

# Understanding stress and anxiety

20<sup>th</sup> March 2018



Health Improvement Team

# What you come away with today!



Increased confidence in supporting pupils with stress



Increased knowledge about what stress and anxiety is



Increased confidence in how to cope with stress

**What is  
stress?**



# Defining stress

- There is no fixed definition for stress, however it can be described as a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.  
(Stress.org.uk)
- Situations or events that put pressure on us – for example, times where we have lots to do and think about, or don't have much control over what happens.
- Our reaction to being placed under pressure – the feelings we get when we have demands placed on us that we find difficult to cope with.  
(Mind UK)

# Recognising the signs

## Physical

- Muscle tension
- Can't relax
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Minor illnesses
- Indigestion
- Weight loss/gain
- Skin conditions
- Raised blood pressure
- Gastric ulcer

## Behavioural

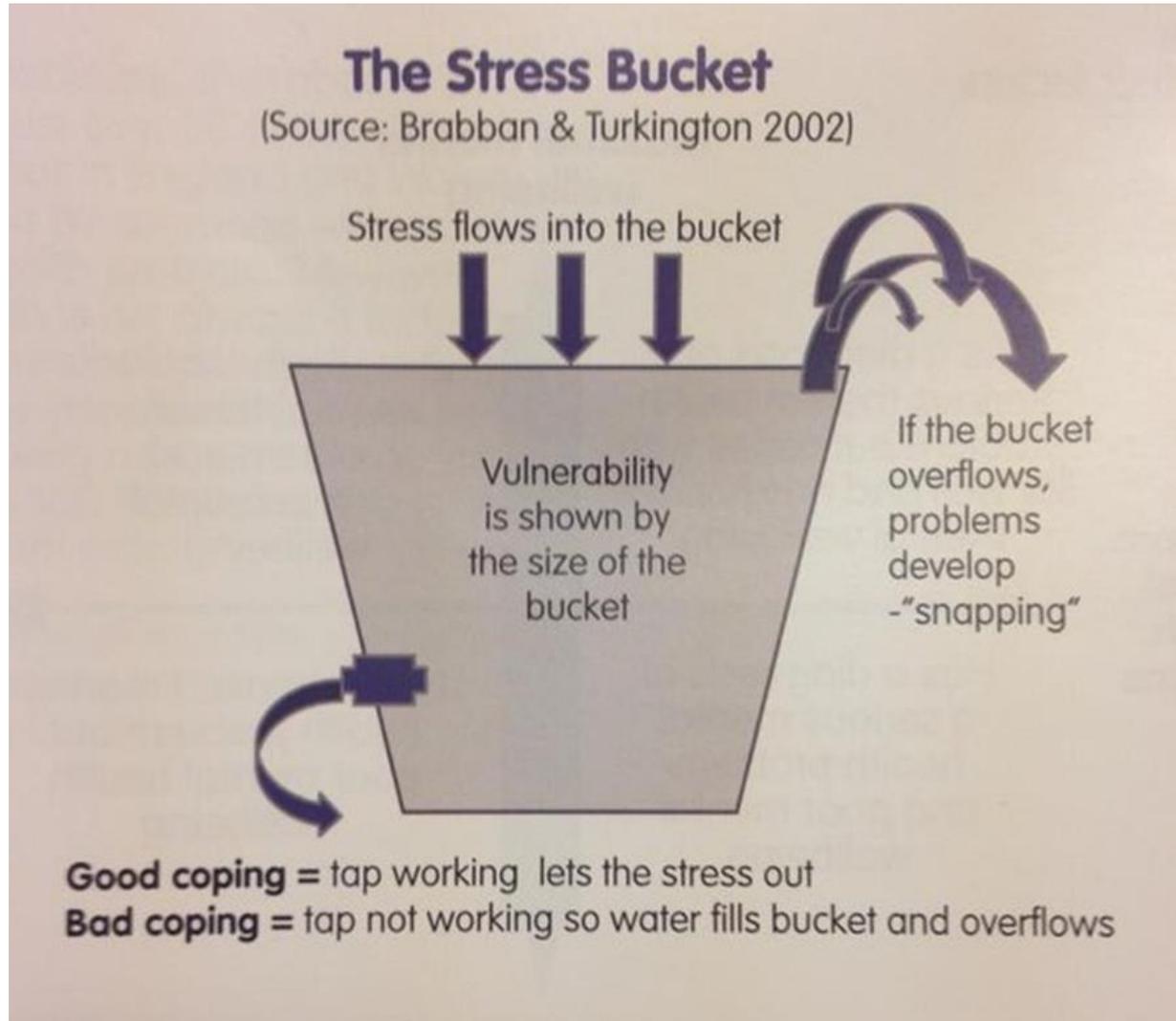
- Urgency
- Over-committed
- Self neglect
- Inefficiency
- Nightmares
- Impatient
- Intolerant
- Wanting to be left alone
- Over controlling towards others
- Need to "lean" on others

