



Healthy Minds Lincolnshire

Worry Management

A support pack for parents/carers

What are worries?

Childhood can be challenging for many young people as they face many new or unfamiliar situations and feeling worried and anxious about these things is a normal emotion. Worries can be formed around many things including relationships/bullying, school pressure, stress at home and illness.

Sometimes the young person needs support to recognise their emotions and understand how they can cope better with worries.

Are worries impacting on the young person's daily life?

- Enjoying hobbies
- Socialising
- School work
- Family relationships
- Sleeping
- Appetite

Is the young person complaining of physical symptoms?

- Upset stomach
- Nausea
- Pounding heart
- Dizziness
- Headaches



What causes worries/anxieties?

Worries usually occur as a result of experiencing a challenging life event such as changing school, moving house, making new friends or taking exams.

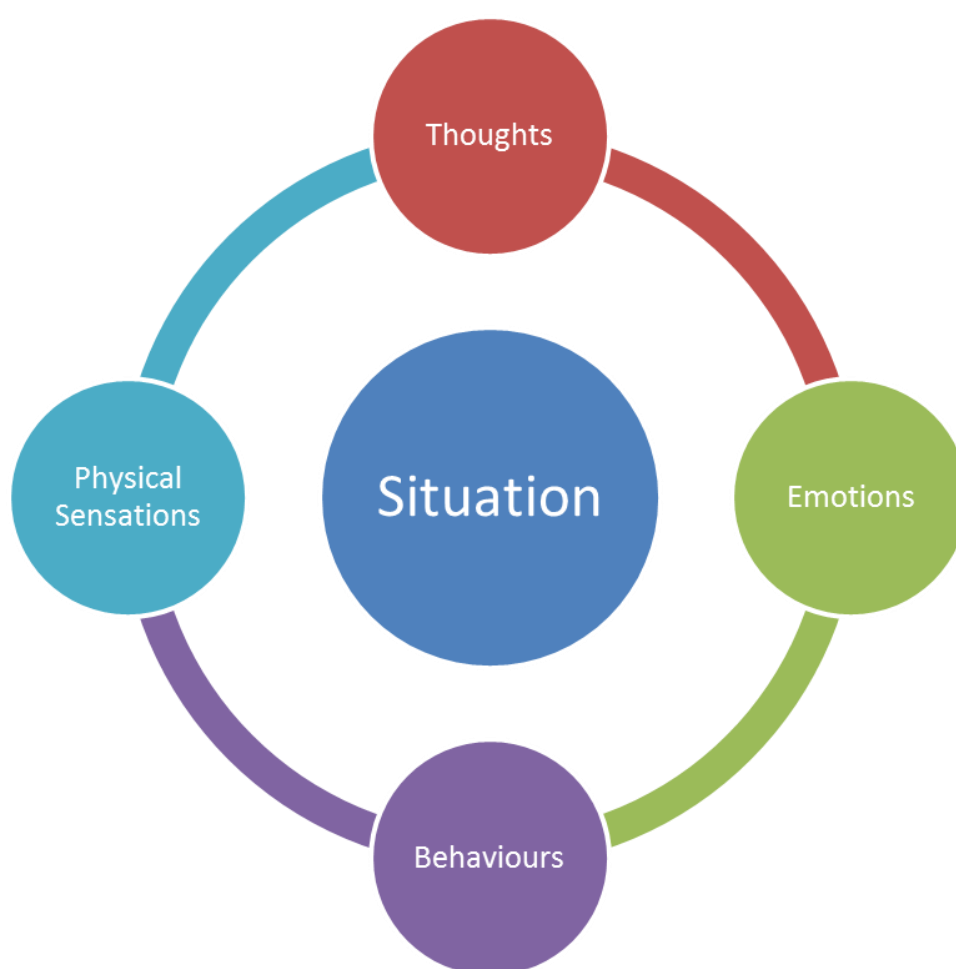
Worries will often manifest as behaviours – for example, a young person may feel anxious and avoid school if they are experiencing bullying.

Worry is the body's natural response to a perceived threat. When we are faced with danger our bodies release adrenaline into the bloodstream, increasing our heart rate and breathing. This then leads to blood and oxygen to be pumped around the body to our muscles which enables us to 'fight or flight'. As well as being useful to escape danger, this reaction is also really beneficial when competing in sporting events, completing exams or performing in front of others. However our brains can often misinterpret everyday situations which we should not be afraid of as a threat and this falsely activates fight or flight mode, causing us to become worried in situations that others might not be.

What keeps the worry going?

Five Area Model

Healthy Minds Lincolnshire recommends using the 5 area model, which is a Cognitive Behavioural Model to understand and explain to the young person why they are feeling worried and what they need to do to break the cycle. The strategies your child will learn in the workshop will provide them with tools to break the 'vicious cycle of worry', by either challenging their thoughts or changing their behaviour. It can be difficult for people to recognise their thoughts and feelings to start with. An explanation of the difference can be useful.



(Padesky, 1986)

Situation – Explore the situation that the young person has experienced or is avoiding.

Thoughts – Can the young person recognise the thoughts that they are having in relation to that situation? E.g., I cannot do that ,everyone will laugh at me.

Emotions – What emotions are they experiencing? Are they feeling sad, lonely, angry, disappointed?

Physical Reactions – What physical sensations are they experiencing? Do they feel tired, generally unwell, suffer from frequent headaches and often feel sick?

Behaviour – What is the resulting behaviour? Are they avoiding situations? Have they stopped doing activities they used to enjoy?

In order to support your child, the Healthy Minds practitioners will use evidence based interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) within the Worry Busting Skills Workshop.

