

Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries:

Guided Self-Help Manual for Therapists

Working with Groups

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Adapted from: 'Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries, Guided Parent Delivered CBT Treatment; Manual for Therapists
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NOTE: This group manual has been developed to assist therapists in the delivery of a guided parent delivered CBT programme using the book 'Helping your child with fears and worries: a self-help guide for parents' (Creswell & Willetts, 2019). The current manual provides session structure and an outline for the delivery of this programme working with groups of parents.

For more in-depth discussion and illustration of the general approach see:

Creswell, C., Parkinson, M., Thirlwall, K., & Willetts, L. (2019). Parent-led CBT for child anxiety: helping parents help their kids. Guilford Press.

There is a separate manual for working with families individually, see:

<http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/87041/>

Conflicts of interest: CC and LW receive royalties for sales of 'Helping your child with fears and worries: a self-help guide for parents' and 'Parent-led CBT for child anxiety: helping parents help their kids.'

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
EVIDENCE BASE.....	5
WHO IS IT AIMED AT?.....	6
RATIONALE, PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME.....	6
PRACTICAL ISSUES.....	7
a. Therapist preparation	7
b. Timing of sessions	8
c. Who attends?	8
d. Conflicting view points	9
e. Group facilitator stance.....	9
f. Supervision	10
g. If further help is needed.....	10
h. Making the book available to parents.....	11
IMPLEMENTING THE MANUAL.....	11
Session content and timings	12
a. Agenda setting.....	12
b. Goal setting and session by session monitoring.....	12
c. Risk	15
d. Other issues that arise.....	15
e. Completing the homework tasks.....	16
SESSION 1 - OVERVIEW	21
SESSION 1: CONTENT	22
1. Group introductions	22
2. Ground rules.....	22
3. Set an agenda	23
4. Philosophy of programme revisited	23
5. Introduce routine outcome measures	23
6. Review of homework.....	23
7. Understanding current difficulties and psychoeducation.....	24
8. Treatment goals	25
9. Setting realistic expectations	27
10. How anxiety develops and is maintained	27
11. Causes of childhood anxiety problems	28
12. Maintenance of child anxiety (Handout 1 – What keeps child anxiety problems going).....	30
13. Maintenance of child anxiety (Handout 2 – What keeps child anxiety problems going Part 2)	32
14. Take home messages	33
15. Other issues.....	33
16. Feedback	34
17. Homework tasks	34
SESSION 2 - OVERVIEW	35

SESSION CONTENT	36
1. Set an agenda	36
2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals	36
3. Review of homework.....	36
4. What are my child's anxious expectations?	38
5. Asking questions not giving answers	39
6. Getting the best results	40
7. Help parents to notice the focus on asking questions not giving answers.....	40
8. Illustrating the technique - Role play (Handout 3 - What are my child's anxious thoughts/expectations).....	40
9. Key concept – What does my child need to learn? (Handout 4)	43
10. Encouraging independence and 'having a go' (Handout 5 *OPTIONAL).....	45
11. Identifying rewards	46
12. Take home messages	47
13. Other issues.....	47
14. Feedback	47
15. Homework tasks.....	48

SESSION 3 - OVERVIEW 49

SESSION CONTENT	50
1. Set an agenda	50
2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals	50
3. Review of homework.....	50
4. A Step-by-Step approach to overcoming fears and worries.	50
5. Unplanned experiments.....	54
6. Take home messages	55
7. Other issues.....	56
8. Feedback.....	56
9. Homework tasks.....	57

SESSION 4 - OVERVIEW 58

SESSION CONTENT	59
1. Setting the agenda.....	59
2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals	59
3. Completing the Step-by-Step plan (Handouts 7 and 8)	59
4. Unplanned Experiments.....	62
5. Helpful reflections and encouragement.....	63
6. Other issues	63
7. Feedback.....	63
8. Homework task	64

SESSION 5 - OVERVIEW 65

SESSION CONTENT	66
1. Setting the agenda.....	66
2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals	66
3. Review of homework.....	66
4. Problem Solving.....	67
5. Problems you may face	69

6.	Illustrating the technique - Problem solving with parent (Handout 10).....	71
7.	Things I have done that have been helpful for reducing my child's anxiety (Handout 11)	71
8.	Keeping things going	72
9.	Things for Me and My Child to Continue to Work on (Handout 12)	72
10.	Other issues.....	73
11.	Congratulate the group!	74
12.	Rewarding yourself	74
13.	What happens next?	75
14.	Take home messages	75
15.	Other issues.....	75
16.	Feedback	75
17.	Homework Tasks	76
 SESSION 6 *OPTIONAL INDIVIDUAL REVIEW - OVERVIEW		77
SESSION CONTENT		77
1.	Setting the agenda.....	77
2.	Review of progress	77
3.	Take home messages	77
 GOAL PROGRESS SHEET (GPS).....		78
 HANDOUT 1 – WHAT KEEPS CHILD ANXIETY PROBLEMS GOING?.....		79
 HANDOUT 2 – WHAT KEEPS CHILD ANXIETY PROBLEMS GOING		80
 HANDOUT 3 WHAT ARE MY CHILD’S ANXIOUS THOUGHTS/ EXPECTATIONS?.....		81
 HANDOUT 4 – WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO LEARN		82
 HANDOUT 5 – ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE*		83
 HANDOUT 6 – REWARDS		84
 HANDOUT 7 – IDEAS FOR A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN		85
 HANDOUT 8 – STEP-BY-STEP PLAN		86
 HANDOUT 9 - KEEPING TRACK OF MY CHILD’S PROGRESS WITH THEIR STEP-BY-STEP PLAN.....		87
 HANDOUT 10 – PROBLEM SOLVING		88
 HANDOUT 11 - THINGS I HAVE DONE THAT HAVE BEEN HELPFUL FOR REDUCING MY CHILD’S ANXIETY		89
 HANDOUT 12 - THINGS FOR ME AND MY CHILD TO CONTINUE TO WORK ON		90
 HELPING CHILDREN OVERCOME FEARS AND WORRIES – A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS –		91
 References.....		97

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guided parent-delivered programme is to teach parents cognitive behavioural strategies and to empower them to use them with their child to overcome difficulties with anxiety by supporting them to work through the accompanying book (Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries 2nd Edition: a self-help guide for parents).

We have typically delivered and evaluated this programme on an individual basis, but in response to demand we have developed this manual so that the materials can be consistently delivered in a group form.

This group programme consists of 5 x 2 hour face-to-face sessions over a six week period with a recommended individual follow up appointment 4 weeks after the programme ends (week 10). Work is conducted solely via parents (after an initial assessment that would involve both the child and the parent). We and other groups internationally have shown that a parent-led CBT approach is an effective and efficient way of treating child anxiety disorders.

EVIDENCE BASE

Guided parent-delivered CBT has been evaluated in the United Kingdom within NHS settings and we have found similar outcomes to those reported from standard, more intensive, child and family-focused CBT approaches. A randomized control trial which included almost 200 children between the ages of 7 and 12 years showed that children who had received the programme were twice as likely to recover from their main anxiety disorder and three times more likely to be free of all anxiety diagnoses compared to those who had not received any treatment (Thirlwall et al., 2013). Of particular note, there were no differences in treatment outcomes according to whether therapists were CBT-trained or CBT-novices when they used this approach. We have also found that the approach achieved similar clinical outcomes, but was more cost-effective than an alternative brief psychological treatment (Creswell et al., 2017). Similar approaches have also been

evaluated in the U.S. and Australia with positive outcomes (Chavira et al., 2014; Cobham, 2012; Lyneham & Rapee, 2006).

WHO IS IT AIMED AT?

The programme is aimed at parents of children aged 5–12 years whose primary presenting problem is anxiety. Ideally this should be determined via the Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule (Silverman, Albano, & Barlow, 1996), or an equivalent semi-structured clinical interview for children and parents to assess childhood anxiety disorders.

Whilst other difficulties, such as behavioural problems and low mood may also be present, the programme specifically targets anxiety and, as such, this should be the primary presenting problem. The programme has not been evaluated with children younger than 5 years or those with communication or learning difficulties, however, it has been suggested to us that, on the basis of anecdotal reports, that it could potentially be adapted to meet the needs of these groups with appropriate supervision.

RATIONALE, PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

We believe that parents are the experts when it comes to their child. They will have a better understanding of how their own child might respond and what will encourage and motivate them to try different things than a therapist will have. Parents often play a central role in determining the pace and timings of when therapeutic strategies can be implemented at home and are often relied upon to solve practical issues that arise. They are often the ones that are present during the struggles and challenges their child is facing and can support their child both between sessions and well beyond the end of treatment. They are also often desperate to know what to do for the best to help their child.

As such, the aim of the programme is to provide strategies for parents that they can use at home to support their child in order for them to overcome problems with anxiety. The sessions with a therapist provide an opportunity for the group to discuss how to apply the

CBT principles described in the book to their children's needs. Techniques are discussed with parents in a collaborative way, asking for their opinions as to how each strategy might work for their children given what they know about them. If a parent is concerned that a particular strategy will not work for their child, ways of adapting strategies are explored in order to make them more useful. Time is spent on reflecting on what works best for the families and guiding the parents, as well as providing opportunity for practice.

Additionally, children with anxiety disorders often elicit responses from those around them that may inadvertently maintain their difficulties and they are highly attuned to messages that may reinforce their anxious beliefs and behaviours. During the programme, parents are, therefore, invited to monitor and, if necessary, alter their reactions to their child. The positive impact that a parent can have in helping their child overcome their problems is emphasised throughout the programme. A key role of the therapist is to highlight helpful strategies that the parent uses or has begun to practice, rather than criticising potentially unhelpful responses.

One of the key aims of the programme is to increase parents' confidence in their ability to help their child overcome their difficulties with anxiety. As such, the philosophy of the programme is non-blaming and one that highlights positive skills and responses of parents, in order to build their confidence and empower them to support their children. For these reasons there should be a non-judgemental group atmosphere at all times.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

a. Therapist preparation

The therapist should have folders to give to each group member at the first session. These should contain handouts for the session and a list of all the session dates. We also recommend giving parents extra sheets of note paper and a pen to help with group work. Some thought should also be given to the room layout and seating, with a relaxed and comfortable environment in mind. One of the benefits of group approach is the

potential for increased peer support. In our experience many families find that talking to others in similar positions to themselves is a positive and helpful experience. As such we recommend preparing for a refreshment break during each group session.

b. Timing of sessions

It is important to have contact with parents regularly to maintain continuity of strategies that are being developed. All sessions should be agreed before the group begins and parents should be encouraged to prioritise and commit to the programme. If a parent cancels or misses a session, a brief telephone conversation and/or sharing of resources may be necessary so momentum is not lost.

c. Who attends?

It is recommended that groups should have 8-10 members, to allow enough time for discussion for each group member within the 2 hour sessions. Some families may be keen for their child to attend sessions. It is important to emphasise that this treatment approach is conducted solely with parents (carers or guardians). Although parents may be initially surprised by this, the merits of this approach are usually understood when the benefits are explained (i.e. parents can implement the strategies at home, child does not need to miss school/other activities, parents are the 'expert' in understanding their own child, parents will have the opportunity to speak freely). Where there are two (or more) parents it is great if they are both able to attend the sessions, but it is important to consider and decide this before the group starts to ensure group sizes are not too large. In order for strategies to be implemented consistently, it is imperative that at least one parent commits to attending *all* the sessions and that this parent is motivated and in a position to make relevant changes in their child's life. If the group agrees it may be possible for the other parent to join some of the sessions or for group members to audio record sessions on their phones to listen back and share with others.

d. Conflicting view points

It is not uncommon for parents in groups to hold different views about the approaches discussed. This needs to be handled sensitively and all perspectives listened too. It is important to remain objective and model an open-minded, non-blaming approach. If one parent has found a strategy unhelpful or does not think it will work for their family, this should be accepted (but explored with a view to adaptation), although it will be important to emphasise that different approaches may be more or less helpful for each family depending on their circumstances and experiences.