## Cognitive/Emotional

- Easily distracted
- Inflexible
- Negative thoughts
- Perception of hopelessness
- Feeling of injustice
- On edge
- Irritable
- Outbursts
- Feeling low
- Tearful
- Resentful of demands
- Depression

# ■ Managing stress

# The stress bucket



- **What fills your bucket?**
- **What affects the size of our bucket?**
- **How do you cope with stress?**

# Ideas to relax or recharge

- Go for a walk
- Spend time in nature
- Call a good friend
- Exercise
- Write in your journal
- Take a long bath
- Light scented candles
- Have cup of tea
- Play with a pet
- Work in a garden
- Get a massage
- Curl up with a good book
- Listen to music
- Watch a comedy



# 3 ideas to support pupils during exams

**Model  
behaviour**

**Promote  
wellbeing**

**Encourage  
peer  
support**

# 1. Model behaviour

- Take regular breaks, manage your time well
- Build your own resilience, reframe problems, be positive
- Support your colleagues
- Demonstrate relaxation activities

## 2. Promote wellbeing

- Consider assemblies, breakfast clubs or lunch time drop ins to promote wellbeing
- Praise and offer support as much as possible. Put up visual reminders of what to do and who to talk to if you are stressed
- Give pupils the space to talk about their emotions and positive ways of coping
- Practice mindfulness techniques during school

# 3. Encourage peer support

- Teach active listening skills to pupils
- Create times and spaces where pupils can go to relax
- Ensure pupils know how to respond and where to signpost their friends to for support
- Encourage celebration of effort- parties, certificates for most supportive or effort awards

# Exam tips for pupils

1. Get organised- ensure you have the time, books and equipment you need to revise
2. Avoid caffeine and get some rest- include regular breaks during revision and get at least 6-8 hours of sleep each night
3. Go outside- get fresh air during breaks, exercise or go for a walk
4. Practice calming activities like breathing, meditation or listening to music
5. Talk to people- meet with friends, teachers or family. If you are getting upset or anxious, talking to someone will help.

