

# CYP Anxiety Workshop with Neurodivergent adaptations

# Our Aims for Today

- Within our MHST, we have been working on adapting our Worry Management workshop and intervention to fit the needs of all children and young people.
- This workshop is four sessions, 1 hour per week. These groups consist of around 10-12 pupils who have been identified by teachers.
- This workshop is inclusive of all students, but we have developed it especially for those who may be neurodivergent or whose worries may divert from what we would classically associate with anxiety.
- The slides we will present are a working template, created by our colleagues within our team. The idea of the slides are you continually add or remove slides to fit the workings of your specific group.

# Session overview

Each session is started with a workshop agreement to ensure respectful participation throughout. This includes defining confidentiality and rules for the workshops.

The session plan will then be outlined aiming to reduce anxiety surrounding the sessions and help ease any uncertainty.

At the end of each session, there will be a bullet-pointed key messages, explaining what we hope they have taken away.

In the first session, each student is given the associated booklet to follow through with the information and activities.

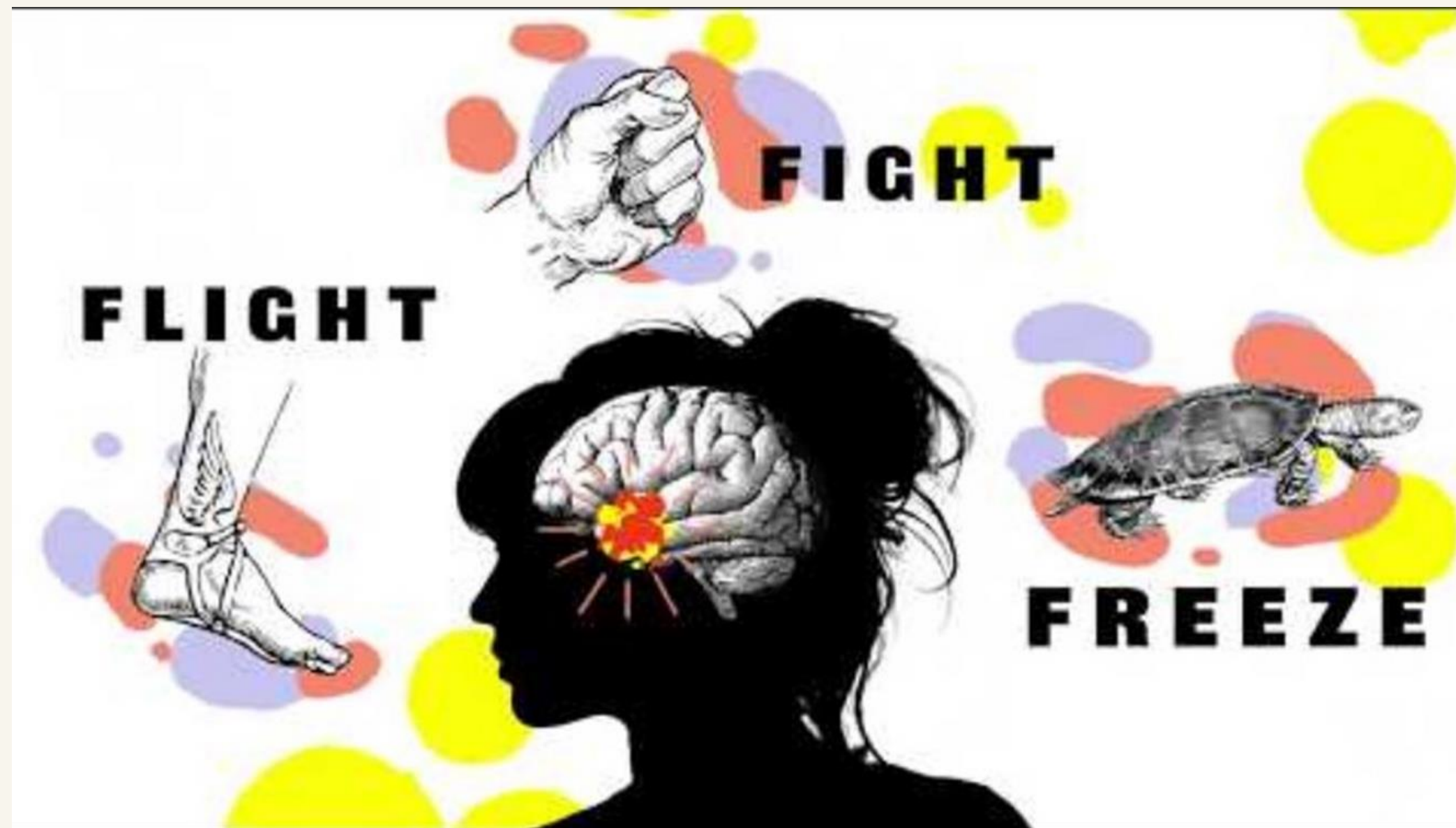
# Session 1 aims

Our first workshop aims to increase knowledge and psychoeducation of anxiety. This is essential for all workshops we develop within MHST. This includes normalising worry and how we can recognise its impact.

