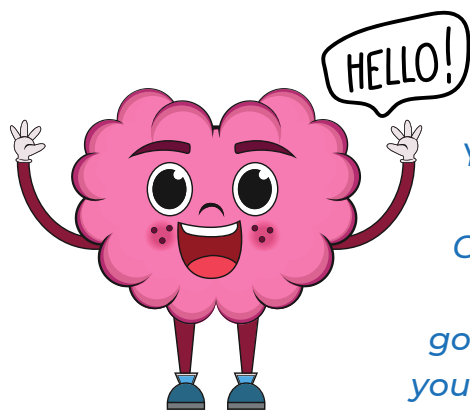


TAME YOUR WORRY BRAIN 6 WEEK CHALLENGE

MEMBER SCHOOL **MOVE**

MORE
EVERY CHILD ACTIVE

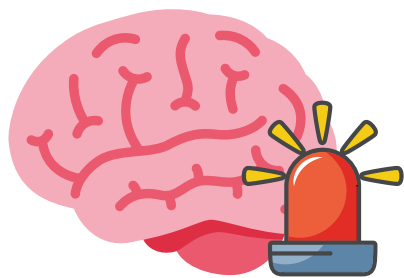


Worrying is normal!

You know that feeling you might get in your tummy when you need to do something you are not sure about? Or the headache that you might get when you are about to leave your parents at the school gate or when you say goodnight in the evening? That feeling is called worrying. And you know what – we all have it! Even your parents and teachers!

We all worry – it is normal! We worry about different things: some of us worry about whether anybody will play with us at lunchtime, whether teachers like us, whether we will be invited to our friend's Birthday party, or whether we'll do well in a test.

Have you ever wondered where worrying comes from? It feels different to all of us – some feel worrying in their tummies, some in their head, some in their legs – but where does worrying come from? Would you be surprised if I told you that it comes from your brain? It is true! And here is how...



Our brains are very complicated and have many different parts. The amygdala "worry brain" sounds like it's unnecessary but is super important because it keeps you safe. For example, when you want to cross the road and you see a car coming down fast, your worry brain tells you that you need to go back to protect yourself. How clever is that?

prefrontal cortex

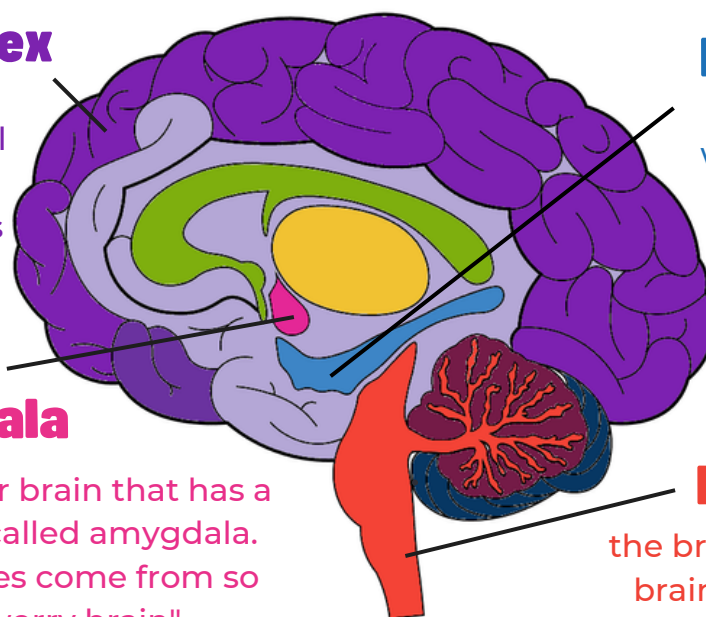
the front part of your brain is called prefrontal cortex – that is your "smart brain" that helps you make the right decisions.

hippocampus

the hippocampus is where we store all of our memories.

amygdala

almond shape bit in your brain that has a very fancy name – it is called amygdala. That is where our worries come from so we can call it our "worry brain".



brain stem

the brain stem is part of the brain that keeps us alive.

So, as you can see, we all worry sometimes as we all have a worry brain. But sometimes, this worrying can cause us problems. The trick is not to try and shut down the worry brain, but to learn how to manage it. And the first step is to get to know your worry brain. To help you with this for now complete the activities on the next page and let us know how you get on.



Activity Sheet



If your worry brain was a character in a cartoon, what would it look like? Draw it below.
Give your worry brain a name – what is it going to be? (My daughter calls her Violet!)

A large, empty rectangular area with a blue border, intended for drawing a cartoon character of a worry brain.

