



Greater Manchester
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Supporting your Child's Mental Health & Wellbeing during Year 11

Wigan CAMHS Mental Health Support Team

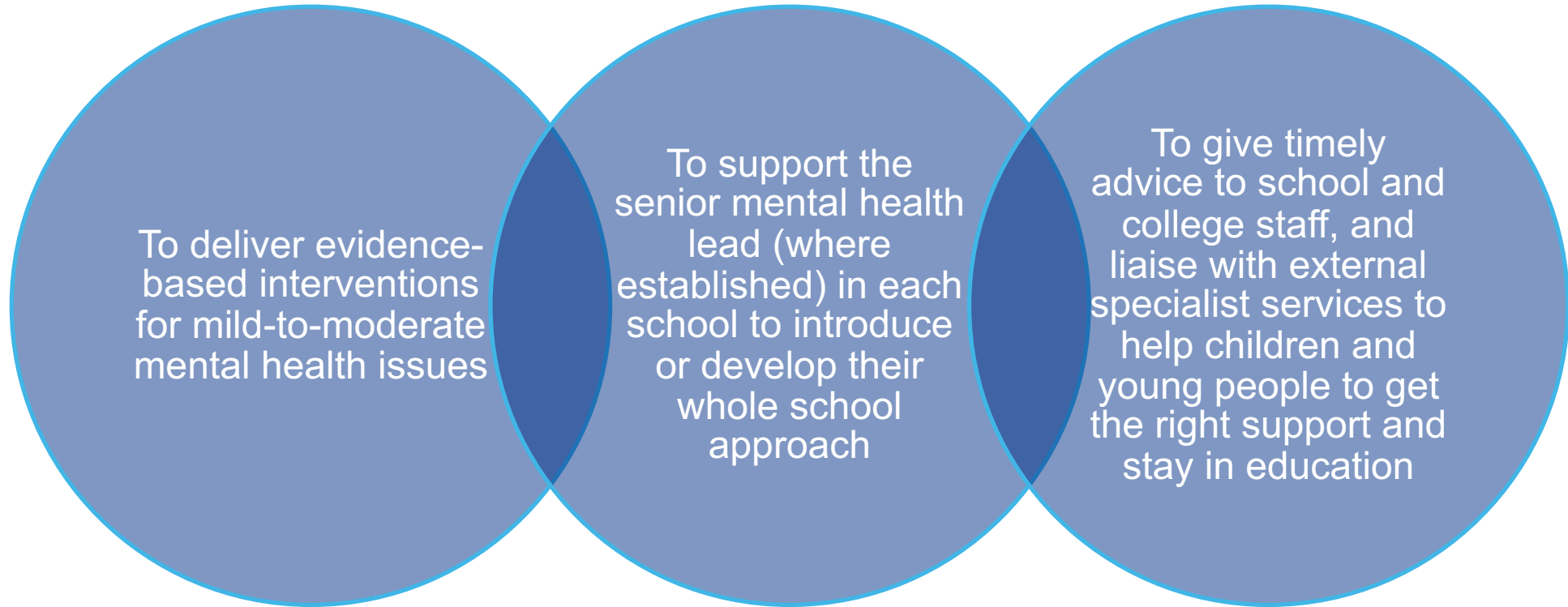
Fred Longworth High School



Improving Lives

Core Functions of the MHST

The Wigan CAMHS Mental Health Support Team (MHST) works alongside a selection of schools in Wigan to provide 3 core functions:

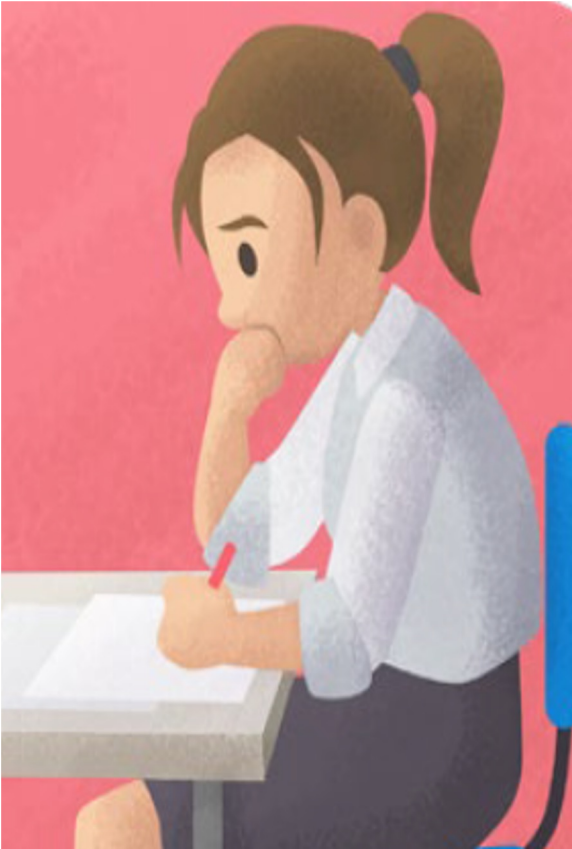


Aims of today's session

- To develop your understanding of exam stress and anxiety.
- To support you to identify signs and symptoms of exam stress and anxiety.
- To provide an overview of healthy habits which can support your child's mental health and wellbeing during Year 11.
- To provide you with resources and practical tips to support yourself and your child during Year 11.
- To inform you of the support available through school in Year 11.



