

# Managing Anxiety during Lockdown

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**achieving**  
**for children**

# Plan

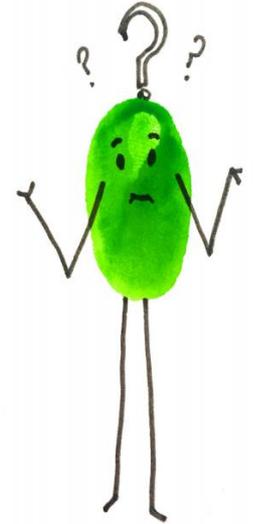
- What is anxiety?
- Anxiety and ADHD
- How to notice anxiety in your child
- What parents can do to help in younger and older children
- When to seek support
- Resources
- Looking after yourself
- Questions - Feedback

# Understanding Anxiety

- All humans experience fears at different points in their lives. This is a normal part of development.
- Anxiety is an expected, normal and transient response to stress; it maybe a necessary cue for adaptation and coping.
- Anxiety can be mild and short lived or pervasive and intense, causing a great deal of distress and placing very real restrictions on life.
- A moderate amount of anxiety helps us to do well. Too much or too little anxiety keeps our performance lower.
- Anxiety is part of our body's **fight/ flight/ freeze response** to danger.



# Recognising a Problem



- Distress - It becomes a problem when it is irrational, uncontrollable and disruptive
- Interference - When it interferes with the young person's life
- Avoidance - Often it is the avoidance behaviours that finally bring the problem to our attention

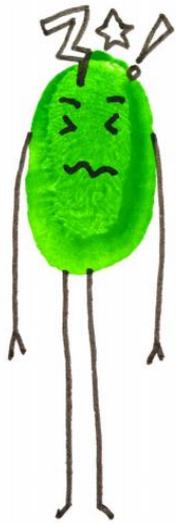
# A new or existing anxiety?

- Has your child always had anxiety?
- Has the current situation made anxiety worse?
- Is the anxiety specifically about Corona virus?
- Remember, there is likely to be a natural increase in anxiety for many at this time, this is normal and understandable.

# ADHD and Anxiety

- Anxiety is common in children with ADHD, children who have ADHD are more likely than children without ADHD to have anxiety
- Some behaviours seen in children with ADHD are the same as those associated with anxiety e.g difficulty paying attention and fidgeting
- Children with ADHD tend to have difficulties with executive functioning which are our organisation and time management skills, as these skills are more difficult for children with ADHD they may find day to day planning and organisation stressful which can heighten their anxiety
- Children with ADHD may also struggle to manage their emotions, this can mean they become flooded with emotions and struggle to make sense of negative thoughts or worries

# Signs and Symptoms



# What you may notice...



## Thoughts and reenactment:

- Talking about their worries
- Re-creating “stories, worries” in their play

## Mood

- Appearing low, sad or more tearful or withdrawn

## Behaviour

- Being angry, argumentative, getting into fights
- Demanding attention/ constant reassurance, “clingy” behaviour
- Losing confidence – avoiding doing things like school work, “seeing” friends, going out for walks

## Physical

- Changes to sleep & appetite
- Physical health complaints e.g. headaches, stomach aches

# So how can you tell if it's anxiety???

- Ask, using open-ended question (e.g. what kind of worries do you have at the moment?), but be aware the children may not be aware or want to share.
- Be curious - wonder aloud with the child/YP - “I wonder whether you’re feeling worried/unsettled about not seeing friends/missing work/this situation and it’s making you not want to do a,b,c/ affecting how you are with your brother?”
- Normalise worry in this time as a way of trying to open up dialogue about it/reduce stigma