Your Brain Name:



OH NO! ZAYNE HAS LOST HIS BRAIN!

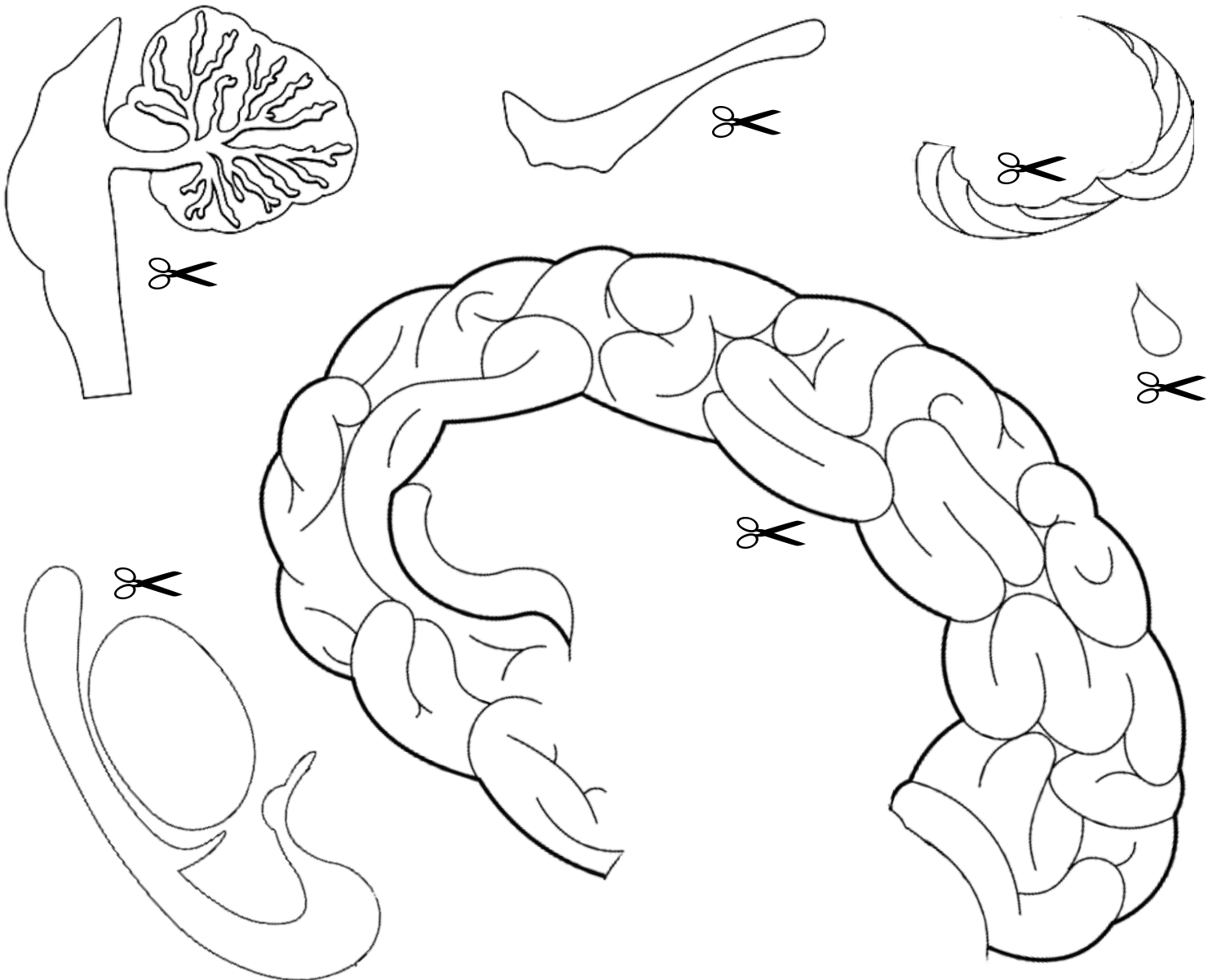


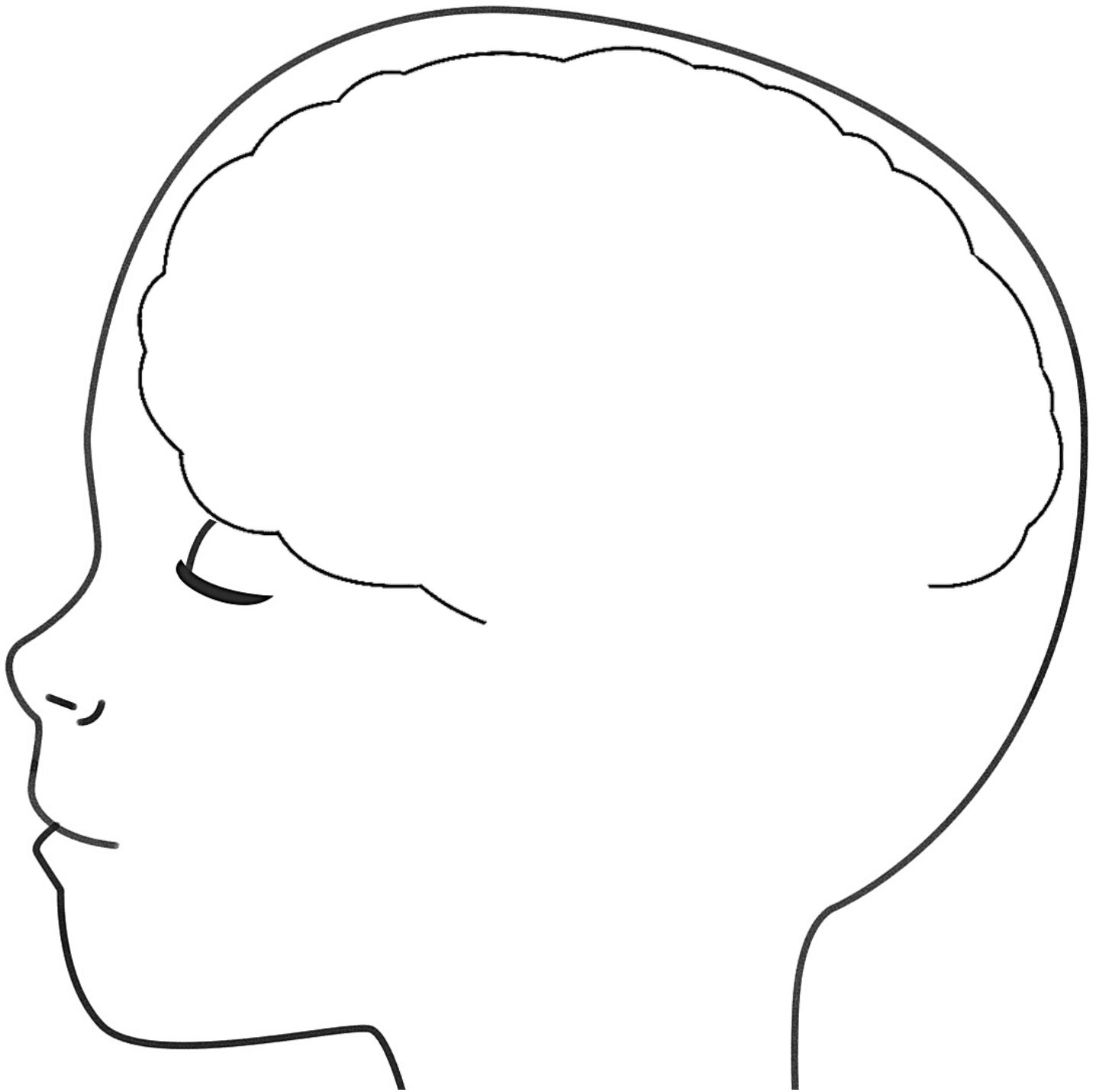
Using the brain pieces below, can you colour them in, cut them out and help stick Zayne's brain back together on the following sheet?

To do this you will need:

- Colouring pencils
- Scissors
- Glue or blue tack

Alternatively, you can try and draw and colour in the areas yourself!





