

Introduction to Anxiety

Parent Workshop

WHO ARE WE?

We work within a **Mental Health Support Team** called **MYME**, working in schools across Enfield, both primary and secondary.

MYME aim to promote emotional wellbeing and mental health by supporting children, young people and their families through prevention, early intervention and identification.

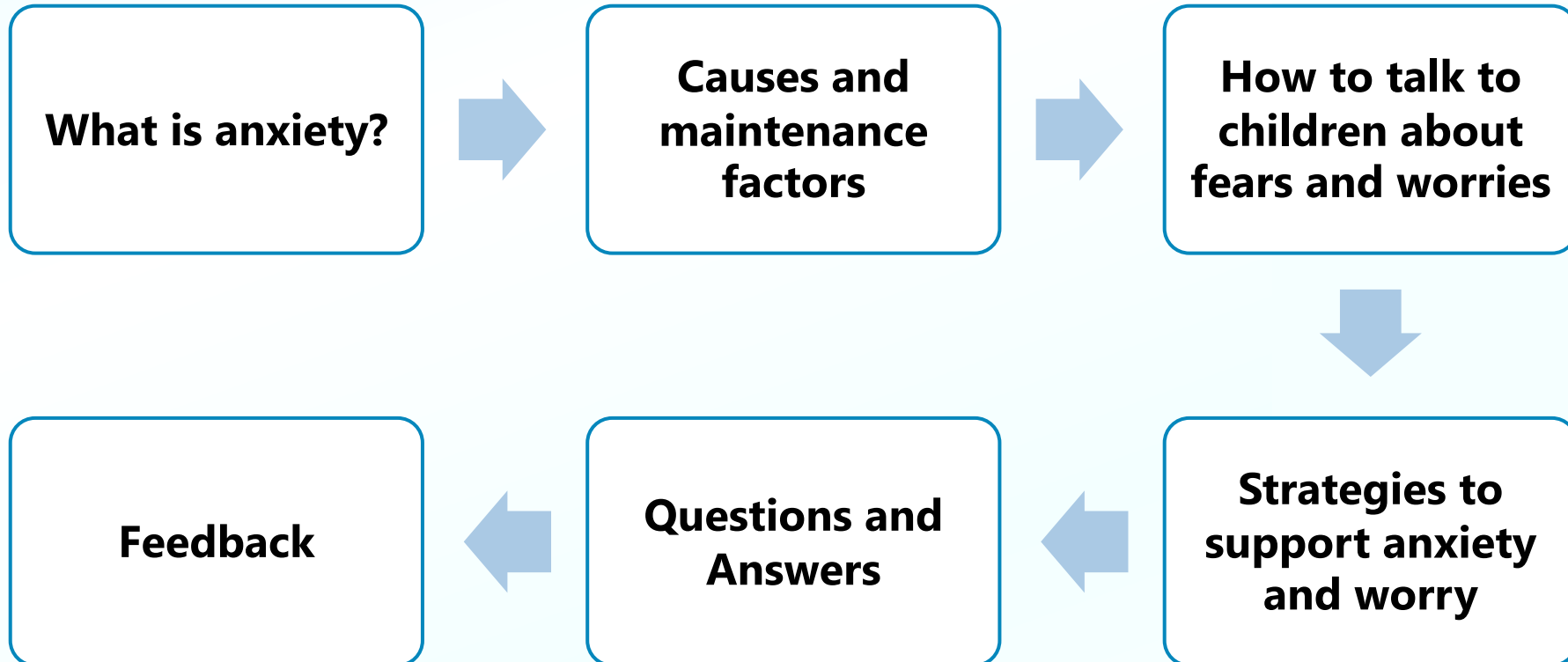
Our team is made up of a wide range of professionals:

Education Mental Health Practitioners/Children's Wellbeing Practitioners

CAMHS Clinical Professionals and Supervisors

Clinical and Team Lead

AGENDA



QUESTIONNAIRE



Helps us to see what you know already and we will ask you to complete the questionnaire at the end to see if there has been any changes to your answers.

Please be honest with your answer – no right or wrong answer

WHAT IS ANXIETY?



- Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear
- It is a **normal** and **healthy** emotion and in the right amounts can be helpful
- It is an evolutionary response that helps to keep us safe
→ Fight, flight and freeze
- It can become hard to manage:
 - In their **social life** (causing problems with friendships, family)
 - **Academically** (reduced academic achievement)
 - In their **mood** (are they miserable/low as a result?)

