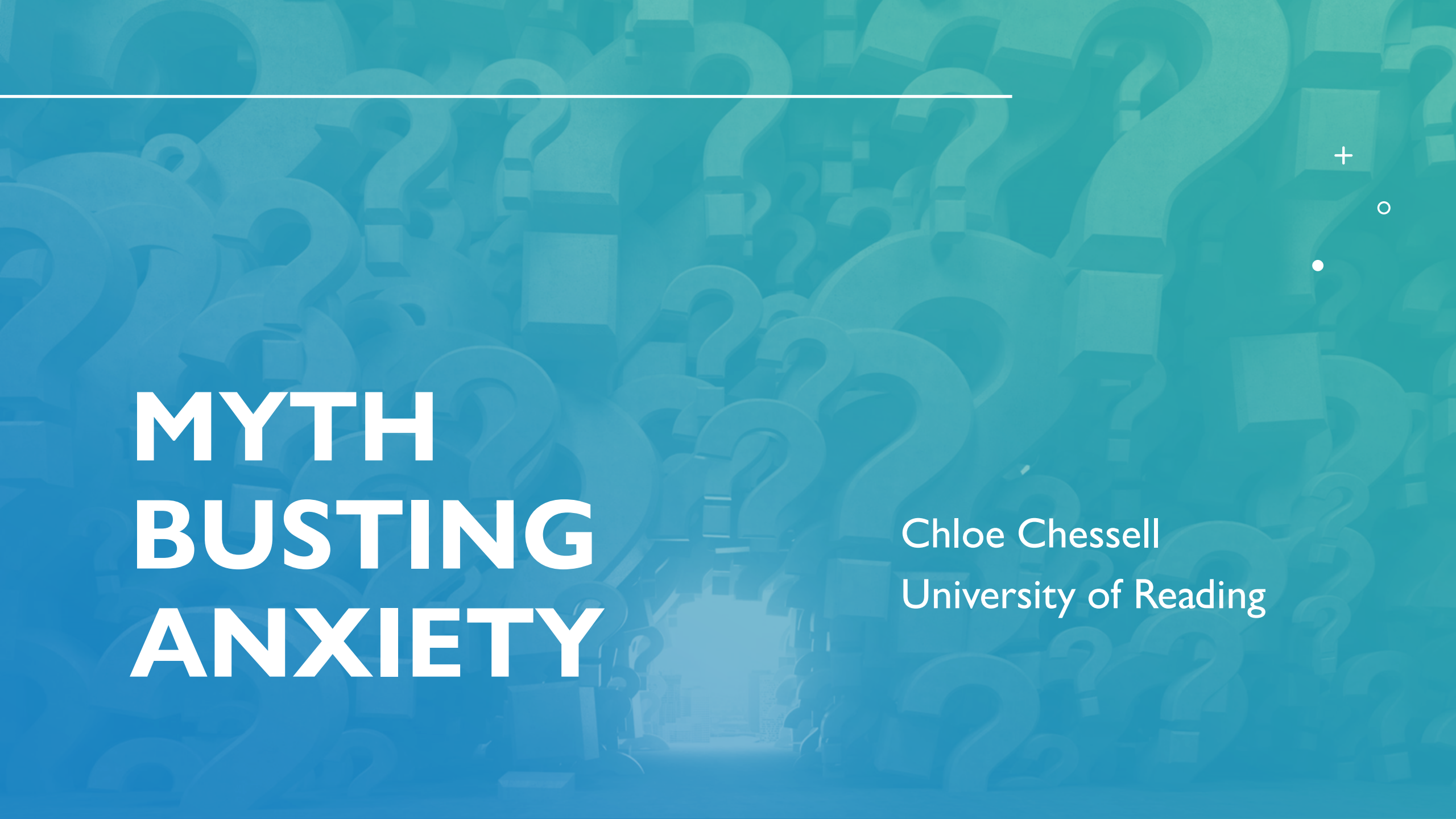


MYTH BUSTING ANXIETY

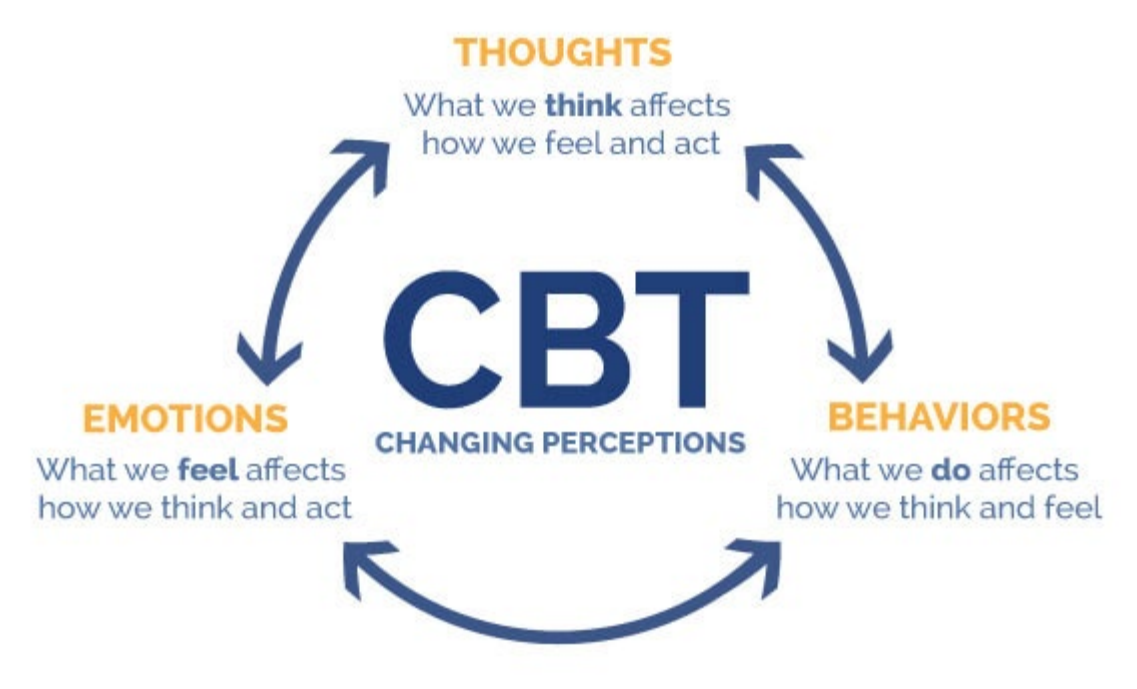
Chloe Chessell
University of Reading

All children grow out of anxiety

MYTH

6.5%

My child will have anxiety forever, it can't be cured



MYTH

Cochrane Library

Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews

Cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents (Review)

James AC, Reardon T, Soler A, James G, Creswell C

My child will have anxiety forever, it can't be cured

MYTH

MYTH

I am a parent/teacher, I can't help a child with anxiety

Clinical outcomes and cost-effectiveness of brief guided parent-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy and solution-focused brief therapy for treatment of childhood anxiety disorders: a randomised controlled trial

Cathy Creswell, Mara Violato*, Hannah Fairbanks, Elizabeth White, Monika Parkinson, Gemma Abitabile, Alessandro Leidi, Peter J Cooper*

Summary

Background Half of all lifetime anxiety disorders emerge before age 12 years; however, access to evidence-based psychological therapies for affected children is poor. We aimed to compare the clinical outcomes and cost-effectiveness of two brief psychological treatments for children with anxiety referred to routine child mental health settings. We hypothesised that brief guided parent-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) would be associated with better clinical outcomes than solution-focused brief therapy and would be cost-effective.

It's not effective working with parents if parents are anxious too

MYTH

The effect of targeting tolerance of children's negative emotions among anxious parents of children with anxiety disorders: A pilot randomised controlled trial

