



Hampshire
County Council

Primary Behaviour
Service

Anxiety Workshop

Chevy Welsh

Aims of the session:

To understand what anxiety is.

To recognize ways that anxiety can present in young people.

To talk through some top tips for responding to anxiety.

Anxiety vs Fear vs Worry

What if...?

Future
Generalised

Reaction to threat

Here and now
Specific

Thoughts about
problems

Cognitive
Grounded



What is Anxiety?

- A normal response to something dangerous or stressful...
- When we detect a 'threat', our nervous system releases stress hormones including adrenaline and cortisol.
- These produce physiological changes which help us 'deal with' the imminent danger.




What does anxiety look like?

- Anger
- Difficulty sleeping
- Defiance
- Chandeliering
- Lack of focus
- Avoidance
- Negativity
- Overplanning


8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

- 1. Anger**


The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.


- 2. Difficulty Sleeping**


In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.


- 3. Defiance**


Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.


- 4. Chandeliering**


Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.


- 5. Lack of Focus**


Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.


- 6. Avoidance**


Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.


- 7. Negativity**

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.


- 8. Overplanning**

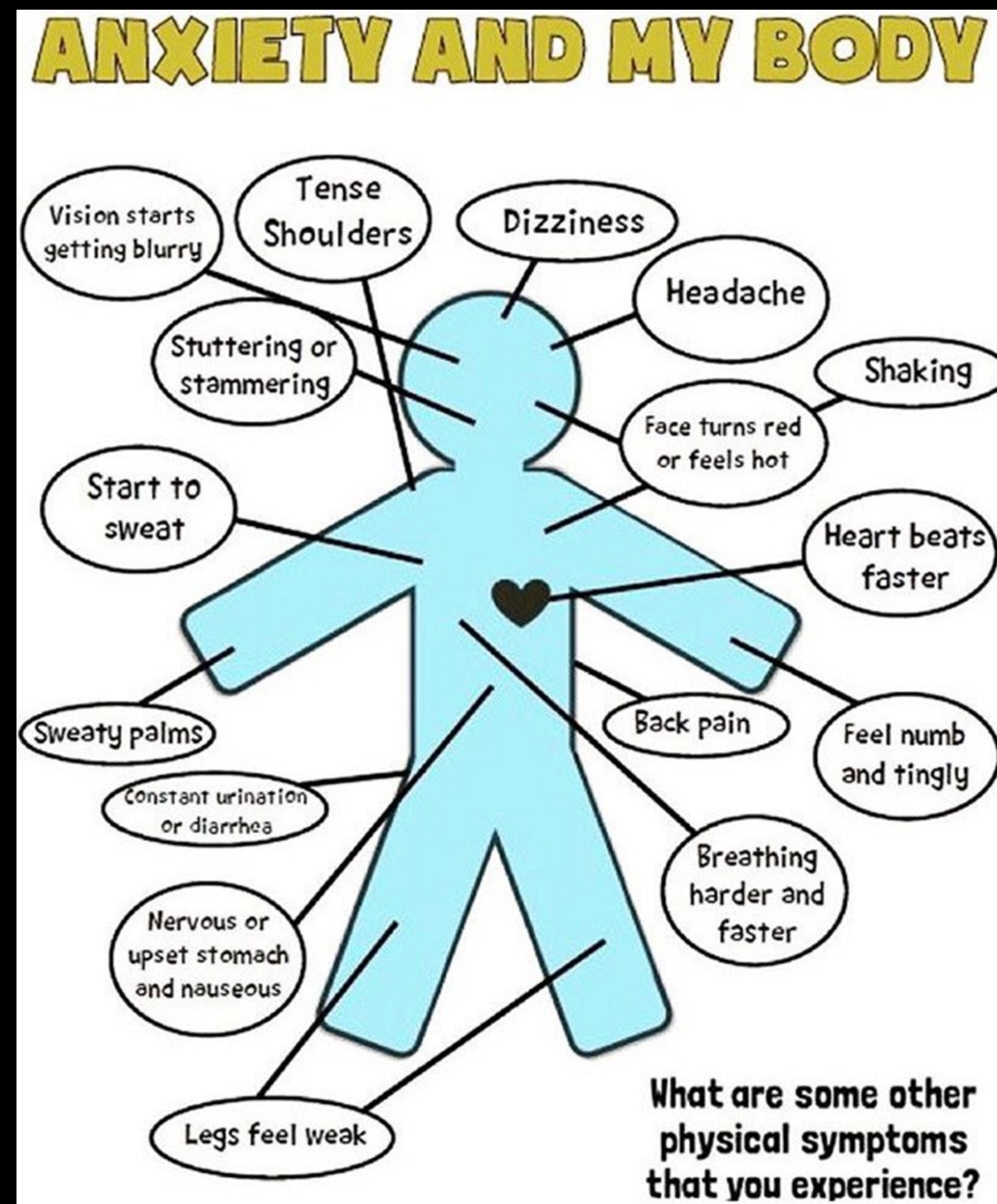
Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



gozen.com

What does anxiety feel like?

- feeling tired, restless or irritable
- feeling shaky or trembly, dizzy or sweating more
- being unable to concentrate or make decisions
- trouble sleeping
- worrying about the past or future, or thinking something bad will happen
- headaches, tummy aches or muscle pain
- dry mouth
- pins and needles
- noticing your heartbeat gets stronger, faster or irregular, or you get short of breath when you start feeling anxious



Common Worries -

What do children worry about?

- Studies repeated from 1930s to 2009 show similar trends
- Early on, the focus is survival
- At birth – falling (the Moro reflex)
- From about 8 months – separation anxiety



Common Worries – Age 3-6

- Disasters, monsters, imaginary creatures,
- Things under the bed,
- Things outside,
- Unfamiliar noises,
- Shapes of shadows; nightmares can start.
- Food and eating
- Toileting



Common Worries - Age 8-12

- School performance, especially around tests and being 'picked'
- Parents divorcing or a parent dying
- Crime, 'baddies', burglars
- Peer rejection or being excluded
- Being bullied
- Themes related to what's in the news

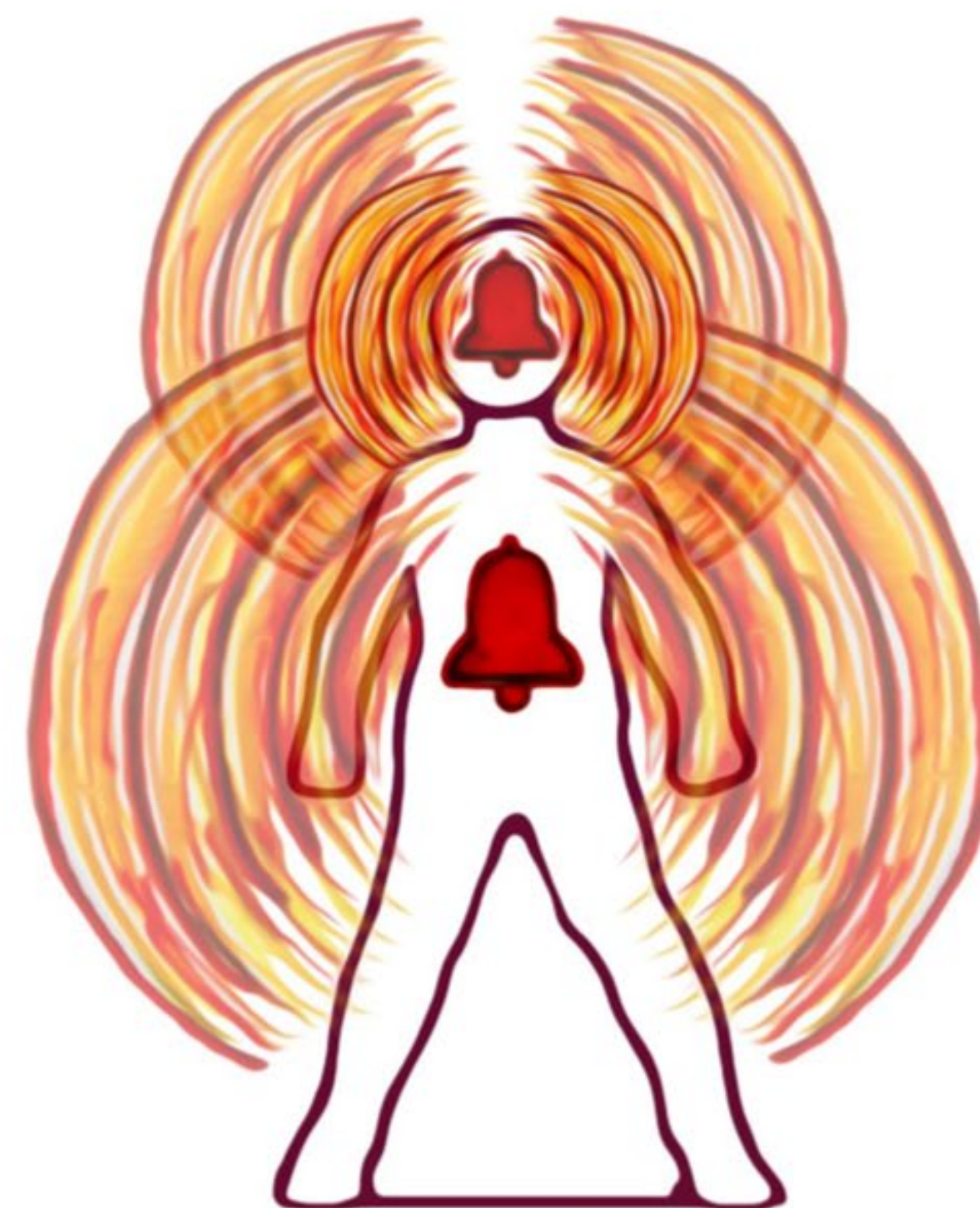


What does worry sound like?

