

Anxiety in Children and Young People

Session Aims

- To provide:
 - An introduction to the different types of anxiety
 - An exploration of what anxiety looks like in the body and brain (and ways to explain it to children)
 - An understanding of the possible causes of anxiety
 - An understanding of what can be done to support a pupil with anxiety

General Information

- Presentation for 1 hour on the background of anxiety
- 15 minute break
- 30(ish) minutes on approaches to identify, explore and tackle anxiety in school
- Housekeeping

What is anxiety?

Generalised anxiety is:

- Excessive worry over a period of 6 months about a range of areas in life
- Difficulty in controlling worry
- Not caused by illicit substances
- Impacts of functioning and causes one or more of the following in children:
 - Restlessness, easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating or mind going blank, irritability, muscle tension, sleep disturbance.

Source: DSM-5

Social anxiety is:

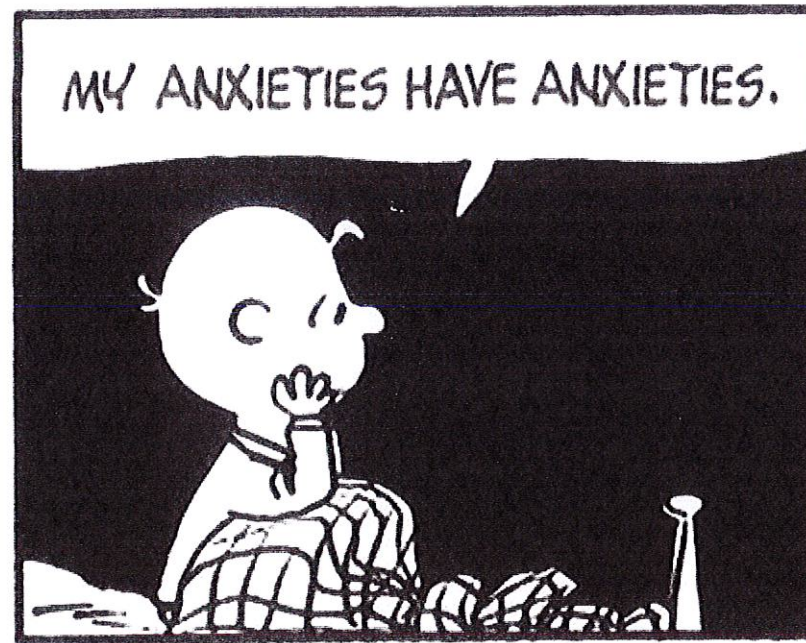
- Persistent fear/worry over social situations where a person can be exposed to scrutiny
- Exposure to fear can induce panic attacks
- The fear is recognised as excessive
- Whereby the avoidance/participation/fear of social situations impairs normal routine and functioning

Source: DSM-5

Other types of anxieties:

- Panic disorders
 - People have sudden feelings of terror. Physical symptoms: sweating, chest pain, palpitations, a feeling of choking.
- Phobias
 - An intense fear of a specific object or situation such as heights or flying. Level of fear is inappropriate to the situation.

Causes of Anxiety



In pairs, think about what events might make a child feel anxious...

Also, consider what the child might be thinking and feeling?

The Purpose of Anxiety



- A stress response dating back to prehistoric times
- All about survival!
- Helps to prepare for fight OR flight.

Glitch in coping strategy

- Our body cannot differentiate between a perceived threat and a psychological threat.
- We can therefore present anxiety without a physical threat and respond psychologically and physically.



