

Managing worries and anxious feelings

Parent support pack



Aims and goals:

- To understand what worries are how they can impact your child
- To understand what keeps worry going
- Show you how to help your child using CBT and Mindfulness techniques
- How you can help in other ways
- Helpful resources and websites

I don't know who I am?

My sibling is very ill

people at school call me weird

Mum and dad are arguing lots

I had an argument with my best friend

I am a bad friend

what if i dont pass my exams?

I am not clever

I am not good enough



What are worries?

Childhood can be challenging for many young people as they face many new or unfamiliar situations and feeling worried and anxious about these things is a normal emotion.

Worries can be formed around many things including relationships or bullying, school pressure, stress at home and illness.

Sometimes the young person needs support to recognise their emotions and understand how they can cope better with worries.

Are worries affecting your young person?

- Enjoying hobbies
- Family relationships
- Socialising
- Sleeping
- School work
- Appetite

Is the young person complaining of physical symptoms?

These could be things like:

- Upset stomach
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Pounding heart

What causes worries and anxieties?

Worries usually occur as a result of experiencing a challenging life event such as changing school, moving house, making new friends or taking exams. However, worries can also often have no identifiable trigger.

Worries will often manifest as behaviours, for example, a young person may feel anxious and avoid school if they are experiencing bullying. Worry is the body's natural response to a perceived threat.

When we are faced with danger our bodies release adrenaline into the bloodstream, increasing our heart rate and breathing. This then leads to blood and oxygen to be pumped around the body to our muscles which enables us to 'fight or flight'.

As well as being useful to escape danger, this reaction is also really beneficial when competing in sporting events, completing exams or performing in front of others.

However our brains can often misinterpret everyday situations which we should not be afraid of as a threat and this falsely activates fight or flight mode, causing us to become worried in situations that others might not be.

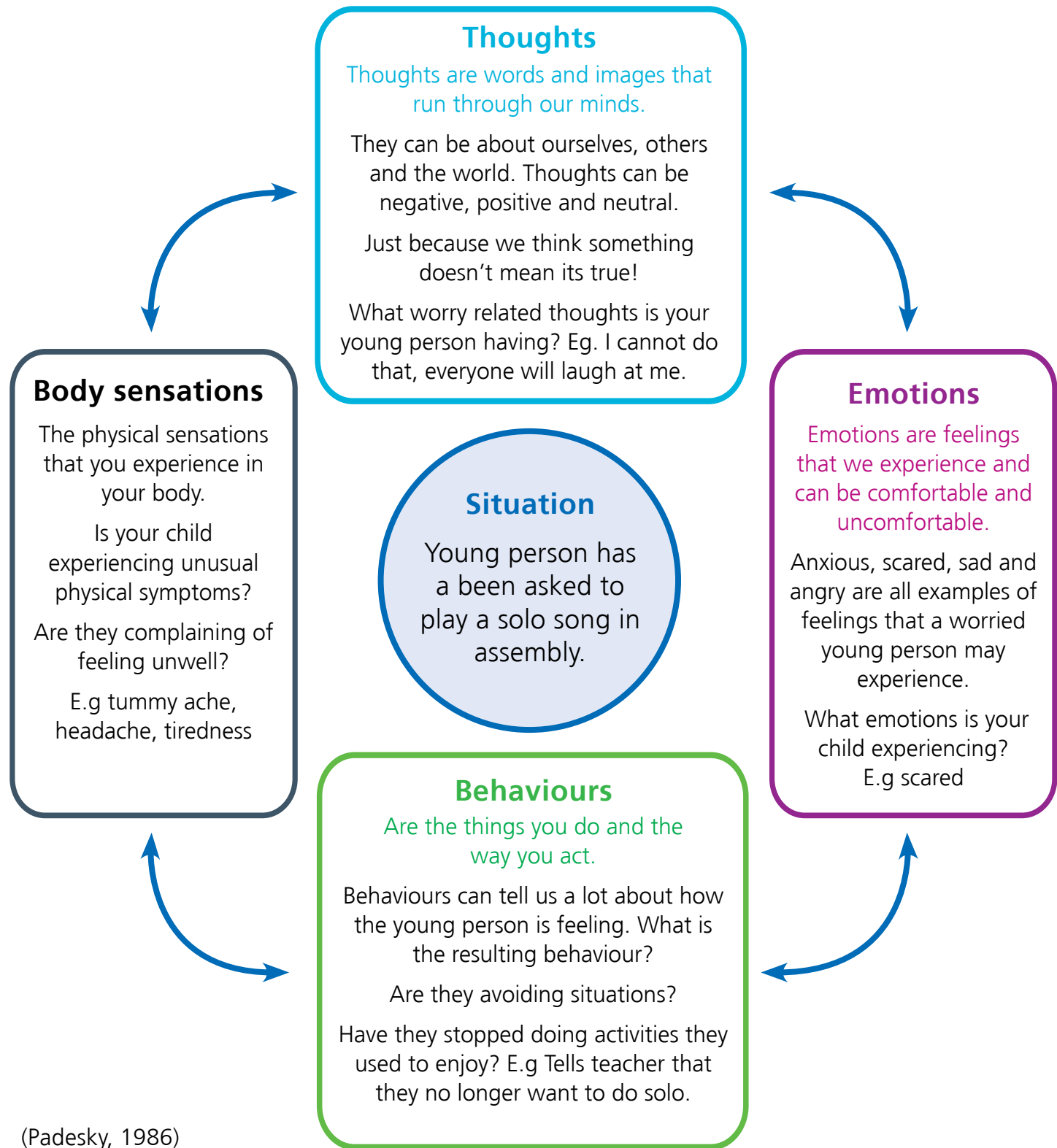
Understanding why your child is worried and what is keeping them worried can be a big help.



