

# Anxiety at home and at school

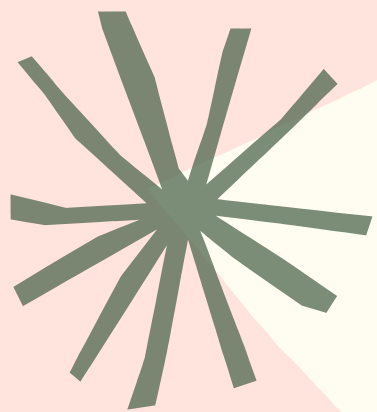
Understanding Anxiety, and how we can help

**Ebony Kriedemann**

School Counsellor

**March 6th | 6pm**

St George's Anglican Grammar



# Hi! My name is Ebony.

**I am St George's School Counsellor**

**I have worked in the mental health field for several years and studied my bachelor of Behavioural Science before commencing my Masters of Counselling.**

**I am incredibly passionate about working with our youth of today to build resilience, connection, and understand our emotions.**

**Things I love outside of work include...**

- **Almond iced lattes**
- **Potatoes, in any form**
- **My husband**
- **My dog**
- **Overpriced linen shirts**
- **Italian food**







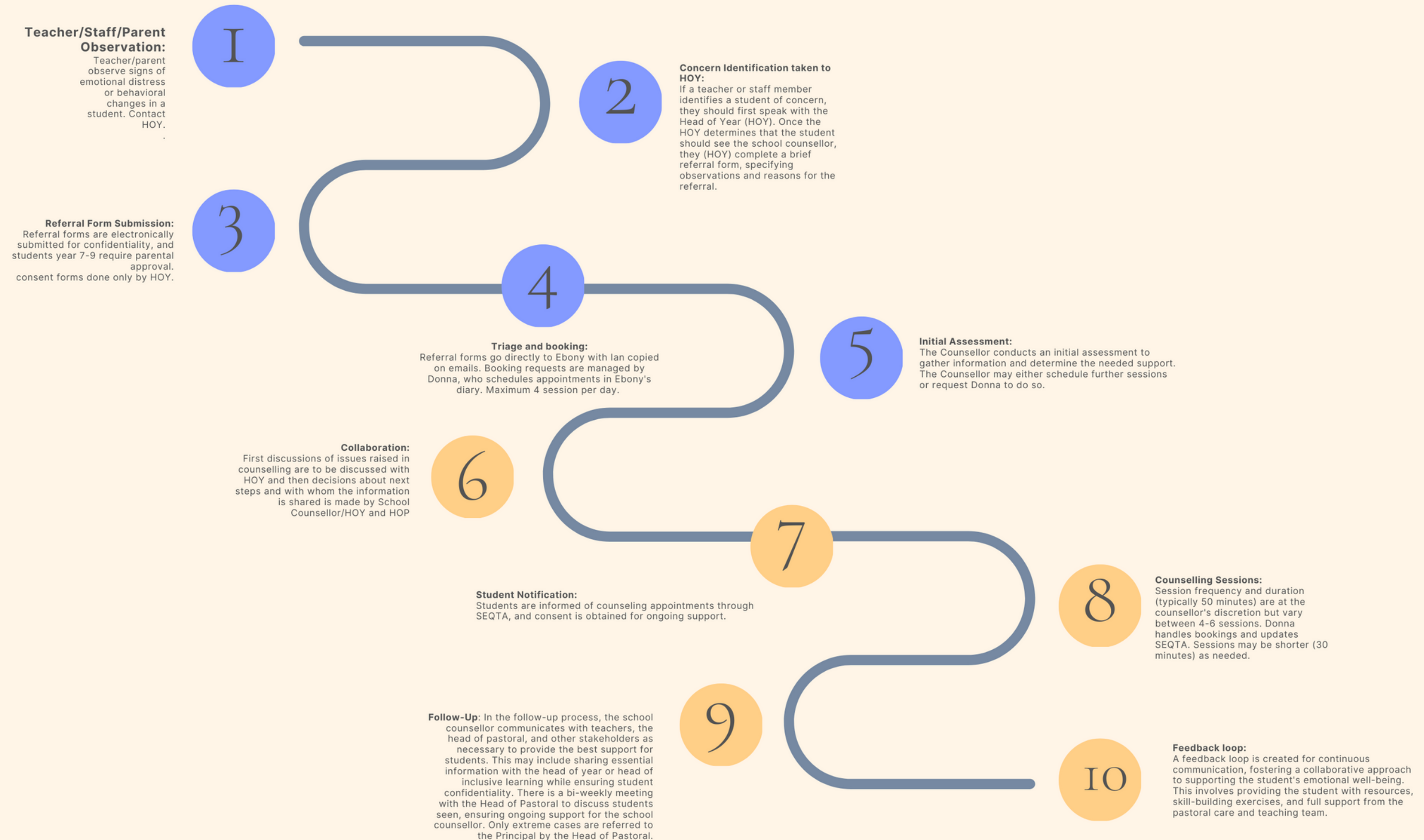
## **The Role of a School Counsellor**




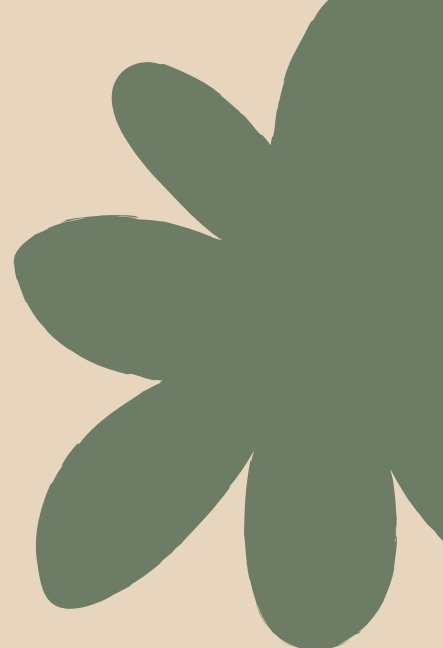

As the School Counsellor, my main focus is on providing emotional support to our students. While I work one on one with students, I am often collaborating closely with the head of pastoral care, our school principal, heads of year, teachers and families, as well as external support networks.

My role involves offering individual counselling, addressing emotional well-being, and fostering personal and social development in our students. I aim to create a safe and supportive space for students to navigate challenges, build resilience, and thrive emotionally.



# St George's Anglican Grammar School Counselling Referral Process





# Understanding Anxiety in Teenagers





# What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal response, born of worry. In many respects, it is seen as a mechanism to keep us safe. It would be unusual not to feel anxiety in potentially high-risk situations or before a test.



When anxiety is excessive and stops someone from functioning, it can become a clinical disorder. This type of diagnosis can be subdivided into generalised anxiety, phobias, and other related conditions

