Introduction To Anxiety



Anxiety = Over-estimation of threat

Under-estimation of own ability to cope





Children's brains develop
from the bottom up.



The Brain

- Downstairs brain (brain stem): automatic responses, involuntary body functions (e.g. heartbeat)
- Midbrain/limbic brain: where emotions are processed and memories are stored. Our 'safety radar' (amygdala) – fight/flight/freeze
- Upstairs brain (cerebral cortex): thinking logically, thinking about how others might be feeling, problem solving, emotional regulation

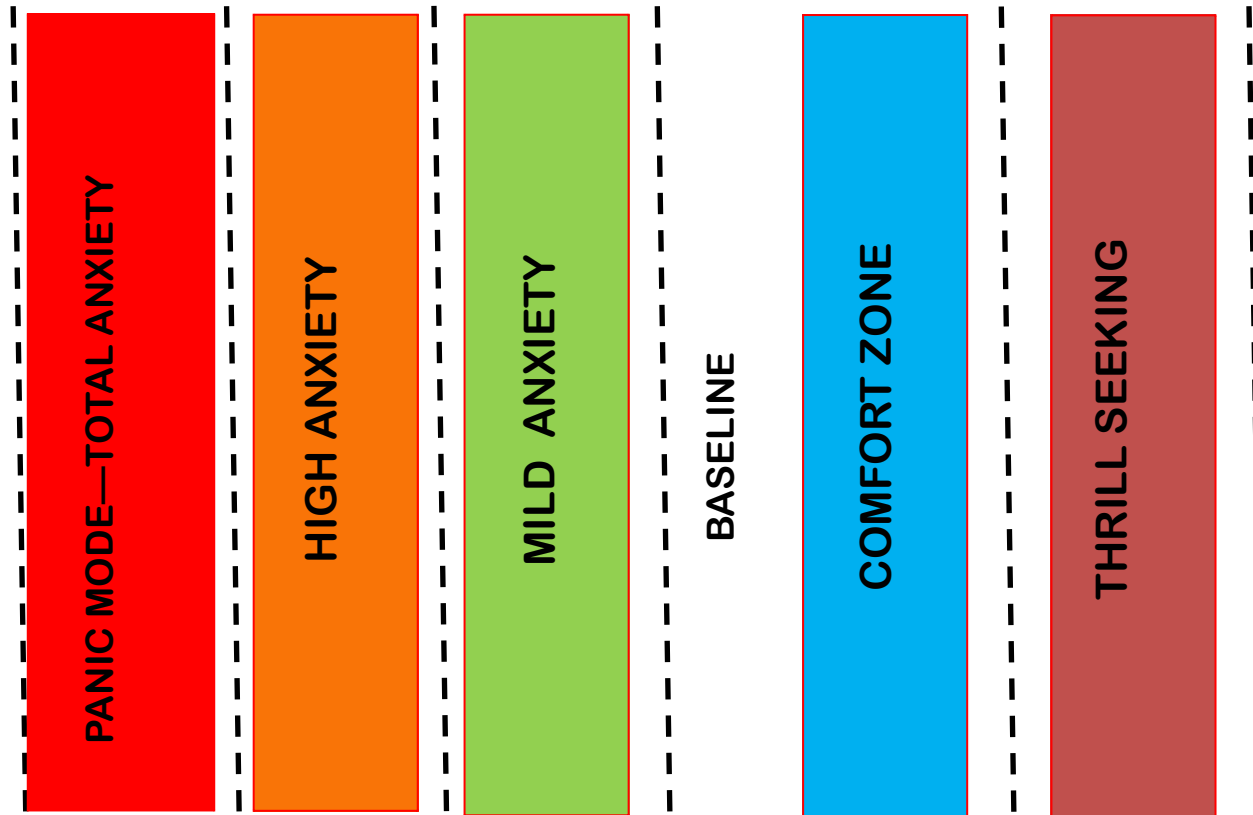
Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M&ab_channel=AnxietyCanada