Impact of exams on our mental health



Exam stress describes the emotional, physiological and behavioural responses caused by an imminent test or exam. It can be related to negative previous experience of exams, poor preparation, worry about failure, or pressure to perform. For children and young people who are generally anxious, the experience of taking exams can be threatening and could lead to unmanageable increases in anxiety levels.

(Reference: Anna Freud Centre)



Worry is a normal part of child development

UNCERTAINTY IS
CERTAIN BUT FEAR
AND WORRY
ARE OPTIONAL.

Worrying is like sitting
in a rocking chair. It
gives you something to
do but it doesn't get you
anywhere. *~English proverb*

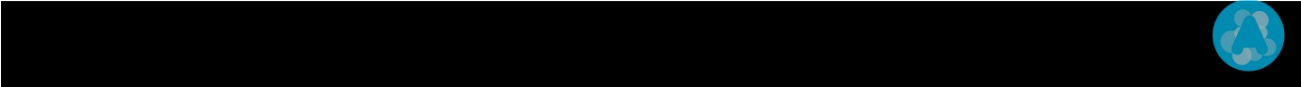


Exam stress and the fight or flight response

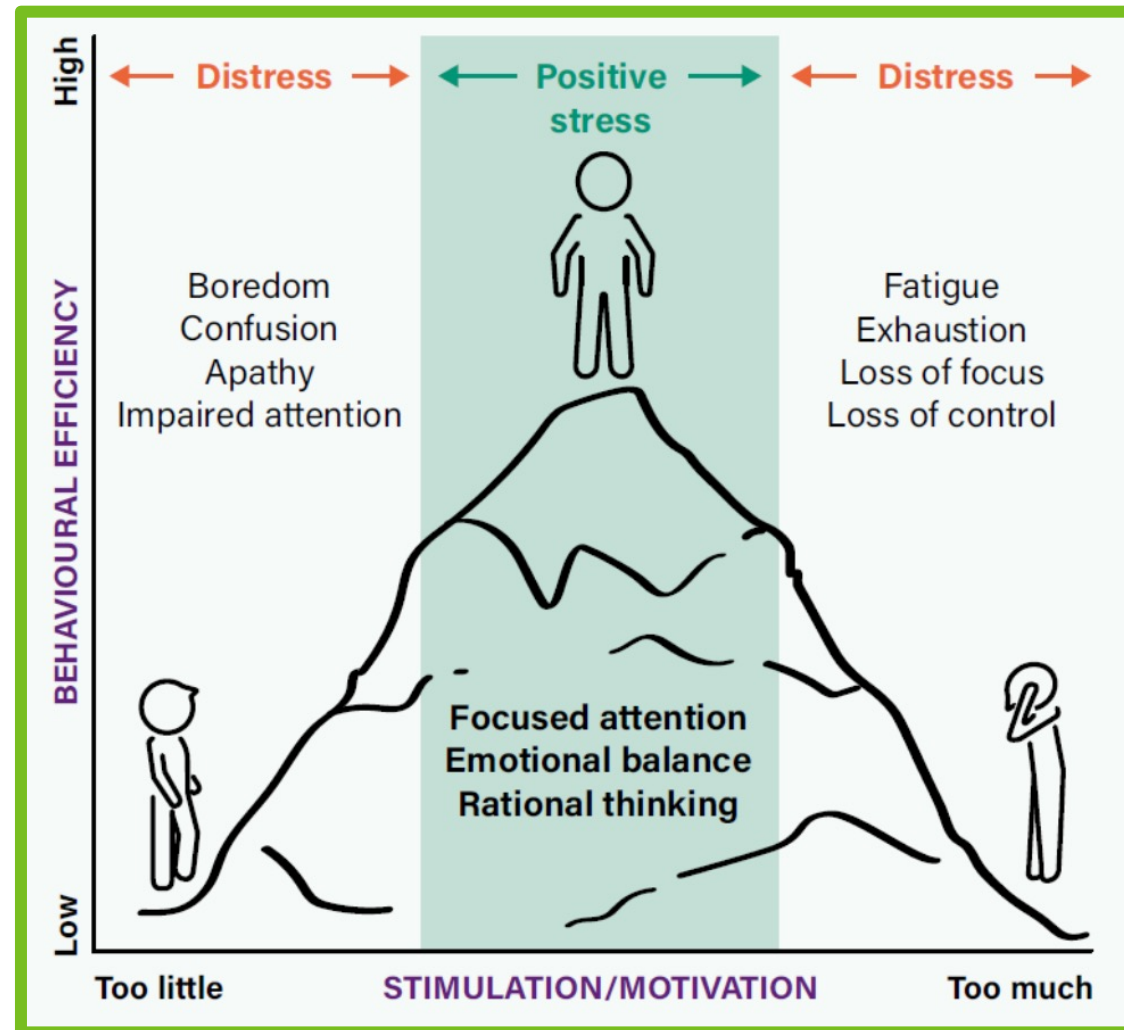
- When we have a thought our bodies respond to what we are thinking.
- Fearful thoughts set off a warning alarm in the body to give us a better chance of survival (Fight or flight response).
- The warning alarm causes changes in our body (increased adrenaline, faster heart and breathing rate, muscle tension, decreased digestive activity, movement of blood to key muscles and the brain). These changes help us to run and think faster, see better, be stronger, heal better and heal quicker.
- If you don't know why you these changes in your body happen it can feel frightening.