Similarly, parents of the same child may also have different perspectives regarding the need for treatment. If one parent does not regard the child as having an anxiety disorder, it will be important to reach an agreement they will not undermine the strategies you will be discussing in the group.

e. Group facilitator stance

The therapist role is to support and encourage parents throughout the programme. The therapist should never criticise a parent when they describe responding to their child in a potentially unhelpful way or if they do not engage fully in the programme. It is better to use these opportunities to reflect on other strategies that might be useful (unless of course their negative responses raise issues of child protection, in which case, local child protection procedures should be followed). For engagement issues, it is best to find out why a parent has not engaged and to help them overcome any obstacles that they highlight. It is likely that members of the group will encounter similar problems (e.g. finding time, difficulty motivating their child, feeling overwhelmed) and getting parents to share ideas and their own solutions provides invaluable peer-support and can bring new perspectives. It is crucial to always look for anything positive that parents have done, acknowledge and highlight this. As the programme progresses, it may be possible to begin to encourage parents to think about what they might have done differently in certain situations, rather than solely focus on what they have done well. This should always be

done in a collaborative (e.g. What else could you have done? What makes it difficult to *praise your child?*) rather than in an authoritative or didactic way (e.g. You didn't *praise* your child, why was that?).

Group rules around confidentiality and promoting a non-judgmental therapeutic setting should be collaboratively discussed at the first session. The therapist should review these regularly throughout the programme and invite parents to add to the list as and when required.

f. Supervision

Regular supervision from an experienced clinician is essential. Therapists should audio or video record sessions and play sessions (or parts of sessions) back to themselves and their supervisor using this manual as a guide. Self-monitoring and regular checking will ensure good fidelity to the programme. Both session recordings and routine outcome measures (see below) should be used to guide supervision discussion and to identify areas of development and adaptation if required.

g. If further help is needed

It is important to emphasise that we do not necessarily expect all of a child's difficulties with anxiety to be entirely overcome by the end of this brief programme. Significant change usually occurs during the programme but also in the 3 – 6 months following the end of the programme. For example, in our randomised controlled trial of this approach 50% of children were free of their primary anxiety disorder at the end of treatment and this increased to 75% by the 6-month follow up (Thirlwall et al., 2013). However, while younger children and those without primary Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) had good outcomes at the end of treatment they were less likely to make further improvements in the 6 months following treatment than older children and those who had other primary diagnoses (Thirlwall, Cooper, & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, if younger children and those with primary GAD have not made a significant improvement *during* treatment then it may be worth considering offering a more intensive treatment straight away, whereas for

others it may be worth monitoring outcomes for a while to see if improvement continues without further intervention.

h. Making the book available to parents

Ideally services will be able to hold a supply of books that they can lend out to parents. We recommend clearly labelling all copies as belonging to the service, numbering each copy, and keeping good records of which family has which number book. Be explicit with families that you will need the book back at the end of treatment so that you can lend it to another family and remind them that it will need to be returned at the penultimate session. Let families know that if they want to be able to write in the book they will need to purchase their own version.

When services are unable to lend families a copy of the book in advance, families will usually be able to access a copy through their local library, but services should ensure this will be possible in advance.

IMPLEMENTING THE MANUAL

The following pages outline what should be covered during each group session, including session plans, handouts, homework assignments, and corresponding reading. The session plans should be followed carefully, although the material should **not** be presented word for word. Instead the therapist needs to be familiar with the material so that they are able to facilitate the group in a conversational style. It is essential that the therapist has expanded their knowledge of the key concepts and has familiarised themselves with the accompanying book prior to running the group. Within each session plan, possible questions and points for discussion are shown in boxes. These can be used to help the therapist and parents develop a shared understanding of the child's anxiety and how best to help them. It is not necessary for the therapist to ask these questions in exactly the way they have been presented, but they should be used to guide discussion around key concepts with a collaborative, curious tone.

Session content and timings

Key concepts take time to cover and should take up the bulk of the allocated session time. All sessions, need to include agenda setting, session by session monitoring, reviewing homework, reviewing other issues highlighted by parents, take home messages and homework setting. It is important to ensure that the correct balance of time is given to each of these. Approximate time allocations are given below.

Approximate time allocations should be as follows:

- i) Setting agenda (5-10 minutes)
- ii) Session by session routine outcome monitoring (ROMs) and reviewing homework (20-30 minutes)
- iii) Key concepts to be covered including discussion points and carrying out exercises (1 hour)
- iv) Other issues highlighted by parents (10-15 minutes)
- v) Take home messages and setting homework (approx. 5-10 minutes)
- vi) Risk review (on individual basis- if applicable; 5-10 minutes)

a. Agenda setting

An agenda should be set at the beginning of each session in order to promote structure and collaboration and to ensure the most important material (brought by both the therapist and the parent) is covered. Parents should be invited to add any items to the agenda and adequate time should be provided within the session to discuss these. The agenda consists of all the items which need to be covered during the session and should be referred to throughout the session to aid time keeping and to ensure key strategies have been discussed.

b. Goal setting and session by session monitoring

It is important to establish clearly defined treatment goals following the 'SMART'

principles (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) in session 1 and to review and monitor progress throughout. As already mentioned, parents should not necessarily expect their child to have fully reached their end goal by the end of this brief programme (although in some cases this will be possible), but to have made significant progress towards it and to feel confident in continuing with the strategies they have learnt. See example goal monitoring in the Handouts.

Regular outcome monitoring reduces drop-out and improves clinical outcomes (Miller et al., 2006). Another important purpose of outcome measures is that they aid meaningful conversation in the session and help the therapist and parent think about the nature of the child's difficulties and the needs of each family. Many services adopt routine outcome measures that should be incorporated into the delivery of this programme.

Information about routine outcome monitoring with children and young people (including goal monitoring tools) can be found here:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/sites/evidence-based-practice-unit/files/pub_and_resources_resources_for_profs_key_messages.pdf

NB! As we only meet with parents during the course of this treatment we collect **child** report measures before and after treatment, but **parent** measures at every session. We recommend using the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale – Parent (RCADS-P; Chorpita, Moffitt, & Gray, 2005), and Goal Based Outcome (Law & Jacob, 2015), the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS; Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sparks, & Claud, 2003), the Group Session Rating Scale (GSRS; Quirk, Miller, Duncan & Owen, 2013) from the CYP IAPT core measurement set, as well as the Child Anxiety Interference Scale- Parent report (CAIS-P; Langley et al., 2014).

A schedule for administering these ROMs is summarised in Table 1. More information about ROMs and printable versions of the above questionnaires can be found on the CORC website: <https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/>

Table 1: Routine Outcome Measures

Session	Parent	Child
Assessment (face to face)	RCADS-P CAIS-P SRS	RCADS-C CAIS-C SRS
Session 1 (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO GSRS	-
Session 2 (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO GSRS	-
Session 3 (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO GSRS	-
Session 4 (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO GSRS	-
Session 5 (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO GSRS	<i>Provide for parents to take home for child to complete prior to next session: RCADS-C ORS CAIS-C</i>
Booster Review (face to face)	RCADS-P ORS CAIS-P GBO SRS CHI-ESQ-P/C	<i>Ask parents to return above ROMs: RCADS-C ORS CAIS-C</i>

*RCADS-P/C = Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale – Parent/Child report; CAIS-P = Child Anxiety Impact Scale- Parent report; SRS = Session Rating Scale; GSRS = Group Session Rating Scale; ORS = Outcome Rating Scale; GBO = Goal Based Outcomes; *CHI-ESQ-P/C = Experience of Service Questionnaire-Parent/Child report (can be used as a measure of service evaluation*

c. Risk

As standard practice, risk to self, to others, and from others should be assessed at the initial appointment. Where necessary a risk management plan should be put in place and all information should be shared in clinical supervision. Risk, and the risk management plan, should be monitored throughout sessions and discussed in supervision routinely. This could be done by asking parents to come before or stay after a session or to speak over the phone, to ensure conversations regarding risk remain confidential.

d. Other issues that arise

During a session, the parent may raise other issues that they would like help with. These might include other difficulties that their child is experiencing and/or difficulties that they themselves are experiencing, including mental health or social problems, such as housing issues. These issues must be acknowledged but, due to time limitations, it is important to ensure that they do not take up whole sessions (see session timings below). Where relevant, parents should be referred to relevant chapters in the parent book (i.e. Chapter 20, School-attendance difficulties; Chapter 19, Overcoming difficult behaviour; Chapter 18, Sleep problems) and encouraged to apply the strategies included in the book to solve these problems (with the therapists' support). If this does not apply, it may be appropriate to advise the parent how to access advice/support from another source. Unless there is an urgent need, it is often not helpful for a child to start another treatment while this programme is ongoing as this may deflect from the focus of the current input, may overwhelm the family, and it may be possible that comorbid problems (depending on their nature) will improve alongside the primary problem that is being targeted in treatment. It is important, however, to review progress with any additional problems that were raised at the end of treatment and, if necessary, refer the child and family for further support at that point.

e. Completing the homework tasks

Sessions are accompanied by handouts. In order to ensure these are completed, parents need to be given a clear rationale:

- Progress is all about what happens between sessions
- They are a 'memory aid'
- They provide a record of progress
- They can be used in case of future need (e.g. after discharge from service)

In order for the parent to be successful in helping to reduce their child's anxiety, it is imperative that they complete the homework tasks set. Occasionally, parents find it hard to do so and, if this is the case, it is important to discuss what is making it difficult for the parent to complete them. When first introducing the programme, explore whether there are any literacy difficulties as almost all the homework relies on the parent reading material and keeping written records. If the parent is not confident about their reading and writing skills, discuss whether they can enlist a buddy to help them read the material and/or keep records. (NB. The book will soon be available as an audiobook, please contact us for updates on this).

Sometimes parents report that they do not have time to read the accompanying chapters. As this programme is a 'guided' treatment, it is essential that the parent already has some knowledge of the key strategies before discussing and practicing them in the sessions in order to make the most of the available session time. As such, the importance of reading chapters in between sessions must be emphasised and potential barriers that make this difficult should be addressed. The therapist should take the book in to every face-to-face session so that the therapist can show the parent key pages in the book which cover the area that they are discussing. If the parent has not been able to read the chapter previously or wishes to recap on any specific issues they can be guided to additional chapters at the back of the book.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

Prior to Session 1 (i.e. start of treatment):

Parent reads: Part 1, Chapter 6 (how to use this book) and Chapter 7 (setting goals)

Session 1 - Week 1: (approximately 2 hours)

- Group introductions
- Ground rules
- Philosophy of programme revisited
 - Why CBT
 - Why parental approach
- Psychoeducation
- How anxiety develops and is maintained
- Treatment goals

Session 2 - Week 2: (approximately 2 hours)

- What is my child thinking?
- What does my child need to learn?
- Promoting independence and 'having a go'
- Identifying rewards

Session 3 - Week 3: (approximately 2 hours)

- Step-by-Step plan

Session 4 - Week 4: (approximately 2 hours)

- Checking in and reviewing homework
- Make changes to Step-by-Step plan as necessary
- Reviewing ROMs

1 WEEK BREAK

Session 5 - Week 6: (approximately 2 hours)

- Checking in and reviewing homework
- Problem solving approach
- What has helped
- What still needs work
- Review goals

4 WEEK BREAK

Individual follow-up appointment - Week 10: (approximately 1 hour)

- Review progress: discharge, monitor or refer elsewhere (step up).

WHAT TO DO BEFORE STARTING TREATMENT

- I. Complete an assessment of the child's presenting problems
 - Confirm that anxiety is the child's primary presenting problem
 - Assessments should be carried out in line with your service's assessment protocols.
 - We recommend a diagnostically informed approach, such as the Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for Children (ADIS-IV-C/P).
 - For more information on assessment see: Creswell, C., Parkinson, M., Thirlwall, K., & Willetts, L. (2019). Parent-led CBT for child anxiety: helping parents help their kids. Guilford Press.
- II. If this treatment is appropriate (child aged between 5- 12 and with a primary problem of anxiety) discuss treatment options with the family in line with your services protocols.
- III. Explain to family how the treatment approach works- specifically that the programme is based on cognitive behavioural principles (i.e. addresses how the child thinks and how they behave in anxiety provoking situations) and is a parent-led guided self-help delivered in a group format. Provide the rationale for working with parents but not directly with children:
 - Parent's know their children best and so are best placed to implement change
 - Parents can be more motivated to make changes as they are more likely to focus on the long-term gain
 - Research has shown treatment to be just as effective when working with parents as when working with children
 - Children don't need to miss school or other activities due to coming to appointments
 - When working with parents the same outcomes can be seen in fewer

sessions

- Parents are more likely to be able to remember and implement strategies in the future
- Parents often have concerns or queries that they are keen to talk about

IV. Explain the number and format of sessions. Check parents will be able to attend all group sessions. These are delivered over 6 weeks to allow parents time to put in to practice the skills they have learnt in sessions. The group sessions should be delivered in the following format:

- Week 1 - Session 1
- Week 2 - Session 2
- Week 3 - Session 3
- Week 4 - Session 4
- Week 5: BREAK
- Week 6 - Session 5
- An individual follow-up session is recommended 4-weeks after the group sessions have ended.

