

Facing fears together – Clinician's guide

Introduction

This is intended to accompany the 'Facing fears together' workbook for young people attending targeted anxiety groups in secondary school. This guide contains ideas and suggestions for practitioners running the low intensity anxiety group 'Facing fear together'. The ideas in this guidance come from both research and from ideas collated from many years of clinical practice running anxiety interventions. You do not however have to use everything in the way it is suggested in the manual (e.g. perhaps you need to make the group 6 not 8 weeks long because of school restrictions). However, if you intend on making changes you should ensure these are in line with the best available evidence base, and always discuss changes with your clinical supervisor.

Throughout the 'Facing fears together' group manual we have used the words 'worry and fear' when talking about anxious thoughts young people might have. You will also notice we use the word 'fear' to refer to young people's emotional state, as well the word 'anxiety' or 'scared'. This is deliberate to match the terminology used most commonly by young people. You should be clear in your mind as practitioners running the group, when you are referring to anxious thoughts or predictions and when talking about emotional states. Also, it is useful to remember that although 'worry' is a common word we all use to describe our anxious thoughts, '**worrying**' is best seen as a behavioural response, i.e something a young person does in response to an anxious thought and feeling scared and something which ideally, they will resist doing when facing their fears.

A note on assessment and engagement

It's advisable to meet with all potential participants that the school has referred in advance of the group. This may take the format of your usual service assessment and selecting young people who might be suitable for your next group intervention. It might be specifically with the group in mind and be a shorter, more targeted assessment.

Ideally you'd involve both YP and parent/carer.

Key information to gather and convey:

- ROMS (RCADs and select symptom tracker)
- Goals (general – they'll be turned into SMART GBOs during the group)
- Risk
- Suitability of presentation to the group content/format
- Information about the group. You can give them the workbook or summary of contents to have a look at in advance if you think it will help

Engagement is key. Normalise wariness or reluctance, talk about the benefits of group participation. Encourage the YP and parent/carer to directly ask about any concerns.

Talk about key processes in the group that you think might be helpful. Procedures for letting the practitioners know if having a difficult time in the group, the ability to use a 'pass' card for any exercise when not feeling ready to share, risk management, confidentiality (what is shared with who) etc, etc. As usual, you should know and follow school and service procedures and make sure these are available and transparent for YP and parents/carers.

Talk about practicalities and see if there are any potential problems with attendance/accessibility you can iron out in advance of the group.

As a service:

It's advisable to gather data on the accessibility of the group to all pupils in the school or schools that you are serving. Do the participants reflect the pupils body? Do any particular students appear to be left out or more reluctant than others? Is the group representative in terms of gender, LGBTQ+, ethnicity, ability, pupil premium, first language, and so on. Keep a close eye on this data over time. If the data suggest that some pupils are under-represented, discuss with the school and look into modifying content or referral pathways, the way it is advertised, or the information conveyed etc. Pay particular attention to students who are typically marginalised. Involve pupils in making the group the most accessible you can.

The initial draft of the 'Facing fears together' group was developed by staff at Kings College London in order to provide a timely, evidenced-based framework for trainees to develop their skills in group delivery. However, ideally over time you should try and obtain young person / parent feedback on the content and process of this group to make revisions and adaptations where necessary. Doing this across groups you offer as a service will result in a co-produced programme of groups you can offer to schools and young people.

A note on engagement during the group sessions

A priority, particularly during the beginning sessions, should be the engagement of the group participants, particularly as groups can lose participants easily if they are not comfortable. This is the main thing you should prioritise and be responsive to.

You may need to increase the amount of chatty/fun activities, and increase the amount of feedback taking. Where you get feedback, respond to it actively.

Always invite participants to contact you out of group (not as an emergency but by email or a weekly phone check-in for example) to let you know if there's anything difficult about the group for them, and problem solve it with them. Encourage them not to give up on the group, but talk to you about it, as the gains of sticking with it will outweigh any discomfort overall.

ROMS

Always schedule time in for ROMS. We've suggested where. But you can alter according to service requirements or group timing. Just make sure it is scheduled in as a group activity. NB – it's not signposted in the guidance or workbook, but where ratings are suggested, provide links to POD or other client-outcomes entry. OR make sure that you collect the completed forms from participants to enter into service recording systems.

Remote working

This group can be conducted remotely or f2f. Use your skills adapting to either setting – or even a change halfway through (or some sessions f2f/some remote). Notes on this are included in the manual. Consider timings and as always, seek feedback as to what has worked less and more well when conducting f2f or remotely. You will have to think creatively as to how / whether you do exercises in pairs or altogether if delivering remotely as it will not always be possible or desirable to do as much pair work as is suggested.

Session timing

The group is based on 1hr 20 minutes or a 'double period' per session.

Suggestions are made for how to adapt timings (where you might be able to reduce exercises to 1 hour) – or you could include the same content over a larger number of sessions. It is also possible to cut whole sessions to reduce the overall number or weeks. For example, session 6 and 7 can be cut, as long as this is thought about carefully with your supervisor and feedback obtained.

Some sessions are more packed than others – and for these you will have to be very disciplined with timing, and adapt some exercises to be more didactic. The timing of the group will vary according to the participants. If you have a quiet group you may be able to fit more exercises in than if they contribute a lot. Sessions 1 and 2 should give you a good idea of how you need to pace the group and you will need to be responsive.

Workbook and handouts

Feel free to adapt and modify the handouts in the workbook – in particular the warm ups and exercises depending on timing, although try and retain the key evidence based exercises.

The warm ups are replaceable / interchangeable. Share ideas with other practitioners and sites from your own experience about what works well. Aside from one or two sessions you can use any warm up exercise you like, depending on the preferences of the group. For very engaged groups, you may choose to get straight into the group activities after you've set the agenda, so you have more time for these.

Co-facilitators

This guidance gives suggestions as to who runs what (largely based on a turn taking model) – but it's perfectly possible to run alone (although do consider group size and practitioner experience, and risk management procedures when making these decisions).

Of course feel free to change who does what based on experience/preference. But remember to challenge yourself as a practitioner over time.

Prizes

Sometimes 'prizes' are referred to in the guidance. Make decisions in advance of the group about whether and how you will include these. They can enhance a fun element of competition and motivation and don't need to be tangible. You can discuss with the school whether pupils can earn house points or behavioural points for winning prizes during the quiz – or with parents or carers. You can bring sweets or healthy snacks as prizes as per school policy and as long as you've informed parents/carers and they consent and you have pre-agreed this with the school. You can also give group credits or trophies etc – whatever feels the most fun and rewarding. They don't need to be included at all.

