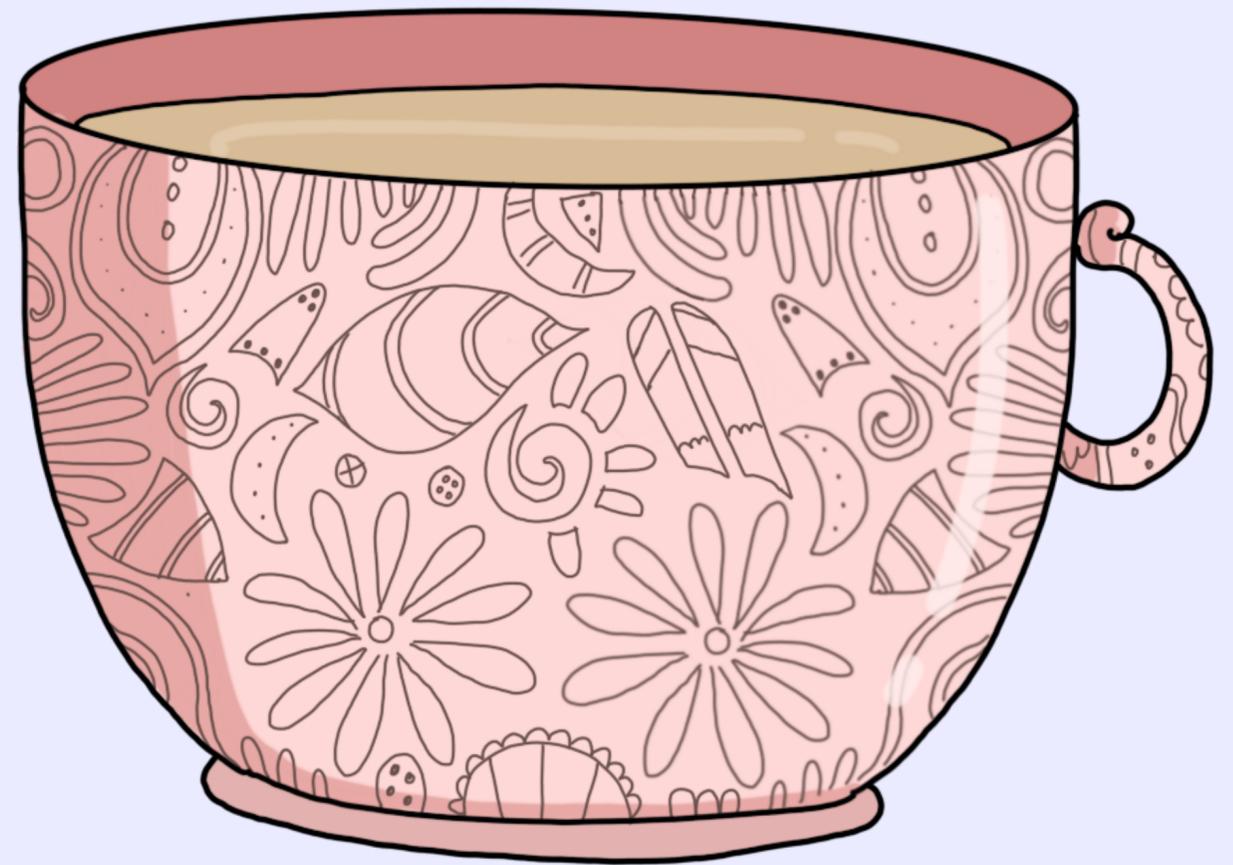


PANIC TO PEACE

Managing & Overcoming Panic Attacks

TO WATCH THE WEBINAR ON REPLAY GO TO:

<https://youtu.be/tlhtM94OLaQ>



INTRODUCTION - REBEKAH BALLAGH

Counsellor

10 years experience in mental health

Best Selling Author/illustrator

Creator of Journey to Wellness

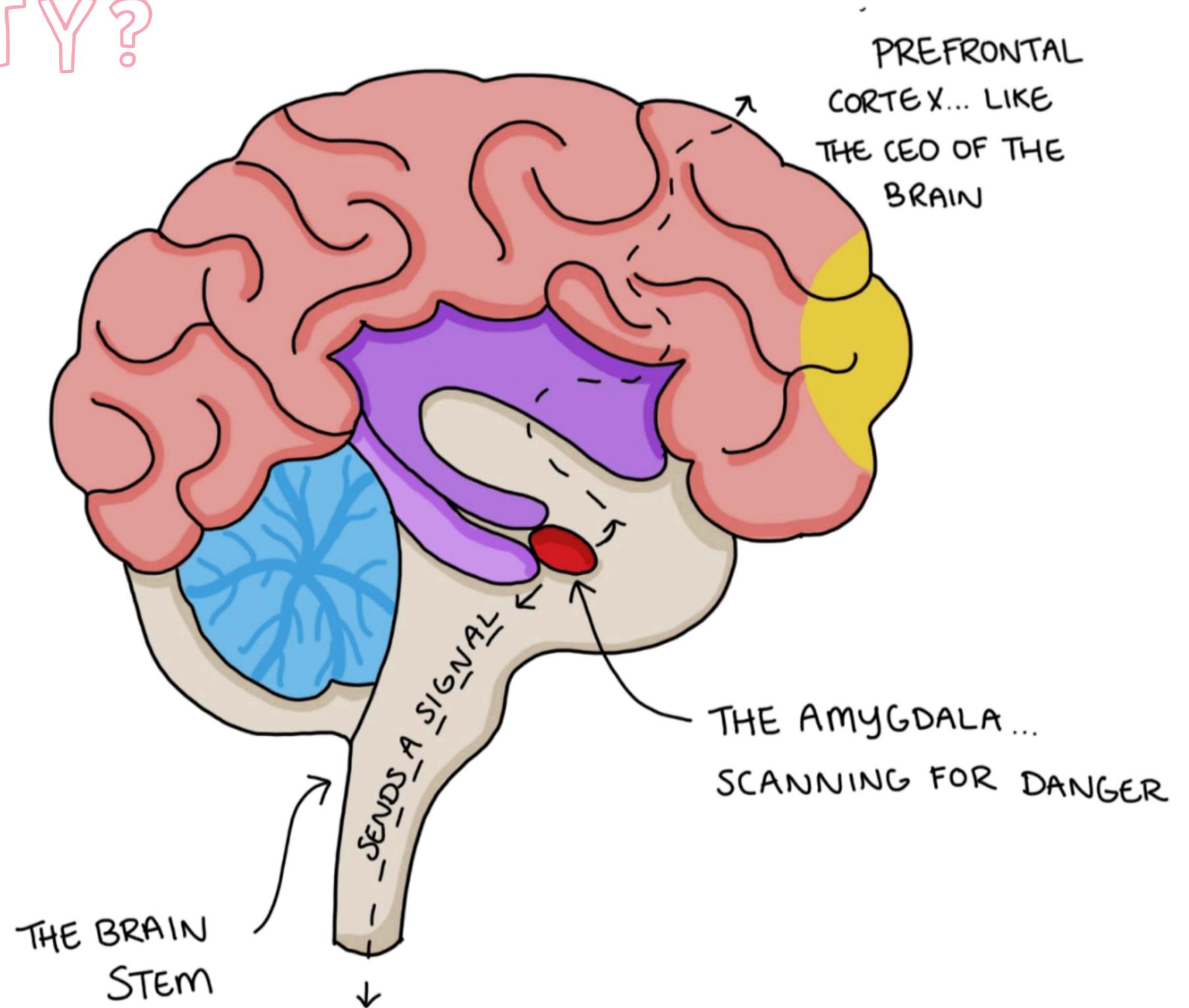
Creator of mental health resources

+ my story



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- Body's natural response to threat
- Amygdala - Emotional centre of the brain
- Evolutionary - Fight | Flight | Freeze
- From back in caveman days
- Modern threats are different but still the same response
- Slow & fast Tracks
- Autonomic Nervous System
 - Parasympathetic
 - Sympathetic





WHAT IS ANXIETY...

