

# Supporting Children with Anxiety and Emotion Coaching

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# Hopes for the session

- ▶ Understand how anxiety manifests
- ▶ Look at some strategies to support children experiencing anxiety and to help them build resilience
- ▶ Time for you to talk to others and look at resources

# What is anxiety?

- A word used to describe feelings of unease, fear, worry
- A natural response to threat and danger
- Leads to the production of the hormone adrenaline
- Behavioural instinct is the survival fight, flight, freeze response
- Triggers can be real or imagined
- Those who are more anxious present as highly vigilant
- Incorporates both the emotions and physical sensations experienced

# Triggers

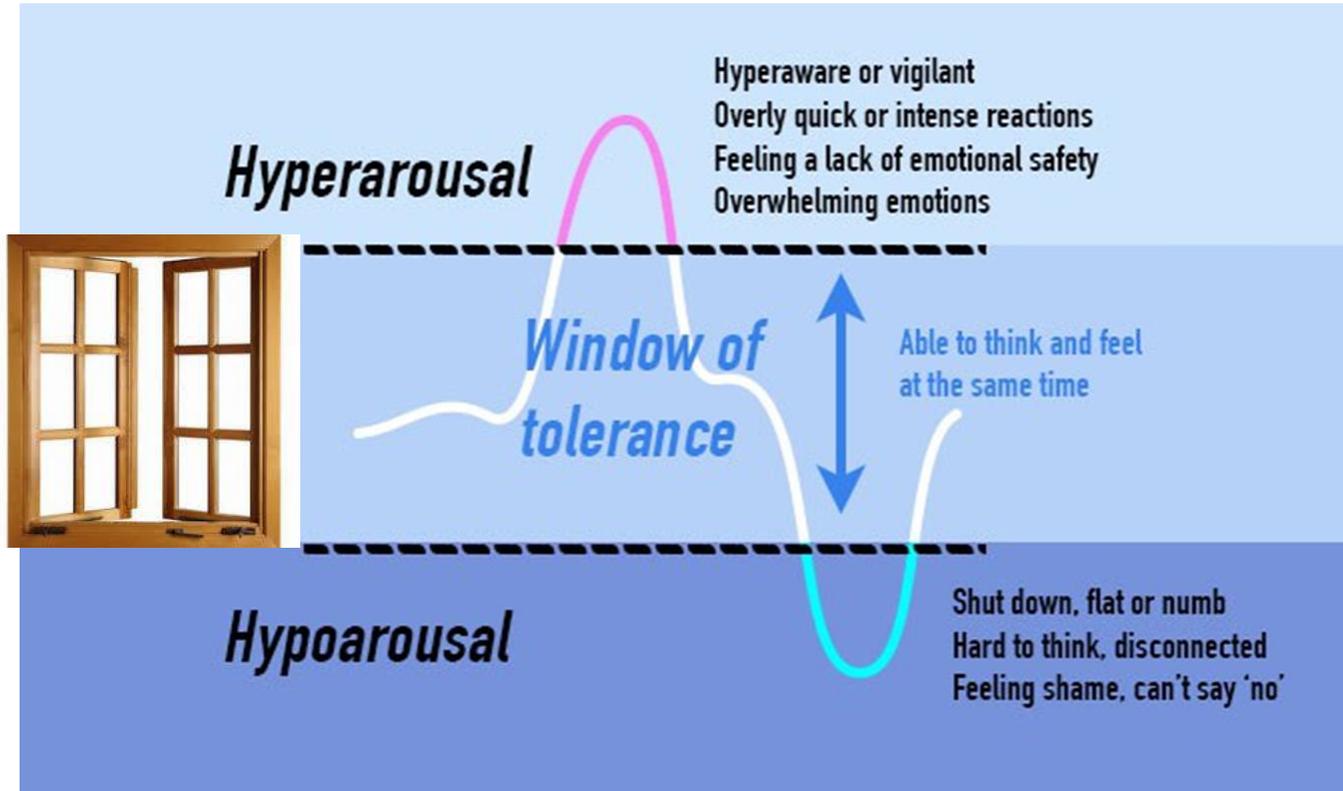
- ▶ What worries, scares and frightens children at home and school?



