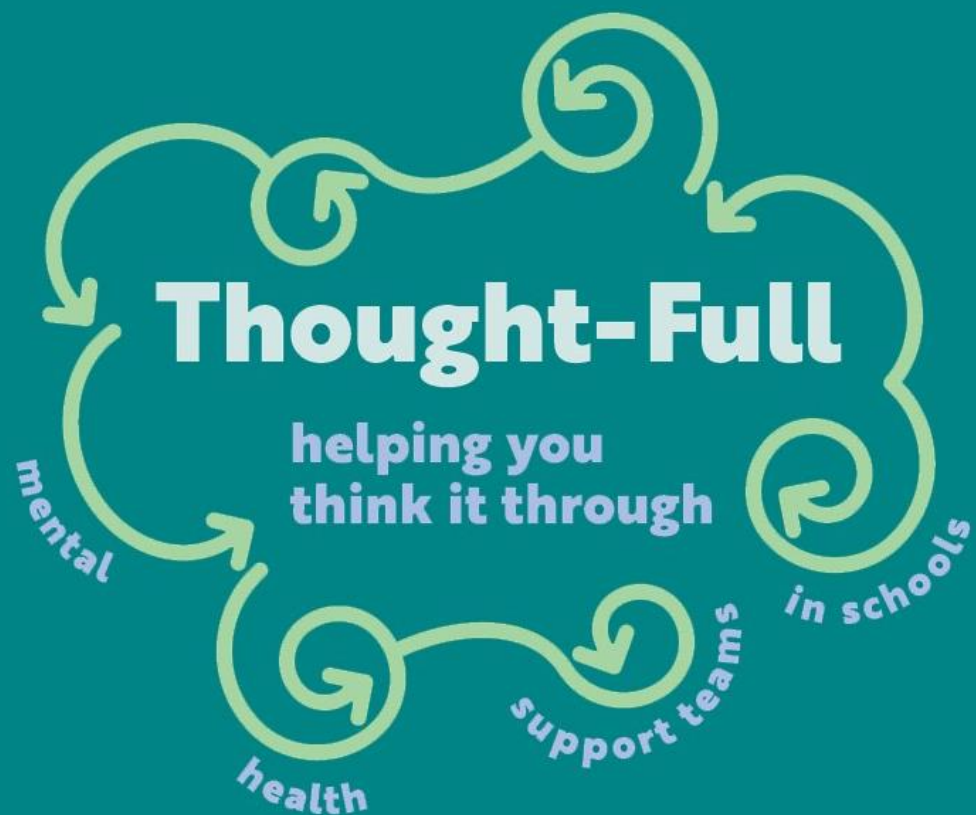
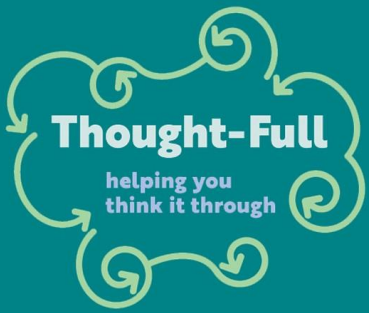


Understanding Anxiety. How can we support all within a school or college setting?

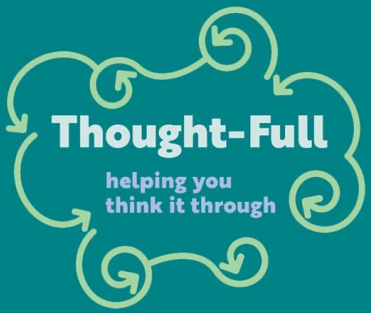




Aims of session

- Anxiety in context and what it might look like in school
- What is anxiety, how it works, what keeps it going
- How to support children with anxiety – what are you already doing?
- Looking after yourselves
- Resources and further support



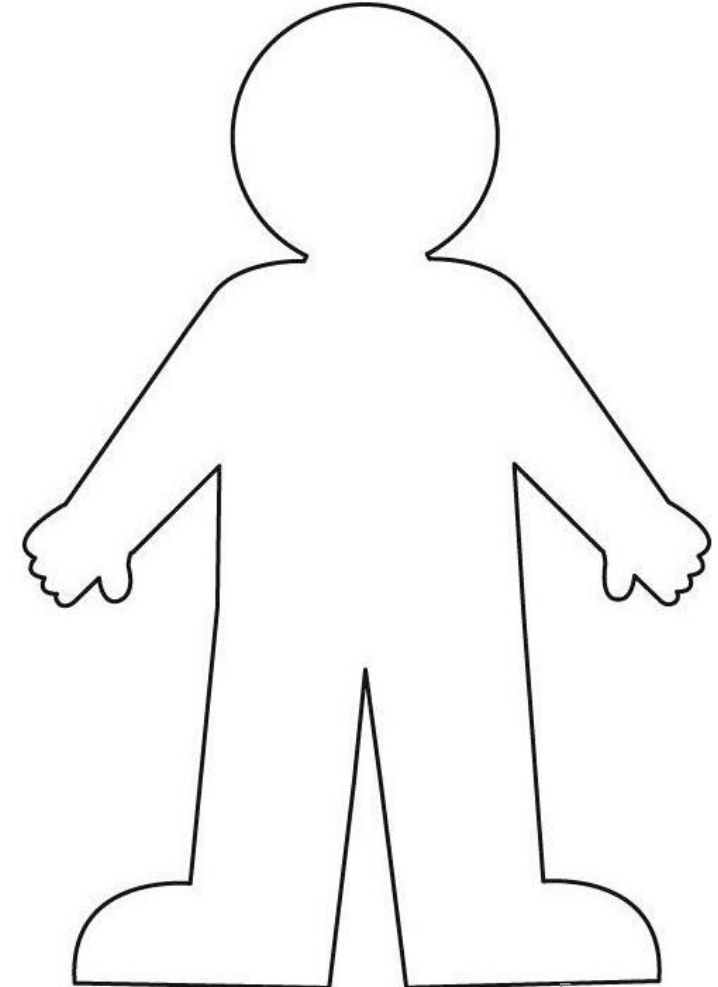


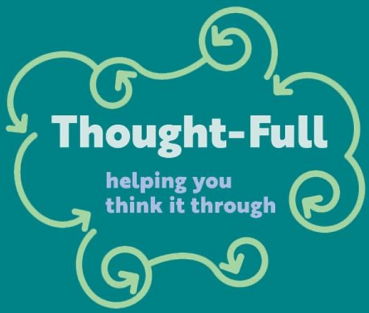
Activity

How anxious would **YOU** be?

- If I told you to take over this presentation
- If I put a spider in your hand
- If you had to go to a party by yourself when you didn't know anyone
- If you had to do a parachute jump
- If you were stuck in a lift

What would your body be doing, what would you be thinking and what would you be feeling?





