

# Managing children's worries & fears

Amina Abdisalam  
Queenie Cheng

Educational Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP)



### From us

**We are not social workers & we do not work for social services**

**We are not here to blame or judge your parenting or how you are raising your children, we believe that you are the expert on your children & family life.**

**We would like to help break the stigma that surrounds children's emotional health & provide you with skills, information & tools on children's mental health.**

### From You

**Please respect the privacy/ confidentiality of other group members.**

**e.g. any children discussions should be kept within the group and not discussed outside the group**



# What is anxiety?

Anxiety can have a lot of names: worry, apprehension, dread, fear. Essentially, you are **expecting that something bad is going to happen**.

**Anxiety is a normal emotion** and it is not always bad. It can help to keep us to stay safe and motivates us to be prepared and do our best.



However, too much anxiety too often can interfere with our day to day life. This is why it is important that children can learn and practise ways of managing these feelings.

How do you know when your child is anxious?



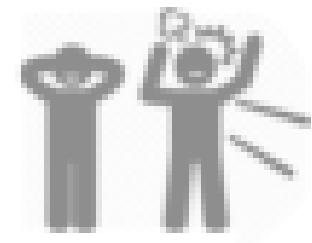
How does it show  
itself in their  
behaviour?



How does it show  
itself physically in  
their bodies?

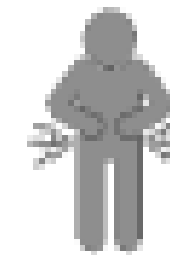
# What could anxiety look like in my child?

## Behaviour



- Easily scared/upset
- Always worrying
- Refusing to talk
- Avoiding eye contact
- Clinging to others
- Seeking reassurance
- Looking out for danger
- Difficulties sleeping
- Refusing to go to school
- Poor appetite
- Excessive crying

## Body



- Tummy aches/ butterflies
- Feeling unwell
- Headaches
- Hot face
- Clammy/sweaty hands
- Heart racing
- Shaky
- Breathing fast
- Wide eyes

# What might be maintaining my child's anxiety?



# How can you help at home?

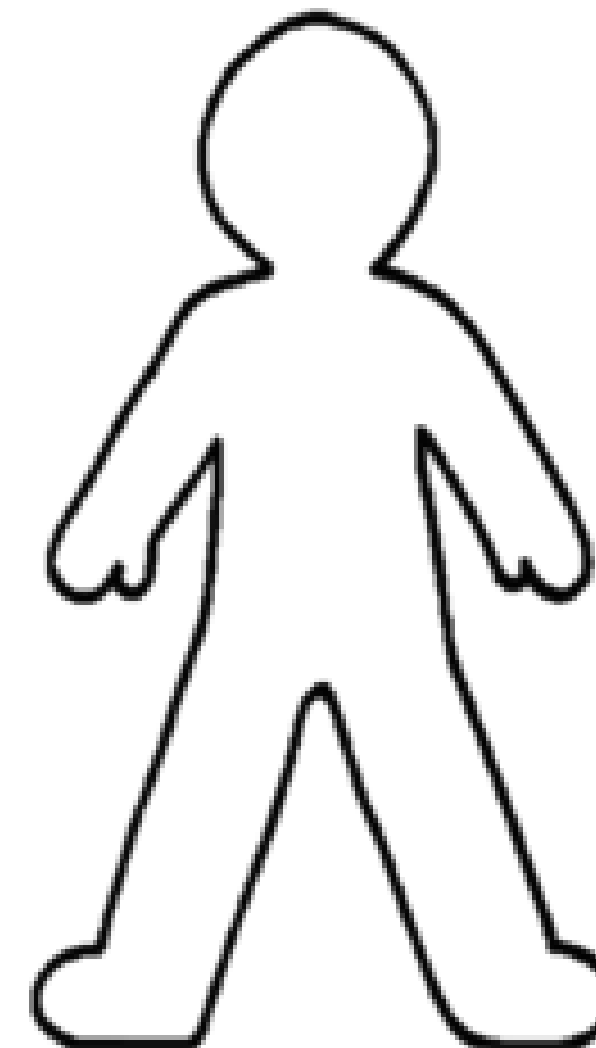
- **Don't be afraid** to approach the child and ask if they are OK or if something is bothering them
- **Active listening** is the **best support** you could offer
- **Wonder aloud** about what might be happening for the child
- **Name feelings** around events if they approach you to talk.
- Look beyond behaviour, **be curious** about what is happening for them.
- **Model emotion regulation**





