

# OVERCOMING YOUR CHILD'S FEARS AND WORRIES – GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS



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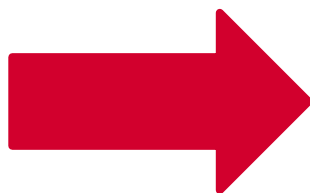
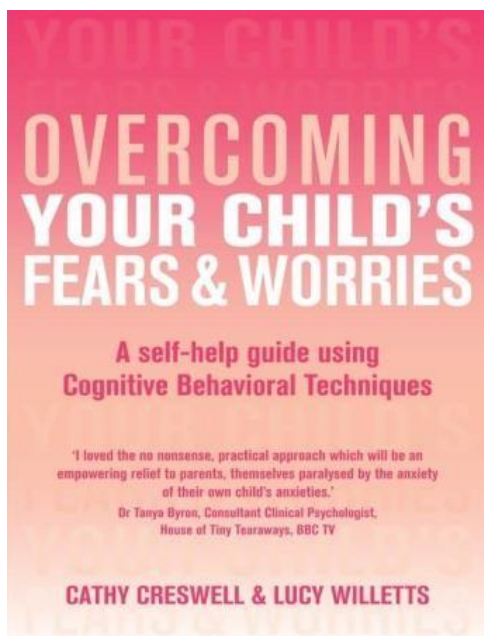
# WHAT ARE WE GOING TO COVER?

- Brief introduction to the 'Overcoming' approach to childhood anxiety problems.
- Facing your fears gradually : Introduction to the use of step plans.
- Coffee break at 18:30
- Developing a step plan
- Final 10-15 mins - Q/A





# What is the Overcoming approach?



- Parent led CBT
- Gold-standard treatment
- Method of delivery: individual (8 sessions), group treatment (6 sessions) or signposted as self-help, online version.
- Where can I get it?
  - AnDY clinic
  - Local CAMHS
  - Online

BJPsych

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2013)  
203, 436–444. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126698

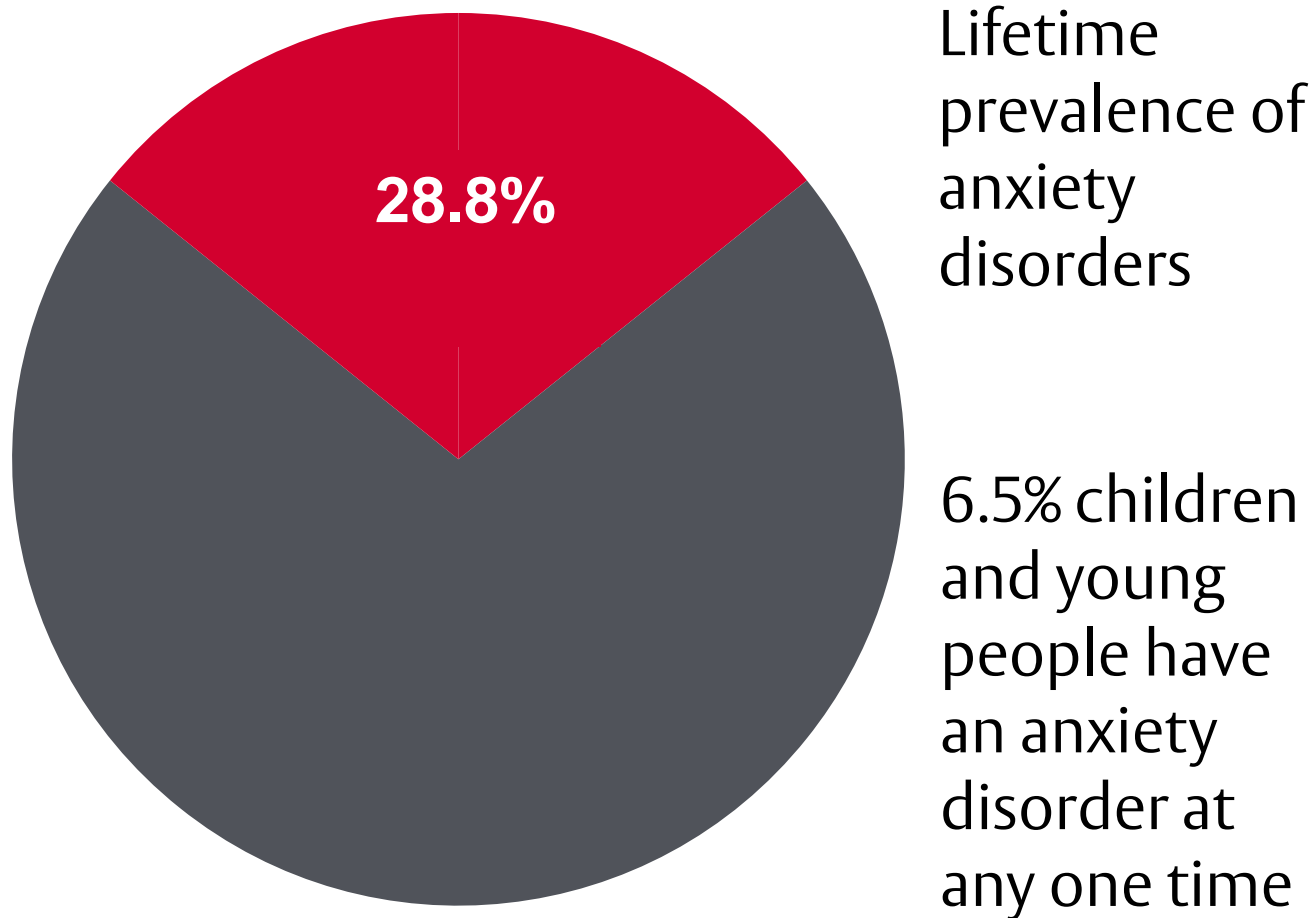
Treatment of child anxiety disorders via guided parent-delivered cognitive-behavioural therapy: randomised controlled trial<sup>†</sup>