What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

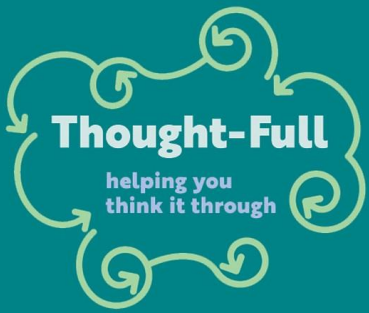
mind.org.uk

Anxiety is common, EVERYONE experiences worries, fears, stress and anxiety some of the time.



“Think of anxiety like fog, if it covers everything, makes it makes it hard to see, stops you from doing what you usually do, and generally gets in the way, then it has likely become a problem.”

(Dr Paul Linsley, UEA)



What might you notice?

Frequently being late or absent

Tummy aches/feeling sick

Headaches

Frequent toilet requests

Withdrawal or shutdown

Crying

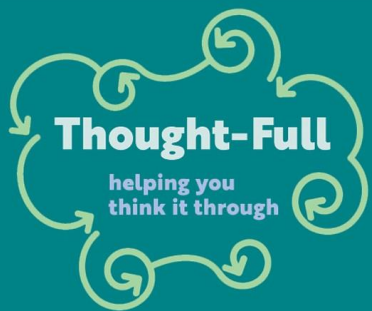
Need for constant reassurance

Behavioural outbursts

Refusal

Worry over lessons/events in the day

AVOIDANCE – whether physical or mental



Anxiety is developmental

Separation anxiety
Stranger danger
Loud noises
Large objects



Imaginary creatures
Noises
Sleeping alone
Darkness
Injury
Animals
Medical interventions
Thunder



Thunder
School performance
Health
Death
Social competence



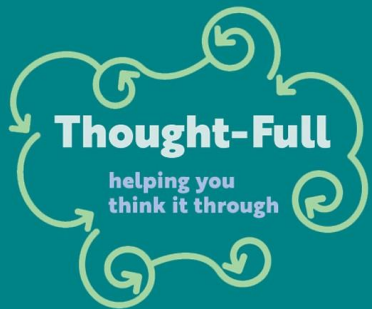
New experiences
School performance
Health
Natural disasters
Social competence





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4>





We need some degree of anxiety to survive



The body's reaction to fear (being scared) is called the “**fight or flight**” response.

When you feel scared there are things that happen to your body to prepare it to deal with danger.

