



Helping children manage and overcome anxiety

John Sharry
www.solutiontalk.ie

Why have a course on anxiety?

Anxiety is the most common mental health problem in children and adults

...yet people with anxiety problems often receive little attention and support

...even though anxiety is highly treatable, and can improve with thoughtful responses.

Parenting - An important note

THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO BRING UP CHILDREN

What matters is finding a way that works for you, your children and your family.

BE CAREFUL ABOUT PARENTING EXPERTS

Trust your own intuition and test ideas in your own experience.

Only so much can be covered in a course...

Everyone here will be dealing with different issues

There is no one right way to bring up children or to solve childhood problems

HOWEVER...in the course I will present some powerful ideas for change

Invitation is to think through how these ideas might apply to your situation and try them out each week

Do get further support if you need it

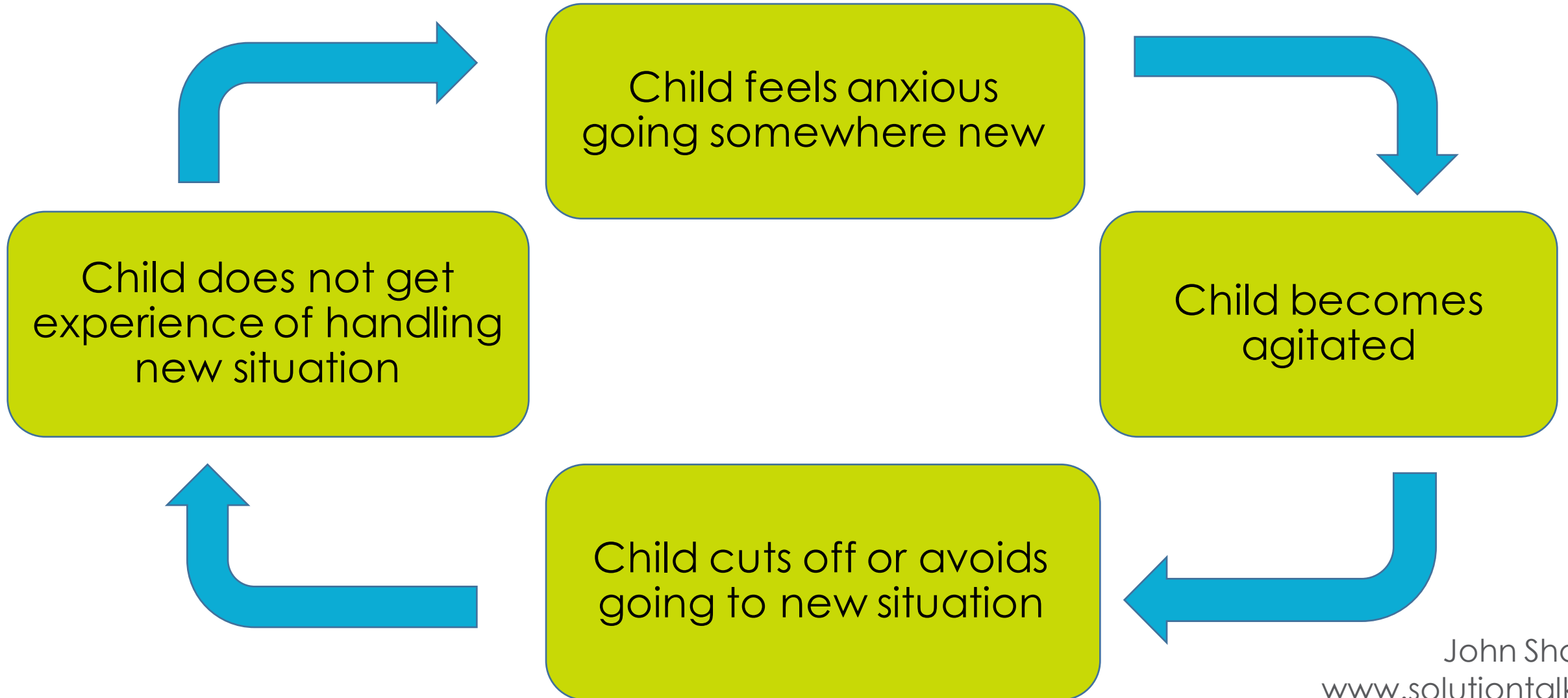
Specific Types of Anxiety Problems

- general anxiety/worry
- separation anxiety
- nightmares
- phobias
- social anxiety or shyness
- panic
- response to stress or trauma
- obsessive compulsive disorder

Causes of Anxiety Problems

- personality
- hereditary
- precipitating event
e.g. bullying, bitten by dog
- can be related to other developmental issues
e.g. Aspergers Syndrome
- pattern or habitual way of coping

Anxious Pattern of Coping



Managing Anxiety Problems in Children

What parents can do?