What keeps the worry going?

In sessions we use the **five area model**, which is a Cognitive Behavioural Model to understand and explain to the young person why they are feeling worried and what they need to do to break the cycle. Helping your child to understand their thoughts, feelings, behaviours and body sensations will help them to recognise the viscous cycle of worry.

The tools they will learn either in sessions or later on in this workbook could help them to break the viscous cycle of worry or change any unhelpful worry related thoughts and behaviours. Please see the example below.



(Padesky, 1986)

In order to support your child, we use evidence based interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Psycho education

Psychoeducation helps young people to become knowledgeable about the difficulty they are experiencing. Worry psycho education helps young people to understand and recognise their worries.

If your child receives an intervention from MHST or CAMHS they will receive psychoeducation to help them understand what they are going through and that experiencing periods of worry is normal.

Coping Strategies and Healthy Living

If your child receives an intervention we will focus on identifying helpful coping strategies to help manage worries, build resilience and improve their mood and general wellbeing. Therefore, it is important that we learn effective ways of coping to build our resilience and help us manage difficult feelings.

The workshop will focus on identifying helpful coping strategies and how to live a healthy life day to day in order to maintain emotional wellbeing, build on resilience and improve mood. The types of coping strategies will use are use are shown later on in this workbook.



‘What if’ v ‘Here and Now’ worries

Learning the difference between ‘ here and now’ worries and worries that may never happen can help your child feel less anxious about things that are out of their control.

For example, I am worried I didn’t study enough for my test and might fail or I’ve forgotten to do my homework.

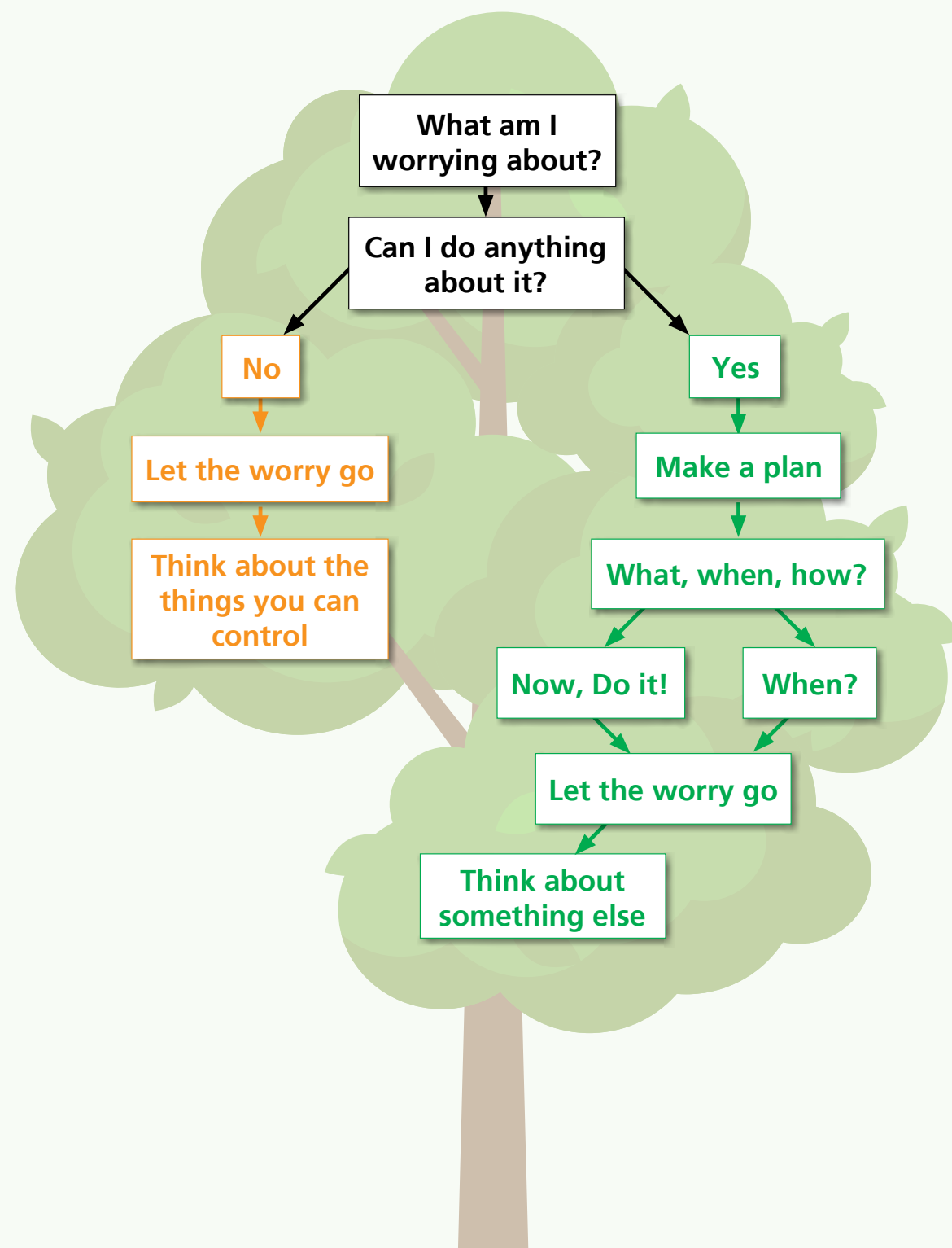
‘What if’ worries are worries that we cannot control.
For example what if it rains?, What if I get sick?,
What if my parents split up?

