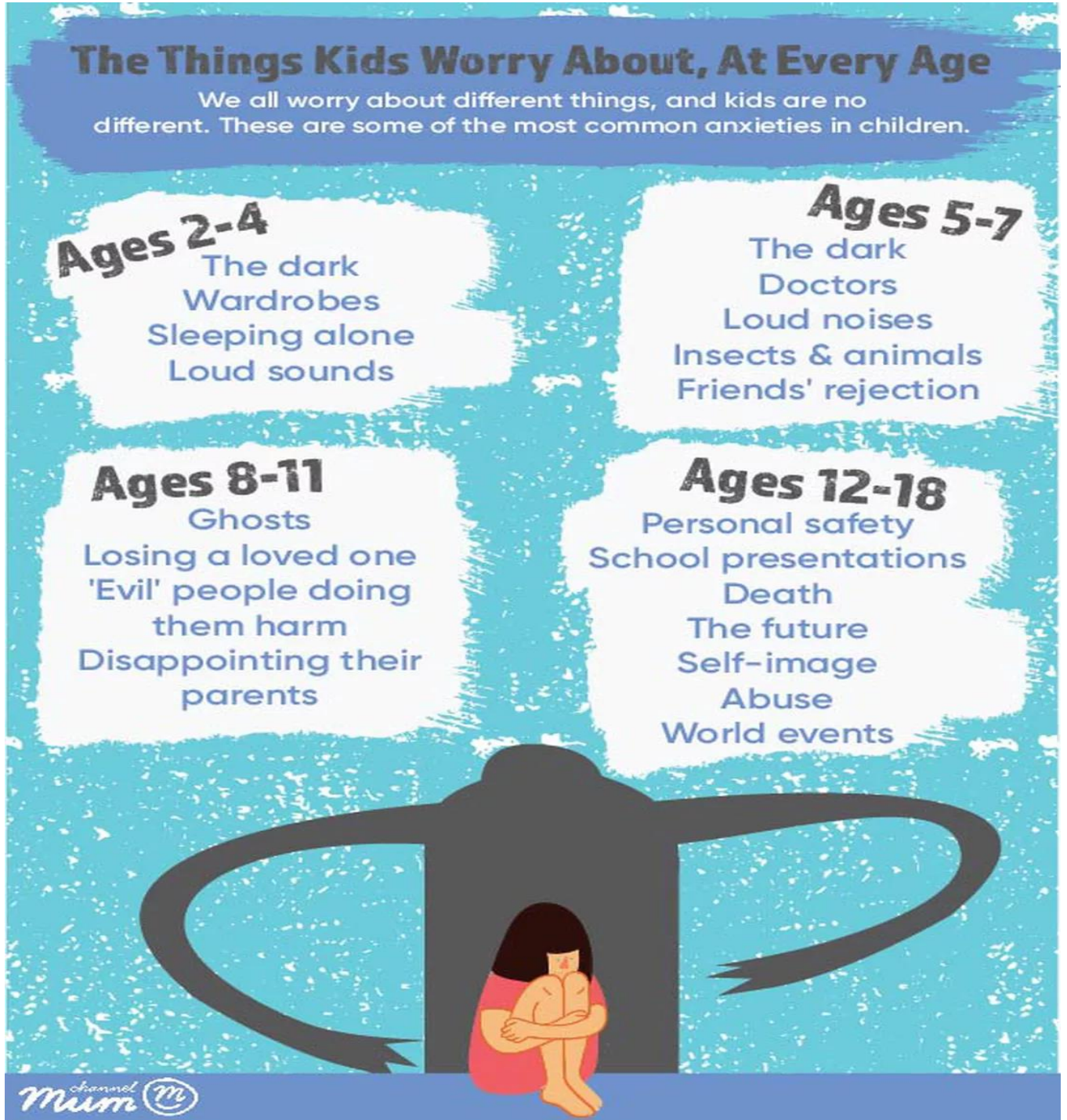
Parent/Carer Coffee Morning: Anxiety

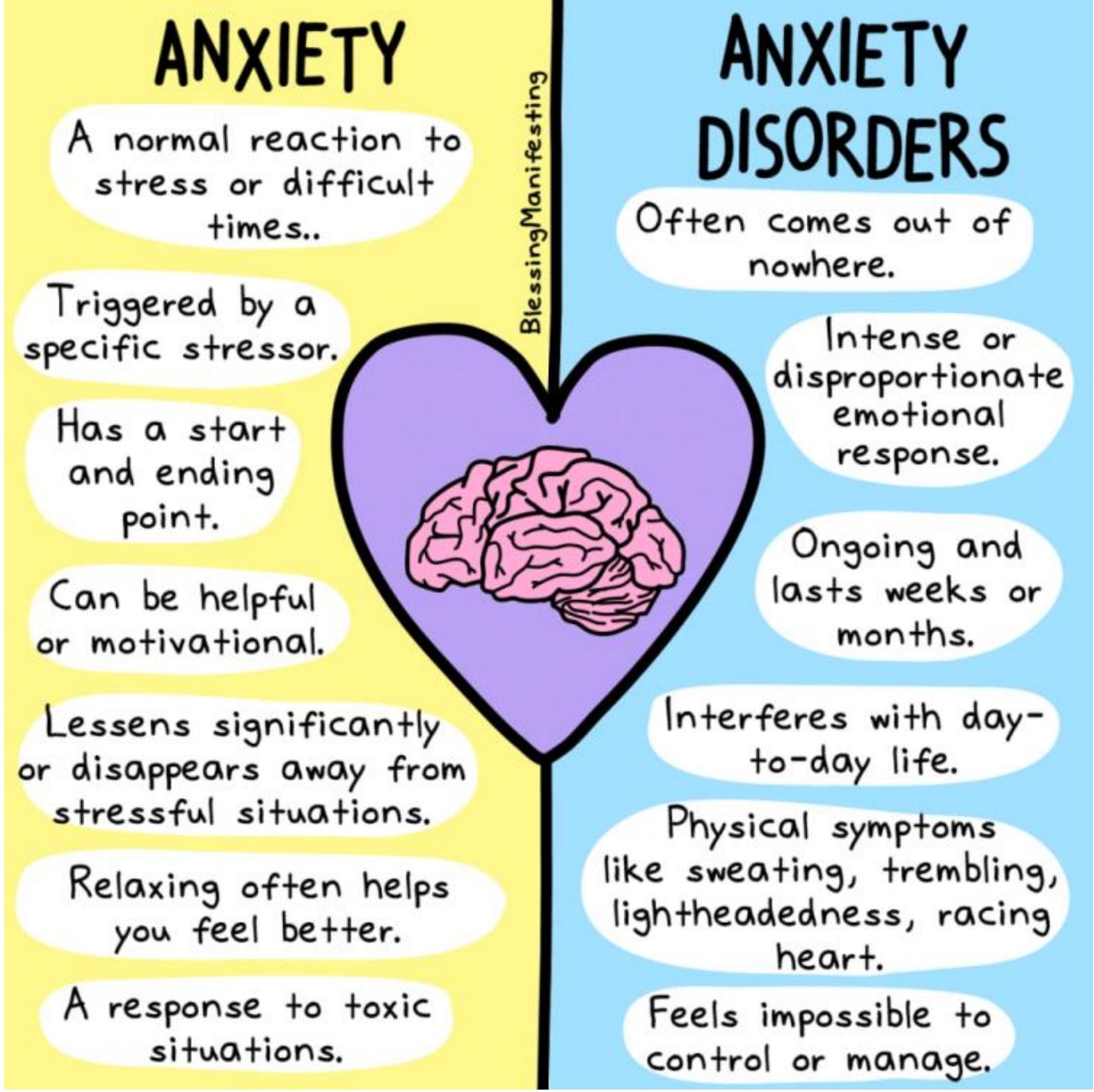


