



Anxiety



Plan of session

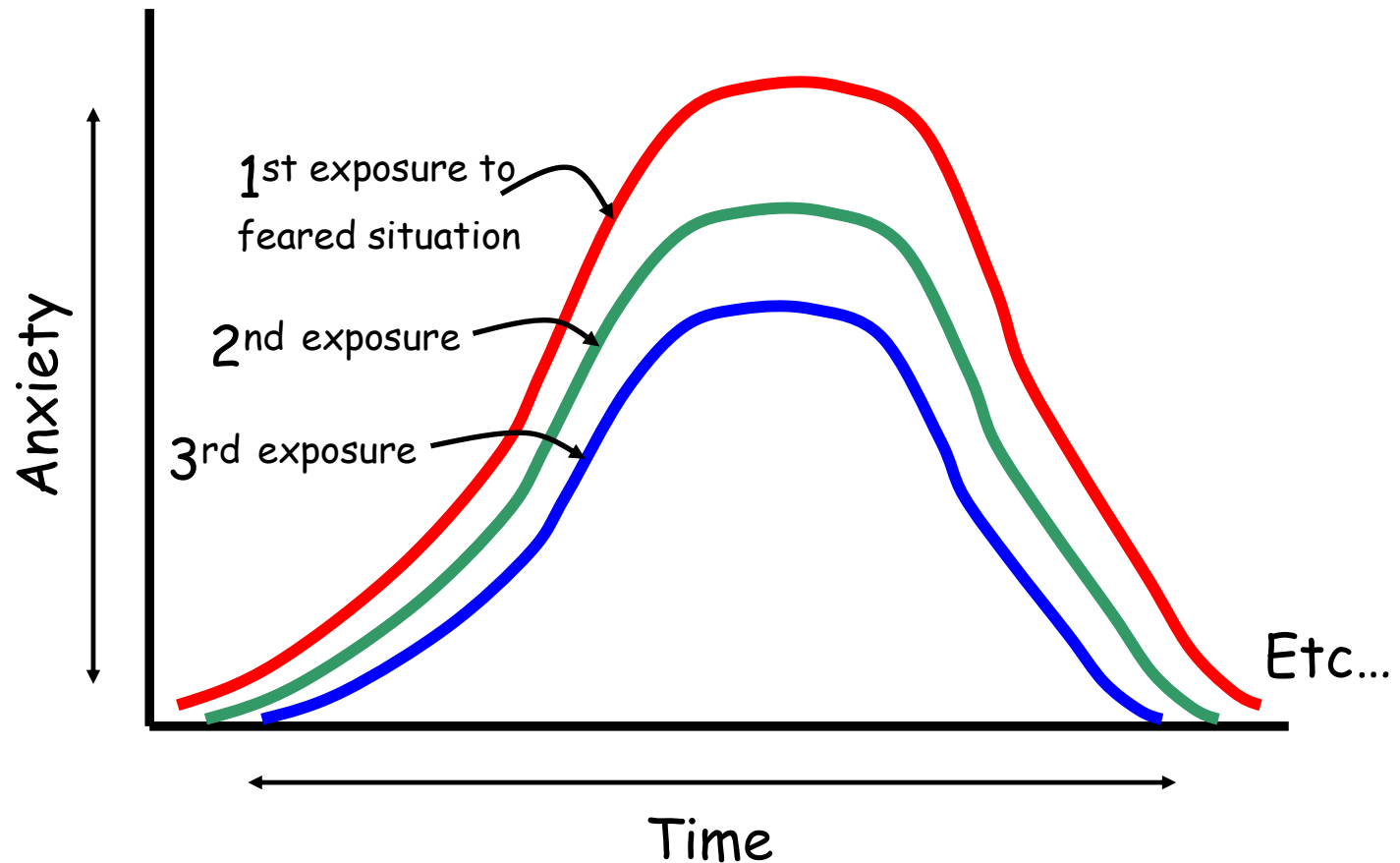
- What is Anxiety?
- What can you do to help?
- Questions



Anxiety

- Anxiety is normal, it is a response to stressful or challenging events.
- 1 in 6 children suffer from anxiety severe enough to interfere with their day to day activities (Dadds et al 1997)
- If left untreated, often persists into adulthood (Anderson 1994)
- Anxiety disorders can be prevented when children are given the appropriate skills

