

# AT THE HARBOUR

## *Understanding the purpose of this cruise before starting it*

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Emotions are one of the most important part of our lives. They not only define who we are but are also necessary for our survival. Sometimes, emotions can become really painful and, if we hold onto them, we end up feeling overwhelmed. In a frantic world where everything seems to be moving faster and faster it's easy to get caught by thoughts as: "What's going to happen next?", "What if something bad happens to me or to my family?" Sometimes it looks as if our mind starts spinning round and round negative thoughts and we can only foresee the worse. This tendency to predict that the worst-case scenario is going to happen is called 'catastrophizing' and it's very common. In addition to this, past experiences and stories from other people contribute to the creation of an anxiety-predicting model inside our brain to the point that we end up losing contact with the outside world. But how many times the worst did not actually happen? Every time I ask this question to someone, I get pretty much the same answer: "Plenty!" Despite to this, we continue to invest a lot of energies predicting the worst; energies that we take away from ourselves, our family and the rest of the world. I am not surprised that people try to push anxiety away and work really hard to "get rid" of it. But if you decided to start this course you are probably aware that pushing emotions away does not actually work. We can compare difficult emotions to quicksand as, sometimes, they can be so overwhelming that you feel stuck into them but the more you try to escape and push them away, the more you end up being dragged down. Exactly as with quicksand the best way out of difficult emotions is, instead, floating. When we begin to accept them and learn how to live with them, emotions start to become more manageable.

Designed by Sergio Sposato – Highly Specialist Clinical Psychologist for Healthy Young Mind Bury



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Things keep happening in our life and, most of the time, we have not control over them. We cannot stop the raining coming out during weekends, we cannot stop trains from being late and we cannot stop people from having different opinions that result in long arguments. But despite we have no control over these events and the feelings that generate from them, we can decide how to respond to these feelings. We can learn how to “float” within these feelings without being dragged down by them.

The aim of this course is to help you understanding what are feelings and how to accept them. Accepting your emotions does not equal to remain passive and suffer without doing anything. Accepting emotions means becoming aware that they exist and, no matter how painful they may seem, you can still learn how to manage them and change your response. When people start understanding this, they realize how much time has been taken away from their lives trying to get rid of emotions and, eventually, become more focused on their goals and values. This means not only feeling better about themselves but also being able to connect more with people around them. So, if you have tried several anxiety management techniques, medications, distractions and other tools aimed to push your emotions away, it's probably time to let it go and get ready for this new journey.

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# HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

This journey is formed by 8 sessions:

- 5 mandatory sessions to be delivered in chronological order, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> (sessions 1-5);
- 2 optional sessions to be delivered if needed (sessions 6-7);
- A final recap session (session 8)

These sessions are based on CBT, ACT and Mindfulness and do not require any previous knowledge of mental health.

The sessions can be delivered by parents, carers and teachers as well as mental health practitioners, and are suitable for young people aged 7-18. Some exercises may be difficult for younger children but can be adapted accordingly.

In order to deliver a session, simply read through it and follow the instructions.

The structure of the sessions is listed below:

1. Meeting the sailors (mandatory) focus on getting to know each other, understanding anxiety and setting group rules;
2. Cleaning our boat (mandatory) focus on understanding the difference between facts and opinions, understanding the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviors and recognizing challenging thoughts
3. The gathering of the storm (mandatory) focus on developing alternative thoughts, using the breath as an anchor and regaining control of the present

4. Detective on board (mandatory) focus on recognizing useful worries from non-useful ones, developing rational thoughts and learning how to use the traffic light system;
5. Facing the storm (mandatory) focus on learning how to face anxiety, developing a “bravery plan” and releasing tension;
6. Making new friends (optional) focus on learning how to make new friends, recognizing bullying, joining a group and maintaining good relationships with others;
7. Mirror, mirror (optional) focus on understanding the value of body image, improving sleep and problem-solving body image problems;
8. You are the captain focus on summarizing the learning, understanding what techniques to use and when and moving forward;

# MEETING THE SAILORS

*Understanding anxiety*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Getting to know each other;
- Understanding what is anxiety;
- Set group rules;

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Life is like a big ocean with an amazing horizon ready to follow you wherever you go. While you sail through your life, you will be able to visit some amazing places and embark in wonderful adventures but, exactly as happens in the ocean, you will see storms gathering around you. For some people anxiety is like a storm. It comes into your life and takes control of everything around you. It may be scary, powerful and sometimes is going to last for several days but you know it will eventually move away. But while you are in the middle of that storm, it is difficult to think about anything else. Your only focus is getting away from the storm and finding a safe place for you to land. As happens with storms, anxiety is a common feeling that everyone experiences. The people around you are experiencing anxiety too. Some more than others. They will be with you in this journey and, because no one can sail a boat on their own, we will start this journey by getting to know each other.

### **MEETING THE OTHER CREWS**

**Requirements:** A ball

**The person with the ball will say his/her name; share what makes him/her feeling anxious and say 3 positive things about themselves before rolling the ball to someone else who has not spoken before.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

- You will ask the group to sit in circle and give the ball to one of them;
- The person who has the ball will say their name, what makes them feeling anxious and three positive things about them before rolling the ball to another person;
- The person who receives the ball will repeat this until everybody has introduced themselves

The aim of this game is to help the children getting to know each other and start paying attention to what makes them feeling anxious.

Talking about their own anxiety can be difficult as children may think they are the only one struggling with this. This short exercise will help them realising that anxiety is a common feeling and encourage them to open up a little bit more.

Now that we know each other, is the time to make sure our journey is going to be safe and pleasant for everybody. Each ship has its own rules and crew are responsible to make sure everyone follows them. This is really important because, if we do not work together, we may end up at the bottom of the sea. The good news is that we do not need too many rules.

### **GROUP RULES**

- Mobile phones may get wet and it is very unlikely we will get signal in the middle of the ocean so they need to remain switched-off and in your pocket during this journey;
- We need all the crews to work together otherwise we will not be able to sail. This means that you need to participate to the games and discussions;
- We are a team so we need to respect each other. No offensive comments or judgments are admitted. We are entitled to have different opinions and express these when appropriate but we still need to be mindful of others;
- We will possibly reach a different harbor at the end of each session but the ship needs to sail on time so you need to make sure you attend the next session on time;
- (ADD YOUR OWN RULES);
- There is a final one which is really important: we speak one per time, without interrupting.



## **STOP AND FEEL THE BREATH**

**When I put my hand over my head like this (show), you will stop talking as soon as you notice me and pay attention to your breath.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

- You will explain that you are going to use nonverbal prompts in order to ensure that everybody has a chance to contribute to the group;
- You will put your hand over your head and explain that: “When I put my hand over my head like this (show), as soon as you notice this you will stop whatever you are doing (talking, drawing, etc.) and do the same (put their hand over their head)”;
- As soon as you put your hand over your head, you will pay attention to your chest going up and down while you breathe;
- When everybody puts their hands over their heads and the group is quiet, you can carry on with the activity you were doing before

The aim of this game has a double function. Groups of children can become unmanageable and it is very important that you have a way to ensure the group can continue. Verbal prompts take the responsibility away from children and bring it back to the adult. Nonverbal prompts like the one introduced above give children control over their actions and promote positive influence from peers. Focusing on the breath will also soothe difficult emotions and encourage mindfulness.

Please make sure you remember these rules.

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We started this journey in order to learn how to cope with anxiety but, before we do this, it is important to understand what is anxiety. “Anxiety is the feeling you get when you have a worry that you can’t get out of your mind, one that starts to be part of your thoughts so that you don’t have time to think about other things. You may feel anxious that something that has happened in the past will happen again or that something bad will happen to you or someone you love.” (O'Neill, 2018) Anxiety can be caused by things that happen around us (i.e. a friend calling you names) or by our thoughts (i.e. thinking that someone you love may become ill). People may be anxious for different things, for example:

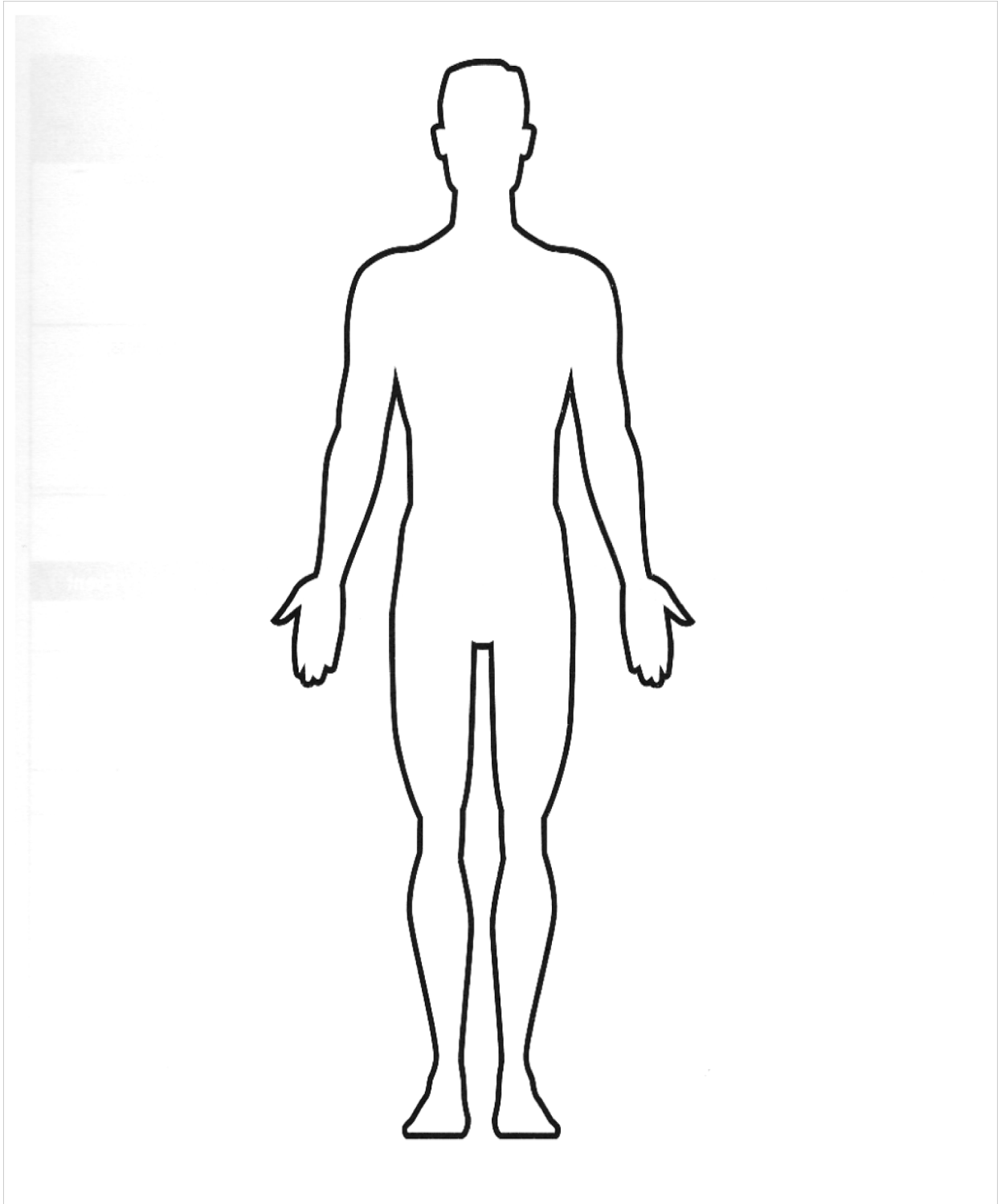
- Criminals;
- Ghosts;
- Getting ill;
- Being left at home by yourself;
- Dying;
- Doing badly at school;
- Friends leaving you out; (O'Neill, 2018)
- Missing your bus;
- Being judged by others;
- Boyfriend/girlfriend not returning your call;
- Gaining weight;
- Losing control;

Can you think about any other reasons for being anxious? (Allow some time for the group to come out with some ideas).

