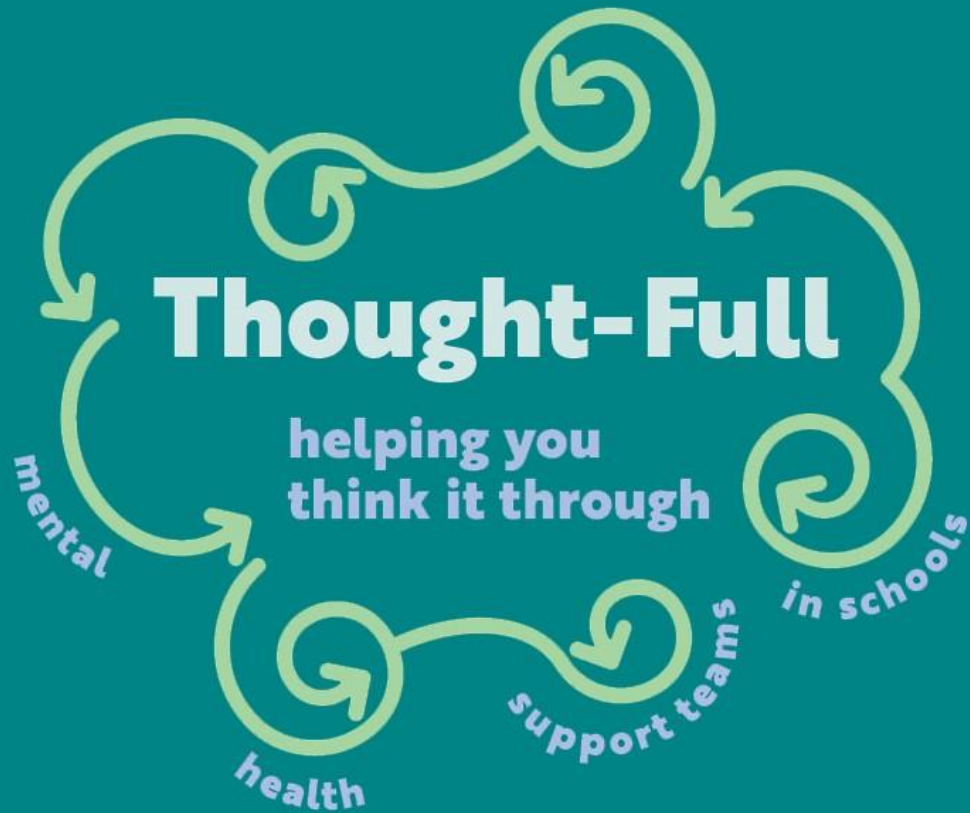


Supporting your child's anxious fears and worries



Manor Field
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Respect Believe Achieve

Leslie Bamford Mental Health Practitioner, trainee

Victoria Page Advisory Teacher

Wednesday 23rd November 2022 9am



Take what you need tokens





Aims of session



- What is anxiety, how does it work, what keeps it going
- When does anxiety become problematic
- What strategies can we use
- What can I change to better support my child with their anxiety and worry.



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

mind.org.uk

Anxiety is common, EVERYONE experiences worries, fears, stress and anxiety some of the time.

Children and anxiety

Children With Anxiety May...



