



# Anxiety

A self-help guide

# What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that we all experience at times. We can feel anxious when we are worried, or afraid. Anxiety can affect us in different ways, such as the way we think, feel, behave and the way our bodies work. It is important to know that anxiety is a normal experience.



## Feelings

Nervous, worried, panicky, stressed, strange, frightened, unsettled



## Physical symptoms

Tense, dizzy, shaky, tight chest, heart racing, feeling sick, sweaty



## Thoughts

Something bad may happen, imagining the worst, worry about lots of different things



## Behaviour

Avoid doing things, pace around, run away, easily flustered, talk quickly

# Fight, flight or freeze

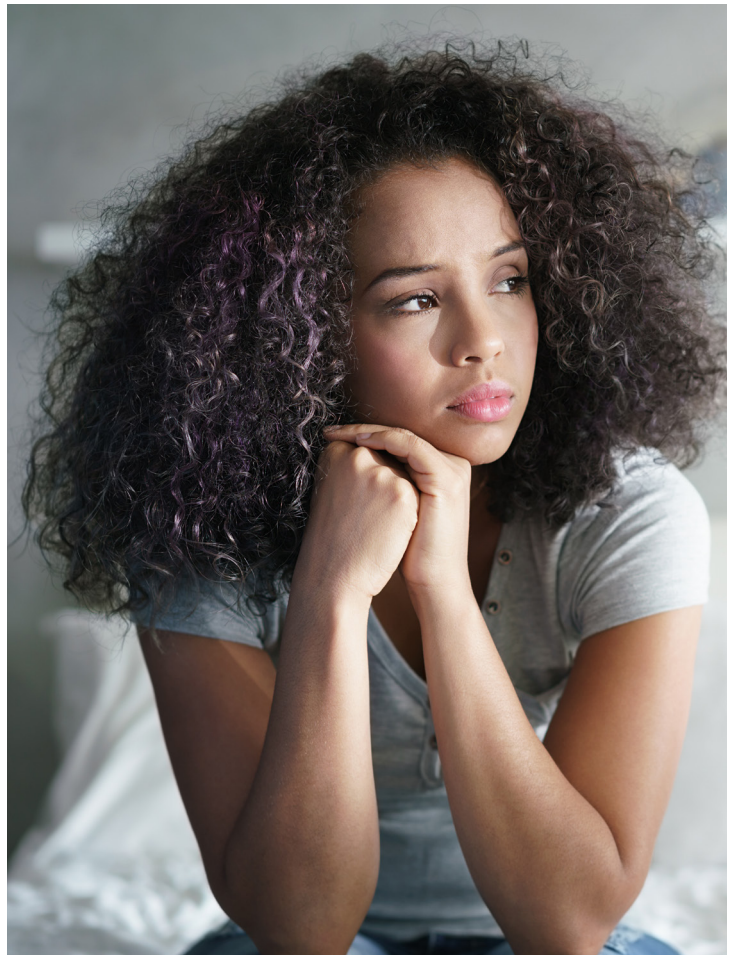
This is something that humans have been developing since we were cave people, millions of years ago. Our bodies developed an 'alarm system' to deal with threats which protected us from harm. Nowadays, different things can set off our fight, flight or freeze response. It is important to remember that although it can be uncomfortable, it is not life threatening and we can manage these symptoms.

