



## Parent Handout Workbook

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#### Who can use Take Action?

The evidence-base for Take Action has been established with the program being delivered by registered psychologists, clinical psychologists, school psychologists and school guidance counsellors who are trained and experienced in Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Therefore, Take Action is recommended for use by these mental health and educational professionals. This Parent Handout Workbook should only be used in conjunction with the Take Action Practitioner Guidebook.

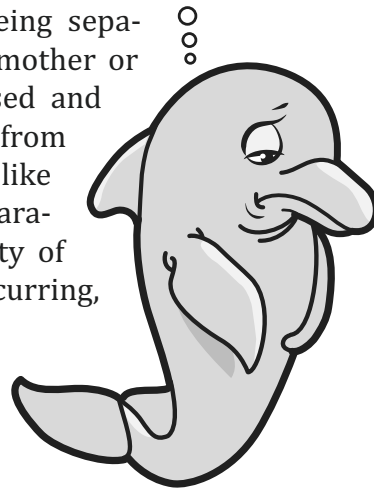


## Types of anxiety in children

Children (and adults) experience anxiety in different ways. The Take Action program has been designed to target four different types of anxiety in children:

**Generalised Anxiety:** Children who have a general tendency to be worried about a range of life areas. Children typically worry about future events, past behaviour, academic or athletic achievement, friends, and health. Children often engage in excessive reassurance seeking, are often perfectionistic and highly conscientious. A number of physical complaints are usually reported including sleep disturbance, feeling tired, general feelings of tension (e.g., easily annoyed or grumpy) and an inability to relax.

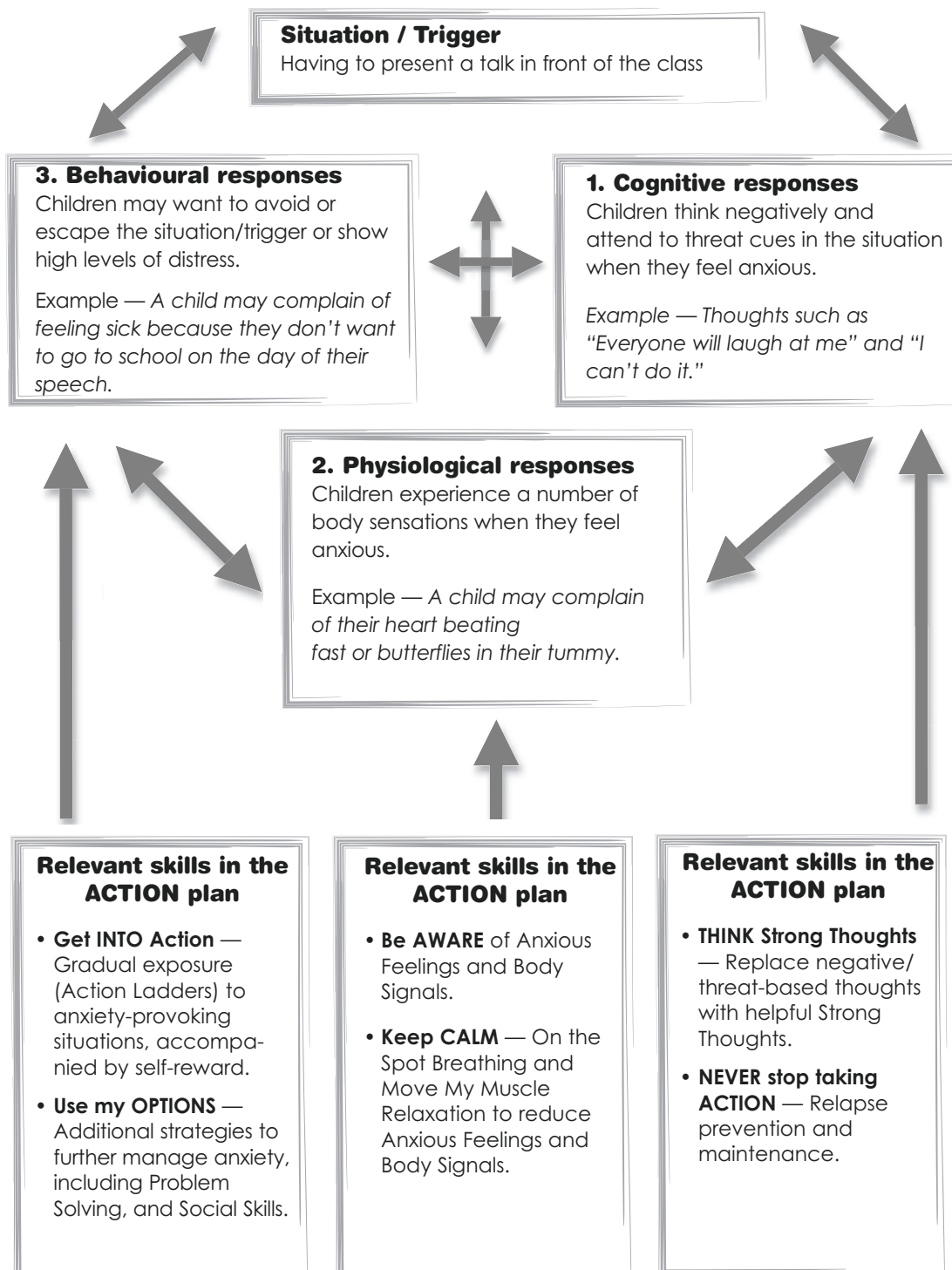
**Separation Anxiety:** Children who fear being separated from a main caregiver, usually their mother or father. Children become extremely distressed and frightened whenever they become separated from their caregiver, and may try to avoid things like school or sleeping alone. Children with separation anxiety also worry about the possibility of being kidnapped, and accidents or death occurring, either to themselves or their caregiver. Children often report a number of physical complaints such as headaches, stomach aches or general sickness, especially upon impending separation.



