

Anxiety Presentation for parents/carers of children in Primary school setting

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Aims and objectives

What anxiety is.

How our body works when we are anxious

What is normal anxiety.

How do anxious children present

Suggestions and strategies to manage anxiety.

Where to go for further support.

What is anxiety?



“something I
feel I can’t cope
with”

Anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (such as sweating, tension or increased pulse) , due to uncertainty concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and self- doubt about one' s capacity to cope with it.

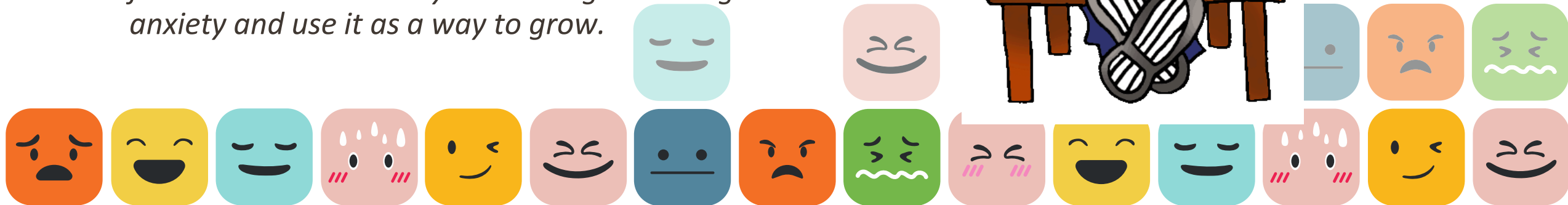
Anxiety is an emotion....

Emotions are how our brains make sense of what is going on around us and move us into action.

*Feeling anxious at times is **normal** and part of every day life especially when we experience something new.*

You can feel anxious because you care and want to do well or when you have to do something new, different or challenging.

Learning to accept that we can feel anxious from time to time is key to learning to manage anxiety and use it as a way to grow.

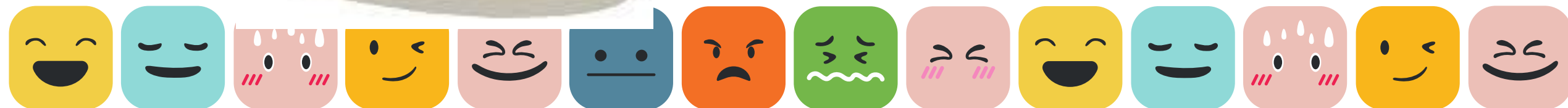


Anxiety becomes a problem when....



.. it stops your child from enjoying normal life, when it affects their school, work, family relationships, friendships and social activities.....

This is when anxiety has taken over and your child has lost control



But where does anxiety come from ?

When our ancestors went out hunting for food they sometimes came across life threatening danger. The danger would trigger an internal worry alarm system in the brain called the **Fight or Flight** response which is a defence mechanism wired into our brains to get us out of danger and stay safe.

Anxiety is a survival mechanism that still plays a role in modern times.

This defence mechanism is a good thing.
It is there to protect you!



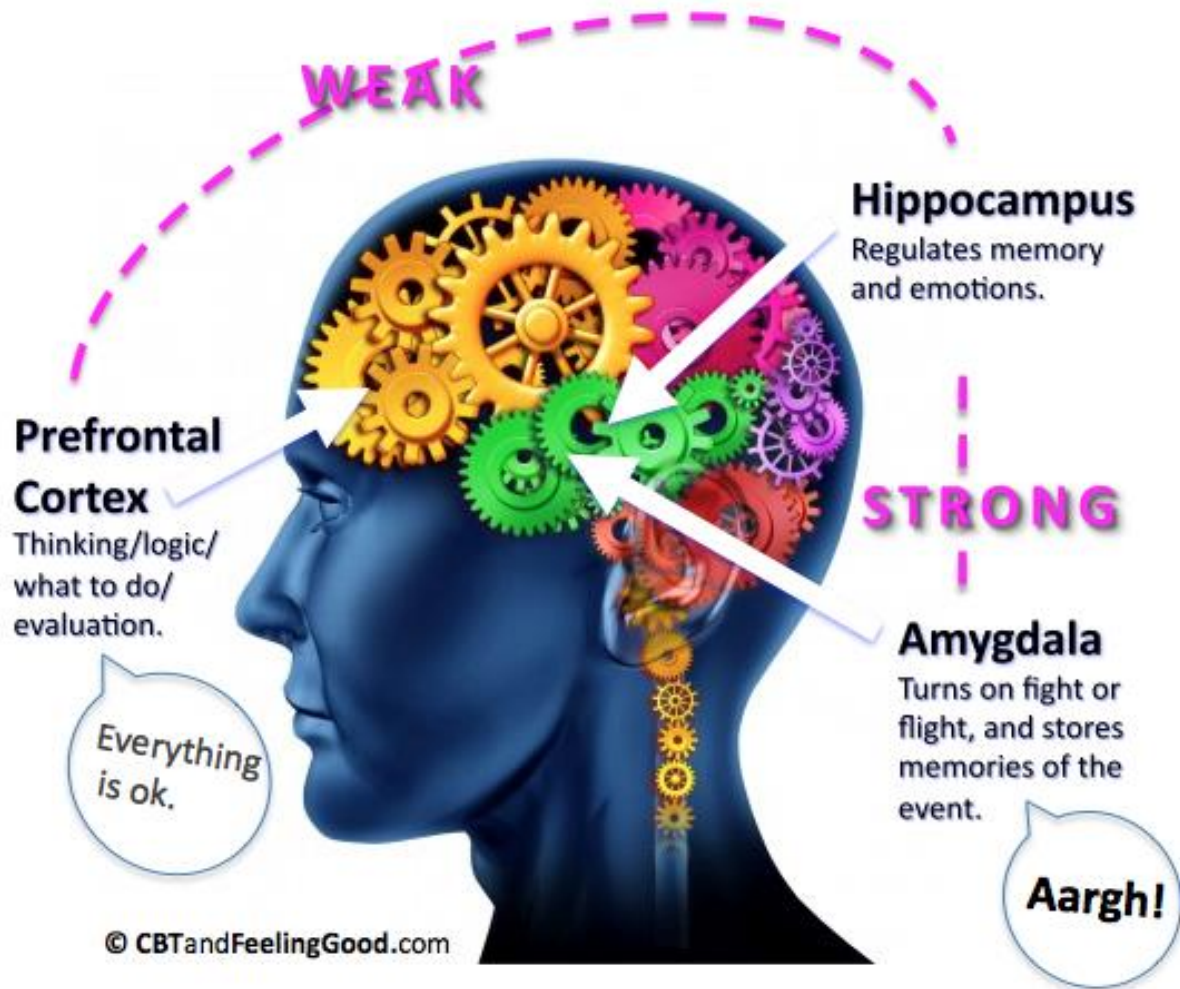
<https://cbt4panic.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-anxiety-cure-cbt4panic-fight-flight-response.png>



[Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained for Kids | Blog | Anxiety Canada](#)



How Anxiety Works:



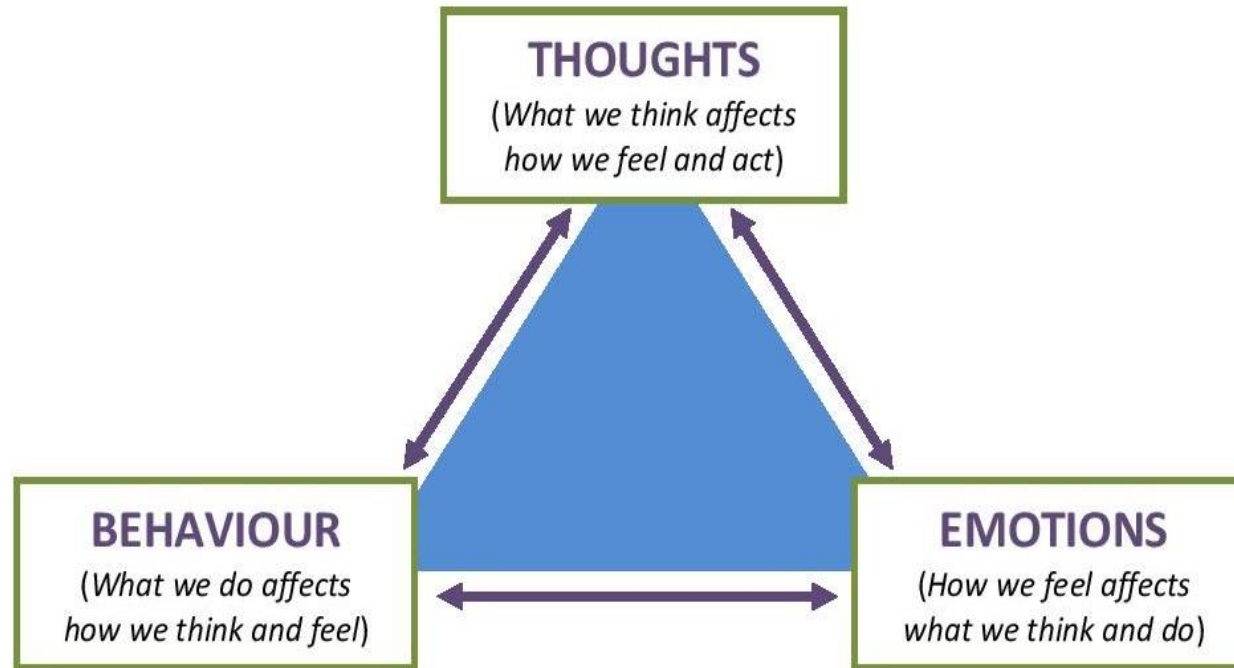
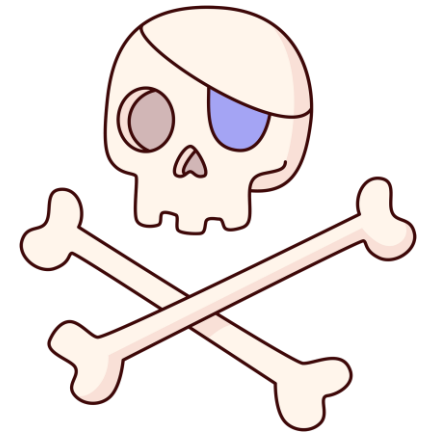
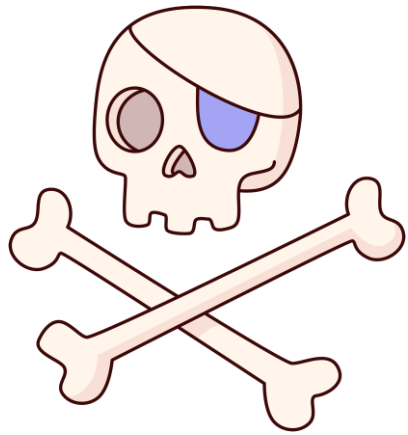
Your brain is made up of two main parts:

- **Thinking brain** (logical, rational, memory)
- **Emotional brain** (emotions, instincts)

When the worry alarm is triggered, the Emotional Brain hijacks the system and takes over making it very difficult to think straight.

It makes you act instinctively without needing to think

Vicious Circle of anxiety



How does anxiety present?

Children are often not able to verbalise that they feel anxious, but will highlight and get investigated for physical symptoms

Common physical symptoms:

Upset tummy/stomach pains

Headaches

Trembling

Shaking

Perspiring

Shortness of breath

Dizziness

Chest pain



Flushing

Feeling sick

Wanting to go to the toilet a lot

Vomiting/diarrhoea

Stiff muscles/tension

Reported sleep problems.



