



Children and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services  
Herefordshire and Worcestershire

# WELLBEING AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TEAMS



## Helping your child with sleep difficulties

A guide for parents

Parent-led CBT Group



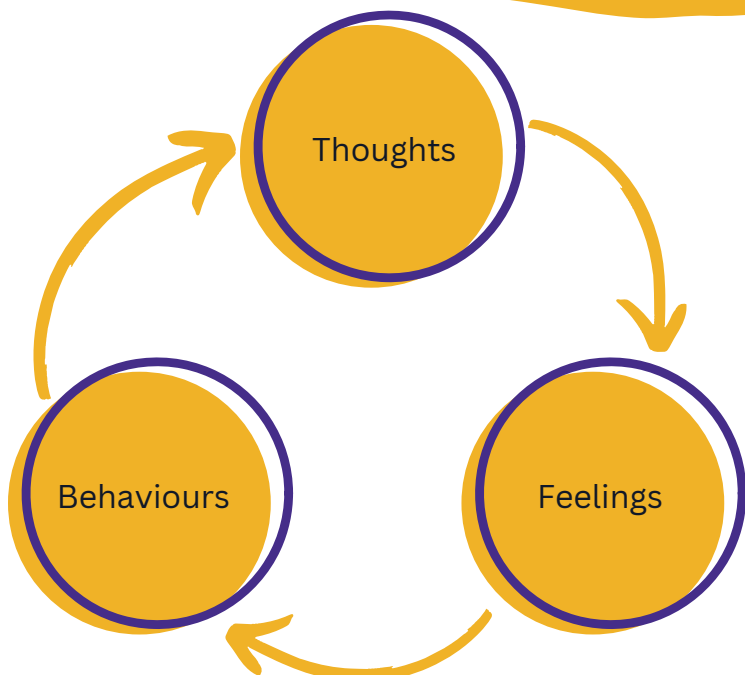
[www.camhs.hacw.nhs.uk/west](http://www.camhs.hacw.nhs.uk/west)



Provided by Herefordshire and Worcestershire  
Health and Care NHS Trust

# What is CBT

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a type of talking therapy which is based on the principle that how you think influences how you feel and what you do. It teaches you coping skills for dealing with different problems.



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# Why aren't you working with my child?

- Research shows that working with parents of younger children is more effective.
- This is because you are the expert of your child, not us. You know the best time to implement strategies and how quickly to work with them.
- You are the ones present during the tough times your child faces and can support them in between sessions and 24/7.
- You will remember the content of these sessions better than your child and so can remind them of the strategies taught beyond completion of the intervention.
- Research shows that working with parents results in positive outcomes quicker than working solely with the child.

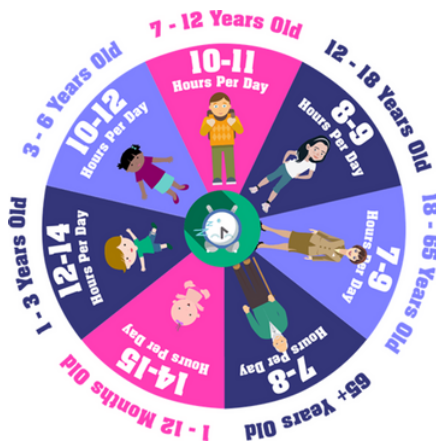


# Session 1

## The Importance of Sleep

The amount of sleep that we need everyday changes as we grow and develop. Maintaining a healthy amount of sleep as our needs change can be a real challenge for our children and they may need support with this i.e. collaborative bedtime routines.

“Sleep is a natural process where your body undergoes a series of changes to help it rest and repair itself – it is vital in supporting children’s development both physically and mentally.”





In Session 1 we will explore the following topics:

- Sleep Hygiene
- What is anxiety?
- What does your child think is going to happen?
- What do we want to achieve?





### Bedtime Routine

- Having a bedtime routine that you stick to every night.
- Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day.
- If children are hungry, they can have a small snack before bed, but no big meals too close to bedtime.



### Bedtime Environment

- Keep the bedroom calm and tidy.
- Keep the bedroom for mainly sleeping.
- Avoiding extreme temperatures in bedroom.
- Have the bedroom as dark as possible, can use blackout blinds if needed.



### Come off devices an hour before bed and dim the lights.

- Blue light from screens can mimic daylight and can therefore affect the production of melatonin.





