The graphic features a dark teal silhouette of a human head in profile, facing left. Inside the head, several light teal gears of various sizes are arranged in a cluster. Above the head is an orange circle containing a white cross. To the left of the head is a white circle. Below the head are three horizontal white lines. The background consists of teal and white geometric shapes, including a large teal circle behind the head and a teal triangle in the top left corner.

# **Anxiety Session for Parents & Carers**

Aims of session:

1. Increase knowledge of anxiety.
2. Provide tips and techniques to speak with your child about mental health and help your child with anxiety

# Introductions

## B&NES Mental Health Support Team

Jasmin: Education Mental Health  
Practitioner

Charlotte: Mental Health Support Worker

- What is the Mental Health Support Team?
- Why are we here?

### Ground rules:

- Please put your mic on mute unless answering/asking a question
- Please put your questions in the chat box – we will have a Q&A and address these at the end
- Confidentiality
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# Session overview

- What is anxiety?
- Recognising anxiety in young people
- Understanding triggers & maintenance
- Ways to manage anxiety
- Top tips for parents
- Q&A

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**ANXIETY**

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## Why do we experience anxiety?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp0lpKTWrp4>



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp0lpKTWrp4>

## Signs of anxiety in children and young people

- Excessive worry/anxiety
- School phobia/separation anxiety
- Low mood/sadness
- Anger and frustration
- Restlessness, fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Becoming withdrawn, loss of social support and peer relationships
- Pre-occupation with cleanliness/hygiene of self and others

Every child is different – It is important to identify their own triggers.

## Feel, look, sound

### What does anxiety **feel** like?

- Racing Heart
- Feeling nervous
- Feeling hot and sweaty
- Feeling tired
- Having a pain in your stomach

### What does anxiety **look** like?

- Change in mood
- Spending more time alone
- Having to suddenly leave an activity
- Breathing quickly

### What does anxiety **sound** like?

It can be physical sounds like:

- Heavy breathing
- Someone tapping

Anxiety can also sound like thoughts in our head. Sometimes these can be negative thoughts.

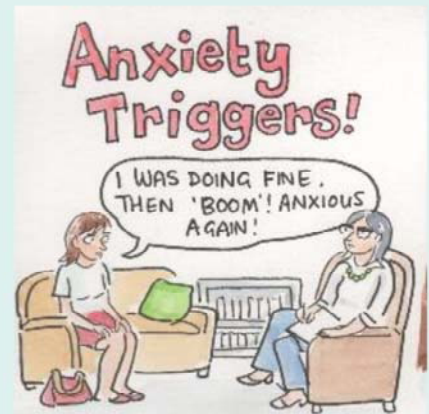
## **Why do some children experience anxiety more than others?**

- 1) Genetics – anxiety can run in families.
- 2) Adverse life events – may affect anxious children more
- 3) Learning by example – witness others express fear
- 4) Learning from other's reactions – how others respond to child
- 5) Coping experiences – not all children have the same opportunities to develop strong coping mechanisms



# Triggers for anxiety

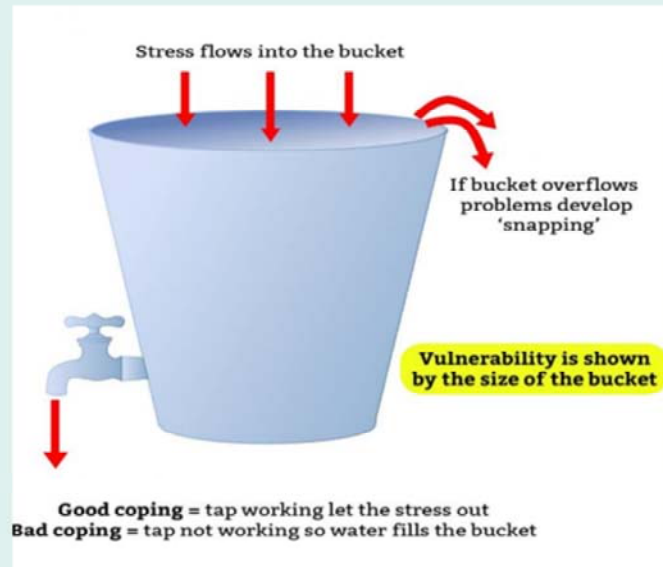
- Triggers for anxiety can be very individual.
- What makes one individual feel anxious, may not affect another
- Triggers can be short term (e.g. exams) or long term (e.g. life events/covid-19 pandemic).



*What have you noticed your child's triggers are?*

# The Stress Bucket

One trigger for anxiety is stress.

