

Supporting your child with anxiety



Lincolnshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

What is anxiety?

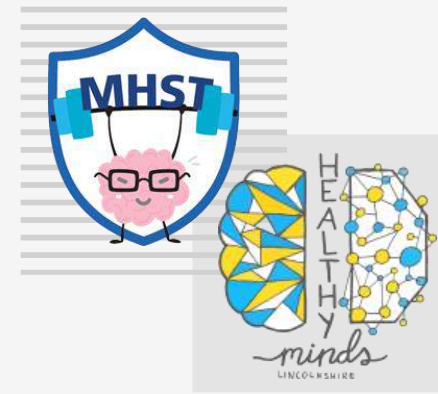


What words come to mind?



nervousness
fatigue anxiety
pressure panic
apprehension tension
distress frustration worry
burnout strain agitation
fear overwhelm

Definitions



There are a range of word young people might use to describe how they feel:

- Anxiety – “is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.” [NHS Choices, 2016](#)
- Worries – are a normal and expected emotion that many of us feel on a day-to-day basis.
- ‘Stress’ can mean two different things - the things that make us anxious or our anxious reaction to them [Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2019](#)



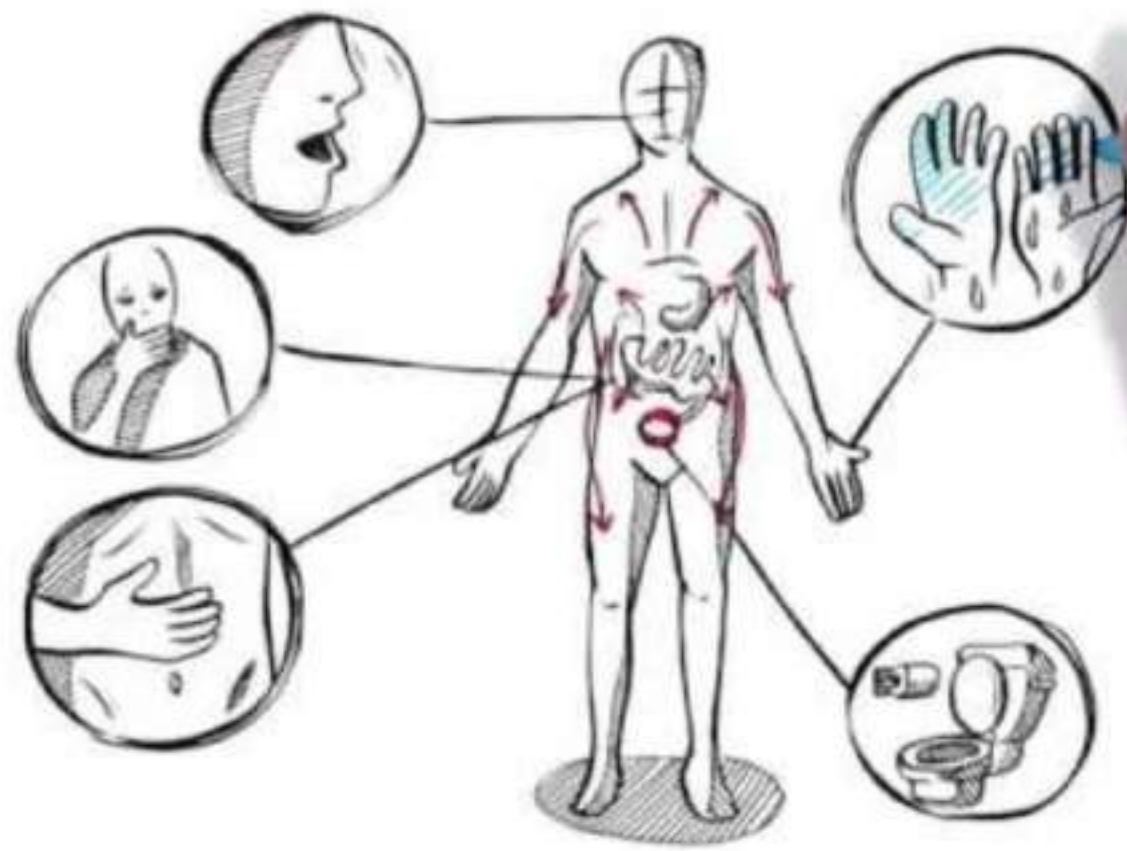
What does anxiety “look” like

Physical sensations



- heart beating really fast
- rapid breathing
- having trouble sleeping
- low appetite
- finding it difficult to concentrate
- feeling tired and grumpy
- having a dry mouth
- getting very hot
- trembling
- feeling faint
- stomach cramps and/or diarrhoea/needing to pee more than usual
- sweating more than usual
- wobbly legs