Smoke Alarm Analogy



Physiology

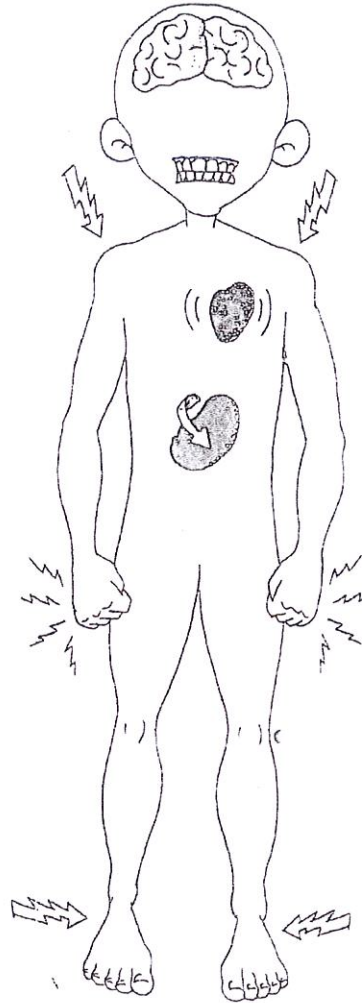
Sweating

Physical Appearance,
such as changes to skin
colour

Dizziness

Increased heart rate

Tense muscles



Nausea

Shallow breathing

Butterflies in
your stomach

Dry mouth, sore eyes

Thoughts and Feelings

Nervous

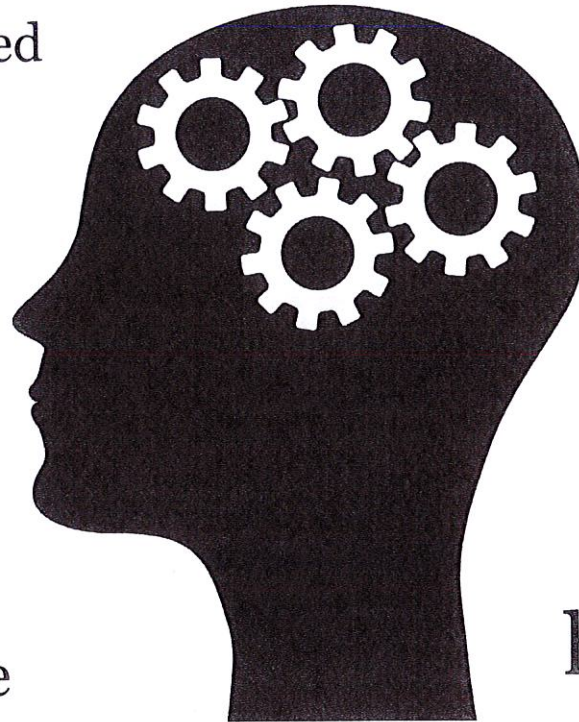
“I’m never going to be
able to do this”

Excitement

Frightened

Extreme
focussed
thinking

Apparent
slowing of time



Scared

Irritable and
impatient

Circular and
helpless thinking

Behaviour

Fight or flight response

“Shutting down”

Appearing
shaky or
exhausted

Frozen

Sudden bursts of
energy or speed



Physical aggression

Difficulties
concentrating

Withdrawal

Difficulties
sleeping

Avoidant
behaviours

Emotions



Memory

Action

Helpful or Unhelpful?

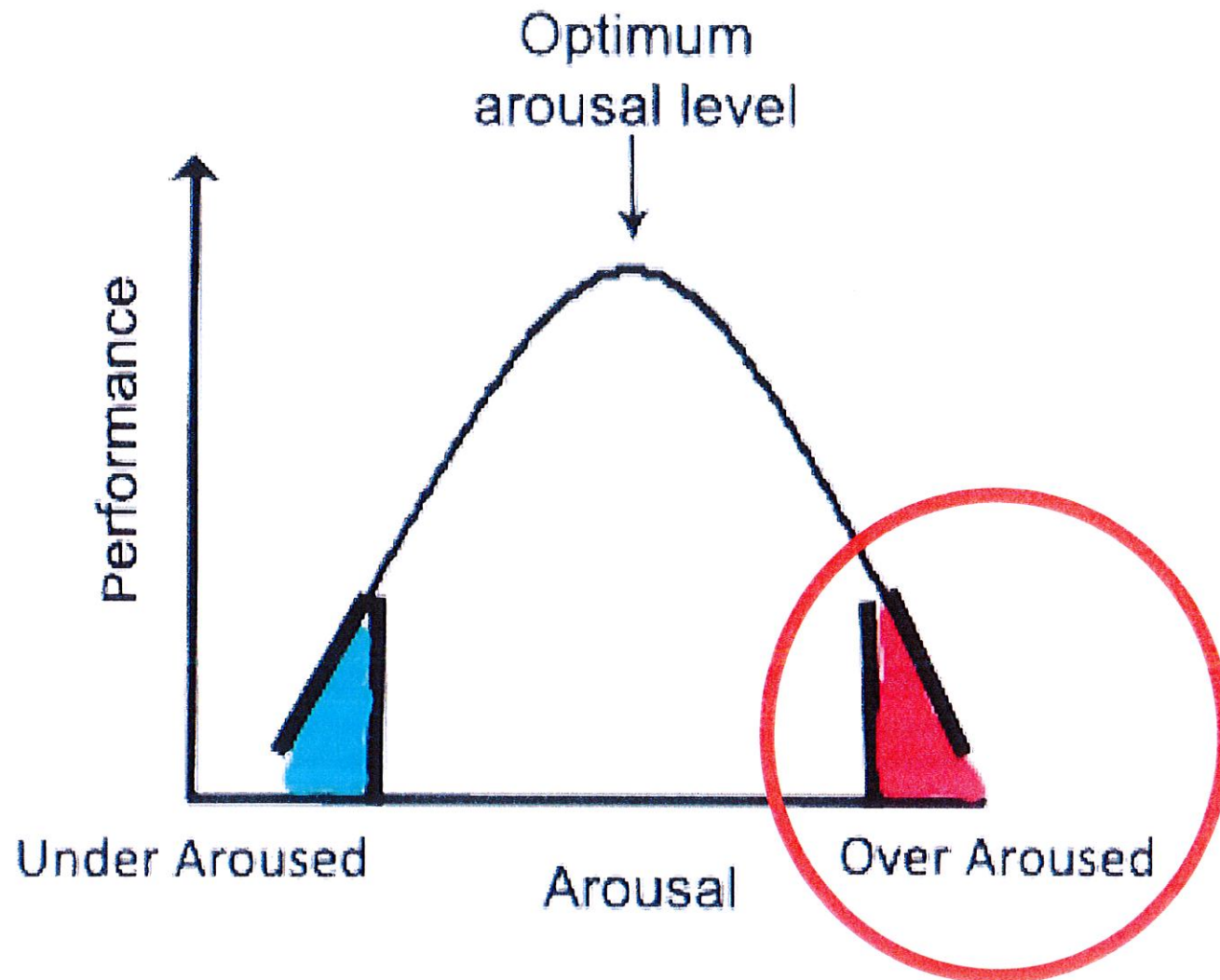
- It is a normal and natural reaction to a perceived threat and may be needed to avoid a real, physical threat.
- Can keep us focussed, alert and energised at times when this is important and enhance our performance.

