



Wellbeing  
For Kids

# Supporting children with anxiety

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# What is Anxiety?

Your mind and body's reaction to stressful, dangerous or unfamiliar situations.



Real / Perceived threat



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# A certain level of Anxiety is normal

- Worries from time to time
- Social challenges
- World / natural events
- New & Unfamiliar challenges
- Performance



Most children learn to cope with normal worries and fear



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# Stress Response – flight or fight

Acute stress (immediate / short term)



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# Stress Response – flight or fight

Acute stress (immediate / short term)



'Alarm bell' goes  
off in body

Sweat –  
keep cool

Breathing  
accelerate -  
oxygen

Digestive system  
and immune  
system slows  
down – conserve  
energy

Heart rate increases –  
flow of oxygen to major  
muscles

Adrenalin and  
Cortisol flood  
into body



# Stress Response – Chronic Stress

Inappropriate / ongoing activation of the stress response

Wear and tear on the body

Alarm bell gets stuck on the 'ON' mode – body assumes that this is the normal level of anxiety





# Common physical symptoms

Headache

Not focused

Racing Thoughts

Dizzy

Racing Heart

Tight Muscles

Wiggly

Sick in Tummy

Shaky

Jumpy

Careless

Reactive



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Peaceful Kids  
Stable

# Fear



Stress Response  
activated from real  
danger



What if the lion  
attacks me?

# Anxiety



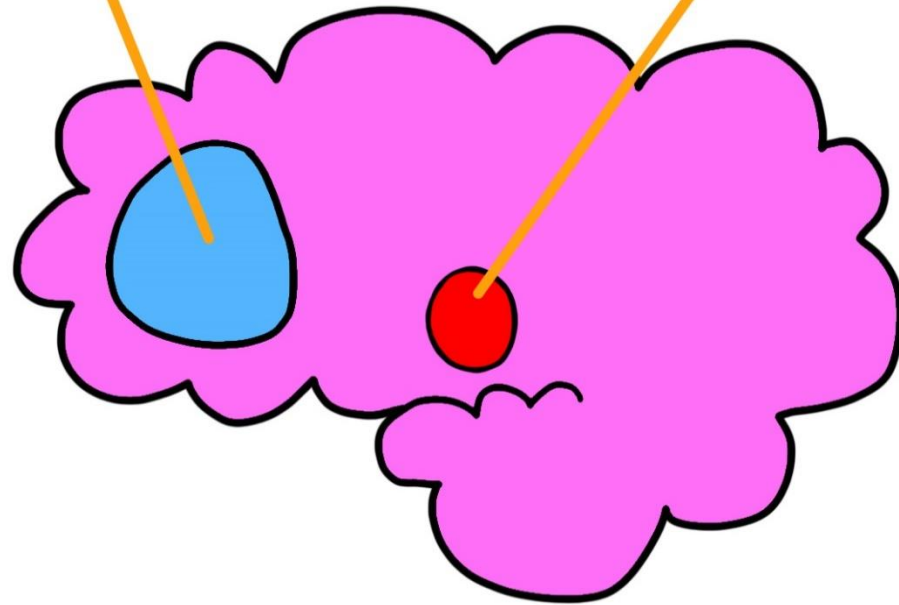
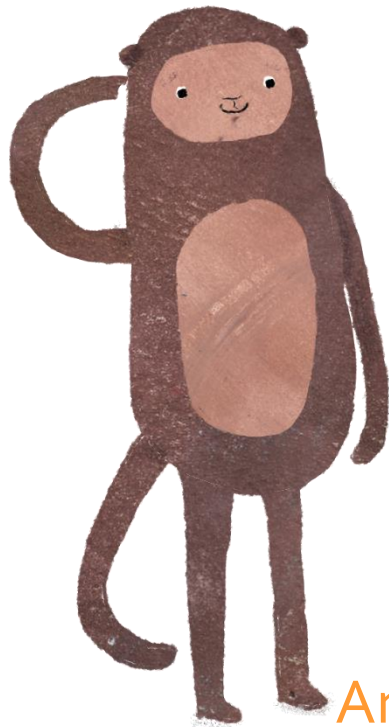
Stress Response  
activated from  
thoughts / perceived  
threat