● **prefrontal cortex** ● **amygdala** ● **brain stem** ● **hippocampus**

Great job! You should think about a career in brain surgery! Now can you draw a line to connect the words above to the right area of the brain?

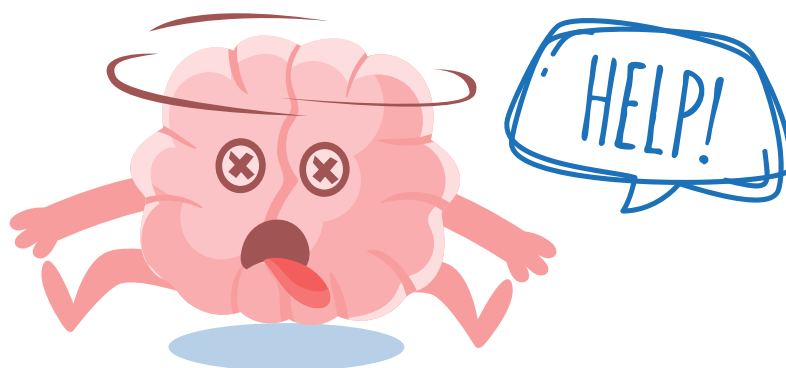
Share your work with us by emailing it to marijana@move-more.org or share it on social media by tagging [@movemoreCIO](https://twitter.com/movemoreCIO)

before you go!