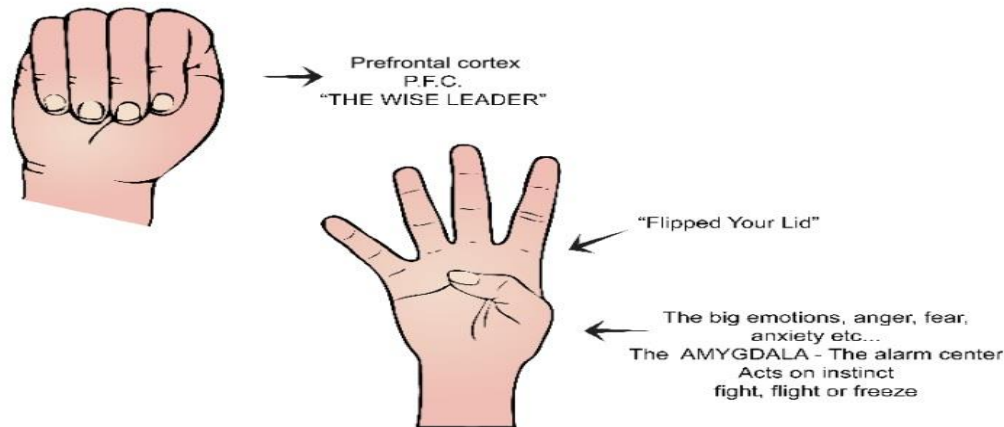
The Anxiety Curve



Fight and Flight

- The brain in the hand!
- The impact of cortisol on the body.

“Flipping One’s Lid”



Credit: Daniel Siegel, V.D. is the creator of this metaphor and expression “Flipped Lid”. Copyright © 2014 www.sharonSelby.com



Presentation of anxiety

Physical: headaches, stomach aches, vomiting, sleep disturbance, palpitations, chest pain, palpitations, chest pain, difficulty breathing, choking sensations (panic attack)

Cognitive: unhelpful / unrealistic thoughts, rumination

Behavioural: avoidance, disruption & withdrawal.

Emotional: excessive fear of something/someone/situation

Physical discomfort

Tense muscles

Headache

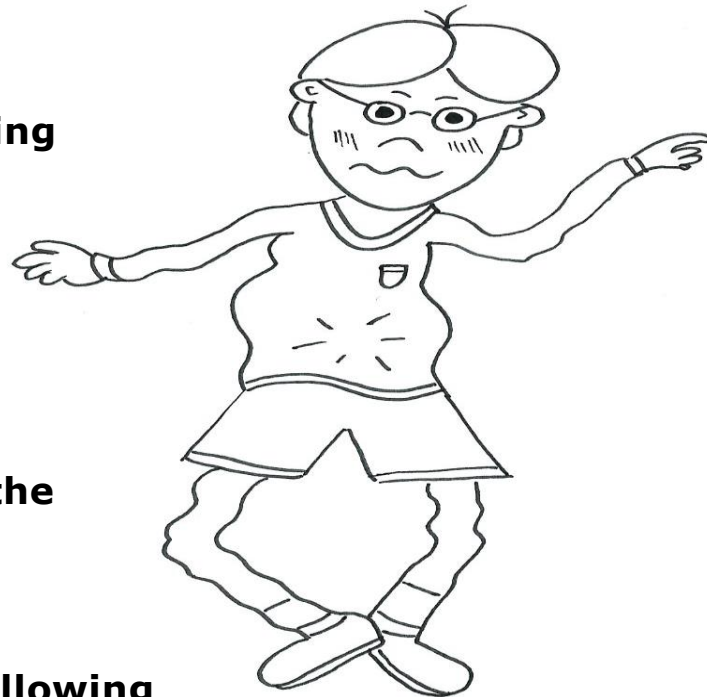
Dizzy/light headed

Breathless

Face flushed

Tight chest

Trembling



Heart beats hard & fast

Sweaty hands

**Stomach pains/
butterflies**

Needing the toilet

Weak legs

Dry mouth/difficulty swallowing

Fidget feet

Blushing



When it becomes a problem

- When anxiety interferes significantly with everyday life opportunities and experiences
- Anxious symptoms dominate the young person, they are unable to do what they used to do or want to do.
- When they can't cope

