

Anxiety Workshop

Today's Session

- What is anxiety?
- Why do some children experience anxiety?
 - What does anxiety feel like?
 - How does it affect behaviour?
 - Challenging negative thoughts
 - Anxiety-related school absence
- Tools that will help you child when they are feeling anxious
- To understand the importance of looking after our own well-being when supporting our children

What is anxiety?



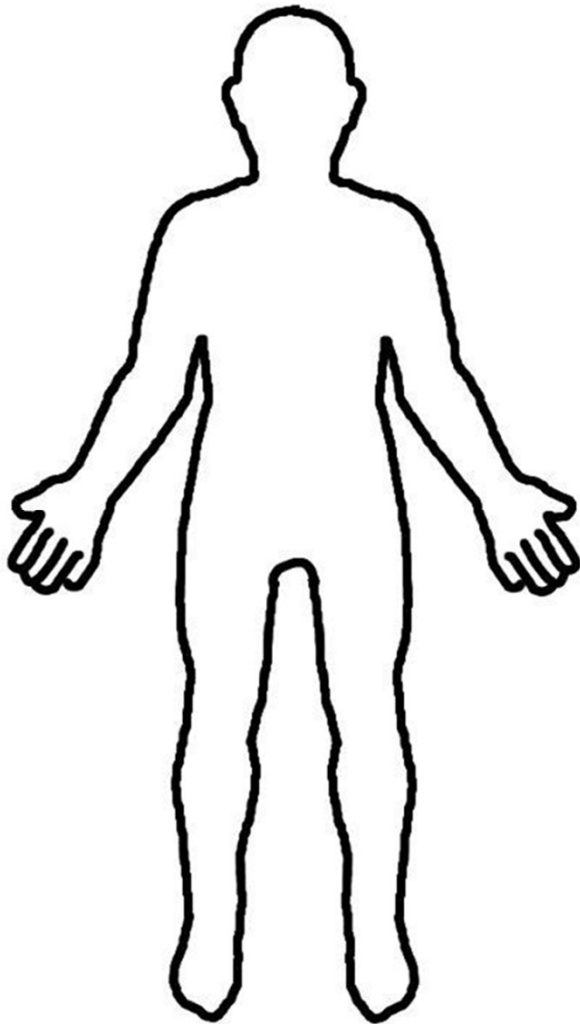
- Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.
- Not always 'bad'!
- Has an evolutionary basis.
- Fight, flight, freeze is a protective mechanism and has kept us safe for thousands of years.
- During FFF, our bodies get ready to fight, run away or play dead.
- Lots of things change in our bodies: heart beats faster, breathing rate increases, we get a rush of chemicals (e.g. adrenaline) designed to give us speed, strength and alertness.
- These chemicals produce the side effects we know as anxiety- stomachache, shaking/ trembling, dizziness, tight/ sore throat, sweating.

Why is my child anxious?

- Some children are just more sensitive. They feel more worried, frightened, sad or scared than others and they feel it in a BIGGER way.
- Some anxious children may have had difficult experiences, e.g., parental separation, bullying, accidents, lots of change in a short time period.
- Some anxious children have anxious parents/ carers.
 - Some of it is down to genetics.
 - You probably won't be able to 'fix' your child's anxiety, but you can help them to tolerate and cope with it better.