What you might see or hear...

Anxiety doesn't always look like worry or fear; it might be **FIGHT AND FLIGHT AND FREEZE**

- My tummy hurts
- I need the loo (every 5 minutes)
- I'm hungry (all the time or at trigger times)
- Chewing cardigan, biting nails/fingers
- Aggressive/defensive talk
- Avoiding demands and withdrawing
- Patterns of reacting to or avoiding specific activities, lessons or people



Stress



Normal Anxiety vs. Problem Anxiety

Normal

- Triggered by certain events and situations
- Intermittent
- Beneficial



Problem

- Interference with daily life
- Irrational
- Chronic



When does anxiety become a problem?

There is a fear or worry about a particular event or multiple areas of life, and it is:

Excessive compared to that experienced by peers (age-inappropriate)

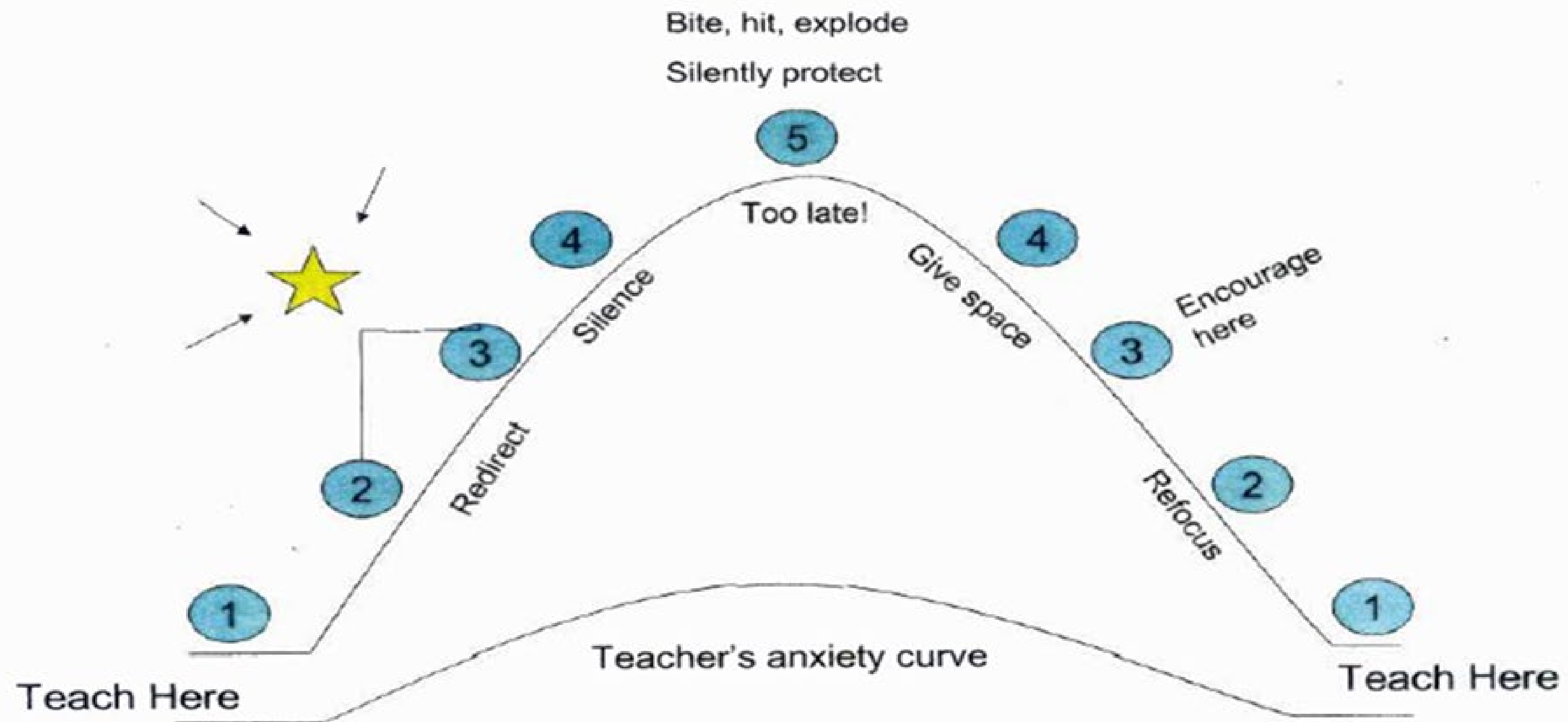
Leads to avoidance of events

Causes significant distress and/or significant interference in daily activities

Persistent, lasting 6 months or more.