Psychoeducation is essential for young people making changes in their anxiety. We aren't able to make those changes unless we first understand what the actual anxiety is about and also what anxiety is.

# Videos

[Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained For Teens](#)



# Session 1: Understanding Anxiety

## **Generalised anxiety**

An excessive amount of anxiety or worry in several parts of life such as health, school or minor concerns.

## **Social Phobia**

Anxiety about what others may think of you or how you may be perceived in social situations.

## Common types of Anxiety

## **Specific Phobia**

A very intense fear of a specific situation or object which is out of proportion to its actual threat.

## **Separation anxiety**

Anxiety about being away from a primary caregiver (parents, carers).

Thoughts about  
worries and  
anxieties

Physical symptoms  
(stomachache,  
shaky)

Finding it hard to  
focus

Eating more or less

# Exploring other common causes of anxiety for neurodivergent individuals

## **Understanding social situations**

- Difficulties telling others what you need
- Struggling to understand body language or behaviour
- Finding sarcasm or 'banter' confusing

## **Sensory challenges**

- Not liking or needing a lot of sensory input
- Our senses include taste, smell, sound, sight, touch, how our bodies move, balance and how things feel inside our bodies (feeling pain).

## **Executive Functioning**

- Planning or organising
- Struggling to manage emotions
- Time management
- Memory
- Avoiding saying or doing the wrong things