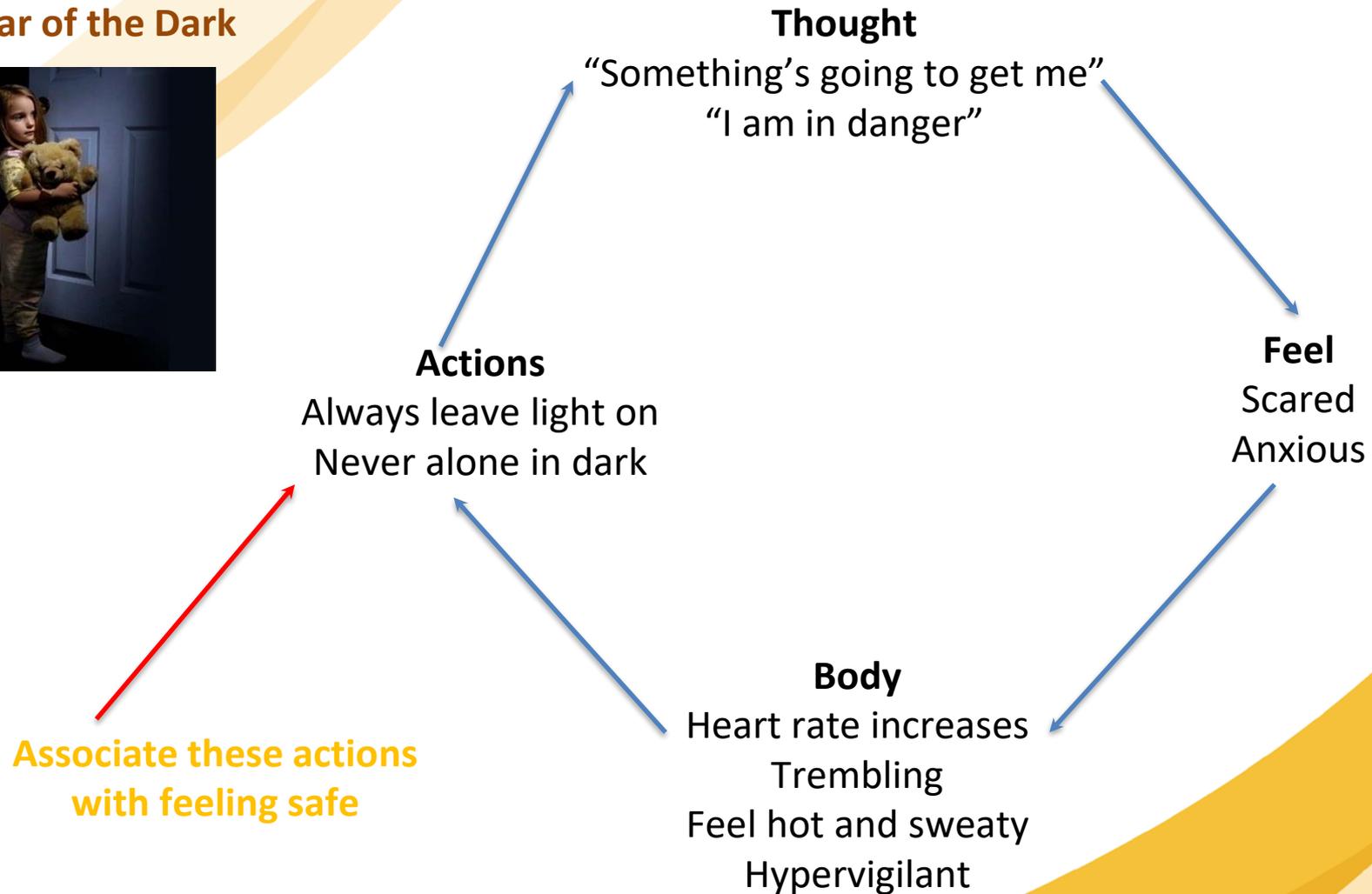
# So how can you tell if it's anxiety???

- Notice when the behaviour may be happening (Antecedant, behaviour, consequence chart aka what happened before and after the behaviour).
- This will help to decipher whether it is specific to a certain circumstance or more generalised.

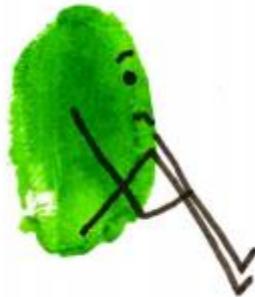
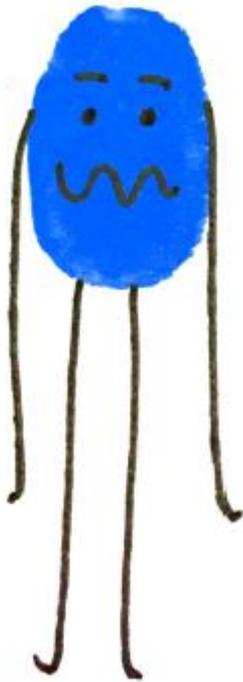
What happened before	What was the behaviour	What happened after/what helped?