# Smoke Alarm

Thinking brain  
(Pre-frontal cortex)

'Smoke Alarm'  
(Amygdala)



Anxious brains function in a constant state of worry and fear. False Alarms



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# 6 Key Strategies to help children

Chill out time  
Non-avoidance  
Problem Solving  
Reflecting Listening  
Helpful Thinking  
Calm Body & Brain

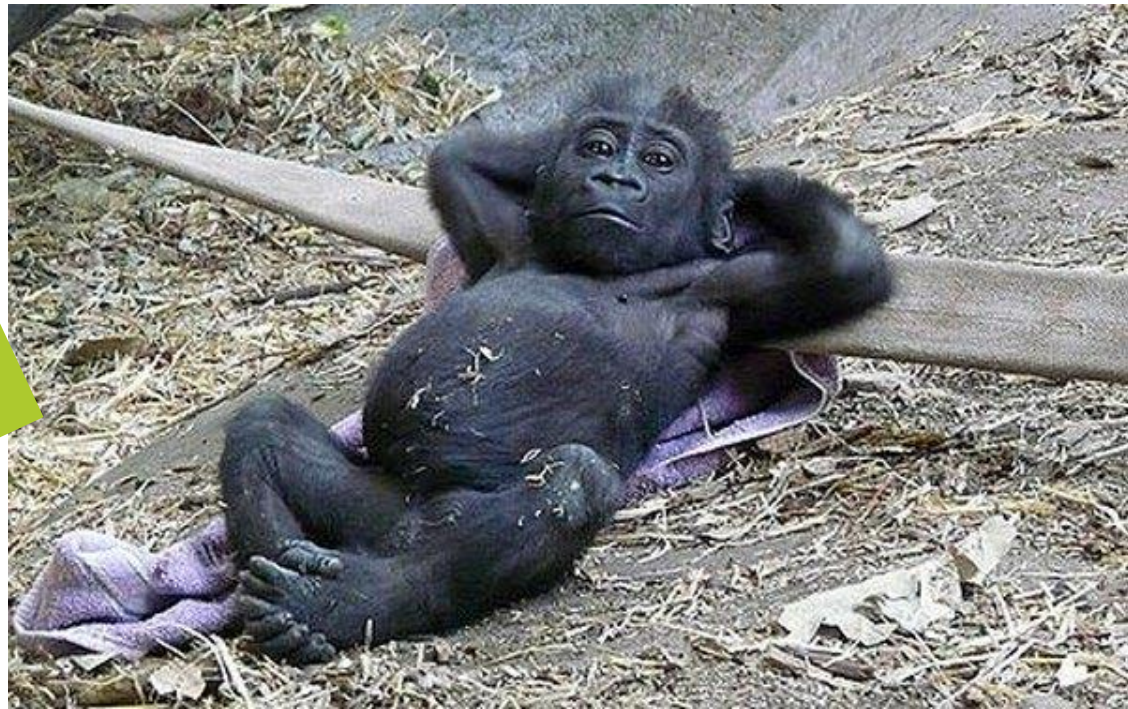