# What keeps anxiety going

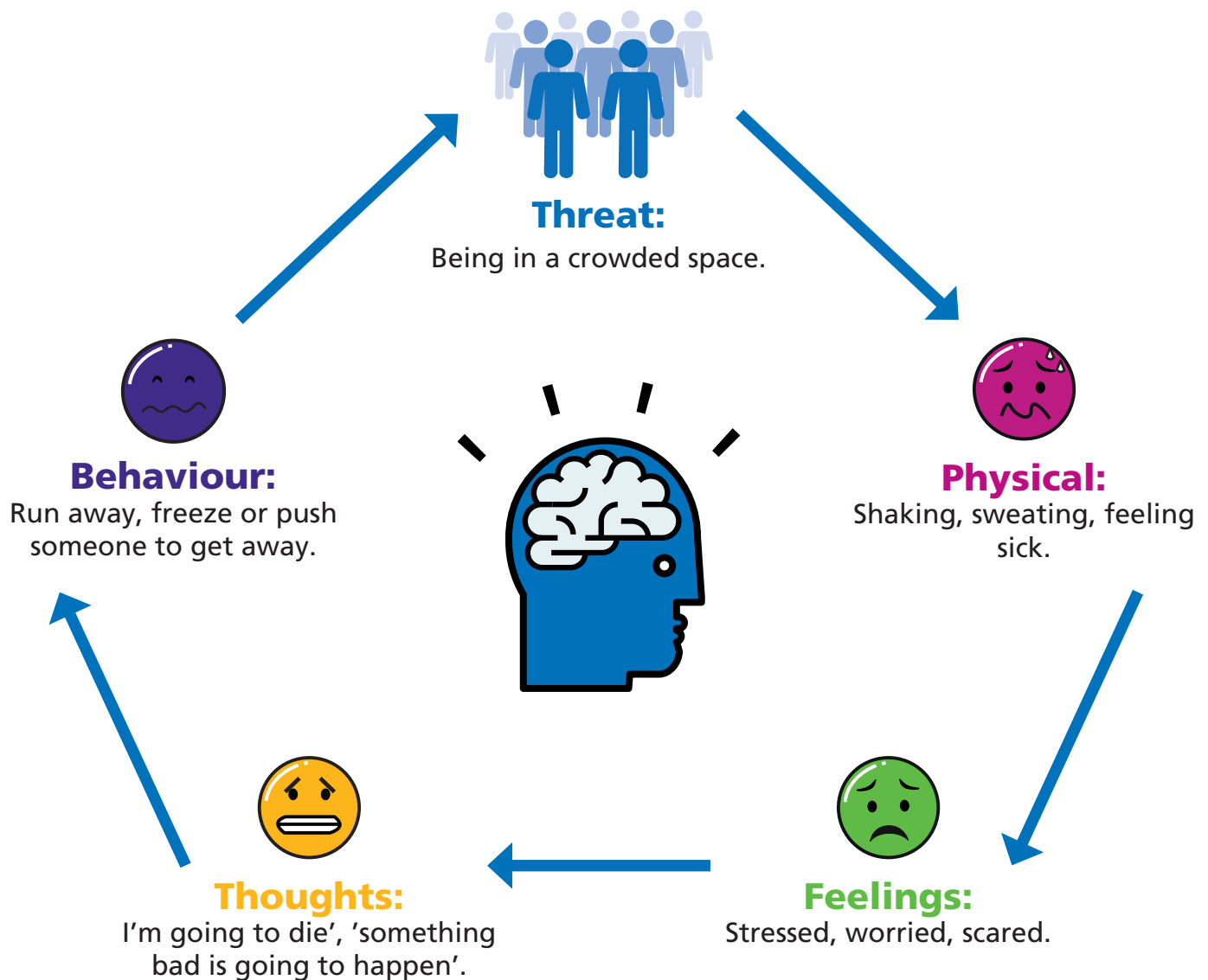
A way of reducing anxiety is to understand why we may feel anxious in certain situations. Sometimes anxiety can go on and on, and can eventually become a life long problem. It is important that when we notice anxiety or that we are worrying then we act quickly

A vicious cycle of anxiety can develop if we do not act quickly. The physical symptoms of anxiety can be frightening and unpleasant, and often we may think that there is something psychically wrong or that something awful is going to happen.

Its important that we understand our own response to anxiety and try and break the cycle as early as possible before it becomes unmanageable.



