



# Helping children manage and overcome anxiety

*(Evening 3)*

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# 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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# GOALS FOR COURSE

- Worrying about death, something will happen at home
- 9 year old, fear of animals – swimming lots of things
- 6yo real worrier, worries being rejected ‘ if they laugh at me, if the don’t like the present
- 11yo girl can’t settle at night, thinks she might die at night – some facial tics
- 5yo girl worries about social occasions – avoiding
- 14 yo girl autism – social anxiety, when something does not go to plan
- 10 yo boy – trying to help him identify his anxiety – sore tummy, body symptoms...’ boy who cried wolf
- 14 yo girl, fear of failure ... avoidance
- 6 yo boy does not like large groups and new situation – help him join in
- 8 yo boy, going to school.... Paired back to a few hours... trying to build it up again
- 9yo twin anxious not as good as twin, thinks twin is more popular
- 8 yo girl, pains in tummy in case gets in trouble – how do we manage her ‘not being good’ she gets devastated if gets in trouble...
- 7yo twin – seek to identify better when anxious VS behaviour ‘bold’
- 6 yo fear you are going to die, does not want to leave te
- 4 yo has nightmares, fear of water over head , general fears
- 5 yo obsessive habits, blowing nose for 20 mins.... Not clean
- 9 yo bad kidney infections, now fears having an accident – does not want people to know
- 10 year old, tummy pains, fear getting sick in front of friends – ‘

# 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

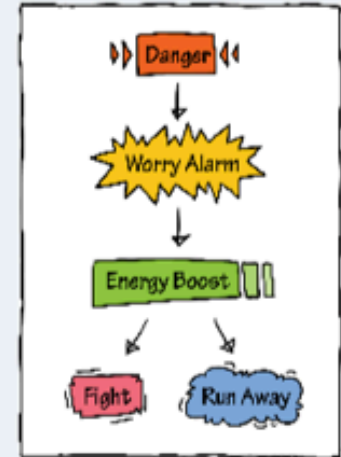
## WHAT IS WORRY?



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



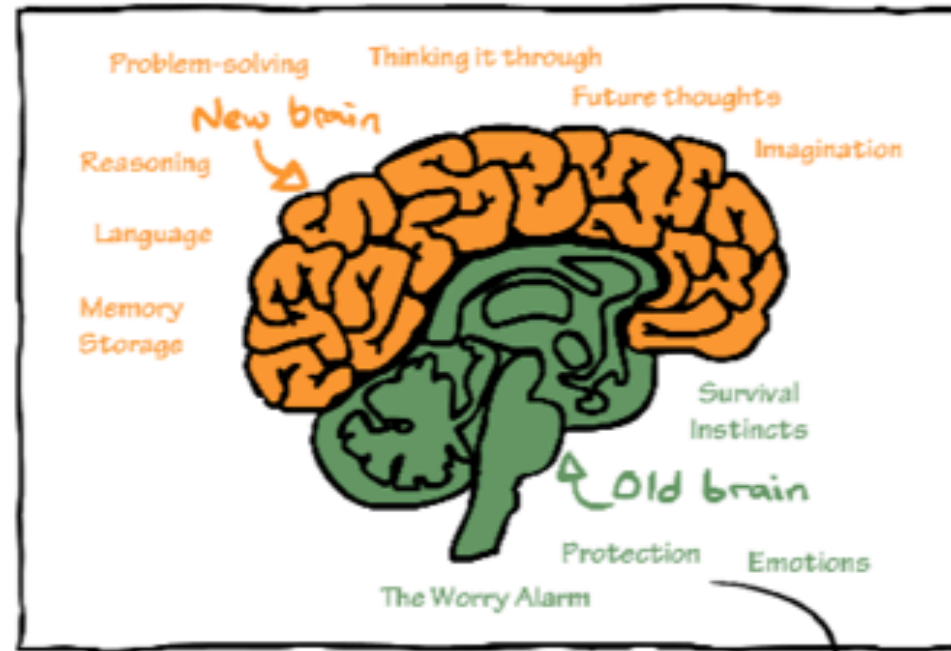
BOOM! Danger triggered an internal worry alarm.



