

Educational Psychology Service and CAMHS Newsletter – 18.06.20

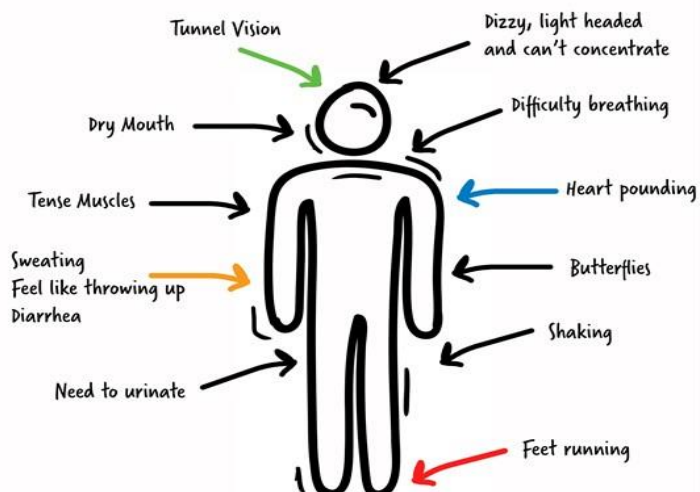
Anxiety

The coronavirus pandemic, and the impact it has had and continues to have on all our lives, may make us feel more than usually anxious. For children and young people, disruption to educational and social routines can cause worry and anxiety. Some children and young people may not be able to express their feelings of anxiety other than through changes in behaviour. This week's newsletter focuses on how to recognise problematic anxiety in children, young people and adults, what to do about it, and when and where to seek help.



What is anxiety? The brain has evolved to try to keep us safe by causing us to experience a sense of anxiety in situations it judges to be threatening. When we are very anxious, the 'rational' part of our brain (called the 'pre-frontal cortex') is temporarily overridden by a more primitive, instinctual part of the brain called the 'amygdala', often prompting what can be described as a 'fight, flight or freeze' response: This makes us feel more alert, stops us thinking about other things, and even causes the range of physical effects pictured below, all designed to get us out of the stressful situation as quickly as possible. **A person who is highly anxious will find it very difficult to focus on anything but the source of their anxiety and is likely to find it almost impossible to learn.**

What happens during freeze, fight or flight?



When is it a problem? It is important to remember that a degree of anxiety is both normal and appropriate in the current circumstances – after all, the threat posed by coronavirus is both real and significant. Helpful levels of anxiety about this threat may prompt us to take sensible steps to keep safe, like washing our hands and social distancing. **It is when a person's anxiety stops being useful and 'adaptive' and gets out of proportion with the level of actual threat that extra support may be needed.**



What might problematic anxiety look like? Problematic or unhelpful anxiety may look different depending on the age of the person and what they are anxious about. You might see the following:

