



Understanding Anxiety

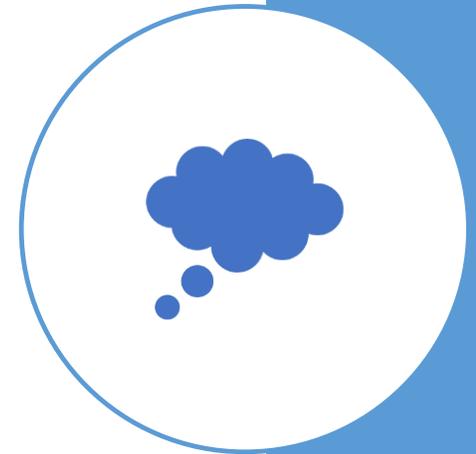
Catherine Munns
Head of Training and Clinical
Development
Brentwood Catholic
Children's Society

Take yourself back to a point in your childhood

- Think about the things you know people **explicitly** said about you
- The impact these things had on you
- This can be positive or negative
- Concrete words that people said

Take yourself back to a point in your childhood

- Think about the things you **implicitly** felt people were saying about you
- These things aren't explicit
- E.g. I felt that I was in the way, although no one ever actually said that
- We internalise these things
- How did I interpret these words?



Sense of self as a result ... how did that inform your behaviour as a child?

Adult form ...



Which of these things
have you retained?



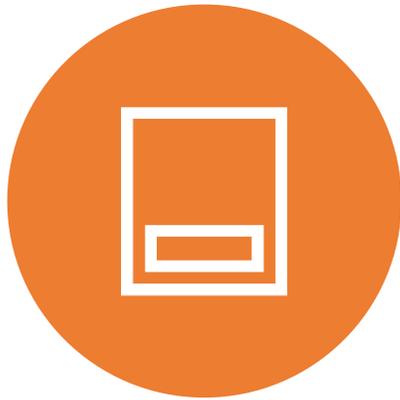
Which still informs the
way you think about
yourself now?



Which ones have you
decided to reject?



We are still the version
of the child we were ...
just older



NARRATIVE



LANGUAGE



INFORM YOUR
INTERACTIONS

We are not the only influencers

- School plays a big part in shaping our children.

Anxiety: one idea

When we experience a feeling of anxiety, it is often the case that we are essentially feeling ill equipped to deal with the situation before us: it can be that feeling which results in anxiety.

To **feel** ill equipped doesn't mean we are, but unless we recognise the feeling, we can't move into the reality of "I can do this", because the feeling of unrecognised anxiety may overwhelm us.

Anxiety: one idea

What makes us feel ill equipped?

What set of circumstances lead us to the belief that we “can’t”.

Narrative

Parental thinking

Mirrored in school

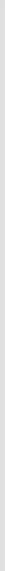
Olivia: ballet

Olivia: ballet

- Be brave and name it rather than avoid it - why do we avoid?
- Explicitly recognise, and take a child back to remembering, that the anxiety was momentary ... when we do that, it means it doesn't become displaced into something else and the child can be free of it because it doesn't escalate
- Celebrate

Naming things

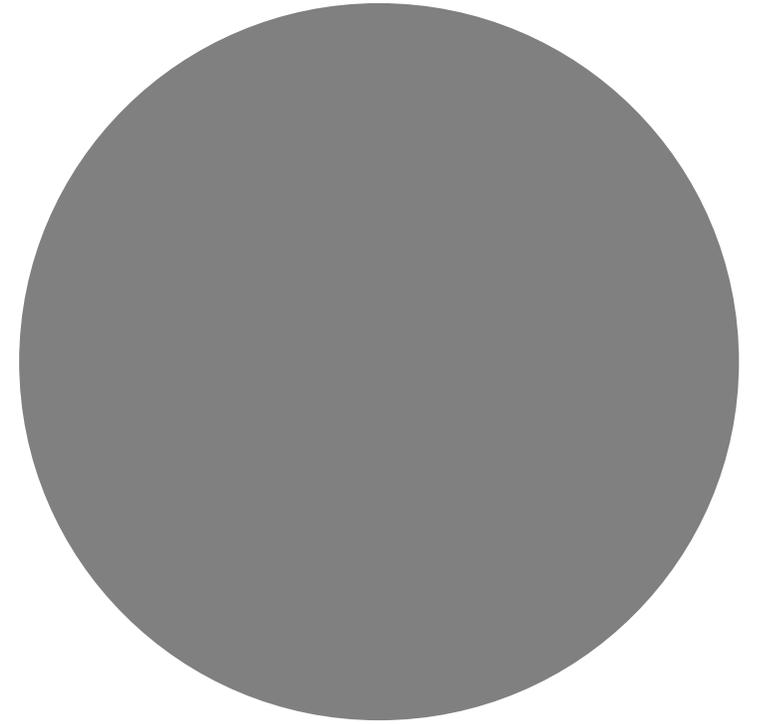
- Children respond, unfailingly, to things being named:
 - Their emotions
 - Their behaviour
 - Their presentation
- As adults, we are often afraid to name things for a child. Why?
- Naming things shows a child we:
 - Can see them
 - Can notice their distress/anxiety/anger etc.
 - Are able to bear it for them



Containment

- Where does the worry go?
- Who holds it?
- Who digests it?
- Who engages the child with it?
- When faced with worry or anxiety, we either seek to dismiss it in the hope it goes, or we try to fix it...
- What does fixing it look like?

I wonder why
we use worry
boxes or
worry
monsters?



What else could we do?

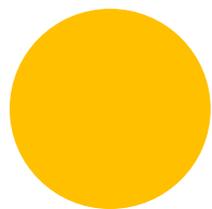
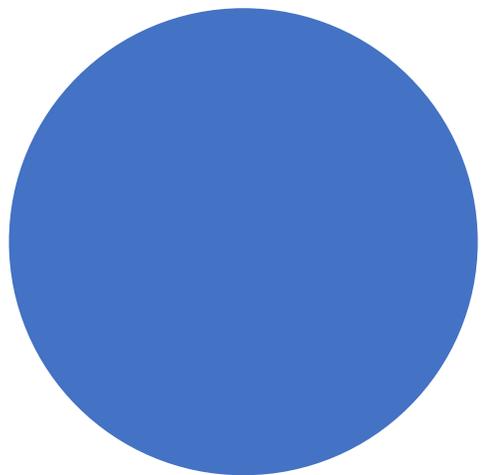
Reverie

- “Reverie is an emotional experience in which the mother does something for her baby akin to ‘mental digestion’ ... which the baby cannot do for herself. In other words the mother becomes a ‘container’ for the baby’s experience.”

Kleinian Theory: Bion’s theory of containment, 2007

Containment

- Making things explicit
- I can see you're feeling
- Giving a child another route to communicating – via more than just their behaviour
- Talk in the third person
- Be aware of your own stress/anxiety etc!



Summary