Additional signs that can be seen in the younger child



Might include....

Avoidance , crying, clingy,

school refusal

Easily upset, sensitive

Change in behaviour

Resistant to change

Melt downs, anger

Expecting the worst

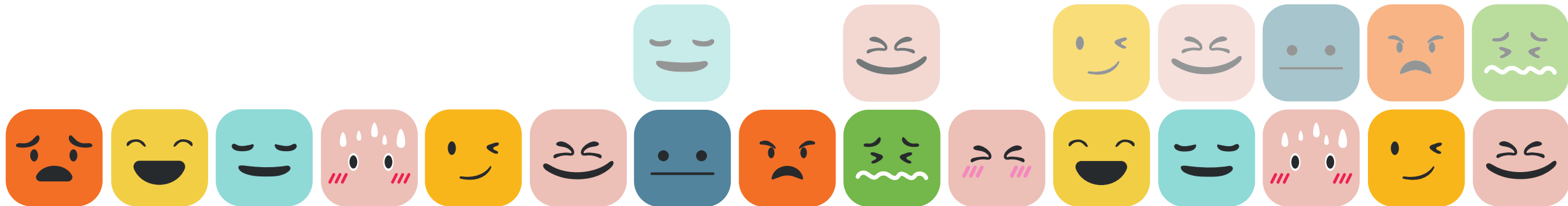
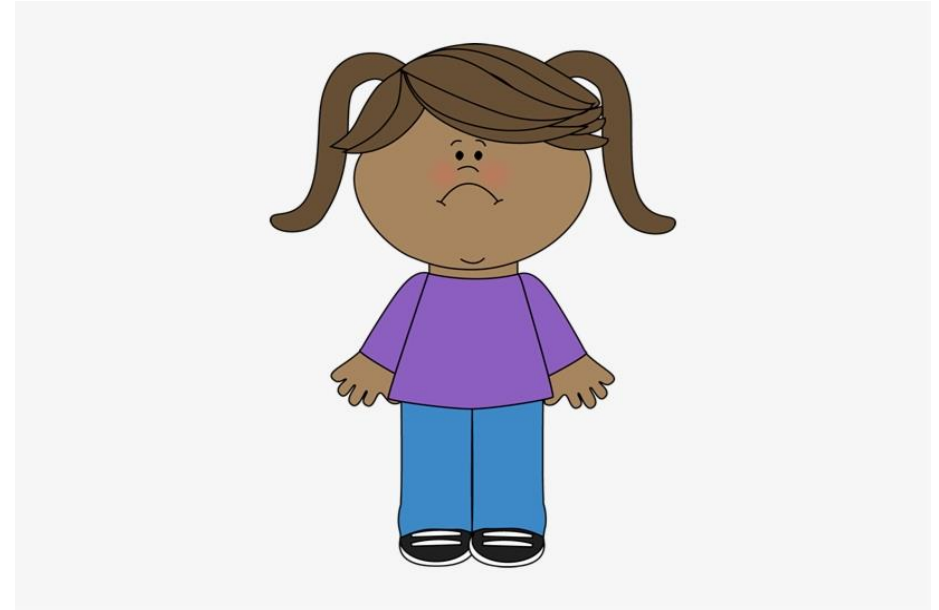
May affect sleep



But what types of anxiety do children of this age Experience?



- *Generalised anxiety*
- *Separation anxiety*
- *Phobias*
- *OCD*
- *Anxiety related to trauma*
- *Anxiety related to neurodevelopmental needs*
- *Social anxiety – in older children*
- *Health anxiety – in older children*



Possible triggers or stress factors:

- **Changes in routine-** changes to school routine, how to get to school, attending a new childminder/after school club.
- **Significant events-** births, deaths, moving house
- **Changes in relationships-** parental separation
- **Even if changes are positive or exciting, the change may feel uncomfortable and precipitate an anxious response in the child**
- **Child attachment to parents and significant others-**Anxiety as a behaviour to draw in parents/caregivers, for more care or attention



But why do some children develop anxiety?



Behavioural factors: The child's anxious behaviours may have been developed to cope with the feelings of anxiety associated with certain people, environments, or situations, such as attending school. For the younger child anxiety can become a mode of expression. Learnt behaviours from others such as care givers, also plays a key role.

Temperament: Anxious infants who struggle to self soothe or self regulate may have a predisposition to later develop anxiety disorders

Neurodiversity: Sensory sensitivity; Intolerance of uncertainty – misunderstanding other's intentions (Deliberate/accidental) ; Executive function- the ability to manage some behaviours and traits.

Genetic influence: if parents have a history of panic disorder/ anxiety/ depression, anxiety disorders in children are often seen. Tentative evidence, as a lot of behaviour will be copied or due to other factors!



What is a normal developmental fear in primary aged children?

- Fear of the dark.
- Fear of danger.
- Tests.
- Peer rejection.
- Insects.
- Animals.
- Ghosts.



- .Bad people.
- .Anticipating something bad will happen –
- .Parental separation etc.
- .Being home alone.
- .Sickness.
- .Dying.
- .School failure.
- .Peer rejection.
- .What others think of them.

The **Red** being the younger development years, and **Black** as they progress through Primary School.

Other general worries in this age group

- **Separating Fantasy and Reality-** *nightmares/ dreams seem real*
- **Managing Rules-** *'will I get told off if an adults thinks I 'm messy?'*
- **Fearing the Unknown** - *new teacher, class trip*
- **Experiencing School- Related Fears-** *speaking aloud, not finishing work*
- **Focus on Cooperation-** *more aware of others and their opinion, fragile egos get easily offended by playful taunts*
- **Fears of 'individuality'** —*fear of wanting to fit in and whilst being unique*
- **Fear of Change-** *changes with friends/ family can feel like a loss*

Okay...but what can I do to help ?