On your own, in pairs, altogether

In the workbook you'll see we make suggestions for the format of each exercise, which generally corresponds to 'on your own', 'in pairs' or 'altogether'.

You can mix these up as you wish, and responsively to group needs and preferences. Depending on the group, you might want to do more of less of each of these options and you will need to be realistic with timings and the format of group activities if you deliver the group remotely.

With pair work, at the start of the group, if it's f2f, you can start by pairing people by who they're sitting next to. This means for early exercises they're more likely to be paired with someone they feel safe with. If you know the group, or as you get to know the group, you can pick pairs that you think might work (and allocate online or f2f). It's probably advisable to keep the same pairs throughout the more challenging groups, when you get into the facing fears work, but mix them up more when doing more fun activities. You'll be guided by group preferences and variation and the success of the engagement and work the group are managing to do.

It can be helpful to think about what you have enjoyed in teaching – what makes you feel safer, what is fun, what challenges you the right amount. Think about how this might be for the YP in your group. If you're not sure, ask them in the feedback activities.

If you want to mix up a f2f group, ask them to stand and order themselves according to a certain category (first letter of the name of someone you admire, star signs, birth dates etc) then sit down in that order. Either they discover the order themselves by chatting or you say them altogether and order together (slightly quicker). Note that, if you include these activities, you'll need to shorten other activities or cut some when you are planning.

Timer graphic

You can use the timer graphic as and when you like if it's helpful to keep the pace of the group, otherwise it can be ignored. You can set the amount of time according to your group plan (decided in advance or responded to appropriately if some activities over-run). Keep to the time allotted and tell the participants not to worry about what isn't finished (or what to prioritise).

Considerations on low mood

The workbook in its current form does not include any activities on low mood, but it may come up. Although the content of the group should stick to facing anxiety (and participants be referred to a different intervention if there is a more pressing priority for them), it is worth mentioning and validating low mood as a consequence of behavioural withdrawal or long term worry or stress/experience of difficult events if it comes up. There are some additional details on this in appendix X. If low mood appears to be a particular problem for one or more of the YP in the group you should discuss this with your supervisor to consider how best to manage.

Weekly agenda

Include an agenda at the start of each week.

The content and style will depend on the timing available.

If you want to be brief you can show a slide you can edit or bring a flipchart to a f2f group.

You can keep reminders of the group rules here (and invite new ideas week on week as appropriate or according to time).

In terms of reviewing learning from last session, any home learning or when doing a general check in: You can be creative and vary it each week. You could use a word cloud, ask a question or two with menti.com, ask participants to say one word each, or go round the class. You could put them in pairs when you have a longer time, so they can share, and then decide together what they'll feed back to the group. You could ask them to feed back for each other. Shake it up by using different methods each week, and as ever, be responsive to your group. If they are quiet or shy, paired activities are great because it can increase

bravery if you've checked it out with a partner first. Or didactic methods are fine if you're short on time as the session is very packed that week. If you only have time for a brief agenda, that's fine, just thread reminders of previous weeks throughout activities, and/or ask about experiences of home learning at the relevant moments.

Home learning and sharing

There isn't a consistent reminder of this given in the guidance session by session, but do make sure you prompt participants to think about what they'll tell people at home or in their lives about what they've been doing. Picking a chosen person to summarise the content to is important for rehearsal, understanding, support and additional perspectives. Make sure the participants understand this and encourage them to do it. Check in about how this is going and problem solve if it is not happening. Set up clear expectations for how and what is shared, and with who, at the assessment and engagement session. Give the parents/carers a blank copy of the worksheet so they can get in touch if they have questions. If you are able, run a briefer parallel group (with fewer sessions) for you to present the tasks the YP are doing and give the parents an opportunity to ask questions. Ensure everyone knows how information sharing works. The expectation would be none of the content of what the YP say will be passed on to parents/carers and teachers by the practitioners unless discussed, with the exception of risk issues (which would also usually be discussed except in exceptional circumstances), but this is why it's all the more important for the YP to share it themselves.

Session 1: Getting to know each other

Activity 1: Agenda Max 5 minutes

Practitioner A: Briefly let the participants know what activities will be taking place this week. Practitioners can invite any comments, but at this stage probably best brief and didactic and then get down to the session, as it's quite a full session.

Remember, however nervous you are feeling the participants will likely be more nervous so remain warm and friendly – and give yourself a break, you don't need to be perfect.

If you are using a 'pass card' (for missing a turn speaking when not feeling up to it) – remind them of this here

Activity 2: 2 Truths and a LIE Max 10 minutes (probably less)

Practitioner B: Introduce the game and make sure you do yours first as an example

You can award prizes for when they vote for the correct answers (see introduction regarding prizes)

Pass turns on to the person on the left. You can run it that the person to their left has to guess, or you can vote as a group on each one.

Encourage the person who's revealed their truth to give follow up details on it if they're happy to.

Activity 3: Group rules MAX 10 minutes (probably less)

Practitioner A: You can get the group to read in pairs and discuss and then discuss as a group

OR

Read suggested rules altogether as a group and ask the YP to add or change as they see fit (keeping within professional boundaries of course)

OR

Start from scratch and ask the group to come up with their own rules, again making sure to maintain professional boundaries – adding an item about confidentiality if it doesn't come up, etc. This option might take you longer than 10 minutes, unless you have a forthcoming group(!), so be mindful of this.

Activity 4: Hopes and fears MAX 10 minutes

Practitioner B: Introduce this activity according to the instructions in the workbook. Refer to guidance in introduction on pair work. Give an example of common hopes and fears that other young people have coming to groups for anxiety specifically (or unfamiliar group settings in general).

Activity 5: Fear vs fun MAX 10 minutes (probably less)

Practitioner A: Introduce this activity according to the instructions in the workbook. Give an example of what would go in each box for you (with info that you are comfortable with and keep reasonably light-hearted – although it's important to normalise that everyone will have things that they would put in the 'areas where worry or fear can take over' even if circumscribed. It's a human thing to have fears and worries).

Participants can use the list underneath for ideas or you can make the activity quite craft driven if you are f2f. Wherever you have an activity that might involve cutting and pasting/post-its or drawing online, you can always ask participants the week before to bring any craft materials that might be suitable. In terms of keeping access equitable – you may want to talk to the school or your MHST about providing 'craft kits' along with the workbooks for a group. See the introduction.