V. Explain the required workload during treatment.

- Explain that the book offers detailed information which will be briefly reviewed in sessions, however the main purpose of sessions is to tailor this information to the individuals so it is important parents do the required reading prior to their sessions.
- Explain that parents will be expected to put their learning in to practice with their child between sessions and this will be reviewed in session.

VI. Encourage parent/s to prioritise treatment

- It may be useful to draw up a therapy agreement with families to explain your services cancellation policy and obtain written consent that they will prioritise therapy for the upcoming weeks.

- Explain to families that you understand there may be other important events for the family but that it is important that they try to prioritise treatment for the next 8 – 12 weeks, as the more the parent puts into treatment the better the outcomes will be.

VII. Make sure each parent has a copy of the book (and set reading for first session)

VIII. Reading prior to session 1

- As the group facilitator will be referring to part 1 and chapters 6 and 7 of the self-help book in session 1, the parent will need to have read this section (pages 1-87) prior to the first group session and should be given at least one week to do so.

SESSION 1 - OVERVIEW

WHAT TO COVER IN SESSION 1?

- Group Introductions
- Ground Rules
- Book: Part 1 and Chapters 6 and 7
- Philosophy of programme revisited
 - Why CBT?
 - Why a parental approach?
- Introduce routine outcome measures
- Review of homework (Parents reading Part 1 and Chapters 6 and 7)
- Key concepts and tasks to cover in session 1:
 - Understanding current difficulties & psychoeducation
 - How anxiety develops and what keeps it going (Refer to Handouts 1 & 2)
 - Set treatment goals
 - Managing parents' expectations

HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 1

- Reflect on treatment goals
- Be on the lookout for maintenance factors
- Complete Handout 2 (Maintenance of child anxiety problems)
- Read chapters 8 and 9

HANDOUTS TO USE IN SESSION 1

- Handout 1 - Development and maintenance map – PART 1 (Handout 1)*OPTIONAL
- Handout 2 - Development and maintenance map – PART 2
- School Information Sheet
- Give ROMs for parent to take home and complete before next session

SESSION 1: CONTENT

1. *Group introductions*

Introduce yourself and go around the group and ask parents to say something about their child (i.e. the child's name, their age, and how they enjoy spending their time), why they have come to the group and what they hope to get from the group. Remind everyone that there are 5 sessions each lasting for 2 hours over 6 weeks (with a break after session 4).

2. *Ground rules*

Ask the group to come up with some ground rules and write these up on a large sheet of paper and stick up on the wall at each group session.

Ensure the following rules are included:

- What is said by others in the group stays in the group
- Explain that the same rules regarding confidentiality apply to group facilitators as the rest of the group – with the exception of if we are concerned about some harm coming to parents or their children. If that is the case we always try to talk to parents about it first (individually) and decide what to do together
- No identifying other people in the group outside of the session
- It is okay to talk about the group in general terms but no specifics
- It is okay to talk about what *you* do in the group but not to talk about other members
- Arrive on time, finish on time
- Turn off mobile phones or put them on silent (if you have to take an emergency call, leave the room)
- Everyone is allowed to have their opinions. No one's opinions will be criticised or judged
- One person to talk at a time
- Be respectful to one another

3. Set an agenda

Outline the planned content of the group session and write these up on a whiteboard or flipchart (see 'agenda setting' in manual introduction).

4. Philosophy of programme revisited

Review with the group the concept of the programme (based on cognitive behavioural principles; guided self-help; work with the parent rather than the child) and re-emphasise the philosophy of the programme and why we are working with parents. Invite parents to discuss any concerns they have about the approach. Refer to page 8/9 and evidence for the approach to address concerns where applicable. Help parents consider solutions to practical challenges where appropriate (recommend parent read ahead to Step 5: problem solving if it may be helpful and manageable).

5. Introduce routine outcome measures

If not already covered in the treatment planning appointment, explain that these measures will help keep track of progress being made throughout the programme and will be administered at the start of each session. Explain that parents should aim to arrive 10-15 minutes before sessions start in order to complete the measures and hand them to the group facilitator. Share that parents will be given the opportunity to reflect upon and share progress on some of the measures briefly at the beginning of each session, but that their responses to the measures will remain confidential. In session 4 there will be an opportunity for parents to discuss their measures and relevant graphs in more detail. Discuss with the parents how this data will be used, along with other information, to monitor progress throughout treatment.

6. Review of homework

Ask the parents whether they have any questions or comments about Part 1 and chapters 6 and 7 of the book. Ask how what they read fitted with their experiences. Were there any

particular case examples they identified with? Explain that the session will be building on what they have read in the book.

If any of the parents have not read Part 1, explore what difficulties they had and encourage them to consider how they could overcome these (depending on the nature of the problem and if manageable at this stage, suggest parent reads step 5 on Problem Solving and use this strategy to find a solution). Normalise and draw on how other members of the group may have been able to mitigate similar challenges. Emphasise the importance of reading the chapters in order to make use of each session and encourage them to read Part 1 and chapter 6 and 7 over the following week.

Discussion Point

In pairs ask the group to discuss what they have read so far. Did any examples resonate with them? Were there parts they didn't understand? Invite the pairs to feedback to the wider group.

7. Understanding current difficulties and psychoeducation

Stress to the parents that the topics you will be discussing today are covered in Part 1 and chapters 6 and 7 of the self-help book and so you will not be covering them in detail. Explain that your role will be to help to tailor information covered in the book to their individual needs and circumstances.

For each area, give a simple overview of the material and explore whether they have understood it. You will ask the parents particular questions about each area in order to increase their, and your, understanding of their child's anxiety.

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To provide parents the opportunity to share their concerns and struggles and to confirm what the main concerns are and what they would like to achieve during the course of the programme.

- To consolidate understanding about the child and how anxiety is having an impact on their life.
- To signpost additional book chapters where appropriate.

Cover the following information:

- What is anxiety and when does it become a problem?

Anxiety is a normal emotion that can be useful and can enhance performance. It becomes a problem when it is severe or frequent and interferes with a child's everyday life. The main aim of the treatment is to help the child overcome anxiety so that it does not interfere with day-to-day life.

- Effects of anxiety on children's lives

Reflect on the ways in which anxiety can have an impact on a child's life:

- Social life (problems with friendships).
- Academic performance (reduced academic achievement).
- Mood (more likely to become depressed).

Discussion point

Ask parents to reflect upon the biggest problems caused by anxiety and to write this down.

Ask them to consider if there are other ways in which anxiety impacts their life which haven't been raised so far. Ask if anyone is willing to share their child's experiences with the group.

8. Treatment goals

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help focus the intervention and to develop realistic and achievable goals.
- To set up hope and opportunity to think about a positive future.
- To increase motivation and help monitor outcomes.

On the basis of the discussion about the children's anxiety and how it interferes, explain to the parents you would like each of them to each identify a maximum of 3 main goals that

they hope the group sessions can help them/their children to achieve. Explain that it would be useful for each of them to set a short, medium and long-term goal and that these should be S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely). Using the questions below, ask them to write their goals down so that they can be reviewed in each session (an example goal progress sheet (GPS) for monitoring goal based outcomes can be found in the Handout section).

The goals that are set in the session should be seen as an initial draft that the parents can reflect on and discuss with their child ahead of session 2. If a parent has any concerns about setting goals with their child remind them to use the trouble-shooting table on page 85-86 to try to overcome any difficulties.

Parents should review these goals before every session to help track progress and to give them a sense of achievement or highlight any difficulties. Explain to parents that you will briefly discuss goal progress at the beginning of each session.

Possible questions

- *If you had a magic wand that meant that when you wake up tomorrow your child does not have any problems with anxiety, what would be different?*
- *What changes would you, or someone looking in from the outside, notice?*
- *How would we know there had been a change?*
- *If your child were no longer having problems with being anxious, what would s/he be doing that s/he isn't doing at the moment?*
- *What would you like your child to do that they are not doing currently?*
- *What is your child missing out on due to anxiety?*
- *What would your child need to do, for you to think they have overcome their difficulties with anxiety?*

9. *Setting realistic expectations*

Discuss with the parents that their child may not progress towards their goals in the first few weeks of treatment as during that time you will be learning more about the problem and setting up plans. Highlight the importance of these initial treatment sessions to enable parents to understand what is keeping their child's anxiety going, and to gather the necessary information to help their children to overcome their fears and worries. Once an understanding of this information is gained, parents will then be able to implement techniques at home, which will help their children to progress towards their goals.

Give out ***School Information Sheet*** to take away and share with the school if appropriate.

NOTE!

*If a parent highlights problems attending school as a particular difficulty for their child, encourage them to read chapter 20, school attendance difficulties.

*If a parent highlights worry as a particular problem for their child, encourage them to read chapter 12, additional principles: overcoming worry.

10. *How anxiety develops and is maintained*

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To develop a shared understanding of how the child's difficulties with anxiety may have developed and factors contributing towards maintenance (i.e. what keeps it going).
- To discuss general factors which can play a role in child anxiety and to obtain information from parents as to which factors may be relevant for their family. This should be a collaborative process.
- To provide parents with a map of possible vicious cycles that can be targeted and broken during the course of the programme.

Many parents wonder about what has caused their child's difficulties with anxiety and some

parents worry that they have contributed to this or that they have done something wrong. Sometimes parents may hold explanations which limit their hope for change in the future. As such we briefly discuss parents' theories about the causes of their child's anxiety and introduce research evidence to enable parents to consider explanations which are consistent with the scope for positive change. It is crucial that this discussion is approached in a sensitive and non-blaming way to help parents develop a better understanding of their child's difficulties with anxiety without feeling guilty or judged. Emphasise that no single factor is likely to have caused their child's anxiety disorder, but that typically a number of factors play a role.

Cover the following information:

11. Causes of childhood anxiety problems

Briefly outline the main causes of childhood anxiety that are hypothesised in the research literature and explore whether any of these explanations seem to apply to their child (encouraging openness but ensuring parents don't feel pressurised in to disclosing anything they are not comfortable with sharing with the group):

- a. Genes
 - Anxiety runs in families
 - Only 1/3 of what makes a child anxious is explained by genes (so it is mostly influenced by environment)
 - We inherit particular characteristics (not anxiety disorder per se), e.g. sensitivity

Possible questions

- *Do you think your child has always been sensitive?*
- *Does anyone else in your family experience anxiety or have they experienced anxiety in the past?*

b. Adverse life events

- Stressful events may increase the risk of anxiety problems but may also have more impact on children who are already more anxious

Possible questions

- *Has your child experienced any significant life events? If so, how do you think it has affected them?*

c. Learning by example

- Picking up fears from parents or others

Possible questions

- *Do you think that your child has picked up on anxious behaviour from any of the adults around them? If so, in what way?*

d. Learning from other's reactions

- How others respond to child when they are anxious

Possible questions

- *Do you think that your child has reacted to the way other people respond to them when they have been in anxiety-provoking situations? If so, in what way?*

e. Coping experiences

- Missed opportunities to learn how to face fears and develop skills

Possible questions

- *Do you think people close to your child have tried to protect them from distressing or anxiety-provoking situations in a way that might have prevented them from learning to face fears and develop skills?*

NOTE!

*If a parent feels that their own anxiety is an important factor in their child's anxiety problem, they should read chapter 14, additional strategies 3: managing your own anxiety.

12. Maintenance of child anxiety (Handout 1 – What keeps child anxiety problems going)

Emphasise that although it can be helpful to understand what has caused their child's anxiety problem, this is actually not essential for successful treatment. It is much more important to the treatment process to understand what is **keeping the anxiety going** their child's anxiety (i.e. maintaining it). A useful analogy is a car that gets stuck in the mud- it may be that they got stuck in the mud because they took a particular route, but now that they are stuck what is needed now is to sort out what is stopping them moving on. Cover the following information, asking the parents to add their responses to Handout 1.