■ 5 minute break

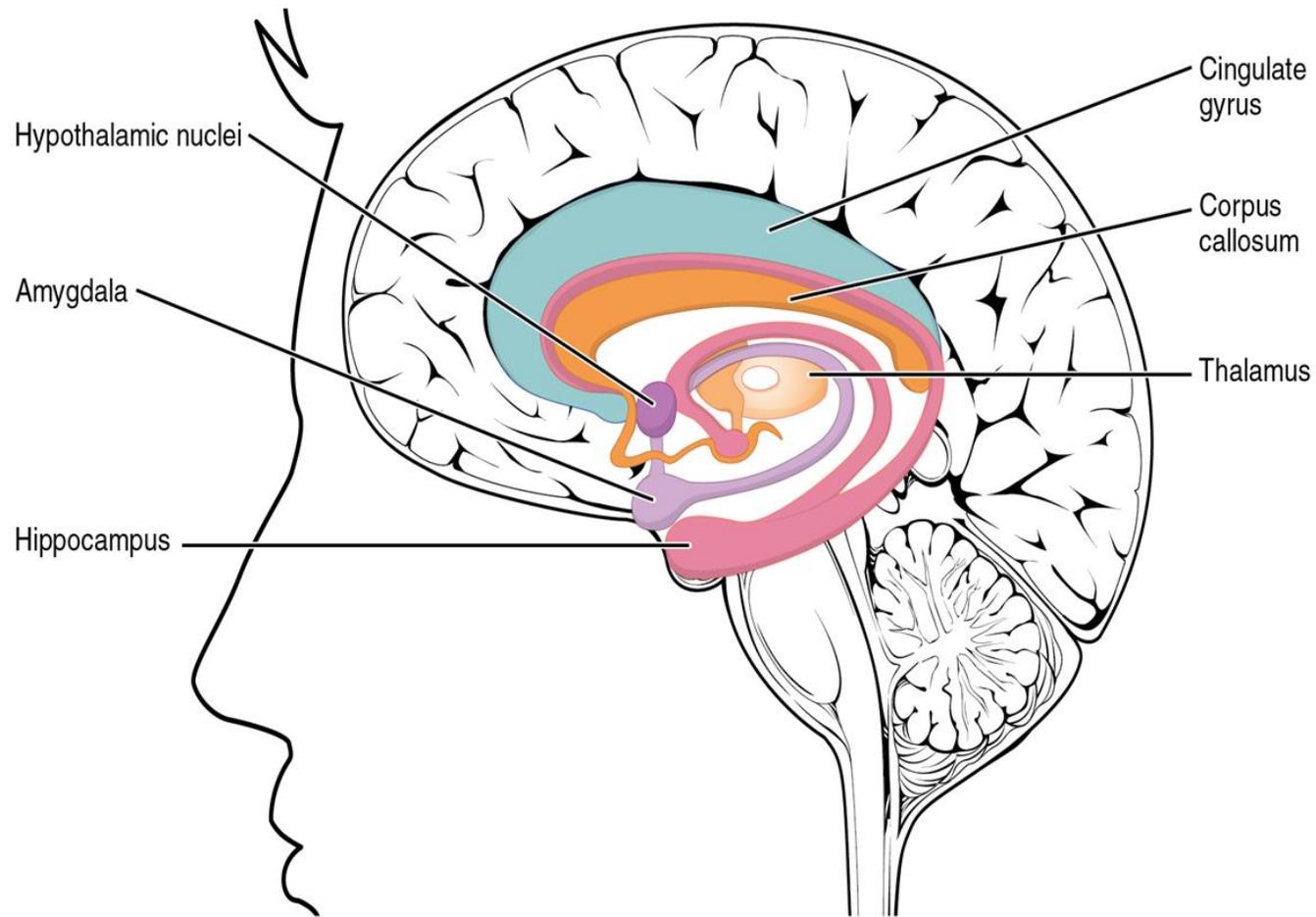
# What is anxiety?



