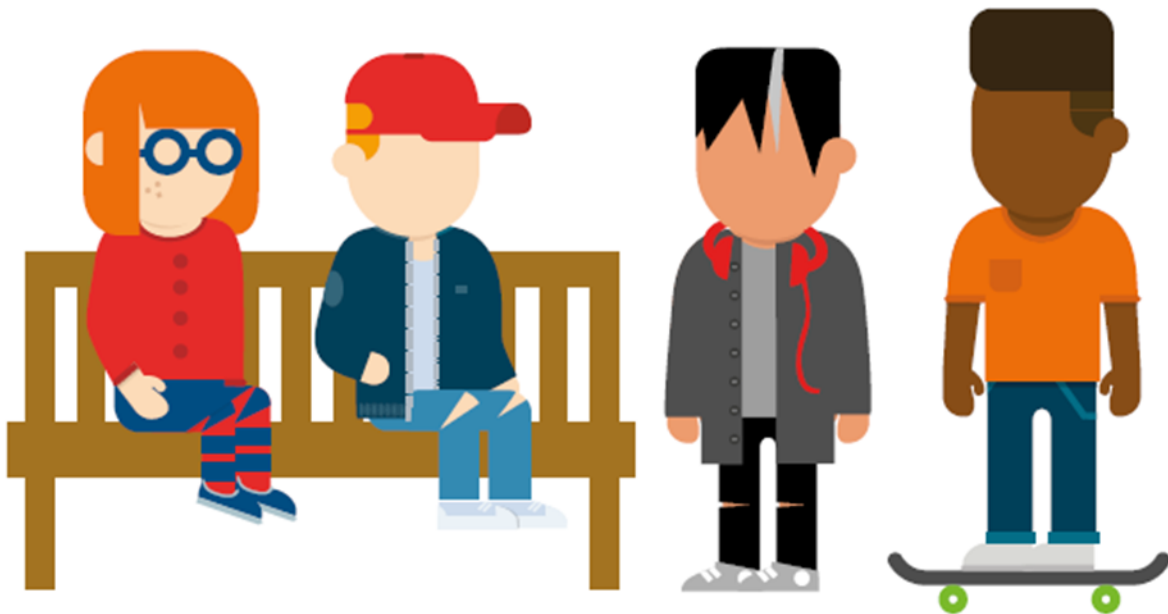


Parent information session



Anxiety

Why does this happen?

We all have the same automatic response to danger called the **FIGHT** or **FLIGHT** response. Humans developed this as cave men because it was a much more dangerous time to live back then (think running away from saber tooth tigers and hunting for food).

The fight or flight response meant that cave men's bodies went into survival mode whenever their brains sensed danger. This meant their heart rate and blood pressure would increase so they had a better chance of running away or fighting the danger!

Even though we don't face the same dangers today, our brains and bodies still react in the same way to the things we see as dangerous, scary or worrying. This means our increased heart rate and blood pressure causes us to feel anxious!



**It's like a
faulty smoke
alarm...**

Imagine you have a smoke alarm that is overly sensitive and goes off all of the time, even when there isn't a real fire. Our Fight or Flight response is just like this - it goes off and causes physical changes in our bodies, even if there isn't any real danger.

**Remember!
These feelings are
normal and are
caused by our body's
natural reactions!**

Examples of Children experiencing anxiety

Specific phobias

When a fear of a particular place, object or situation becomes a problem it is called a phobia. This describes a fear that is excessive and leads to avoidance or extreme discomfort when a child is faced with the feared object (or place or situation). Fears are common; a lot of people are cautious of, for example, snakes or bees and this can be a healthy response. If, however, your child's fear is significantly interfering with his or her life, such as causing problems at school, in the family or with friends, or if it stops him or her from doing things he or she would like to do, then it would no doubt be best for your child to receive help in overcoming this fear. Common fears we see in children include fears of dogs, heights, injections and vomiting.

Sarah, aged 10.

Sarah has never liked spiders. I remember when she was just a toddler, she once became hysterical because she saw a bit of fluff on the carpet which looked a bit like a spider. Since then, she has always had to keep away if we came across a spider in the room, but it never used to cause a big problem. Over time it just seems to have got worse. Now we're finding that there are certain places that Sarah won't want to go to because she thinks we're likely to see a spider. For example, her granddad had to go into hospital for a month, so his flat was empty for all that time. We went over to give it a clean-up before he came home. We shouldn't have taken Sarah with us really because, not surprisingly, we came across a spider before too long.

