

The background of the slide is a light gray gradient. It is decorated with numerous realistic water droplets of various sizes, scattered across the top and bottom edges. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

MANAGING FEARS AND WORRIES IN CHILDREN SEPARATION ANXIETY

ADAPTED FROM MATERIAL BY CRESWELL AND WILLETTS

AIMS FOR TODAY



To help you understand what anxiety is and what it looks like in children



To briefly introduce ways of managing anxiety in children

IS ANXIETY A PROBLEM FOR YOUR CHILD?

- HOW STRONG IS THEIR WORRY?
- IS IT BECOMING HARD FOR THEM/YOU TO MANAGE?
- IS THE ANXIETY STOPPING THEM FROM DOING WHAT THEY WANT TO/SHOULD BE DOING?
- ARE THEY MISERABLE/LOW AS A RESULT?
- IS THEIR ANXIETY STOPPING YOU FROM DOING WHAT YOU WANT TO/SHOULD BE DOING?

ANXIOUS THINKING/EXPECTATIONS

- ANXIETY IS A RESPONSE TO SOMETHING *PERCEIVED AS DANGEROUS*
- WE OFTEN UNDERESTIMATE OUR ABILITY TO COPE
- AND OVERESTIMATE HOW AWFUL SOMETHING IS GOING TO BE



PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- ARE CAUSED BY THE FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE
- IT KEPT OUR ANCESTORS SAFE AND CAN KEEP US SAFE, TOO.
- BUT IT FEELS HORRIBLE!



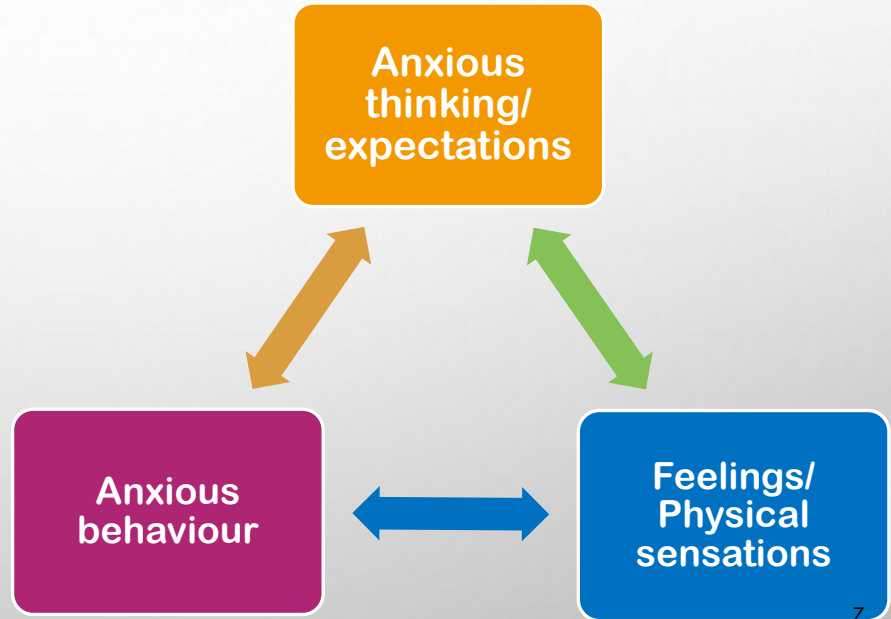
ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR



- **SEEK REASSURANCE**
- **AVOID SITUATIONS WE ARE NERVOUS ABOUT**
- **DISLIKE TRYING NEW THINGS OR TAKING RISKS**
- **GET UPSET EASILY**
- **AVOID TALKING OR EYE CONTACT**
- **REPEATEDLY CHECK THINGS**
- **FIDGET**