Behaviours



- Avoidance
- Fidgeting
- Lack of eye contact
- Isolating/ withdrawing
- Angry, aggressive, snappy behaviours
- Becoming overly attached to a safety object or person (e.g., refusing to go out, away from home, to school unless they have a certain object or person with them).

Thoughts and words



- "What if _ happens?"
- Thoughts that others will judge them (e.g. "people will laugh at me", "people will think I'm stupid")
- "I'm going to fail."
- Thoughts of being trapped (e.g. "I won't be able to escape.")
- Thoughts of helplessness and being out of control (e.g. "there's nothing I can do to change this")
- Overestimation of the threat and/or an underestimation of their ability to cope



How to respond



Alex



Alex is 7 years old and lives with his parents and older sister. He loves animals, so much so he wants to be a vet when he grows up. His favourite thing to do is play with the rabbit, Flopsy.

Alex has always been 'a bit of a worrier' he appears to be on the lookout for things that can go wrong and then starts to believe that the worst thing would happen. He seeks reassurance from his family a lot, but this rarely changes things for long. School causes Alex the most worries, he is more relaxed over the holidays but starts to have a lot of worries on Sunday nights. He has ended up missing days from school due to feeling sick.

Dad: Can you pop your shoes on so we're ready for school?

Alex: *looking down at his feet* no

Dad: Why not?

Alex: I don't want to go

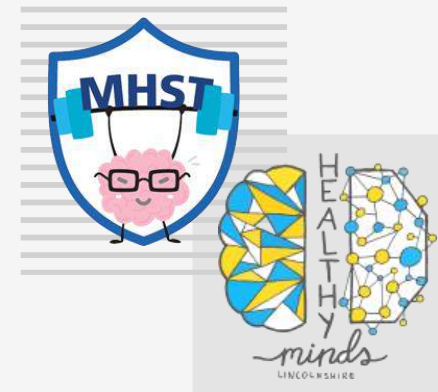
Dad: We don't have much time; we need to leave for school

Alex: I feel sick

Dad: Have some toast, that'll help. Don't worry about school, you'll be fine. There's nothing to worry about!



Active listening and validating



How do you know that people are actively listening to you?
What do you do to validate someone's voice?



Being curious



Ask open questions, such as:

- Why are you feeling worried?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about this situation that's making you worried?