# What is Anxiety?



Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained For Teens

Share

**FIGHT**

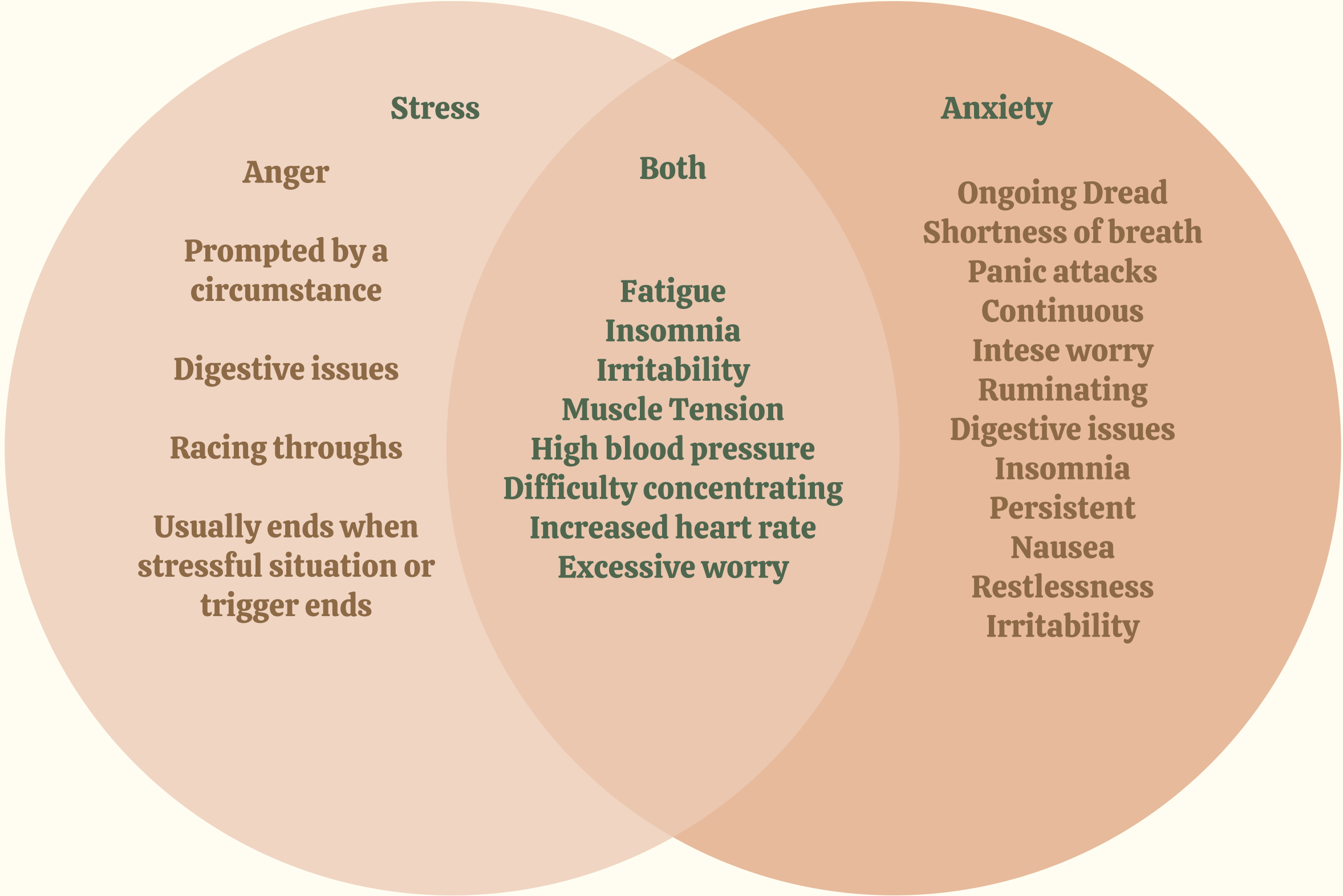
**FLIGHT**

**FREEZE**

Watch on YouTube

The video thumbnail features a central silhouette of a person's head in profile, facing left. Inside the head, a brain is depicted with a red play button icon overlaid on it. To the left of the head, there is an illustration of a hand in a fist, with the word 'FIGHT' in bold black letters below it. To the right of the head, there is an illustration of a turtle, with the word 'FREEZE' in bold black letters below it. To the left of the head, there is an illustration of a winged foot, with the word 'FLIGHT' in bold black letters below it. The background is white with colorful, abstract shapes in shades of purple, red, and yellow. In the top left corner of the thumbnail, there is a blue circular icon with a white play button. In the top right corner, there is a white arrow pointing right with the word 'Share' below it. At the bottom left, there is a dark grey bar with the text 'Watch on' followed by the YouTube logo and the word 'YouTube'.

# How to recognise Stress vs Anxiety







# Anxiety Identifiers

**Avoidance of Tasks**

**Irrational fears**

**Attendance Issues**

**Physical Signs of Anxiety**

**Overthinking and Rumination**

**Excessive Worrying**

**Restlessness**

**Perceived Lack of Control**

**Difficulty Concentrating**

**Perfectionism**

**Irritability**

**Seeking Reassurance**

**Social Withdrawal**

**Changes in Academic Performance**

**Perceived Criticism**



# The faulty fire alarm.

