

# Helping Children to Cope with Stress and Anxiety

**Fleet Primary School  
Parent /Carer Workshop  
25<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
12.30-1.30pm**



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# Today we will think about...

- To recognise the signs, symptoms and causes of stress and anxiety
- To take away strategies for helping your child to cope better with everyday stress and anxiety
- To understand how to support your child if they experience panic attacks

# Ground Rules

- Confidentiality
- No pressure to share anything personal
- Being open-minded and non-judgemental
- Be kind to yourself

## Stress:

a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances

"She's obviously under a lot of stress"



## Anxiety:

a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

"He felt a surge of anxiety"

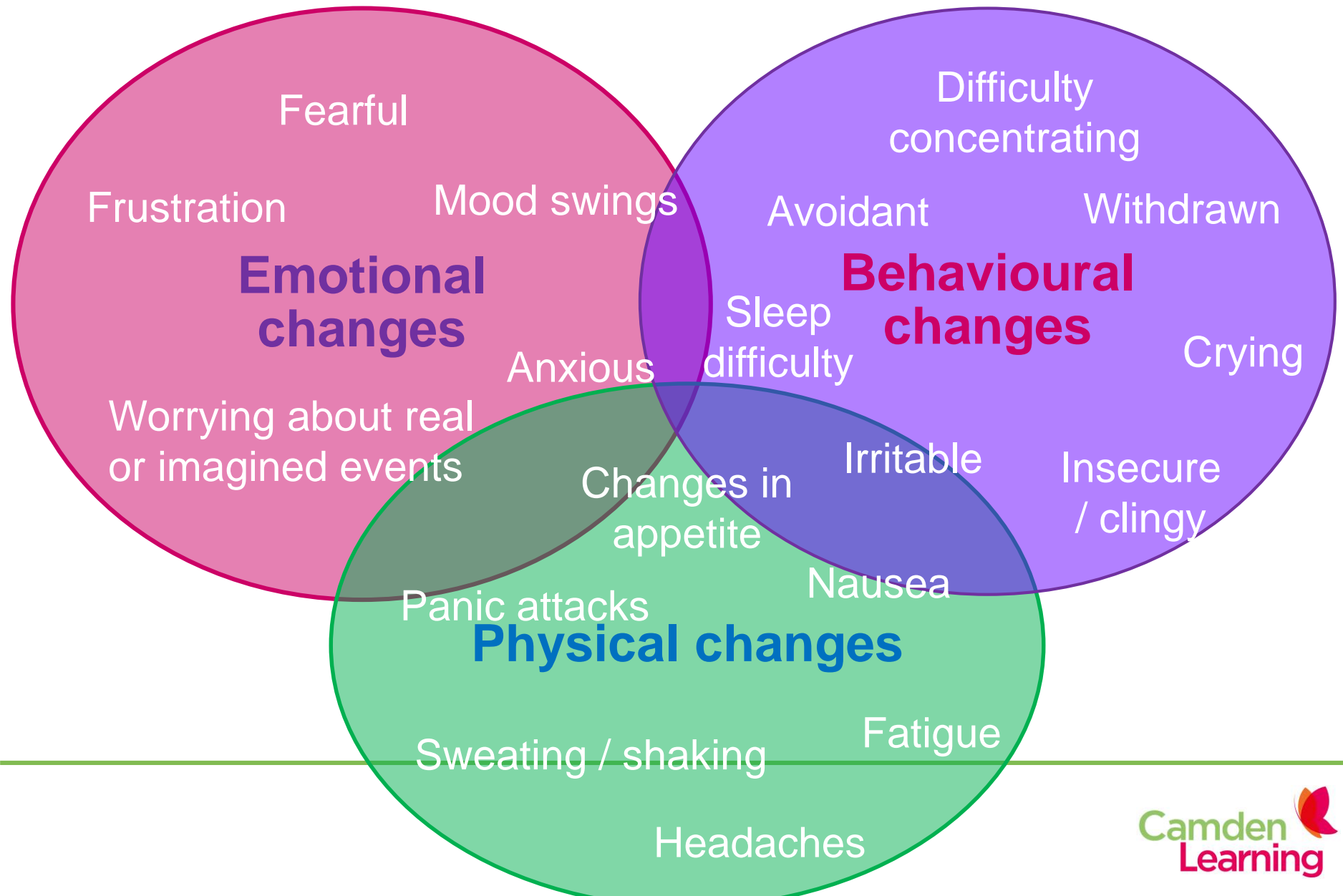




Can you think of  
examples of when  
your child has shown  
that they feel stressed  
or anxious?



