

# Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

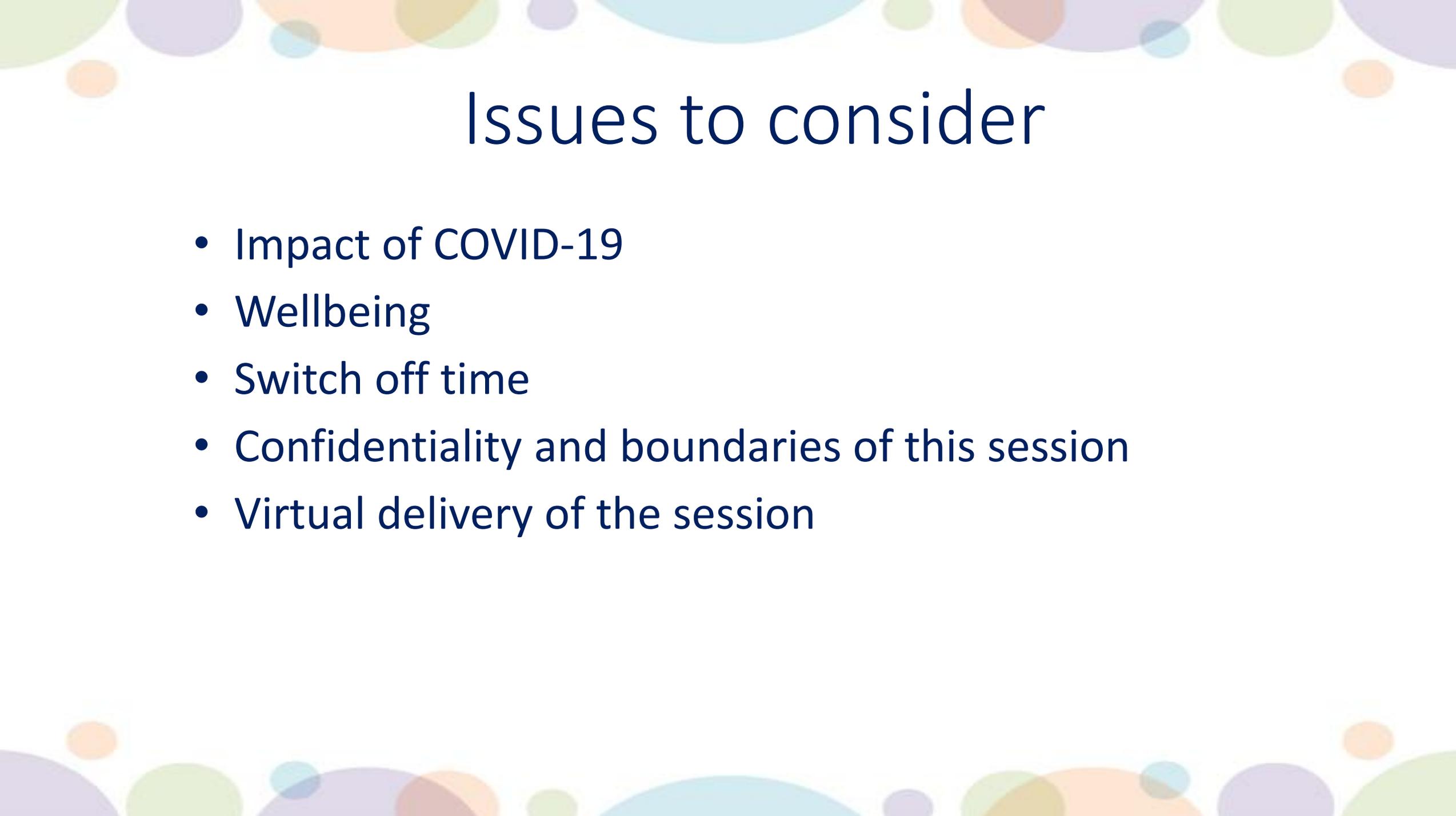
**Understanding and supporting through a multi-agency graduated  
response**

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Welcome





# Issues to consider

- Impact of COVID-19
- Wellbeing
- Switch off time
- Confidentiality and boundaries of this session
- Virtual delivery of the session

# Session Outline

- What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?
- Physiology of anxiety
- Child/Parent responses
- Prevalence and Key Principles
- Core Approaches
- Functions
- Returning to school
- End and evaluation

# What is EBSA?

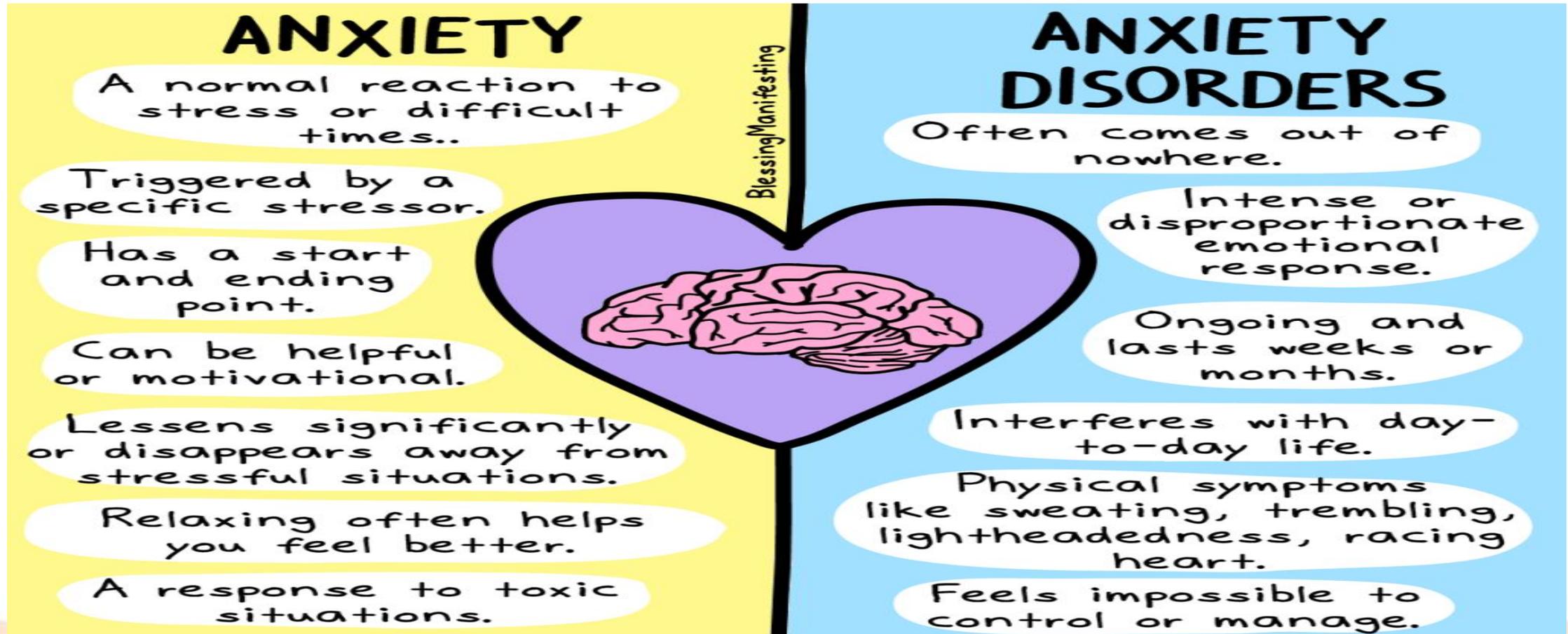
“Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school”