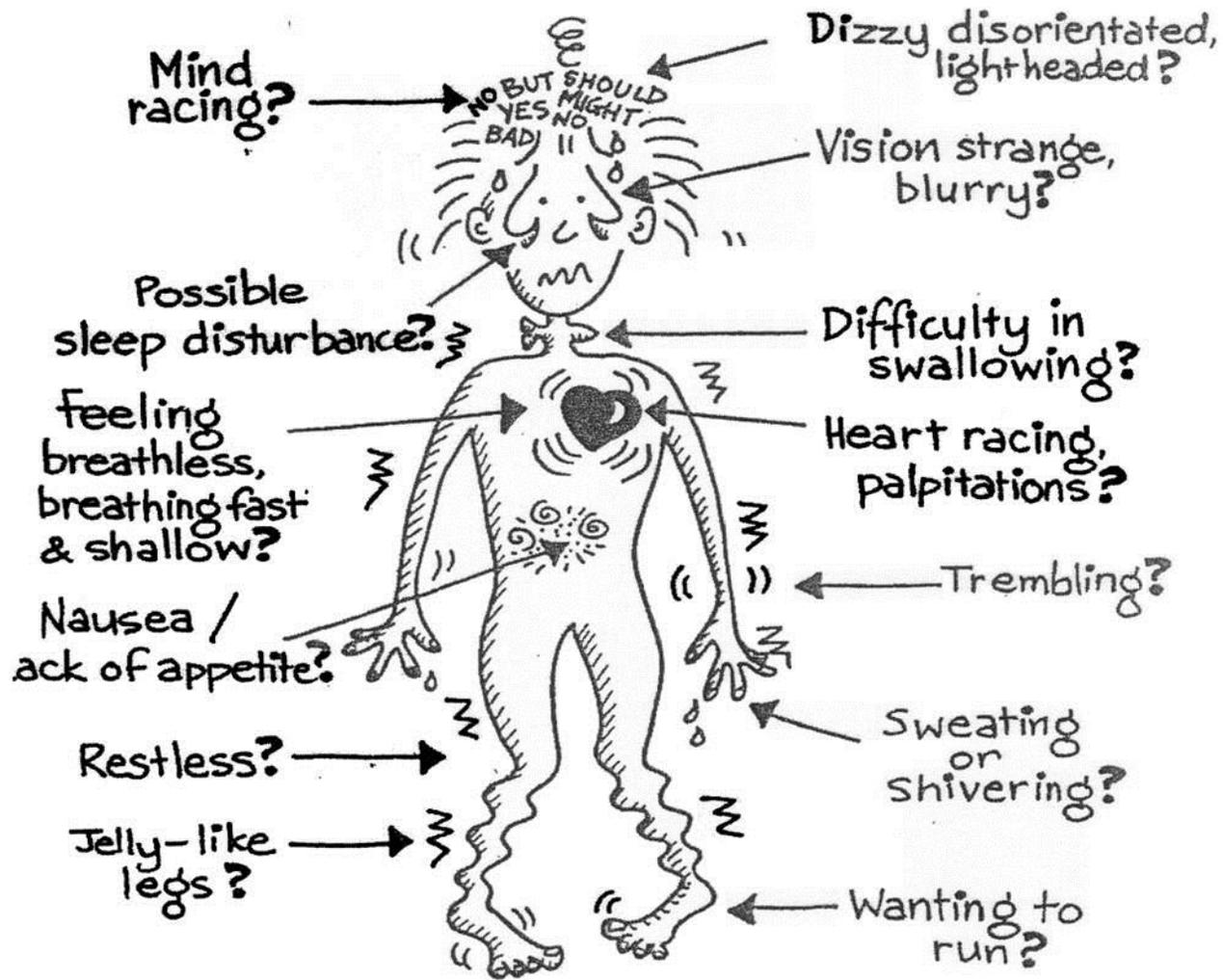
# Triggers

- ▶ After something bad has happened
- ▶ Significant life events i.e. bereavement/illness/separation/domestic violence/bullying/exams
- ▶ Specific situations and contexts
- ▶ Genetic predisposition
- ▶ Temperamental disposition
- ▶ Learnt pattern of behaviours- avoiding situation reinforces fear
- ▶ Uncertainty and feeling out of control
- ▶ A fear of having to do something new or out of our comfort zone.

# Helpful analogies



# Physical signs of anxiety



FIGHT



FLIGHT oohlala!