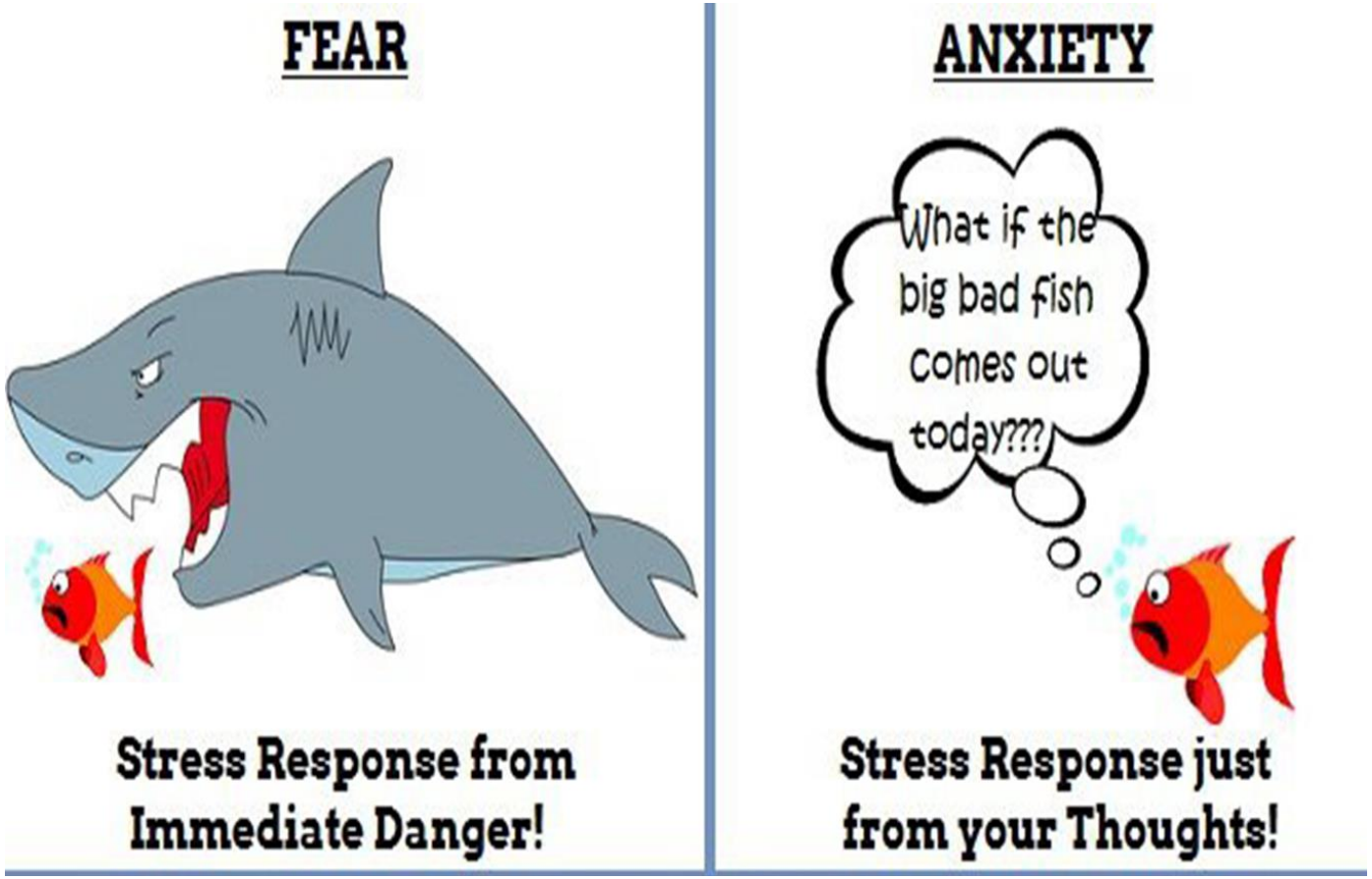
Everyone can achieve. Everyone can learn. Everyone belongs.