Types of anxiety

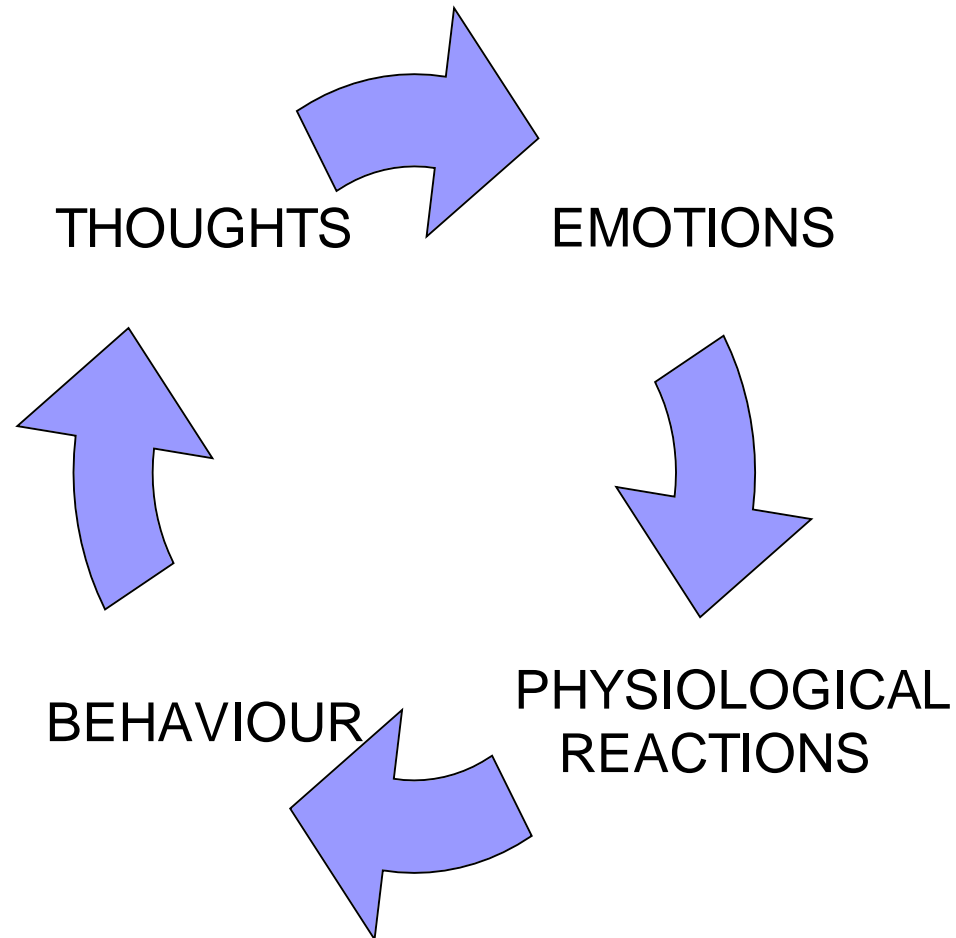
- **Severe anxiety** long standing avoidant behaviours e.g. separation anxiety in children
 - **Phobias** marked fear which is not age appropriate i.e. buttons, dogs
 - **Social anxiety/phobia-** fear of what other people think of you, or your performance can develop in mid to late teens.
- ‘Agoraphobia’ is the extreme phobic state of social anxiety