Imagine anxiety like an overactive smoke detector in your brain called the amygdala. Its job is to alert you to possible dangers. Sometimes, it can get too sensitive and go off even when there's no real danger, overwhelming the part of your brain that handles memories, called the hippocampus.

Once the perceived danger passes, the alarm stops, but your memory files might still be messy. That's where therapy comes in — it helps tidy up those mental files.

In this analogy, some people have smoke detectors that rarely go off and only respond to real danger, so they recover quickly. Others have frequent false alarms, like a smoke detector triggered by a toaster without a real fire.

The key is recognising when it's just a false alarm. By understanding this, you can calm down, restore peace of mind, and get back to enjoying life.



# Understanding Anxiety and Teens

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders among teenagers. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), approximately

**32%**

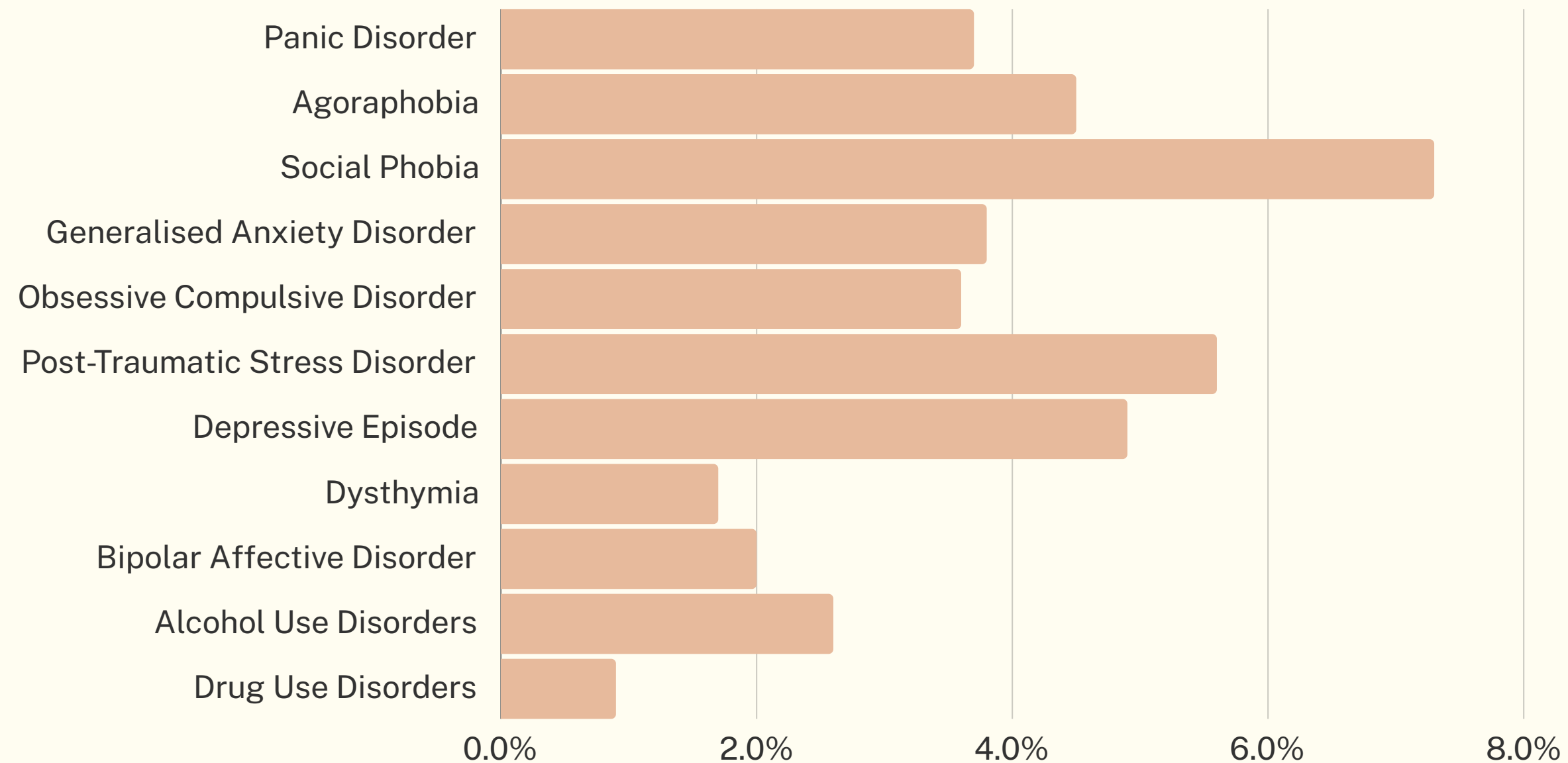
Of adolescents aged 13-18 will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives. Common anxiety disorders among teenagers include generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and specific phobias. The emergence or increased prevalence of anxiety during adolescence is influenced by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors.