Normal worries…

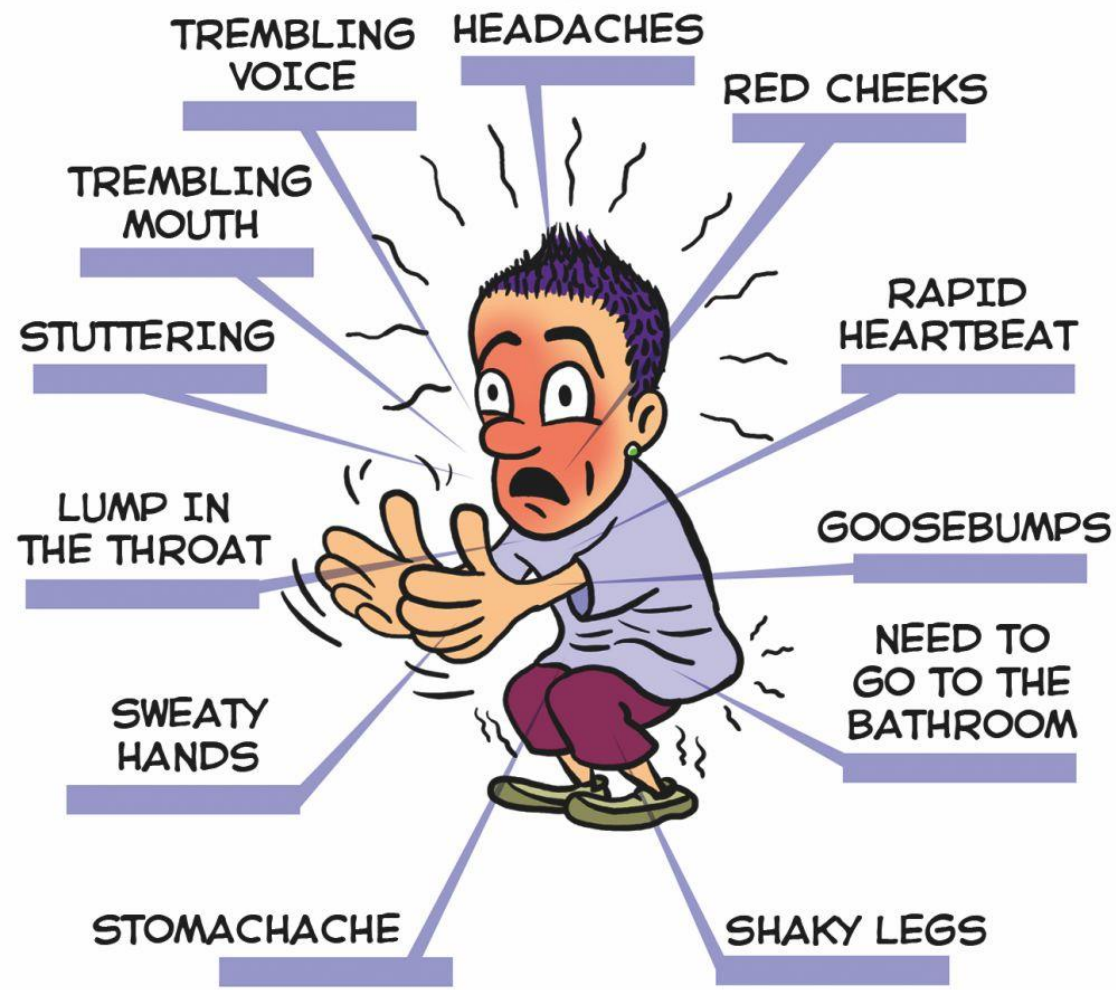


When it is a problem?





Anxiety is a state which can prepare us for further fear- it helps us plan and protects us from the fear from happening



Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

www.thepathway2success.com

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry





Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty





Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

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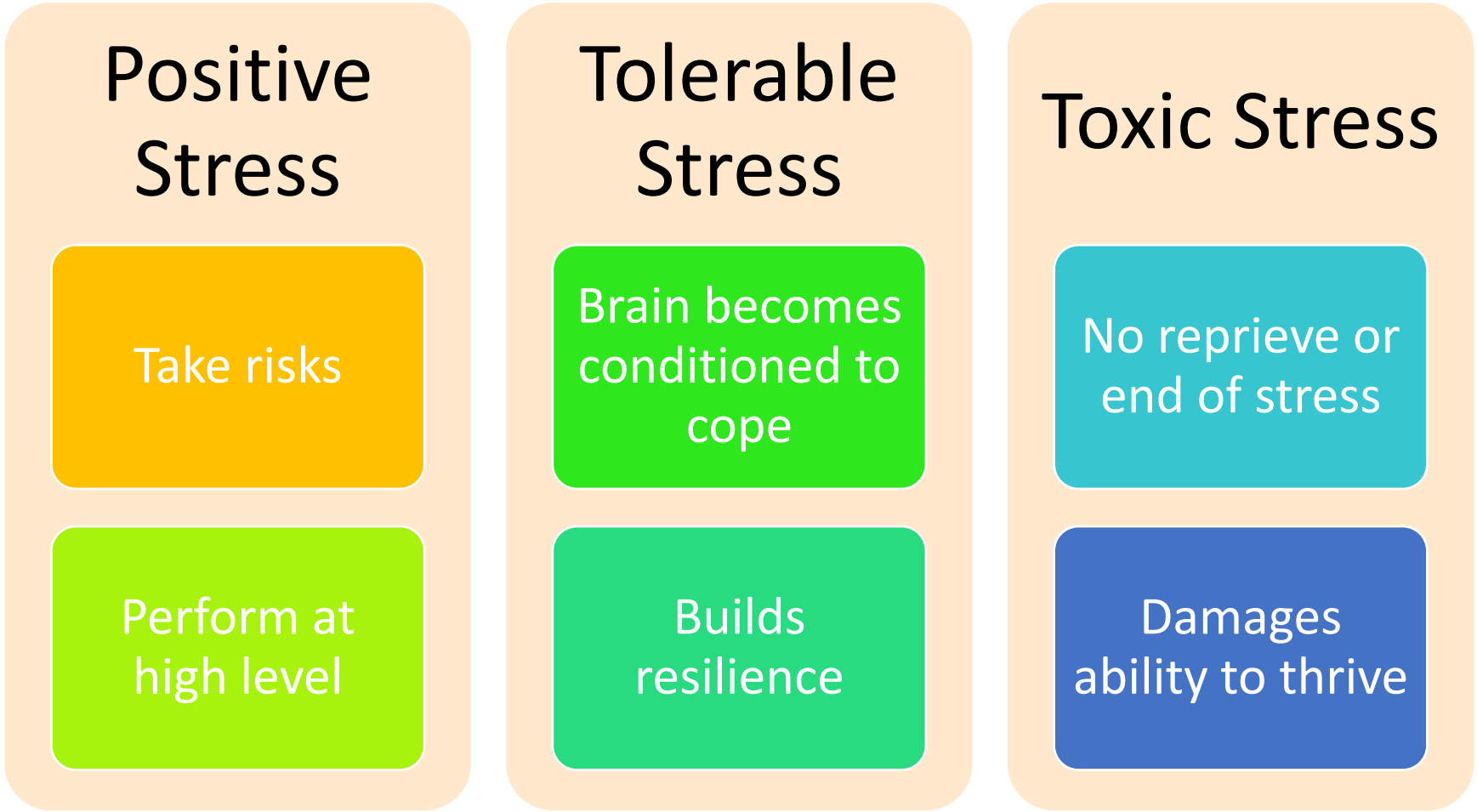
Clipart by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino

The All-Clear Signal



- Anxious children spend more time on high alert
- In some children (especially boys), this can result in dysregulated behaviour
- Children need to learn to de-activate their ‘security system’
- We try to reassure children that they are safe – this might not be effective as they need to learn themselves that they feel safe and OK in order to 'de-activate’ the system'
- Trauma = the whole world is dangerous - oversensitive alarm

Stress Effects



If a child avoids stress, they won't learn coping skills – they will practice less and the world becomes more anxiety provoking.



