

Supporting Young People Manage Anxiety

Resource Pack



**achieving
for children**

Introduction

This parent session is designed to provide you with some psychoeducation surrounding anxiety. We will be sharing the foundations of anxiety, how it presents in some children & teenagers, how their thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and physical feelings may be affected, and then strategies that can be used to reduce these feelings. This resource pack will accompany tonight's presentation; providing reflective tasks for yourself, and your young person, alongside practical strategies and tips.

Emotional Health Service at Achieving for Children

Reflection Task

1. Did you ever find yourself experiencing anxiety as young person or adult? How did you manage this?

Stress

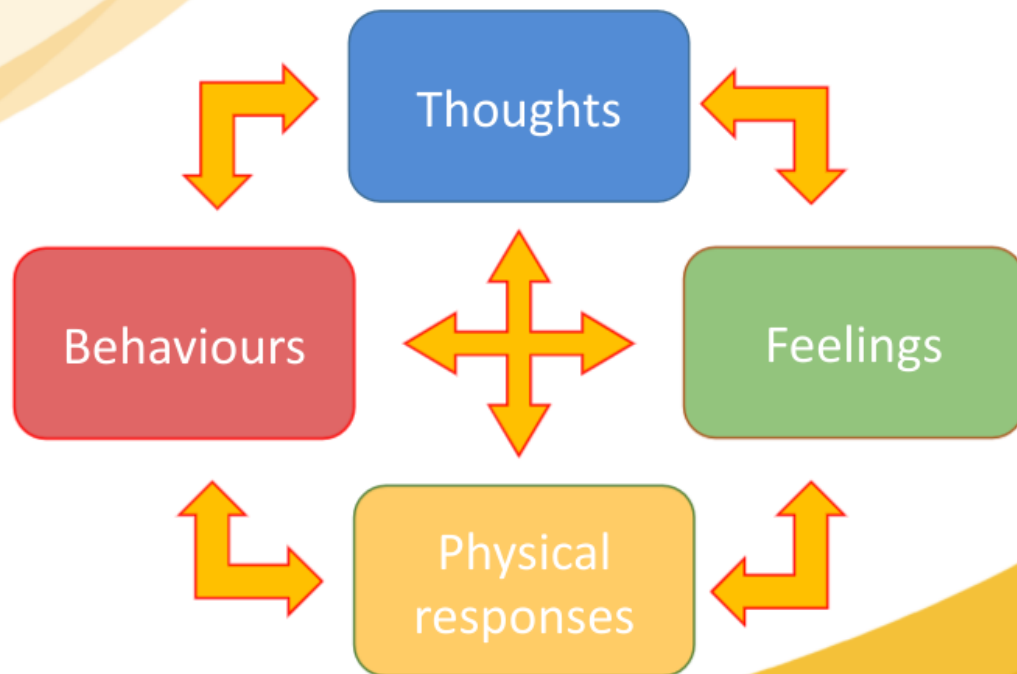
Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses.

Stress is the body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. It's very common, can be motivating to help us achieve things in our daily life, but too much stress can lead to anxiety and impact our wellbeing.