# The stats.

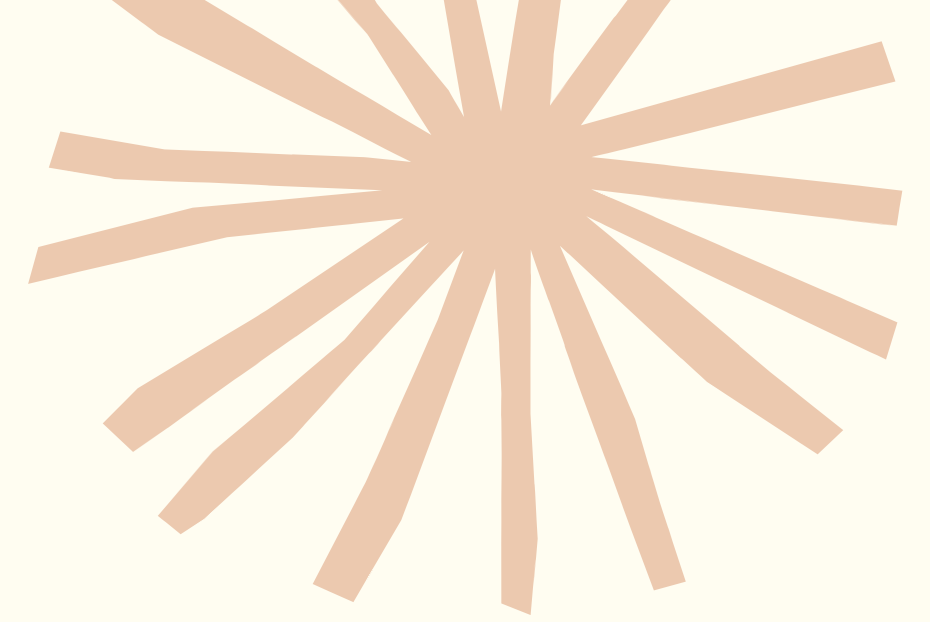
*Mental health disorders among young people have soared by nearly 50 per cent in 15 years, new data shows, as experts warn the health system is struggling to cope with the growing complexity and demand.*

- **According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), nearly 40% of young Australians aged 16 to 24, totaling over 1 million individuals, faced a mental health disorder in the past year.**
- **This marks an increase from 26% reported in 2007.**
- **Young women were particularly affected, with 45.5% experiencing a mental health condition, up from 30.1% in 2007.**
- **In comparison, one-third of young men (32.4%) experienced a mental health condition, up from 22.8% in 2007.**
- **Anxiety disorders were the most prevalent, affecting two in five young women and one in four young men.**

## Anxiety disorders were the most common type of mental health condition in 2020-2022



% persons who met criteria for diagnosis of a mental disorder and had sufficient symptoms of that disorder in the previous 12 months.



# **Understanding Teenage Anxiety: Influencing Factors and Emergence**

Biological, Psychological, and Social Factors.

1

**Hormonal Changes:**

During adolescence, hormonal changes lead to increased activity in the brain, affecting its chemistry and making teenagers more susceptible to anxiety.