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS



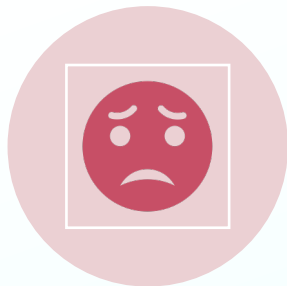
COMMON ANXIETIES EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN



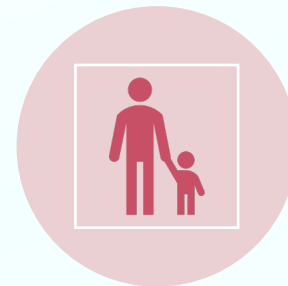
Specific phobias: Fear of particular places, objects or situations which leads to avoidance or extreme discomfort when faced with the feared object/situation



Social anxiety: Fear of doing something embarrassing in front of others, being judged negatively, looking silly or rejected by others

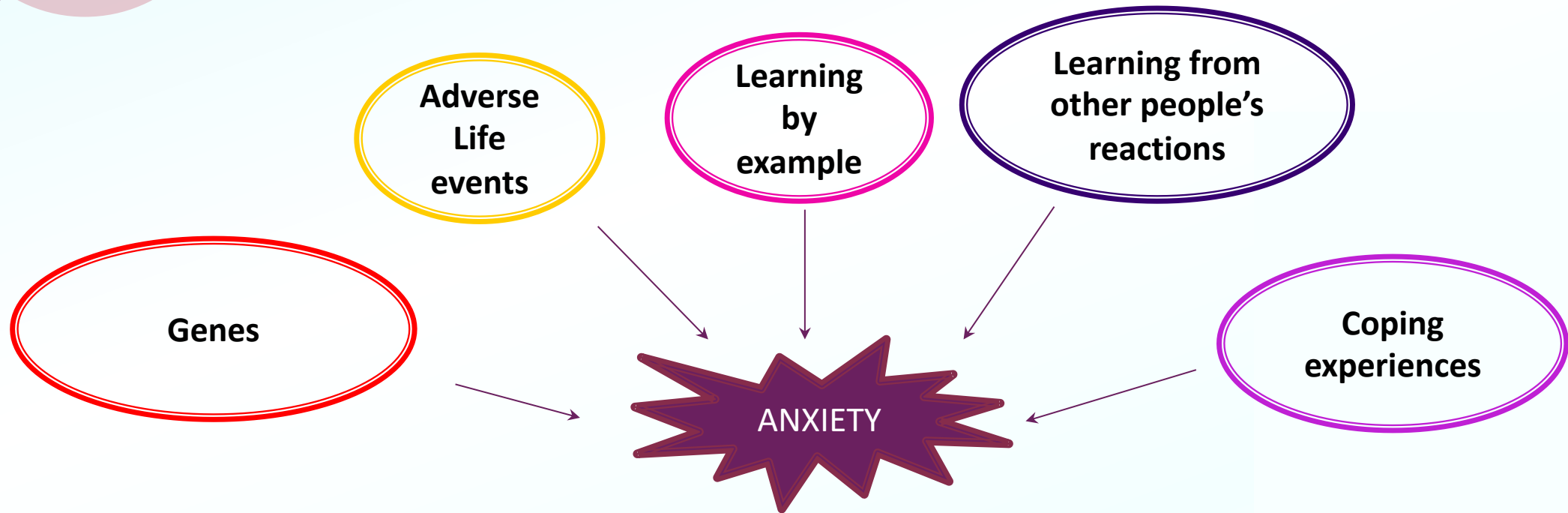


Generalised anxiety: Excessive worrying about a range of different concerns rather than a single concern = "a bit of a worrier"



Separation anxiety: Extreme difficulty to be away from a parent/ carer and worrying that something bad might happen to them in the absence of the carer or to the carer in absence of the child

HOW ANXIETY DEVELOPS



- It's important to note that there isn't any one factor that contributes to anxiety
- Although it can be helpful to understand the causes of your child's anxiety, it is much more important to understand what is **keeping** their anxiety **going** and **how** to support your child to overcome it.



LEARNING FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S REACTIONS

1. Overreacting
2. Dismissing their worries
3. Over reassuring an anxious child

WHAT KEEPS ANXIETY GOING?

