

Anxiety-Led School Refusal



What can be put in place to
help **my brain** to feel safe ...

Home **-&-** School






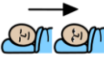


• Visual Timetables

- Use a visual timetable **for home and school**
- I **need to know** if there is a change to the timetable **in advance**
- Go through the next day, **the night before**

PROVIDE ME WITH ROUTINE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Warning bell 8.49	Warning bell 8.49	Warning bell 8.49	Warning bell 8.49	Warning bell 8.49
Registration 8.54 – 9.00	Registration 8.54 – 9.00	Registration 8.54 – 9.00	Registration 8.54 – 9.00	Registration 8.54 – 9.00
Period 1 9.00 – 10.00	Period 1 9.00 – 10.00	Period 1 9.00 – 10.00	Period 1 9.00 – 10.00	Period 1 9.00 – 10.00
Period 2 10.00 – 11.00	Period 2 10.00 – 11.00	Period 2 10.00 – 11.00	Period 2 10.00 – 11.00	Period 2 10.00 – 11.00
Interval 11.00 – 11.10	Interval 11.00 – 11.10	Interval 11.00 – 11.10	Interval 11.00 – 11.10	Interval 11.00 – 11.10
Period 3 11.10 – 12.10	Period 3 11.10 – 12.10	Period 3 11.10 – 12.10	Period 3 11.10 – 12.10	Period 3 11.10 – 12.10
Period 4 12.10 – 13.10	Period 4 12.10 – 13.10	Period 4 12.10 – 13.10	Period 4 12.10 – 13.10	Period 4 12.10 – 13.10
Lunch 13.10 – 13.55	Lunch 13.10 – 13.55	Lunch 13.10 – 13.55	Lunch 13.10 – 13.55	Lunch 13.10 – 13.55
Period 5 13.55 – 14.55	Period 5 13.55 – 14.55	Period 5 13.55 – 14.55	Period 5 13.55 – 14.55	Period 5 13.55 – 14.55
Period 6 14.55 – 15.55	Period 6 14.55 – 15.55			

Example

 now	 next	 then
 wake up	 eat breakfast	 wash face

































On a whiteboard

On a calendar

Tick List

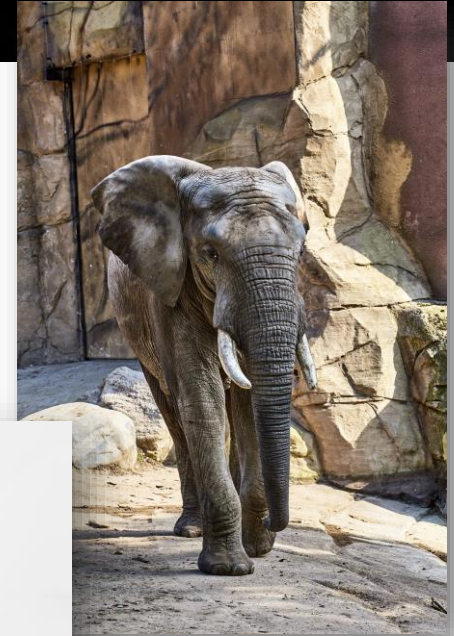
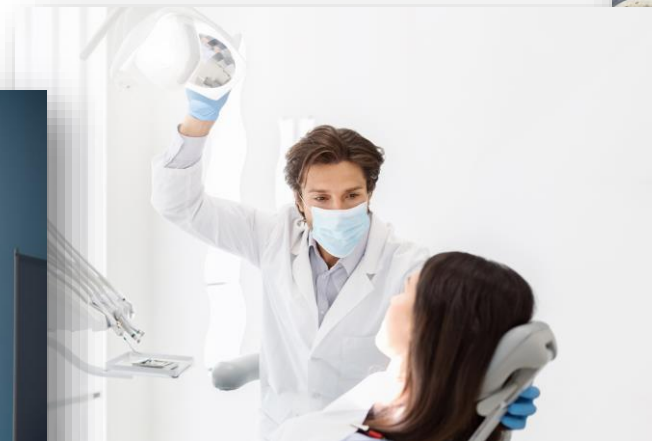
Visual Timetables

• Social Stories

HELP ME TO
UNDERSTAND

If there is an event that you know I will struggle with –
show me what it involves. Let me see it, as if it's
happening and that will make me feel in control (safe)



- **Belonging**

If I feel that I belong – then I feel safe.