Appear more clingy than normal



Be restless and fidgety



Complain of stomachaches



Display changes in eating and sleeping habits



Express negative thoughts or worries



Get upset or angry more quickly

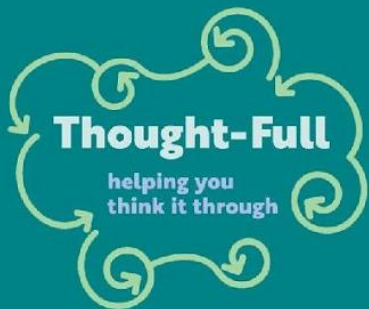


Have bouts of unexplained crying



Struggle to concentrate





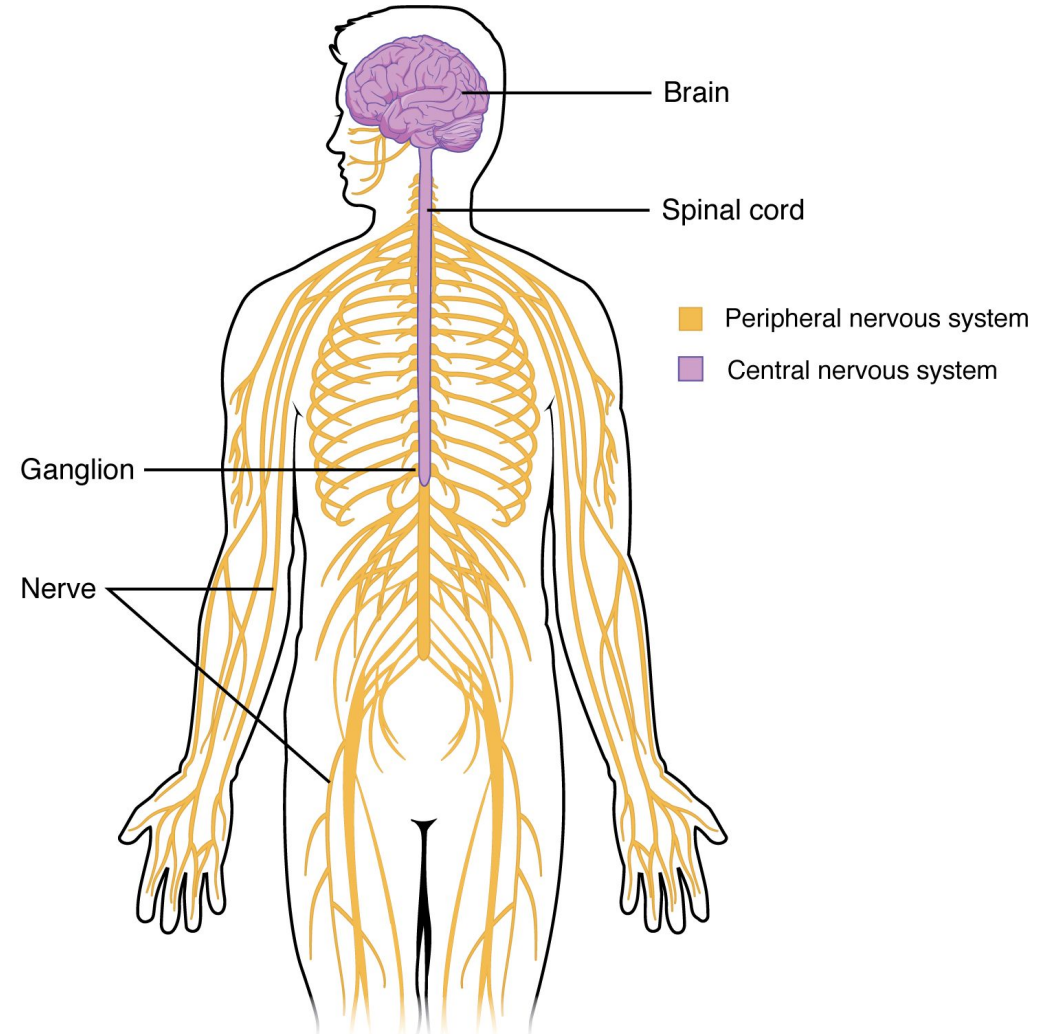
When you feel scared there are things that happen to your body to prepare it to deal with danger.

FIGHT → FLIGHT → FREEZE

The body's reaction to fear (being scared) is called the "**fight or flight**" response.