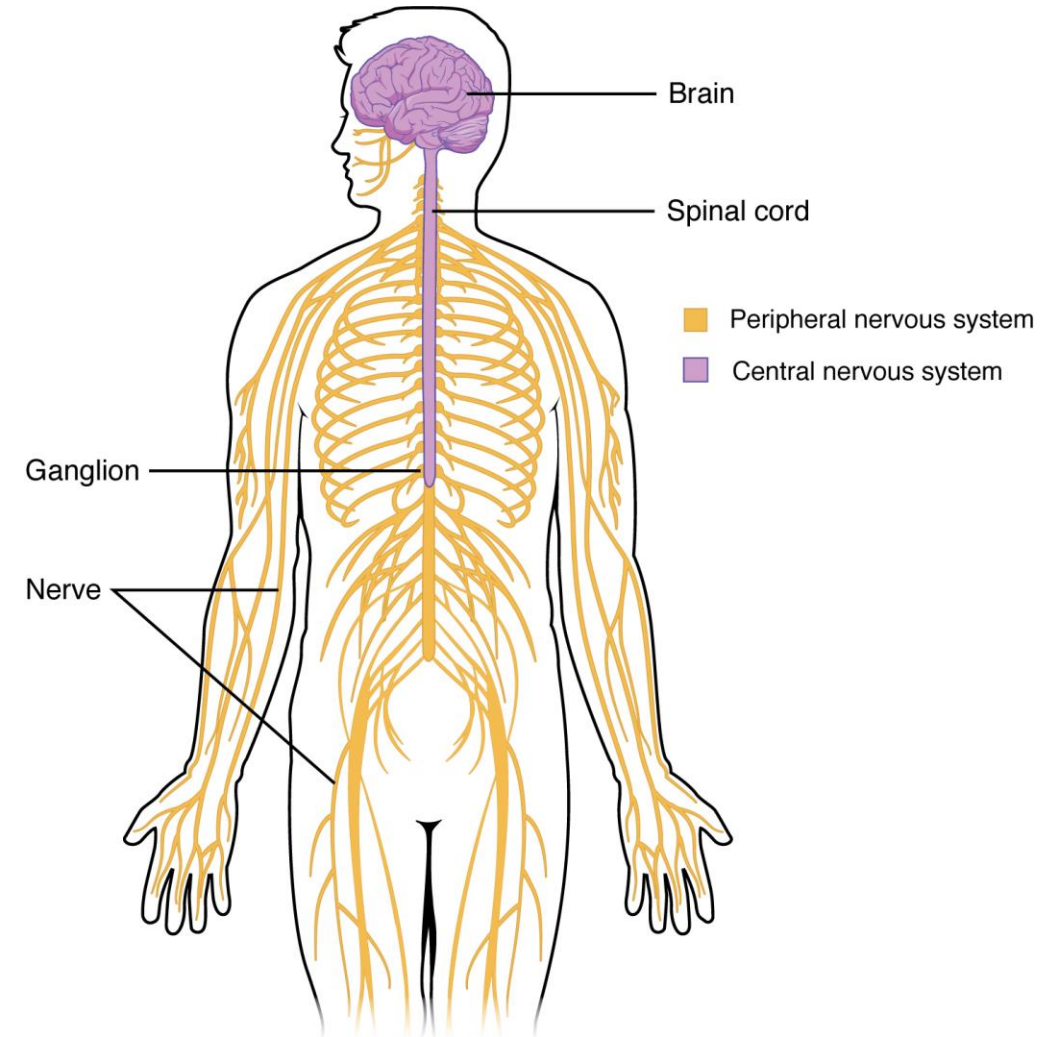
FIGHT

FLIGHT

FREEZE

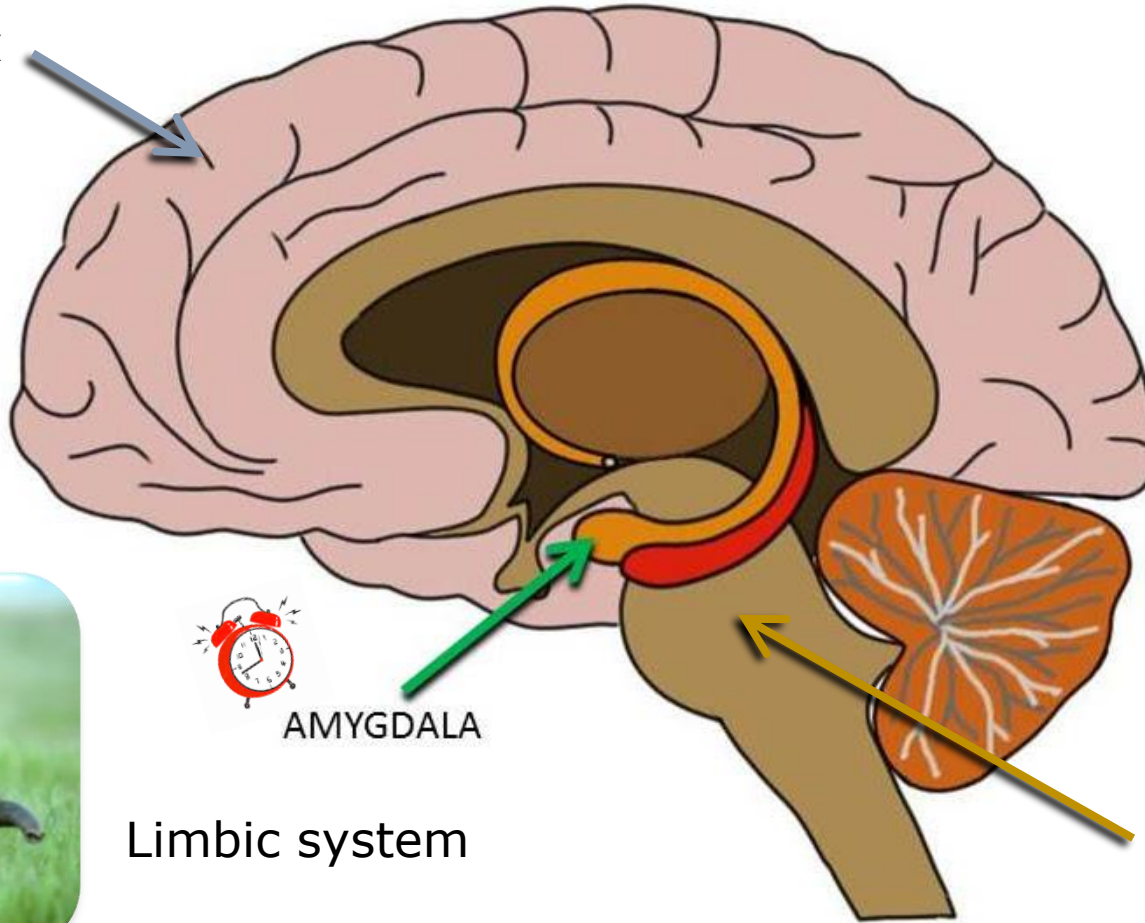
Physical signs of anxiety

- **Shortness of Breath**
- **Heart Pounding**
- **Stomach Aches/ Feeling sick**
- **Dry Mouth**
- **Flushed Cheeks**
- **Blurred Vision**
- **Dilated Pupils**
- **Trembling**
- **Sweating**



The Meerkat Brain

Neo-cortex

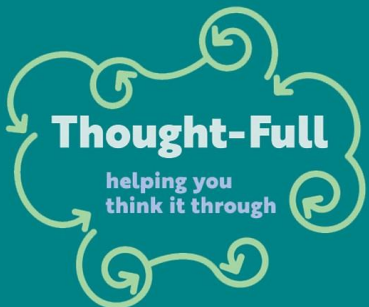


AMYGDALA

Limbic system

Brainstem

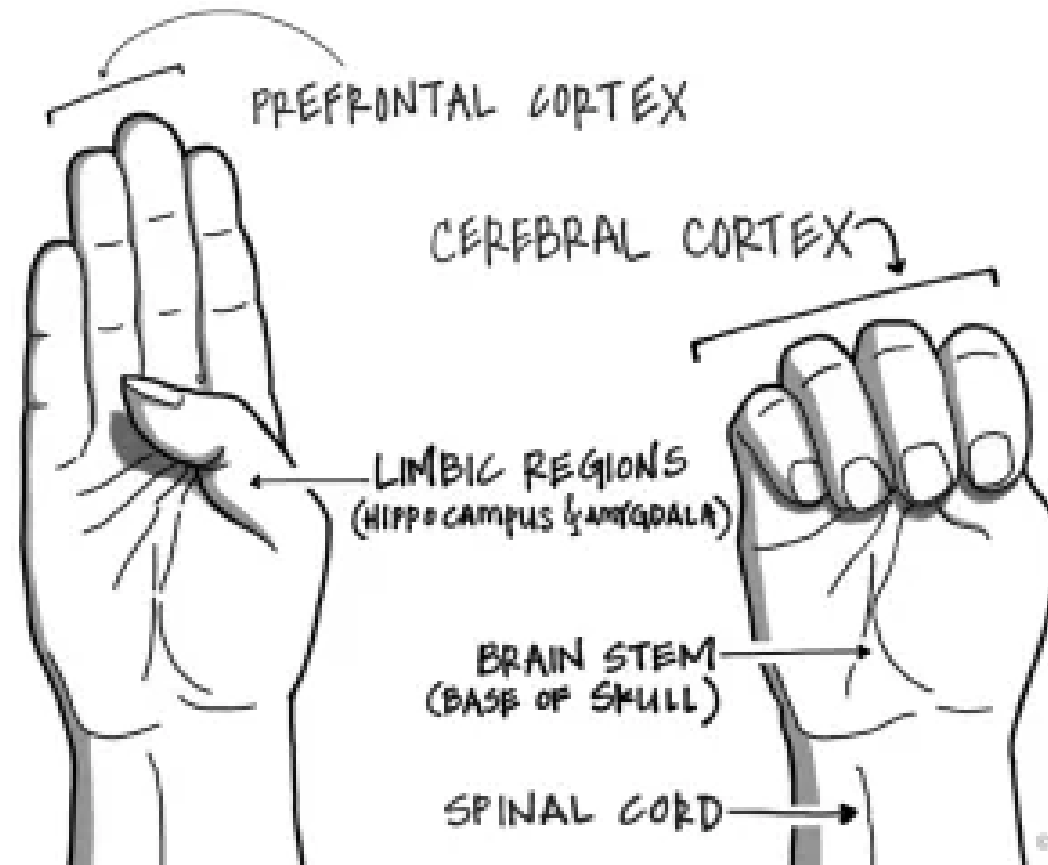


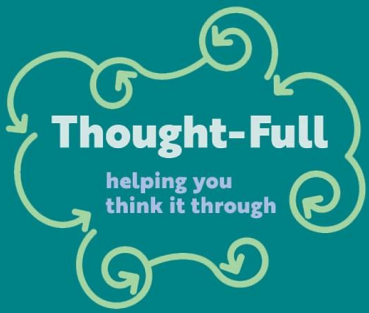


The meerkat part of the brain tries to protect us (fight, flight, or freeze response). Sometimes the meerkat thinks that everyday stress is a real danger and starts to jump up and down inside our brain.