Activity 6: The nuts and bolts of fears and worries 10 minutes

Practitioner B: Say you're going to read them an example scenario and ask them to close their eyes and imagine the situation in detail.

Read out the bus scenario you'll be familiar with from teaching (you wake late, don't have time to do anything, and have to run out the door. As you run up to the bus at the bus stop, the driver closes the doors and drives off – give as much detail as possible). NB feel free to use alternative scenarios (e.g. waving at a friend across the street who walks off, getting an ambiguous email from a friend/teacher etc etc).

Ask: What are your immediate reactions? Write them down on your worksheet. This can stay private.

Then explain how reactions can be sorted into TFB – see worksheet for sample wording. Go through the bus scenario as a group, getting examples from the group as you go. One tip is to link the different thoughts to the different feelings and urges/responses – but embrace them all. If you have a confident member of the group, you can ask them to give their thought and use that as one example, OR you can include all the examples, making sure to link different thoughts with corresponding feelings and behaviours, and validating them all.

The group can note down a copy of their own responses on the worksheet if they wish – or take notes from the group discussion.

If time do the pair exercise thinking more generally about unhelpful responses to anxiety and you can include low mood if relevant.

Activity 7: Your experience MAX 15 minutes

Practitioner A: Ask the participants to think about a recent typical example for their own fear/worry or one of their fears/worries. Make sure they know how to ask for help if they need it, and also check in on all participants during the exercise. Reassure them not to worry too much about the “Is there anything here that might keep thoughts or feelings going in an unhelpful way, either now or in the future? Circle any in the box below” question. It’s important for now just to get a bit of a picture about what’s happening in the moment of a typical bit of worry.

If f2f, the practitioner/s need to go around and check in whether anyone needs any help or support.

If online – one practitioner can go into a break out room where participants can go into if they need to ask a question or ask for help. Let them know they can shout out if they prefer.

They can finish over the week. Leave a minute at the end to come together as a group. Ask how it was/if there are any questions.

Activity 8 Relax and feedback approx. 10 mins

Practitioner B: Lead a brief breathing exercise. Here’s an example

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXltOY0sLRY> remember to cue and pause when you’ve done a minute.

Keeping the exercise brief can help remind participants that even a short amount of relaxation can have an impact on mood/stress – and can be done quite easily and quietly. Pull out this point of learning as appropriate.

Set aside time for any feedback questionnaires. Students should have completed their ROMs and sent brief goals during assessment/engagement. Goals will be smartened next week so there’s no need to re-rate them here.

If there’s time, ask the students to discuss main learning points from today in pairs, and each pair then feeds back one headline to the group OR just discuss headlines as a group.

Time-saving options

Activities 1 and 3 can be much shorter if didactic

You can cut Activity 5

You can shorten or cut Activity 7 – and leave for next session.

Be mindful or adapting or altering pair work if needed when working remotely – i.e. you might need to factor in more time to enable participants to go off and call each other and therefore might need to cut some warm up activities. You might want to keep the group together and therefore will need to be creative as to how participants can all contribute with feedback or exercises.

Session 2: Understanding fear and worry

Activity 1: Agenda MAX 5 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead setting the agenda. Don't forget there should be some room for negotiation. Is there something they would like to add? Is there something important missing that you can make time for this group or in a future group? Give choice about the warm up activity if you come with a few up your sleeve, or is there one that the group particularly likes? If you have a relatively quiet group it can be helpful to be more didactic as they'll feel safer, especially early on. But over time it can be nice to increase the level of collaboration around the agenda.

Activity 2: Finding your inner super hero MAX 10 minutes

Practitioner A: Tell the group about what secret super power you would like to have and why. For example "my super hero power would be to be able to turn invisible, so I can hear secret conversations."

Give the participants a minute to think about it – they can make a note if they like

Go round the group each in turn to hear a bit about it – don't push if they don't give any reasons

Give them a reminder about 'pass cards' if you're using them (e.g. can just say 'pass')

Activity 3: Re-cap from last session MAX 10 minutes

Practitioner A: Ask the group to get into pairs. Refer to notes in the introduction about pair work. You can plan ahead.

Give them max 5 mins to discuss two questions

What can you remember about the group rules?

What jumped out at you last week? Or What do you particularly remember from last week?

They can write notes in boxes on the worksheets and you can tell them they can decide any headlines they want to feedback (and who will do it).

Spend 5 mins getting headlines from the group. It's helpful to stick up the group rules in the room in a f2f group while they're talking in pairs, or share on the whiteboard while they're doing the activity as speedier. Spend more time on question 2.

Remind them they can add notes to their worksheet if someone else mentions something that's meaningful to them.

Activity 4: Why does fear exist approx. 10 minutes

Practitioner B: Explain early man and the lion. Invite the participants to draw their physical responses to anxiety or stress on the picture (as you have demonstrated during the group discussion).

You can also explain the false alarm and the meercats analogy to talk about why some people experience more anxiety than others. Or talk about how common it is genetically, and how adaptive for human survival

Direct the participants to read the information on the pages in their workbook at home; explain there is quite a bit of information but it is all really useful to know when we are facing our fears and so we have included this so they can refer back to it. This might also be useful information / section to share with their parents/carers.

Activity 5: The value of facing your fears 10-15 minutes

Practitioner A: Present the anxiety curves to explain the rationale of how to overcome your fears with graded exposure. Do as collaboratively as possible

Lead the pair exercise according to the instructions in the workbook, and then bring everyone back together as group to answer questions etc.

Activity 6: Organising my priorities 10-15 minutes (need 5 min spare for activity 8 so either activity 6 or 7 need to be 10 mins - or both a maximum of 12-13)

Practitioner B: Describe a 'case' example of fears and how it interferes with their life, e.g. a social/separation fear. Use a similar box to the worksheet box to categorise the impact of the fears. You can categorise them collaboratively if it feels helpful and you have more time workbook. You can refer to the case example.

Ask them to think about their own fear/s on their own, according to the instructions in the workbook.

Pritesh was 14 years old and worried about what his classmates and teachers thought of him. He worried about getting answers wrong in class and was always scared he would get asked a question by his teacher. Pritesh really worried that if he got asked a question, his mind would go blank and he would just stutter and say nothing. He thought that his whole class would laugh at him and his teacher would give him a detention. Pritesh also worried he would stutter and not have anything interesting to say if his classmates spoke to him in the playground or after school. He worried they would think he was weird and boring.