Research over the last 30 years and beyond shows that excessively avoiding psychological discomfort (stress, worry, anxiety etc) tends to lead to low wellbeing and poor life satisfaction.





- Humanity and the future
- Eco Anxiety/Climate Anxiety
- Pandemic has impacted worries

Increase in school anxiety

- School refusal – now called Emotionally Based School Avoidance
- Unprecedented number of CYP struggling to go into school (1:5)
- Push (towards school) / Pull (away from school) factors



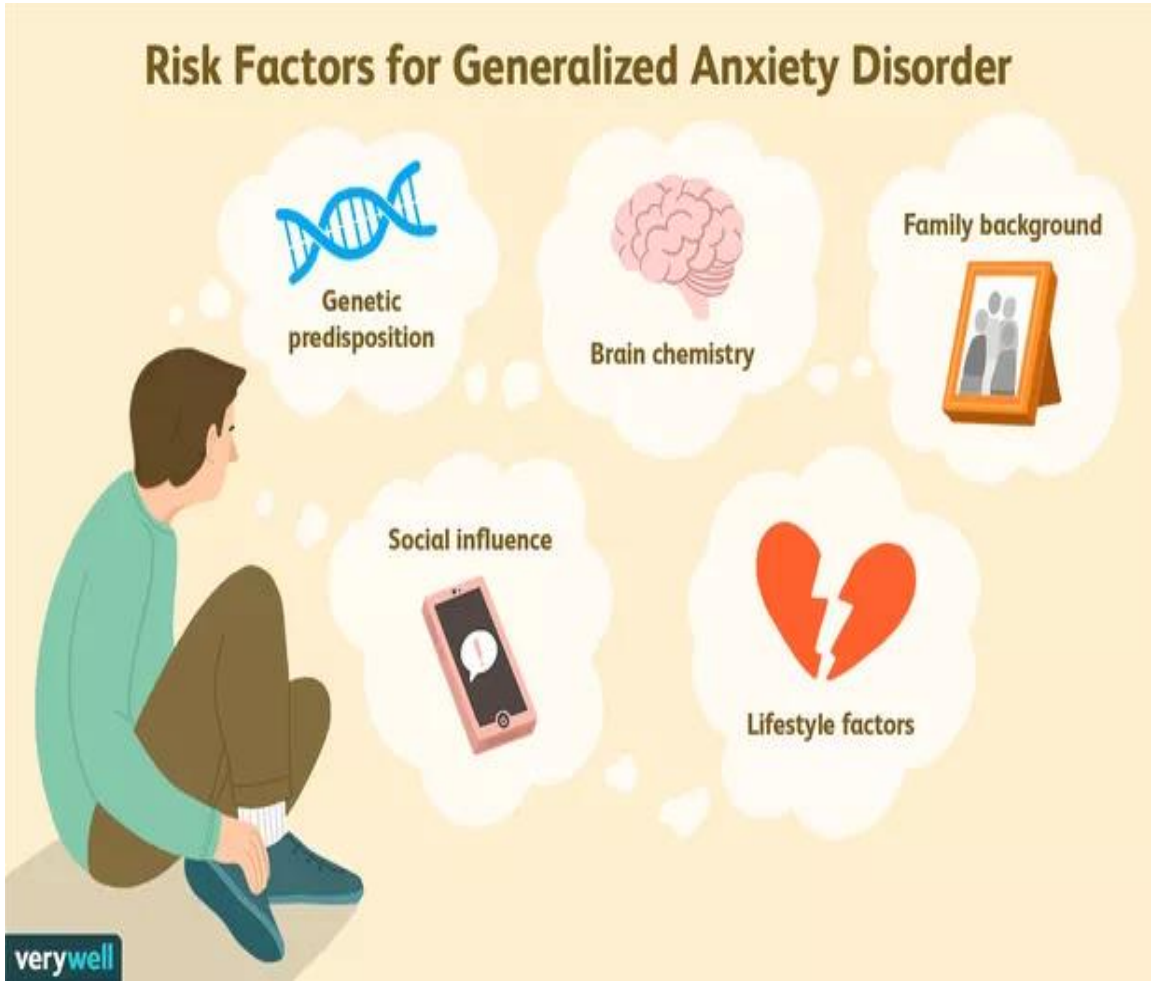
Social Media and Anxiety

- ‘Obsessive’ focus on likes/comments (validation)
- Unrealistic sense of body image or reality
- Cyber bullying
- Effects of Screen time: health, mood, regulation, development (7+ hours screen time a day = changes to their brain)
- After lockdowns –more challenging for autistic pupils - less sensory stressors at home



What increases vulnerability of anxiety?

