



# Helping children manage and overcome anxiety

*(Evening 3)*

John Sharry  
[www.solutiontalk.ie](http://www.solutiontalk.ie)

# Managing Anxiety Problems in Children and Teenagers

## *Evening 2*

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

[www.solutiontalk.ie/anxiety-three-night-course](http://www.solutiontalk.ie/anxiety-three-night-course)

# Managing Anxiety Problems in Children and Teenagers

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# Respond to Anxiety with an Action Plan

- 1. PAUSE** – Take a moment to reflect about your child's anxiety and how you are currently responding to it
- 2. TUNE IN** – What is going on for your child ( and you)?
- 3. RESPOND**– what is best way to respond when your child is anxious? – **Create a step by step plan of action**
- 4. PREVENT** – How can you prevent problems from happening again?, How can you address the underlying issues?  
**Create a prevention plan**

# Feedback - Questions

- 1) Does anxiety ever fully go away?
- 2) child needing constant reassurance
- 3) child anxious because they were bullied
- 4) exam anxiety

## Feedback - Questions

2) Child needs constant reassurance, worries homework is not good enough, teacher rings parent when she is upset/ sick in class

# Feedback - Questions

3) Anxiety caused by being bullied

# Feedback - Questions

4) Child suffering from exam anxiety ( and avoiding study) when to understand and when to 'force him to study'



# Principle 4

**‘Problem Solve – Addressing the situation that causes the worry’**



# Problem Solving with Older Child

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1. Pick a **good time and place** to talk
2. **Listen** to your child first
  - What is happening for you?
  - What are you feeling?
3. Help your child **think up solutions**
  - What would you like to happen?
  - What would make things better?
  - What can you do?
4. Agree a **Plan** – What would you like to try?

# 1. Pick a good time and place to talk

2 different types of children:

**Child who talks to you too much** about their worries and anxieties

- Set up 'worry time' / special problem solving time

**Child who wont tell you** what is on their mind

- Work hard at helping child open up and talk

## 2. Listen to your child when they talk

- When they talk repeat what they say
- Wait and use lots of silence
- Don't rush in with advice
- Focus on feelings – 'you must feel sad about that'
- When you think you have listened enough, listen longer
- When you have listened longer, then listen even more!

# 3. Help your child think up solutions

- Ask your child for their ideas on a solution, before you give your own advice.
- Ask your child good questions to generate solutions.
  - What would you like to happen?
  - What would make things better?
  - What can you do?



# Moving from Problem to Solution Thinking



# Focusing on Solutions

## – Asking good questions

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### Focus on what might go well

- *We have talked about the worst thing that can happen – but what is the best thing that can happen?*
- *How can you make sure the best thing can happen?*

### Focus on what has worked before

- *When have things gone well before? What did you do then?*
- *How did you get to school that time?*
- *What did you say to yourself to manage the anxiety?*
- *How were you able to persist?*
- *What does it say about you that you were able to do that then?*

## 4. Agree a plan

- Agree a plan for what your child will do and what you will do to help going forward.
- Make sure to talk again and review.



# Principle 4

## ‘Problem Solve – Investigating the Anxiety itself’



ANXIETY

## Principle 4

### ‘Problem Solve – Investigating the Anxiety itself’

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1. Help your child understand anxiety
2. Externalise worry or anxiety
3. Challenge negative thoughts
4. Build coping thoughts



# Helping Your Child Understand Anxiety

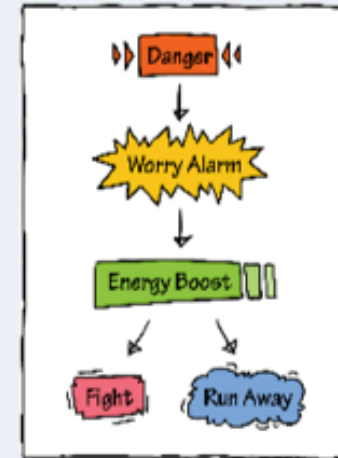
## WHAT IS WORRY?