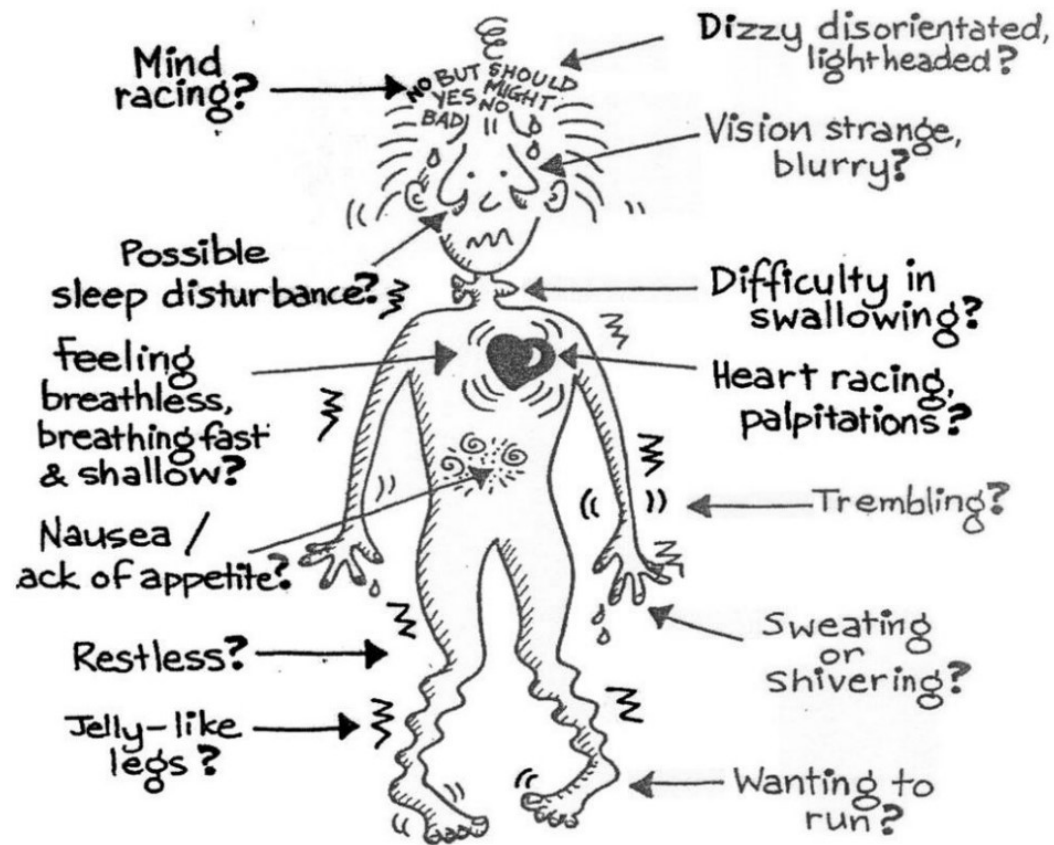


Where does your child feel their anxiety?



Colour in where you think your child feels their anxiety on the body outline. What does it feel like for them? Is it pain, heat, cold, tingly, sudden?

What does anxiety feel like in a child's body?



What does anxiety look like in a child's behaviour?



When a child is having anxiety they can rarely say "I'm feeling anxious." Instead their anxiety can show up as a number of other feelings and through different symptoms.

1 CHANDELIERING



Chandeliering is when your child seems calm and then suddenly the smallest of things upsets them. They fly off the handle and you're not quite sure why. They have pushed their emotions away for SO long that they finally bubble up to the surface!

2 ANGER

When a child feels anxious it triggers their fight or flight response. This may make them angry although they may not know why.



3 DEFIANCE

When your child is feeling anxious they feel out of control. They may defy you in an attempt to control whatever aspect of their life they can.



4 DIFFICULTY SLEEPING

One of the biggest hallmarks of anxiety in children is not being able to get to sleep or having issues staying asleep. Sound familiar?



5 NEGATIVITY

Someone who experiences anxiety tends to have many more negative thoughts than someone who does not. Children are no different.



6 LACK OF FOCUS

Children with anxiety get so caught up in their own worries and thoughts that they lose focus of what they're trying to do and can't pay attention to what is going on around them.



7 OVERPLANNING

Overplanning has the same cause as defiant behavior in children with anxiety. Children will over-plan when they know they're going into a situation where they will have little or no control.