Physical signs of anxiety

- Shortness of Breath
- Heart Pounding
- Stomach Aches/ Feeling sick
- Dry Mouth
- Flushed Cheeks
- Blurred Vision
- Dilated Pupils
- Trembling
- Sweating





Anxiety is developmental



Separation anxiety
Stranger danger
Loud noises
Large objects



Imaginary creatures
Noises
Sleeping alone
Darkness
Injury
Animals
Medical interventions
Thunder



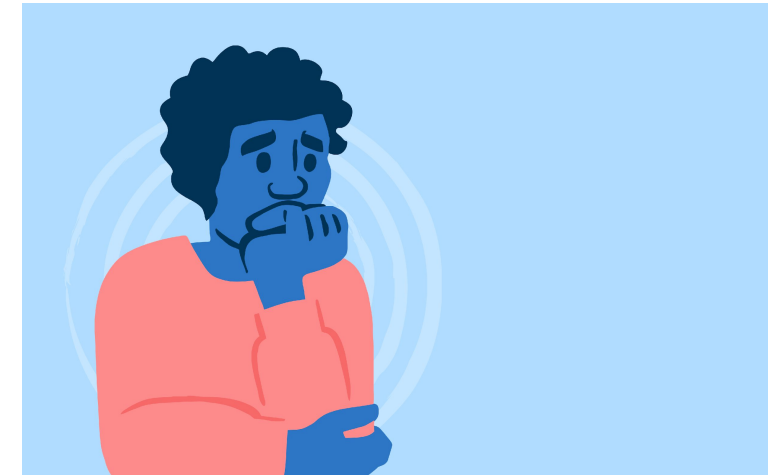
Thunder
School performance
Health
Death
Social competence



New experiences
School performance
Health
Natural disasters
Social competence



So when does it become a problem?



Fear

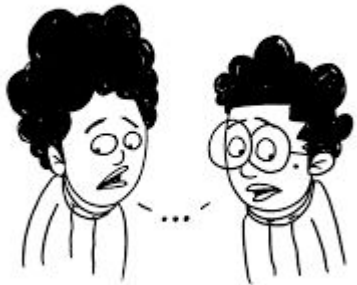


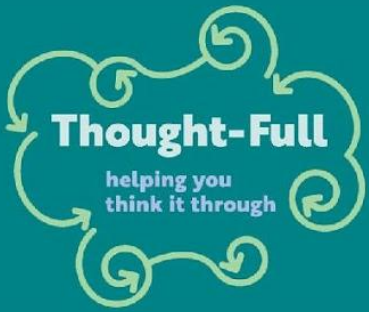
Avoidance



Problematic
anxiety

Avoidance can look like...