When our ancestors went out hunting and gathering food, they often ran into danger...



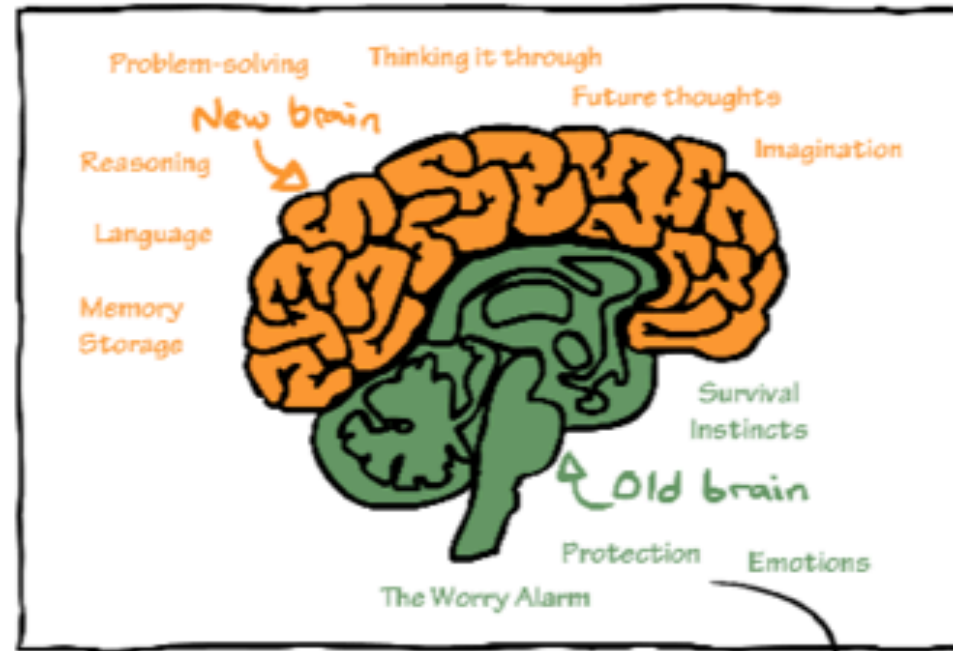
BOOM! Danger triggered an internal worry alarm.



This worry alarm or "stress response" is a defense mechanism wired into our bodies.

