

## Insight into...



# Supporting Anxiety Management in Children & Young People

Health &amp; Wellbeing Series: A2

May 2020

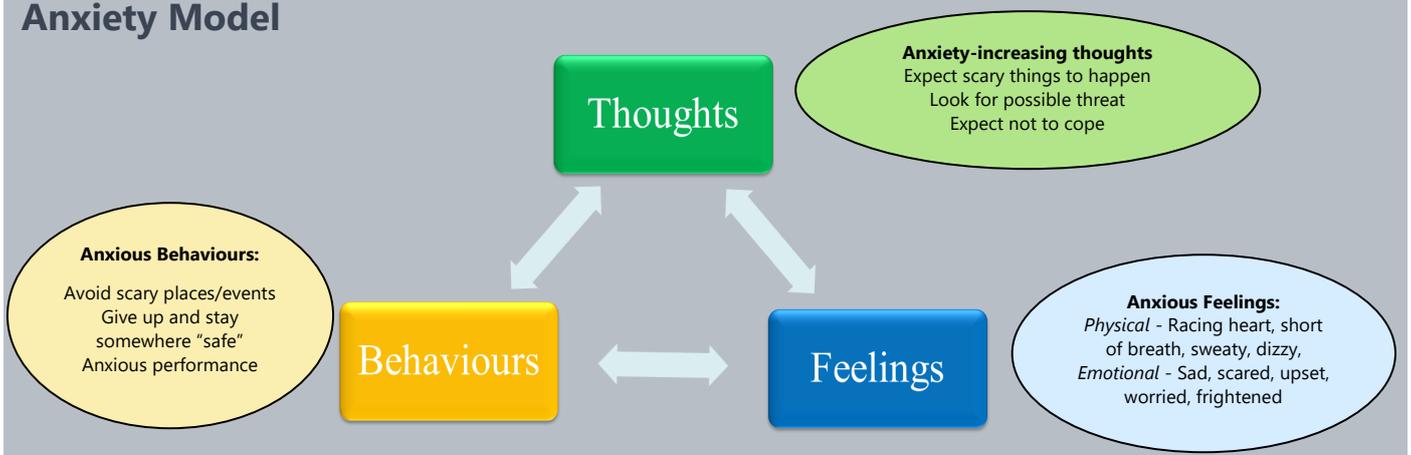
@WL\_EPS

*"When you can't control what is happening around you, challenge yourself to control the way in which you respond"*

## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction that helps us to cope with difficult, challenging or dangerous situations. Everyone will feel anxious at some point in their life. There are relatively few real threats to our physical safety. However many people feel anxious because they imagine threat and feel psychologically at risk. They worry about what might happen which then impacts on how they feel about a certain situation, which then impacts their behaviour.

## Anxiety Model



## Thinking Traps

Threat is often created in our minds by the way we THINK about events. Thinking traps are examples of negative thinking patterns which can contribute to negative feelings.

### Fortune Telling

"I know I will get it wrong"

### Over-generalisation

"I always make mistakes"

### Catastrophising

"I'll freak out & no-one will help me"

### Filtering

only focusing on the negatives

### Should Statements

"I should never feel anxious"

### Black & White Thinking

"Anything less than perfect is a failure"

### Labelling

"I'm useless"

### Mind Reading

"They think I'm stupid"

### Over-estimating danger

"I will go crazy"