*(West Sussex Guidance, p.3)*

“[EBSA] occurs when stress exceeds support, when risks are greater than resilience and when ‘pull’ factors that promote school non-attendance overcome the ‘push’ factors that encourage attendance”

*(Thambirajah et al., 2008, p.33)*

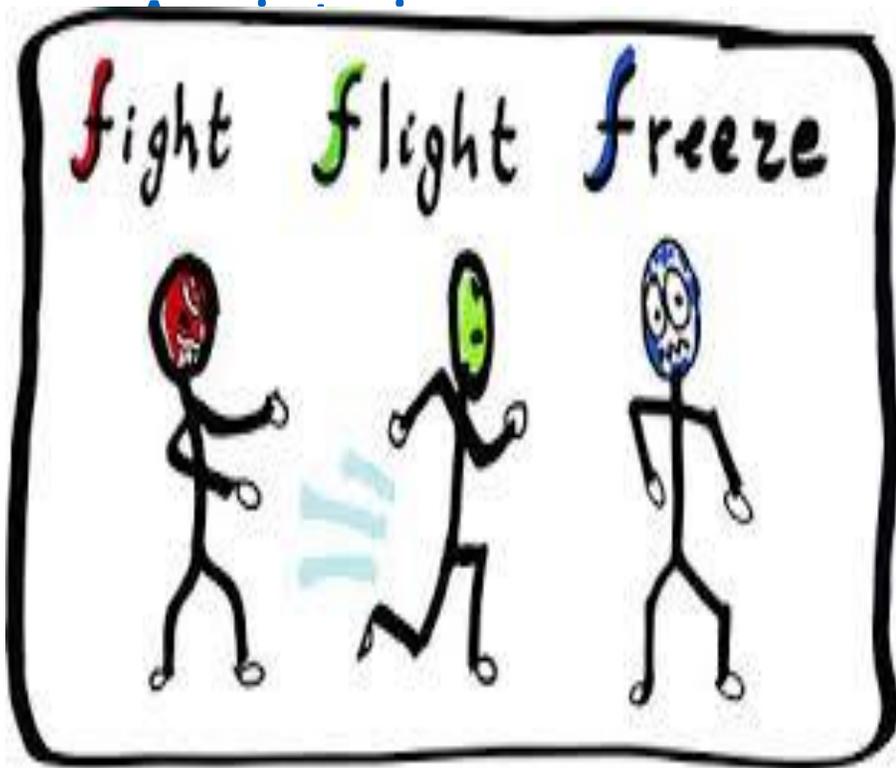
# Anxiety Reactions



# Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

- [https://youtu.be/jEHwB1PG -Q](https://youtu.be/jEHwB1PG-Q)