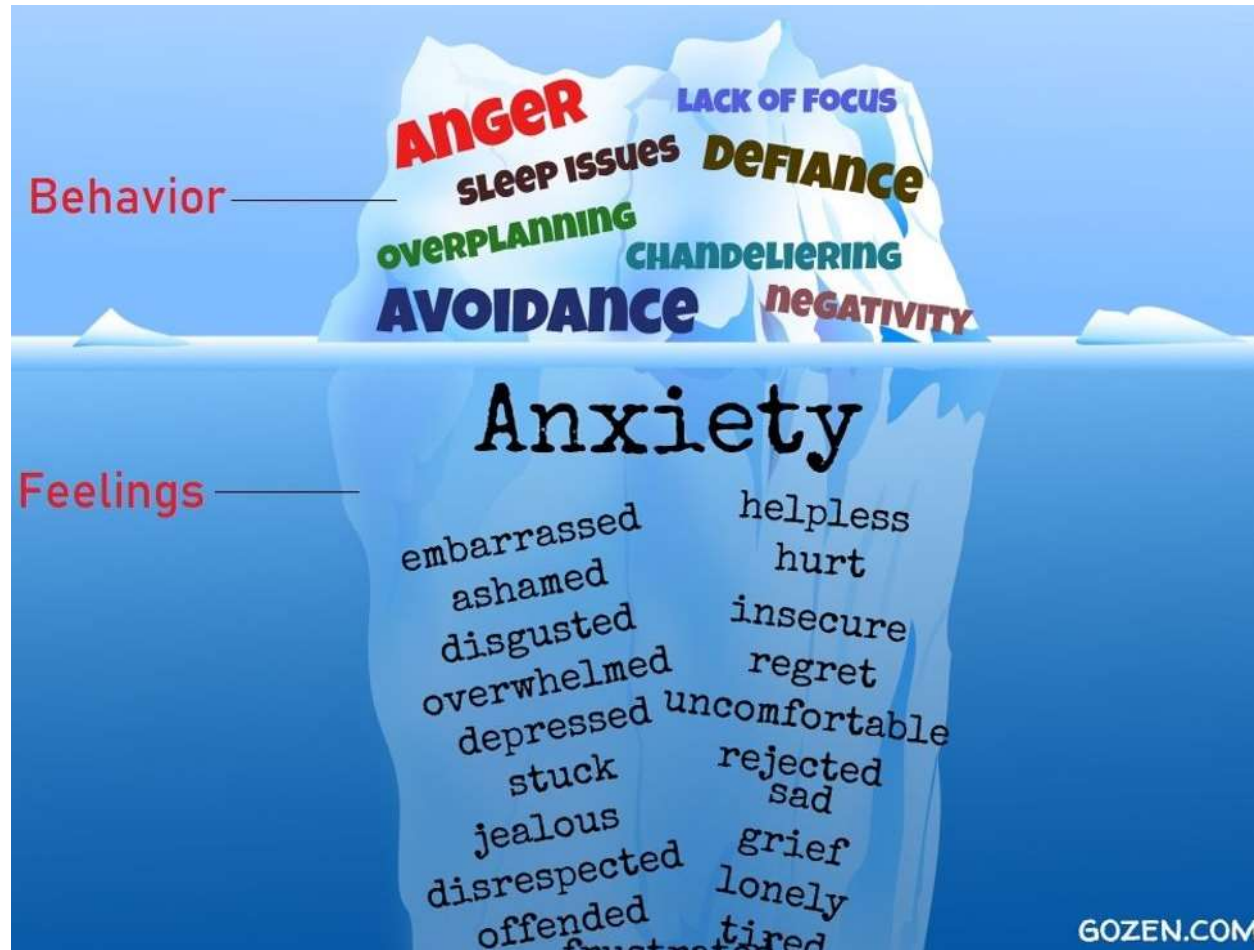


8 AVOIDANCE

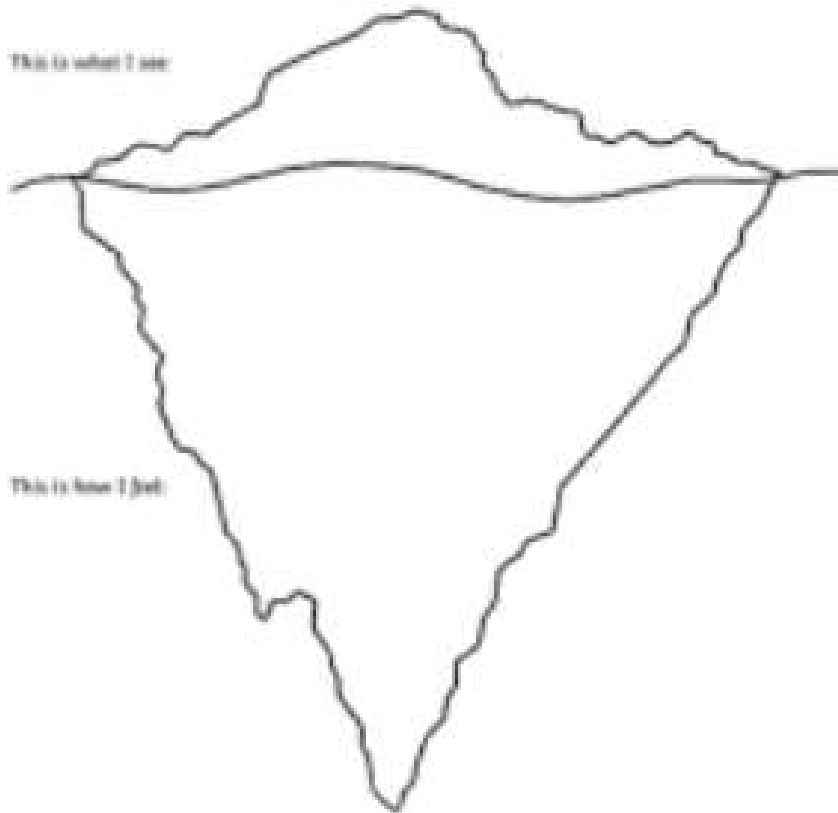
Children with anxiety will sometimes try to avoid certain situations or people that cause them that anxiety. In turn they end up getting in those situations or seeing that person more.