If receiving an intervention, we will work through this with your young person using the worry tree below.

Managing worries

Your child or young person can learn how to manage their worries effectively using the worry tree. The worry tree guides your child or young person through the process of identifying what kind of worry they have and what to do about it.

Through using the worry tree, they will learn that 'here and now' worries can be solved by using problem solving and making a plan of action, and 'what if' worries can be managed by using distraction techniques and scheduling worry time.



Problem solving

As part of any intervention, your child will learn problem solving skills. Using these skills regularly will help your child or young person to take action in their lives, reach their goals, help them cope with stressful life experiences and proactively solve problems.

Problem solving techniques are useful if your child or young person is worrying about 'here and now' issues that could have a solution eg. "I don't know my spellings so I will fail the test".

If your child or young person has a 'here and now' problem, this could feel overwhelming.

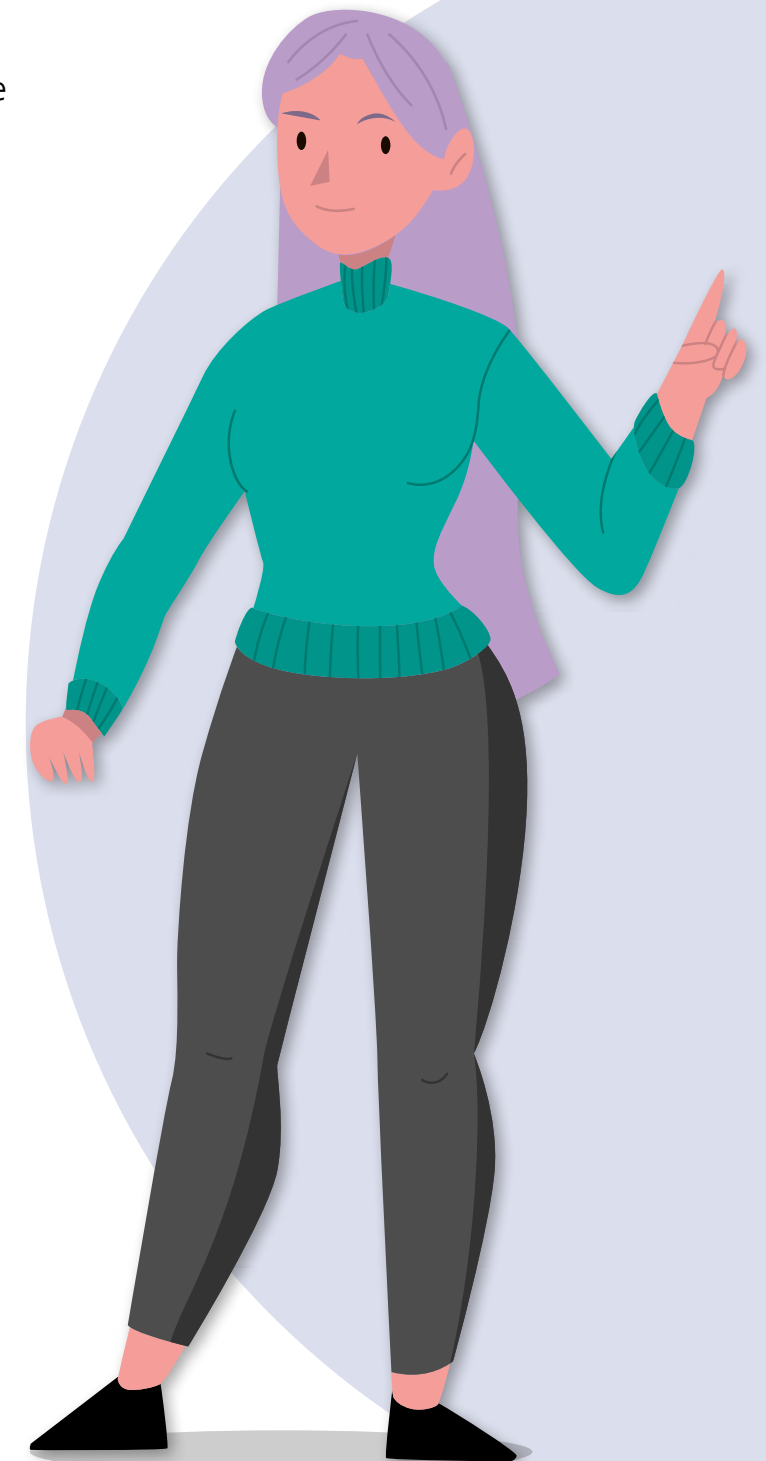
By breaking down the resolution into small steps, the problem seems more manageable and can be solved.