When we feel anxious or worried we start experiencing some sensations in our body. Some people feel that they can’t breathe while others feel strong pain in their tummies. This is because anxiety triggers a chain of reactions in our body aimed to prepare us for the worse. This is called flight-or-fight response. Basically, every time our mind thinks that we are in danger, it prepares our body for fighting or running away. This is the reason why anxiety can become really unpleasant.

I would like you to use the picture below to write down where do you feel your anxiety.

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(Phifer, Crowder, Elsenraat, & Hull, 2017)

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Anxiety is a very important feeling that can help people focusing on difficult tasks and improve their performance; it can also help people surviving to difficult situations. Imagine that you have an important school test planned next week. You've studied hard to prepare for it but, when you decided to close the book, you realize that you may need to spend a little bit more time on a specific topic. Without anxiety, you would not be able to notice this and you would probably fail the text. Now imagine that you are walking to the bus stop and suddenly notice the bus arriving. What would you do? You would probably run to catch the bus. Again, that sense of worry alerts your brain so that it can start the flight-or-fight response so that you run and catch the bus. Without anxiety, we will not be able to survive. Despite it can be painful at times, anxiety can also be useful. Can you think about a situation when anxiety helped you to succeed? (Encourage the group to reflect on how anxiety can be helpful to them. Provide some prompts if necessary). We have reached our first harbor and it is time to reflect on what we have learned so far. During this journey you have learned that anxiety is a common feeling and that, sometimes, it can be very useful. You have understood that anxiety causes some tension and changes to our body in order to allow us to deal with the situation. Before we go home, I would like you to gather together and spend some time reflecting on the day.

### **A COOLING OUT-BREATH**

**We learn that focusing on a long out-breath can be relaxing and help us feel calm.**

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- Sit with your back straight and your body relaxed and gently rest your hands on your knees. Breathe naturally while I count the length of your inhale and exhale. (Count out loud, adjusting your pace to the natural rhythm of the child's breath);
- Now, breathe in for two counts and breathe out for four counts;
- Let's go back to breathing naturally. (Greenland, 2016)

## Homework

Between now and our next adventure, I would like you to follow these steps each time you feel anxious.

### 10-Point Check-In

This page is a quick "cheat sheet" on grounding and coping skills. Start at the top and work your way to the bottom. At the end, discuss with your therapist or journal about how you felt prior to starting this exercise and how you felt when you completed this exercise.

10

Take 10 deep breaths

9

Name 9 things you see

8

Name 8 people who support you

7

Name 7 colors

6

Name 6 things that make you happy

5

Take 5 deep breaths

4

Name 4 things you hear

3

Name 3 things that you can touch

2

Take 2 deep breaths

1

How do you feel now?

(Phifer, Crowder, Elsenraat, & Hull, 2017)

# CLEANING OUR BOAT

*How to work around anxiety thoughts*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Understanding the difference between facts and opinions;
- Understanding the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviors;
- Recognizing challenging thoughts

We have learned what is anxiety and why this can be a useful emotion and we have also introduced a 10-point check-in to start managing our anxiety. Have you had a chance to try this? Do you want to share your experience with us?

Allow the group to share their experiences and highlight the positive ones. It may be possible that someone did not find the 10 points useful. This is because people are different and not all the strategies work for everybody. Also, it is very important to continue to practice these steps over and over as it takes time to learn new skills. If someone has not tried the strategies, it is important to remember this: if you got to your GP because you have strong pain in your tummy and he gives you some tablets for the pain but you don't take these, what do you think is it going to happen? The pain will not go away! It is the same here: if we don't practice these strategies, we may not learn how to deal with anxiety; also, we need all the sailors to work together if we want the boat to be able to sail.

Before we sail today, we need to clean our boat and remove all the non-essential things from the deck. Basically, we need to make sure that only 'facts' remain on board while we get rid of all those heavy 'opinions' that our boat cannot carry. But what is the difference between the two? Facts are always true, no matter what people think or say. Opinions depends from what we think or feel and other people may have different ideas about these. "The Sun is a star" it's a fact because everybody knows this is true while "Summer is the best season of the year" it's an opinion as other people may like winter.

### **FACTS VS OPINIONS**

**We ask the group to share one fact and one opinion until they learn the difference between these.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- You will start by telling either a fact or an opinion and ask the group to tell you what is that;
- Carry on until they understand the difference;

- Ask each child to tell a fact and then an opinion and check they understood this;

The aim of this exercise is to allow the group to learn the difference between facts and opinions, before moving to the next step. Young children may struggle with this. If this is the case, you can skip this exercise. Please, do not skip this with older children!

Ok, now that we know the difference between facts and opinion it's time to sail, but before we do this, we need to leave our worries and tension outside this room. Let's try to shake it up! (shake it up exercise)

## **SHAKE IT UP**

**We shake our bodies to the sound of a clap to release energy and help us focus.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Let's pretend we put magic glue on the bottoms of your feet and glue them to the floor. (Mime putting glue on the bottom of one foot and stomping it on the ground; then continue with the other foot. Group will follow your lead);
- Can you wiggle your knees and keep the bottoms of your feet flat on the floor at the same time? (Wiggle your knees while keeping the bottoms of your feet flat on the floor as if they're stuck);
- Let's move our bodies to the sound of the clap, keeping our feet glued to the floor. Make big movements when you hear loud claps. (Clap loudly. Demo the movements as best as you can while clapping);
- Make small movements when you hear quiet clapping. (Clap quietly. Demo the movements as best as you can while clapping)



- What do you do if you hear fast claps? (Clap fast, and group will answer, “Move fast.”);
- And if you hear slow claps? (Clap slowly, and group will answer, “Move slowly”);
- That’s it. See if you can follow these sounds, and when the clapping stops, freeze. 9Alternate between fast, slow, loud and quiet claps. Group will freeze when the clapping stops.)
- Let’s relax and feel our breathing for a few moments.

The aim of this game is to bring the focus of the group attention to the session and away from challenging thoughts.

Adapted from (Greenland, 2016)

Anxiety is usually caused by negative thoughts. Our mind is like a radio that constantly broadcasts news; however, we cannot pay attention to all of them and we focus just on the ones we think may be the most important. Usually, the negative ones. This news are basically our thoughts and some of them are so powerful that we start believing they’re true, even if we have no evidence to prove them. (Harris, 2019) How many times have you worried about failing a test but then you actually passed it? The problem is that we don’t know what’s going to happen in the future because the future simply doesn’t exist as yet. Despite to this, we spend a lot of time worrying about things that may happen to us or the people we love. The result is that we start believing these thoughts are true and we become anxious.

Make a list of all the things you worry about:

◇ \_\_\_\_\_

◇ \_\_\_\_\_

◇ \_\_\_\_\_

◇ \_\_\_\_\_

◇ \_\_\_\_\_

The problem is that when we feel anxious, we start believing these things will probably happen and we cannot focus on anything else. The 10-point check-in can help us switching our attention to the present. It is also important to acknowledge that thoughts are just thoughts! You do not have to do anything about them as they cannot hurt you or force you to do anything. A lot of people think that when they have a thought, they need to deal with it, but this is not necessarily true. Let's try a quick experiment:

### **HAND UP**

**We'll keep our hand over our head while thinking we need to take it off to see if thoughts can force us to do things we do not want to.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Just mimic me and put your right hand over your head;
- Now, I want you to think: "I need to take the hand off my head" while you continue to leave your hand over the head;
- As you can see, the fact your mind is telling you that you need to take the hand off doesn't actually mean you have to do it.

The aim of this exercise is to prove that thoughts are just thoughts and we do not necessarily have to act on them.

Our thoughts influence how we feel and, consequently, what we do. If I think that I will fail the math's test how do you think I'm going to feel? Probably, I will be anxious, unable to sleep and with stomach pain in the morning. If this is the case, I might decide that I don't want to go to school and I will, in fact, fail the test. But now that I know that a thought

is just a thought, a can change my response to this, go to school and pass that test.

### **BIT INTO A LEMON**

**We imagine biting into a lemon to help us understanding the connection between what's happening in your mind and what's happening in our bodies.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Resting your hands on your knees, sit with your back straight and your body relaxed and close your eyes;
- Picture yourself sitting at a kitchen table. There's a lemon in front of you. Imagine picking up the lemon. Imagine that it's wet and cold in your hand. Picture yourself cutting the lemon in half, picking up one half, smelling the lemon, and then biting into it. Is anything happening in your mouth?
- Did your body react to thinking about biting into a lemon as if you were actually doing it? Can you give other examples of mind-body connections?

Adapted from (Greenland, 2016)

This game is aimed to show that thoughts can affect our reactions. The vast majority of children experiences reactions of disgust as if they were actually biting into the lemon.

During the first part of our cruise, we have seen that facts are different from opinions, that our mind is constantly thinking and that, if we engage with our thoughts, these end up affecting our feelings and reactions. The good news is that if we accept thoughts for what they are and stop engaging with them, our emotions become more manageable. But before we learn how to do this, there is a little bit of pest control to do.

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Some thoughts can be happy (i.e. I'm really good at piano), some can be neutral (i.e. The table it's cold) and some others can be difficult (i.e. My friends don't like me). We usually pay more attention to the negative ones. But negative thoughts usually contain some mistakes. If we learn how to recognize them, we can change our reactions. We call these thoughts 'pesky thoughts'. Let's have a look at some of them:

- ◇ **Overgeneralizing:** Their sting results in people making sweeping judgements based on one experience. For example, Kate was in training for the high jump and tried to clear a personal best height. She didn't make it on her first attempt and was stung by an over-generalising thought and thought 'I'll never be able to jump that high' and gave up without trying again. Without being stung by the thought she would have kept practicing and improved her jumping skills.
- ◇ **Selective Thinking:** Causing people to concentrate only on the bad parts of their experience. For example, after he was stung by a selective thinking thought John decided that he hated going to school and often thought about the subjects and teachers he didn't like. He never thought about the parts of school that he did enjoy like meeting his mates, History class, and sports.
- ◇ **Black and White Thinking:** Causing people to think in extremes. Maria was stung by a black and white thinking thought and when she said something foolish without realising it in front of her friends they started to laugh. Her black and white thinking told her that just because her friends laughed at her this time: 'They must all think I'm stupid.'
- ◇ **Personalizing:** Causing people to take responsibility for things that have nothing to do with them. David was walking to the shops when he passed Melanie on the other side of the street. Melanie didn't say hello because she didn't see him, but David was stung by a personalising thought so he thought: 'She didn't say hello because she doesn't like me.'
- ◇ **Jumping to Conclusions:** Causing people to jump to conclusions about things without enough evidence to make a conclusion or without considering alternatives. Mark was stung by a jumping to

conclusions thought when he came home from school and found some of his money had gone from his bedroom. He jumped to the conclusion that it had been stolen by his brother Stephen.