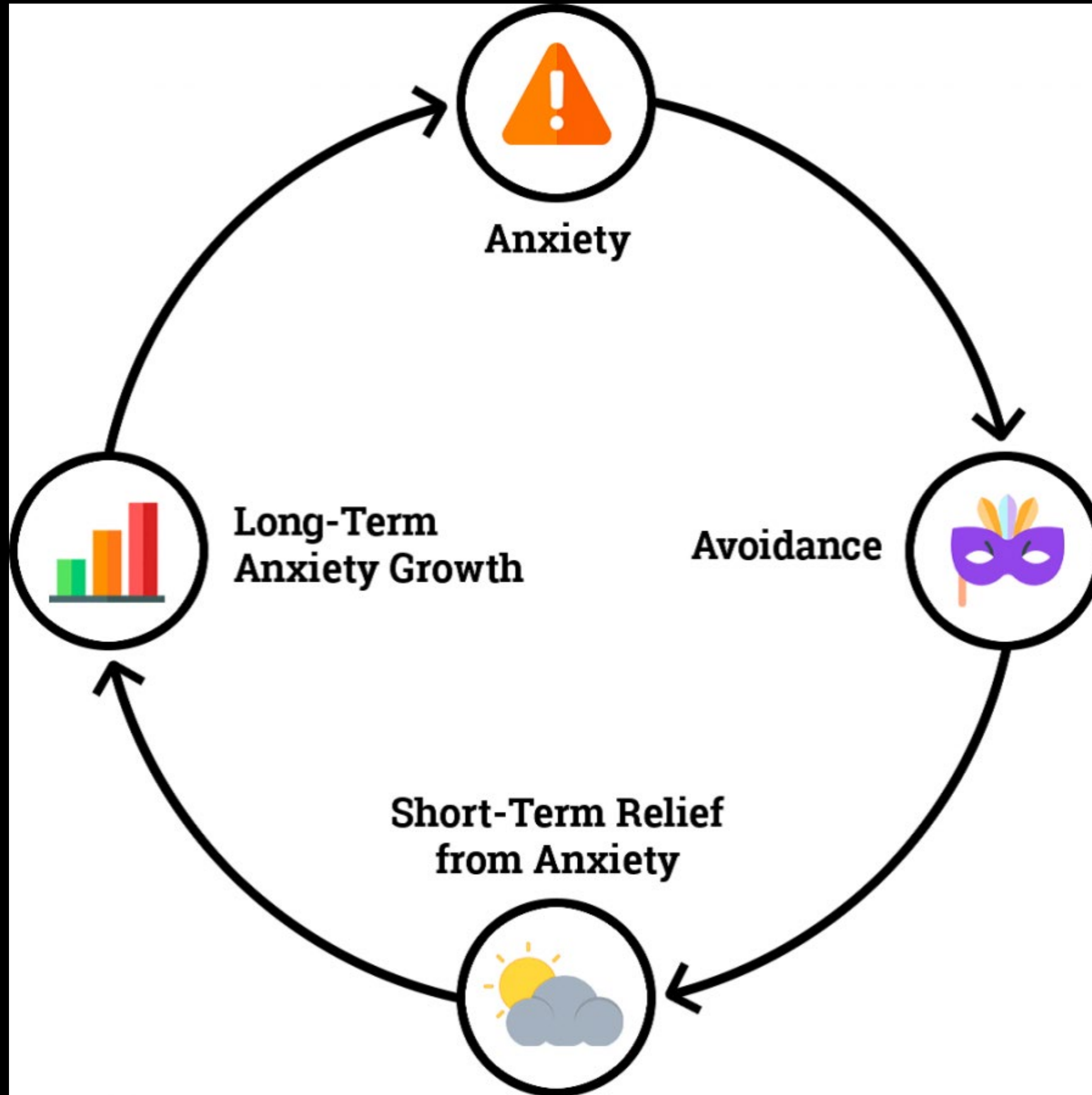


The Anxiety Curve



Positive support strategies

Buron & Curtis
Anxiety Curve Model

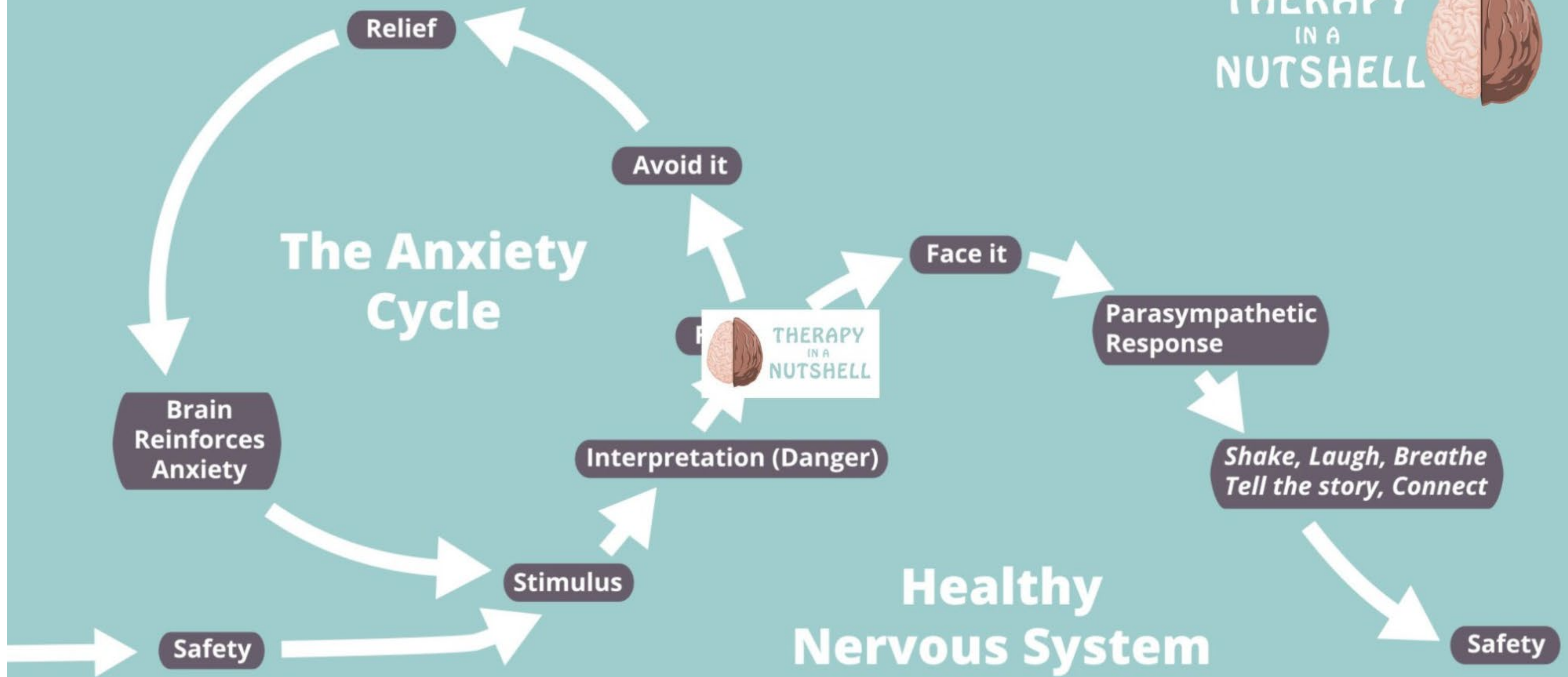




THERAPY
IN A
NUTSHELL



The Anxiety Cycle



Healthy Nervous System



Upstairs / Downstairs Brain

Our goal: to help
our child's brain to
link the two floors!

**Different types of anxiety meltdowns
need different responses!**

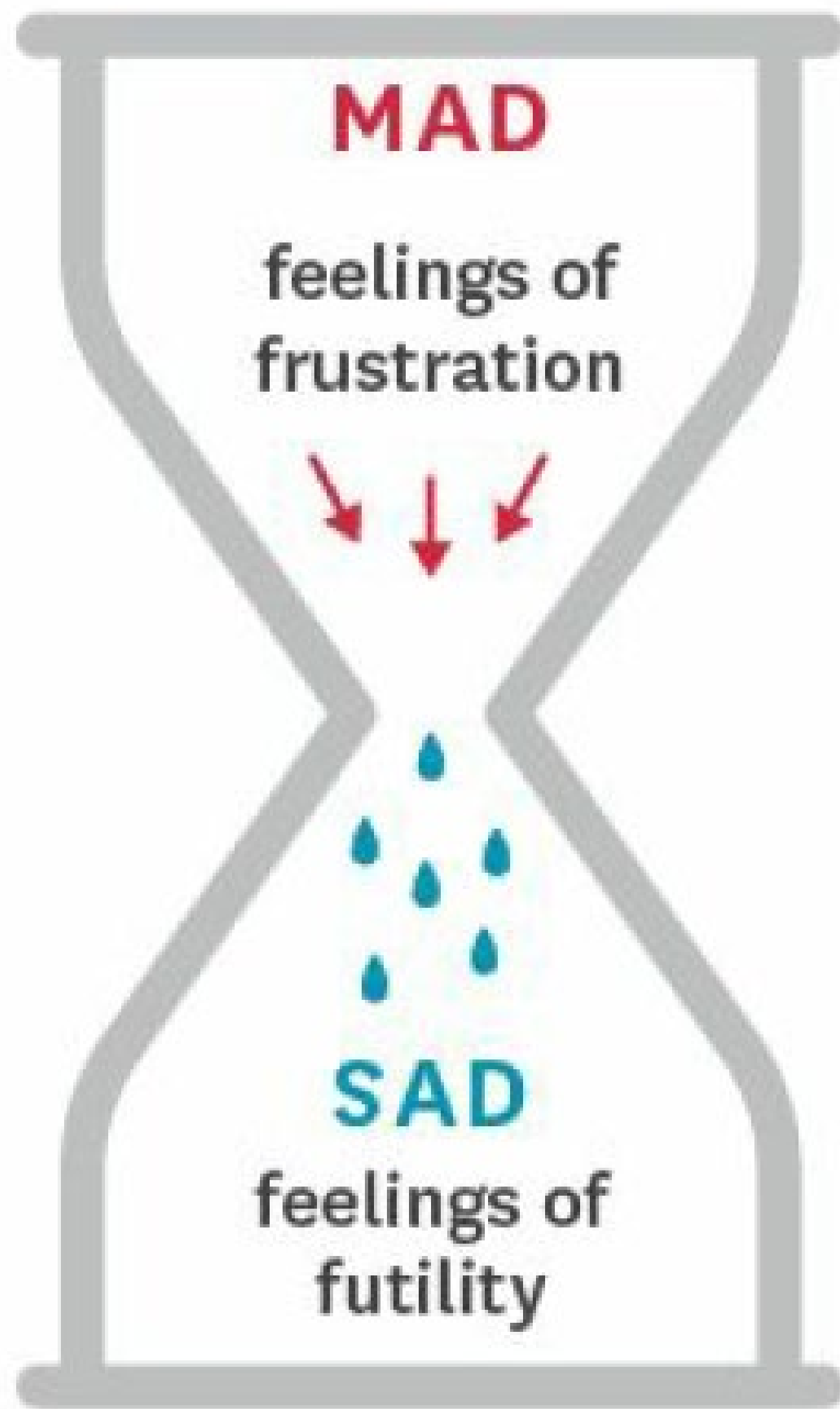
An upstairs 'melt down' = in control

**A downstairs 'melt down' = lost
control (lid flipped!)**



Responding to Anxiety





“Aggression

is the failure of adaptation
when we have not yet

had our tears

about the things we cannot
change in life.”