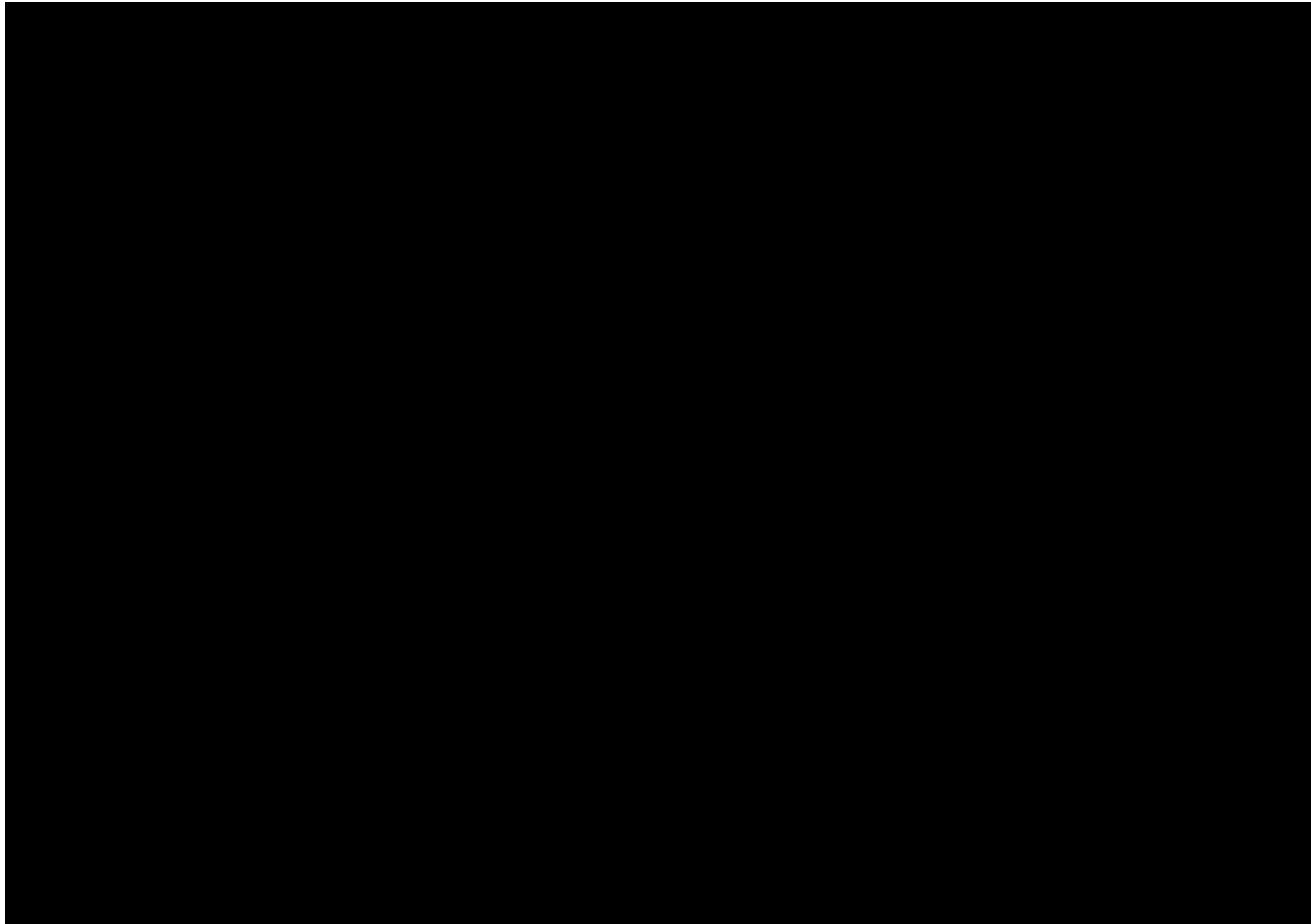
Examples of Fight/Flight/Freeze Responses