Sarah got really upset and was out the door before you could do anything about it. Since then, she has refused to go back to her granddad's house, so he always has to come to us to visit, which feels unfair on him.

Social anxiety

When a child is socially anxious, they are typically anxious about a variety of different situations in which they fear doing something embarrassing, that people will think they are stupid, judge them negatively, or react badly to them. For children this can make it difficult to enter situations where there will be other people – for example, going to school, being with other children (such as at parties), and going to cafes or restaurants. It may also make it hard for a child to participate in a social situation, for example, not being able to put their hand up in class or talk in a large group of peers. Although children who are socially anxious may be perfectly comfortable when they are with people they know well, they may try to avoid situations where there will be fewer familiar people or may feel very uncomfortable if they have to be in these kinds of situations. Occasionally, when social anxiety is severe, children are not able to talk at all in certain situations such as at school or with people outside of their home. This is commonly referred to as 'selective mutism'.

Layla, aged 11

Layla's biggest problem is with school. In the summer holidays she's like a different person. Then maybe a week before she's due to go back she'll start getting the tummy aches. It's the same on a Sunday evening during the school term. It's hard to know if she is genuinely ill or not, especially as sometimes she is physically sick, and she tends to go white as a sheet at the mention of going to school. This problem has been around for a while although, when she was ten, she had a supportive teacher and things seemed to settle down for a bit. But since she has changed class, she has found it hard. She seems to think everybody thinks badly of her. So, any little thing will upset her, like if another child is just looking at her, she'll think they are thinking there is something wrong with her hair or her clothes. Her teachers have told me that she is quiet in class and never puts her hand up or tries to participate. She often comes home with no idea of what she should be doing for her homework as she hasn't understood it but hasn't asked the teacher what to do.

Generalised anxiety

Generalised anxiety describes a condition where a child worries excessively and finds it hard to get worries out of his or her mind. The worries tend to be about a range of different concerns, rather than a single issue. For example, common worries can include things going on in the world (such as terrorism), doing well at school, friendships, getting things right, and the health of ourselves and others. For some children, the worries change over time, so a child can move from worrying about one thing to something else. The worries are often accompanied by unpleasant physical symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, muscle aches, sleep problems (difficulty settling or frequent waking), irritability and tiredness. Again, these difficulties can interfere with the child's ability to enjoy activities at home, school, in the family or with friends. Generalised anxiety can present a bit differently from some of the other anxiety problems – with more worry and less avoidance – and for this reason there are some strategies that work well.

The best way to describe Ben is as 'a worrier'. He seems to worry about anything, and everything. I have stopped putting the news on when he is around because it is like he is on the lookout for bad news. For example, he is terrified that we are all going to catch the illness that has been talked about on the news that is happening on the other side of the world. He also gets really wound up when his dad has to go into the city for work as he has seen stories about bombs and terrorism.

I suppose I can understand those worries, but there are others I find harder. He just gets something into his head, and it seems to get stuck there. Like he has a real worry about a monster that was in a film that he watched at his cousin's house. He is convinced that if he goes upstairs the monster is going to come and get him, to the point that he won't go upstairs on his own. We tell him that there is no monster, it was just a made-up character, and just to forget about it, but he just can't seem to get rid of this thought. Since this has been going on he has had to share a bedroom with his brother, but it takes Ben so long to get to sleep at night because he is worrying about something or other that this is now disturbing.