## Education of the fight and flight response can be helpful!

- To normalise anxious feelings:  
Everybody gets these to some  
degree
- Understand physical feelings so not  
frightened by them
- Learning to recognising feelings  
can help you deal with them in a  
helpful way and reduce avoidance





# Talking Tips

These tips can help open conversations to a point where the young person feels able to speak openly, without judgement:

- **Be curious:**

“I wonder if you’re feeling \_\_\_\_\_?”

“I wonder if you’re worried about \_\_\_\_\_?”

“I imagine that would feel \_\_\_\_\_”

- **Empathising/Validating**

“It sounds like that (situation) has been frustrating / upsetting / disheartening for you”

“I can tell that this is important to you...”

“It makes sense that you would be feeling disappointed / hurt / confused about this (situation)”

- **Normalising, making suggestions**

“lots of children feel / think about \_\_\_\_\_ when they are worried. Is that like what’s going on for you?”

- **Check their understanding**

“does that make sense?” **but also yours** – “have I understood that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_?”

- **Labelling emotions**

- **Make it fun or rewarding**

# Pick your moment & make it rewarding

The 'right' time will differ for everyone

Talking about worries can be hard, scary, or boring - what might make it more appealing for your child?



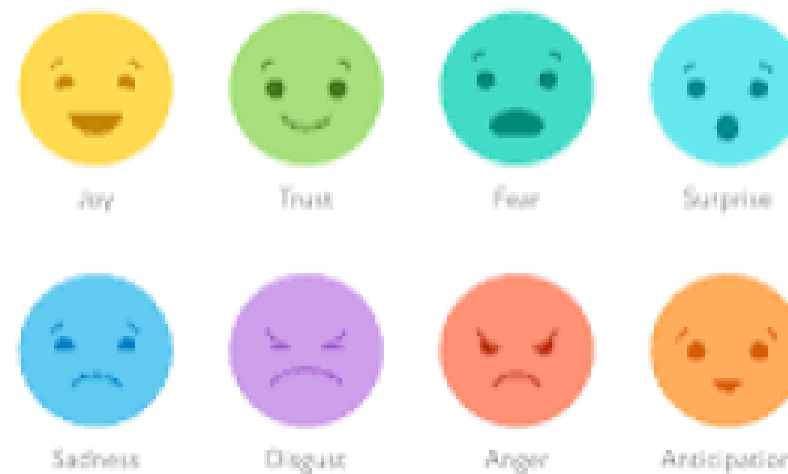
**Remember:** You don't have to fix the emotion, or solve the problem, simply listening and acknowledging is often enough.

# Be creative

## Zones of Regulation

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Bored Lonely Sad Tired Unwell	Calm Content Focused Happy Ready to learn	Anxious Confused Excited Frustrated Worried	Angry Aggressive Terrified I need time and space

### Basic Emotions



# Reassurance

## Reassurance that promotes opportunities for new learning

Go on, have a go,  
you've done it before  
and it went really  
well

I really think you can do this. I  
was so proud when you asked a  
question in class last week

I really think you can do this. I  
was so proud when you asked a  
question in class last week

## Reassurance that reduces opportunities for new learning

You'll be fine and you can  
always phone me if you  
get too worried

Don't worry, it will all be  
okay. I'm sure your  
classmates won't laugh and  
the teacher is bound to be  
really nice

It's okay,  
mummy's here

# Positive and coping self-talk

I am trying  
my best

I am  
capable

I am  
focused

I can have  
another go

I can take  
my time

I cannot  
do it YET!