Anxiety experienced



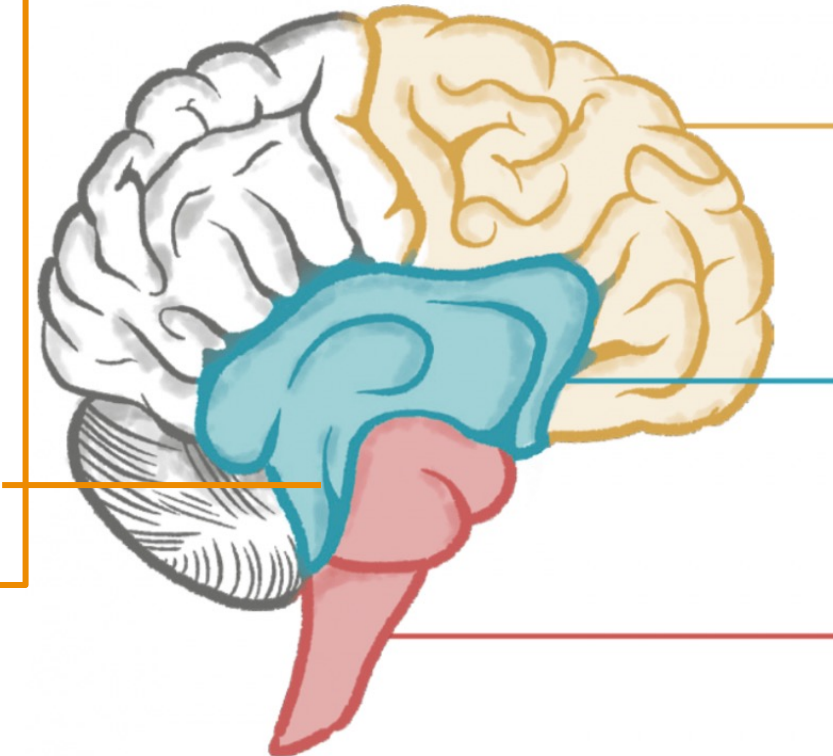
Stress can sometimes be useful to enhance our motivation or performance, but it can become a problem when it interferes with our everyday life. This is when we might need some extra help.



Amygdala & Frontal Lobe

THE AMYGDALA

The amygdala is always on the look out for danger and when it senses danger it sends signals and chemicals to other parts of the body. That danger might be real danger (if your safety is threatened) or it might be activated when you exaggerate how dangerous something is. Either way, when the amygdala is really active, it fires signals and chemicals around your body that prepare us to fight, flight



FRONTAL LOBE - THE THINKING BRAIN

This is your human brain responsible for thinking, planning, making logical decisions, imagining things and remembering things.

Group task and discussion

How might exam stress impact on a child's:

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Relationships
- Behaviour
- Academic performance
- Future goals



Possible signs and symptoms of exam stress

Physical health	Mental health	Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">ExhaustionFrequent illnessAppetite lossWeight lossEnergy lossPoor sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Depression, anxiety or angerLow self esteemLow self-beliefReduced confidenceDecreased happinessFrequent negative thoughtsJudging worth on test resultsSelf-harm or substance useSuicidal thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Withdrawing from friends or familySeeking excessive reassuranceTaking emotions out on othersBelieve they are a disappointment to othersBecoming verbally or physically aggressive towards others



