



# COPING WITH

# ANXIETY

## Parent's Workshop

# Hello!

We are Children and Young People's  
Education Wellbeing Practitioners at  
South West London & St George's  
Mental Health NHS Trust



# Agenda

- ❖ What is anxiety?
- ❖ How can anxiety present itself in your child?
  - ❖ What keeps anxiety going?
- ❖ How can you continue support your child to cope with anxiety?

# Anxiety...helpful or problematic?

**TED<sup>x</sup>** AmoskeagMillyardWomen  
x = independently organized TED event

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# So...what is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal response to stress. Everyone will experience at some point in their lives

Anxiety becomes an issue when we feel unable to manage it and it stops us from doing the things we want to do

People use all different words for anxiety, some call it stress, some call it worries but for this workshop we are going to use the phrase anxiety

Anxiety can fall into different categories

We can re-learn by approaching our fears in a graded way when they are not dangerous and learn to feel safe again

# So...what is anxiety?

Anxiety =

Overestimation  
of danger

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Underestimation of  
ability to cope

# How do young people describe anxiety?

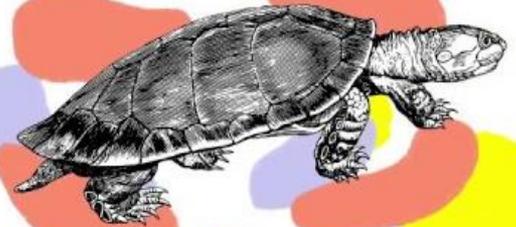
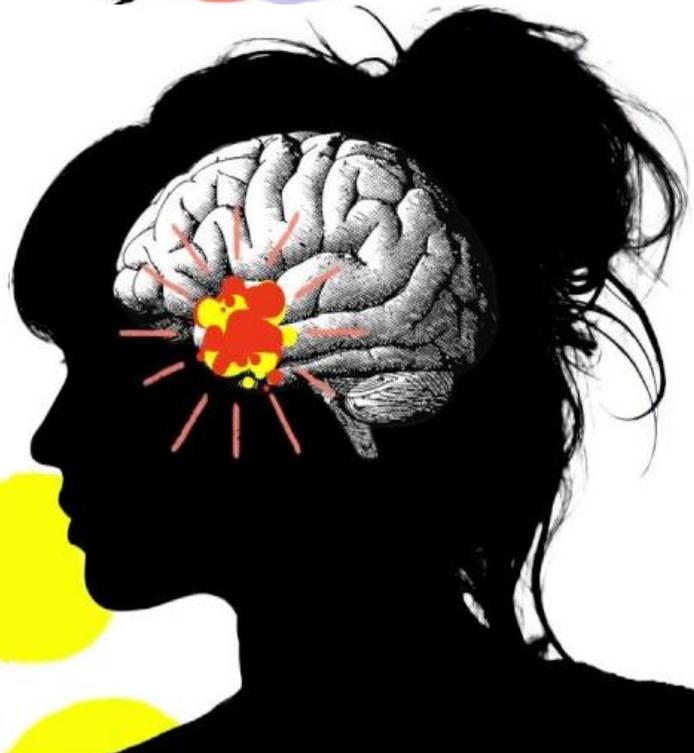


# How our body responds to anxiety

**FLIGHT**



**FIGHT**



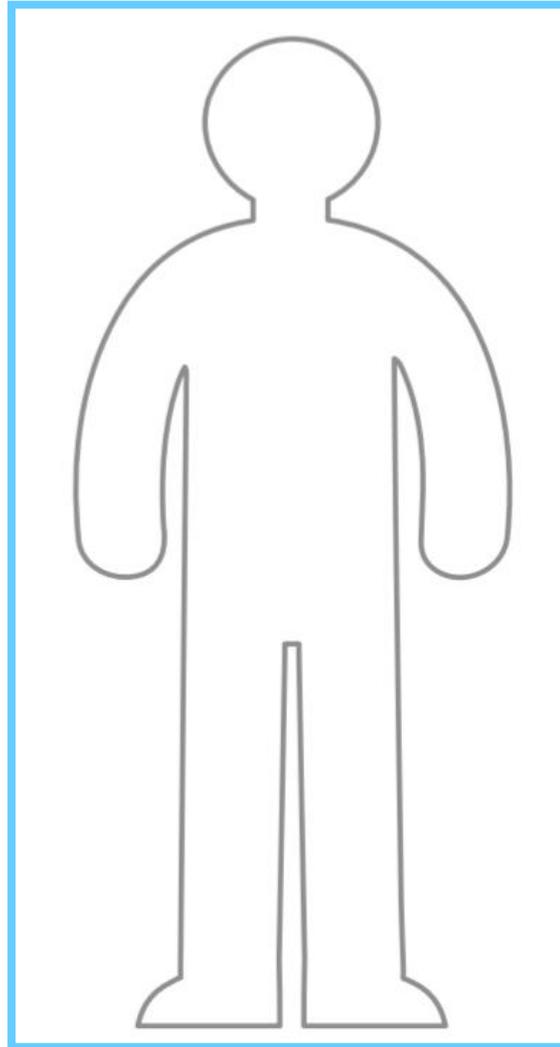
**FREEZE**

**NHS**

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# Anxiety in the body



**EARS:** Your hearing and all of your senses become more acute.

**EYES:** Your pupils dilate to help you see better. Your peripheral vision is also heightened.

**DRY MOUTH:** There is decreased flow of saliva as energy is diverted toward the muscles.

**SKIN and SWEAT GLANDS:** Sweating increases. Hands and feet often feel cold as blood supplies are diverted to the brain and muscles.