- ◇ **Catastrophizing:** Causing people to presume that everything is a complete disaster. Aishling wanted to buy a great present for Zoe's birthday and decided on a new black top that she knew her friend had her eye on for some time. When she went to town the shop only had dark grey left which she bought instead. Afterwards when she was wrapping her friend's present she was stung by a catastrophizing thought and thought: 'My present is a complete disaster. Zoe's going to hate it.'
- ◇ **Predicting the Future:** Causing people to presume that the worst possible things are going to happen in the future. Karl was depressed and was stung by a predicting the future thought that made him think: 'I am never going to get better.'
- ◇ **Rumination:** Causing people to think over and over and over and over again and again and again in their head about something that has upset them. Kelly was annoyed when a class mate said something she didn't like. After she was stung by a ruminating thought she spent the rest of the day thinking about it. (O'Reilly)

Do you recognize any of these pesky thoughts? Let's see if we can do this together. (Use the homework sheet at the end of this session to practice during the session. Start by writing down the situation (i.e. Anna rang me to invite me at a party). In the next column write down the thoughts (i.e. I am too fat for the party. Her friends will laugh at me), followed by the feeling and pesky thoughts (i.e. anxiety – jumping to conclusion). Add how long this last (i.e. all day) and the outcome (i.e. I've rang her back to say I don't feel well and can't go). As the group to provide few examples until everybody has understood how to complete this. You will be practicing during the rest of the week to understand what makes you feel anxious and why. In addition to this and the 10-point check-in, let's introduce another small technique that can help with your anxiety but remember: the aim is not to get rid of unwanted thoughts and feelings but to help you feeling better despite to them.

## THE FUNNY VOICE

**We use funny voices to take a step back from our thoughts and recognise they are just thoughts and we don't need to do anything about them.**

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### LEADING THE GAME

- Find a thought that upsets or bothers you. Focus on the thought for ten seconds, believing it as much as possible. Notice how it affects you;
- Then pick an animated cartoon character with a humorous voice, such as Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Shrek or Homer Simpson. Now bring the troubling thought to mind, but 'hear' it in the cartoon character's voice, as if that character were speaking your thoughts out loud. Notice what happens;
- Now get the negative thought back in its original form and again believe it as much as possible. Notice how it affects you;
- Next pick a different cartoon character or a character from a movie or television show. Consider fantasy characters such as Darth Vader, Yoda, Gollum or someone from your favourite sitcom, or actors with distinctive voices. Once again bring the distressing thought to mind and 'hear' it in that voice. Notice what happens.

This technique is particularly good with recurrent negative thoughts. After doing the exercise then repeating it, you've probably found that you're not taking that thought so seriously. You may even have found yourself grinning or chuckling. Notice that you have not tried to get rid of the thought, argue with it, push it away. By hearing it from a different voice, you have just realised that is nothing more than a thought and this made your emotion less painful.

Adapted from (Harris, 2019)

## Homework

We have reached our second harbor so thank you for your hard work. It has been a busy cruise, with lot to learn and lot to do. To make sure we do not have to clean the boat again next week, make sure you complete this worksheet and record what makes you feel anxious during this week. If you have forgotten how to do it, please ask before leaving the boat as this is a very important step for helping with your anxiety.

### Thoughts and Feelings Log

Journaling is a helpful way to gain insight on the impact of negative thoughts or worries. To better understand the impact of your anxiety, journal about your intrusive thoughts. When a negative thought or recurring thought happens, write down the event, your feelings, how long the feelings lasted, and what happened as a result of the worry. (Did you miss out on an opportunity? Were you able to rejoin a group? Did you avoid an activity or person?)

Event (Time of Day, People Involved, Situation)	Negative Thought or Worry	Feelings & Why	How Long the Feelings Lasted	Outcome



# THE GATHERING OF THE STORM

*How to 'drop the anchor' when anxiety gets too strong*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Developing alternative thoughts;
- Using your breath as an anchor;
- Regain control of the present

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Welcome back to this new journey. We have cleaned our boat from 'pesky' thoughts so that we can sail with just the right equipment. How has it gone? Have you been able to look at your thoughts using the worksheet? What have you learned from this exercise? (Check that everybody has completed the worksheet correctly. If someone has struggled with it, spend some time at the end of this session to complete the worksheet with them. This worksheet is an essential part of the program!)

If you have completed your worksheet correctly, you are probably aware that you tend to have some 'pesky' thoughts more than others. For example, some people tend to catastrophize while others constantly jump to conclusions that make them worry.

Today we are going to learn how to accept these thoughts and make them become more manageable but, before we do so, it may be useful to stomp our feet and get ready to sail.

### **STOMP YOUR FEET**

**We stomp our feet to the ground to regain control of our body and mind.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Sit with your back straight and your body relaxed. Breathe naturally and notice what's happening with your body and mind at the moment;
- Move your attention to the bottom of your feet and notice how they feel against the ground. Let thoughts and emotions simply pass;
- Push your feet hard into the floor and feel the ground beneath you. Pay attention to what you feel;

The aim of this exercise is to bring the attention back to the present and ground.

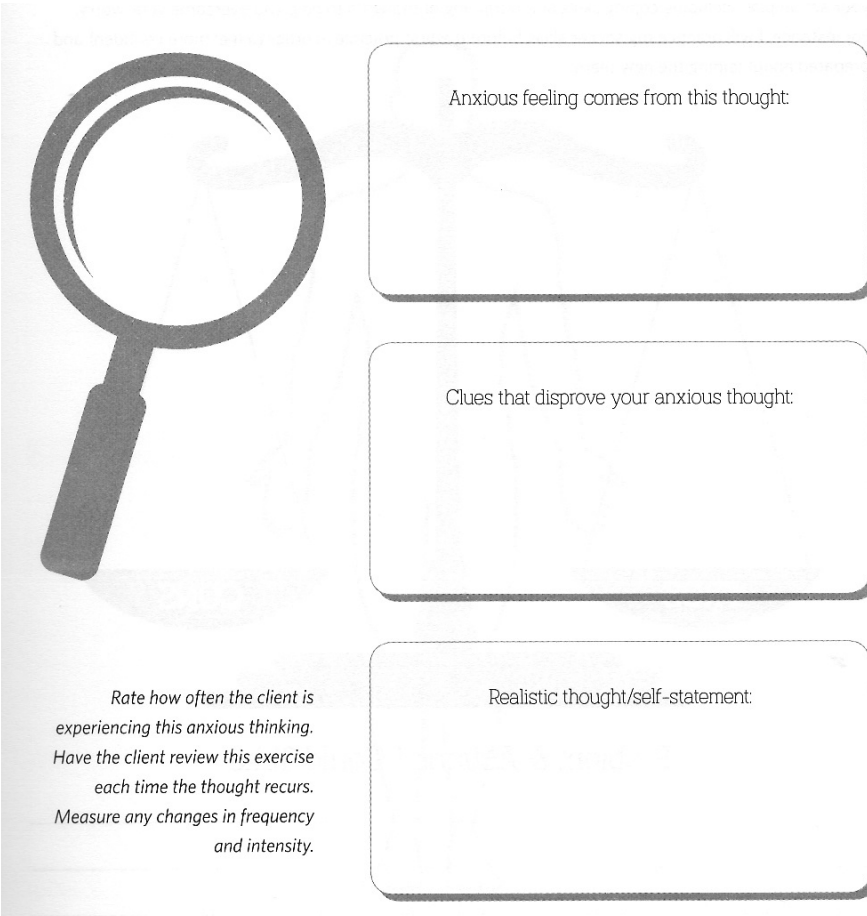
How do you feel? It feels like we can actually let our thoughts and feelings go by grounding stomping our feet and focusing on what's happening here and now. This technique can be really useful and you can use it every time you need it.

Sometimes, our thoughts can be really challenging. Like a storm they hit us so badly that we start worrying and find difficult to focus on something else. But we do have a choice! We can focus on the storm and complain about it or we can focus on how to protect ourselves until the storm has passed. What do you think is the best option and why? (Let the group share their opinion and then explain that focusing on the storm can be exhausting and does not make the storm going away, while accepting that the storm is there and focusing on finding a repair can help us surviving until the storm is over).

Today, we will learn how to switch our attention from the storm to the repair. As we have learned during our last journey, thoughts are not necessarily true and they may contain some 'pesky' elements that make us feel anxious. Do you remember the hand over the head? Unfortunately, sometimes it's difficult to remember this while we are dealing with our anxiety and we have to act as a detective in order to find clues that will help us understanding if our thoughts are facts or opinions. Let me give you an example.

Mary had a math test planned and she studied very hard for it. On the day of the test, she was really anxious as she started feeling that she would fail the test and her parents would be very upset with her. Rather than giving into her anxious feelings, she decided to look at clues that disprove her anxious thoughts and she came out with this: "My parents love me", "When I failed a test in the past, they have been really supportive with me", "I have studied hard and practice this test several times". This helped her formulating a new thought based on the evidence she had: "I have studied hard and it's unlikely I will fail the test; however, even if this is the case, my parents will be supportive and I can repeat the test". This helped reducing her anxiety.

As you can see, by looking at evidence that disprove her thoughts, she was able to feel less anxious and deal with her test. Let's try this together.



Anxious feeling comes from this thought:

Clues that disprove your anxious thought:

Realistic thought/self-statement:

*Rate how often the client is experiencing this anxious thinking. Have the client review this exercise each time the thought recurs. Measure any changes in frequency and intensity.*

(O'Reilly)

Next time you feel anxious, rather than following your thoughts, try to play the detective and see if you can come out with a more realistic thought that doesn't contain any "pesky" bit. Remember that we are not doing this to get rid of the thoughts!

If our anxiety is still too strong after this exercise, we can use our breath to clear our mind and focus on the present. We have already introduced some games and exercises that can help us with this but we are going to introduce another one.

## **BREATHING WITH A PINWHEEL**

**We blow on a pinwheel to notice that different ways of breathing – quick, slow, deep, and shallow – affect how our minds and bodies feel.**

---

### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Sit with your back straight and your body relaxed. Pick up your pinwheel;
- We'll blow on our pinwheels together using long, deep breaths and notice how we feel. Does your body feel relaxed? Is it easy or hard for you to sit still after breathing deeply?
- Now let's blow on our pinwheels using short, quick breaths. How does your body feel now? Do you feel the same after breathing quickly as you feel after breathing slowly?
- Let's blow on our pinwheels now, breathing normally. Was it easy to keep your mind on breathing, or were you distracted?

Have a long discussion about the different types of breathing: Can you think of a situation when breathing deeply would be useful in daily life? (Maybe to calm down when you're upset, or to help you concentrate.) What about breathing quickly? (Maybe when you're tired and want to feel a little more energized.)

(Greenland, 2016)

So far, we have learned that anxiety comes mainly from our thoughts and that these thoughts are not necessarily true. We have also learned that we can act as detectives to unmask 'pesky' thoughts so that they become more manageable. Finally, we have learned some techniques that can help us accepting our thoughts and reducing our anxiety. Unfortunately, sometimes storms can be very painful or last long. When this happens, it may be difficult to step away from our thoughts and deal with them. When this

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happens, we may feel overwhelmed and think that we cannot cope but, in fact, we can! And the best way to do this is to drop an anchor until the storm is gone.