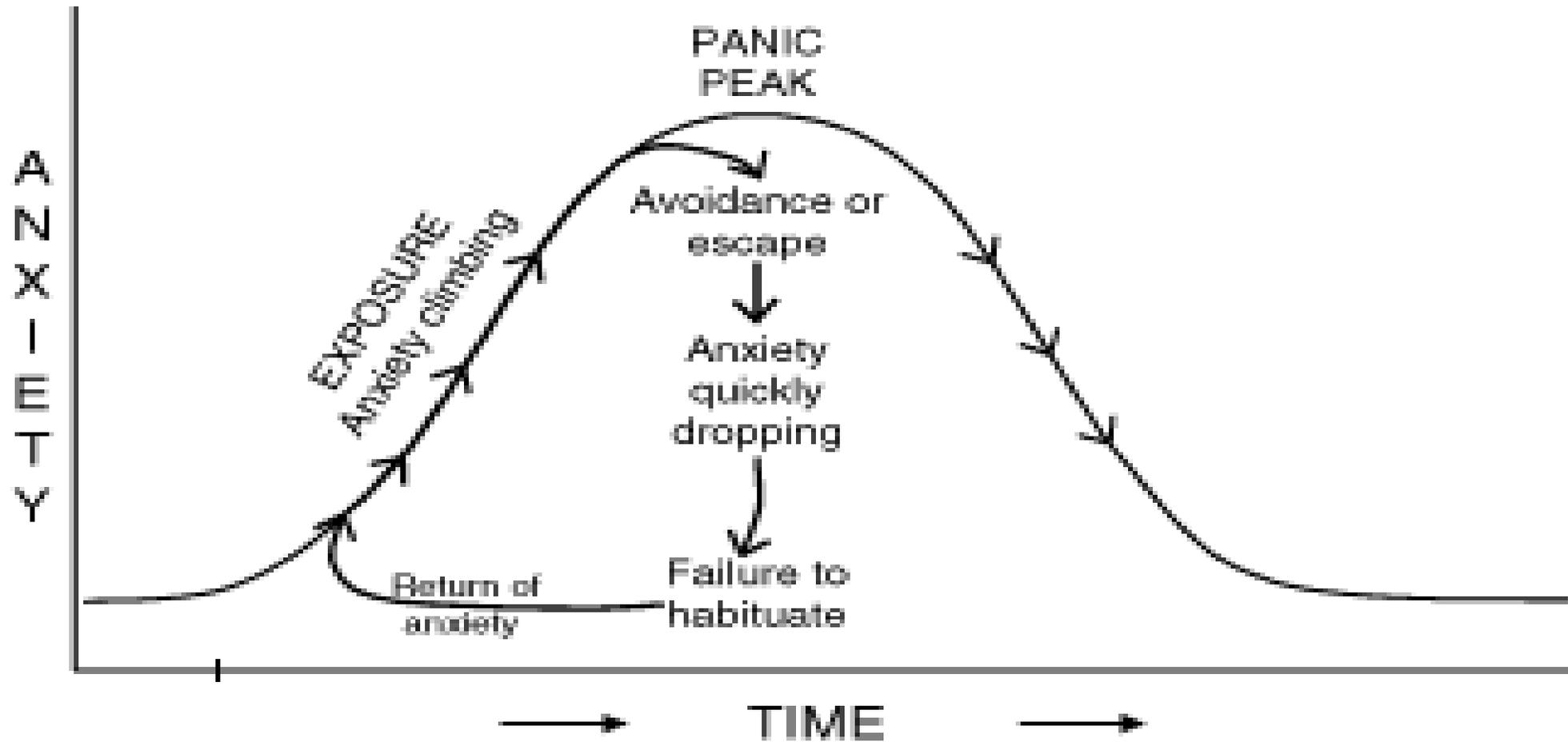
# Adrenaline Response - part of everyone's daily functioning



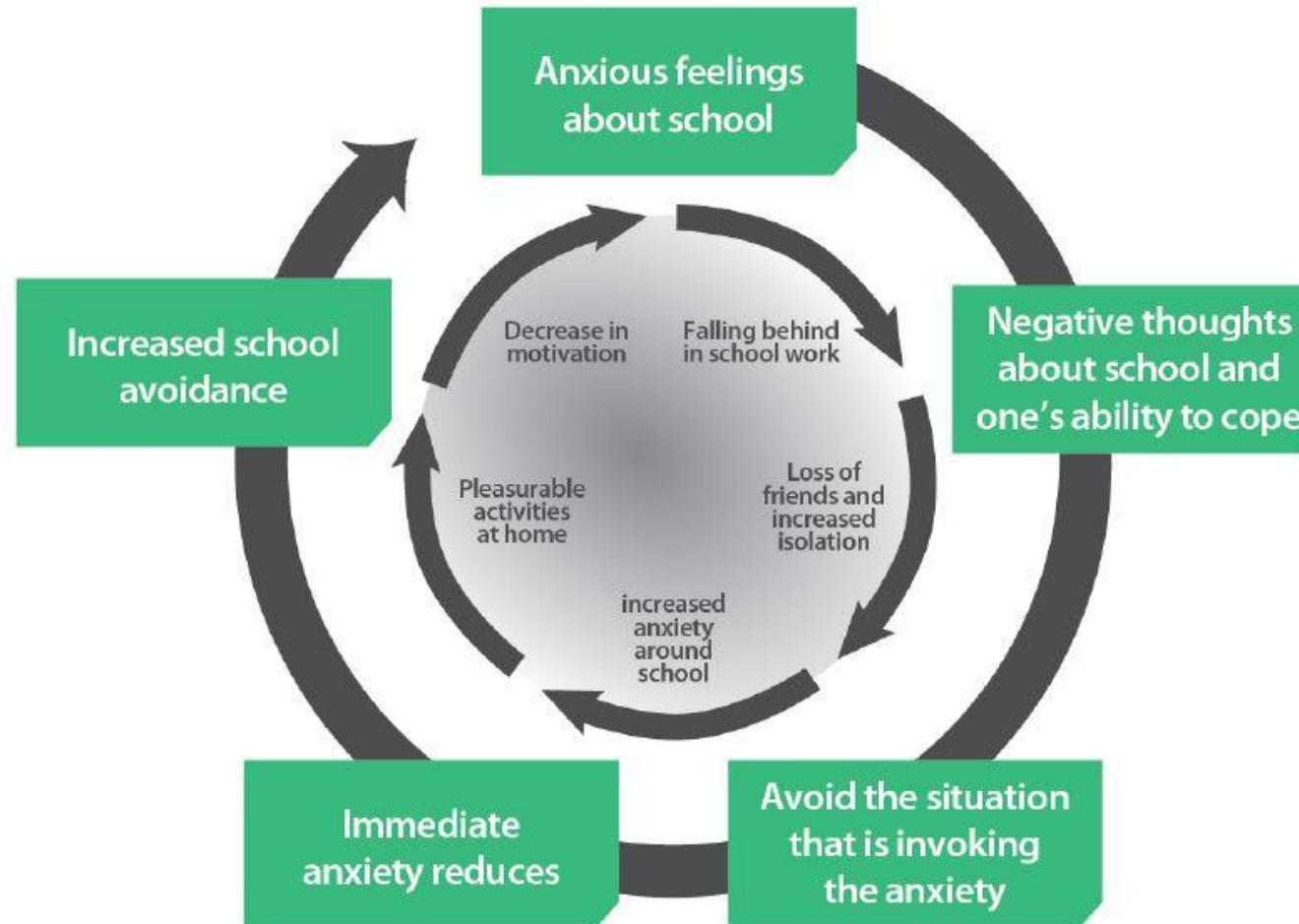
- A natural physiological reaction
- A healthy way for keeping us on track
- Keeps us alert to threats or danger
- Useful to help us reach goals, deal with deadlines and achieve ambitions
- Can help us to face the things we are afraid of..... *'Feel the fear and do it anyway'!*
- The more we avoid, the more we fear.