# Signs / Symptoms



# The Spectrum of Stress and Anxiety

## Healthy levels

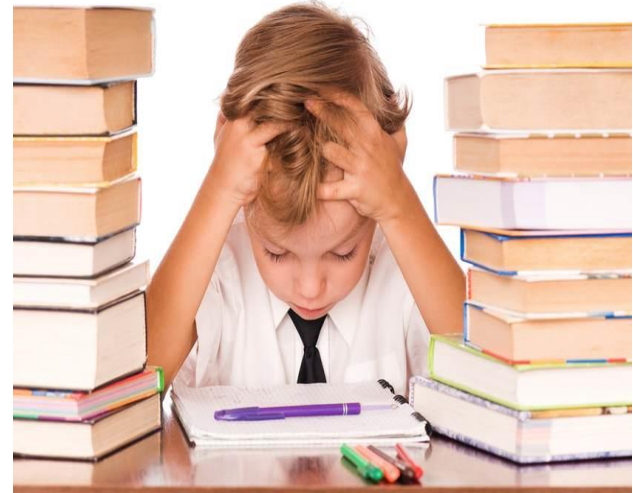


- Can use adrenaline to help us perform
- Develop motivation to achieve well
- Enables us to become good at specific things

**70%**

70% increase in rates of anxiety in teens over past 25 years.

## Unhealthy levels



- Unable to function in daily life
- Stress hormone (cortisol) affects physical health too
- Inability to concentrate and problem-solve
- Sleep, diet, motivation can all be affected

# If the stress/anxiety affects daily living

- Excessive anxiety and worry most days about many things for at least **six months**
- Difficulty controlling the worry
- Appearance of **three** of the following six symptoms: restlessness, fatigue, irritability, muscle tension, sleep disturbance, and difficulty concentrating
- Symptoms not being caused by current stressors from the environment, e.g. exams, lockdown, bereavement



**What does it mean to be resilient?**

Do You Bend or Break?

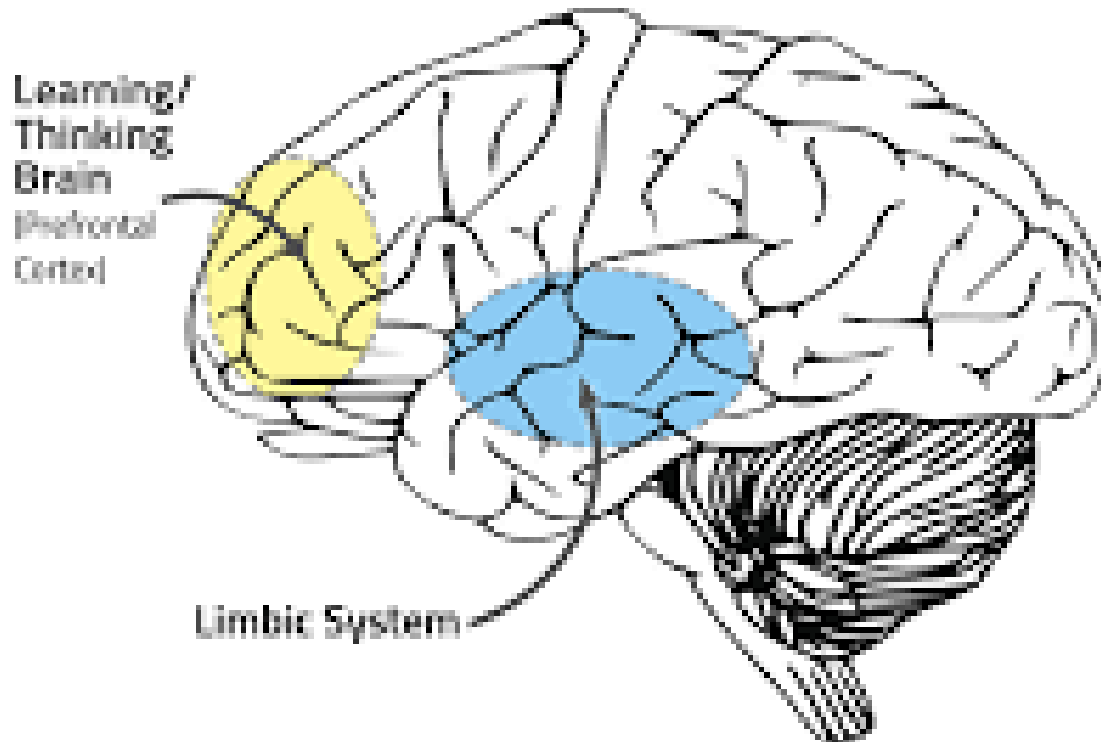
# Understanding the Stress/Anxiety Response