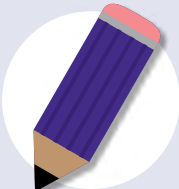
1. Identifying the problem.
2. Identifying possible solutions.
3. Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of potential solutions.
4. Selecting a solution.
5. Planning how to implement the solution.
6. Carrying out the solution.
7. Review.

Your child or young person may find it hard to think of potential solutions.

Remind them that **ANY** idea is fine at this stage, even if it is clearly very silly.

If a solution doesn't work to solve the problem, remain positive and remind your child that they have lots of other ideas already so they can try another one.





Problem solving

The way that we think about a situation can also impact on our mood. Over thinking can contribute to low mood so learning how to problem solve can be helpful with avoiding this.

It can become really overwhelming when we have a lot to do and don't know where to start, particularly when we are already feeling low. This is why we use a step by step approach to solving problems

What is the problem?

Can you think of 4 things that you could do to deal with this problem?
(no matter how helpful or silly!)

Now that we have some options, we need to work out which is the best solution

Solutuons	Good things	Bad things

Which solution will you choose?

Think about which has more good than bad, which seems the easiest and which you think will solve the problem the best.

Worry time

Your child or young person may be worrying about hypothetical future scenarios ('what if' worries) eg. "What if the car crashes on the way to school?" In this case worry time is a more suitable strategy.

Worry time involves you child or young person 'catching' their worries throughout the day and writing them down to deal with later. They then have a specific time set aside for worrying.

For example, between 6pm and 6:20pm they will get out their daily worries and worry about them for 20 minutes. Stick to any planned worry time and remind your child or young person when it starts and ends.

They may want some support during their worry time to discuss their worries.

Catching their worries

Outside of worry time, remind them to save their worries for later.

You or they could write it down and put it in their worryloper, worry jar or use an app such as 'Worry Time by Reach out' or 'Worry Tree'.



Worry time

If we worried all the time, it can overwhelm us and stop us from doing what we need to do. To try to help this, we can schedule time in our day to worry, rather than worrying all the time.

See if you can find some worry time in your day.

1

Plan your time to worry

When we have lots of worries and they impact our day it can overwhelm us. Setting a worry time will give you space each day to think about all of your worries. The more you use worry time, the less your worries will impact you throughout the day.

2

Set a time to worry

Decide a time of day that you can set aside and focus on your worries without being distracted. The more you use your worry time the less you will need it as you will get better and better at managing your worries.

3

Write down and keep a log of your worries

Keep track of the things that you are worrying about during the day by writing them down so you can think about them later.

