



Mental Health  
Support Team  
Buckinghamshire

# Overcoming Adolescent Anxiety Parent Workshop

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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 an 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

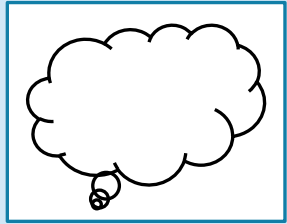
## Generalised anxiety

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

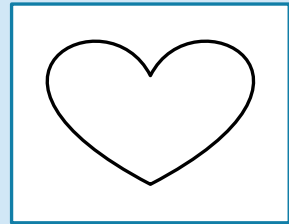
## Social anxiety

- 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

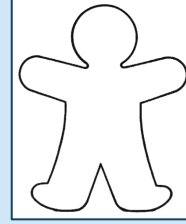
What might give you an indication that that anxiety is a problem?



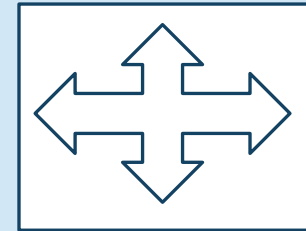
Thoughts



Feelings

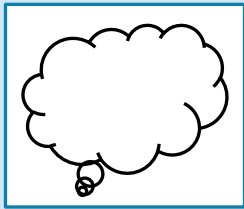


Physical



Behaviour

# Signs of Anxiety



Thoughts

Thinking the worst

Self-critical

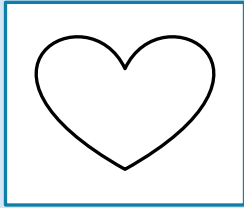
Over-exaggerating

Catastrophising

Predicting

Mind reading

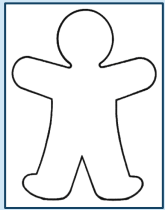
# Signs of Anxiety



Feelings

Worry  
Panic  
Anger  
Embarrassed  
Stressed  
Fearful  
Hopeless

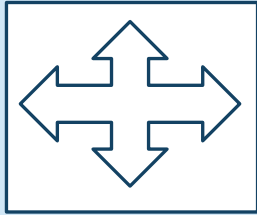
# Signs of Anxiety



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

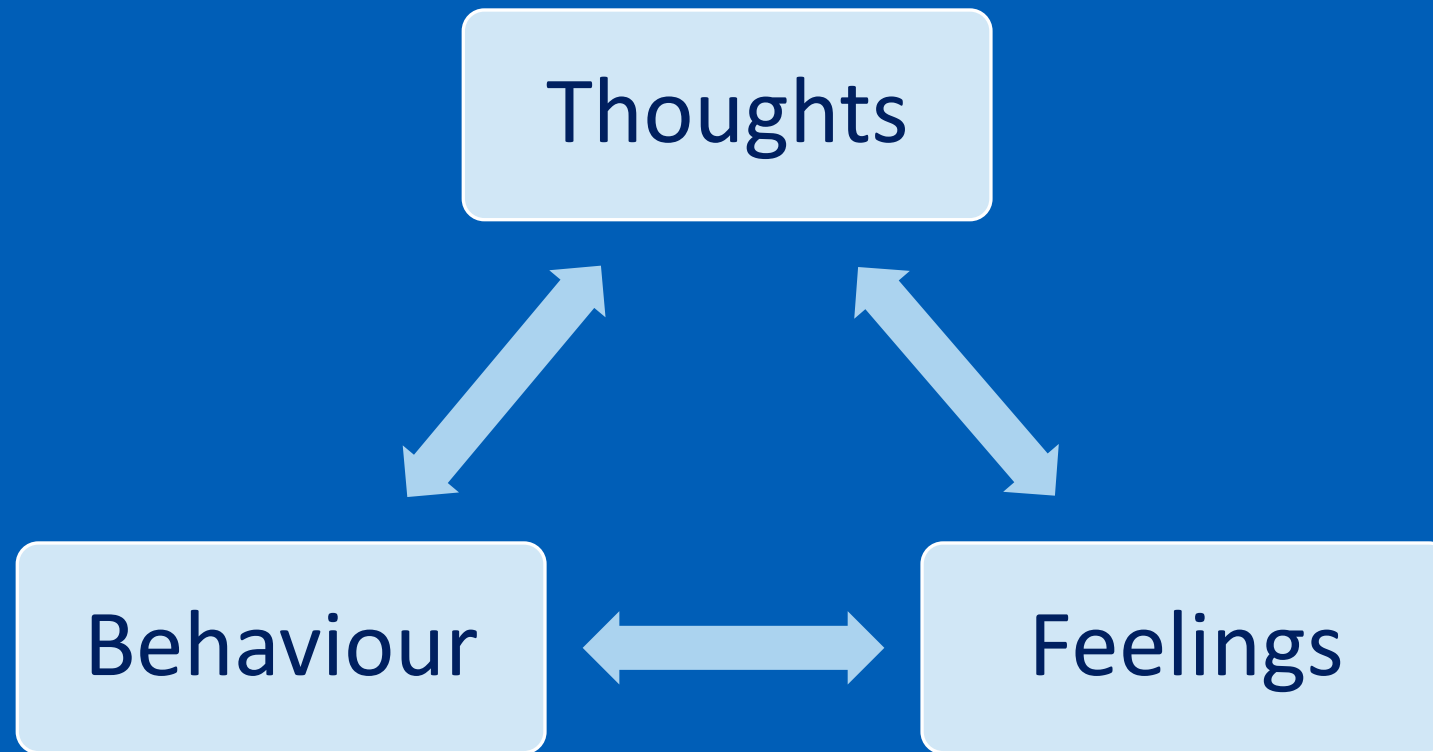
Anxiety is a normal emotion - everyone has  
changes in mood

