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Understanding and Managing Work Related Anxiety in Project SEARCH

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Introductions

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- Framing the problem
  - Concerns and misconceptions
  - Understanding anxiety – clinical vs normal work related
  - Work related anxiety in Project SEARCH interns

- What we are doing in the UK
  - Evolution of the programme
  - Workshop session 1
  - Workshop session 2
  - Train the Trainer

- Understanding anxiety
  - The function of anxiety
  - How anxiety works
  - The basics of anxiety management strategies
  - Resources

- Overview of strategies including examples

Framing the problem

Framing the problem:
Common concerns/misconceptions

- Anxiety is a mental health disorder

- Project SEARCH teams should not deal with workplace anxiety: it is not in our remit

- Staff fear and confidence in dealing with work related anxiety

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Clinical Anxiety

- **Diagnosable mental health condition** that has a big impact on your life.

- Anxiety may come up **unexpectedly** for seemingly no reason.

- Anxiety response to a situation or problem may be **much stronger** then you would expect.

- May experience a lot of **unrealistic anxiety** e.g. fear of a situation that will likely never happen.

- **May last for a long time** even if the situation has been resolved.

- May feel **impossible to control** or manage.

- Disorders include;
    - Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Phobias, PTSD, OCD, Health Anxiety, Body Dysmorphic Disorder, Perinatal Anxiety

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'Normal' Anxiety

- "A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome".

- Sub clinical –**NOT A DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION**

- Related to a **specific** situation or problem.

- **Lasts only as long** as the situation or problem.

- Is **proportional** to the situation or problem.

- Is a **realistic response** to a realistic situation or problem (to that individual).

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Reflection

- Does work related anxiety fit best with clinical anxiety or 'normal' anxiety?
  - Normal anxiety

- What is and isn't part of my role?
  - Clinical anxiety is not. We signpost on to appropriate professionals or seek advice from them if they are already involved.
  - Understanding and managing "normal" work related anxiety is an integral part of our role in helping interns gain meaningful employment.
  - Clinical and "normal" anxiety are not mutually exclusive.

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Work related anxiety in Project SEARCH interns

What interns might say

- "I've got a bad tummy"
- "I've got a sore throat"
- "I've got a headache"
- "I'm bored"
- "I'm not enjoying this placement"

How interns might feel

- Nervous
- Need the loo
- Butterflies
- Moody
- Unsure

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Cont'd...

What interns might do

- Overwhelmed

- Crying

- Go home sick/ring in sick

- Avoid new tasks/situations

- Want to stay in the classroom

- Not speak to managers

- Get angry or irritable

- Withdraw/hide

- Drop out of Project SEARCH

- Not do the work

- Not ask questions

- Express lack of enjoyment at the end of the day

- Concerns or complaints raised by managers and mentors

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What we are doing in the UK

Evolution of the programme

- Workshop Session 1 – Understanding Anxiety and the basics of management
- Workshop Session 2 – review of learning and problem solving person centred examples
- Project SEARCH onsite team peer discussion
- Delivered at UK Project SEARCH Conference
- Train the trainer

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Workshop Session 1

Aim:

- introduce new learning – understanding anxiety and management strategies

- create a shared understanding and language

- Normalise work related anxiety

- Introducing general management strategies

Design:

- Takes place in Induction weeks

- Half day session (approx. 2.5-3 hrs with breaks)

- Facilitated exercises (whole group and small group)

- Role plays

- Handouts and resources provided

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Workshop Session 1

Observations:

- Shared and individual understanding and language improves
- Helps identify potentially anxiety provoking situations for individual scenarios

Feedback from sites:

- Themes and exercises are being incorporated into wider curriculum
- Provides a basis for individual discussion and strategizing
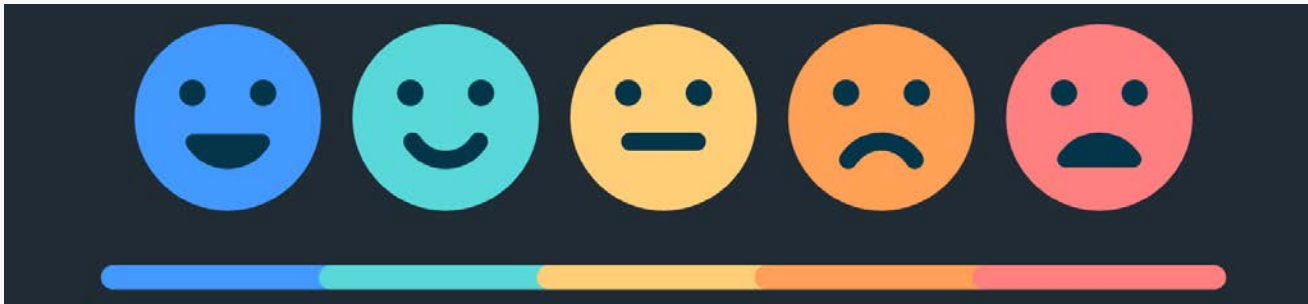
Workshop Session 2