Fight	Flight	Freeze
<p>In the past, when our ancient ancestors were faced with invaders, they would have picked up their weapons and sought to overcome the cause of their fear through fighting.</p>	<p>In the past, running away from a dangerous animal or situation.</p>	<p>Our ancient ancestors, when charged by herd of animals would have tried to make themselves invisible, e.g. by hiding behind a rock and staying still until the threat had gone.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child lashing out, verbally or physically. • Other aggressive behaviour, e.g. throwing objects, hitting others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When faced with stress, a child may walk/run away • Hide • A child 'switching off' and not engaging with you– while they haven't physically attempted to flee the situation, they have mentally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a more subtle reaction that is hard to identify, e.g. A child tries not to get noticed, is avoidant. • They don't answer or ignore you. • They may appear very quiet and shy • At a more extreme level, the child could refuse to follow instructions but rarely knows/gives a reason.

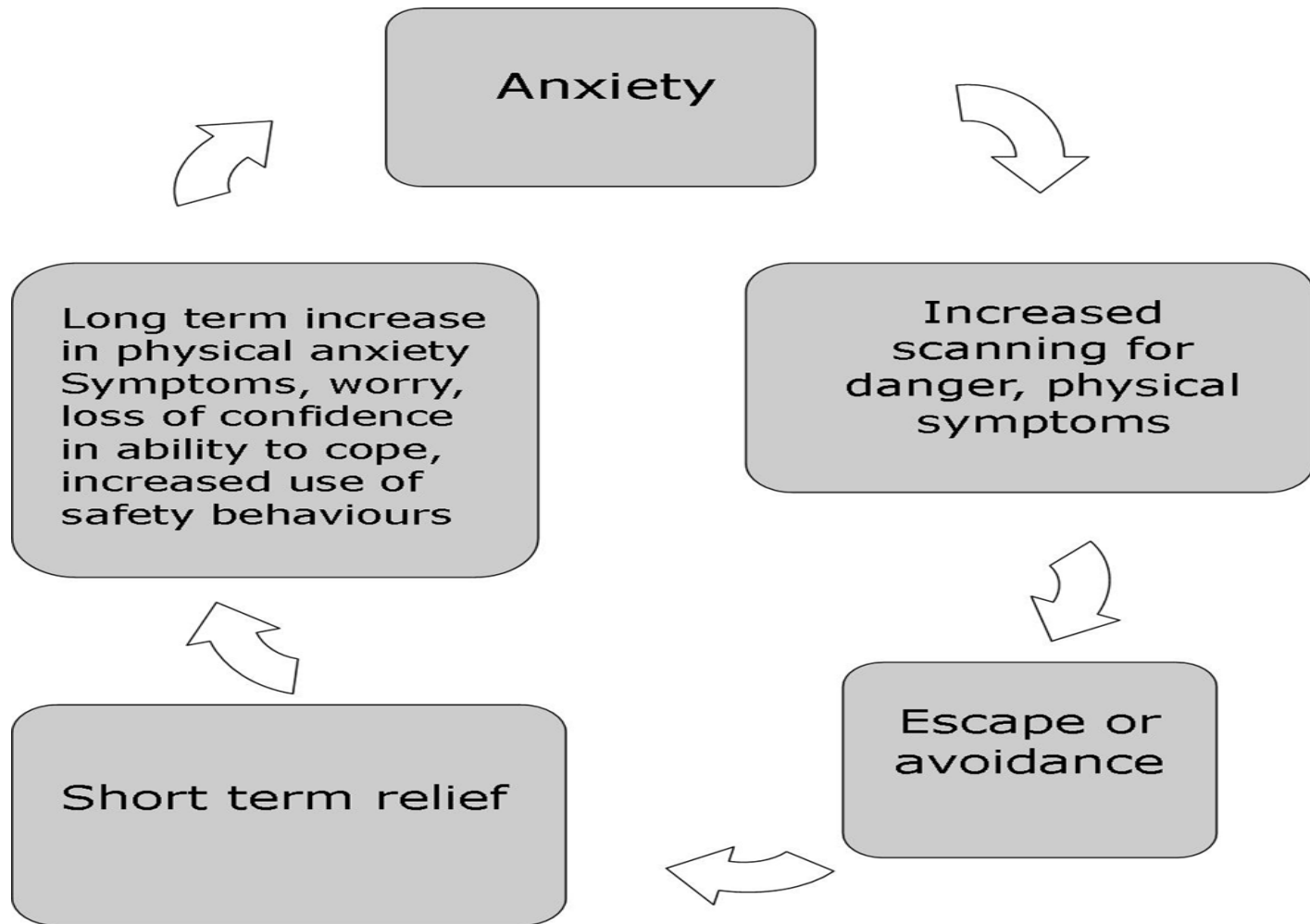
Levels of anxiety



Anxiety – Physical Implications



Anxiety – Breeds Anxiety



Different types of anxiety

Different Types of Anxiety

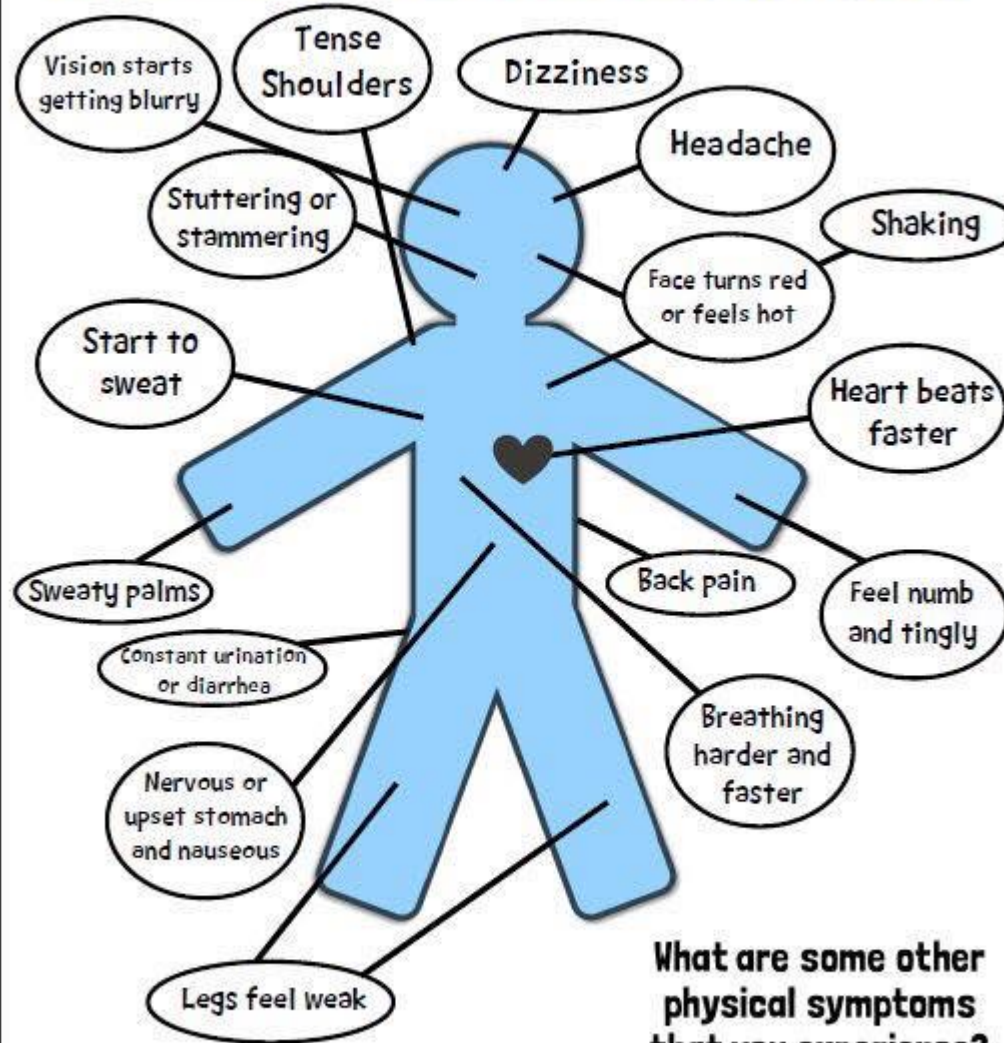
- **Generalised Anxiety [Disorder]**
- **Social Anxiety**
- **Panic**
- **Agoraphobia**
- **Separation Anxiety**
- **Selective mutism**
- **OCD includes anxieties**

Signs and symptoms of anxiety

Physical Symptoms of Anxiety

ANXIETY AND MY BODY

Color in the reactions that happen to your body when you start getting anxious.