Possible signs and symptoms of exam stress

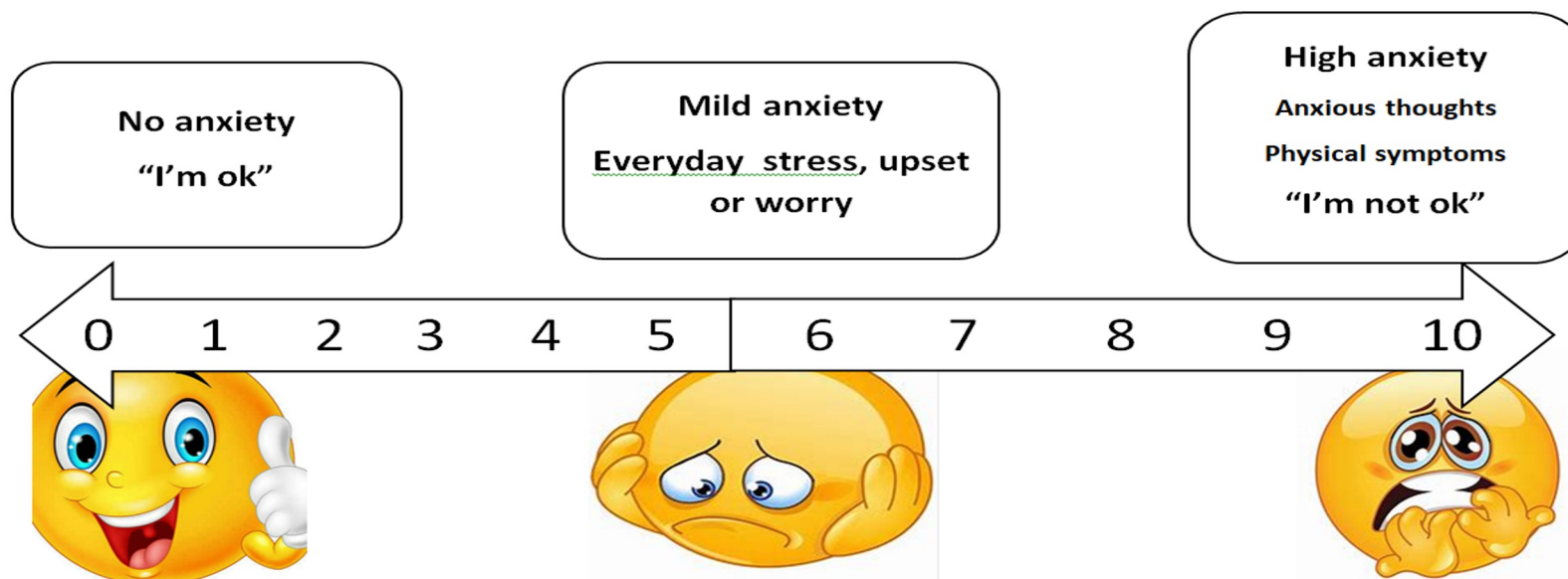
Behaviour	Academic performance	Future goals
<p>Stopping their social and leisure activities Not wanting to be around other people Avoiding revision Over revising Spending time worrying or stressing Avoiding friends Feel less interested or motivated to do fun things Avoiding school</p>	<p>Memory and concentration difficulty Problems reading and interpreting questions Less belief in ability Procrastinating Avoiding or escaping from lessons</p>	<p>Reduced motivation to achieve their future goals Less belief in their ability to achieve their goals Reduction in their actual ability to achieve their goals</p>



Anxiety explained

Anxiety is caused by our perception of threat. Anxiety put simply is the overestimation a perceived threat and underestimation our ability to cope.

Anxiety as a continuum



What is Anxiety?



Symptoms of Stress & Anxiety

Muscle tension

Restlessness

Fatigue

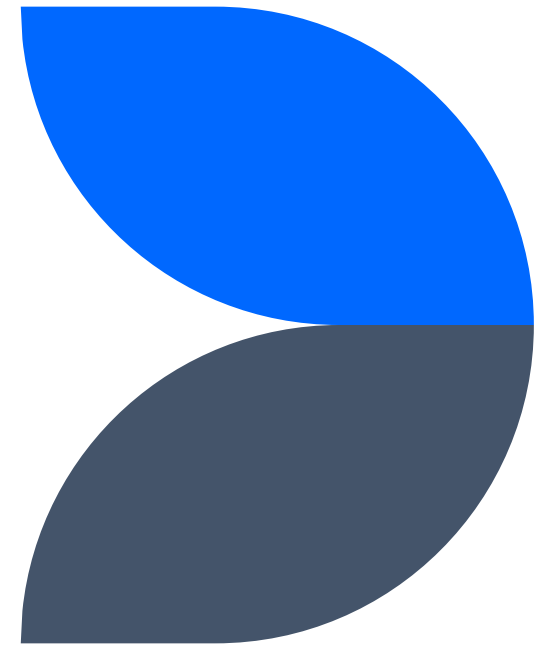
Irritability

Sleep

Concentration



Tips to Help with Exam Stress



Top tips to help with exam stress

- Encourage your child to take care of themselves by eating the right kind of foods, drinking water and getting enough sleep. For teenagers 8 – 10 hours sleep is essential as tiredness can impair concentration and increase anxiety.
- Provide reassurance by reminding your child of past/current successes and give giving them the opportunity to say how they are feeling.
- Support them to develop a realistic revision timetable and encourage them to take regular breaks.
- Promote regular exercise to get rid of physical tension. Improved blood flow to the brain can improve a young persons ability to think clearly, learn, concentrate and remember.
- Encourage relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing and mindfulness.