### Before Bed

- Avoid giving your child too much caffeinated or sugary drinks
- Try to encourage your child to exercise in the day but not too close to bedtime
- Get as much daylight as possible
- Try not to let your child nap during the day
- Go to the toilet during the bedtime routine and then before bed



### Relaxation

- Reading
- Having a warm bath
- Listening to relaxing music quietly
- 3 Great Things
- Cuddling with your pet
- Colouring



## What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a normal emotion
- It can be helpful and enhance performance
- Anxiety becomes a problem when it is more severe or frequent and interferes with a child’s everyday life
- Our aim is not to stop them from ever worrying or being afraid
- Instead, we want to take back control of the fear/worry so that it doesn’t get in the way of them enjoying life.



# Session 1

## What is anxiety?

A good way to think of anxiety is like a faulty smoke alarm. Imagine you have a smoke alarm that is oversensitive and goes off all of the time, even when there isn't a real fire. When you have a problem with anxiety, your Fight or Flight response is just like this – it goes off and causes the symptoms of anxiety, even when there isn't any real danger.



ThinkNinja: Anxiety (youtube.com)

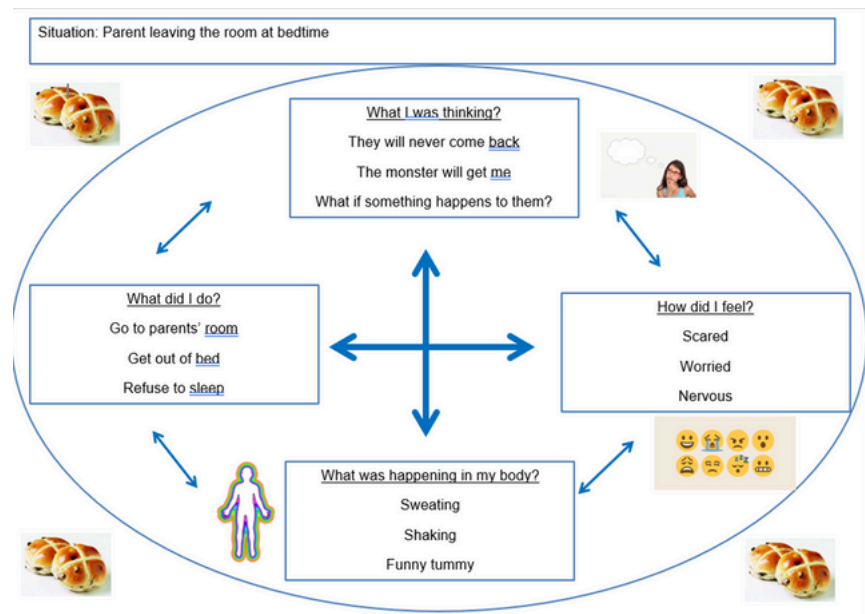


# Session 1

## What is anxiety

We experience **thoughts**, **feelings** and **behaviours** when faced with a situation.

If we change either our thoughts or response to things, we can influence our feelings and behaviours, or vice versa, to change for the future

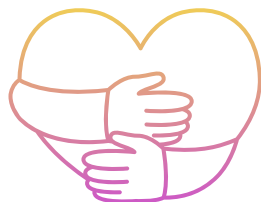


The first step is to understand what your child is thinking.

When we understand our child's thoughts, and their feared consequences, we can structure experiments to challenge this belief.

### Tips on generating conversations

- *How* you ask a child about their worries, and *when* you ask your child can be as important as *what* you ask them.
- Empathising, validating and normalising your child's feelings helps them to feel understood.
- Make suggestions
- Check your understanding
- Label their emotions
- Pick your moment
- Make it fun or rewarding, if you can



### The power of validating your child's feeling

“VALIDATION communicates to another person that their feelings, thoughts and actions make sense and are understandable to you in a particular situation.

It does not necessarily mean that you like or agree with what the other person is doing, saying, or feeling.

It means that you understand where they are coming from”  
(Lineham, 2014)

Validation can de-escalate conflict and intense emotions.

Validation can show that:

- We understand
- We are listening
- We are being non-judgmental
- We care about the relationship
- We can disagree without creating conflict





Choosing how and when to talk to your child is equally as important as having the conversation.

- Suggestions include:



Using their favourite TV show as examples.



During an activity so that the atmosphere is relaxed.



Roleplaying with teddies or puppets

# Session 1

## Setting SMART Goals

**S** **SPECIFIC:** Be very clear about what you want to achieve. Consider breaking the goal down into smaller steps.

**M** **MEASURABLE:** How will you know when you have achieved your goal? What will you be doing? What will others notice you doing?

**A** **ACHIEVEABLE:** Ensure your goals are not too high. Consider setting smaller goals on your way to the big one.

**R** **REALISTIC:** Make sure your goal is important to you. What will make a difference to your life?

**T** **TIMELY:** Set a reasonable time limit to achieve your goal. Can you achieve it in 6-8 sessions? Do you need longer?