## Survival Mode: Flight/Fight/Freeze

[Kids Want to Know](#)

Frontal lobe (Prefrontal cortex) goes offline

Limbic system / mind and lower brain functions take over



# Teaching Self-Regulation

In through the  
nose

Out through the  
mouth



7

Practice long  
deep breathing

11

**breathe  
in**

**breathe  
out**

**Count 1 to 7**

First, count from one to seven  
on each "in" breath . . .

**Count 1 to 11**

. . . then, counting at the same  
rate, count from one to eleven  
on each "out" breath



# THE STRESS BUCKET



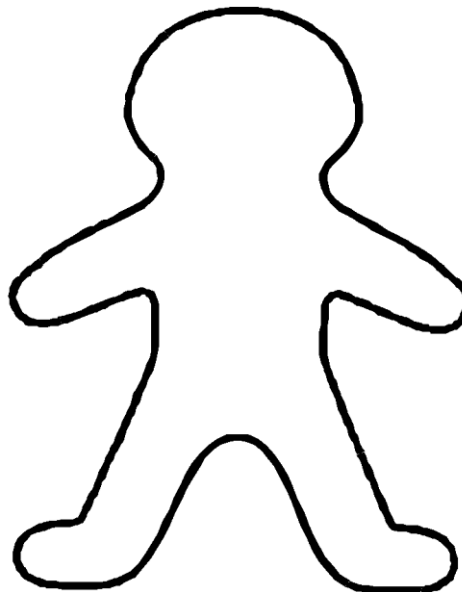
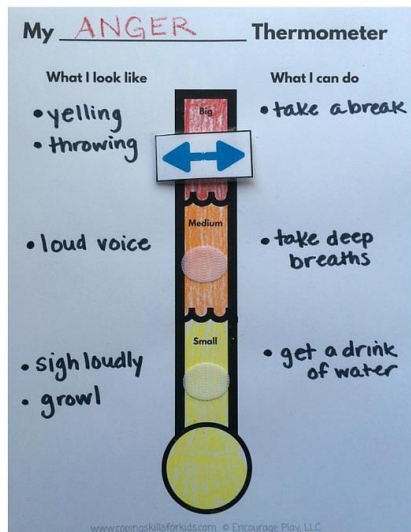


# Self-regulation = calming ourselves down

1. Recognise when we are starting to feel stressed
2. Name those feelings
3. Employ coping strategies

- Ginger-bread activity – write down how you feel when stressed
- Point to face picture that represents how you feel


## Making a Feelings Thermometer





5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1


## SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN

FIRST OFF – TAKE 3 SLOW & QUIET DEEP BREATHS!