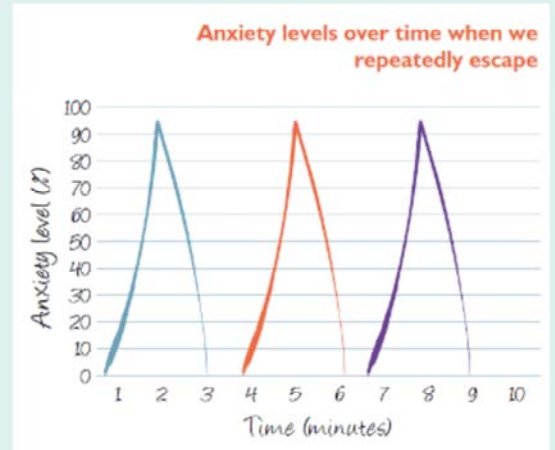


## What maintains anxiety?

**Avoidance/anxious behaviours** – leaving a feared situation means we don't learn to cope

**Physical response (bodily symptoms)** – can be interpreted as a sign that something bad is happening.

**Anxious thinking/expectations** – thinking something bad is going to happen and that we won't be able to cope.



- Avoidance - by simply avoiding whatever is causing us to feel worried or anxious, we soon teach ourselves that avoiding the source of our fear feels better than confronting it. Avoidance brings us immediate relief and can soon create a '*pattern of avoidance*'. However, the next time we face the source of our phobia, our fear-related physical feelings quickly go up again and our '*pattern of avoidance*' starts again. Over time, we learn that the only way we can manage our fear is to avoid the source of our phobia when it's encountered, but this doesn't help us in the long term.
- Physical response – often children aren't aware that the physical symptoms are caused by anxiety, and they just interpret them as illness or a sign that they can't cope. They are usually unpleasant, which increases avoidance and reduces confidence in coping with challenges.
- Anxious thinking/expectations – thinking something bad is going to happen and that we won't be able to cope.

## Maintenance cycle of anxiety

### Thoughts

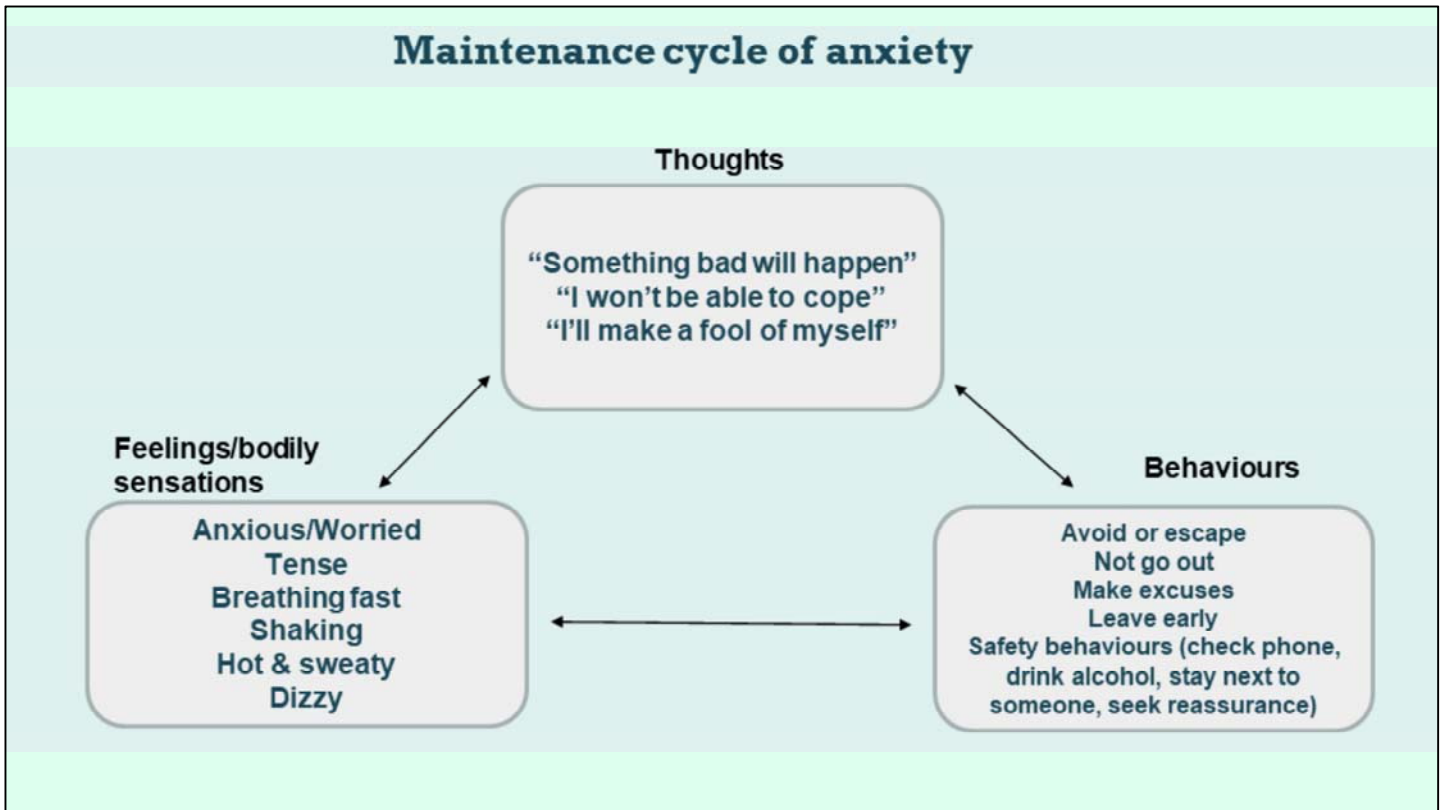
“Something bad will happen”  
“I won’t be able to cope”  
“I’ll make a fool of myself”