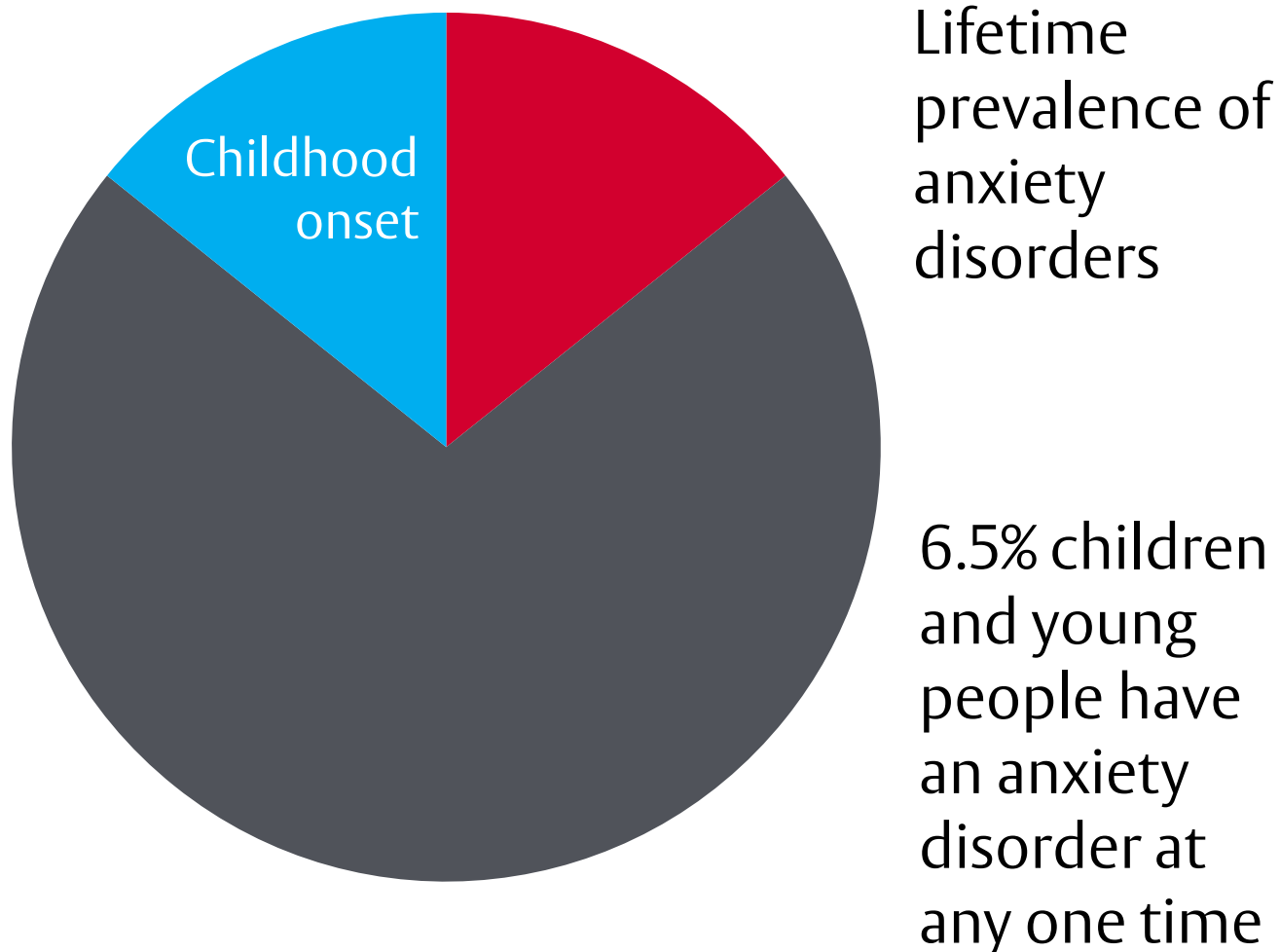
Kerstin Thirlwall, Peter J. Cooper, Jessica Karalus, Meryn Voysey, Lucy Willetts and Cathy Creswell





# UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD ANXIETY PROBLEMS

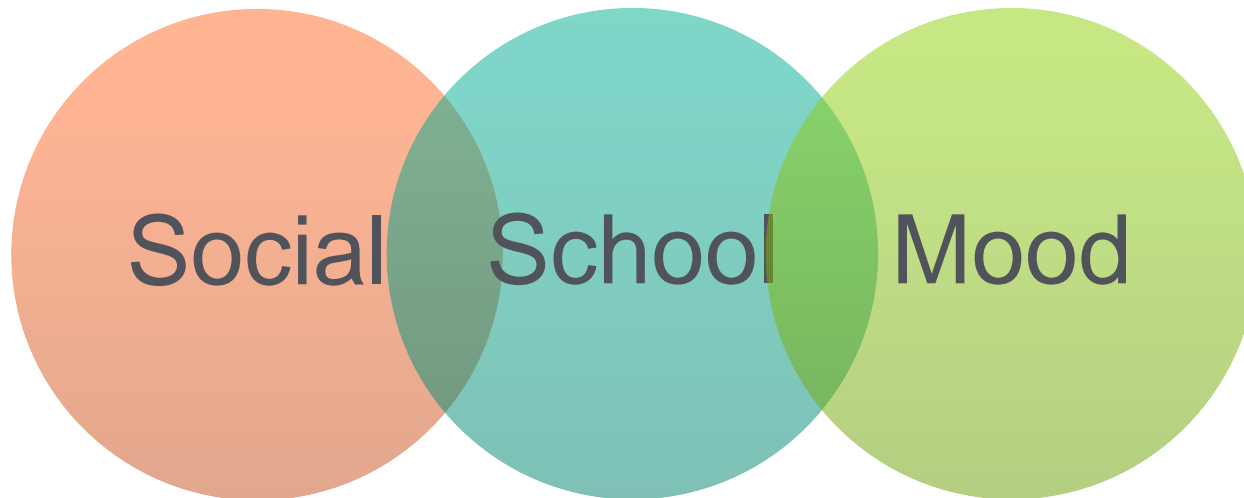






# What is anxiety and when does it become a problem?

- Anxiety is a **normal** emotion - It can be helpful and enhance performance
- Anxiety becomes a problem when it's **excessive** and **interferes** with a child's everyday life – around 2-3 children in a normal school class have significant anxiety problems.







# What are common anxieties experienced by children?

- **Specific phobias:** Fear of particular place, object or situation
- **Social anxiety:** Fear of doing something embarrassing in front of others
- **Generalized anxiety:** Excessive worrying and difficulty controlling worrying
- **Separation anxiety:** Extreme difficulty to be away from a parent / carer
- **Panic Disorder:** Intense feelings of anxiety and unpleasant physical symptoms
- **PTSD and OCD**