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!**

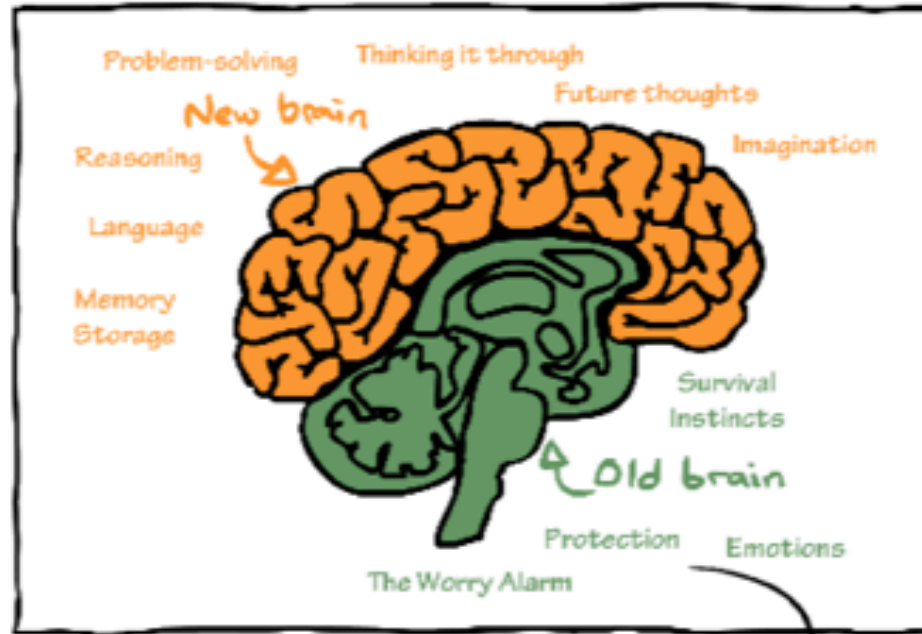
When the worry alarm is triggered, the older (more emotional) brain takes over. That means the newer (more logical) brain is put on hold. This can make it hard to think rationally.



# The Lizard Brain V The Wizard Brain



## YOUR BRAIN ON WORRY



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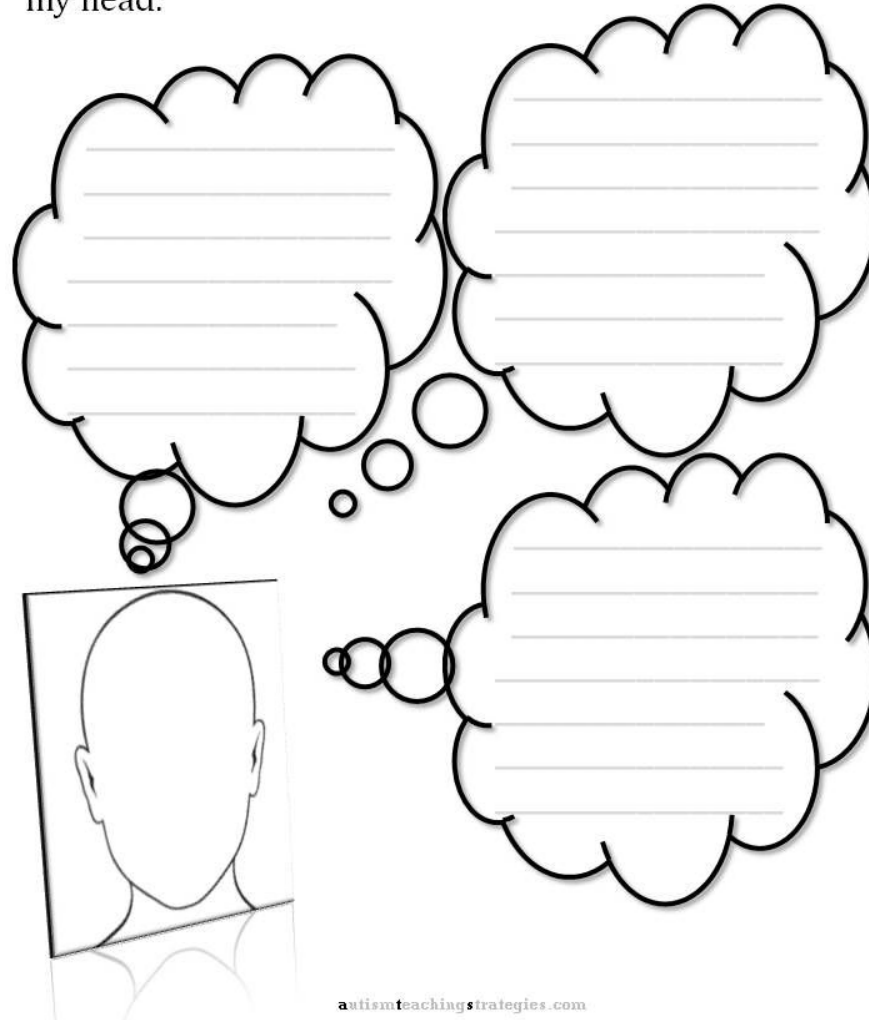
# Externalising Worry/ Talking Back to Worry