Cognitive

Worry
Unhelpful thinking
Negativity Bias
Not in PFC (flip the lid)
Can't concentrate

Behavioural

Avoidance
Snappy - Irritable
Unhelpful behaviours
Safety or reassurance
seeking

Physical

Muscle tension
Sleep issues
IBS symptoms
On alert

Emotional

Hypersensitive
Panicky
Low mood
Fear
Nervous
Irritated

What is a panic attack?

A sudden episode of intense fear and anxiety

Overwhelming physical symptoms and sensations

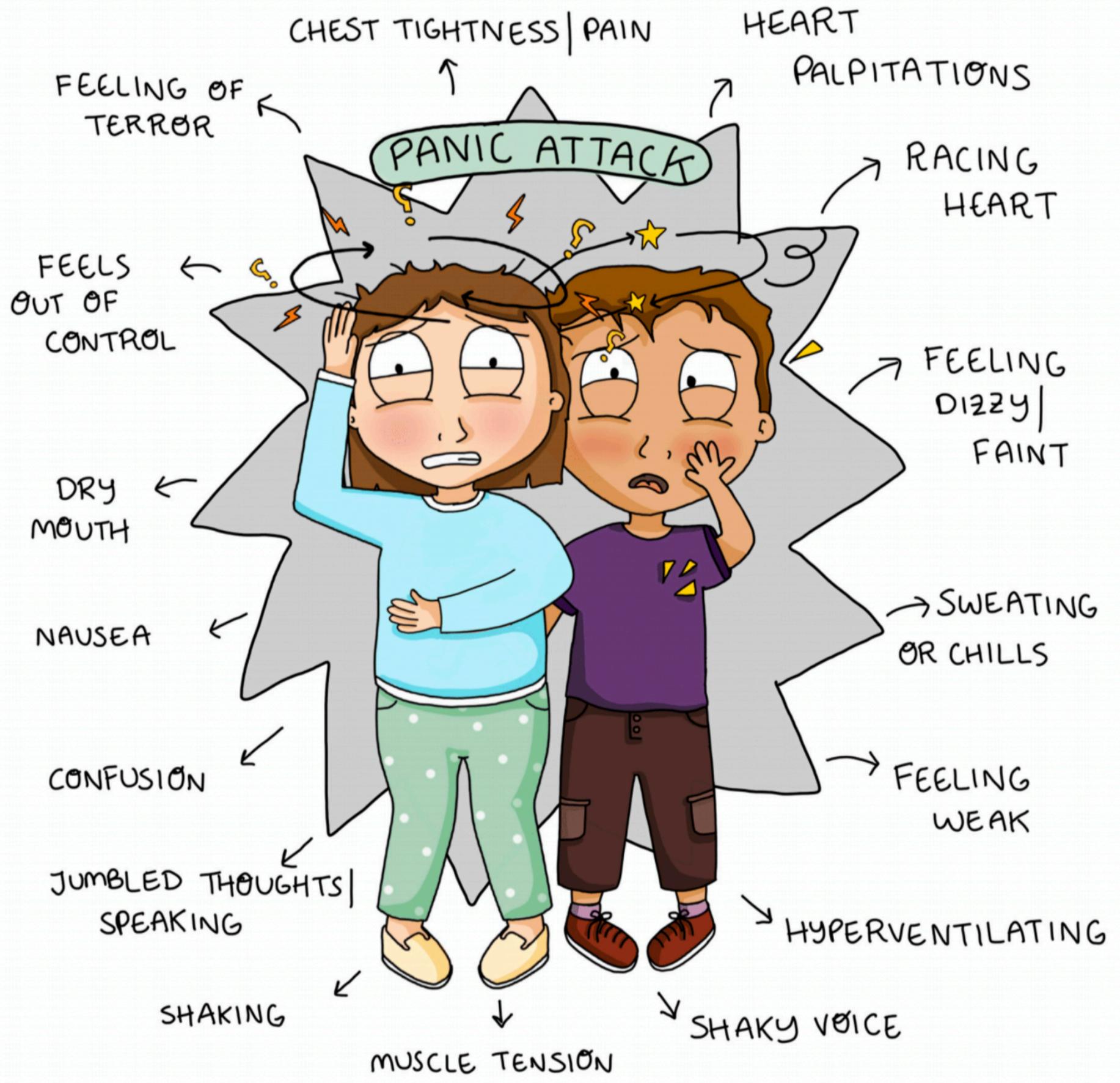
Often accompanied by intense fears and thoughts that you are having a heart attack, going to die, or are going crazy

Happens in the absence of any real threat or danger (even though it feels like there is!)

May occur 'out of the blue' or may be brought on by a known stressor or fear (like a specific phobia, i.e. public speaking)

Usually symptoms peak by 10 minutes but they can last longer and can occur back to back

You will likely feel stressed, on edge and key-ed up after a panic attack, which may then change to fatigue and exhaustion

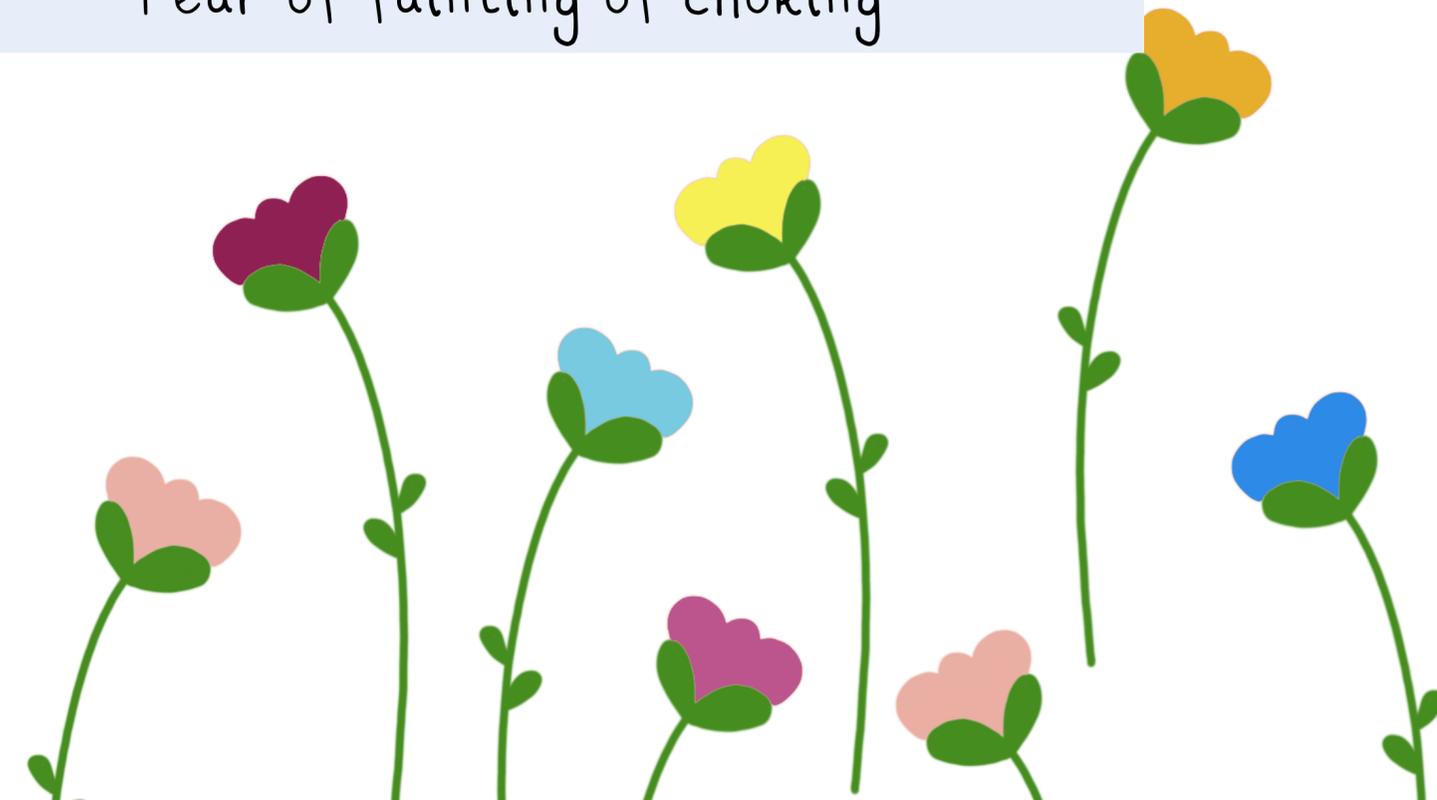


Physically:

- Chest pain or tightness
- Sweating
- Feeling of choking
- Dizzy, lightheaded, faint or unsteady
- Heart palpitations, pounding/racing heart
- Nausea
- IBS symptoms
- Numbness/tibgling
- Trembling and shaking
- Short of breath
- Hyperventilation

Mentally:

- Feeling like things aren't real (derealisation)
- Feeling out of body (depersonalisation)
- Feel like you are going crazy
- Fear you might lose control
- Fear you are having a heart attack
- Fear you might die
- Fear of fainting or choking



Difference between an anxiety attack and a panic attack

Anxiety attacks tend to occur after a long build up of anxiety and worry

Panic attacks come on more quickly and can even occur suddenly without clear cause

Panic attacks usually peak by 10 minutes while anxiety can last much much longer, even months

Anxiety attacks don't tend to have the same extreme sense of fear or detachment that panic attacks do



Common thoughts/fears/myths debunked

I'm having a heart attack

You are not. Your heart is actually designed to perform in this way in order to get you out of danger. Your heart is more than capable of functioning in this way for the period of time your panic attack will last (and longer). Think of it like going for a long run! Head to your GP for a 'WOF' to alleviate any fears around this.

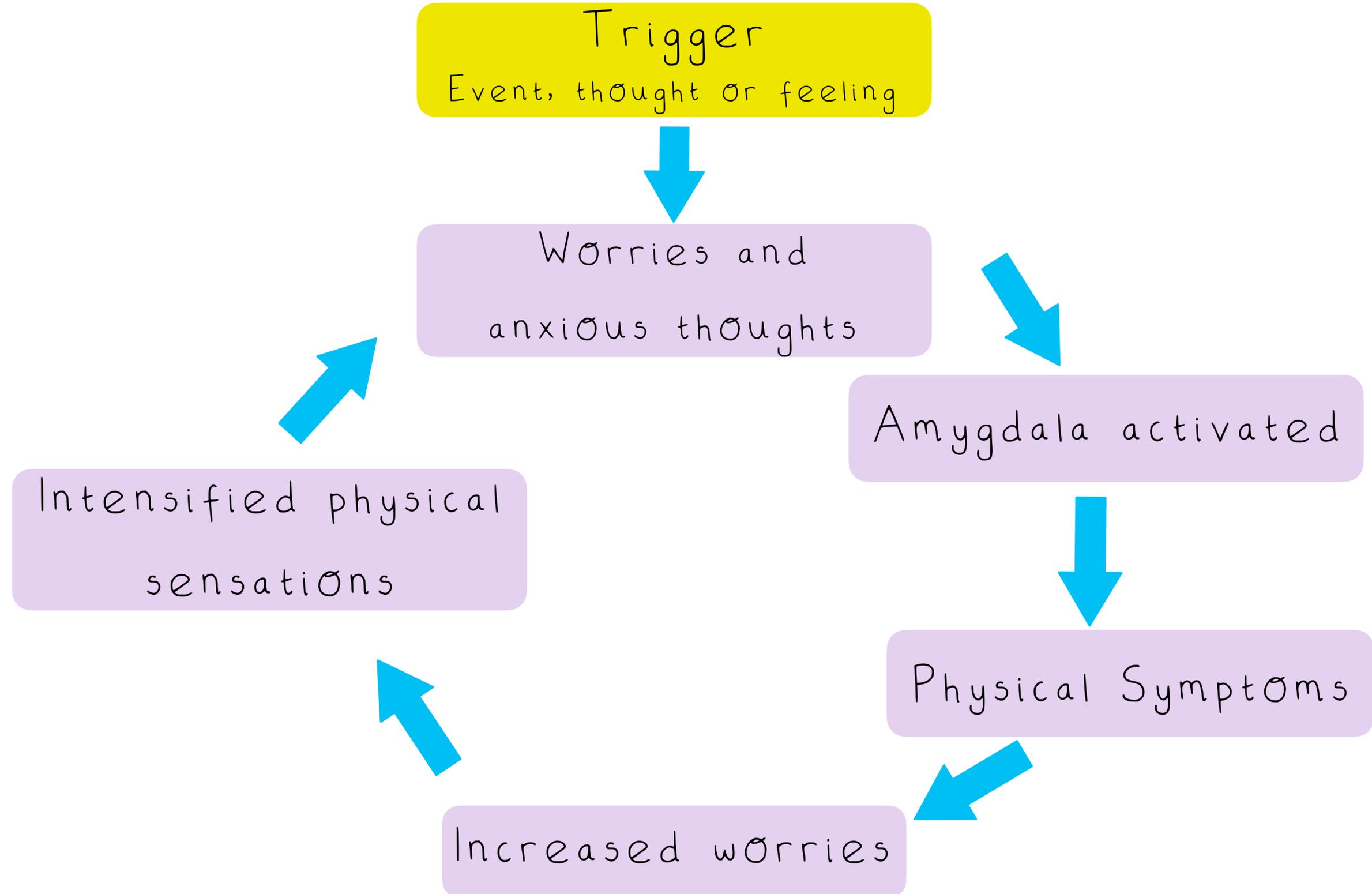
I'm going crazy

Panic attacks WILL NOT make you 'go insane'. They will not 'flick a switch' or make you go crazy. They are a functional design of your body that is malfunctioning right now and this can be overcome. In fact, your nervous system is designed to 'pull on the hand break' to ensure you do not stay in this mode for too long.

This is never going to end

Have any of your panic attacks lasted forever yet? No. They always pass. Most times within 10 mins. Ride them out.