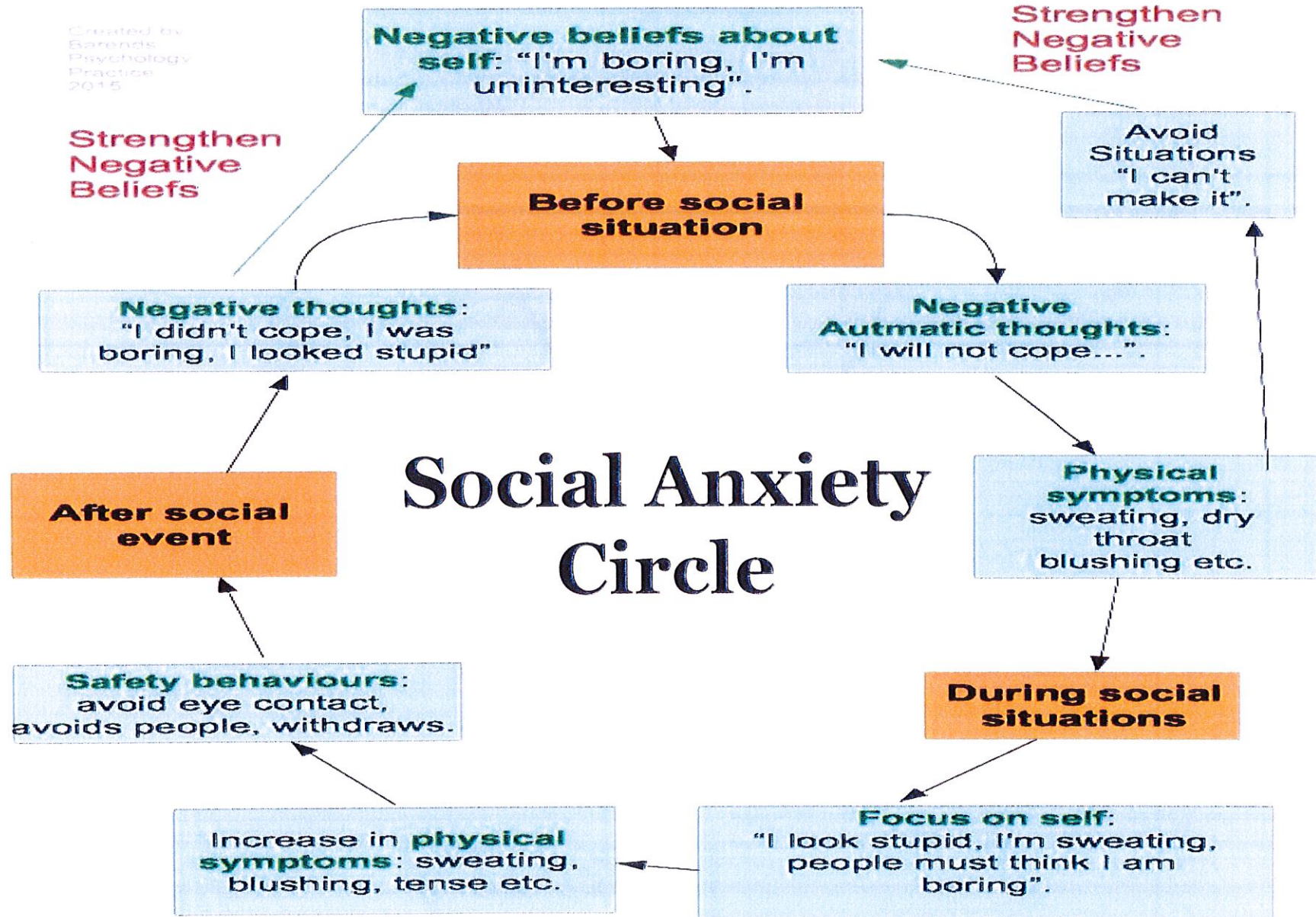
Helpful or Unhelpful?

Persistent anxiety over time affects and interferes with daily life. It can impact on:

- Difficulties engaging with learning
- Reduced performance and achievement
- Limited social inclusion
- Poor emotional well being
- Mental health issues

Arousal





Who may anxiety affect?

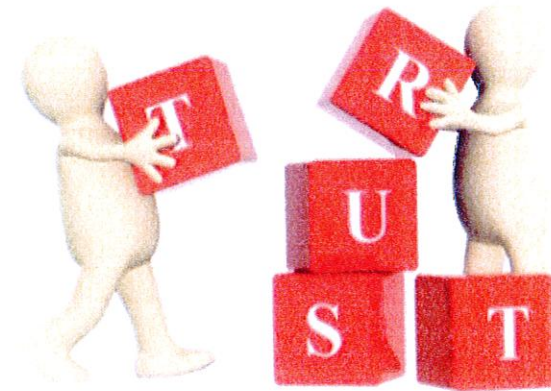
- All children will experience anxiety at some point.
- Approximately 1 in 6 children and young people may experience significant anxiety during their school years.
- Vulnerable groups may be more prone to experiencing anxiety than others.