# Anxious thoughts & the vicious cycle of anxiety

## Fear of the Dark



**What can parents  
do to help?**



# Covid-specific anxiety

- Structure (this can be loose!)
- Sleep
- Exercise
- PACE (playfulness; acceptance; curiosity; empathy)



# Covid-specific anxiety

- Be aware of your own anxieties in relation to covid - how many you be expressing these? Is there anything you think you may need to do differently?
- Normalise feelings
- Use resources that help explain (e.g. Alex Scheffler 5-9 years [www.nosycrow.com](http://www.nosycrow.com) ; [www.bombinithebee.co.uk](http://www.bombinithebee.co.uk))

# Covid-specific anxiety

- Reassure - begin to help support with coping thoughts (e.g. “this won’t last forever)
- When you feel this way, what can help? (strategies below)
- Think about what child values and which values covid has affected (e.g. friends) - is there anyway of moving closer to those values (e.g. send something to a friend; facetime; plan what to do when you’ll see them again)

# Covid-specific anxiety

For older children and adolescents..

- Look after your wellbeing and try to find balance-make sure you split your time between things that you find pleasure in, things where you can achieve (even small goals) and staying connected
- Some things that you can do to keep yourself occupied are listening to music, getting outside, trying some gardening, reading a book or watching a film

# Covid-specific anxiety

- Challenge your thoughts compassionately
- Notice and limit your worries
- Use reputable news sources
- Set a routine
- Stay mentally and physically active
- Practice gratitude and focus

# General anxiety management: Practical

**These can help with anxiety in the moment but, if practiced regularly can help give a calmer “baseline”**

Grounding techniques:

- 5 senses game (5 things you can hear; see; smell etc)
- Body scan (apps to support e.g. Headspace)

Breathing exercises:

- 5 finger breathing
- Breath in for 5 out for 6



# General anxiety management: Practical

## Physical:

- Running around the garden/outside space 5 times
- Doing 50 jumping jacks
- Yoga/stretching (cosmic kids; yoga with adrienne)
- Progressive muscle relaxation

# Calm Box: create together

Stretch like a  
cat

Go and get a  
drink of water  
and drink it  
slowly

Take five  
deep breaths.

Sort wooden  
blocks into  
colours

Colour a  
pattern in a  
colouring book

Play with  
fidget toy for  
five minutes

Listen to a  
relaxation  
audio for 5  
minutes

Make a pizza. The key  
adult draws a circle on  
the child's back and uses  
different touches to  
represent pizza toppings  
of the child's choice



Mould aroma dough in  
your hands. Smell it.  
Make something out of  
it and put it back. Smell  
your hands to remind  
yourself what you did

# General anxiety management: Thought-based

- Coping thoughts:  
E.g. “I can do this”
  
- Self-esteem - focus on the positives (children are likely to need support with this



# Worry Tree



1. Notice the worry



2. Ask 'What am I worrying about?'



3. Ask 'Can I do anything about it?'



No

Yes

Let the worry go

Make a plan!

Think about something else

What, When, How?

Now

Later

Do it!

Decide 'when?'

Let the worry go

Let the worry go

Think about something else

Think about something else

# Increasing motivation to use strategies

**Different things will work for different children**

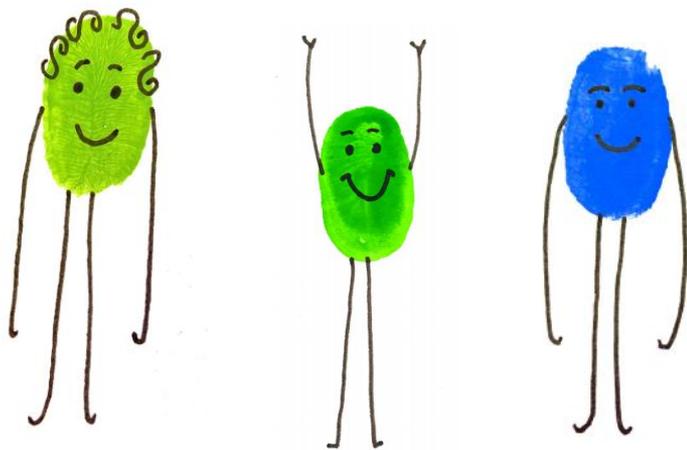
- Incorporate into learning?
- Reward
- Do as a family