Group task and discussion

Sharing ideas

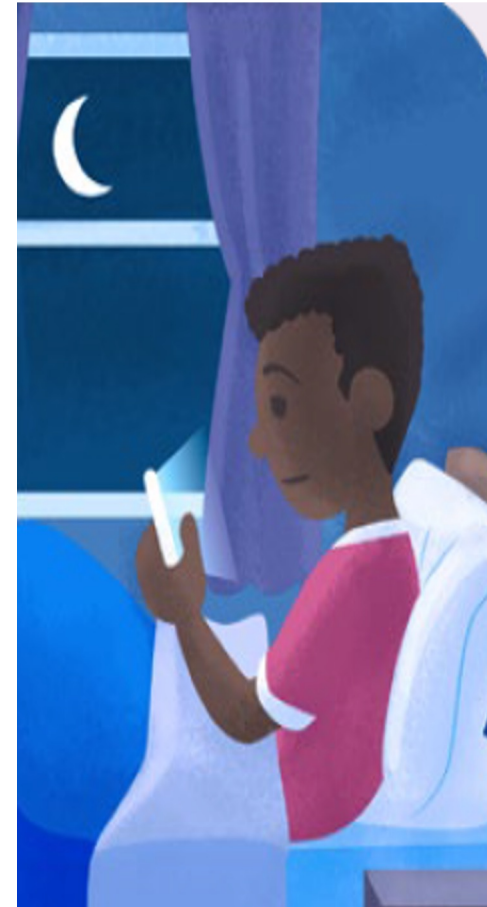
What are you already doing to support your child to manage their stress and look after themselves?










Healthy habits – Sleep

Good sleep is essential for a young person's wellbeing and has proven advantages for memory and performance. However, during adolescents changes in the brain can mean that teenagers' body clocks are not set for early starts. Over time this can lead to 'sleep debt' which might impact on their everyday functioning. Sleep problems can also be associated with mental health difficulties, and life stressors at school and/or home. They can signal that something is not right for that young person and they need help.

(Reference: Anna Freud Centre)



Our Top Tips For Sleep...

-  Ask them how they slept and keep an eye out for any changes to their sleep pattern.
-  Advise them to cut out any after school napping.
-  Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and energy drinks after 4pm.
-  Exercise: Even 10 minutes can drastically improve sleep quality. But avoid strenuous workouts close to bedtime.
-  Make sure that their sleep environment supports sleep. Encourage them not to keep their phones by the side of their bed and to put their phones away before 9pm.
-  Encourage them out of their rooms: Exposure to sunlight during the day helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle..
-  Support them to establish a regular relaxing bedtime routine.



Healthy habits – Communication

Our brains are not fully developed until we are between 22 - 25 years old. It is normal during adolescence for there to be lower reasoned/rational thinking, more impulsiveness and a tendency to respond emotionally. In addition, taking another persons perspective into account can be difficult. Because your child's brain is still developing you can help during their GCSEs by supporting them to;

1. **Regulate their emotions,**
2. **Plan their revision**
3. **Think more realistically**



Healthy habits – Regulate : Relate : Reason

Step (1) Empathy “Connect before correct” – Recognise all emotions as being natural, normal and not a matter of choice. Take on the child’s perspective.

Step (2) Validate and label their feelings Be present, take notice and really listen. “You appear to be feeling angry, It’s understandable that you might feel angry given how much pressure you are under. I sometimes feel angry when I am under pressure too”.

Step (3) Set limits “You are angry that I’ve taken your phone. We agreed that I would take your phone away when you are trying to revise because it helps you to stay focused. Shouting at me is not ok. I will keep your phone safe and you can have it back in one hour”.

Step (4) Problem solving Next time you are feeling like this what can you do? What options do you have? What is the best option? What do you need to do to give this a try?



Healthy habits: Revision balance

- Our mood can be greatly affected by what we do, when, and with whom.
- In order to maintain a healthy sense of wellbeing, we need to balance what we do. We can use the acronym ACE to help us remember:
 - Achieve: Revision/chores/work
 - Connect: Friends/family
 - Enjoy: Play/fun/pleasure



Activity planning

WEEKLY REVISION PLANNER

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	TIME	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
8:30AM - 4PM	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	SCHOOL	9AM - 10AM	BREAKFAST / SHOWER	BREAKFAST / SHOWER
4PM - 5PM	HOMEWORK	TV / GAMING / SOCIAL MEDIA	HOMEWORK	TV / GAMING / SOCIAL MEDIA	HOMEWORK	10AM - 11AM	REVISION - ENGLISH	REVISION - SCIENCE
5PM - 6PM	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	11AM - 1PM	SEEING FRIENDS / LUNCH	SPORT / LUNCH
6PM - 7PM	REVISION - GEOGRAPHY	HOMEWORK	REVISION - HISTORY	REVISION - FRENCH	REVISION - SCIENCE	1PM - 3PM	REVISION - MATHS	REVISION - FLASH CARDS
7PM - 8PM	REVISION - MATHS	REVISION - ENGLISH	FREE TIME	HOMEWORK	FREE TIME	3PM - 5PM	OUT WITH FAMILY	SPORT / TV / GAMING
8PM - 9PM	FREE TIME / SHOWER	FREE TIME / SHOWER	FREE TIME / SHOWER	FREE TIME / SHOWER	FREE TIME / SHOWER	6PM - 8PM	DINNER / FREE TIME	DINNER / FREE TIME



Coping Self-Talk

When faced with a threatening or stressful situation, young people tend to think very negatively about themselves and their performance, predicting the worst.