THE PANIC ATTACK CYCLE



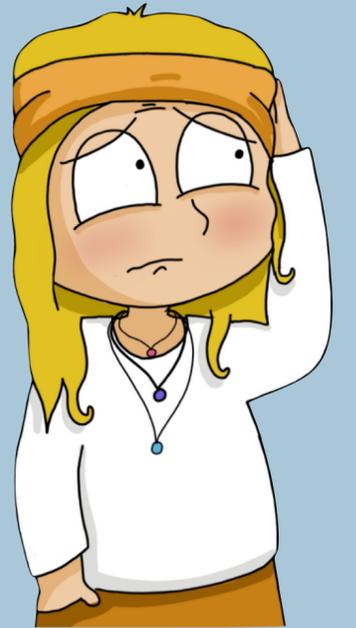
HOW ANXIETY MAY PRESENT

— Avoidance and isolation



- Unhealthy coping mechanisms; drinking, mindless scrolling, etc

— Work/social avoidance



- Ongoing physical complaints i.e. tummy aches, headaches, fatigue

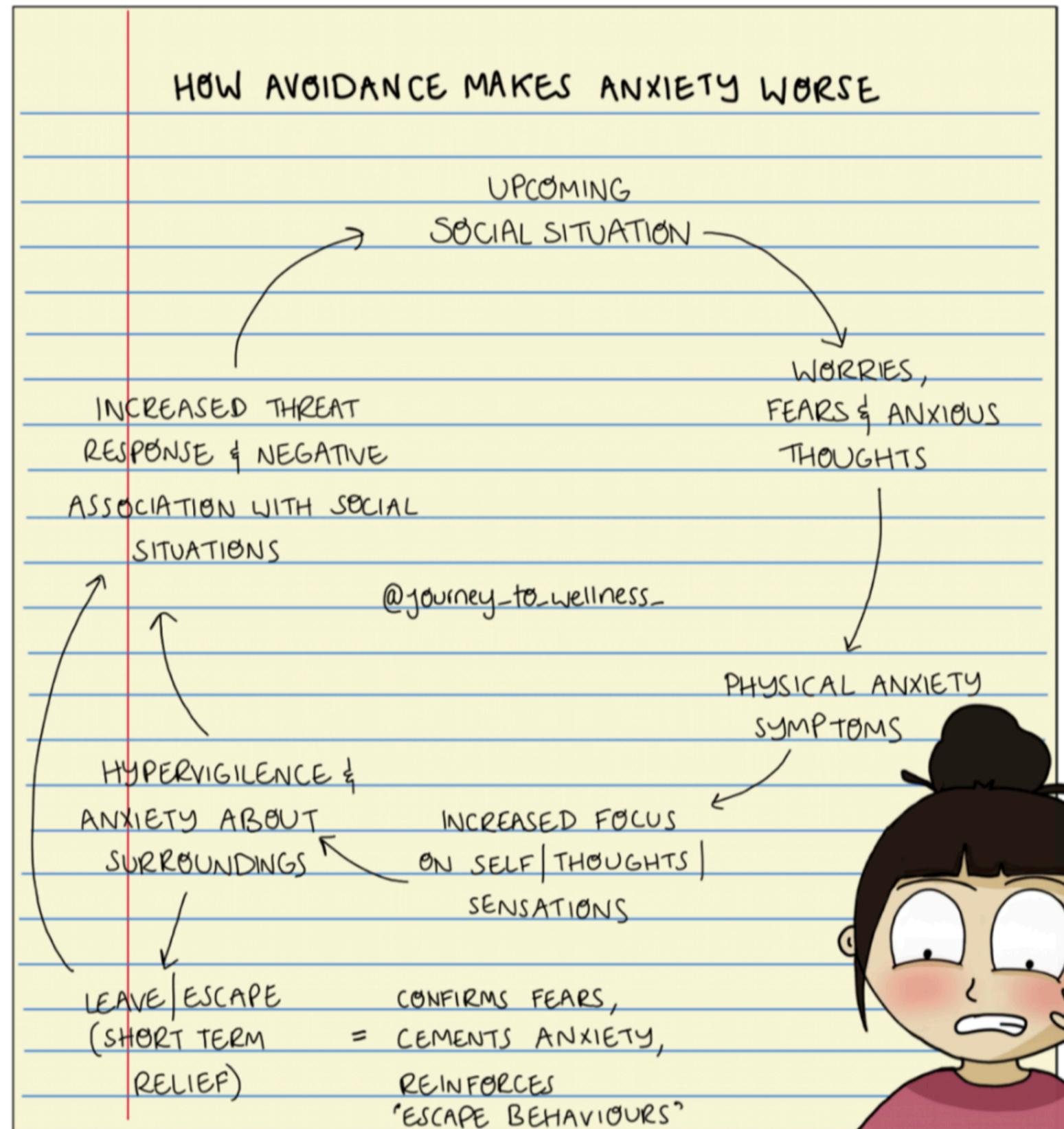


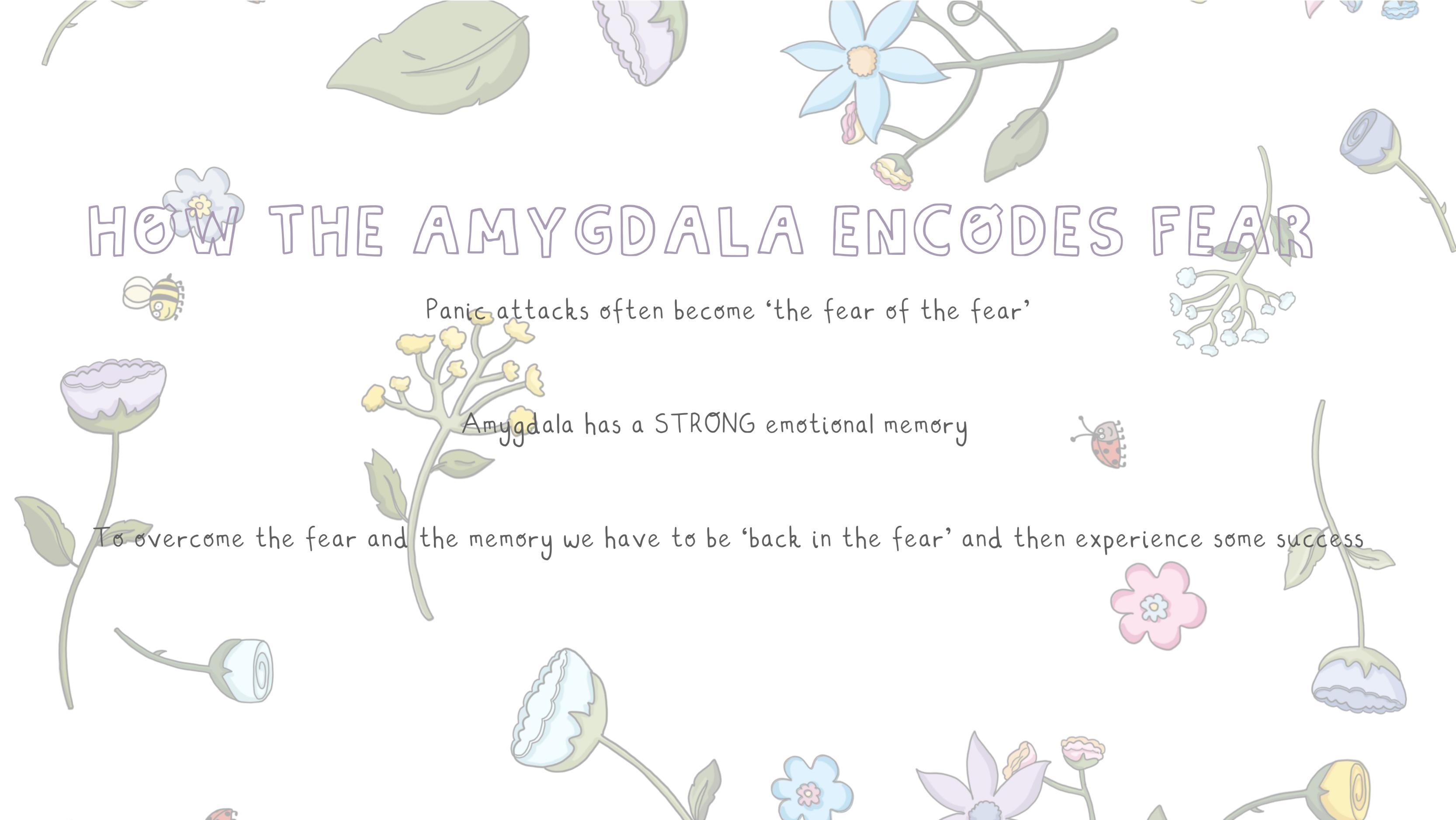
— Getting lost in social media



- Trouble sleeping and concentrating

WHEN ANXIETY MOVES FROM 'NORMAL' TO 'UNHELPFUL'





HOW THE AMYGDALA ENCODES FEAR

Panic attacks often become 'the fear of the fear'

Amygdala has a STRONG emotional memory

To overcome the fear and the memory we have to be 'back in the fear' and then experience some success

HOW WE ALLY WITH THE ANXIETY

- Providing lots of external reassurance
- Trying to offer certainty
- Trying to remove any discomfort
- 'Enabling' avoidance
- 'Allying the anxiety'
- Fixation on physical symptoms



UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

Catastrophising

Blowing things out of proportion

'Should-ing'

Being harsh or demanding on yourself, often saying 'I should...'