4

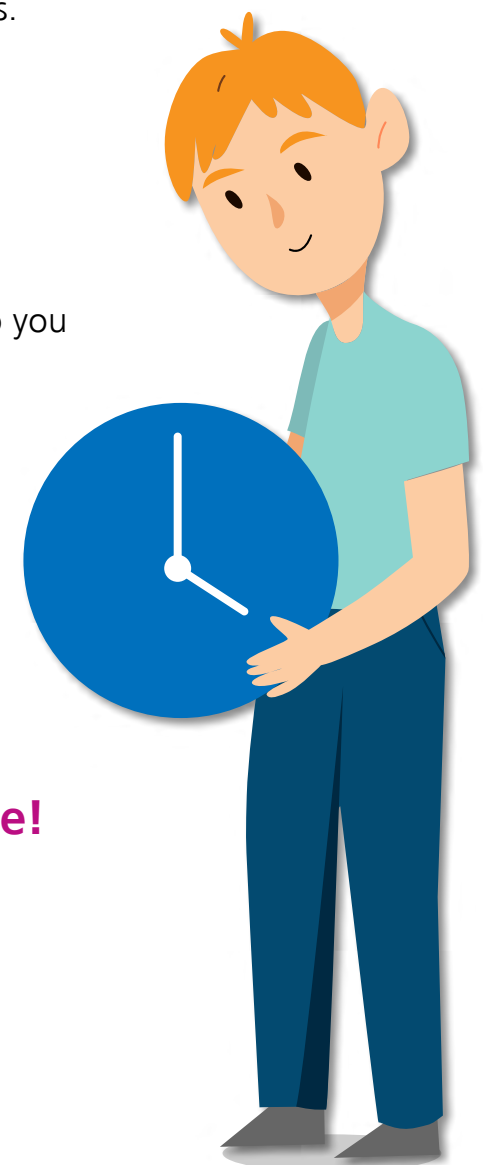
Refocus your mind

Once you have written down your worry it is important to try not to think about it. Try to distract yourself by doing something you enjoy or something that will keep you busy.

5

Take your worries to worry time!

Take your worry list into worry time.



Grounding and distraction

The following activities work well for grounding and distraction

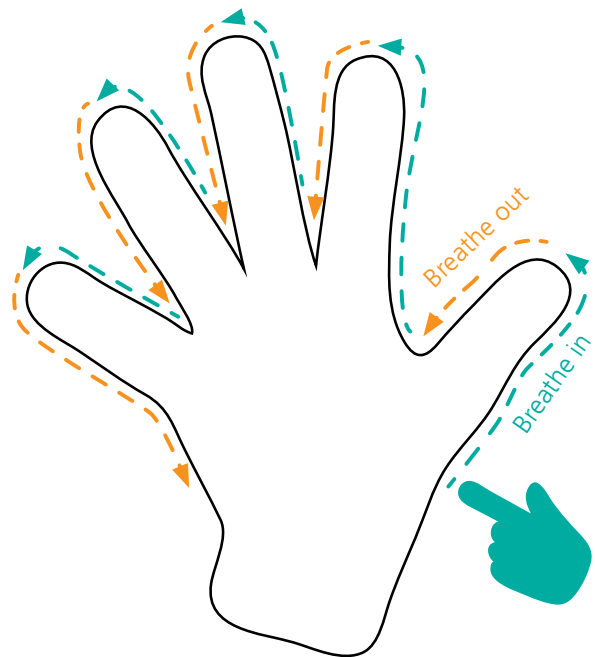
Grounding

Grounding is an exercise to focus on our senses.

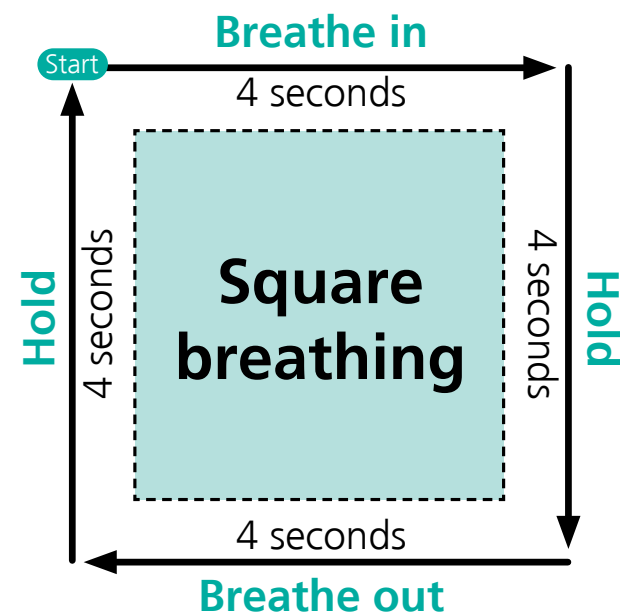
-  5 things I can see
-  4 things I can hear
-  3 things I can touch
-  2 things I can smell
-  1 thing I can taste



Finger breathing



Square breathing



How can you help?