**TENSE MUSCLES:** Sugars and fats are converted for use as energy and sent to your major muscles to help you to fight or run away.

**BRAIN:** Mental activity and alertness increase for quick decision making. This can feel like racing thoughts.

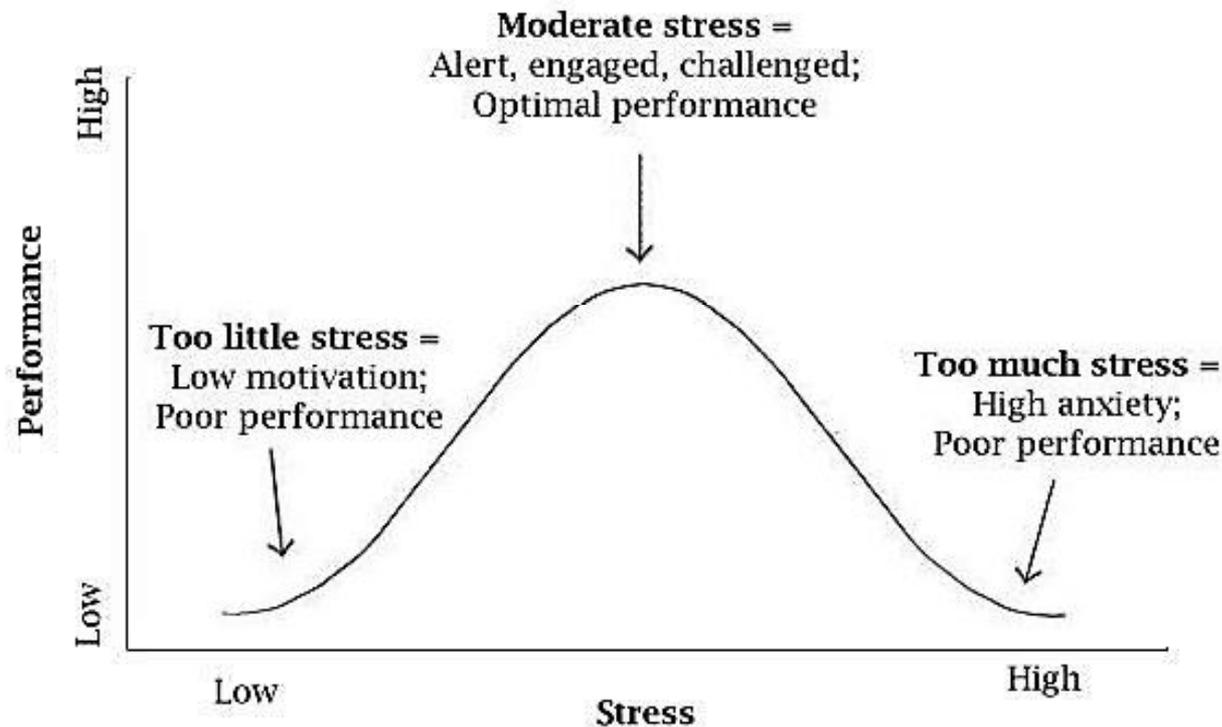
**LUNGS:** Your breathing rate increases and your airways dilate. More oxygen enters your blood. Lots of oxygen can sometimes make us light-headed.

**HEART:** Your heart begins to beat faster and harder to pump blood containing oxygen and sugar to your major muscles to use for energy.

**NAUSEA and 'BUTTERFLIES' IN STOMACH:** Gut activity slows as blood supply is reduced. This can affect digestion and cause digestion issues.