With reference to examples in the book (pages 39-47), discuss how anxiety can be kept going by:

a. Anxious thinking/expectations:

- Child thinks something bad is going to happen and thinks they will be unable to cope
- Child will look out for evidence to support this

Possible questions

- *Do you have an idea of what your child's anxious thoughts/expectations are when they are in a challenging situation?*

b. Physical response (bodily symptoms)

- Child interprets these as a sign that something bad is happening

- Being aware of physical symptoms reduces confidence in coping with challenges
- Can be unpleasant so can increase avoidance

Possible questions

- Does your child complain about physical symptoms such as stomach aches, increased heart rate, shaking and sweating?
- How does s/he react to these symptoms?
- How might this affect what they think about the situation and what they do?

c. Anxious behaviour

- Avoidance keeps fears going as we never know if bad thing happens or not and don't get the opportunity to develop coping skills
- Safety-seeking behaviours (things the child does to keep themselves safe) can keep fears going because the child believes the feared outcome did not happen because they performed the safety-behaviour. Reassurance seeking is a kind of safety seeking behaviour that can prevent children from learning that they can cope independently

NOTE!

*If a parent feels that feeling out of control or bodily symptoms of anxiety is a significant problem for their child, direct them to chapter 14, additional strategies 2: managing physical symptoms of anxiety

Discussion Point

Ask parents to look at Handout 1, which should now be completed, and, if they are happy to, ask them to summarise to the group what seem to be some of the main things that may be keeping anxiety going for their child. Encourage parents to add or amend their handouts as other members of the group speak.

Possible questions

- What does your child do when they are feeling anxious or worried? How might that affect how they think and feel about the situation?

Implications for treatment: Explain that the content of the sessions will mainly focus on helping to change how a child thinks and how they behave as shown on Handout 1. Explain that you will not spend a great deal of time on the physical side of anxiety in it's own right (i.e. apart from how they think about/ behave in response to it), as this aspect of anxiety usually becomes less problematic as thinking and behaviour change.

13. Maintenance of child anxiety (Handout 2 – What keeps child anxiety problems going Part 2)

So far, we have talked about how what the child thinks and does can help keep anxiety going. Children's thoughts and behaviour are also influenced by other people around them. By working together, we will be able to look at some of these areas and discuss helpful ways of responding to anxiety.

Cover the following information referring to Handout 2 (note, the therapist will introduce the principles of Handout 2 in this session, but the parent will be asked to complete it as homework – signpost parents to page 49-54 in the book):

Explain that in addition to the things that children think and do that can keep anxiety going, children also are on the lookout for how people around them respond. That is, children also learn what to think and how to behave from others around them. Sometimes our natural reactions to children who are showing high levels of anxiety can inadvertently help keep the problem going, but by taking a different approach, adults and other people around the child can also influence more positive ways of coping.

Ask parents to use the information from their completed Handout 1 to fill in the bottom section of Handout 2 (child's anxious expectations, physical responses and behaviour). Referring to the top section of Handout 2, encourage parents to think about how the people around their child's (e.g. parents, other carers, school teachers) anxious expectations, physical responses and behaviours may relate to their child's anxiety. Ask parents to think about how the responses of people around their child may keep their child's anxious expectations going. Ask the parents to complete Handout 2 as homework and remind them they can refer to the example in the book for guidance (page 51).

Implications for treatment

Explain that the content of the sessions will mainly focus on helping to change how the child thinks and how they behave as shown on Handout 1- and in order to help the child do that as easily as possible we will also be keeping an eye out for what people, around the child can do to help break any vicious cycles that are keeping the child's anxiety going.

14. Take home messages

Take home messages

Invite the parents to say what they will take away from the session and remind them of any other critical elements that they may have missed, using the following 'take home messages' as guidance:

- No single factor causes anxiety, but there are certain things that may contribute to its development and maintenance.
- We can help a child to be less anxious by trying to change some of the things which may be contributing to unhelpful maintenance cycles.
- Parents are well placed to support these changes and have an important and positive role to play.

15. Other issues

Ask parents if they have any other issues that they would like to discuss. Acknowledge these

issues and empathise with the parents, if appropriate ask the group if others have experienced similar issues. If relevant, refer to later chapters in the book and suggest that the parent(s) read them. Signpost to other sources of information/ support if applicable.

16. Feedback

Ask parents to complete the Group Session Rating Scale (GSRS) and discuss feedback given.

17. Homework tasks

Homework

Ask parents to write down the following tasks on a homework sheet:

1. Complete Handout 2 – Maintenance of child anxiety problems Part 2
2. Reflect on goals (discuss with child and confirm in next session)
3. Read Chapters 8 and 9 and any extra chapters if indicated.
4. Complete ROMs before next session

Ask the parents if they have any comments or questions and if any of them have any concerns about completing the homework tasks. Confirm the time for your next session.

SESSION 2 - OVERVIEW

WHAT TO COVER IN SESSION 2?

- Book: Chapters 8 & 9
- Collect routine outcome measures
- Review goals
- Review homework (Handout 2)
- Key concepts:
 - What are my child's anxious thoughts/expectations? (Handout 3)
 - What does my child need to learn? (Handout 4)
 - Promoting independence and 'having a go' (Handout 5 *OPTIONAL)
 - Identifying rewards (Handout 6)

HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 2

- Read Chapter 10
- Encourage independence and 'having a go' behaviour (Handout 5 *OPTIONAL)
- Reflect on rewards (Handout 6)

HANDOUTS TO USE IN SESSION 2

- What are my child's anxious thoughts/expectations? (Handout 3)
- What does my child need to learn? (Handout 4)
- Encouraging independence (Handout 5 * OPTIONAL)
- Rewards (Handout 6)
- Give ROMs for parent to take home and complete before next session

SESSION CONTENT

1. Set an agenda

Outline the content of the session and ask parents if there is anything in particular, they would like to discuss. Write items for discussion up on whiteboard or flipchart and allocate time for this at the end. Remind parents of the group rules.

2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals

Ask parents to complete and hand in their questionnaires*. Remind them these will be monitored throughout treatment. If parents are happy, ask them to share with the group the goals they have set and finalized with their child. Did anyone have any further thoughts about the goals that were set? Did their children give any input on them? Confirm the final goals for them to focus on, ensuring they are SMART.

NOTE!

* NB Recall from session 1 that we would not expect change in ROMS at this stage, however, ask parents if they note any changes (improvement or deterioration) and discuss as a group why this may be. Praise parents for any efforts they have made to make a change.

3. Review of homework

a. Feedback and outcome monitoring

Ask the parents whether they have any questions or comments from the last session. Ask parents for any questions or comments about chapters 8 and 9 of the 'Helping Your Child' book. Tell the parents that you will be touching on the material that they have read in this session, by giving a brief summary and by practicing some of the strategies outlined. If they have not read the relevant chapters, as in session 1, explore what difficulties they had and encourage them to problem solve to overcome these and to set clear plans for when they will do it. Once again, emphasise the importance of reading the chapters in order to make

use of each session and encourage them to read chapters 8 and 9 over the following week. Review whether any of the parents read any of the additional chapters (below) that were identified in the last sessions (if applicable) and if they have any reflections, comments, or questions, for example:

- Chapter 12 Additional strategies 1: Overcoming Worry
- Chapter 13 Additional strategies 2: Managing physical symptoms of anxiety
- Chapter 14 Additional strategies 3: Managing your own anxiety
- Chapter 16 Using this book with younger children
- Chapter 17 Using this book with older children and teenagers
- Chapter 18 Sleep problems
- Chapter 19 Overcoming difficult behaviour
- Chapter 20 School-attendance difficulties

If any of these difficulties were raised in session 1 but the parent did not read the relevant chapter, emphasise that this extra information will really help them to be successful in helping their child overcome their anxiety and set this as homework for this session. If reading additional chapters was too much for the parent, keep this in mind for future homework planning.

b. Homework – Handout 2

Ask the parents to get into pairs and discuss how they got on with filling in Handout 2. Ask parents to discuss what they learned about their child from this exercise, and what they learned about how people around the child may contribute to the maintenance of their child's anxiety.

Ask parents to feedback to the group, take care to normalise any parental responses that the parent has identified that may be having a maintaining role. Did they identify reassurance as a way in which they or others respond? If so, discuss the following. If not comment that many parents describe reassurance as one of their usual responses- ask if the

parent feels that that is a way that they tend to respond? If so, discuss the following:

- Most parents reassure their children at times, it is a natural response, and in some situations, it may reduce distress in the short-term.
- Anxious children often seek out reassurance from their parents and others and therefore it is not surprising that parents respond to these requests.
- However, reassurance sometimes does not help the child to feel less anxious in the long run - particularly if it stops the child learning what they need to learn to overcome their difficulties. Does that seem to apply to anyone in the group?
- Reassurance can be addictive: the more a child gets reassurance, the more they will want it/think they need it.
- Children need to be able to feel that they can deal with their fears themselves and are able to test out for themselves whether or not their worried thoughts are accurate
- Cutting out reassurance can be attempted gradually and in a way that feels comfortable for the parents.
- Cutting out reassurance is not about not responding at all; it is about responding differently.
- We will be discussing different ways of responding to children when they are seeking reassurance as we go on.

4. What are my child's anxious expectations?

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To further emphasise the potentially maintaining role of thoughts in anxiety.
- To give parents strategies to help identify their child's anxious thoughts/ expectations
- To give parents **alternatives to reassurance** or responses that may inadvertently promote avoidance.
- To give an opportunity to practice.

Cover the following information:

Seeing danger everywhere:

- Anxious children are often on the lookout for threat, and ‘jump to conclusions’ about threat.
- If there is some uncertainty about what is going on, anxious children may expect something bad to happen, or may think they won’t be able to cope with what happens.
- As discussed last time, anxious thoughts or expectations can make children feel less able to cope

Possible questions

- From the information you have collected what have you noticed about how your child sees the world?
- Are they on the lookout for danger?
- Do they have anxious thoughts about not being able to cope?

5. Asking questions not giving answers

Some children may not be clear on exactly what they think will happen in the situation they fear, or they might find it difficult to explain. If it is possible to understand a child’s thoughts, from their point of view, this can be helpful to help us know what they need to learn in order to overcome their problems with anxiety. To find out more about the child’s anxious

Possible examples

- Why are you feeling worried?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about [this situation] that is making you worried?

thoughts/ expectations, different questions parents can ask their children are given on page 90.

6. Getting the best results

- *How* you ask a child about their worries, and *when* you ask your child can be as important as *what* you ask them.
- Discuss the following techniques with parents to help them to identify their child's anxious expectations:
- Helping your child feel understood – empathising
- Helping your child feel normal – normalising
- Making suggestions
- Checking your understanding
- Labelling emotions
- Pick your moment
- Make it fun or rewarding where possible

7. Help parents to notice the focus on asking questions not giving answers

- Helps children to think for themselves
- Puts children in control
- Prevents children feeling 'silly'/'wrong'
- Helps children to start practicing to getting used to there being some uncertainty (i.e. problems aren't necessarily swiftly resolved)

8. Illustrating the technique - Role play (Handout 3 - What are my child's anxious thoughts/expectations)

Explain to the parents that you would like to have a go at the above strategies through a short role play. Ask the parents to try and identify a time recently when they noticed their child was feeling anxious, refer to the homework (Handout 2) if the parent is struggling to generate a situation. Explain to parents that you are going to demonstrate the above

strategy by enacting a short role play before they practice it for themselves. Ask for a volunteer and suggest that you will play the role of the child's mother/father first and that they take the role of their child. Work through Handout 3 with the volunteer, demonstrating asking questions (not giving answers), empathising, normalising, making gentle suggestions if applicable, checking understanding, labelling emotions, making it fun/rewarding (e.g. by giving praise for describing thoughts).

After the role play, ask the volunteer parent and the group what they thought the therapist said that was helpful or unhelpful. Emphasise that the therapist may not have necessarily done the exercise perfectly and so it is helpful for the parents to look out for things that the therapist said that the child would not be responsive to or would think was silly or annoying. Highlight how difficult it can be to not jump in with reassurance but just to acknowledge the child's fears, empathise and label the emotions. Notice how sometimes it can feel like you are 'leaving the child hanging' by acknowledging but not resolving their worries for them. Invite the groups' thoughts on this in terms of benefits and challenges. Note that the next steps will be about helping the child to address the fears or worries that they have described.

Ask parents to get into pairs and explain that you would like one parent to play their child and respond how they think their child would respond when being questioned. The other parent will practice questioning. Explain that they will swap roles to give them both an opportunity to practice the questioning techniques above. Remind parents that different children may respond in different ways and encourage them to think about and discuss with their partner how they feel their child may respond, while being respectful that this may be different to others.

