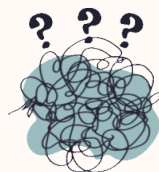


# ***Anxiety Psychoeducation***

By Payal Shah



# Agenda

- 1. Confidentiality**
- 2. What is Anxiety**
- 3. Fight or Flight Response**
- 4. Our body**
- 5. Causes of anxiety**
- 6. Three main aspects of anxiety**
- 7. Main Points of Treatment**
- 8. Anything you wish to add?**





# WHAT IS ANXIETY



**1**

**Anxiety is a *normal* reaction**

**2**


***Everyone* experiences anxiety in some way or another - it connects us all together**

**3**

**Why we feel anxiety and what it is may really surprise you**


**4**

**Without anxiety we may be in serious trouble - it's our *bodies normal reaction* to perceived danger**



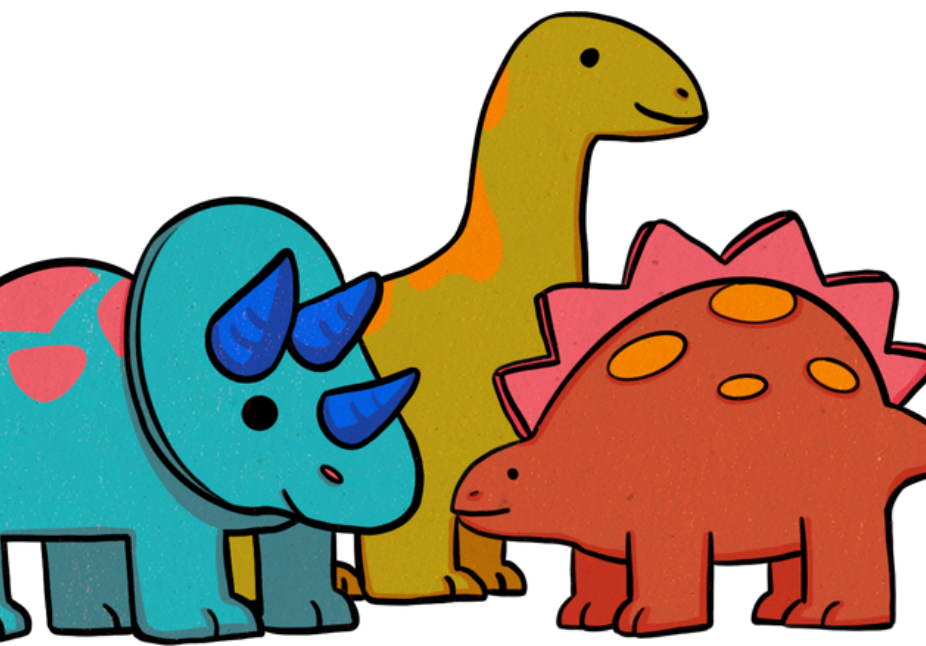


- Anxiety like an **internal alarm system** - as soon as our bodies sense that we're in danger a small part of the brain called the **amygdala** kicks in and gets your body ready to react usually known as **fight-flight or freeze response**.
- Reaction goes back millions of years to cavemen. Imagine, that they were hunting for their food and were suddenly confronted by a dinosaur
- This anxiety alarm gave them the ability to **fight the danger** by supplying blood to our muscles allowing us to breathe faster, or **run away** by increasing our heart rate or **freeze** and stay hidden/play dead.
- Over millions of generations this developed into the system known as anxiety today.



So, today we don't need to fight or run away from dinosaurs but can you think of a time when we might be in danger and experience a similar reaction?

- So this fight or flight reaction is our **inbuilt alarm system** going off!
- It helps keep us safe and reduces the likelihood of us doing something dangerous.
- If we think about the fire alarm what if it went off 4 times a day every day when there isn't a fire - is that useful?
- Sometimes it's the same with our alarm system, it goes a bit faulty and our body starts doing a lot of things



# Our body



• **NEEDING THE TOILET:** IS ACTUALLY BECAUSE OUR BODY WANTS TO MAKE US LIGHTER SO WE CAN RUN FASTER.

