



With all of us in mind

South West Yorkshire Partnership **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**I don't want to be...**

# **Worried anymore**

**A guided self-help booklet  
for young people.**



“Tense”

“Nervous”

“Stressed out”

“Worrier”

...are all words which we might use to describe a child who has a problem with worrying.

What other names do you know to call someone who worries a lot: \_\_\_\_\_

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*“I’m sure that I’ll fail the tests at school.”*

*“I am really tired but I can’t sleep for worrying.”*

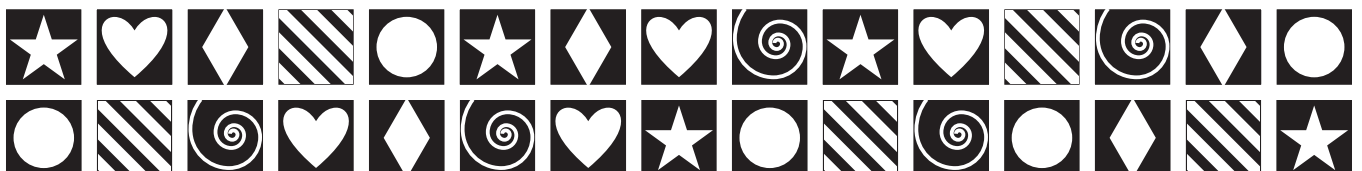
*“No matter what I do, it’s all going to go wrong.”*

*“I’m losing control.”*

...are all anxious thoughts, but isn’t it normal to feel worried? The answer is

**YES!**

It is normal to feel worried especially when we have big tests or have to go into hospital for an operation for example. Being worried can become a problem when it goes on for a long time and stops children from doing what they want to do.



These are some of the signs that you may experience if you are feeling worried.

**How you feel - (tick if you feel like this)**

- Anxious, nervous, worried, frightened
- Feeling something dreadful is going to happen
- Tense, stressed, uptight, on edge, unsettled
- Unreal, strange, woozy, detached, panicky

**How you think**

- Constant worrying
- Can't concentrate
- Thoughts racing
- Mind jumping from one thing to another
- Imagining the worst and dwelling on it

**Common thoughts**

- I'm losing control
- I'm cracking up
- I'm going to faint
- My legs are going to collapse
- I'm going to have a heart attack
- I'm going to make a fool of myself
- I can't cope
- I've got to get out



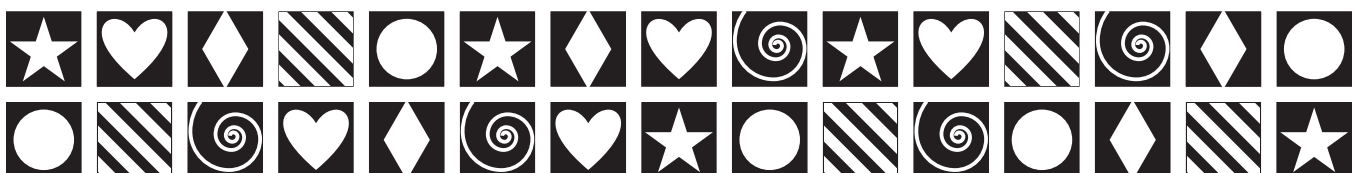
## What happens to your body

- Heart pounds, races, skips a beat
- Chest feels tight or painful
- Tingling or numbness in toes or fingers
- Stomach churning or "butterflies"
- Having to go to the toilet
- Feeling jumpy or restless
- Tense muscles
- Body aching
- Sweating
- Breathing changes
- Dizzy, light headed

