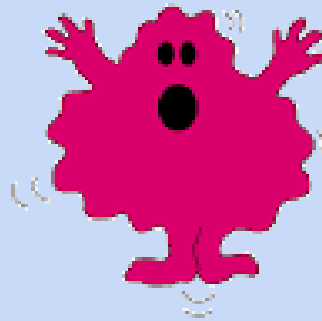


# Understanding Anxiety

**EH4MH**  
EARLY HELP 4 MENTAL HEALTH

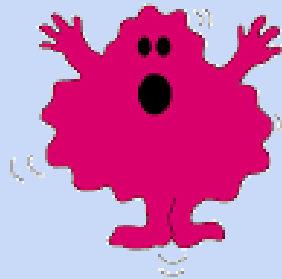


As part of Devon's dedicated service for school staff.

**EH4MH**  
EARLY HELP 4 MENTAL HEALTH

# Aim

**We are here today to provide you with the opportunity to explore the concept of anxiety in a safe and sensitive forum.**



***Everybody experiences anxiety, it is normal to feel anxious sometimes.***

***Anxiety can be good for us...but it can also be debilitating!***



**Anxiety...**

**...helps keep us alive today.**



**...is motivating - helps us to perform at our best.**

**...creates the feeling of excitement within us.**



HEALTH & SAFETY  
COMMISSION

PROPOSED  
CHILD PROTECTION  
COTTON WOOL SUIT



IT DOESN'T LOOK SAFE TO ME  
AT ALL - HIS FACE IS TOTALLY  
EXPOSED TO DANGER

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Avoiding some situations could be useful

But:

Positive risk taking &  
celebrating small brave  
steps...

...develops confidence &  
self belief rather than  
reinforcing the thoughts to  
avoid.

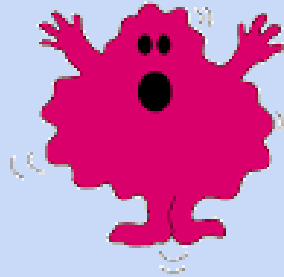


***“My anxiety attacks can hit out of nowhere, they’re so unpredictable and intense. It feels like a meteor when it hits the earth... it has complete control of my life at that moment and comes with no warning”***