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# Chill out time each day



Strategy 1



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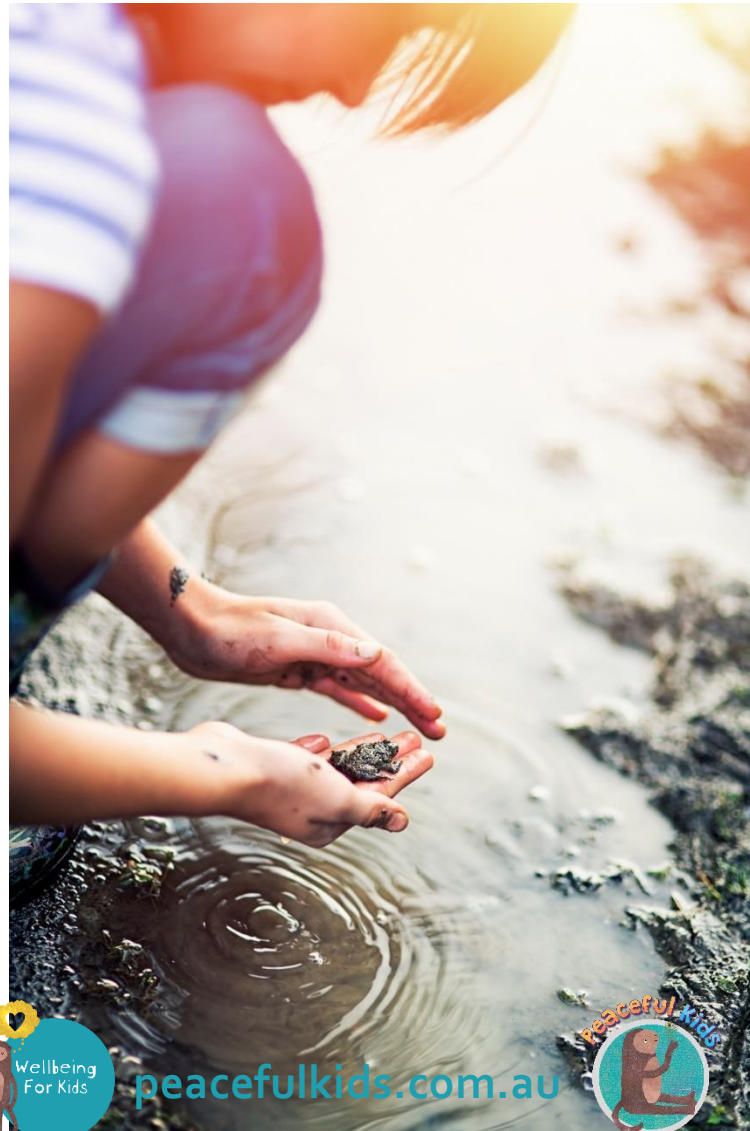
- Lots of free play!
- Allow for boredom



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# Flow Time



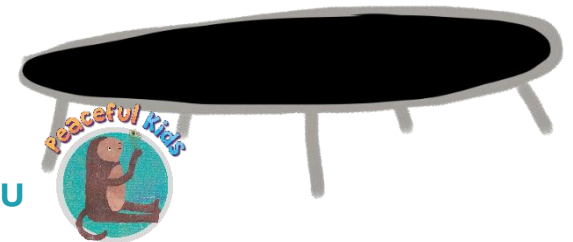
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# Is there time left for Unstructured Free Play?