MAINTENANCE CYCLE OF ANXIETY

THOUGHTS

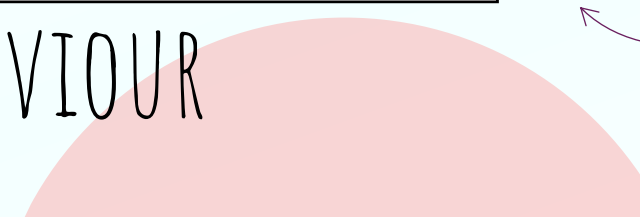
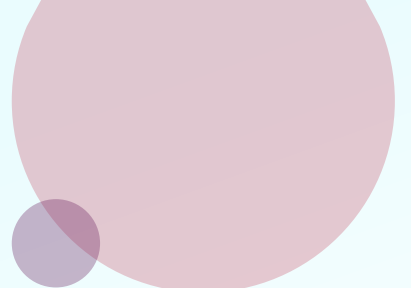
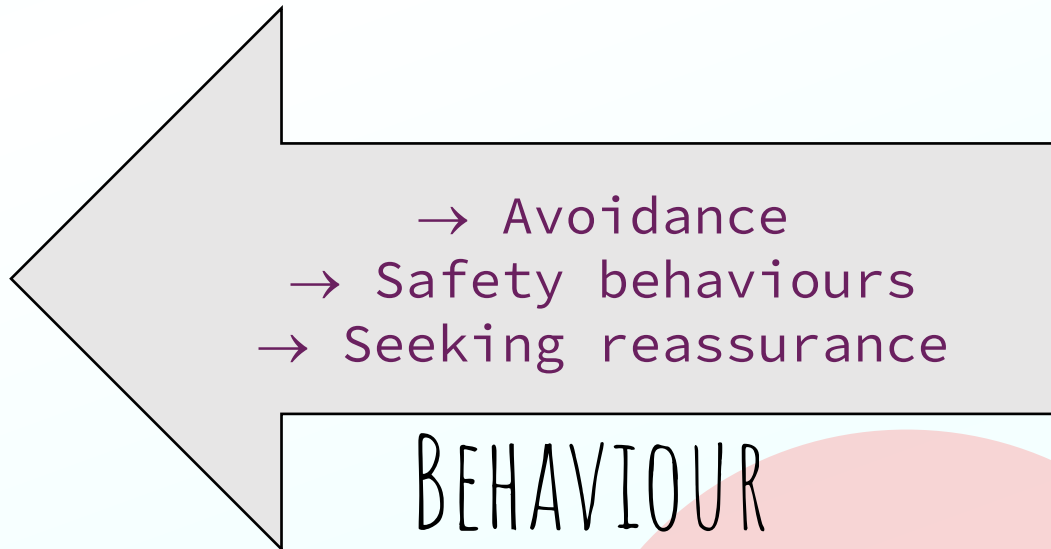
- Thinking something bad might happen
- Thinking they can't cope

FEELINGS

- Reinforces something bad is happening
- Feels uncomfortable
- Reduces confidence in coping

- Avoidance
- Safety behaviours
- Seeking reassurance

BEHAVIOUR



MAINTENANCE FACTORS - ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR

AVOIDANCE:

One of the most common strategies people use to reduce anxiety is avoidance.

Avoidance provides short term relief. Ultimately in the long-term, results in increased anxiety → vicious cycle.

Avoidance keeps fears going as we never know how likely our fears are to happen and stops us learning to cope.

SAFETY SEEKING BEHAVIOURS:

→ Things the child does to keep themselves safe

It keeps fears going because the child believes the feared outcome did not happen because they performed the safety-behaviour.

"I'm only okay if..."

Reassurance seeking is a kind of safety seeking behaviour that can prevent children from learning that they can cope independently



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ANXIETY AND WORRY

Talking to
children about
fears and worries

Being mindful of
our own
responses

Coping /
relaxation
strategies





TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT FEARS AND WORRIES

- Find a time and space when a child is feeling calm and you won't be interrupted.
- Try and ask questions rather than giving answers. Being curious can help children to talk about their worries.

★ *Why are you feeling worried? What is frightening you?*

★ *What do you think might happen?*

★ *What about the situation makes you feel worried?*

★ *What is the worst thing that might happen?*

★ *What helped you to do X in the past? What do you think could help you?*



Empathising

'That sounds really difficult to be thinking about that a lot'

Labelling emotions

'It sounds like you are feeling really frightened about...'

**Make it fun/
rewarding**

Be receptive "You look sad/upset today, do you want to have a chat/is there anything I can do?"

Normalising–

'Being worried feels uncomfortable, it's not 'bad', I feel worried sometimes too.'

Check understanding–

'So let me check, what you're telling me is...''

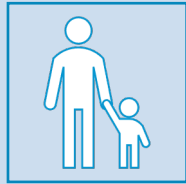
Thanking them 'Thank you for sharing and opening up to me. I know it's not easy'

HOW and **WHEN** is as important as **WHAT** you are asking!

