



ANXIOUS TO THRIVING

Parent Webinar



www.relationalparenting.net

WELCOME

ABOUT ANXIOUS TO THRIVING

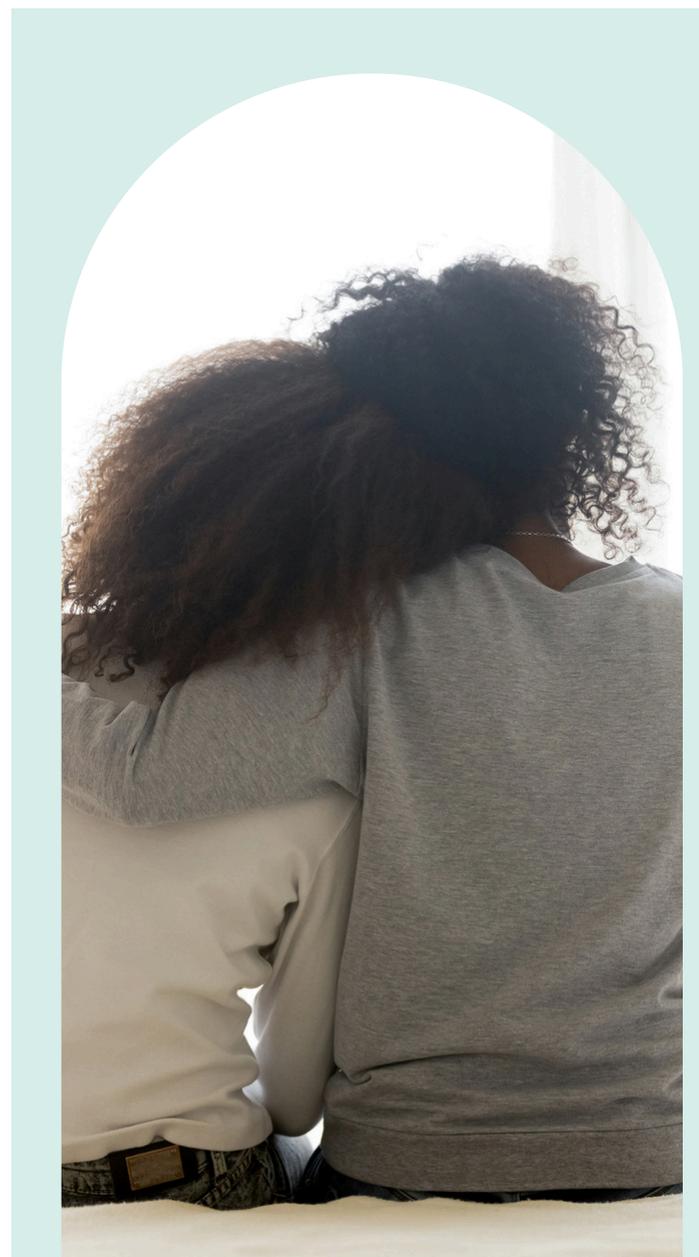
Anxious to Thriving is based on the SPACE (Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions) program, a parent-focused program developed to help families reduce childhood anxiety and build resilience.

SPACE is a practical, research-backed program designed to help parents support children and adolescents with anxiety, OCD, and related challenges. Developed by Dr. Eli Lebowitz at Yale University, SPACE has been proven effective in clinical trials.

Unlike traditional therapies, children don't need to attend SPACE sessions—instead, parents learn how to respond in ways that reduce their child's anxiety.

The focus is on two key changes: increasing supportive responses to their child's struggles, and reducing the accommodations that may be unintentionally maintaining anxiety. By shifting how they interact, parents help their child build resilience, confidence, and the ability to cope with big feelings.

PRACTICAL, EVIDENCE-BASED SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS.



ABOUT



TAMAR SLOAN

Psychologist Supporting Parents

I'm a psychologist with over 25 years of experience supporting children, parents, and educators. My journey began working with vulnerable young people, where I quickly saw how powerful connection can be in shaping behaviour and restoring hope.

For the past decade, I've specialised in helping families respond to challenges with calm strength and compassion. Discovering the Relational Parenting (NVR) approach transformed my work, and I now train and guide parents in using these tools in everyday life.

It's a privilege to walk alongside families as they rediscover their role as a calm, connected anchor for their children.