## **DROP THE ANCHOR**

**We combine various techniques to help us dealing with strong anxiety.**

---

### **LEADING THE GAME**

- I want you to take a moment to acknowledge that there are difficult thoughts and feelings showing up. Please, try to name them and understand them. (Pause to give the YP time to focus on this).
- At the same time, see if you can push your feet hard into the floor. That's it. Feel the ground beneath you.
- Now sit forward in your chair and press your fingers together, and as you do that, move your elbows and your shoulders. Feel your arms moving, all the way from your fingers to your shoulder blades.
- Take a moment to acknowledge that there is a lot of pain here that you didn't ask for...but here it is...and it's challenging and it's difficult and, despite you want it to go away, it's still not going...
- Silently acknowledge to yourself what type of pain it is...For example, you can tell to yourself 'This is sadness' or 'This is anger' or 'This is a painful memory'.
- Now notice that there are painful thoughts and feelings here, and there's also a body around all that pain – holding it, containing it. And it's a body you can move and control. Take a deep breath. Count 1-5 in your mind while you are breathing in, then hold while counting until 3, and count again until 5 while you are breathing out. (REPEAT 5 TIMES)

- Straighten your back again, and notice the whole body now – your hands, feet, arms, legs. Gently move them and feel them moving...Have a good stretch...Notice your muscles stretching...Press your feet down and feel the floor.
- Now also look around the room – up, down, and side to side – and notice five things that you can see.
- And also notice three or four things that you can hear.
- So notice, there are some difficult thoughts and feelings here that you are struggling with, and at the same time, see if you can also notice your body in the chair...and gently move that body...That's it, take control of your arms and legs.
- Also notice the room around you.
- Do you notice any difference now?
- Is it any easier for you to be present, to focus on what I am saying and what we are doing here?
- Do you have more control on your arms and legs? Do you have more control over your actions now? Move your body, your arms, legs, mouth. Do you have more control on what you are doing now?
- Repeat until you feel more relaxed

Dropping the anchor is a very powerful technique that can be used for:

- Emotional Dysregulation;
- Dissociation;
- Overwhelming emotions;
- Impulsive behaviours;
- Panic attack;
- Flashbacks

Adapted from: (Harris, 2019)



Even if this exercise cannot bring you back to a safe harbor or let the problems go away, it will provide you with a quick strategy you can use to make your anxiety more manageable until it passes. Remember that anxiety is not meant to last forever and if you do not engage with your thoughts and instead you focus on the present, it will soon pass on its own.

## HOMEWORK

At the end of our third journey we have learned how to manage even the most powerful storm but your sailing skills need practice. During this week complete the 'Thoughts and Feelings Log' that we have introduced last week but also play the "Detective" for each anxious thought, using the example we provided earlier. Continue to play some of the techniques we have introduced to help you managing your anxiety as see which one works better for you.

# DETECTIVES ON BOARD

*How to develop more rational thoughts that will reduce your anxiety*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Recognizing useful worries from non-useful ones;
- Developing rational thoughts;
- Traffic light system;

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We're back again and ready to sail. So far, we have learned what is anxiety and some techniques to make it more manageable. Have you been practicing these? Are these working? Which one is your favorite?

We have also seen that thoughts are just thoughts and sometimes contain some thinking mistakes. Playing the detective can help us developing rational thoughts by looking at the evidences. Have you had a chance to try this? How did it go? How does it make you feel?

Unfortunately, last night our rudder went missing and I had to hire a detective to help us finding it out. We will not be able to sail until we find it and the detective needs your clues in order to be able to figure it out what happened.

If you have completed your worksheet correctly, you are probably aware that you tend to have some 'pesky' thoughts more than others. For example, some people tend to catastrophize while others constantly jump to conclusions that make them worry.

Today we are going to learn how to accept these thoughts and make them become more manageable but, before we do so, it may be useful to stomp our feet and get ready to sail. We need to wear uniforms in order to avoid contaminating the clues. Let's start with this:

### **ZIP-UP**

**We imagine there's a zipper going up our bodies to help us keep our backs straight and muscles relaxed.**

---

#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Let's pretend we have a zipper running up and down our bodies, from our belly buttons to our chines, that help us sit or stand straight and tall;

- Without touching your body, put one hand in front of your belly button and the other hand at your lower back;
- Ok, let's zip ourselves up: ZIIPPP;
- Now that we are zipped up, let's take a few breaths together with our bodies straight and tall;

Adapted from (Greenland, 2016)

Now that we are wearing our uniforms, we can start helping the detective finding the clues. As we said during our first cruise, anxiety causes people to worry about things. When we are worried about something, we may end up spending a lot of energy thinking about the worst-case scenario. This causes changes in our body (for example our heart pumping faster) and bring us to do things we may regret (for example avoiding to spend time with our friend). In the long-term, this can be time consuming and leave us exhausted.

Worrying is normal and everyone does it; however, there are situation when it is useful to worry and some other where is not. A useful way to understand if a worry is useful consists in asking ourselves if we can do something to change the situation. For example, if I am worried that I may fail an exam, this motivates to study more and, by studying more, I will be able to succeed. But is it useful to get upset about the weather? How can I change it? If I have planned to go out but it's raining, the best thing to do is finding activities I can do indoor instead of worrying. Even if I spend the entire day worrying, it is very unlikely this will change the weather. Look at the list below and let me know what worries are useful and what are not:

- **Fire**: Leaving something over the cooker can cause a fire;
- **Time**: I've invited a friend to watch football but I'm sure he will be late and we will miss the match;
- **Temperature**: It could be cold outside tomorrow and I need to wear appropriate clothes
- **Bomb**: I am not going out to play with my friends in case criminals decided to place a bomb;

- **All**igators: I am on holiday and I was told to avoid visiting the lake because there have been some recent report of alligators playing in the area;
- **Illness**: I check my door three times to ensure it is closed so that germs will not get inside;
- **Restauran**t: A friend invited me to eat some fish but I don't like fish

The detective told me that a clue lies behind the red letters. If we find out in which case is appropriate to worry, we should be able to get a word. Let's try:

- Is it ok to worry about this because fire can be a big problem and, if I avoid leaving foods over a heated cooker, I can prevent a fire;
- If my friend is late, can I ask the football team to delay the match? Probably I cannot. Does it make any sense for me to worry and be anxious about something like this? What if my friend is on time?
- If I know that it's going to be cold, I can wear clothes that will keep me warm;
- It is very unlikely that someone will place a bomb. It takes time, knowledge and the right materials to do so. Also, these things happen very rarely and I cannot spend the rest of my life at home for something that might never happen to me;
- Alligators can be quite dangerous and if I know they are in the lake, I will keep myself away;
- Germs live in our body and many other places. The front door cannot stop them so checking it over and over it will not protect me from illness;
- If I know that my friend has booked a table in a restaurant that only cook fish, I can tell him that I will not be able to go. He can book a different restaurant or we can meet later;

What word do we get if we put the letters in order? (FALLEN)

So, it looks like the difference between useful worries and non-useful ones is given by the fact that it may be useful to worry for things I can change but it does not make sense worrying for things I cannot.

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# Getting to Know Your Worry

---

1. Describe a recent situation when you experienced some anxiety. Remember to describe the what, where, and why of this situation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Was there anything you could have changed about this situation to make it less anxiety provoking? Was there anything you could have changed to make it more peaceful? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. List the things you were not able to change about this situation. What didn't you have control over? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Describe a recent situation where you felt peaceful or at ease. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Describe your thoughts regarding the peaceful situation. What were you thinking? What were you feeling? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. When in an anxiety-provoking situation, what would change for you if you could accept your thoughts and the situation for what they are? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(O'Reilly)

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The exercise below should help you understanding what worries you and what can you change in order to feel less worried. If there is nothing that you can change, this means that probably you are worrying about something outside your control and, if this is the case, worrying will not make things any better. You can use the 10-point check-in to bring your attention back to the present and use your energy for something else.

Despite sometimes we know we are worrying about things that might not happen, the anxiety is still there and, in this case, it may be useful introducing a better version of the detective game.

### **SUPER DETECTIVE**

**We investigate our thoughts in order to make them more manageable.**

---

#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Let's start by thinking about a situation when you felt really anxious. What happened? Where were you? (I.e. Two weeks ago, when I was in school with my friends);
- Now think at the emotions you experienced and where you felt it most. (I.e. worried, anxious, stomach cramp, lump in my throat);
- Rate the emotion from 1 to 100 (i.e. anxious 90%);
- Now look at the thoughts you had and see if you can spot any "pesky" one. (i.e. Annah will tell Mary that I wet my bed last night – predicting the future);
- It's now time to look at evidence that prove my thought is right. (i.e. She has done something similar in the past);
- And at the evidence that disconfirm my thought. (i.e. She cares for me, she will never do anything like this; she knows I'll be embarrassed);
- If we look again at the evidence, can we find any alternative thought? A better one? One more likely to happen? Bear in mind that we need to believe to this thought so it cannot be



- The opposite of my initial one. In this case, a good example could be: “I’m worried Annah may tell Mary that I wet my bed last night because she did something similar in the past; however, I know she cares for me and she will never do something like that to me”;
- Look at the alternative thought and rate your feelings again. (i.e. anxiety 30%)

This exercise is very powerful and can help us developing less stressful thoughts and, guess what, if our thoughts are less stressful then we can be less anxious and focus on the present moment.

There are some tips we need to follow to make this technique work:

- We need to complete this exercise immediately after we have a distressful thought, otherwise we will forget it and it’s not going to work;
- If it’s not practical to do this immediately, we need to do it at the earliest opportunity. So, if I’m talking to a friend, I can wait until I finish the conversation and then go to the toilet and complete this;
- It’s good to do this in write so that you can go back if you experience the same thought again. You can use a notepad to write all your thoughts;
- Our alternative thought needs to be something based on evidence and something we believe. If I think that I’m ugly, I cannot expect to change this in “I’m beautiful”. If you don’t believe your alternative thought, then look at the evidence and try to think about a new one;
- It takes time to learn this technique but, if you keep practicing it, it will eventually become automatic;
- This means that after few months, if you do it correctly, you’ll do this in your mind without using the notepad (but you can still use it if you want)

But, hold on, are those red character another clue? It looks like they make a work if we put them together!

Sometimes, despite we manage to develop a more manageable thought, the anxiety is still there. If we get upset about this or try to push it back, the thought will end up being more powerful and our anxiety will go up. We can use our breathing exercises or the 10-point checklist to focus on the present but, if the thought is still there, it may be useful finding our ways to deal with it. The reason for this is that people are different and different strategies work for different people. Also, a strategy that worked in the past may not work now and this is why is important to keep trying new things and adapting our strategies to the situation. Bear in mind that strategies also need practicing in order to work. They may not work the first time we try but, if we keep trying, they will eventually work.

The thoughts' detective always carries on two suitcases. The first one is a 'real' suitcase and contains objects and tools. In this suitcase there are things that make him feel calm and relaxed. There is always at least one thing that tastes nice, one thing that smells nice, one thing that it pleasant to touch, something that makes a nice sound and something that is nice to see.

You can create your own "self-soothing" bag to deal with difficult emotions and carry it on with you. For example, I've created mine using a colored piece of fabric with stars and moons on it. Inside, I've put some of my favorite chocolates, a scented candle and a spray, a stress ball which I like to touch, an MP3 player with my favorite songs and some pictures of places I would like to visit. Every time I feel anxious, I open my bag and use these things to calm me down. It would be nice for you to do the same. You can color and personalize you bag as you want, or you can buy one already made and fill it with the things you like most. Think about what you would like to put inside the bad and add these items to the top luggage on the next page. You will create your bag when you go at home and bring it with you in the next journey.

In the bottom luggage I would like you to write down strategies that help you calming down and relaxing. You can use some of the strategies we have learned together or your personal ones. I always find the 10-point checklist really useful and also the drop the anchor one. Which one works for you instead? Please write them down in the bottom luggage.