Positive reinforcement

Celebrating success is crucial when children or young people are making positive changes in their lives.

Discuss with your child how they would like to be rewarded for their 'brave behaviour' and success when they make progress (or even when they try something new and fail).

Rewards don't have to be very big. For example, they could have their favourite food for tea. Rewards can also be agreed with school so that success is celebrated in all areas of life.

Practical support

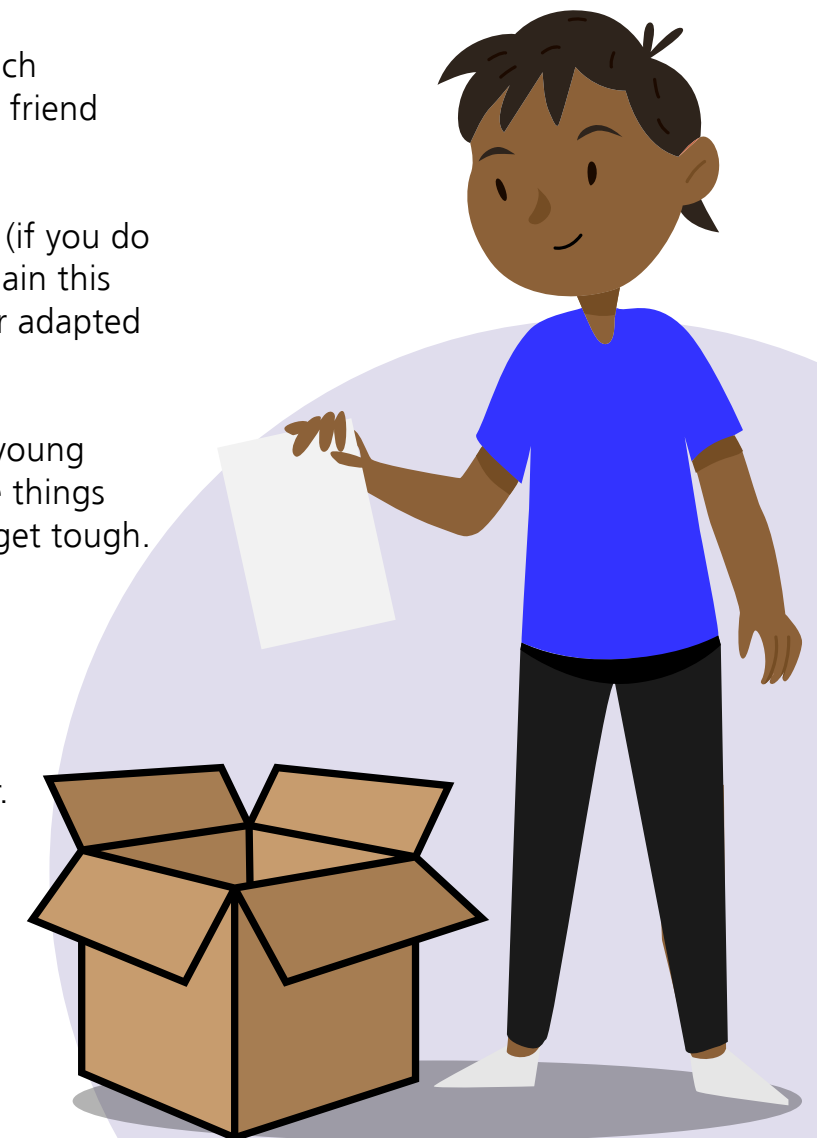
Your child will have lots of new strategies to practice. It is important to set your child to set activities and goals that are realistic and achievable. However, they may need some extra support so that they can complete these activities successfully.

For example, joining a club or group which requires transportation or going to see a friend that requires a bus fare.

If you are unable to provide this support (if you do not have adequate finances), please explain this to your child and negotiate a different or adapted activity.

We also recommend that every child or young person has a self soothe box to keep the things that make them feel better when times get tough.

The box and what is in it do not have to be expensive. It can be a shoe box that can be decorated and have small items or prompts to remind your child what they should try to make them feel better.