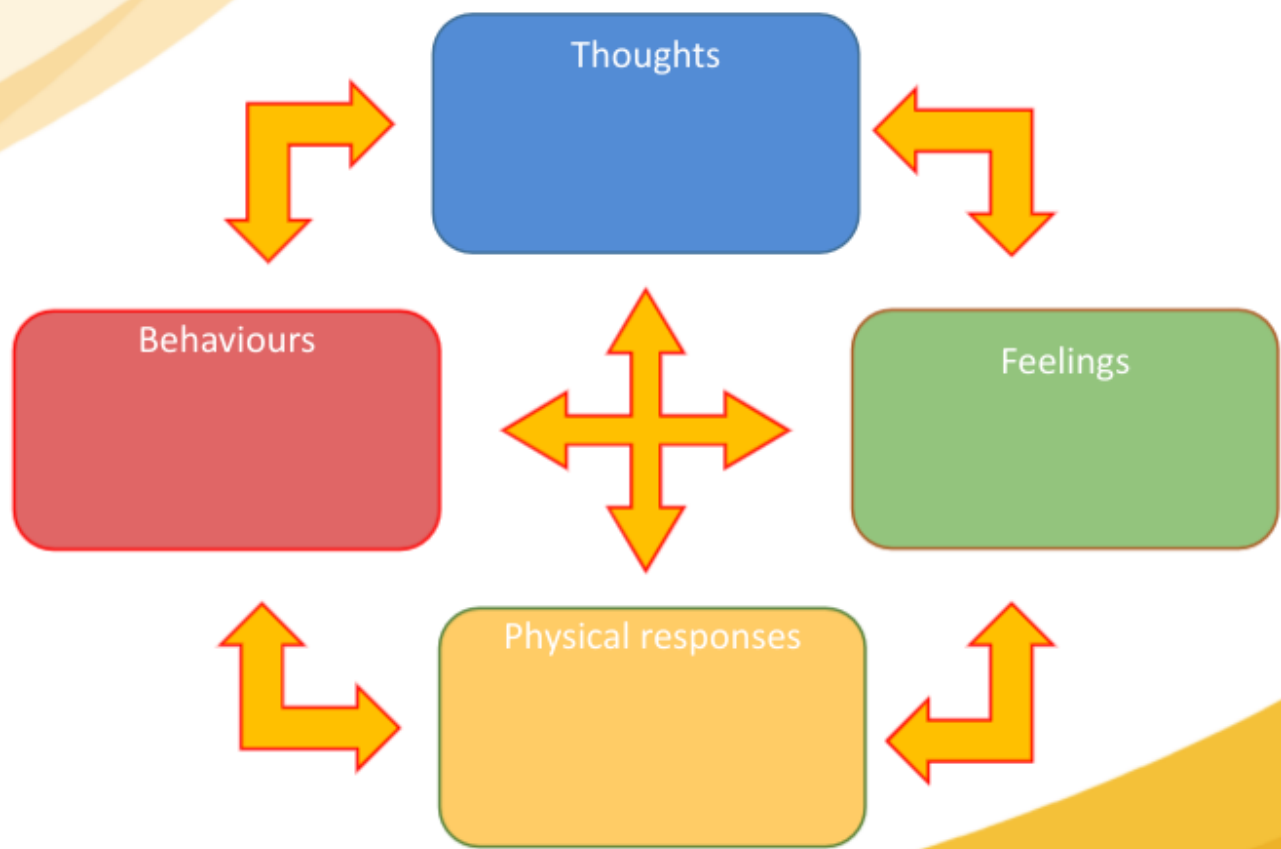
Signs to look out for:

- Worry a lot and feel tense
- Have headaches and stomach pains
- Not sleep well
- Be irritable
- Lose interest in food or eat more than normal
- Not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- Be negative and have a low mood
- Feel hopeless about the future