# The vicious cycle of avoidance

## THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF AVOIDANCE

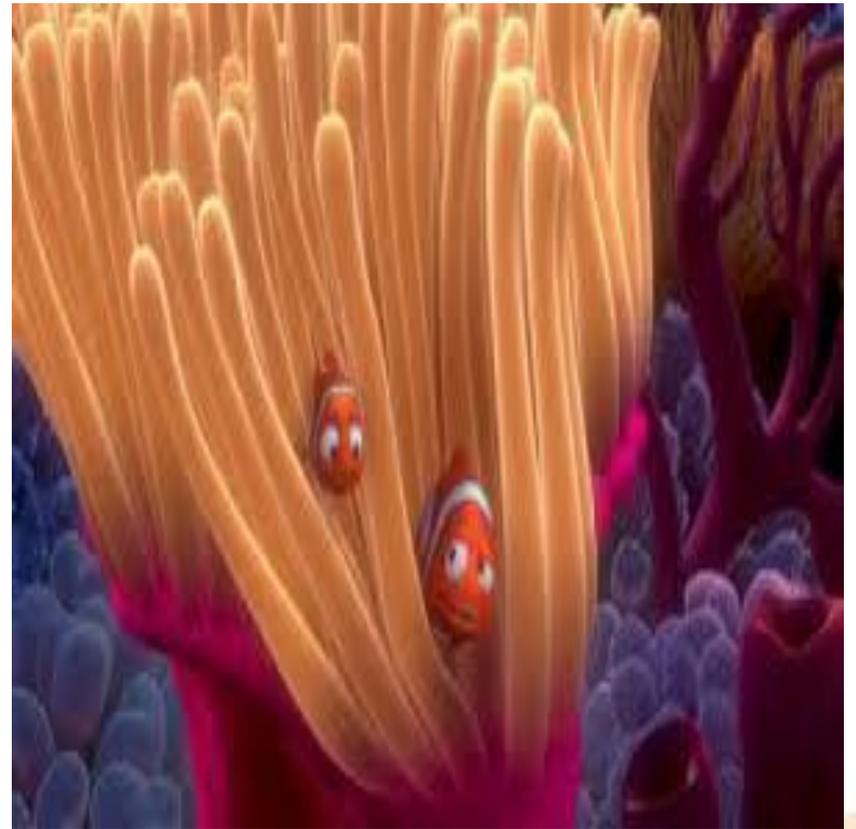


Anxiety is a key feature of EBSA – there may be triggering and maintaining factors