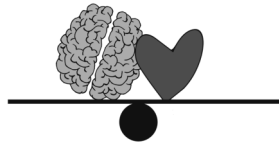
What does the workshop cover?

Psycho-education

The Healthy Minds practitioners will support your child to understand and recognise worries. They will be shown the 5 area model and have chance to practice using this so that they can start to break the cycle.

Coping Strategies and Healthy Living

At times we are faced with problems and stressful life experiences that we have no or little influence over. Therefore, it is important that we learn effective ways of coping to build our resilience and help us manage difficult feelings. The workshop will focus on identifying helpful coping strategies and how to live a healthy life day to day in order to maintain emotional wellbeing, build on resilience and improve mood. Your child will learn about mindfulness, relaxation, self-soothe strategies and the importance of maintaining a healthy diet, sleep pattern and level of exercise.



What if Vs Here and Now Worries

Here and Now worries are worries that we can do something about and can be solved. What if worries are worries that we cannot control (what if it rains?, what if I get sick?, what if Mum and Dad get divorced?). Your child/young person will be supported to be able to identify their worry and whether they are here and now or what if.

Managing worries

Your child/ young person will learn how to manage their worries effectively using the worry tree. The worry tree guides your child/ young person through the process of identifying what kind of worry they have and what to do about it. They will learn that here and now worries can be solved by using problem-solving and making a plan of action, and what if worries can be managed by using distraction techniques and worry time.



Problem-solving

As part of the workshop, your child will learn problem-solving skills. Using these skills regularly will help your child /young person to take action in their lives, reach their goals, help them cope with stressful life experiences and proactively solve problems.

Problem solving techniques are useful if your child is worrying about here and now issues that could have a solution e.g. "I don't know my spellings so I will fail the test".

If your child has a here and now problem, this could feel overwhelming. By breaking down the resolution into small steps, the problem seems more manageable and can be solved.

1. Identifying the problem.
2. Identifying possible solutions.
3. Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of potential solutions.
4. Selecting a solution.
5. Planning how to implement the solution.
6. Carrying out the solution.
7. Review.

Your child may find it hard to think of potential solutions. Remind them that ANY idea is fine at this stage, even if it is clearly very silly. If a solution doesn't work to solve the problem, remain positive and remind your child that they have lots of other ideas already so they can try another one.

Worry Time

Your child may be worrying about hypothetical future scenarios (what if worries) e.g.. "What if the car crashes on the way to school?". In this case worry time is a more suitable strategy.

Worry time involves you child/young person 'catching' their worries throughout the day and writing them down to deal with later. They then have a specific time set aside for worrying. For example, between 6pm and 6:20pm they will get out their daily worries and worry about them for 20 minutes. Stick to any planned worry time and remind your child when it starts and ends. They may want some support during their worry time to discuss their worries.

Outside of worry time, remind your child to save their worries for later. You/they could write it down and put it in their worry lope or use an app such as 'Worry Time by Reach out' or 'Worry Tree'.

It is key that you support your child to engage in a distracting activity outside of and after their worry time. The following activities work well for grounding and distraction.

Staying in the Here and Now

Look around the room...

Name 5 things you can see



Name 4 things you can hear



Name 3 things you can feel



Name 2 things you can smell



Name 1 thing you can taste



So, how can you help?

Positive reinforcement

Celebrating success is crucial when children/young people are making positive changes in their lives. Discuss with your child how they would like to be rewarded for their 'brave behaviour' and success when they make progress (or even when they try something new and fail). Rewards don't have to be very big. For example, they could have their favourite food for tea. Rewards can also be agreed with school so that success is celebrated in all areas of life.

Practical support

Your child will have lots of new strategies to practice. It is important to set your child to set activities and goals that are realistic and achievable. However, they may need some extra support so that they can complete these activities successfully. For example, joining a club/group which require transportation or going to see a friend that requires a bus fare. If you are unable to provide this support (e.g., you do not have adequate finances), please explain this to your child and negotiate a different or adapted activity. We also recommend that every child/young person has a self-soothe box to keep the things that make them feel better when times get tough. The box and what is in it do not have to be expensive. It can be a shoe box that can be decorated and have small items or prompts to remind your child what they should try to make them feel better.

A note on safety behaviours and brave behaviour

As parents it is very difficult to see our children in distress and we want to do things to help them. However, when we try and help our children/ young people with worries, it is easy to feed into the worry and anxiety without realising we are doing it. For example, a child is scared of monsters at night time so the parent gives the child 'monster spray' to get rid of the monsters. This is safety behaviour because, although it may work in the short term, the child becomes reliant on the 'monster spray' rather than building confidence and learning that s/he can manage the anxiety. So, we challenge you to recognise the safety behaviours that you are unintentionally feeding and instead encourage brave behaviour. Encourage your child to 'have a go' and celebrate the effort regardless of success or failure.

Additional resources

Here is a list books which could be used to support your child with worry , these are ideas not recommendations;

What to do when you worry too much – by Dawn Huebner – A CBT Resource Book for your child to provide them with additional strategies to manage their worry.

The huge bag of worries – by Virginia Ironside – A fictional story about how one girl learns to let go of her worries.

No Worries by Katie Abbey – A mindfulness activity book, helping children use mindfulness to tackle anxious thoughts.

Hello Happy by Stephanie Clarkson – A mindfulness activity book, with the focus on how to deal with our emotions.

Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (for parents) by Cathy Creswell – A great resource for parents which talks through many different strategies you can put in place at home to manage their worry and provides step by step guidance and case studies on how to do this.



Thank you!