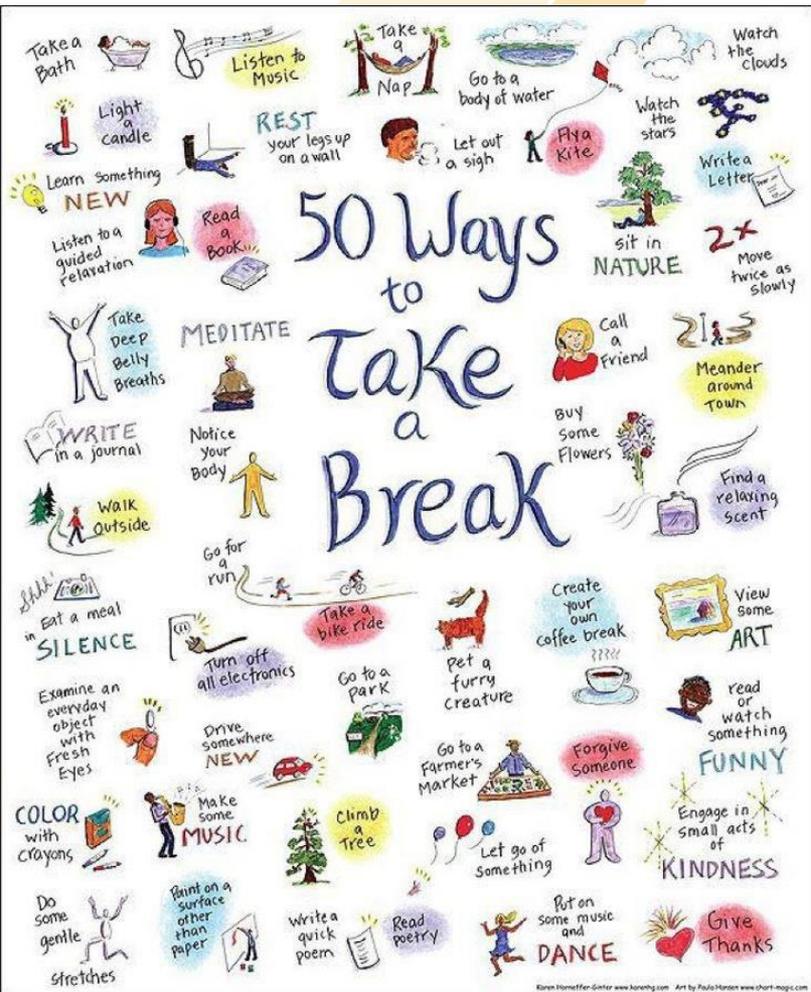
**Be realistic - learning anxiety management can be a lifetime's work. Start to sew the seeds and this can be enough.**

# Supporting yourself

- Lower expectations of yourself (surviving is fine; use a critical eye when looking at social media)
- Lower expectations of your child
- Is self-care possible?
- Reflect on what went well (even if it was a small thing)
- Find a way to offload your feelings

We are all unique.  
Every child is unique.  
You know your child best and  
what may work for them.





Stop, Breathe, Think



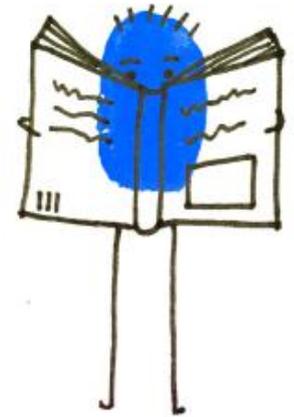
Calm

Think Ninja



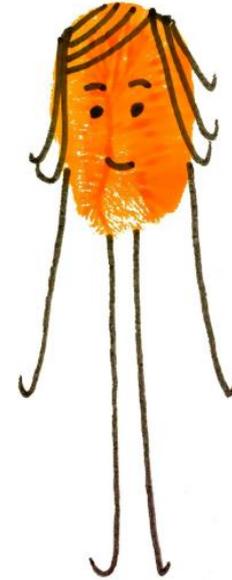
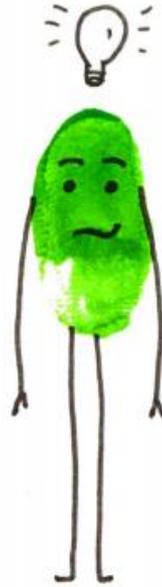
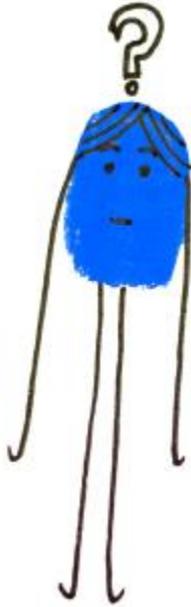
Headspace

# Resources



- What To Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner
- The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside
- Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide by Cathy Cresswell
- “Relax Kids” Their website provides useful resources to help children cope with a range of stressful situations: <http://www.relaxkids.co.uk/UK/Home>

# Questions - Ideas - Feedback



THANK YOU