Hand Model of the Brain





Why do things not get better on their own?

ABC MODEL

Behaviour

What did I do in response ?

Avoidance; avoiding separation
Safety Seeking; wanting to be close
Reassurance Seeking; asking lots of questions

Antecedent (Trigger or Situation)

Getting ready for school in the morning
Sunday evening
Parents leaving the house
Being out of sight
Feelings; Anxious, Worried, Sad, Fearful, Angry
Thoughts; "what if" "I want to stay home" ...

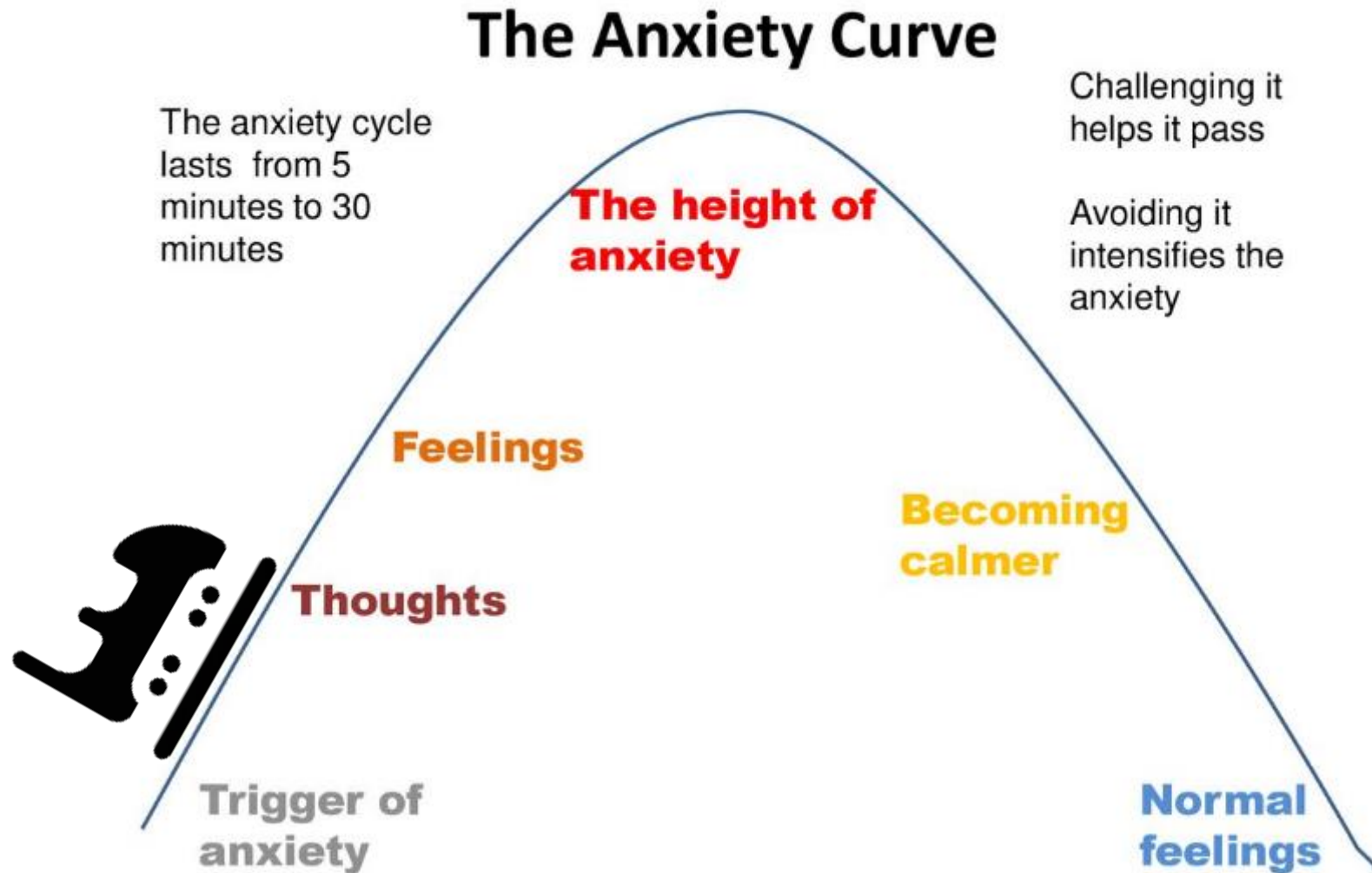
Consequence

Did my behaviour change
how I felt or thought ?

Feel better in the short term, but long term makes it more difficult to do things, practice independence.



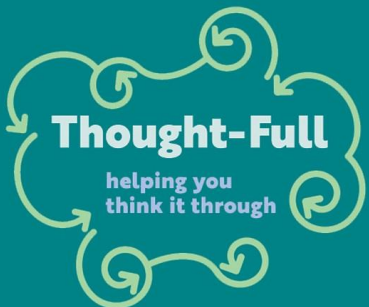
Facing Fears



Facing Fears

The Anxiety Curve





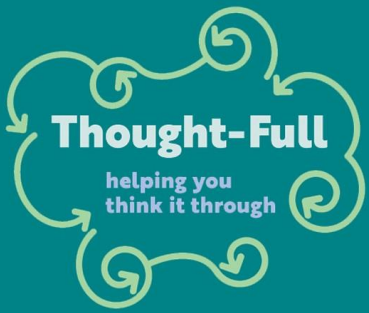
Safety-seeking and reassurance-seeking behaviours

Children with anxiety often rely on things or people to feel safe, and sometimes this stops them from learning that **they are already safe**.

For example:

- Always relying on a certain staff member or friend for support.
- Needing lots of reassurance from a parent before leaving them.
- Avoiding situations that worry them or relying on others to do things for them.



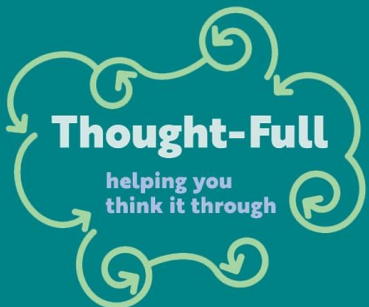


BEWARE OF **TOO MUCH** REASSURANCE

Alternatives to repeated reassurance

- Disrupt the pattern of reassurance (e.g. ask child to predict your response)
- Provide reassurance **once**, then on future occasions refer to previous answer or ask child *“what do you think I will say?”*
Then disengage from further discussion
- **Fixed time** for when reassurance provided *e.g. once on the hour*
- Have **ten minutes** worry time per day and remind or redirect your child to bring worry up then. Park until then.
- Respond to emotion rather than content *“you sound worried but I know you’ll cope with it” – be specific to what they can cope with.*