Help me to feel that I am an **IMPORTANT** part of the school community



Important Note Taker

HELP ME TO FEEL
THAT I BELONG

Library Helper



- Praise Me

If I feel IMPORTANT – I feel that you care

If you care – then I feel safe



Send a little note home

HELP ME TO FEEL
SPECIAL – THAT
YOU CARE

A call home to say something positive



- **Soft Landings at School**

Transition can make my controlling brain go into Survival mode. Help my brain to feel safe by giving me a 'soft landing'

**ALLOW MY
BRAIN TO
FEEL SAFE**



SOFT LANDINGS:

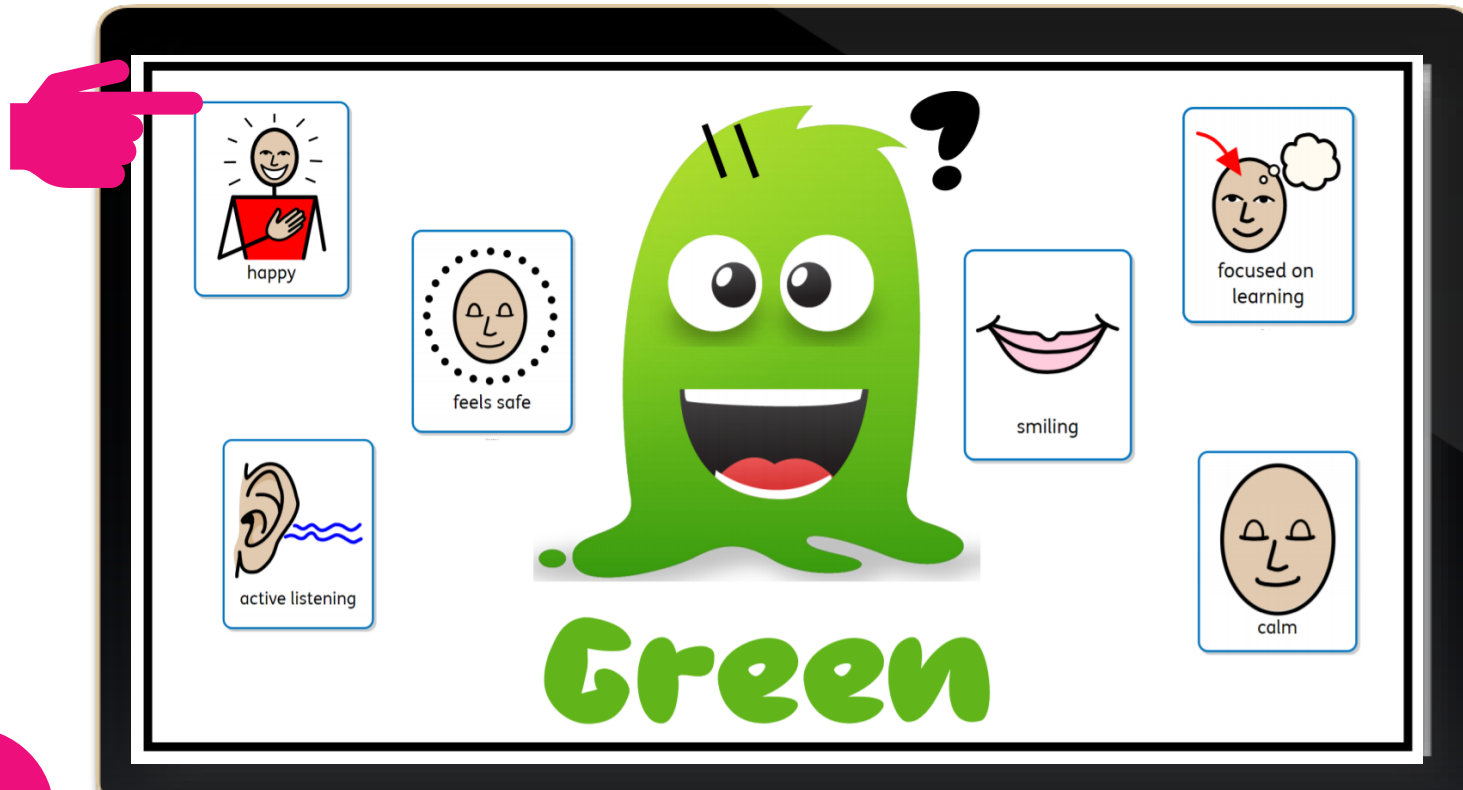
Sensory circuits club, peer mentor, library helpers, breakfast club, meeting a familiar adult before school starts, having a box with lots of things I love to play with for a few minutes