# The Biological Basis of Anxiety

## YOUR BRAIN ON WORRY



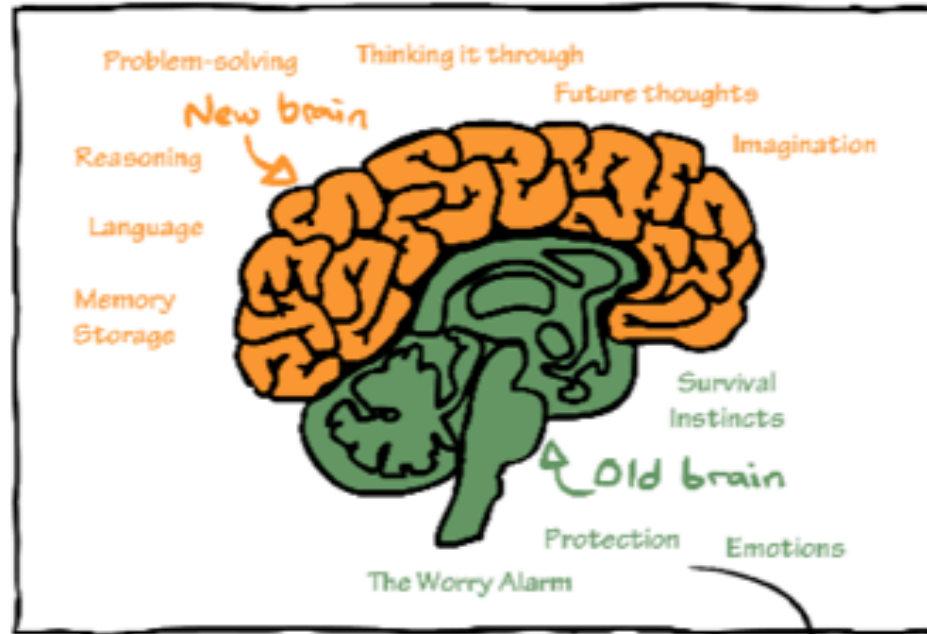
**I'm in charge!**

When the worry alarm is triggered, the older (more emotional) brain takes over. That means the newer (more logical brain) is put on hold. This can make it hard to think rationally.

# The Lizard Brain V The Wizard Brain



## YOUR BRAIN ON WORRY



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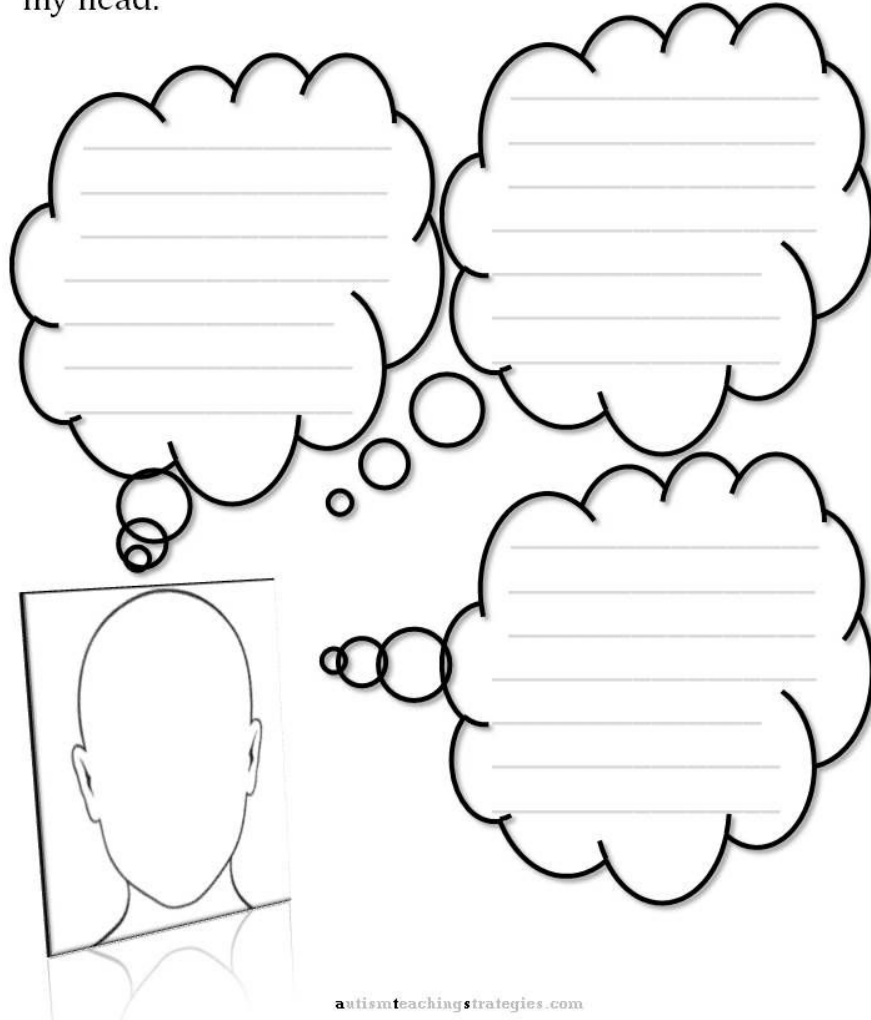
# Externalising Worry/ Talking Back to Worry

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1. Help children externalise the worry and separate it from themselves.
2. Calling it a name can help such as:
  - *'The Worry'* or *'The Tyrant'*
  - or for older kids *'that Anxiety seems to be bothering you again'*
3. Then you can ask questions about it
  - What is *'The Worry'* making you do?
  - What is *The Worry* saying to you?
  - What do you want to say back?