A note on safety behaviours and brave behaviour

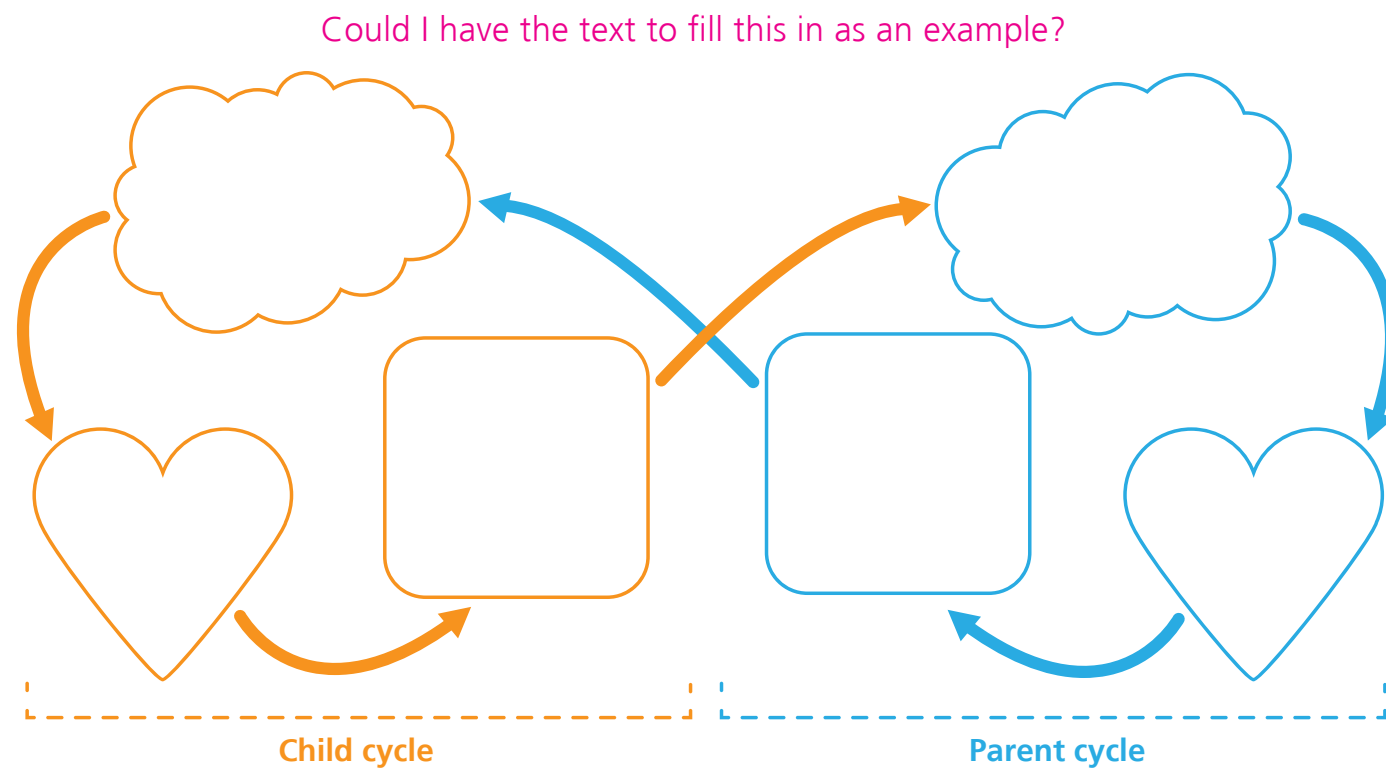
As parents it is very difficult to see our children in distress and we want to do things to help them.

However, when we try and help our children or young people with worries, it is easy to feed into the worry and anxiety without realising we are doing it.

For example, a child is scared of monsters at night time so the parent gives the child 'monster spray' to get rid of the monsters. This is safety behaviour because, although it may work in the short term, the child becomes reliant on the 'monster spray' rather than building confidence and learning that they can manage the anxiety.