Regulating emotions

When my controlling brain puts me into survival mode – I need to know how to regulate my nervous system and feel safe again ... help me to feel calm

HELP ME TO FEEL CALM



Zones of Regulation

Naming emotions
Understanding emotions
Regulating emotions

- **Regulating emotions**

If I am in survival mode – I CAN'T COMMUNICATE, because
that part of my brain has shut down. Give me a way of
communicating to you - visually



**HELP ME TO
FEEL CALM**

**Communication
Cards**

**I need help
I need time out
I need my safe person**



• Emotion Thermometer

We ALL have an emotional thermometer ... let me show you – when it's all too much

Sometimes it's not just one thing ...

it's the build-up of the day



Where can I go to calm down?

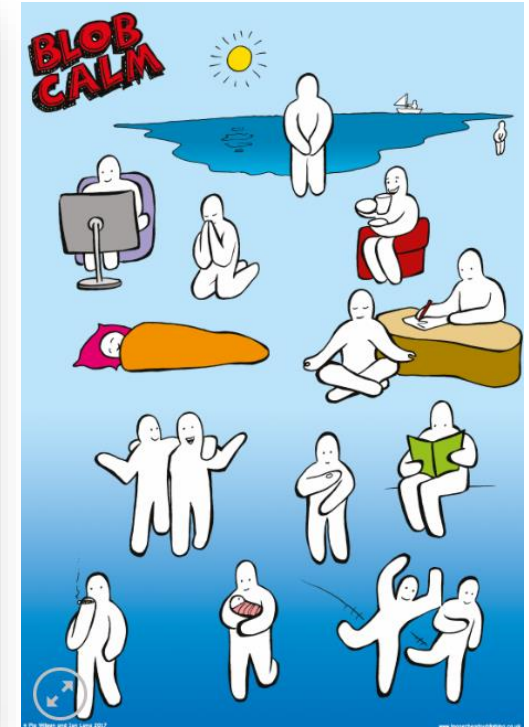
HELP ME TO FEEL CALM



- **Being a BLOB**

We ALL have emotions ... and that's OK. Help me to understand them in a fun way

**HELP ME TO
FEEL ACCEPTED**



- **Remove known triggers**

Breaktimes (transitions) makes my controlling brain go into survival mode. I become emotionally dysregulating
– **please give me an alternative**

Alternatives for EVERYONE inside & out:

Playground Pal, Colouring in, jigsaws, Lego, playdough, painting, dancing, ICT, dance, Wii games, yoga

**REMOVE
KNOWN
TRIGGERS**



Never underestimate the impact the class environment can have on a child's ability to learn, cope and feel resilient. Try and make the classroom and the wider school environment safe, accessible, comfortable and welcoming. Encourage children to gain ownership over their environment and make it a sanctuary.

Little Spots of Worry

This exercise identifies areas in the learning environment a child may feel unsafe. Once you have mapped out the nursery/school – use stickers to colour code different areas. You could also use photographs from an iPad.



Feeling Safe

Emotions

It is important that all children understand what anxiety feels like, this emotional intelligence can be achieved through the Zones of Regulation Toolkit.

- Remove known triggers

Assembly (transitions) makes my controlling brain go into survival mode. I become emotionally dysregulating

– please give me an alternative

Options include:

Fun booster groups for literacy/maths, creative play (THRIVE), music and movement – a quieter assembly?



REMOVE
KNOWN
TRIGGERS

- Remove known triggers

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REMOVE KNOWN TRIGGERS

RAG THE DAY

Identify times in the day that I don't feel safe – then provide me with alternatives, or reduce these unsafe triggers



- Remove known triggers

**REMOVE
KNOWN
TRIGGERS**



RAG THE DAY

If you **KNOW** that shopping/trips/town/holidays
– are a trigger ... why do them?



- **Safe Person/Mentor**

Let me see my 'safe person' now and then, so that my brain doesn't go into 'Survival Mode'



**HELP ME TO
FEEL SAFE**

**Could the safe person be – the person in the office/the head of school/a peer mentor? Could it be a soft toy?
Could it be a therapy animal?**

- Remove known triggers



REMOVE KNOWN TRIGGERS

Lunchtime (transitions) makes my controlling brain go into survival mode. I become emotionally dysregulating

– please give me an alternative

Can a small group of children sit together in a little lunch club – a place that's calm and relaxed?



- **Teach me how ...**

If yoga and mindfulness are scientifically proven to calm my nervous system and allow my brain to feel safe so that I can learn

... teach me!!!