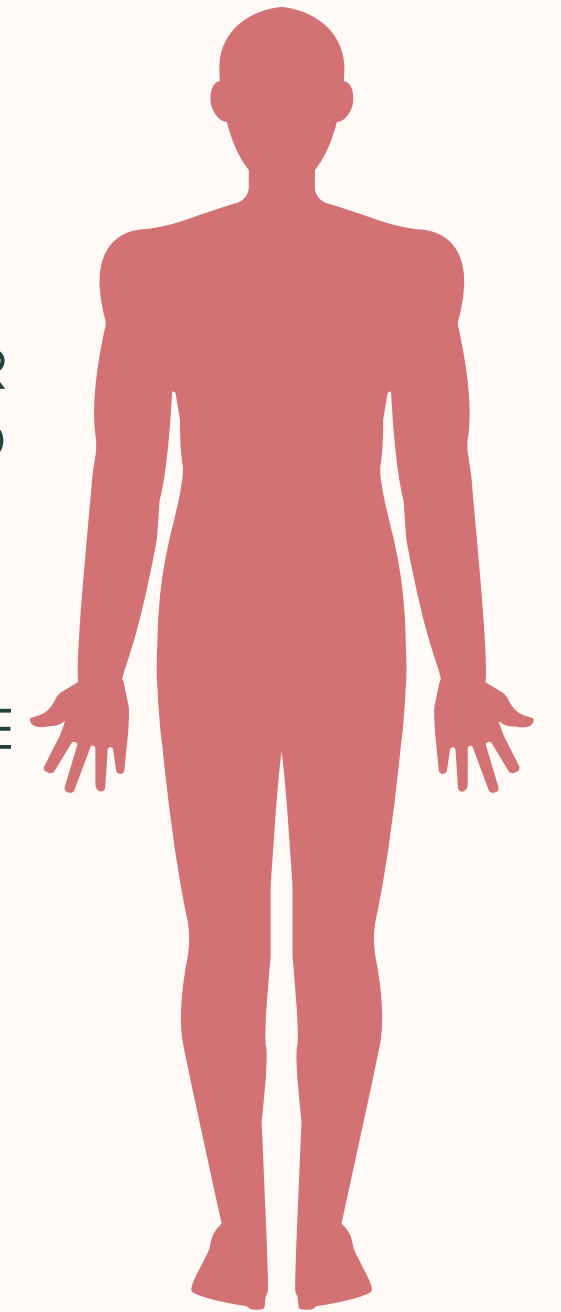
• **BREATHING FAST:** OUR BODY IS TRYING TO GET AS MUCH OXYGEN AS POSSIBLE IN TO OUR BODY SO THAT WE CAN HAVE MORE ENERGY TO RUN

• **TUMMY ACHE/BUTTERFLIES:** AS WE ARE ABOUT TO 'FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL' OUR BODY DECIDES THAT AT THAT TIME WE DON'T NEED TO BE DIGESTING FOOD, SO OUR BLOOD STARTS TO MOVE OUT OF OUR STOMACH BACK TO OUR HEART TO PUMP AROUND OUR BODY. THIS CAN ALSO MAKE US FEEL A BIT SICK.