Managing Anxiety Problems in Children and Teenagers

6 Principles

1. Appreciate your children's strengths
2. Pause in the face of anxiety/ Make a plan
3. Managing your own and your children's Feelings of anxiety
4. Problem Solve 1 – Addressing the situation that makes the child anxious
5. Problem Solve 2 – Investigating the anxiety itself
6. Tackling problems step by step

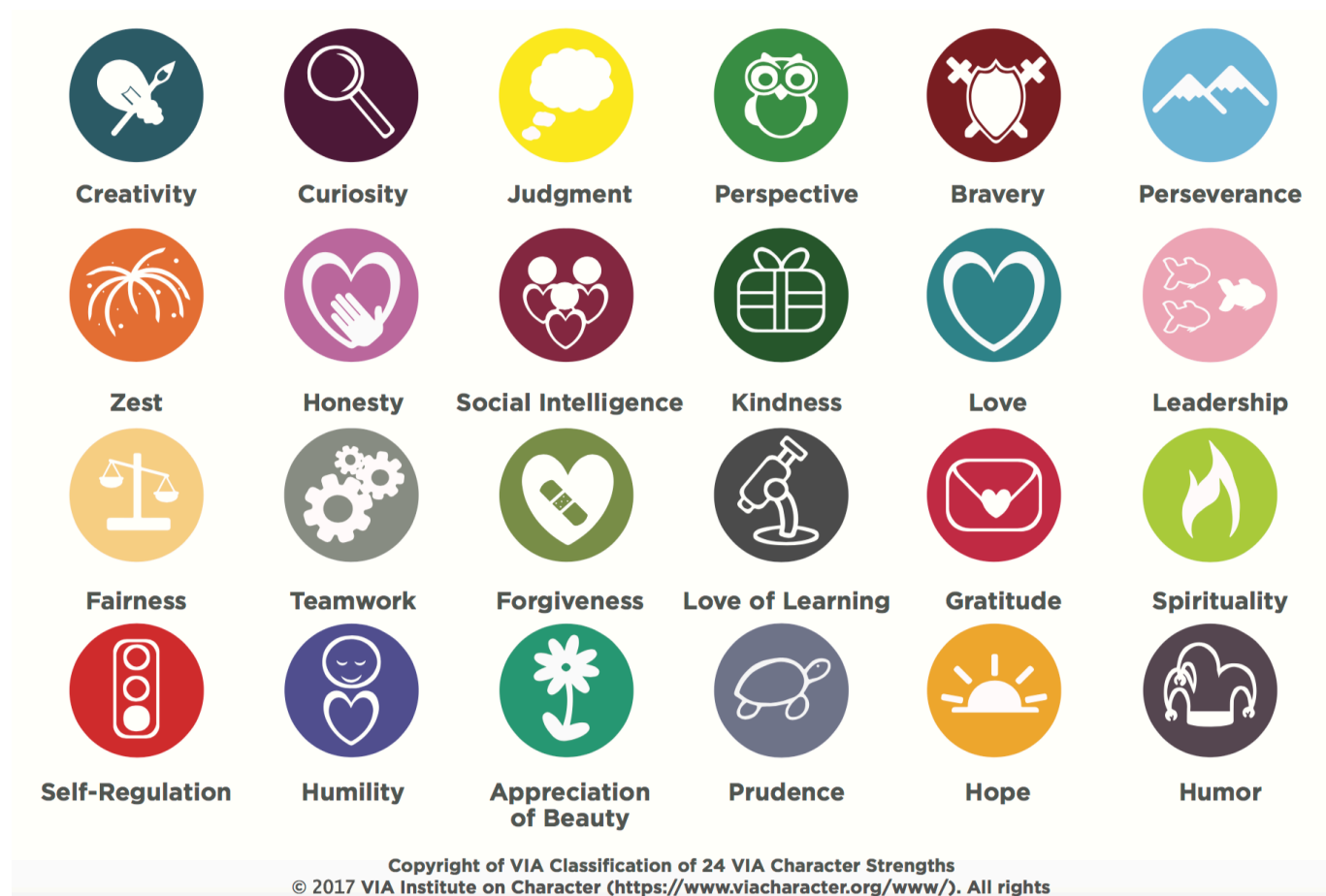
GOALS FOR COURSE

Five Principles to Manage Anxiety in Children

- 1 Pause in the face of anxiety