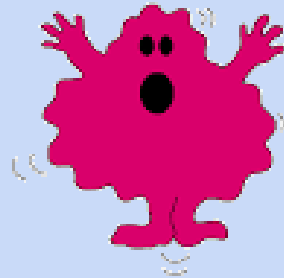
# The Biology Behind Anxiety



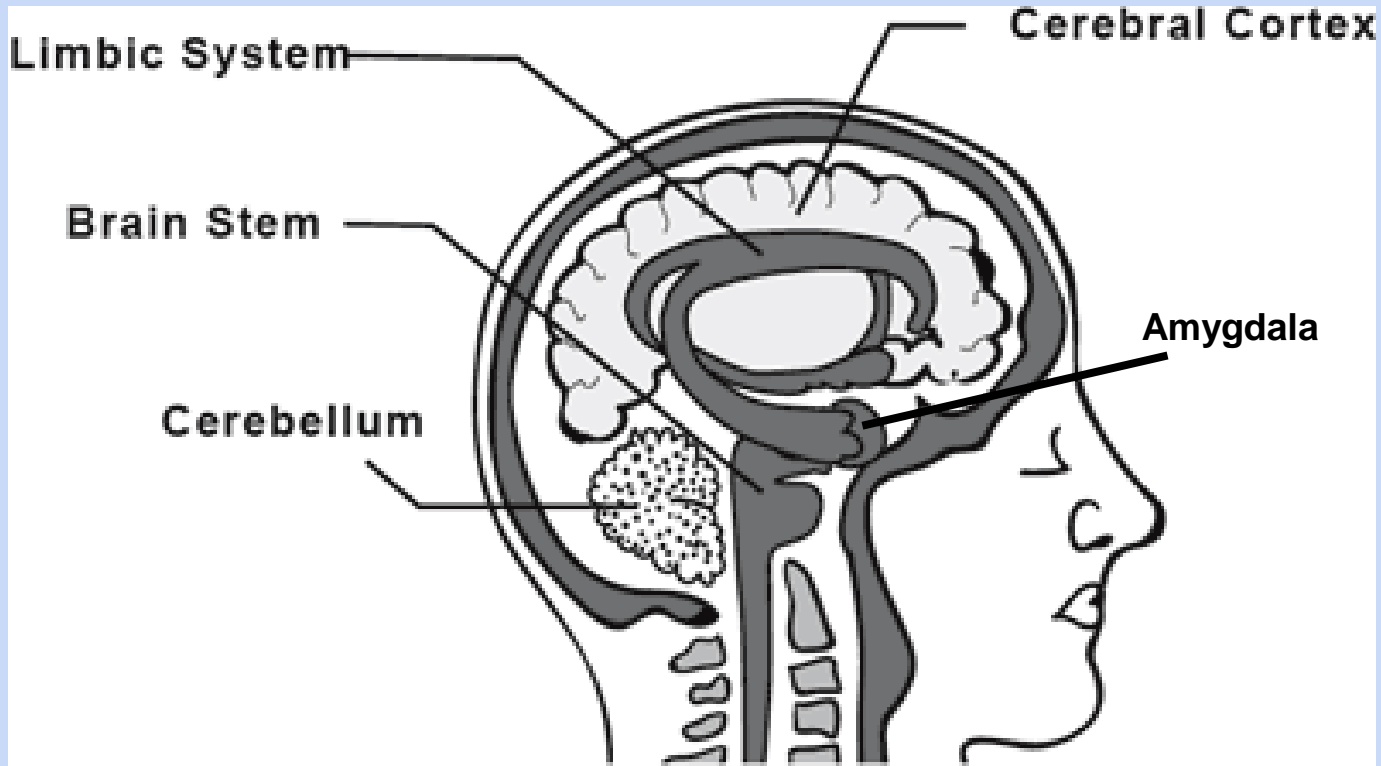
# The Limbic System

The limbic system governs behaviour essential to survival of the individual.

...so it is involved in *self-preservation* and *preservation of the species*...



# This is where the limbic system sits within the brain:



# Fight or Flight...

## Ready for Action

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Veins in skin restrict blood to send more blood to major muscle groups ( this can lead to feeling chilled)
- Blood glucose levels increase
- Muscles tense up energised by adrenaline and glucose ( goose bumps)
- Smooth muscle relaxes to allow more oxygen into the Lungs



## Increased Alertness

- Pupils dilate to let in as much light
- Brain becomes alert to broader picture, looking for threat, not able to focus on specific tasks

## Energy efficient

- Non essential systems shut down such as immune system and digestive system.
- Body may evacuate to lighten load ready for flight

All of these three types of responses are natural and designed to help a person respond to threat

## Thoughts racing or disjointed.

Caused by adrenaline release

**Dry Mouth** - sympathetic nervous system shutting down inessential systems stops saliva production in mouth.

**Blushing** - Adrenaline causes your blood vessels to dilate in order to improve blood flow and oxygen delivery. As a result, the vessels in your face dilate, allowing more blood to flow through them than usual.

**Shakey voice** - oxygen overload interferes with vocalising

**Neck & Shoulder tension** - caused by oxygen pumping to muscles, and after effects as the oxygen reduces.

**Sweating** - The body heats up because it is working harder to circulate blood. And then sweats so it can cool itself down / regulate temperatures.

**Tightness in the chest and throat, difficulty breathing** - if you do not burn the extra oxygen off that your body is taking in it will try to reduce the levels by constricting the chest and the lungs, reducing breath intake...

**Dizzy / lightheaded.** Due to adrenaline and increase in oxygen

**Surroundings seem distant / tunnel vision.** Pupils dilate to take in as much visual info as possible; eye refocuses to distance to spot the danger