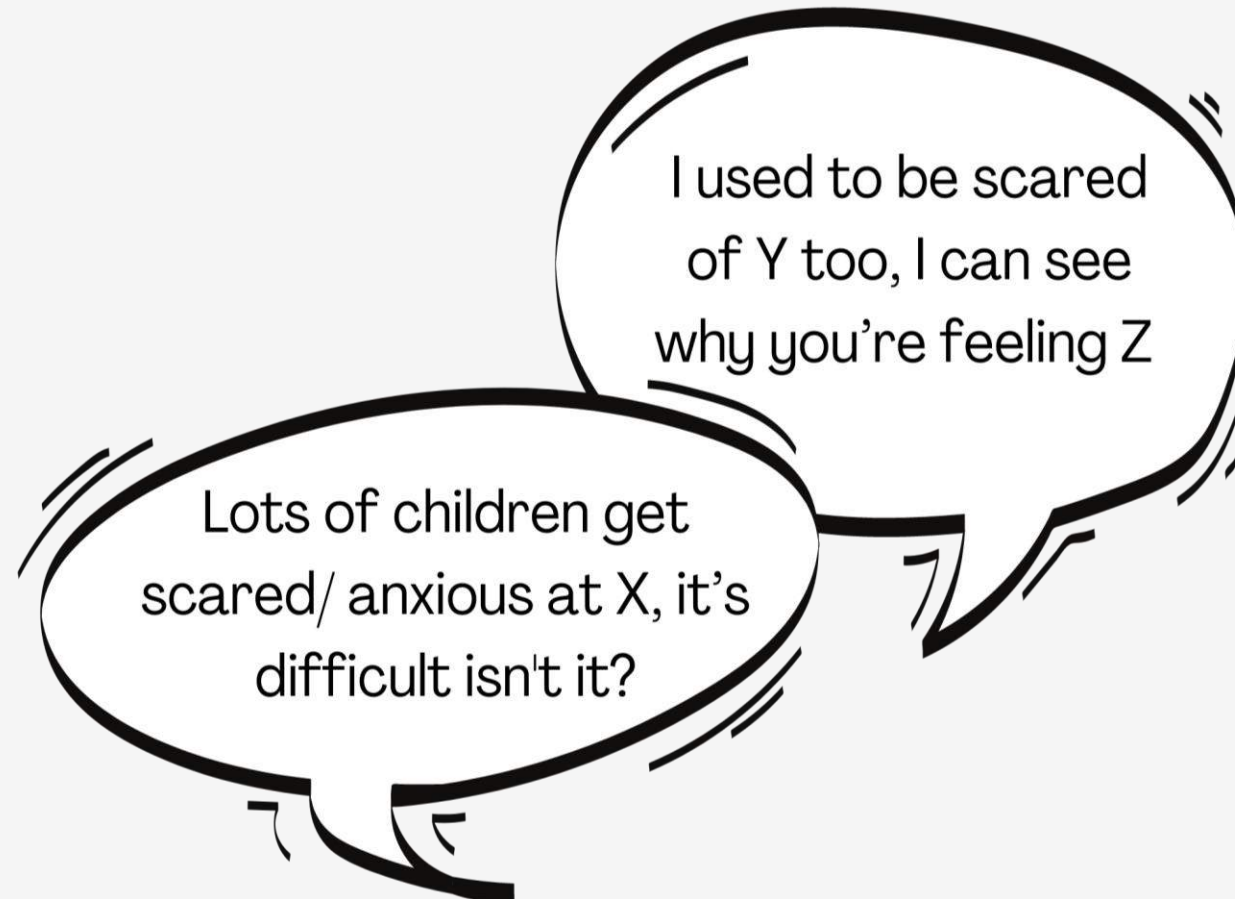
Empathising



- Use **what** rather than *why*
- Use validating statements before hand
- Allow yourself to connect with your own emotions that recognise their feeling