Anxiety Iceberg



My Feelings Iceberg



Anxiety Iceberg

You could make one of
your own,
with your child.

Negative thoughts

- Anxious children tend to engage in more negative 'self-talk'.
 - Their internal dialogues are more critical and pessimistic.
- It's important to encourage your child to notice these thoughts, then voice them out loud so that you can help to challenge them.
- Your child may not find it easy to do this, so you could be their voice initially: "I'm wondering if..."
 - Then you can 'fact check' the thought with your child.



healthy	
Self-Talk 	
THIS	NOT THAT
✓ Whoops. I made a mistake.	✗ I'm so dumb.
✓ I like me.	✗ No one likes me.
✓ I did something bad.	✗ I'm a bad person.
✓ This is really hard, but I'm going to keep trying.	✗ I give up. I'll never be able to do this.
✓ I haven't figured it out...yet.	✗ I never get anything right.
✓ I am enough. And worthy, too.	✗ I'm not good enough.

Anxiety about going to school

- Lots of children find it hard to come into school.
- Separation anxiety is when your child finds it hard to part with you or be away from you and becomes worried about this.
- School anxiety could be due to finding the work hard, friendship difficulties, not feeling as though they fit in, and bullying.





School anxiety- what it looks like



- Not wanting to get up and get ready
 - Saying they can't go
- Worrying a lot about small issues, such as having the right equipment or lunch
- Feeling sick, or having stomach aches or headaches
 - Not sleeping well
 - Not doing schoolwork, or their grades dropping
- Being angry or upset, or acting out – at school or at home
 - Withdrawing – seeming low or depressed.



School Anxiety- How To Help

- Talk to them about what is worrying them
- Think together about what changes could be made
 - Reach out to the school as early as possible
- Discuss coping strategies with your child, e.g., breathing, separation hearts
 - Have a good morning routine
 - Try a worry journal or worry box

Top Tips



- Explain about fight, flight, freeze and the brain so it doesn't feel like a mystery.
 - Try not to avoid situations/ people/ events. Avoidance feeds the anxiety.
- Encourage your child to notice when they're having the anxious thought and to tell you about it.
 - Encourage them to recognise how this feels in their body.
 - Challenge the negative self-talk. Fact check it for you child.
- Describe the anxious feelings like riding a wave. It builds up to a peak and then breaks and gets smaller.
 - Relaxation techniques- mindfulness (54321), meditation apps, breathing. See handouts.
 - Make a set time (10 minutes) to talk about their worries. Try to avoid bedtime.



Top Tips continued...

- Make a 'Self-Soothe Box'. See handout.
- Stay calm- they will look to you for reassurance
- Stay with them- try not to leave them alone
 - Distraction- anything you can think of!
- Offer a cold drink with ice in. This can almost shock the senses and act as distraction/ bring them back to the present moment.
- Read a book about anxiety/ worry. This will help to normalise it by showing that lots of people feel like this sometimes.
- When we're afraid of something, the hardest time is just before we do it. So, try to reduce this waiting time.
 - If you are anxious, model how you cope to your child.

Deep breathing
using your hand.



And MOST importantly of all... try to look after your own wellbeing.

We can't help others if we're not helping ourselves.

HOW TO USE OXYGEN MASK ON PLANE



Ask for help if you need it

Friends and family can often help - don't be afraid to ask them to have your child for a bit if you need some time out to sort out your own stuff. You can repay them when things get better for you!



Don't struggle alone

If things are getting you down, it's important to recognise this. Talk to someone you trust and see what they think. Many people go on struggling with very difficult situations because they feel they should be able to cope and don't deserve any help.



Take time for yourself

It's easy to say take some time for yourself but in reality this may not feel possible. You might be too busy, exhausted or hard up for exercise or hobbies. But even a night in with a friend, a DVD box set or your favourite dinner can help.



Don't blame yourself

If your child is having problems, don't be too hard on yourself or blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent. Children often take it out on those closest to them, so you might be feeling the effect of their very powerful emotions.



You're doing everything you can

If you had a difficult time growing up yourself, or have had emotional problems or mental health problems, it can be very worrying to think that the same thing might happen to your child. But the love and care you show them and the fact that you are trying to help will protect against this. Getting help for them and perhaps for yourself too can give them the best chance of feeling better.



Speak to your GP if you're struggling to cope

Go to your GP if things are really getting on top of you. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. You can't help your child if you are not being supported yourself. Some people worry their parenting will be judged and their children will be taken away if they admit they are struggling to cope. This should only happen if a child is being abused or neglected and the role of professionals is to support you to look after your child as well as you can.

Any Questions?