- Dr. Gordon Neufeld

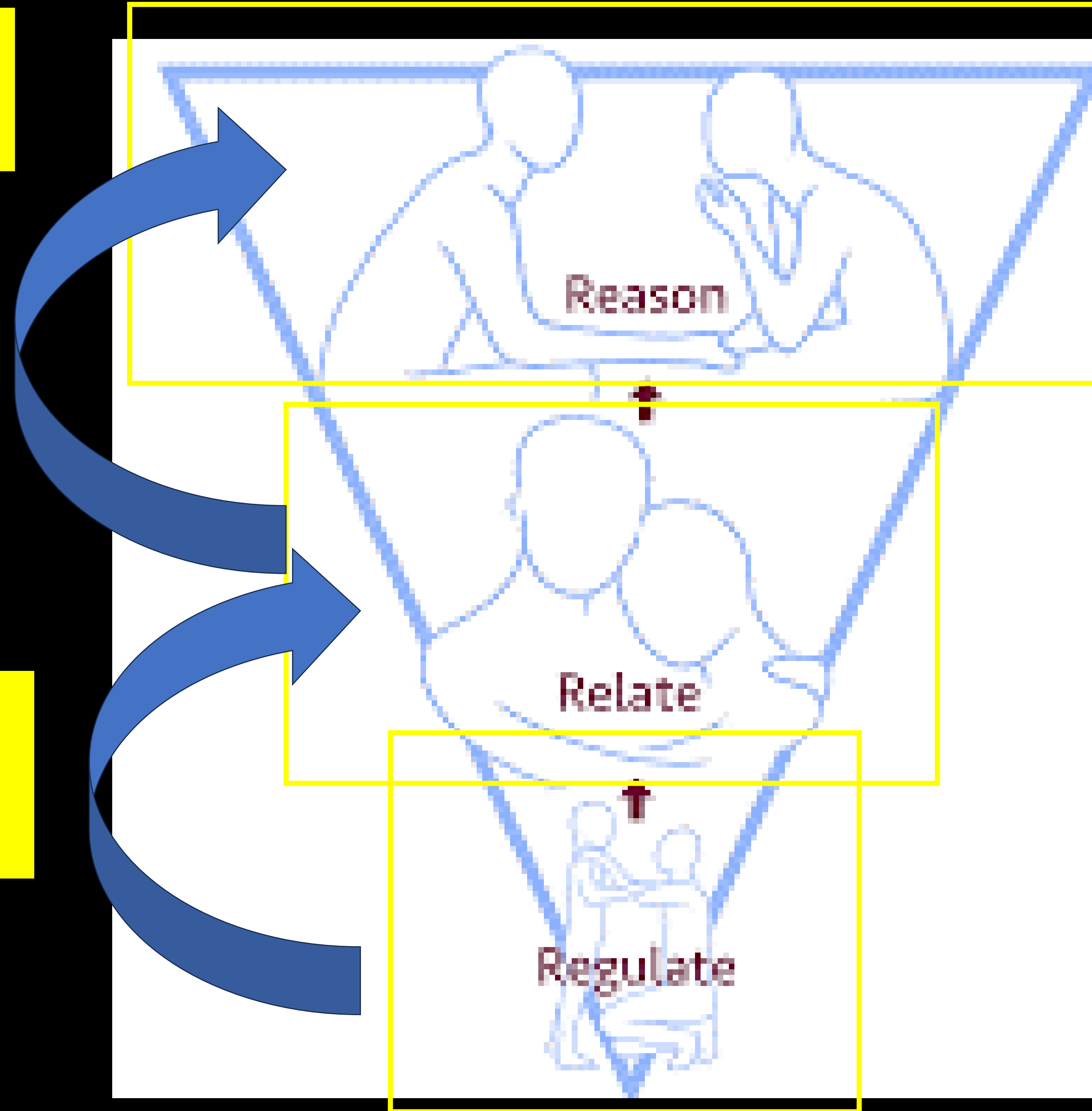
*Dr Gordon Neufeld
Tears of Futility*

 Neufeld Institute

Reflection and
repair

Regulation
time

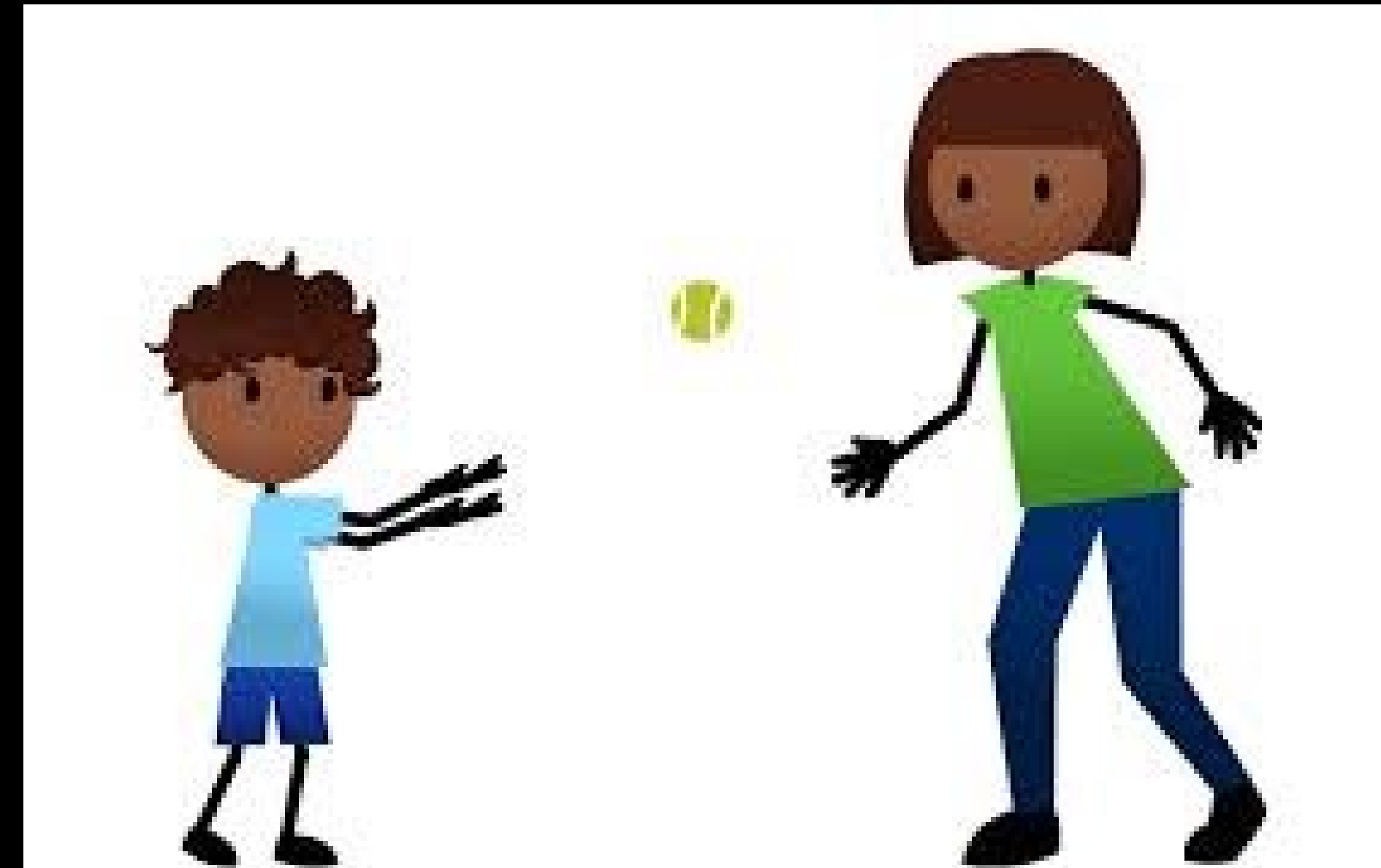
Find 5
things



Regulate

Priority: Calm the body

- Safety first
- Distraction
- Breathing techniques
- Sensory/regulatory activities
- Mindfulness
- Repetitive movements
- Be the model of CALM



Finger Breathing



Just One Breath BREATHING ACTIVITY



Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.

Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.



Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.

Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.

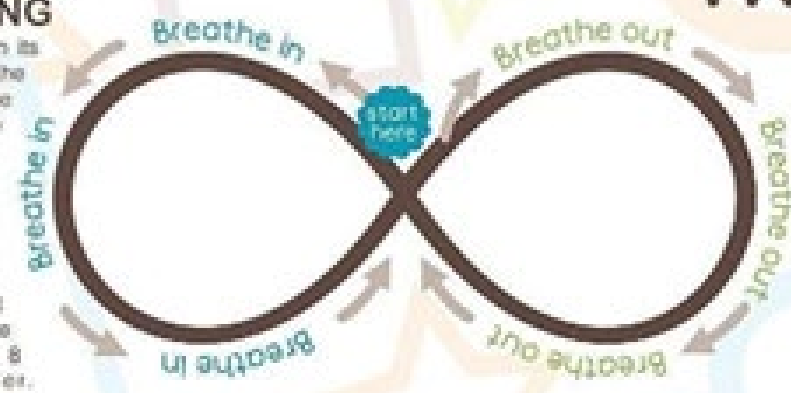


Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com



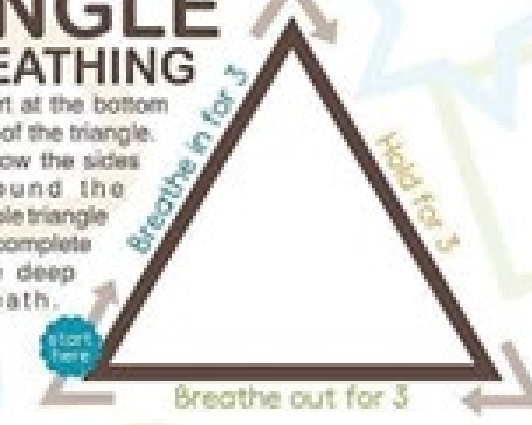
LAZY 8 BREATHING

Start with an 8 on its side. Starting in the middle, go to the left and trace the left part of the 8 with your finger while you breathe in. When you get to the middle of the 8 again, breathe out while you trace the right part of the 8 with your finger.



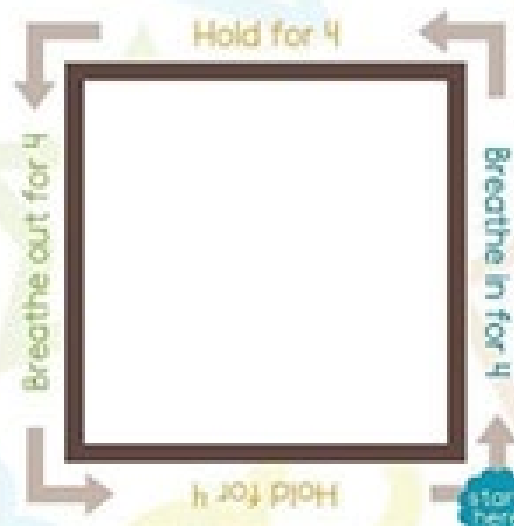
TRIANGLE BREATHING

Start at the bottom left of the triangle. Follow the sides around the whole triangle to complete one deep breath.



SQUARE BREATHING

Start at the bottom right of the square, and follow the arrows around the whole square to complete one deep breath.



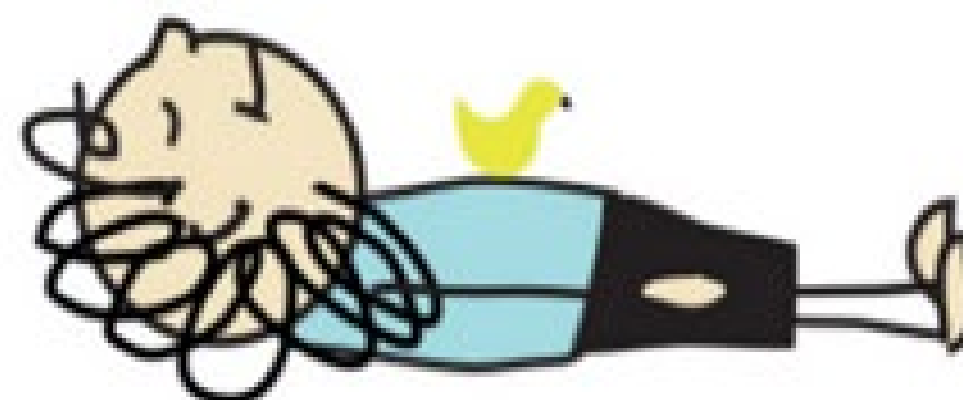
STAR BREATHING

Start at any "Breathe in" side, hold your breath at the point, then breathe out. Keep going until you've gone around the whole star.