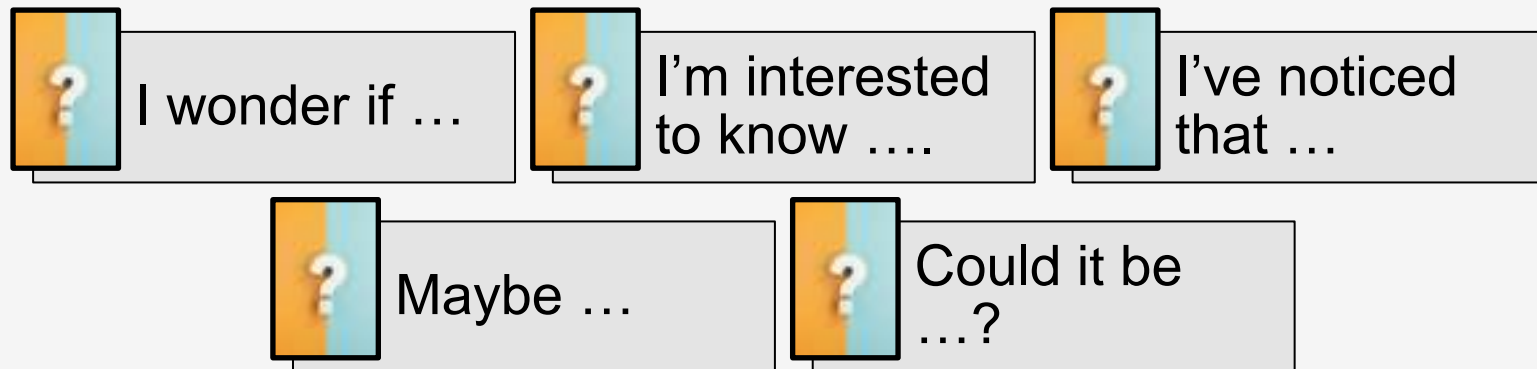
Normalising



Make suggestions



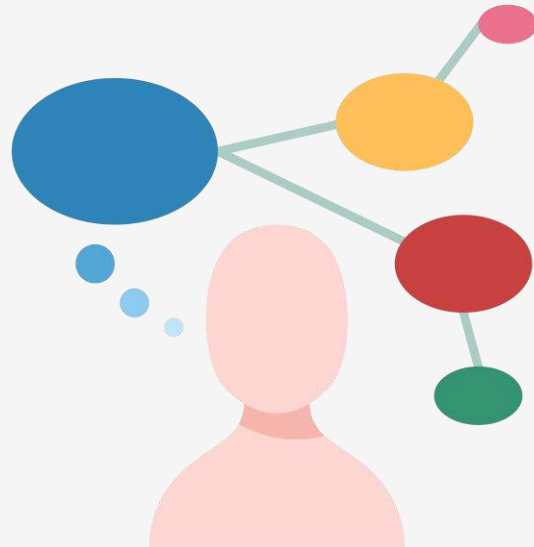
When making suggestions it is important to frame these as questions not instructions or facts, it is important that young people take ownership of their journey where they can.



Check understanding



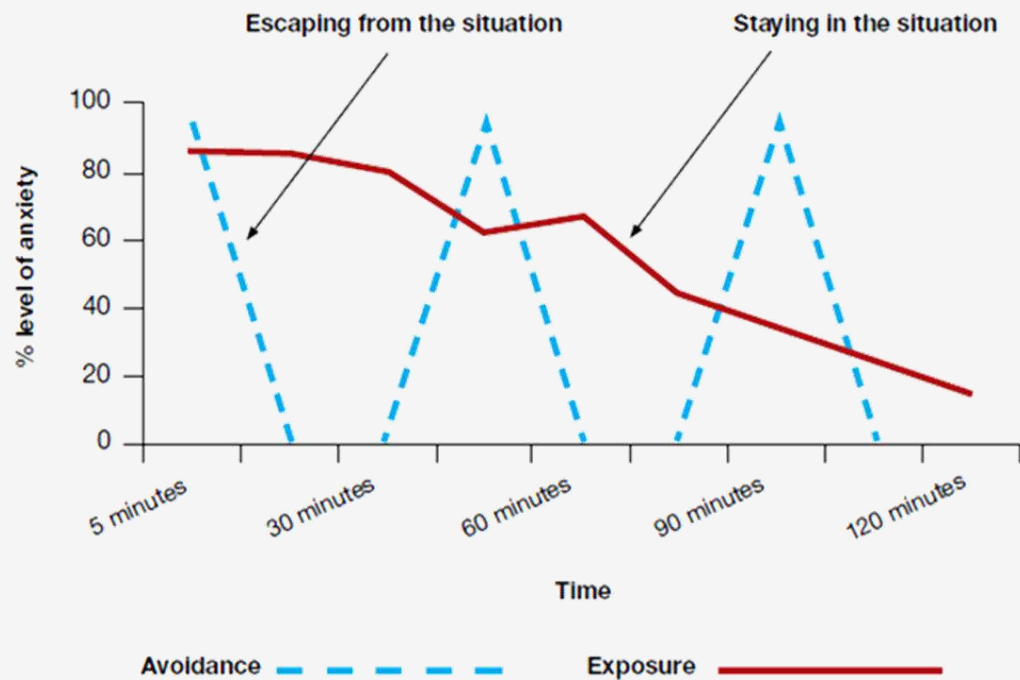
When we know our children, we might assume that we can accurately read their emotions and know why they are feeling these in relation to triggers, however we suggest taking the opportunity to ask back to our young people.



What can I do to help?