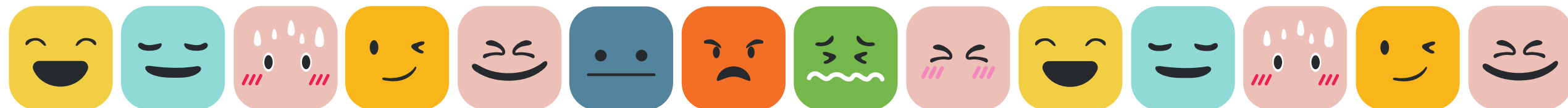
Things to avoid.....

Avoid dismissing a child's emotions: saying 'don't be scared' can lead the child to think they are wrong and bad for feeling that way

Avoid lying to avoid an emotional reaction: 'it won't hurt' when it will may lead to a sense of distrust and increase the emotional response

Avoid shaming a child for their emotions: teasing a child may lead to a sense of shame and undermines confidence...humour can be a useful distraction but not if it minimises the child's feelings.

Avoid ignoring a child's emotions: this may tell the child that their emotions are not important and limit opportunities to learn new ways of managing emotions



Emotional regulation... the basics

A good night's **sleep**- have a bedtime routine and set time for bed, avoid screens 1 hour before bed and promote quiet calm activities. Try not to talk about worries at bedtime unless you have to.

Regular healthy meals maintain blood sugars. Avoid caffeine & sugar.

Keep **active**, have lots of **fun**, **socialise with friends**

but

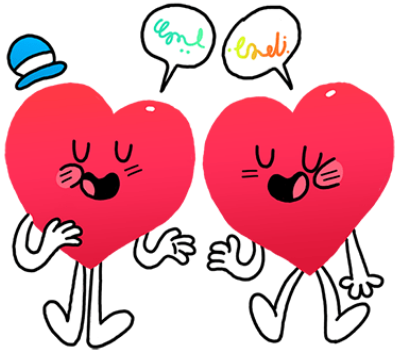
also **set time to relax** don't overschedule!

Be **available to talk** through problems and worries, remember to praise your child for effort, not just results.

Offer your child **stability and clear boundaries**, they will feel secure.

Have good **communication** with your school.

Your wellbeing is vital , get some support for yourself!



Support your child to strategize



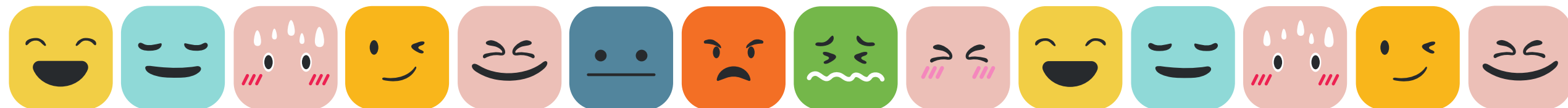
Adapted from Butler and Hope 2007

Worry Time:

- **Allow 15 minutes per day to talk about worries.** This is time together so really make the most of talking and listening about whatever worries. **There should be no interruptions**, no TV, no telephone, no sister, or brother wanting to play or have help with their homework.
- Worry Time is the time to say whatever the child wants to say about their worries, during this time mum/ dad/ guardian should listen and try and help.

There is one important rule about Worry Time:

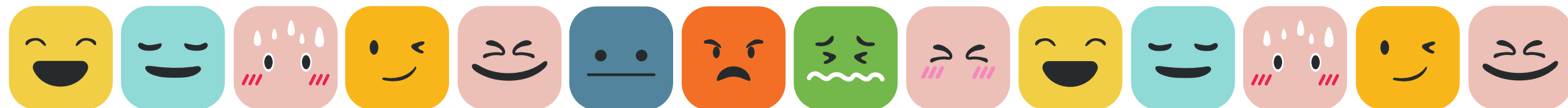
At all other times when your child feels that their head is full of worries, they must write them all down and pop them into a **WORRY BOX, A BOOK**, - ready for discussion later.




Get the child to question their anxiety thoughts

Questions to ask my thoughts and worries:

- What am I worrying about? Have I coped with this before?
- What is the proof that this thought is true or will happen? What is the evidence that this thought is not true or will not happen?
- What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
- What would a friend say about my thought?
- Am I 100% sure that this thought will happen?
- Is this a feeling or a fact?



Anxious Behaviours- graded exposure work

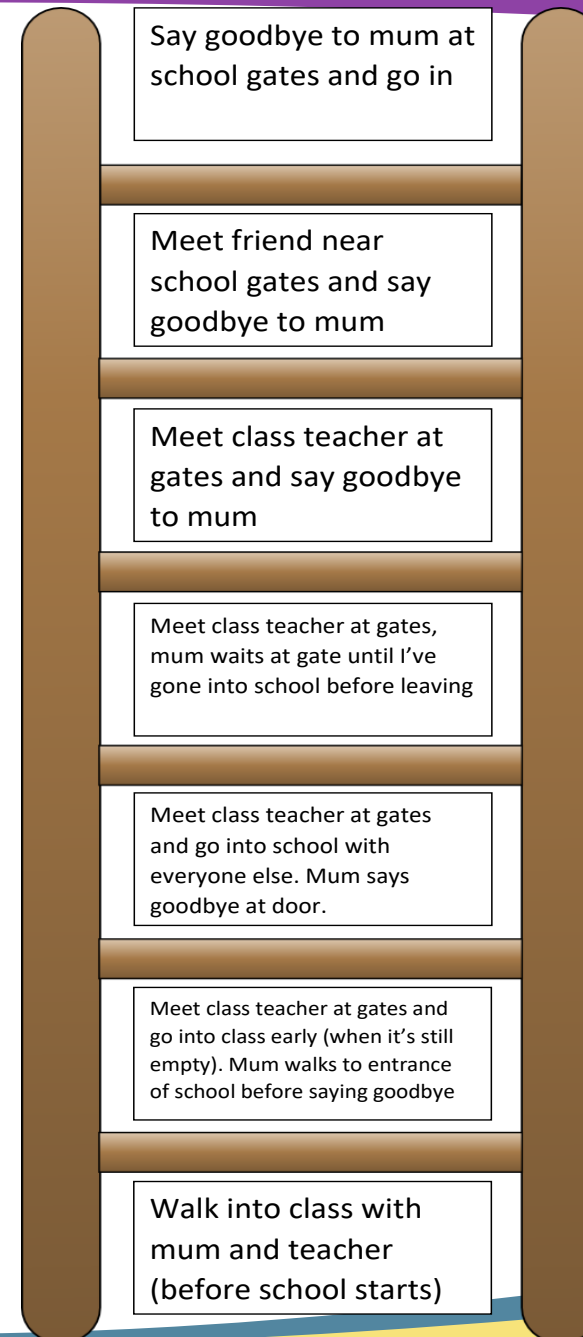
	Situation	Anxiety (0-100%)
		