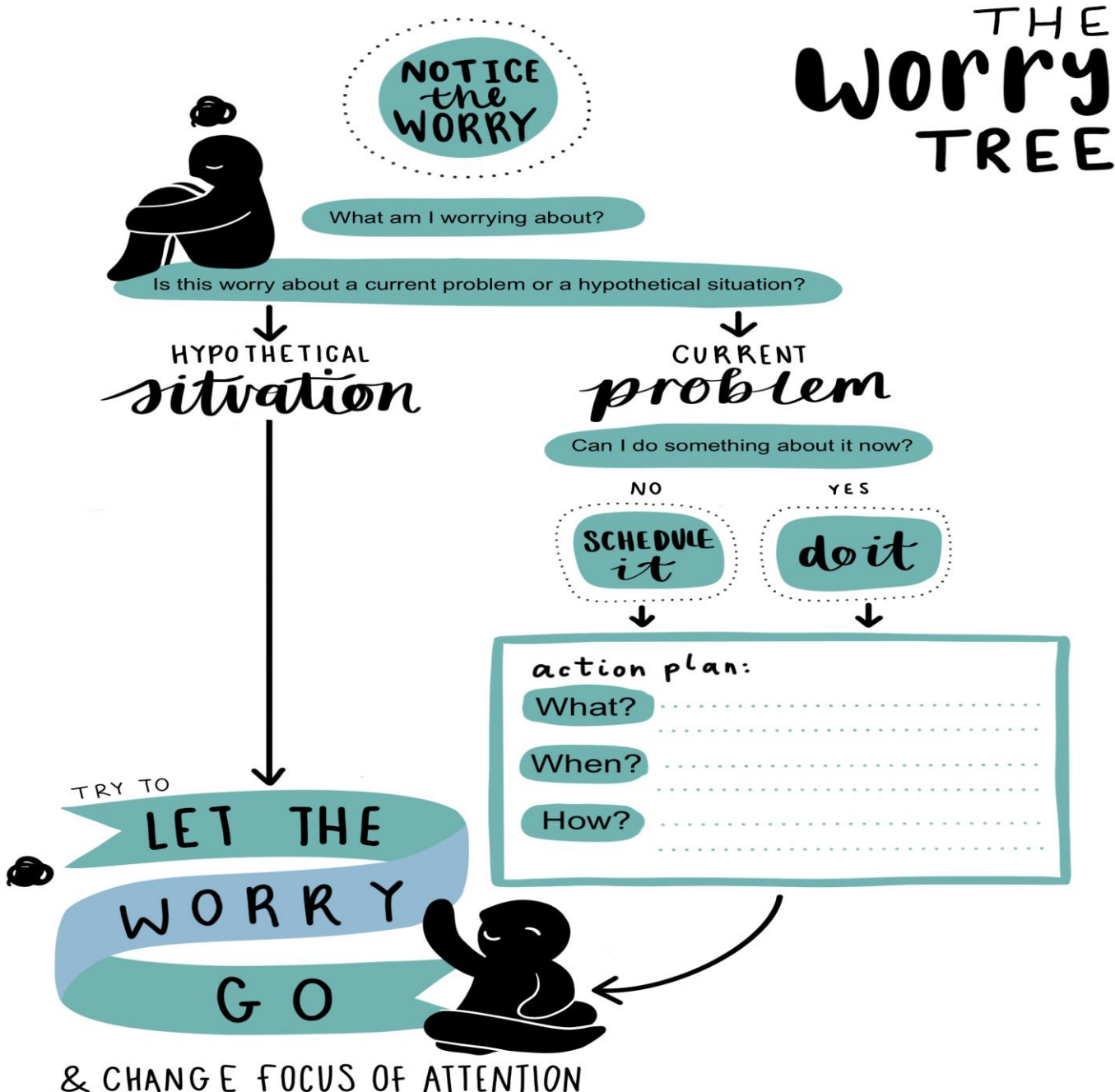
Children

- Clingy of care givers
- Difficulties getting off to and staying asleep
- Repeated nightmares (more than once a week)
- Complaints of tummy aches/feeling unwell
- Increased temper tantrums
- Excessive reassurance seeking

Teenagers

- Overeating or undereating
- Excessive sleepiness and fatigue / sleep disturbances
- Overly Irritable and/or tearful
- Social withdrawal
- Restless
- Body aches
- Difficulties concentrating (Sourced from www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

My child seems anxious – what should I do? ‘The Worry Tree’ is a useful resource to help children and those who care for them to think about what to do when they feel anxious:



Resource designed by Caitlin Smith 2020 for Bolton CAMHS with input from Bethany Smith, Wellbeing Practitioner. Adapted from Butler and Hope 2007. This resource may be photocopied, stored or reproduced with no alterations. For therapeutic use only. ©

Things to try when you feel anxious

Draw a picture about your worry You could draw a ‘worry bag’ and inside it draw pictures of all the things you are worried about. Or you could draw yourself doing something that helps you feel less anxious.

Get active Exercise has been shown to make us feel less anxious. You could try going for a walk, doing press ups or star jumps, dancing to music or riding your bike.

