

What keeps anxiety going?

Anxiety can be maintained by:

1. Anxious/negative thoughts



“I will never be able to do that”

“I can’t!”

“What if...”

“Everyone will look at me”



When we have anxious/negative thoughts, we tend to:

- Over-estimate “danger”
- Underestimate ability to cope
- Be hypervigilant to evidence which confirms these anxious thoughts

2. Anxious feelings

The Fight, Flight and Freeze Response:

- Anxious /negative thoughts will automatically trigger your body to respond in the same way it would if there was a full scale emergency!



Fight



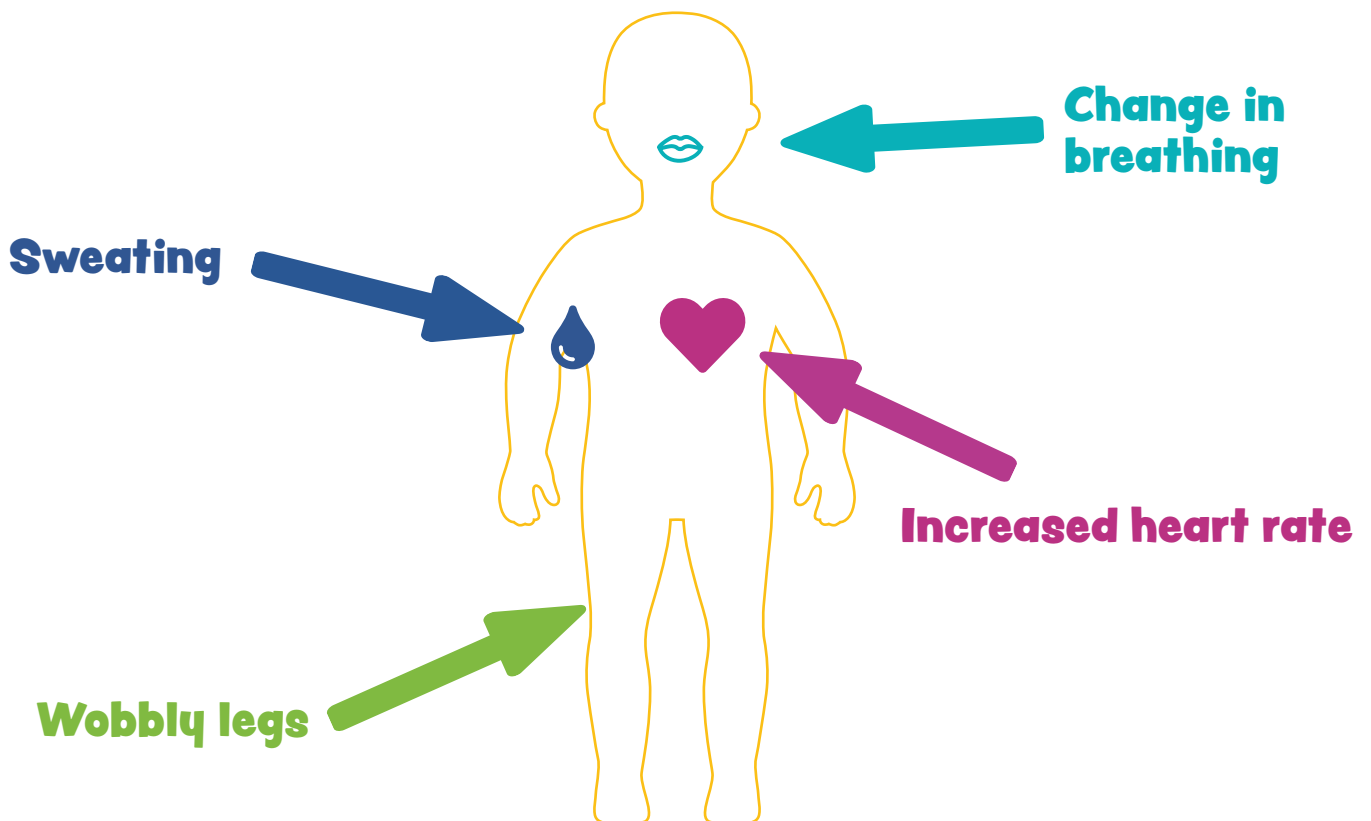
Flight



Freeze

Physical sensations in the body:

- Associated with adrenaline release, increased heart rate, breathing, sweating nausea .
- Uncomfortable symptoms reducing confidence to cope with threat.



These sensations can then feed into the negative thoughts, reaffirming them, which in turn can lead to anxious behaviours.

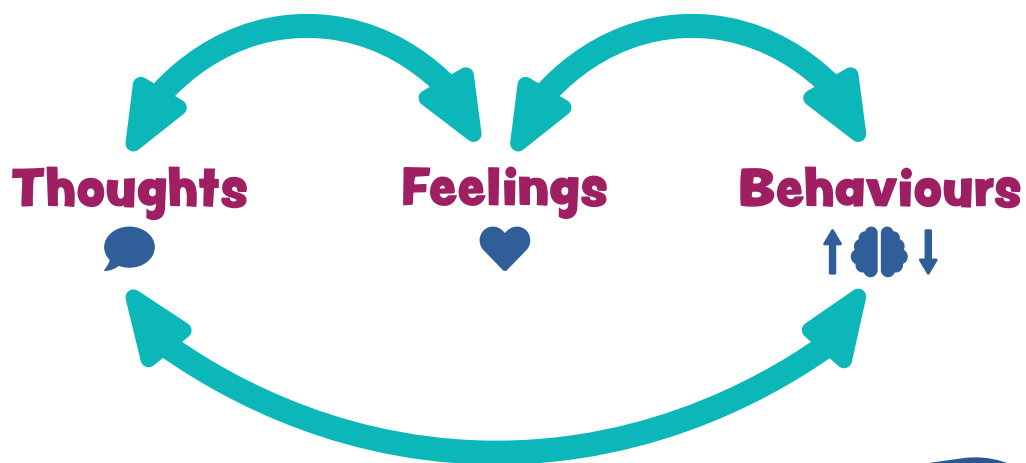
3. Anxious behaviours

- **Avoidance** of situations that cause anxiety
- **Safety seeking** behaviours
- **Reassurance seeking**

By **avoiding** the situation, the anxiety will grow and feel bigger than it is overtime.

Safety seeking behaviours are things that you do to help you approach the situation. For example, only wearing certain clothes, being very strict with the process or having something with you as a “lucky charm”. Although these behaviours may allow you to take part in the situation rather than avoiding it, relying on them can in itself become a problem.

The same thing applies if you constantly **seek reassurance**. This may be always asking if you are doing things right, reading the news/apps for information or checking things repeatedly.



Strategies

- Challenge your thoughts by using the TRUTH or BELIEF method.
- Be aware if you have developed any Safety Behaviours and try to eliminate them
- Limit the number of times you seek reassurance
- Its all about breaking the anxiety cycle!