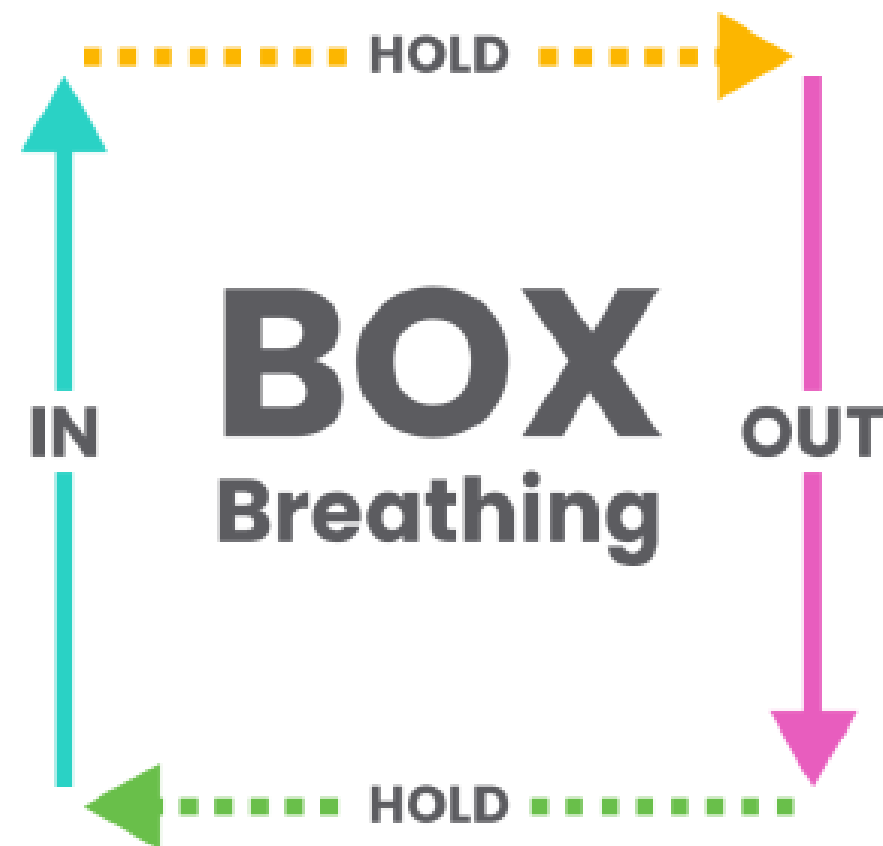
I can relax  
and  
breathe

I put in the  
effort

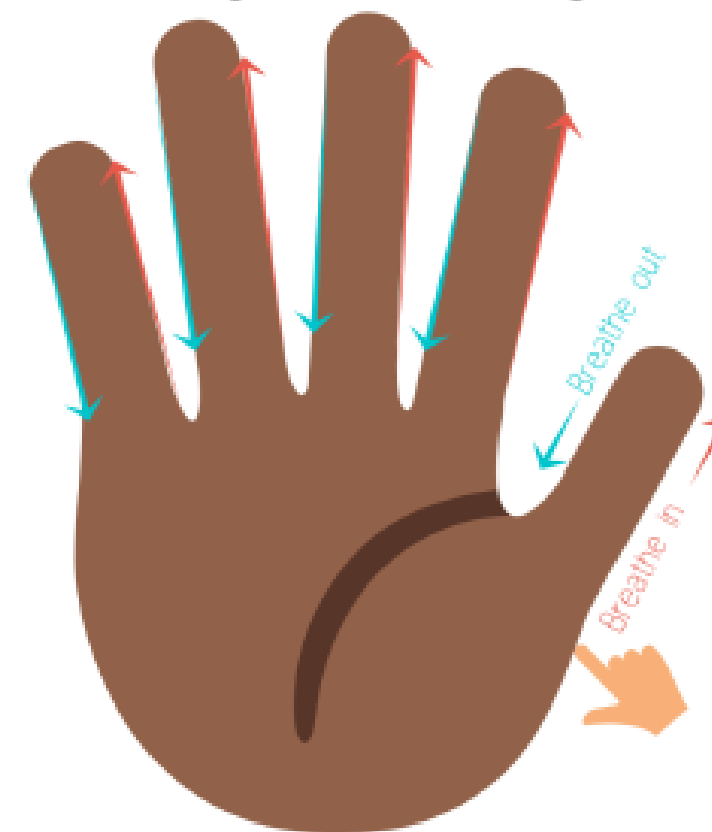
I am  
learning

# Deep breathing

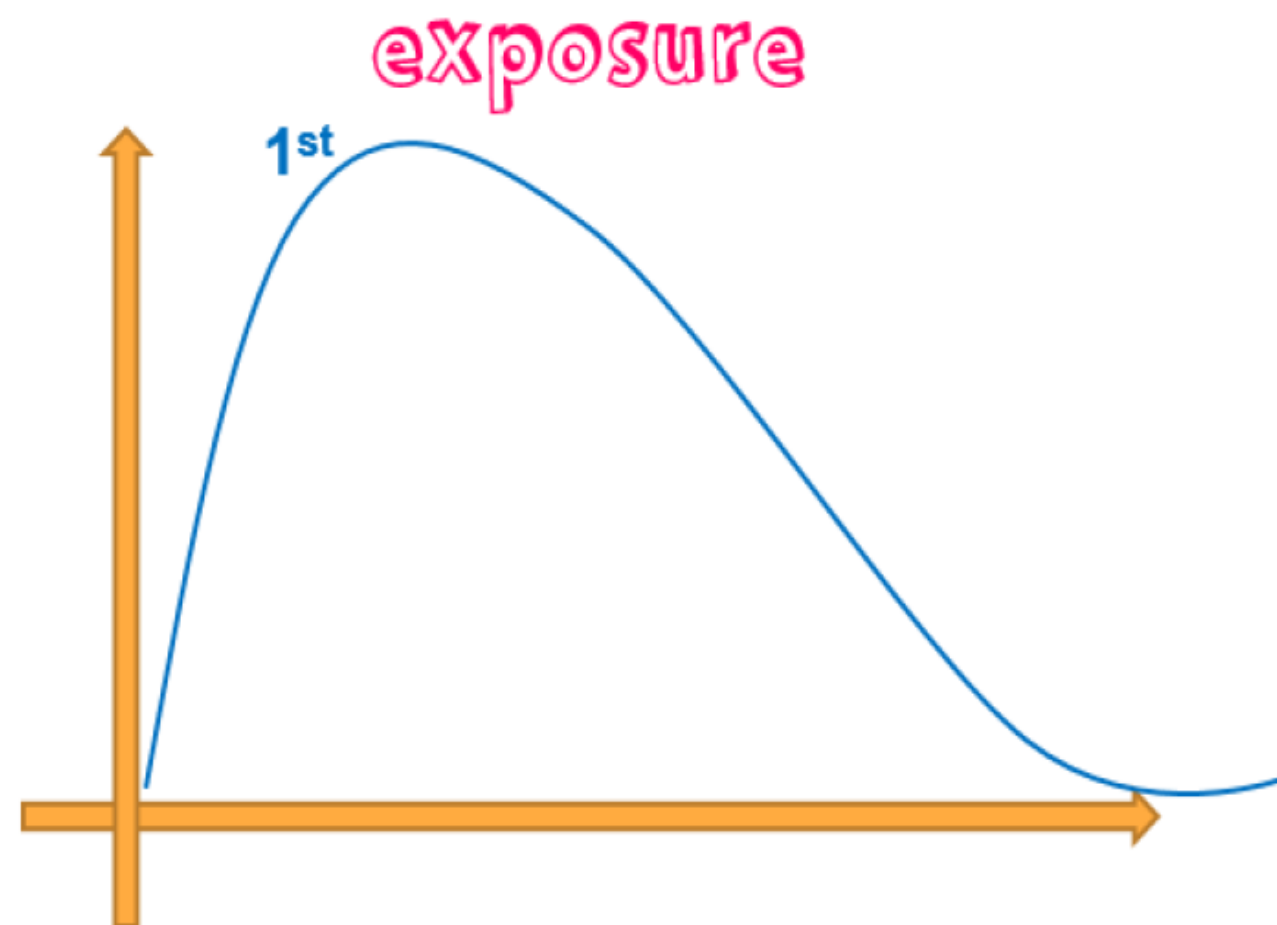
Deep breathing is an excellent way to help re-set our bodies and keep them calm when we are feeling worried. Giving children something concrete to focus on can make this easier.