Coping Self-Talk aims to replace worrying thoughts with more helpful thoughts that are likely to support resilience.

For example: “I’ve done this before even though I have worried about it”



Coping Self-Talk

"This might be tricky but I will be able to cope"

"Trying my best is enough"

"This test does not define me as a person"

"I have many talents and skills in other areas"

"I have coped with difficult things before, I can do it now"

"This is a temporary emotion, it will pass"

"Although I feel scared, I am not in danger"

"I am loved"

"I am proud of myself for what I have already achieved"

"It is ok not to know everything. I am still learning"

NB: Coping self-talk needs to be realistic. (Not "everything always goes well")



Healthy habits – coping self-talk

- If you notice you or your child worrying, you can practice replacing the unhelpful thought with a positive, coping thought.
- It may be helpful for your child to identify 3 coping sentences to repeat to themselves when they are worrying.
- Some young people also find it helpful to write their coping self-talk statements down.



Healthy habits: Problem solving

What is the problem : I have no motivation to revise and I have fallen behind with my Science revision				
Brain storm potential solutions	Advantages of this	Disadvantages of this	List from best to worst idea	What steps do you now need to take
Revise every day to catch up.	I would get back on top of revision. I would feel like I was doing something to solve the problem. Mum and Dad would be pleased and will see that I am trying so there would be less arguments.	I can't be bothered revising and I won't stick to this. Revising everyday feels like too much pressure and even the thought of it stresses me out.	3	
Develop a realistic revision plan and try and stick to it	I could break up revision into manageable chunks and plan regularly breaks to relax. I won't feel as stressed or pressured. Even if I manage only 30 minutes a night it's more than I am doing now.	Mum and Dad would want me to do more than I feel able to manage and might not agree with my revision plan.	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a revision plan. 2. Talk to Mum and Dad about how I am feeling. 3. Speak to my teacher and get some advice.
Speak to me teacher and ask for some help	She could tell me what subjects to focus on and she knows where I am doing well and where I struggle. This would help to focus my revision. Other people might be struggling too and the teacher might suggest <u>doing some</u> in class revision with us.	My teacher is stressed about the exams and only thinks about her subject. She might suggest doing a lot more than I feel able to do.	2	



Helpful apps – Mindfulness

Youth Programs

10 - 12 Year Olds
Designed for children as they learn the power of thoughts and respect for others...
17 Modules 56 Sessions

13 - 15 Year Olds
Designed to support teenagers as they transition to high school and make new...
21 Modules 69 Sessions

16 - 18 Year Olds
Designed to support teenagers as they plan for the future.
21 Modules 71 Sessions

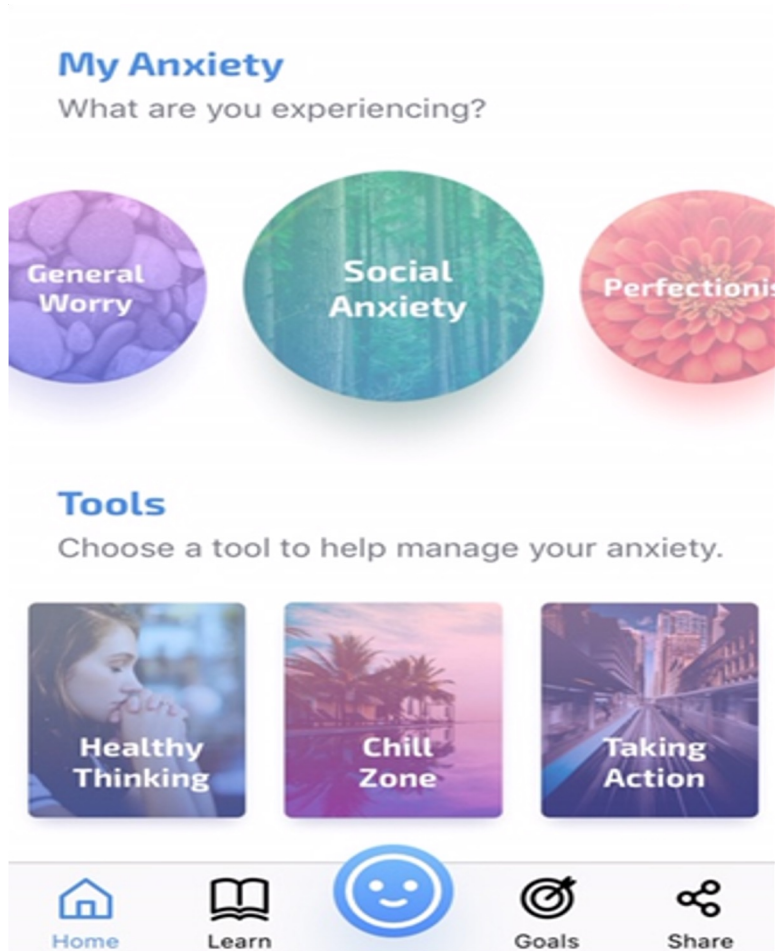
Bite Size
Short 1 - 4 minute meditations.
4 Modules 8 Sessions