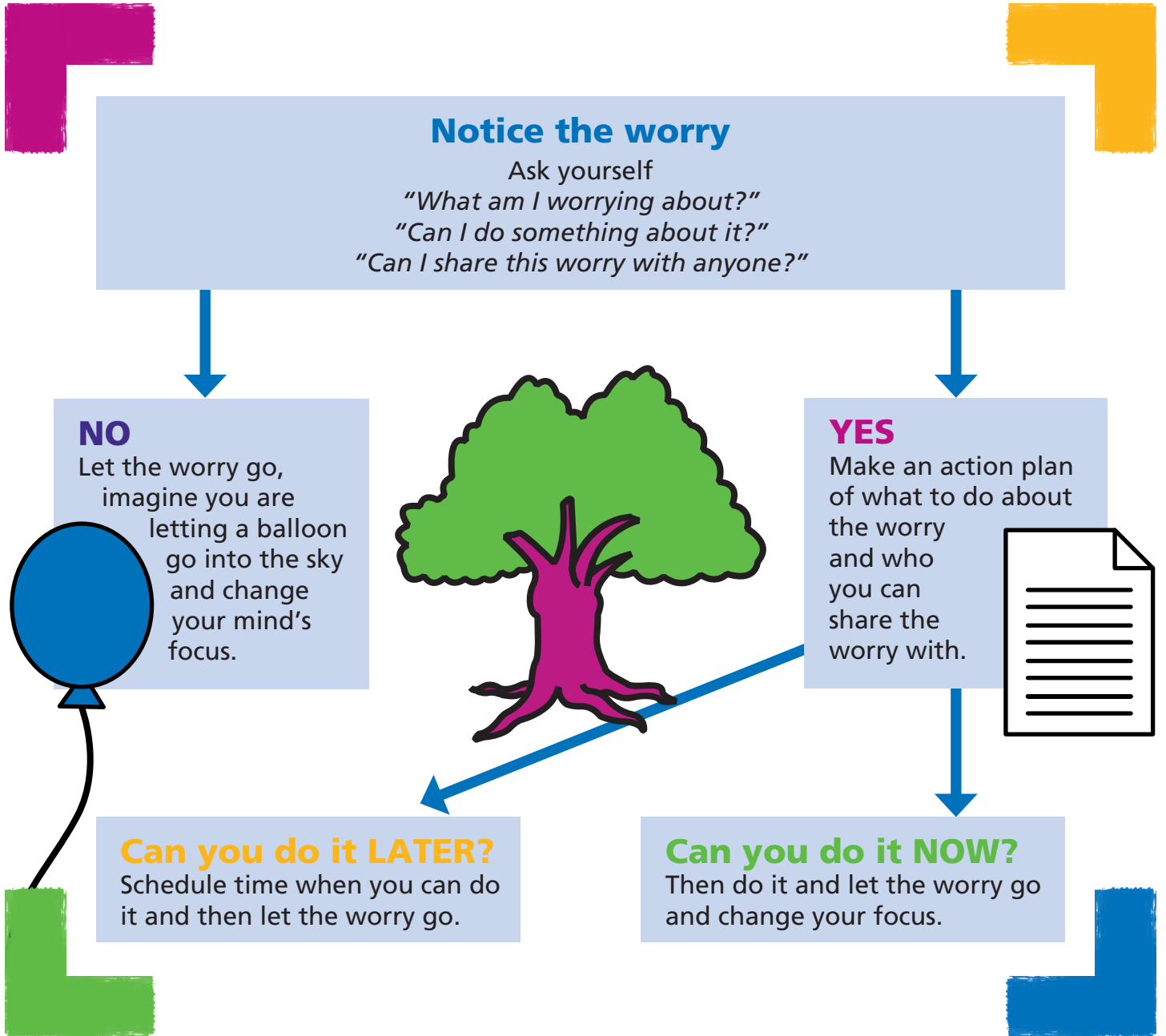
# Anxiety cycle



Altering your thoughts relating to anxiety is important in overcoming a 'threat'. It is also important that you recognise when you are worrying so that you become practice in intervening when these thought occur as quickly as possible.

**Example:** Imagine you are running late for school. All of a sudden you get a pain in your chest and feel breathless. The thought you have is "I'm having a heart attack". This could be physical symptoms of anxiety. In this example you could be worried about walking into class and everyone staring at you.

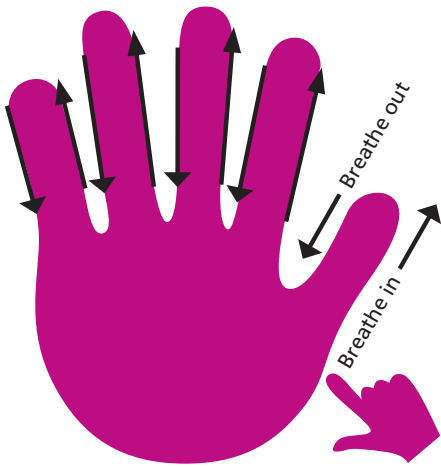
# Worry tree



# Breathing techniques

Practising breathing techniques helps to reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety. By doing this we regulate the physical response and calm our body and brain down. Examples of how to practise breathing techniques include:

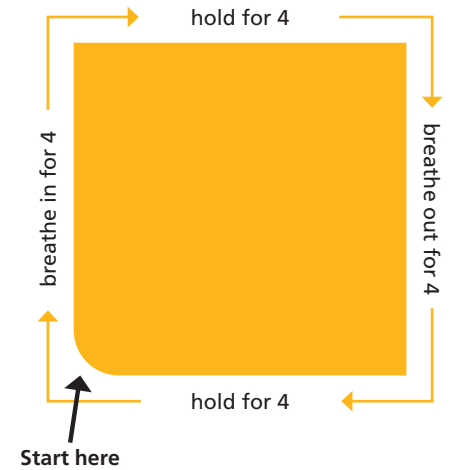
## 5 Finger breathing



## Star breathing



## Rectangle breathing



# Distraction techniques

We sometimes worry about things we cannot change, and in these situations it is a good idea to have a list of activities that we know will calm us down and distract us when we are anxious.