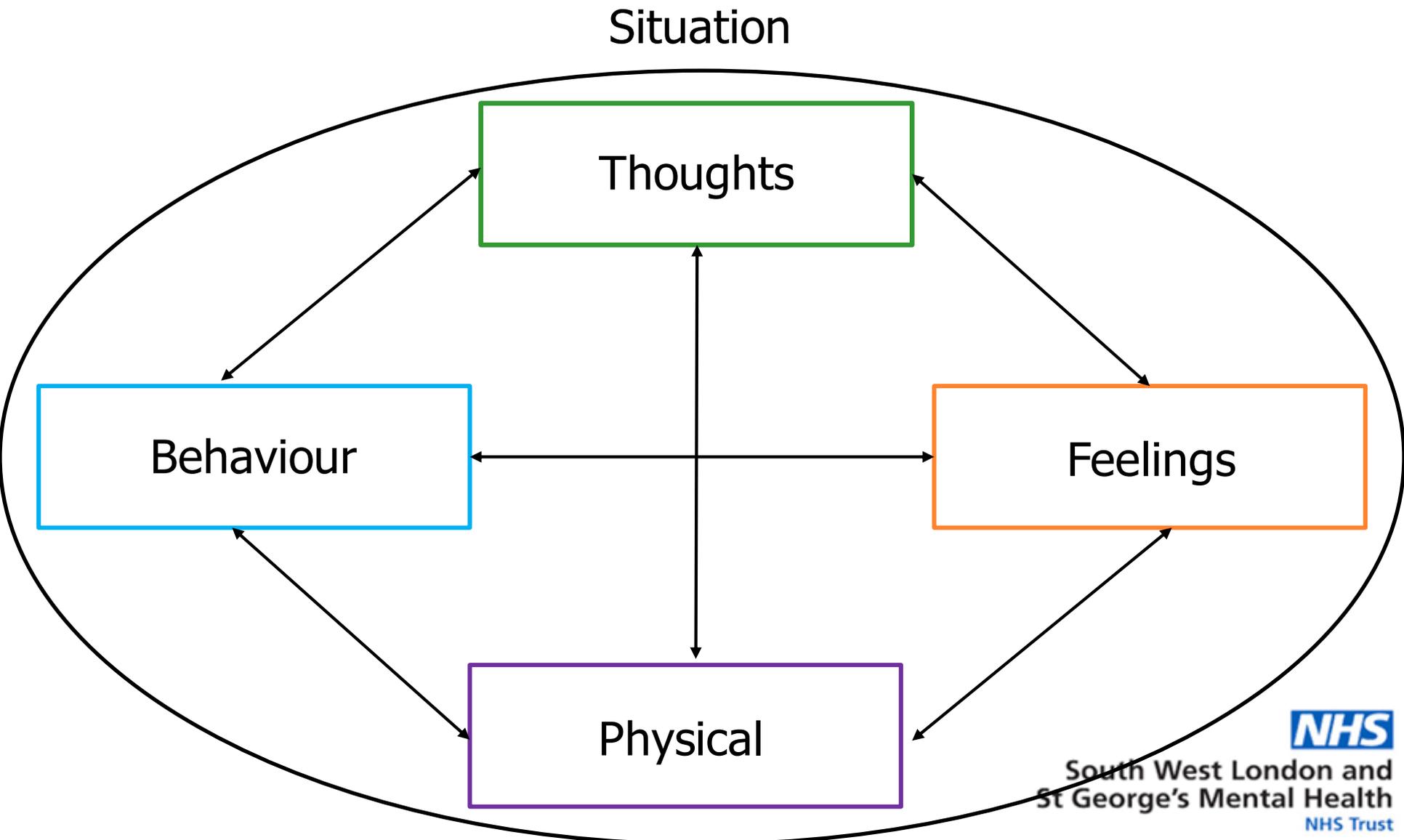
# When can anxiety be helpful?