In class Pritesh would try and arrive early so he could always sit at the back and he kept his head down as much as he could to reduce the risk of his teacher asking him a question. When he did his homework, he always asked his older brother and parents to check his answers, but never felt completely sure he had done his homework right. Pritesh avoided hanging out with classmates he didn't know very well. He had one good friend, and whenever they were together with other people from his class, Pritesh would let his friend answer for him and would never initiate a conversation or ask any questions. He always rehearsed in his mind things to say in case someone asked him a direct question. Pritesh turned down invitations to play football after school or go to any parties.

Things I have stopped doing or avoid because of my fear and worry

E.g. Going out with friends, accepting invitations to football or parties, answering questions in lessons, asking questions in groups.....

Things I do to make me feel 'safer' in the moment when I feel anxious

Think through what I am going to say in case I get asked a question, arrive early in lessons, sit at the back, keep head down, never start a conversation or speak unless I am directly asked a question

Things I ask other people to do in the moment when I feel anxious

Get my parents and brother to check my homework, ask my friend to speak for me when in a group where possible.....

Again, remind participants what to do if they need more support (have breakout room with one practitioner, put hand up etc etc.)

No need to feed back on this exercise.

Note that the participants can have a think and add to the lists as they like over the next few weeks. It can be really helpful to ask trusted people in their lives to help suggest ideas where the anxiety is getting in the way – as long as they're happy to have those conversations.

Activity 7: SMARTening my goals and tying them into what really matters to me 10-15 minutes

Practitioner A: Give a SMARTENING example e.g. “I want to feel less anxious”

Give the group examples of what this un-SMART goal might look like e.g. If I felt less anxious, I would be able “to go back to drama club”; “to accept invites to stay over at friend’s houses”; “to be able to go on public transport” etc etc.

Send them off in pairs to come up with smartened goals. They only have to share as much as is comfortable. Can talk hypothetically if reality too difficult. Remind participants they should protect themselves as they feel is right. They shouldn’t feel obliged to over- or under- share.

Practitioners need good oversight. Support pairs as above.

See if you can get a SMART goal each but don’t worry too much if imperfect – you’re supporting them to understand the process. Say to the participants that you’re going to make a note of them (unless they have any objections) so that you can check in about them over the group. If they can ask them to say how much out of 10 they’re achieved at the moment

Activity 8 – 5 minutes MAX

Practitioner B: Ask the participants the two questions according to the workbook.

Either the group can all feedback on each item, or it can just be a space for them to reflect in the workbook, and then an optional quick ‘one word’ fire round for group about take-homes.

Time-saving options

Make activities 4 & 5 completely didactic, can even use pre-recorded video you have made, to keep it efficient. Or you can ask participants to watch between sessions and recap very briefly.

CAN keep activities 6&7 down to max 10 mins, especially if practitioners emphasise that they can be thought about for HW and will come back to later.

Activity 8 can be done for HW.

Session 3 Building a step by step plan

Activity 1: Agenda MAX 5 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead agenda, see the notes about this in previous sessions. Decide in advance how collaborative/didactic depending on timings and particular group needs.

Activity 2: Who I admire 5-10 minutes

Practitioner B: Ask the group to think on their own who they most admire and why, according to the instructions in the workbook and under a time limit.

Now give the group your example (which you have planned in advance). Don't tell them who it is, but instead ask them to try and guess who it is by giving them clues, e.g. give qualities that explain why you admire them (specific); you can then add more specific clues, like their initials. If the group don't guess in a minute then tell them.

Then go round the circle in turn. The participant on your left can ask the person to their left to guess the answer (they can ask the group if they get stuck) and move the group on in a timely way if it hasn't been guessed correctly quite quickly.

Participants can use the pass card if you've decided you'll use it in the group. Do encourage participants to let you know the qualities they admire.

Activity 3: Make a step by step plan 30 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook. But this should be a very active exercise for both practitioners.

On the worksheet you can give the YP a few moments to remember take home messages from last week. Then elicit and/or didactically focus on the main points e.g.: (overall 5 min)

Fear is adaptive and important in survival

Some people might be more likely to experience learning through fear than others

It can be a problem when you get false alarms

If you approach a fear in the absence of threat to life it will come down by itself

Trying to control fears will make them worse, better to ride the wave

The more times you do it the easier it gets

Fear makes you do things that conflict with your goals in life and these are the things you will want to focus on in overcoming them

Next, demonstrate anchors with fear thermometer and invite the participants to note theirs on their workbooks. Start by giving your own example of a 0, a 5 and a 10 – for example 0 = watching TV, 5 big hairy spider in the bath, 10 being in a plane crash (overall 5 min)

Invite them to look at their list of things they avoid etc because of fear that they started next week – and show the example from last week. Ask them to start to put a number by each example, according to how difficult on the fear thermometer it would be to do. Give an example from each category – making clear, for example that when you're rating things that fear makes other people do, the rating would be how difficult it would be to *drop* the activity. Give about 5 minutes for this review activity – and make it clear it's an opportunity to add any they missed last week, or if they haven't had time to think about it between sessions.

Then, altogether, give an example of a step by step plan. Show a list of behaviours transferring to the beginnings of a step by step plan. You can get creative with this exercise – using a pre-prepared list of categories that you begin to transfer to a thermometer or to a ladder or steps. You can make text boxes to shift on screen, use post its, or just a pen and paper etc. Give it approximately 5 minutes.

Then give them approx. 10 minutes to start their own step by step plans in pairs, transferring activities from their list under the categories, to the step by step plan according to difficulty.

You may want to consider YP refining/completing their step-by-step plans as a home learning task, particularly if they haven't been able to complete them in the group. It may also be helpful to ask all YP to give you/email/bring back a copy of their completed step-by-step plans at the end of the group or before/at start of the next session. They will have a chance to refine the step-by-step plan in the next session.

Activity 4: Coping vs unhelpful behaviours (10 mins)

Practitioner B: Introduce according to the instructions in the workbook

Ask them to imagine the example scenario in detail (preferably close their eyes etc).

Lead the pairs activity according to the instructions in the workbook then bring the group altogether to feedback. Gently guide the group to a consensus on the unhelpful vs coping behaviours categories, but it's helpful to emphasise they're aren't really right or wrong answers. The aim is to support the YP to start to think about how they are responding to fears – with a gentle curiosity, and having an open mind to what is helpful and what might keep fears going rather than support them to overcome them. Encourage self compassion and validate all responses. It's only then you'll start to be able to re-think responses.

Activity 5: A moment to relax (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead any nice relaxation or grounding activity – or you can get participants to select from a choice of activities. You can refer to page at end of this book or the workbook. You may well wish to add to the list of the activities here, or as suggested in the workbook, get the participants to take ownership of it together and build it up with plenty of new activities they find helpful and they want to recommend to others.