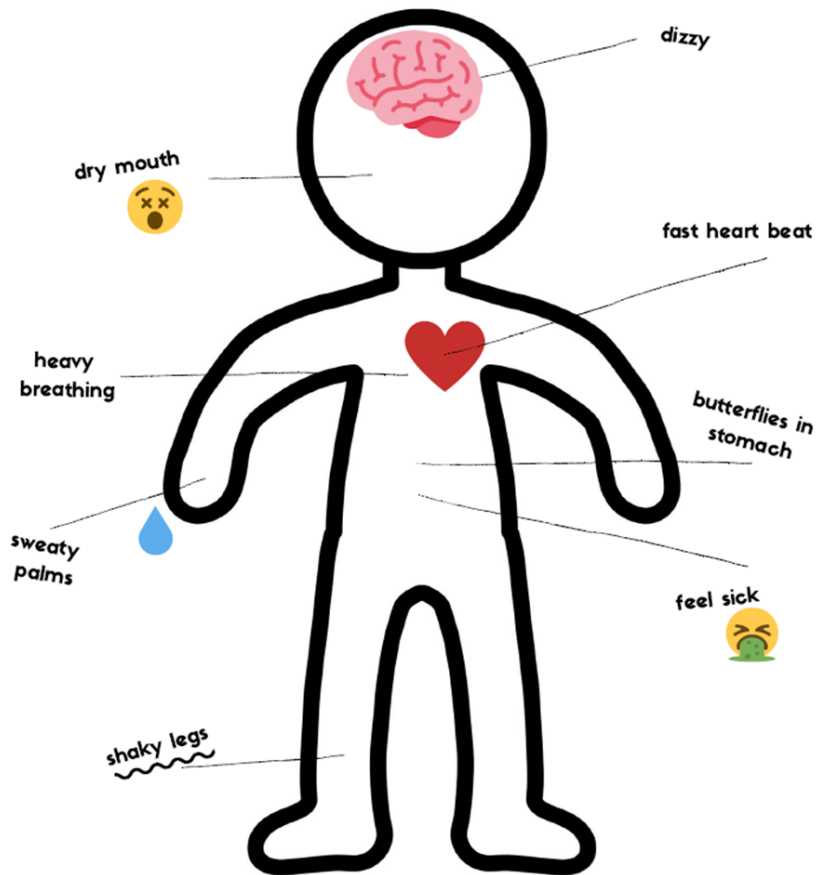
Ben, aged 9

Separation anxiety

Some children find it extremely difficult to be apart from a parent or other carer. This often relates to a fear that if they are separated from their carer, they will not see each other again. This can either be because of a fear that some harm will come to the child if their carer is not present (such as they will get taken or injured), or that harm will come to their carer in the child's absence. These fears can make it difficult for a child to take part in a range of activities that other children of the same age will be doing, including attending school, visiting friends, going to after-school clubs or activities, or going on sleepovers.

Muhammed, aged 7

There are a lot of things Muhammed finds difficult, but I think the one I struggle with the most is bedtime. Muhammed needs to have me or his dad there with him for him to go to sleep. We feel like we have tried everything – we have insisted he stay in his room and have let him cry, but he just got himself so worked up that it seemed to make things worse; we decorated his room for him so that it would be a nice place to be – none of these things have made any difference. What tends to happen is that one of us will go in with Muhammed and read him a story and then we must lie down on his bed with him until he drops off. Quite often we'll end up dropping off, too, then we lose a big chunk of our evening. Then when we finally, do get to bed, more often than not we'll be woken up to find Muhammed has crept in, too, at some point in the night. I think the fact that none of us are getting enough sleep is making everything else harder to deal with. The other big thing is, of course, school. Muhammed has missed a great deal of school this year as he just finds it so difficult, and we just don't have the energy to keep pushing him to go any more. It just doesn't seem like it can be good for him to go through so much stress each day. I try to imagine him ten years from now. He certainly can't be coming into our bed then. Something must be done.



Dizzy – because of quicker breathing

Bigger eyes – to let in more light and help us to see

Red face – everything is working faster and adrenaline (a chemical) causes blood vessels to get bigger

Breathing faster – to get more oxygen in to your blood stream

Sweating – to cool the body down when everything in it is going faster

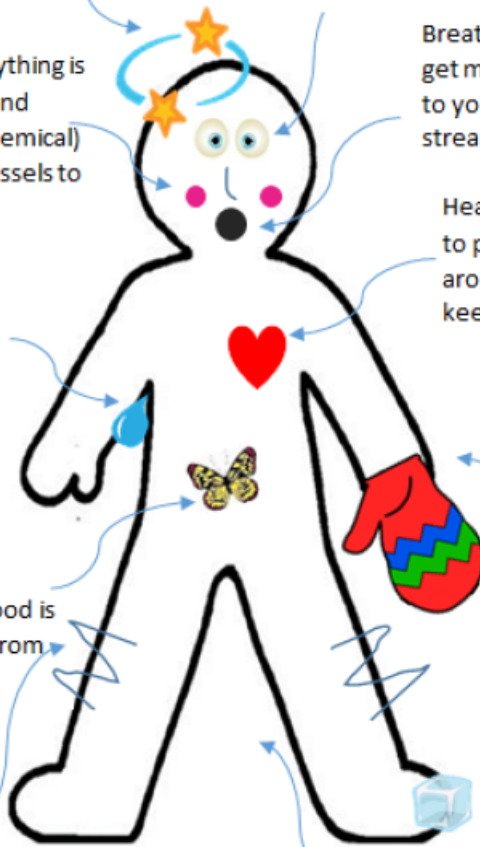
Heart beats faster – to pump blood around your body to keep it moving