COPING SKILLS FOR KIDS

Belly Breathing



Relate



Secure Base

You are the child's secure base in school

No strategy will work if offered from a judgemental, critical, punishing or shaming adult

Connect then correct

© Beacon House
Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team

The illustration shows a large, simple line drawing of a person's head and shoulders in profile, facing right. Inside the head area, there is a smaller, circular inset showing a child in a crouching or huddled position, with their hands near their face, suggesting distress or fear. The overall style is minimalist and uses dark purple lines on a white background. A decorative yellow and white wavy line runs across the bottom of the slide.

Relate

- Listen to their perspective
- Validate their feelings
- Turn up
- Show interest
- Model apologies
- Make them FEEL the connection



Sensory Activities such as Orbeez or Kinetic Sand



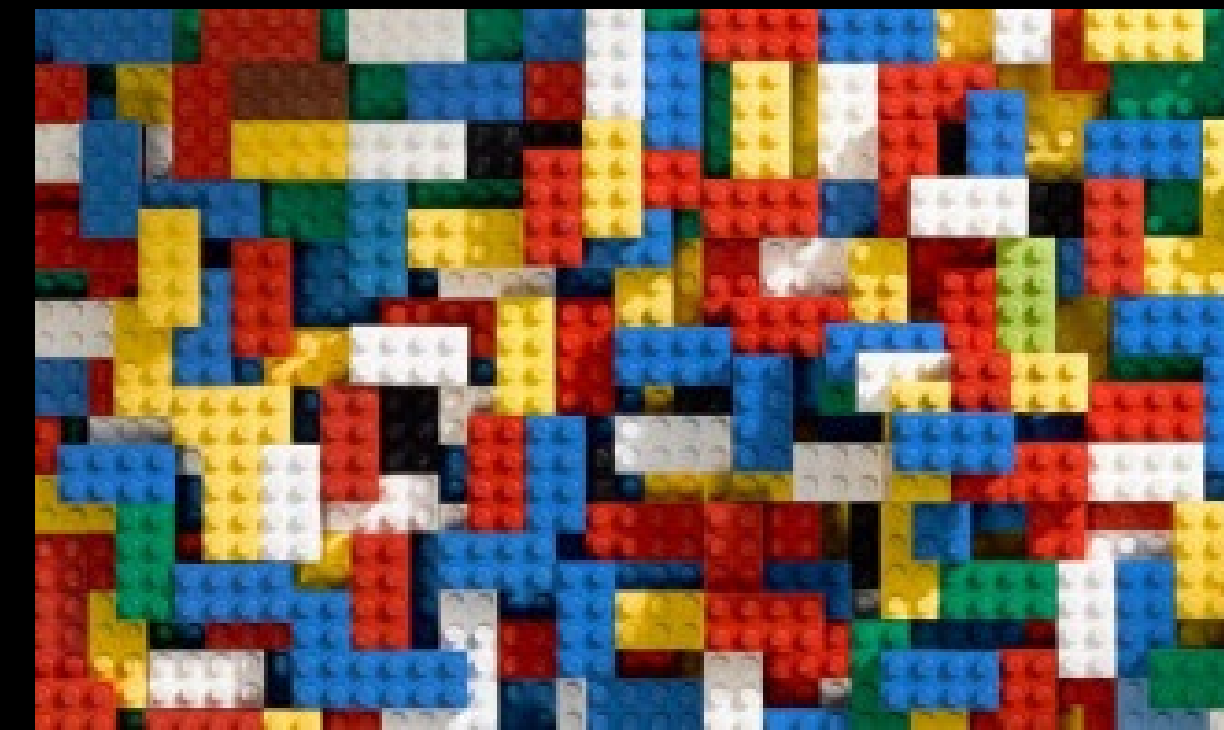
**Proprioception Regulatory Activities
e.g. lifting, pushing, pulling, jumping or pressure**



Yoga such as Cosmic Kids



**High Interest activities or those
requiring repeated actions**



Reason

- Help them make sense of it



Reason

- Help them make sense of it
- Be curious

I'm **w**ondering...

I **i**magine...

I **n**oticed...

Reason

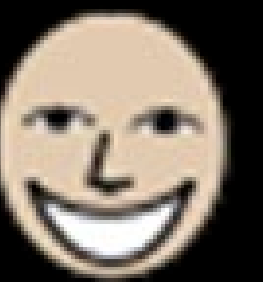
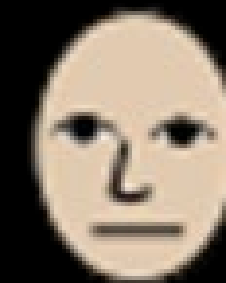
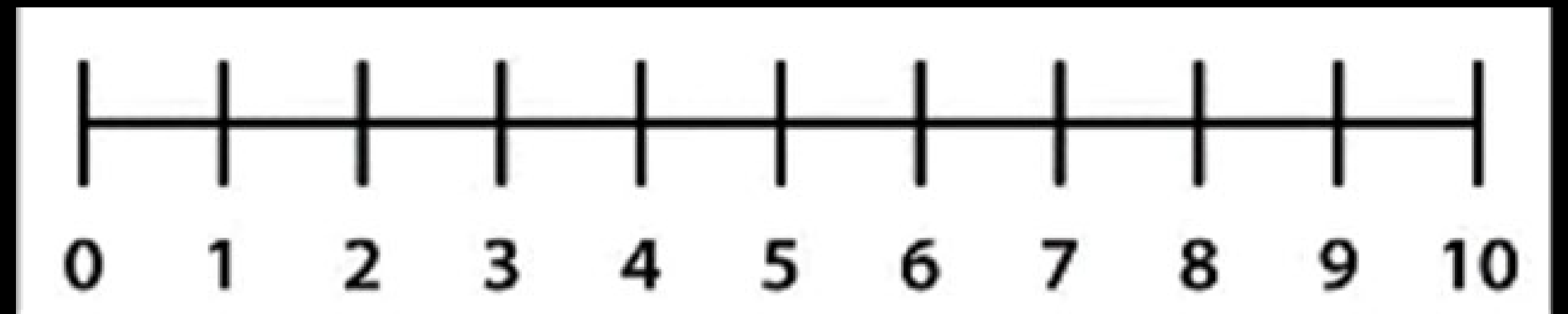
- Help them make sense of it
- Be curious
- Circles of Control

A white circle with a thin black outline, centered on the right side of the slide. Inside the circle, the text "What's in your control?" is written in a black, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines: "What's in", "your", and "control?".

What's in
your
control?

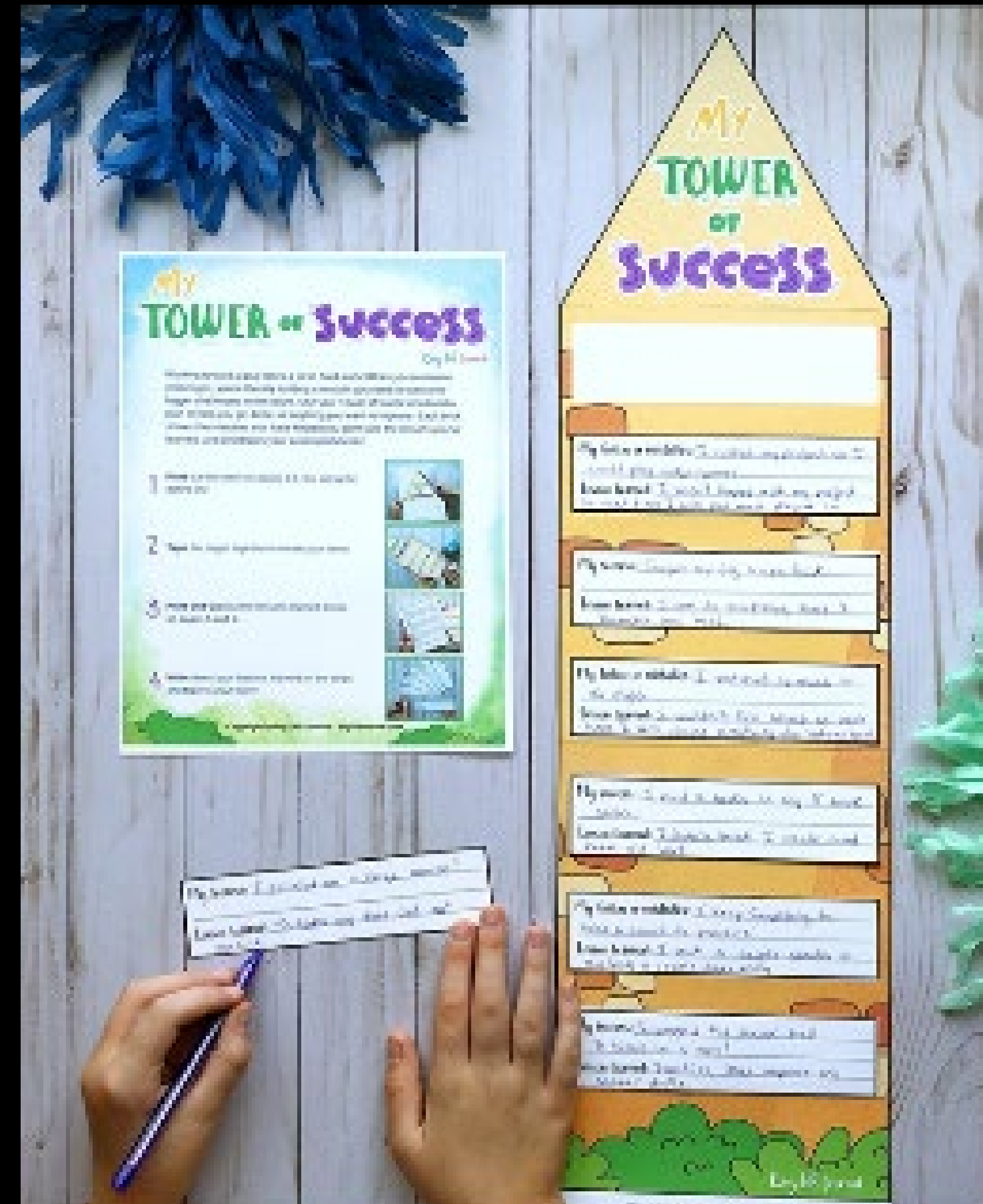
Reason

- Help them make sense of it
- Be curious
- Circles of Control
- Draw it out
- Scaling