How do I know that my worry brain is talking to me? That is a very good question. Keep your eyes peeled for next week's activities to learn "worry brain language"!



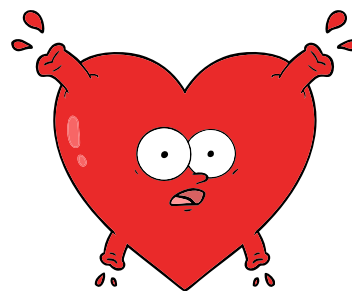
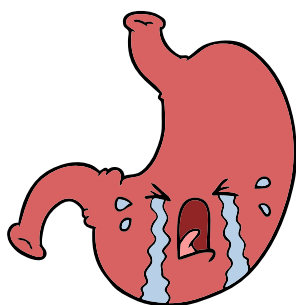
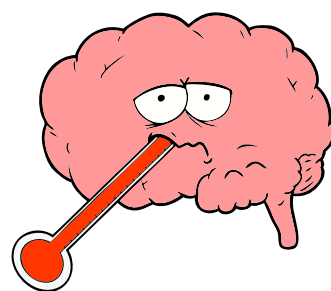
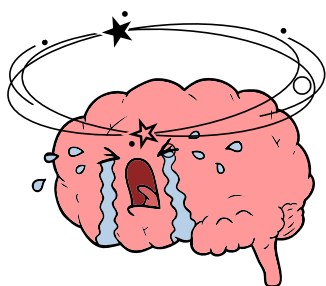
Breaking the code - understanding the “worry brain” signs



How do we know when our worry brain is speaking to us? Read on to find out!

Body-brain connection: your brain is connected with your body, and it tells it to prepare to protect you when amygdala senses danger. This happens even before we become aware that we might need to fight, flight or freeze. Usually, we notice that something is not right too late, when worry has already taken over us. But the trick is to catch worrying early enough. The first step is to learn the signs of the worry brain.

Some worry brain signs: breathing faster, feeling too hot or too cold, your heart thumping hard, feeling like you just have to move, feeling dizzy, tummy ache, feeling like you are going to faint, headache, butterflies in your tummy, feeling uncomfortable but not knowing why...



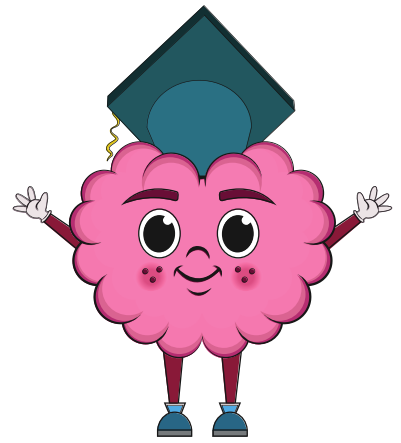
No two worry brains are the same!

To help you learn your worry brain's signs, complete activities on the next page and let us know how you get on.



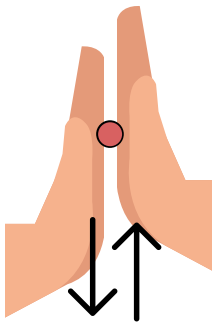
Great job!

Now you know the signs to look out for when your worry brain is taking over. The next step is to persuade your worry brain that you are ok! To do this, you need to find out what it is that you like doing when you feel worried.



What makes you feel calm again?

Deep breathing helps some people, while some need to move their bodies to reset. Here are some suggestions for you to try:



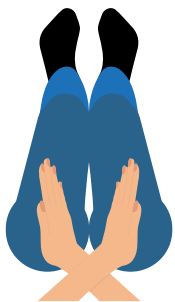
Pen Rolling

Take a pen or pencil, put it between the open palms of your hands and slowly roll it up and down your hands. Repeat until your worry brain is not as loud anymore.



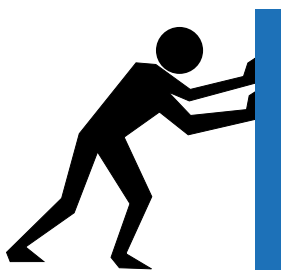
Finger Breathing

Stretch your hand out so that you can see the palm of your hand. Get a finger from your other hand ready to trace fingers on your stretch hand up and down. Slide up each finger slowly and then slide down. Repeat for all fingers. If it helps, you can breathe in while you slide up and breath out while you slide down. Do it for as long as needed to quiet your worry brain.