Rachel M Hiller[a], Adela Apetroaia[b], Kiri Clarke[b], Zoe Hughes[b], Faith Orchard[b], Monika Parkinson[b], Cathy Creswell[b,*]

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ABSTRACT

Following cognitive behavioural therapy for child anxiety a significant minority of children fail to lose their diagnosis status. One potential barrier is high parental anxiety. We designed a pilot RCT to test claims that parental intolerance of the child's negative emotions may impact treatment outcomes. Parents of 60 children with an anxiety disorder, who were themselves highly anxious, received either brief parent-delivered treatment for child anxiety or the same treatment with strategies specifically targeting parental tolerance of their child's negative emotions. Consistent with predictions, parental tolerance of the child's negative emotions significantly improved from pre- to post-treatment. However, there was no evidence to inform the direction of this association as improvements were substantial in both groups. Moreover, while there were significant improvements in child anxiety in both conditions, there was little evidence that this was associated with the improvement in parental tolerance. Nevertheless, findings provide important clinical insight, including that parent-led treatments are appropriate even when the parent is highly anxious and that it may not be necessary to adjust interventions for many families.

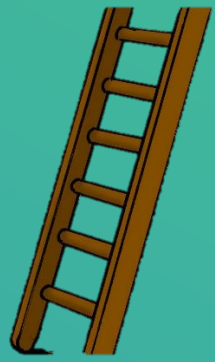
- Ask open, curious questions
- Be empathetic (e.g., ‘that sounds really hard for you’)
- Ensure your child feels listened to

Talking about worry makes worry worse

Can feel unnatural at first!