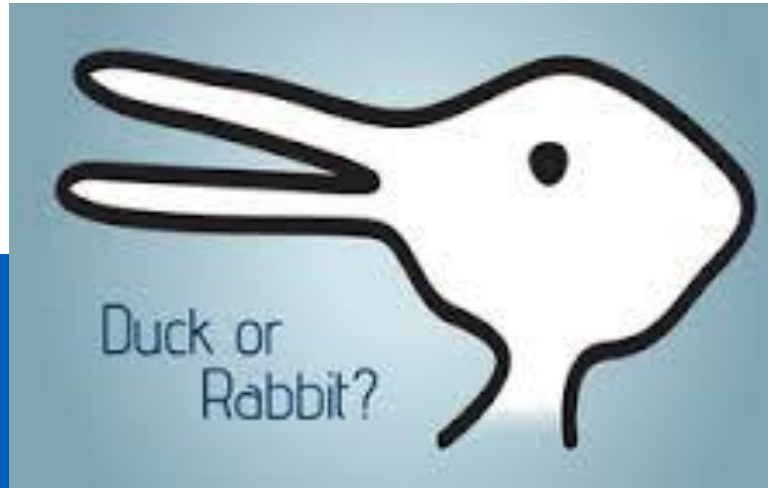
We need to consider the context and wider picture



CONTEXT  
MATTERS

# What is CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)?





- Our interpretation of an event determines **how we react**
- Different interpretations mean we might experience different **emotions**
- Distress can be reduced by changing our 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.