Confidence

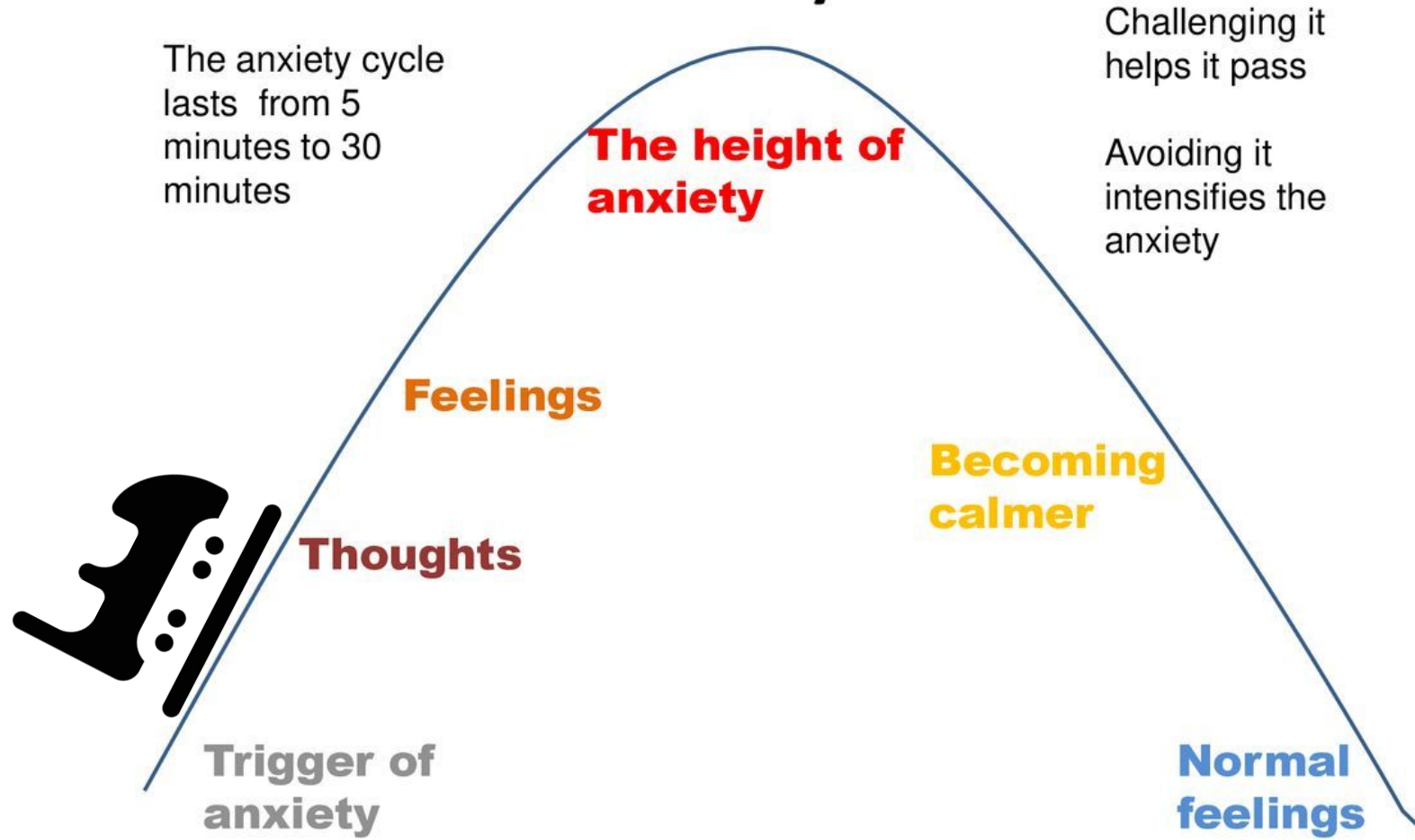
+

Empathy



Facing Fears

The Anxiety Curve