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR FEARS AND WORRIES



Talk about other things: It is usually during ordinary conversations that children bring up important issues.



Take the pressure off: Don't constantly ask your child what is wrong as this can cause them to close down. Instead, remind them you are there for them.



Talk about your own worries: It can help if you talk about your news and your own stresses too. Modelling the sharing of concerns and disclosing problems will help them learn how to do this.

WHAT IF A CHILD FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT THEIR FEARS AND WORRIES?

1. **Make tentative suggestions.**
2. **Observe behaviour & notice patterns.**
3. **Don't feel you need to get all the answers straight away.**



BEING MINDFUL OF OUR OWN RESPONSES

Model healthy ways to manage our own anxiety & stress (easier said than done!).

Be mindful of our body language and behaviour when a child is facing an anxiety-provoking situation (e.g., hovering near child and constantly asking child if okay).

Our responses can accidentally send the message that there is reason to be anxious and that we do not believe the child can cope. They might also encourage avoidance.

Showing your child that you are there when they need you (e.g., with a hug, making them a hot chocolate, sitting with them and listening).



REASSURANCE

Reassurance which <u>promotes</u> opportunities for new learning:	Reassurance which <u>reduces</u> opportunities for new learning:
Go on, have a go, you've done it before and it went better than you expected!	It's ok, you don't need to put your hand up if you find it too scary!
I think you should see how it goes. I feel confident but even if it doesn't go well, we will have an idea of what to work on next.	It will be fine, don't worry! There is nothing to be scared of.
I really think you can do this. I was so proud when you asked a question in class last week.	It will all be OK. I'm sure your classmates won't laugh.

COPING AND RELAXATION STRATEGIES

Distraction techniques



Breathing techniques

Room Search

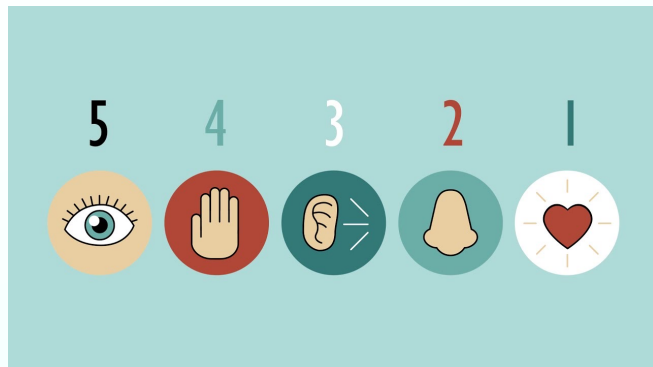
Think of a category and search the room for it. For example, look for:

- Everything that is a ... colour
- Everything that is a ... shape
- Things that feel of...
- Things made of ...

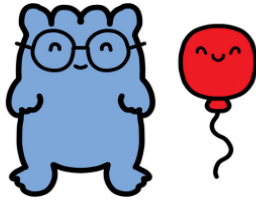
Visualisation



Positive self-talk/coping strategies



Belly Breathing



- Take a deep breath in and fill your belly like you're inflating a balloon.
- As you do this, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breath in and fill the balloon in your belly.
- Pause and then let all of the air out of your belly like you're letting a balloon deflate.
- As you do this, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breath out and let the balloon go down from your belly.



I CAN DO THIS

I AM SMART

YES I CAN!