## What you do

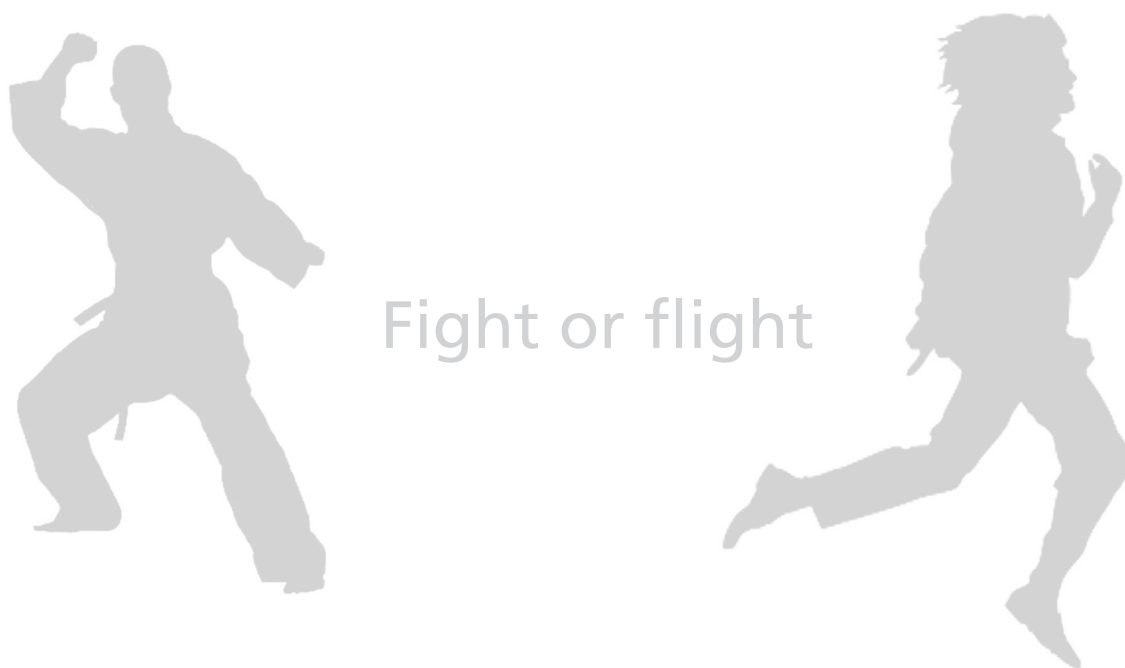
- Pace up and down
- Start jobs and not finish
- Can't sit and relax
- On the go all the time
- Talk quickly or more than usual
- Snappy and irritable behaviour
- Eat more
- Eat less
- Stop / avoid doing things

If you have ticked many of these boxes then you may be experiencing **anxiety**.



## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the feeling we get when our body responds to a frightening or dangerous experience. It has been called the 'flight or fight' response. Which is your body getting ready to either fight the danger or run away from it as fast as you can. Anxiety makes you ready for action!



To understand what is happening in your body imagine that you are about to be attacked by a huge monster. As soon as you see it your **muscles tense** ready for action. Your **heart beats faster** to carry blood to your muscles and brain where it is most needed. You **breathe faster** to take in more air. You start to **sweat** as this stops you from getting too hot. Your **mouth becomes dry** and you start to have **butterflies in your belly**.



## What is anxiety?

The flight or fight response helped to keep us safe, especially when there were loads of big animals around who would have eaten us for breakfast if we didn't run away or put up a fight. Thankfully, we are not in life or death situations nowadays.

List some situations which have made you anxious or worried recently:



How many of these situations would it have been helpful to run away or fight?

In fact the symptoms of anxiety are often **unhelpful** in most situations and if we don't understand why they are there they can make us feel a lot worse!