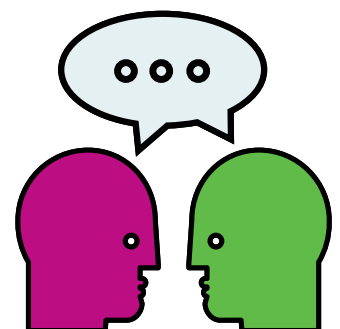
- Colouring
- Exercising
- Listening to music
- Playing with pets
- Watching TV
- Having a snack
- Mindfulness (apps such as CALM/Headspace)
- Going outdoors



# Talking techniques

It is really important to talk to others and tell them when we are feeling worried. It can be hard to share a worry, but it is important to share it so people around can help. Here are some different ways you can share a worry if you find it difficult.

- Identifying 5 people you can talk to about a worry
- Having a dedicated time to talk about a worry
- Writing down a worry and sharing this with someone you trust
- Using a worry monster to hold your worries, and sharing this monster with someone



# Planning ahead

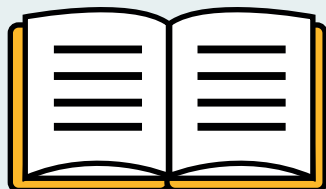
It is important to make a plan on how to deal with anxiety. It is also good to talk this plan through with your parent/carer, so they can support you with it.

The plan should consider:

- Situations that make you feel anxious or worried
- Physical symptoms of anxiety you may experience
- Some reminders of breathing techniques
- A list of distraction techniques
- A list of people you can talk to about a worry
- Create a self-soothe box

It is useful to create a self-soothe box, to help when you are feeling anxious or worried. Below are some useful things to include within the box.

- Something you can touch and that feels nice (teddy or blanket)
- Memories (pictures or a letter)
- Something smelly (perfume)
- Music you like to listen to
- Calming technique cards (enclosed with the self-help pack)
- Activity (play dough, colouring book or writing pad)
- Relaxation activities (face mask, bubble bath or reading)
- List of people you can talk to
- Positive quotes
- Something nice to eat



We hope that you have found some of the techniques within this booklet useful. If some of the techniques have not been particularly helpful, it is worth continuing to try them for a few weeks. If you feel that your situation hasn't improved following a few weeks of trying new techniques contact your GP, CAMHS, school or any other professional involved in supporting you.

## Useful websites, apps and contact details

### CAMHS single point of access

Call: 01977 735865

9am-5pm

### Samaritans

Free anytime phone number

Call: 116123 Text: 07725 909090

### Kooth

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) (free, safe and anonymous online support for 11 to 19 year olds)

### Childline

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) for email or to use the 1-2-1 counsellor chat or call:

0800 1111 (free, anytime for help with any worry for under 19s)

### Papyrus

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) for online text or phone support to young people.

Call: 080 0684 141 or text: 07786 209697

### Young Minds

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk) (resources for children and young people, parents and professionals)

### CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net) (help via website and helpline for people aged 15-35)

### Heads Above the Waves

[www.hatw.co.uk](http://www.hatw.co.uk) (online advice, support and coping strategies for young people suffering with depression and self-harm)

### Self Harm UK

[www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

### Elefriends

[www.elefriends.org.uk](http://www.elefriends.org.uk)

(safe place to listen, share and be heard)

### The Mix

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

Helpline: 080 8808 4994

Text: THEMIX to 85258 for crisis support.

### Mindout

[www.mindout.org.uk](http://www.mindout.org.uk)

(online instant message service that is confidential and anonymous to support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities)

### Cruse

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) or

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

(bereavement support)

### Doc Ready

[www.docready.org](http://www.docready.org)

(helps to prepare people to talk about mental health to the GP).

### Stay Alive App (app to download)

### Change Grow Live (CGL)

[www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

Call: 07917 200696

(If you are using drugs or alcohol as a way to cope CGL offers confidential support)

### Victim support

Call: 01924 614440 or 0300 0303 1971 (for emotional and practical support for anyone under 18 who has been affected by a crime)