Tell parents that if they become stuck or they break character in the role play, they should pause and explore this, (why was it difficult to answer that question? How could it have been asked differently?). Ask parents to then enter back into the role play. Similarly, if the parent questioning becomes stuck or they do not know what question to ask next, ask the parents

to discuss this before re-entering the role play. Remind parents the aim is to identify their child's anxious expectations, to help their child feel understood and consider alternative responses to providing reassurance (if applicable) by referring to the questions on Handout 3.

Role Play 1:

Remind the group to agree on a situation before they start asking questions and give them Handout 3 for guidance. The group facilitator should go around the groups ensuring parents are practicing the techniques discussed (asking questions, not giving answers, empathising, normalising, making suggestions, checking understanding, labelling emotions, making it fun/rewarding) and providing help/feedback/praise where necessary. See p 92- 95 of Helping Your Child for an example.

After the first role play, ask the group to feedback (it may be useful to write this up on a whiteboard/flipchart for others to see in the next role plays):

- Ask what they thought the questioners said that was helpful or unhelpful
- Ask how easy or hard they found the process, what did they find helpful or unhelpful.
- Ask the parents how they found the experience when they were playing the child

Possible questions

- *How did it feel being your child and going through this process?*
- *Were there things that were said that were helpful?*
- *Which things might have been unhelpful?*
- *How do you think your child would have responded to the questions?*
- *Do you think they would have answered in a similar way?*
- *How was it asking questions?*
- *Which bits did you think went well?*
- *Were there bits you found difficult?*

Role Play 2:

Ask the parents to switch roles, making sure all parents are given adequate time to practice questioning (using Handout 3 and notes from the group for guidance).

Once everyone has had an opportunity in both roles ask parents if they think they could use this strategy with their child. If they found it hard, emphasise that it will get easier with practice and encourage them to practice this technique with another adult before trying it out with their child if they can.

Trouble shooting	
Problems with finding out what my child is thinking	
Child can't remember what they were worried about	Try to ask them at the time they are feeling anxious or, if too distressed at the time, soon after, or try to get them to imagine the situation.
Child won't tell me why they are worried when others are around	See 'pick your moment' to ask the child about their worries.
Child says 'I don't know' a lot	Try all questions on Pg. 90 or make tentative suggestions
Child is not worried about anything in particular	Use some of the questions on Pg. 90.
Child does not want to talk about their worries	See 'Make it fun or rewarding' Pg. 96 or observe their behaviour and look for patterns.

9. Key concept – What does my child need to learn? (Handout 4)

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help parents identify what their child needs to learn to overcome their anxiety.

Cover the following information:

- Children need to learn that their anxious expectations are unlikely to happen, and/or that if they do, there is something they can do about it, or that they may be able to

cope better than they thought/expected.

- Explain to parents that their role is to support their child in developing a different point of view, so that they no longer expect something bad to happen or expect that they will not be able to cope.
- Where children are unable to articulate particular anxious thoughts, we can hypothesise about this (pages 97- 101).
- Sometimes children may feel anxious because they don't know what will happen and they don't like not knowing. This is absolutely fine to work with as what they need to learn is what would actually happen.

Possible questions

- Is the feared outcome as likely to happen as your child thinks it is?
- If the feared outcome does happen, will it be as bad as they think it will be?
- Might they cope better than they think they will?

Complete Handout 4 – What does my child need to learn?

Give parents Handout 4 to complete. Ask them to think about what they have learnt from the role play about their child's anxious thoughts/ expectations and what their child needs to learn to overcome their fears. Discuss how this can be applied to the goals that they came up with in session 1 (note: this might be the same information that they added to the previous Handout 3 or the information might be different – this is fine!). In the second column, encourage the parent to identify what their child expects to happen in challenging situations which relate to this goal, using information from the role play as applicable. Once parents have identified/ hypothesized about their child's anxious expectations, ask the parent to identify what their child needs to learn in situations related to their goals. Refer to Pg. 105. of the book for examples to assist the parent.

NOTE!

*For younger children (i.e. aged 5- 8 years old) refer to chapter 16, using this book with younger children, with particular reference to what does my child need to learn p. 237.

*10. Encouraging independence and 'having a go' (Handout 5 *OPTIONAL).*

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help parents to identify areas where they can promote independence in their child
- To discuss strategies to help parents to encourage their child to 'have a go'.

Cover the following information:

- Refer to Handout 4 and 'what my child needs to learn'- reflect that anxious children often fail to learn this new helpful information as they often avoid trying new, challenging or anxiety provoking things.
- Explain that we all learn through our experiences; we learn that setbacks and discomfort do pass, things are not always as we expect, and that if we keep trying, we are likely to overcome challenges.
- Explain that for children to learn this, they need to have the opportunity to develop independence, to do things by themselves to learn that they can cope, and succeed, even if it doesn't always work out well the first time.
- Explain that next session we will be discussing how to help their child with what they need to learn by putting their fears to the test.
- However, some parents find it helpful to start by encouraging their child to be more independent in day-to-day life. Do any of the parents think this would be helpful for their child? For example, does their child rely on others to do things that they could do for themselves? If so, refer to pages 107 - 128 of the book for tips on how to make some changes.
- To prepare for next week, we also need to start thinking about what will encourage

their child to have a go at putting fears to the test in order to learn new things about their fears.

Possible questions

- How could you celebrate your child's attempts at being brave?
- Do you have any concerns about how that will work?

11. Identifying rewards

- The most useful way to encourage children to have a go at testing their fears is through rewards, to acknowledge the effort they have made to overcome their anxiety.
- Rewards don't need to be expensive or cost money, but should fit with the achievement that a child has made.
- Give parent Handout 6 and ask them to write down a few reward ideas under each of the headings. Tell the parents to fill out some more ideas at home having spoken to their children.
- Discuss with the parents any concerns that they might have about rewards, refer to pages 122-125.

12. Take home messages

Take home messages

Invite the parents to say what they will take away from the session and remind them of any other critical elements that they may have missed, using the following 'take home messages' as guidance:

- Anxious children often expect threat to occur and underestimate their ability to cope with possible threat.
- Parents can help their child to overcome anxiety by identifying their anxious expectations and identifying what their child needs to learn to overcome their worries.
- To do this, parents need to ask their child questions (rather than providing answers) to help identify their child's anxious expectations and what their child needs to learn to overcome their worries.
- Parents can also help their child to become more independent in day-to-day activities, by creating opportunities for them to learn new information to help them overcome their fears.

13. Other issues

Talk about any issues that the parents have specifically requested to discuss. Acknowledge these issues and empathize with the parent/s, problem solve if appropriate or consider how other skills covered in this programme may apply. If relevant, refer to later chapters in the book and suggest that the parent read them.

14. Feedback

Ask parents to complete the GSRS and discuss feedback given.

15. Homework tasks

Homework

Ask parents to write down the following tasks:

1. Read Chapter 10
2. Practice using the questioning skills from the role play with their child
3. Add information from these conversations to Handout 3 – What are my child's anxious expectations and Handout 4 – What does my child need to learn?
4. Complete Handout 5 if helpful – Encouraging independence
5. Complete Handout 6 – Rewards
6. Complete ROMs before next session

Ask the parents if they have any comments or questions about today's session and if they have any concerns about completing the homework tasks. Confirm the time for your next session.

SESSION 3 - OVERVIEW

WHAT TO COVER IN SESSION 3?

- Book: Chapter 10
- Collect routine outcome measures
- Review goals
- Review homework (Handouts 3, 4, 5 and 6)
- Key concepts
 - Introducing a Step-by-Step Plan
 - Unplanned experiments

TASKS TO DO IN THE SESSION:

- Draft a Step-by-Step plan (Handout 7 and Handout 8)
- Give ROMs for parent to take home and complete before next session

HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 3

- Finalise Step-by-Step plan with child (Handout 8)
- Start implementing Step-by-Step plan
- Monitor progress of Step-by-Step plan (Handout 9)

HANDOUTS TO USE IN SESSION 3

- Handout 7 - Ideas for a Step-by-Step plan
- Handout 8 – Step-by-Step plan
- Handout 9 – Keeping track of the Step-by-Step plan
- Give ROMs for parent to take home and complete before next session

SESSION CONTENT

1. Set an agenda

Outline the content of the session and ask the parent if there is anything in particular that the parents would like to discuss. Remind parents of the group rules.

2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals

Complete, review, and reflect on measures and goals. Ask the parents for general feedback about how their children are progressing. Remind parents that in the next session they will have the opportunity to look at graphs which will illustrate if there have been any changes in the measures they have been completing weekly.

NOTE!

* NB Recall from session 1 and 2 that we would not expect change in ROMS at this stage, however, note any changes (improvement or deterioration) and discuss with parents what may account for any changes. Praise parents for any efforts they have made to make a change.

3. Review of homework

Review Handouts 3 and 4 (what are my child's anxious expectations and what does my child need to learn?)

Ask what the parents learned from trying out the questioning skills. If applicable, review Handout 5 (encouraging independence) and ask them how they got on with encouraging independence. Review Handout 6 (rewards). If the parents have any concerns about rewards use the Trouble-shooting table on pages 123 - 125 to try to overcome any difficulties.

Ask what they thought about the material covered in Chapter 10.

4. A Step-by-Step approach to overcoming fears and worries.

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To ensure the parent has understood how to devise a Step-by-Step Plan
- To help the parent break down a goal into more achievable steps for their child.
- Making and reviewing predictions about a step
- Planning carrying out steps

Refer back to any difficulties the group have mentioned about their children testing out their fears previously (i.e. avoiding a fear or being unable to conduct an experiment). Explain that some fears may be too overwhelming for a child to simply have a go at and that if this is the case, it is important to build up gradually what they are comfortable with. Again, emphasise that this will be familiar to them having read Chapter 10 and that you will work with the parent on starting to devise a Step-by-Step plan for their child that they will continue at home.

Cover the following information

Explain to parents that you are going to work through the process of developing a step-by step plan together as a group. Ask if anyone has any suggestions regarding a fear that could be used for the example (group facilitators should have one in mind in case there are no suggestions). Group facilitators should assist the group in working together to decide on an ultimate goal and then breaking the goal down into a series of steps. This could be done on a white board/ flip chart. Help the parents to begin to devise Step-by-Step plans using the following guidelines:

i. A Step-by-Step approach (refer to page 130)

- Children's fears often need to be faced gradually to give the child confidence in their ability to cope, increase motivation, and get them used to testing out fears.
- Decide on which fear to face first.
- Come up with an ultimate goal which is achievable and realistic (refer to Ultimate Goals page 132).
- Come up with an ultimate reward for the ultimate goal (refer to Ultimate Goals and

Rewards page 134).

ii. Breaking it down into steps

- Break the ultimate goal down into a series of steps (aim for about 10).
- All steps should relate to (and work towards) the ultimate goal.
- Rate each step in terms of how anxious you think it will make the child feel (using Handout 7 and the Worry Scale from the book (page 137).
- Order the steps from least anxiety-provoking to most anxiety-provoking finishing with the ultimate goal.
- Add the steps from least anxiety provoking to most anxiety provoking to Handout 8 (Step-by-Step Plan)
- Using Handout 6 (rewards) add reward for each step (from smallest reward to ultimate reward)
- Think about whether any planning is needed prior to the child completing any of the steps (planning steps in advance page 145)

iii. Predictions and reviewing steps

- Facing fears allows information to be gathered about what a child expects to happen vs. what actually happens.
- Treating steps like experiments allows parents and children to reflect on what they have learnt from completing a step on the Step-by-Step plan.
- Predictions should be made before each step and reviewed after the step is attempted to maximise the new learning that takes place (see keeping track of my child's progress with their Step-by-Step plan page 149)
- Ask the parents to keep track of their child's predictions and progress using Handouts 8 and 9 over the next weeks.

Possible questions after a step has been completed

- What happened?
- Was it the same as you thought?
- Did your predictions come true?
- Did something else happen?
- How did you cope?
- What have you learned from doing the step?

iv. Putting it into practice

Ask parents to get into pairs and start creating their own step plans. Give them strips of paper to write steps on which can then be moved around to decide the order. Once completed, ask parents to write their step plan on Handout 8.

- Ask parents to discuss which step their child will try first and what the reward will be, if they are happy to ask everyone to feed this back to the group.