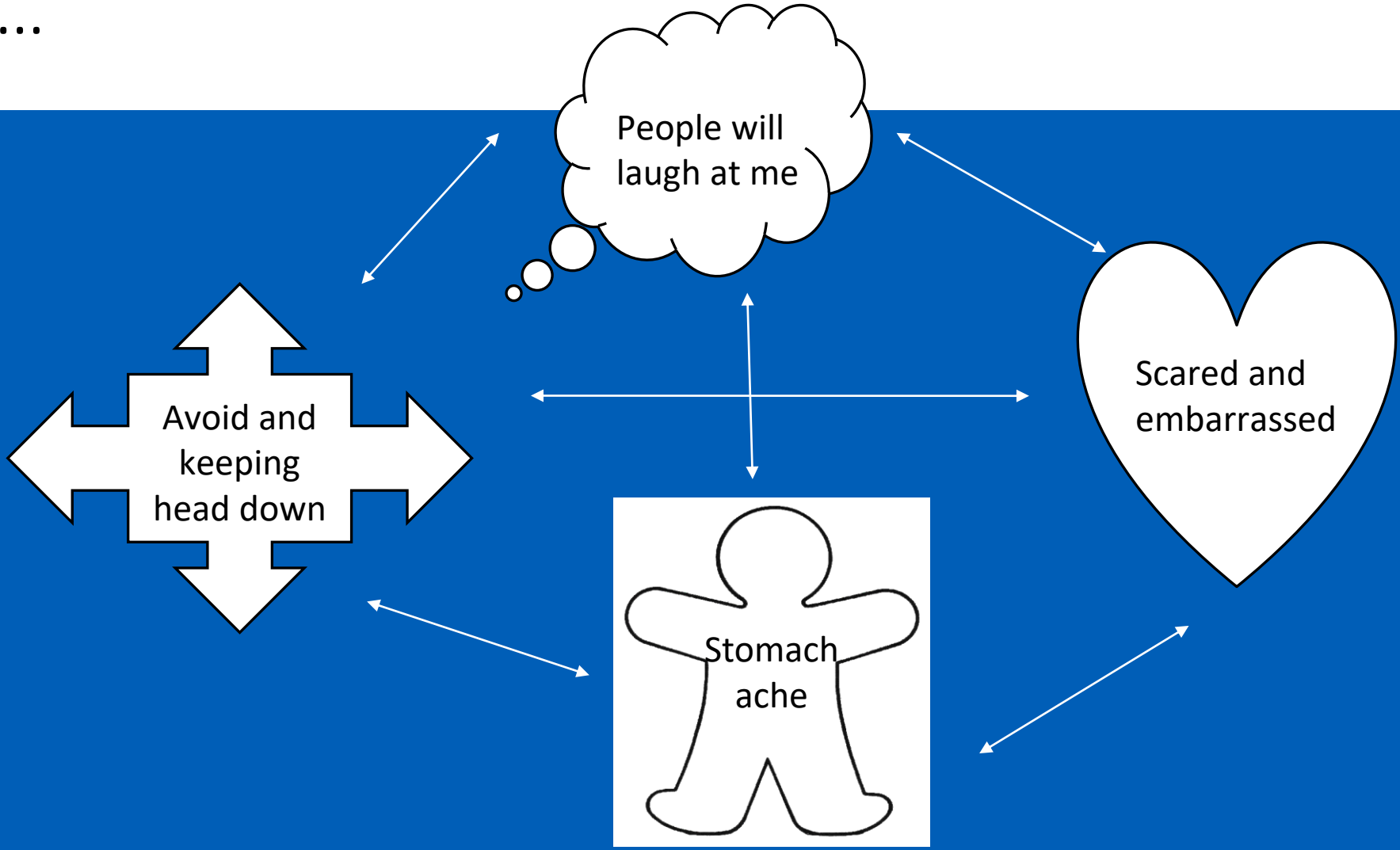
What are you thinking?

How do you feel?

What reaction might you notice in your body?

What do you do?

# 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 become **habit**

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

Therefore we do not **change** our behaviour

# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
2. Share helpful messages
3. Try additional strategies
4. 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 and validate
- Recognise that talking about anxiety can be difficult and takes courage
- Normalise difficulties

# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
- 2. Share helpful messages**
3. Try additional strategies
4. Seek additional support if necessary



# Helpful messages for young people

- Anxiety is 'normal'
- Certain types of thoughts can maintain/increase anxiety
- We can challenge anxious thinking and face fears (in a manageable way)
- Certain types of behaviour (e.g. avoidance) can make things feel better in the short term but worse in the long term



# Helpful messages for parents

- Praise and **reward** brave behaviour
- **Ignore** / do not overly respond to anxious behaviour
- **Model** brave, non-avoidant behaviour themselves
- Support the adolescent to be more **independent** (build confidence)
- Offer **choices** rather than make decisions



# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
2. Share helpful messages
- 3. Try additional strategies**
4. Seek additional support if necessary



# Strategy 1

## Helping the young person to identify and evaluate their anxious thoughts

- Weigh up evidence for and against their thoughts
- Generate alternative more balanced ways of thinking