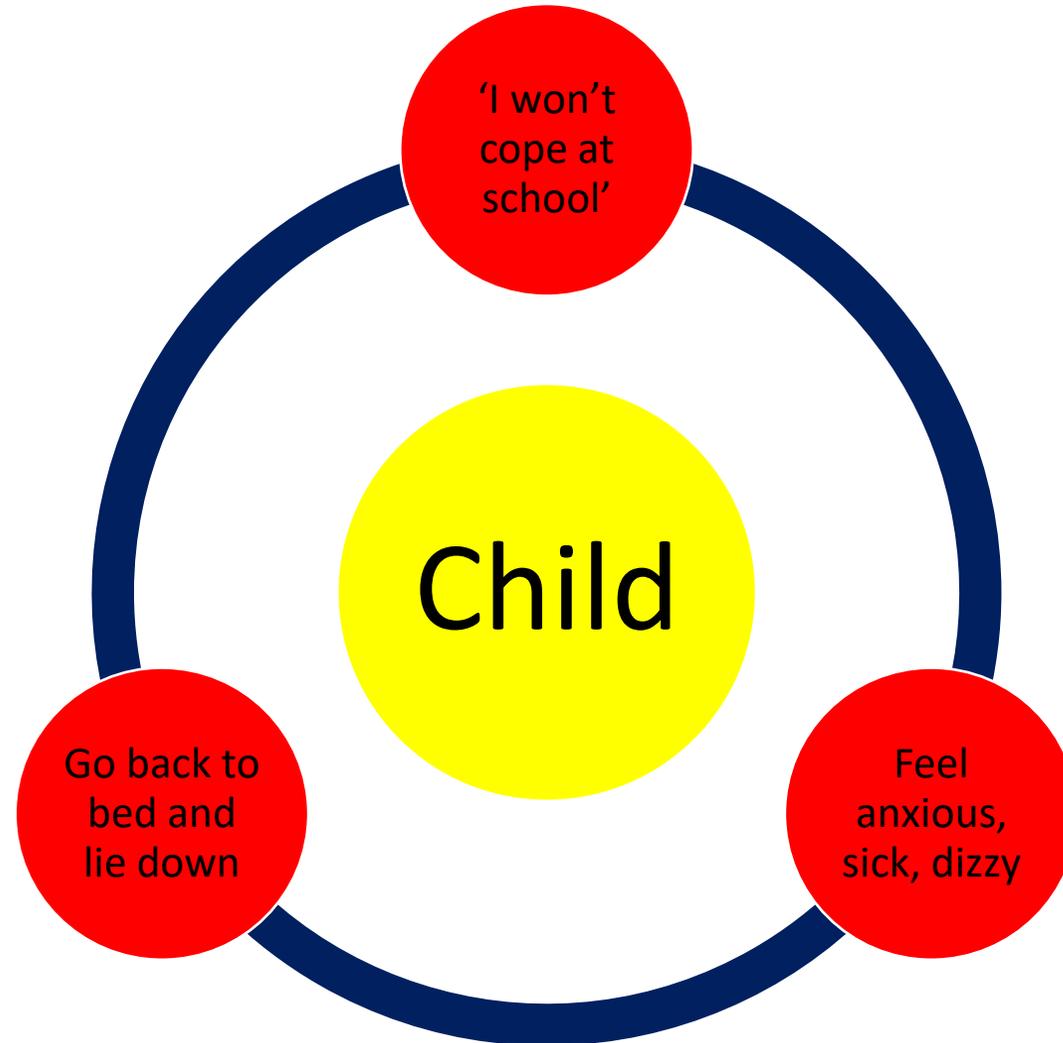


# Dealing with EBSA can be tough for parents too!

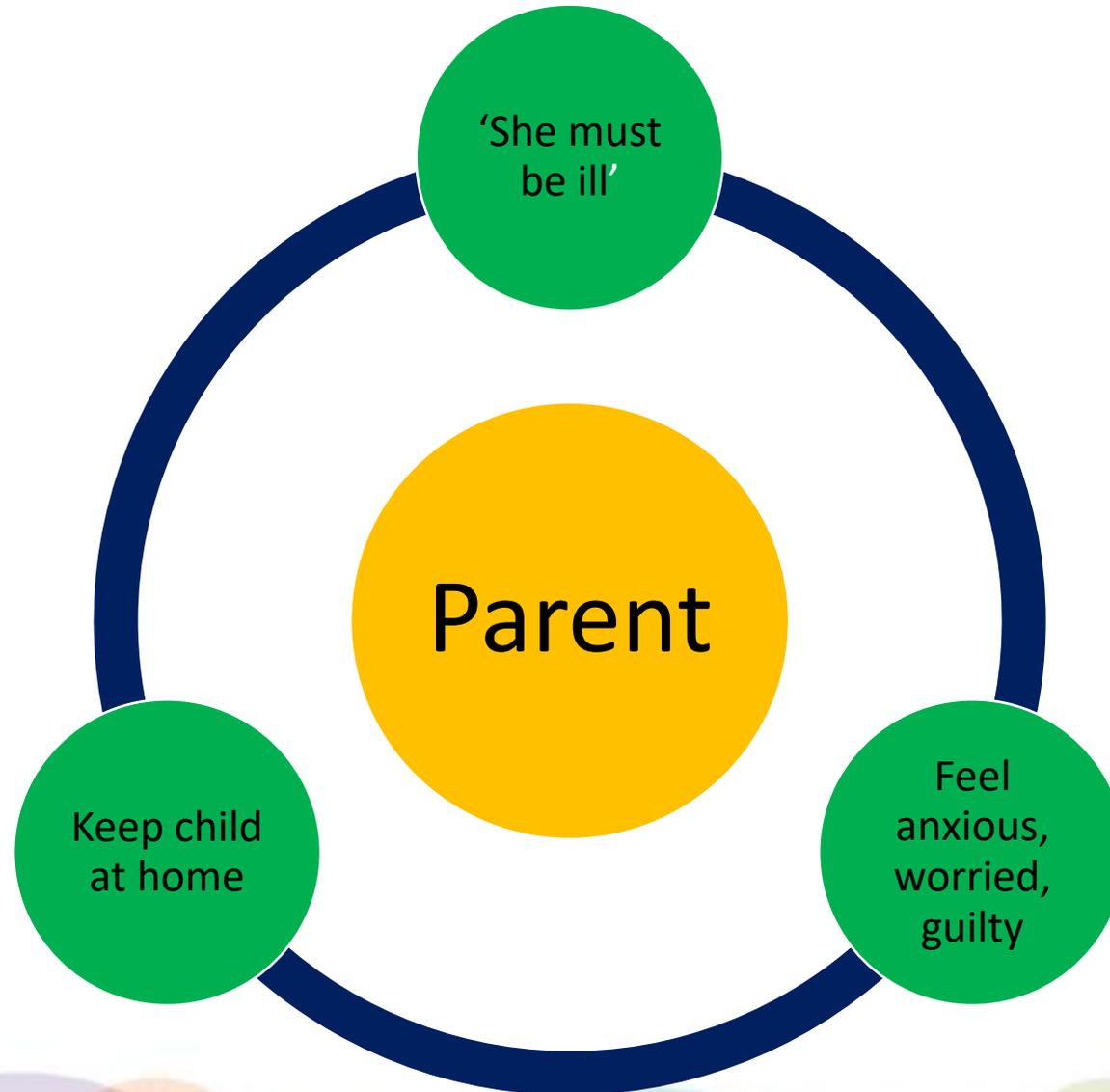
- ‘You think you can do these things Nemo but you just can’t!’
- Checking, checking and checking again – makes it safe
- ‘He’s got one short fin so he’s not a very good swimmer’