- Temperament
- Life stresses and trauma (world is dangerous)
- Parents/Carers – avoid helicopter parenting
- Medical conditions
- The Modern World
- Sensory processing – can't control the day
- Neurodiversity

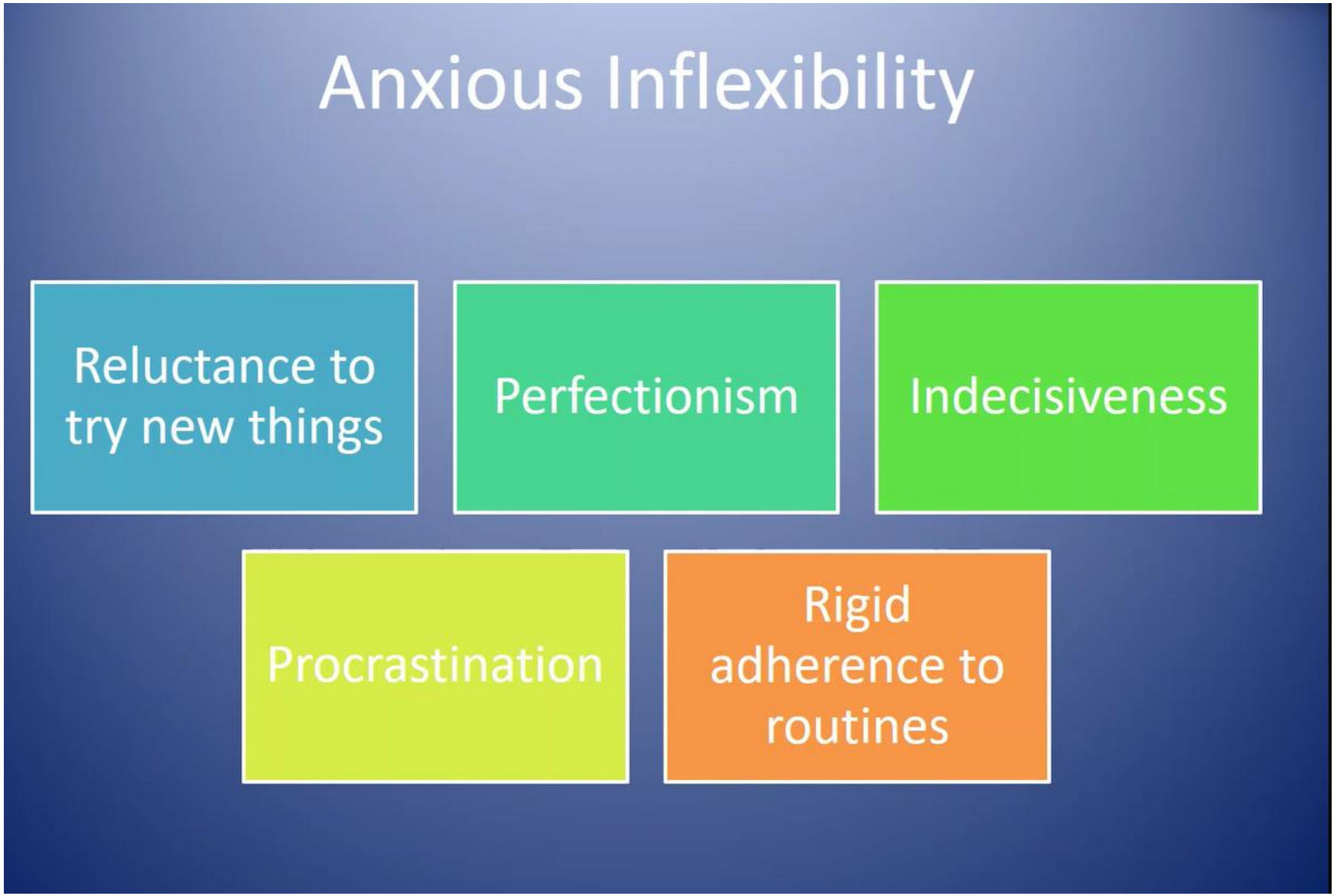


Supporting children to manage anxiety

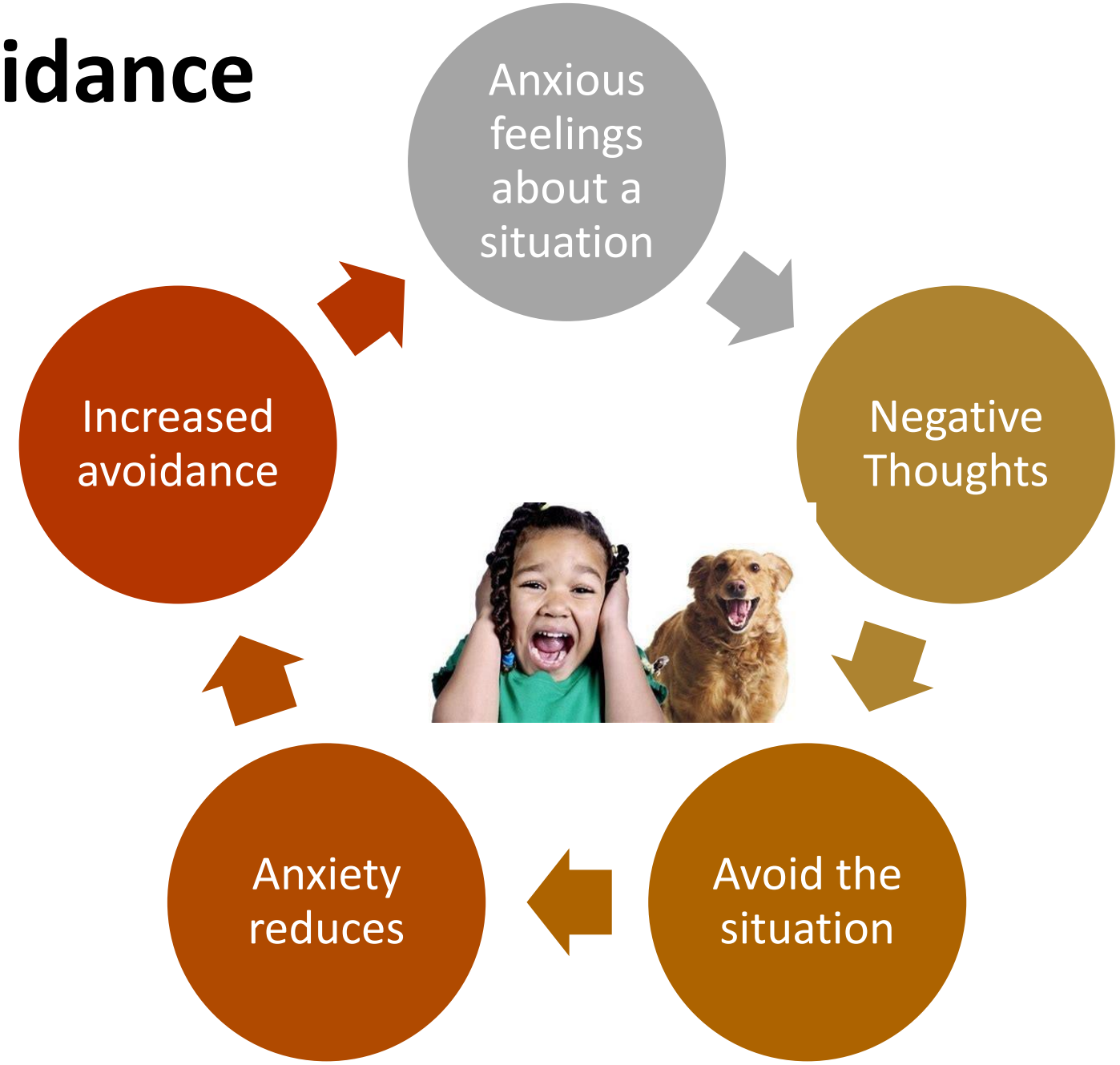
- S – Show them how to cope
- U – Understand they have a problem
- P – Patience is paramount
- P - Prompt them to practice new skills
- O - Observe them, highlight successes
- R – Reward/praise brave behaviour
- T – Talk about, 15 minute worry time check in