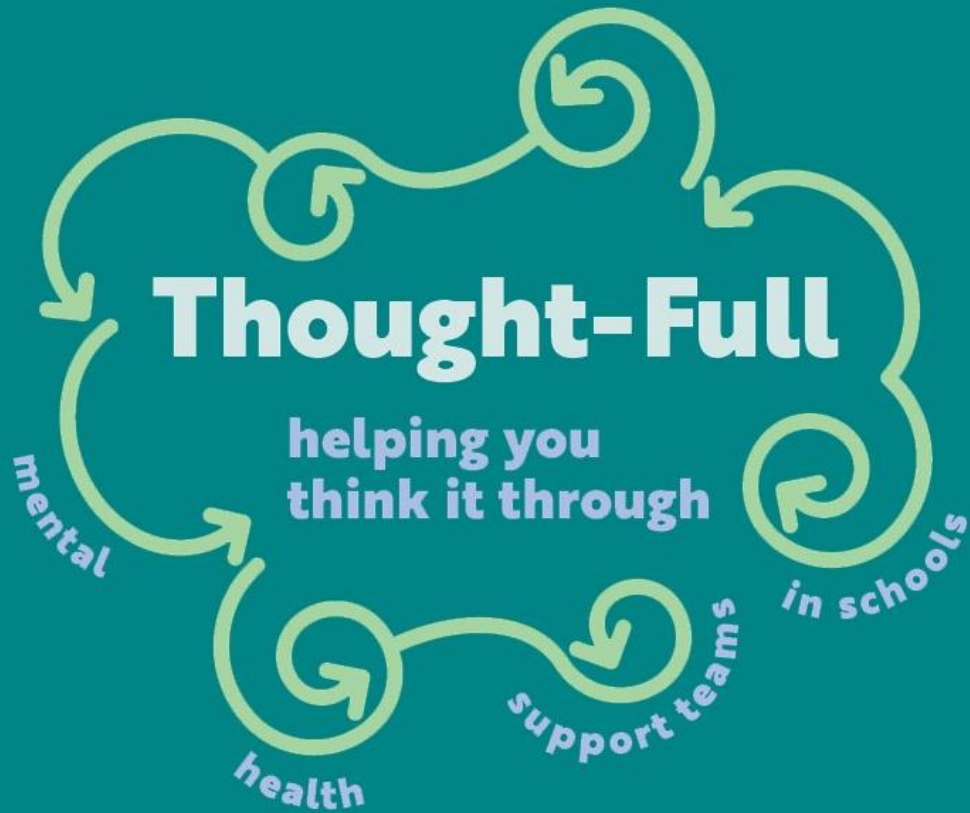


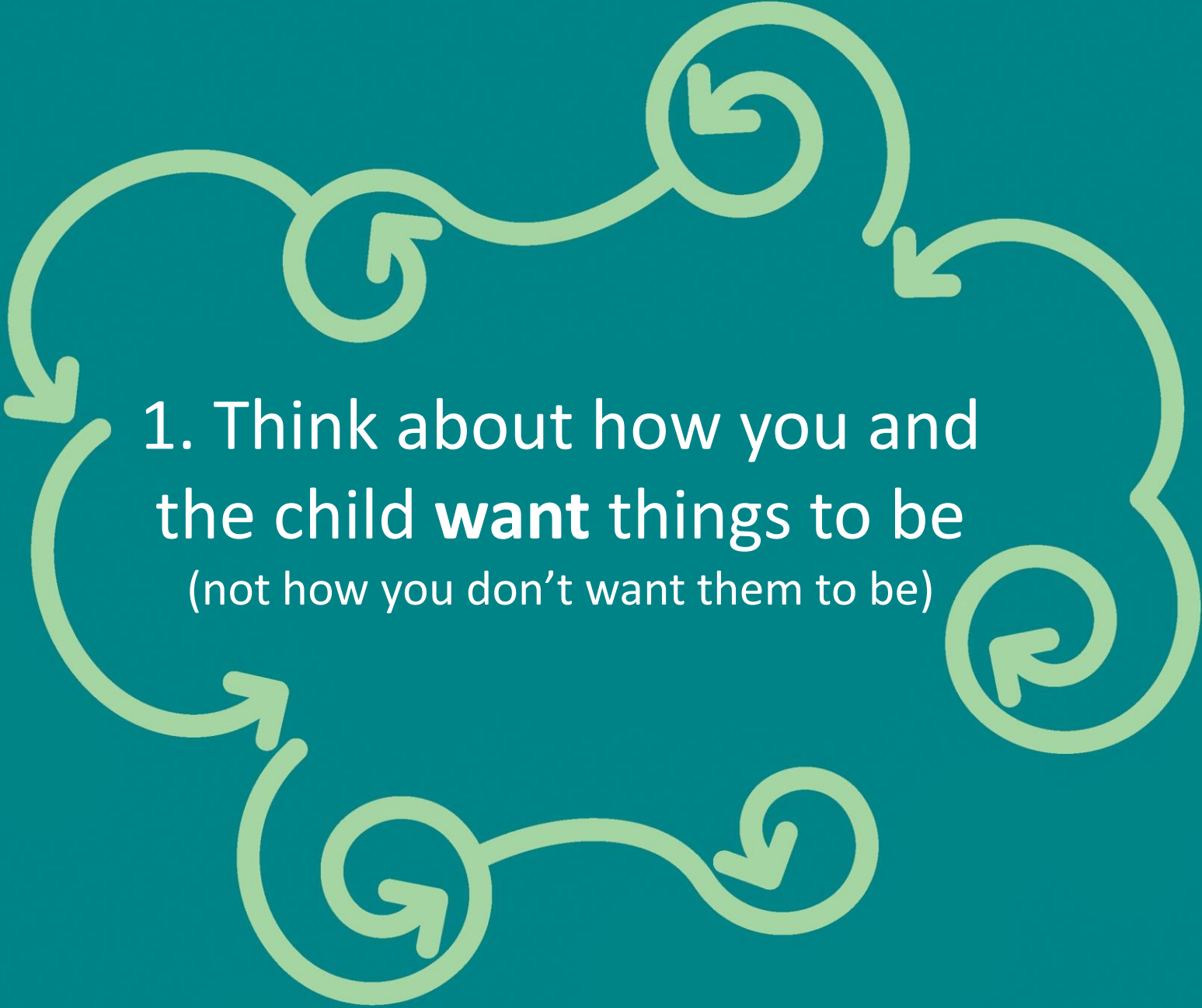
Positive examples of reassurance

<i>Reassurance which promotes opportunities for new experiences</i>	<i>Reassurance which reduces opportunities for new experiences</i>
<i>Go on, have a go, you've done it before and it went really well</i>	<i>It's OK, Mummy's here.</i>
<i>I think you should see how it goes. I feel confident that your first day will go well but even if it doesn't we can think of what we can do to help make it better next time</i>	<i>It will be fine, don't worry!</i>
<i>I really think you can do this. I was so proud when you did X before</i>	<i>Don't worry, I'm sure you'll make lots of friends straight away and your teacher will be really nice</i>

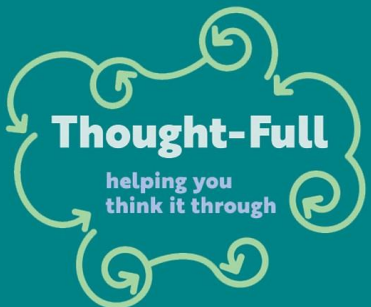
How do you support children who are anxious?