Butterflies in stomach – blood is drawn away from muscles

Cold hands and feet – blood is drawn out of our hands and feet to other body parts

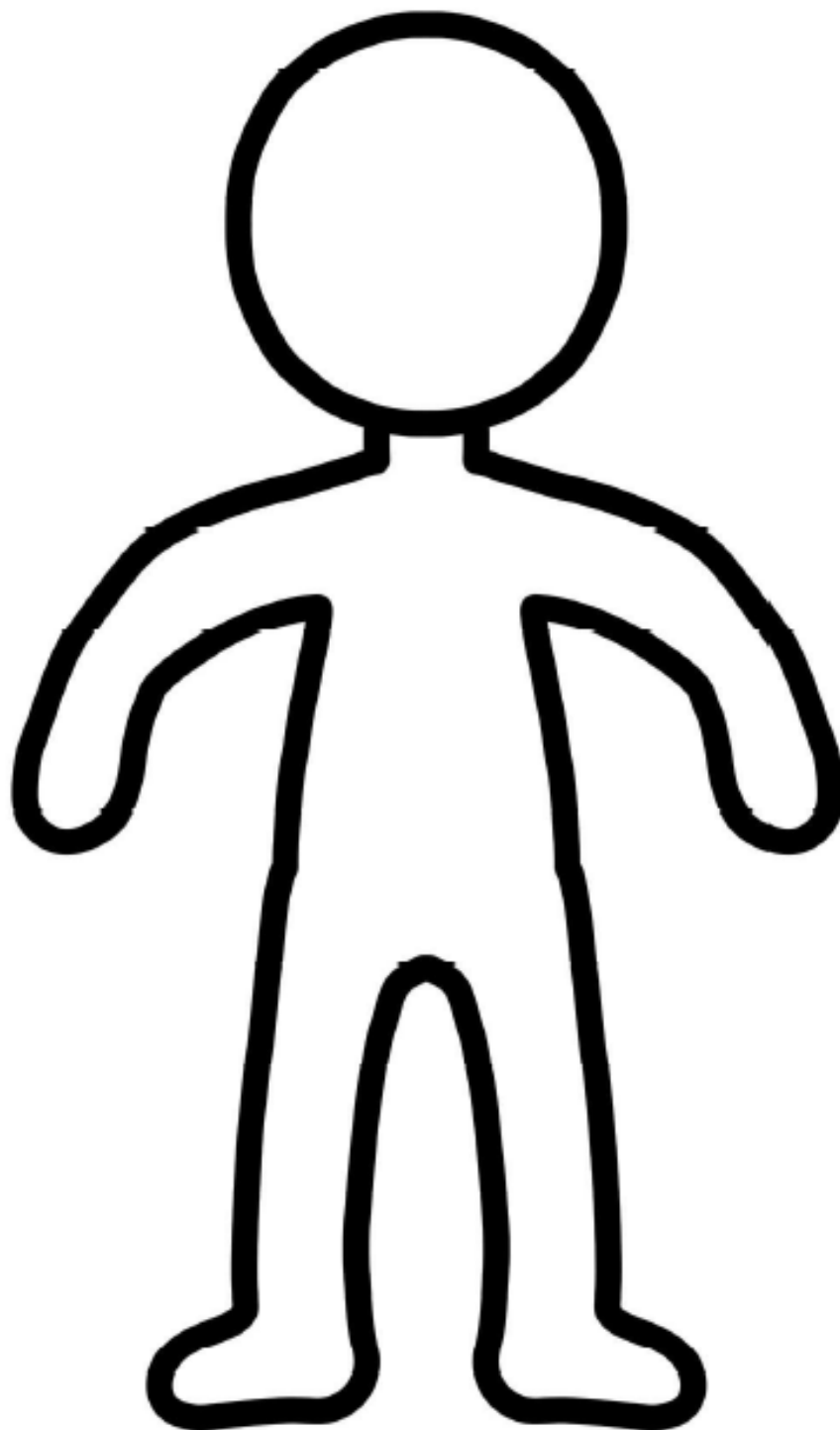
Wobbly 'jelly' legs – blood is moving quickly which can make body parts feel shaky and your muscles tense to be prepared