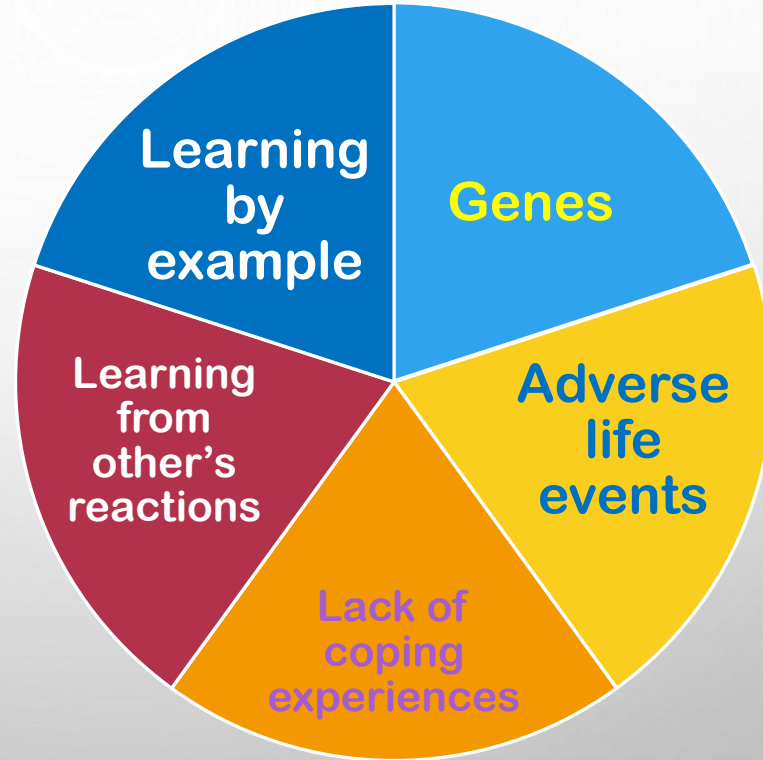
THINK ABOUT A FEAR OR WORRY THAT YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE...

What are their
thoughts, behaviours
and sensations?



HOW DO FEARS AND WORRIES DEVELOP IN CHILDREN?

ANXIETY IS CAUSED BY A WHOLE RANGE OF FACTORS:



GENES



Genes

- ANXIETY TENDS TO RUN IN FAMILIES
- IT IS LIKELY THAT WE INHERIT CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE US MORE INCLINED TO BECOME ANXIOUS, SUCH AS:
 - HOW EASILY THINGS MAKE US JUMP
 - HOW GENERALLY EMOTIONAL WE ARE

ADVERSE LIFE EVENTS



Adverse
life
events

- FEARS AND WORRIES SOMETIMES GET WORSE AFTER DIFFICULT LIFE EVENTS.
- FOR SOME PEOPLE, DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES CAN HELP TO BUILD RESILIENCE
- DIFFERENT PEOPLE CAN RESPOND TO SIMILAR EXPERIENCES IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS


LEARNING BY EXAMPLE



Learning
by
example

- CHILDREN LEARN FROM WATCHING OTHER PEOPLE
- THIS HELPS THEM STAY AWAY FROM POTENTIAL DANGER
- BUT THEY CAN ALSO LEARN SOME UNHELPFUL RESPONSES

LEARNING FROM OTHER'S REACTIONS



Learning
from
other's
reactions

- A PARENT MAY INADVERTENTLY BEHAVE IN A WAY THAT INCREASES THE CHILD'S FEAR (FOR EXAMPLE, IF THEY ARE WORRIED THAT THE CHILD WILL BE ANXIOUS)
- PARENTS MAY TAKE OVER A TASK THAT A CHILD IS FINDING DIFFICULT, GIVING THEM THE IDEA THAT THEY *CAN'T* DO IT

LACK OF COPING EXPERIENCES



Lack of
coping
experiences

- IT IS IN OUR NATURE TO WANT TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN
- IT IS NORMAL TO STEP IN AND PROTECT THEM

BUT

- THIS MAY MEAN THAT CHILDREN DON'T GET A CHANCE TO LEARN COPING STRATEGIES

SEPARATION ANXIETY

- **WHEN SOMEONE FEELS UPSET OR FEARFUL ABOUT BEING AWAY FROM ANOTHER PERSON. THIS CAN SOMETIMES HAPPEN IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME WITH YOU. THEY MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO LEAVE YOU, OR BECOME UPSET OR CLINGY.**
- **SOME CHILDREN WILL FIND IT TAKES SOME TIME TO ADAPT TO CHANGES TO THEIR ROUTINE, LIKE STARTING NURSERY OR THERE MAY BE OTHER CHANGES IN THEIR LIFE WHERE THEY NEED SOME EXTRA SUPPORT.**
- **IT'S QUITE COMMON FOR CHILDREN TO FEEL THIS WAY, AND YOU CAN HELP THEM UNDERSTAND.**

HELP YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND

- **IT MIGHT FEEL HARD TO LEAVE YOUR CHILD, ESPECIALLY IF THEY'RE UPSET. BUT OVER TIME, SPENDING TIME WITH OTHERS WILL HELP YOUR CHILD BUILD THEIR INDEPENDENCE.**
- **PRACTISE THE IDEA OF SEPARATION WITH YOUR CHILD TO HELP THEM GET USED TO IT. ALLOW THEM TO GET MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF BEING AWAY FROM YOU.**
- **IF YOU CAN, LEAVE YOUR CHILD IN THE CARE OF A CLOSE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER FOR A SHORT TIME.**

