

Healthy Minds Lincolnshire

Exploring Anxiety

An information and education pack for young people

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an emotion that we can experience when we feel scared and fearful about something or suspect we are in danger. We all feel anxious at one time or another and this is a normal emotion. In fact, a little bit of anxiety can be a good thing as it can keep us safe from harm. For example, a fear of fire can stop us from putting our hand too close to a flame.



Different things make different people anxious. For example, some people are scared of spiders, others are scared of rollercoasters. We are all different. When we experience anxiety, it can produce some really uncomfortable feelings in our body.

Have a look at the list below and tick which physical feelings apply to you when feeling anxious:

- Feeling sick
- Breathing faster
- Heart beating faster
- Knotted stomach
- Hot and sweaty
- Headache
- Feeling shaky and tense

Something else (please state):



The Fight or Flight Response

Anxiety is the body's way of responding to danger. When we feel like we are in danger, or we feel threatened, our body triggers the fight or flight response.

For example, if you were hiking in the woods and you came across a bear, there are three main things that your body would do:



Flight

Run away from the bear as fast as you can

Fight

Try to make yourself look big and scary, shout and fight the bear

Freeze

Become frozen to the spot with fear

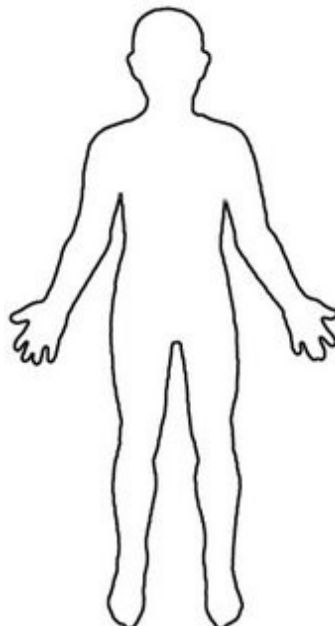
We need this response to help our bodies react really quickly to danger. But the response can also be triggered when something simply feels dangerous, but really isn't. For example, taking a test or exam, giving a presentation, or being in an uncomfortable social situation. In these situations when we are not really in physical danger, it is usually our thoughts about the situation or our interpretation of it that sets off the fight or flight response.

Our Body's Alarm System



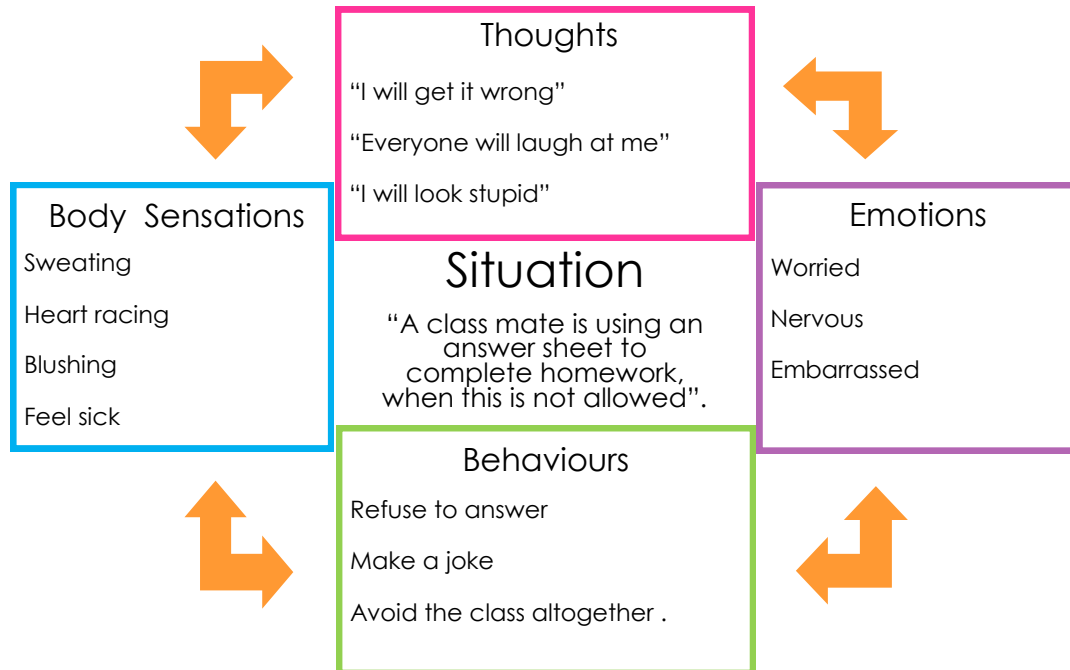
When the brain perceives a threat, it activates the body's "fight or flight" alarm system. We experience uncomfortable feelings because adrenaline is released and makes the body's systems speed up, diverting blood towards the big muscles, preparing us to attack (anger) or escape (anxiety).

Draw or write what physical sensations occur in your body...