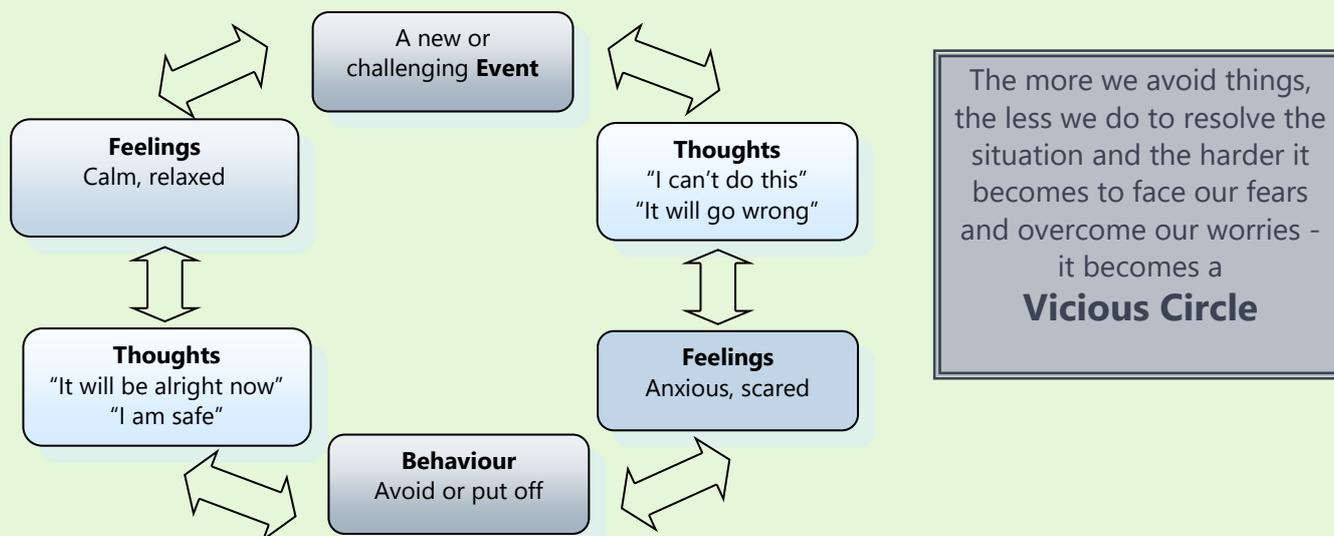


Children who are anxious tend to think in ways that increase their sense of threat and danger. They:

- ◆ Expect negative events will occur
- ◆ Expect to be unsuccessful & negatively evaluate what they do
- ◆ Perceive themselves as being unable to cope with frightening events that do arise
- ◆ Are biased towards possible threat-related cues

## Avoidance Cycle

Avoidance may bring short-term relief but it does not help you to cope and overcome your anxiety. By avoiding the situation we are psychologically reinforcing the message that there is danger. The goal is to reclaim your life, take anxious feelings with you and **Face Your Fears**.



If we avoid things we are frightened of, we do not get the opportunity to find out they are harmless. We also miss out on opportunities to learn new coping skills.

## Breaking the Vicious Circle

So how can we reframe this way of thinking to break this vicious circle and learn how to control our anxious feelings and change our behaviours? We need to:

- ◆ Identify negative ways of thinking
- ◆ Discover the links between what we think, how we feel and what we do (see Insight A1, What is Anxiety?)
- ◆ Develop new skills to cope with our anxieties (see Insight A3, Anxiety Management Strategies)

### Challenge your thinking

- ◆ Is there another way to look at this?
- ◆ What would I tell a friend in this situation?
- ◆ What is the evidence for this being true?
- ◆ Even if this is true, what's the worst thing that could happen?
- ◆ What is the most likely thing to happen?
- ◆ What steps can I take right now to respond in the best way possible to this situation?
- ◆ What help do I need?

### Positive Self-talk

When we are anxious we tend to look for signs that we will fail or be unsuccessful. Positive self-talk is a way of reframing how you view things, removing negative bias and focussing on our achievements & the things that will help us to be successful:

- ◆ I know this will be scary but I will be fine
- ◆ I'm proud of myself for even trying. That took courage
- ◆ That's the first question answered now for the next one

## Further Supports and Information

[www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk)

[Anxiety.org.uk](http://Anxiety.org.uk)

[Youngminds.org.uk](http://Youngminds.org.uk)

[Mind.org.uk](http://Mind.org.uk)

[Childline.org.uk](http://Childline.org.uk)

Scottish Association for Mental Health

Helpline: 03444 775 774

Text support: text YM to 85258

Online help tool

Helpline: 0800 1111; 1-2-1 counsellor chat or online support tool