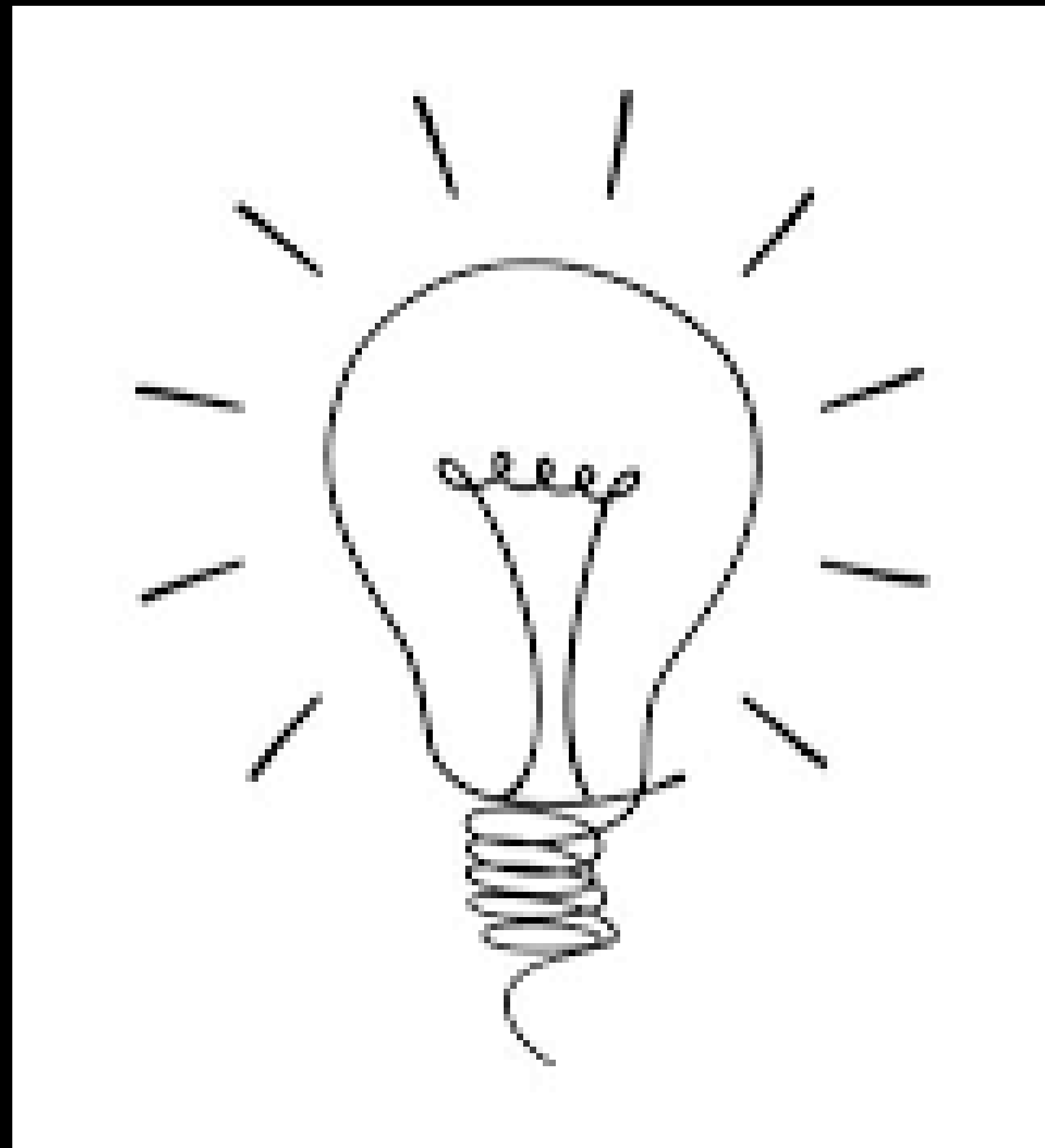


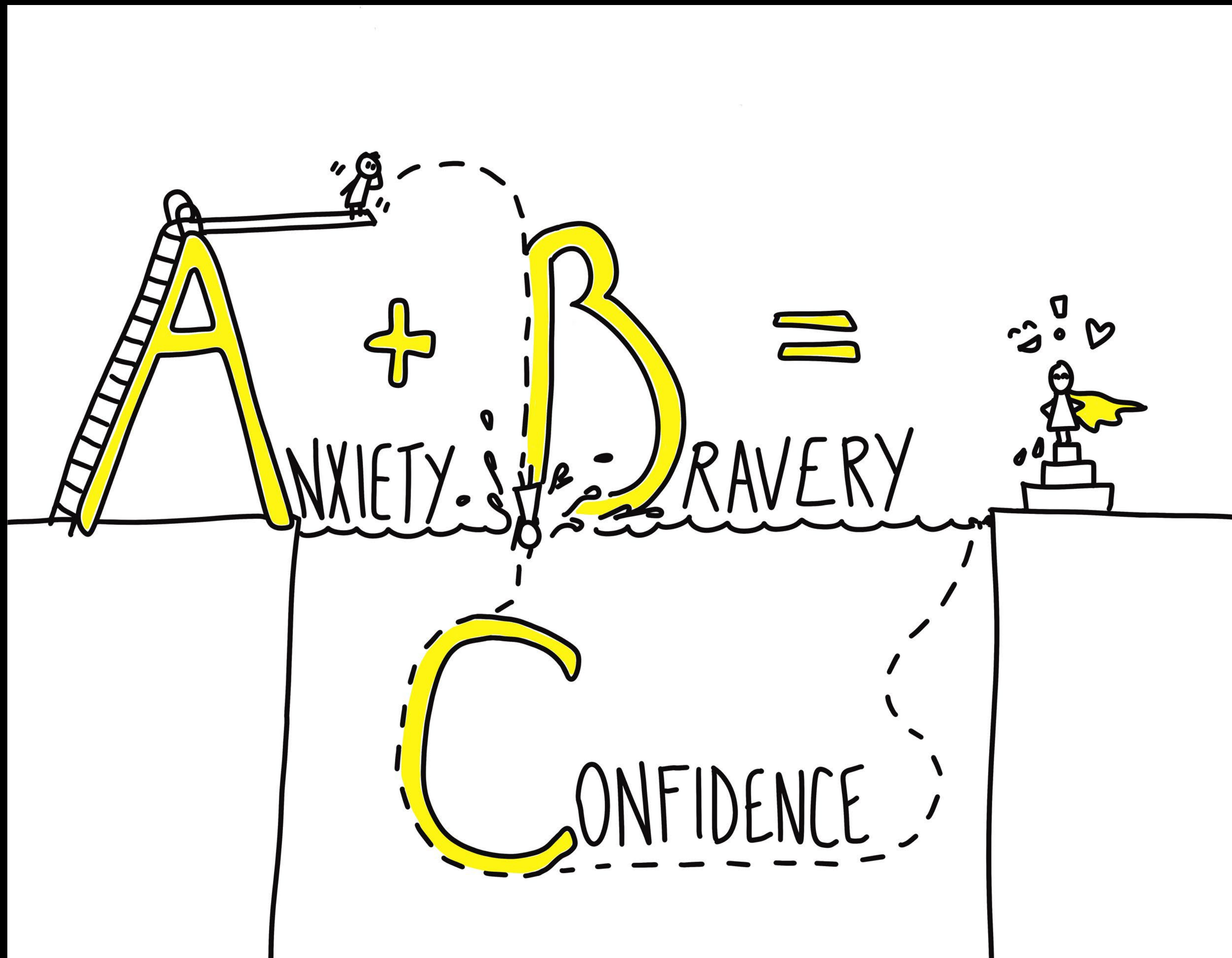
Reason

- Help them make sense of it
- Be curious
- Circles of Control
- Draw it out
- Scaling
- Steps to Success