Chat for a few minutes and reflect – before sharing



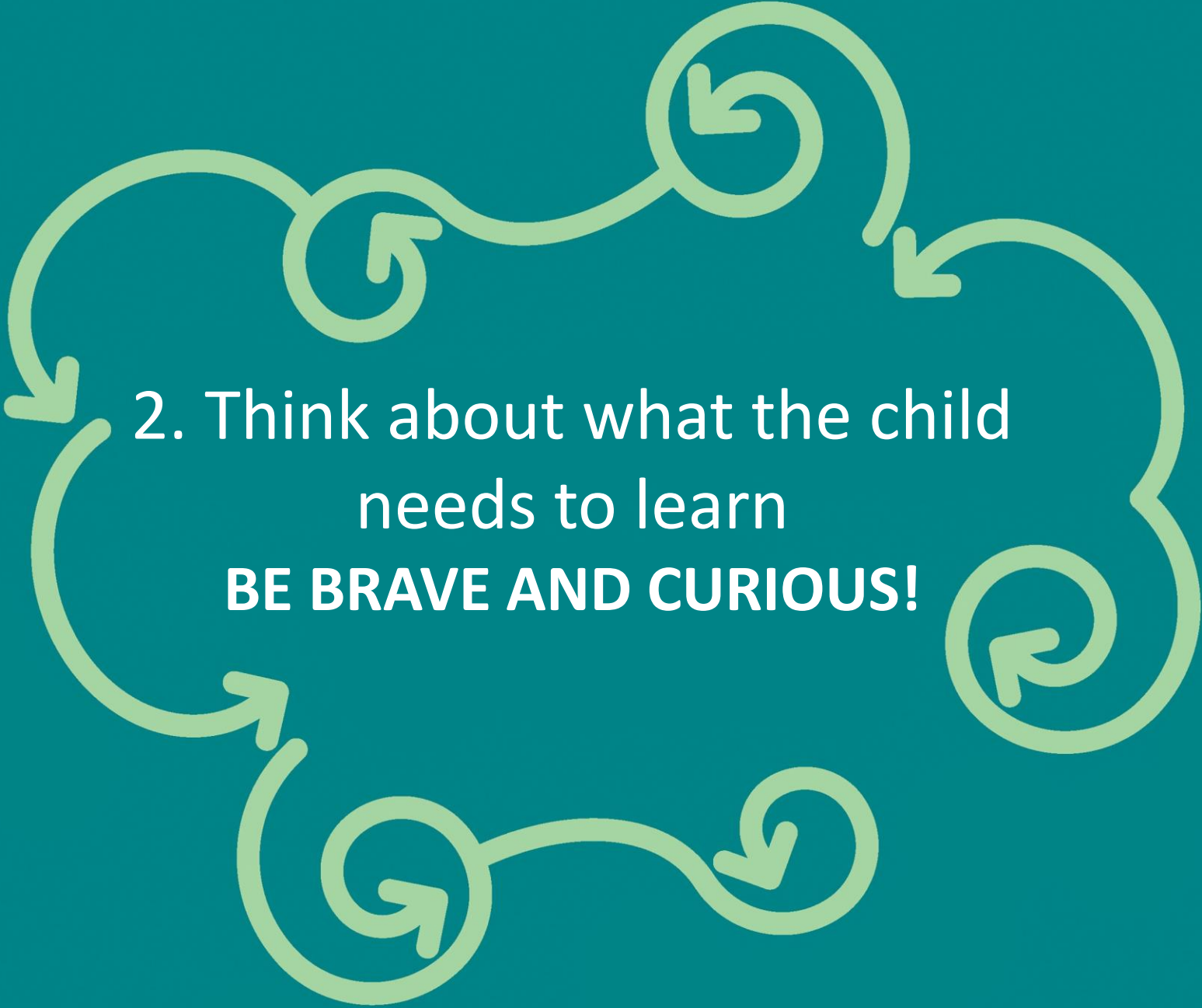


1. Think about how you and
the child **want** things to be
(not how you don't want them to be)

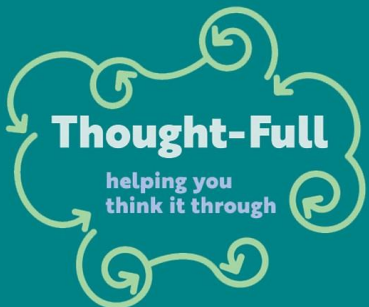


Problem: coming into classroom

What I want to achieve	Child	Parent	Teacher
	Walk into class independently	Be able to drop off with no crying/resistance	Child coming in independently
	Go into class quickly	No delay in me leaving school	No need for me to be involved
	Put my stuff away and start my work	Stop feeling guilty/awful	Settling without resistance and starting work



2. Think about what the child
needs to learn
BE BRAVE AND CURIOUS!



Using open questions

Asking questions rather than giving answers

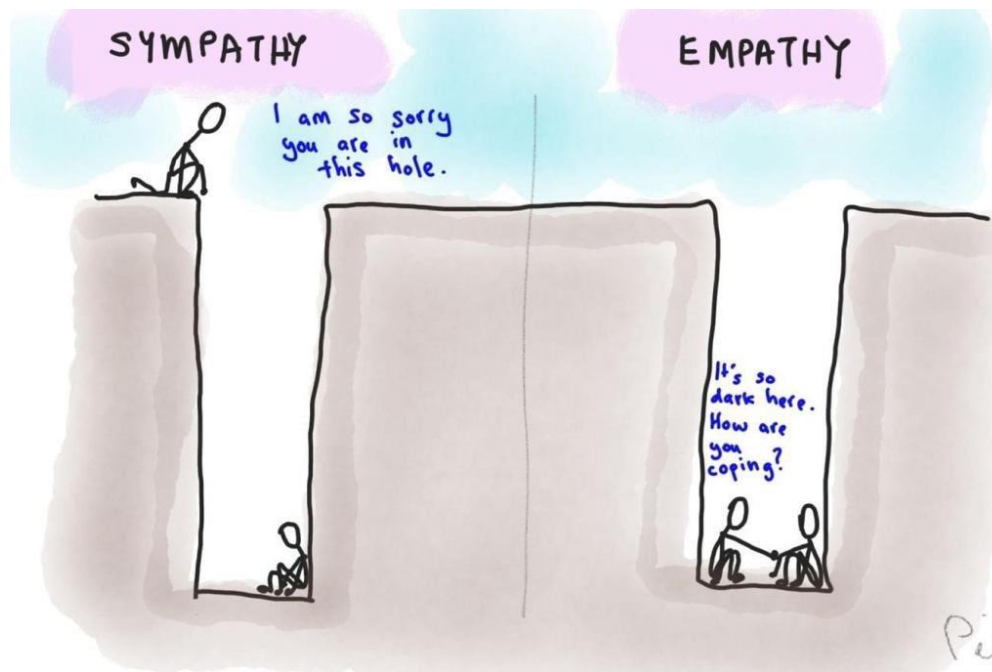
- ❖ *Why are you feeling worried?*
- ❖ *What is frightening you?*
- ❖ *What do you think will happen if you...?*
- ❖ *What is the worst thing that might happen?*
- ❖ *What is it about this situation that is making you feel frightened/worried?*