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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

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1. Is that really true? What is the likelihood of that happening?
2. What can you do if that happens?
3. What can you do to stop that happening/ keep yourself safe?
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

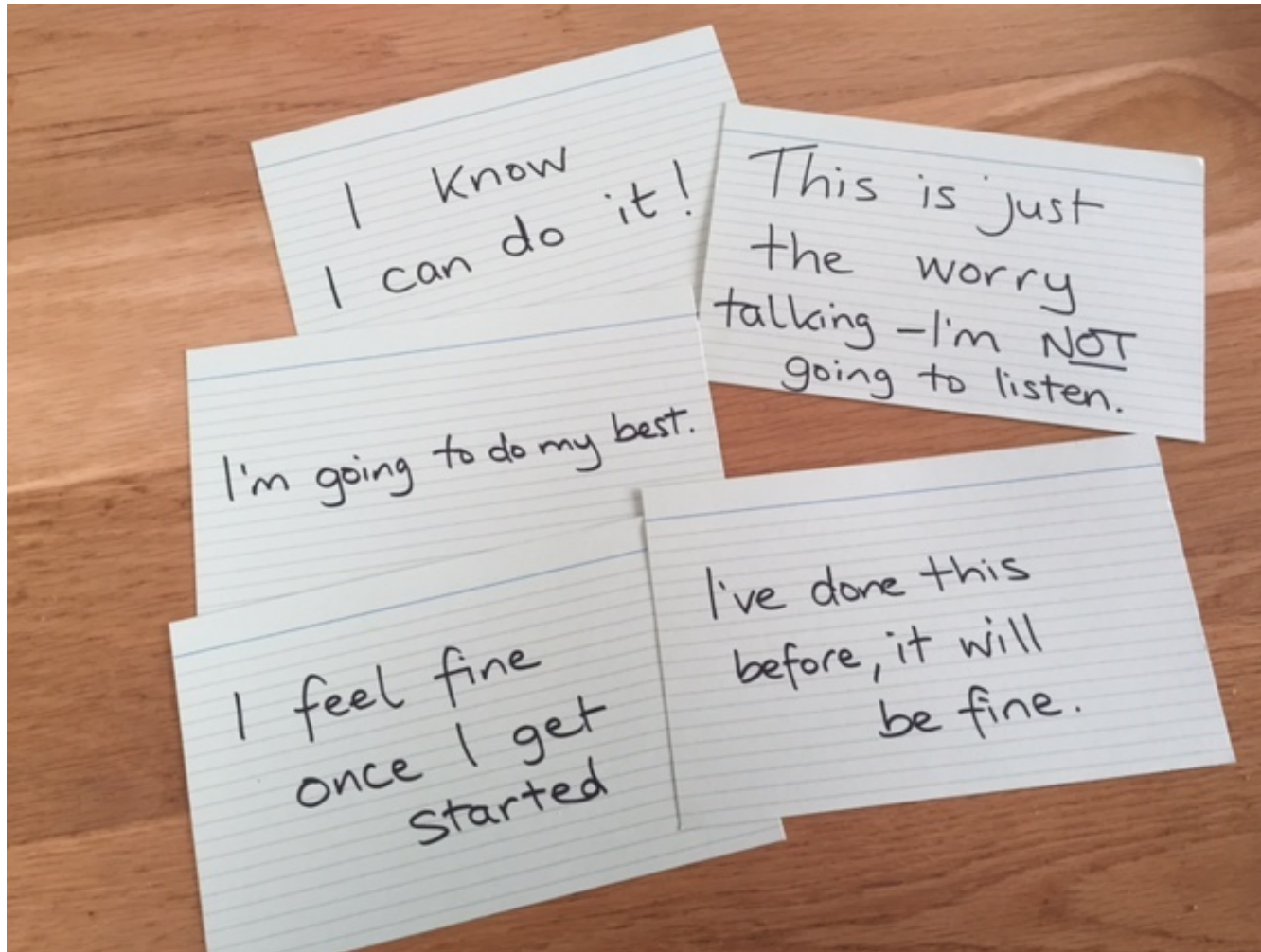
- Everyone hates me
- Everyone hates me
- I'm useless at this
- I'm no good at this
- I'm too anxious to do this