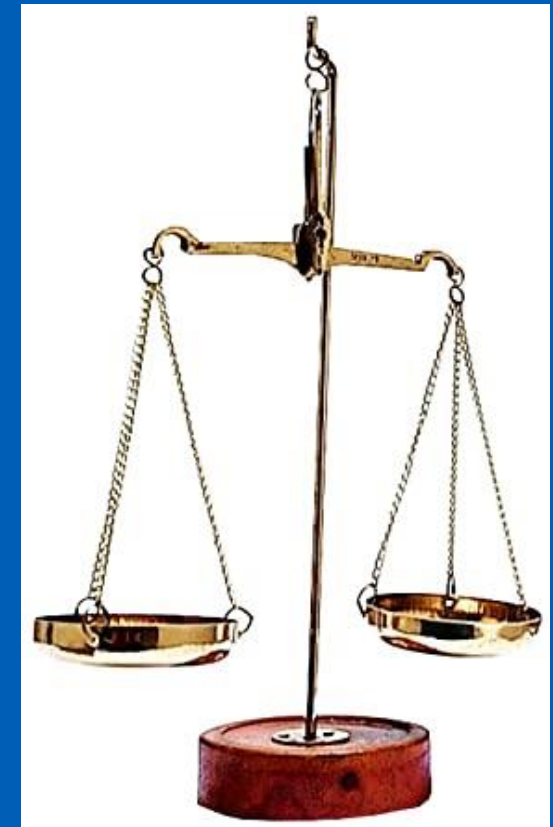


# Strategy 1

Helping the young person to identify and evaluate their anxious thoughts

What are the benefits of this strategy?

- Discourage reliance from others
- Become more independent in their thinking
- Build confidence



# Strategy 1

## Helping the young person to identify and evaluate their anxious thoughts

Asking questions rather than giving answers.

- 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?



# 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

**Problem Solving**  
Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.

**Identify Your Problem**

↓

**Possible Solutions**

→

	For	Against

→

**Chosen Solution**

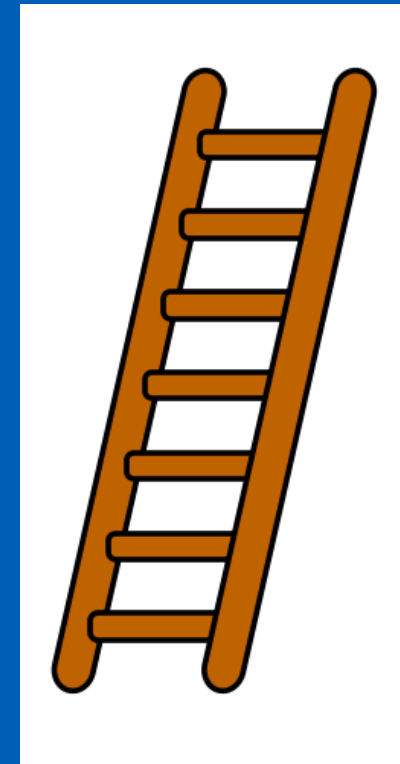
**Steps Required**

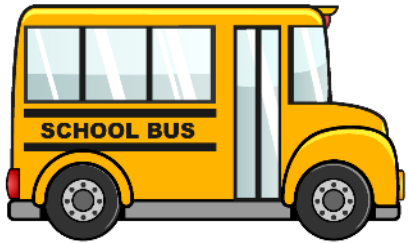
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10	

# Strategy 3

## Helping the young person to face their fears in a graded way

- Involves planning and doing things that are normally anxiety-provoking
- Done in a **graded** way
- Get the YP to develop multiple steps from less to more anxiety provoking
- Start with the easier steps