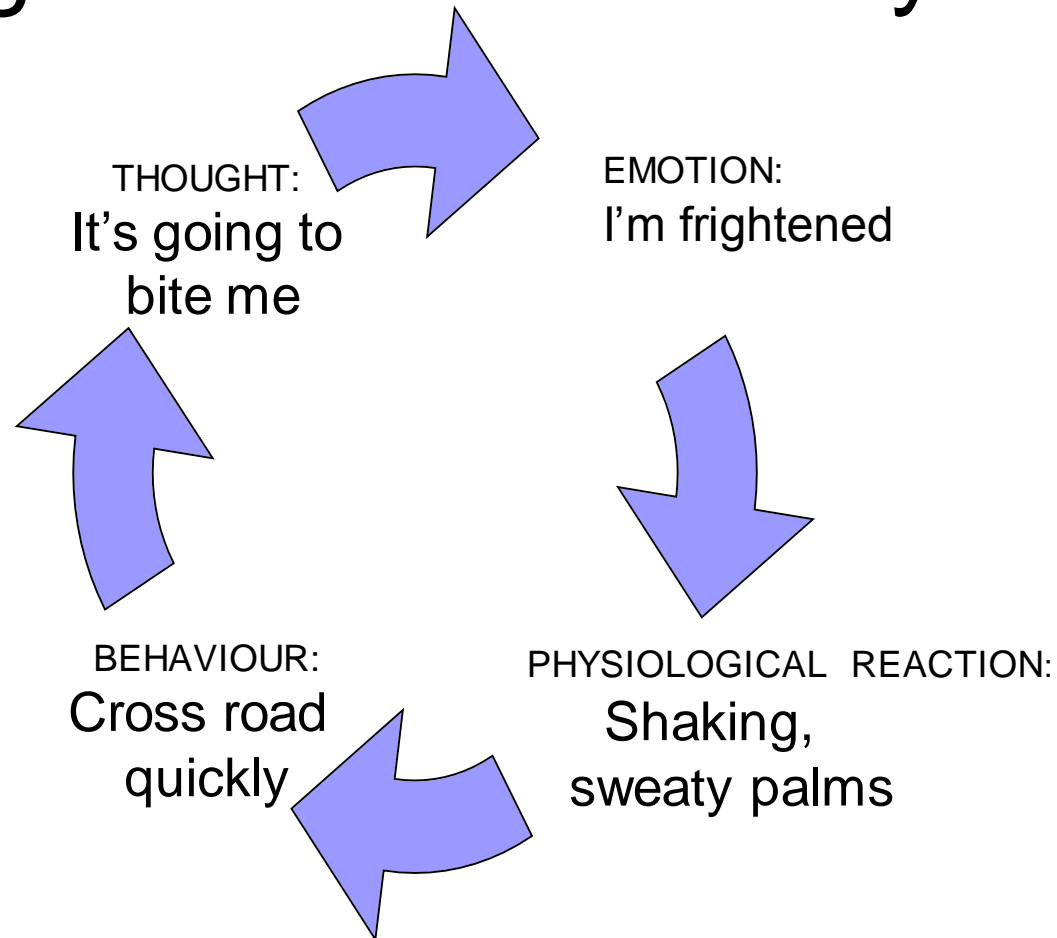
Types of Anxiety Cont.

- **OCD** (Repeated unpleasant thoughts i.e. germs) often unreasonable
- **PTSD** (recurrent persistent intrusive recollections of event)
- **Generalised anxiety** (excessively worried most of the time, interferes in daily activities)
- **Panic attacks** are unpredictable acute symptoms, very disabling.

CBT model of Anxiety



Situation: You see a dog walking along the road towards you





What maintains anxiety?

- Avoidance
- Reassurance
- Copying others anxious behaviour
- Repeated exposure to perceived negative experiences

Child factors

Parent factors

Situational factors

Have to say goodbye to Mum to go in to class

She is not going to be able to cope;
She is going to get really upset

Someone will pick on me

Anxious; Tense

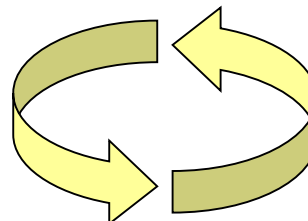
Fear

Tummy ache

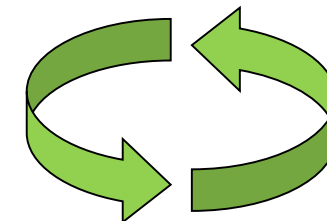
Cuddle and try to comfort; Take her home

Cling on to Mum; Refuse to go in

A clinical model of the *maintenance* of anxiety



Failure to disconfirm assumptions



Reinforcement of avoidance



ANGER

(OR FIGHT)

Adrenaline produces energy in our body to give us the strength to fight off a real or perceived danger. For some people the possibility of danger is constantly present leaving them feeling **threatened** most of the time. They are hyper alert and looking for trouble. This is a **protective, instinctive** behaviour. Young people in this hyper aroused state need to be soothed and contained in order to feel **safe**.

Avoidance

(or flight)

- Safety behaviours, such as avoidance, are actions carried out with the intention of **preventing** a feared catastrophe. In the short-term they often give a **sense of relief**, but in the long-term they are unhelpful because they prevent us realising these beliefs aren't always true and that they are maintaining anxiety.



What is excessive reassurance seeking?

- When a child is feeling anxious, he or she will probably turn to you for help in feeling better. One of the ways in which a child might do this is through reassurance seeking, which involves asking you lots of questions, or asking the same question over and over in order to hear from you that things will be okay.


Some examples of reassurance seeking:

- “Are you sure you locked all the doors?”
- “Tell me again that I’m a good girl!”
- “Did you wash your hands before you cooked dinner? Are you really sure?”
- Calling mum or dad over and over again on the phone from school to make sure they are okay.
- Asking parents to check homework repeatedly to make sure there are absolutely no mistakes.