# CBT

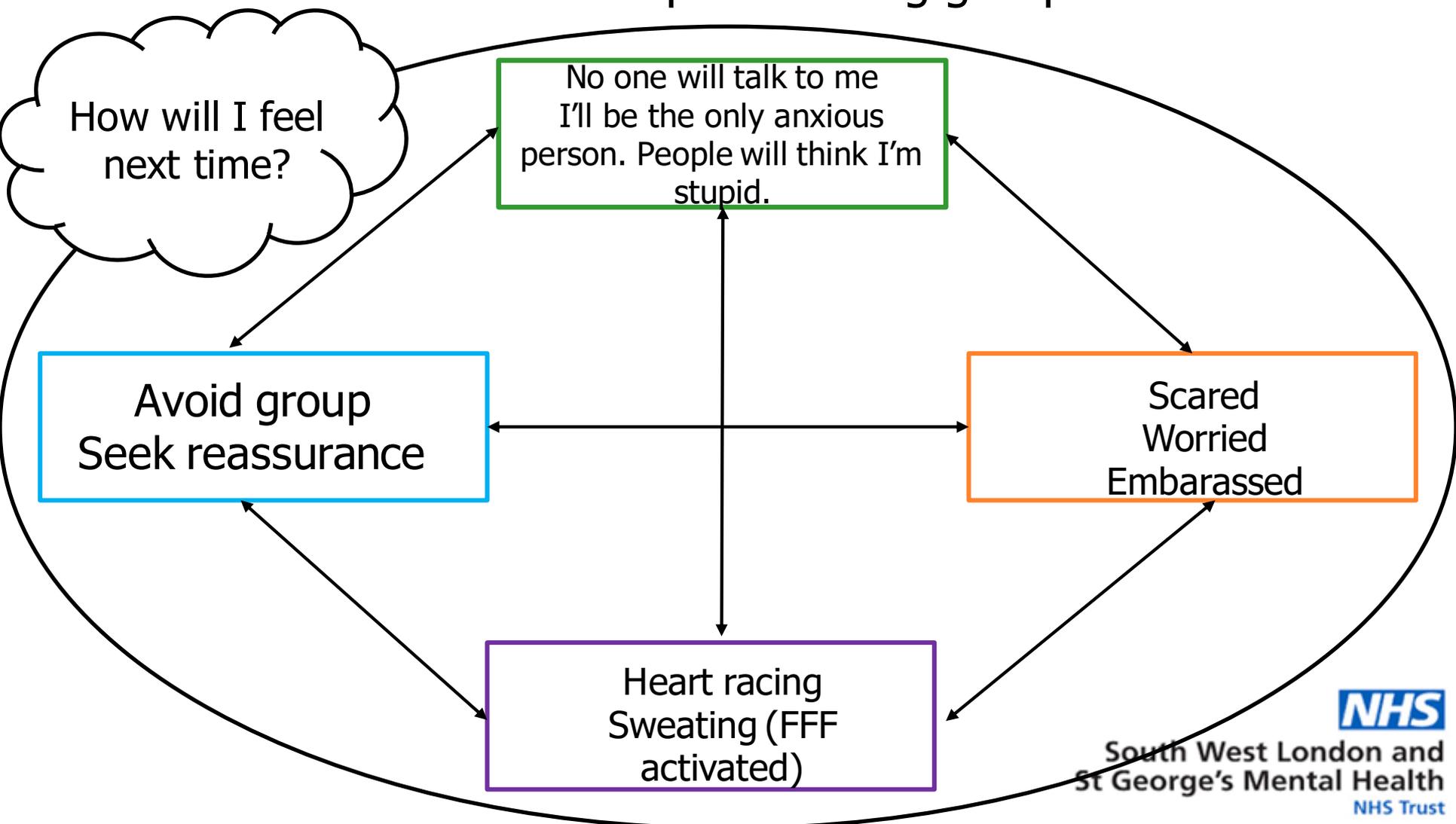


# Thoughts-feelings-behaviours cycle



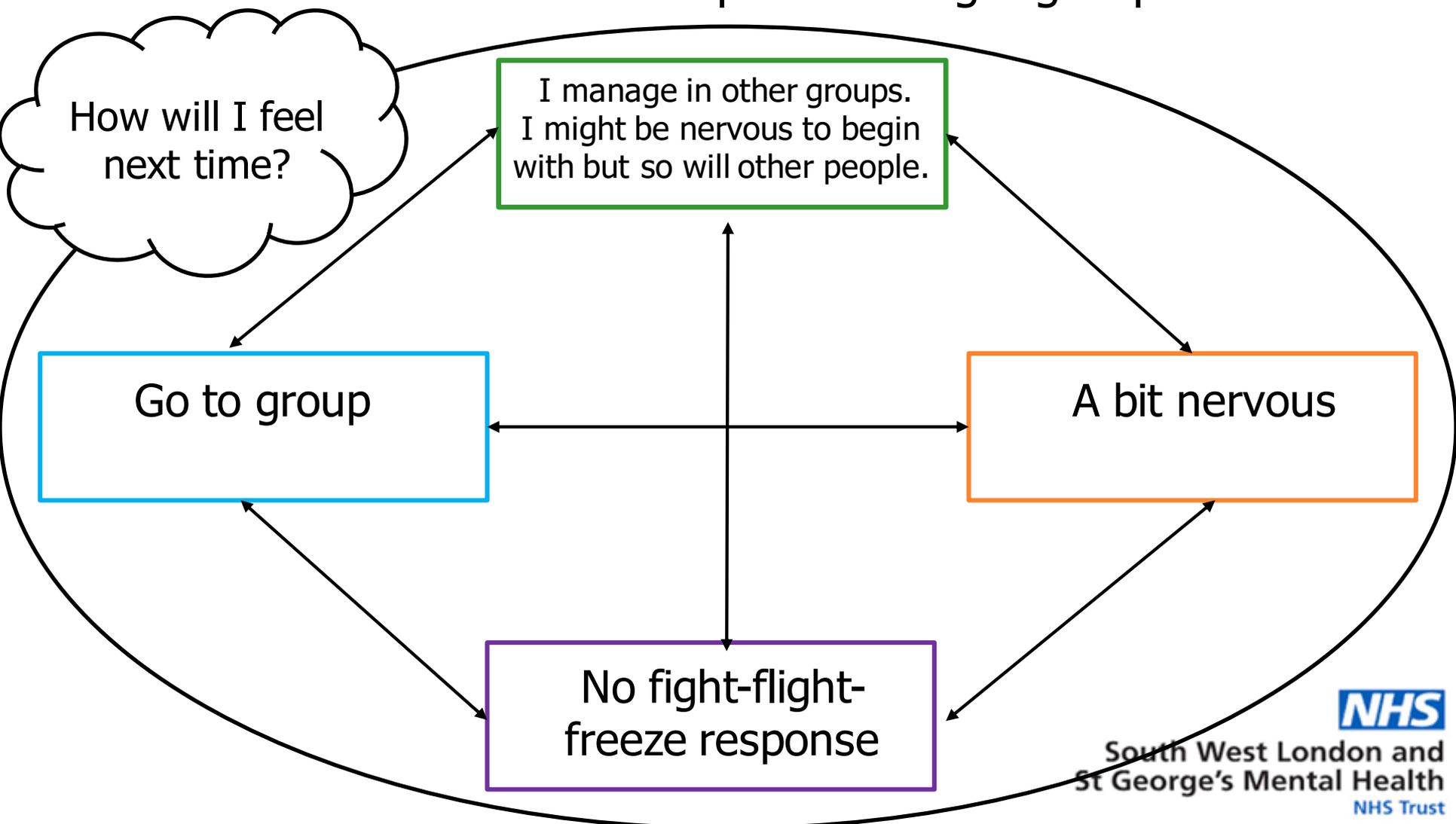
# Thoughts-feelings-behaviours cycle

## Anxious example: Starting group



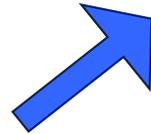
# Thoughts-feelings-behaviours cycle

## Non-anxious example: Starting a group

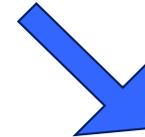


# Avoidance

Feared situation



**Long term:** Increase in worry



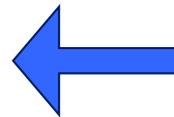