Make a plan with the child to approach whatever makes them feel anxious gradually:

1. **Break the worry down** into manageable chunks – write a list of what makes them anxious and break it down into small manageable steps
2. **Create a hierarchy** or ‘ladder’ of their anxious situations and fears, by rating how anxious they would feel (0- 10) and place them in order- 10 being worst.
3. **Start with the first step and practice (repeatedly!)** until the child feels less and less anxious. Encourage the young person to think
“what did I think would happen?” e.g. the anxious thought will come true
“what actually did happen?” e.g. I coped with my worry/fear....
4. **Move onto the next step of your ladder when you are ready...** this process can take a while and you need to go at the child' s pace, if it feels too hard, how can you make it easier? Don't be scared to go back a step if you need to.
5. **Reinforce the learning with praise/rewards.**

Exposure ladder-example

Break the worry down into smaller manageable steps



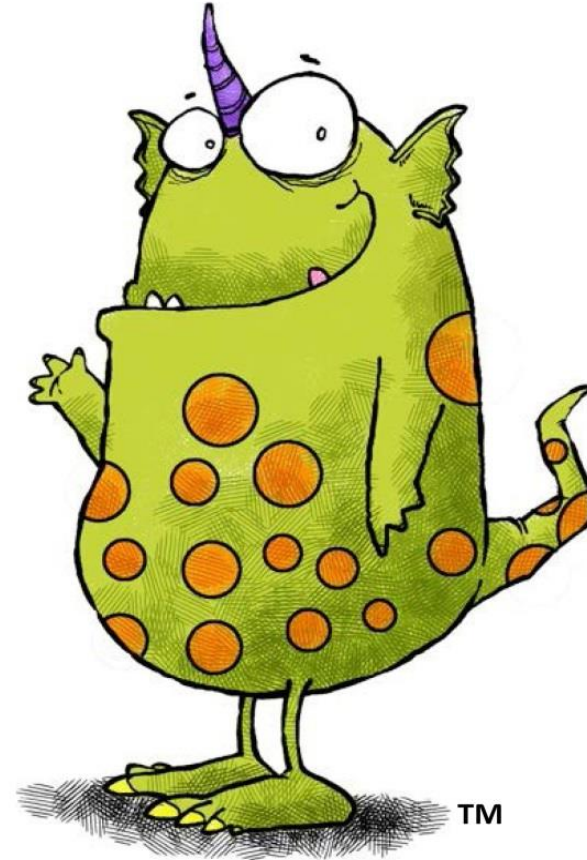
GOAL: To go into school by myself

Externalise anxiety

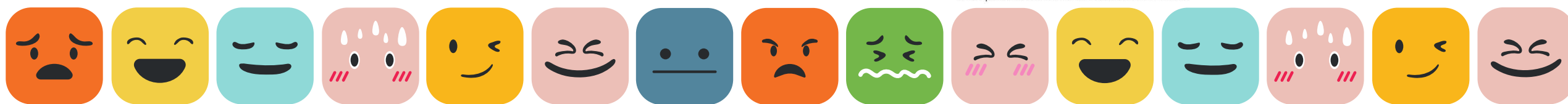
Ignoring your worries doesn't help but bringing the worry to life and talking about it like a character can help especially for younger children.

Help the child to create their own worry monster

'The worry monster lives in the old brain that is responsible for keeping us safe when we are in danger. Of course, sometimes he can get confused and a bit out of control. When that happens, we need to stop and talk some sense into him. What do we need to tell him to help him calm down?'



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Do *monster time!*

Schedule daily monster time for at 15 minutes per day ...



- Pretend to be a monster, dress up as a monster ...
- Make a monster mask and use monster noises for a tickle fight ...
- Colour in a print out of a monster ... change the picture so that the monster looks silly ...
- Make up a silly song about monsters ...
- Cut up a picture of a monster and stick it back together so it looks silly ...

The aim of this strategy is to take away the scariness of monsters









Make a checklist

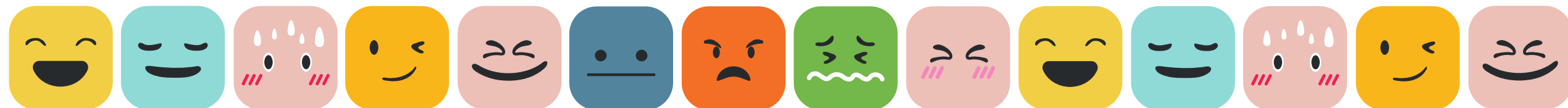
What do trained pilots do when they face an emergency? They refer to a checklist. Even with years of experience a pilot will refer to a checklist because when you are faced with danger you cannot think straight.

When we feel anxious, we can get overwhelmed and not be able to think clearly.

Drawing up a checklist of things that you know help you to calm down can be really useful.