School  
Homework  
After School Activities  
Screen time  
Home tasks



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# Non-Avoidance



Strategy 2



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# Avoidance



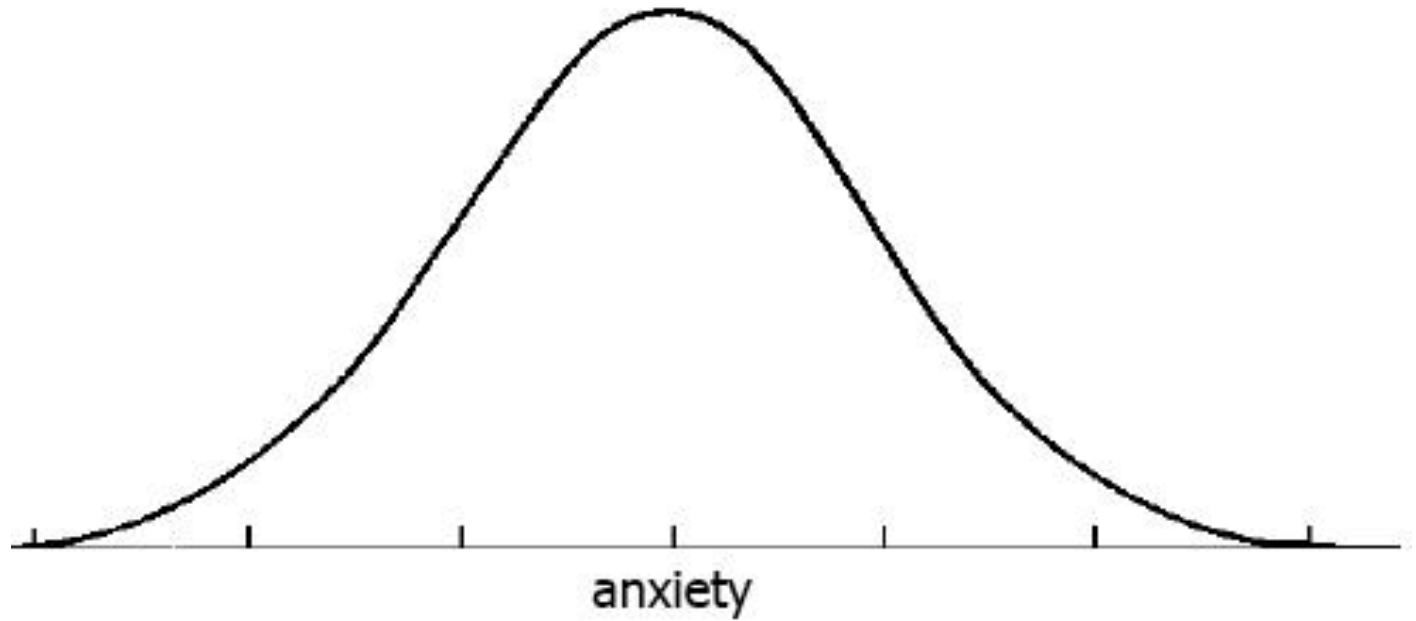
Anxiety is made worse when children avoid things they have some concern about.



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# Anxiety Curve



## Anxiety Waves



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# Stepped Approach

(gradual exposure)

Face fears in small steps



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# Problem Solving

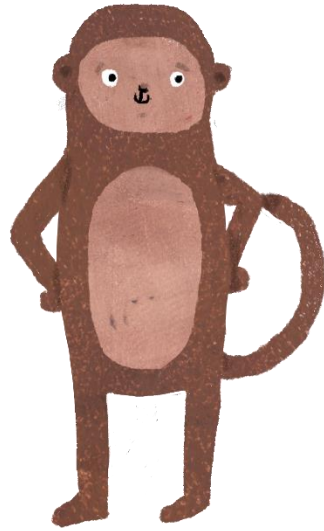
Helping our child with difficulties using the coaching method

Strategy 3



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# Coaching Questions

“What could you do?”

“What would happen if you did this?...”

“What do you think could fix this?”

“Let’s brainstorm ideas”



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Adults believe that children can't solve problems independently

Adults therefore don't allow children to have a go at solving problems on their own and make mistakes – even if it is hard

Children don't learn the skills or have developed enough confidence to make a decision and have a go

Adults beliefs are confirmed that children can't solve problems on their own as they can't cope