Mind-Reading

Assuming you know what someone else is thinking

Black & white thinking

Seeing only one extreme... Good or bad, right or wrong

Future predicting

'What ifs' & making predictions about what is going to happen

Labelling

Calling yourself harsh names like "I'm so stupid"

Filtering

Only focusing on one part of something, usually the negative

Remember: Not all thoughts are true! Think of worries anxiety

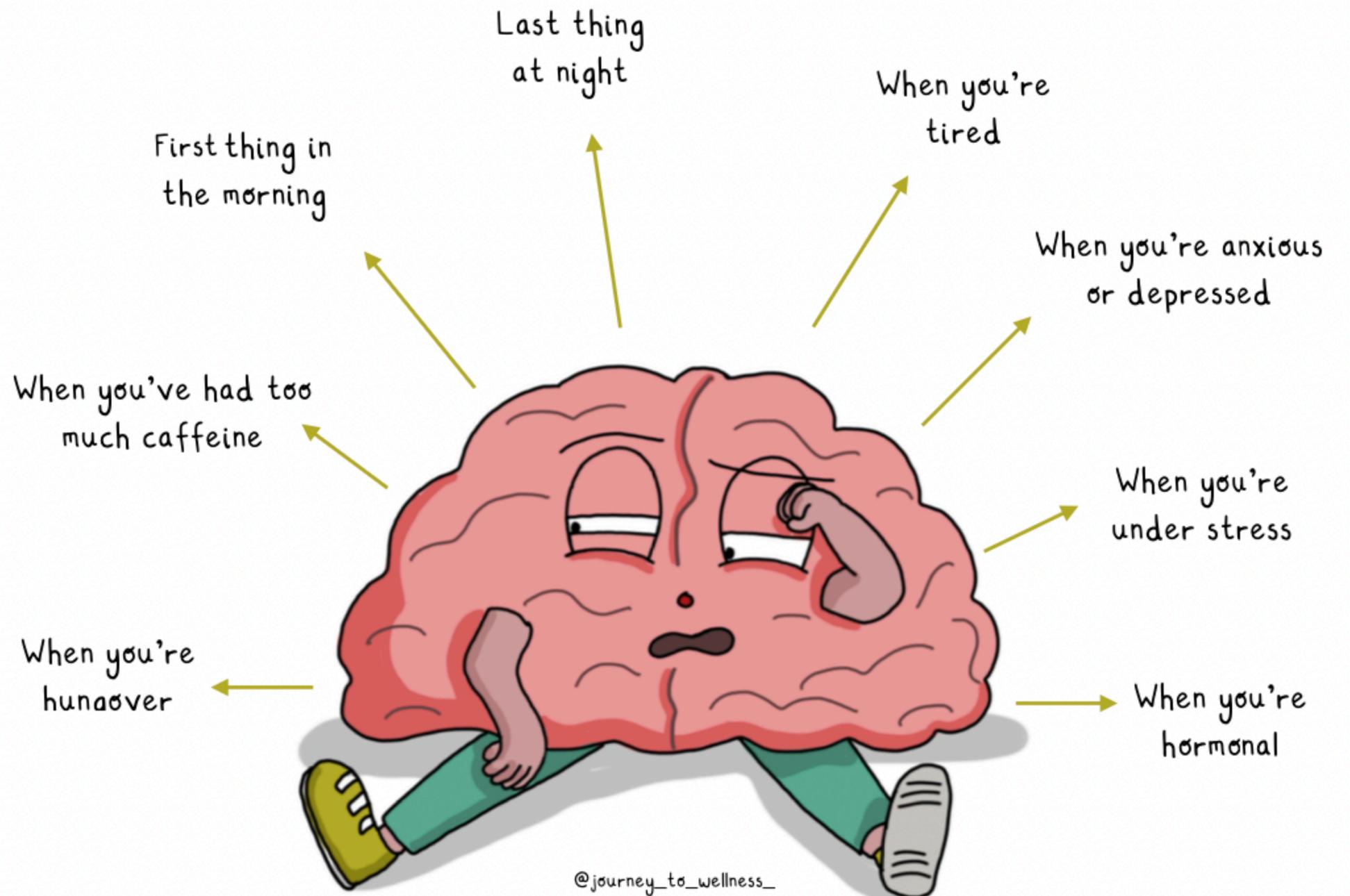
like ads on the TV...

Thoughts are like books in a library

There are certain times where your brain is more 'vulnerable' to unhelpful thoughts, and to getting negative ones STUCK.

TIMES YOUR BRAIN IS STICKY...

STICKY THINKING AND 'GLITCHES'



STRATEGIES
AND TOOLS
TO
OVERCOME
PANIC

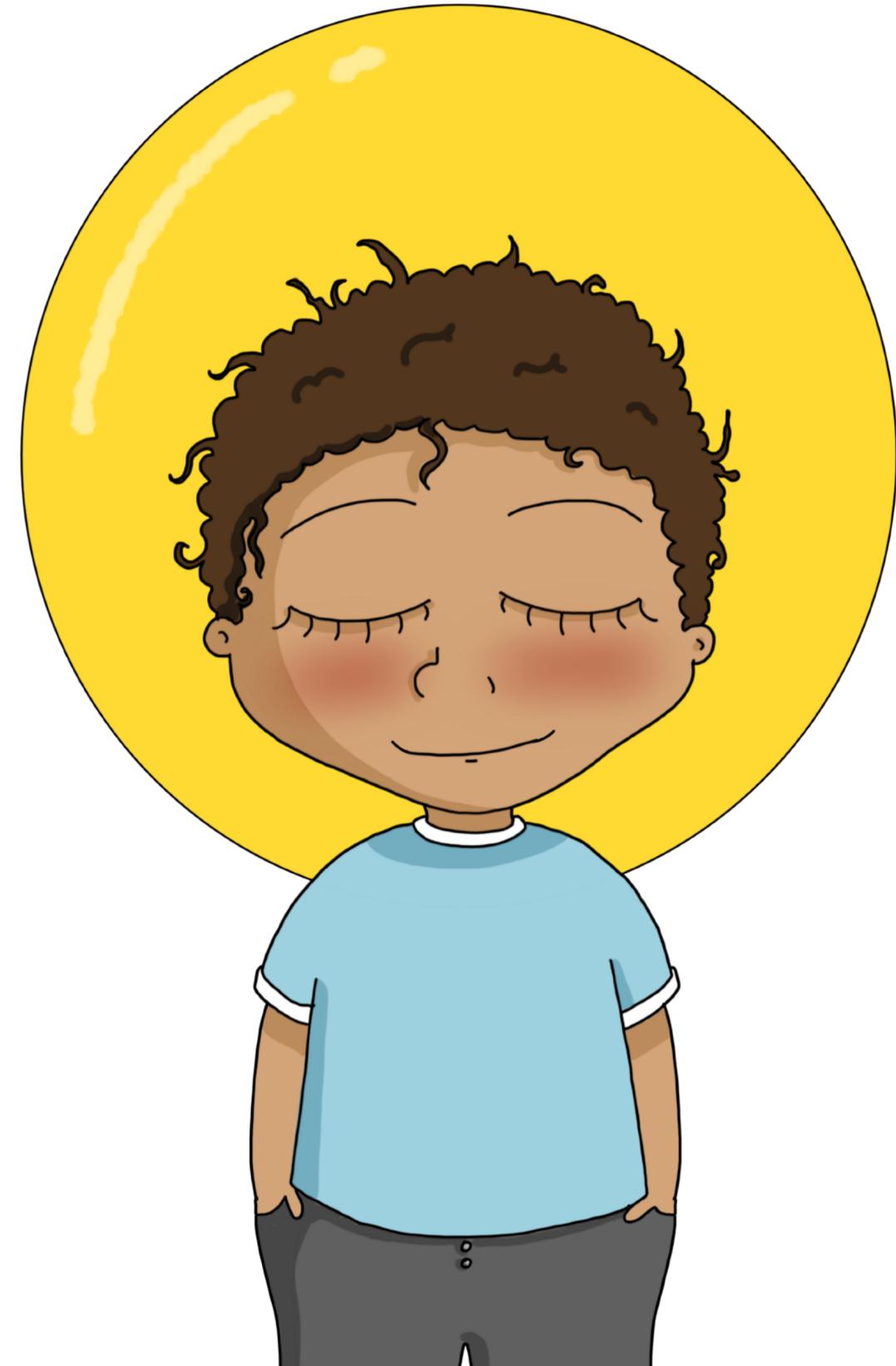


First and foremost we have to work at adopting a new attitude and approach to the panic.