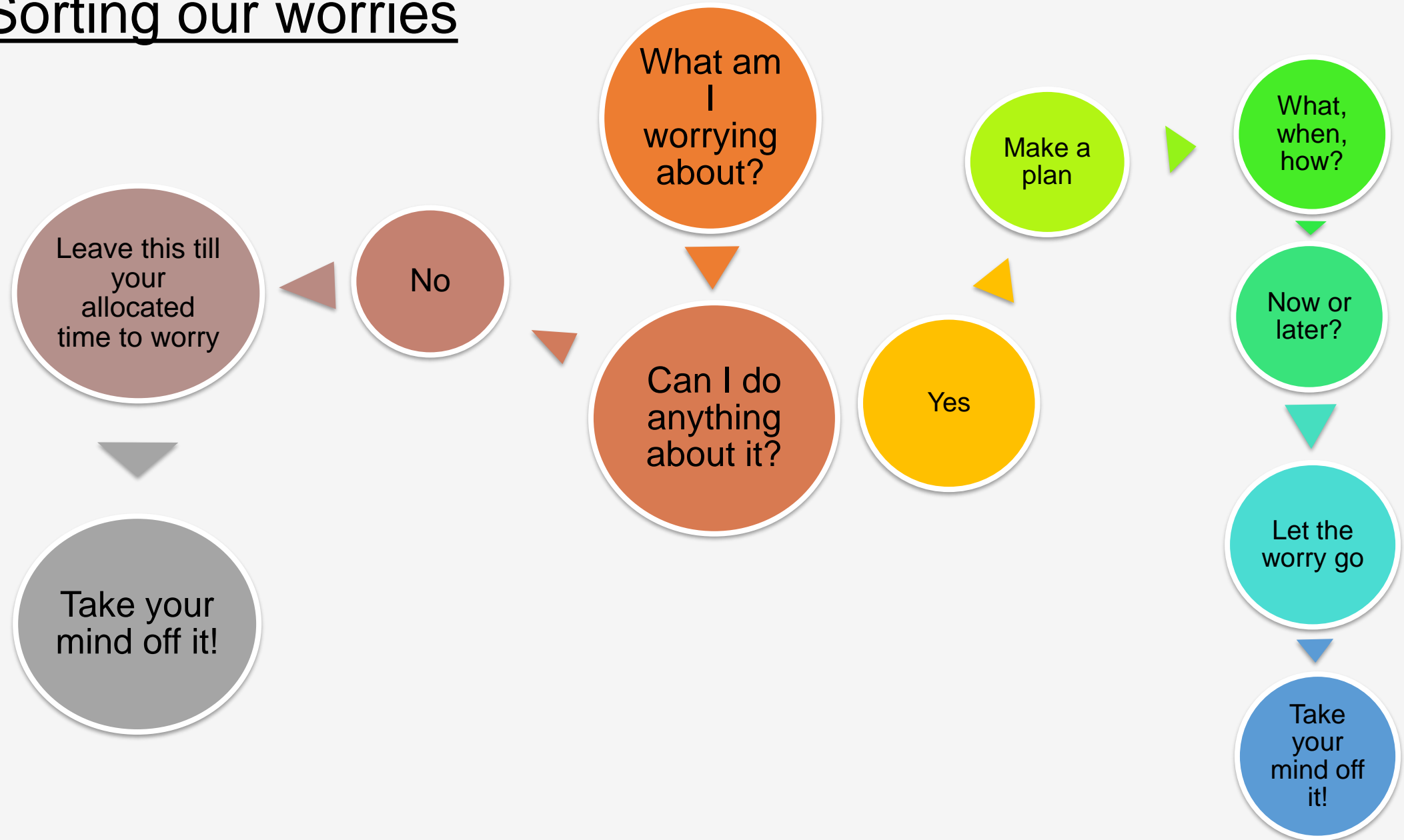


Habituation



- This graph shows how our anxiety levels change by staying in a situation versus avoiding the situation.
- This may be unpleasant, but the symptoms do reduce.

Sorting our worries



Problem solving



1. Identify the worry you want to focus on
2. Identify solutions
3. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each solution
4. Select a solution
5. Develop a plan
6. Put your plan into action
7. Review your plan

Worry time



- This is your time to worry, only worry at this time
- 15-20 minutes a day
- Early evening is best, not just before bed