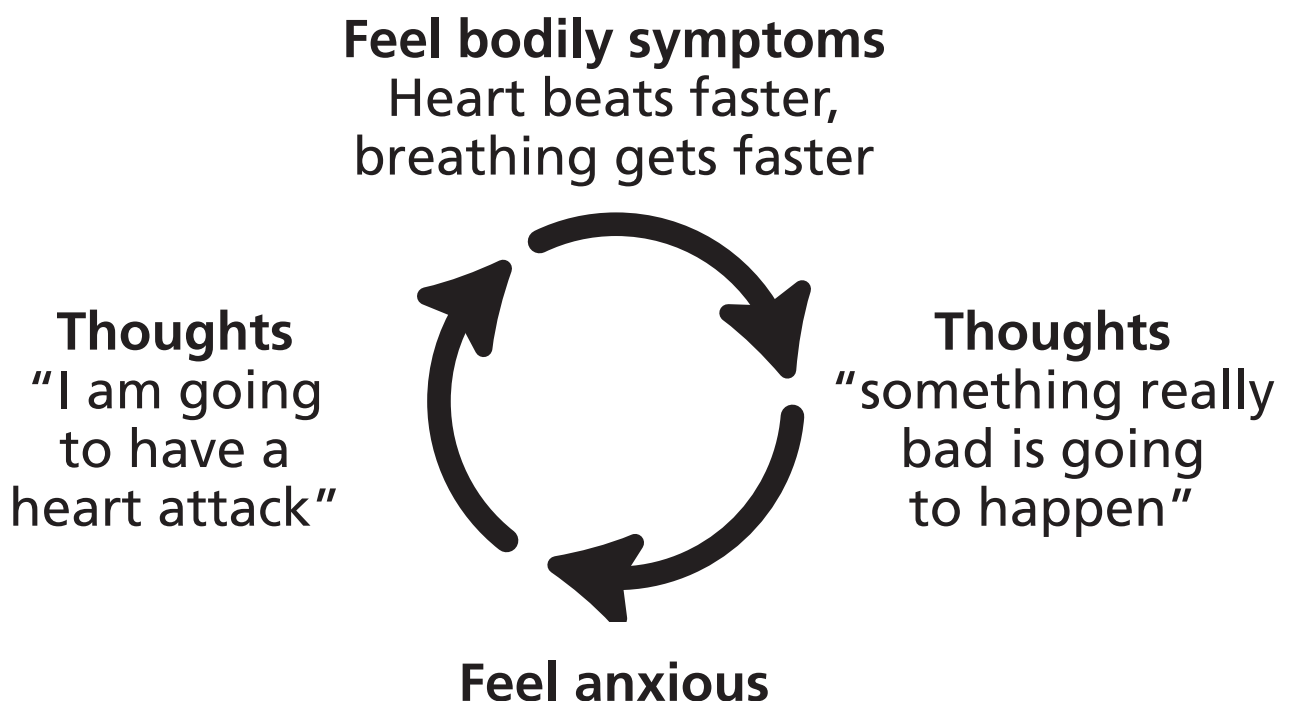


## What causes anxiety and why won't it go away?

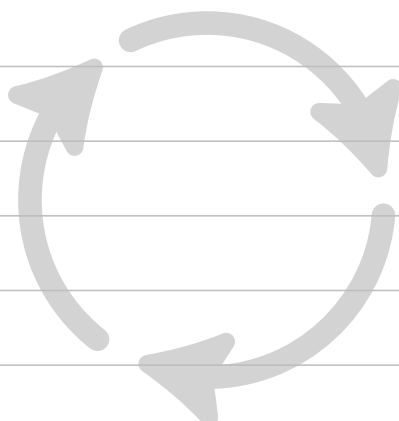
There are many reasons why someone becomes anxious. Sometimes if we have a parent who is a worrier we will become worriers too. This is because we can actually **learn to worry!**

How does this happen? Worrying about things can easily become a habit or automatic, especially if lots of stressful and bad things happen to us. However, the number one cause of anxiety is the **vicious circle**.

As you know the bodily symptoms of anxiety can be frightening and horrible, and you may feel that **something really bad** is about to happen. This thought then makes even more symptoms and so a vicious circle develops.



**Has a similar circle happened to you?**  
Try and draw it out.



The vicious circle can eventually lead to us becoming **afraid of worrying** because the feelings in our body are so horrible. When we worry about worrying we feel more anxious and this make us feel worse. One way people who worry about worrying deal with this is to stop doing the things which make them worried. This is called **avoidance**. Are there any things which you have stopped doing because you are afraid that you will get worried if you do?

*Going on the bus, busy shops*



## In summary

Anxiety is a completely normal response to things that make us worried or scared. Some of us worry more than others.

The feelings in your body when you are anxious are not dangerous.

Anxiety is only a problem when:

1. It goes on too long.
2. Happens all the time.
3. Stops us doing what we want to do.

Anxiety and worries can become part of a vicious circle which keeps anxiety and worries going!

## How can I deal with my anxiety better?

Anxiety is not an illness so can't be cured. If we can break the vicious circle you can learn to deal with it a lot better. There are four important steps which will **break the vicious circle**:

1. Understand your anxiety better.
2. Reduce the symptoms in your body.
3. Alter the thoughts related to your anxiety.
4. Alter the behaviours related to your anxiety.



## Understanding your anxiety better

You may already know what situations cause you to become anxious. However, keeping a diary will help you remember details which can easily be forgotten.

Situation	How anxious am I? 1 = Only a little 8 = very anxious	Thoughts in my mind	What is happening in my body
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8		



## Problem solving

If there is a real worry in your life which is causing anxiety, try this problem solving tool.

Write down your problem

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Write down as many solutions as you can to solve it

Solution A \_\_\_\_\_

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Solution B \_\_\_\_\_

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Solution C \_\_\_\_\_

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Pick the best solution then break it down into simple steps. What is the first thing you need to do?

