

MHST Coffee Afternoon: Talking to your child about anxiety & worries



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM (MHST)
Emotional Health Service
Achieving for Children
42 York Street
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NHS
South West London
Clinical Commissioning Group

 **achieving
for children**

 **Are you OK
Kingston?**

 **Are you OK
Richmond?**

Plan for today...

- Introducing the MHST
- The cycle of anxiety
- How to respond to worries
- Further resources
- Time to talk

Who are the MHST?

Mental Health
Support Team



- The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) is an **early intervention**, multi disciplinary team of clinical specialists, mental health clinicians (psychotherapists, counselling psychologists, art psychotherapists, drama psychotherapists, dance movement psychotherapists) and education wellbeing practitioners (EWPs).
- We provide support for **common mental health and wellbeing difficulties** to children, young people, families/carers and staff in school settings, within Kingston and Richmond.
- The teams are delivered by Achieving for Children as part of our Emotional Health Service.



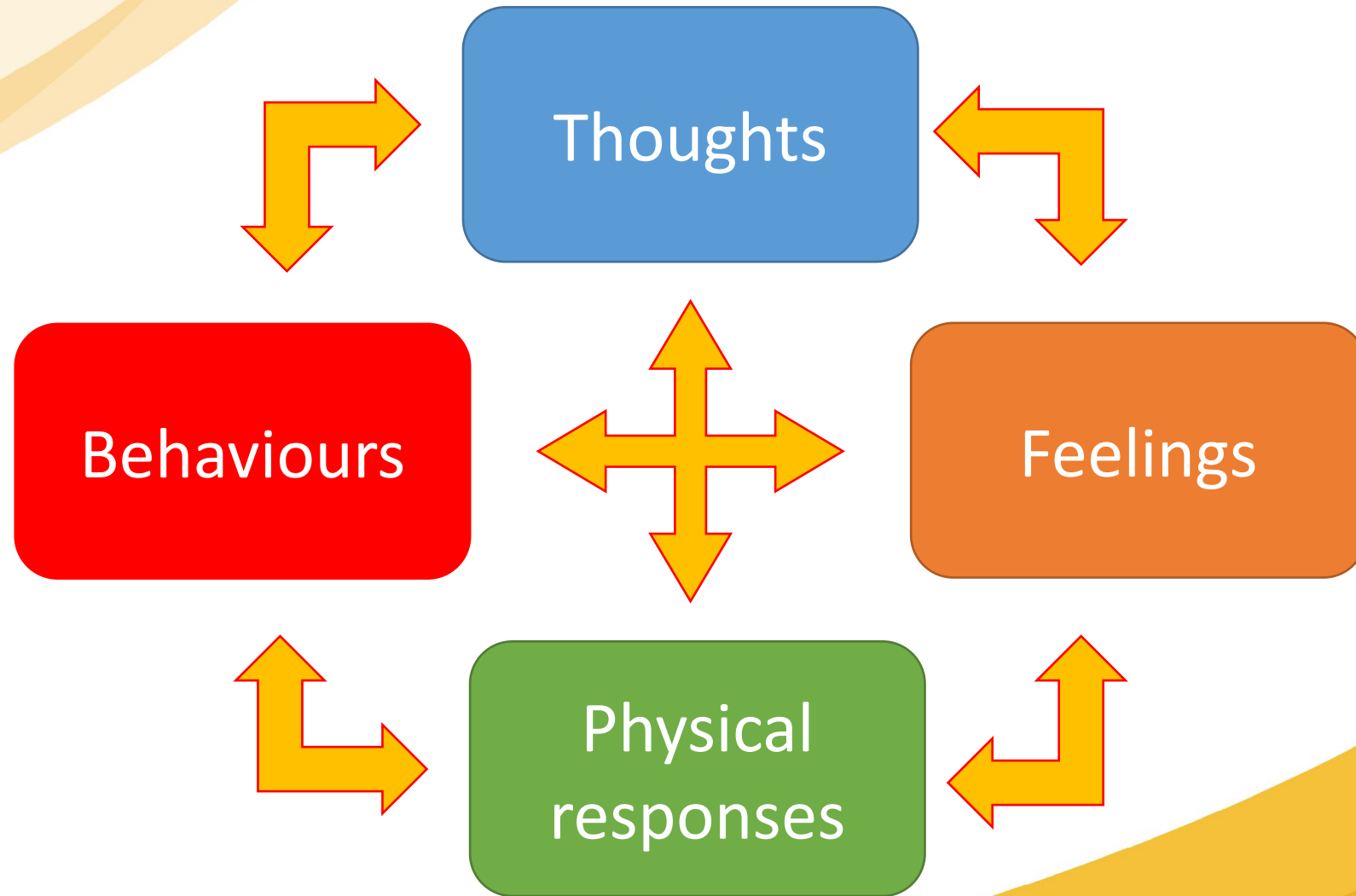
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What might this look like in my child's school?