Tune in to the ‘now’ Anxiety can make us dwell on ‘what ifs’ and future possibilities. Deliberately ‘tuning in’ to the present moment can help to break this habit. There are lots of ways to do this. You could try mindfulness activities, such as those in the book ‘Sitting Still Like a Frog’ by Eline Snel, or at <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>

or grounding: paying attention to the place you are in right now, think of 5 things you can see ... 4 things you can hear ... 3 things you can feel against your skin (the breeze/ the ground/ your clothes against your skin) ... 2 things you can smell ... 1 thing you can taste....



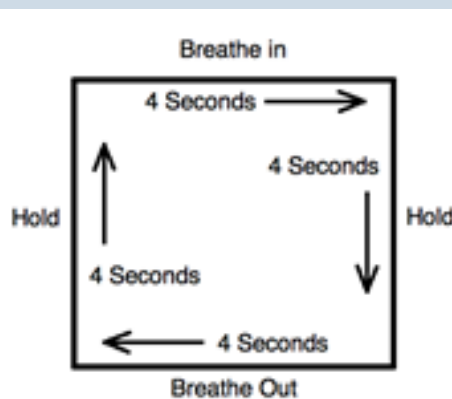
Focus on your breath

When we are anxious, our breathing can become shallow and fast. This is to get the body ready to run or fight, but the effects (dizziness) can make us feel more anxious. Taking slow, deep breaths can have a calming effect. You could try:

-Hot Chocolate Breathing: Pretend you have a mug of hot chocolate in your hands. Smell the warm chocolatey smell for three seconds, hold it for one, blow it cool for three, hold it for one. Repeat three or four times.

-Teddy Breathing: Place a teddy/beanbag on your stomach and watch it move up as you breathe in and down as you breathe out

-Square Breathing: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, then breathe out for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds (see diagram)



Back to Back Breathing (good for ages 5-12)

- sit with an adult so you are back to back
- try keeping your back long and notice you partner's breath moving their back
- Try matching their pace of breathing or breath slowly together

Visualisation (for younger children, keep this shorter)

Adult would ideally guide child to keep them focused:

- lie down with legs straight or knees bent
- cover yourself with a light blanket
- take a deep breath in
- let your eyes close
- in your mind's eye, imagine your favourite place
- look around your favourite place. What can you see? Trees? The sea? Sky full of stars?
- listen carefully to any sounds. What can you hear? Music? Gentle waves arriving to the shore?
- take a deep breath. Can you smell anything familiar? Flowers?
- can you taste anything? Chocolate fudge cake?
- what can you feel? The sun warming your face? Water tickling your feet?
- when you are ready, take one more look at your favourite place? Notice how you feel being there. You can go to your favourite place anytime.
- wiggle your fingers and toes and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Special thanks to Beth Smith, Ruqayyah Karajda and Adi Frankovitch (CAMHS) for contributing to this newsletter.

Who to contact for help

If you or your child is experiencing unhelpful anxiety which is persistently interfering with daily life, you may wish to seek further support – for example, from your GP, or from the following organisations:

-1Point counselling service: website:

www.1pointbolton.org.uk , telephone: 02104 917745

-Anna Freud -advice and resources on supporting children and young people experiencing anxiety:

<https://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/coronavirus/>

-Anxiety UK: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

-NHS-approved mental health apps, many of which are tailored to supporting individuals with anxiety, can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

-Kooth - for young people aged 11-18, offers online counselling and chat forums: www.kooth.com

**Educational Psychology Service
Schools ICT
Smithills Dean Road
Bolton
BL1 6JT**

Telephone: 012044 338612



Need support?

Our COVID 19 community response line is now open offering vital help to people who need food or essential items

01204 337221

8.30am – 5.30pm Mon – Fri and Sat 9am – 1.30pm



www.bolton.gov.uk



[boltoncouncil](https://www.facebook.com/boltoncouncil)



[boltoncouncil](https://twitter.com/boltoncouncil)

**Bolton
Council**

Our values are who we are...

Accountable, determined, making a difference, honest and respectful. We work together.



**Bolton
2030**

**I LOVE
BOLTON
BECAUSE...**