- **GIVE YOUR CHILD AS MUCH INFORMATION AS YOU CAN ABOUT ANY NEW ROUTINES. THIS WILL HELP THEM TO KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND FEEL LESS ANXIOUS.**
- **HELP YOUR CHILD TEST OUT NEW ROUTINES. FOR EXAMPLE IF THEY'RE STARTING A NEW NURSERY, YOU COULD WALK THE ROUTE WITH THEM.**
- **TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ANY SHARED PLANS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HELP THEM SEE THAT THERE ARE THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO AND CHANGE CAN BE A GOOD THING.**
- **SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD'S NURSERY AND YOUR GP IF YOU THINK EXTRA SUPPORT WILL HELP.**

MAKE THE PROCESS EASIER

TRY SOME TACTICS TO MAKE THE PROCESS FEEL EASIER FOR BOTH OF YOU:

- INTRODUCE NEW ROUTINES IN SMALL STEPS IN YOU CAN.**
- WHEN LEAVING YOUR CHILD IN SOMEONE ELSE'S CARE, ASK THAT PERSON TO COME TO YOUR HOUSE. FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS ARE LIKELY TO COMFORT YOUR CHILD.**
- KEEP ANY GOODBYES SHORT. REASSURE YOUR CHILD THAT YOU'LL BE BACK AT A SPECIFIC TIME. TRY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THIS. BE CONSISTENT TO HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL CONFIDENT THAT YOU'LL RETURN.**
- IF YOU CAN, BE POSITIVE IN FRONT OF YOUR CHILD. CHILDREN CAN OFTEN PICK UP ON FEELINGS OF TENSION FROM OTHERS. SEEING YOU IN A POSITIVE MOOD WILL HELP THEM LEARN THAT THE SEPARATION IS NOT A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE.**

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ANXIETY

Help your
child
recognise
anxious
thoughts

Problem
solving

Promote
and build
independ-
ence

Manage
your
child's
worries

Manage
your own
worries

Help your child recognise anxious thoughts

- Recognise their anxious thoughts and expectations- what do they need to learn to help them overcome their anxiety?
- Pick your moment
- Make suggestions rather than giving answers
- Help them to understand their emotions by naming them
- Be empathetic, check your understanding and normalise their worries
- Use open-ended questions and be curious!

TRY OUT THESE QUESTIONS

- WHAT IS FRIGHTENING YOU?
- HOW DO YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW?
- WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN?
- IS THERE SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAT COULD HAPPEN?
- WHAT IS THE WORST THING THAT CAN HAPPEN?
- WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS SITUATION THAT IS MAKING YOU WORRIED?
- WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A FRIEND IN THE SAME SITUATION?
- WHAT WOULD A FRIEND TELL YOU?

