

# Exam Stress Workshop

*Harrow Mental Health Support Team*



# Harrow Mental Health Support Team

- Our team of Mental Health Practitioners work in schools across Harrow, providing early intervention
- We work with parents using guided- self help interventions for:
  - Managing challenging behaviour
  - Overcoming your child's fears and worries



# Group agreement

- Confidentiality.
- Only share what you feel comfortable with other members attending the workshop with knowing.
- This can be an emotive topic so please do what you need to do to take care of yourself.
- Be respectful of each other's opinions.



# Today we will cover...

Normal levels  
of stress vs  
unhelpful  
levels of  
stress

How can I tell  
if my child is  
anxious?

How can I  
support my  
child?



# Exam Stress

- With exams coming up, your child might feel worried, tense, or afraid
- This can affect your child's thoughts, emotions, the way they behave and physical feelings in their bodies.
- Feeling anxious about exams coming up is a normal feeling that EVERYONE feels



Can be good for motivation

## Normal levels of anxiousness

Feeling nervous before an exam

Feeling a bit worried about writing  
an important essay

Feeling nervous about presenting to  
the class

Still able to perform at our best!

Can be bad for motivation

## When feeling anxious is becoming unhelpful

Feeling so nervous about an exam that we  
can't concentrate on revision

Feeling so worried about an essay that we  
think about it constantly

Feeling so nervous about presenting to  
the class that we skip the lesson

May stop us from doing our best

# Discussion:

## How do you know when your child is anxious?

*How does it  
show in their  
behaviour?*



*How does it  
show in their  
bodies?*



*How does it  
show in their  
thoughts?*



# Recognising the signs



Central and  
North West London  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Behaviour

- Easily upset, irritable
- Refusing to talk
- Constantly seeking reassurance
- Difficulty sleeping
- Refusing to go to school
- Appetite changes
- Revising too much
- Poor concentration
- Play on games consoles more to avoid revising

## Body

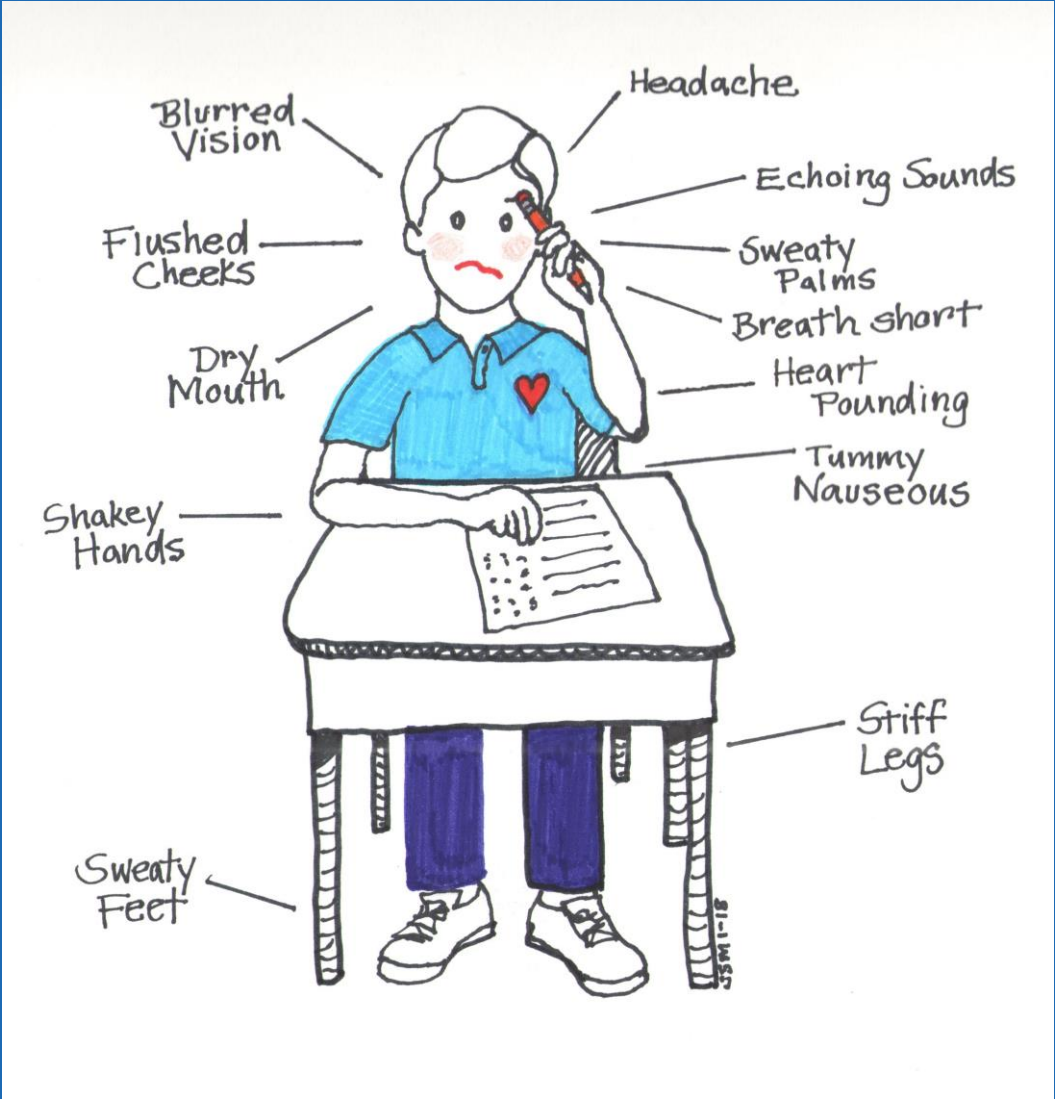
- Tummy aches/butterflies
- Feeling unwell often
- Headaches
- Complaining parts of their body aches e.g. arm
- Clammy/sweaty hands
- Heart racing
- Shaky
- Breathing fast