## 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. Transform this into a more helpful balanced thought?
3. 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
- 4. PREVENT** – How can you prevent problems from happening again?, How can you address the underlying issues?

# 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**

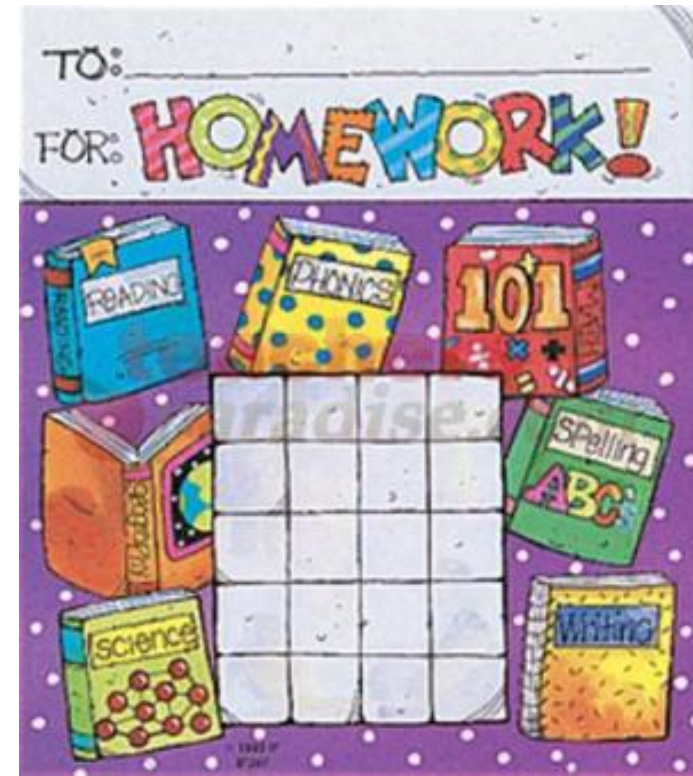
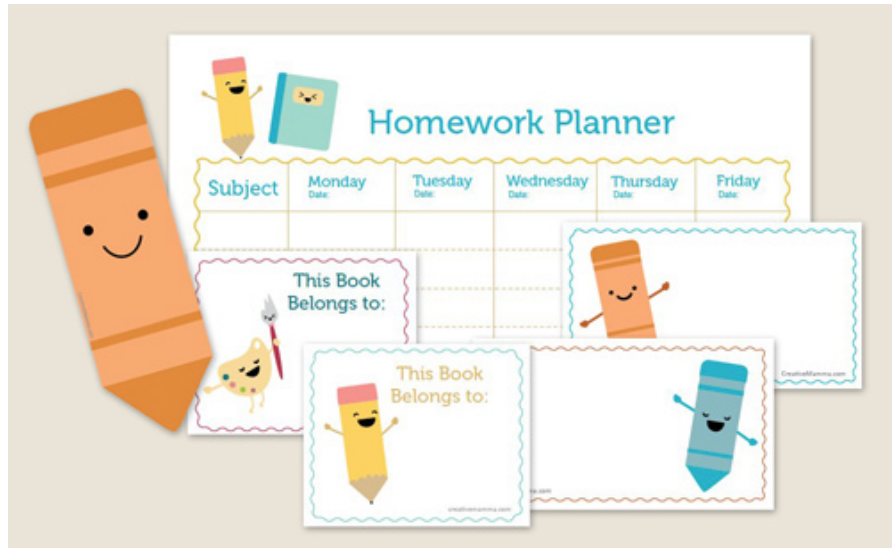
# Example: Anxious/ refusing to go to school