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

Anxiety is a threat system every animal has evolved. It's healthy and necessary. It's why we check the road before we cross, why we sniff a yoghurt tub before eating it, and why we jump at loud noises. We've survived and thrived because of our fight or flight response.

BUT HUMANS ARE UNIQUE

We have an imagination

It's likely we evolved our imagination so we could predict threat. This allows us to be prepared for potentially dangerous situations.

It also means we can be scared of things that don't even exist! Like monsters under the bed. Or things that haven't happened yet, like the prospect of being rejected, the idea of failing, or making a public mistake.

It's when anxiety becomes oversensitive and negatively impacts our life that it becomes an issue.

Particularly when we can be scared of both real threats, and perceived threats.



IMPACT OF ANXIETY



IT AFFECTS HOW WE FEEL

Anxiety elicits a very physical and physiological response, one we've all experienced. We evolved this response so we can be ready to fight or flight. It allows us to be ready to either attack the threat, or get away from it.

For example:

- Increased heart rate
- Breathing faster
- Shaky hands
- Feeling sick

IT AFFECTS HOW WE THINK

When anxiety is triggered (by a real or perceived threat), we:

- We overestimate the negative
- We underestimate the positive
- We underestimate our ability to cope with it

For example:

- "This is going to be terrible."
- "I'm going to fail."
- "I can't do this."



IT AFFECTS HOW WE ACT

Avoidance ensures we won't be exposed to the situation that makes us feel uncomfortable and believe we can't cope with it. The brain's primary instinct to avoid ensures we'll stay safe.

For example:

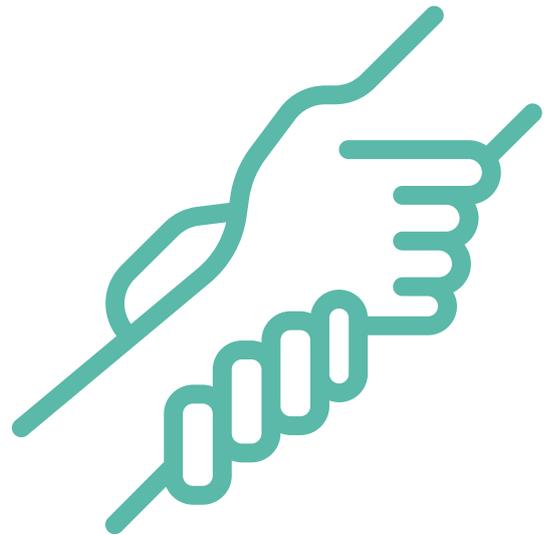
- Avoiding school or certain classes
- Not leaving the house
- Preferring electronic devices rather than social interaction

SUPPORTIVE STATEMENTS

Many parents who are faced with a child with challenging behaviours find themselves torn between two opposing poles. On the one hand, they feel the need to communicate their child's behaviour isn't okay and want to communicate boundaries about appropriate behaviour.

On the other hand, many parents will have a desire to avoid triggering negative emotions in their child or further conflict, particularly if it's been counterproductive in the past.

The key is to communicate boundaries in a way that doesn't encourage escalation. A useful way to do this is with the use of supportive statements.



For example:

"I know you don't want to get off the iPad, and I also know you know the rules."

"I can see you're upset at me, I know you can still talk to me respectfully."

"I know going to school makes you anxious, and I believe you can still do it."

ACCOMMODATION



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation refers to any action you may be doing, or even things you're deliberately not doing, to help your child feel less anxious (or to avoid the bad, sad or mad emotions associated with anxiety).

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATION

- Sleeping in child's bed
- Answering questions in place of child
- Avoiding changes in routines
- Driving child instead of school bus
- Avoiding social gatherings
- Keeping windows closed
- Avoiding 'contaminated' foods
- Providing separate meals
- Coming home early from work
- Picking child up early from school
- Staying up late with child
- Keeping lights on at night
- Completing child's homework
- Taking stairs instead of elevator
- Limiting who comes to the house
- Adapting holiday plans
- Providing extra soap
- Responding to repeated phone calls
- Accompanying child to the bathroom
- Not going out in the evening
- Staying with child at parties
- Rigid night-time rituals
- Avoiding outings
- Answering the same question over and over
- Taking child to doctor for anxiety symptoms
- Accompanying child places
- Allowing devices at night
- Not visiting friends



ACCOMMODATION

1 Helpful Accommodation

Accommodation that helps your child cope with a little more anxiety

Accommodation that helps your child avoid feeling anxious, or any of the strong emotions associated with feeling anxious (e.g., anger or distress)

2 Unhelpful Accommodation

PARENTAL CHOICE?