Cross crawls

Touch one hand to opposite knee and repeat on the other side. Remember to breathe and do for as long as needed.



Wall pushes

Lean against the wall with your hands and try your best to try and move the wall. Tense every muscle in your body and then relax. Repeat as many times as you like.

Which one of these do you like the best? Or do you have a different way to calm your worry brain? [Share with us by emailing it to marijana@move-more.org](mailto:marijana@move-more.org) or share it on social media by tagging @movemoreCIO

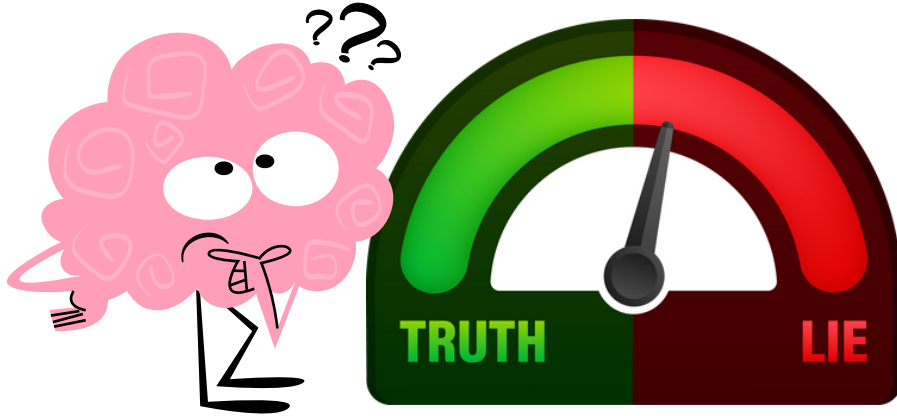


before you go!

Your worry brain doesn't always tell the truth! Shocking but true. Wait for next week's activities to learn about how to know when your worry brain is whispering lies into your ears and what you can do about it!



LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE - IS MY WORRY BRAIN TELLING THE TRUTH?!

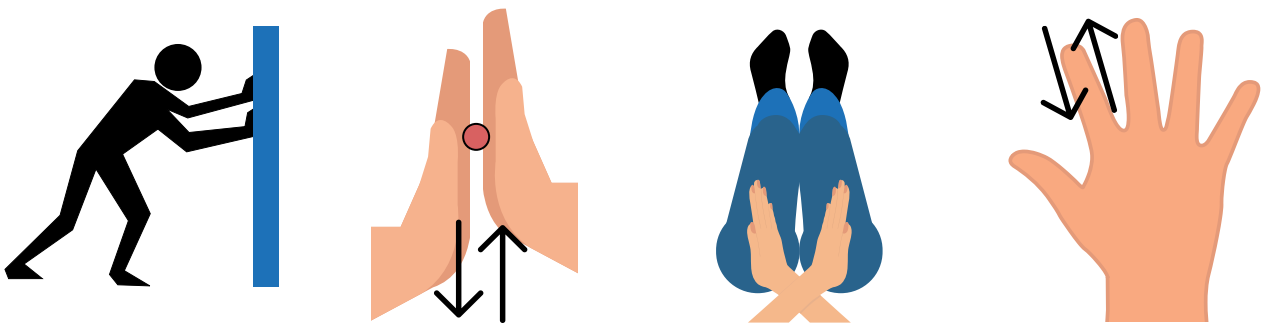


You now know that all your worry brain wants to do is keep you safe. So, when your worry brain tells you that you can't fall asleep without your parents or that you need to move away because a ball will hit you – it is trying to keep you safe.

But worry brain doesn't always know the difference between a real danger and pretend danger. This is why your worry brain sometimes tells you that you are in danger when you are not, that you are not safe when you are perfectly safe.

This happens because when your worry brain tells you that you are unsafe, it switches off your smart brain (remember pre-frontal cortex?) and you find it hard to tell the difference between what is likely to happen or not and to make good decisions.

The trick here is to first notice when worry brain is speaking to you, then to allow time to calm your brain – you have already learned how to do both in the previous weeks challenges.



We are now moving to the next step – fact-checking your worry brain. To learn how to do this complete this week's Tame your worry brain activities below. As always, let us know how you get on!



Worry Brain Activity

• Stand up to your worry brain and fact-check it: worry brain needs to be challenged or it will keep thinking that it is right in trying to keep you safe when you are already safe. Use this worry brain fact-checker questions to learn how to challenge your worry brain.