• **THOUGHTS RACING:** THIS HELPS US EVALUATE OUR THREAT QUICKLY AND MAKE QUICK DECISIONS

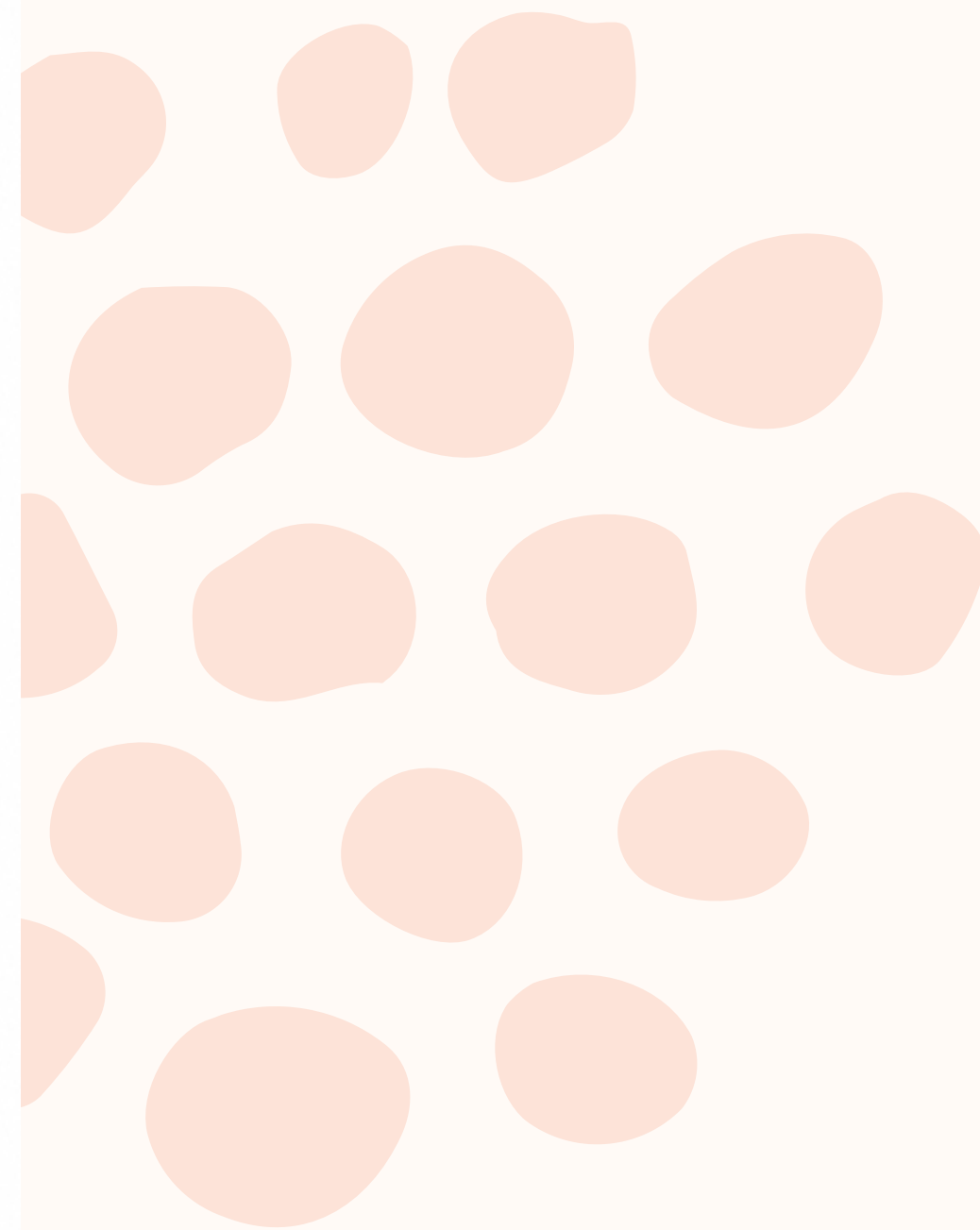
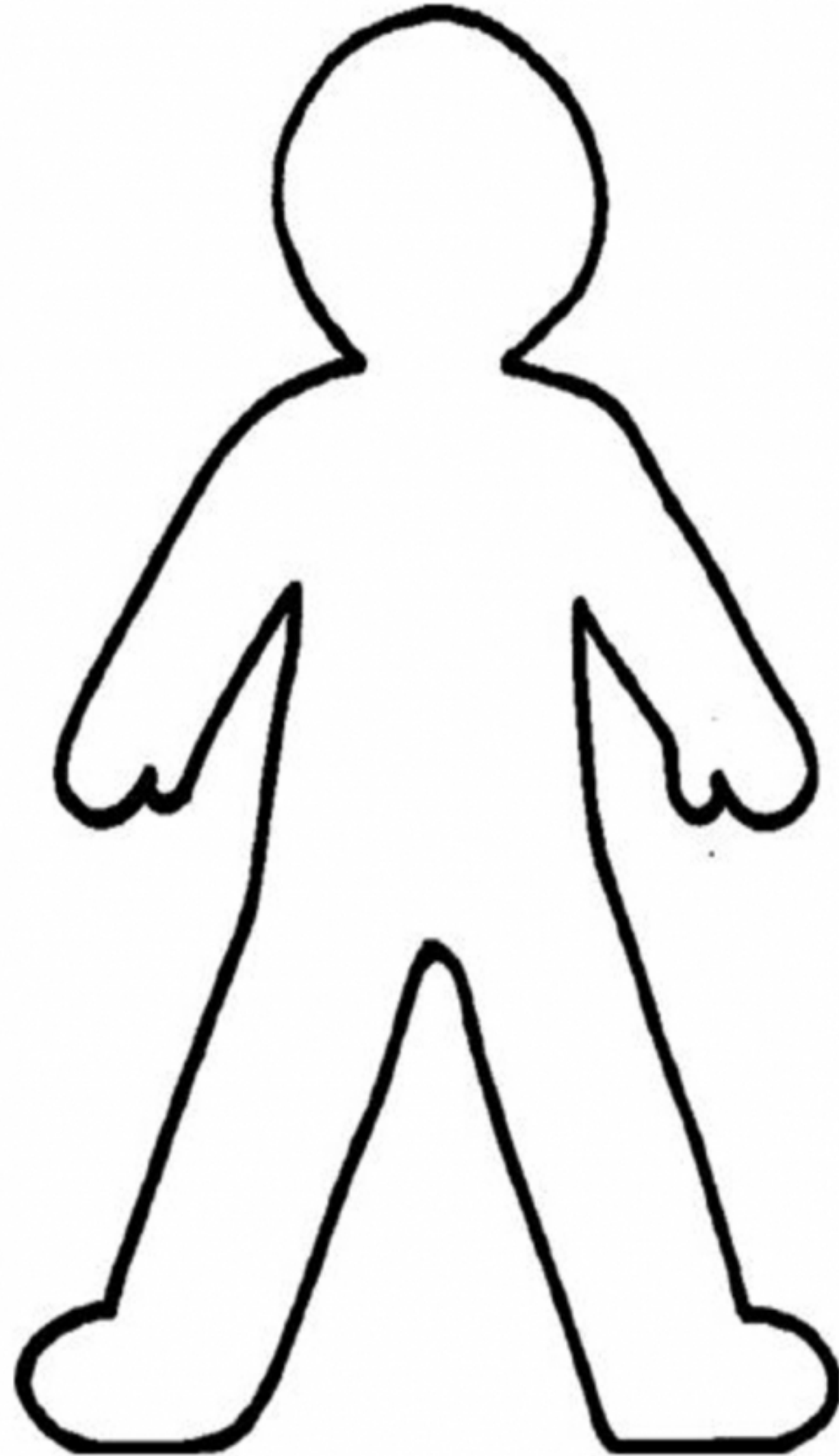
• **HEART BEATING/CHEST FLUTTERS:** THIS IS OUR HEART BEATING REALLY FAST TO GET ALL THAT OXYGEN ROUND OUR BLOOD SO WE CAN BE AS ALERT AS POSSIBLE