# Defining anxiety

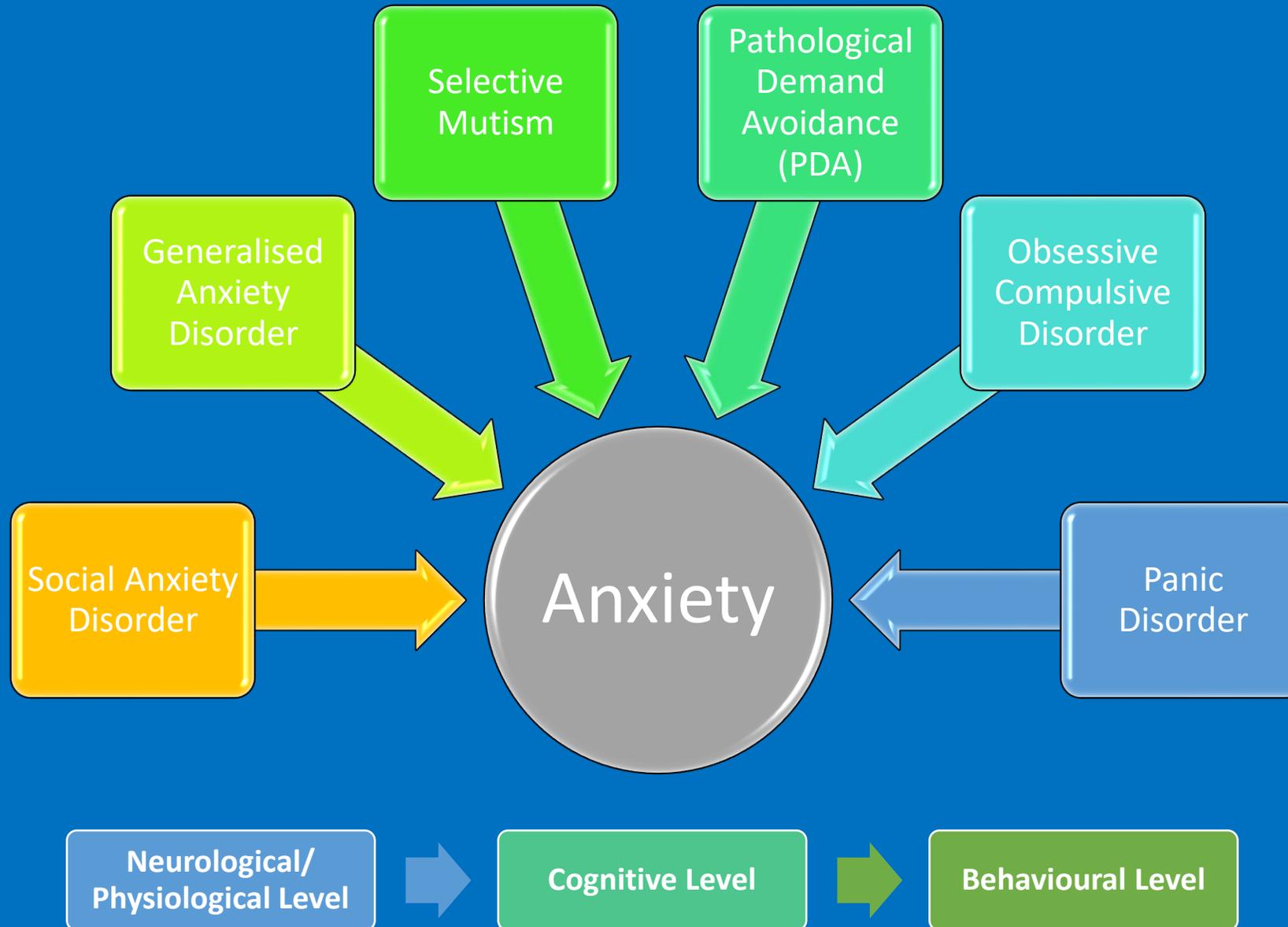
Anxiety is the most common emotional response to intense or prolonged stress. Anxiety can be experienced in various ways, including:

- Worrisome thoughts
- Feelings of fear, unease, or dread
- Desire to avoid what is feared
- Distressing dreams associated with the fear
- Trouble falling asleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Physical reactions such as muscle tension, sweating, trembling, and changes in breathing and heart rate



- **When people feel anxious, certain regions of the brain, including the amygdala - the part of the limbic system, revs up and starts releasing stress hormones. It communicates with the hypothalamus, alerts the rest of the brain that a danger is present and triggers a fight or flight response. It fills the nervous system with cortisol and norepinephrine, which are responsible for the increased body's heart rate and blood pressure.**

# Types of anxiety



**“For me, anxiety feels as if everyone in the world is waiting for me to trip up, so that they can laugh at me. It makes me feel nervous and unsure whether the next step I take is the best way forward.”**

# Anxiety in early years

- Symptoms of separation anxiety disorder, could also be attachment disorder:
- Fear that something terrible will happen to a loved one. For example, the child may constantly worry about a parent becoming sick or getting hurt.
- Worry that an unpredicted event will lead to permanent separation. For example, they may worry about being kidnapped or getting lost.
- Refusal to go to school. A child with separation anxiety disorder may have an unreasonable fear of school, and will do almost anything to stay home.
- Reluctance to go to sleep. Separation anxiety disorder can make children insomniacs, either because of the fear of being alone or due to nightmares about separation.
- Physical sickness like a headache or stomach ache. At the time of separation, or before, children with separation anxiety problems often complain they feel ill.
- Clinging to the caregiver.