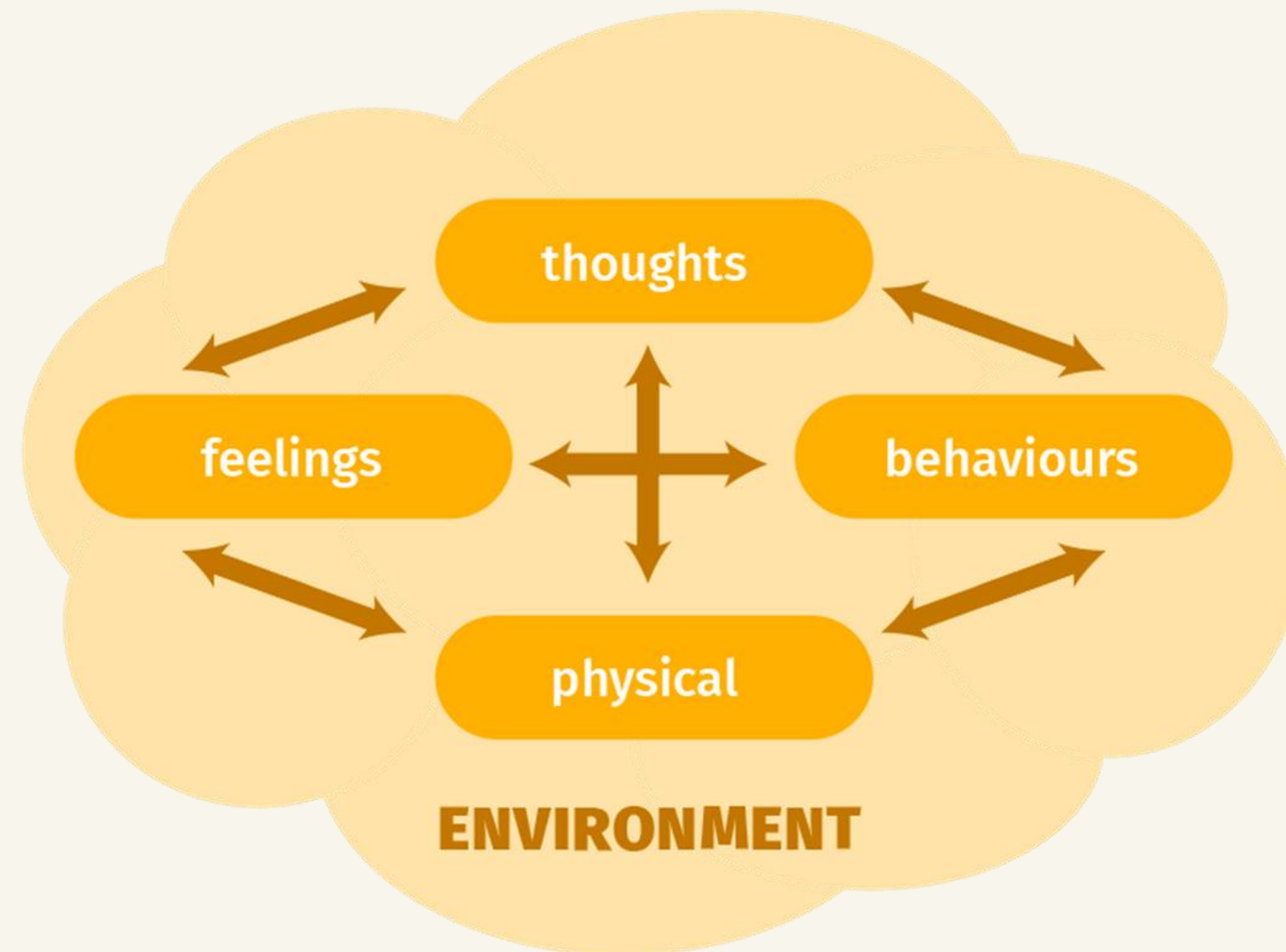
# Session 1 Activity 1



# Session 1: Maintenance of Anxiety



# Session 1: Activity



# Session 2 aims

The aim of this session is to think about decreasing rumination of worry and starting to introduce strategies to help with generalised worry.