Aim:

- Review learning – understanding anxiety and management strategies
- Recognise successful management strategies from internships
- Strategize and problem solve management strategies in advance of next internship
- Making strategies transferable – internships/employment

Design:

- Takes place in first transition week
- Half day session (approx. 2-2.5 hrs with breaks)
- Facilitated exercises (whole group and small group)
- Handouts and resources provided

Workshop Session 2

Observations:

- Promotes creativity
- Interns begin to assist each other
- Interns start to internalise their own strategies and improved communication with on site team and department managers/mentors
- Improved self reflection

Feedback from sites:

- Increased ownership of strategies
- Increased staff confidence, creativity, enthusiasm and innovation
- improved ability to recognise how anxiety presents in individual interns
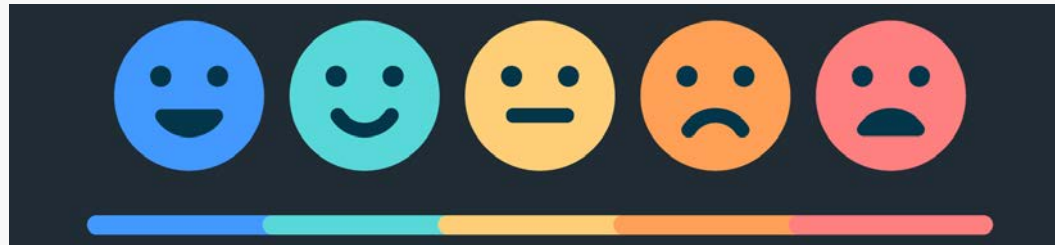
Train the Trainer

Aim:

Provide attendees the:

- necessary knowledge and understanding of anxiety
- knowledge and practice of anxiety management strategies

Teach attendees how to:

- Identify and differentiate clinical and 'normal' anxiety in interns
- facilitate team discussion and problem solving

Design:

- One full day training, preferably regional to encourage network and shared learning
- We only use widely available self help materials that require no specialist knowledge or expertise to use
- Model delivering workshop sessions to interns
- Practical focus - learning and practicing anxiety management strategies
- Problem solving individual real life examples
- Handouts, resources and guidance provided

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Understanding Anxiety

Work related anxiety in Project SEARCH interns

What interns might do

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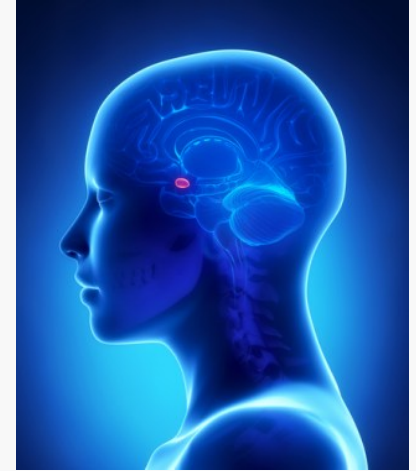
The Function of Anxiety

It alerts us to threat and protects us from dangers!