Empathy, Sympathy and Normalise

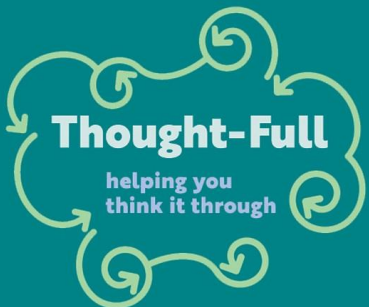
Empathise

- Show you can see how that must make them feel and validate them
- Label emotions
- Check your understanding of what is causing their anxiety



Normalise

- Show this is a normal reaction
- Validate how they feel
- Give examples of others who may experience anxiety or how they overcome things before



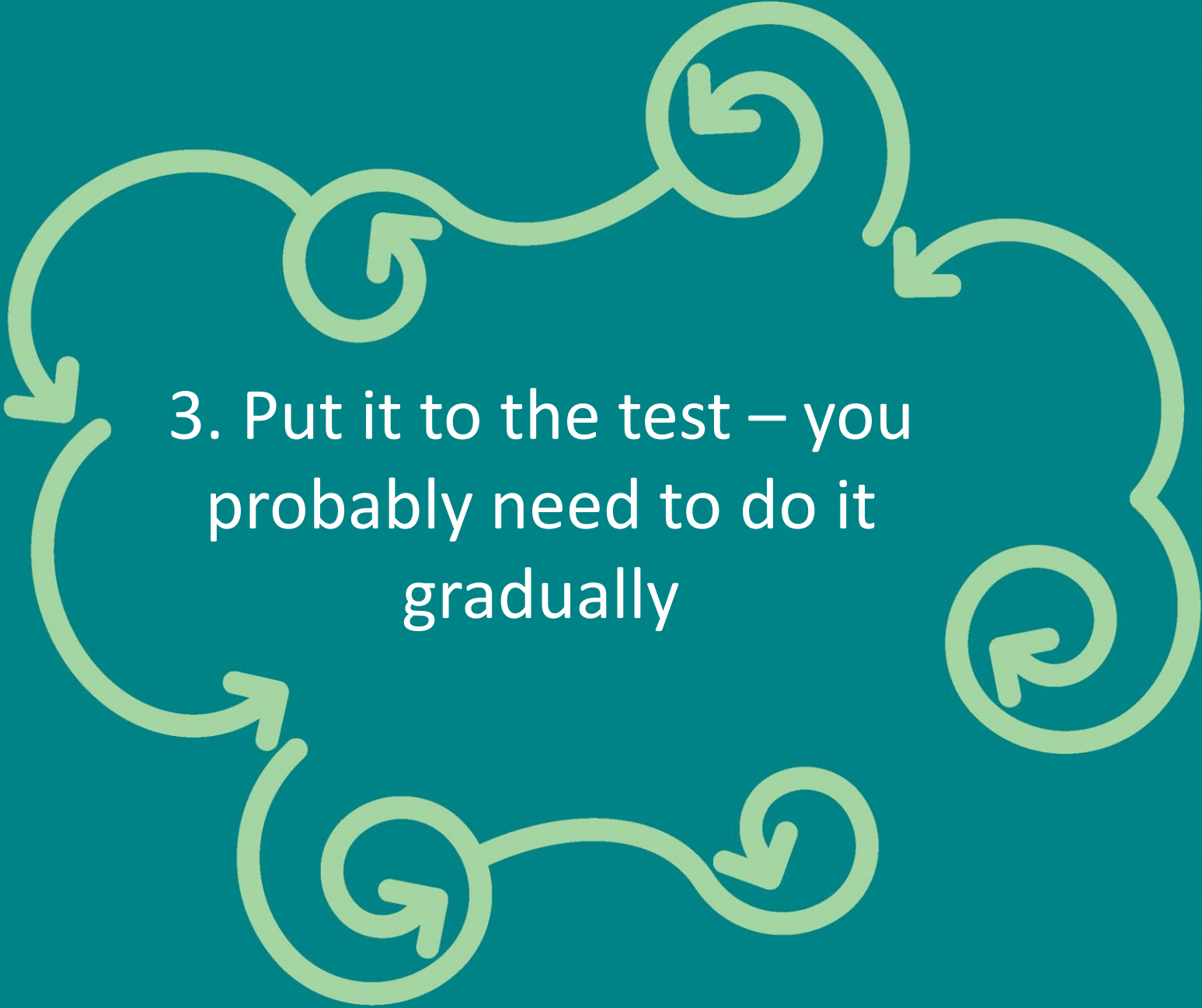
Goal	What is the child thinking?	What does the child need to learn?
To be in school every day	My mum will get hurt if I'm not home and she won't be there to pick me up	What happens to mum when I'm at school? What would happen if she couldn't pick me up? How will I cope?

Thought-Full

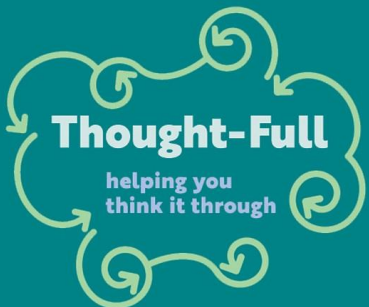
helping you
think it through

The child ultimately
needs to learn:

- 1 Things ***may not*** turn out as *they fear*
- 2 Even if things don't go well, they ***can*** cope or do something about it
- 3 By facing our fears, **we learn new information** that help us to overcome them (and other fears)



3. Put it to the test – you
probably need to do it
gradually



Ultimate goal: To leave Mum at the school gate in the mornings, as soon as we get there