Remind them:

- The first step should be achievable, something they may have already done once or twice.
- To praise their children for any attempts at conquering a step and provide rewards as agreed.
- To review predictions about each step once it has been completed.
- To problem solve any difficulties the child faces with a step and If necessary, break a step down into smaller steps.
- To be on the lookout for safety behaviours.
- Use Handout 9 to keep a record of steps attempted and their outcomes

v. *Safety-seeking behaviours*

- Remind parents that safety-seeking behaviours are things that children might do to make themselves feel safe enough to have a go at facing a fear.
- Parents should be on the lookout for these as if children become too reliant on them they may prevent a child from learning that they can cope with a situation because they believe they managed it only because of their safety-seeking behaviour (pages 150 - 151).

Once the group's Step-by-Step plans have been completed, ask them to share them with their children at home to ensure that the steps are in the right order and that the rewards are motivating enough for their child.

Also, make sure that the parent is happy with the Step-by-Step plan they have devised and that they are clear about what step their child will try first. Make sure there is a clear plan in place for when and where they will put the plans in to practice.

NOTE!

*If the plan relates to a sleep problem, refer the parent to chapter 18, p.253 'Sleep problems'. if the step plan relates to school attendance, refer the parent to chapter 20, p. 276, 'school-attendance difficulties.

5. *Unplanned experiments*

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help parents look out for opportunities in everyday life where they can promote facing or testing out fears.

Cover the following information:

Encourage parents to find opportunities to face fears in a more spontaneous way where possible alongside the step plan. For example, at the park, in a café or at a relative's house. Encourage parents to ask their child what they predict will happen in these situations and offer a reward.

Encourage parents to check out afterwards what happened and what their child learnt.

Trouble shooting	
Can't think of a fear to focus on	Review Handouts
Can't think of an ultimate goal	Review the families' treatment goals from the first session and consider whether one of these could be an ultimate goal. See pages 132 – 133 for examples of 'ultimate goals'.
Difficulty breaking down fear into steps	See Breaking it Down into Steps page 135 and see example Step-by-Step plans page 136, 141, 143 & 144
Can't come up with appropriate rewards	Refer to handout 9 and Rewards, pages 119 - 122
Don't know how anxious the step will make the child feel	Have a guess and check with child once home using Worry Scale page 137
Child can't explain what they predict will happen when they try the step	Have a go in order to find out

6. Take home messages

Take home messages

Invite the parents to say what they will take away from the session and remind them of any other critical elements that they may have missed, using the following 'take home messages' as guidance:

- Facing fears allows children to gather new information about their anxious expectations
- Fears need to be faced gradually which can be done by making a Step-by-Step plan
- Predictions should be made about each step and added to Handout 8 they should then be reviewed after the step is attempted
- Each step should have a reward agreed ahead of time
- Unplanned experiments can be useful opportunities to learn new information or consolidate learning
- When a step is completed parents should record what happened using handout 9
- Rewards can help to motivate an anxious child, as well as show that their bravery has been noticed.

7. Other issues

Talk about any other issues that the parents has specifically requested that you discuss. Acknowledge these issues, empathise with the parent/s and apply/signpost any relevant strategies covered in the programme. If relevant, refer to later chapters in the book and suggest that the parent read them.

8. Feedback

Ask parents to complete the GSRS and discuss feedback given

9. Homework tasks

Homework

Ask parents to write down the following tasks:

1. Complete the Step-by-Step plan with their child and alter if necessary.
2. Encourage the child to have a go at the first steps on the Step-by-Step plan.
3. Record the child's predictions about each step before they attempt to complete it using Handout 8 – Step-by-Step Plan
4. Keep track of the child's progress using Handout 9 – Keeping track of my child's progress with their Step-by-Step Plan
5. Be on the look out for opportunities for unplanned experiments
6. Complete ROMs before next session

Ask the group if they have any comments or questions about today's session and if they have any concerns about completing the homework tasks. Confirm the time of your next session.

NB: THERAPIST NEEDS TO PRINT GRAPHS OF COMPLETED ROMS FOR EACH PARENT AHEAD OF SESSION 4.

SESSION 4 - OVERVIEW

WHAT TO COVER IN SESSION 4?

- Review routine outcomes
- Review goals
- Review homework (Handouts 8 and 9)
- Make changes to Step-by-Step plan as necessary
- Any additional chapters suggested in session 3

TASKS TO DO IN SESSION:

- Review Step-by-Step plan
 - Review questionnaire graphs
 - Ask the parents if they have made any changes to the Step-by-Step plan?
 - Ask if the parents got feedback from their child regarding the Step-by-Step plan?
 - Review attempts of the first step of the plan (e.g. how did it go? what did the child predict and learn?)
- Make changes to Step-by-Step plan if needed (e.g. if steps are too generic and need breaking down)
- Agree next step to be completed/tested between sessions

HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 4

- Continue implementing Step-by-Step plan
- Read Chapter 11 on 'Problem Solving'.
- Give ROMs for parent to take home and complete before next session

SESSION CONTENT

1. *Setting the agenda*

Outline the content of the session and ask the parent if there is anything in particular that they would like to discuss. Remind parents of the group rules.

2. *Complete routine outcome measure and review goals*

Complete, review and reflect on measures and goals. Ask parents to look at their individual graphs which you have prepared. Explain each measure and ask the group to feedback on their graphs. **Note that the data they are reviewing included the ROMs up to the previous week, and so do not include reflections on the last week when they have been working on their Step Plan. Ask the group to reflect on how they feel things have progressed over the last week.**

Possible questions about ROMs graphs

- Do the graphs reflect how you feel things have been going?
- Are there any scores you don't agree with?
- How do you think scores could be improved/maintained?

3. *Completing the Step-by-Step plan (Handouts 7 and 8)*

Ask how the parents got on with their Step-by-Step plans and discuss if they made any changes to the Step-by-Step plan from last session. Check that the parents discussed the Step-by-Step plan with their child and confirmed that the steps were in the right order and that the child was happy with the rewards. Ask the group for feedback on how their children feel about the Step-by-Step plan.

i. Trying the first step on the Step-by-Step plan

Explore with the parents how their child's attempts at the first step went. Ask how they got

on with helping their child to identify their predictions for the first step. If they are finding this difficult, use the Trouble-shooting table in session 2 to try and overcome any problems. Praise attempts made by the parent.

If any of the parents report that their child was not able to complete the step, clarify why this was (e.g. child was too anxious, not practical to do step this week etc). Ask the group if they have any ideas on how to overcome this and acknowledge how hard it is to encourage anxious children to face their fears. Use problem solving with the parents to find ways of ensuring their children are more successful this week (e.g. break the step down into smaller steps, find a more motivating reward, make sure it is practical to carry out the step, consider how opportunities to carry out the step can be created, etc.). Praise the group for their efforts and plan for how to move forward, rather than dwelling on any failed attempts.

ii. Reviewing each step

If children were successful in completing the step(s), find out how it went- how anxious they were and what helped them to complete the step. Make sure that children received the agreed reward. Ask the parents whether they were able to review the outcome of the step(s) with their children, and whether they were able to help their children consider what the results mean. Ask if doing the step(s) helped the children to think or feel differently. Remind the parents that by asking these questions, they are encouraging their children to be curious, to spot new information, to notice differences between their predictions and expectations, and to start to think differently.

Refer to handout 9 to encourage parents to keep a record of their children's progress with the Step-by-Step-plan and also to note what their children learned after each step. Discuss with the parents what their children have learned so far, and what they still need to learn. Consider whether parents need to add in some more or different steps to the Step-by-Step plan so their children can gather specific information about fears or worries if the current steps do not allow them the opportunity to do this.

If children have managed to complete several steps, praise the parents for their success. As long as the children are working towards facing their fears, there is no need to restrict their progress. If, however children are struggling, encourage the parents to think about whether the steps need to be broken down further to enable the children to do it. If the children have not learned anything new/helpful from the step, encourage the parents to think about how the step may need to be changed/ repeated in a different scenario to help the children learn something new/helpful.

iii. Agreeing the next step

If children did not complete the step last week, the parent should try again using the ideas that you have come up with above.

If children completed the first step, but only once, consider whether it will be useful for them to repeat this step depending on what they have learned so far. This can be done before starting a new step or in parallel with it, if the parent feels the child is ready for the next step.

If children did complete the step, discuss what the next step on the plan is and how the parents feel they will get on with it.

Ensure all group members are aware of what next steps should be completed in the weeks before the next session.

Discuss with the group what their children's predictions for their next steps may be and remind the parents to discuss this with their children before implementing the steps. Confirm what the rewards will be for this step. Agree with each member of the group when their child will try this new step and how many times/ in different scenarios they will attempt it. It may be necessary to give a smaller reward for subsequent attempts at the step once a child has completed it once (e.g. if the child practices it four more times, the parent will reward them by letting them have a friend round for tea). Remind the parents to review

with their child what they learned after they have completed the step.

4. *Unplanned Experiments*

Ask the parents to discuss in pairs if their children have conducted any unplanned experiments to test out their anxious expectations. Ask the parents to discuss:

- If they were able to ask their child what their anxious expectations were
- What the outcome of the experiment was
- Whether they were able to help their child work out what the results mean.
- Did the experiment help their child to think or feel differently?

If a parent says their child has not done an experiment, ask the pairs to discuss whether the child could conduct any experiments to test out their fears or to help them to learn new information relating to their anxious expectations.

Ask the pairs if they are happy to feedback to the group and ask parents if they feel any of the unplanned experiments others have conducted may be useful for their child.

Trouble shooting	
Child did not complete the first step on plan	
Child was too anxious / had a tantrum	Acknowledge how hard it is for children to face fears Break down into smaller steps (page 151)
Child refused to do step	Change rewards to increase motivation Break down into smaller steps Give child choice of which step to try first (page 153)
What do I do 'in the moment' when child is distressed	Acknowledge child's distress Encourage child to continue to face their fear Show confidence in your child Remind them of the reward Also see pages 154 - 155
Managing panic attacks or unpleasant physical symptom during the step	Encourage child to breathe normally Help them to focus on something else e.g. sounds around them (page 155) Also see Chapter 13.

Parent / child forgot to do step	Emphasise importance of facing fears Praise parent for other efforts in programme Agree day / time for child to try step this week
Child refused to do step more than once	Give additional reward for repeated attempts

5. *Helpful reflections and encouragement*

Summarise the group's discussion and highlight the areas that the parents have worked well on and any positive shifts that have occurred for their children. Encourage the parents to continue using the strategies that they have found most helpful so far and to give things they have found more challenging another try on basis of the discussions you have had. Praise the parents for their effort, acknowledging difficulties and highlighting what they have done well (e.g. *it sounds as though Lisa became quite upset at first, but you did a great job supporting her without talking to her teacher for her and it sounds as though she was more able to handle the situation on her own than she had thought*).

6. *Other issues*

Talk about any other issues that the parents has specifically requested that you discuss. Acknowledge these issues, empathize with the parent/s and draw on any applicable strategies in the programme. If relevant, refer to later chapters in the book and suggest that the parent read them.

7. *Feedback*

Ask parents to complete the GSRS and discuss feedback given.

8. Homework task

Homework

Ask parents to write down the following tasks:

1. Continue implementing the Step-by-Step plan on Handout 8
2. Continue to record child's progress on Handout 9
3. Be on the lookout for opportunities for the child to conduct 'unplanned experiments' and encourage the child to test out fears and reflect on what happens
4. Read Chapter 11 on 'Problem Solving'
5. Complete ROMs before next session

Confirm the time for the next session. NB. Remind parents there is a break for a week, to allow them time to continue to work on their step plans, and you will therefore meet in 2 weeks' time.

SESSION 5 - OVERVIEW

WHAT TO COVER IN THE SESSION?

- Chapter 11 Problem Solving
- Collect routine outcome measures
- Review goals
- Review homework (Handout 8 – Completed Step-by-Step Plan and Handout 9 – Keeping track of my child's progress)
- Problem solving approach
- What has helped & what still needs work
- Congratulations - encourage parents to reward themselves

TASKS TO DO IN THE SESSION:

- Problem solving (Handout 10)
- Things that have been helpful for reducing my child's anxiety (Handout 11)
- Things for me and my child to continue to work on (Handout 12)

HOMEWORK AFTER SESSION 5

- Continue using Step-by-Step plan (Handout 8)
- Continue recording progress (Handout 9)
- Use problem solving approach (Handout 10)

HANDOUTS TO USE IN SESSION 5

- Handout 10
- Handout 11
- Handout 12

SESSION CONTENT

1. Setting the agenda

Outline the content of the session and ask parents if there is anything in particular that they would like to discuss. Remind parents of the group rules.