POSITIVE SELF TALK FOR KIDS

TRY THE BEST I CAN

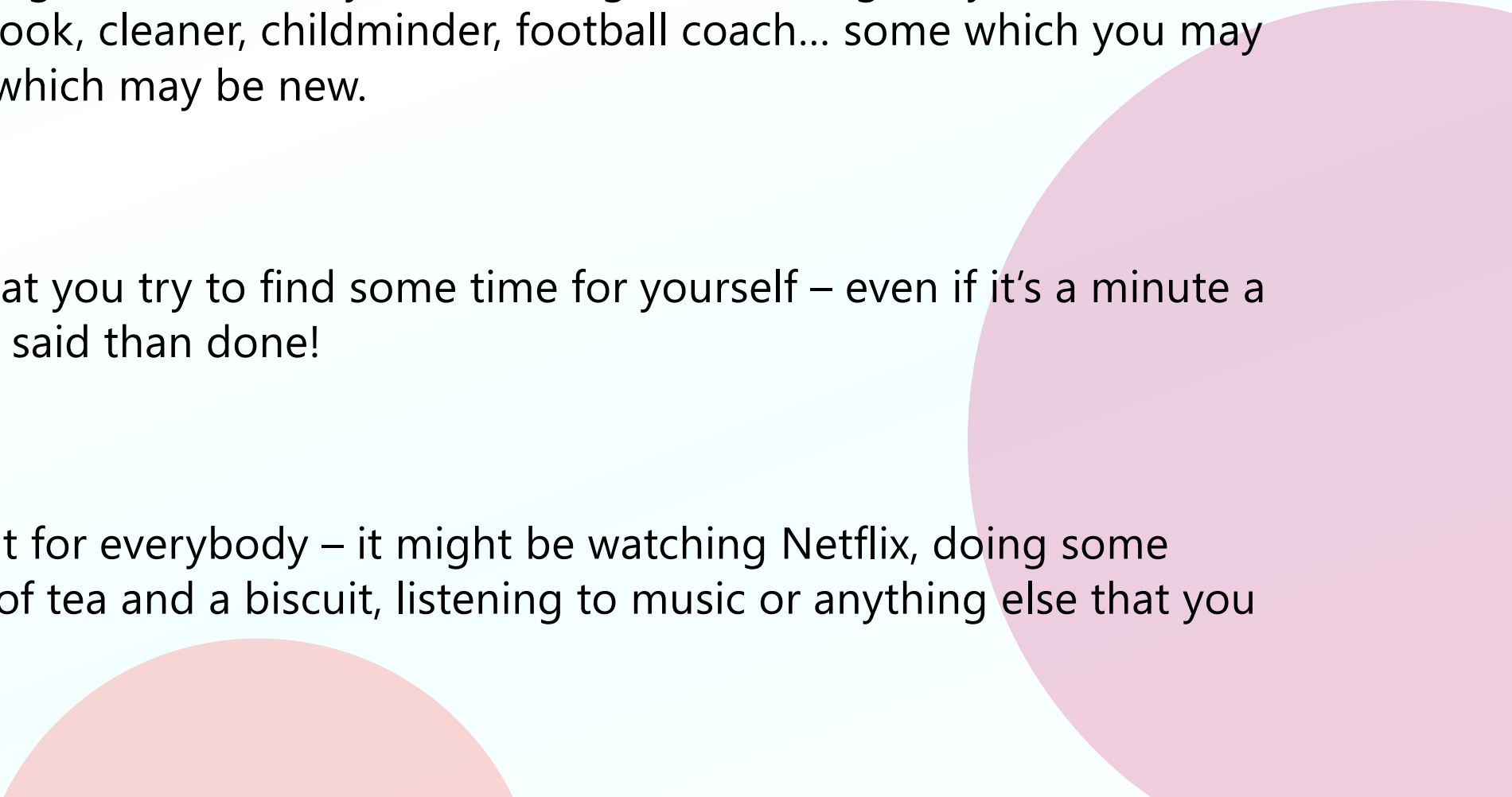
THE WORRY TREE





LOOK AFTER YOURSELF



- During this time, you might have found yourself being lots of things to your child – parent/carer, teacher, cook, cleaner, childminder, football coach... some which you may be used to, and some which may be new.
 - It is really important that you try to find some time for yourself – even if it's a minute a day. This is more easily said than done!
 - Self-care looks different for everybody – it might be watching Netflix, doing some exercise, having a cup of tea and a biscuit, listening to music or anything else that you enjoy.
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WHAT IF I MAKE IT WORSE?

Talking to our children about their fears and worries can increase our own anxious thoughts.

We might worry that we can make things worse, put ideas in their head or say the wrong thing – these are very **normal** and **common** concerns! It is OK to try and get things wrong sometimes.

Providing a **listening, curious** ear to your child can make a big difference to their fears and worries.

The aim isn't to 'fix' the worry, but support your child to feel in control, think for themselves, stop them feeling 'silly' and begin to learn to cope with uncertainty.



FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Book: Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries by **Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts** (available on Amazon)

Young Minds Parent Helpline: Offers free and confidential expert advice for parents worried about their child. Information on supporting children and young people with specific problems can also be found on their website. **T:** 0808 802 5544 free to call 9.30-4pm, online contact form for out of hours.

Website: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/>

Family Lives: Advice on all aspects of parenting, including health and wellbeing, family relationships, bullying. . **T:** 0808 800 2222 free to call (Monday to Friday - 9am to 9pm and Weekdays - 10am to 3pm).

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

YoungMinds: guide for parents on supporting a child with anxiety

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>

MindEd: A free educational resource for adults on children and young people's mental health. **Website:**

<https://www.minded.org.uk/>

Kooth: Online counselling service with a qualified counsellor and emotional well-being platform for children and young people.

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>