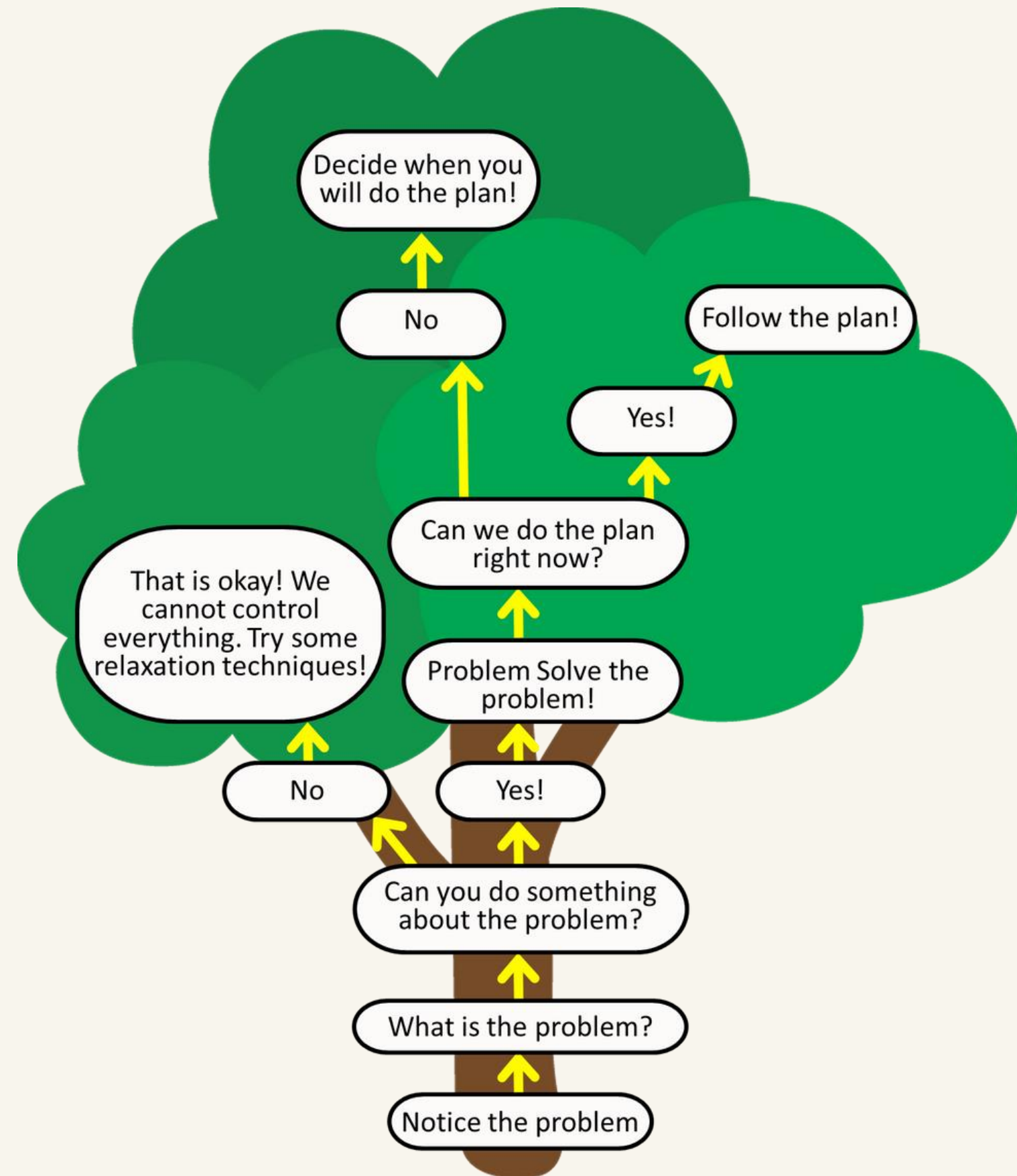
# Types of worries

## Hypothetical worries

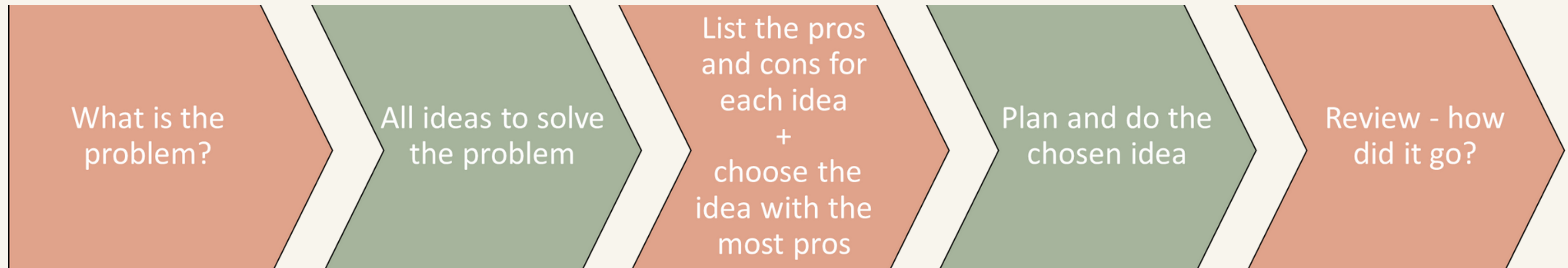
Hypothetical worries are worries we do not have control over and can't do anything about.

## Practical worries

Practical worries we have control over and can do something about.



# Problem Solving and Worry Time



**We can have some many worries in our day. Some people like to schedule a “worry time” where they can go through all their worries and think about them.**