The Cognitive Behavioural Model

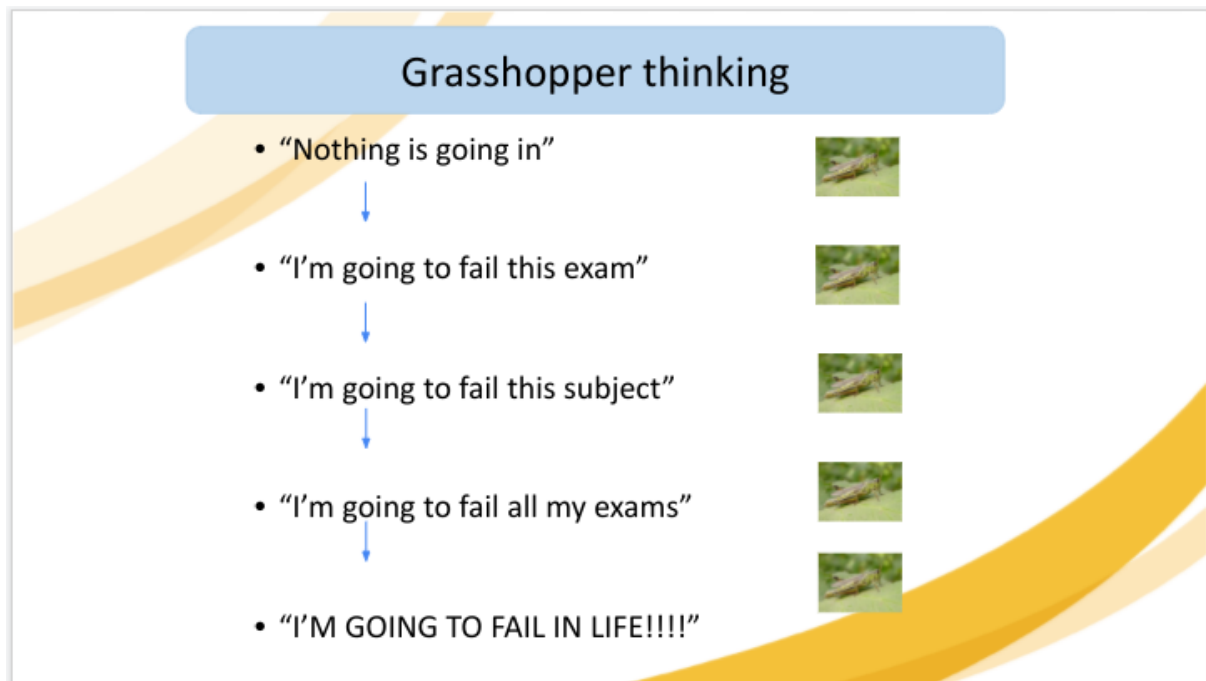


Use the blank versions on the next page to record what you notice for your child/young person, or have them complete it:



$$\text{Anxiety} = \frac{\text{Overestimation of threat}}{\text{Underestimation of ability to cope}}$$

Thoughts



Helping your child to manage anxious thoughts:

Identifying thoughts, feelings, physical reactions, and behaviours, and challenging the thinking. This can be done by:

1. Thought catching

Encourage your child to catch themselves when they are experiencing helpful thoughts. This develops self-awareness around the way we think in stressful situations. Worrying thoughts often start with "What if...?" This might be a good place to start when it comes to catching negative thoughts.

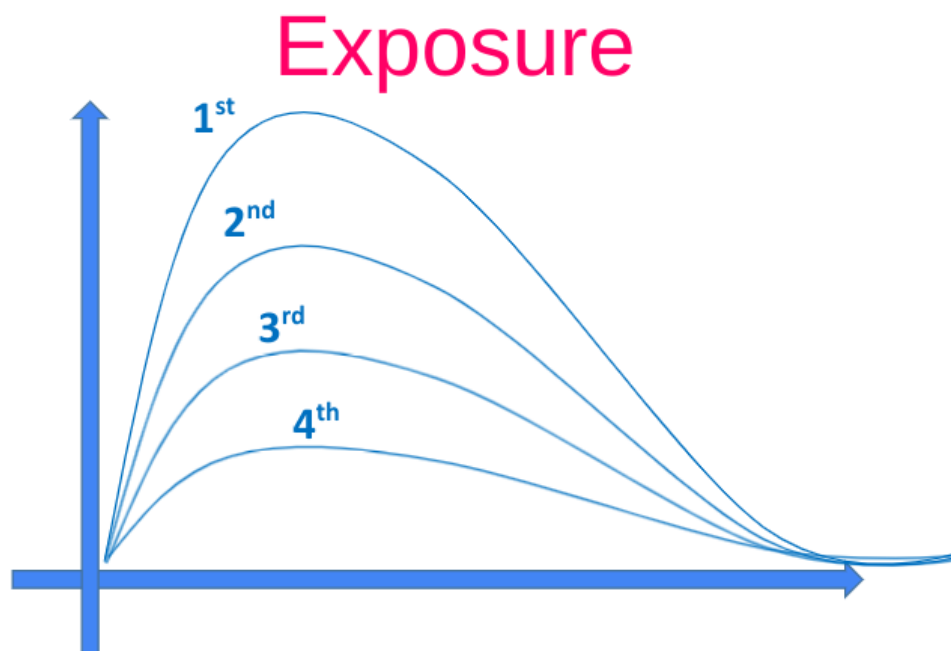
2. Recognising unhelpful thoughts

The big 5 challenge can help us to challenge less helpful thoughts, and turn them into a more helpful one.

<p>Less helpful RED thoughts: What went through your mind? What did you think would happen?</p>	<p>The Big 5 questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What evidence do I have to think that? 2. What are the other ways of looking at this situation? 3. What is the worst thing that could happen? 4. Are there facts that I have overlooked or ignored? 5. What would I say to a friend who told me this thought? 	<p>More helpful GREEN thoughts: Can you now think of a more balanced thought that might be more accurate</p>

Behaviours

In order to face our fears, we have to expose ourselves to them, and then learn that actually we can cope, and survive them. The graph below shows that the first exposure to a feared event, anxiety will be high, but so long as we stay in the situation, it will decrease. The second time we expose ourselves to the event, our anxiety will be lower, and decrease quicker, and so on until we don't feel as anxious.