*You might see this as:  
Increased emotional sensitivity,  
heightened mood swings, and a sense of  
vulnerability.*

2

During adolescence, the brain experiences rapid growth and undergoes significant changes in neural connections, particularly in the prefrontal cortex. This incomplete development can result in challenges in emotion regulation, making teenagers more prone to anxiety.

*You might see this as:  
Difficulty regulating emotions,  
challenges in decision-making,  
and heightened susceptibility to  
stress.*

3

**Identity Formation:**

Teens explore beliefs, values, and interests, a process that can be anxiety-inducing as they strive to establish individual identities and find a sense of belonging.

*You might see this as:  
Pressure to establish identity, fear of  
not fitting in, and stress related to  
finding a sense of belonging.*





4

**Social Pressure:** Adolescence involves navigating peer relationships, friendships, and social hierarchies. The fear of rejection, desire for acceptance, and constant peer comparison contribute to anxiety.

*You might see this as:  
Fear of rejection, desire for acceptance,  
and constant comparison to peers  
contributing to heightened anxiety.*

5

**Increased Responsibility:** Transitioning to adulthood brings new responsibilities like academic demands, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities, leading to overwhelming feelings and anxiety.

*You might see this as:  
Feeling overwhelmed, struggling  
to balance responsibilities, and  
increased stress.*

6

**Societal and Environmental Factors:** Various societal and environmental factors contribute to teenage anxiety. Expectations regarding academics, athletics, appearance, and social interactions create pressure. Additionally, family dynamics, traumatic events, socioeconomic status, and cultural influences also play a role.

*You might see this as:  
Pressure to meet societal standards,  
fear of falling short, anxiety related to  
performance expectations, financial  
pressures, and cultural expectations  
contributing to anxiety.*



# How Anxiety affects the teenage brain.

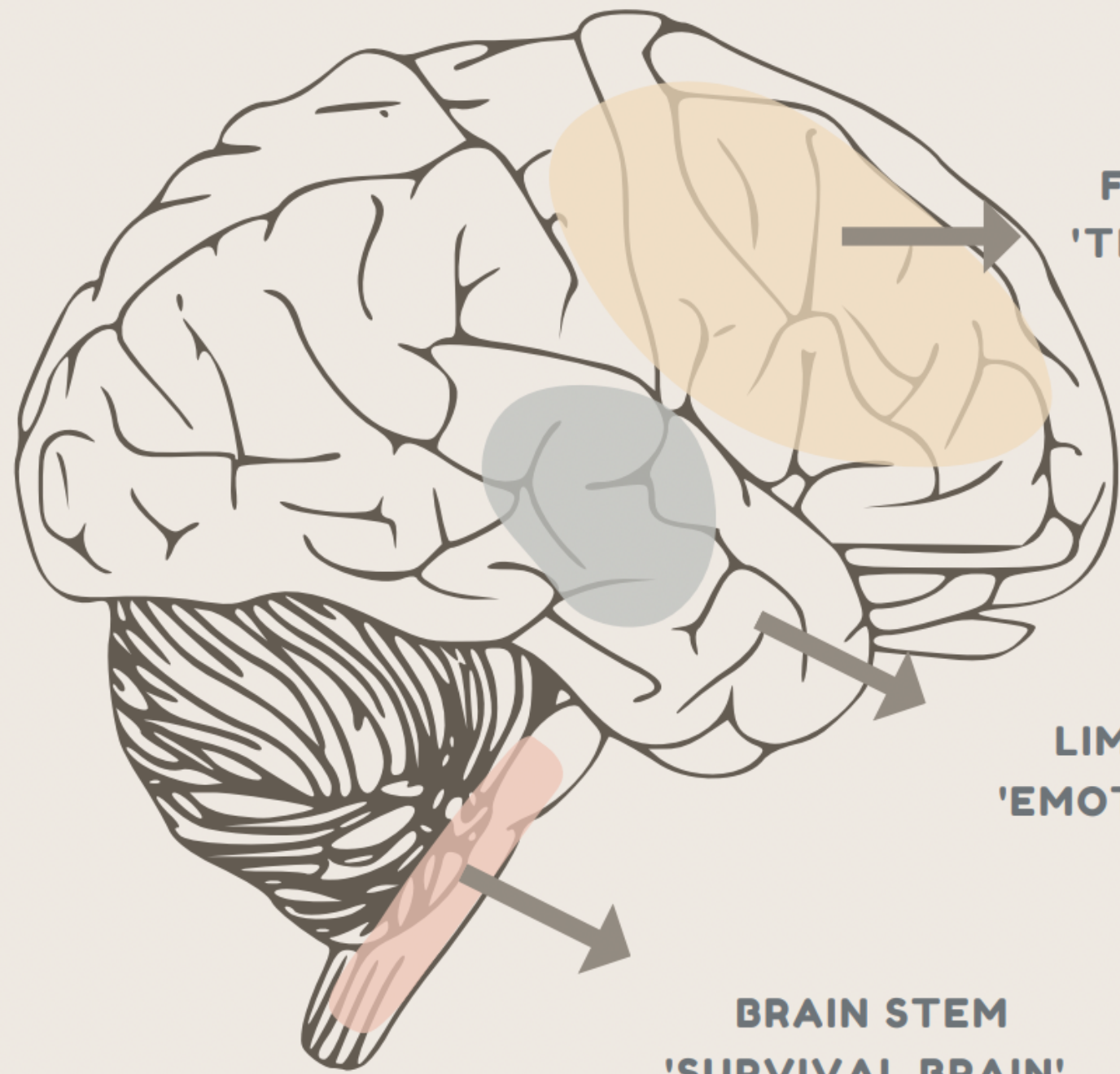
Our brains are wired to respond to a perceived threat, and we can't always distinguish between an actual physical danger (such as a tiger) or a threat caused by worry or fear.