FREEZE

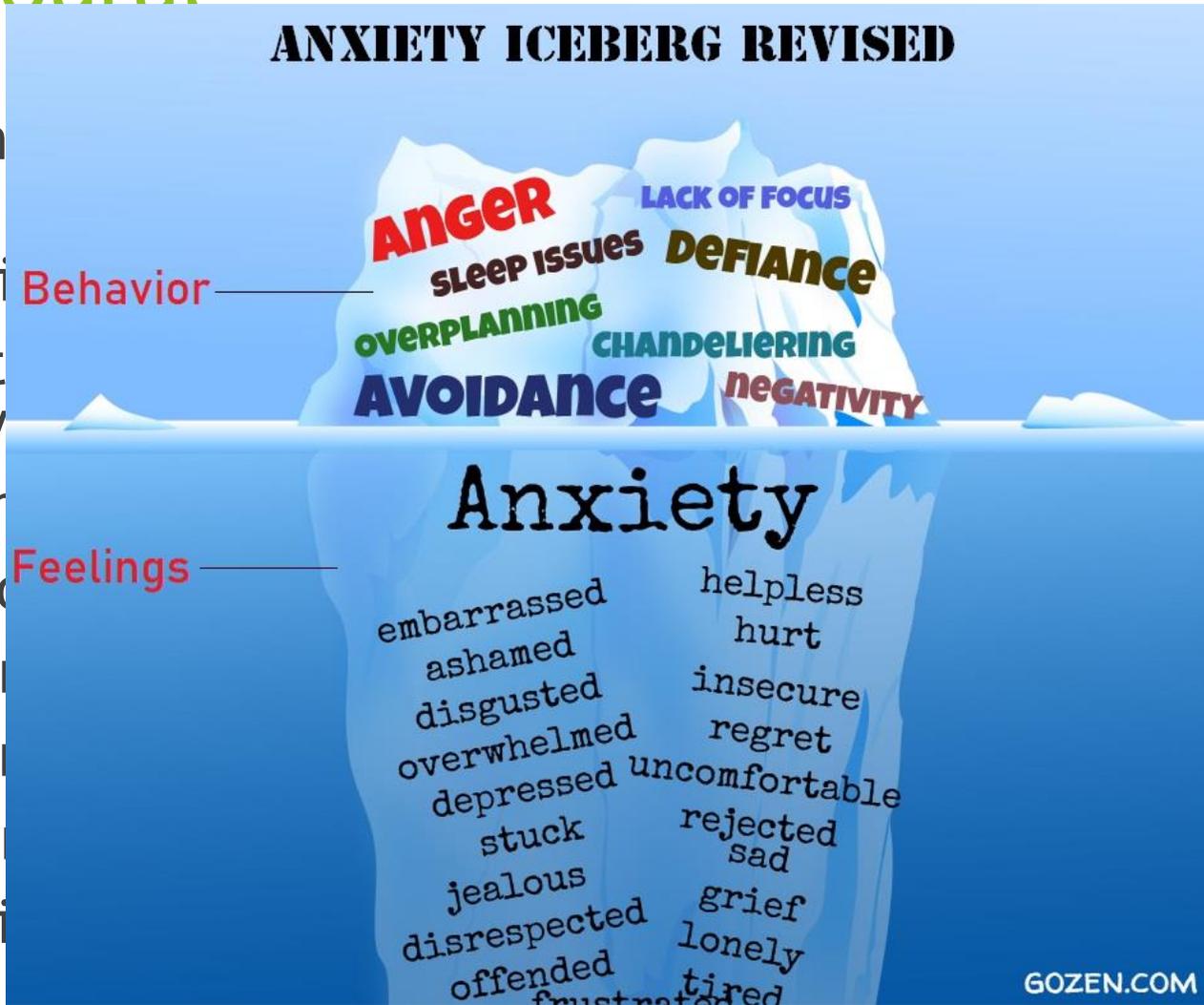


# Psychological Affects

- ▶ Feeling fearful and panicky
- ▶ “Frozen” thought processes
- ▶ Nagging sense of fear
- ▶ Tearful
- ▶ Feeling tired
- ▶ Insomnia/ nightmares
- ▶ Irritable
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Loss of self confidence
- ▶ Fear of failure and reluctance to start work

# Behavioural

- Avoiding times
- Not being
- Go to t
- to get y
- Tantrum
- Need for
- Constant
- Constant
- Reluctant
- Perfectionist