We can break this exposure down into small steps, creating a ladder that has more manageable steps, to ensure anxiety doesn't become overwhelming. See the below example.

Goal: To try my best in my exams

We can use a stepladder to help us plan out the different steps we need to take to reach our goals



Step 5 – Take my exams and try my very best. I can be proud of myself no matter the outcome.

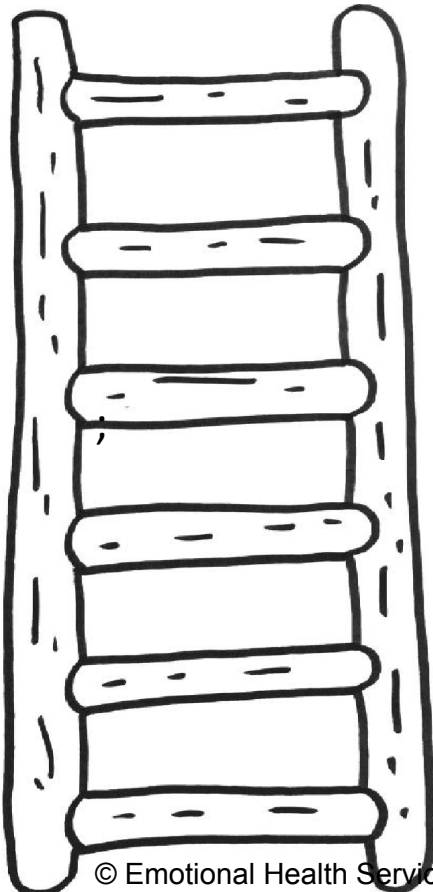
Step 4 - complete a timed practice paper

Step 3 – complete a practice question with unlimited time

Step 2 – make revision cards and practice with my friend

Step 1 – make a revision timetable

Use this space to create your own for your child, or have them create one.



Ultimate Goal:

Step 1:

Feelings

Having a conversation with your young person could be a really simple way to help them feel calmer, validated and supported during their exams. The PACE model gives four easy prompts to remember during the conversation.

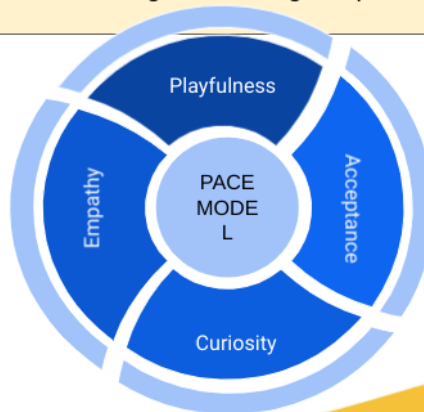
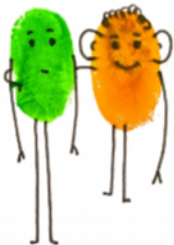
The PACE Model

Playfulness- Make time for fun, laugh and have fun together

Acceptance- Accepting what your child is feeling, thinking, and saying and acknowledging their point of view can make them feel safe

Curiosity- Approach conversations from a not knowing stance and be curious about your child's feelings and emotions

Empathy - Recognising your young persons feelings and having compassion for them meeting them where they are at.