The brain processes anxiety through a complex interplay of different regions and neural pathways.

Here is a general overview of the three parts involved in how the brain processes anxiety.

Remember that when our brain thinks we are in danger, it responds to help us stay safe.





**FRONTAL LOBE**  
**'THINKING BRAIN'**

**LIMBIC SYSTEM**  
**'EMOTIONAL BRAIN'**

**BRAIN STEM**  
**'SURVIVAL BRAIN'**



**The prefrontal cortex:**  
The front part of the brain, called the prefrontal cortex, controls important tasks like making decisions and controlling impulses. When someone feels anxious, it can affect this part of the brain in a bad way. This can make it hard to concentrate, stop worrying, and manage emotions.



The amygdala, a part of the brain that deals with emotions and fear, tends to be extra active in people with anxiety. This means they might react more strongly to stressful or scary situations.

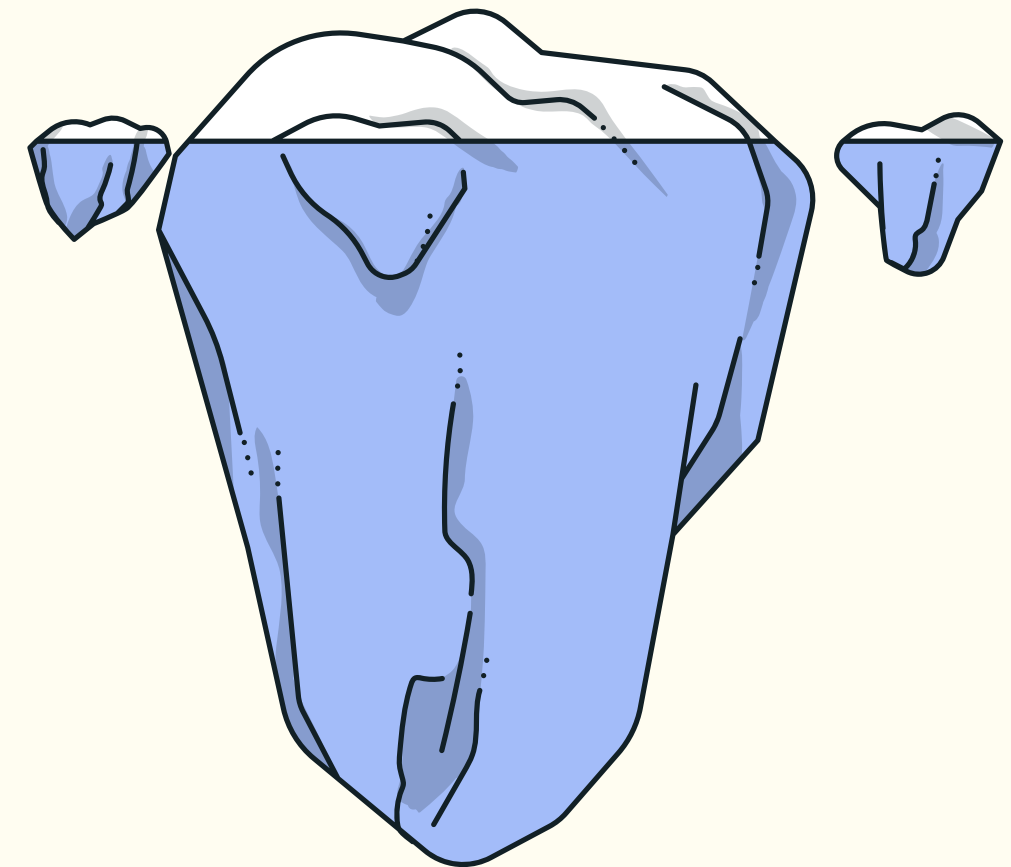


The brainstem passes messages from the amygdala to the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus then tells the body to release stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones help the body get ready to react quickly to what it thinks is a threat.