Watch your language

It's okay, let's not do it.

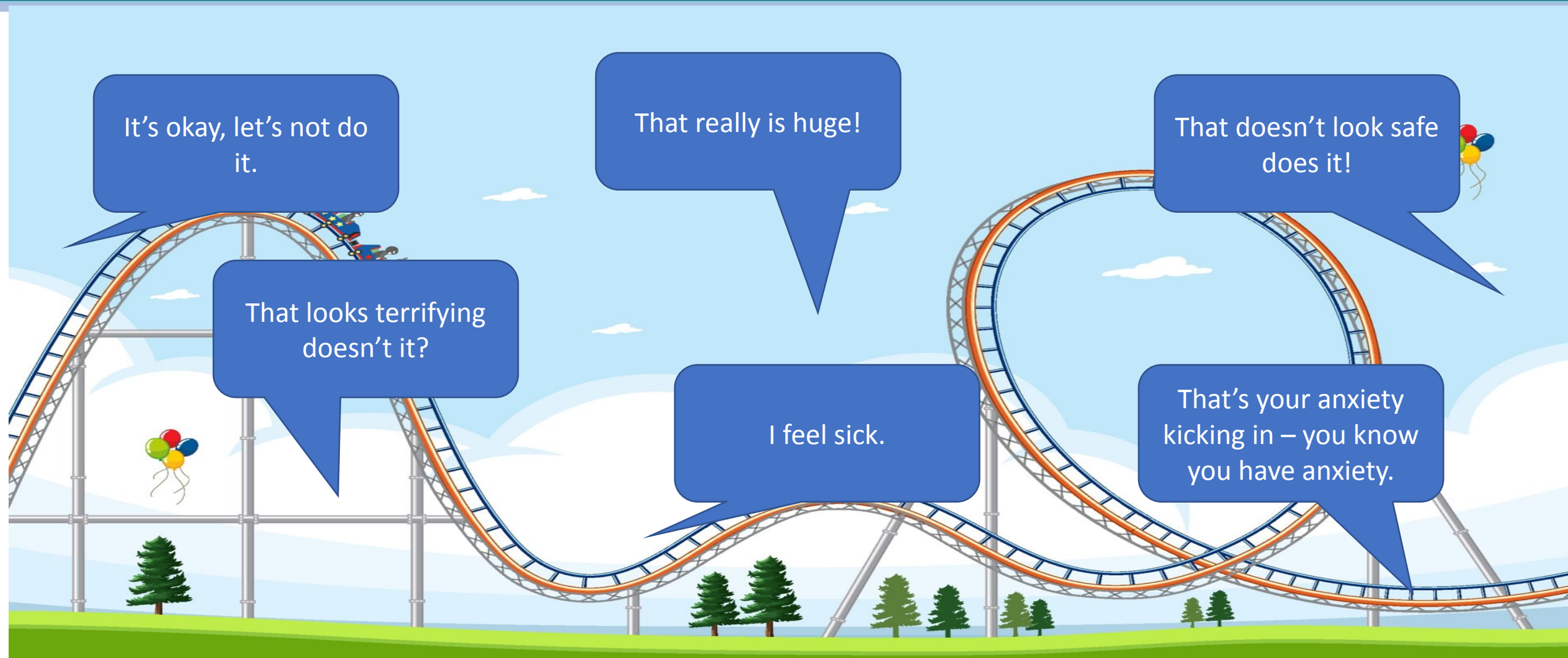
That really is huge!