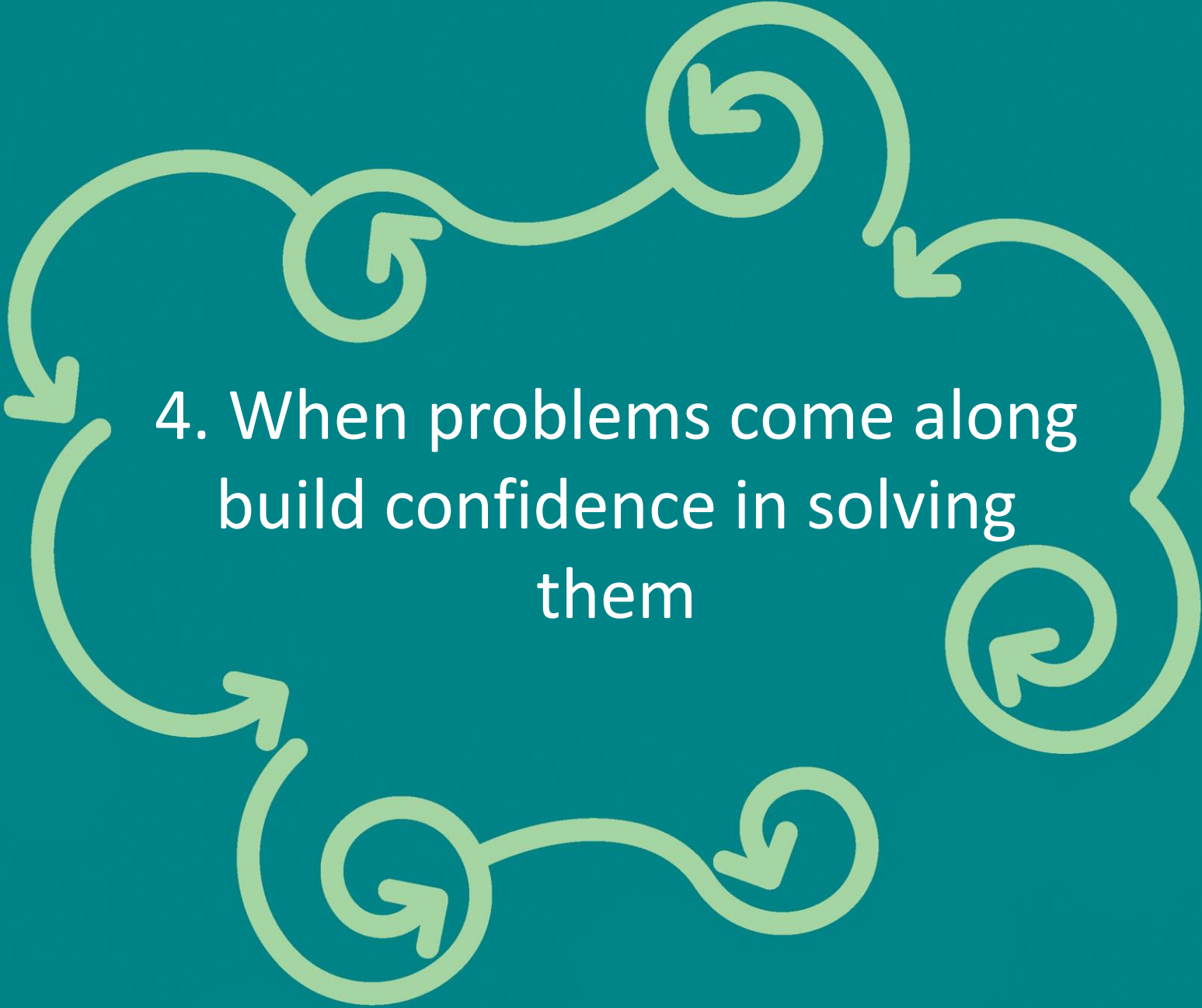
Step 5: For mum to wait by gate until I go in door

Step 4: For mum to wait inside gate on playground, in agreed spot.

Step 3: For mum to walk into school holding my hand, up to gate and then walk back to agreed spot to watch me walk in.

Step 2: For mum to walk into school holding my hand, up to school door and then walk back to agreed spot.

Step 1: For mum to walk into school holding hand entire way until a member of school staff greets me.

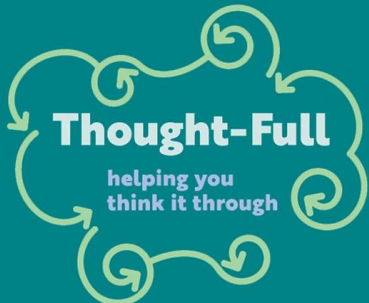


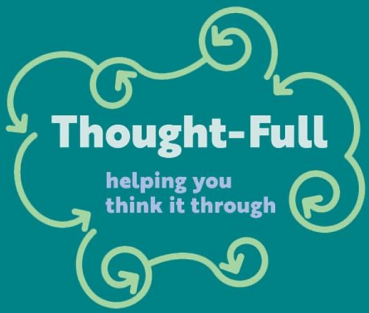
4. When problems come along
build confidence in solving
them

Helping children to adapt



Accommodating response	Understanding	Confidence
Answering repeated questions about time of doctor's appointment.	"It sounds like your quite worried about that? Why do you think that might be?"	"I told you the time earlier, lets get on with this task"
Telling child to text you if they feel anxious at school.	"It sounds like its quite difficult for you to be at school without me there."	"I wonder how you'll get on this morning. I'll text you at lunchtime".
Agreeing to collect child early from school.	It sounds like that thing you get when your anxious & it makes your tummy weird. Is that right?	What else do you think you could do right now? Let's think of some ideas.



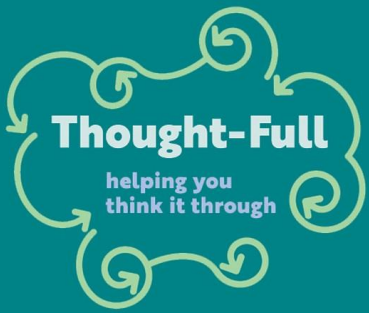


Final word on looking after ourselves

Supporting your sometimes distressed and anxious young person can be anxiety provoking and draining for us we need to look after ourselves so we can continue to offer support

- Do you have a good support network
- Don't suffer in isolation. Don't be afraid to seek support of others and voice any feelings of isolation
- Work alongside school and other support groups and services
- Ensure you have time for your own self-care – no matter how small this is
- Have a good routine- sleep, exercise and diet etc
- Hold in mind what else is going on in your own life and what the impact might be for you and your child.





Signposting and resources

Emerging Minds – podcasts, resources

Overcoming your child's fears and worries

The Invisible String

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rZNTFf35Aw>

Understanding anxiety webinar

Mentally Healthy Schools

Anna Freud Centre

Thought-Full





Themes of workshops

- Anxiety
- Building Resilience
- Common mental health difficulties & overview of Mental Health
- Emotion Coaching
- Exam stress
- How to talk mental health with young people
- Introduction to mental health & common MH difficulties
- Low Mood
- Separation anxiety
- Sleep
- The Teenage brain