What are some other physical symptoms that you experience?



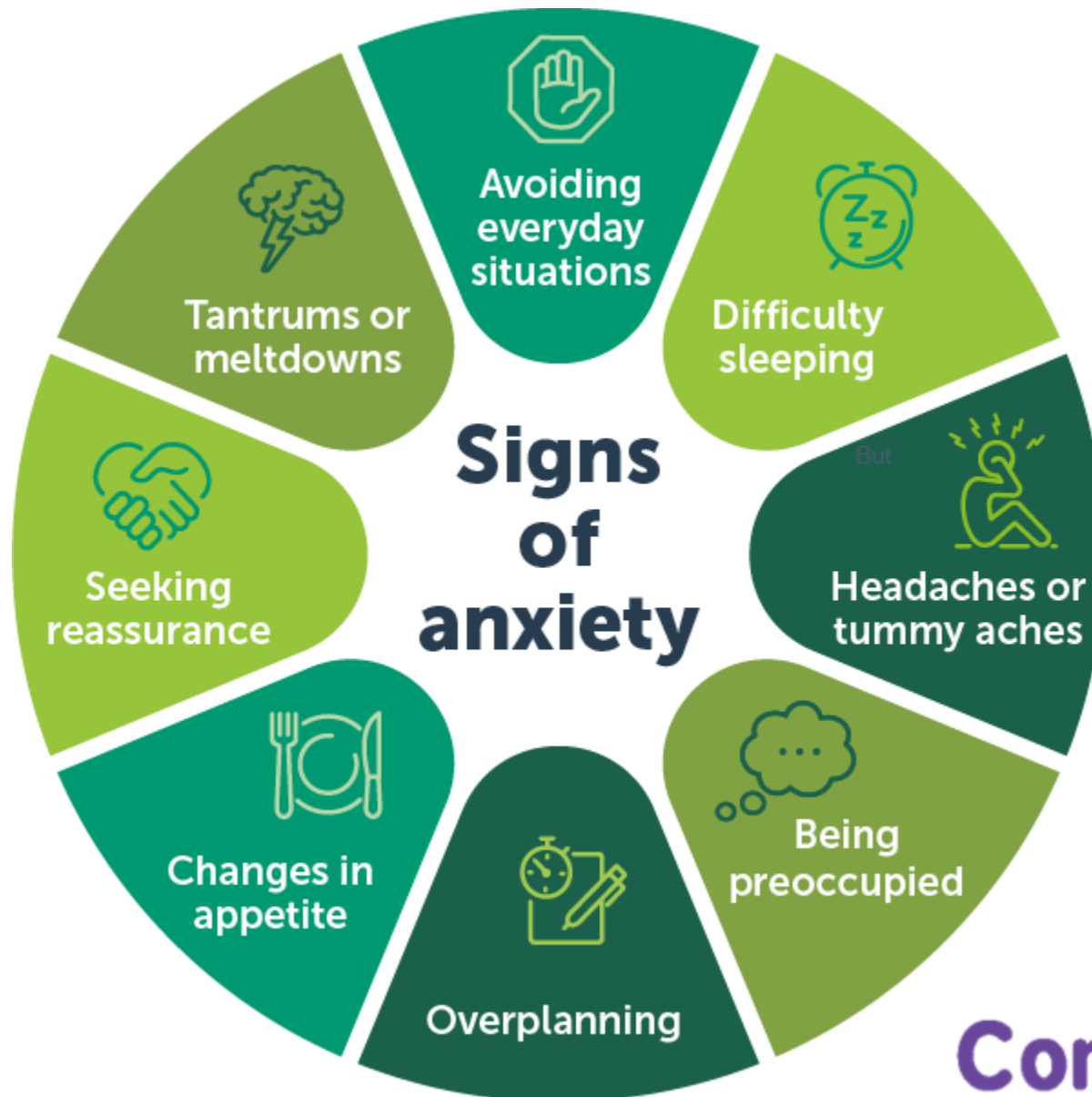
© 2018 Mylemarks LLC. All Rights Reserved.
For more resources, visit www.mylemarks.com