• **SWEATY PALMS:** THE BODY SWEATS SO THAT IT CAN KEEP US COOL SO THAT WE ARE MORE EFFICIENT





Where do you  
feel anxiety in  
your body?



# Causes of childhood anxiety problems

## **BIOLOGICAL FACTORS**

Anxiety runs in families, 1/3 of what makes us anxious can be explained by genes. We may inherit particular characteristics i.e. sensitivity. Two possible things inherited could be: 1) how easily our bodies jump to action in response to threat and 2) generally how emotional we are.

## **LEARNING BY EXAMPLE**

We can also pick up fears from parents or others around them. Do you think that you/your child has picked up on anxious behavior from any of the adults around them?

## **ADVERSE LIFE EVENTS**

Stressful events may have more impact on anxious children. Have you/your child experienced any significant life events? If so, how do you think this has affected your anxiety?

## **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

How others respond to the child when they're anxious. For example, parents may inadvertently encourage their child to avoid situations they fear, resulting in the young person to avoid the situation as well.



# What keeps problematic anxiety going?

## OUR BEHAVIOUR

As anxiety isn't pleasant and can make us feel really uncomfortable, we are therefore driven to act in ways to help reduce or escape anxiety. This means it's very common for us to avoid situations that make us feel anxious. While this makes sense we may never test out how likely are fears are and how to cope in situations when we feel anxious.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

Ongoing stress or problems in someone's life and environment can keep problematic anxiety going. If someone is unable to overcome or find solutions to these problems or if they have little or no control over them (e.g. parental conflict, bullying) then the anxiety and stress associated with the problems may continue.

## OUR THOUGHTS

The way we think about a situation or what we think is going to happen impacts on how we feel i.e. going to a party. If we are thinking in an anxious way, we tend to overestimate the likelihood of danger and underestimate our ability to cope with it.

## OTHERS BEHAVIOUR

Sometimes what others do can also keep anxiety going. If those close to you get frustrated or upset when you are anxious, this can make you feel more anxious. Sometimes others can fall into the trap of helping you avoid things or overly reassuring you and this can also keep anxiety going.