# Support through Reflective Listening



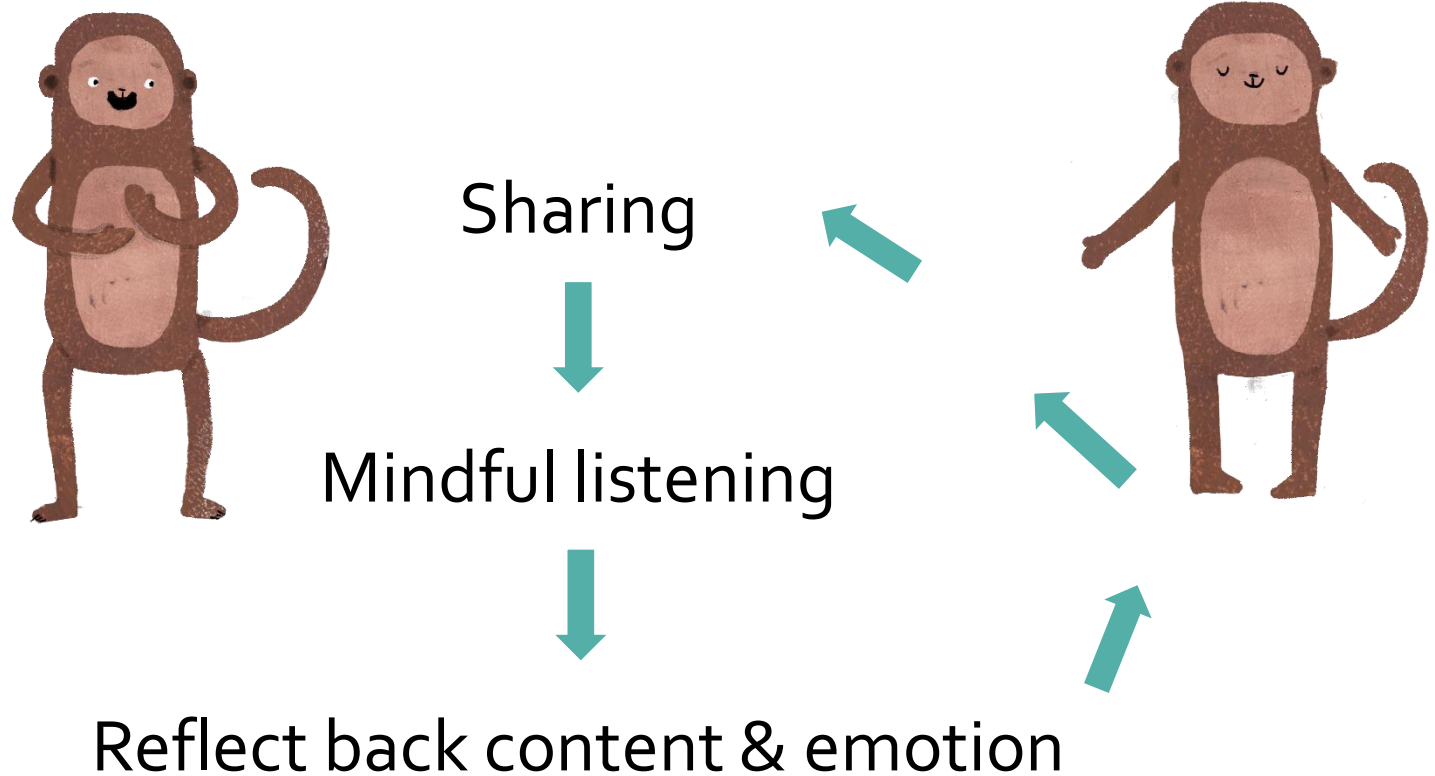
Strategy 4



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# Reflective Listening Technique





# Name it & Tame it

When we name an emotion it helps to tame the emotion



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# Respond vs React



Co-regulating



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# MIRROR NEURONS



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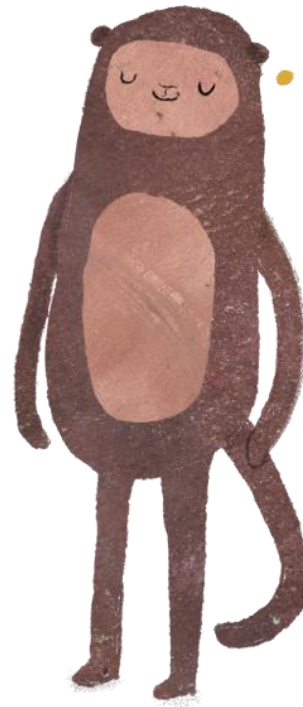