Smiling Mind

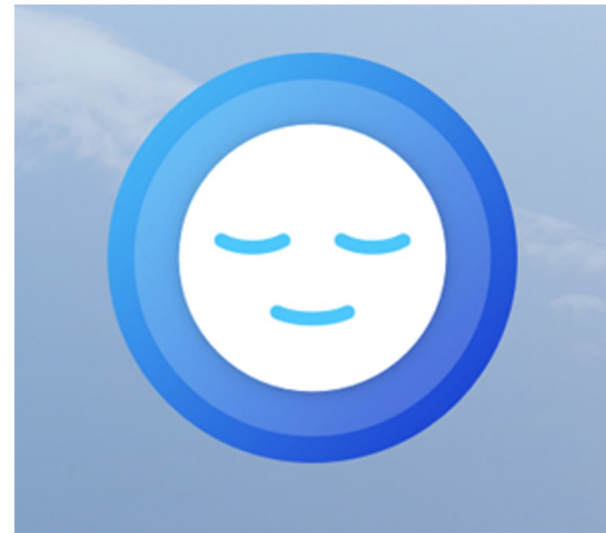


3 Good Things

Helpful apps – Anxiety



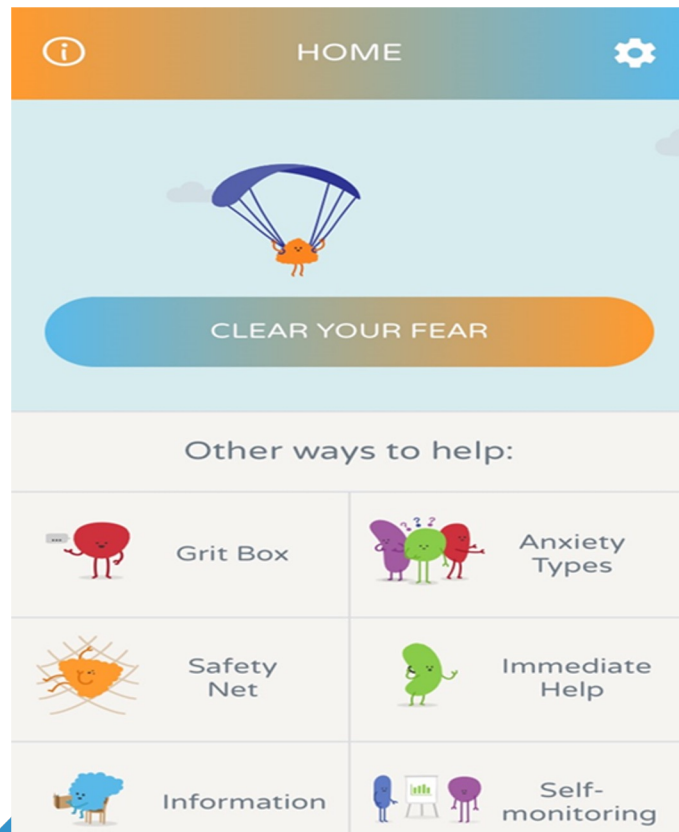
- Mindshift



Helpful apps – Anxiety



Clear Fear
<https://www.clearfear.co.uk/>



- The Clear Fear app provides ways for children and young people to manage symptoms of anxiety. Clear Fear uses a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) framework to help change anxious thoughts and emotions, alter anxious behaviours and calm fear responses.
- It has helpful descriptions of the different ways in which anxiety shows, resources and a ‘grit box’ to boost resilience.
- Clear Fear is recommended for the ages of 11-19 years.
- It is not a substitute for a mental health professional.