## Thoughts

- The worst is going to happen
- I will fail
- I'm not good enough
- Everyone can do this but I can't
- I'm a bad person
- They will laugh at me
- I can't do this



# Bodily Sensations



# Discussion

- What do we think might help manage worries in relation to exams?
- Is there anything you have tried before that has helped?
- Has anyone given you any useful advice in the past?



# Strategies

## Pomodoro method

The Pomodoro method follows a pattern of 25 minutes studying followed by a 5 minute break.

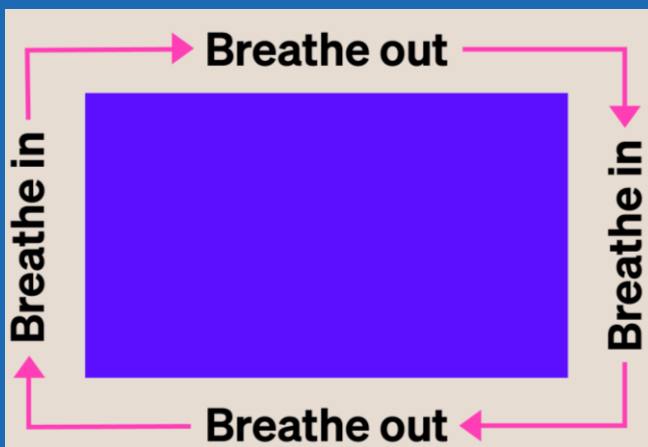
## Have your children 'sell' what they have learned to you

Encourage your children to sell their newly-learned facts 'Dragons' Den' style and ask them probing questions to make them think.



# Breathing and grounding techniques

- Rectangle breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- 54321 grounding technique



### 5-4-3-2-1

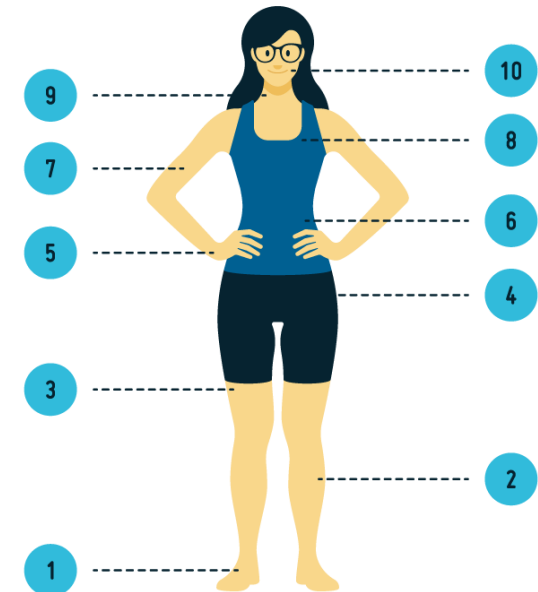
This grounding technique can be done nearly anywhere and is effective at bringing you back to the present moment. Use when feeling overwhelmed

Name...