**HELP ME TO
FEEL SAFE**



Yoga moves can be put into each lesson as a brain break, or part of the breakfast club/lunch club/PE lesson/after school club

- **Sharing my worries**



GETTING MY WORRIES OUT

Sometimes our worries get so much – that we can't cope, and we just need to get them out. Help me to get them out

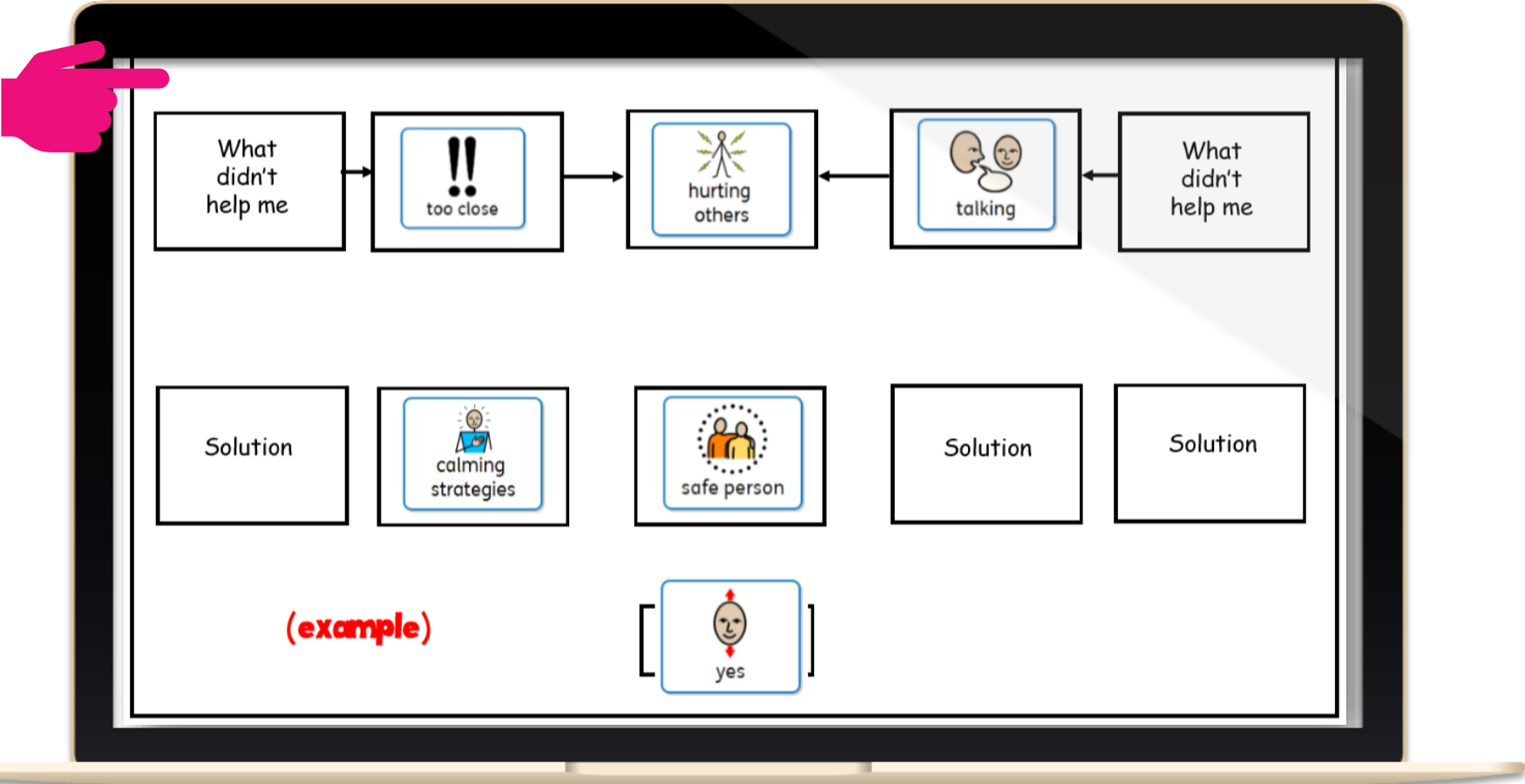
Options of getting worries out:

A Worry Monster, through a Story, a Diary, Creatively – through painting/drama/drumming



