

**Dr Ellie Atkins, Clinical Psychologist (& some young helpers) present:**



# **HOW TO DEAL WITH STRESS ABOUT C-19**



**A guide for children & young people**

# WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

- I'm a psychologist working in a hospital
- I help children who are ill or have a health condition
- I help them with their feelings and their wellbeing
- I know that being ill, or worrying about being ill can be stressful or scary so I've written this to help people because everyone is talking about Covid-19 or coronavirus



# THIS IS WHAT I'M GOING TO COVER

- What is anxiety and stress?
- What will help?

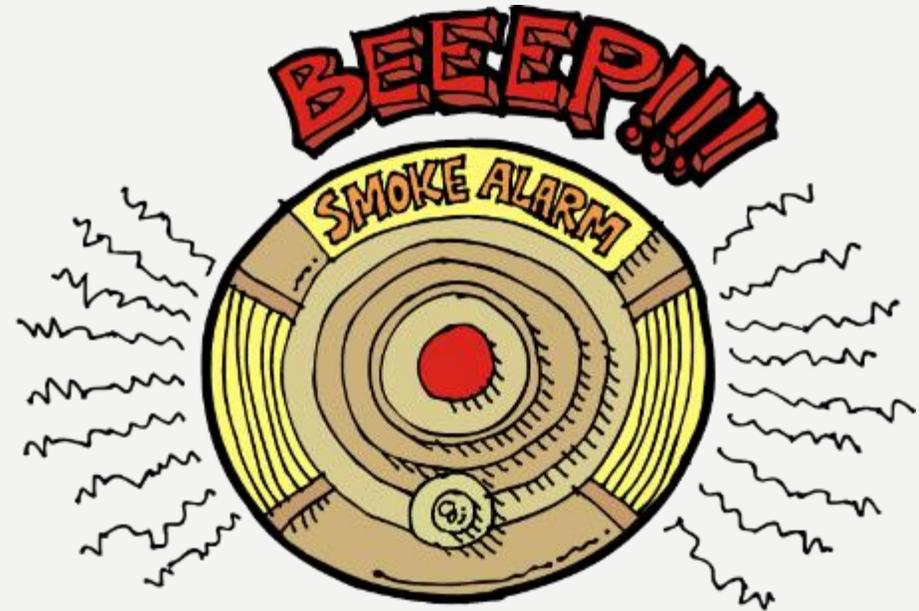


# ANXIETY IS LIKE A SMOKE ALARM

WHEN I BURN TOAST IN MY HOUSE...