# Identifying Worrying Thoughts

2. When I felt WORRIED, these thoughts raced through my head:



# Challenging Negative Thoughts/ beliefs

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1. Is that belief really true? What is the likelihood of that being true?
2. Just because one person treated you badly in the past, does not mean that other people will. Aren't there lots of good people you there?
3. Why would you want to talk to someone who treated you badly like that?
4. How does thinking this way affect you?
5. Is it the most helpful way to think ?
6. What is the most helpful way to think about things?



# Moving from Problem to Solution Thinking



# What is a more helpful way to think about things?

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## Negative Thought

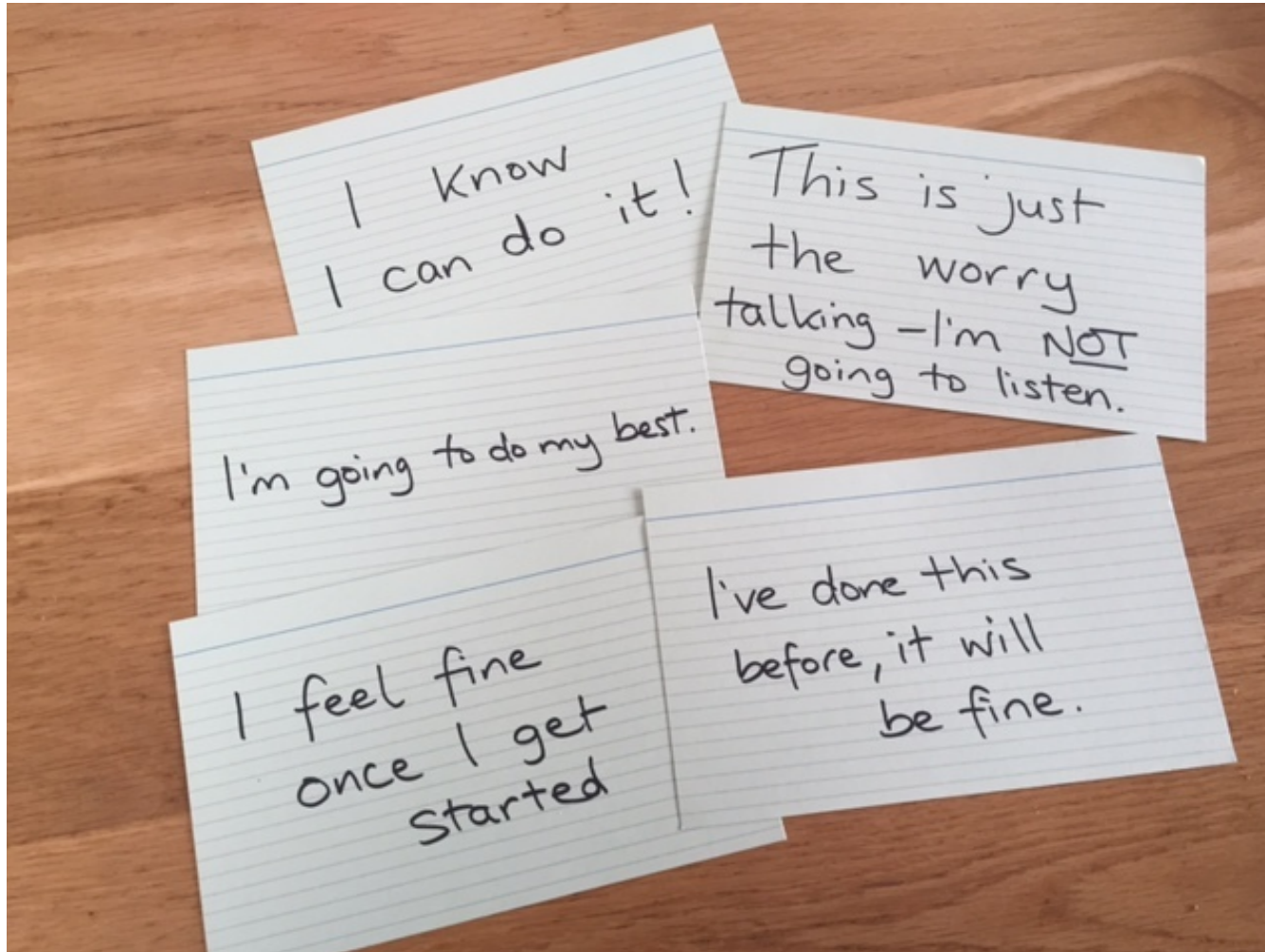
- Everyone hates me
- Everyone hates me
- I'm useless at this
- I'm no good at this
- I'm too anxious to do this