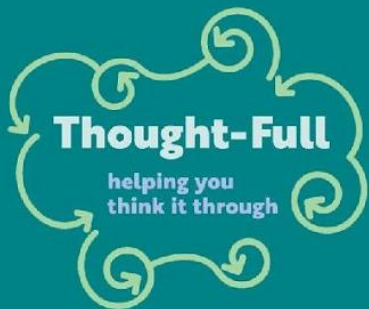
That doesn't look safe does it!

That looks terrifying doesn't it?

I feel sick.

That's your anxiety kicking in – you know you have anxiety.





Alternative language to “anxiety”

Those worried feelings.

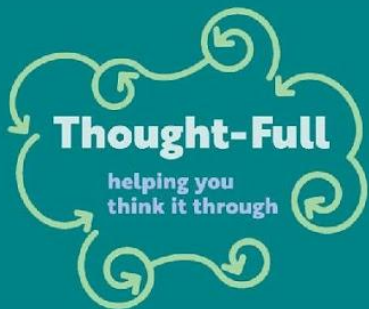
Are you feeling a bit unsure?

It can uncomfortable.

Remember this is how your body feels when you get nervous.

You're feeling worried right now.

Are you finding this tricky?

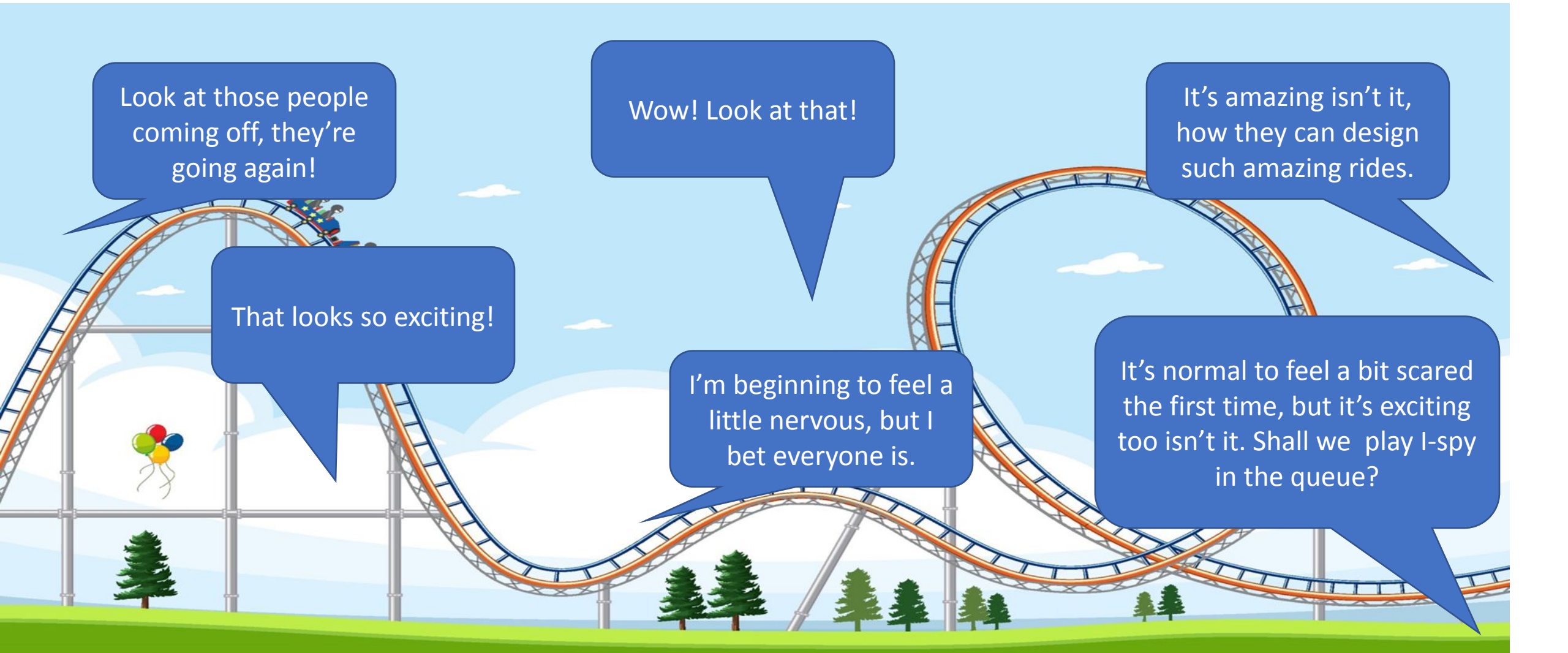


Why do I do that?



- Trying to protect the child – this is natural
- Forget that anxiety is not dangerous/harmful
- It feels bad/terrible to experience others in distress
- Our own attachment experiences
- Not giving child chance to tolerate some distress

Watch your language



Look at those people coming off, they're going again!

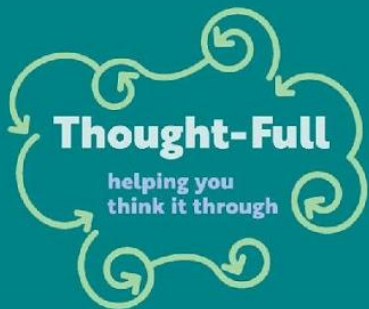
Wow! Look at that!

It's amazing isn't it, how they can design such amazing rides.

That looks so exciting!

I'm beginning to feel a little nervous, but I bet everyone is.

It's normal to feel a bit scared the first time, but it's exciting too isn't it. Shall we play I-spy in the queue?



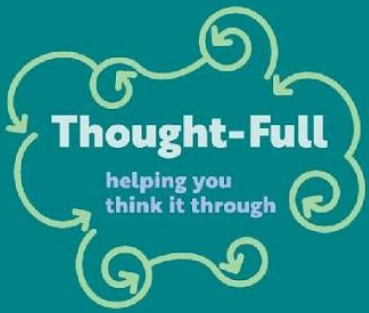
Small steps to success



EXAMPLE: My child is too anxious to attend a play date at a friend's house if I am not with them.

What “alternative language” could I use to support them?
(Remember, Confidence and Empathy!)

What steps could we put in place towards the goal?

