

# Supporting your anxious child - Holly Lodge School

---

Children and Young  
People's Services

[For a better life](#)

**Jill Pretorius**  
**Primary Mental Health Worker**  
**Child & Adolescent Mental Health**

**May 2016**

---

## This workshop is for you

- To understand what anxiety is – and why it's ok (in small doses)
- To know how it affects us / your child
- To have some strategies to help your child help themselves
- To know you are not alone and that there is support
- To have a bit of fun too!

---

## Before we start:

- Please turn phones off or onto silent. But if you need to take a call, that's fine. Just pop outside for a bit.
- There is a lot to talk about, but I will finish on time.
- We are all different. Feel free to join in, or just listen.
- Only share what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Please be respectful of each other in what we say or do.
- A little bit about me...

---

## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a word we use to describe feelings of unease, worry and fear.

It incorporates both the emotions and the physical sensations we might experience when we are worried or nervous about something.

## What does anxiety mean to you?

- Introduce yourself to the person(s) next to you if you don't them, and discuss briefly
  - What things does your child worry about?
  - What do they do or say that shows you they are anxious?
- Just spend a minute per person; not too long please!
- Feedback to group: are the themes similar or different?



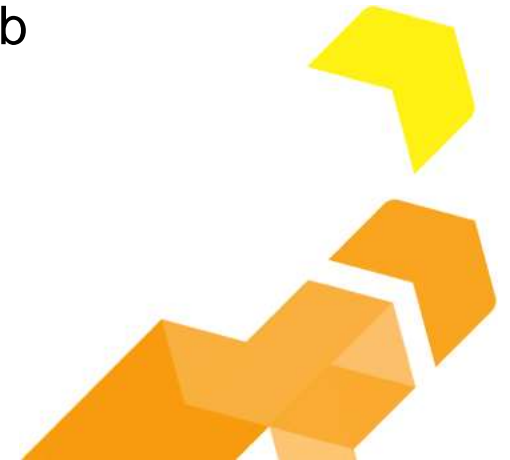
## Physical signs of anxiety

- nausea (feeling sick)
- tense muscles and headaches
- pins and needles
- feeling light headed or dizzy
- faster breathing
- sweating or hot flushes
- a fast, thumping or irregular heart beat
- raised blood pressure
- difficulty sleeping
- needing the toilet more frequently, or less frequently
- churning in the pit of your stomach
- experiencing panic attacks



## Psychological signs of anxiety

- feeling tense, nervous and on edge
- having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst
- feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing down
- feeling like other people can see you're anxious and are looking at you
- feeling your mind is really busy with thoughts
- dwelling on negative experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again (this is called rumination)
- feeling restless and not being able to concentrate
- feeling numb



## Is it the same for children?

- May present differently in children and adolescents than in adults. Common signs can include:
- Excessive and persistent worry
- Restlessness and irritability
- Crying or losing temper easily or frequently
- Avoidance and procrastination
- Disruption to sleep and eating patterns
- Decline in academic performance
- Truancy and school refusal
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Withdrawal from social, class or school activities
- Tiredness and fatigue



---

## Types of anxiety disorders

- Generalised anxiety
- OCD
- Phobias
- Social anxiety
- Panic attacks
- PTSD
- Separation anxiety
- Selective mutism

## Fight, flight or freeze

- Anxiety helps us prepare for real danger (such as a bear confronting us in the woods) or for performing at our best (for example, it helps us get ready for a big game or speech).
- When we experience anxiety, it triggers our “fight-flight-freeze” response and prepares our bodies to defend themselves. For instance, our heart beats faster to pump blood to our muscles so we have the energy to run away or fight off danger.
- When we freeze, we may not be noticed, allowing the danger to pass. This response is also called “anxious arousal”.
- Without anxiety, humans would not have survived as a species!