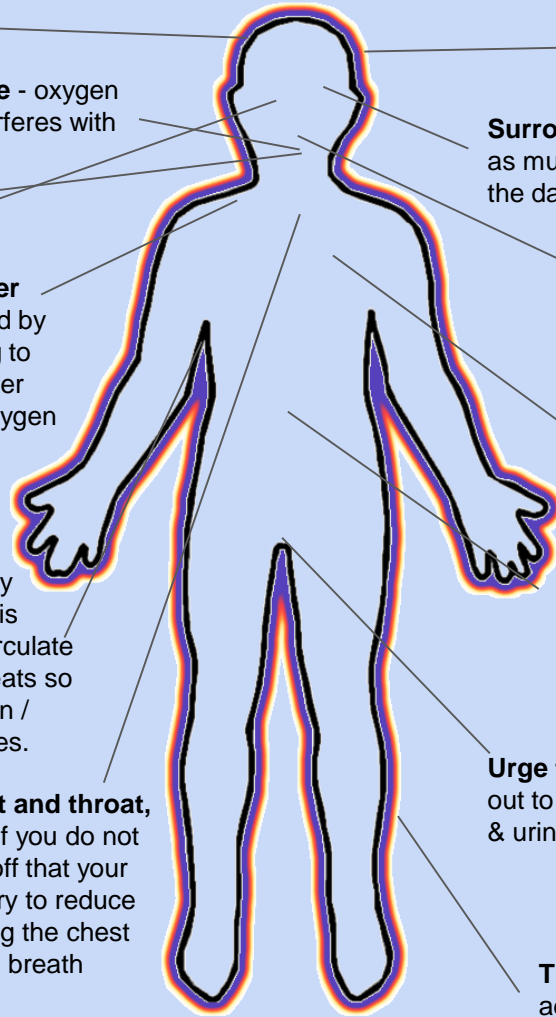
**Difficulty breathing** - the lungs, throat and nostrils open up to flood the lungs with enough oxygen to keep up with the increased circulation of blood (re-oxygenating it) - this can trigger shallow rapid breathing.

**Heart pounding** - beats faster to increase circulation, since it anticipates your body is about to work a lot harder.

**Butterflies/'sick' feeling** - Parasympathetic nervous system shuts down your digestive system to redirect blood to essential systems such as the heart, lungs, legs and arms. This can also cause *irritable bowel syndrome, nausea and diarrhea*

**Urge to urinate or pass a stool** - bladder and bowels may open out to reduce the need for inessential internal actions (and faeces & urine may have put off our attackers)

**Trembling, wobbliness, tingling and shaking** - an effect of adrenaline stimulus and oxygen stimulus (overloads).



# Symptoms of fight or flight...

# Freeze...

## When and Why

- Perceive the threat as inescapable → Freeze response
- An emergency conservation device
- Has the potential to save our lives - shuts down pain and makes us appear dead
- Seen as a primary defense survival strategy
- Freeze response is located in our brain stem and is known as the parasympathetic system, where automatic metabolic activity can be turned off, so that we go 'floppy'