### Feelings/bodily sensations

Anxious/Worried  
Tense  
Breathing fast  
Shaking  
Hot & sweaty  
Dizzy

### Behaviours

Avoid or escape  
Not go out  
Make excuses  
Leave early  
Safety behaviours (check phone,  
drink alcohol, stay next to  
someone, seek reassurance)



**Top tips for  
self-  
management  
of anxiety**

**Exercise can be a natural alternative to using up adrenaline when your body is in 'flight' mode.**



It also...

- Releases frustration – pent up emotions can lead to higher anxiety and panic attacks.
- Decreases muscle tension – having tense muscles can be responsible for feeling tense or uptight
- Increases oxygen levels in the brain – this can increase mental clarity and help you manage your concentration and memory.
- Reduces the amount of adrenaline in your bloodstream – increased adrenaline can keep you in the state of Fight/Flight/Freeze.

**Tips**  
**Physical Activity**



**Increases the levels of endorphins (a 'happy' hormone) in your blood stream – endorphins increase your sense of well-being.**



**Helps maintain a healthy blood acidity levels and blood sugar levels – this can increase energy as well as maintain steady energy levels throughout the day.**

# Tips

## Self care & self esteem



- Self care: Bath time / shower time routine.
- Spend time doing things they **enjoy** and are **good** at!
- Taking time out to be kind to themselves.
- Booster list: what do they like about themselves? What is a compliment that they received recently? How would their friends describe them? What are they grateful for?
- Discuss social media.



# Tips

## Sleep



Night time routine



Avoiding Stimulants



Avoid blue light



Less screen time



Worry management



Exercise



Relaxation techniques

# GOOD REASONS to put down your PHONE

@POSITIVELYPRESENT



## Tips

Phone and social media use

# Tips

## Feeling supported & 'checking in'

**Talking to someone:** family, friends, making time to catch up. The Mix has an online chat service and free helpline: [the-mix.org.uk](http://the-mix.org.uk) as well as online resources and support groups. Kooth also provided online, anonymous support.

**Checking in/problem solving:** Asking questions such as "What am I worried about", "What are the chances of that happening" and noting down possible solutions is a helpful way to challenge thoughts, reassure and calm the mind. This can be done in a journal.

*Journaling has many benefits and more information can be found on the handouts that will be provided after this session.*

# Problem solving

## 1. Clearly state the problem/situation:

Try to be clear about what exactly the problem is. Write down a statement of this problem:

I don't have enough money for the bus fare to college.

## 2. List all possible solutions:

Try and sneak on the bus

Ask my friend to lend me the money

Stuff it, stay at home

Run!

Ask Mum for a lift

Call my friend who always has a lift in to ask if they can take me



# Tips

## Sensory calming

**Sensory calming:** When anxiety is present, sensory calming can help. This includes; weighted blankets, sensory lights and calming audio.

*You can find further information on this, including links to resources, on the handout that will be sent to you following this session.*



# Tips Breathing

## Milkshake breathing



One breathing technique is to imagine blowing bubbles into a milkshake. You can try:



Breathing in slowly through your nose for **3** counts



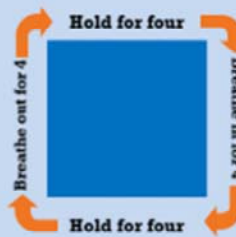
Hold your breath for **2** counts



Breathing out slowly through your mouth for **5** counts - like you are blowing bubbles!

## Square breathing

You can use a square to help you with your breathing. You can find a square to use in your classroom.



Follow each line of the square with your eyes. Breathe in, hold your breath, breathe out then hold your breath for 4 counts to help you feel calmer.