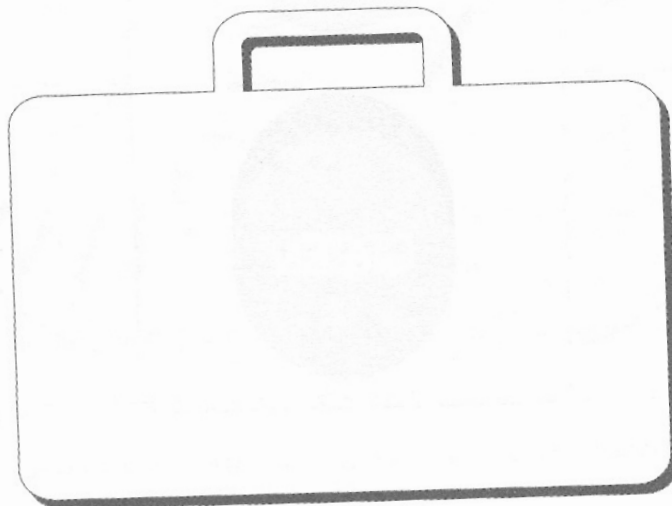
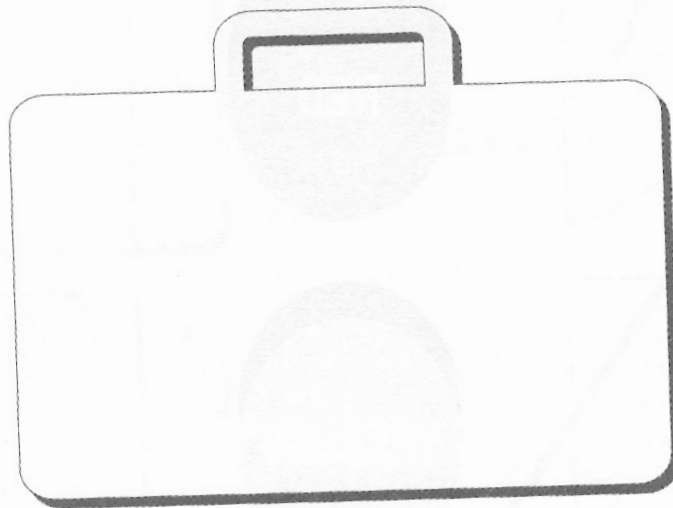
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## Creating Your Own Coping Kit

---

No matter what difficult emotion or thought a client is having, it is helpful for them to have a kit ready to address it. Assist your client in problem solving to create their own kit at home. It's great if you are able to have various items in your office that could be used in a kit, but if not, you can help your client identify what items could be helpful. The items chosen should help the client think positively and relax (perhaps a stuffed animal, a photo of a loved one, a puzzle or game, a card with positive messages written on it).

On the suitcases below, have the client write or draw items that they could keep in a box, bag, or suitcase to have ready to help them cope with difficult emotions or thoughts.



(O'Reilly)

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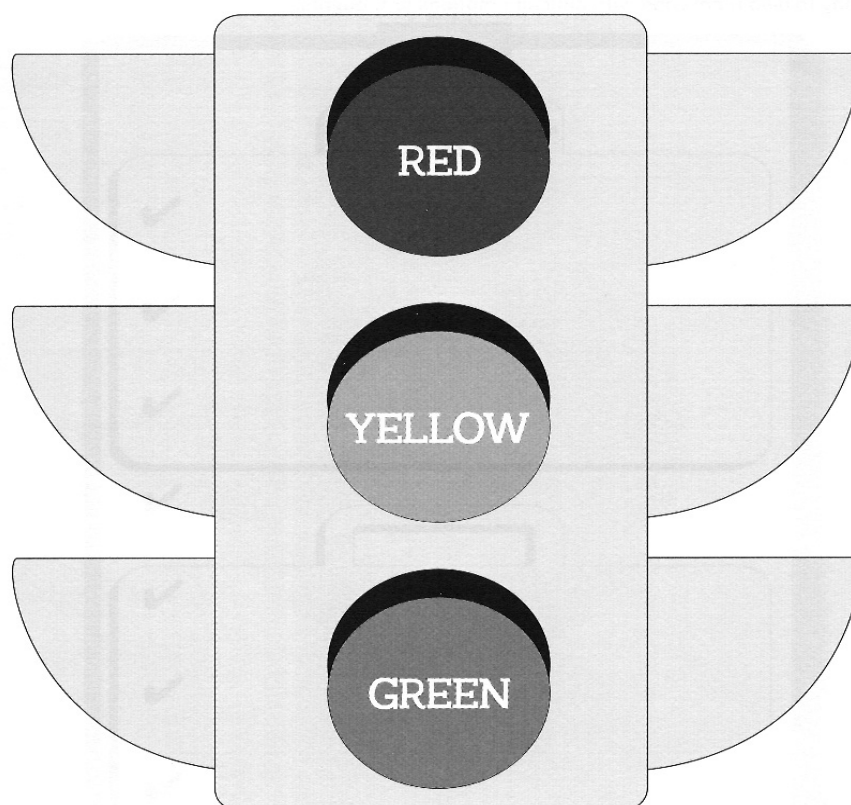
Life on the sea can be challenging and some seas are very busy so we decided to install some traffic lights for worries.

When you feel worried, you use the traffic light below to remember yourself to stop and think. You will write the worry next to the red light. But we know some worries are useful (we can change the situation) while other are not (we cannot do anything about them). We will use the space next to the yellow light to build a plan to deal with our worries. This can be using a tool from our self-soothing box, a technique or both. We will then act our plan and write what happens next to the green light.

## **Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light**

---

This activity is designed to help you identify a worry, problem-solve for the worry, and make a good decision regarding your worry. Use the traffic light below to remind you to stop and identify the worry (red), come up with a plan (yellow), and act (green). As learned in previous activities, some worry is good, and some is bad. Use this activity to help you decide if the worry you are experiencing is "bad" worry that can be addressed in a positive way.



(O'Reilly)

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So, in this cruise we have learned how to make out thoughts more manageable becoming a super detective; how to recognize useful worries from non-useful ones; how to create a self-soothing box to deal with strong emotions and how to problem-solve those. But there is still a mystery to solve.

The detective said the last clue is: wet, big and salty...Any idea what that may be?

He also left this to resolve the mystery about our rudder: Key 1 + Key 2 + Key 3

F\_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_ THE S\_\_

Aww, that makes perfectly sense! We can now recover our rudder and sail, but until the next week, please use the worksheet in the next page every time you have a difficult thought. Remember to use it as soon as you have a thought. The worksheet it's just a template and you can use it for multiple thoughts or write the thoughts down in a notepad using the same scheme.

You can also continue to use the other skills you have learned so far.

## HOMEWORK

Thought Record Sheet – 7 column						
Situation / Trigger	Feelings Emotions – (Rate 0 – 100%) Body sensations	Unhelpful Thoughts / Images	Facts that support the unhelpful thought	Facts that provide evidence against the unhelpful thought	Alternative, more realistic and balanced perspective	Outcome Re-rate emotion
<p>What happened? Where? When? Who with? How?</p>	<p>What emotion did I feel at that time? What else? How intense was it? What did I notice in my body? Where did I feel it?</p>	<p>What went through my mind? What disturbed me? What did those thoughts/images/memories mean to me, or say about me or the situation? What am I responding to? What 'button' is this pressing for me? What would be the worst thing about that, or that could happen?</p>	<p>What are the facts? What facts do I have that the unhelpful thought/s are totally true?</p>	<p>What facts do I have that the unhelpful thought/s are NOT totally true? Is it possible that this is opinion, rather than fact? What have others said about this?</p>	<p>STOPP! Take a breath....  What would someone else say about this situation? What's the bigger picture? Is there another way of seeing it? What advice would I give someone else? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? Is this really as important as it seems?</p>	<p>What am I feeling now? (0-100%)  What could I do differently? What would be more effective?  Do what works! Act wisely. What will be most helpful for me or the situation? What will the consequences be?</p>

(Vivyan, 2010)

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# FACING THE STORM

*How to face our anxiety and ease the tension in your body*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Learning how to face our anxiety
- Developing a “bravery plan”;
- Releasing any tension;

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Welcome back to this new journey. In the past few sessions we have learned some strategies to manage our anxiety and it's now the time to do so. So far, we have learned that anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing and that we cannot get rid of it; however, we can make peace with it and change our response. The Thought record the detective taught to us, combined with the other techniques we have learned, it's a very powerful tool that can help us with our anxiety so it's now time to review some of them. Who wants to share some thoughts with the other crews? (Please check that everyone has completed the thought record correctly. If this is not the case, please explain it again and complete some examples before starting the session).

Have you ever asked yourself what is that makes anxiety worse? Please, spend 5 minutes writing down what do you think makes anxiety worse:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Now, I'm going to tell you something that may sound pretty strange to you: One of the things that makes anxiety worse is actually trying to get rid of it!!! I know, I know, it's difficult to believe it, but let's try a game together:

### **PUSHING THE ANXIETY AWAY**

**We pretend to push away our anxiety to prove this makes it worsen.**

---

#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Please, set with your back straight and take a sheet of A4 paper (do the same). I want you to mimic me during this exercise;



- Now, imagine that out there are all the things you like and the people you care about (indicates around you);
- But out there are also the things you have to do, your homework, cleaning your room, going to school (again indicate the space around them);
- Finally, out there are all your worries, fear and painful feelings;
- Please, grab the sheet of paper with both hands like this (show them). Let's pretend this sheet is your fears and worries and push it away as much as you can (extend your arms away from the body and push the sheet away). Keep doing this for at least one minute;
- Now, while you continue to push the sheet away, I want you to tell me how hard is this? It's tiring and painful and, despite we are pushing it away, our anxiety and worries are still here and consuming our energies;
- Let's see what happens if we try to push them even further. Please, use all your strength to push it away. What happens? Is the sheet disappearing or is it still there?
- Now, relax your arms and just put the sheet of paper over your knees. As you see, you can still see it but it's less painful and less difficult to manage.

We have tried to push our worries away for less than one minute and we are pretty much exhausted. Can you imagine doing it all day, every day of your life? How tired will you be at the end? What's happen instead when we stop trying to push our anxiety away and we just accept it? It just becomes easier to manage.

The aim of this exercise is to show that trying to get rid of our anxiety makes it worsen while accepting it make it more manageable. It's important to highlight that when people are busy pushing the anxiety away and in pain, they cannot focus on anything else and miss the opportunity to be happy.

Adapted from: (Harris, ACT made simple, 2019)

Do you believe me now?

It's very important that we stop trying to push our anxiety away and, instead, problem-solve it. The best way to reduce our anxiety it's facing it! It may be really scaring initially but, if you plan some easy and small steps, you will eventually beat it. Let me explain this a little bit better to you with an example.

Once, I had a crew called Mike. He was really nice and clever but it was scared about swimming. Now, as you can imagine, it's difficult to board a sailor that doesn't want to swim because what happens if we have an accident and the boat sinks? He was really embarrassed to talk about this as he was worried the other crews might laugh at him but one day he decided to talk to me. I have explained that everybody is worries about something and there was no reason why he should feel embarrassed. I have explained that the only way to continue his journey was to face his anxiety and I suggested him to create a bravery plan. A bravery plan is something everyone can create. You start by thinking about what makes you feel anxious and then you write down some steps to face this. You start by creating a list from the least scaring step up to the most scaring one and then you start following the plan. You start by acting on the least scaring step and, once this no longer scares you, you move to the next. This is what Mike wrote down:

1. Research how to stay safe when swimming;
2. Visit the swimming pool, but don't go in the water;
3. Chose myself new goggles from the shop;
4. Go to the pool, get changed and sit on the edge;
5. Dip my feet into the water;
6. Get into the water at the shallow end with one of my parents, with my goggles on, where I can touch the bottom;
7. Trying using a swimming float in the shallow end with one of my parents;
8. Splash water on my face;
9. Put my end under the water for one second;
10. Get into the shallow water on my own;
11. Get into the deep water with my parents;

12. Get into the deep water on my own but ask my parents to be around;

13. Getting into the deep water on my own

Adapted from (O'Neill, 2018)

It took about 4 months for Mike to be able to swim, but he eventually managed to do so. Initially, he was really scared but after a while he became less scared and now he swims with his friends. Sometimes, he still feels scared but he thinks that he can manage this because he really likes swimming with his friends.