You can try out new techniques and evaluate how helpful they are for reference.

Take a Time-out 	Color or draw 
Count to 10 	Take a deep breath 
Write in journal 	Listen to music 



Other calming strategies

Reducing worry feeling techniques:

- Breathe in for 7 ...out for 11
- 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 slow breath in and out.
- Square breathing
- Find items A, B, C etc
- **Mindfulness activities:** Breathing in as though to smell of the flower, blowing out to blow out a candle, taking a walk in nature and noticing the present moment

Think what works for you when you are stressed/anxious?

Suggestions to help challenge worries

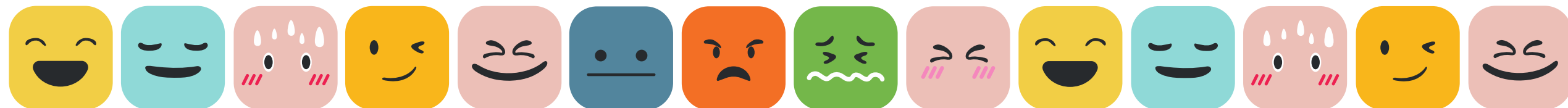
Thought diary write down worries and fears and contain to a book you can just shut and close off your worries and fears

Challenge worries Make a list of all the things that worry you. Write positive challenging statements next to your worry thoughts – “What would you tell your best friend to do”; is it a ‘fact or a belief?’

Finding solutions using the worry tree

Talk to someone – a problem shared is a problem halved.

Tell your Worry he cannot beat you!!



Other ways to help with Worries

Writing out/drawing out the worry

Anxious thoughts make us feel powerless, but talking back to anxious thoughts gives us control over the situation

- ❖ Talk back to the worry – telling the worry to **GO AWAY!** or “you are not helping me solve a problem right now”
- ❖ Use puppets/stories to create a character – super hero or self to challenge worries – make a script
- ❖ Thought stopping - saying **STOP!** This technique interrupts the anxious flow
- ❖ Put a big full stop on the end of the worry**FULL STOP!**

One positive from today was....help the young person identify a positive for the day.

STOPP Technique

STOPP

TAKE A BREATH

OBSERVE: What am I thinking?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?

PULL BACK: Put in some perspective. See the bigger picture. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this?

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS: What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for this situation?

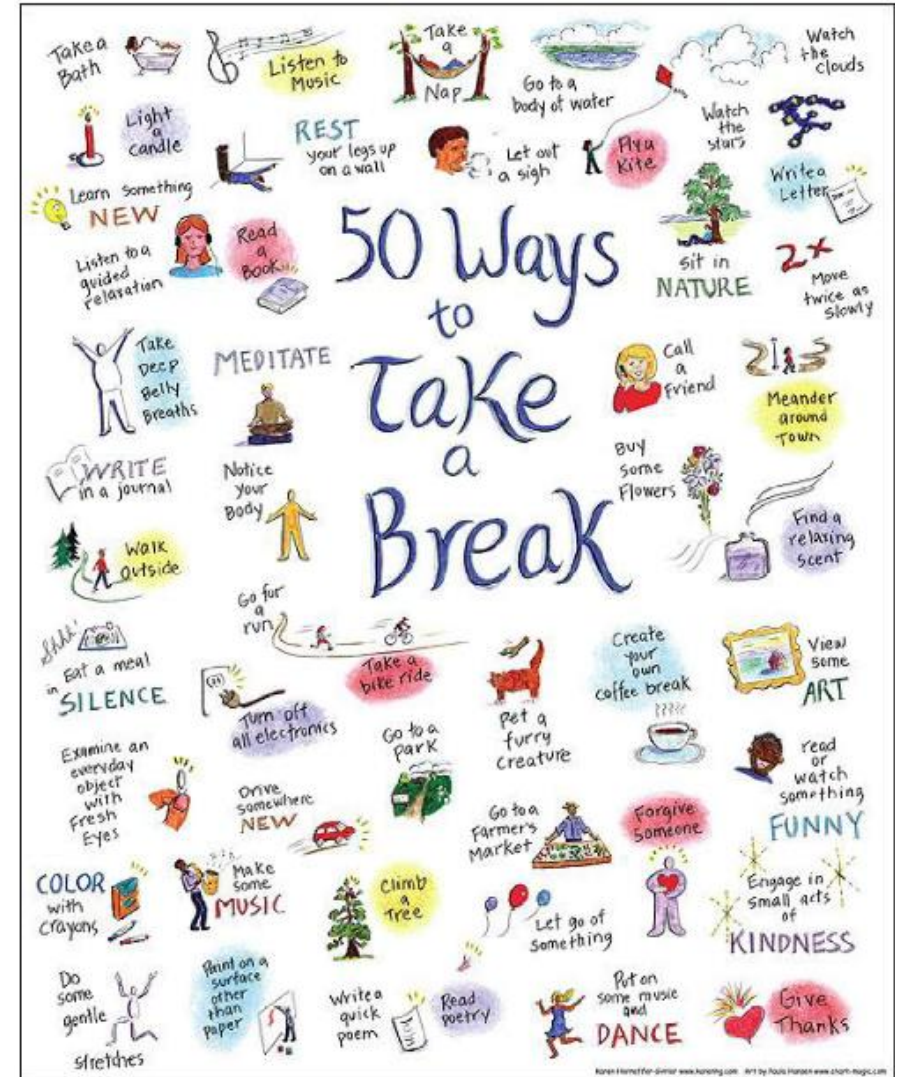


Building A Coping Kit/Toolbox

Have a list/box of strategies to use in a moment of anxiety.
This may include:

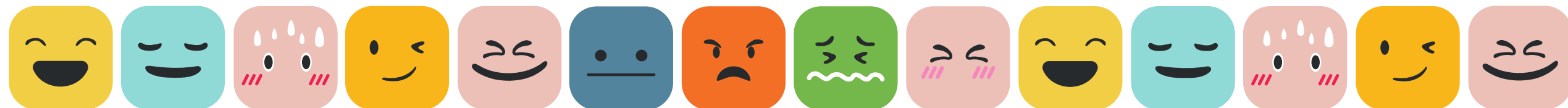
- a stress ball / a glitter ball
- Fidgets
- a calming picture / photos of fun memories or people I love
- age-appropriate instructions for deep breathing, relaxation or imagery exercise
- colouring kit
- Lego, playdough
- Some jokes or inspirational messages
- Something that smells, feels, sounds, looks nice

. The child could try to use this first before involving an adult to encourage age-appropriate independence



Summary

- *Anxiety is normal and a small amount is necessary for us all to function well.*
- *Feel the fear and face it anyway, encourage brave behaviour.*
- *Encourage helpful coping strategies : they WILL work, j ust keep practicing*
- *Have a 'calm plan' prepared. Acknowledge, contain and help problem solve*
- *Enjoy life; do not waste your life worrying it away!*
- *Know where to go to ask for help if you need it*



Surrey's emotional wellbeing and mental health service for children and young people



Please do look at our new website:
<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/> There is information for children, young people, families and carers about services, advice and resources, including how to ask for help in a crisis via the 24/7 Crisis Line.
SABP crisis line: 0300 456 83 42
CYP crisis line: 08009154644



Websites

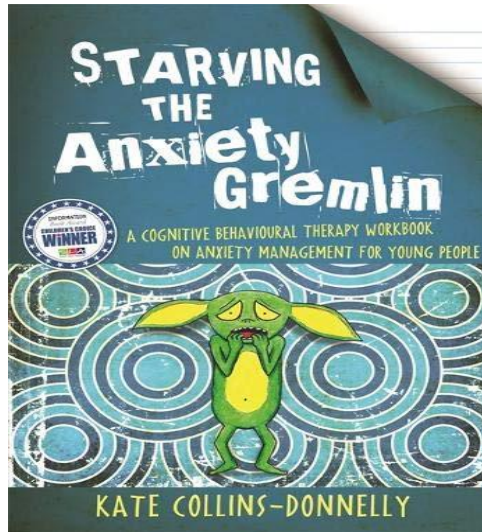
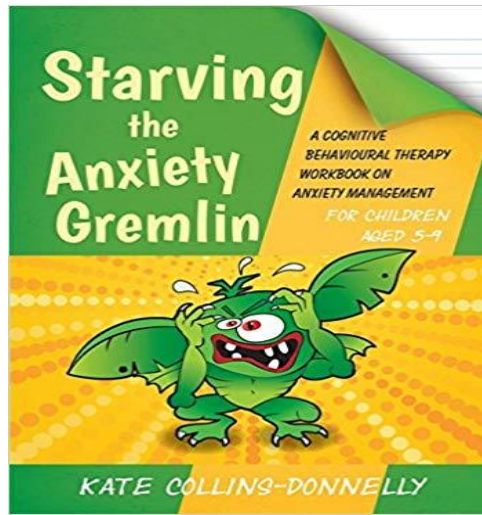


- **www.youngminds.org.uk** Young Minds is a UK national charity for children and parents of children with mental health problems. They offer information and advice to parents, young persons and professionals about mental health problems, how to cope with mental health problems, best practice, current campaigns, and information about child and adolescent mental health services.
- **www.ocdaction.org.uk** The OCD Action Help and Information Line: 08453906232 (UK) The website gives advice and information about OCD and related conditions.
- **<https://www.anxietycanada.com/>** - free online resources
- Little Parachutes Website has different story books for anxiety and other topics **<https://www.littleparachutes.com/>**

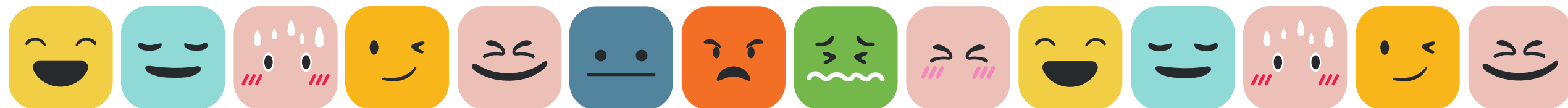


Books

- **Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries** a self- help guide to using CBT Techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- **Overcoming Your Childs Shyness and Social Anxiety** a self- help guide to CBT techniques by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts
- **Relax Kids Aladdin's Magic Carpet** by Marneta Viegas
- **The Huge bag of worries** by Virginia Ironside
- **The Whole Brain Child** by Dr Daniel Siegel
- **The Brain** by David Eagleman
- **Frazzled** By Ruby Wax
- **The Chimp Paradox** by Steve Peters



- **Helping Your anxious Child** by Rapee, Spence, Cobham and Wignall
- **What To do When You Worry Too Much – A Kids Guide To Overcoming Anxiety** By Dawn Huebner
- **What To Do When You Grumble Too Much – a Kids Guide to Overcoming Negativity** By Dawn Huebner
- **1,2,3 Magic** by Thomas Phelan book/ DVD resource which can help remind everyone of useful age appropriate strategies when trying to encourage young people to make wise choices in their behaviour especially useful for parents of children aged 2 to 12; learning to manage troublesome behaviour, encourage good behaviour, and strengthen the parent- child relationship
- **A kid's Guide to overcoming OCD** (What to do Guide for kids) by Dawn Huebner "This story guides children and their parents through the cognitive-behavioral techniques used to treat Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Revealing OCD in a whole new light, this interactive self- help book turns kids into super- sleuths who can recognize OCD' s tricks. Engaging examples, activities, and step- by- step instructions help children master the skills needed to break free from the sticky thoughts and urges of OCD, and live happier lives. This is a complete resource for educating, motivating, and empowering children to work toward change".