Helpful websites



Goal-setting



Going on day trips or holiday



Going to the cinema



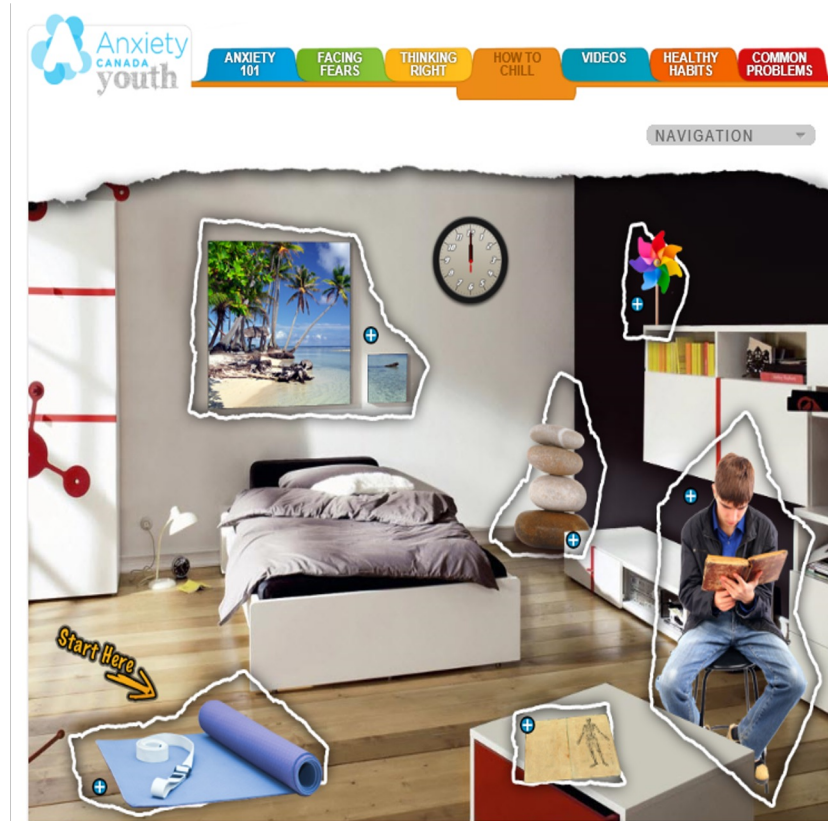
Hope box



Laughter / humour



Letting off steam

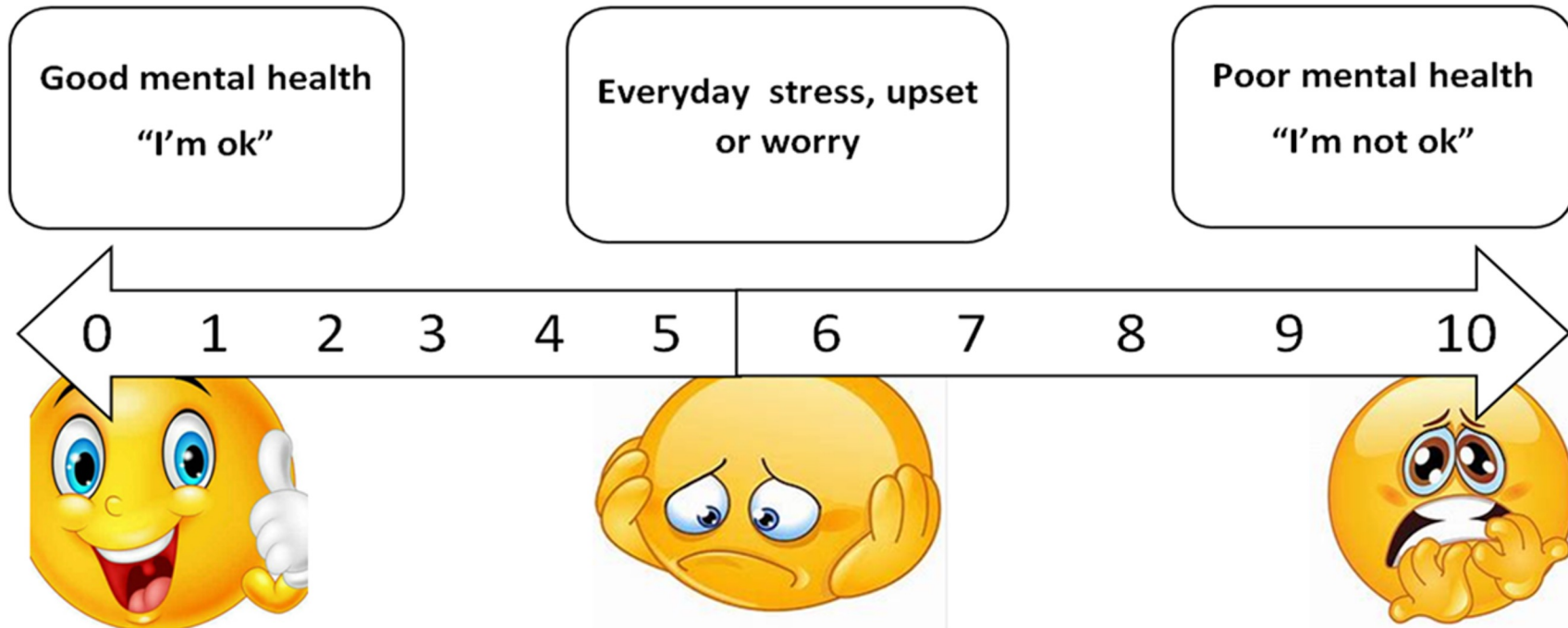


Healthy habits - Home as their safe space

- **Be available** Actively listening when they are trying to tell you how they feel.
- **Respond sensitively** Even if you think they are being unreasonable or you disagree with what they are saying. Take into account your own stress and frustration.
- **Accept their feelings** Validate how difficult they are finding things and ask how you can help.
- **Cooperative enabling** Agree a realistic revision timetable in advance, recognise their effort and encourage them to look after themselves by planning breaks and having opportunities to relax and spend time with friends.
- **Promoting family membership** Agree a cut off time for revision and encourage them out of their bedroom. Spend time as a family watching television, going for walks, eating together etc.



Mental health as a continuum



Further support in school

- School inclusion staff: Mrs Waring and Mrs Naylor
- Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Bailey
- HOY
- Wigan MHST Team: Amy Sixsmith (Education Mental Health Practitioner)



Parent 'GCSES' during Year 11

Good enough relationships at home

Chill out time

Success reminders

Encourage effort and exercise

Sleep