- 2 Manage your own and your children's feelings of anxiety
- 3 Problem Solve 1 – Address underlying issues
- 4 Problem Solve 2 – Investigate the anxiety itself
- 5 Build your children's self-esteem

Principle 1

'Appreciate your Child's Strengths'

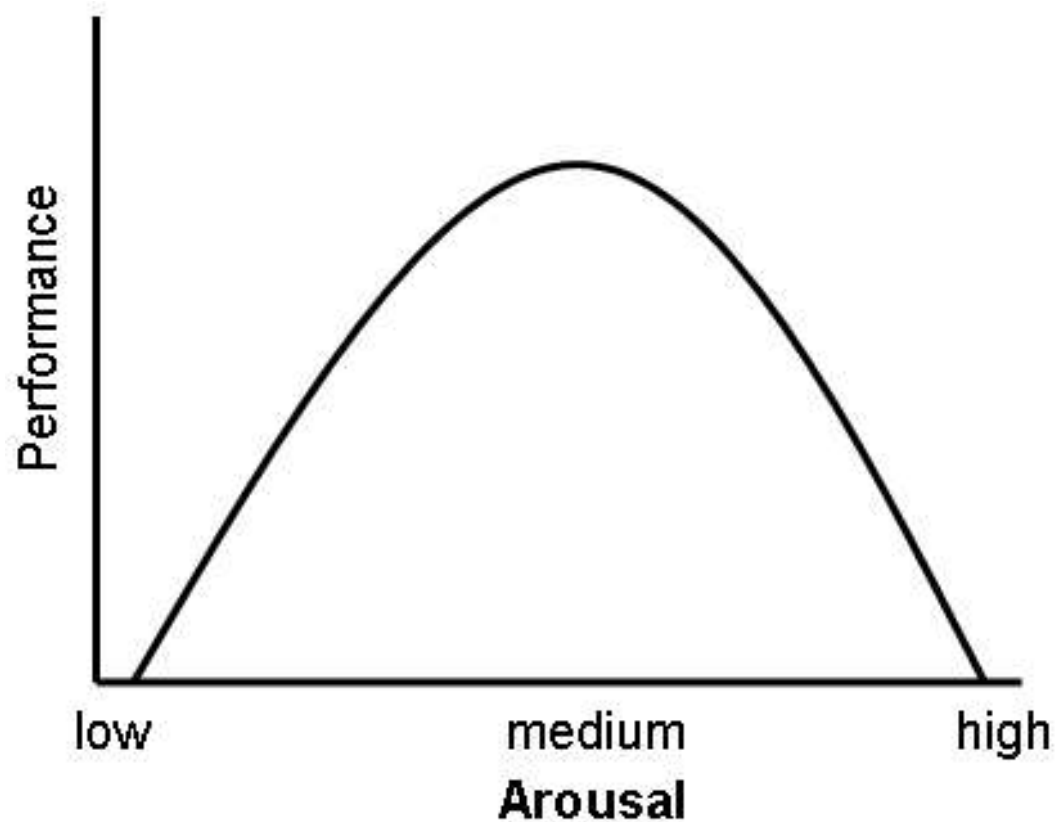


Strengths of Anxious Children (and their parents!)

- sensitive to feelings
- often thoughtful/ reflective
- great imaginations
- can be good planners/ organisers

Purpose of Anxiety

A little bit of Anxiety is a good thing...