### Not SMART

My child to sleep better

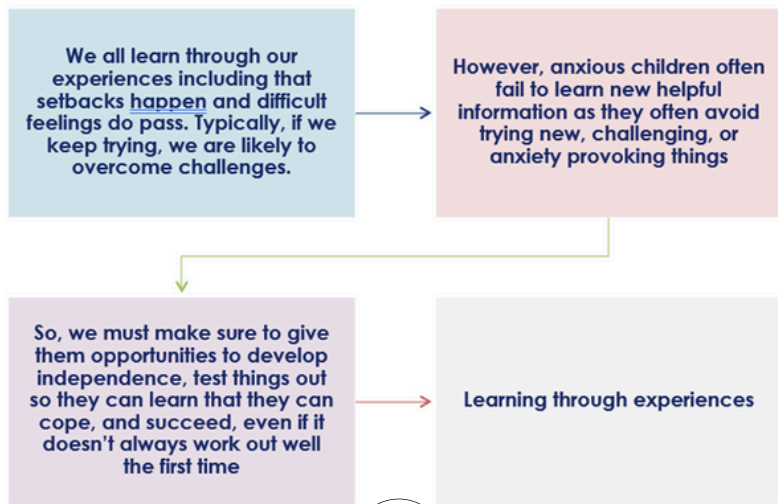
### SMART

To read to my child for 10 minutes prior to leaving the room, one night a week



In Session 2 we will explore the following topics:

- Reflections
- Step-by-step plan
- Problem solving
- Resource booklet



**Ultimate Goal:** For parent to sit on landing with door closed for ten minutes before going to their room, two nights a week

- Step 8** Parent to sit on landing in view for 5 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 7** Parent to sit on landing in view for 10 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 6** Parent to sit in room inside of door for 5 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 5** Parent to sit in room inside of door for 10 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 4** Parent to sit on floor against bedframe for 5 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 3** Parent to sit on floor against bedframe for 10 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 2** Parent to sit at bedside for 5 minutes whilst child settles
- Step 1** Parent to sit at bedside for 10 minutes whilst child settles



**Ultimate Goal:**

Step 8

Step 7

Step 6

Step 5

Step 4

Step 3

Step 2

Step 1



### Where

The location of the house you are in e.g. moving from their bedside, to the floor, to the doorway, to the landing...

### When

The frequency of behaviours occurring e.g. moving from 5 kisses, to 4, to 3, to 2, to 1, to a hug

### What

The amount of time spent with your child e.g. five minutes spent at their bedside before leaving the room

### Who

Which parent e.g. if they find it easier to separate from Mum begin here





Time spent with adults  
Note: May want to avoid sleepovers in parents beds



Choices  
What is for pudding or tea, which park to go to



Small material items



Sticker system



If you are worried about your child's sleep, keeping a sleep diary may be helpful. Sleep diaries can help you to find reasons why your child is not sleeping. It is important that you log everything for at least two weeks to see if any patterns emerge.

You can also share the sleep diary with any professionals that are involved with your child such as your Health Visitor, GP or Family Support Worker.

It might be helpful to keep notes each day and then complete this every morning with your child when they wake up. Make sure to keep the diary somewhere that you and your child will see it every morning and make filling it in part of your daily routine.





Once you have completed the sleep diary for two weeks, look through the diary together and see if there is anything that you notice.

- Is there anything that you/your child could change to support better sleep?
- Is there any links between daily activities and sleep difficulties?
- Is there anything you/your child has learnt from completing the sleep diary?

A lot of sleep related difficulties in children are caused by poor routine, negative sleep hygiene and an inappropriate sleep environment. Just by making small changes we can often make a big difference for our child's sleep.



Anxiety and low mood can also be another major indicator for sleep difficulties. By completing the WEST sleep workshop, you will gain tools to support your child with any worries, anxieties or low mood that is affecting their sleep.

Using both positive sleep hygiene changes and supportive wellbeing strategies you can work to create a positive sleep experience and build a solid base for your children to have a good relationship with sleep for their whole lives.



# Session 2

## Sleep Diary

Start Date:	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
What time did you/your child go to bed last night?							
How long did it take you/your child to first fall asleep?							
Did you/your child wake in the night?							
How many times & how long for?							
What time did you/your child wake up this morning?							
What time did you/ your child get out of bed?							
Did you/your child have any naps during the day?							
What time & how long for?							
How did you/your child feel when waking up? (Refreshed/Ok/Lethargic)							
Did you/your child use a blue light emitting device before bed? (Mobile phone, TV, tablet...)							
Did you/your child drink any caffeine after 2pm?							
How much and at what time?							
Did you/ your child partake in any form of high-level exercise? (Sports, Gym, Running, Swimming)							
Was there any situation in the day that made you/your child feel anxious/worried/sad?							



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