ASD: Common Triggers

- Changes in routine
- Changes to the environment
- Unfamiliar social situations
- Heightened or reduced sensory sensitivity such as noise or light
- Fear of a particular situation, activity or object

Attachment Needs

- Building trust
 - With both adults and peers
- Fear
- Failure
- Hyper-vigilance



Experiencing each of these factors may cause additional anxieties.

Manifestation of Anxiety

- Behaviour that looks like anger or frustration may be a manifestation of anxiety.
- Some children manage their anxiety in school but “let go” at home.
- Some children can be very anxious in school but appear to cope in other contexts.

What are your school currently doing to identify, explore and support anxiety?



Managing Anxiety

IDENTIFY



EXPLORE



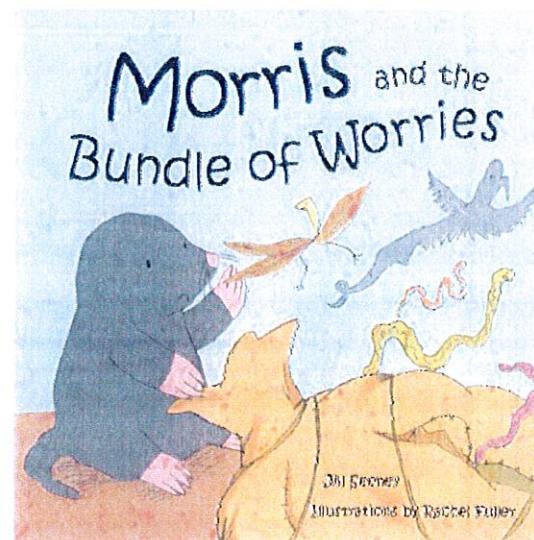
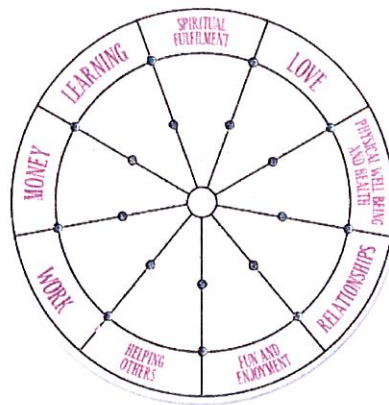
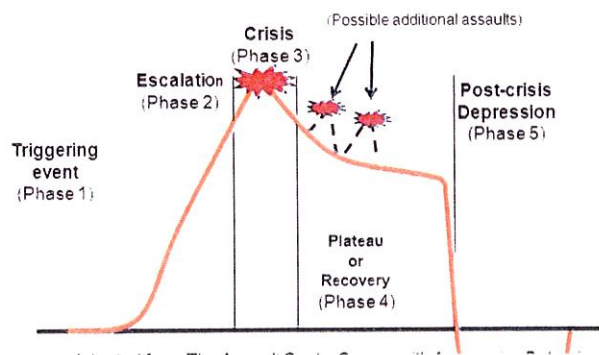
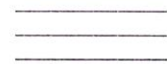
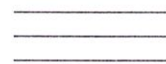
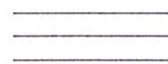
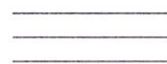
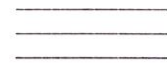
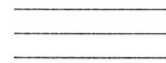
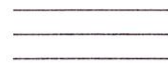
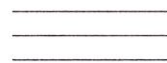
TACKLE

Identifying Anxiety

- Using the Bradford Range Guidance for SEMH
- School behavioural data
- Observing the child
- Discussions with staff and parents
- Discussions with the child
- ABC Analysis

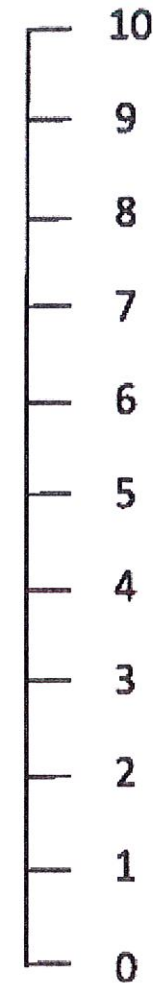
Exploring Anxiety

- Scaling Questions
- Card Sort Activities
- Labelling Activities
- The Anxiety Curve
- Online Resources and books