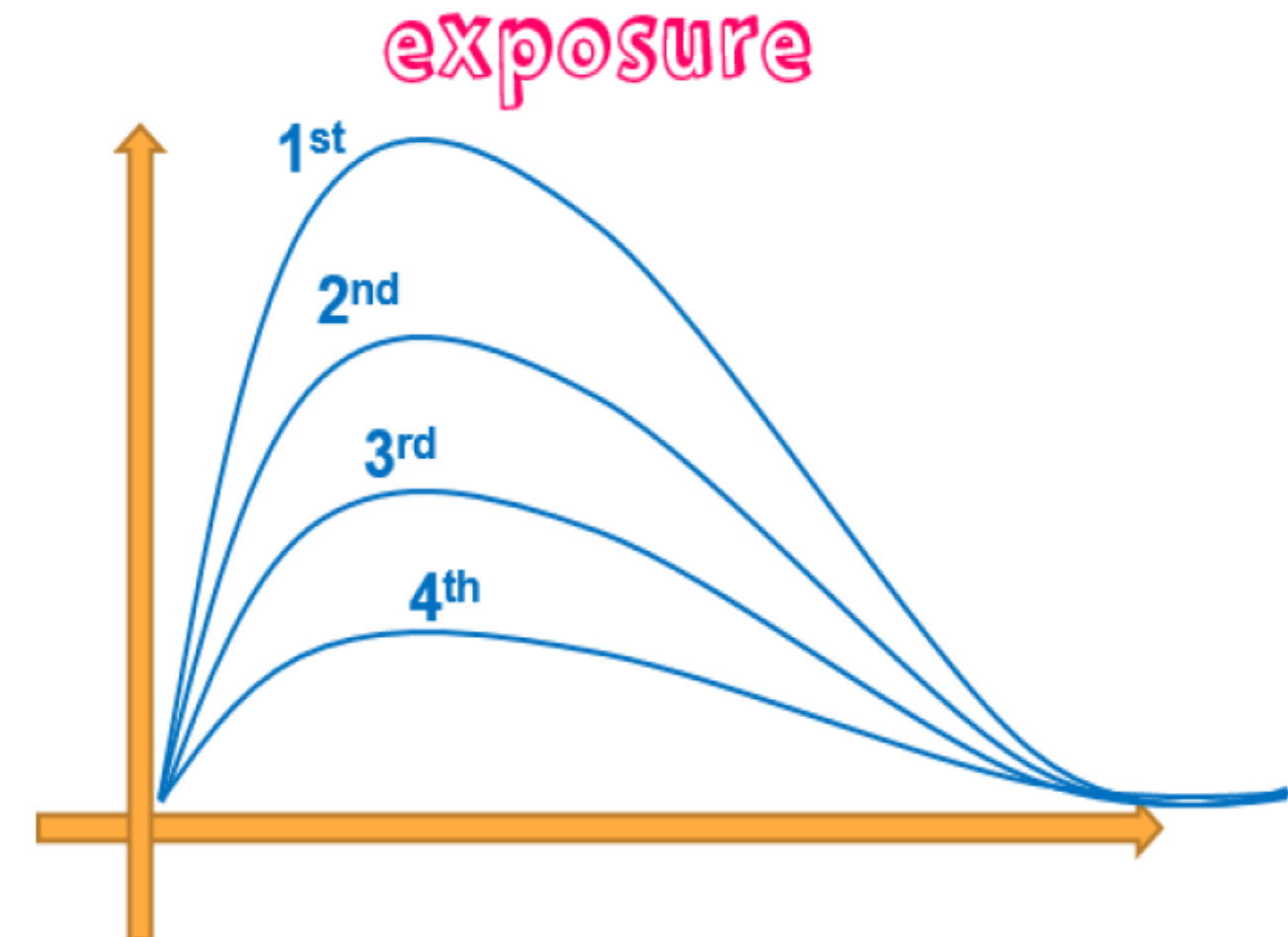
5 Finger Breathing



## The vicious cycle of avoidance



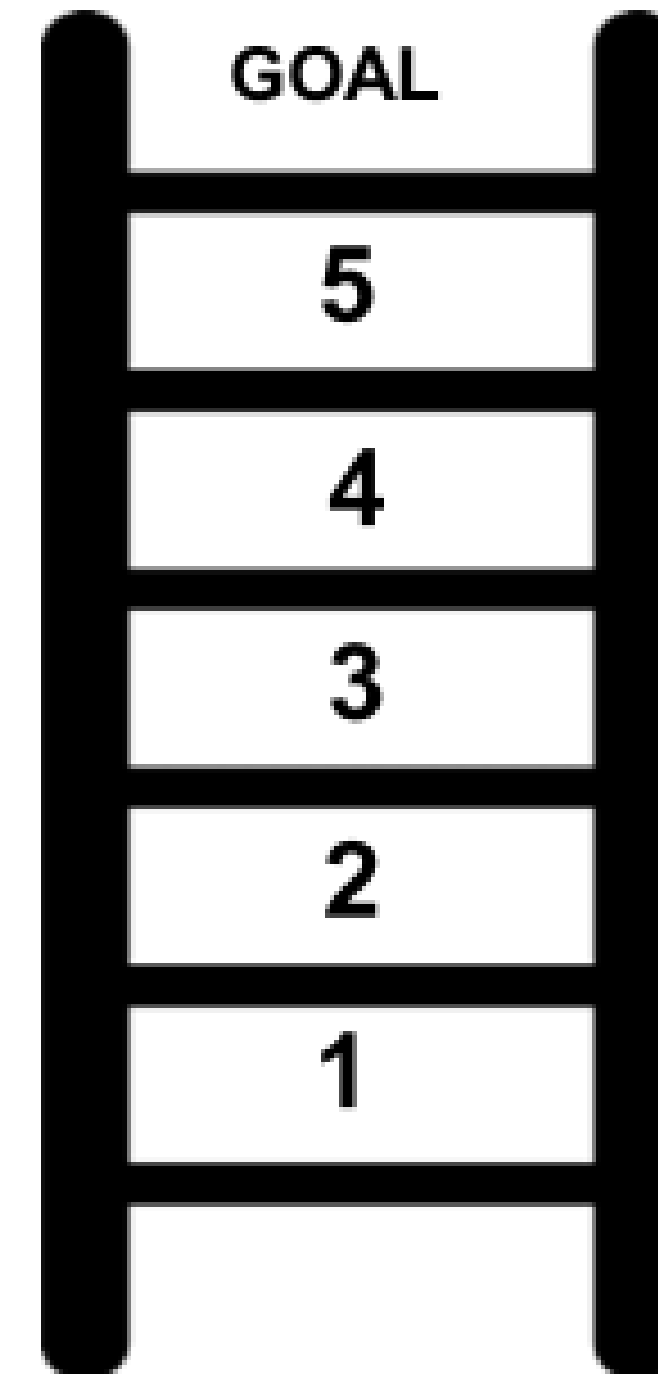
## If we didn't avoid the situation





## Example

1. To sleep in my room with Dad on camp bed
2. To sleep in my room all night with my cousin staying over
3. To sleep in my room alone all night with my parents upstairs while I settle
4. To sleep in my room with my parent checking every 10 minutes until I am asleep for two nights in a row
5. To sleep in my room with my parent checking every half-hour until I am asleep for a week



# *Thank You*



**If you are worried about your child's wellbeing make sure you ask  
for help.**

**Who should I ask?**

- **Speak to your GP**
- **Speak to your child's class teacher or the school mental health  
lead**