Step 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4 \_\_\_\_\_



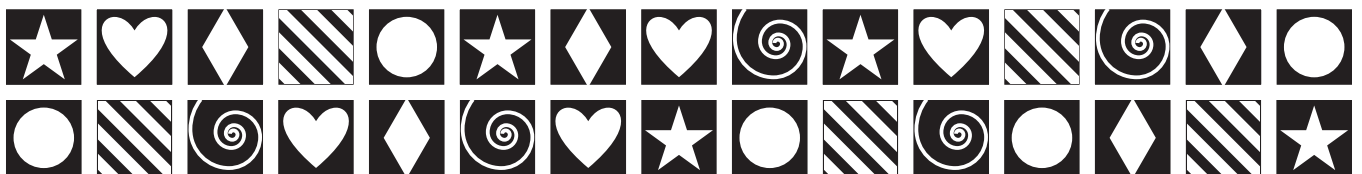
## Learn to relax

You will remember that worrying often comes with some unpleasant physical sensations. When we worry, changes in our breathing and the tension of our muscles bring on these bodily sensations and make us feel even worse. These changes are warning signs that you are becoming anxious. Next we will learn what to do when you notice these signs.

## Breathing

By learning how to maintain a calm and relaxed rate of breathing, it is possible to stop many of the unpleasant physical symptoms we experience when feeling nervous and worried.

First we need to make sure that you are a **belly breather!** Put one hand on your belly and one on your chest, when you breathe in which hand moves the most? If it is the hand on your belly that's great, if it is the hand on your chest you need to change how you breathe. To get use to belly breathing push out your belly before you breath in, this will help you to get into the habit of belly breathing. It is tricky at first but you will get it with **practise.**



## Controlled breathing

When you're anxious your breathing gets faster. You need to learn to slow it down. Getting your breathing into a natural rhythm will soon get you breathing and feeling normal again.

Follow these three steps:

**1. Breath in through your nose for four.**

*1,2,3,4*

**2. Hold for two.**

*1,2*

**3. Out through your mouth for 6.**

*1,2,3,4,5,6*

To help you to practise this breathing, draw a black spot on your hand.



Every time you notice the spot that you have drawn practise the rhythm breathing once!



## Muscle relaxation

Once you have become a rhythm breather if you still feel anxious try muscle relaxation. Muscle relaxation helps us to understand the difference between muscles that are tense and relaxed. First start with your hands:

**Hands** - make a fist, hold it for two then relax.

**Arms** - bend your elbow and tense your arms. Feel the tension especially in your upper arm. Hold for two then relax.

**Neck** – press your head back then roll it from side to side slowly.

**Face** - lower your eyebrows in a frown, hold for two then relax.

**Chest** – take a deep breath, hold it in for two, notice the tension then relax.

**Buttocks** – squeeze your buttocks together hold for two and relax.

**Legs** - straighten your legs and bend your feet towards your face. Finish by wiggling your toes.

It is normally a good idea to get someone else to read this out to you. You can't read it and relax at the same time. You will need to **practise** this every day. Once you have learnt how to do it you can use your relaxation skills any time, any place!

My relaxation place is: \_\_\_\_\_

My relaxation time is: \_\_\_\_\_



## Alter the thoughts related to your anxiety

Thoughts play a big part in the vicious circle. If you can identify the thoughts which make you anxious you can learn to fight back and break the vicious circle.

It isn't always easy to know what it is that you are thinking that is making your anxiety worse. The sort of thoughts that make you anxious can come and go in a flash. They may come into your mind automatically and may be so familiar that they just feel like part of you.

If you keep a diary you can start to identify the thoughts which cause you the most anxiety. Think about the last time you felt very anxious. Use the worry diary on the next page to identify and challenge your thoughts. Remember all thoughts can count. No thought is too small or too silly. Some thoughts are like unpleasant pictures in your mind.



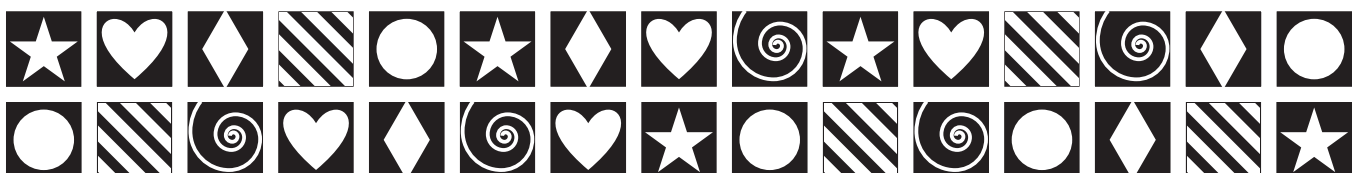
## Worry diary

Using a worry diary stops thoughts from going round and round. Look at this example of how to fill it in then have a go on the next page.