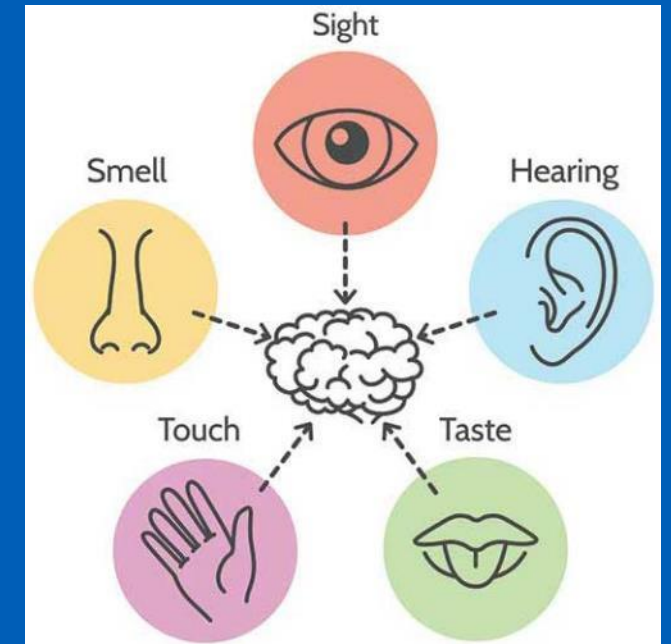
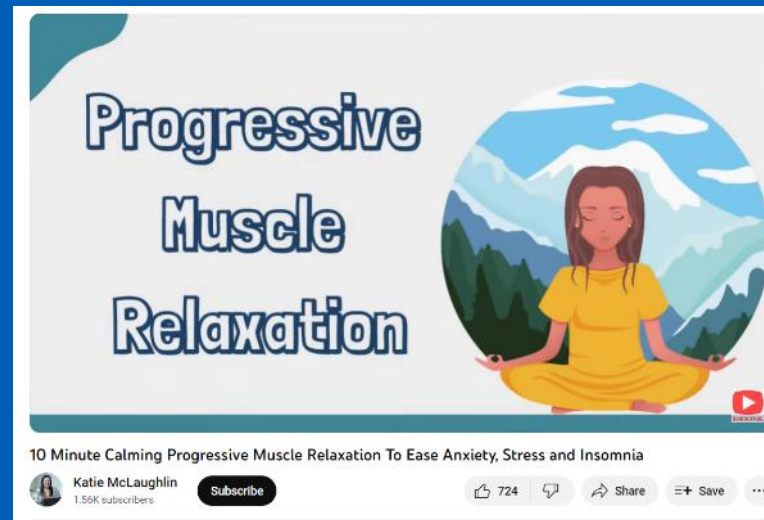
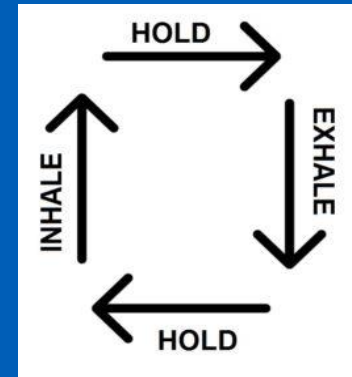
# EXAMPLE: Developing a hierarchy of fears for social anxiety

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

- Box breathing
- Grounding: The 5 senses
- Progressive muscle relaxation



# How you can help

1. Be there for the young person
2. Share helpful messages
3. Try additional strategies
4. **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

# 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:

Great Marlow 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)

Sir William Borlase's Grammar School

[safeguarding@swbgs.com](mailto:safeguarding@swbgs.com)

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

# CAMHS

**Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Service**

Referrals for higher level and more persistent mental health needs

Urgent referrals: Single Point of Access (SPA): 01865 901 951 (8am–6pm, Monday to Friday)

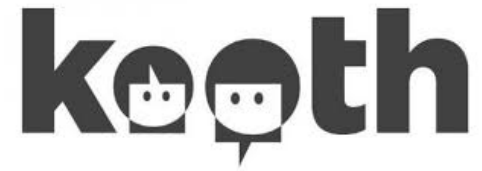
Less urgent referrals:  
[BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

# In summary: how can we help?

1. Recognise signs of anxiety and listen to the YP
2. Help the YP to think about their thoughts and behaviours
3. Help the YP to understand what is going on
4. Encourage the YP to face their fears
5. Help the YP to problem solve
6. Help the YP be aware of where to find support



# Useful Resources





## MHST - Parent Training/Workshop





**Any Questions**