Talking about worry makes worry worse

MYTH



It's helpful for children to avoid situations that make them anxious

5. To answer an unprepared question in front of the whole class

4. To answer a pre-prepared question in front of the whole class

3. To answer an unprepared question in front of a small group of students

2. To answer a pre-prepared question in front of a small group of students (5 – 6 students)

1. To answer a pre-prepared question in front of 1 – 2 students

Prediction

Review

5. To be able to go to sleep when there's a spider in the room

4. To sit within a metre of a spider, for half an hour

3. To be in the same room as a small spider, for 10 minutes

2. To watch a video of a spider

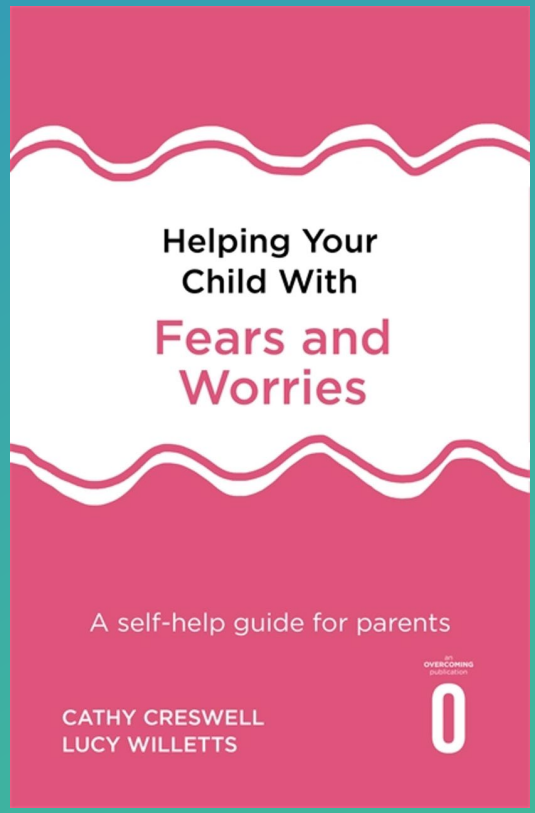
1. To look at a picture of a spider

Prediction

+ Review

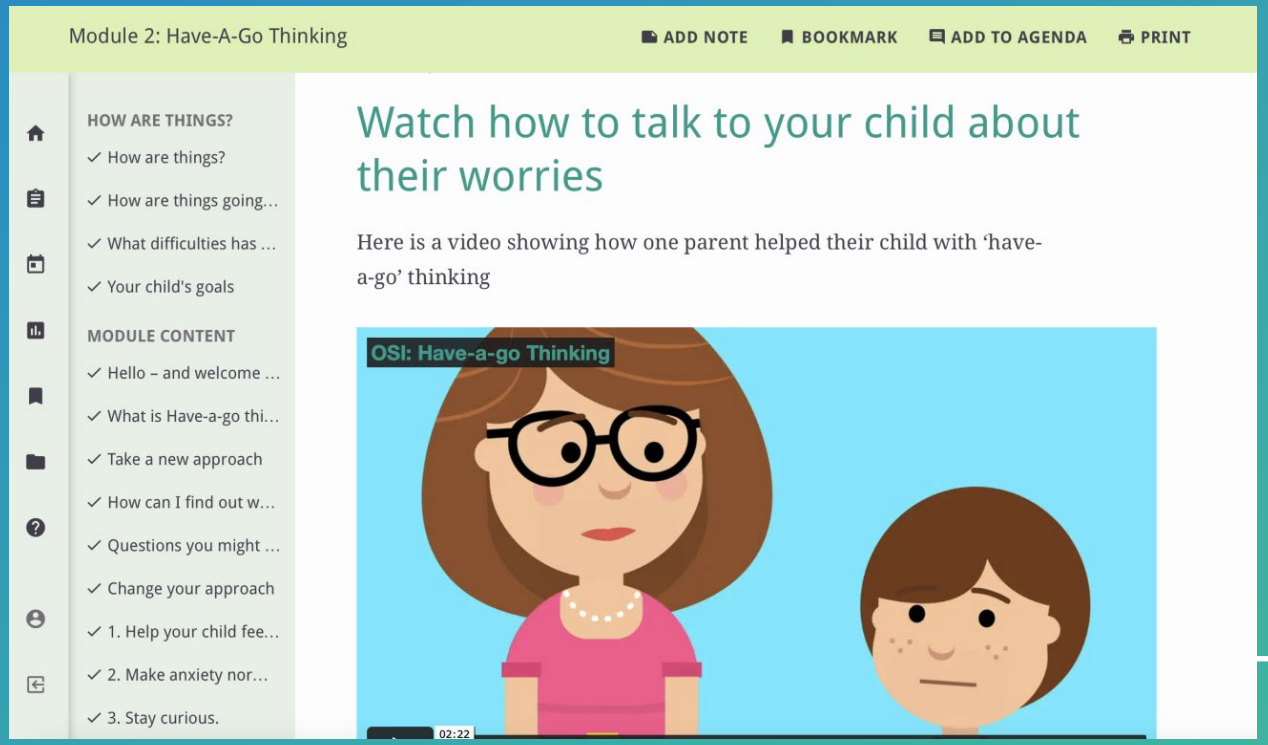
Key points about step-by-step plans

- Involve the child in creating the plan
- Use curious questions before and after each step
- Try to make the plan fun and engaging



Treatment for child anxiety only works face-to-face

MYTH



- CBT is effective
- Parents/teachers are well placed to support anxious children
- Use open, curious questions to talk about worries
- Encourage children to ‘have a go’ and face their fears
- Gradual step-by-step approach focused on helping children to learn new information