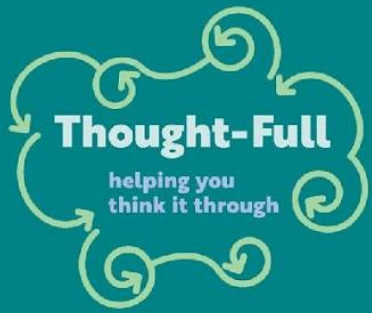


Using open questions

Asking questions rather than giving answers

- ❖ *Why are you feeling worried?*
- ❖ *What is frightening you?*
- ❖ *What do you think will happen if you...?*
- ❖ *What is the worst thing that might happen?*
- ❖ *What is it about this situation that is making you feel frightened/worried?*



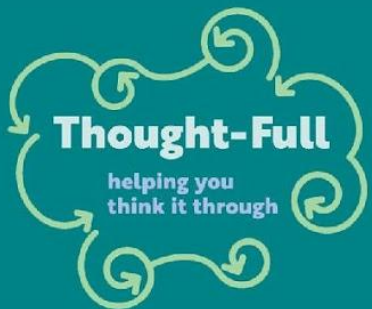


Empathise

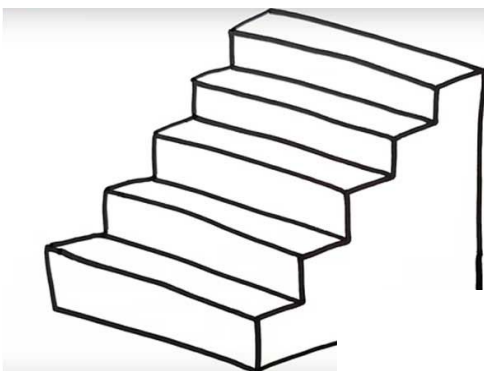
- Show you can see how that must make them feel and validate them
- Label emotions
- Check your understanding of what is causing their anxiety

Normalise

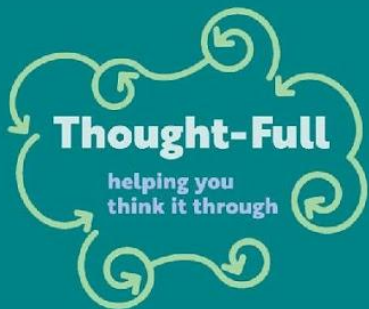
- Show this is a normal reaction
- Validate how they feel
- Give examples of others who may experience anxiety or how they overcome things before



Agree a Step-by-Step Plan



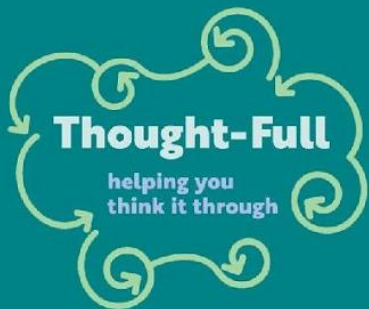
- Playdate without mum.
1. Say hello to friend's mum.
 2. Drop a book to friend's house.
 3. Playdate, mum stays whole time.
 4. Playdate, mum pops out.
 5. Playdate, mum stays 30 mins.



Important



- Small steps
- Agreed with child
- Repeat steps until anxiety decreases
- Remain confident – “*When you have your playdate*”
- Don’t show child your own worries.
- Empathise, but don’t reassure
- Don’t answer lots of questions



Key learning



- Anxiety is normal
- Adults can keep anxiety going with their responses
- Watch your language
- Be confident
- Take small steps towards a goal



Beneath every behaviour is a feeling. And beneath every feeling is a need. And when we meet that need rather than focus on the behaviour, we begin to deal with the cause not the symptom.

Ashleigh Warner, psychologist

'Children's emotions are as real as yours. Just because they might get sad over the colour of their cup, does not make their feelings any less real.'

~ Rebekah Lipp



"When you're feeling anxious, remember that you're still you. You are not your anxiety."
~ Deanne Repich

"HAVE PATIENCE WITH ALL THINGS, BUT CHIEFLY HAVE PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF..."

~Saint Francis de Sales