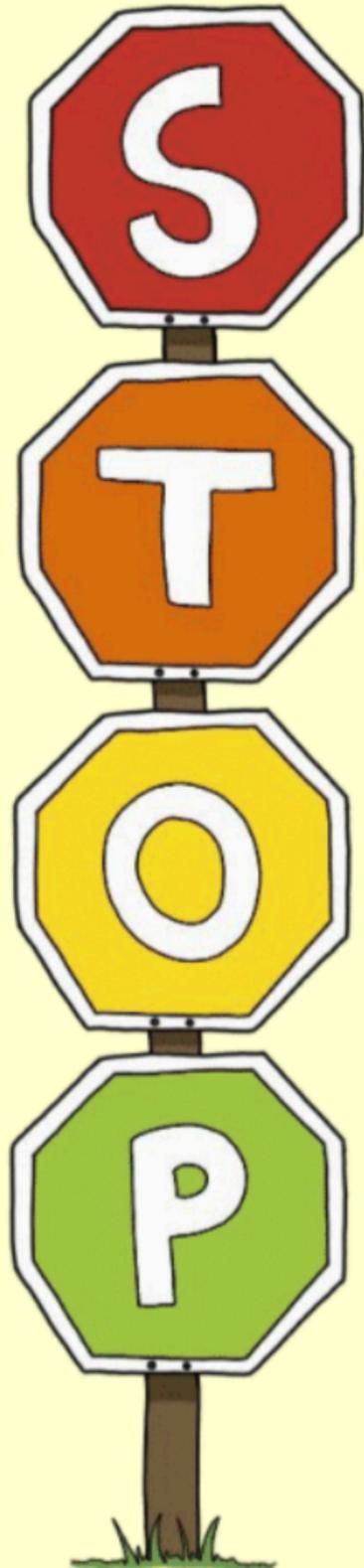
No longer pushing it away.

No longer feeding the fear.

“I welcome this as an opportunity to overcome my fear and become my best self”



STOP



Especially great to try when you notice feelings of anxiety or distress

S - Stop: Stop what you are doing. Press pause.

T - Take a Deep Breath: Now take several more deep breaths into your belly. Breathe slowly.

O - Observe: Continue to breathe slowly and observe your thoughts. Tune in to your body and the physical sensations you are experiencing. Notice your present experience without judgement.

P - Proceed: Press play and proceed with something helpful & useful to you in this moment. Ask yourself: "what do I need to do right now to look after myself?" Engage in self-care and be mindful about how you continue on in your day.

EXPOSURE AND THE FEAR LADDER



HOW TO:

1. WRITE OUT A FEAR YOU ARE TRYING TO CONQUER - SOMETHING THAT FEELS 10/10 SCARY.

PUT IT HERE

2. ON THE LOWER RUNGS WRITE OUT STEPS YOU COULD TAKE TO WORK TOWARDS YOUR FEAR.

PLACE THEM ON THE RUNG THAT CORRESPONDS WITH HOW CHALLENGING/SCARY IT IS.

3. START AT RUNG 1 & WORK YOUR WAY UP - REPEAT EACH RUNG OVER & OVER UNTIL IT NO LONGER FEELS AS SCARY AS IT WAS, & COULD BE MOVED TO RUNG 1 OR 2.

NOTE: IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP, IT'S STILL AN ACHIEVEMENT TO MOVE OFF RUNG ONE!

COPING STATEMENTS



💬 THIS FEELING IS TEMPORARY

💬 THESE SENSATIONS WILL PASS

💬 I FOCUS ON CALMING & SLOWING MY BREATH

💬 I AM NOT GOING CRAZY & THIS WILL NOT LAST FOREVER

💬 I AM NOT TRAPPED OR OUT OF CONTROL

💬 I CAN RIDE THIS OUT

💬 PEOPLE CANNOT TELL FROM THE OUTSIDE HOW I AM FEELING INSIDE. THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM THINKING

💬 I TRUST THAT I AM STRONG ENOUGH TO COPE

CHEAT SHEET

- BREATHE! TAKE LONG, SLOW DEEP BREATHS
- PRACTICE GROUNDING TECHNIQUES
- TAKE A BREAK AWAY - GO FOR A WALK
- HAVE A NAP TO 'RESET' WHEN YOU CAN
- SPLASH WATER ON YOUR FACE
- LEAN INTO THE FEAR - PRACTICE COPING WITH SITUATIONS YOU FIND SCARY
- RECOGNISE YOUR EMOTIONS, NAME THEM, SHARE IT OUTLOUD IF YOU CAN
- REMIND YOURSELF 'IT WILL PASS', THAT THIS IS UNCOMFORTABLE BUT NOT DANGEROUS
- RIDE IT OUT



- GROUNDING
- INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL FOCUS GROUNDING
- SHARP GROUNDING TOOLS - ICE/WATER ETC



TEXTURE TOUCH

You can do this exercise either outside, throughout your home, in your office or school.

Set a timer for 5 minutes.

Begin to walk around your chosen space reaching out and touching different items. Try to find as many items with as many different textures as you can.

Notice if things are...

- Smooth or rough
- Bumpy or flat
- Cool or warm to touch
- Soft or hard
- Fluffy or coarse
- Dense or light

Describe each item to yourself as though you had never seen or touched it before.

If your mind wanders off, simply acknowledge this then return your attention to this exercise.



COLD CLOTH



A calming grounding exercise for coping with anxiety, panic, unhealthy urges and overwhelming emotions

Get a cloth and soak it in cold water.

Place the cloth either over your whole face or just covering your eyes.

Notice...

- How the cloth feels on your skin
- The temperature
- The feeling of your closed eyelids
- Your slow steady breath
- What emotions this brings up

You might like to try this lying down, or to use your hands to put gentle pressure on the cloth or your eyelids.

WATER DUNK

Fill a sink with water - You can do this with either cold or warm water. You may like to experiment with both and observe your reactions to see which one is the most helpful to you.

Dunk your hands into the sink of water. Notice...

- What does the temperature feel like on your skin?
- Move your hands around - what sensations does that create?
- Wiggle your fingers - Notice how that feels
- Observe the way the water moves, describe to yourself what that looks like
- Notice the way the light reflects on the water
- Take note of sounds you can hear as you move your hands in the water

A great grounding experience for coping with anxiety, panic, unhealthy urges and overwhelming emotions



HOLDING ICE

Grab a piece of ice out of the freezer.

Hold the ice cube in your hand, noticing and describing to yourself...

- What is your initial reaction?
- How does the ice feel in the palm of your hand?
- What is the temperature like?
- How does it feel as the ice begins to melt?
- What emotions and thoughts come up for you while holding the ice?
- Does your initial reaction change as time goes on and the ice melts?

This is a great sensory distress tolerance skill for coping with anxiety, unhealthy/unhelpful urges and overwhelming feelings - It is a very real and physical grounding experience

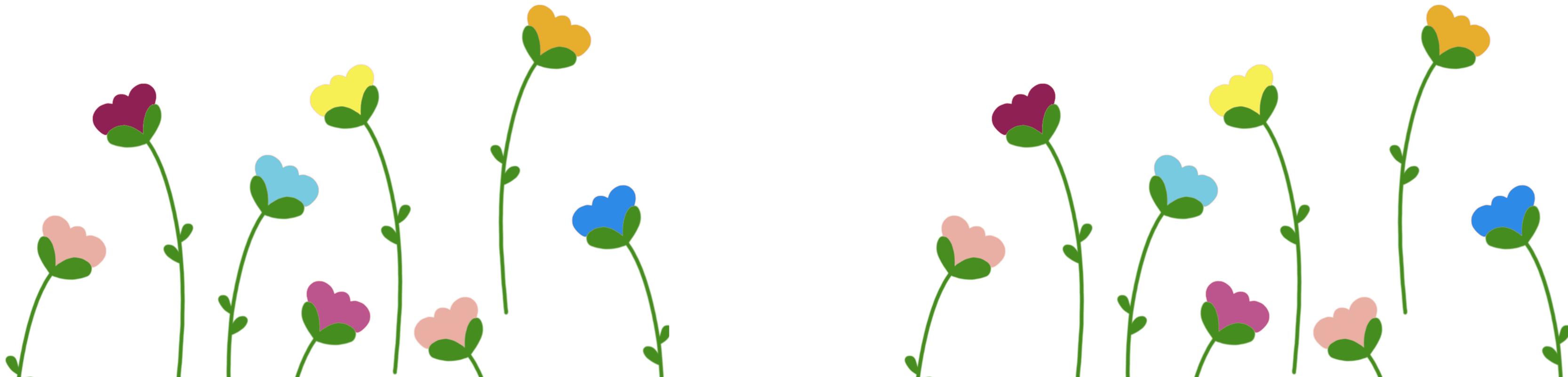


Overall nervous system regulation

Post-it notes to disrupt patterns or to remind you or new ones

Frequent body scans or check-ins

Morning and nighttime routine - Under 5 minutes is fine!



BODY SCAN



Sit somewhere comfortable or lie down.