FIGHT   FLIGHT   FREEZE

How Anxiety works: the vicious cycle

SITUATION: The Phone Ringing

THOUGHTS

ACTIONS or SAFETY BEHAVIOURS

EMOTIONS

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

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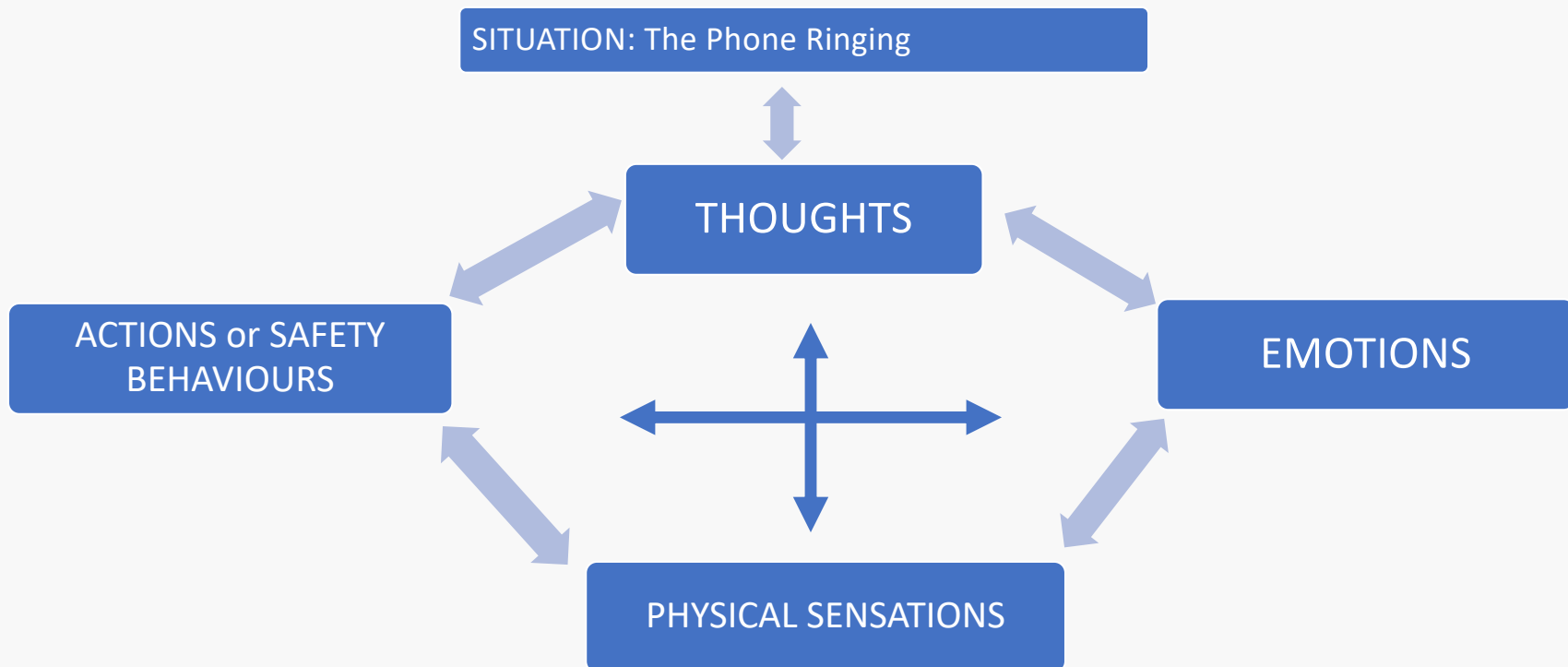
Basics of Anxiety Management

REDUCE THE THREAT:

- Making the unpredictable predictable. (planning, graded exposure to new tasks, intensive job coaching that reduces over time)
- Making the unsafe safe (new environments, exit, safe places, named workers)

CHANGE BEHAVIOURS AND PATTERNS OF THINKING

- Overcoming patterns of avoidance and withdrawal
- Changing stressful lifestyles and regaining our self confidence

REDUCE OR COPE WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS AND PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- Repetition "riding the wave" reduces anxiety
- The DFN Project SEARCH model itself

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Management Strategy Categories

NOT ANXIOUS	A BIT ANXIOUS	VERY ANXIOUS
Preventative: Balance based. Maintaining a good standard of health and wellbeing, and ensuring suitable networks of support and communication skills are in place.	Stopping it building: Action based. Building a tool box of thought and action based strategies to help manage anxiety in it's early stages and help prevent it worsening or impacting on work.	Coping when highly anxious/panic: Strategies for use when work related anxiety is high, usually involves planning in advance with intern and on site teams. Not often needed if planned for.

Sleep and daily routine

Healthy intake and meal routines

Alcohol

Communicating effectively

Regular exercise

Socialising in relation to work

Relaxation and choices in down time

Identifying and challenging worry thoughts

Going for a walk/use of movement

Distraction and grounding techniques

Use of music/ sensory strategies

Breathing exercises

Focus using work tasks

SAFE PLACE

Planning and using safe places

Resources

Examples of self help resources for additional information and ideas:

- General anxiety information including self help workbook: https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anxiety.asp
- General anxiety information and self help guidance: https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AnxietySelfHelp.pdf
- Easy read booklet on anxiety for people with learning disabilities: https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/anxiety-information/learning-disabilities-and-anxiety/
- Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities anxiety information: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/a-to-z/a/anxiety
- Mental Health Foundation easy read guide to anxiety: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilties/publications/easy-read-guide-anxiety

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Thank you for listening!
Any Questions?

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