**The aim is to not worry throughout the day and worry at worry time. It can take some practice!**



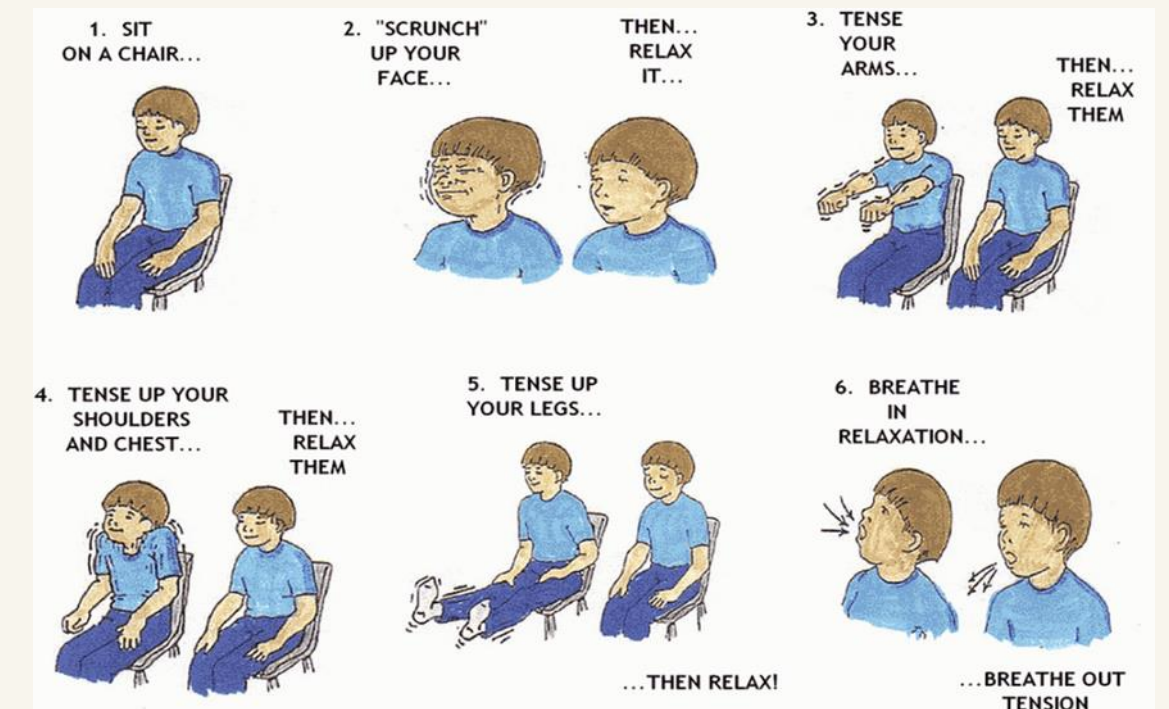
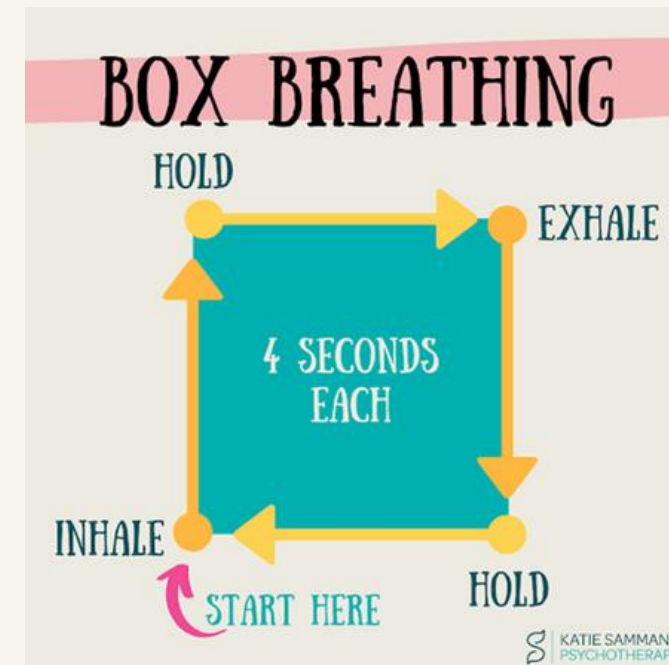
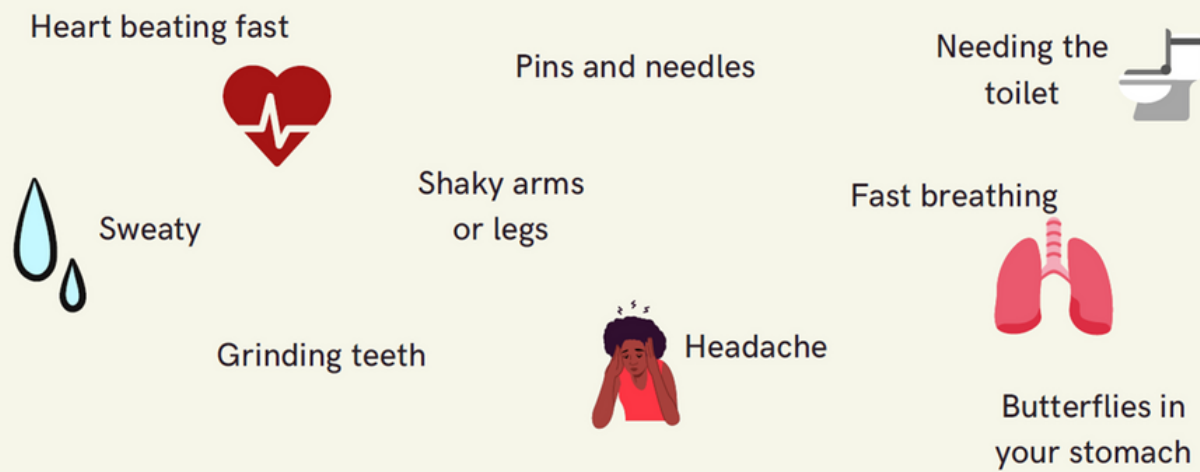
# Session 3