Nudge children a bit towards feeling a little uncomfortable.

Gently push towards them being out of their comfort zone.



Avoidance



Avoiding the thing that makes them anxious makes them more anxious as they are not being exposed to it - more exposure means it gets better.

Reassurance

Validate first

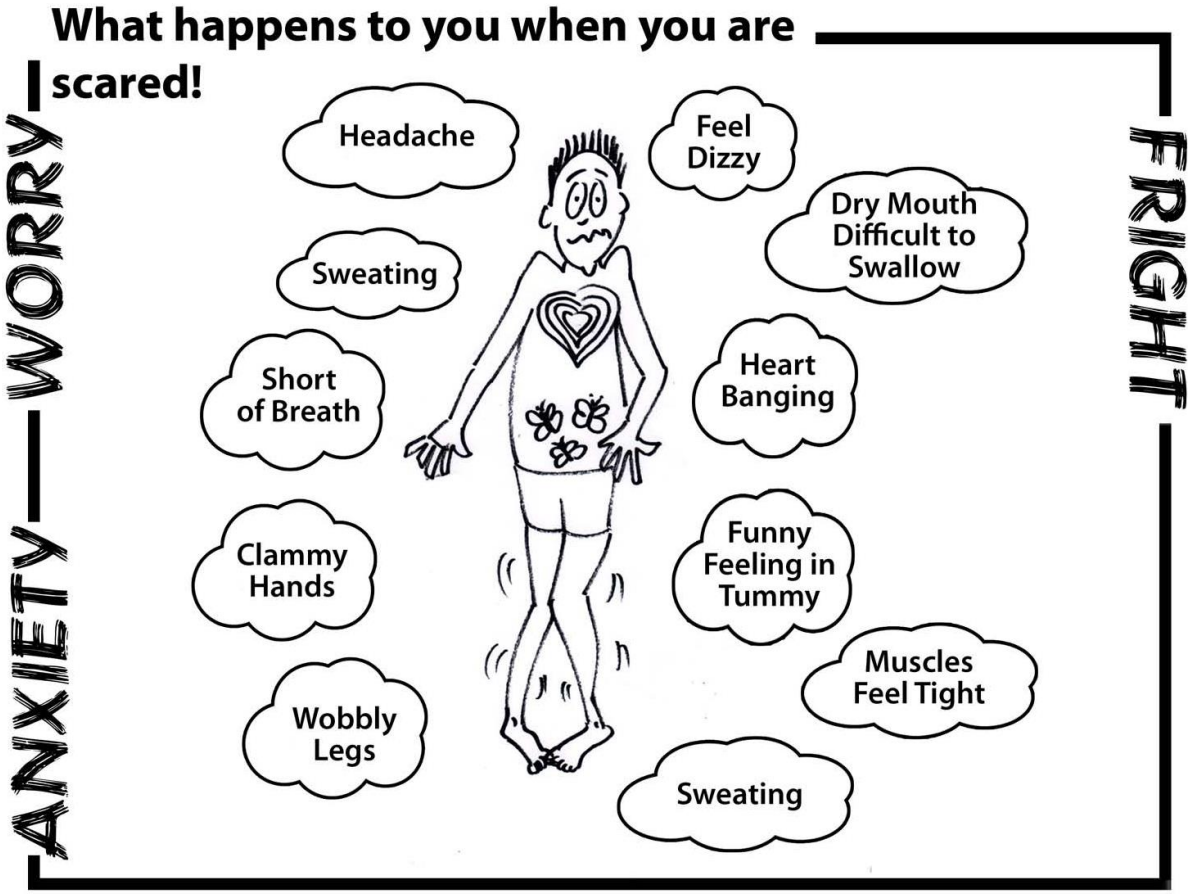
Clear and firm

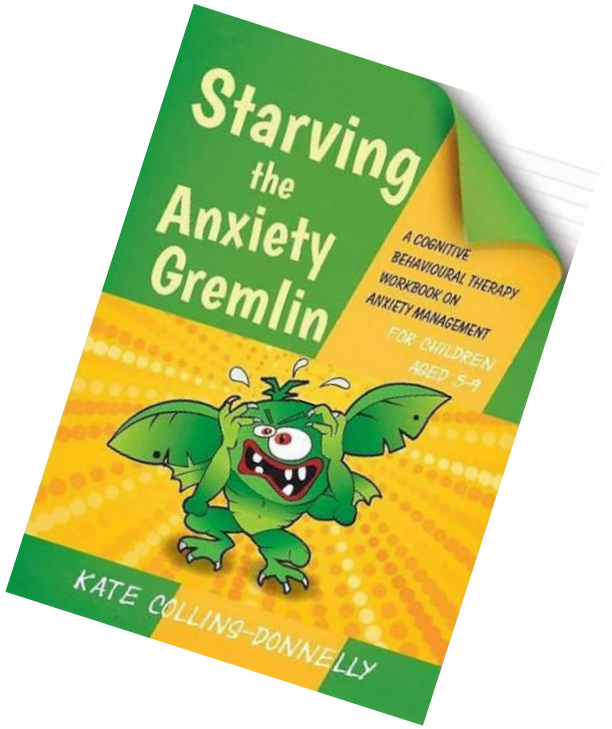
Reinforce brave behaviour

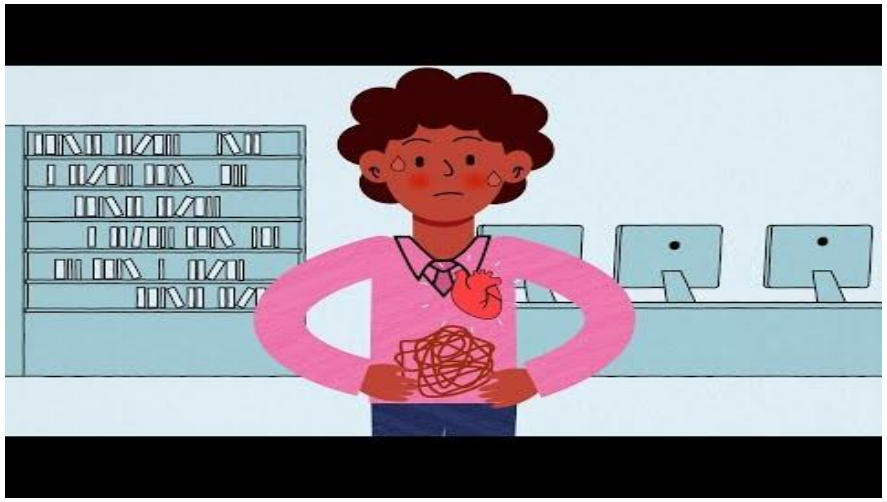
Avoid anxiety cycle



Psychoeducation







- Normalise what is happening in their body
- Education about the science of anxiety

Strategies to help children manage anxiety

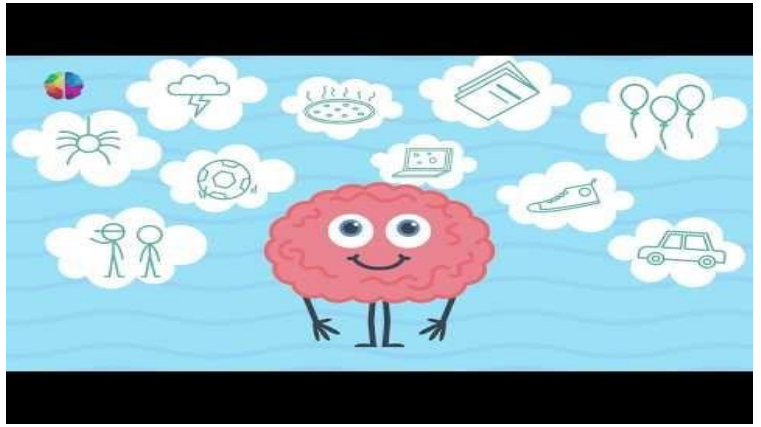
- Slow down – deep breaths
- Worry Time – 10-15 mins/day
- Have a go - give new things a try
- Model coping - show them how to overcome stress
- Be truthful and open about scary things
- Check your behaviour – step back