Spend the bulk of the 10 mins on this – but leave a few mins for them to take notes about what to use and when – or rate for effectiveness. And encourage participants to keep adding to their lists over the coming weeks.

Activity 6: Back up team (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

It's important for the exercise to be instinctual for participants – they don't need to be fixed, and they can stay private.

Do explicitly note that this is just to start them off thinking who might be able to help out with what while they face their fears, and also to think more generally about their network. Sometimes people outside our immediate circle can have significant roles too – with being more independent etc.

Invite them to add people to their priority box for who might help out with what over the week or if there's time start in session. Give examples.

Activity 7: Feedback (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

It can be done just as a self-reflection activity – but you may want to summarise with a quick fire one word or phrase round to sum up the group.

Remind participants that they can come to you any time with feedback, concerns or difficulties and remind them how to do this.

Time-saving options

Activity 3: Shorten step by step plan activity – allocate time to do this for homework – or go straight to allocating priorities to steps. The activity doesn't have to be broken down into all the separate parts.

Activities 4 and 6 can be much shorter and didactic e.g. present a definition and list of examples for 4/give them the back up team graphic from the individual manual, a brief description and ask to think about for homework – the activity where you assign helpers to different priorities can be omitted.

Session 4: Facing your fears

Activity 1: Agenda (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead agenda. Keep a bit of room for a brief reminder of activities/main messages from the group so far.

Activity 2: Spidery warm up (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead the activity according to the instructions in the work book. Note:

You may choose to change the example if someone in the group has a moderate spider fear.

Other good examples are fear of the dark, fear of swimming etc...

Don't give them too long in their pairs and keep group feedback brief. Give space for ideas but do update any approaches that are too speedy or jump into facing fears too dramatically. Prompt thinking about grading and ways to grade. Emphasise manageability.

Activity 3: Step by step plan (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook. The activity gives participants a chance on their own to make their step by step plan acceptable for sharing with a peer (while keeping a private one), and also catch up on a few steps if they are behind because of missed groups/homework.

Support the participants as usual by indicating how to ask for help.

Make sure to be reassuring, e.g. 4-5 steps is plenty for now. If time, go round the group and discuss how to vary and grade activities. You may want to provide a list of didactic tips on how to grade activities that might seem all-or-nothing.

In the same pairs as above (for continuity) they can chat with each other about first steps.

Activity 4: Facing fears (max 30 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead the activity according to the instructions in the workbook. Make sure you spend some time talking through how to make the most of facing your fears and each of the key points in the workbook (planned and manageable; stay for long enough to learn something new; drop unhelpful habits; repeat in different contexts and review learning when the task is complete.)

NOTE – for groups that have longer, and for groups that have grasped concepts quickly, are well-gelled and functioning well and safely, it might well be possible to use this exercise as an opportunity for **taking the first step on the hierarchy**. If this is planned for this session,

then guide the participants to choose relatively low options and also ones that are possible within session – and indicate that they will be doing so at the start of the activity so they can plan accordingly. If you do this, then always offer an analogue alternative such as sucking a lemon/chili (i.e. not dangerous but can get used to unpleasant sensations). Indicate how it is practice for tolerating difficulty and ask them to reflect on what they've learned afterwards as you would with an exposure task.

If this doesn't feel appropriate for the group – just offer the analogue task.

If f2f: bring lemon slices or chop small pieces of chili (follow H&S guidelines at school) – make sure parents aware in information packs and give permission / make aware of allergies etc.

If online: ask them to find a piece of food at home that is either disliked or quite neutral.

Pull out the key learning point: Learning how to *respond* rather than *react*. I.e. how do you consciously tolerate and manage difficulty

When feeding back, make sure to ask the what did I learn questions? -Insert here from P. 44 getting to grips-

NOTE: If you choose to do a facing your fear task, you may want to use the activity 5 form to plan it step by step before carrying it out.

Activity 5: Planning a home task to face your fears (15 minutes)

Practitioner B: Take the participants through the facing your fears plan before sending them off in pairs or on their own to plan it for the week ahead. It will be helpful to use one example as a guide, for example the spider phobia example or one of the other case examples you have used during the course.

With gelled and relatively comfortable groups it's advisable to keep the same pairs across the tasks in this group so they build up knowledge of each other and trust.

Both practitioners will be active during this exercise, and as always, make sure that you are circulating and supporting, either in the same room or in the different break out rooms. As always tell them how to call a practitioner in, and make sure this is a simple process.

Participants plan a home facing your fears task to do over the week.

Make sure they are thinking about how realistic and achievable this activity is. Prompt them to think about use of the back up team – both in terms of support and in terms of cheerleading and helping them pragmatically to make sure they do it.

Prompt them to think of rewards and set some time within the activity to make notes on this as set out in the work book.

Activity 6: A moment to relax (5 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead any relaxation strategy that you've not used before. Or you can use a group favourite. This can be dictated by time – for example just breathing along with breath graphic for 5 minutes, or even only 3 deep breaths (where out breath is blowing out air to the bottom of your lungs). Or you can do a brief version of imagery, differential relaxation or the light stream exercise. Pick from the resources at the end of the work book and encourage them to make notes as usual.

Activity 7: Feedback (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the work book.

It can be done just as a self-reflection activity – but you may want to summarise with a quick fire one word or phrase round to sum up the group.

Remind participants that they can come to you any time with feedback, concerns or difficulties and remind them how to do this.

Time-saving options

Activity 6 – this activity can be cut, and instead have some pleasant food during the feedback exercise. You can plan this in advance if online or provide if f2f. The food is also modelling a reward for doing something tricky.

Activity 4 – you can remove the in-session task and rather spend time planning an at-home task. It is recommended to do a tricky task in session as it makes participants feel more prepared to do something at home – so it may be you want to plan carefully to make this a longer session if all the other sessions are shorter. And make sure this is clear to groups and schools. It's advisable to have an earlier start time within the school day rather than a different finish time if pick-up is involved, but discuss with school.

Session 5: Facing your fears

Activity 1: Agenda (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead agenda. Keep a bit of room for a brief reminder of activities/main messages from the group so far.

Activity 2: Warm up – Revision quiz (15 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead a revision quiz.

We've provided slides with sample questions. These can easily be modified, and should be modified to suit the group. If you want it to be quicker, you can use multiple-choice and ask the team to use quick fire buzzers for each question.