Principle 2

‘Pause in the Face of Anxiety’

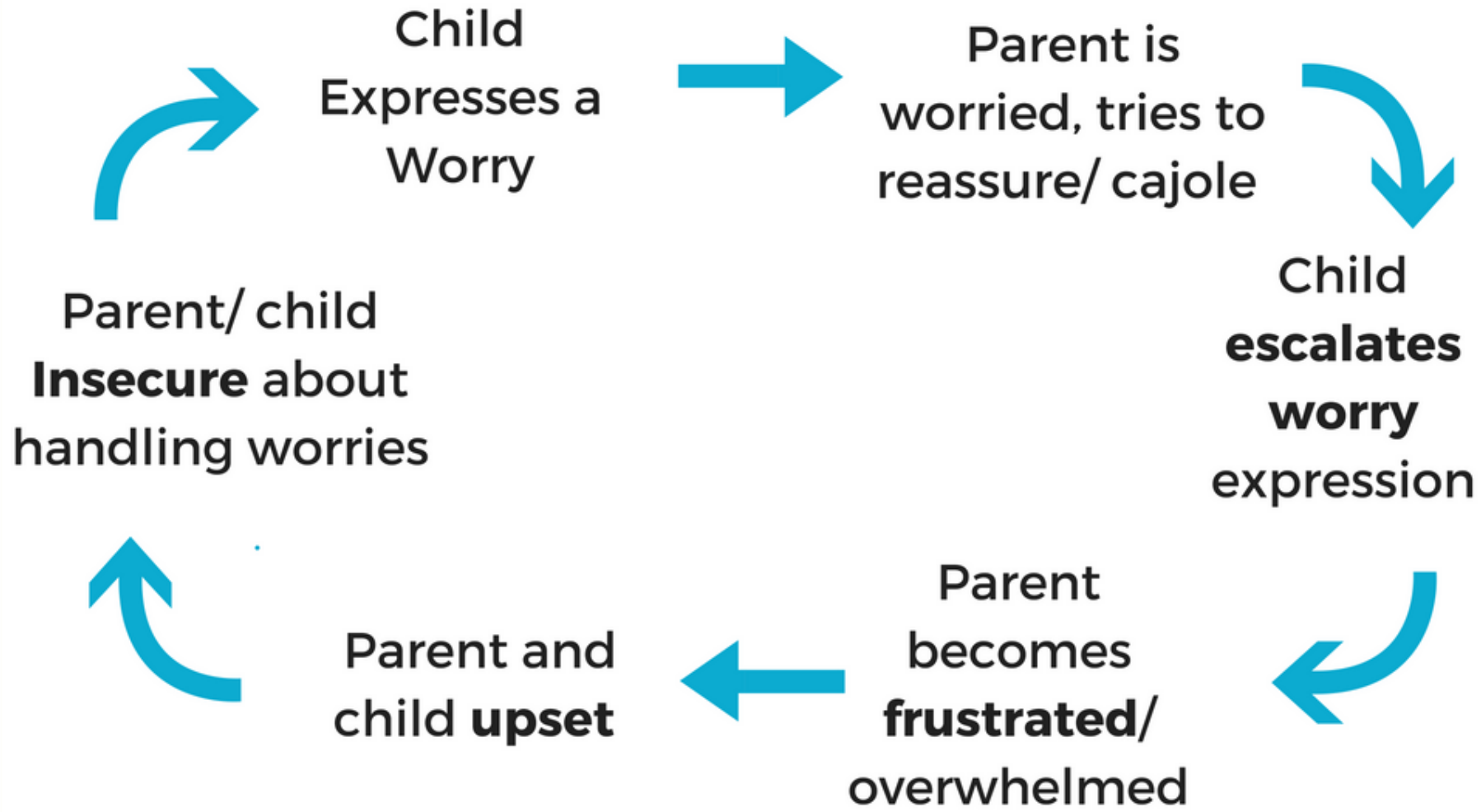


Anxiety – Parent responses

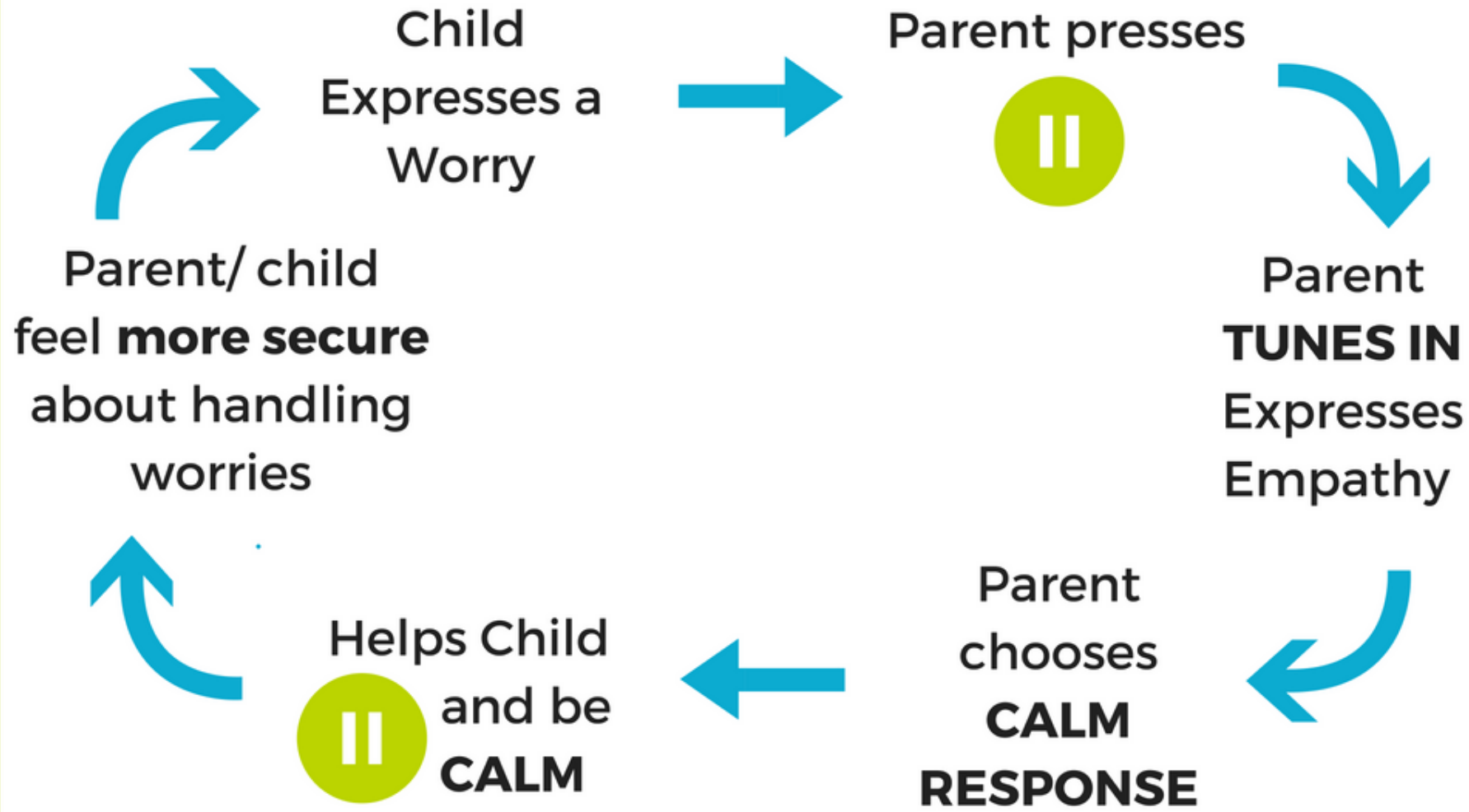
2 problematic responses:

- **Over-engaging** with anxiety
 - results in parent getting anxious
- **Dismissing** anxiety
 - results in parent getting angry or frustrated

Parent-Child Anxiety Cycle



Pause in the Face of Anxiety





Pausing in the Face of Anxiety

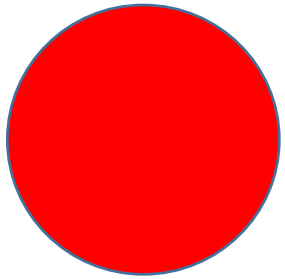
1. **PAUSE** - Manage your own anxiety/frustration as a parent
2. **TUNE IN** - Empathise and understand child's anxiety
3. **CHOOSE** your response - A calm, upbeat and sympathetic response works best. How will you respond step by step?
4. **PREVENT** – Make a plan to prevent problem happening again



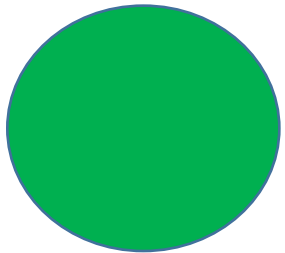
Pause and Plan

1. **PAUSE** – Take a moment to reflect about your own child and their anxiety
2. **TUNE IN** – What is going on for your child?
3. **RESPOND**– what is best way to respond step by step when your child is anxious?
4. **PREVENT** – How can you prevent prevent problems from happening again?