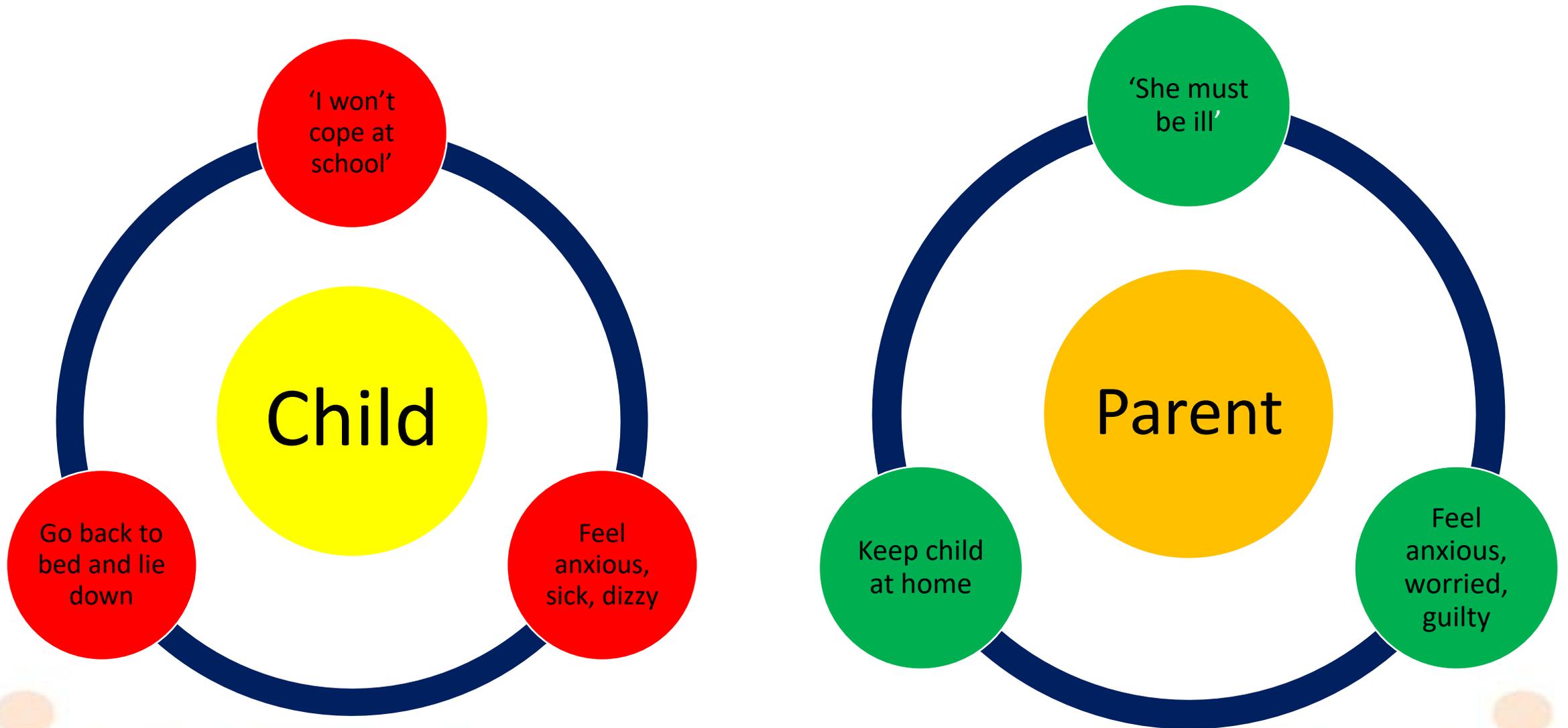
# Child Anxiety Circle



# Parent Anxiety Circle



# Child and Parent Anxiety Circle



# Prevalence rates

- EBSA behaviours are estimated to affect about 1-2% of school aged children (Elliott, 1999; Kearney, 2008; Guilliford and Miller, 2015).
- EBSA is equally common in boys and girls (King and Bernstein, 2001).
- There appear to be three peaks of EBSA risk that correspond with key transition periods: 5-6 years old (school entry), 11-12 years old (transition to secondary school) and around 14 years (Pellegrini, 2007)
- Risk factors for EBSA include those linked to school, family and the CYP.

# Intervention Key Principles

Evidence shows several factors are associated with positive outcomes, including:

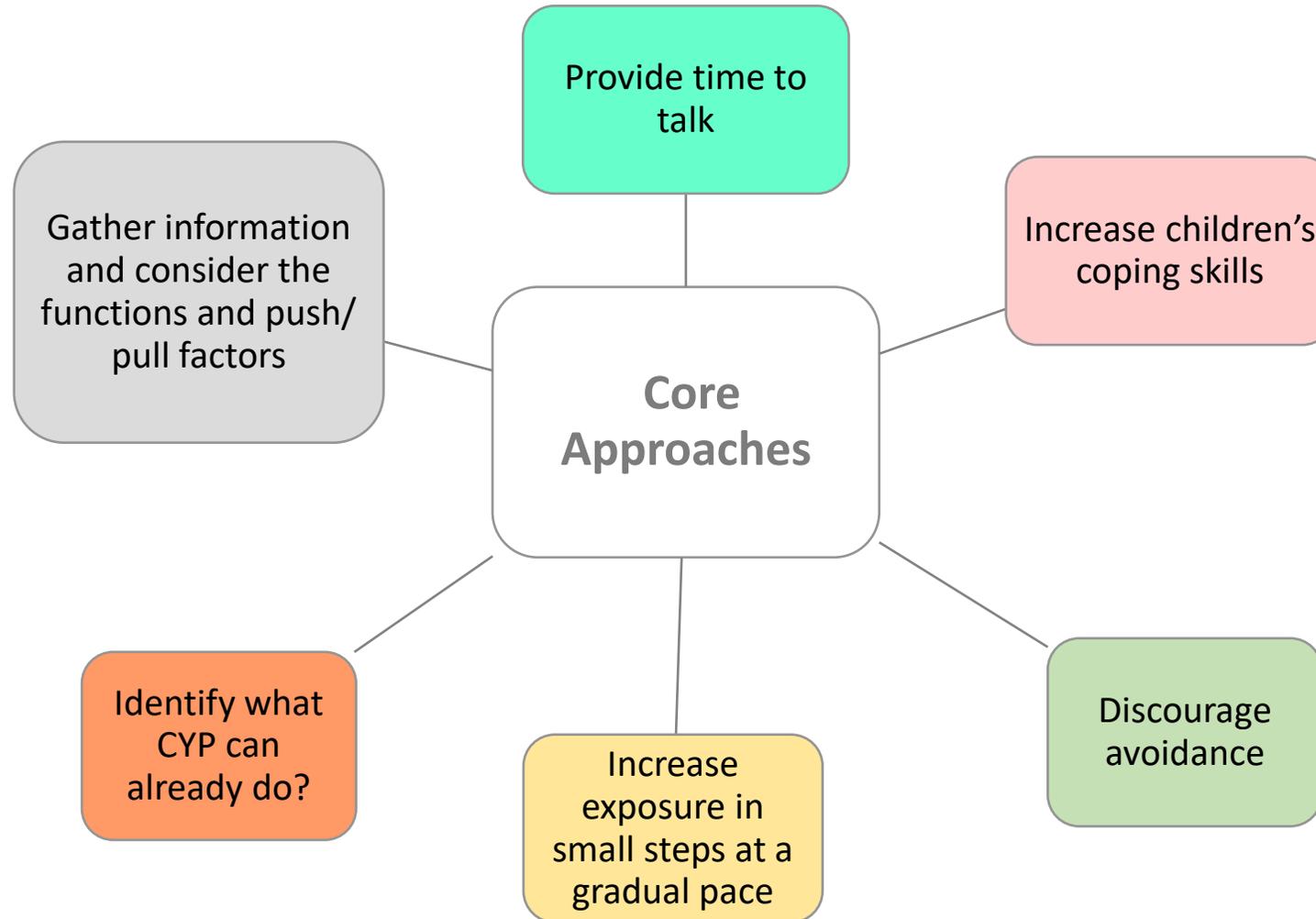
- **early** intervention;
- **working with** parents/ carers, staff and YP;
- taking **flexible** approaches to consider the individual factors/ function(s) served by non-attendance; and
- emphasising the need for a **rapid return** to school alongside good support and environmental adaptations.