5 List 5 things you can SEE 

4 List 4 things you can FEEL 

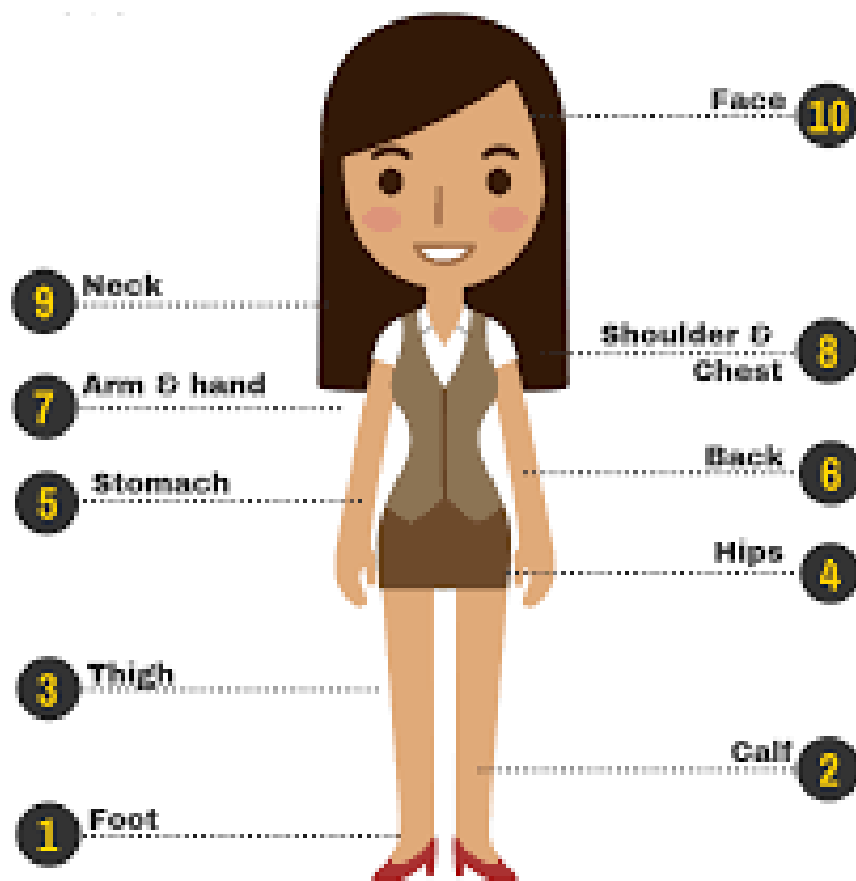
3 List 3 things you can HEAR 

2 List 2 things you can SMELL 

1 List something positive about yourself 😊

MAKE  
today  
COUNT

FINISHED? NOW – TAKE 3 MORE SLOW & QUIET DEEP BREATHS ☺



WORKfit

# Calming the Mind

## Headspace Video

<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>



<https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/>

# Supportive Conversations

- **How to start a conversation with your child:**

- “Let’s share some things that went well today and some things that were hard, I’ll go first...”
- “Did anything make you smile today?”
- “I noticed you didn’t want to play with x, is anything on your mind?”

**Some examples of what to say during a conversation with your child:**

- “Thank you for telling me, you are being really brave”
- “I’m here for you, we can work through this together”
- “These feelings won’t last forever, we can take it one day at a time ”



# Scenario

**Your child tells you they are too anxious to go to school. They say they are worried about catching coronavirus and even more worried about spreading it to older family members.**