If you have enough participants, divide them into pairs or two/three larger teams. If there aren't that many participants or time is short, they can play individually.

Have fun getting the participants to come up with team names and/or a specific buzzer sound.

If face to face – teams can confer together in the room quietly.

If online – it's usually easy to set up break out room chat functions while everyone stays in the main room. They don't go into the breakout rooms but should be able to access the chat once someone starts typing in the team. If it's impossible for the teams to 'confer' on separate chats while staying in the main group, it can still be run like a panel quiz (everyone on team gets points if anyone on team answers correctly).

Advisably be generous in awarding success if people buzz. A way to increase participation/fun is to have a timer for the answers. You can give bonus points for answering before the timer is up.

Where you can, give a prize to the winning team.

*If you have a shy or quiet group – you might want to replace with a more conventional warm up or a short reflection on what has been learned so far in pairs, with headlines fed back.

Activity 3: How did it go? (20 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

The instructions are to do this activity in pairs – but it depends slightly on the group. Preferably it will be done in pairs, as the support and experiences from other young people can be maximised. Practitioners should keep an eye on the pairs, and give extremely clear instructions for what to do if a YP needs to talk to practitioners or access support with the

exercise. For example, make sure they know how to be in touch with the practitioners, if they get stuck, or upset – or their partner is upset, . Again, if online, make sure one practitioner is available to go to in a breakout room with clear instructions, or make sure they know how to call a practitioner into their breakout rooms.

Activity 4: REWARD 10 minutes

Practitioner B: Remind the group about the concept of rewards and how important they are in facing fears. Prompt or lead a discussion about different sorts of rewards and different things you can target (e.g. fun and excitement/challenge, comfort and relationships, relaxation, valued items, things you can slowly work towards etc etc)

In small groups (can be pairs/alone/full group as usual) – participants come up with a list of good rewards – can arrange in hierarchy if want to. Make sure they know there's a time limit.

Draw the participants' attention to the ideas on following page of the workbook. If f2f or they have a pair of scissors and a print out at home, they can cut and stick in the box or on step by step plan. Again, you can get creative with crafts when you lead this activity, but it will take planning.

There is no need to come together as a group to feed back for this activity, although it will be useful for you to have an idea of what the groups have talked about as practitioners, and you may want to provide supports or prompts as the group/s are thinking together.

NOTE: As a potentially relatively un-stressful activity, and depending on the shyness of the group, you might choose to shake up pairs for this activity, e.g. using a 'stand and sort' task to sit in a different order. If you do so – you will probably want to return to the original pairs for the next task, unless you have concerns about the original pairings.

If you have time, do squeeze in a short 2-5 minute pleasant activity to model a reward. You can choose any from the list on the following page of the workbook as long as you have prepared. You will definitely be carrying out this activity in session 6 next week, and if you choose, you can ask the participants to vote on what activity this will be (for next session see activity 4, session 6).

Activity 5: Planning next home learning task 20 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

Participants are creating a face your fears plan (you will be very familiar with this from anxiety teaching). It's a lot of work and they may need guidance. In particular, encourage them to think realistically and achievably (SMART in general).

Keep a close eye on proceedings and make clear again how the participants can contact you.

When you come together as a group, ask each pair to give you headlines about what they are going to do. You will want to have a good idea about what this will be for each pair so stay close and monitor each pair during the activity by visiting break out rooms or circling the room if you are f2f. Make sure both practitioners have a good idea about who will visit which pairs and have a plan for the timing of this. Make sure the participants know you will be checking in with each of them during the process.

At the end of the discussion, remind the participants to think about how they might use the back up team, and make a note about this if this is something they hadn't already added to plan. Prompt them that this might include use of rewards after doing a step.

Don't forget to give a five minute warning to the pairs before you come back together as a group.

Don't forget to leave a sufficient amount of time for coming together at the end, although the bulk of the time should be used for the pair work. Don't hear about individual plans in large amounts of detail – you should have a good idea from visiting pairs during the group. Be as cheerleading and encouraging as feels appropriate.

Activity 6: Feedback (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

It can be done just as a self-reflection activity – but you may want to summarise with a quick fire one word or phrase round to sum up the group.

Remind participants that they can come to you any time with feedback, concerns or difficulties and remind them how to do this.

Time-saving options

You can cut activity 2 completely, or provide a much shorter revision or warm up activity

You can shorten activities 3 and 4 (taking stock and rewards). Activity 4, in particular, can be much more didactic.

Session 6: Facing your fears

Note: This is roughly the same format as session 5 but with a few changes. It's fine to point this out to participants if it feels helpful.

Activity 1: Agenda (max 5 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead the agenda. Keep a bit of room for a brief reminder of activities/main messages from the group so far.

Activity 2: Warm up – The story of my name (10 minutes)

Practitioner A: Give participants a few minutes to follow the instructions you give them (as according to the instructions in the workbook).

Go round each participant in turn, asking them to tell everyone what they are happy to share about their name. Before the participant starts, Practitioner A gives an example before they start asking the participants.

Activity 3: How did it go? (20 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

The instructions are to do this activity in pairs – but it depends slightly on the group. Preferably it will be done in pairs, as the support and experiences from other young people can be maximised. Practitioners should keep an eye on the pairs, and give extremely clear instructions for what to do if a YP needs to talk to practitioners or access support with the exercise. For example, make sure they know how to be in touch with the practitioners if they get stuck, or upset – or their partner is upset. Again, if online, make sure one practitioner is available to go to in a breakout room with clear instructions, or make sure they know how to call a practitioner into their breakout rooms.

Activity 4: REWARD 15 minutes

Practitioner A: Check whether the group have been rewarding themselves after completing step-by-step tasks and facilitate discussion on what they have found works etc. . This discussion can take less time than the previous session but do include prompts/reminders of the same points and ensure YP are using rewards.

In small groups (can be pairs/alone/full group as usual) – participants come up with a list of good rewards – can arrange in hierarchy if want to. Make sure they know there's a time limit.

Remind them of the reward ideas in the workbook from the previous session.

There is no need to come together as a group to feed back for this activity, although it will be useful for you to have an idea of what the groups have talked about as practitioners, and you may want to provide supports or prompts as the group/s are thinking together.

NOTE: As a potentially relatively un-stressful activity, and depending on the shyness of the group, you might choose to shake up pairs for this activity, e.g. using a 'stand and sort' task to sit in a different order. If you do so – you will probably want to return to the original pairs for the next task, unless you have concerns about the original pairings.

