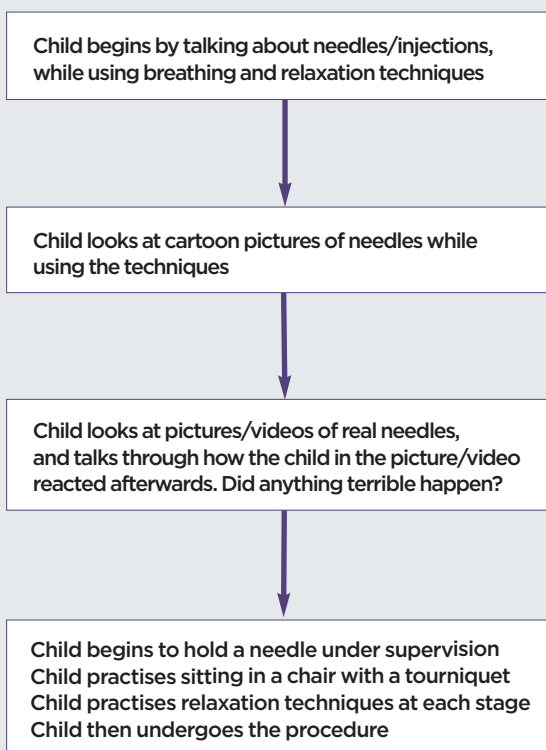


Overcoming needle phobia**Case study**

Joanne is a 13-year-old girl who needs to have allergy testing following a number of progressively worsening reactions. She is terrified of needles and is worried that it will be really painful and something terrible will happen. Joanne has refused to have her blood taken on three separate occasions. The GP started by working with the practice nurse to try to support Joanne, by using breathing techniques and letting Joanne have as much control over the situation as possible. For some children this would be enough to help them get through the blood test.

Joanne's GP diagnoses her with a specific phobia and refers her for psychological support. Over six sessions, Joanne works with the psychologist to talk about why she feels hot and short of breath when it is time to have the blood test. The psychologist talks through how anxiety makes the body react, and explains that although it feels frightening it is actually normal.

Joanne learns ways to control how her body starts to feel, and practises these techniques in less stressful situations (e.g. when she is talking about blood tests or looking at pictures of needles). She then watches videos of children having blood tests with the psychologist, and they talk through her fear that something terrible will happen and how the children in the videos react. Joanne uses her coping strategies and begins to feel more confident that she can control the impact of her fear on how she feels.

Joanne, the psychologist and the nurse plan how the blood test will go. Joanne practises sitting in the chair and at the next visit she employs her coping strategies and despite being scared, is able to go through with the blood test.