# The Anxiety Iceberg

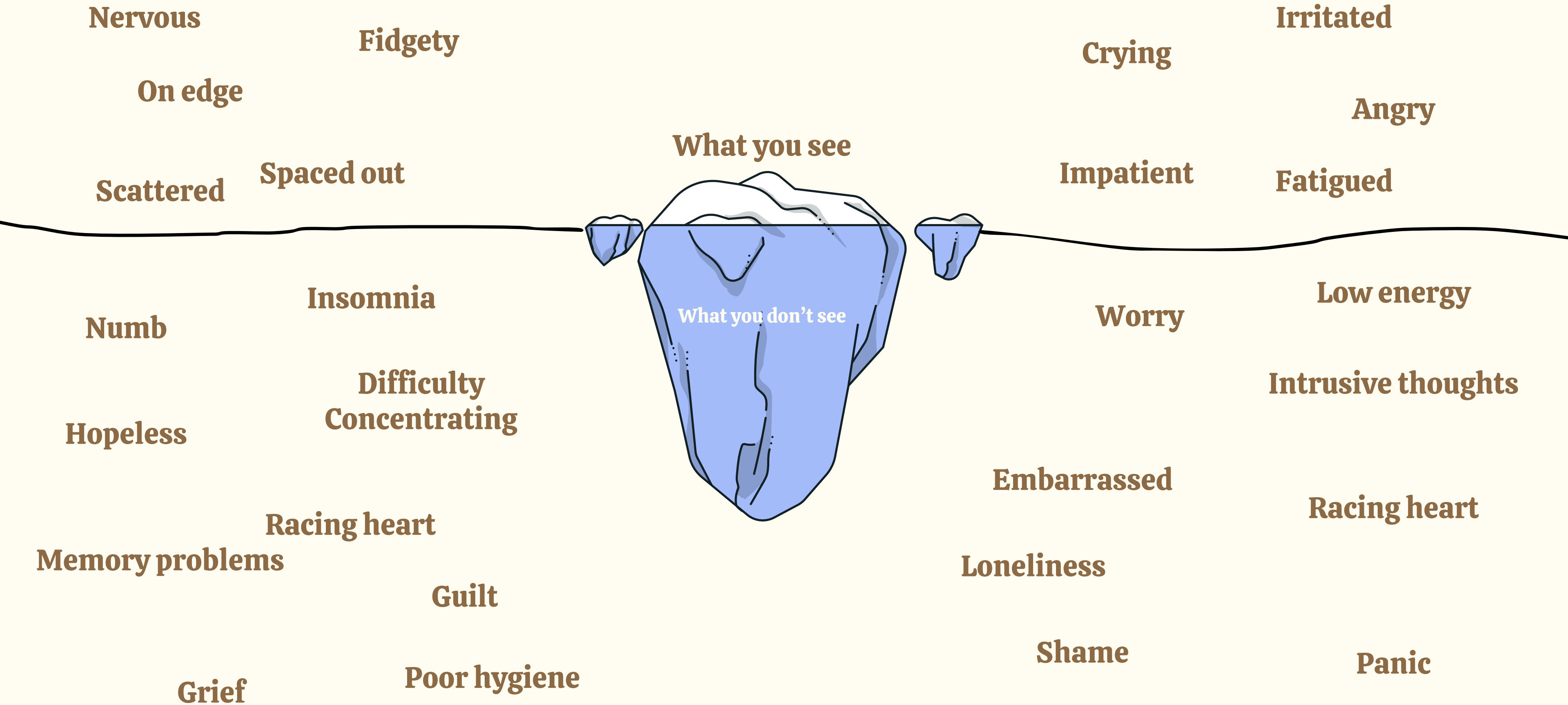
The iceberg theory is a model that represents the idea that, although anxiety is displayed outwardly, other emotions may be hidden beneath the surface; just like an iceberg, you can't see the full magnitude of what is hidden below the surface. The behavior you see is "the tip of the iceberg" - what you don't see are the emotional, social, and other factors that lie beneath the surface and cause that behavior.

**What you see**

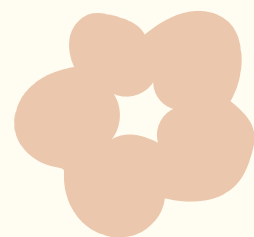


**What you don't see**

# The Anxiety Iceberg



# Managing Anxiety at home



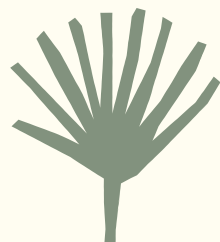
Establish a Supportive Environment



Normalise mistakes



Collaborating with the support around you



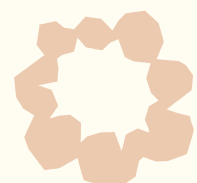
Providing Predictability and Routine



Model healthy behaviours



Clearly Communicating Expectations



Staying Calm and Consistent



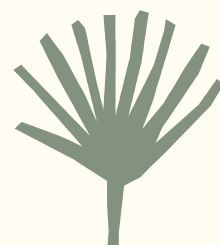
Provide gentle check in's



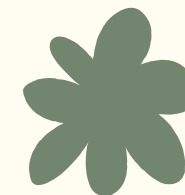
Set realistic expectations



Encouraging Self-Advocacy



Encourage Peer Support



Encourage open communication



# Co-Regulation



# **Co-regulation**

**Teenage years are a challenging time for both teens and their parents. It's a period marked by intense emotions, identity exploration, and the need for independence.**

**One powerful tool that can transform parent-teen relationships is the practice of co-regulation.**

## **Understanding Co-Regulation:**

**Co-regulation refers to the mutual influence and support that individuals provide to each other in a relationship, particularly in the context of managing emotions. For parents and teens, co-regulation involves the parent guiding and supporting the teen in understanding and regulating their emotions.**



# Key components of co-regulation:

## 1. Emotional Awareness:

- Encourage open communication about feelings.
- Help teens identify and label their emotions.