## Constructive Thought

- I had a row with J, but I can make up
- I haven't got to know everyone yet
- I am learning new things about this each time I try it
- I am going to do my best
- I feel nervous now, but will feel better once I get started

# Build Affirmation/ Coping Cards

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# Coping cards

## Exercise

1. Identify a negative thought that might underpin your child's worry
2. Think how you might challenge that thought and belief
- 3.
4. Transform this into a more helpful balanced thought?
5. Write it out as coping card.



# Coming up with a Plan

- 1. PAUSE** – Take a moment to reflect about your child's anxiety and how you are currently responding to it
- 2. TUNE IN** – What is going on for your child?
- 3. RESPOND**– what is best way to respond when your child is anxious? – Create a step by step plan of action
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# 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** *'Let's 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**

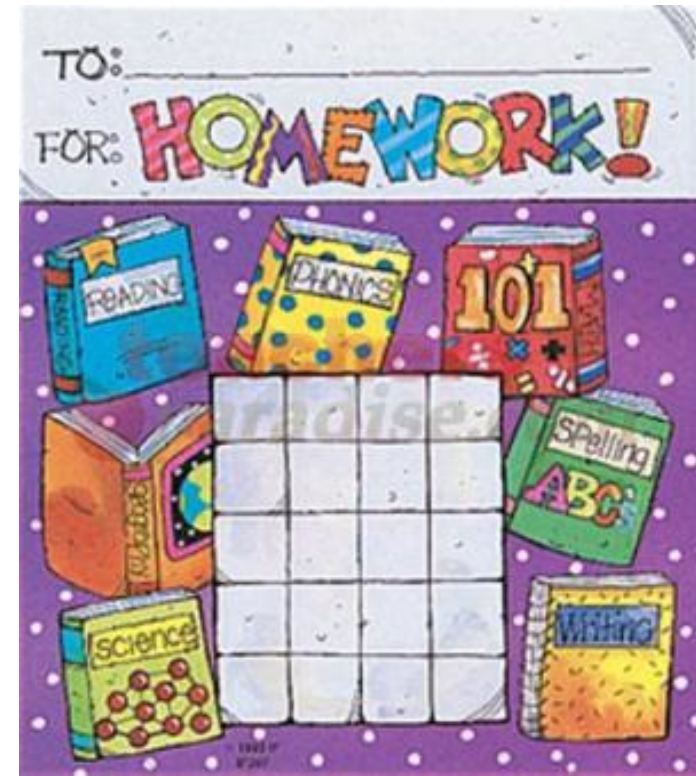
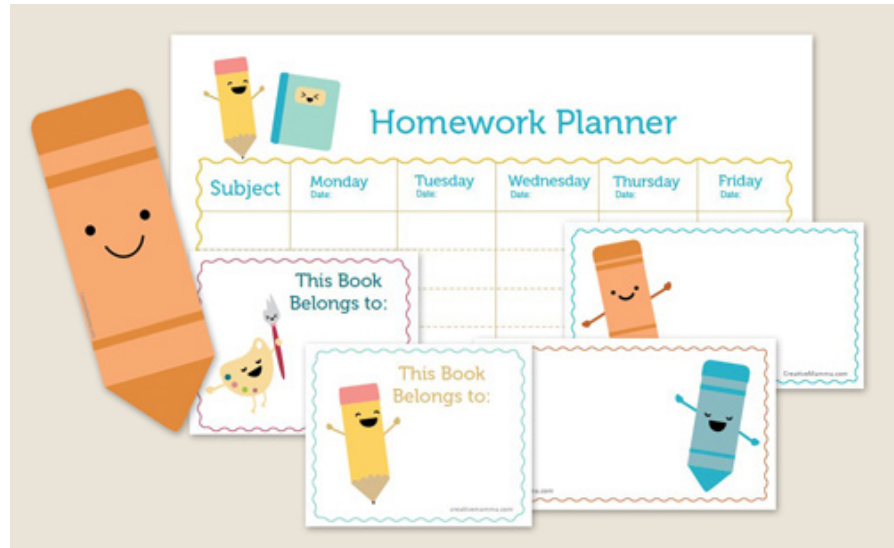
# Example: Anxious/ refusing to go to school