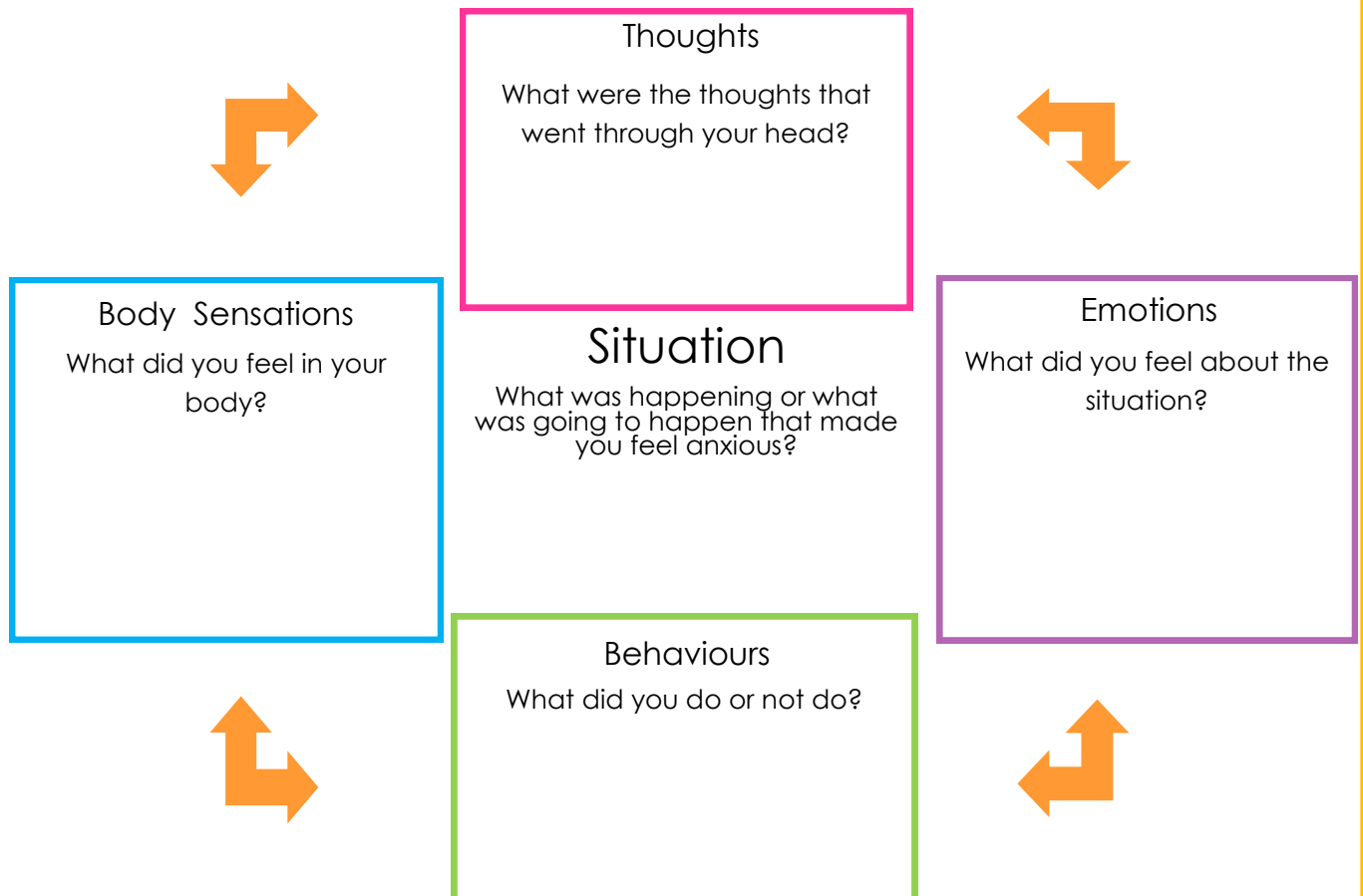


The 5 Areas

We can understand our experience of anxiety more by thinking about what situations trigger this reaction and exploring our thoughts, feelings, behaviour and physical sensations related to these situations. We can explore this by using the 5 area model. Here is an example:



Now think about a situation when you felt anxious or worried and fill in your own 5 area model below. You can do this as many times as you like using different situations that make you feel anxious or worried...



So what do I do about it?

When feeling anxious, we often think and do things that are actually unhelpful and keep the anxiety going. For example, avoiding situations that make us feel anxious might make us feel better straight away but it actually keeps the anxiety going longer term as we never learn to manage the situation.

Now you have explored one or more situations that make you feel anxious, take a closer look at the thoughts and behaviours you have noted.

Do any of these seem unhelpful?



Are any of your thoughts negative? If so, try and challenge these thoughts - can you come up with some different thoughts that are more positive or more realistic for the situation? If so, make a note of them.



Do you think any of your behaviours are keeping the anxiety going? Are any them 'avoiding' behaviours? If so, think about what you could do differently next time. E.g. try deep breathing or 'feel the fear and do it anyway.'



More Strategies

The Healthy Minds practitioner you or your parent/carer have spoken to may have sent some more specific strategies that can help you to manage anxiety and worry. Start using these now. Ask someone to help you if you need to. And remember, it is ok to have set backs and forget to use strategies at times. Be kind to yourself and

Don't forget to check out our website, for lots of other useful information; such as our relaxation videos and our useful apps booklet!

<https://www.lpft.nhs.uk/young-people>



Useful Websites & Numbers

Websites:

- **Get self-help**—www.getselfhelp.co.uk
- **Young Minds**—www.youngminds.org.uk
- **KOOTH** - www.kooth.com
- **LCC Emotional Wellbeing Pathway**—www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellbeing
- **Mood Juice**—<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/>

Numbers:

- **Here4You Advice Line:** 0800 234 63 42
(Healthy Minds & CAMHS)
- **ChildLine:** 0800 1111
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
- **Young Minds Crisis Messenger (Shout);**

SHOUT to 85258