Mindfulness

‘Mindfulness equips you with the skill of training the attention by attending to and focusing on whatever is happening in any given moment’.

- I Spy Senses
- Breathing exercises
- Grounding in senses
- Nature
- Creativity
- Meditation





Positive Actions

- Journaling - keep track of feelings
- Three good things
- Daily goal setting – small, achievable
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Gratitude Lists

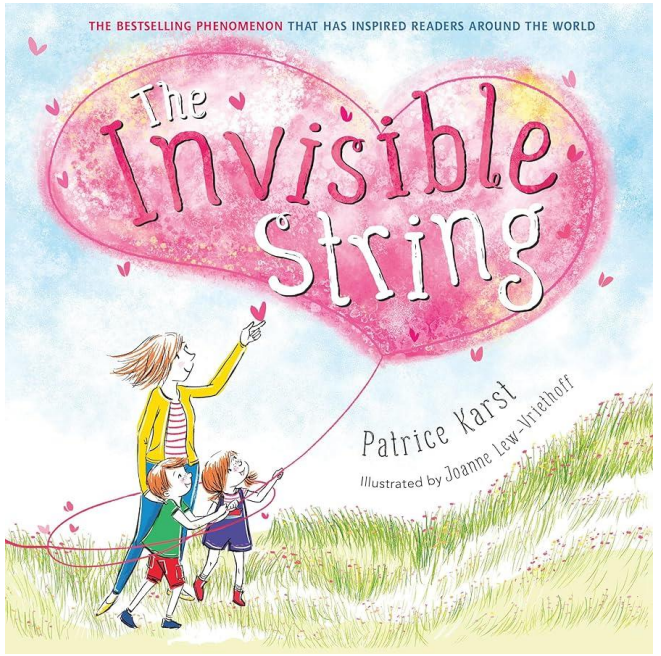




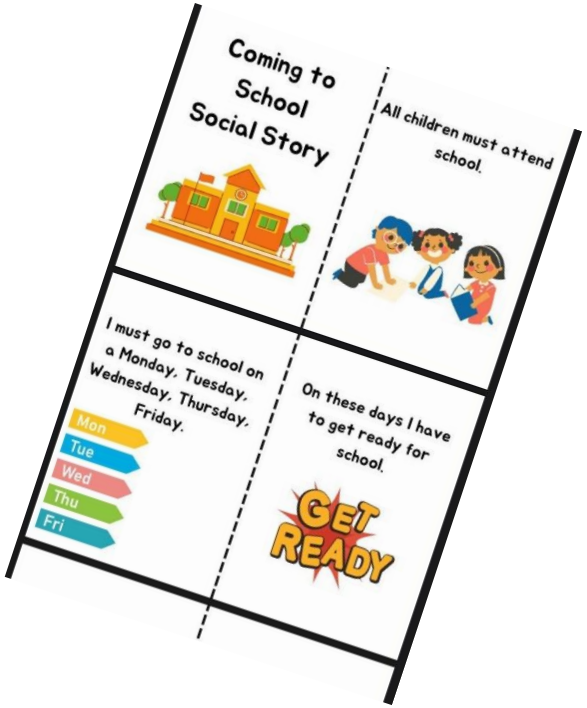
Separation Anxiety

- Coming to school:
  - Bracelets/transitional objects
  - Social stories/scripts
  - Speak to teacher about special jobs/activities
  - Ensure you are presenting as calm and reassuring
  - Be mindful of the language you are using

- Night time anxiety:
  - Worry dolls/book/jar/box
  - Dream catchers
  - Mindfulness
  - Worry time