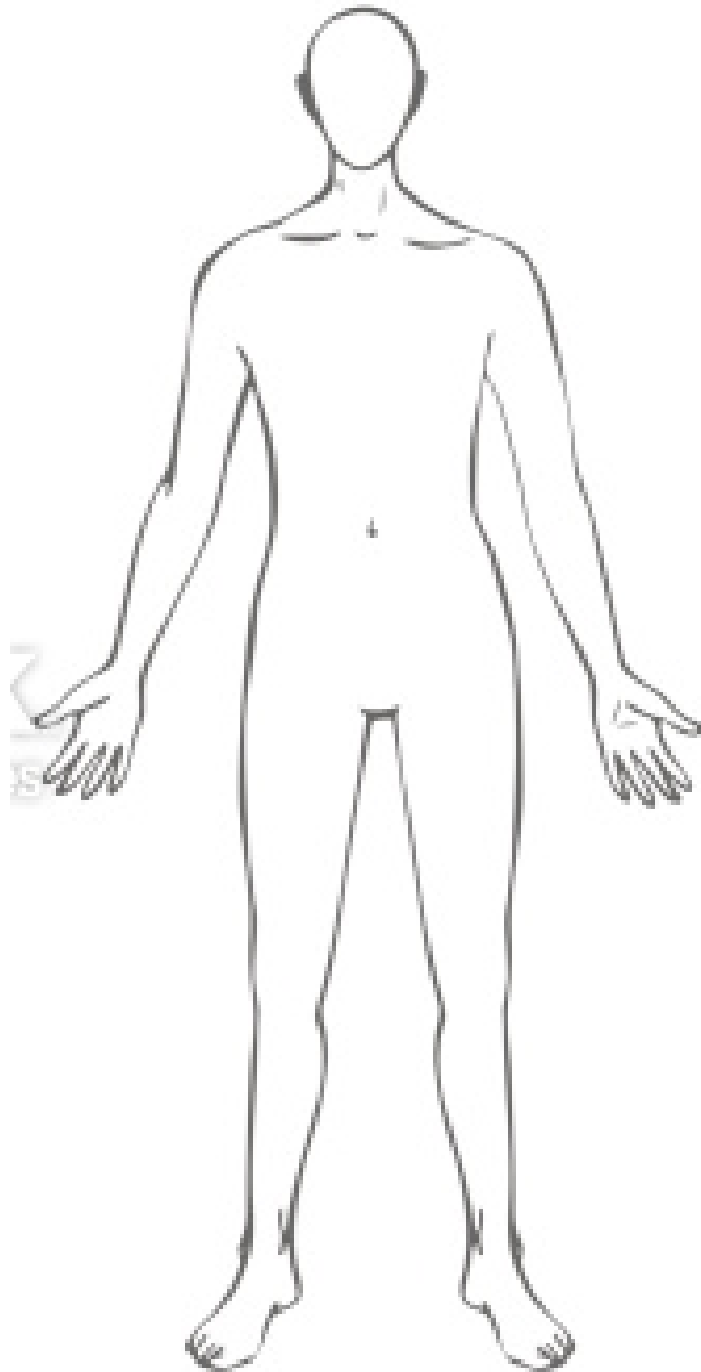
Talking tips!

- Asking questions- being curious
 - “I wonder if you’re feeling _____?”
 - “I wonder if you’re worried about _____?”
 - “I imagine that would feel _____”
- Empathising
- Normalising, making suggestions
 - “lots of children feel / think about _____ when they are worried.
 - Is that like what’s going on for you?”
- Check their understanding
 - “Does that make sense?” but also yours – “have I understood that you feel _____ because of _____?”
- Labelling emotions
- Make it fun or rewarding

Remember: You don’t have to fix the emotion, or solve the problem, simply listening and acknowledging is often enough.

Physical Responses

Have your child label their physical responses to stress and anxiety on the body map. Which affect them the most?



Eating Right

Drink 6-8 glasses of water a day

Cut back on sugar

Remember 5 fruits and vegetables a day! Colour your plate

Avoid caffeine - a small amount in the morning might include coffee, tea, sugary drinks and chocolate

Eat 6 small meals a day, or 3 meals and two snacks.

Sleeping Well

If your teen has been revising in the evening, it will continue to process knowledge and consolidate learning. Adolescents need 8-10 hours of sleep per night.

- ★ Limit screens in the bedroom
- ★ Exercise for better sleep
 - 60 minutes of exercise each day is a good level to aim for - even just a walk.
- ★ Cut out the caffeine
- ★ Do not binge before bedtime
- ★ Have a good routine
- ★ Create a sleep-friendly bedroom
 - Thicker curtains or moving revision out of their bedroom can create a peaceful environment for sleep
- ★ Talk through any problems
 - Talking through problems earlier in the day means they are less likely to lie awake worrying about things.

- ★ Avoid long weekend lie-ins
 - This can disrupt our body clock, and make it harder to get up on Monday morning

The 20 minute rule

If your child is unable to get to sleep after 20 minutes, allow them to get up.

- ★ Suggest doing something different – read, do some relaxation, have a warm milky drink or sit in a dim light and do something calming.
- ★ When they are sleepy again, they can then go back to bed.
- ★ Young people have also noted that writing down their thoughts in a notebook to problem solve tomorrow can be helpful or perhaps doing a brain dump of all the thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and behaviours they are experiencing.

Strategies

Movement

Exercise releases helpful hormones (endorphins) and enhances self-esteem. It also improves concentration & sleep. Encourage your teen to move in between revision breaks, this could be as simple as a 10 minute yoga break, or 30 minute walk around the block.

Breathing

Deep breathing can combat the physical effects of stress, and reserve the fight/flight response.