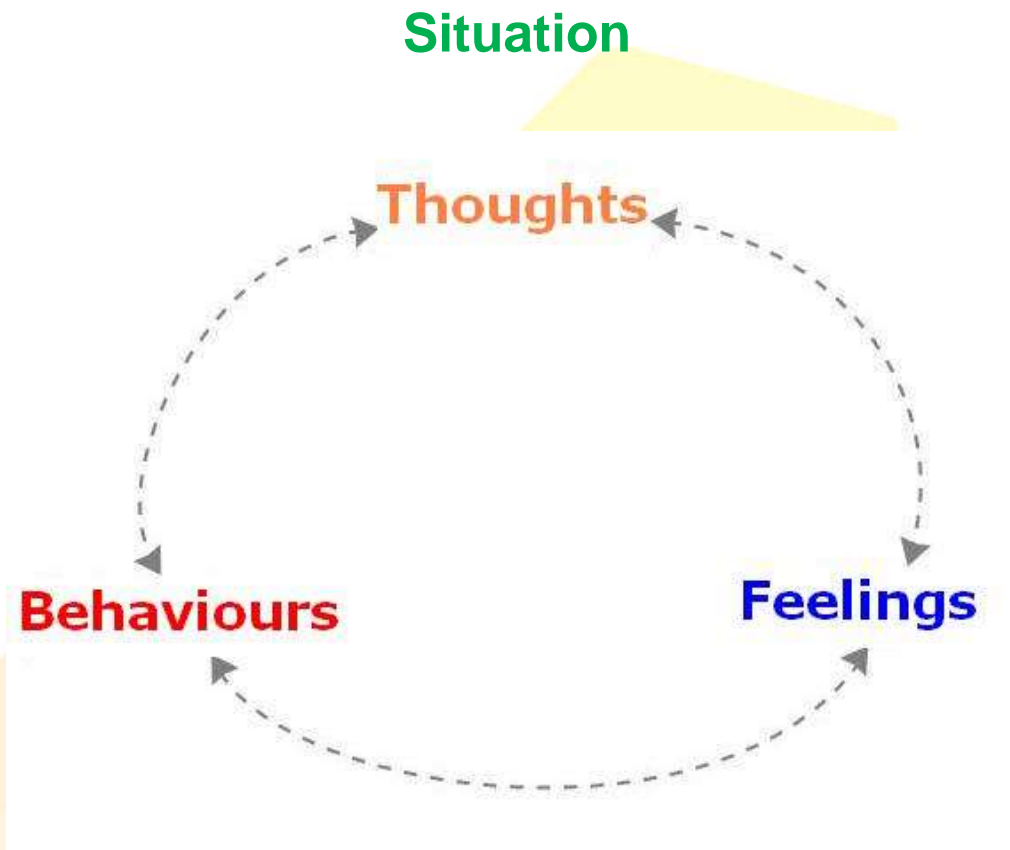
# Why do we get anxious?



The flight, fight or freeze response is a normal response, but one which can be triggered too often, by things which we perceive to be a threat to us.

... a bit like an over-sensitive smoke detector

# The anxiety circle



---

## 5 Things to remember about anxiety

- Anxiety is normal
- Anxiety is adaptive
- Anxiety is not dangerous
- Anxiety is temporary and will subside
- Anxiety is common

## What should we do or not do?

1. The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety, but to help a child manage it.
2. Don't avoid things just because they make a child anxious.
3. Express positive—but realistic—expectations.
4. Respect her feelings, but don't empower them.
5. Don't ask leading questions.
6. Don't reinforce the child's fears.
7. Encourage the child to tolerate her anxiety.
8. Try to keep the anticipatory period short.
9. Think things through with the child.
10. Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety.

## Ways of managing anxiety

- Stop reassuring the child (F<sub>reeze</sub> E<sub>mpathise</sub> E<sub>valuate</sub> L<sub>et go</sub>)
- Highlight why worrying is good
- Bring the child's worry to life
- Teach the child to be a 'Thought Detective' with 3Cs:
  - Catch your thoughts / collect evidence / challenge your thoughts
- Allow them to worry
- Help them go from 'what if' to 'what is' (mindfulness)
- Avoid avoiding everything that causes anxiety

- [www.gozen.com](http://www.gozen.com)

# Emotional Toolbox



Physical tool



Relaxation tool



Inappropriate tools



Social tool



Special interest tool



Thinking tool



---

# Take a deep breath...



---

## What next?

### ➤ On separate post it notes, please write:

- Something you really liked or found useful from the session
- Something that might make the session better for another time
- Something you will try at home

### ➤ Quick discussion:

How can you as parents carry this forward?

## Resources:

### ➤ Online:

- [www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

### ➤ Books for parents / carers:

- Coping with an anxious or depressed child - *Dr Sam Cartwright-Hatton*
- Helping Children to Cope with Change, Stress and Anxiety: A Photocopiable Activities Book – *Deborah M Plummer*
- Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-by-step Guide for Parents – *Ronald Rapee*

## Resources:

### ► Books for children:

- What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (*Huebner & Matthews*)
- The Huge Bag of Worries (*Virginia Ironside*)
- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin for Children Aged 5-9 (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) (*Kate Collins-Donnelly*)
- The Panicosaurus: Managing Anxiety in Children Including Those with Asperger Syndrome