# What are the triggers?

Family  
bereavement

Change,  
E.g: new born

Trauma  
/ abuse

Divorce/  
separation

Poverty/  
Housing

Poor physical  
health

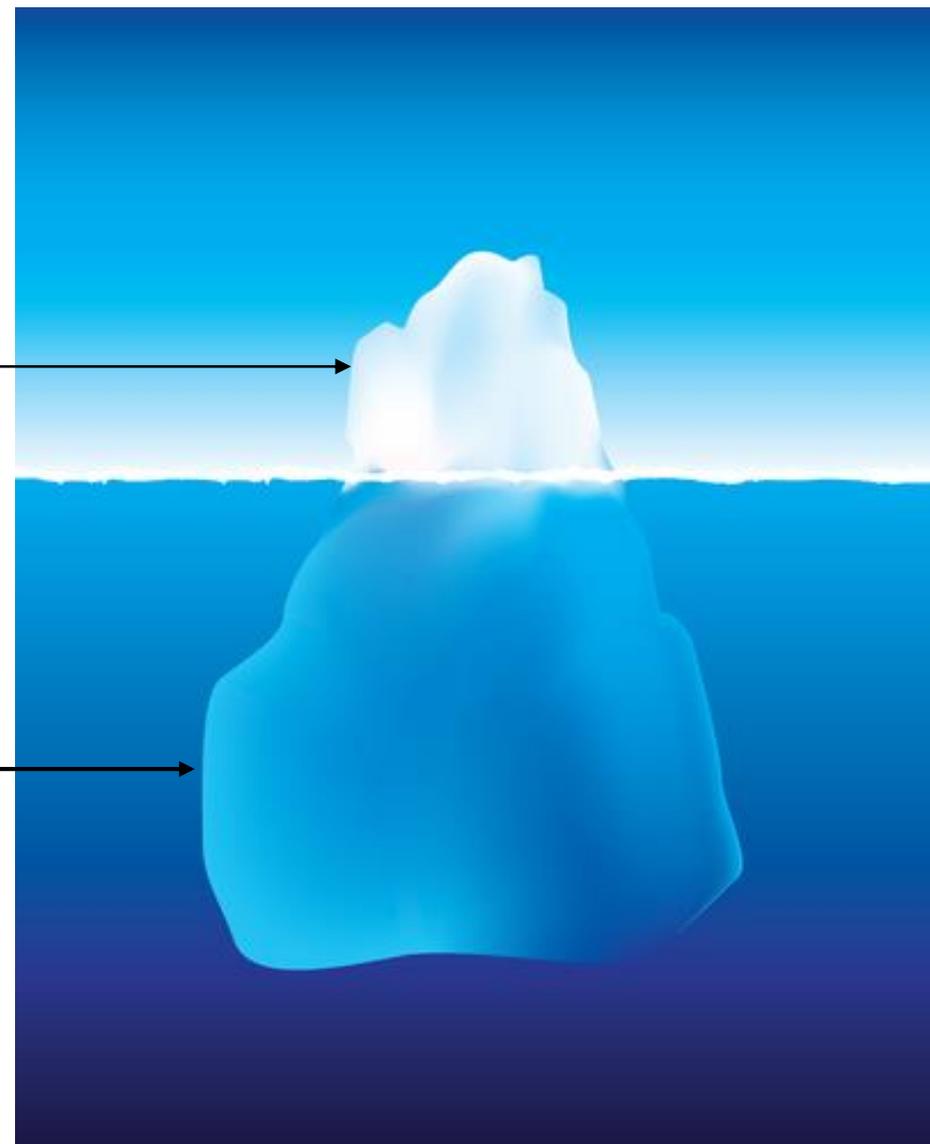


# What has changed?

**behaviours**



**emotions**



# ■ Managing anxiety

# 3 steps to support anxious pupils

Analyse

Goals

Tools &  
techniques

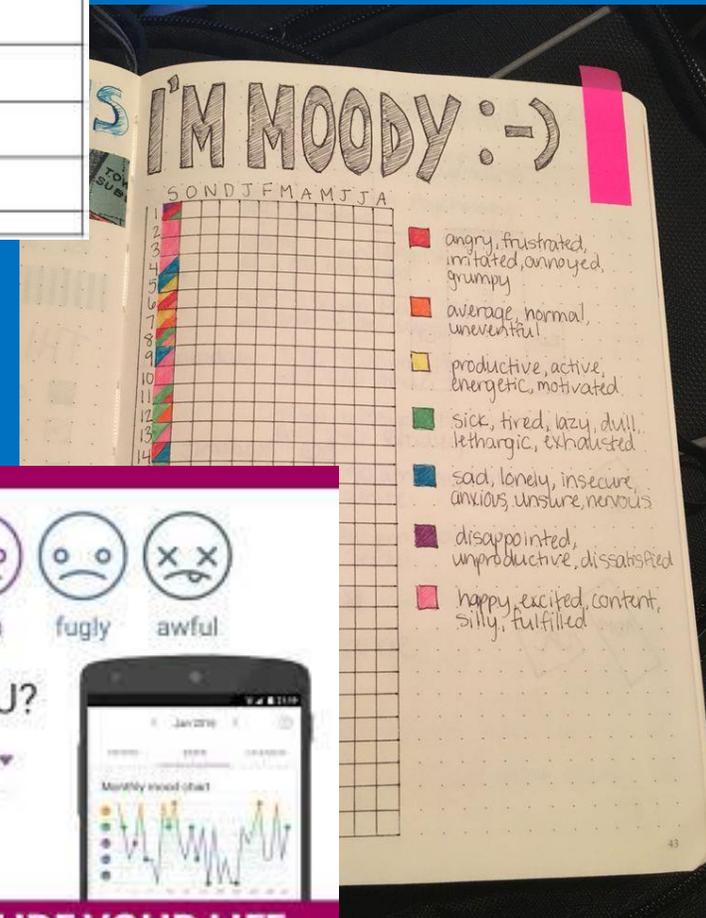
# 1. Analyse

- Journal
- Blog/Vlog
- Track the day- emotion scales
- Lists- 5 things that triggered anxiety
- What can we alter, accept or avoid?

How are you feeling today?

	HAPPY	SAD	SILLY	ANGRY	SICK	DISAPPOINTED	FURTYRATER	FULL OF PRIDE	ECITED	SCARED	SURPRISED	NERVOUS	WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHEN
Mon.													
Tue.													
Wed.													
Thurs.													
Fri.													
Sat.													
Sun.													

[www.child-behaviorguide.com](http://www.child-behaviorguide.com)



## 2. Goals

- What would you like to change?
- SMART goals
- Break each goal down into smaller goals
- What small successes can be celebrated?