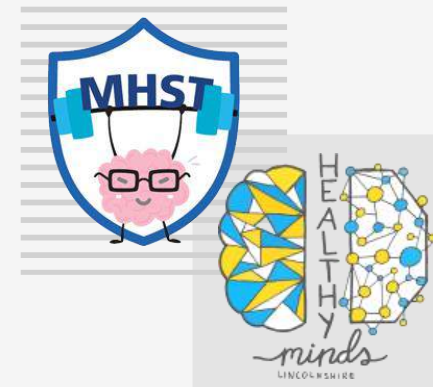
Write it down

Let the worry go

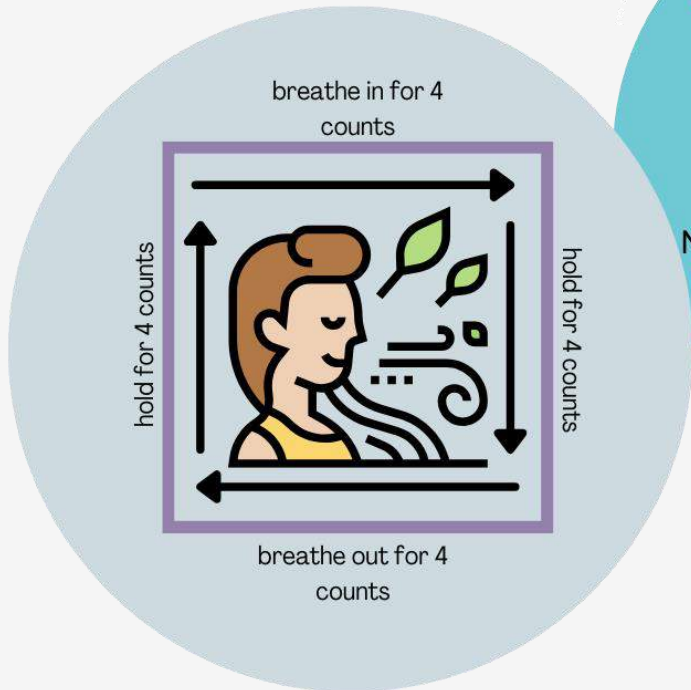
Take your mind off
it!



Meeting our sensory needs

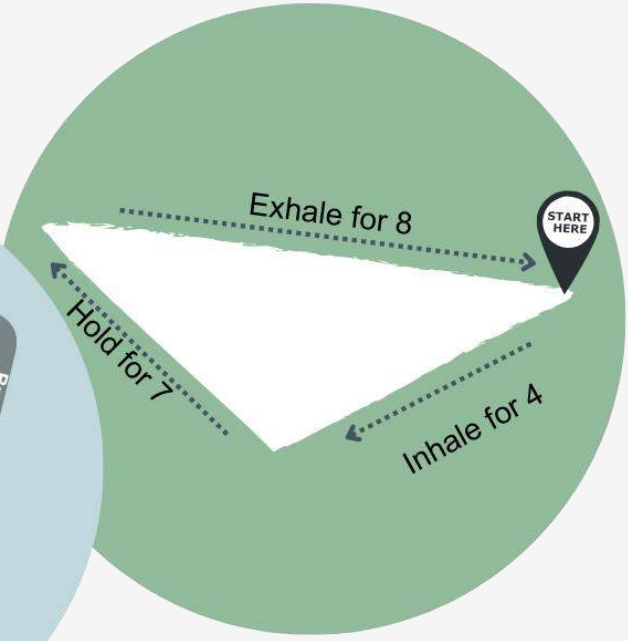
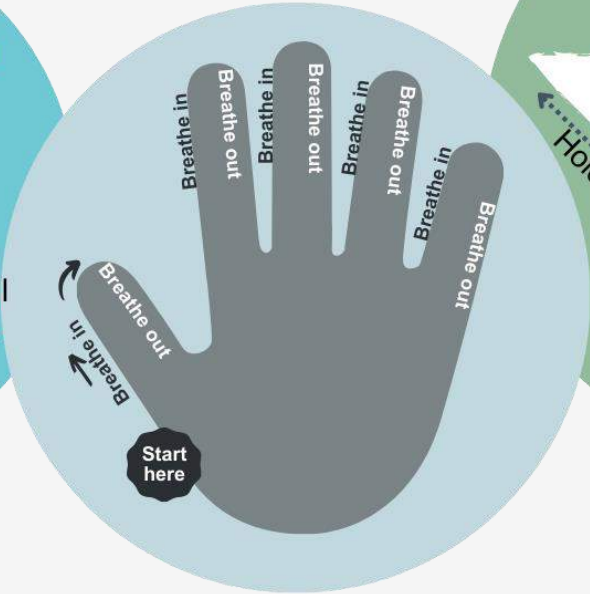


Relaxation



5 Senses Grounding

Notice 5 things you see
Notice 4 things you can touch
Notice 3 things you hear
Notice 2 things you can smell
Notice 1 thing you can taste



Resources



- LPFT Webpage
- LPFT Podcast (MHST podcast)
- LPFT Young People - Self-Help pages
- Here4You advice and referral:

0800 234 6342



Any questions?