- Education Wellbeing Practitioner based in your school one day a week, with flexibility for online work
- Offering 1-1 brief guided self-help interventions for children with mild to moderate anxiety or behaviour difficulties
- May also deliver group-work and workshops with groups or classes of children
- Also running workshops for staff and parents e.g. (work coming up / planned)

For more information, speak to your class teacher or the school's Mental Health Lead

The Cognitive Behavioural Model



A vicious cycle

These responses
create a vicious
cycle that maintain
anxiety

Thoughts

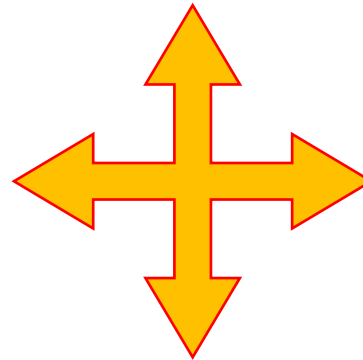
*"Something bad might
happen to me"*
*"What if my parents don't
pick me up from school?"*

Behaviours

Avoid school
Check parents' plans
Reassurance seeking

Feelings

Anxious
Worried
Sad

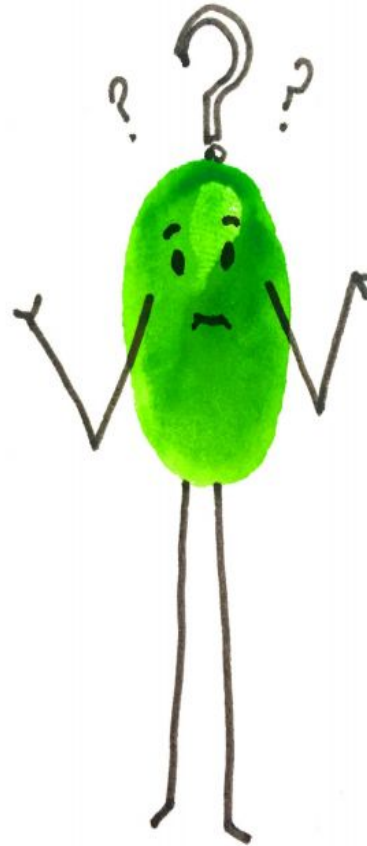


Physical responses

Heart racing
Shaky
Feeling sick
Headache

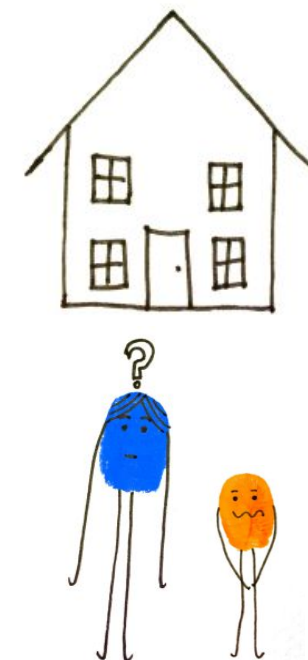


How can we help?



How can you help at home?

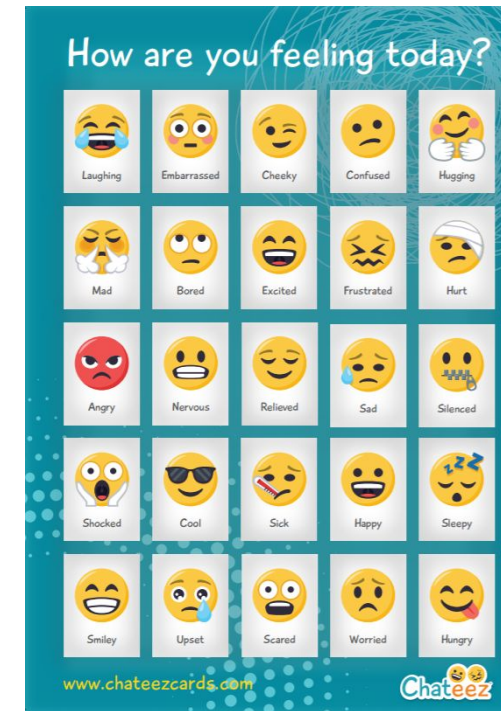
- **Don't be afraid** to approach the child and ask if they are OK or if something is bothering them
- **Active listening** is the **best support** you could offer
- **Wonder aloud** about what might be happening for the child
- **Name feelings** around events if they approach you to talk
- Look beyond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



Talking tips



- **Asking questions – being curious:**
“I wonder if you’re feeling ____?” “I wonder if you’re worried about ____?”
- **Empathising**
“Those sound like some really difficult thoughts / feelings to be having”
- **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**
“I can see that you’re feeling _____”
- **Make it fun or rewarding**



Reassurance

Some children ask for reassurance about the same situation over and over again. Most parents already know that giving reassurance over and over again is not only exhausting but also doesn't work.