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# Helpful Thinking



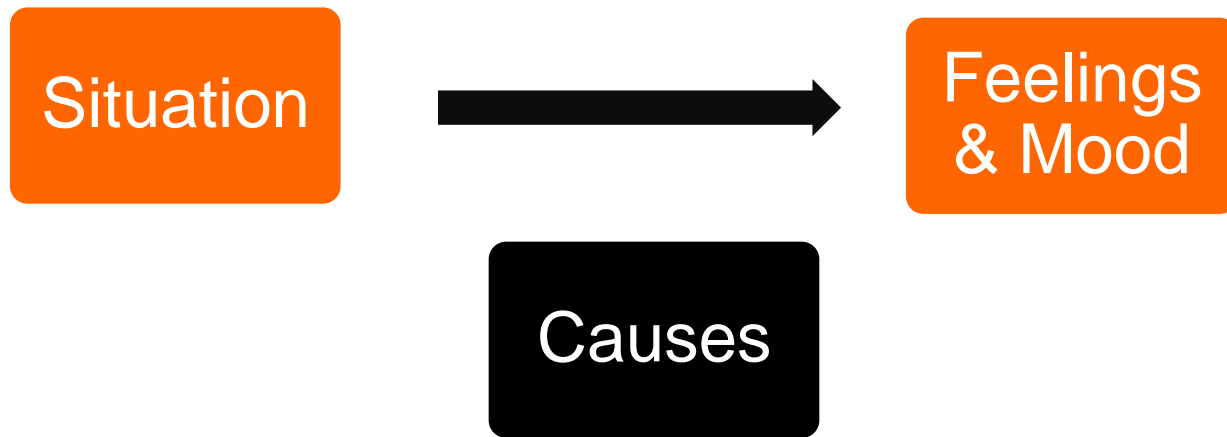
Strategy 5



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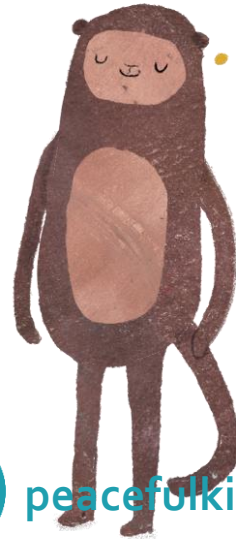
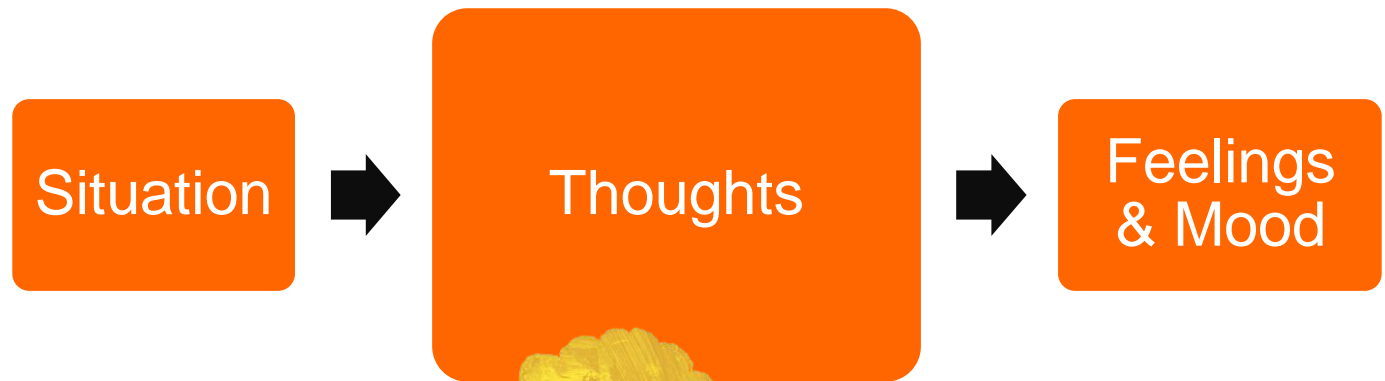