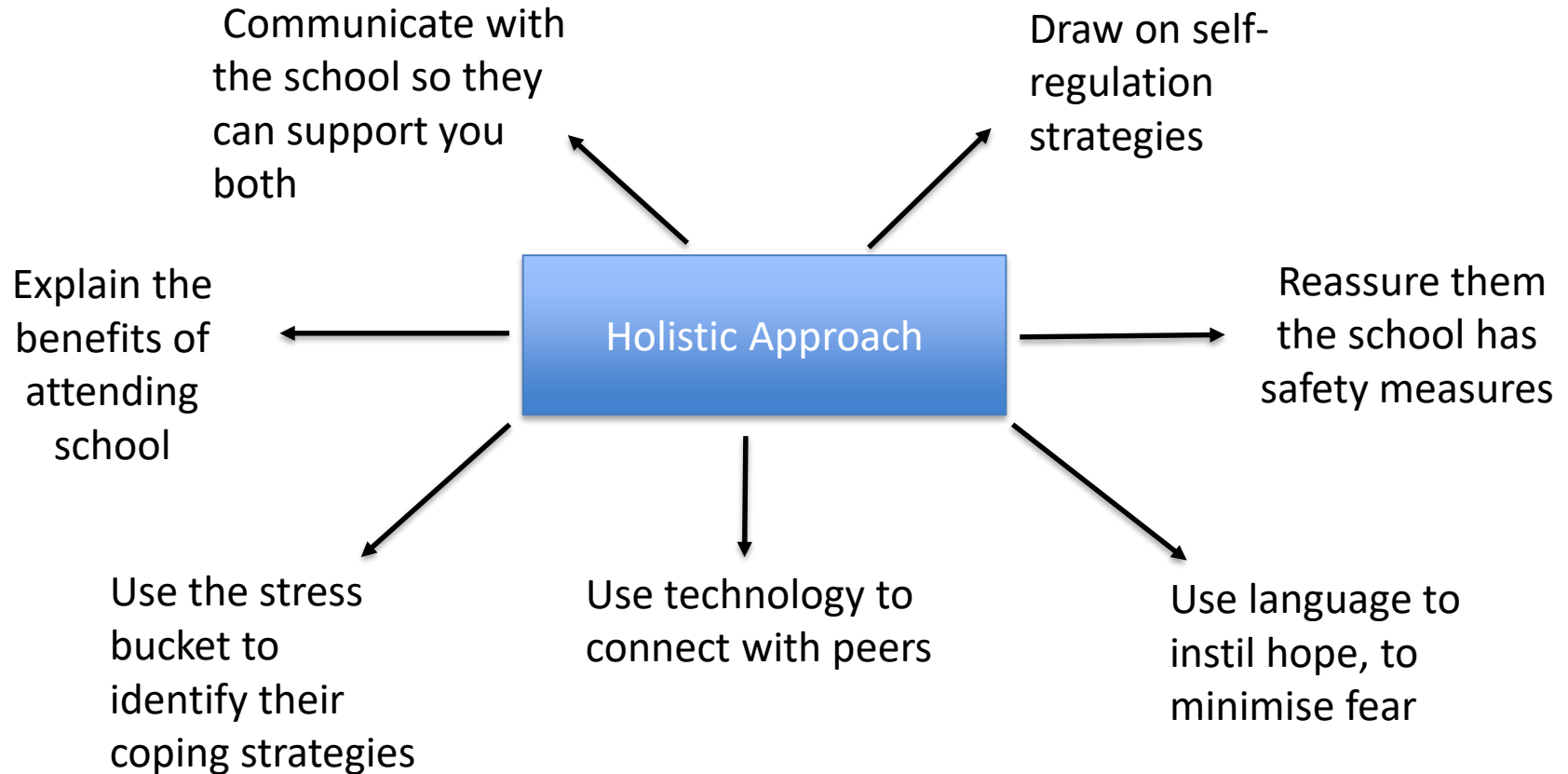
**They are now refusing to go into school.**

**How would you deal with this situation?**



# Managing this scenario

**Your child tells you they are too anxious to go to school. They say they are worried about catching coronavirus and even more worried about spreading it to older family members. They are now refusing to go into school.**



# Strategies to Support Panic Attacks

- Breathe slowly and deeply together
- Sit with them and offer calm physical reassurance
- Reassure them that the anxiety will pass and that they will be okay
- Ask them to think of a safe and relaxing place or person in their mind
- Try using all five senses together

# Panic Attacks

## *Helping children understand panic attacks*

- Panic attacks are the body's "flight-freeze-fight" response kicking in.
- Panic attacks are harmless, although they can feel very uncomfortable or scary.
- Panic attacks are brief (typically lasting only 10 to 15 minutes)