2. Complete routine outcome measure and review goals

Complete, review and reflect on measures and goals.

3. Review of homework

I. Step by Step Plan

Ask the group to feedback on how their children have progressed with their step plan. Ask whether they have completed any further steps towards their goal and review where they are on their plans. Ask parents to discuss in small group their children's predictions before they completed their step/s and what the outcomes were. Ask the parents to feedback to the group. Find out how the parents have got on with identifying their children's anxious expectations and reviewing the outcome of each step with their children. Ask the parents if they have noticed anything when monitoring their own responses to their children. Highlight anything that they are doing that is helping their children to be brave and test out their fears. If anyone has completed their plan, ask the parents what else their child could work towards and encourage them to develop a new step plan.

II. Unplanned Experiments

Ask the parents if their children have conducted any more unplanned experiments to test out their anxious expectations. Ask the parents what their children's anxious expectations were, what the outcomes of the experiment were and what the results meant for their children. Ask if any experiments have helped their children to think or feel differently. If any parents have not done an experiment, discuss as a group what experiments could be done to test out fears or to help their children to learn new information relating to their anxious

expectations.

4. Problem Solving

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help parents practice and apply the problem solving strategy.
- To aid the parents in supporting their children to deal with problems more independently.
- To reduce the children's rumination and worry regarding real challenges.
- To enhance the children's sense of their own coping ability and increase their confidence in solving problems.

Discuss the principles of problem solving with the group using the information below. If you have already used problem-solving to overcome any difficulties during the programme, refer back to this as an example.

Cover the following information:

- i. Introduction to problem solving
 - Problem solving can be used for real-life problems that emerge when parents try to help their children to challenge their anxious thoughts e.g. the child is worried about attending school because a child wouldn't let them join in a game. Problem solving can also be useful for addressing blocks to the Step-by-Step plan.
 - Children who are highly anxious often feel like they are not in control of challenging situations and are not confident in their ability to problem solve. However, when we test their actual problem-solving abilities they do not have 'deficits'- it's just their perception. This leads them to seek help from others to solve problems.
 - It is important for children to become independent and confident in their ability to overcome problems that they encounter (NB. This does not mean they have to deal with problems alone- seeking help can be a good strategy in many situations).

ii. *How to do Step-by-Step problem solving*

- What is the problem?
 - Ask the child to describe what the problem is.
- Weird and wonderful solutions
 - Ask the child to list as many different ideas as possible about what they might to do solve the problem.
- Which is the best solution?
 - Ask the child what might happen if they carry out each solution (refer to Which is the Best Solution? page 167 for questions).
- Ask the child whether each solution is doable
- Ask the child to decide which the best solution is by asking them to rate the solutions using the rating scale on page 171.

Possible questions

- *What would happen if you did X?*
 - *What would happen in the end?*
 - *What would happen to how you feel [about this situation]?*
 - *Is this solution possible? Is there anything which would make this situation difficult to do?*
-
- Encourage the child to make a decision and have a go!

- Ask the child how it went and review what happened. Praise the child for their efforts.

Possible questions

- *What happened?*
- *How did they cope?*
- *Did they cope better than expected?*
- *Were they able to make a difference to the situation?*
- *What has your child learned from putting this solution into place?*

5. Problems you may face

Discuss how parents sometimes encounter problems when trying to help their children overcome their fears and worries. Explain that you will use a problem that someone in the group has come across in putting this programme in place to have a practice at problem solving. They will then know how to do it so can share it with their child, and can also use it themselves when helpful.

List some common problems that parents face in overcoming their children's fears, worries and anxieties (Chapter 15, pages 224-225):

Common practical problems

- I don't have enough time to do the exercises.
- It is quicker (easier) to just do something for my child, rather than try to get them to do it them self.
- I don't know when to push my child. Are they anxious or are they not interested?
- Other family members have different ideas about what is the right thing to do.
- When my child 'acts up' I don't know if this is because they are upset or being difficult.

- I'm not there at the times that my child worries.
- It seems unfair to my other children to be rewarding one child for doing things they do all the time.
- We know what our child needs to do to overcome their fears, but those situations don't happen very often in everyday life.

Common personal problems

- I find it hard to keep motivated to keep 'pushing' my child.
- I can't help worrying about how my child will be able to manage if I give them a push.
- It is hard to push my child to do something, when there are other members of the family who have the same problem and are not doing anything about it.

Possible questions

- *Have you encountered any of these problems?*
- *Are there other problems that you have faced in putting this programme in place?*

Trouble shooting	
Child can't come up with solutions	Make tentative suggestions. Ask the child what a friend might do, or what they have done in a past situation which may have been similar.
Child chooses an idea I think will not work	Go with the idea anyway, if it does not work, support your child to choose another.
My child had a go at the solution and it went wrong	Acknowledge with the child things go wrong. Consider other ideas you can try to overcome the problem.

6. Illustrating the technique - Problem solving with parent (Handout 10)

Identify which problem(s) the parents have experienced and use the problem-solving steps with the parent to try and come up with a solution, working through the steps (Handout 10).

Once problem solving has been demonstrated as a group, ask parents to get into groups of 3 to practice problem solving themselves. Ask one parent to play themselves, one to play a child and the other to observe and offer feedback. Allow all parents to have a go at practicing the problem-solving approach.

7. Things I have done that have been helpful for reducing my child's anxiety (Handout 11)

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To help parents reflect on what has been helpful for their family.
- To encourage parents to continue implementing strategies that have been helpful.
- To increase parents' confidence by recognising their achievements.

Discuss with the group what strategies they feel have helped their child become less anxious. Ask each parent to record their personal experiences on Handout 11.

Possible questions

- *Which strategies have helped your child the most?*
- *What have they responded well to?*
- *What do you think you have done well and how has this had an impact on your child?*

8. Keeping things going

Talk to the parents about how to help their children maintain their progress using the following information:

- Important to keep practicing the skills learned.
- From time to time, parents need to review their own reactions and check whether they may be inadvertently providing more reassurance than is needed or allowing the child to avoid feared situations.
- Parents should set goals that have yet to be reached and review them as each one is achieved.
- Parents should set aside some time each week to review the child's progress.

9. Things for Me and My Child to Continue to Work on (Handout 12)

Therapeutic objectives and aims:

- To establish goals for parents to work towards with their children in the short and long term.
- To problem solve with parents any difficulties that may prevent them from continuing the work.

Review the routine outcome measures, each parent should be given a copy of their graphs generated by the ROMs they have completed and the goals that were set in session 1. If the goal(s) have been achieved, ask the parent what made this possible and discuss the parent's role in bringing about change. Ask parents to think of a new goal which they can begin to work on. If a goal has not been reached yet, discuss what has been achieved so far and emphasize the importance of continuing to implement the strategies discussed.

Discuss what the parent feels that their child still needs to work on and encourage them to fill in Handout 12. Discuss any obstacles that may get in the way of them continuing to work towards these goals and problem solve if necessary.

Possible questions

- What are the immediate and longer-term goals that you can work towards?
- Do you expect any future challenges?
- What can you do to prevent these from causing any setbacks?

10. Other issues

Talk about any other issues that the parents have specifically requested that you discuss. Acknowledge these issues and empathise with the parent/s, making links to strategies covered in the programme where appropriate. If relevant, refer to chapters in the book and suggest that the parent read them.

i. Additional strategies

- Overcoming worry
- Managing physical symptoms of anxiety
- Managing your own anxiety
- Keeping it going

ii. Addressing particular needs

- Using the approach with younger children or teenagers
- Sleep problems
- Overcoming difficult behaviour
- School-attendance difficulties
- Helping children overcome fears and worries – a guide for teachers

11. Congratulate the group!

Congratulate parents on reaching the end of the programme. Praise them for their commitment in sticking with it and reflect on what progress has been made.

If parents continue to have concerns about their children's anxiety, emphasise that most children continue to make gains in the weeks and months following treatment, however make sure they are aware of how they can access further support if things do not continue to improve.

12. Rewarding yourself

Talk to the group about rewarding themselves for their efforts both to motivate them to continue to work hard with their child but also to be a good role model for their children.

Possible questions

- What do you think you have done well and how has this had an impact on your child?
- How can you reward yourself?

NOTE!

* If any parent is unable to think of what they have achieved, outline what you think that they have done well and praise them for this. Be specific about what you think they have done particularly well and how you feel this has had an impact on their child's progress (e.g. *'I have been particularly impressed by how you have persisted with the Step-by-Step plan despite Amy being quite reluctant to try the steps – because you kept going and tried hard to find motivating rewards, Amy did put her fears to the test!'*).

13. What happens next?

Outline that there will be one further session to review the program. Explain this will be an individual session (either over the phone or face to face) in approximately 4 weeks time.

14. Take home messages

Take home messages

Invite the parents to say what they will take away from the session and remind them of any other critical elements that they may have missed, using the following 'take home messages' as guidance:

- In addition to testing out fears, problem solving is a useful strategy for dealing with thoughts that reflect difficult situations that may actually happen.
- Problem solving helps children to develop a sense of being able to cope independently in different and/or difficult situations.

15. Other issues

Talk about any other issues that the parents has specifically requested that you discuss. Acknowledge these issues and empathize with the parent. If relevant, refer to later chapters in the book and suggest that the parents read them.

16. Feedback

Ask parents to complete the GSRS and discuss feedback given

17. Homework Tasks

Homework

Ask the parents to write down the following tasks:

- Continue to implement and record progress with the Step-by-Step plan (Handouts 8 and 9)
- Be on the lookout for opportunities for the child to conduct 'experiments' and encourage the child to test out fears and reflect on what happens.
- Use the problem-solving approach with their child and record on Handout 10
- Continue filling in Handout 11 and 12 in preparation for session 6 (final session).

Ask the parents if they have any comments or questions about today's session and if they have any concerns about completing the homework tasks. Confirm the time for your final session.

SESSION 6 *OPTIONAL INDIVIDUAL REVIEW - OVERVIEW

SESSION CONTENT

1. Setting the agenda

Outline the content of the session and ask parents if there is anything in particular that they would like to discuss.

2. Review of progress

- Review routine outcome measures; look at graphs of measures from beginning to end of treatment. Note that as this is an individual session, the therapist need to hand out the Session Rating Scale for this session.
- Review goals and if appropriate, set new goals
- Look at how things were when the parent first started the group and how things are now
- Review what has helped and what still needs work
- Congratulations - encourage parents to reward themselves

3. Take home messages

Take home messages

Invite the parents to say what they will take away from the session and remind them of any other critical elements that they may have missed, using the following 'take home messages' as guidance:

- Parents are now equipped with strategies to help their child overcome their difficulties with anxiety.
- With practice and ongoing use of these strategies, the child is likely to make further progress.
- The family will be helped to stay on track by setting short and long-term goals

GOAL PROGRESS SHEET (GPS)

Goal 1 (Tick one box: Short-term Y Medium-term Y Long-term):

.....

.....

Session	Date	Today I would rate progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number below)										
Remember a score of 0 means no progress has been made towards a goal, a score of 10 means a goal has been reached fully, and a score of 5 is exactly halfway between the 2.												
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Booster		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Goal 2 (Tick one box: Short-term Y Medium-term Y Long-term):

.....

.....

Session	Date	Today I would rate progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number below)										
Remember a score of 0 means no progress has been made towards a goal, a score of 10 means a goal has been reached fully, and a score of 5 is exactly halfway between the 2.												
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Booster		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Goal 3 (Tick one box: Short-term Y Medium-term Y Long-term):

.....

.....

Session	Date	Today I would rate progress to this goal? (please circle the appropriate number below)										
Remember a score of 0 means no progress has been made towards a goal, a score of 10 means a goal has been reached fully, and a score of 5 is exactly halfway between the 2.												
1		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Booster		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

HANDOUT 1 – WHAT KEEPS CHILD ANXIETY PROBLEMS GOING?

TRIGGER/SITUATION: _____

YOUR CHILD'S ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS:

YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR:

YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL RESPONSE:



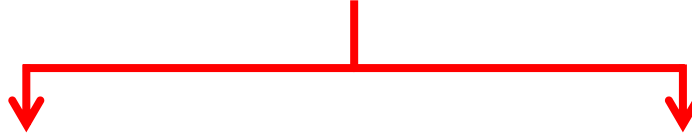
HANDOUT 2 – WHAT KEEPS CHILD ANXIETY PROBLEMS GOING?