# WHAT KEEPS CHILDREN'S ANXIETY GOING?



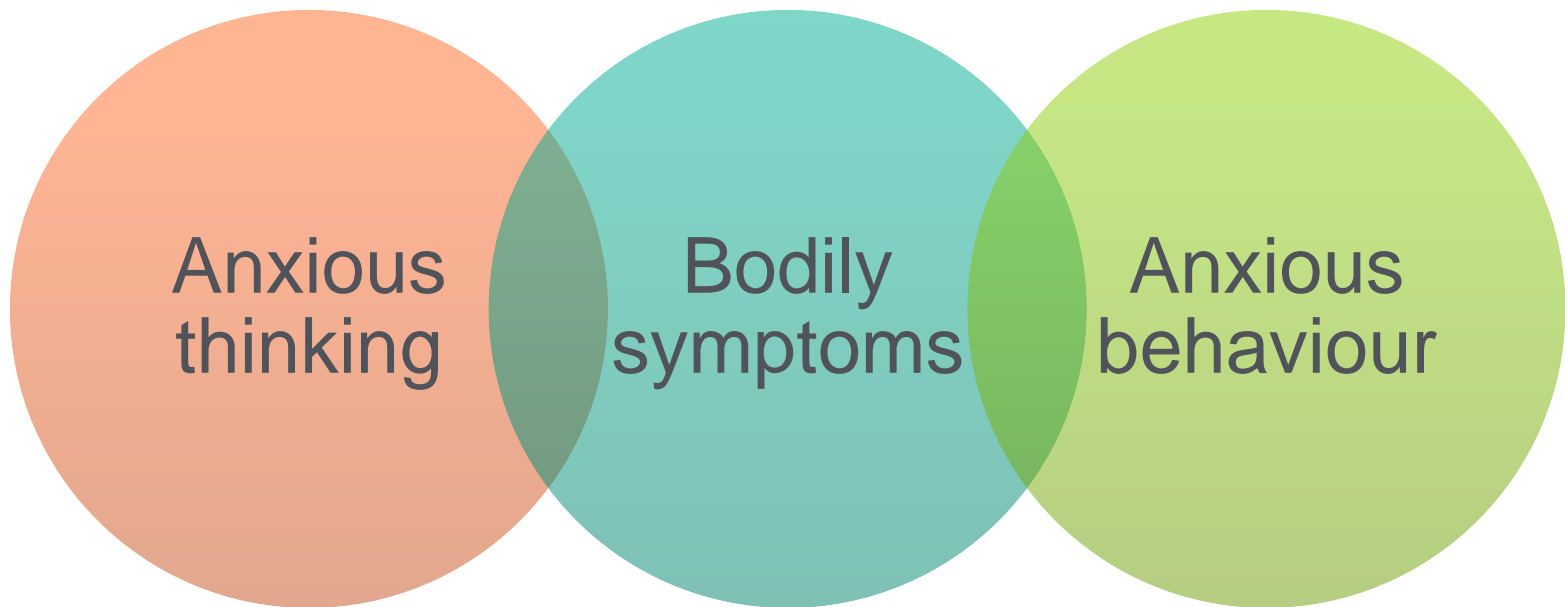
# WHAT KEEPS CHILDREN'S ANXIETY GOING?

- Although it can be helpful to understand the causes (e.g. genes, critical life events) of your child's anxiety **it is much more important to understand what is keeping their anxiety going.**

If a car gets stuck in mud, part of the problem was the route it took, but what is needed now is to sort out what is stopping the car moving on.



## What keeps children's anxiety going?





# ANXIOUS THINKING



I won't be able to  
speak...everyone will  
just laugh at me and  
think I am stupid



# BODILY SYMPTOMS



- If child interprets bodily symptoms as a sign that something bad is happening and/or too uncomfortable to bear – they will feel more anxious and less confident that they will/can deal with the threat



# ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR



- **Avoidance**
  - By not facing their fears a child does (i) not discover whether it is really as bad as they think or (ii) learn to cope with it
- **Safety behaviours**
  - Prevent the child from testing out their fears and learning something new



# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

## Situation

John is due to give a presentation in school



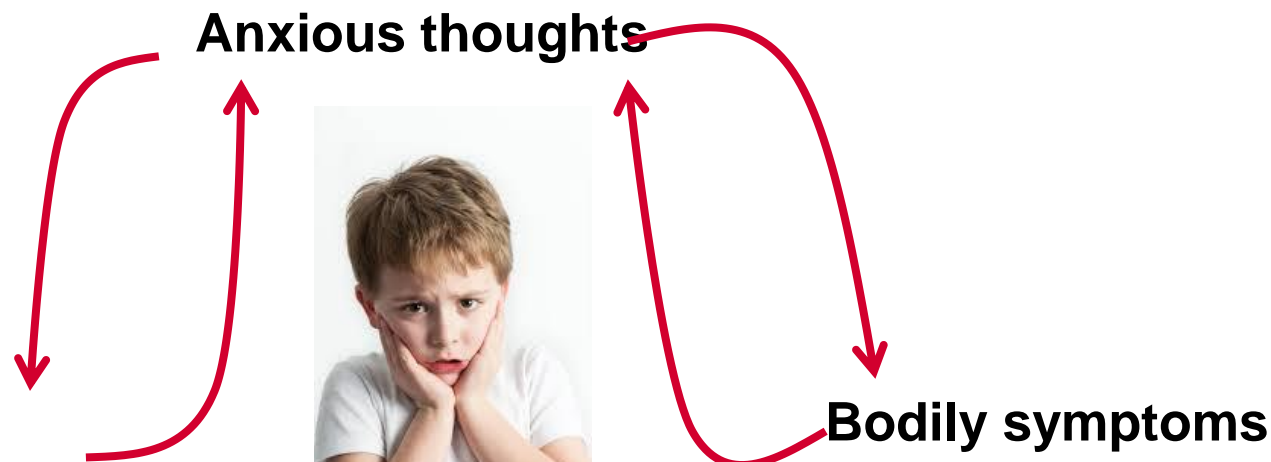
## Anxious thoughts



## Bodily symptoms



## Anxious Behaviour







# FACING FEARS - STEP PLAN





# FACING FEARS: A STEP BY STEP APPROACH

- **Decide on ‘Ultimate Goal’ and ‘Ultimate Reward’**
  - Ultimate Goal = Sleep over
  - Ultimate Reward = Cinema and pizza
- **Break down in to steps**
  - Generate steps
  - Rate how anxious each step would make child
  - Order steps
  - Agree a reward for each step





Steps	Reward
Ask the teacher a question in front of the whole class.	Dinner out
Answer a question asked by the teacher (answer not planned) in front of the whole class.	Go to craft shop after school
Answer a question asked by the teacher (planned in advance) in front of the whole class.	Coffee shop on way home
Ask the teacher a question in a small group.	Make cakes with Mum
Answer a question asked by the teacher (answer not planned) in a small group.	Stop on way home for magazine
Answer a question asked by the teacher (planned in advance) in a small group.	Choose favourite dinner
Ask the teacher a question after class has finished and classmates have gone.	Praise from Mum and teacher





Steps	Reward
To wait at school to be picked up. Dad might or might not be late	Match attacks gold card from Ebay
Dad to be 5 mins late (don't know where he'll be)	Match attacks folder
Dad to be 2 mins late (don't know where he'll be)	4 x Match attacks
Dad to stay at corner and not come in to get me until 5 mins late	3x Match attacks
Dad to stay at corner and not come in to get me until 2 mins late	2 x Match attacks
Dad to stay at school gate and not come in to get me until 2 mins late	Match attacks
Dad to stand where I can't immediately see him when I come out of school	Play football on way home





# PUTTING STEP PLAN INTO PLACE

- Plan it
  - Discuss with your child
  - Discuss what they **predict** will happen
- Have a go
- Review **prediction**
  - Was it as they thought it would be?
  - Was anything different?
  - How did they cope?
  - What did they learn?
- Deliver reward as promised
- Repeat!







# DEVISING A STEP PLAN





# STEP-PLAN: TROUBLESHOOTING

Issue	Possible solution
<b>Child was too anxious</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Acknowledge how hard it is for your child to face fears</li><li>- Help child challenge anxious thoughts about step</li><li>- Break down into smaller steps</li></ul>
<b>Child refuses to do the step</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Change reward to increase motivation</li><li>- Make sure it is not too anxiety provoking</li><li>- Break down into smaller steps</li><li>- Give child choice of which step to try first</li></ul>
<b>Child gets distressed whilst doing a step</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Acknowledge their distress and encourage them to keep going</li><li>- Say: "I know you can do this, remember how you did x, you can do this"</li><li>- Get them to think how they will feel afterwards</li></ul>
<b>Child refused to do step more than once</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Give additional reward for repeated attempts</li></ul>
<b>You/your child forgot to do step</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Agree day/time for child to try step this week</li></ul>





**Thank you for listening.  
Any questions?**