Take a few deep breaths and notice the feeling of your body in contact with the chair or floor.

Start at your feet and work your way up through each part of your body, noticing how each area feels as you take a mental scan of your body.

If you notice any tension you may like to gently let go of this gripping, saying the word "relax" in your mind as you exhale and melt into this part of your body. Allow your body to feel heavy and at ease.



HOT SPOTS



Check in with these common 'hot spot' areas in your body. These places often hold muscle tension, tightness and gripping in response to anxiety or stress.

Scan through each of the areas indicated by the arrows: forehead, jaw, shoulders, chest, tummy & glutes.

Release any tension you feel in these spots by breathing in to them with a slow inhale then letting go of tension and saying the word "relax" to yourself on your exhale.

ISOMETRIC MUSCLE RELAXATION

Learn to create relaxation in your body by tensing and relaxing specific and isolated muscle groups.

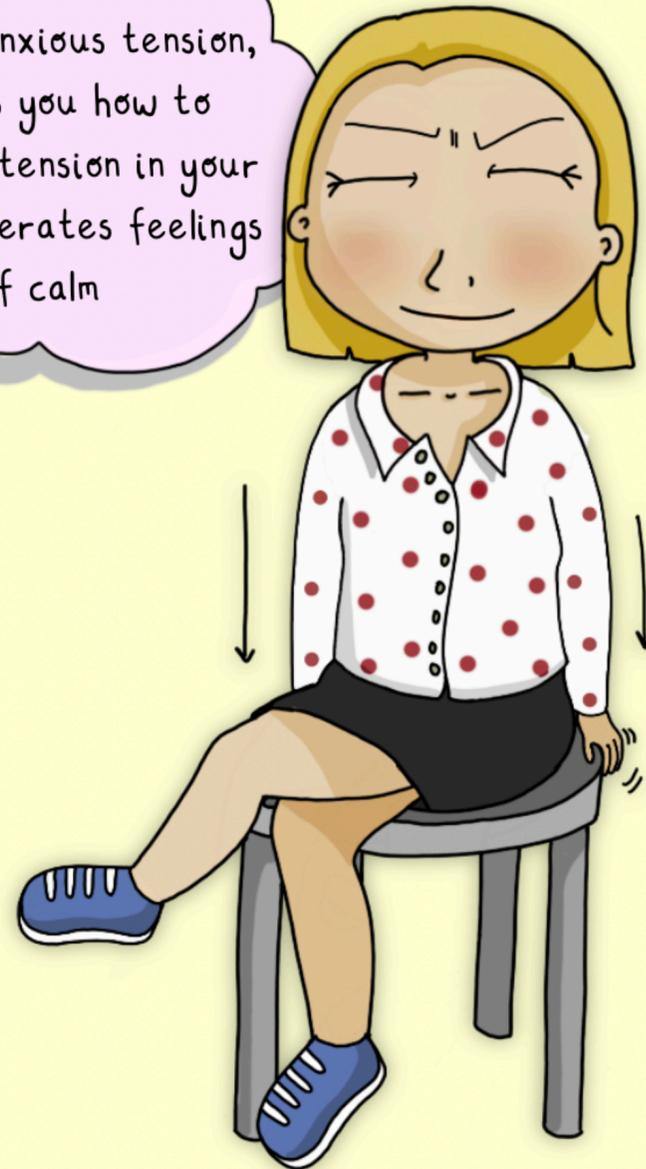
HOW TO:

1. Take a seat. Take a deep breath and hold for 7 seconds
2. At the same time, use your arms to pull yourself down onto your seat. This will tense your arm and shoulder muscles
3. After 7 seconds, breathe out and say the word "relax" to yourself while simultaneously letting go of the seat and releasing all tension from your muscles

Try these other muscle groups at step 2:

- Tense legs by crossing feet at ankles, press your upper leg down while lifting lower leg up to meet the pressure
- Hunch and release shoulders
- Clasp hands tight together while simultaneously pulling arms out/apart

Releases anxious tension, teaches you how to recognise tension in your body & generates feelings of calm



After your body scan, if you identify any hot spots holding tension you can use isometric muscle relaxation

MINDFUL TEA



Sit down somewhere comfortable with a cup of tea.

- Notice the heat of the mug in your hands
- Close your eyes and take a deep inhale of the aroma of the cup of tea
- Pay attention to the colour and the little details of the tea and the mug it is in
- Take a sip and take note of the temperature in your mouth
- Describe the flavour to yourself as if you had never tasted it before
- Notice the sensation of as you swallow the tea

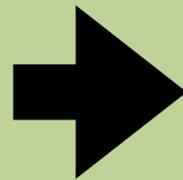
Continue to cycle through your senses as you enjoy a mindful cup of tea break.

You can try this with coffee, soup or hot chocolate too!

Try this as a part of your morning or night time routine

BREATHING

ONLY DIRECT ACCESS TO PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM



First take your resting breathing rate (how many breaths in 1 minute)

Then try 3-5 minutes of a breathing exercise

Now take your resting rate again

You can do this 3 x per day

00:01:00



Music Timer

ALTERNATE

NOSTRIL

BREATH

OR

BELLY BREATH

OR

WEIGHTED BREATH

00:01:00



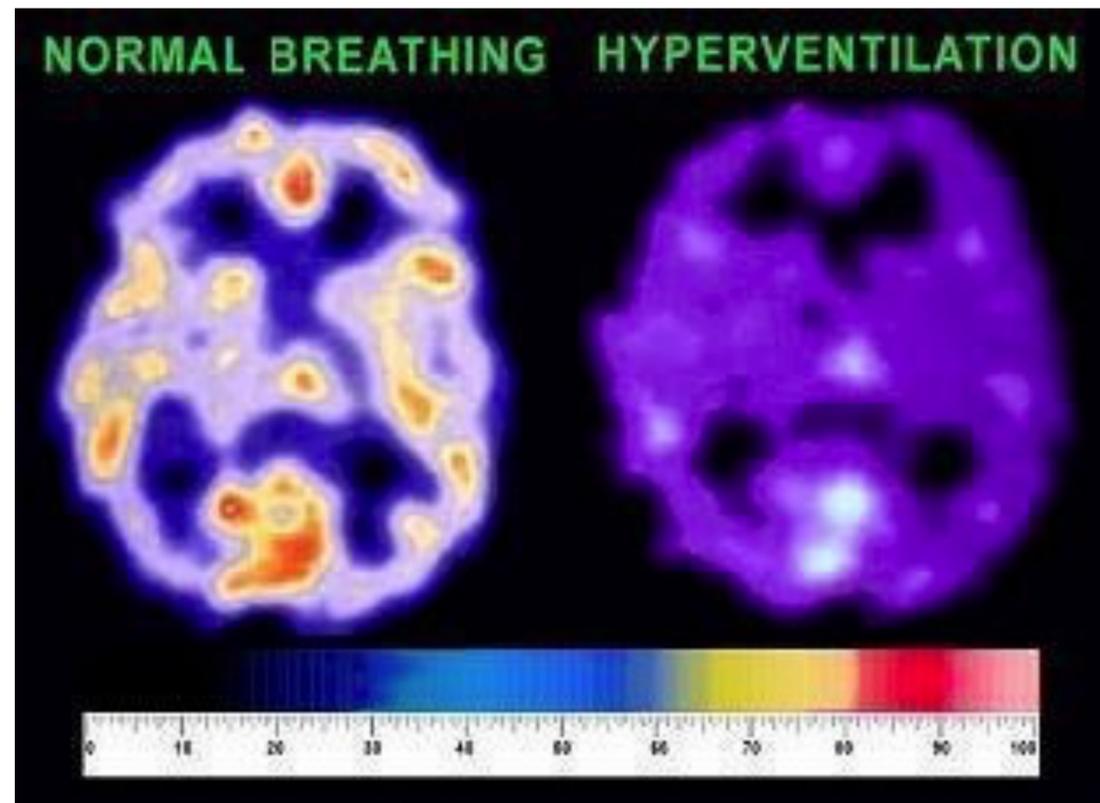
Music Timer

Normal Breathing rate? 12 - 20 breaths per minute.