1

TRIGGER/SITUATION: _____

3

PARENT/OTHER PEOPLE'S ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS



PARENT/OTHER PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR:

PARENT/OTHER PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL RESPONSES:

HOW ARE THESE BEHAVIOURS KEEPING THE ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS GOING?:

HOW ARE THESE PHYSICAL REACTIONS KEEPING THE ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS GOING?:



2

YOUR CHILD'S ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS:

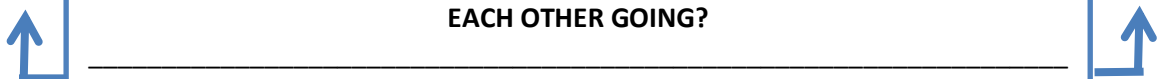
HOW ARE THESE BEHAVIOURS KEEPING THE ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS GOING?:

HOW ARE THESE PHYSICAL REACTIONS KEEPING THE ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS GOING?:

YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR (e.g. avoidance, safety behaviours, reassurance seeking):

YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL RESPONSES:

HOW ARE YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL RESPONSES AND BEHAVIOURS KEEPING EACH OTHER GOING?



HANDOUT 3 WHAT ARE MY CHILD'S ANXIOUS THOUGHTS/ EXPECTATIONS?

WHAT IS HAPPENING?	WHAT IS MY CHILD THINKING?	MY RESPONSES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Why are you feeling worried?</i>• <i>What is frightening you?</i>• <i>What do you think will happen?</i>• <i>What is the worst thing that might happen?</i>• <i>What is it about [this situation] that is making you worried?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Be curious</i>• <i>Help your child feel understood</i>• <i>Help your child feel normal</i>• <i>Make suggestions</i>• <i>Check you have understood</i>• <i>Keep it rewarding (and fun, if applicable)</i>

HANDOUT 4 – WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO LEARN?

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO LEARN?	Goal	What does my child expect will happen?	What does my child need to learn?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is the feared outcome as likely as your child thinks?</i> • <i>If the feared outcome does happen, will it be as bad as they think it will be?</i> • <i>Might they cope better than they think they will?</i> 			

HANDOUT 5 – ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE*

Independent Activity	When did my child try this?	What tips for success did I use?	How did it go? What did my child do?
1.			
2.			
3.			

* OPTIONAL HANDOUT

HANDOUT 6 – REWARDS

Tips to remember:

- Make praise clear and specific
- Include a range of rewards under each category
- Rewards don't need to be expensive
- Make sure both you and your child agree to the reward
- Make sure you would be willing to *not* give the reward if the goal was not met
- Try to have rewards that can be given immediately or soon after the goal has been met

Things to do with my child:

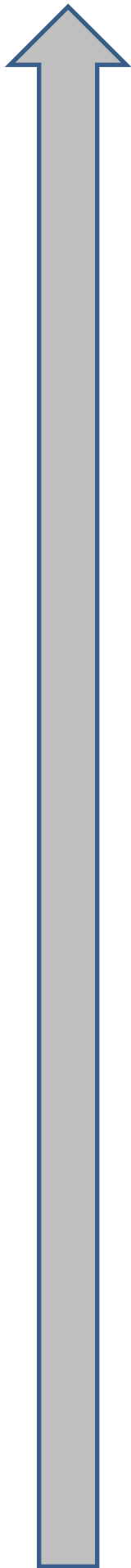
Other things my child would enjoy:

HANDOUT 7 – IDEAS FOR A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

ULTIMATE GOAL: _____

[illegible]

HANDOUT 8 – STEP-BY-STEP PLAN



PREDICTION	ULTIMATE GOAL	ULTIMATE REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 9	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 8	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 7	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 6	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 5	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 4	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 3	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 2	REWARD
PREDICTION	STEP 1	REWARD

HANDOUT 9 - KEEPING TRACK OF MY CHILD'S PROGRESS WITH THEIR STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Date/Time	Which step did my child try?	What strategies did I use to encourage them to 'have a go'?	How did it go? What did my child do?	What did they learn?

HANDOUT 10 – PROBLEM SOLVING

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?	LIST ALL THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (NO MATTER HOW WEIRD OR WONDERFUL!)	WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I CHOSE THIS SOLUTION? (IN THE SHORT TERM? IN THE LONG TERM? TO MY ANXIETY IN THE FUTURE?)	IS THIS PLAN DOABLE? YES/NO	HOW GOOD IS THE OUTCOME? RATE 0-10	SELECT PLAN. WHAT HAPPENED?

HANDOUT 11 - THINGS I HAVE DONE THAT HAVE BEEN HELPFUL FOR REDUCING MY CHILD'S ANXIETY

HANDOUT 12 - THINGS FOR ME AND MY CHILD TO CONTINUE TO WORK ON

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

HELPING CHILDREN OVERCOME FEARS AND WORRIES

– A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS –

We have written this guide for teachers of children who are experiencing difficulties with anxiety. We hope that it will provide you with a helpful summary of the techniques that parents are using at home so that you can use the same strategies at school. You may well be familiar with some of the ideas already, but if you would like more information about the strategies we have outlined, we suggest you read the rest of the book that we have written for parents ('Helping your Child with Fears and Worries', Creswell & Willetts (Publisher: LittleBrown)).

What are common fears and worries of anxious children?

Everyone, children and adults alike, experiences worries, fears and anxiety some of the time. However, for some children these fears and worries can be excessive; they interfere with their everyday life including school attendance and participation in school activities. Fears, worry and anxiety involve (i) an expectation that something bad is going to happen, (ii) physical responses to this (e.g. 'butterflies' in the tummy, fast breathing, or fast heart rate) and (iii) things we do to keep away from things we fear or to try to stay safe when we have to confront them (e.g. avoiding eye contact in frightening social situations). Anxiety problems are actually the most common emotional and behavioural problems experienced by children. Children often do not grow out of these problems, and they can be a risk factor for other issues, such as depression, in adolescence or adulthood. Therefore, it is essential that children experiencing anxiety problems are supported in overcoming their difficulties.

Fears and worries in school

Children with anxiety difficulties often feel anxious about various aspects of school. There are many different reasons for this. Some children find social situations scary, such as mixing with their peers, speaking to teachers, or contributing in class. Other children are worried about separating from a parent or caregiver. For other children, their worries or anxious expectations are more general and may involve a whole host of different things, including getting told off, not doing well enough in their work or

sports, or falling out with a friend. Suffice to say, school can be a scary place for many children. Sometimes you may see the direct effects of this in school – for example, children may be withdrawn, tearful or have behavioural outbursts – but sometimes children may manage to ‘keep it together’ during the school day and the emotional fallout happens when they get home. This can sometimes lead to a tricky situation for teachers, as parents may be reporting that the child is very anxious about school, but teachers may not see the evidence of that, which may lead them to think the problems are all at home. In these situations, it is really helpful when schools and parents can work together to help the child overcome their difficulties.

What can be done in school?

There are various things that can be done in school to help children overcome their anxiety difficulties, alongside parents or carers implementing strategies at home. Below we outline strategies that teachers or other school staff we have worked with have found they can use with children to help them to overcome their anxieties.

Overcoming fears and worries in school

We have talked above about the tendency for children to try to stay away from things they are scared of (avoidance) or do things that will make them feel safe (safety behaviours) when they get anxious. The trouble is that if anxious children avoid the things that make them feel anxious they don’t get the chance to gather new information about the situation, so they don’t find out if their anxious expectation will actually happen or not and whether they could really cope.

Here’s an example:

Jane thinks that if she answers a question in class she will get it wrong and her classmates will think that she is stupid. When her teacher asks her a question, she therefore looks down at the desk and does not answer. In doing this, she does not get to know if she would get the answer right, and if she didn’t whether her classmates would even care. In helping a child overcome their anxieties, the child needs to be supported in gathering new information about their anxious expectations so they can discover that:

- 1. Things may not turn out as they fear.*

2. *Even if things don't go well, they can cope or do something about it.*
3. *By facing fears, we learn new things that help us overcome them*

Facing fears gradually

When a child is anxious, people around them can often try hard to make sure they won't become distressed. For example:

Whenever Jane's teacher asked her a question she went red, avoided eye contact and stared at the desk. This seemed to attract more attention to Jane, which the teacher could see was not helping. Gradually she stopped asking Jane questions in the hope that she would begin to put her hand up.

Although Jane's teacher's response was completely understandable, and in fact showed that she had quite a good understanding of Jane's anxieties, it did also allow Jane to avoid facing her fears and learning from these new experiences. Teachers are in a great position to provide children with opportunities to face their fears gradually so that they can overcome those fears. Here is an example of what Jane's teacher did.

Jane's teacher sat down with Jane during break time and let Jane know that he could see she was finding it hard to answer questions. He asked Jane what made it so difficult for her. Jane told him that she was worried that she might get the answer wrong. Jane's teacher suggested they try to find out if she really would get it wrong and what would happen if she did. Every day at break-time he would ask Jane one question from the lesson and they would see how many she got right.

Having done this for a week, her teacher discussed with Jane what she had discovered from asking questions at breaktime. They noted how they had found that although she didn't always get the answer right she didn't get it wrong more than other children in the class would have done. Her teacher congratulated her. They decided that, as she was so good at answering questions at break time, it was now time to start answering questions in a small

group. He agreed that each day when she was working in a small group, he would ask her a question about the work. Jane was worried that she would be singled out, so he agreed to also ask other children in the group questions. Gradually, Jane and her teacher progressed from answering questions individually, to a small group, to the whole class, and finally to asking the teacher a question herself in front of the class.

Using problem-solving to tackle real life problems or threats

Although children's anxious expectations are not always realistic, sometimes they might reflect an actual problem that the child is facing. For example, a child who is worried that other children will reject them if they ask to join in because other children are sometimes unkind and say that they don't want to play with them. This will need a different approach. In the case of bullying this clearly needs to be dealt with using official school procedures. However, you may also be able to support the child in problem-solving these types of situations. What can they do if a child says that they do not want to play with them? How many different ideas can they come up with? What do they think would happen if they tried each of these ideas? Which one seems the best? Can they give it a go? (and How did it go?)

Another example might be a child who is worried about doing badly in a test and does in fact struggle academically. You could support the child in problem-solving solutions to this 'real life' problem, thinking with them about things you can be doing at school to help and things they can be doing at home.

Tips for helping children to overcome anxiety in school

In helping children to gather new information about their anxious expectations and to face their fears gradually, the following tips can be useful:

- 1. As much as possible, work with the child to set goals so you both know what you want to achieve.*
- 2. Think about what the child needs to learn in order to challenge their anxious*

expectations.

3. *Work with the child to develop a plan to test out fears and gain new knowledge. Make a step-by-step plan to gradually try out new things to test their anxious expectations.*
4. *If the child struggles with a step, it may simply be too difficult, in which case break it down into smaller ones.*
5. *Be open and explicit with parents about the strategies you are using so that you can work together. If a similar approach is being taken at home and at school, change will occur faster. Meet with parent/s to review progress regularly.*
6. *Find ways to motivate and reward the child – facing fears is hard work (and they may not always show you how hard they are finding it)!*
7. *Be positive and praise the child – just having a go is an achievement!*
8. *Be prepared for setbacks, they always happen. Just try again the next day or the next week.*

Common concerns

If I praise a child who is anxious, won't it just draw more attention to them?

It is a question of *how* to give it rather than whether to give it. Negotiate with the child how they would like to receive praise or how they would like to be rewarded. It can be done very subtly, or you can praise them when you meet with them separately or with their parent/s. Similarly, they do not need to be rewarded in front of the whole class if this makes them feel uncomfortable; you can do this away from other pupils if need be.

I am no expert in children's anxiety, so should I really be doing this type of thing? Is this not more appropriate for a specially trained staff member?

We would certainly encourage you to work with other members of staff who have particular expertise in helping children with emotional difficulties. However, you are well equipped to help a child in your class: you are likely to know them very well and you will be able to create opportunities for them to face their fears. As long as you communicate regularly with the child and their parent/s, all agree a plan of action and regularly review it together, you are very likely to be helping the child overcome their fears.

How I am supposed to find the time to do this?

The strategies described here have all been used by teachers and other school staff that we have worked with. It is true that some extra time and thought may be required to get the ball rolling, but often things can start to change quickly. We would hope that this work will prevent a greater input of time further down the line, should problems become more entrenched. However, there is no reason why you cannot enlist the help of a colleague, perhaps a teaching assistant, specially trained staff member or similar.

For more information:

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