Anxiety



**Short term:** Relief



Avoidance



# Avoidance



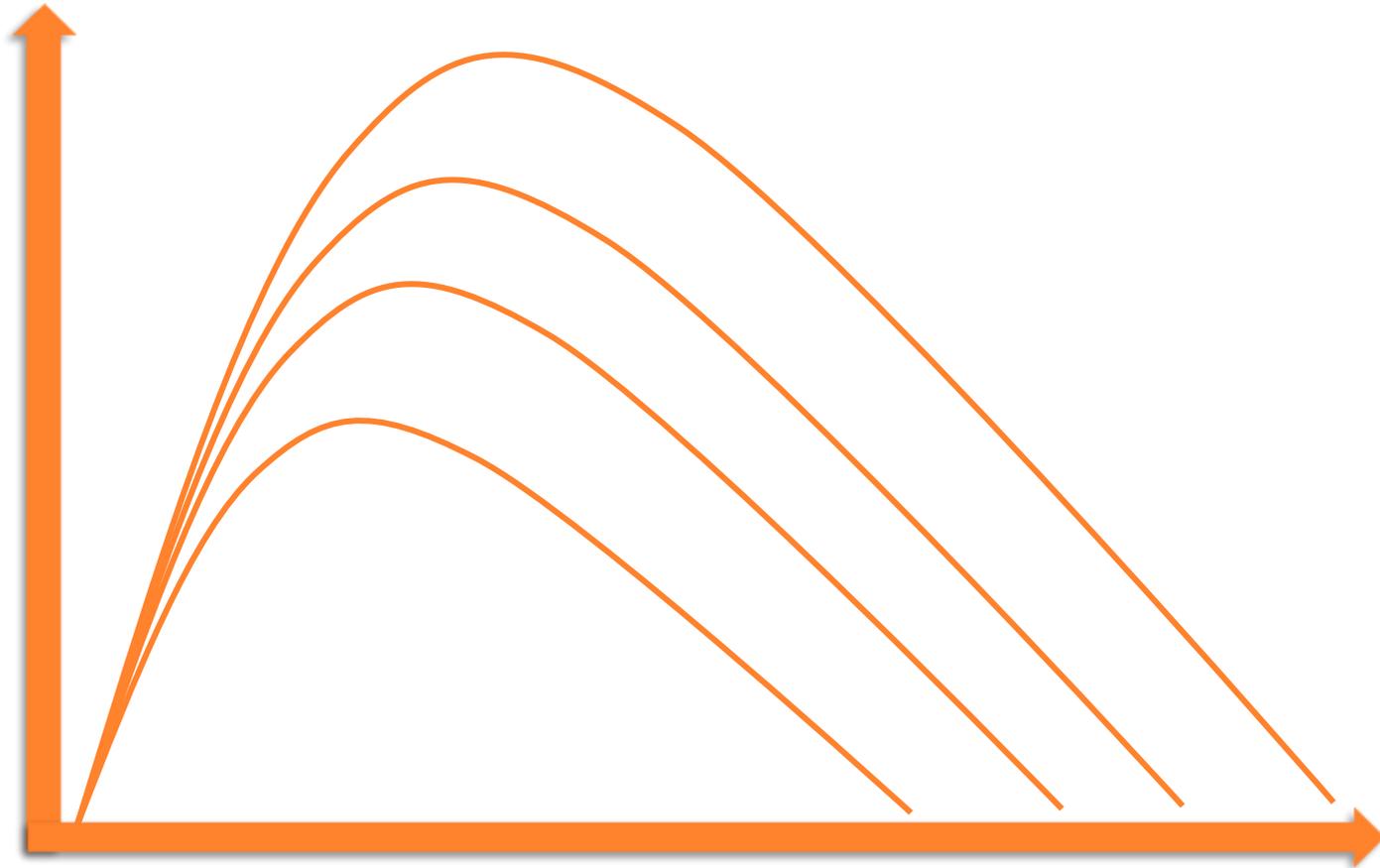
# Avoidance

People commonly fall into the trap of becoming dependent on certain behaviours or habits to help reduce anxiety.

We call these Safety behaviours.

Safety behaviours are things we feel we have to do to keep us safe, and while they can make us feel better in the short term, they can also keep anxiety problems going.