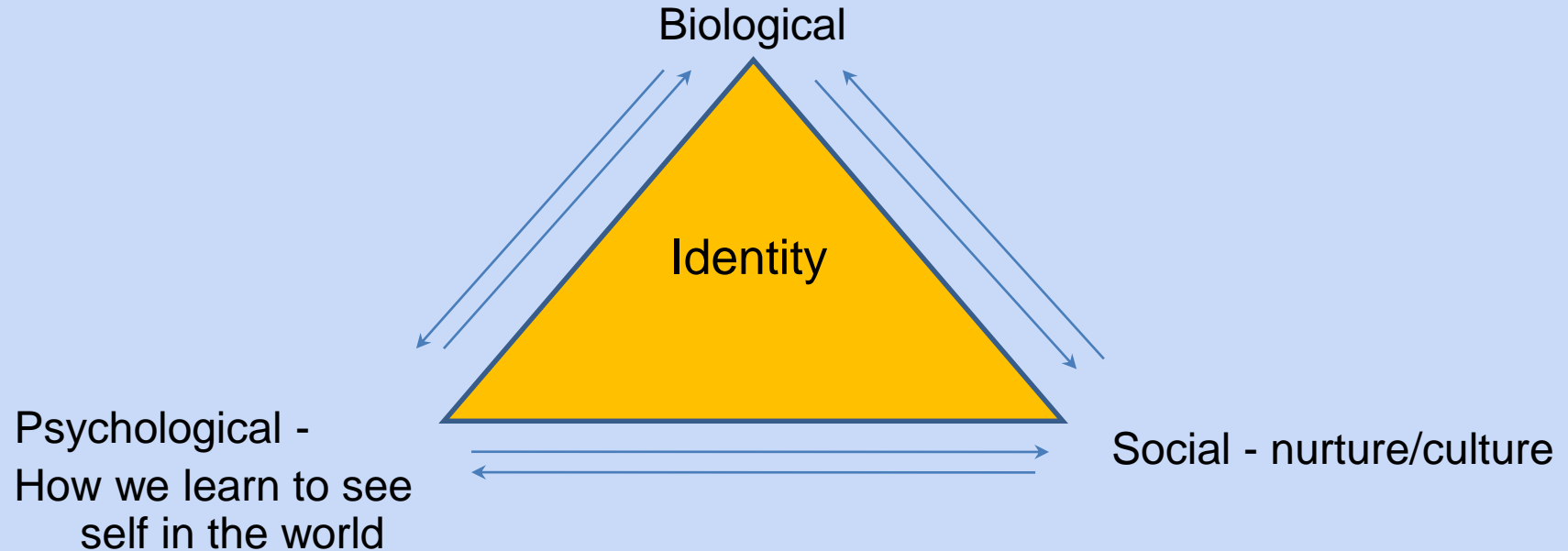
## In response to trauma

- The freeze response can happen when we are terrified.
- Examples of possible freeze triggering events: car accidents, are subjected to violent crimes, or witness a terrifying event.
- People may: pass out, freeze, mentally distance themselves from what is happening, experience no physical pain, have no memory of the event.
- It is important to think about this when supporting children who have been through an extreme experience as they may experience fragmented memories and flashbacks to the event which stay with them for a long time.

## Symptoms

- Being rooted to the spot unable to move
- Disassociating from the situation - may seem in a bubble; eyes glaze over.
- Frozen Panic
- Loss of concentration on deprioritised tasks.
- Children and young people will find it difficult to communicate when in this moment.
- Reactivated really easily

# A Bio-Psycho-Social model



# Vicious Thought Cycle

## Am I:

- Beating myself up?
- Focusing on the bad stuff?
- Being gloomy about the future?
- Expecting things to go wrong?
- Worrying what others may think about me?

## Do I feel:

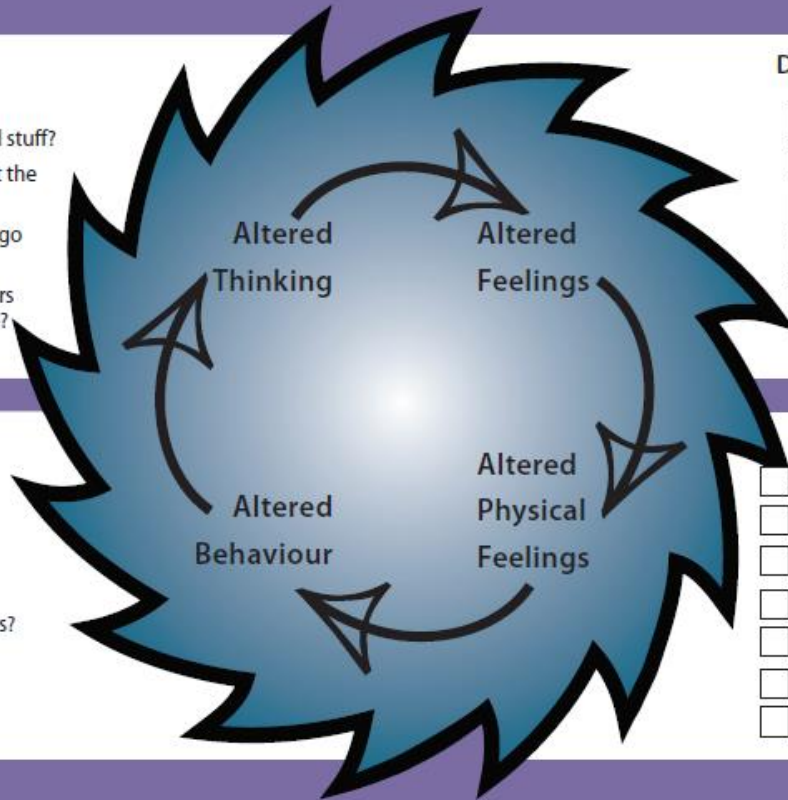
- Low/Sad?
- Stressed/Anxious?
- Guilty?
- Ashamed?
- Angry/Irritable?

## Am I choosing to:

- Avoid something?
- Escape/Run away?
- Lean on others too much?
- Stop doing fun things?
- Stop seeing people I like?
- Doing things that backfire?