Resources for Parents

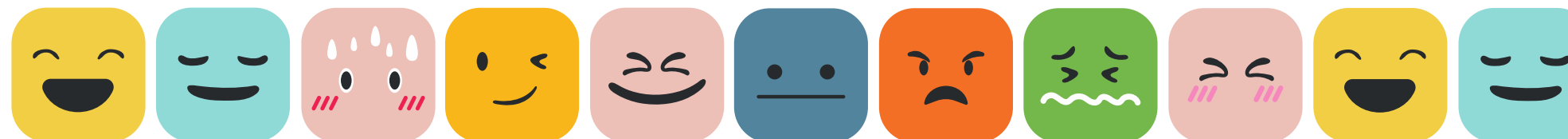
- **Cruse Bereavement care Helpline:** 0808 808 1677 **Website:** <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
- **Mind Matters Surrey IAPT** (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) is a talking therapy service for adults (18+) registered with a GP in Surrey. They provide quick and easy access to talking therapies, <https://www.mindmattersnhs.co.uk/>
- **Samaritan helpline** - Whatever you're going through, samaritans will face it with you. Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 for free <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- [Parenting courses and advice - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/)
- [Resources and information for parents :: Mindworks Surrey \(mindworks-surrey.org\)](https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/)
- [Groups for parents/carers :: Mindworks Surrey \(mindworks-surrey.org\)](https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/)

- You may want to consider accessing the Family Learning courses available. You can check different dates and courses on the website [Find an adult learning course - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/)
- Woking Family centre also run some parenting workshops:
 - [The Parenting Puzzle.pdf \(woking.gov.uk\)](https://www.woking.gov.uk/)
 - [Parenting and Family workshops \(woking.gov.uk\)](https://www.woking.gov.uk/)
- [Parents Wellbeing Service \(PWS\) - Surrey | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/) The Parent Wellbeing Service offers support to parents or carers whose children are experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing such as anxiety, depression, stress, self-harm and eating disorders. They accept self-referrals and school referrals.
- [Parent Empowerment Around Anxiety course | Learning Space](https://www.learning-space.org.uk/)



PARENT WELLBEING SERVICE

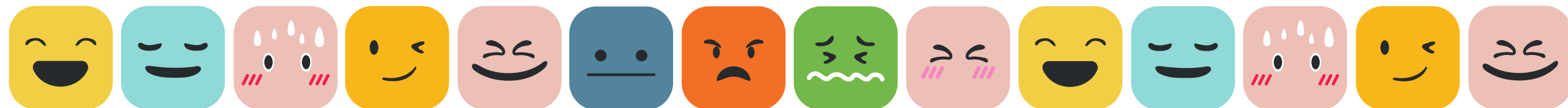
Our partnership is made up of 12 different charities and organisations working across Surrey. All coming together to support children, young people, and their families to thrive.



Further resources and videos:

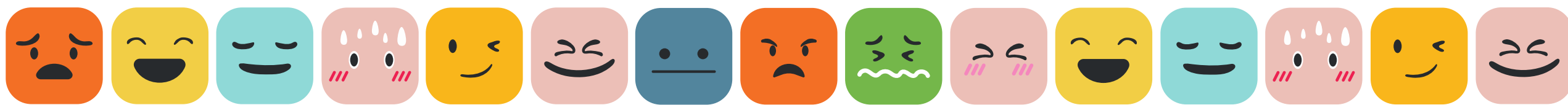
Anxiety

- **YMCA webinars**
 - [Anxiety in Children: Strategies for Parents and Carers - YouTube](#)
 - [Anxiety in Children: Strategies for Staff - YouTube](#)
 - [Strategies to keep calm with your child webinar - YouTube](#)
- **Short videos**
 - [VI DEO: 5 Simple Strategies for Managing Anxiety - Dr Pooky Knightsmith](#)
 - [VI DEO: Anxiety - Find What Feels Safe - Dr Pooky Knightsmith](#)
- **Window of tolerance** [EMOTIONAL REGULATION | Window of Tolerance Explained - YouTube](#)
- **Coregulation** [6 Steps to Effective Co-Regulation – YouTube](#)
- **Sensory regulation** [Autism & ADHD: Sensory Regulation in the Classroom - Creative Education](#)
- **Explore clubs and interest**, things they enjoy and will succeed in. Are there any clubs they could join? In school or the community. The Family Information Service website might be good to explore the local offer [Family Information Service - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#) you can also call and they can help you.
- **Resources on school avoidance:**
 - online training - [Find an adult learning course - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)
 - Local offer [Emotionally Based School Non- Attendance \(EBSNA\) | Surrey Local Offer](#)
 - Parents padlet [EBSNA Resources for Parents \(padlet.com\)](#)
 - [I am a parent/family member/carer : : Mindworks Surrey \(mindworks-surrey.org\)](#)
 - Family Voice have an EBSNA group for parents. This is a Surrey wide group. Please ask parents to email lucy.y@familyvoicesurrey for more information
 - [Not Fine in School - School Refusal, School Attendance](#)

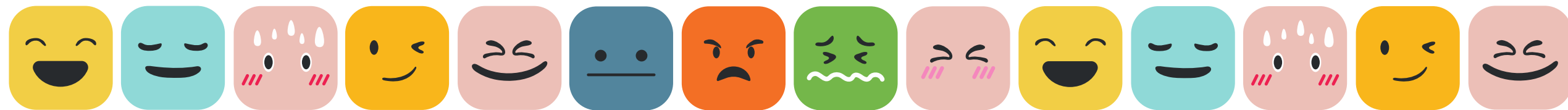


If you could spend a couple of minutes to answer these 5 short questions to provide feedback, I would be very grateful... 😊
many thanks

Primary Mental Health Training Feedback



THANK
YOU!!



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional
wellbeing and mental health service



Find out more at
mindworks-surrey.org