Make sure you leave time to do a pleasant activity together – labelled in the workbook this week. It can be brief. If you prepare in advance, participants can vote on it the week before so you can be prepared (if f2f group you can bring materials for an activity like making a glitter bottle – if online you can ask them to bring craft materials or whatever necessary with them or prepare, e.g. make sure they have a comfortable chair and/or blanket for a relaxation exercise). As ever, be mindful of cost and resource limitations if asking them to bring something from home. Remember you can think about craft packages for the group members if this can be feasibly be resourced from the school or the MHST.

If you choose to have the participants vote on this activity – make sure to include this at the end of activity 4 in session 5 (the previous session).

Activity 5: Planning next home learning task 20 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

Participants are creating a face your fears plan (you will be very familiar with this from anxiety teaching). It's a lot of work and they may need guidance. In particular, encourage them to think realistically and achievably (SMART in general).

Keep a close eye on proceedings and make clear again how the participants can contact/speak to you.

When you come together as a group, ask each pair to give you headlines about what they are going to do. You will want to have a good idea about what this will be for each pair so stay close and monitoring each pair during the activity by visiting break out rooms or circling the room if you are f2f. Make sure both practitioners have a good idea about who will visit which pairs and have a plan for the timing of this. Make sure the participants know you will be checking in with each of them during the process.

At the end of the discussion, remind the participants to think about how they might use the back up team, and make a note about this if this is something they hadn't already added to plan. Prompt them that this might include use of rewards after doing a step.

Don't forget to give a five minute warning to the pairs before you come back together as a group.

Don't forget to leave a sufficient amount of time for coming together at the end, although the bulk of the time should be used for the pair work. Don't hear about individual plans in large amounts of detail – you should have a good idea from visiting pairs during the group. Be as cheerleading and encouraging as feels appropriate.

Activity 6: Feedback (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner A: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

It can be done just as a self-reflection activity – but you may want to summarise with a quick fire one word or phrase round to sum up the group.

Remind participants that they can come to you any time with feedback, concerns or difficulties and remind them how to do this.

This is a good opportunity to review ROMS – this isn't signposted in the workbook, but it is a good opportunity if you want more than T1 and T2 across the whole group. Make sure to leave time for it alongside the GBOs before the feedback/reflection part of the exercise. It's sufficient to keep to the subscale of a standardised questionnaire as a chosen symptom tracker.

Time-saving options

Activities 3-5 can all be shortened, particularly as following the same format as the previous week.

In activity 4, you can cut the reflection on rewards activity and only lead a relaxation/coping practice, and it can be kept brief.

Session 7 Problem Solving

Activity 1: Agenda 5 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead agenda settings. Include a quickfire round checking in about home learning task. Have a plan with how to check in with participants after the group if there are signs someone has struggled

Note: You may choose to have a longer gap between this session and session 6, even if a couple of weeks. If so, you might want to prompt a bit of extra planning in session 6 if there's time, or at least have a plan for extra steps if there's time.

Activity 2: Warm up 15 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead this exercise on telling the difference between problems and fears.

You can run this in many different ways.

One option as suggested here is to give them a couple of minutes (with a time limit) to tick whether they think something is a problem or a fear. Do the first example together beforehand. This can be done in pairs where most participants are shy or quiet, so they feel more confident to suggest answers when you come together as a group.

When you come together as a group, get them to all shout out whether they think each is a problem or fear. Remind them there's no right or wrong answers.

You can spend a few minutes in advance of the exercise defining a 'problem' and a 'fear' but it can be more fun to go for a quick-fire round and then discuss the definitions after this.

Go through the problems vs fears definition table and invite them to add any notes. You can do this in a didactic way or guided discovery, depending on the timing.

Flag that you'll think about how to respond to problems or fears later in the session today.

Activity 3: Worry tree 15 minutes

Practitioner A: Go through the worry tree with a few examples, especially ones that are currently relevant to the year/age group or to current events.

Give the participants some time to try their own worries through the tree. Make it clear how to get help from you if needed.

Activity 4 Problem solving 20 minutes

Practitioner B: Use an example to go through the steps of problem solving together. The participants can make notes on their worksheet – or you can do it altogether as a group on a

slide or flipchart – and then use the worksheet to practice solving a problem for homework. You can use one of the examples below or ask a participant to suggest a real one from the group. You can get the group to pick from several options which one they'd like to solve together.

Example problems:

You're locked out of your Netflix account.

Your mum drops you off at a new friend's house for a sleepover. When they answer the door she says "Love you boo boo, don't forget mr snuggles" and passes you your favourite cuddly toy (or the one you loved when you were 6).

You haven't completed your homework due in today.

You want to get a pet but your parents won't let you, as they believe they'll have to do all the work.

A group of friends you really like are really into football but you don't like it, and when you try it you discover you are quite bad at it.

Activity 5: Planning next home learning task 15 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead the activity according to the instructions in the workbook as usual. You may want to shift the pairs if it feels safe.

Hopefully the majority of the group will be familiar with this by now. Encourage them to briefly review their previous step from the plan and what they learnt from completing it. Support them to think about how they can build on this for their next step. As usual, encourage them to think realistically and achievably (SMART in general). Always encourage them that feeling shame or disappointment if they haven't done anything is not helpful, and much better to just help problem solve how and when to start – find another task that feels more manageable.

Keep a close eye on proceedings and make clear again how the participants can call you in to help if needed.

When you come together as a group, ask each pair to give you headlines about what they are going to do. Note that this time they've been advised in the workbook they can come up with a few steps if they're confident about what they are doing. You will want to have a good idea about what this will be for each pair so stay close and monitoring each pair during the activity by visiting break out rooms or circling the room if you are f2f. Make sure both practitioners have a good idea about who will visit which pairs and have a plan for the timing of this. Make sure the participants know you will be checking in with each of them during the process.

At the end of the discussion, remind the participants to think about how they might use the back up team, and make a note about this if this is something they hadn't already added to plan. Prompt them that this might include use of rewards after doing a step.

Don't forget to give a five minute warning to the pairs before you come back together as a group.

Don't forget to leave a sufficient amount of time for coming together at the end, although the bulk of the time should be used for the pair work. Don't hear about individual plans in large amounts of detail – you should have a good idea from visiting pairs during the group. Be as cheerleading and encouraging as feels appropriate.

Activity 6: Feedback (max 10 minutes)

Practitioner B: Lead this activity according to the instructions in the workbook.

It can be done just as a self-reflection activity – but you may want to summarise with a quick fire one word or phrase round to sum up the group.

Remind participants that they can come to you any time with feedback, concerns or difficulties and remind them how to do this.