# True or False?





# What really happens !



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# Unhelpful Thoughts

**'Catastrophe' Thoughts** Thinking this is the worst thing that could happen

**Worry Thoughts** Worrying about every single thing that could happen

**Must be right Thoughts** Needing everything to be perfect or as expected

**Crystal Ball Thoughts** I need to know exactly what is going to happen for things to be ok and I can't stand change

**Too Hard Thoughts** It's not ok if things are hard or not fun

# Helpful Thoughts

**Perspective Thoughts** this could be worse / it's not that bad

**Calm Thoughts** things will feel better if I keep calm and be mindful

**Having a Go Thoughts** It's ok to make mistakes or not do things perfectly – it means I'm having a go

**Go with the Flow Thoughts** Not everything will go to plan and that's ok

**Grit Thoughts** Sometimes things are hard which is ok – life is not always fun





“I have experienced  
some terrible things  
in my life, some of  
which actually  
happened.”

Mark Twain



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# Calm Body & Brain

Strategy 6



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## MINDFUL BELLY BREATHING

SIT OR LIE DOWN

PLACE HANDS ON YOUR BELLY

COUNT TO 3 AS YOU BREATHE IN SLOWLY THROUGH YOUR NOSE

FEEL YOUR BELLY EXPAND

COUNT TO 3 AS YOU BREATHE OUT THROUGH YOUR MOUTH

FEEL YOUR BELLY GO FLAT

REPEAT 3 TIMES



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# 2 branches of the Nervous System

Highly Stressed

Stressed

Balanced

Relaxed

Sleep



## Sympathetic Nervous System

'Stress System'

Reptilian Brain activated

Flight / Fight Activated

Thinking is distorted

Emotions run high



## Parasympathetic Nervous System

'Rest & Digest System'

Thinking slower & clearer

Emotions – more even

tempered



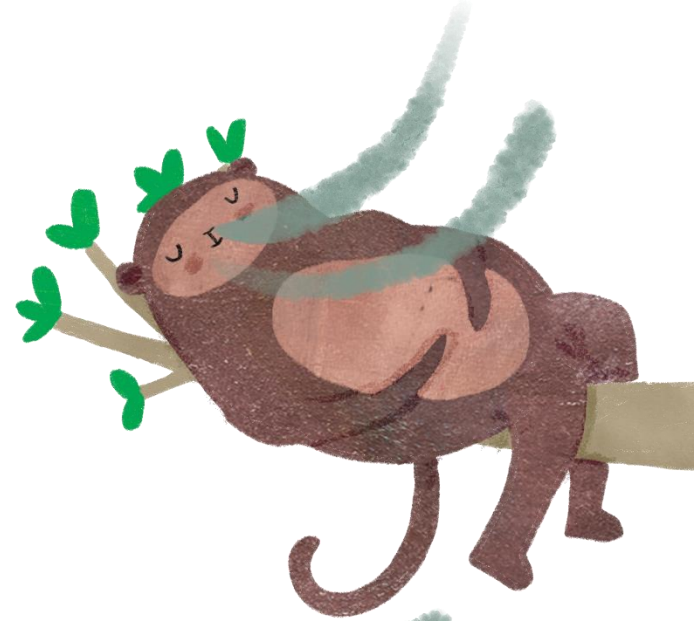
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# Inhale

Stimulates the  
Sympathetic



# Exhale

Stimulates the  
Parasympathetic



Extend the exhale..