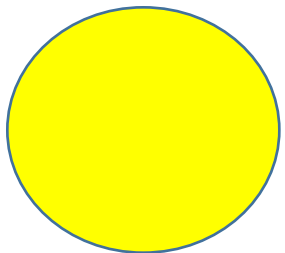
Small Groups of 5



0-5 year olds

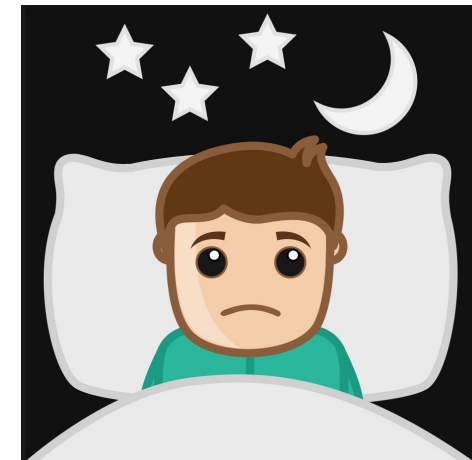


6-11 year olds



12+ year olds

Example: Worried at Bedtime /Not staying in room



Gentle plan of action

- **Remaining calm** and empathic
- **Encourage coping** ‘Back to bed now, use your relaxation, “ I’ll come back and check on you in two minutes, but only if you are calm”
- **Not give into worry-** I’ll only stay in room if you are calm and try to sleep’ ‘I’ll only stay with you if you talk about something else’
- **Gradual withdrawal,** 1) lie in bed, 2) sit in chair, 3) be outside 4) check in in 5mins, 10 mins, 20 mins...
- **Praise** - “well done for relaxing, lets tuck you in”

Example: Worried at Bedtime /Not staying in room



Prevention plan

- 1) Relaxing bedtime routine
- 2) Having a 'worry time' / problem solving time
- 3) Doing relaxation with child
- 4) Having special rituals - Using a worry box/
worry dolls, having a magic protective cloak,
Gentle reminder - when you touch your
heart..
- 5) Using a reward chart

Example: Anxious/ refusing to go to school

Prevention plan

- 1) **Tune In** – try to understand what is causing your child's anxiety about school
- 2) **Problem solve** with child about how to address causes of worry.
- 3) **Brainstorm with child** about ways to make going to school easier (how to arrive, what to do when anxious..)
- 4) **Work with school** to create a plan
- 5) Teach child **relaxation skills** and **strategies** for dealing with anxiety in school or on way to school.
- 6) **Set up Rewards and Consequences**

Example: Anxious/ refusing to go to school

Gentle step by step plan of action

- **Remaining calm** and empathic – ‘ I know you feel a little nervous’
- **Reassurance/ coaching** ‘Lets calm now. It will all be fine’
- Praise - ‘you are very brave’
- **Focus on agreed strategies** ‘lets count your breaths... just focus on how happy you will feel
- **Take a break** - if child too upset, take a break and try again in a minute
- **Implement agreed rewards and consequences**

Principle 3

‘Managing your own and your children’s feelings of anxiety’



Managing your own and your children's feelings of anxiety

- Body awareness
- Physical exercise
- Body Relaxation (e.g. yoga, progressive muscular relaxation)
- Breathing and Relaxation
- Mindfulness and Meditation



Encouraging Body Awareness

The Mind-Body Connection Worksheet

Body Part	Stressed/Anxious	Frightened	Angry
Top of head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back of head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back of neck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Left Shoulder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Right shoulder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stomach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Center of back	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lower back	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reset Print

Meditation and Mindfulness



Managing Anxiety Problems in Children and Teenagers Evening 1

1. **Appreciate your children's strengths**
2. **Pause in the face of anxiety/ Make a plan**
3. **Managing your own and your children's Feelings of anxiety**
4. Problem Solve 1 – Addressing the situation that makes the child anxious
5. Problem Solve 2 – Investigating the anxiety itself
6. Tackling problems step by step