# 3. Tools & Techniques

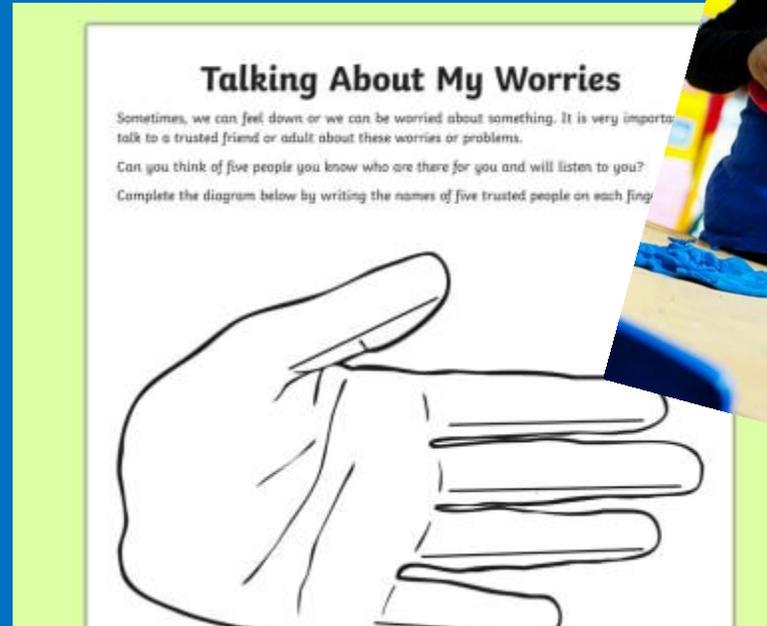
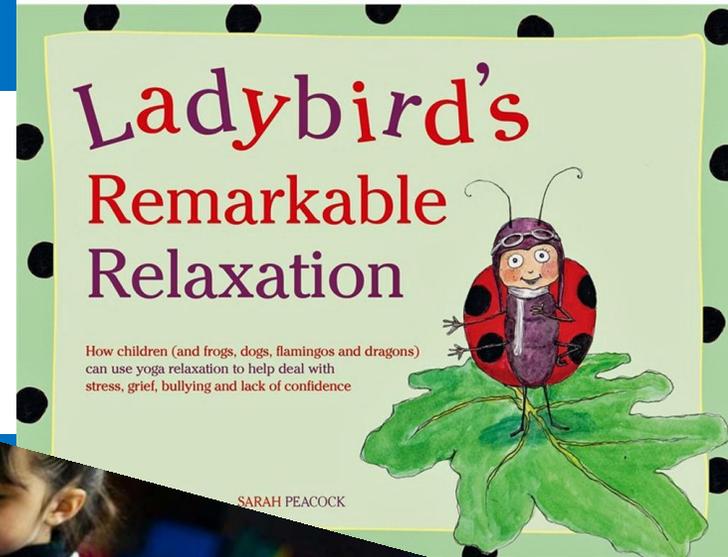
■ Time passing or distraction activities

■ Calming activities

■ Exercise, nature

■ Sensory activities,  
e.g. pets, music

■ Who to speak to:  
Safeguarding lead, Counsellor



SLOW  
DOWN

KEEP  
CALM

BE  
POSITIVE

TAKE  
IT  
EASY

UNPLUG

ENJOY  
LIFE

HAVE  
FUN

BREATHE

RELAX

GO  
OUTSIDE



MEDITATE

# Useful websites for teachers and parents

Young Minds  
[www.youngminds.co.uk](http://www.youngminds.co.uk)

NHS Choices  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Charlie Waller  
Memorial Trust  
[www.CWMT.org.uk](http://www.CWMT.org.uk)

Rethink mental  
illness  
[www.timetochange.co.uk](http://www.timetochange.co.uk)