# Habituation



# Habituation



# Creating a hierarchy

**Ultimate goal:  
To be able to do a  
presentation to my class**



Giving a presentation to my whole family

Asking a question in front of the class

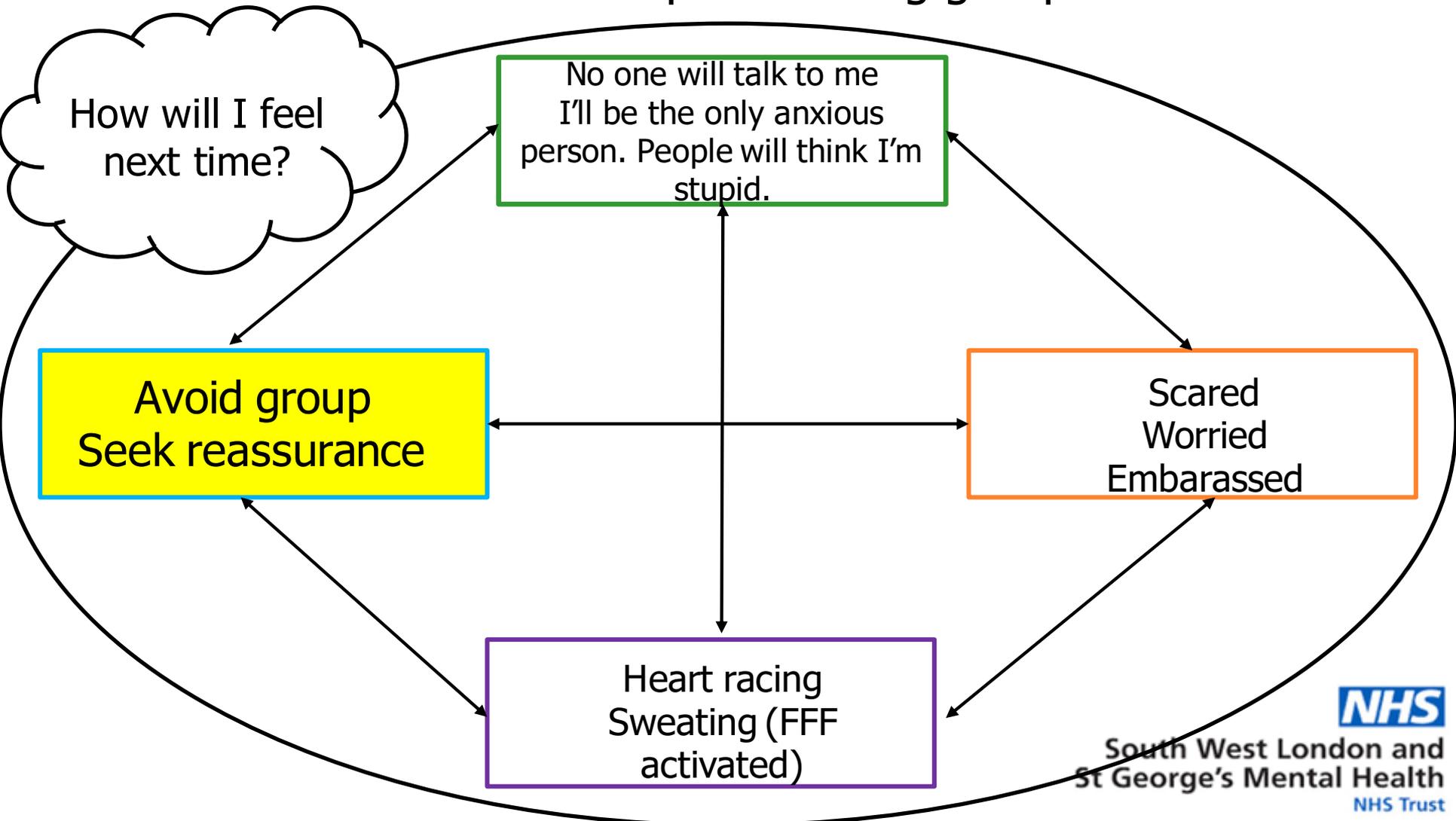
Asking a question in a small group

Asking a teacher a question 1:1

Talking to a class-mate I don't usually speak to

# What can parents do?

## Anxious example: Starting group



# How can parents reduce avoidance?

- ❖ Let them have a go - encourage independence (while ensuring they are safe).
- ❖ Notice and praise brave behaviour (Rewards).
- ❖ Model facing anxiety.
- ❖ Encourage your child to face their anxiety in small manageable steps.
- ❖ Look out for safety behaviours, especially ones which you might be doing for your child.

# Help your child to problem solve



There are 7 steps to problem solving; using the problem solving table will help you to work through each step.

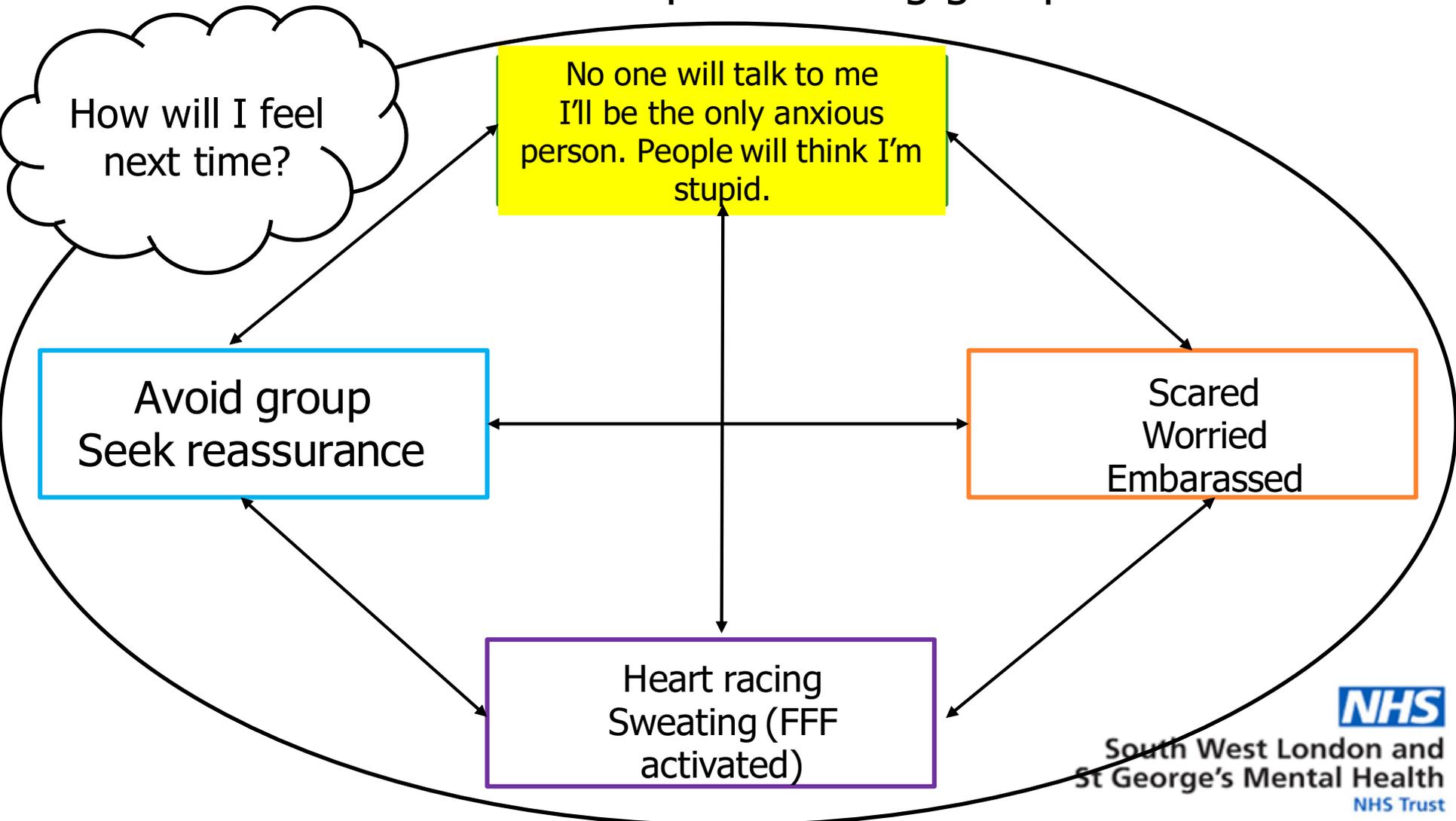
1. Define what the problem is.
2. List all of the possible solutions. Think of as many ways to solve the problem as you can, even if some of them initially feel silly.
3. Think of the Pros and cons of each solution. How practical are they? How helpful are they? What would the long and short term consequences be?
4. Is the plan do-able? What could get in the way? Who could help you with it?
5. Rate each plan from 0-10 in terms of how good you think it is.
6. Choose one plan to try and set a time to do it.
7. Review what happened after you did it. Did your solution work? If not which other option could you try?