Scaling Question

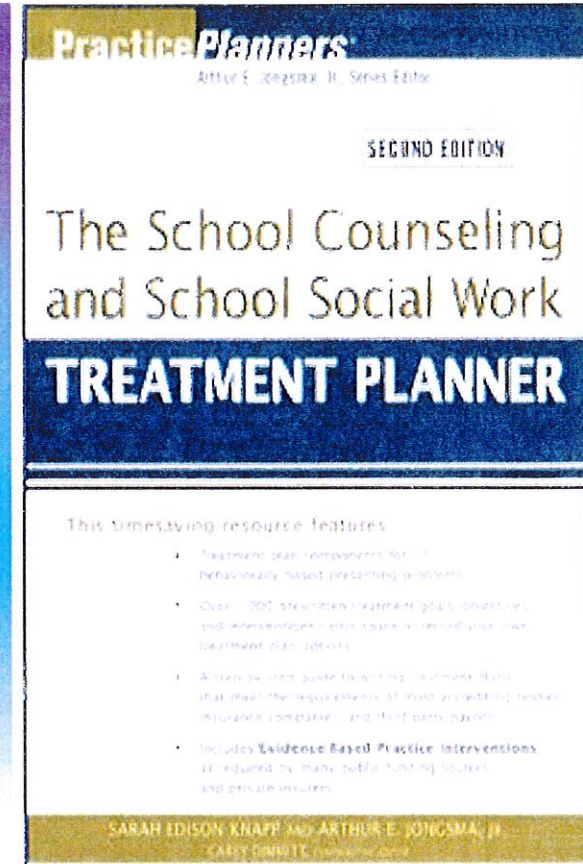
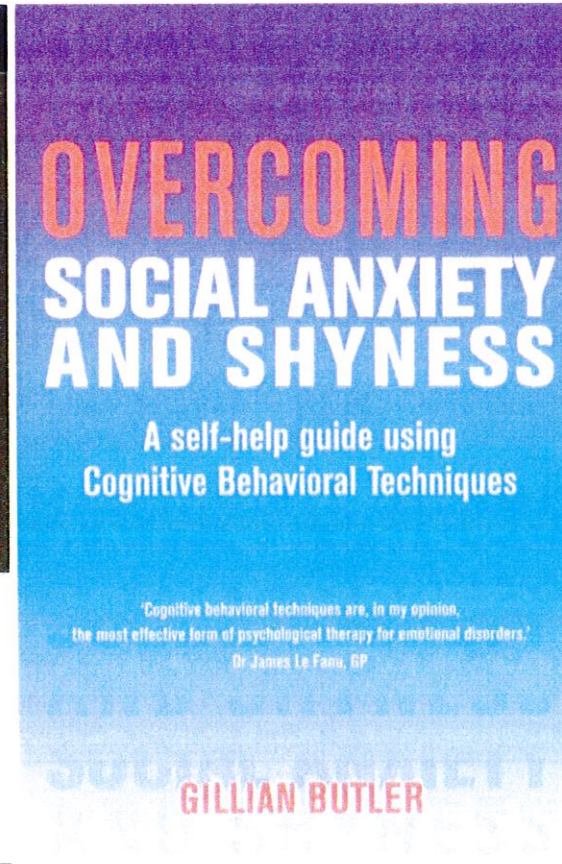
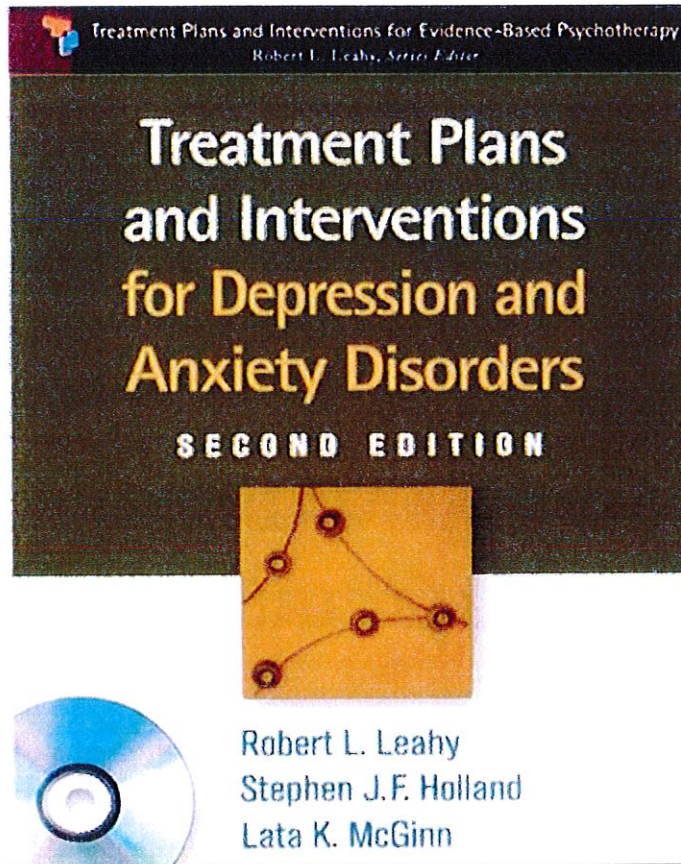
- Establish an area for discussion
- Explain the line
- Ask the learner to rate themselves on the line
- Explore why they are at this level using positively framed questions
- Ask them to rate where they would like to be on the line
- Explore what they feel could help get them to that point



Online Resources

- www.nhs.uk>anxiety disorder
- www.youngminds.co.uk
- www.anxiety.org.uk
- www.careforyourmind.org
- <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/anxiety-information/young-people-and-anxiety/>
- <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/>
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/classroom/understanding-anxiety.aspx>