Needing to go to the toilet – muscles relax so the energy can go elsewhere



My Symptoms of Anxiety

When feeling anxious, we all experience some physical symptoms which can be unpleasant and upsetting. It's important to remember that these are **NORMAL** body reactions to a feared situation that everyone experiences at some time or another. What symptoms do you notice in your body when you're feeling anxious?



Remember! Everyone's symptoms of anxiety might be different but they are **NORMAL** body reactions.

The five areas formulation

The situation

Thoughts or Images

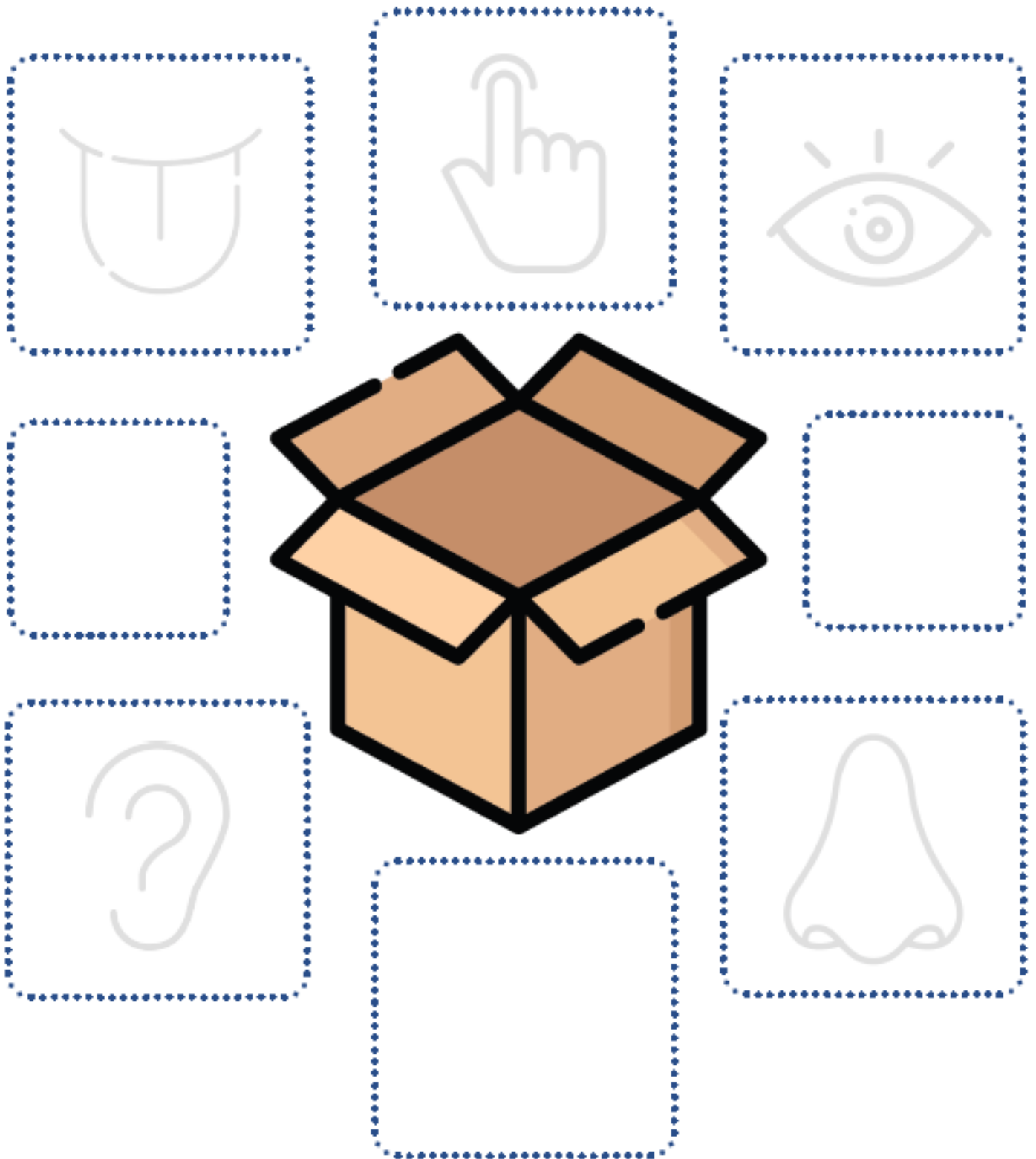
Body / Physical Sensations

Feelings, Moods, Emotions

Behaviours - (What I do or don't do)

My Self-Soothing Box

What would go in your Self-Soothing box? Try to find at least one thing that suits each of the five senses!