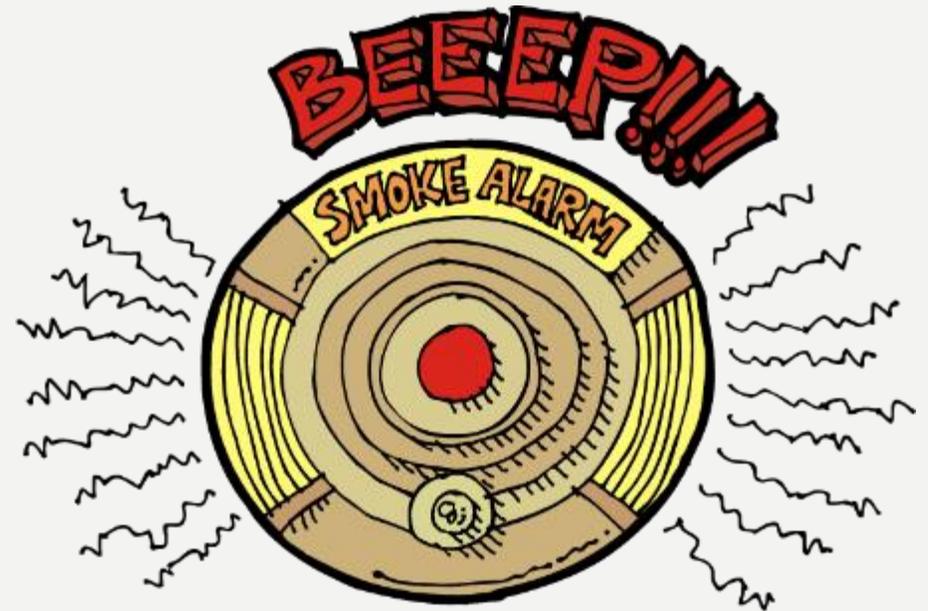


MY SMOKE ALARM GOES OFF

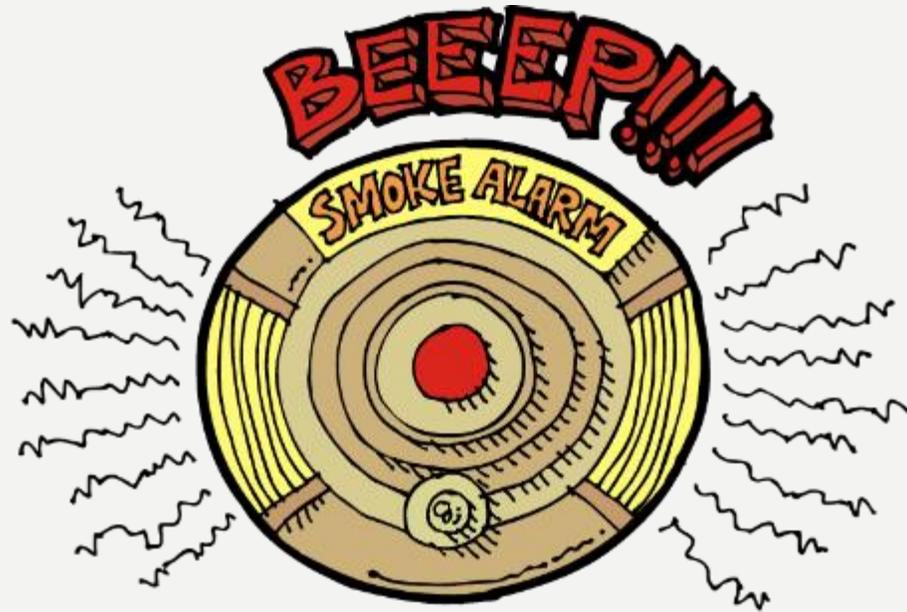


# ANXIETY IS LIKE AN ALARM

- Our alarm goes off when we think there is a danger.
- I wonder if your alarm is going off a lot at the moment



# WHY IS YOUR ALARM GOING OFF?



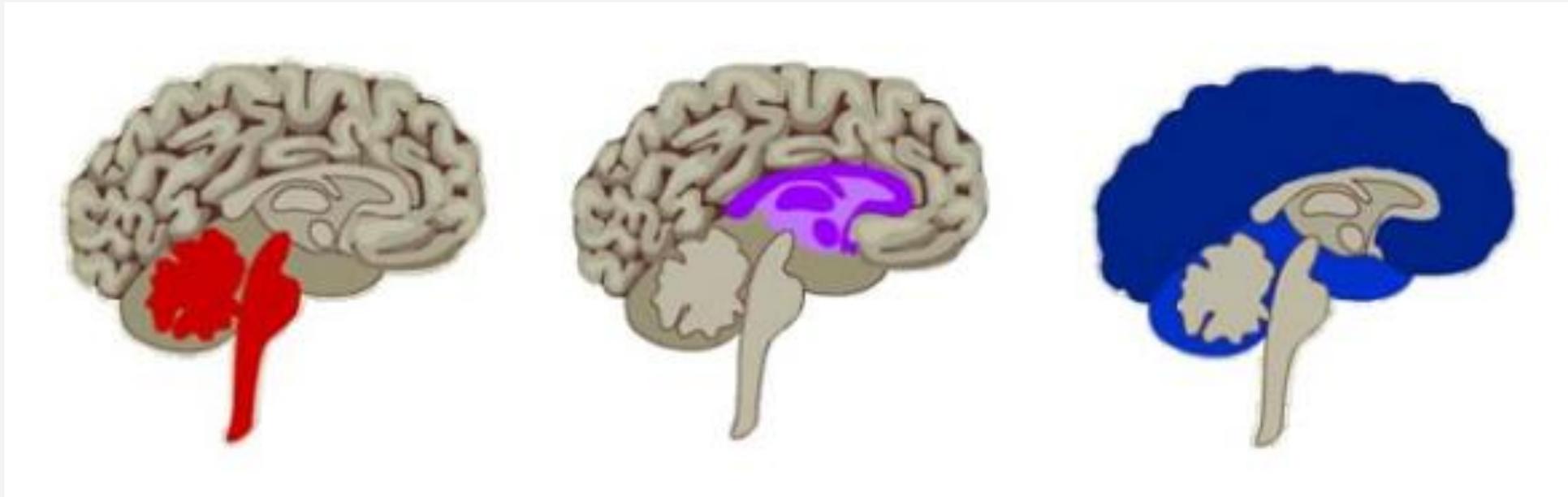
There are lots of reasons why your alarm might go off at the moment