This reassurance seeking ends up being a behaviour that, although well intentioned, only decreases anxiety in the short term, and actually ends up reinforcing the worried thoughts of the child that they cannot cope on their own.

It is not that we can never give reassurance but we can think about how much and when it is helpful. A helpful question to ask ourselves is whether the reassurance is helping the child to have a go at new things and test their fears, or if it's stopping them from learning for themselves.

'Will I be OK at school?'

'What if I can't do it?'

'Are you OK?'

What can we do instead?

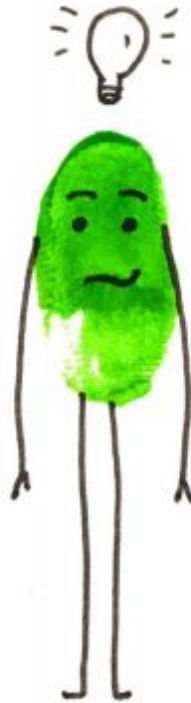
A gradual approach to reducing reassurance:

1. You can agree to give only 1 item of reassurance per situation or daily (you decide)
1. Respond differently without giving reassurance. You can use the talking tips to find out more about what is worrying them, or use questions which help them to build their confidence and self-esteem and trust that they know the answer:

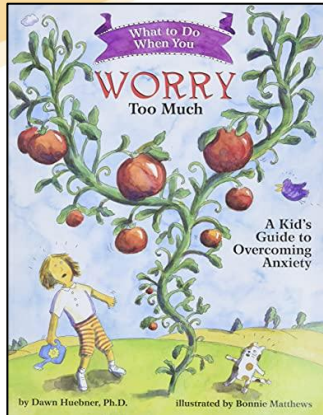
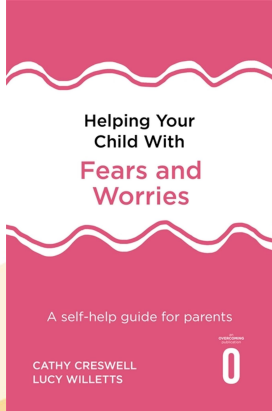
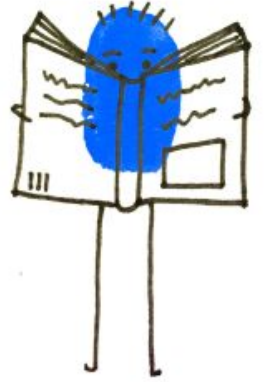
“You already know the answer to that question. I am not going to answer that.”
“It sounds like you are feeling worried, what can we do to help you feel a bit better - maybe some relaxed breathing? Are there any helpful thoughts that you can tell yourself?”

“What do you think? How could you handle that?”

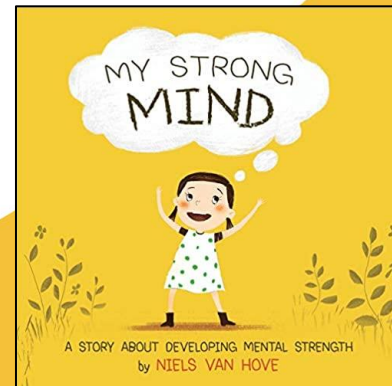
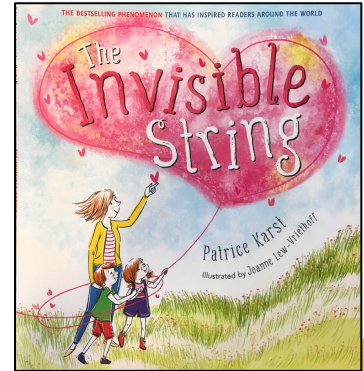
What has worked for managing your
child's worries?



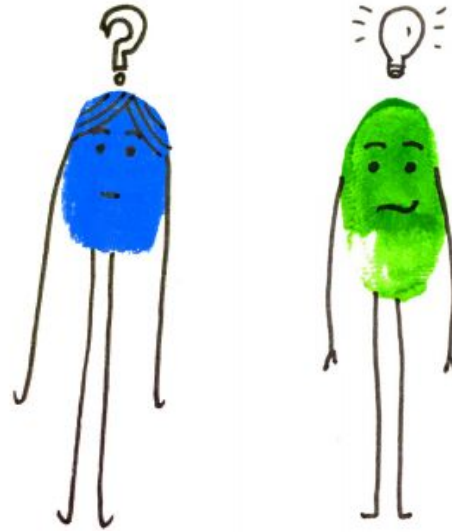
Further resources



- Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide by Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts
- Anxiety Canada website
- What To Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner
- The Invisible String by Patrick Karst
- My Strong Mind books by Niels Van Hove
- Headspace - app for mindfulness and relaxation



Questions - Ideas - Feedback



Feedback
forms

Contact us on:

mhstbusiness.support@achievingforchildren.org.uk

For further support please contact your child's **class teacher** or the Mental Health Lead