SEEKING OR RECEIVING REASSURANCE FROM OTHERS.

- It is a natural response to tell an anxious child that everything will be all right.
- The problem is, children grow to depend on their adults to solve their problems and miss out the chance to increase their confidence to solve their own problems.
- To be the best support, you need to let them do the work/problem-solving, and you remain their guide.

- 
- To be effective, reassurance should be realistic, sincere, given at the right time, directed at the appropriate target and based on sound grounds (*Lau, 1989- Family Therapist, Canada*).

Listening & Encouraging self-assurance, not giving re-assurance

- Reassurance giving can only reduce anxiety as a very temporary measure.
- looking at the evidence of worry thoughts, and taking small action steps towards the fear can boost a child's ability to re-assure themselves.





What can we do?

Try and understand what is *behind* the
child's behaviour

And be a lighthouse not a helicopter!



What can we do?

Help the child(ren) to:

- **Emotional:** express their feelings and learn ways to manage them
- **Physical:** recognise their body cues
learn to do deep breathing and relaxation exercises
- **Cognitive:** distraction, positive self talk, challenge distorted thoughts by treating thoughts as just thoughts & not facts



What can we do cont...?

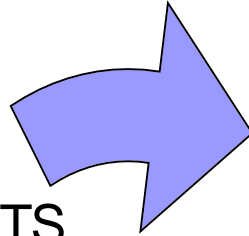
■ Behavioural:

- model appropriate management of feelings,
- reduce excessive reassurance and encourage self-assurance
- encourage the child to gradually face up to their fear and not avoid situation – step plan of exposure, with rewards

What can we do?

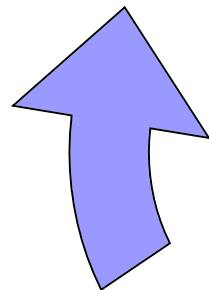
Positive self talk or inner thoughts
Problem solving
Self reward

THOUGHTS

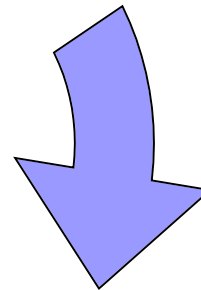


EMOTIONS

Awareness of
body cues



BEHAVIOUR



PHYSIOLOGICAL
REACTIONS

Reward systems
Exposure
Self reward

Awareness of body cues
Relaxation
Deep breathing



Being a Young Person's guide

- Listen to the young person's worries in an open, empathic way, without jumping in to comment or offer reassurance
- Encourage them to answer their own questions
- Ask them what they think the likelihood is of something bad happening
- Encourage them to come up with ideas and things that have worked before.



How can Anxiety be Reduced?

- Visual Relaxation
- Controlled breathing
- Muscle relaxation
- Looking at the evidence & treating thoughts as just thoughts & not facts
- Facing your fears and not avoiding situations
- Listening & encouraging self-assurance, not giving re-assurance

Using a Detective's Approach to Beat Unhelpful Thoughts

- Evidence Checklist

1. Has this happened before? What happened then?
2. What other reasons could there be for this happening?
3. How likely is it to happen?
4. What would someone I admire think in the same situation?
5. What would I tell a friend who was in the situation and had the same unhelpful thought?
6. Would I feel better if I changed my thought?
7. How can I cope with the situation?



Facing fears and not avoiding situations

- The next step is to **take action** to face fears.
- Taking small steps to begin to re-assure themselves that nothing bad will happen and build confidence.

FACING YOUR FEARS ACTION STEPS CHECKLIST

- Identify the fear that the young person wants to beat. Be specific.
- Break the fear down into small steps.
- Put the steps on to a ladder with the easiest at the bottom and the hardest (the goal) at the top.
- Start at the bottom of the ladder
- Practice the first step of the ladder a lot until you feel less scared. Then move up to the next step.
- Use helpful thinking, looking at the evidence and relaxation to help climb the ladder.
- Decide on a reward for success at each step – and also for *trying*.

MY LADDER FOR BRAVE BEHAVIOURS





General building of good mental health

- Self-esteem
- Problem-solving skills
- Psychological resilience
- Self expression
- Building positive relationships with peers and adults



Mindfulness

- Apps for Mindfulness-
 - Headspace
 - Mindful Gnats
 - Mindshift
 - NHS Choices



QUESTIONS....