Over-breathing indicates the stress response may be activated

Over-breathing throws out the balance of CO₂ and O₂ in the brain

Causing symptoms such as; tight chest, dizziness, anxiety, insomnia



Effects of 1 minute of voluntary hyperventilation on brain oxygen levels (vasoconstriction due to a lack of CO₂)

Did you know... A 'normal' breathing rate for an adult/teenager who isn't under stress is between 12 -20 breaths per minute.

If your breathing rate is faster than 20 breaths per minute, you are 'over-breathing' – over-breathing creates an imbalance of Co2 and O2 in your body... You end up with *less* Co2 than you need; this actually causes your brain to get over-excited and to overthink... Over-breathing also creates these symptoms:

- Feeling faint or lightheaded
- Feeling anxious or panicky
- Dizziness or tingling
- Tight chest or pain in the chest
- Frequent yawning or sighing
- Faster heartbeat
- Insomnia



Anxiety Interventions

From mild anxiety to panic



10 - Splash face with water, deep belly breaths, ride it out, coping statement 'this will pass'

9 - Alternate nostril breath, spot 5 things starting with the letter 'P', relax your shoulders

8 - Focus on your feet on the floor, mindfully observe your thoughts, 10 deep belly breaths

7 - Focus on your senses, name anxious thinking styles, take 5 deep breaths, relax your muscles

6 - Pivot your attention to the present, focus on what is within your control, 5 deep breaths

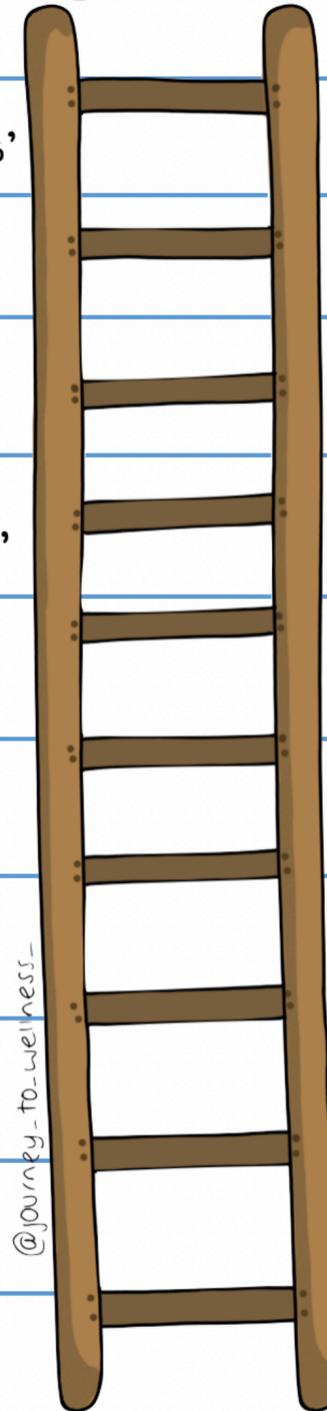
5 - Move slowly, breathe into your belly, stay present with your senses, observe your thinking

4 - Write out worries, problem solve, take a stroll, breathe deeply

3 - Coping statements, belly breaths, body scan

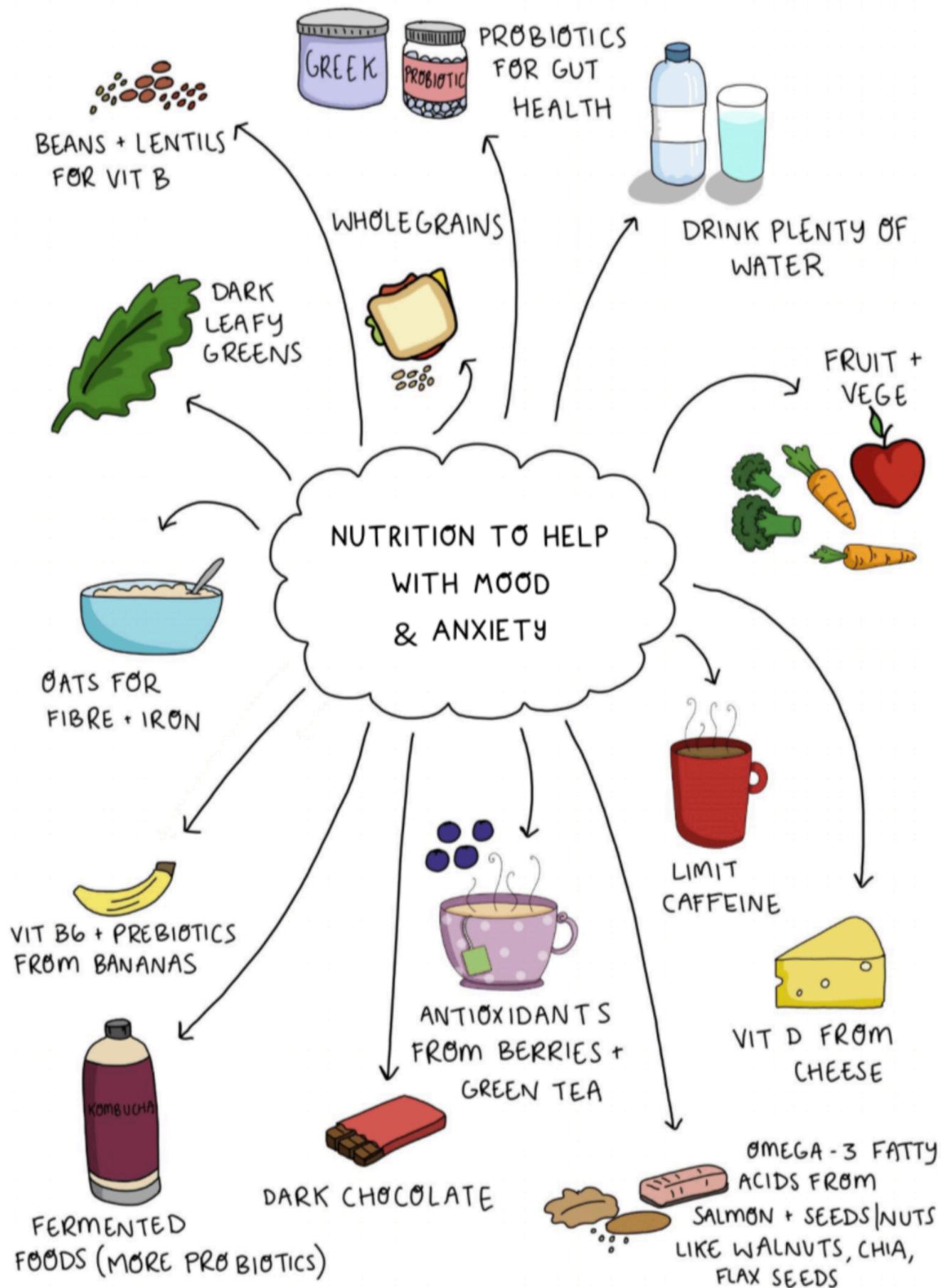
2 - Check in with thoughts and oversee any muscle tension

1 - Focus on the present moment, allow your emotions just to be



@journey_to_wellness_

@journey_to_wellness_





SLEEP

EXERCISE | MOVEMENT

WATER

NUTRITION

And remember...

Putting in place these tools and changes to the way you approach panic will take time and repetition.

Don't be disheartened if it feels unnatural and things don't work right off that bat on the first go.

Our brains need to do things over and over again in order to make and create new habits, then to reinforce those new tools and behaviour before they feel natural.

Hang in there. Don't give up. You've got this.

You CAN and WILL overcome this and have a brand new way of thinking and relating to panic and anxiety if you put in the work.

QUESTION
AND ANSWER
TIME!

RESOURCES

Mindfulness Cards

Anxiety Toolbox

Note to Self or Note to Self Journal

Grounding & Mindfulness Course

Anxiety Course Online

Mini Toolboxes - Breathing, Worry, Mood

MORE RESOURCES - AVAILABLE ON MY WEBSITE

Upcoming 6 week
coaching course

- Discover and unpack your limiting beliefs
- Re-write the way you see yourself
- Learn techniques to overcome your inner critic
- Discover tools to improve your focus and feel more in control of your life - Reduce your stress and anxiety
- Find more balance
- Build your confidence