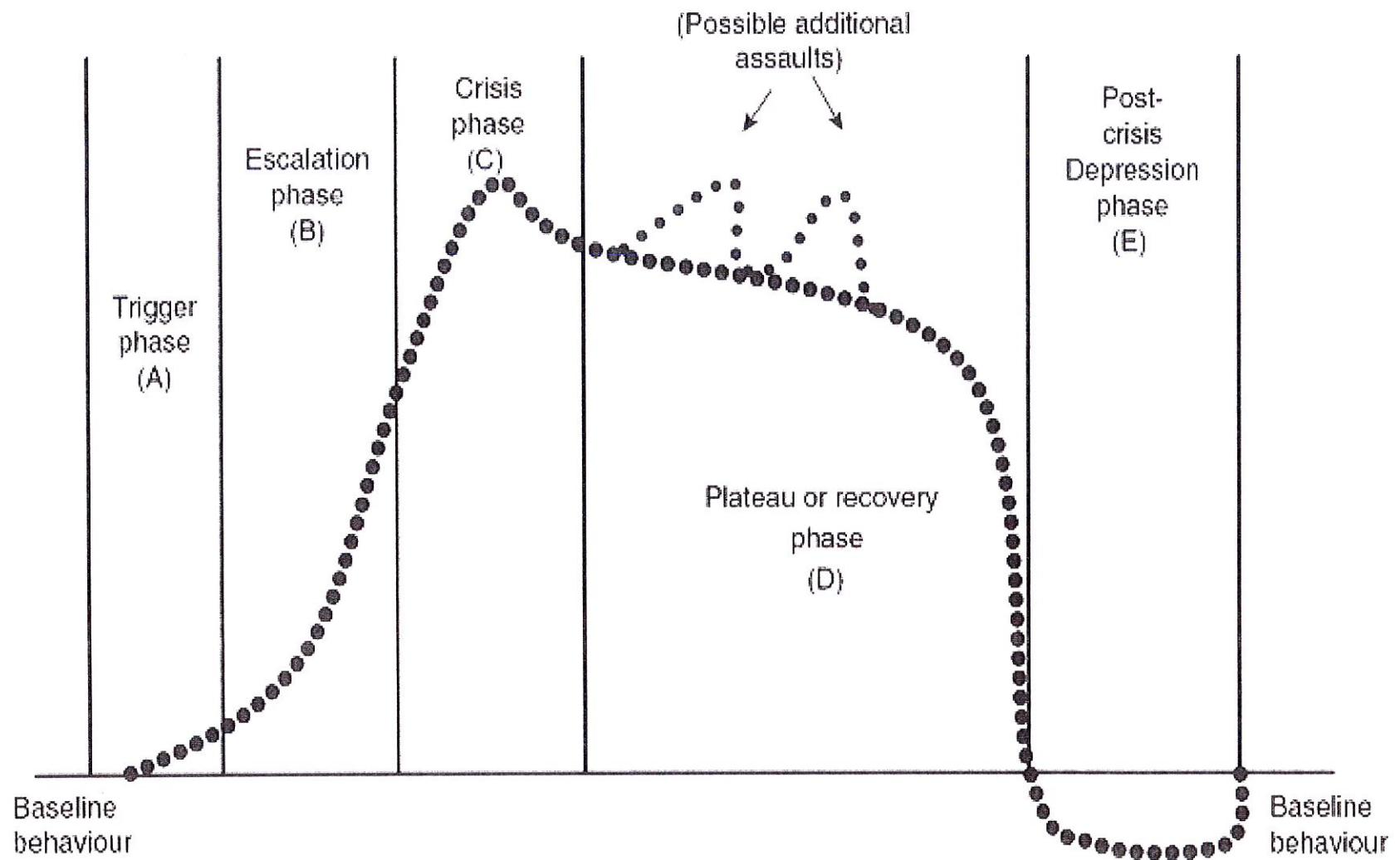
Other Resources



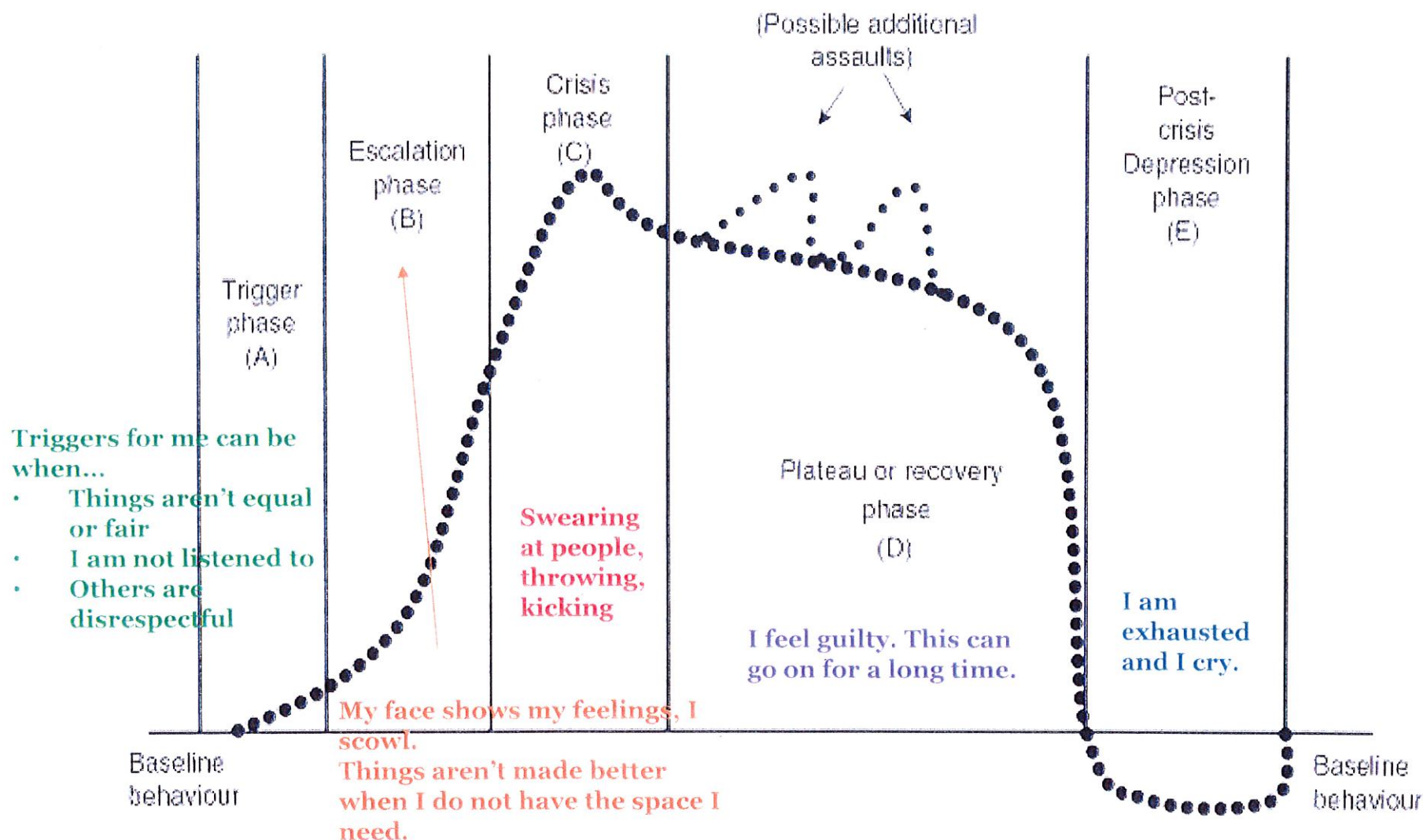
Tackling Anxiety

- Managing:
 - **Physiology:** Breakwell Assault Cycle, Thermometer Model, Incredible 5 Point Scale, Breathing Techniques, Relaxation Techniques, Mindfulness Exercises, Run Around.
 - **Unhelpful Thoughts:** Cognitive Behavioural Interventions, Meet and Greet, Solution-Focussed Work, Modelling, Role Play, Scaffolding.

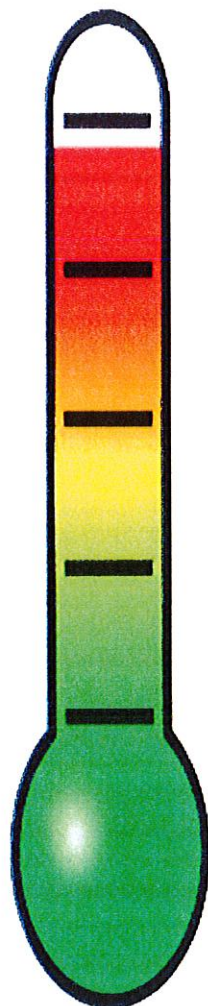
Breakwell Assault Cycle



Breakwell Assault Cycle



Incredible 5 Point Scale



5

This looks like: SHOUTING! Swearing that is directed at others, throwing, kicking.

What helps: I need adult support to keep me safe.

4

This looks like: Shouting louder, taking things personally, saying what I don't mean, interfering, no reasoning.

What helps: I need adult support to keep me safe.

3

This looks like: Lose manners, chunter, I will tell you to "go away", I start to get louder

What helps: Having a safe place to have my voice heard.

2

This looks like: I find it harder to show who I am, I find it hard to sit still, I can be protective over others.

What helps: Having a safe place to have my voice heard and talking things through with a trusted adult.

1

This looks like: Polite, chatty, I compliment others, helpful, empathetic, caring.

Breathing Techniques

'Square
breathing' or
'milkshake
breathing'!

Breathe out, making the breath last for a
count of 4....

Breathe in,
making the
breath last for a
count of 4

1 elephant
takes 1
second to
say!



Breathe in,
making the
breath last
for a count
of 4
seconds

*Use the idea of blowing
long stream of small
bubbles into a milkshake
to help explain the
exhaling part of this
technique

Breathe out, making the breath last for
a count of 4

Repeat...
until
feeling
calmer

Relaxation Techniques

- Hand massage
- Mindfulness exercises
- Pizza massage
- Cosmic Kids Yoga
- www.positivepsychologyprogram.com