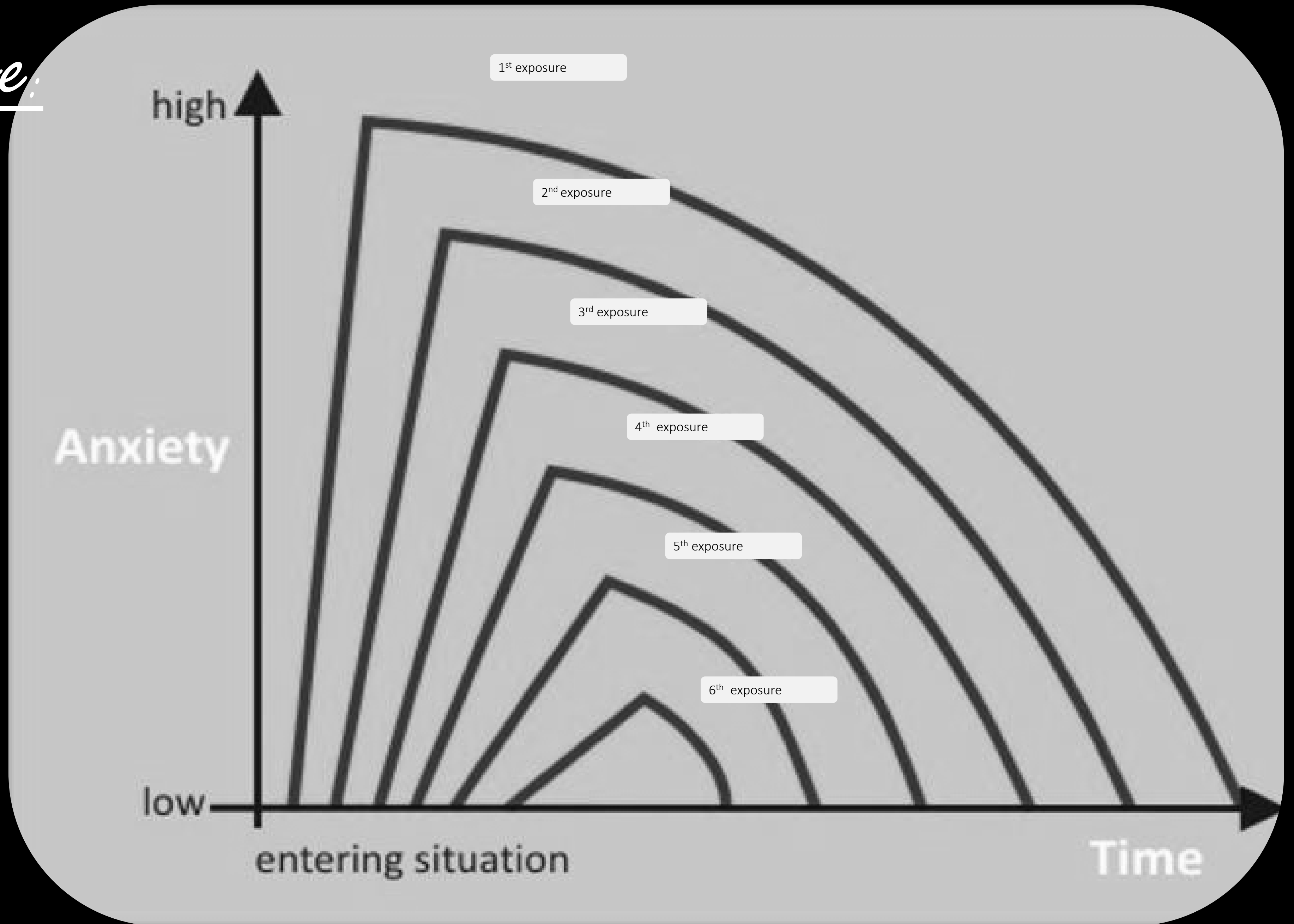


Strategien





Graded exposure:



Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance

Avoid avoidance

- Avoidance & excessive reassurance grow and maintain stress and anxiety
- The brainstem never learns ‘this is safe, I am okay’
- Acute episodes of stress and anxiety almost always reduce after 45 mins – and when this starts to happen the brain does important learning.
- Reduce the anticipatory anxiety

Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
- Routines and visuals

My Morning Routine

Have a bath

Wear pyjamas

Go to sleep

Turn on television

first next last

first next last

next last

Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
- Routines and visuals
- Prepare for change



OOPS

Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
- Routines and visuals
- Prepare for change
- Time to talk



Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
- Routines and visuals
- Prepare for change
- Time to talk
- Worry monsters/jars



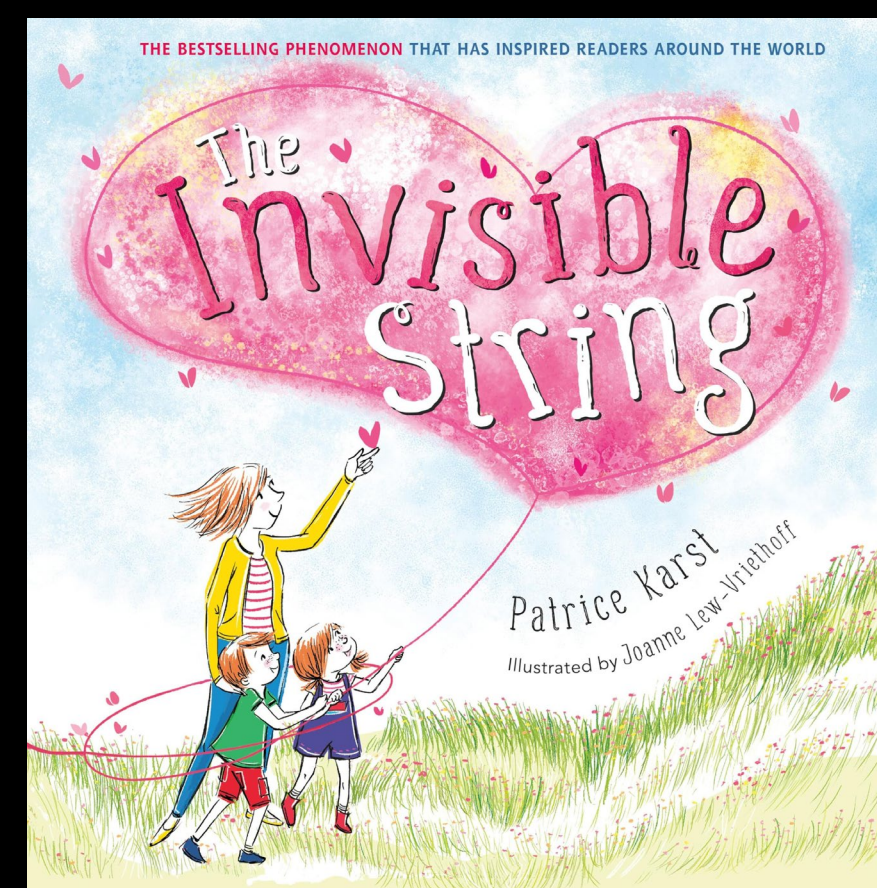
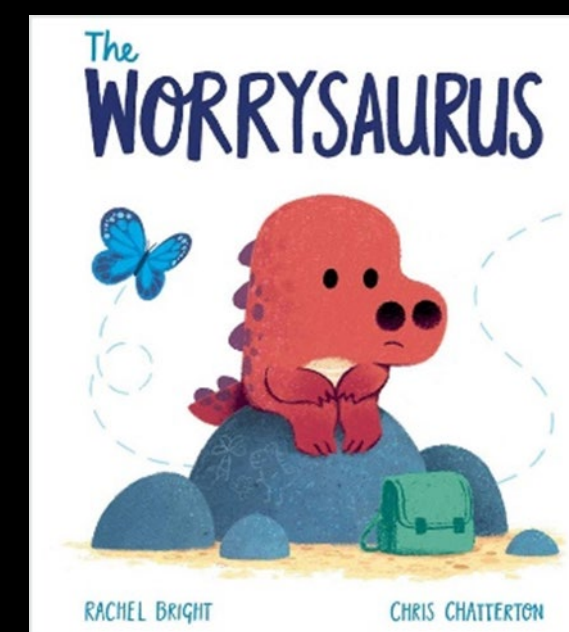
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- Worry monsters/jars
- Model how to cope with stress



Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
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- Prepare for change
- Time to talk
- Worry monsters/jars
- Model how to cope with stress
- Resources