## 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



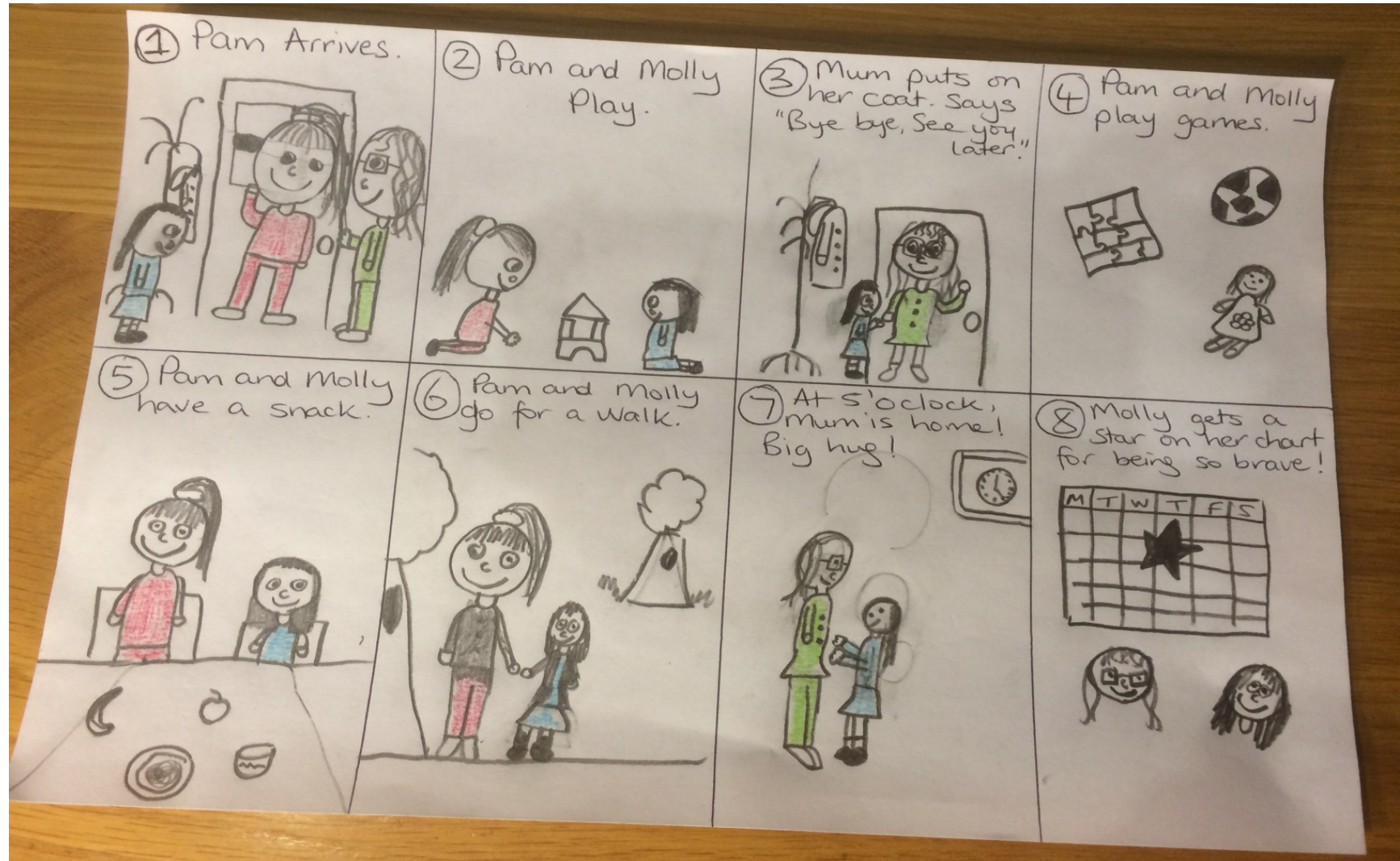
# Using Rewards

*'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

- 1. PAUSE** – Take a moment to reflect about your child's anxiety and how you are currently responding to it
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# Anxiety Meltdown– Step by Step Plan