Connect-Ed

Mental Health Services for Schools

Psychological Symptoms of Anxiety

<https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/anxiety-primary-aged/>



Connect-Ed

Mental Health Services for Schools

ANXIETY– OTHER SIGNS TO LOOK FOR

- finding it hard to concentrate
- not sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams
- eating more or less than usual
- quickly getting angry or irritable, and being out of control during outbursts (tantrums)
- constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- feeling tense and fidgety, or using the toilet often
- always crying
- being clingy, especially in young children
- complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell
- Picking at the skin, picking hair, biting nails
- Struggling to make or keep friends
- Struggling to cope
- Lack of eye contact
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Wetting themselves



ANXIETY– THE PRESSURE COOKER OR POP AFFECT

- Children who appear to keep it together
- Don't like to draw attention
- The child who smiles – so it seems they can't be worried
- Sweet and polite
- The timid child

Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3_Ew7ejOo4&ab_channel=KidsHelpPhone

What causes anxiety?

What may cause a child to feel anxious

What can you think of that may cause a child to feel anxious?



Stressful events that may cause and continue to trigger anxiety

- frequently moving house or school
- moving between homes (e.g. separated parents)
- parents fighting or arguing
- becoming seriously ill or getting injured in an accident
- school-related issues like exams or bullying
- going to a new school
- going to school

“Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum disorders are more likely to have problems with anxiety.” *NHS*

ACES

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Primary

1. Verbal, physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Neglect

Secondary

1. Domestic Violence
2. Substance Misuse in the home
3. Family separations
4. Parent in prison
5. Family mental illness
6. Bereavement

Factors that can impact on a child's ability to regulate anxiety

Are there any additional needs present?
Has this child experienced trauma/Adverse
Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What is the child's home life like?
Have they experienced a sense of safety and
consistency?
Have they grown up with adults modelling for them how to
manage difficult emotions (co-regulating)?

What is going on in their life right now that may
impact their anxiety on a given day?

**Strategies to help my child manage
their feelings of anxiety**

Verbal reasoning is often not helpful in flight/fight/freeze response

What's wrong?



Use your words.

Why did you hurt your friend?



Calm down.

Why haven't you done your work?

What's happened?



70% of communication is **nonverbal**

Children who are dysregulated and anxious are even less able to focus on the words you say. They will instead be affected by **how you say them.**

Pay attention to your:

- Body Language and Proxemics
- Tone of voice
- **‘Matching’** emotion in your voice and body
(to show the child you understand how they feel)

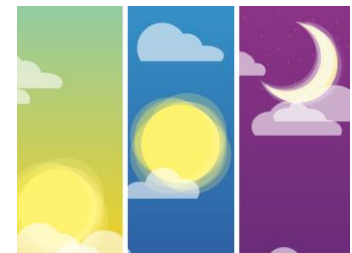


Sentence Starters for Building Emotional Safety & Relationships

Instead of....	Try this...
What's wrong?	I notice you seem upset/worried/sad/angry/annoyed right now; can you tell me more about how you feel?
Don't cry, don't be sad	You are feeling sad, that's ok and I'm here
You need to calm down right now!	I can see you're feeling angry/finding it hard to settle right now. How about we try...
Don't be angry, you'll have a turn next	I can see you are angry because you want a turn and that's OK but it's not acceptable to push
I can't talk to you now - I'm talking to ...	I can't speak with you right now, but I can see you're worried/upset and I can speak to you about it once I have finished/ in a moment