It's now time to create your own bravery plan and face your anxiety, but before we do so, I want to give you some advice:

- Make sure the actions on your plan are relevant to the problem. If you are scared of going out, watching TV is not a relevant action;
- List the actions from the easiest to the most challenging. If you start from very challenging one, you may become too anxious and abandon the plan;
- Stay with one action until it becomes less scary before moving to the next one! Don't rush on yourself!
- If you are unsure about what to do, ask someone to help you with the plan;
- Talk about your fears with trusted people! Everybody is scared about something and you will not be judged because of this;
- Don't let people pressuring you! If someone tells you shouldn't be scared of something, explain that what is scary for you might not be scary for them same as what scares them may not be scary for you

Let's make a bravery plan now. You don't need to share this with anyone if you don't want to but it may be useful to share with your parents or friends so that they can help you.

Let's start by writing down one thing that makes you feel anxious or scares you:

One of the things that worries/scares me at this time is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

The next step is to write down 10 steps you can follow in order to overcome this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now, order the steps from the least scaring to the most scaring and put them in order:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

It looks like we finally have our bravery plan! From today, you will start following the first step and then move to the next one when you are ready. Remember: you can always ask for help if you are struggling. If you feel the first step is too scary, go back to your list and try changing the order. The first step needs to be scary enough, but not so much!

Now that the storm is starting to clear, we can talk about tension. Anxiety can cause some tension in our body. We have learned the connection between body and mind and we know that anxiety can cause stomach

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pain, lump in our throat, headache and various other physical problems. What we need is a way to release this tension and relax. What do you do when you feel tense?

A lot of people decide to watch TV or play games when they feel tense. This can be fun but all that excitement can be stressful for your brain. This is why sometimes we need to unplug and do some relaxing activities to ease our tension. You can use some of items in your luggage or some of the activities below:

- Paint a pebble with acrylic paint;
- Make a collage;
- Do some gentle stretches;
- Read a book;
- Write a poem;
- Go for a bike ride;
- Watch a candle flame flickering (ask an adult for help with this);
- Listen to some music;
- Watch the clouds – what shape can you spot?
- Collect some flowers;
- Color a mandala;
- Play an instrument;
- Bake a cake with you parents;
- Sing a song;
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You can use the empty dots to add things that help you relaxing and ease your tension.

We are now going to two very powerful techniques to help you easing your tension: Mindfulness and Progressive Muscles Relaxation. To be fair, we have already introduced some examples of these techniques in the past sessions but it's now time to add some more.

Mindfulness consists in becoming aware of the present moment. This helps our mind stop paying attention to difficult thoughts and feelings (which will still be there) and instead focusing on the present so that we can live our life as it is.

### **QUICK MINDFULNESS**

**We use a quick mindfulness exercise to help us easing our tension and quieting our mind.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- Sit in a quiet and comfortable space. You can also lay down, if you prefer;
- Close your eyes and imagine that your thoughts are clouds floating across the sky;
- Notice the cloud's shapes and colours;
- Now, take your attention to your body and see if you can find any tension. Focus on your tummy, your head and your chest;
- Notice your chest moving up and down while you breathe;
- Imagine to breathe into the tension;
- Breathe into the tension for ten counts and then open your eyes

Mindfulness can be really useful but because tension happens in the body, sometimes it can be quite uncomfortable and we need another strategy to help us dealing with it. Contracting and relaxing our muscles can help us easing strong tensions in our body. One of the things that sailors like is playing dice. Let's see if they can help us with our tension.

# Relaxation Rolls

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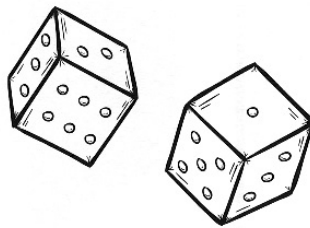
This is a game to help you practice muscle relaxation. Roll a single die and perform the relaxation technique next to the number you roll. You can also list your own calming strategies for Round 2 and practice each when you roll the die.

## Round 1

1. Clench your toes, count to three, then relax your toes.
2. Close your eyes tightly, count to three, then relax your eyes and face.
3. Clench your teeth, count to three, then relax your jaw.
4. Tighten your fists, count to three, then relax your hands.
5. Tighten your calf muscles, count to three, then relax your legs.
6. Tighten your stomach, count to three, then relax your stomach.

## Round 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



(O'Reilly)

In this journey we have learned two very important things: how to face our anxiety using a bravery plan and how to release our tension. If we practice

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these strategies together with the ones we have learned before, we will become able to manage our anxiety.

### Homework

Until our next journey, I want you to continue using the thought record worksheet but also to start following the steps in your bravery plan. We will review these next week. Remember that no technique can work if you don't use it.



# MAKING NEW FRIENDS

*How to make and maintain new friends*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Learning how to make new friends;
- Recognizing bullying;
- Joining a group;
- Maintaining good relationships with others;

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Another journey is starting and I wonder how did the bravery plan go? Have you started to following it? Have you progressed to the steps? Please, share your story with the other sailors. What did you find difficult? How did you manage to overcome these difficulties? What will you do next?

It is also important that you continue your thought record worksheet and I want everybody to share one thought from that worksheet. As we already know, we can learn how to accept our anxiety only if we practice the skills we learn!

Sailing it's a nice experience but sailing alone can be boring. This is why on the boat, as in life, we are often looking to make new friends. For some people this is a very easy task, while for others it may be difficult. Why do you think it is important to make new friends?

- Friends are people we can talk to and make us feel less lonely;
- Being part of a group gives us a sense of protection;
- Friends can help us when we are struggling;
- Friends are funny and it's nice to spend time with them

All the above is true but, sometimes, we worry about our friends. We may think they are upset with us; we may be worried that they do not like us anymore; we may be concerned about what they think of us. These are common problems and we will spend this cruise and the next one trying to deal with some of these.

Some people are worried when they have to talk in front of others; when they have to enter a room full of strangers; when they have to go to a new, unfamiliar, place. We call this "social anxiety". The cause for social anxiety is usually the fear that others may judge us negatively, laugh at us or that we may end up doing something that will embarrass us. These thoughts are very common and, to some extent, everyone experiences them more or less. These are usually caused by what we called "pesky thought" and we now have the tool to deal with them.

There is a question I ask everybody: when you go out, do you look at everyone around you trying to identify their defects and then comment on them? I'm sure the vast majority of people don't! This means that when you go out, despite you may think that people are looking at you and judging

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you this is not actually happening! Sometimes, you may feel this is the case but it's just your mind playing you some tricks 😊 The best thing to do is acknowledging this by telling yourself: "My mind is telling me the story of..." and completing this sentencing with a funny title. An example could be: "My mind is telling me the story that everyone is staring at me. I call this, the mirror house". This will help you separating your thoughts from 'facts' and feeling less worried. You will then complete the thought record worksheet and some relaxation to move away from this.

### **THE MIND STORY**

**We use some examples to understand how to use the mind story technique.**

---

#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- I'm going to tell you some example and I want you to come out with an original title for this mind stories;
- Hannah needs to present her science project to the class but she is worried her classmates will laugh at her. What title can she give to this? (e.g. My mind is telling me the story of the laughing big mouths);
- John decided to go to a party but he is convinced that people will judge him because he is not tall. What can he say to himself? (e.g. My mind is telling me the story of the little boy in the land of giants);
- Peter has spilled some milkshake over his shirt and he's now convinced his friends will take picture of him and post these on social medias. What can he say to himself? (e.g. Here we go, my mind is telling me the paparazzi story again).

Now that we know how to deal with our fears, it's time to make new friends. But how can we do so? What do you find difficult when it comes to making new friends? This is a list of tips you can use to make new friends.

## MAKING NEW FRIEND

**Wen use the tips below to increase or chances to make new friends.**

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### LEADING THE GAME

- Remember: All human beings are lovable but finding friends may take some efforts;
- **Look for people who are close to you.** In order to find friends who like you, it's important they have a chance to get to know you. This means you need to be able to meet them and spend time with them. It might be difficult becoming friends with someone who lives far away from you as the chances to spend time together are very limited. How can you go to the cinema together if your friend lives in Japan after all?
- **Look for people who are similar to you.** Despite agreeing with someone doesn't always mean they are going to like you, people often find easier make friends with people who share similar interests. Think about what you like and start from there. If you like singing, you can join a karaoke group and make some friends who want to sing together;
- **Learn how to talk to them.** This basically means: Ask and respond to questions; make chit-chat; tell them something about yourself; don't interrupt; learn new interesting things to talk about;

- **Tell the other person you like them.** But don't overdo! We often like people who give us compliments and make us feel good. If you compliment with others, they may start liking you more;
- **Join an ongoing group conversation.** If we wait for people to approach us, we may be waiting forever. This means that sometimes we need to make the first move

Adapted from: (Linehan, 2015)

There is a very important rule and we need to remember this: It's impossible to be liked by everybody, same as we don't like everybody we meet! This means that, if someone doesn't like you, this is not necessarily because there is something wrong with you! It may just be the case that you are two different but, hey, there are so many people out there waiting to be your friends so why being so focused on the ones who do not want to 😊 The time you spend trying to make people liking you is time you are taking away from the chances of looking for people who actually like you the way you are.

Sometimes, we meet people who appear to be our friend but eventually make us suffering. They may convince us to do things we don't like going or behaving in ways we don't want to behave; they may call us names and make jokes. These are not real friends! A real friend listens to you, talks to you kindly, stands up for you and includes you. A false friend ignores you, leaves you out, hurts you and teases or embarrasses you. (O'Neill, 2018) Bullying can happen in lots of different ways and, sometimes, it's difficult to recognise it. Bullying can be:

- Hurting, embarrassing or upsetting on purpose;
- Taking your belonging without your permission;
- Making you do something you don't want to do;
- Gossiping or telling lies about you;
- Calling you names or teasing you;

- Pushing and shoving;
- Leaving you out; (O'Neill, 2018)

If you are experiencing any of the above, you are not alone! And maybe the bully has convinced you that you're the only one feeling like this or seeing those things but you cannot see in other people's minds. Even if you feel really alone with your worries, there are always people around you who can help. If you think someone is bullying you, these are some steps you can follow:

- Talk to your parents, your friends or your teachers. Bullying is not your fault and they will not judge you for this;
- Stand for yourself but only if it is safe to do so! Bullies are often insecure and try to mask this pretending to be strong. They target people who do not react or who are perceived as vulnerable. Sometimes, if you tell them to stop and go away, or if you refuse to do what they are asking you, they will stop;
- If it's a group of bullies, do not try to stop them on your own. Use your phone to call for help or scream until someone come and help you. Do not face them on your own. Never!
- If the bully is a person you go out with, stop doing so. Go out with other friends. Your parents may get you a new number if the person is texting you offensive texts or pictures. Posts on social media can be reported;
- If the bully is stealing from you, threatening your or asking you for inappropriate picture, inform your parents immediately;
- If you don't feel comfortable to speak to your parents/teachers, contact childline on 0800 1111 or visit <https://www.childline.org.uk>

Remember that it's your right to be happy! A friend should make you feel good about yourself.

People are always interconnected and they tend to form groups. This is because groups make them feel safe. If we want to make new friends, it may be difficult find them isolated. Most of the time, we meet group of people and learning how to joining these can be really useful. The first thing we need to consider is that not everybody is looking for friends.

It's really important to understand the difference between these two kind of groups. We call the ones open to new friends "Open groups" and the ones who are not willing to make new friends "Closed group". Let's see the differences.

## OPEN GROUPS VS CLOSED GROUPS

We use some clues to understand the differences between open groups and closed groups.