One of the most helpful ways of supporting with anxiety is using a step by step approach to overcoming feared situations.

If you have a sense of what the child would like to be different (i.e. an “ultimate goal”) you can then support them to break this down into small achievable steps. This stops the goal from feeling unrealistic or overwhelming. Mapping steps out on a ladder can be a visual way of thinking this through and gives the person some ownership over each step and making changes.

This method of gradual exposure allows them to gather evidence of what hap-



EXAMPLE



Goal: Swim in pool at best friend's birthday party

10 = swim in deep end of the pool by myself (no floaties)

9 = swim in deep end of the pool with floaties

8 = swim in deep end of the pool with parent and floaties

7 = swim into the deep end of the pool and back to shallow end with floaties

6 = jump into the deep end and climb out straight away

5 = swim in shallow end of the pool by myself (no floaties)

4 = swim in shallow end of the pool with floaties

3 = swim in shallow end of the pool with parent and floaties

2 = stand in shallow end of the pool with parent

1 = sit on the edge of the pool with parent

My Goal :

Step 10

Step 9

Step 8

Step 7

Step 6

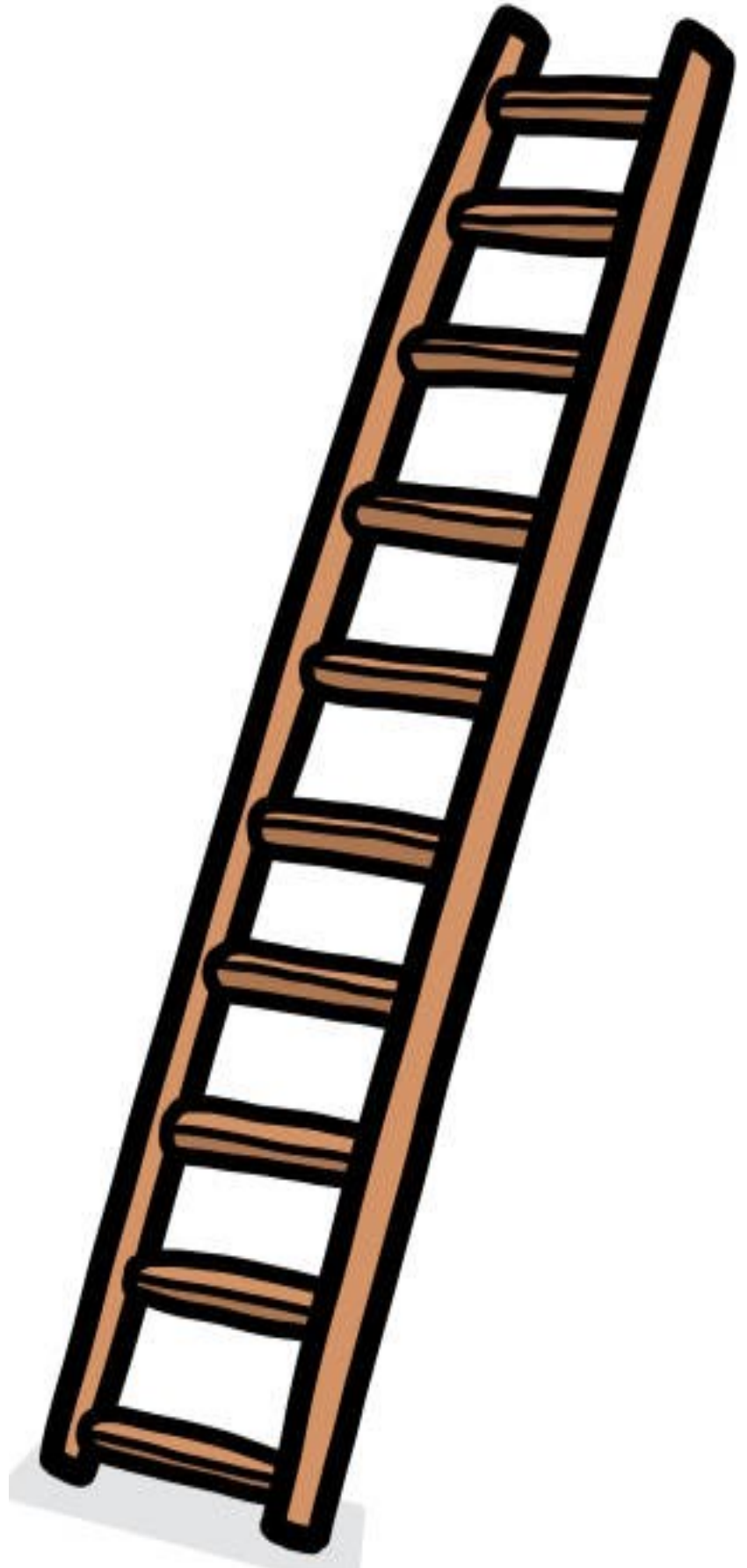
Step 5

Step 4

Step 3

Step 2

Step 1





Local websites and sources of support

MindMate Website

A website to help you explore emotional wellbeing and mental health issues and offer information about where support is available www.mindmate.org.uk

MindMate Single Point of Access

MindMate Single Point of Access (SPA) is there to identify support for children and young people in Leeds with their emotional wellbeing or mental health. It is for all children and young people who have a Leeds GP, of school age and under the age of 18. We work with a variety of services in order to find the right support.

www.mindmate.org.uk / 0300 555 0324

MindMate Wellbeing

'MindMate Wellbeing' is school cluster-based mental health support (also previously known as TaMHS). It can help you by providing consultation for professionals and face-to-face support for young people as well as broader access to other services in the cluster. This can be usually accessed where the child or young person attends school through the young person's school or [MindMate SPA](#)

School Nurses

School Nurses can support your work with the young person. This service can be accessed through the young person's school.

GP support

The young person's GP (General Medical Practitioner) can offer confidential and regular support for a wide range of health problems, including the psychological distress and physical injuries of self-harm. Although not an emergency service, quick access to advice and, if necessary, an appointment, should usually be available for urgent matters.