Maybe.....

- Because you can't go to school?
- Because you are worried about getting ill?
- Because you don't want to wash your hands, or think you should wash them a lot?
- Because the grown-ups are stressed?
- Because you can't see your friends or your siblings are annoying?

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GET ANXIOUS?

- When we're anxious, our brain can shut down, leaving us stuck either very emotional or in emergency 'fight or flight' mode. This makes it hard to think, to plan or to reason.



**SO, WHAT  
CAN WE DO?**

Created by Dr Ellie Atkins, Clinical Health Psychologist, St  
George's Hospital

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KEEP CALM

There are lots of things outside our control. Let's remember to breathe and focus on what really matters so we can respond constructively.

STAY WISE

Making wise choices helps everyone. Let's choose positive actions that support our wellbeing and help others to do the same.

BE KIND

We're all in this together, even when we're forced apart. Let's stay connected and reach out to help others who may be in need.

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/>

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# TWO WAYS TO SEE THIS:

I can't cope with this. It's too much!

OR

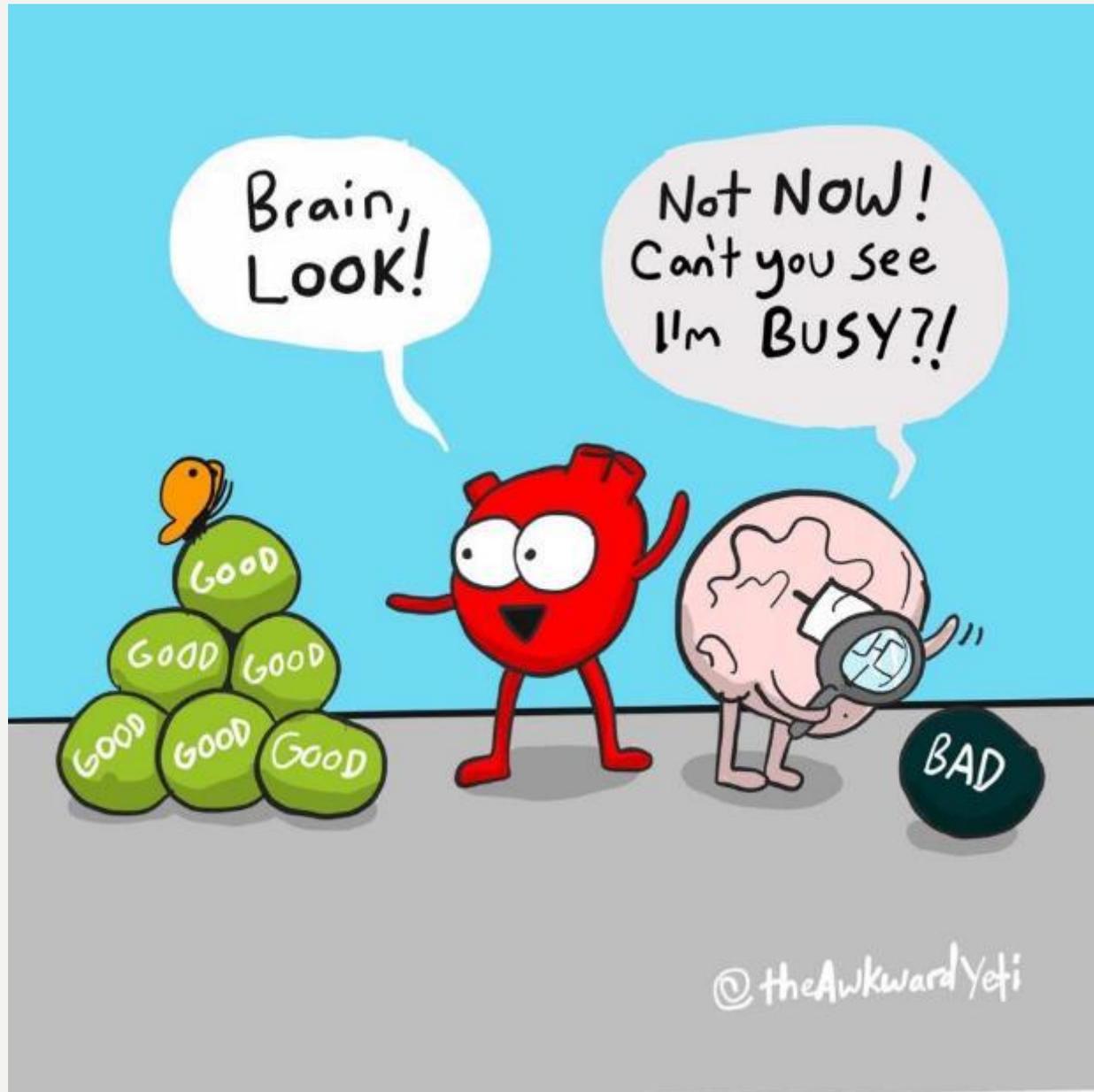
This is a tough situation. We are going to get through it together.

# TWO WAYS TO SEE THIS:

I hate all these changes. It's not fair!

OR

It's not fair that this has happened but I can find some things that feel ok.



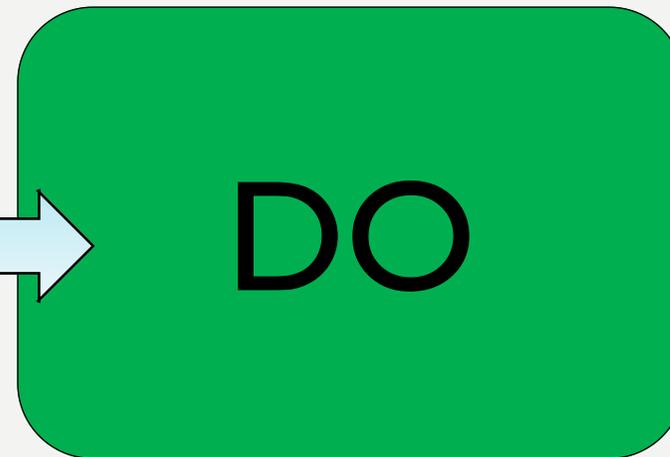
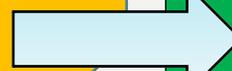
Created by Dr Ellie Atkins, Clinical Health Psychologist, St George's Hospital

# GROWN-UPS FEEL LIKE THIS TOO!

- This situation is out of my control.
- There's nothing I can do
- I can't cope with this
- This will be terrible
- This is a very difficult situation. I will do what I can.
- I can't control many things but I can look after myself
- I am limited in what I can do, but that doesn't mean there's nothing I can do
- I can still be positive despite the situation
- We will get through this