This is a good opportunity to review ROMS – this isn't signposted in the workbook, but it is a good opportunity if you want more than T1 and T2 across the whole group. Make sure to leave time for it alongside the GBOs before the feedback/reflection part of the exercise. It's sufficient to keep to the subscale of a standardised questionnaire, as a chosen symptom tracker.

Time-saving options

Activity 2 can be a short didactic exercise. You can give them definitions about problems and fears to read for homework before the group, and/or the worry tree and problem solving steps from activities 3 and 4 to make for a shorter session.

Activities 3-4 can be considerably shortened, particularly 3, where you can go through with just one brief example.

Session 8. Looking back and moving forwards

Activity 1: Agenda 10 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead the agenda. Keep the list of activities brief and didactic so that you can spend a bit more time hearing headlines about how the home learning has gone this week, and you have some time for a bit of help/investigation/reassurance if there have been any difficulties.

A key message for this session: You have the information now. If you haven't done as much as you'd like, this is by no means a failure, it just wasn't the right time. Take what you've learned forwards for when you're ready.

Activity 2: Mystery warm up 10 minutes

If online: Guess that noise. When it's your turn you turn off your camera but leave your audio on. You make a noise and people have to guess what it is. Then you turn your camera on to reveal. Practitioner A demonstrates first and leads the exercise.

If f2f (or online): What am I doing? When it's your turn you mime an activity and everyone has to guess what the activity is. Practitioner A demonstrates first and leads the exercise.

Activity 3 What have I learned so far? 20 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead the group altogether through the important things they want to remember from the group when they leave.

This can be done in a number of different ways depending on the group and setting. With a quieter group who prefer more structure, you could bring a powerpoint presentation with key points, and ask them to contribute or give examples. You could bring key words (either showing them on shared screen or cutting them out and laminating to go and pick off the floor) and each participant can pick one to say what learning it has prompted.

In pairs the participants can then start making a list of things they've achieved over the course of the programme. This might be realising something new, or doing steps facing fears on the hierarchy, difficult things they've done that they're proud of, solving problems.

These should be concrete and specific, not vague and general. Encourage them to describe in detail. They can choose how to record them. It might be on a poster. It might be written as stories or examples – it might be drawings.

Emphasise this is a longer piece of work they are just starting today – they can think about between sessions and they will also spend some more time on this in the last session. Encourage them to take their time on it.

It's really important and valuable for them to have an honest and specific record of achievements. It's easy to minimise or rubbish things that you've achieved, but it's very important for your mental health not to. If it's tricky they should think about how they might talk about it if their friend was having the same problem with them and they wanted to encourage them about what they had achieved.

If there's time, participants can each share one thing they have really valued.

Activity 4 Reflections 15 minutes

Practitioner A: Lead this feedback session. Give the participants some time individually to complete all of your end of group ROMS, including standardised measures, goal ratings and session feedback questionnaires. When they've finished, give them time to think about their reflections on the group process and any feedback or closing comments they want to make to the practitioners and/or the group.

Remember to give them instructions about individually reflecting when they have finished ROMS before they start completing them, so that they have something to do if they finish before others.

Activity 5 Moving forwards plan 25 minutes

Practitioner B: Lead participants through the questions on the Moving Forwards Plan, then give them time to complete themselves or in pairs.

You can run this how you like. Probably it's best to give them time on their own, and feedback altogether might be selecting one main point that they want to remember/tell the group (but optional whether this is shared or not). If they've been working well in pairs and have fed back that they enjoy doing this, then of course this activity could also be run in pairs.

Don't forget to leave at least 5 minutes at the end to award certificates for completing the course, designed by you (example in worksheets that you can use or not as you wish). Remember to email them the personalised ones if you are meeting online – or award them printed versions f2f.

It can be nice to include on the certificate, or say something in particular to each participant about what has impressed you about them over the weeks (grown in confidence, stuck with it even if it's been hard, been kind, sharing etc etc.)

Time-saving options

You may feel that a warm up isn't really necessary for the final group and you'd like to spend more time on reflection/reward/endings, so you may wish to cut activity 2.

Activities 3-5 can all be shortened considerably, especially if time is spent making the rationale for the activities clear so that they can be completed independently.

Make sure to leave time to mark the end of the group and your positive feedback for all of the members, as individually specific as you are able.

Time-saving options overall

-Shorter warm-ups

-Omit session 6 and session 7

Appendix – Anxiety and Low Mood

(NOTE: this is intended as a guide for practitioners with some ideas of the conversations you might have with young people in the group if they raise / you notice / ROMS show changes in mood / risk). All of the below should be used in conjunction with risk protocols in place with the service/school.

When fears and worries take over our life and stop us doing the things we used to or want to, it is completely normal to begin to feel low in mood. You might notice feeling more tired, irritable, lacking energy and generally being lower in mood. This makes sense because you have stopped doing things that you probably used to enjoy or want to do because your fears and worries are bossing you around and preventing you doing things. The less you do and the more withdrawn you become because of your fears and worries, the lower your mood is likely to become. Sometimes young people cannot see how to claim back their life from their fears and worries and so this can also contribute to their mood becoming affected. Our mood can also be impacted when we have lots of stress or worry or have to manage negative life events.

The good news is that when young people learn the tools they need to start facing their fears and getting back to doing the things they would like to, their low mood also lifts and is no longer a problem! We often ask young people “if I had a magic wand and could magic your anxiety away, would you still feel low in mood?” and most young people say no, they would not feel low in mood if their anxiety was taken away. If this is true for you, it is a good sign that working on facing your fears and overcoming your anxiety will also help your mood.

For some young people during the group however, their mood might get worse despite them trying to face their fears. Maybe they experienced a difficult life event unexpectedly or something else in their life changed or maybe they don't know what changed but they notice their mood is becoming more of a problem than their anxiety now. Young people might start to notice that their sleeping and eating is being affected. Maybe they no longer want to do much and find that their motivation to do a range of things is really going down. Maybe they can't find as much pleasure or enjoyment in doing activities they used to really enjoy (despite their anxiety). If this sounds like you, or, lots of things have changed in your life since you first met with your practitioner or had your assessment, you should approach your practitioner to discuss this. Sometimes young people experience thoughts about not wanting to be here anymore or have urges to harm themselves. Your practitioner will have helped many other young people with these kinds of difficulties before, so you must tell them if you think this is going on for you so that they can help talk to who they need to, to get you the right support. It might be you need some additional or different support right now to the 'Facing your fears' group.