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### LEADING THE GAME

- In open groups everyone is standing somewhere apart so that there's space to join them;
  - Members occasionally glance around the room;
  - There are gaps in the conversation;
  - Members are talking about a topic of general interest;
- 
- In closed groups everyone is standing together and there's no space for joining them;
  - Members only look at each other;
  - There are few or no gaps in the conversation;
  - Members seem to be pairing off

Adapted from (Linehan, 2015)

As you can imagine, joining open groups it's easier than joining closed ones. But how can we best approach a group of people? There is a simple rule to follow: **Wait for a break in the conversation, stand beside a friendly-looking member of the group and say something like "Mind if I join you"**. This makes your intention clear and doesn't seem rude or interrupt the conversation. (Linehan, 2015)

These are instead some things to avoid:

- Move gradually close to the group. People may think you are creepy;
- Offer to refill their glasses or serve them food. You want to be their friend, not their waiter;
- Stand beside them and chip in on the conversation. That may seem rude;
- Go up and introduce yourself. What will you do after that? Have they introduced themselves? Wouldn't you interrupt the conversation? (Linehan, 2015)

Whether you are meeting a single person or a group, when you make new friends you should act naturally and be yourself. Real friends are the ones who had a chance to get to know the real you and like you the way you are. Pretending to be someone else in order to make friends can take unexpected turns.

But making new friends is only the first step of a much longer journey. It is also important to get some tips on how to maintain good relationship with others.

#### **FRIENDSHIPS LAST LONGER WHEN WE ARE MINDFUL.**

##### **OBSERVE**

- ☐ Pay attention with interest and curiosity to others around you.
- ☐ Stop multitasking; focus on the people you are with.
- ☐ Stay in the present rather than planning what to say next.
- ☐ Let go of a focus on self, and focus on others around you.
- ☐ Be open to new information about others.
- ☐ Notice judgmental thoughts about others, and let them go.
- ☐ Give up clinging to always being right.

##### **DESCRIBE**

- ☐ Replace judgmental words with descriptive words.
- ☐ Avoid assuming or interpreting what other people think about you without checking the facts. (Remember, *no one* has ever observed another person's thoughts, motives, intentions, feelings, emotions, desires, or experiences.)
- ☐ Avoid questioning other people's motives (unless you have very good reasons to do so).
- ☐ Give others the benefit of the doubt.

##### **PARTICIPATE**

- ☐ Throw yourself into interactions with others.
- ☐ Go with the flow, rather than trying to control the flow.
- ☐ Become one with group activities and conversations.



The above tips should help you improving your friendships.

During this journey we have learned that social anxiety is very common and what tools can we use to deal with it; we have also learned how to increase our chances to make new friends, how to join a group and how to improve our friendships. These techniques make easier making new friend but there are times when these may not work. If that's the case, try to problem-solve or talk to someone. Also, they take time and practice. They may seem unnatural at the beginning but once you practice these for a while, they become more natural.

### **Homework**

This is all for today but until the next journey it may be useful trying some of these techniques and see if they work. What about starting with the other sailor? Is there anyone you would fancy as a friend? Remember to also practice the thought record and relaxation techniques as usual.

# MIRROR, MIRROR

*Dealing with body image problems and sleep*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Understanding the value of body image;
- Improving your sleep;
- Problem-solving body image problems;

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During our last journey we have learned how to make new friends and improve our relationships. Have you had any chance to practice these skills? How did it go?

In this journey we will learn how to like ourselves a little bit more. Some people think the way you look like is important and every day we see people on TV and magazines looking flawless. But do you know this is not how those people look in real life? Special lights on TV and computer effects on photographs mean that normal human beings can look like aliens from Planet Perfect! (O'Neill, 2018) Sometimes, people convince themselves that they need to look like the people on social media, TV and magazines and, they spend a lot of time trying to achieve this. But how important is your physical appearance and how does it contribute to make you a good person?

## **THE BODY PIE**

**We use two pies to understand how important is body image.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

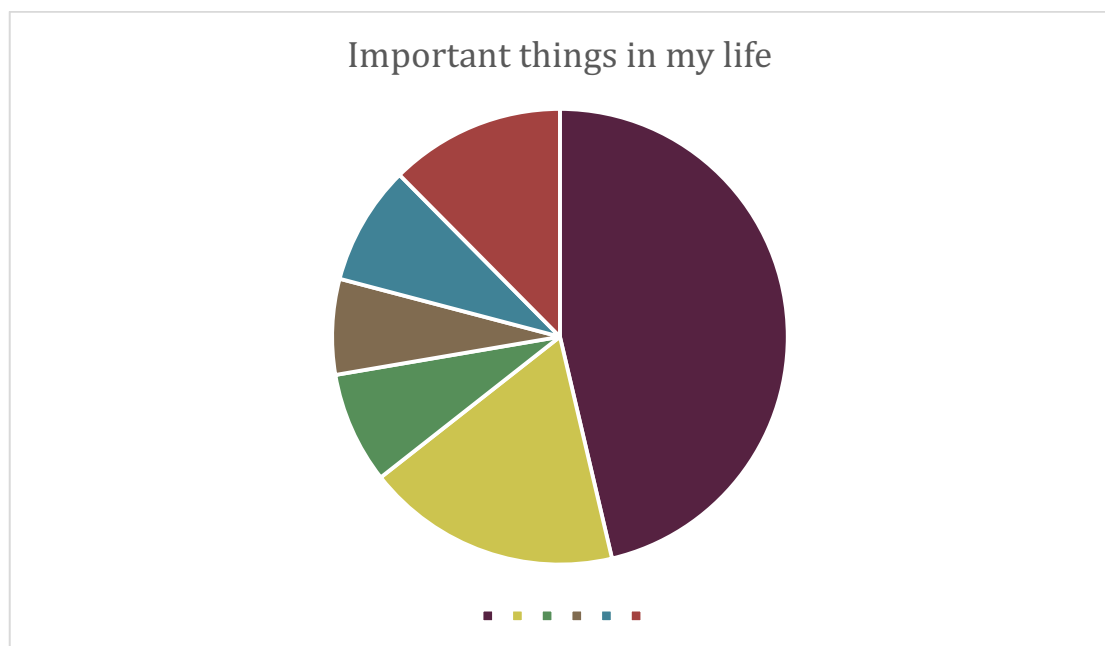
- You will ask the group write down a list of things that are important for them (body image, friends, family, hobbies, school, etc);
- Then you will ask them to assign a slice on the first pie. Important things take big slices; less important ones go into the small slices;
- You then ask the group to think about their best friend and what do they like about them (body image, hobbies, kindness, listening, etc.);
- Then you will ask them the second pie and assign a slice to each attribute. Important things take big slices; less important ones go into the small slices;

Young people who struggle with body image often overestimate its importance but, when it comes down to their best friends, they are able to understand that other attributes are more important than body image. These pies will help them understand this using visual aids.

I want you to use the pie below and assign a slice to the things you think are important in your life, starting from body image. But before we do so, I would like you to write a list with these things:

Important things in my life:

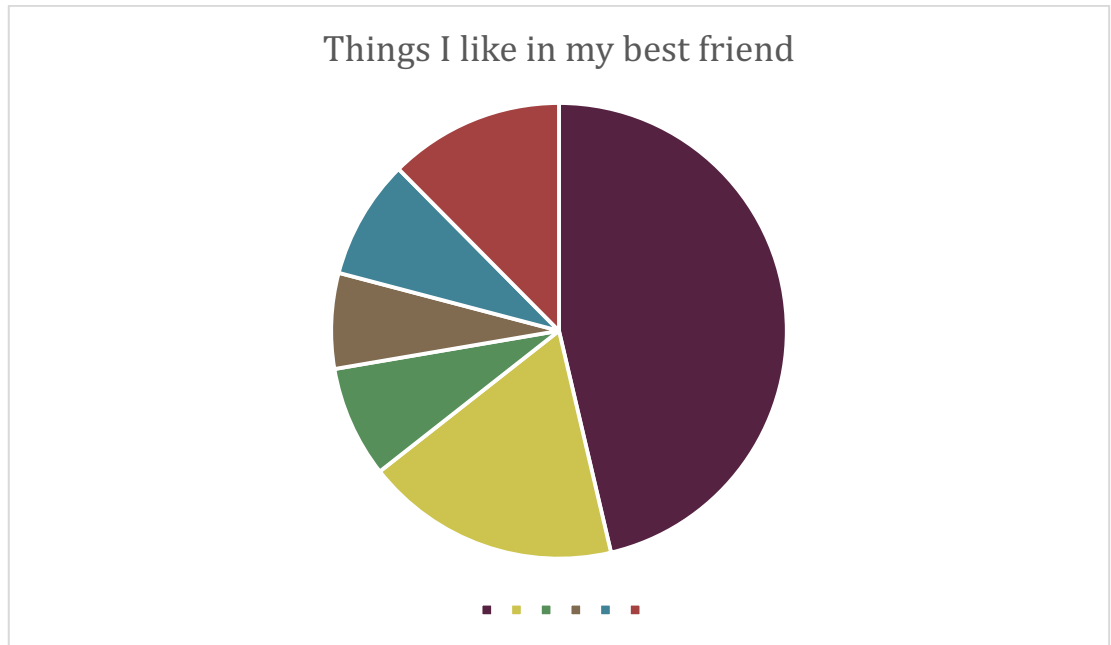
- The way I look like;
- 
- 
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- 



That looks great! Now, I want you to think about your best friend and use another pie to write down the reasons why you like them:

Important things about my best friend:

- The way they look like;
- 
- 
- 
- 



What has just happened? It looks like that some people make a big deal about the way they look like while, in fact, there are other attributes that are more important. You don't become friend with someone just because the way they look like; you become their friend because they are kind, they listen to you or because you have a lot in common. Imagine that you go to a party and meet someone who looks really nice. You decide to approach them and then realize this person is rude, boring and has nothing in common with you. What would you do? Probably, you will find an excuse and run away as soon as possible. This is because a nice face or a nice body don't make a person looking nice. It's their personality, sense of humor, common interests that make the difference. So, you don't need to look like the people on social media in order to find people who like you.

## **A FRIEND IN THE MIRROR**

**Every time we look at the mirror, we say something positive to ourselves.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

- You will ask the group to look at themselves in the mirror, one per time;
- Every time they look at themselves in the mirror, they will say something they like about themselves. This can be a physical or personality attribute;

This exercise teaches young people to start loving themselves rather than focusing only on their defects.

Our body keeps changing every day. It will change as you get older and start to become an adult which might make you feel worried or embarrassed. These changes are normal and happen to everybody. It is common to feel shy about your body but you can always speak to someone you trust if you feel confused about it. Remember, no one but you is allowed to see or touch your body without your permission! (O'Neill, 2018)

Unfortunately, sometimes we get really fixated about our body and start seeing defects that other people do not notice. When this happens, we end up feeling embarrassed and avoid contacts with others. However, we know that physical appearance is just one aspect of who we are and it's not the most important one. If we surprise ourselves becoming fixated about our body, we can use the thoughts record to challenge our thoughts and some of the exercises we have discovered during our previous journeys to change our focus. It is perfectly ok if you want to look better and improve yourself, but this should not be an obsession and should not take time away from the people and the things you love.

Keeping your body healthy is really important and there are some basic rules you can follow. Attend your personal hygiene, eat regularly, do some exercise and try to get a good rest at night. These rules will help you avoiding problems in the future. Sometimes, sleeping can be a little bit of an issue but the tips below can help us with it.



# sleep hygiene

## What is Sleep Hygiene?

'Sleep hygiene' is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Considerable research has gone into developing a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to enhance good sleeping, and there is much evidence to suggest that these strategies can provide long-term solutions to sleep difficulties.