# Managing anxiety or stress by:





Walk round the house

Write down how you feel or draw a picture

Find things to be grateful for

Do something which makes your brain busy (write a story, read a book, craft, sing, plan your next project, remember a great holiday, get a hug)

Get some fresh air (perhaps in the garden)

*"I'm really worried"*  
Or  
*"I'm pretty stressed right now"*  
Or  
*"I'm really scared about what might happen"*

Take some deep breaths (or blow bubbles or blow up a balloon)

*"There are things that can help. What would help me right now?"*

*"I can't go for a bike ride but I can run around the garden"*

# WRITE ABOUT IT

 Write a journal or a diary

 Draw pictures about it

 Keep a log of events

 Write a blog

 Make a video about it

 Keep a photo diary

- Give your brain ways to process what's happening



# What is going well?

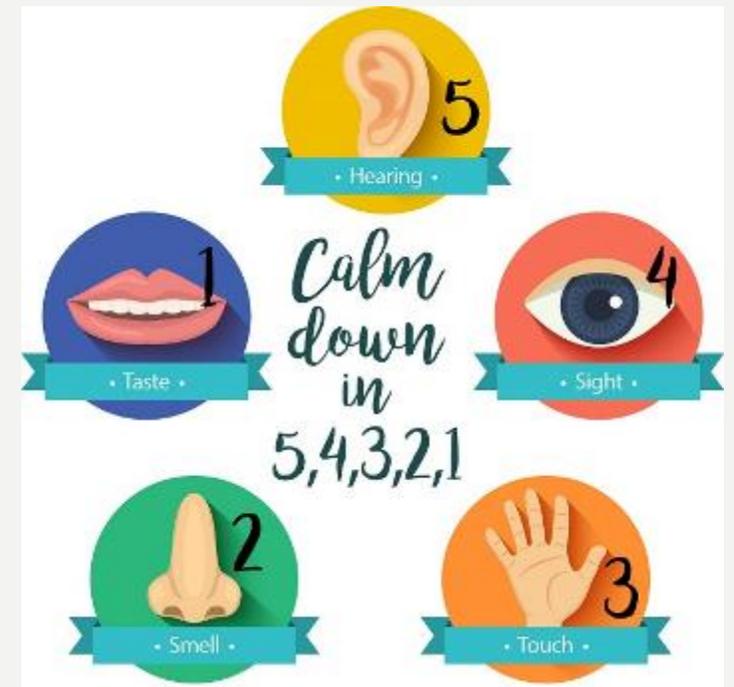


## HERE'S A LIST OF THINGS ONE YOUNG PERSON SAID:

- 1) Being able to be home with Mummy or daddy
- 2) That spring is still growing and people can still enjoy the new plants and sunshine
- 3) We can still get fresh food in the shop
- 4) More time to read books

# OTHER TECHNIQUES THAT CAN HELP

- Grounding – Squash a squishy or hug a teddy. Feel the floor under your feet or the chair at your back.
- Breathing – For ideas about this look at:  
<http://headspaceguildford.co.uk/just-breathe/>
- “If you feel helpless, help others”. Lots of people are doing wonderful things for others – what could you do? (doesn't have to be a big gesture! – a picture in your window is a start)



## THINGS TO REMEMBER:

### 1. It's ok to not be ok

- This situation is new and different
- Feeling worried and stressed is normal

### 2. We will get through this

- There are things you can do that will help
- This won't last forever



# INFO FOR THE GROWN UPS

- Children and young people respond to stress in different ways (e.g. being more clingy, anxious, withdrawn, angry, agitated, bedwetting etc)
- Children needs adults' love and attention during difficult time. Give them extra time and attention
- Listen to their worries and speak kindly to them
- Find chances to play and relax together – more time at home gives plenty more opportunities than normal for this
- Keep a regular routine which includes time for playing and relaxing and time for learning
- Give them facts about what is happening in words they can understand at their age
- Look after yourself – your children will need you to help regulate their feelings, so you need to find ways to relax and de-stress too. (see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Ykpl7P\\_\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Ykpl7P__4) for more info)