## Am I:

- Tense?
- Shaky?
- Sick?
- Can't sleep?
- Off my food?
- Heart racing?
- Hot/Sweaty?
- Dizzy?
- Cold/Clammy
- Tired out?
- Not able to relax?





# We may see children and young people:

Asking for lots of reassurance

Wanting things to be perfect.

Having difficulty joining in.



Reluctant to ask for help.

Saying that they feel unwell.

Fearful of test / performance situations.

## What else have others observed?

## Key things our young people would like us to know:

*“I find it really helpful when the person who I’m speaking to about my anxiety is really listening to me and non-authoritative. I appreciate a non-judgemental and supportive approach”*

*“I find having a designated quiet space really good - somewhere to go rather than just leaving the school premises”*

*“Things that may appear small or trivial might feel really massive to me. I wish the staff had questioned their own instinctive reactions to what I was telling them”*

With thanks to our young people involved in People Participation for sharing these!



# Our very own Magic



**To repair, recover and sustain good mental health these are musts:**

**Talk about your feelings.**

**Ask for Help.**

**Take a Break.**

**Eat Well.**

**Stay Hydrated.**

**Keep in Touch with People you Care About.**

**Stay Active in Mind and Body**

**Do Something you are Good at and Enjoy**

**Actively Care for Others**

**Be Proud of your very Being**



## Ostrich Style

**'Burying head in sand'**

**Avoid thinking or talking about problems.**

**Signal given: too busy and unavailable to support.**

**'Swerving' the issue.**

## Kangaroo Style



**Protective**

**wanting to keep everyone safe, as if in a pouch.**

**Too accommodating and controlling**

**Inner rescuer at play.**

## Jellyfish Style



**Wobbly, see through, and reactive to a prod.**

**Being in a raw emotional state, with all feelings close to the surface.**

**May be swept away by currents of emotion and beliefs.**

**Intense and visible reactions.**

# How are we Being?

# And communicating that Being?



## Dolphin Style

**A calm, warm, nurturing style**

**Guiding, coaching, encouraging and subtle.**

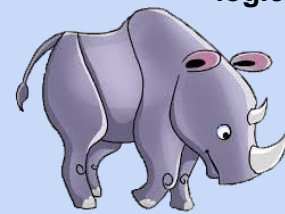
**Think of calmly swimming alongside and gently nudging in the right direction occasionally.**

## Rhinoceros Style

**Attempts to persuade and convince the person to change by argument**

**As if charging at and trying to smash through the behaviour and beliefs using logic.**

**Rushing in to make change.**



# Let's have a think about the impact of what we say...

*“What now?”*

*“I haven't got time for your nonsense today”*

*“Why don't you just stop thinking about it?”*

*“Don't worry about it, it'll be alright”*

*“Don't be silly...”*

*“Don't be stupid, we've talked about this”*

**How does that leave you feeling...?**

"Failure is an opportunity to grow"

## GROWTH MINDSET

"I can learn to do anything I want"

"Challenges help me to grow"

"My effort and attitude determine my abilities"

"Feedback is constructive"

"I am inspired by the success of others"

"I like to try new things"

"Failure is the limit of my abilities"

## FIXED MINDSET

"I'm either good at it or I'm not"

"My abilities are unchanging"

"I don't like to be challenged"      "I can either do it, or I can't"

"My potential is predetermined"

"When I'm frustrated, I give up"

"Feedback and criticism are personal"

"I stick to what I know"

**M = ME!** How you are **BEING** is crucial to successful listening. Watch out for your inner rescuer.

**A = Active Listening-** Listening is different to hearing!

**G = Generate** their “what next.”

**I = Inspire** and be Inspired ...

**C = Compliment** - notice and feed the qualities of the Growth Mindset.

## How to help someone become their own expert problem solver:

- Encourage their own answers - thoughtful problem solving and solution finding.

*“What was it you came up with last time we spoke - you had such a good idea but it has slipped my mind”*

*“So let’s take some deep breaths and think about this together”*

*“Let me know when your brain is ready to do some thinking - if you need 5 deep breaths, or 10 that’s fine, you let me know when you are ready”*

- How can I help you?