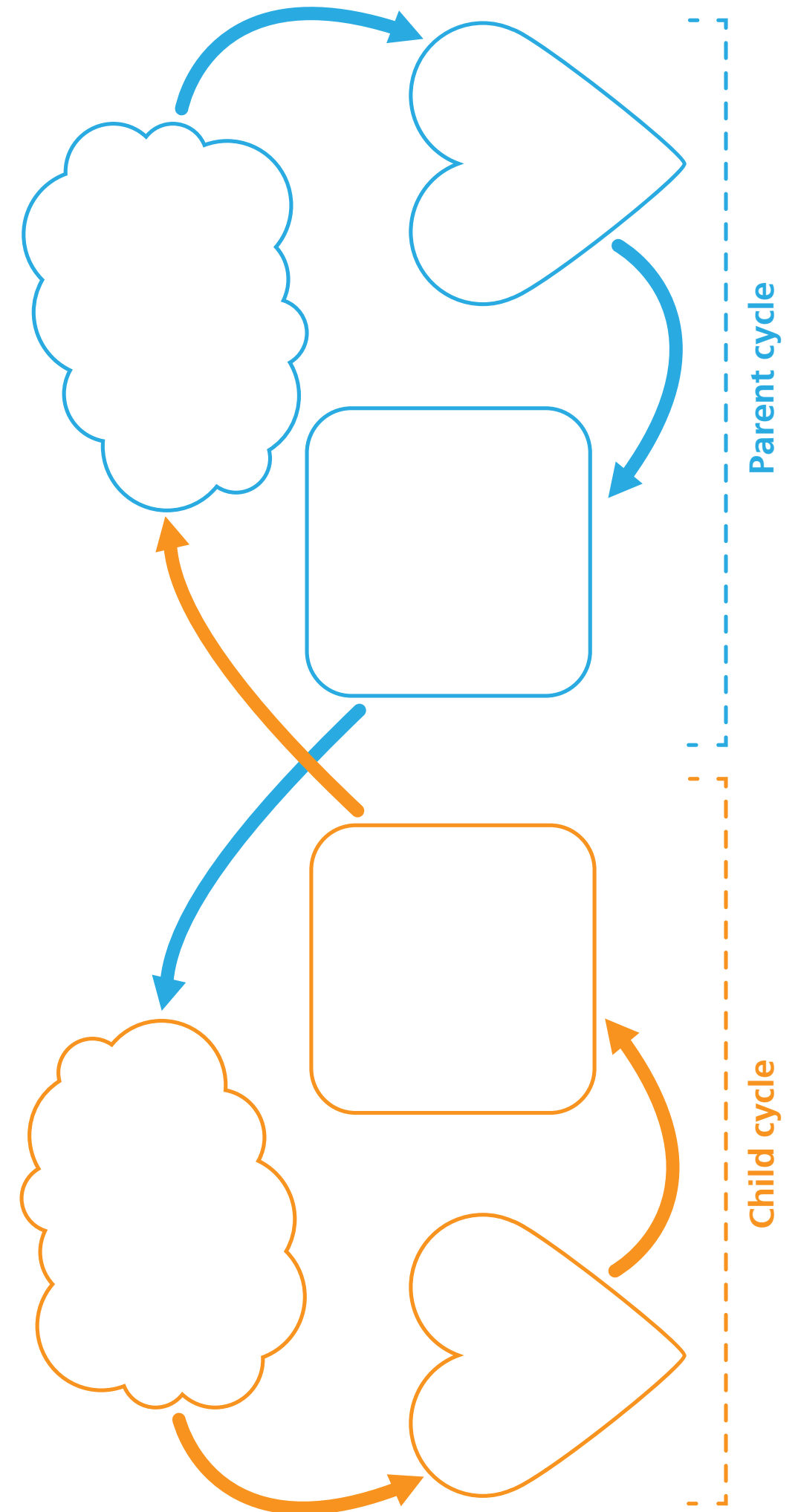
So, we challenge you to recognise the safety behaviours that you are unintentionally feeding and instead encourage brave behaviour. Encourage your child to 'have a go' and celebrate the effort regardless of success or failure.

Here is an example:



Use the figure of eight diagram on the next page to reflect on your reactions to your young person's worry.

Your figure of eight diagram



Additional resources

Here is a list of books which could be used to support your child with worry, these are ideas not recommendations.

What to do when you worry too much by Dawn Huebner

A CBT Resource Book for your child to provide them with additional strategies to manage their worry.

The huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside

A fictional story about how one girl learns to let go of her worries.

No Worries by Katie Abbey

A mindfulness activity book, helping children use mindfulness to tackle anxious thoughts.

Hello Happy by Stephanie Clarkson

A mindfulness activity book, with the focus on how to deal with our emotions.

Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (for parents) by Cathy Creswell

A great resource for parents which talks through many different strategies you can put in place at home to manage their worry and provides step by step guidance and case studies on how to do this.

Useful websites and numbers



Mental Health Crisis Response Team

01744 415 640

24 hours a day
seven days a week.

24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line

Freephone 0800 051 1508

24 hours a day
seven days a week.

Text Support

Text REACH to 85258

24 hours a day
seven days a week.

HOPELINE247
0800 068 41 41

Are you, or is a young person you know, not coping with life?

For confidential suicide prevention advice contact **HOPELINE247**.

Call: **0800 068 41 41**
Text: **07860 039 961**

www.papyrus-uk.org

THE MIX
Essential support for under 25s

Essential support for under 25s. Get advice about relationships, drugs, mental health, money and jobs.

0808 808 4994
4pm to 11pm Monday to Friday

One to one chat and message, visit
www.themix.org.uk

LISTENING EAR
someone to talk to

A charity to help those who've been bereaved, suffered loss or experienced separation.

0151 488 6648
www.listening-ear.co.uk

kooth
www.kooth.com

SAMARITANS

116 123

childline
0800 1111

Additional info

We have other workbooks available.
Please ask your local mental health support team.

We really appreciate your feedback to help us improve our service for you.
Please fill out a short survey once you have completed this workbook.