Help your
child
recognise
anxious
thoughts

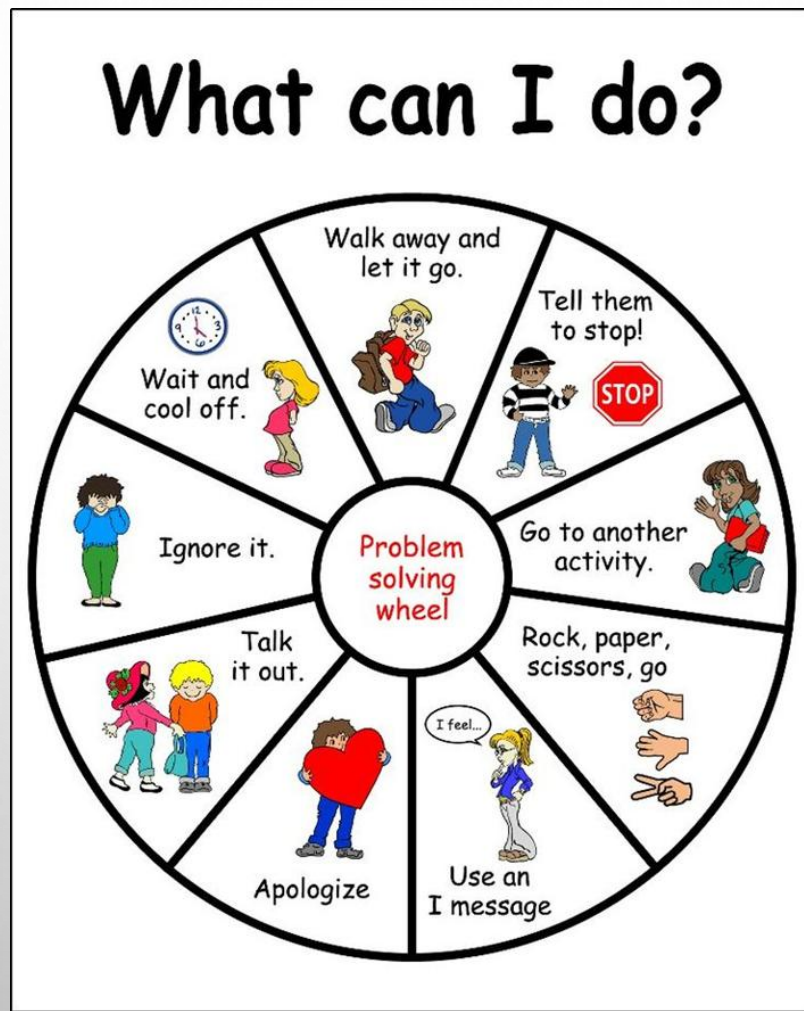


Problem solving

- All children have to face difficult situations at one time or another
- Sometimes your child's worry is realistic
- It's important that we teach them how to solve problems independently

Encourage your child to think of different solutions

Ask your child to think about the pros and cons



Encourage your child to try things out

Promote and build independence

- Show your child how to be independent and do things for themselves
- Be confident in your child and let them know you are confident
- Encourage them to have an internal voice that says 'have a go- I can do this'
- Be tolerant of and respect their struggle- try to be patient and uncritical
- Slowly build up what your child can do

Usual age

Skill

6+	Choosing own clothes, dressing self
6+	Tying shoes
7+	Taking a bath independently
7+	Brushing teeth or combing hair without help
8+	Putting dirty clothes in the washing basket
9+	Making breakfast or a packed lunch
9+	Packing own bag for school
10+	Choosing own haircut/ hairstyle
11+	Getting up in the morning without a reminder (using an alarm)
11+	Being responsible for own bedroom (tidiness, decorations)
12+	Arrange own transport to certain places (e.g. bike, bus)

**Promote
and build
independ-
ence**

IMPORTANT NOTE

Parenting is a really difficult balancing act between:



Manage your child's worries

Relaxing
breathing

Grounding
techniques

Worry time

Books

Relaxing breathing

Hot Chocolate Breathing



Pretend you are holding a warm mug of hot chocolate. Take in a **slow, deep breath** through your nose to smell the treat. Then **breathe out** through your mouth to cool it off. **Repeat this five times.** Deep breathing is a great tool to calm your mind and your body!



This is a lovely breathing exercise, as it:

- encourages slow and steady breathing, which can really help to get rid of the unpleasant physical feelings that anxiety can cause
- puts a pleasant and comforting image in your head

Grounding
techniques
aim...

...to bring
you
back...

...into the
present
moment.