Literature has identified key elements of support that should be in place in order for reintegration action plans to be successful.

Key Elements of Any Plan	Completed? Who/When?
Direct telephone contact between parent/carers and key workers in school. Agree expectations regarding frequency of contact and set realistic response times.	
A return to school at the earliest opportunity.	
Early home visits if appropriate to discuss the young person's reluctance to attend school.	
All parties to agree to actions and keep to them until the next review period.	
A personalised programme for each young person. (e.g. flexible timetable, arrangements for transport, buddying, regular 'reset' breaks, or check-in's with a trusted adult when in school, and provision of a safe haven.	
Ensuring the young person has access to an identified member of staff who can be approached if anxiety becomes temporarily overwhelming in school (i.e. a key worker).	
Ensuring all staff (including supply staff) are informed about the young person's difficulties, particularly during changes of classes/key stages.	
Identifying a safe place or base in school that the young person can go to if needed.	
Identifying a member of staff for the young person to 'check in' with throughout the day.	
Considering whether or not a family assessment such as an Early Help Assessment would be helpful to identify whole family support.	

# EBSA Core Approaches



# Functions of EBSA

There are 4 main functions of drivers of EBSA identified through research



## 1. To avoid something or a situation which elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress

- Learn about anxiety and worrying and how it affects thoughts/ feelings/ behaviours and that avoidance makes things worse
- Teach anxiety management techniques
- Gradual re-exposure to school using an avoidance hierarchy created with the YP
- Consider what coping techniques the YP will use in each situation and what support is available

# Functions of EBSA



## 2. To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out; public speaking or group tasks; group work)

- Learn about anxiety and worrying and how it affects thoughts / feelings / behaviours and that avoidance makes things worse
- Teach anxiety management techniques
- Teach social skills and give opportunities to problem-solve and practise coping in the specific situations which provoke anxiety for the YP
- Pre-teaching of key work missed
- Buddying / peer mentoring

# Functions of EBSA



## 3. To get attention from, or spend more time with, significant others

- Work with parents/ carers to support them in developing skills to manage school avoidance behaviours, establish morning routines, focus on positive behaviours and limit the attention the CYP receives when they don't attend school.
- Establish rewards for attendance.

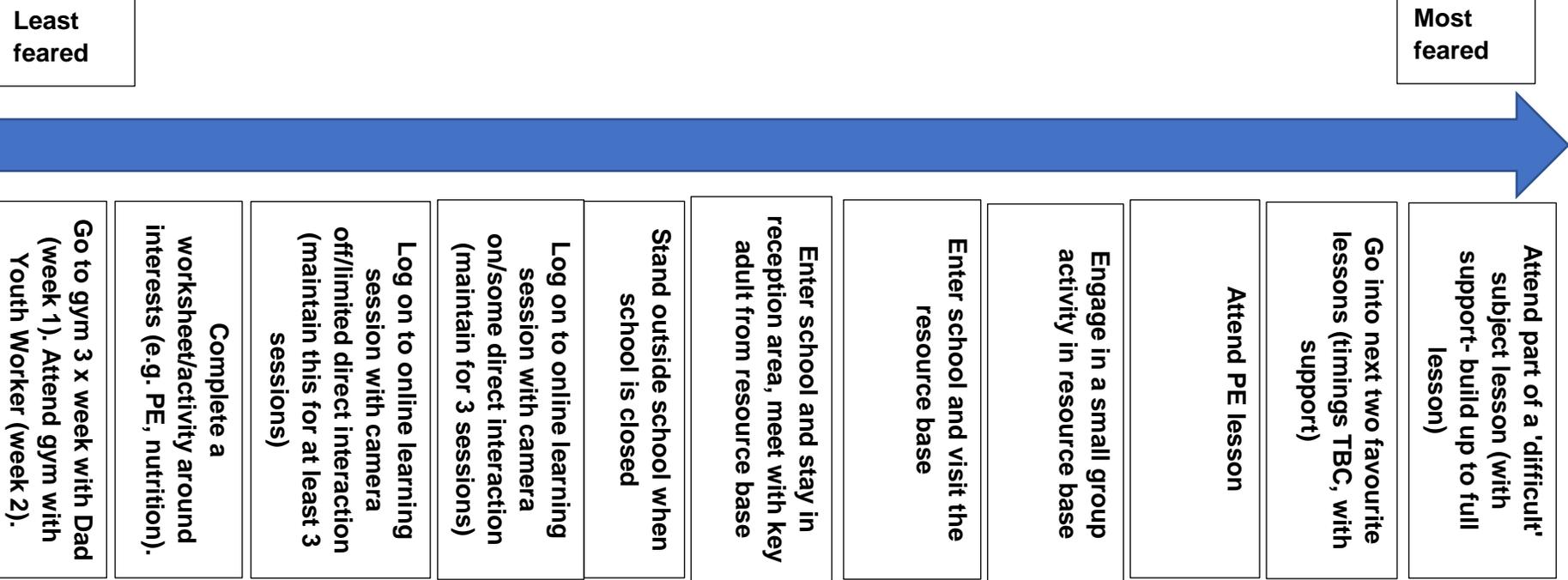
# Functions of EBSA



## 4. To spend more time out of school doing something that is more fun or motivating

- Increase rewards for attendance and dis-incentivise non-attendance
- Limit attention received during non-attendance
- If possible, take away the more stimulating activity
- Support travel to and from school
- Teach skills (e.g. refusing offers from peers)
- Make school as stimulating as possible