## 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**
- 7) Make a plan to build **you child's self-esteem**

# Using rewards and consequences

- acknowledge bravery
- praise and reward each step
- hold child accountable for their behaviour



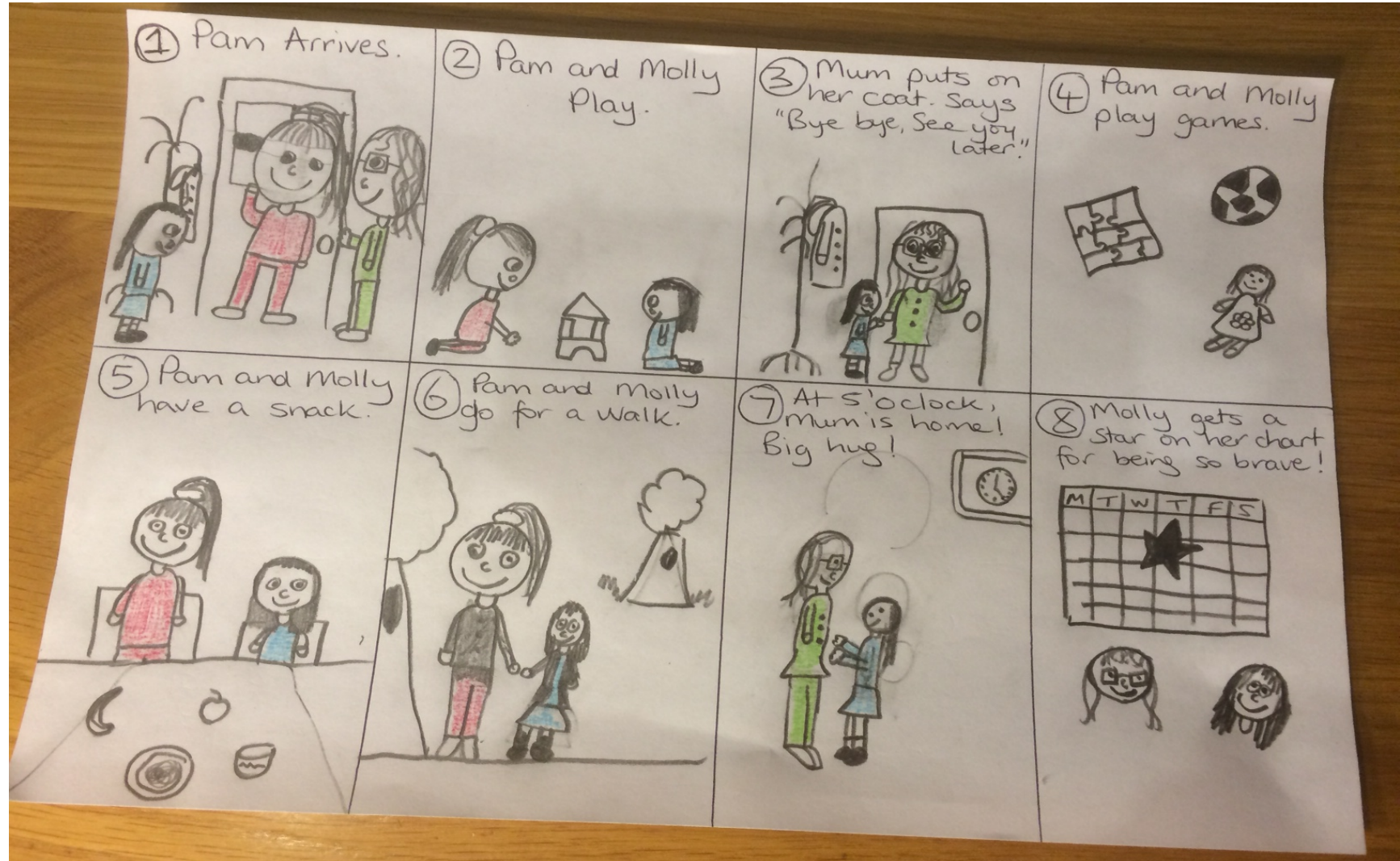


# Using Rewards

*'I know it is hard to face your fears (e.g. get up and go to school)...to help you we are going to give you a special reward each time you are brave/ work hard at doing this'*

- Choose reward that **motivates** your child  
e.g. star on chart for preschooler, extra daily pocket money or a special trip at weekend for older
- Make **first step small** and manageable
- Can help to use a motivational **chart** or picture **schedule**
- Give lots of **praise** –  
*'well done for being so brave – you have earned that reward'*

# Picture Chart - Separation Anxiety



# Using Consequences

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1. *'If you go late to school you will have to do extra work in school at breaktime.'*
2. *'If you stay off from school, you will have to do work at home.'*
3. *'If you have a meltdown at home, you will have to clean up later.'*
4. *'If you shout and scream you will lose some pocket money.'*

# When-Then

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1. *'When you try the homework yourself for a few minutes then, I will help you.'*
2. *'When you lie relaxed in your bedroom for a minute, then I will come in and tuck you in.'*
3. *'I can only stay in the room if you lie quietly and relax.'*
4. *'When it is worry time we can talk about your upset - I can only talk now, if you talk about happy things.'*



# Coming up with a Plan

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# Anxiety Meltdown– Step by Step Plan

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1. Remain **calm** and **respectful**.
2. **Acknowledge feelings** *'you sound very worried – tell what is bothering you'*
3. **Address disrespect** *'I know you feel upset...but you can't hit out/ take it out on others – you must speak politely.'*
4. **Coach/ soothe** – *'shhs lets calm it ....practice taking a few breaths... we will talk in a few minutes'*
5. End conversation **if disrespect continues** *'lets take a break - when you are calm, then we can talk.'*
6. Use **consequences** – *'If you continue to scream you will lose pocket money.'*
7. If rudeness/ meltdown continues, **take action** – e.g. walk away
8. **Follow up later** to talk through when things are calmer, impose consequences