# Coping behaviours vs Unhelpful habits


We find lots of different ways of coping with difficult emotions and feelings, some of these strategies or behaviours are really helpful, but others are less so. While some behaviours provide **short term relief**, they can actually cause **more** problems in the long term by keeping anxiety going or causing other forms of distress. It might be helpful to think of these behaviours as **unhelpful habits**.

BELOW ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF UNHELPFUL HABITS.

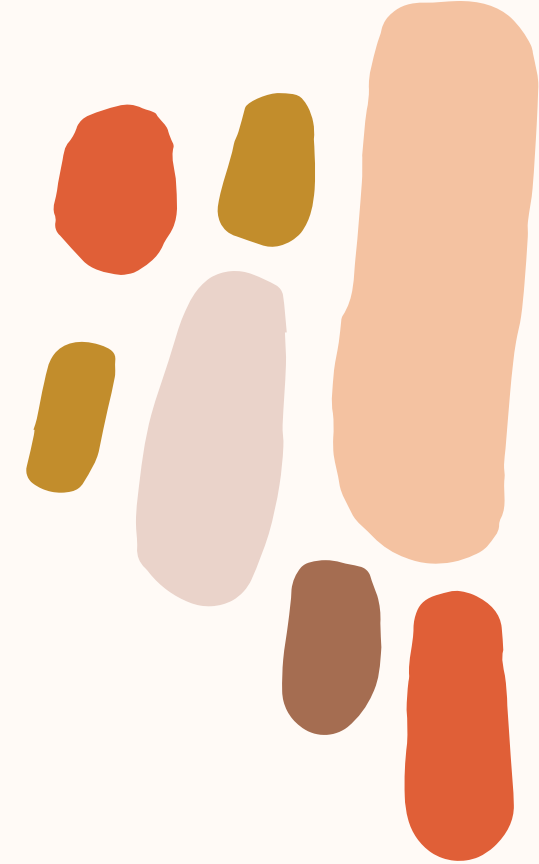
- **REHEARSING WHAT TO SAY BEFORE SPEAKING TO SOMEONE**
  - **ONLY GOING SHOPPING AT QUIET TIMES OF DAY**
  - **COVERING MOUTH WHEN TALKING**
- **NOT MAKING EYE CONTACT WHEN WALKING DOWN STREET**
- **ASKING SOMEONE AGAIN AND AGAIN IF THEY THINK YOU WILL BE OK**
  - **TEXTING A PARENT/CARER TO CHECK**



All of these behaviours develop because they make us feel **less anxious** or worried, and because they work in the **short term** we keep doing them. However, this is a **trap** that we all fall into sometimes. While they do tend to make us feel better they also **prevent** us from overcoming our anxiety in the **long term** and can sometimes even make it worse.