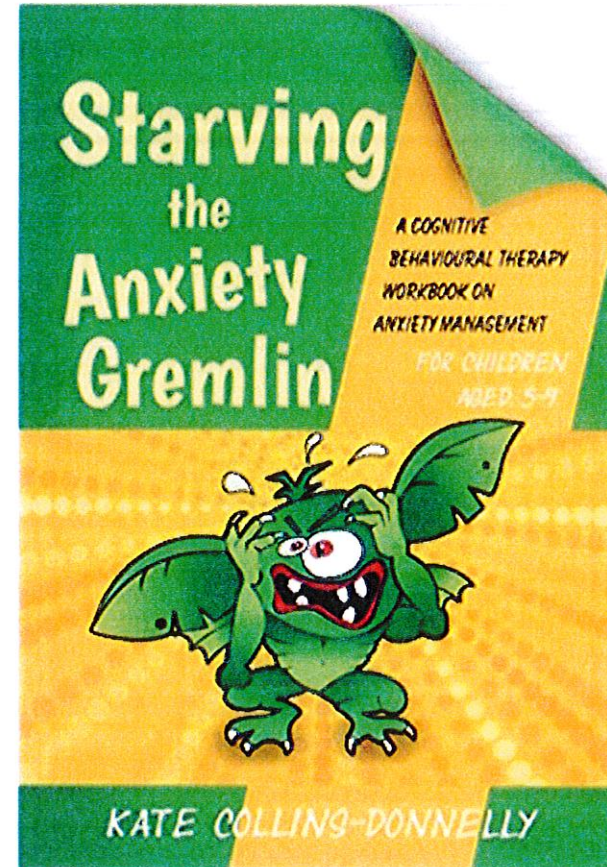
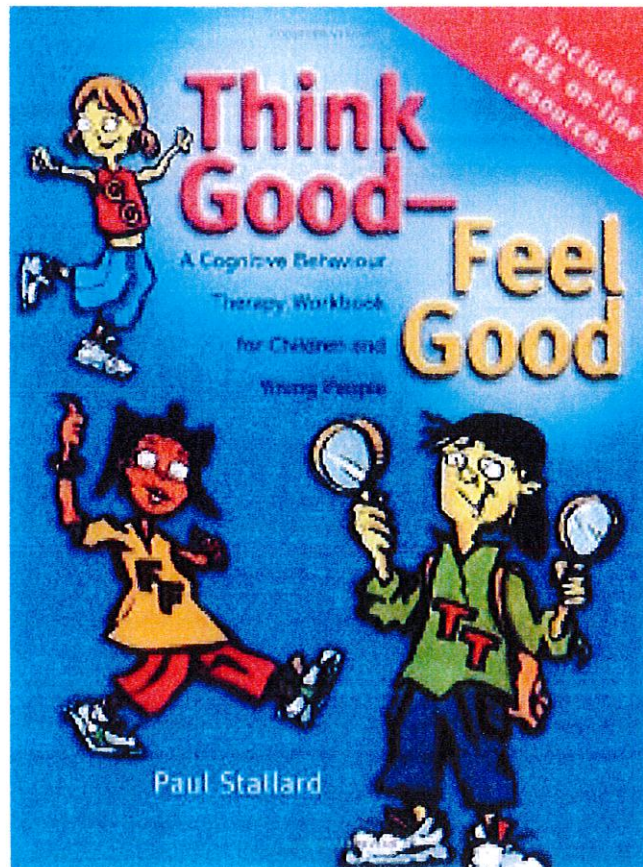


CBT approaches

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

- Gives children knowledge and ownership to change distorted perceptions
- Looks at the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Appropriate for ages 7+, where a child is able to reflect on experiences.

CBT approaches



Modelling

Adults using simple language to convey how they or the child might be feeling and mirror this emotion using facial expressions

“Timmy, you are feeling happy. You are happy because you are smiling.”

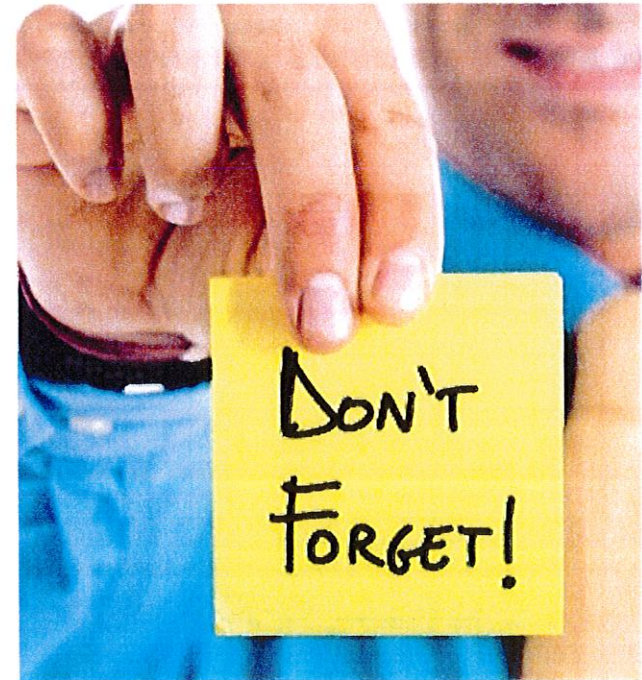


Other Strategies

- Morning meet and greets
 - Can be daily or weekly (as child needs)
- Positive interactions with adults
- “Ordinary Magic”
- ELKLAN strategies
- Working collaboratively with school staff and parents (make them aware)

Points to Remember

- Anxiety is complex
- Change will not happen overnight
- Change will require hard work and long-term support
- If anxious behaviours disappear, they can return!



Planning Next Steps

- Background
- Main Concerns
- What's Working Well
- Possible Strategies
- The Next 3 Days
- The Next Half Term



Thank you!