This sessions aims to introduce healthy and safe relaxation strategies to help reduce anxiety and stress

This session also introduced the idea of positive self-talk and a 'bully brain'

# Relaxation techniques

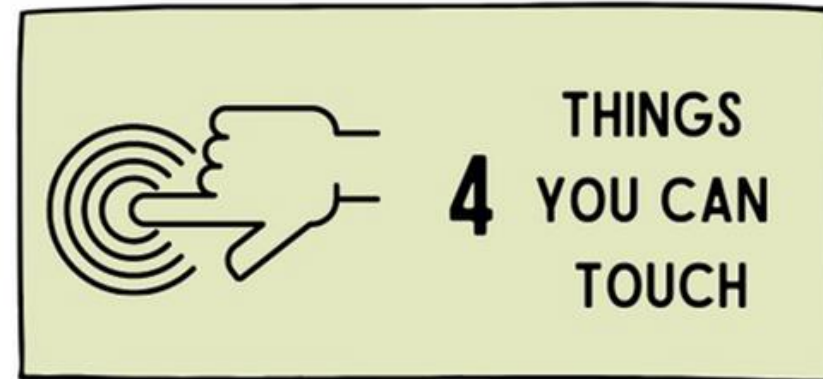
## Common physical symptoms of anxiety:



[5 Minute Mindfulness Meditation](#)



# Other Techniques



Take a hot or cold shower

Squeezing ice/ice pack

Washing hands with cold water

Go for a walk/nature walk or be in nature

Using fidget toys

Creative activities – drawing, colouring, painting

Listen to music – happy upbeat songs!

Do something you like

# Bully Brain

Sometimes we can be quite mean to the self and think negatively . We can tell ourselves that there are things we do not like about us and become critical.

This can make us feel upset, anxious or even frustrated. These negative thoughts can also stop us from doing things and we start avoiding certain situations.



# Positive self-talk

Negative	Recognition	Decision	Growth
<i>I can't</i>	<i>I need to</i>	<i>I'm done with...</i>	<b><i>I</i></b>
<i>I won't</i>	<i>I ought to</i>	<i>I no longer...</i>	<b><i>am</i></b>
<i>I wish but..</i>	<i>I really should</i>	<i>I'm not going to...</i>	<b><i>I</i></b>
<i>I could never</i>	<i>I'd like to</i>	<i>From now on..</i>	<b><i>have</i></b>
			<b><i>I</i></b>
			<b><i>will</i></b>

Self-talk plays a crucial role in cognitive processing and emotional development.

By encouraging the development of healthy self-talk habits, we provide them with essential tools for self-regulation, communication, and navigating social situations.

# Videos

[You are not your thoughts | AboutKidsHealth at The Hospital for Sick Children](#)



# Session 4

This session aims to help young people recognise the impact of the sensory environment and how this can increase our anxiety

# Environmental Factors

Physical - Clutter, busy environments, noise, temperature, comfort

Social - Supportive vs difficult relationships, social expectations, Bullying

Cultural - religion, cultural norms/expectations, discrimination and stigma.

# Cultural Differences

- Gender differences
- Differences in ability
- Physical appearance
- Money difficulties
- Religious differences
- English as a second language

and can lead to

- Being left out
- Being singled out
- Feeling different from others
- A lack of connection to others
- Discrimination
- Bullying

# Differences with how our brain works

Communication differences

Social battery

Empathy differences

Sensory overwhelm or  
underwhelm

Organisation

Understanding instructions

Remembering things

Planning

Being impulsive

Emotional control

Time management

Starting a task

# Session 4 Activity

During this activity, we ask the young people within our session to identify environmental triggers that may increase their anxiety.

Additionally we start to think about the tools they already use to help them

# What can help?

Visual timetables

Routine

Predicability

Keeping things the same

Routine

Breaking tasks down

Written instructions

Signs and labels

# Ending Thoughts

- This workshop aimed to adapt our current workshops to help neurodivergent young people struggling with high anxiety.
- This workshop is a working document aiming to adapt with the young people and practitioners are continually looking at how to improve
- The first pilots of this workshop have been successful and have allowed us to support young people and help fulfil a gap within the service