About your worries	
What am I worried about?	<i>Not doing my school work</i>
List my worrisome thoughts	<i>I won't have enough time to do it. It will be rubbish. Everyone will laugh at me. What will my teacher say.</i>
What am I predicting?	<i>I will get into trouble and everyone will think I am stupid.</i>
How much do I believe it will happen? (0 – 100%)	<i>80%</i>
What emotions am I feeling? (Rate the intensity 0 – 100%)	<i>Anxious 80% Sad 40%</i>

Challenging your worries	
What is the evidence for my prediction?	<i>I can't concentrate in class when I am worried, my teacher told off someone yesterday for not finishing their work.</i>
What is the evidence against my prediction?	<i>I have always finished my work on time. I get rewards for doing good work all the time. My teacher has never told me off before.</i>
How likely is it that what I am predicting will actually happen (0-100%)?	<i>15%</i>
What is the worst that could happen?	<i>I could get a detention.</i>
What is the best that could happen?	<i>I could finish on time and get a reward from my teacher.</i>
If the worst did happen, what would I be able to do to cope?	<i>I could ask my teacher for help.</i>
How else could I view the situation?	<i>Lots of people don't finish their work, as long as you try your best that's what really matters.</i>

Balanced thinking	
A more helpful thought to replace my worry is:	<i>Worry about this is unhelpful, I have done well in the past. My work is normally better than other people and I work hard.</i>
How much do I rate my prediction now? (0-100%)	<i>35 %</i>
How intense are my emotions now? (0-100%)	<i>Anxious 40%, Sad 10 %</i>



## About your worries

What am I worried about?

List my worrisome thoughts

What am I predicting?

How much do I believe it will happen? (0 – 100%)

What emotions am I feeling? (Rate the intensity 0 – 100%)

## Challenging your worries

What is the evidence for my prediction?

What is the evidence against my prediction?

How likely is it that what I am predicting will actually happen (0-100%)?

What is the worst that could happen?

What is the best that could happen?

If the worst did happen, what would I be able to do to cope?

How else could I view the situation?

## Balanced thinking

A more helpful thought to replace my worry is:

How much do I rate my prediction now? (0-100%)

How intense are my emotions now? (0-100%)



## Changing the behaviours related to your anxiety

As you know when we are anxious we stop doing things because the symptoms of anxiety are so awful. Write down all the activities that your anxiety has stopped you from doing. Once you have made a list choose which ones you could do easily and which ones would be more difficult. Start on the easiest and then tick off any activities which you do.

Activities I avoid doing	Difficulty 1- 10 (10 most difficult)	✓

Symptoms of anxiety don't last for ever. They go up and come down. You should expect that anxiety will take about 30 minutes to go away when you try an activity which you have avoided. It is important to remember that the more you avoid something the more difficult it will seem to overcome. Facing your fears will break the vicious circle of anxiety.



**If your difficulties come back... it's not a problem!**

The first thing to do is:

- Tell someone!
- Next, look through this booklet and read all the hard work which you have already done.
- Finally contact your CAMHS primary practitioner

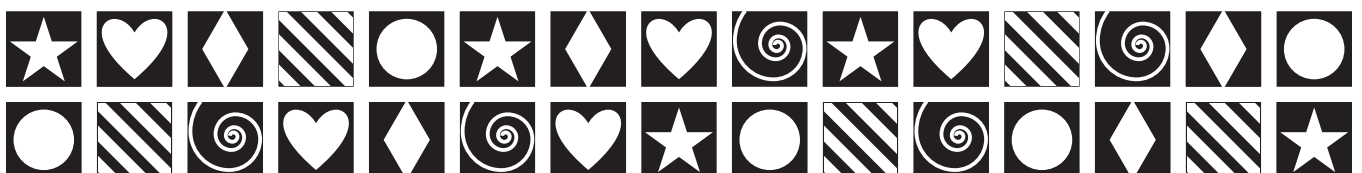
**Your CAMHS primary practitioner is:**

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You can contact them by speaking to a member of school staff or you can contact a member of CAMHS team directly by calling:

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## The primary intervention team



# References

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