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*“Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don’t listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won’t tell you the big stuff when they are big. Because to them all of it has always been big stuff.”*

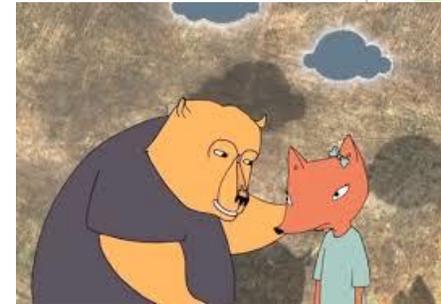
*Catherine M Wallace*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT6FdhKriB8>

# Emotion Coaching

## Step 1. Empathic Listening

- Need to genuinely empathise with the child from their point of view. This doesn't mean agreeing with them, just viewing things from their perspective
- Recognise all emotions as being natural and normal and not always a matter of choice
- Recognise behaviour as communication (relational vs behavioural model)
- Look for physical and verbal signs of the emotion being felt
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>



## Step 2. Validating and labelling emotions

- ‘I can see that you are getting worried about this. I would feel nervous in a similar situation. It’s normal to feel like that’
- ‘I can see you’re frowning and you’re kicking the wall and you’re expressing a lot of energy. I wonder if you’re feeling scared. I would be feeling like that too if I didn’t know what was happening next’
- ‘I noticed you looking around at the other who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling worried right now about whether your work will be ok. Have I got that right?’

## Step 3: Setting limits on behaviour (if needed)

Validate the emotion and label the feeling

...BUT...

certain behaviours cannot be accepted

*‘We can’t behave like that even though you are feeling worried because it is not safe’.*

## Step 4. Problem solving

- ▶ Move to problem solving **when the child is calm**
- ▶ Explore the incident and support them to think of ideas and actions that could lead to a more predictive outcome later
- ▶ Consider all possible solutions, weight up costs and benefits, pick the best solution, try it!

# Other strategies...

- ▶ TIME IN with you (scheduled and regular)
- ▶ WORRY TIME - allocate 15 minutes worry time a day to help contain the worry time
- ▶ THOUGHT DIARY - write down worries and fears and contain to a book
- ▶ Regular opportunities for CALMING ACTIVITIES or sharing a SENSORY BOX together
- ▶ Normalising by TALKING about our emotions too



# Calming the body - Mindfulness

*Paying attention in a purposeful way*

- ▶ BREATHING EXERCISES
  - ▶ Breath in & out regularly
  - ▶ Deep breath in through the nose and out through the nose
- ▶ PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION
- ▶ MINDFUL MINUTES



# Mindfulness Resources

- ▶ One minute meditations for both adults and children: [http://www.just-a-minute.org/resource\\_centre/](http://www.just-a-minute.org/resource_centre/)
- ▶ Mindfulness: A guide to finding peace in a frantic world- Mark Williams & Danny Penman <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>
- ▶ Zen Den - Mindfulness for kids- Youtube video
- ▶ Mindful Ninja (Spotify)
- ▶ Mindfulness Apps: Headspace, Smiling Mind
- ▶ Quiet the Mind by Matthew Johnstone
- ▶ Sitting Still Like a Frog- Eline Snel
- ▶ Free meditations, podcasts, <http://franticworld.com/resources/>
- ▶ Mind up or .B programmes
- ▶ Class Dojo website <https://ideas.classdojo.com/b/mindfulness>

# Books and resources

- ▶ 'What to do when you worry too much' Dawn Huebner
- ▶ The huge bag of worries, Virginia Ironside
- ▶ Starving the Anxiety Gremlin, Kate Collins-Donnelly
- ▶ Panicosaurus, Kay Al-Ghani
- ▶ When my worries get too big, Kari Dunn Buron
- ▶ Sitting like a frog, Eline Snel
- ▶ The incredible 5 point scale, Kari Dunn Buron
- ▶ Willy and the Wobbly House, Margot Sunderland
- ▶ Hey Warrior, Karen Young
- ▶ Help! I've Got an Alarm Bell Going off in My Head, K L Aspden
- ▶ Wellbeing Stories and teacher toolkit  
<https://www.wellbeingstories.com/>
- ▶ How You Can Help Children to Recognise and Talk About Their Feelings, Ros Bayley



Questions?

▶ Thank you for listening!