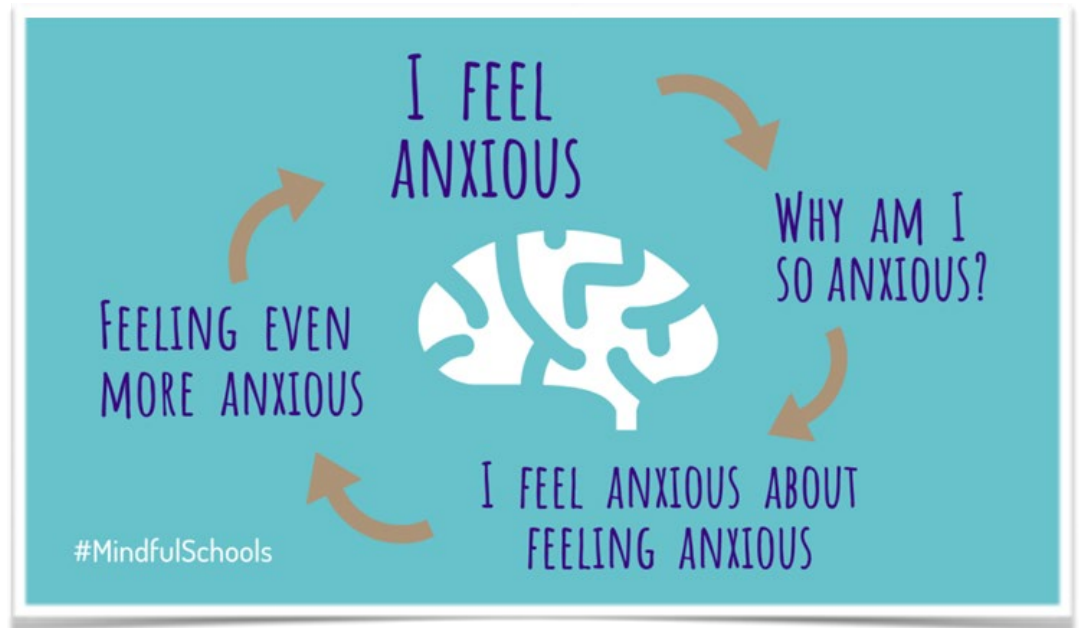


What If...

How to uncover what triggers our anxiety

Anxiety is based in the future. We may feel anxious RIGHT NOW but the true fear is based in the future; what could happen. When you think about your anxious thoughts, most of them would probably start with “What if...”. What if I get laid off from work? What if my kids do not return to school until September? What if I can’t pay my bills? For many people, the thought is only the tip-of-the-iceberg, and does not get into truly what is making us anxious. So let’s get below the surface.

What’s the worst thing that could happen?

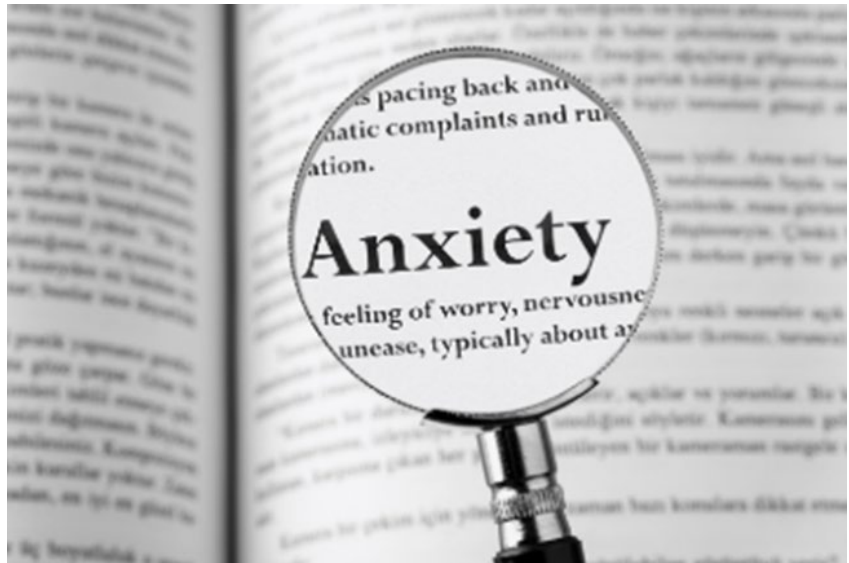


Suppose your worst fear is true...

Here is a technique to uncover our fears and fantasies that trigger our anxiety:

1. Write down your anxious thoughts and pick one to focus on.

2. With the thought you decided to focus on, ask yourself “What if this was true?” “What is the worst thing that could happen?” “What am I the most afraid of?” A new fantasy or thought will pop into your head.



3. Write down the new fantasy or thought below, or beside, the previous fantasy or thought.

4. At each level, draw an arrow after each thought. For example:

What if I get laid off —> Then I would not be getting paid —> I could not pay my bills —> my utilities may be shut off/or I get evicted —> etc.

5. Stop when you have struck a chord - you will know when you hit it. This is the core fear!

This technique is used to expose the fear - being aware is often not enough, ultimately we have to face it. Stay tuned for more ways to face the fear.



Contributed by
Ezra Branderhorst
Registered Social Worker &
Cognitive Behaviour Therapist