# Where to get Advice and Support

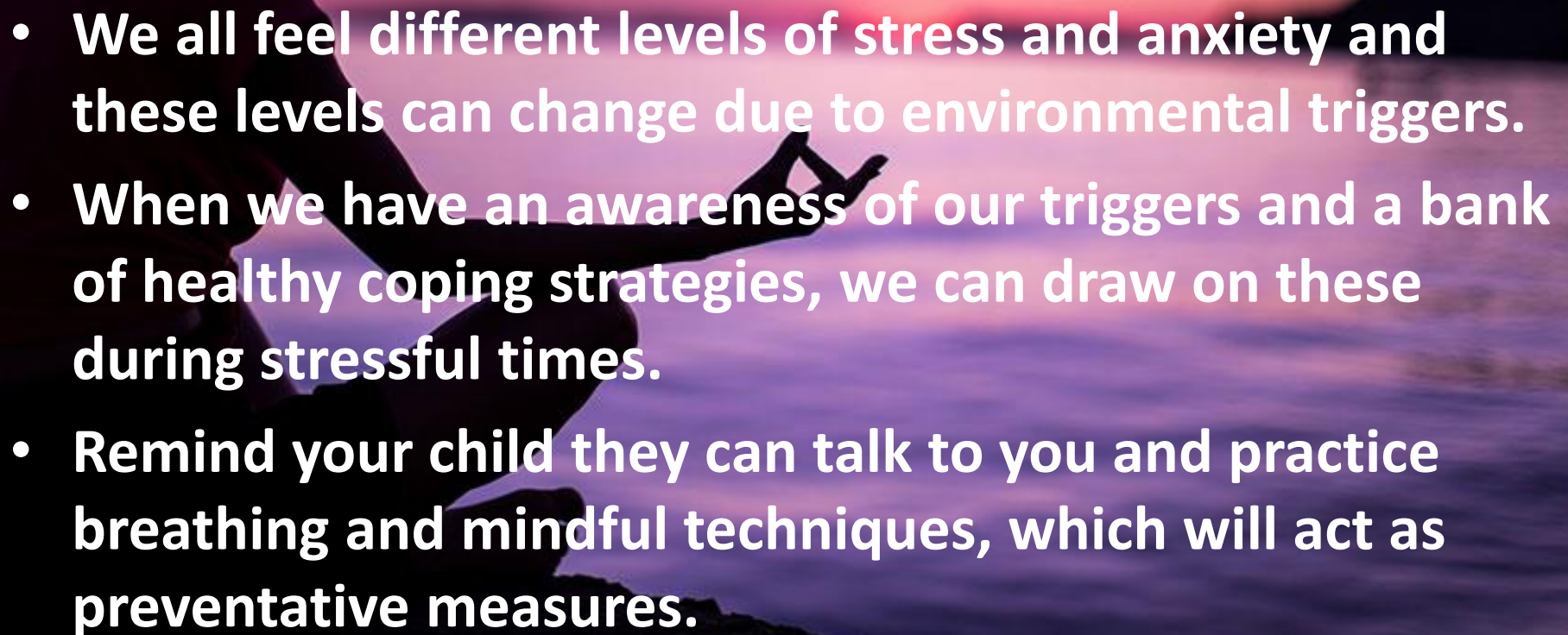
- Family / Friends
- School
- GP



## Information:

- Resilient Stories: <https://afineparent.com/gift-guides/childrens-books-about-resilience.html>
- MindEd for Families - <https://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/>
- Pooky Knightsmith blog - <https://www.pookyknightsmith.com/>
- Young Minds - [http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_children\\_young\\_people](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people)

# Summary

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- A silhouette of a person sitting in a meditative pose (lotus or similar) on a rocky shore, looking out at the ocean during a sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and orange, and the water reflects these colors. The person's hands are in a mudra (gesture), with fingers interlaced.
- **We all feel different levels of stress and anxiety and these levels can change due to environmental triggers.**
  - **When we have an awareness of our triggers and a bank of healthy coping strategies, we can draw on these during stressful times.**
  - **Remind your child they can talk to you and practice breathing and mindful techniques, which will act as preventative measures.**

# Feedback Forms

[Parent Workshop Feedback Form](#)