# Example Avoidance Hierarchy



# EBSA Thrive Support Pathway



- Planned response from initial concerns at Getting Advice stage, to working with CYP with more significant needs (Getting Help/ Getting More Help) to working with those with highly complex needs and/or prolonged periods of time outside of school (Getting Risk Support).
- Single referral point to access multiagency support.
- School's link EWO will 'triage' the referral and contact the school. If further support needed, EWO will contact link EH school coordinator and EP to discuss an action plan.
- Further parental consent sought for more specialist input/ direct work (e.g. CAMHS, EPS)
- [Partnerships IN Salford \(partnersinsalford.org\)](http://partnersinsalford.org)

# Return To School CPR



## Connect

- Make contact with school, speak to staff about your concerns
- Explore push/pull factors and return to school questionnaire
- Agree what the first day back will look like for your child, for you and for the teachers supporting your child

## Practice

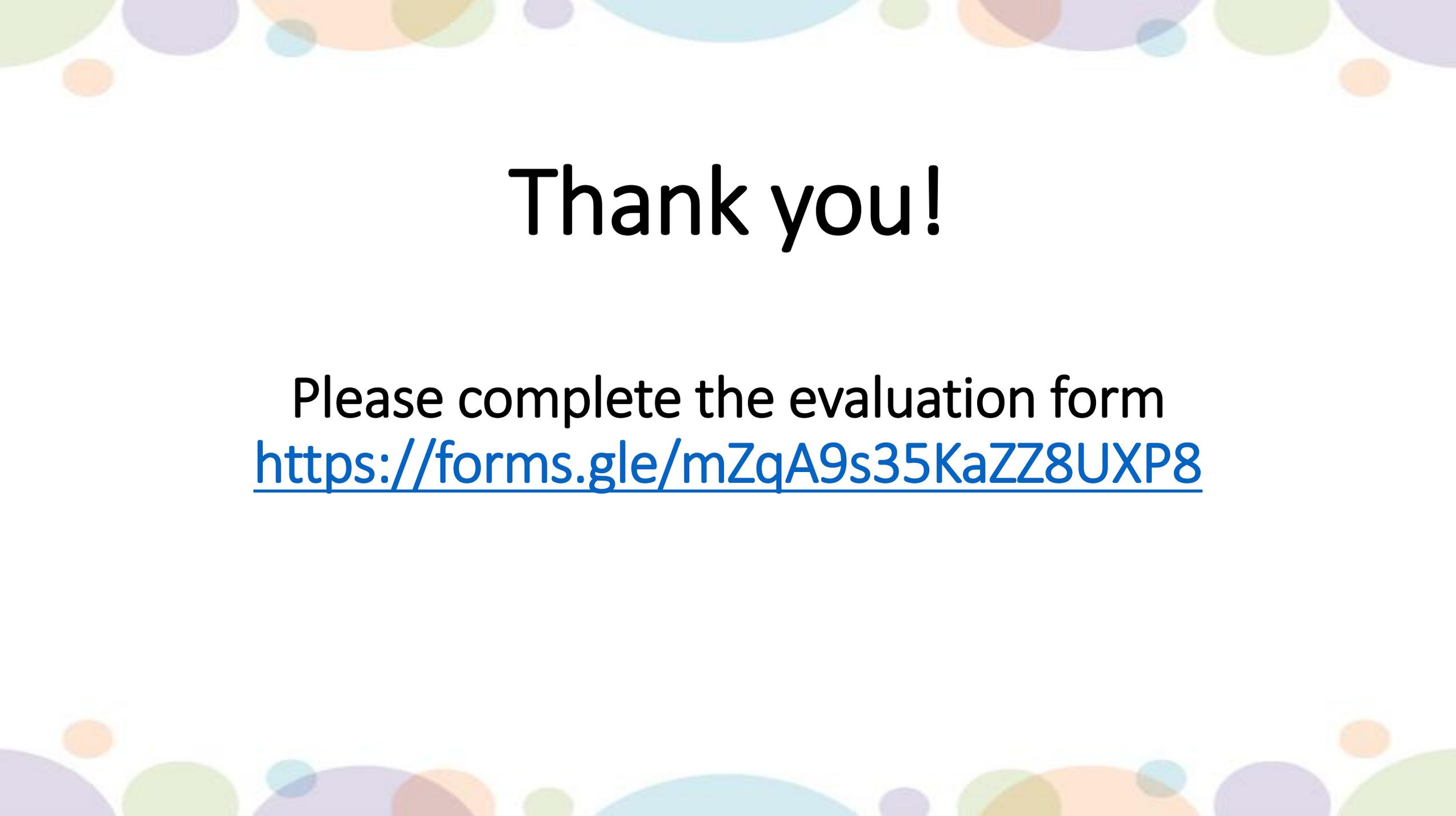
- Practice introducing 'calm times' for you and your child, colouring, reading together, listening to music
- Model these behaviours as a parent – you are the biggest influence on their views of the world!
- Limit access to newsworthy and credible sources of information, be your child's information 'buffer'

## Routines

- Set routines at home, getting up at the same time every day, getting dressed, having a structure throughout the day
- Get sleep routines in place **now**, especially important to have a night time 'wind down' routine
- Share your return to school plan with your child, let them know they will be safe in school and what the day will look like for them and you!

# Further support and information

- **Salford Thrive webpages:** [www.partnersinsalford.org/salford-0-25-advisory-board/salford-thrive-ehwb/thrive-school-resources/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa](http://www.partnersinsalford.org/salford-0-25-advisory-board/salford-thrive-ehwb/thrive-school-resources/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa)
- **EBSA Drop-in Support Group** (Tuesday during term time, 11am-12pm)  
email [Julie.owen@salford.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.owen@salford.gov.uk)
- Online resources – see **Parent/Carer Support Summary**
- **Early Help Hubs:** [www.salford.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-help-for-families/family-hubs-childrens-centres/](http://www.salford.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-help-for-families/family-hubs-childrens-centres/)
- **Parent Assembly** email [Steven.Booth@salford.gov.uk](mailto:Steven.Booth@salford.gov.uk)

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# Thank you!

Please complete the evaluation form  
<https://forms.gle/mZqA9s35KaZZ8UXP8>