# Reduce reassurance

- ❖ Cut out reassurance and ask questions instead: help your child evaluate whether their anxious thought is realistic or not.
- ❖ Project an air of confidence in your child: “I know it seems difficult, but I think you can do it.”
- ❖ Be mindful of the impact your responses have on your child.

# What can you do? - Thoughts

## Anxious example: Starting group



# Emotion Validation

Emotion Validation and Empathy: Often people try to make a person feel better by dismissing the difficult feeling (for example, saying “you don’t need to worry about that”).

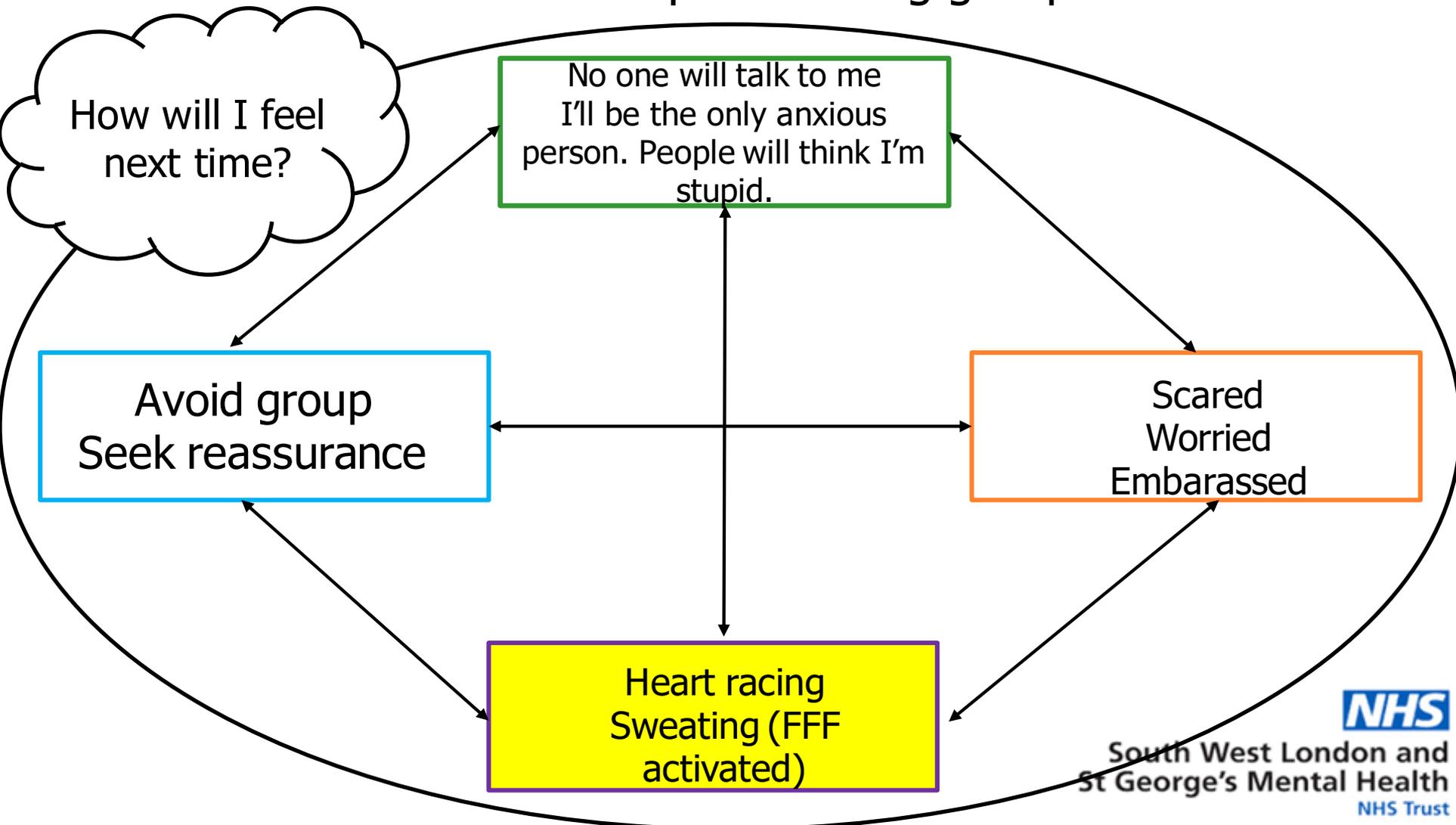
It’s really important to demonstrate empathy through emotion validation, before helping the person develop a more helpful perspective (for example, I can hear that this is really troubling for you, let’s have a think together about what’s going on”).