Strategies to help prevent my child from building up anxiety

- Identify the key triggers for your child (however small); these could be times of the day, certain places, transitions, specific people, specific objects, specific animals
- For example, going to their second home, going to school, separating from you, homework, going out to certain places, meeting specific people, being hungry/tired
- Identify the calming strategies that suit your child best in the different situations - trial and error, you will need several as each strategy may work sometimes and not at other times)
- Add calming and grounding strategies to your daily morning, after school and bedtime routine



Videos

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTzXFPh6CPI&ab_channel=GonNoodle%7CGetMoving



Managing the feelings of anxiety



- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and let you know when they get overwhelmed. It might help to explain these feelings are common – we all feel worried or scared sometimes.
- If there is a particular situation your child finds challenging, support them to gradually do the thing that makes them anxious. For example, if going to a crowded shopping centre makes them anxious, start with short trips to the local shops, building up to visiting a shopping centre in a quiet period.
- Make a practical plan together for coping with anxious feelings in the future, such as breathing techniques or reassuring phrases to focus on.
- Take time out to have fun together and take the focus off feelings of anxiety.

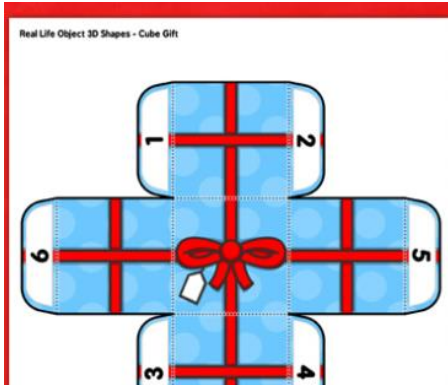


Managing the feelings of anxiety



- Help your child to have healthy routines that include enough good-quality sleep, regular outdoor exercise, eating well and avoiding excessive screen time.
- Build a sense of safety between you
- Work on a positive relationship
- Prioritise your child attending school. Attending and participating in school will help your child develop important skills and knowledge to help them learn, as well as building their social and emotional skills.
- If you are a parent or carer with anxiety, it is important to also care for your own mental health and seek help when you need it.

Coping Toolbox/kit – arts & crafts





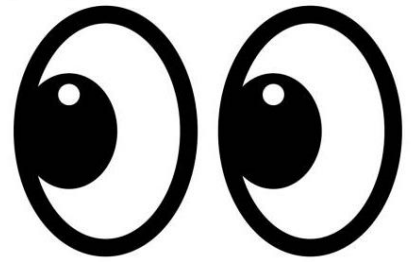
The power of touch (when it is welcomed)

- Body tapping helps ground you
- Hugs release happy hormones

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMtO0ffVO_g&ab_channel=WXYZ-TVDetroit%7CChannel7

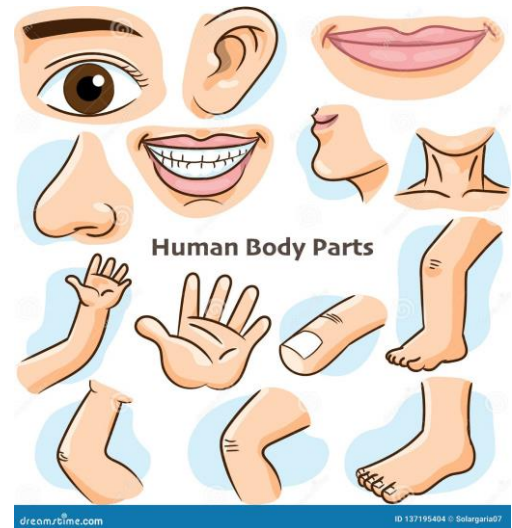
3 3 3 Strategy, ask the child to ...