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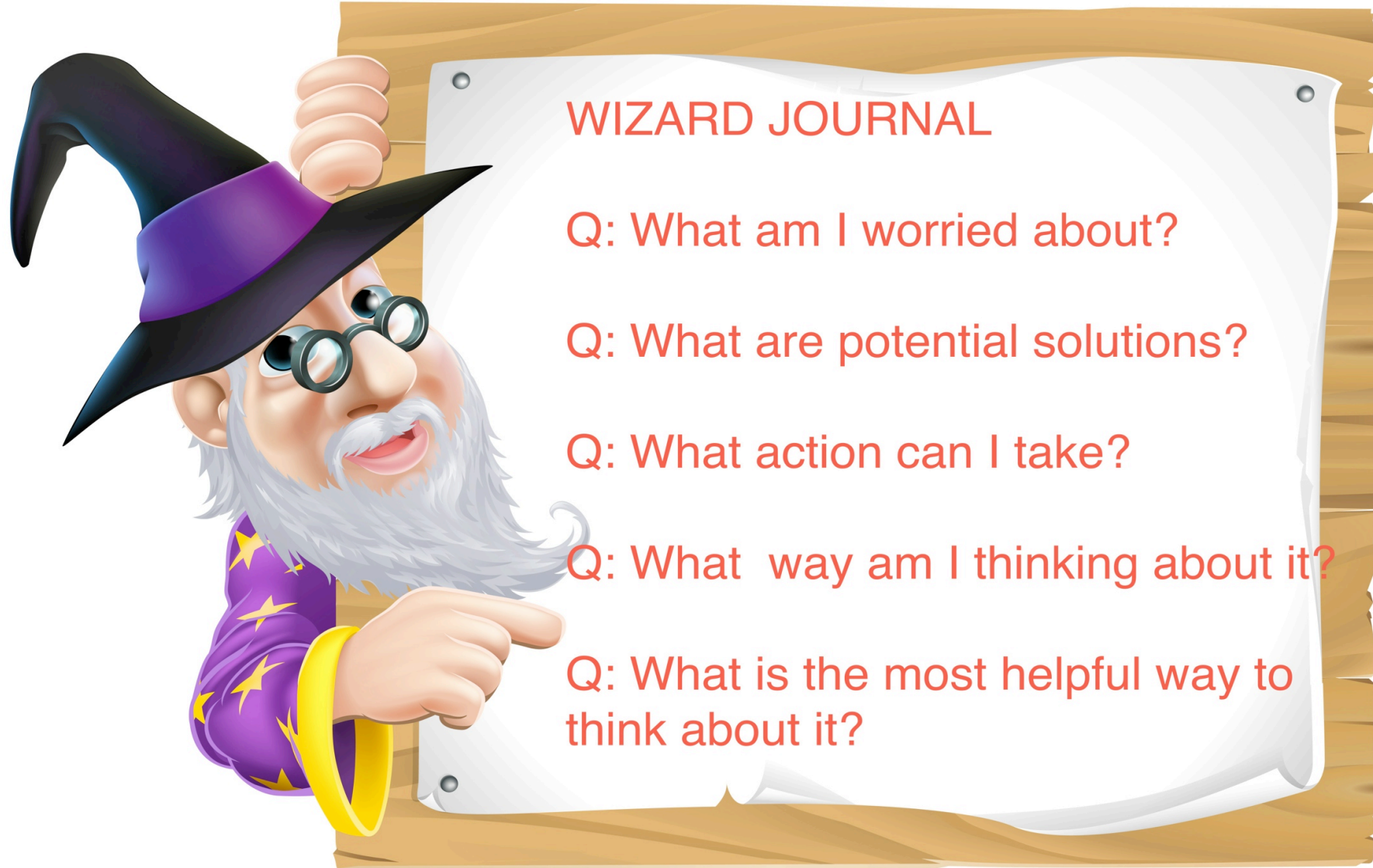
1. Remain **calm** and **respectful**.
2. **Acknowledge feelings** *‘you sound very worried – tell what is bothering you’*
3. **Address disrespect** *‘I know you feel upset...but you can’t take it out on others – you must speak politely.’*
4. **Coach** – *‘take a break now...let’s practice taking a few breaths... we will talk in a few minutes’*
5. End conversation **if disrespect continues** *‘when you are calm, then I will listen.’*
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