# Coming up with more balanced, helpful thoughts

WHAT IS HAPPENING	WHAT IS HE OR SHE THINKING	EVIDENCE AND ALTERNATIVES	WHAT HAPPENED IN THE END
	<p><b>Why are you worried?</b></p> <p><b>What do you think will happen? What is it about [this situation] that is making you worried?</b></p>	<p><b>What makes you think that [this situation] will happen?</b></p> <p><b>Has that ever happened to you before? Have you ever seen that happen to someone else?</b></p> <p><b>How likely is it that [this situation] will happen?</b></p> <p><b>From what has happened before or to other people, what do you think will happen?</b></p> <p><b>What would you think was happening if someone else was in the same boat?</b></p> <p><b>What would [another child] think if they were in this situation?</b></p> <p><b>How could you test out this thought?</b></p>	<p><b>What did your child think? What did your child do?</b></p> <p><b>How did your child feel?</b></p>

# What can you do? - Feelings

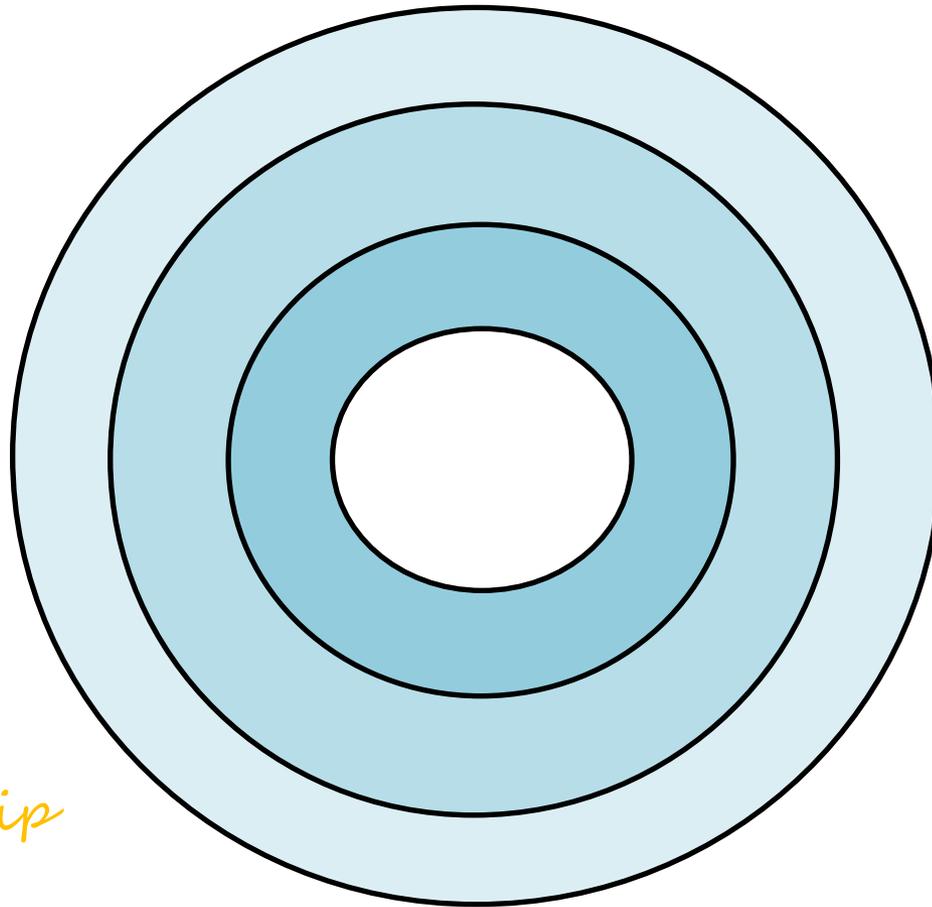
## Anxious example: Starting group



# How can you support?

*Emotional*

*Practical*



*Companionship*

*Motivational*



# Managing your own emotions

- ❖ Being a parent is not easy!
- ❖ Look after yourself, as well as your child
- ❖ Access support for yourself too (formal or informal)
- ❖ Monitor emotional responses
- ❖ Project an air of confidence and encourage independence



# Any questions