How about
your teacher?
Would they
agree with it?

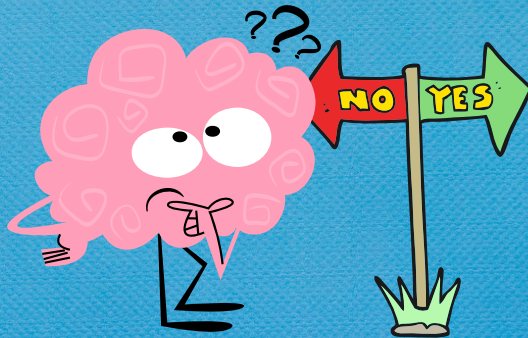


What would your best
friend say to this worry?
Would they agree with
the worry brain?



How true/likely it is
for this to happen?

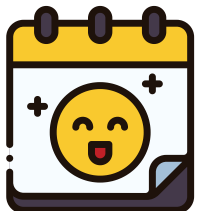
*(For example, your
parents always come
back to pick you up – why
wouldn't they this time?)*



What would your
favourite book
character (or sports
person) say to this
worry? Would they
agree with it?

- If you decide that worry brain got a bit carried away and that you are perfectly safe, you can say to your worry brain “Thank you worry brain for trying to keep me safe, but I am absolutely fine now.” To make it easier to do this when you are worried, make sure that you practice it when you are calm first.
- If you think that worry brain is telling the truth, the best thing to do is speak to an adult – they should be able to help you.

Create your own worry brain fact-checker and share it with me marijana@move-more.org and/or on social media by tagging [@movemoreCIO](https://twitter.com/movemoreCIO) We are looking forward to seeing it!



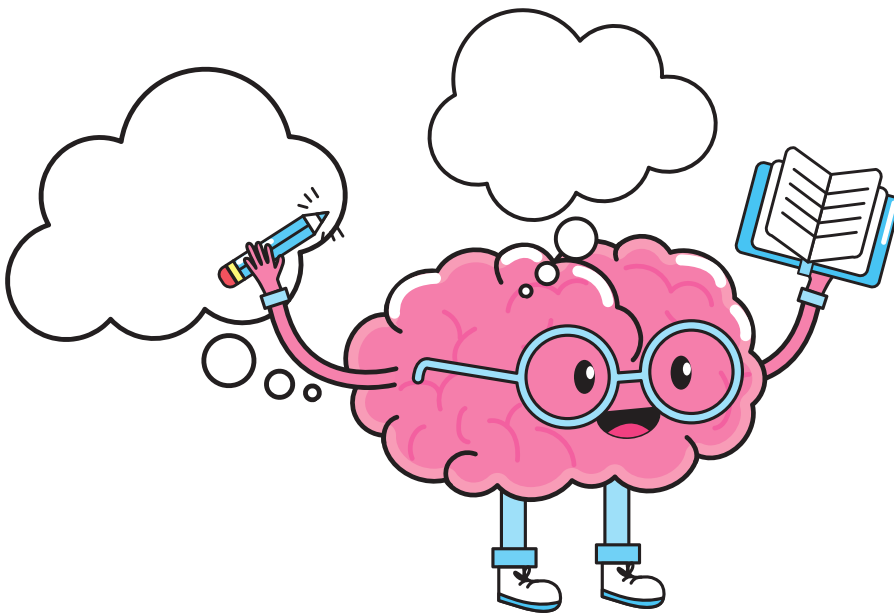
before you go!

Before you go! Although sometimes it feels that you must worry as soon as you start to feel your worries, most worries can be left for another time. Next week we will be teaching you how to “postpone” your worries.



DEDICATED WORRY TIME

Sometimes, worry brain can be so loud that we feel we just must worry there and then. But do we really? Most of the time, the answer is No. You can choose to say “Not now, worry brain” and worry later. This will help you take control of your worry brain and free some time (and energy) to focus on other things. Here is how...



- Set a time that you will use to worry as much as you like! This could be every day or a few times a week or once a week. Choose time of day that works for you (and your adults!) but try to avoid doing it just before bedtime.
- Decide where you will be doing your Dedicated worry time – you can choose to snuggle up in bed, to sit at your desk, on the sofa...Wherever you feel comfortable!
- Note your worries: you can have a pad handy throughout the day and whenever a worry pops into your head you can write it down (or ask your adult to do it) and save it to worry about it later. Or you can do this during the worry time - anything goes!
- Use Worry jars or Worry boxes to store your worries in. Simply pop a piece of paper with your worry on it into a jar or a box, close the lid, have some fun and look at it during your worry time. (Remember to use your calm down tools to help you silence the worry brain enough to allow you to write down your worry)
- Use your dedicated worry time to talk about the worries in your worry jar.
- Let go of your worry: once a worry isn't troubling you anymore, you can scrunch the paper up and put it in a bin! Or shred it. Whatever you do – it feels good to get rid of a worry!