# Prevention Plan

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- a) Take time to **address causes** of worries where possible.
- b) During worry time, **listen empathically** and encourage **child to come up with solutions**, *'What can we do to help?'*
- c) Coaches child in assertiveness and **strategies to cope with situation** that causes the anxiety.
- d) Coaches child in **relaxation or stress management** techniques.
- e) Encourage child in 'worry free' happy activities that child is good at (to build self-esteem etc.).
- f) Set aside a daily playtime with the child (which is worry free).

# Worry/ Problem Solving Journal



# Creative Technique

## Worry Box



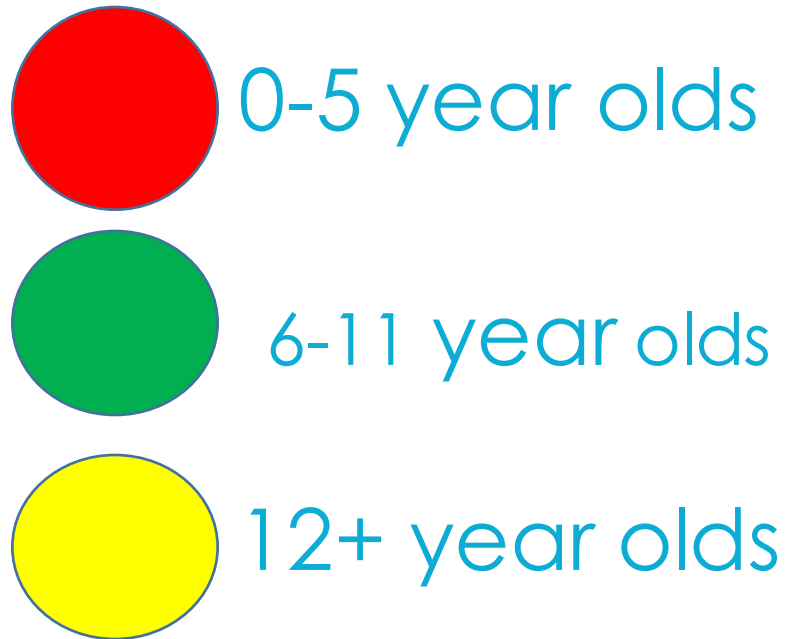


## Pause and Reflect

### **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



# 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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## **‘Building Children’s Self-Esteem’ Talk**

Monday March 20<sup>th</sup>, Springhill Court Hotel, Kilkenny

Wednesday May 20<sup>th</sup>, Tara Tower Hotel, Dublin

## **‘Parenting 3-9 year olds’/‘Parenting Teenagers’**

Dublin, Autumn 2017



**/SolutionTalk**



**@JohnSharryIRL**

# Example - Separation Anxiety

## Prevention Plan

Make a picture schedule with child explaining the routine step by step:

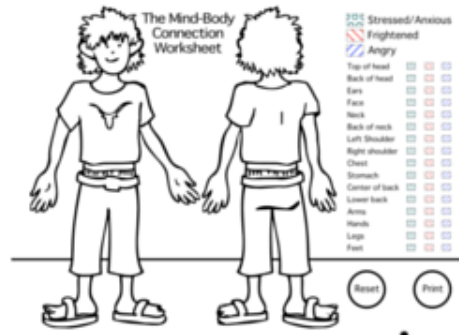
1. Baby sitter arrives
2. Baby sitter and child play together
3. Mum puts on her coat and kisses good bye
4. Child and baby sitter play special games
5. Child and babysitter have a snack
6. Mum comes home and gives child a kiss
7. Star on chart for child being so brave





## PAUSE POINT

Think about the different techniques to help children manage feelings of anxiety



What might work with **your own child**?

# Breathing and Relaxation

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The simplest way to relax is to  
Become aware of your breath...