3 Name 3 things they can see



3 Name 3 things they can hear

3 Move 3 parts of their body parts



Strategies for coping with Anxiety

S**TOP !** Just pause for a moment



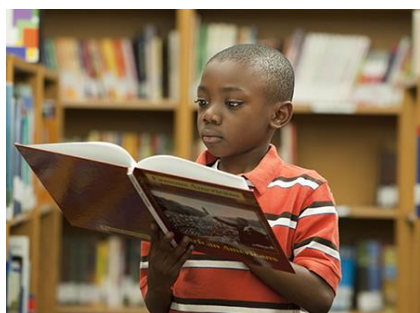
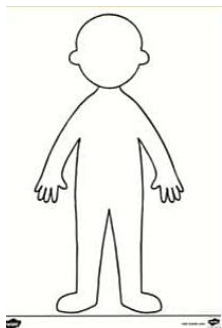
T**AKE A BREATH** Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out.

O**BSERVE** What thoughts are going through your mind right now? What are you reacting to?

P**ULL BACK - PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE** What's the bigger picture? What is another way of looking at this situation?

What advice would I give a friend? What would a trusted friend say to me right now? Is this a fact or opinion?

P**RACTISE WHAT WORKS - PROCEED** What is the best thing to do right now? Best for me, for others, for the situation?







Anxiety Scale



How do you feel right now?

Zones of regulation with additional visuals

ZONES OF REGULATION!

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Good to Go Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Anxious Excited	Mad/Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Out of Control I Need Time and Space

COPYRIGHT - JULIA WISHART, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST





Stomp, stomp, blow [like a tree in the wind]

Anxiety – Do's and Don'ts

Do listen and talk	Do listen and talk with your child
Do be	Do be honest! If You do not understand, say so
Try	Try your best to understand them
Speak	Speak calmly and quietly
Be	Be aware of your body language
Let	Let the child know you are available
Prepare	Prepare your strategies

- **Do not panic**
- **Do not shout**
- **Do not be impatient or get frustrated**
- **Do not be dismissive**

Routines and transitions

- These can be difficult for children to manage
- Worse if child tends to have anxiety
- More difficult for SEN children
- Routines help to minimise anxiety as they offer familiarity and child feels more in control

Jacob's Routine Chart

Morning	Evening
Get dressed <input type="checkbox"/>	Tidy my toys away <input type="checkbox"/>
Eat Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/>	Eat Dinner <input type="checkbox"/>
Brush Hair <input type="checkbox"/>	Take a bath <input type="checkbox"/>
Brush teeth <input type="checkbox"/>	Put on PJ's <input type="checkbox"/>
Pack my bag <input type="checkbox"/>	Brush teeth <input type="checkbox"/>
Put my shoes on <input type="checkbox"/>	Go to bed <input type="checkbox"/>

What to do

- Follow morning and bedtime routines, keep these the same in different homes
- Prepare the child in advance, e.g. night before, they can prepare their school bag/overnight bag with you, talk about how they feel and what to expect
- Explore all the things they are familiar with (e.g. teacher, friends, family, building)
- Explore all the positive and exciting things they can try (e.g. new game, new skill they learnt)

TRANSITIONS FOR CHILDREN



Turn to the person next to you and discuss



When to seek help

- You can always speak to the class teacher for help

It's a good idea to seek professional help or reassurance yourself if your child is constantly anxious and:

- it's not getting better, or is getting worse
- self-help is not working
- it's affecting their school or family life, or their friendships

NHS.UK



In summary

- Introduction to anxiety
- Different Types of anxiety
- Signs and symptoms of anxiety
- What can cause anxiety?
- Strategies to help my child manage their feelings of anxiety



Further support

- Online resources, browse the web
- <https://coolkids.org.au/login> Cool kids programme online
- Young Minds Parents Helpline: Opening times: 9.30am-4pm, Monday-Friday [0808 802 5544](tel:08088025544)
- Anxiety UK: Opening times: 10.30am-4.30pm, Monday-Friday
[03444 775 774](tel:03444775774), [07537 416 905](tel:07537416905), support@anxietyuk.org.uk
- GP

Check-Out

1. Bring up the photo of your child(ren) again, remember all their qualities and strengths.
2. Choose one idea or strategy to try from today.
3. Set an alarm on your phone to use that strategy today.



Video

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70j3xyu7OGw&ab_channel=TheMindfulnessTeacher

Parent/Carer workshop evaluation



<https://forms.office.com/e/AVA6BReFfh>



Questions and ideas