Worry Brain Activity

Why don't you have a go at making your own Worry jars or Worry boxes?

How will you decorate it? Alternatively, decorate the one below, add your worry brain character from week one or maybe write some of your own worry notes in the jar?

Take a photo and share it with me marijana@move-more.org and/or on social media by tagging [@movemoreCIO](https://www.instagram.com/movemoreCIO) We look forward to seeing your creations!



before you go!

Worry brain needs to be challenged or it will think that it is right all the time (and we know that's not true). Wait for next week's activities to learn how to set your own challenges to do something that you are normally worried about.



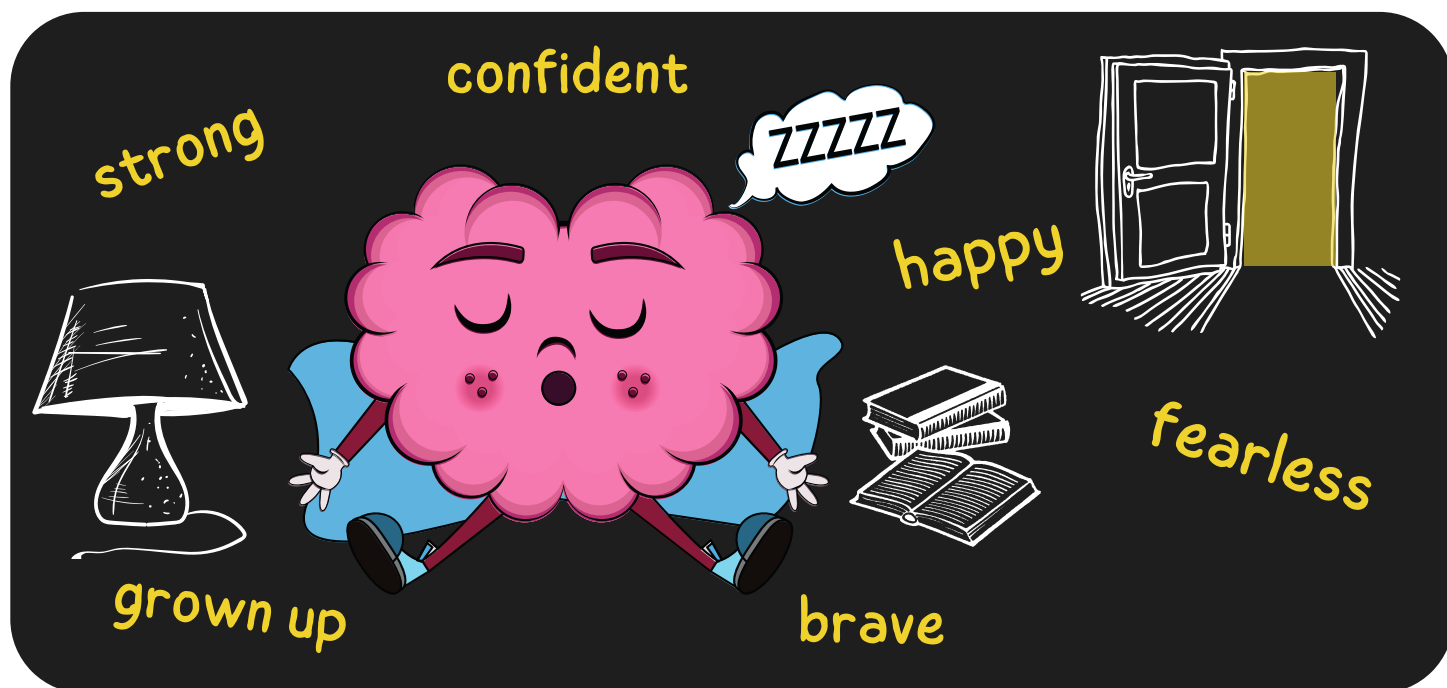
COURAGE CHALLENGE

To be able to truly tame our worry brains, we need to do things that worry brain tells us are scary. We need to challenge worry brain and prove them wrong. You can do this by setting yourselves some “courage challenges”.