To take a diaphragmatic breath:

- Place your hand on your stomach
- Breathe in gently through your nose
- Imagine the lowest part of your lungs filling with air until they become completely full
- Hold the breath for a second or two. The whole of the top part of your body should feel tense
- Gently breathe out, fully and completely, starting from the base of the lungs and *relax*.....

Other breathing exercises can include imagining a balloon in your stomach and inflating, then deflating it.

Or five finger breathing - trace around your hand, with the opposite index finger, breath in as your index finger travels up and out when your index finger tracing down.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



First, starting with your feet, tense your muscles slowly while taking a deep slow breath through your nose.

Hold both your muscles and breath for 5 secs, and then breath slowly out through your mouth while releasing the muscle tension in your feet.

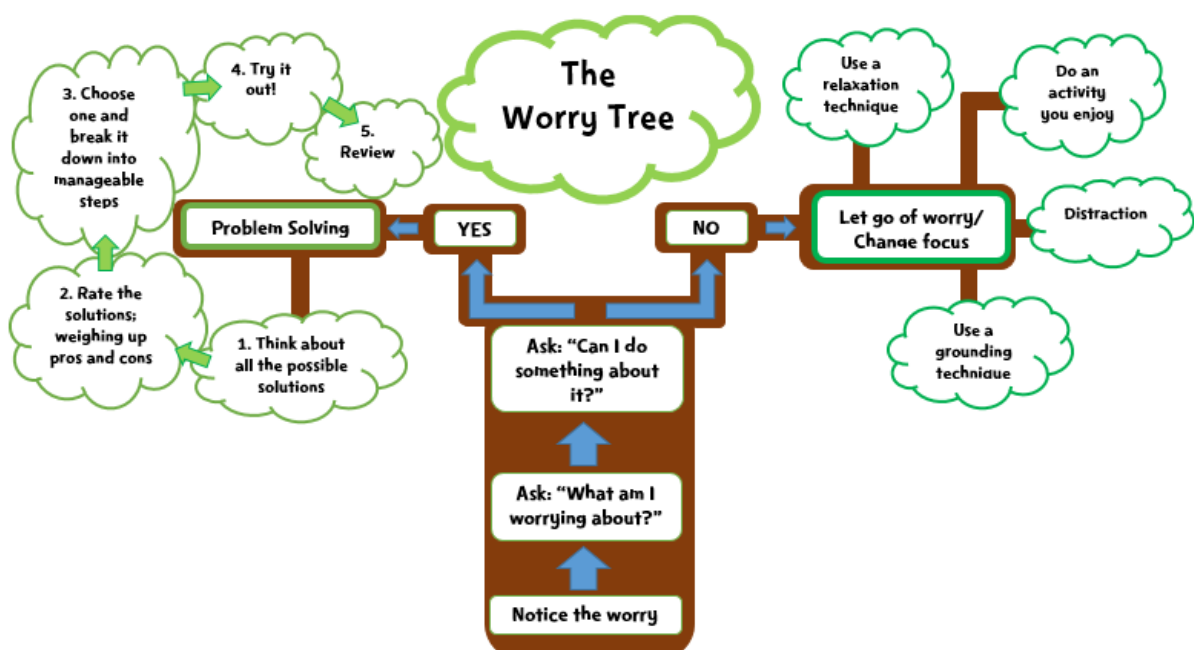
Now repeat, but with a different body part working your way up to the head.

Try focusing on key spots of tension like neck, jaw and legs.

NOYZE

Worry Tree

Put worries through the worry tree - deciding can I do something about the worry or not:



Encourage your young person to use this blank worry tree to fill in any worries, and either problem-solve it or let it go.



Resources

Websites:

- NHS Sleep Hygiene:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/sleep-tips-for-teenagers/>
- Anna Freud Centre podcasts:
<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/child-in-mind/>
- Videos focused on negative emotions:
<https://maudsleycharity.org/familiesunderpressure/>
- Emotional Health Service at AFC resource pages
<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/community-information/information-and-advice/emotional-health-service>

Books:

- Helping your child with Fears & Worries by Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts
- The Teenage Guide to Stress *by Nicola Morgan*
- My Anxious Mind by Michael Tompkins
- What to do when you worry too much by Dawn Huebner & Bonnie Matthews (Reception-Yr4)
- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly (5-9yrs & 10yrs+ versions)
- Helping Children with ADHD: A CBT Guide for Practitioners, Parents & Teachers by Susan Young