There are many medications which are used to treat insomnia, but these tend to be only effective in the short-term. Ongoing use of sleeping pills may lead to dependence and interfere with developing good sleep habits independent of medication, thereby prolonging sleep difficulties. Talk to your health professional about what is right for you, but we recommend good sleep hygiene as an important part of treating insomnia, either with other strategies such as medication or cognitive therapy or alone.

## Sleep Hygiene Tips

- 1) **Get regular.** One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give your body something to work from.
- 2) **Sleep when sleepy.** Only try to sleep when you actually feel tired or sleepy, rather than spending too much time awake in bed.
- 3) **Get up & try again.** If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again. Sit quietly on the couch with the lights off (bright light will tell your brain that it is time to wake up), or read something boring like the phone book. Avoid doing anything that is too stimulating or interesting, as this will wake you up even more.
- 4) **Avoid caffeine & nicotine.** It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and some medications) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.
- 5) **Avoid alcohol.** It is also best to avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. Many people believe that alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get to sleep at first, but it actually interrupts the quality of sleep.
- 6) **Bed is for sleeping.** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, read, work on your laptop, pay bills, and other things, your body will not learn this connection.



- 7) **No naps.** It is best to avoid taking naps during the day, to make sure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
- 8) **Sleep rituals.** You can develop your own rituals of things to remind your body that it is time to sleep - some people find it useful to do relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed each night, or sit calmly with a cup of caffeine-free tea.
- 9) **Bathtime.** Having a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again. Research shows that sleepiness is associated with a drop in body temperature.
- 10) **No clock-watching.** Many people who struggle with sleep tend to watch the clock too much. Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up (especially if you turn on the light to read the time) and reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep" or "it's so early, I have only slept for 5 hours, this is terrible."
- 11) **Use a sleep diary.** This worksheet can be a useful way of making sure you have the right facts about your sleep, rather than making assumptions. Because a diary involves watching the clock (see point 10) it is a good idea to only use it for two weeks to get an idea of what is going and then perhaps two months down the track to see how you are progressing.
- 12) **Exercise.** Regular exercise is a good idea to help with good sleep, but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day feeling refreshed!
- 13) **Eat right.** A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that a very empty stomach at bedtime is distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a heavy meal soon before bed can also interrupt sleep. Some people recommend a warm glass of milk, which contains tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer.
- 14) **The right space.** It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping. A cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best, and make sure you have curtains or an eyemask to block out early morning light and earplugs if there is noise outside your room.
- 15) **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.



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Sometimes, you may think that body image is really important because of something that happened to you in the past. This can be a negative comment you received from a friend, a situation when you have been embarrassed by others or something you have seen on TV or social media. It is really important that you become able to look at these things under a new light. For a sailor, after all, a new day is a new beginning and we need to make sure you bring this principle into your daily life.

In order to address these issues, you need to ask yourself some questions and use the spaces below to answer.

- 1. Is there any experience that you remember that may have caused you to worry about your body? It doesn't necessarily need to be something to do with your body. It can be bullying, humiliation, rejection or something you have learned from others. Something that made you feel as if you looked different or abnormal.

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- 2. Can you think about a recent situation when you felt the same or felt upset about the way you look like?

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- 3. What was happening at the time?

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4. How did you feel emotionally?

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5. What was the most upsetting thing about that situation?

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Adapted from: (Veale, Wilson, & Clarke, 2009)

These memories usually happen when we are quite young and keep haunting us for all our life, unless we decide to face them. For this reason, it's really important that we learn some techniques to face these ghosts.

### **FACING MEMORIES**

**We look at old memories from a different perspective in order to overcome the difficult feelings they cause.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- You will use the three-column template below to help the group facing their memories;
- You will ask them to note the situation that cause the memory in the first column;
- You will then ask them to use the second column to write down how did they feel at the time?
- You will ask them to think about the situation from a different perspective. Is there any kinder way to look at the situation? What would you say to a close friend who is experiencing it?

- Is there any pesky thought? What would be a more rational way to think about that situation?

The aim of this exercise is to help young people to use the skills they have learned in order to develop an alternative way to look at the situation. Difficult feelings at the time may have prevented them from looking at the situation from a rational perspective and, as result, they may have ended up getting stuck into it. Developing alternative meanings can help them moving away from those thoughts.

Look at the example below:

Situation	What did I think?	What do I think now?
<i>I hit a street sign while I was walking back from school with my friends. They laughed at me and told me that my nose looked like a strawberry.</i>	<i>I was really embarrassed and I thought there was something wrong with my nose. Since then, I feel my nose is too big and red.</i>	<i>This kind of things happen to everybody. When I hit the sign, my nose must have been hurt and this is probably why they said that. My nose is not usually that red.</i>

As you can see, looking at the situation later on can help us feeling less worried about it. Sometimes, we make a big deal for things that may not be so important but if we face these, we may end up feeling better.

During this journey, we have learned that our body is very important and it's ok if we want to look nice. If we follow some simple rules, we can improve our body and how we feel about it. Sometimes, we become fixated about the way we look like but we know this is not the most important part of who we are. Our personality is so far more important and this is what actually makes people to like us. The pie chart is a useful tool we can use to remember this. If we are still struggling with body image, we can use the techniques we introduced during this journey to face our memories and thoughts.

### **Homework**

During this week, I would like you to use the worksheet on the next page in order to create a plan to improve your body and mind. Think about what tools can you use to relax your mind and note this in the circle on the left. Use the circle on the right to think about something you can do to help your body feeling better. Set a personal goal, think about what triggers you can avoid and what coping skills you can use. You can use the number at the bottom to rate your progress.

# Mind and Body Wellness Plan

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## MIND:

What are you going  
to do this week to create a  
healthy mind?

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## BODY:

What are you going  
to do this week to create a  
healthy body?

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Personal goal for this week: \_\_\_\_\_

Triggers to avoid: \_\_\_\_\_

Coping skills to use: \_\_\_\_\_

End-of-the-week review. Please rate each of the following from 1 (not successful) to 5 (very successful):

Working toward my personal goal      **1   2   3   4   5**

Avoiding triggers      **1   2   3   4   5**

Using coping skills      **1   2   3   4   5**

Bettering my mind and body      **1   2   3   4   5**

(O'Reilly)

# YOU ARE THE CAPTAIN

*It's now your time to rule the boat*

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## **Aims of the session**

- Summarizing what we have learned so far;
- Understanding what techniques to use and when;
- Moving forward;

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Our journey is coming to an end but this is only the beginning of your adventure. During this cruise we have explored many fascinating places and learned some interesting facts about anxiety. For some people, the end of a journey may be scaring and this is perfectly normal. It is also normal if you still feel anxious as we know it is not possible to completely get rid of anxiety; however, you have learned how to respond to this anxiety in ways that make it more manageable and is now time to sail your own boat.

We will start by looking back at some golden rules. Let's do this with a game.

### **THE ROLLING BALL**

**As we roll a ball back and forth, we tell something that we remember about this journey.**

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#### **LEADING THE GAME**

- We're going to roll this ball to one another, and when it's your turn, name something you remember about the past journeys;
- I'll go first. "We cannot get rid of anxiety, but we can change the way we respond to it" (Roll the ball to someone else);

The aim of this game is to help the group recalling important aspects of the journey.

When we started this journey, we thought that anxiety was a wild beast that we needed to tame; however, we have now learned this is not the case. Actually, the more we try to push it away, the more it becomes stronger. A better way to deal with it is recognising that anxiety is just a temporary emotion that can also be useful at times and focus our attention to the present moment. If our mind gets caught by anxiety, we can use **Stop and feel the breath** and a **cooling-out breath** to bring out attention back. The **10-**

**point checklist** is also a good option. If we feel still anxious, we can also take off our **copying kit** luggage and use the tools inside.

Anxiety is usually caused by thoughts but, as we know, thoughts are not facts! Some of them are actually quite pesky and contains some errors that make things worse. The **detective**, the **thoughts record** sheet and the **traffic light** can help us spotting pesky thought and dealing with these. Don't forget the **funny voice** can also be a good ally.

Anxiety produces changes to our body and some of them can be quite unpleasant. But we've learned some techniques to deal with these. What about trying **shake it up**, **stomp your feet** and **quick mindfulness**?

Sometimes things get a little bit tougher and we may end up feeling overwhelmed. If this is the case, we can use some emergency tool, including **dropping the anchor**, the **super detective** or writing a **bravery plan** to face these.

The **mind story** and **making new friend** can help us if we are struggling to make friends. We can also practice the **friendships last longer when we are mindful** to improve our friendships.

If we are struggling getting to be, **sleep hygiene** will definitely help us and if we are worried about the way we look like, we can have a look at the **pie** and use **facing our memories** to feel better.

Just put all this together into a quick reference table.

Problem	Solution
Wanting to calm down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stop and feel the breath;</li><li>• Cooling-out breath;</li><li>• 10-point check-in;</li><li>• Copying kit luggage;</li><li>• Roll the dice</li></ul>
Difficult thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting to know your worries;</li><li>• Thoughts record;</li><li>• List of pesky thoughts;</li><li>• Traffic light;</li><li>• Funny voice</li></ul>
Physical symptoms of anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shake-it up;</li><li>• Stomp your feet;</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick mindfulness;</li> <li>• Rolle the dice;</li> <li>• 10-point check-in</li> </ul>
Strong anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dropping the anchor;</li> <li>• Super detective;</li> <li>• Thoughts record;</li> <li>• Mind and body plan;</li> <li>• Bravery plan</li> </ul>
Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mind story;</li> <li>• Making new friends;</li> <li>• Friendships last longer when we are mindful</li> </ul>
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleep hygiene</li> </ul>
Physical appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pie chart;</li> <li>• Facing our memories</li> </ul>

And remember, if you're not sure about what to do, you can go back to the previous journey and look at what can be helpful for you and, if you're still unsure, it's a good idea to have a list of people you can contact. Actually, because this is one of my favourite tool, why don't we write a plan together that will help us moving forward?

We are going to use the table below to create an action plan to deal with anxiety. Read the questions on the left and write your own answers on the right.

Positive statement. What can I tell myself when I feel anxious? (when you feel anxious, it is really important that you remember that anxiety is a temporary emotion and, despite it can be challenging at times, you know how to face it)	
What can I tell myself to remember to use this plan? (this plan only works if you use it! What would you see to an anxious friend if you knew they had an anxiety plan?)	
What is that makes me feel anxious? (think about the techniques you can use to find out what makes you feel anxious)	



Is this something I can change? (if you can, write some steps you can follow to change the situation but, if you cannot, write what techniques you can use to focus on the present)	
What techniques can I use to calm down?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> <li>9.</li> <li>10.</li> </ol>
What thing can I do to relax?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> </ol>
What is a safe place I can go if I feel too anxious?	
Who can I contact if I feel anxious? (write the name and phone number of at least 3 people you can contact if you feel anxious?)	

Having a plan to deal with anxiety should help you making it more manageable.

Our journey is coming to an end but, before we go, I think it may be useful to play another game together.

## **THE MISSING CHAIR**

**We run around the room and when I say “sit” you’ll take a sit in one of the available chairs. The person who remains without a chair will tell the group what will they do to face their anxiety.**

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### **LEADING THE GAME**

- We put some chairs around the room but we make sure the number of people exceed the number of chairs by 1;
- When you say “run” the group will run around the room;
- When you say “sit”, the group will take one of the available chairs;
- The person who remains with no chairs will tell the group what will they do to manage their anxiety;
- You keep removing one chair each time until everyone had a chance to speak

The aim of this game is to encourage the group to think how can they manage their anxiety on their own.

Well done to everybody! We have reached the end of this journey but, remember, this is only the beginning of the adventure. Keep practicing, plan ahead and you will become better and better at managing your anxiety.

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