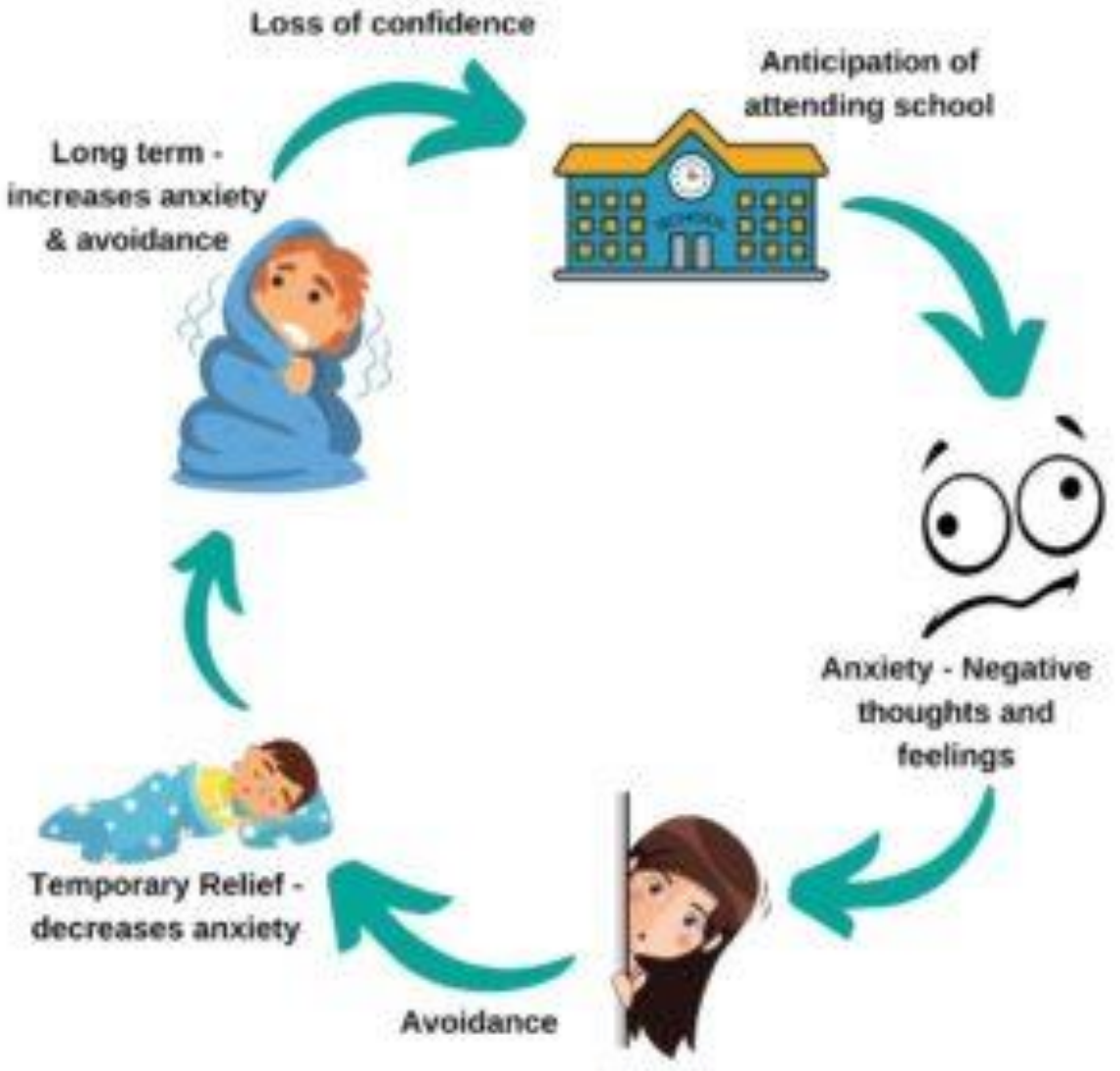


Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

- A day off reinforces the idea that school is not safe and this will make the anxiety worse.

- School and parents give the same message that ‘everything is fine’, stay calm and manage their emotions so that they are reassuring…‘it might feel a bit scary but I know you can manage’ or ‘You are safe, I will see you at 3.15’.

- These strategies may feel unkind but it is important to break the anxiety cycle or things will get worse.



Challenging unhelpful thoughts

- Ask your child is this way of thinking helpful?
- How can you make this unhelpful thought into a helpful one?
- Think of exceptions!
- Are you forgetting the positives?
- Did you fail last time?
- When did you cope or manage with this before?



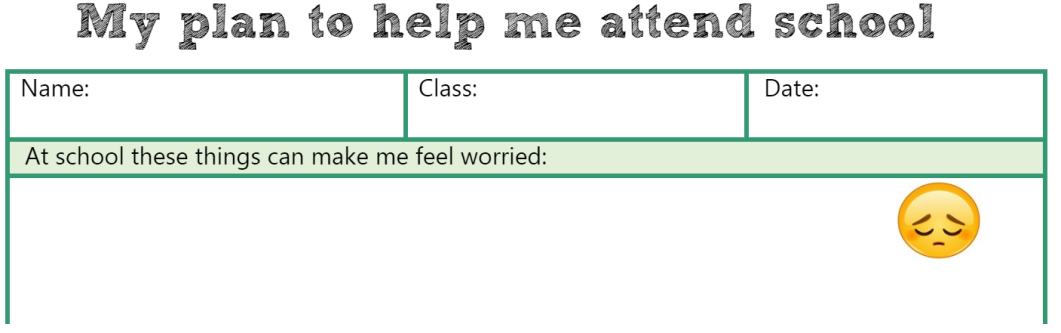
Things to remember…

- Anxiety passes away and will not harm your child
- You don’t have to fix it
- Don’t let anxiety guide your decisions
- Your child is braver than you think
- Trust your child to face challenges successfully
- It will get easier with practice
- Together, you can learn to take charge of anxiety

Wagner, 2013

Further help

- Resources
- Class teacher – adjustments
- Pastoral Leader (Miss Foster, Miss Cassell, Miss Huish, Mr Burns) – explore worries, direct work
- Miss James – Children's Support Worker
- Mrs Knight – Senior Mental Health Lead
- Mrs Hennessy - SENDCo
- School Nurse – advice and direct work
- Primary Mental Health Specialist – consultation and advice on referrals to CAMHS
- Therapeutic support (not MHST)


My plan to help me attend school

Name:	Class:	Date:

At school these things can make me feel worried:

😔