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# Hyperarousal



Use Mindfulness, Deep Breathing, Grounding



# Window of Tolerance

Body in optimal state

Mentally engaged

Access both reason & emotion

Use Physical activity, breathing, Mindfulness

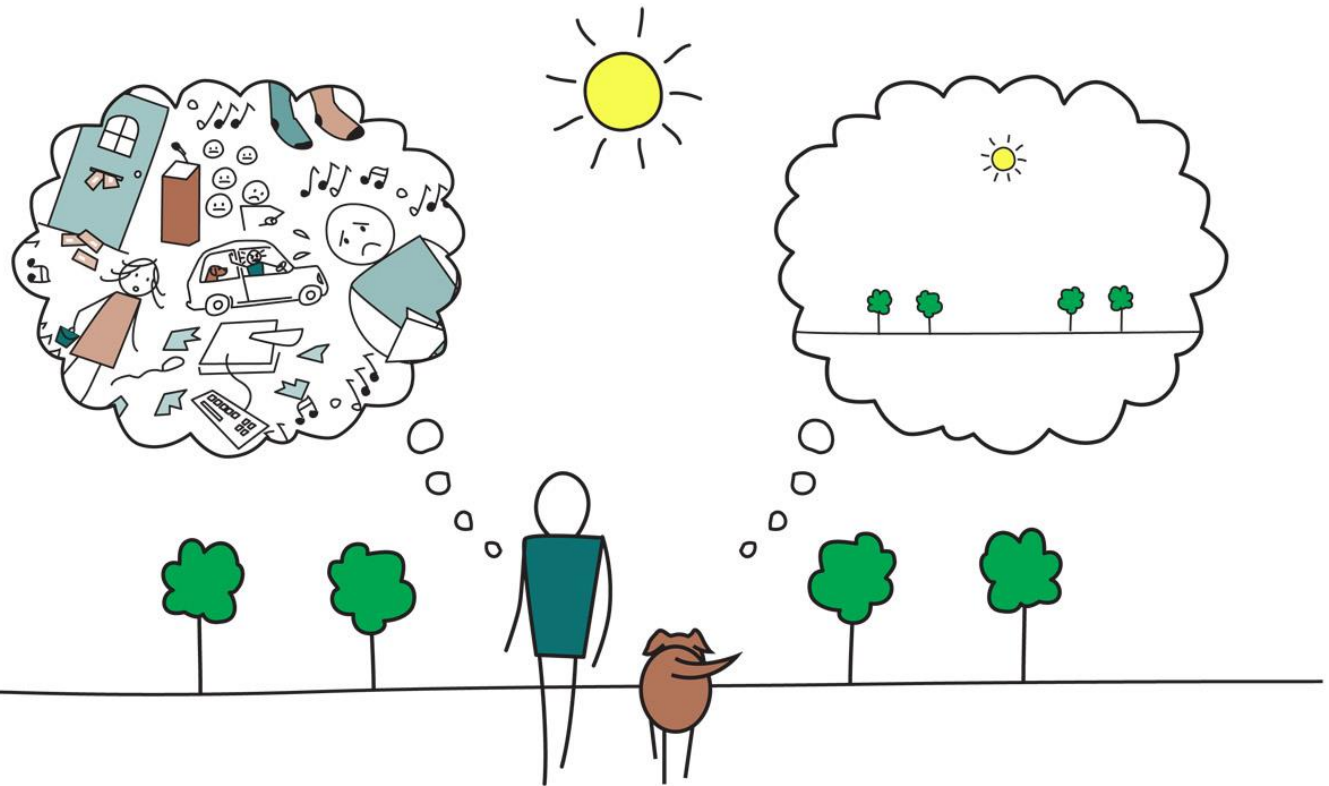
# Hypoarousal



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# Being Mindful



Mind Full, or Mindful?



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**“Mindfulness in parenting significantly reduces children’s stress levels”**

**Professor Lea Waters Study**

**The Relationship between Child Stress,  
Child Mindfulness and Parent  
Mindfulness**



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# KEEP CALM AND BREATHE DEEPLY

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