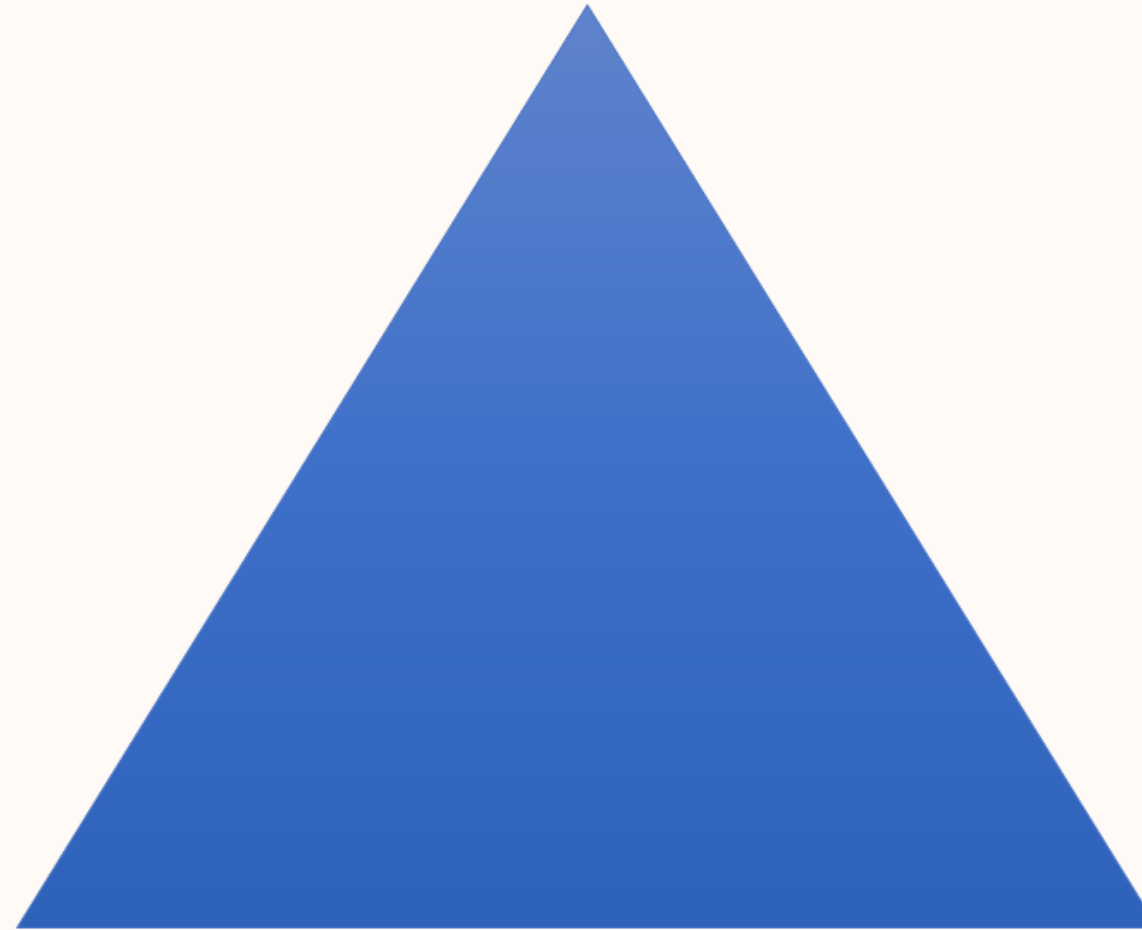


# Three main aspects to Anxiety



## **Anxious expectations** – two common thoughts

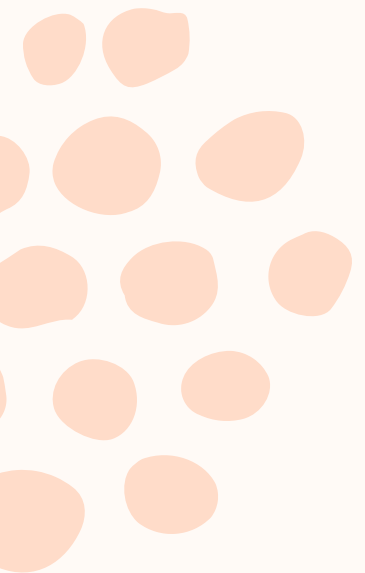
1. Overestimate = how likely it is something bad will happen
2. Underestimate = their ability to cope with what might happen



## **Avoidance and safety seeking behaviours**

These behaviours help the child feel safe by stopping (preventing) the 'bad thing' from happening. Reassurance seeking (type of safety behaviour) is also common.

**Bodily changes** – racing heart, sweaty palms, unsettled stomach. These kind of symptoms can be alarming and may cause more anxiety





So what does this all mean?

- OUR ANXIETY IS A REALLY **USEFUL RESPONSE** IT IS NOT A BAD THING
  - BUT THE PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE THAT OUR BRAIN WANTS TO BE **SAFE THAN SORRY**, SO WE END UP WITH OUR ALARM GOING OFF WHEN IT DOESN'T NEED TO
  - SO MAYBE SOME OF YOUR WORRIES IS YOUR **FALSE ALARM** GOING OFF - WOULD YOU AGREE WITH THIS?
- 

# Main Points of this Treatment


**Help you/your child overcome anxiety so that it does not interfere with day to day life.**

Anxiety is caused by a range of **interacting factors**

Children who are prone to fears and worries may be **particularly influenced** by their experiences

It is **normal** for parents/carers to want to **protect** their children, but this needs to be balanced against giving them opportunities to **'have a go'**





**In the event of difficulties arising during the day,  
please telephone your child's clinician/team  
manager or CAMHS Duty Team on 020 8702 4500  
(Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00) or the CAMHS  
Crisis Team 020 3758 2056 (Monday to Sunday  
09:00 to 00:00).**

**Out of hours, please telephone your GP emergency  
service, or in an emergency please seek advice  
from A & E.**



**If you can't manage to get them to A&E safely you  
can call 999 at any time.**



*Thank  
you*