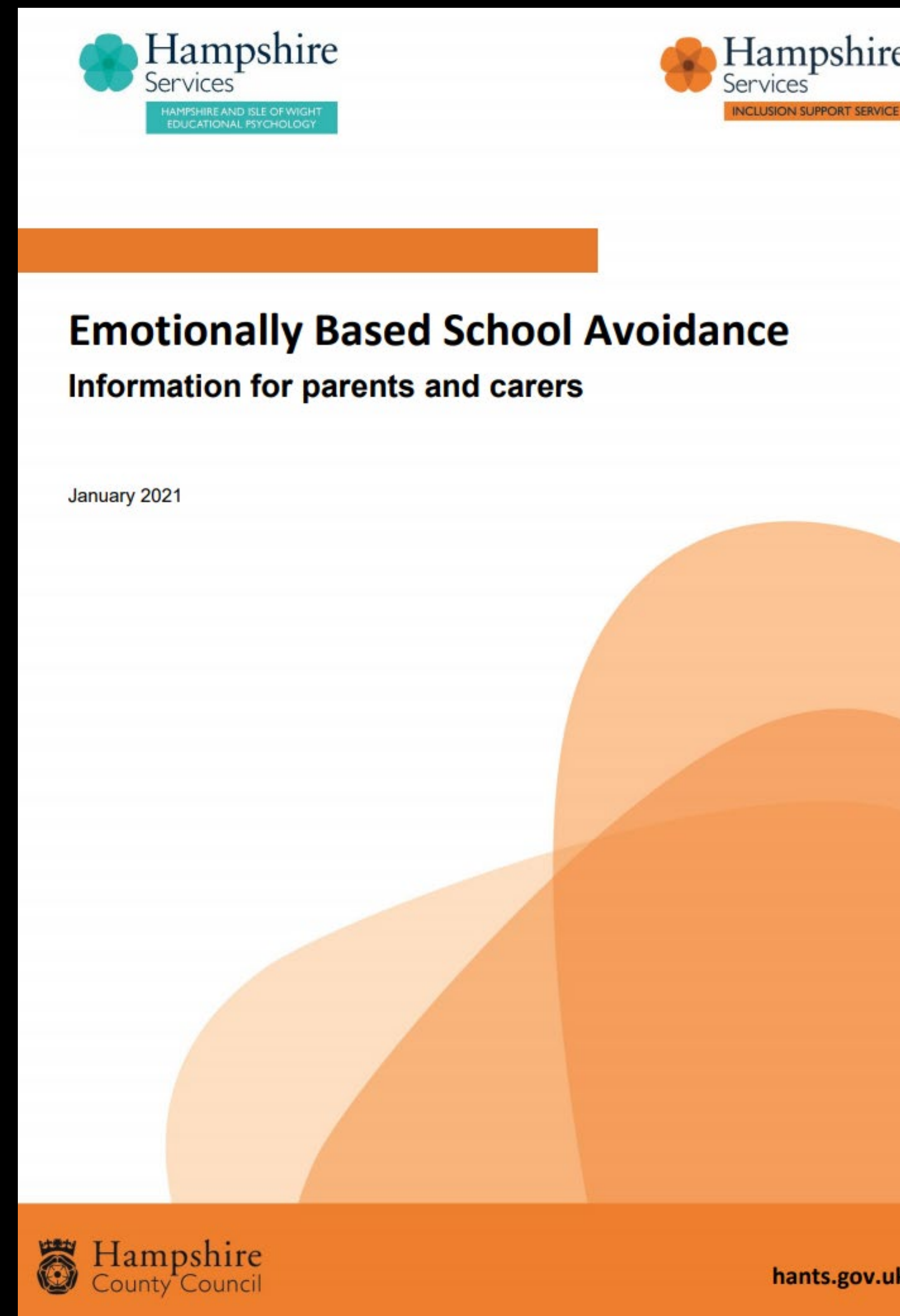
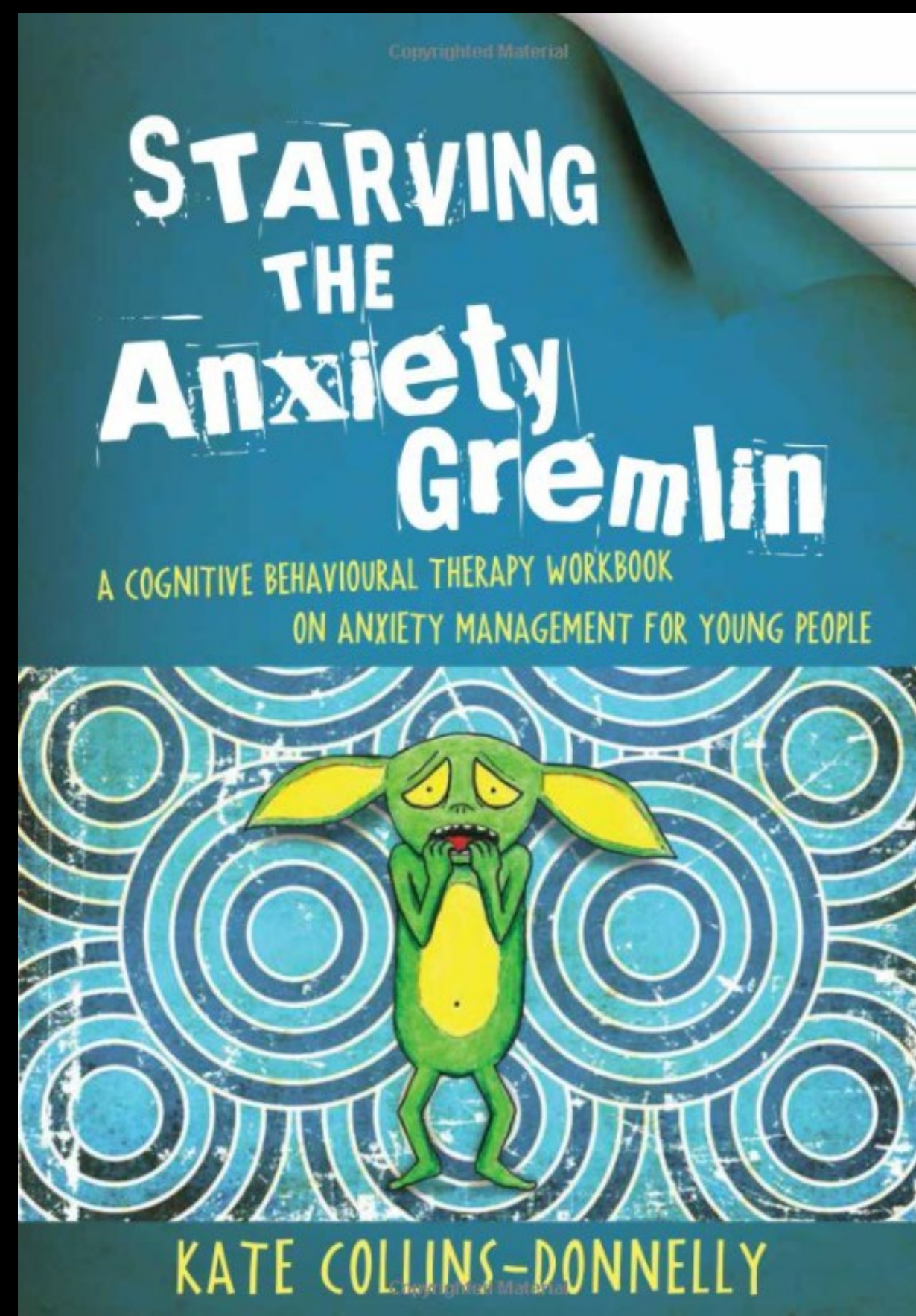
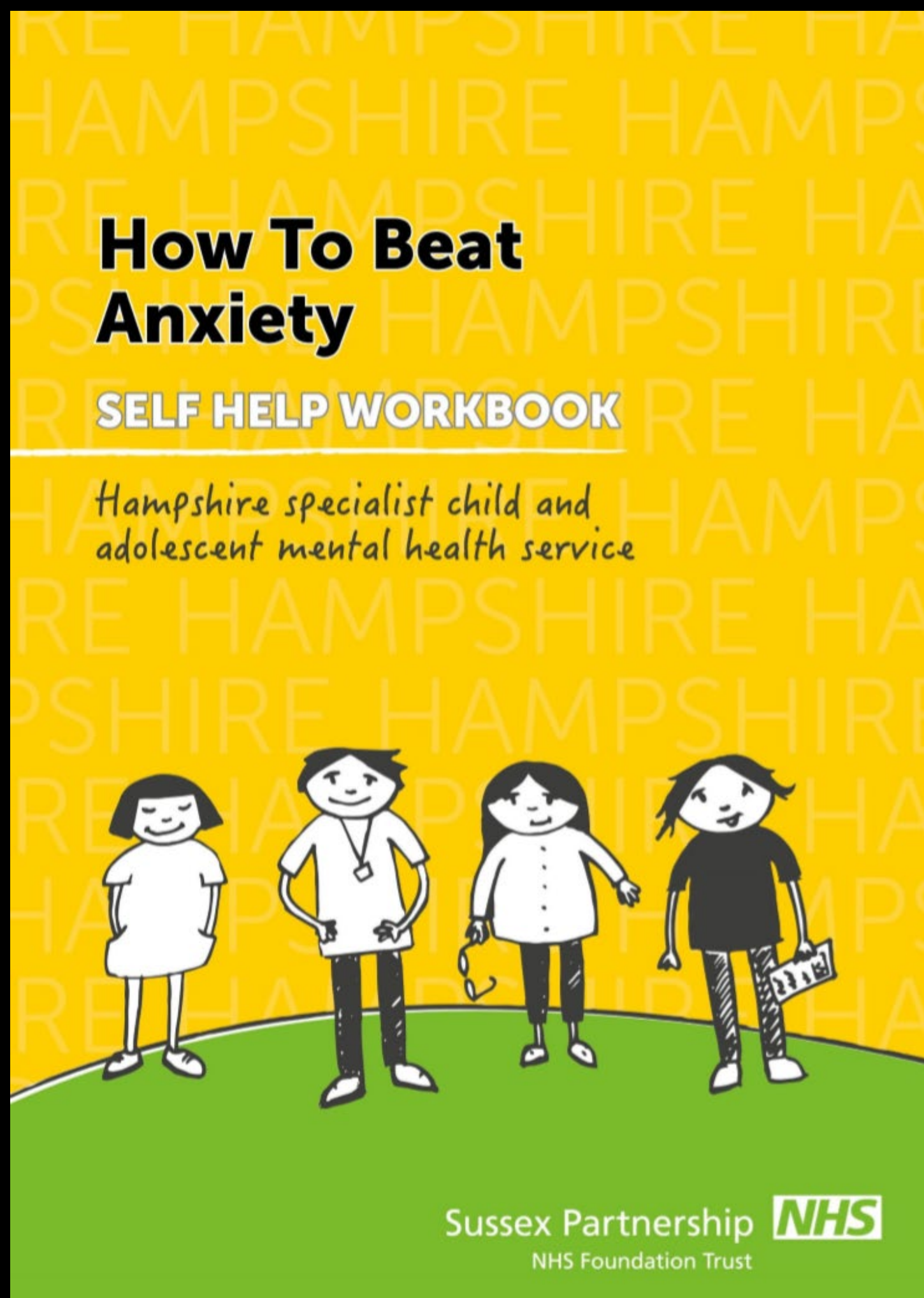


Top Tips

- Avoid avoidance
- Routines and visuals
- Prepare for change
- Time to talk
- Worry monsters/jars
- Model how to cope with stress
- Resources
- Resist the urge to fix it for them – it's okay to have uncomfortable feelings



Resources for Adults



Any Questions?