- 5 Things you see
- 4 Things you feel
- 3 Things you hear
- 2 Things you smell
- 1 Thing you taste

## RELAX YOUR MUSCLES TO RELIEVE STRESS

Ease tension one muscle group at a time.



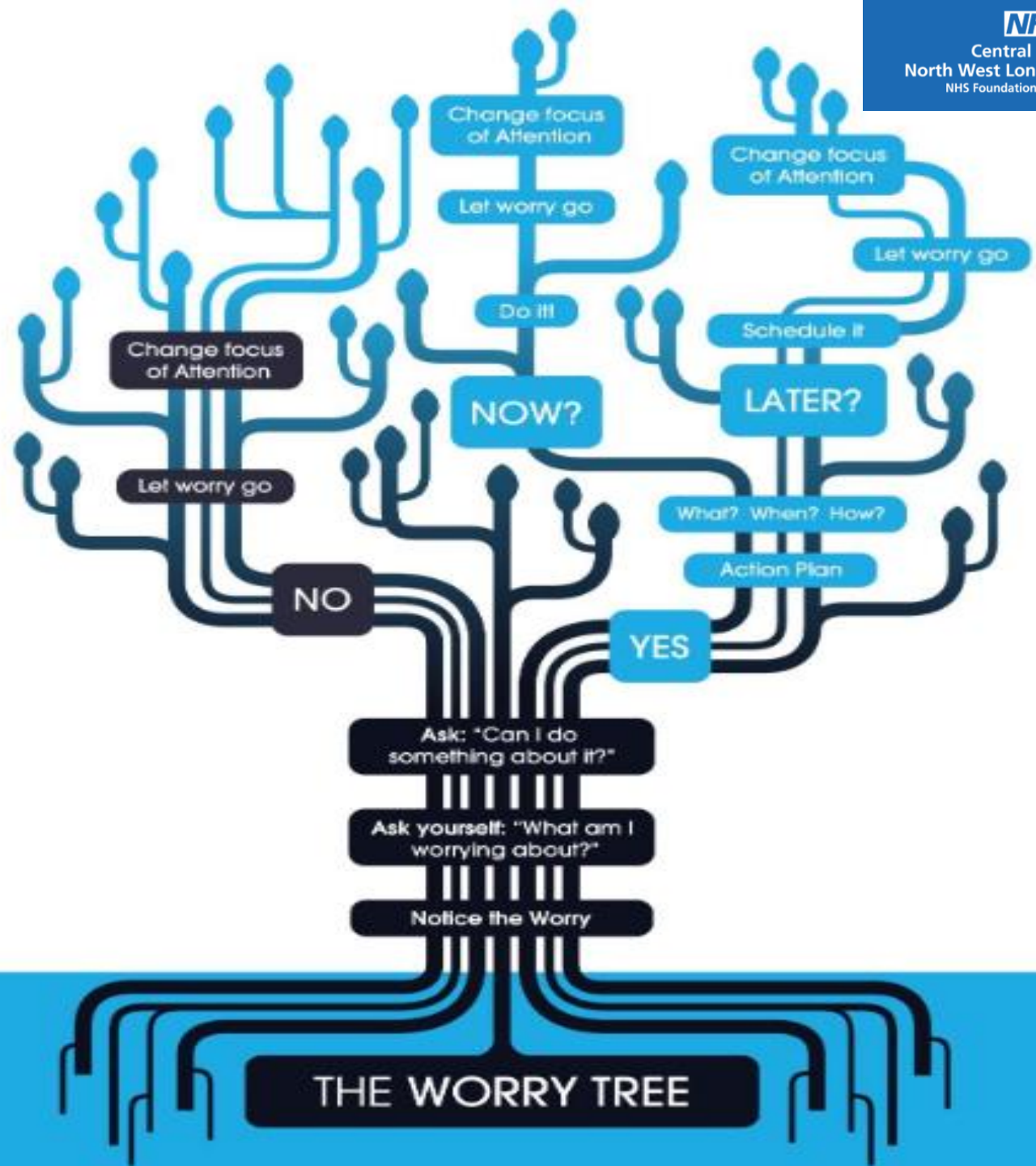
# Hobbies & Socialising

- Encourage them to continue engaging with their hobbies & socialising with their peers
- This can provide an outlet for relieving stress they may be feeling
- Don't wait for them to be overwhelmed with stressed to try these strategies – make them a regular and consistent part of their life so they can manage their stress levels



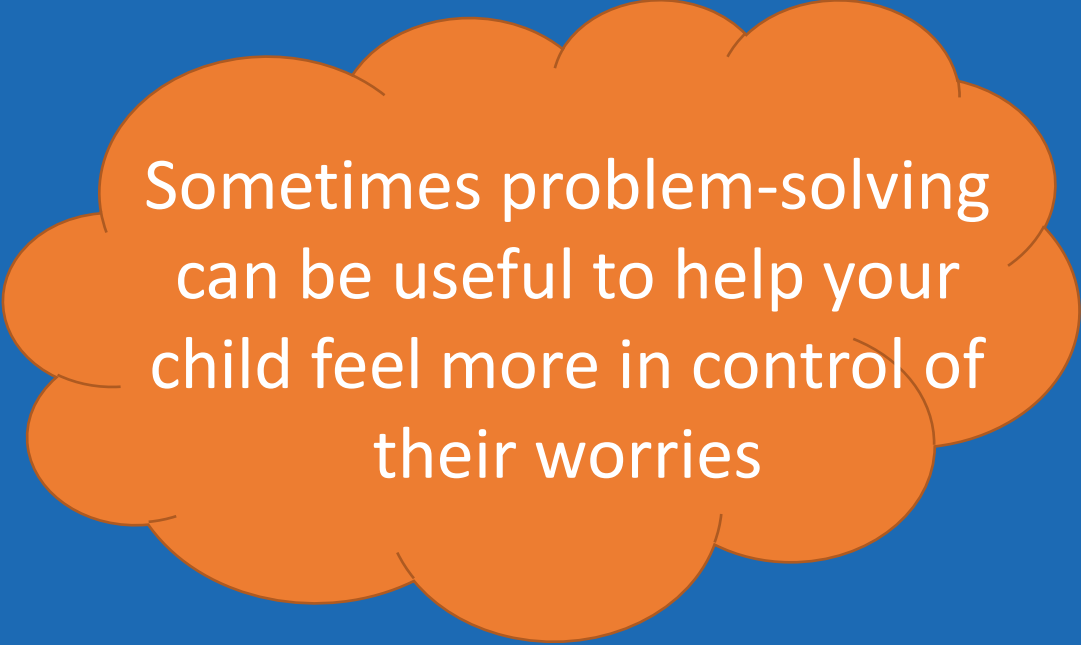
# Worry tree

Sometimes problem-solving can be useful to help your child feel more in control of their worries



# Problem-Solving

1. Identify the current problem your child is facing
2. Come up with a list of solutions
3. Go through pros & cons of each solution
4. Encourage your child to pick a solution & try it out
5. Reflect on how it went



Sometimes problem-solving can be useful to help your child feel more in control of their worries

# Try not to add to the pressure

- Listen to your child, give them support and avoid criticism
- Before they go in for a test or exam, remind your child that they have prepared and their best is enough
- After each exam, encourage your child to talk it through with you  
Discuss the parts that went well rather than just focusing on the questions they found difficult
- Praise and reward them for their efforts



# What if I need more support?

- Talk to a teacher, SENCo or the clinician
- Talk to your GP
- Young Minds: 0808 802 5544  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- Mental Health Foundation  
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- Childline: 0800 1111  
<https://www.childline.org.uk/>



# Questionnaire & Questions