## 2. Active Listening:

- Be fully present when your teen is expressing themselves.
- Reflect back what you hear to ensure understanding.





# Key components of co-regulation:

## 3. Validation:

- **Acknowledge and validate your teen's emotions without judgment.**
- **Express empathy and understanding.**

## 4. Modeling Regulation Techniques:

- **Demonstrate healthy emotion regulation strategies, such as deep breathing or mindfulness.**
- **Encourage your teen to explore and find what works best for them.**





# Key components of co-regulation:

## 5. Setting Boundaries:

- **Work collaboratively to establish clear and fair boundaries.**
- **Discuss consequences and expectations in a calm and supportive manner.**





# Benefits of Co-Regulation:

## Improved Communication:

- **Co-regulation fosters a more open and understanding dialogue between parents and teens.**
- **It creates a safe space for teens to express themselves without fear of judgment.**

## Enhanced Emotional Resilience:

- **Teens who experience co-regulation learn how to navigate and regulate their emotions, contributing to increased emotional resilience.**

## Strengthened Parent-Teen Connection:

- **Co-regulation builds a foundation of trust and connection between parents and teens, crucial for navigating the challenges of adolescence.**

## Skill Development:

- **Teens develop valuable emotional regulation skills that will serve them well in various aspects of life.**







# Practical Tips for Co-Regulating with Your Teen

- 1. Regular Check-Ins:** Create a safe space for open communication by regularly checking in with your teen about their emotions and experiences.
- 2. Share Your Emotions:** Be open about your own feelings and coping mechanisms, demonstrating healthy emotional expression and fostering understanding.
- 3. Learn Together:** Explore emotional regulation techniques together through reading, workshops, or therapy sessions to deepen understanding and connection.
- 4. Relaxation Activities:** Engage in relaxing activities together, such as walks, yoga, or hobbies, to promote calmness and bonding.
- 5. Encourage Independence:** Support your teen in finding their own ways to manage emotions, empowering them to navigate challenges independently while offering guidance when needed.



# Practical skills for helping teens through Anxiety:



**Anxiety 5, 4, 3, 2,1 is a mindfulness exercise used to cope with, lessen, and manage anxiety. This grounding technique can help increase awareness and decrease intrusive thoughts in moments of heightened anxiety, worry, or panic attacks.**

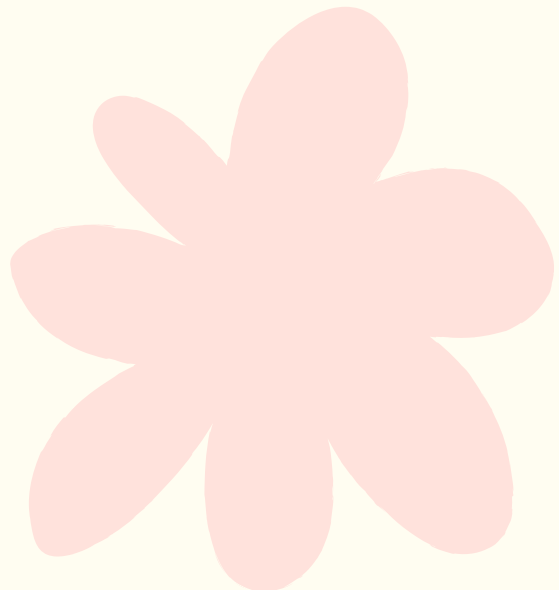


# Useful apps and tools!

- 1. Headspace: Guided meditation and mindfulness exercises.**
- 2. Calm: Meditation, breathing exercises, and sleep stories.**
- 3. MindShift: Tools and techniques for managing anxiety tailored for teens.**
- 4. Smiling Mind: Mindfulness exercises for stress reduction.**
- 5. SuperBetter: Game-based resilience-building for anxiety.**
- 6. WorryTime: Structured worry management tool.**
- 7. Clear Fear: Information and techniques for specific anxieties.**
- 8. MoodMission: Personalized coping strategies for anxiety.**
- 9. Breathe2Relax: Deep breathing exercises for stress relief.**
- 10. Pacifica: Mood tracking, relaxation, and CBT-based activities for anxiety management.**

**These apps can complement professional treatment but are not a substitute for it. Encourage teenagers to integrate them into a broader approach to managing anxiety.**





**THANK YOU!**