**Social Anxiety:** Children who fear and/or avoid social situations where they have to interact with other people or be the centre of attention. Children often think others will evaluate them negatively or that they will embarrass themselves.

**Specific Fears:** Children who have excessive fear of a specific object, activity or situation and avoid this object, activity or situation. Some of the common types of specific phobias in children are fears of animals, natural environment (e.g., darkness, storms, water), blood and / or injections, and situations like elevators.

## How the ACTION plan works



## How can the Take Action program assist children and families?

The Take Action program aims to teach children helpful ways to cope with and manage anxiety by addressing the Three Responses of Anxiety. The word ACTION is a coping-oriented acronym used throughout the program. Children are encouraged to *Take ACTION* against their anxiety (e.g., approach their fears/worries) using the well-researched and effective strategies learnt during the program.

Children will learn about an ACTION plan, with each letter in the word ACTION standing for a set of skills that children will learn during the program (described below):

### Steps in the ACTION Plan

**A**

**Be AWARE** — The first step in the ACTION plan teaches children to be AWARE of their feelings and learn to recognise when they feel anxious. Children will also learn to be AWARE of signals in their bodies that indicate they are feeling anxious.

**C**

**Keep CALM** — Once children learn to be AWARE of signs of anxiety, the second step in the ACTION plan teaches children strategies to keep CALM and reduce their anxiety. These strategies include On The Spot Deep Breathing and Move My Muscles Relaxation.

**T**

**THINK Strong Thoughts** — Building on from being AWARE and keeping CALM, the third step in the ACTION plan teaches children to THINK positively and confidently. Children learn strategies for turning Scared (unhelpful) thoughts into Strong (positive) thoughts.

**I**

**Get INTO ACTION** — The fourth step in the ACTION plan encourages children to gradually deal with anxiety-provoking situations using an ACTION Ladder (a step-by-step graded exposure hierarchy). Children practise the Be AWARE, Keep CALM and THINK Strong Thoughts steps while climbing their ACTION Ladder/s. Children are encouraged to reward themselves for taking ACTION against their anxiety.

**O**

**Use my OPTIONS** — The fifth step in the ACTION plan teaches children additional strategies (or OPTIONS) to further manage their anxiety including problem solving, asking supportive others for help, and positive self-statements. Children are also taught social skills (e.g., confident body signals, assertiveness, dealing with bullying strategies) to further enhance their coping abilities.

**N**

**NEVER stop taking ACTION** — The last step in the ACTION plan encourages children to plan for anxiety-provoking times so they can keep taking ACTION against anxiety in the future.

### **3. Practise often – First time, Second time, Third time**

Just confronting a situation once will not be enough to take away your child's anxiety completely. It takes many repetitions, as well as using the skills in the ACTION Plan, to "wear down" the anxiety associated with a given situation. This frequent practise will result in your child feeling less and less anxious in the same situation. The more frequently a situation is confronted the sooner the degree of anxiety will begin to reduce. Remember that approaching and practising the skills in the ACTION Plan when in scary situations decreases anxiety.



### **4. Practise in lots of situations and with lots of different stimuli that trigger anxiety.**

For example, if your child is afraid of vomiting, they could practise eating food from the food court in a local shopping centre; at a birthday party; and the deli. They could do high impact exercise that increases physical arousal. Your child could also practise with a variety of feared foods, such as crunchy and lumpy textures, reheated food, and any food items they specifically avoid. The key message is that practising the ACTION Plan in lots of situations and with lots of stimuli that triggers fear is likely to strengthen anxiety reductions.