Leeds Bereavement service

Child Bereavement UK Leeds offers support to children and young people who have been bereaved of a close family member. The service is for Leeds young people up to and including age 18, providing general advice, advocacy, one to one and group support. As a result of the government advice during the coronavirus outbreak, premises are now closed; however, staff are working remotely and are continuing to provide support to families by telephone and digital means. Contact them by phone 01133 503598, on email leedssupport@childbereavementuk.org or visit them online at [Child Bereavement UK Leeds](http://ChildBereavementUKLeeds.org)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyfgodSSdV4>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rcb96N1L2k>

Useful apps:



Chill Panda

Relaxation and breathing techniques for all the family. Helps with worry management and anxiety.



STOP, BREATHE & THINK KIDS: FOCUS, CALM & SLEEP (age 5 to 10)

The app for meditation & mindfulness, has a unique approach that allows you to check in with your emotions.



Cove

Uses music to express feelings and emotions. Can help with anxiety, depression and negative thinking. Can store the music in a journal or send to others to express feelings.



National websites and helplines:



Action for Children

This website contains information about promoting good wellbeing. It has some good suggestion around activities to spend time with your child and getting support for parents. also offers support around Covid-19.

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-for-parents/childrens-mental-health/how-can-you-help-with-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/mental-health-resources-and-information/>



Anna Freud

Advice and support for young people, parents/ carers and schools regarding anxiety and self-care including Covid-19 advice/support.

<https://www.annafreud.org/>



Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

Set up in memory of a young man who had depression. Free resources on how to keep mentally well in particular guides for parents/carers.

<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/>



Childline

Activities, support, advice line, information and toolbox including games to help with anxiety, worries and feeling calm.

<https://www.childline.org.uk>



MindED for Families

Supporting parents/carers who are concerned about their child's mental health. Information, resources around common problems.

<https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people/>



Winston's Wish

Support for children and young people after the death of a parent/ carer or sibling. Including advice for Covid-19. Freephone and online chat support available.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/> / Phone: 08088 020 021