- Find guided breathing techniques on apps such as calm and headspace, or free videos on youtube

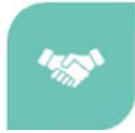
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# Helping your child

# Have a chat



FIND AN  
APPROPRIATE  
TIME TO TALK



BE OPEN AND  
HONEST



NORMALISE  
FEELINGS



BE AWARE OF  
YOUR REACTION



TRY PROBLEM  
SOLVING



BE FUTURE  
FOCUSSED



GIVE  
ENCOURAGERS



IDENTIFY CLEAR  
NEXT STEPS

- Find an appropriate time to talk – perhaps 1:1, in the car, in their bedroom. Not at times when everyone's stressed or arguing!
- Be open and honest – start with something simple “How are you?” or “what was the best and worst bit about your day?”. If they are struggling to open up, tell them honestly and openly about any changes you've noticed in their behaviour and give them an opportunity to tell you about this if they feel comfortable to do so. Ask them “do you want to talk about what's going on?” Focus on listening to their worries, being empathetic and validate their feelings to help them feel supported.
- Normalisation - is also a good way of helping young people understand there are lots of other people feeling the same as them. You can use statements such as “I'm hearing that you're really worried about going to school at the moment, and this is completely normal and understandable. There are lots of other people in your class and your year group who are feeling the same as you, so you're not alone” can help.
- Be aware of your own reactions - Young people often take their emotional cues from adults, so it is important to manage your own emotions and remain calm, speak compassionately to them, and answer any questions they have honestly.
- Encourage problem solving – Research has found that problem solving can be a mediator between stressful life events and wellbeing, therefore, whilst reassurance is important, it is also helpful to encourage young people to come up with their own solutions to perceived problems or worries. An easy way to do this, is to answer their questions with another question such ‘what would help you feel better about this?’, or ‘do you have any ideas for how you could get on top of your



homework?'. This can help break a larger problem down into smaller, more manageable steps.

- Be future focused – whilst it is important to acknowledge losses and missed opportunities, it can also be helpful to encourage discussion about things they are looking forward to and their hopes for the future. This will help to move their focus away from negative things and provide a reminder that this time will pass.
- Give encouragers – “You can talk to me, I'm here for you”, “If you need to talk to someone else, that's okay too” “If you talk to me about what is worrying you, I can do my best to help” “Even if I don't understand, know that I want to” “We're going to get through this together”
- Identify clear next steps – ask what they'd like you to do to help. Will you plan something fun to do together? Is the plan for them to speak to a teacher at school about how they're feeling? If you decide to seek further help, be clear about who you will speak to and when.

## Encourage children to 'have a go'

- The best way to overcome fears is to have a go, starting with small steps
- Sit with the anxiety and allow it to naturally drop
- Review their learning
- Offer rewards

The best way to overcome fears is to have a go, starting with small steps. This will give them more motivation to continue.

So if for example they are anxious about going to the supermarket, the first step would be to get in the car, then the next time to get as far as the car park, then the entrance, then the shop. Try and encourage them to come up with these steps themselves.

At each step, make sure they are allowing time for the anxiety to naturally decrease. You could check in with them on a scale of 0-10.

Afterwards, when anxiety has subsided, review what they learnt. You might ask them whether their prediction about the situation came true. If it didn't, what actually happened and what have they learnt from this experience? How would they feel about doing it again?

You may need to complete each step more than once before they are ready to move up to the next one.

Sometimes rewards can help motivate children to complete these steps, they don't need to be anything too expensive. Doing some baking, going somewhere they enjoy, extra time on the playstation etc. Don't give the reward unless the step was attempted.

## Try a grounding or relaxation exercise with them



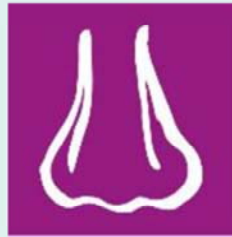
Can you name  
5 things you  
can see?



Can you name  
4 things you  
can feel?



Can you name  
3 things you  
can hear?



Can you name  
2 things you  
can smell?



Can you  
name 1  
thing you  
can taste?

**LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

**FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

**LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Try making a sound if you're somewhere quiet.

**SMELL:** Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favourite smells.

**TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favourite thing to taste.



- Provide craft materials so young people can personalise their item. They are much more likely to use the item if it is special to them.
- What works for them? Do this as a list or create an actual box including their sensory items, things that comfort them, notepads/journals
- Include affirmations / coping notes – things that help them to manage their anxiety **that physical symptoms are just anxiety (e.g. racing heart)**
- **Anxiety is not dangerous and doesn't last forever**
- **Positive coaching statements (e.g. "I am going to be okay")**
- **A reminder to use some coping skills (e.g. I can use my senses to calm down)**



# Outline workshop for pupils?

01

## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

What does anxiety feel like, look like, sound like?

02

## HOW CAN WE MANAGE ANXIETY?

- What triggers anxiety?
- Creating tools to manage anxiety.

03

## LOOKING AFTER OUR BODY AND MIND.

- How can I look after myself?

04

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

- What can be done to help manage the effects of anxiety?



**Questions?**



# Feedback

<https://forms.gle/2vXpzdjn3cRYFf37A>

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