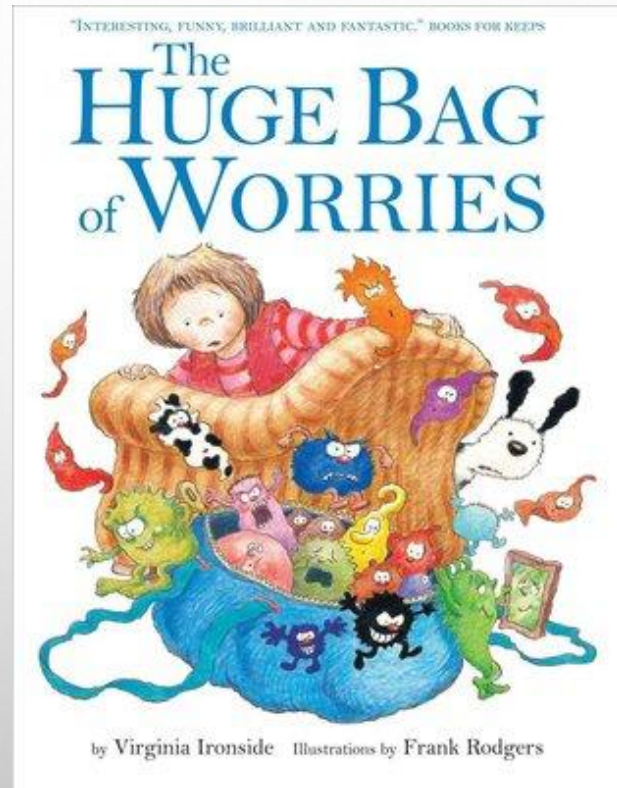
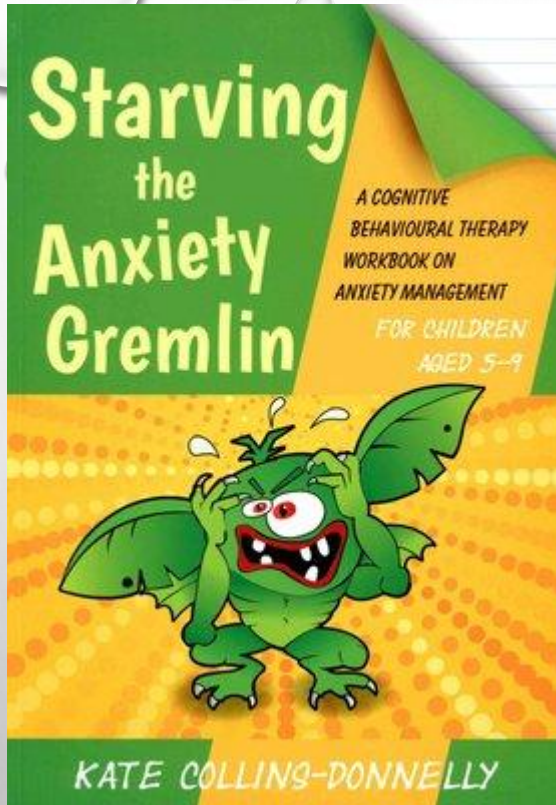
- 5** things I can see
- 4** things I can hear
- 3** things I can touch or feel
- 2** things I can smell or like the smell of
- 1** slow deep breath

Worry time

1. Decide on the worry time period when you and your child can talk about their worries
2. Set aside worries when they arise during the day – use a notebook or a worry jar
3. Use relaxing breathing or grounding techniques to return to the present moment
4. Use the designated worry time to discuss the worries



Books

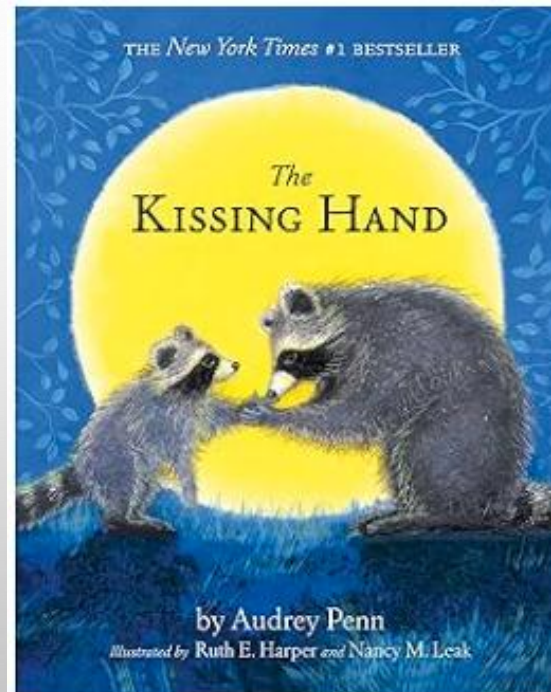


BOOKS TO READ WITH THE CHILD FOR SEPARATION:

"THE INVISIBLE STRING" BY PATRICE KARST

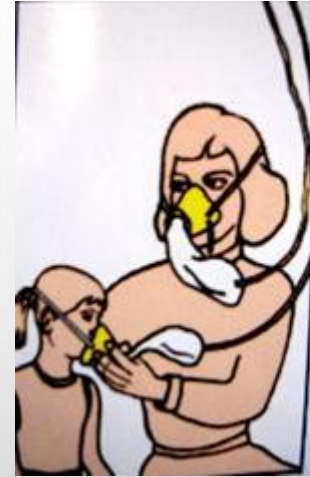
THE KISSING HAND

BY AUNDREY PENN



Manage your own worries

- Be aware of your own anxiety responses
- Be aware that your child might well notice when you're anxious
- Try and think of ways to manage your own anxious feelings, such as the techniques described above
- Sometimes this just isn't possible, so problem solve another way round it e.g. can your partner or a friend help out?
- Be kind to yourself. Being a parent is hard!



Put on your own
oxygen mask
before helping
those around you.