*“We know we need to feel better to be able to do more learning”*

Calming Down jar - still enabling them to choose

Moving on Jar - *“good choice”*

- Notice what they are doing well

*“I really like how you are thoughtful about what needs to happen for you to feel better”*

*“I really like how you notice when you are not feeling right and come and seek support, and then find your own solution”*

*“I like how you are exploring different ideas”*



# The Seven Confident Thoughts

1. *The world is a pretty safe place*
2. *I can cope with most things*
3. *Bad things don't usually happen to me*
4. *Bad things don't usually up out of the blue*
5. *I have some control over the things that happen to me*
6. *People are pretty nice really*
7. *Other people respect me*

Exercise: looking back at identified children's fears, link this to one of the above thoughts and see if you can come up with a phrase that can build the child's confidence



# More Examples of Supportive Approaches

- **Set structures and routines.** Knowing what to expect can help to reduce worry. Where possible, let children know in advance of upcoming events, changes in usual teachers etc.
- **Consider the environment** to support children with anxiety.
- **Bite size** - Help children break assignment or tasks down into smaller chunks.
- **Be mindful of timed activities and testing situations.** Some children with anxiety may perform poorly with time pressures.
- **Plan ahead** For excursions and school trips when a child has particular fears or concerns (e.g. pre-talk).
- **Work with the teachers/support staff as a team;** with separation anxiety, you may develop a clear plan together



# Helpful Literature/Resources

**'When your worries get too big' Kari Dunn Buron**

**'A Huge Bag of worries' Virginia Ironside**

**[http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/19579/cyp\\_parents\\_1\\_2\\_web.pdf](http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/19579/cyp_parents_1_2_web.pdf)**

**[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/anxiety\\_stepladder\\_approach.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/anxiety_stepladder_approach.html)**

**<http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/43>**

**<http://www.anxietybc.com/anxiety-PDF-documents>**

**<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>**

**[http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_parents/worried\\_about\\_your\\_child/anxiety](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/worried_about_your_child/anxiety)**

# Helpful Literature/Resources

**What to Do When You Worry Too Much. A Kid's Guide to Anxiety,**  
by Dawn Huebner

**What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck. A Kid's Guide to Overcoming OCD**  
by Dawn Huebner

**Think Good - Feel Good. A cognitive behaviour therapy workbook for children and young people,**  
by Paul Stallard

**The Coping Cat Workbook**  
By Philip Kendall & Kristina Hedtke

**Timid to Tiger. A Treatment Manual for Parenting the Anxious Children**  
By Sam Cartwright-Hatton, with Ben Laskey, Stewart Rust and Deborah McNally.

**The Incredible Years. A trouble shooting guide for parents of children aged 2-8years,**  
By Carolyn Webster-Stratton.

# Helpful Literature/Resources

Also recommended are the Margot Sunderland books

- Margot Sunderland (2003). "*The Day the Sea Went out and Never Came Back*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
- Margot Sunderland (2003). "*Ruby and the Rubbish Bin*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
- Margot Sunderland (2003). "*Teenie Weenie in a Too Big World: A Story for Fearful Children*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd
- Margot Sunderland (2001). "*A Pea Called Mildred: A Story to Help Children Pursue Their Hopes and Dreams*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
- Margot Sunderland (2001). "*A Niffleloo Called Nevermind: A Story for Children Who Bottle Up Their Feelings*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
- Margot Sunderland (2001). "*Willy and the Wobbly House: A Story for Children Who are Anxious or Obsessional*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
- Margot Sunderland (1997). "*Draw on Your Emotions*". Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

# Thank you for your time today.

The Early Help for Mental Health Service (EH4MH) is commissioned by Devon County Council and Public Health.

The EH4MH service delivers two distinct strands in partnership with each other... Virgincare, Young Devon & Kooth.

Virgincare provides support to school staff with provision of Mental Health Consultation, Clinical Supervision and Training.

Young Devon & Kooth provide counselling to secondary age young people.

Training today was brought to you free as part of the EH4MH delivery from Virgincare. It is important that together we develop our offer to maximise its impact over its 5 year life span. Please fill in the feedback form provided as this will help us identify any areas of improvement in this Anxiety training event. We value all feedback and look forward to receiving yours.

If you would like to hear more about EH4MH please check in with your EH&W Champion who will let you know how we are developing in your school. Best Wishes to you all, EH4MH Team

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Image 1: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/brain-power/grades-4-5/your-amazing-brain-module-2/background>

Image 2: <http://vanat.cvm.umn.edu/brain18/pages/limbicComponents.html>

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