# 'Feeling sick' due to anxiety– Step by Step Plan

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1. Remain **calm, warm and empathic**.
2. **Listen to symptoms** - *where do you feel it? What do you feel?*
3. **Acknowledge pain** - *that sounds sore, that must feel bad*
4. **Name Anxiety as external** – *'Is the Anxiety unsettling your tummy again? You know that is just the Anxiety, giving you the headaches'*
5. **Coach in agreed strategies** – *'Lets take a few breaths, now to relax your tummy' / 'lets start walking, once you get moving you will feel better'*
6. **Reassure** – *'Once you get going you will feel better*
7. **Praise** - *' you are very strong/ brave... keeping going'*



# Prevention Plan

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- Take time to **address causes** of worries where possible.
- During worry time, **listen empathically** and encourage **child to come up with solutions**, *‘What can we do to help?’*
- Encourage child in **‘worry free’ happy activities** that child is good at (to build self-esteem etc.)
- Set aside a **daily play and connecting parent child time.**



# Prevention Plan (ctd)

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## Coach child in

- Assertiveness and **strategies to cope with situation** that causes the anxiety
- in **relaxation** techniques (e.g. how to relax body and mind)
- in better techniques to communicate anxiety
  - **talking and not hitting out**
  - **self-distraction rather than cutting** or self-harm

# 'I hate myself' (when corrected) – Step by Step Plan

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1. Remain **calm** and **warm** ( often parent is using negative correction)
2. **Acknowledge feelings** – you sound annoyed...
3. **Encourage talking** - what is upsetting you?
4. **Sometimes ignore** – lets just turn off the internet now
5. **Gently discipline** – no screens in bedrooms - I am only doing this to create a relaxing routine
6. Use **consequences not criticism**- 'if you don't turn it off, you will only lose some time tomorrow'

# Worry/ Problem Solving Journal



## WIZARD JOURNAL

Q: What am I worried about?

Q: What are potential solutions?

Q: What action can I take?

Q: What way am I thinking about it?

Q: What is the most helpful way to think about it?

# Creative Technique

## Worry Box



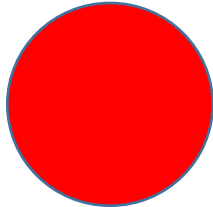
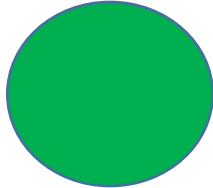
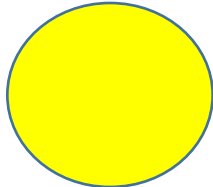


## Pause and Reflect

### **TAKE TIME TO COME UP WITH A PLAN TO MANAGE YOUR CHILD'S ANXIETY GOING FORWARD**

1. How will you respond when your child is anxious?
2. How will you address problems and prevent the anxiety?
3. How can you support your child?

# Small Groups of 5

-  0-5 year olds
-  6-11 year olds
-  12+ year olds

# Principle

## 'Building your child's self-esteem'



# Encouraging self-esteem and confidence

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- Setting aside daily play and **fun times**.
- Creating positive **family rituals**, Gratitude time.
- Discover your **child's passions**.
- Help them get involved in projects they **enjoy** and **succeed** in.
- Help your child make supportive and **good friends**.
- Encourage **responsibility** and **skill mastery**.
- Help your children **contribute socially**.



# Managing your own and your children's feelings of anxiety

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



# Visualisation and Relaxation

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**Redirect** your child's powerful **imagination** to focus on **relaxing** rather than worrying ideas...



# Plan going forward



1. Make a plan in your notebook about what ideas you want to put into action going forward?
2. How can you ensure you keep making progress?
3. What further supports might you need?

Complete the feedback form

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# Solution



WWW.SOLUTIONTALK.IE

**‘Managing Children’s anxiety’ Parents’**

Sunday 15th April 2018 Dublin 9am-1pm

**‘ Supporting families with an anxious child ‘ – Professionals**

One day 20<sup>th</sup> April 2018 Dublin

**‘Parenting 3-9 year olds’/‘Parenting Teenagers’** Dublin,

Autumn 2018



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