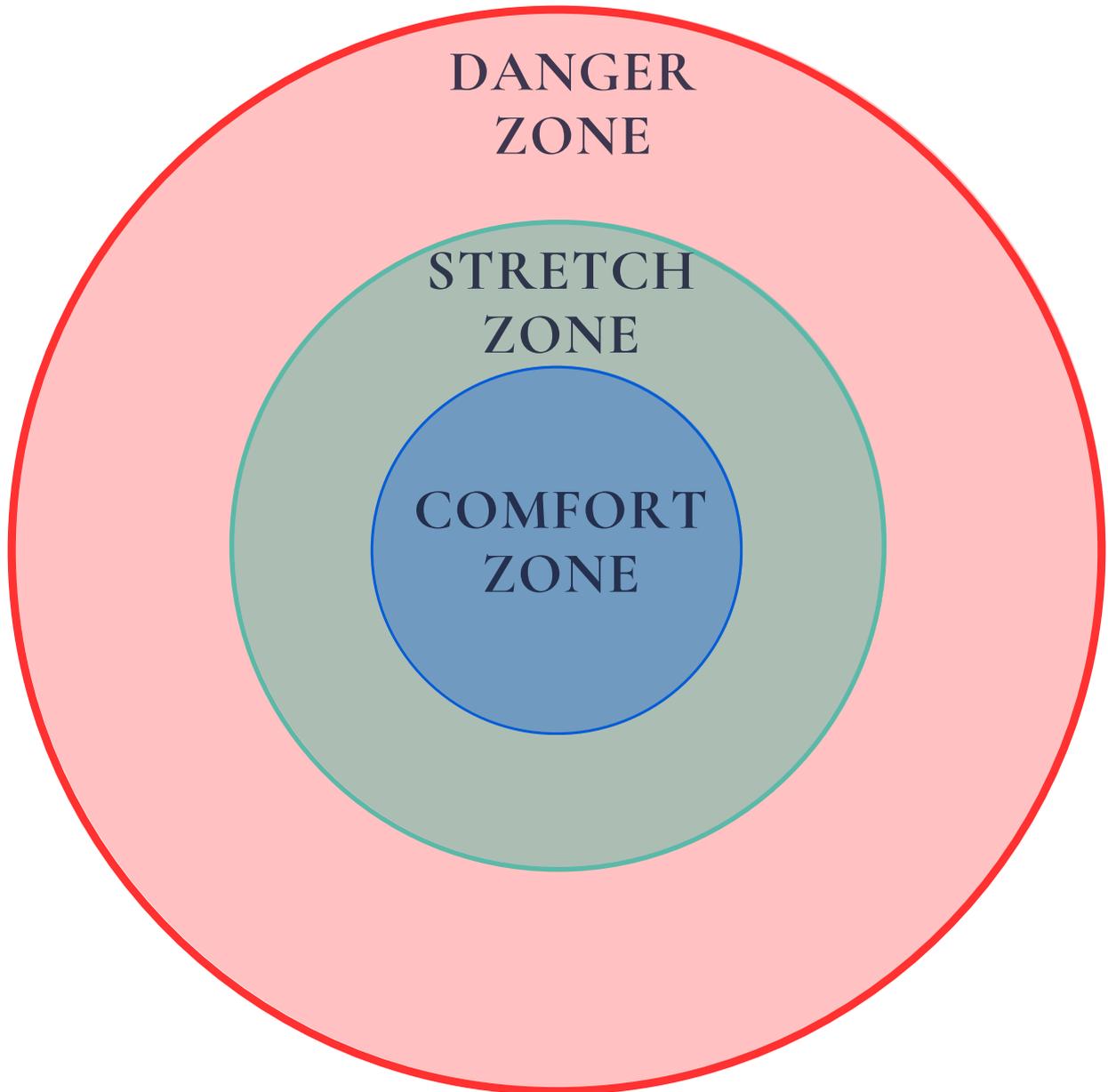
● Do (did) you do this with all your children?