• DON'T PUNISH ME

UNDERSTAND MY TRIGGERS



- **Teach me about my brain**

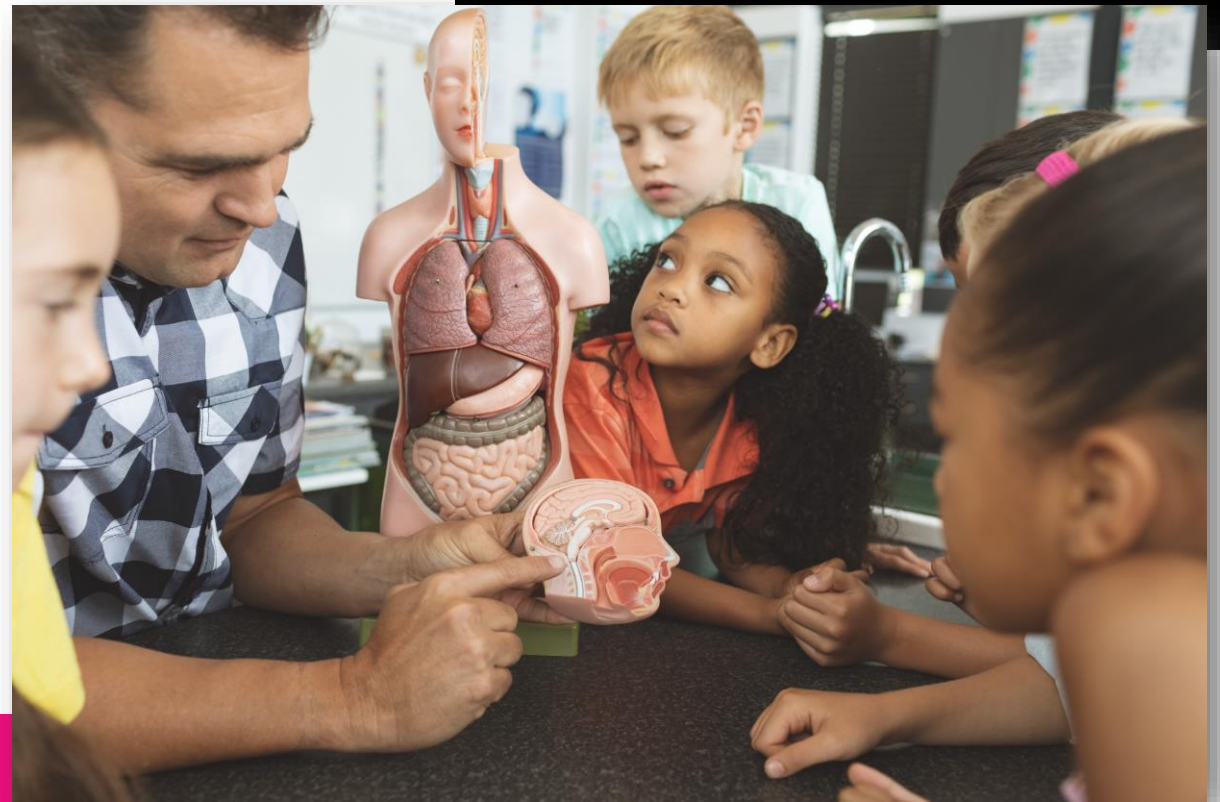
If I understand that it is my brain trying to keep me safe – it will help me to understand my own triggers

Teach me – at home

+

Teach me – at school – in lessons/assembly

**SHOW ME
HOW**



- **Soft Landings at home**

Because my brain makes me feel unsafe during transition – help me feel safe by giving me everything I need



**ALLOW MY
BRAIN TO
FEEL SAFE**

Please, don't talk to me – just let me come in, watch TV, give me a snack and let me relax

HELP MY BRAIN TO PROCESS TRIGGERS IN A HEALTHY WAY

When I do exercise, it **reduces my blood sugar levels**

Let my brain recreate the **fight response** – in a **healthy way**, like in boxing



Remember
Stress = secretion of cortisol levels + inhibits strong neuro connections

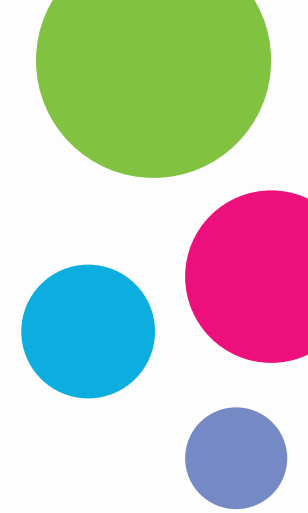
AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS

Let my brain recreate the **flight response** – through aerobic activities



COLLABORATION – IS EVERYTHING

Consistent - Predicable - Routine



Thank You



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