Courage challenge is about you setting yourself a task to do something that you would normally worry about. **Follow these steps to help you:**



- Write down (or ask an adult to help you) things that your worry brain tells you that you can't do because they make you feel scared or worried.
- Pick one of them: maybe the one that you'd like to be able to do the most, or the one that might sound the easiest.
- Draw/write how you would feel if you were able to do that thing. Put your drawing somewhere visible and look at it every time you start to feel worry brain talking to you.
- Ask an adult to help you to break down your challenge into smaller steps that don't sound as scary.
- Make a plan of how you'll give it a go and just go for it!



Check out our example Courage Challenge PLAN on the next page and use the points above to set your own Courage Challenge Plan. Don't forget to share it with us by taking a photo and sharing it with me marijana@move-more.org and/or on social media by tagging @movemoreCIO We look forward to seeing your creations as always!



Example

MY COURAGE CHALLENGE PLAN

"My worry brain tells me that I will never be able to be upstairs on my own (because something will happen to me if I am not with my adults)"



BRAVE!
FEARLESS!
HAPPY!



Step 1 - spend some time downstairs but in a room on my own.

Maybe start with a minute and extend to 5 / 10 minutes? Do something you enjoy during this time, or something that helps calm your worry brain. At the end, tell yourself: "I am brave!"

Step 2 - sit at the bottom of the stairs by myself.

Again, start with a minute and then extend the time. Give yourself a massive pat on the back!

Step 3 - sit on the middle of the stairs by myself (halfway up).

Start with just a minute and go from there. Do a lap of honour around the house – you deserve it!

Step 4 - sit at the top of the stairs by myself.

Start with short periods of time and then go for longer. Applaud yourself and all that courage!

Step 5 - sit just outside my room by myself.

While your adults are downstairs. Extend the time as you feel more comfortable with it. Look at the mirror and say: "I love myself!"

Step 6 - be in my room by myself with an adult downstairs.

As with previous steps, start small and build from there. CELEBRATE! Dance around, give yourself a hug and enjoy the amazing feeling of doing something that you thought you couldn't do!

Remember! Be kind to yourself if things don't go to plan. Worry brains can be super stubborn not wanting to give up that easily. If you stumble, all you need to do is recognize that worry brain might be too loud at that moment, do one of the "calm down" activities from previous weeks and try again. You might need to change or adapt your steps and that's ok. Do what you need to do and just keep trying.

before you go!

Adults play a massive part in helping their children tame their worry brains. This is why next week it will all be about adults!



ADULTS! TAME YOUR WORRY BRAINS!

You won't be surprised to know that children aren't the only ones with worry brains. Adults have worry brains too. Everything that we shared in the past weeks applies to us too. To be able to truly help your children with taming their worry brains, make sure that you work on your own ability to tame your worry brain.

Consider the following:

- You also have a worry brain.
- Your worry brain talks to your children's worry brains. This is the reason why children can often sense our mental state and feed off our emotions.
- The first step is to be mindful of the signals that we are sending to our children. If we appear worried, their worry brains will pick that up and act accordingly.
- Secondly, model the behaviour that you'd like to see. Make sure that your children see and hear you use the tools that we have shared. For example: "Hmmm, I am starting to feel a bit strange. My heart is racing, I have butterflies in my tummy... This feels like it could be my worry brain trying to tell me something. I'll do some pen rolling while I listen to my worry brain and decide if it is telling the truth or not."
- Finally, don't expect children to be able to tame their worry brains independently straight away. They need to co-regulate with your first. This means that they will rely on you for a while to encourage them to do the steps to tame their worry brains.



Trying to battle on (at least) 2 fronts – taming your own and your child's worry brain – can be exhausting. You need to look after yourself to have enough physical and emotional energy for this.

Self-care is super important here. It is often talked about, but also misunderstood. Self-care is not just about smelly candles, yoga, massage and similar. It is actually about all the little things that we do to look after our mental health. It is about trying to listen to how we feel and truly understanding our own needs. It isn't about what it looks like, but how it makes you feel.



Here are some suggestions to improve your self-care:

- Allow yourself to take time out when you feel overwhelmed
- Make time to do an activity that you know makes you feel good
- Respect your needs by setting boundaries around your time
- Push yourself to do something that you have always wanted to do
- Give yourself permission to do nothing for a while
- Cook and enjoy a nutritious meal
- "Talk to yourself how you would to someone you love" (Brené Brown)
- Try not to compare yourself to others

Self-care IS EMPOWERMENT

Asking for help is another form of selfcare. We all need to be listened to and supported; it isn't a sign of weakness; it doesn't reflect badly on you. It is just a sign that life is presenting some challenges that you need a little bit of help with. And that's why I am here: to listen and support. Get in touch on

marijana@move-more.org