● Would you like to be able to stop this behaviour?

● If your child were not anxious, would you still do this?

● What would happen if you did not do this one day?

THE STRETCH ZONE



YOUR PLAN

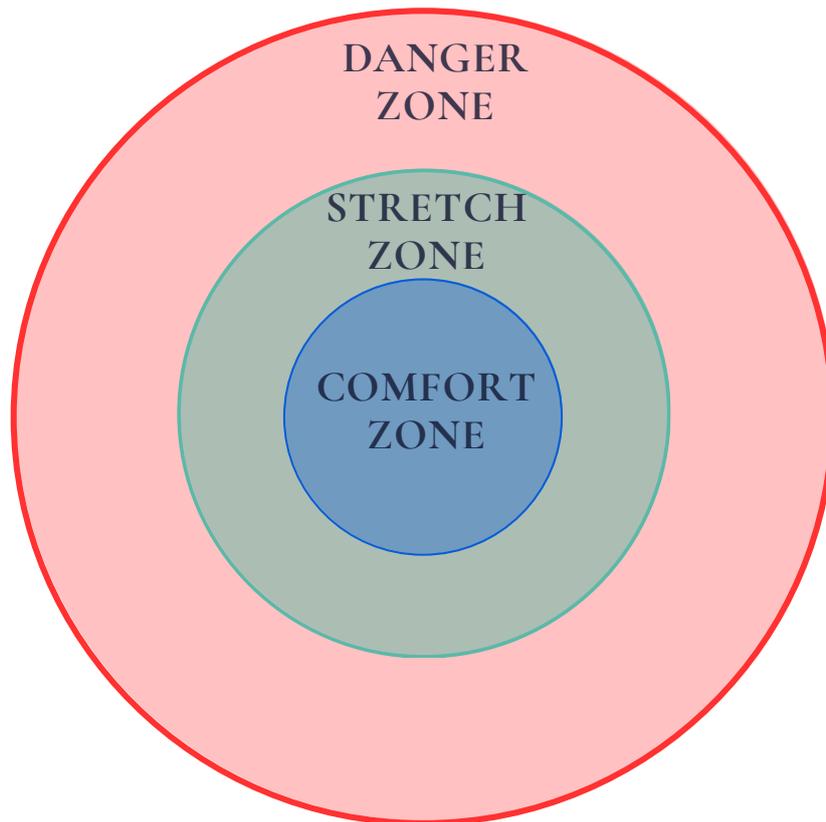
1. CHOOSE A FOCUS

Decide on one accommodating behaviour you're going to change

2. INFORM YOUR CHILD

Component	Example	Your Words
Love	Sammy, we love you and know anxiety means it's hard for you to go to school.	
Your intent	We're going to answer 2 calls when you're at school and then we're going to suggest you follow the plan to go to the wellbeing hub.	
Love	You're an amazing kid and we know you've got this.	

3. REDUCE ACCOMMODATION





CONSISTENCY
IS KEY



MISTAKES
ARE OKAY



CHANGE
HAPPENS
OVER TIME

4. LOVINGLY PERSIST

FURTHER SUPPORT

WE WISH YOUR FAMILY ALL THE BEST.

KEEP UP THE AMAZING WORK!



Your school's student wellbeing faculty or the school psychologist



Your GP



Local Child and Adolescent Mental Health services



Local Child and Family Centers



Ask around about psychologists or counsellors



Parent information websites



ANXIOUS_{TO} THRIVING

Online Course



Proven Parenting Tools
for Anxious School
Avoidance

- ✓ **Understand anxiety and school avoidance** – why it happens and what your child needs most.
- ✓ **Gain practical, proven strategies** – tools you can use right away at home and school.
- ✓ **Support your child to thrive** – build calm, confidence, and stronger connections.



www.relationalparenting.net



Parent Counseling & Family Support



Practical, compassionate support for parents navigating challenging behaviours with their children.



Anxiety, including school avoidance



Angry, defiant, or aggressive behaviour



Struggles with devices, neurodiversity, or risk taking



TELETHEALTH

Accessible and flexible

Provided by an Experienced,
Registered Psychologist