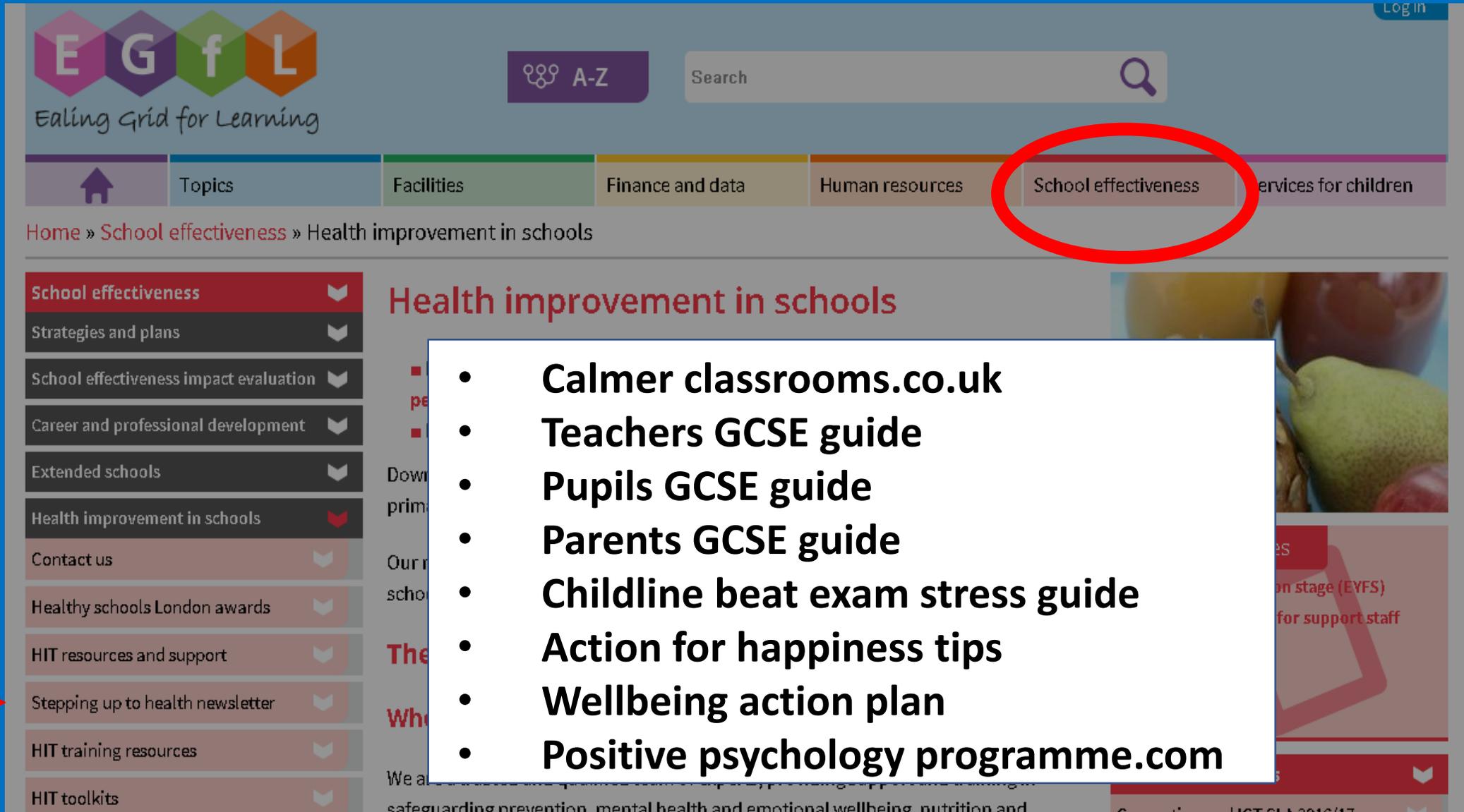
ChildLine  
[www.childline.co.uk](http://www.childline.co.uk)

Department of  
Health  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

Anxiety UK  
[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

The British  
Psychological  
Society  
[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

# Where to find our training resources



The screenshot shows the Ealing Grid for Learning website. The logo 'EGfL' is at the top left. A navigation bar contains links for Home, Topics, Facilities, Finance and data, Human resources, School effectiveness (circled in red), and Services for children. Below the navigation bar, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home » School effectiveness » Health improvement in schools'. A left-hand sidebar menu lists various categories, with 'Health improvement in schools' selected. A central content area displays the title 'Health improvement in schools' and a list of resources. A red arrow points to the 'HIT training resources' link in the sidebar. A white box with a black border contains a list of training resources.

Log in

EGfL  
Ealing Grid for Learning

A-Z Search

Home Topics Facilities Finance and data Human resources **School effectiveness** Services for children

Home » School effectiveness » Health improvement in schools

School effectiveness

- Strategies and plans
- School effectiveness impact evaluation
- Career and professional development
- Extended schools
- Health improvement in schools
- Contact us
- Healthy schools London awards
- HIT resources and support
- Stepping up to health newsletter
- HIT training resources
- HIT toolkits

## Health improvement in schools

- Calmer classrooms.co.uk
- Teachers GCSE guide
- Pupils GCSE guide
- Parents GCSE guide
- Childline beat exam stress guide
- Action for happiness tips
- Wellbeing action plan
- Positive psychology programme.com

HIT training resources



# Thank you for attending!



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[www.egfl.org.uk](http://www.egfl.org.uk)



020 8825 8865



**Healthy Schools**  
EALING