

a parents/carers
guide to understanding

anxiety

Managing Anxiety

- ***When children are anxious it is natural to want to make them feel better. It is important that we do not try and manage the whole situation to protect them as it can make the situation worse. It is our role to help them deal with their anxieties and through implementing strategies make them feel that they can effectively manage situations that they struggle with. Fundamentally, we have to teach them coping strategies.***
- ***As adults we cannot promise children that we can stop what is making them feel worried or anxious, we have to be realistic with them. For example, we cannot say to a child that they will be fine in a maths test and will do well or that they won't struggle in social time, however what we can do is build their confidence by instilling the feeling that they can manage effectively whatever happens and that nothing traumatic is going to happen to them.***
- ***As adults we need to respect their feelings and acknowledge them and it is important that we help children understand exactly what the fear is. For example in a class assessment, is it the inability to revise? Is it the physical process of actually completing the test? Is it the fear of failure? Through being empathetic and listening we can determine exactly what the fear is and then encourage children to face their fears. For example, 'I know that you are worried about this assessment, however I am going to help you get through this'.***
- ***Use open questions when speaking to a child about their anxieties rather than leading questions. This will have impact of how they manage the anxiety. For example, 'Are you anxious about the maths assessment tomorrow?', the child may not have been overly anxious but through a leading question it could feed the anxiety. Through asking a question such as 'How do you feel about the maths assessment tomorrow?', it will lead them to consider more options.***

Managing Anxiety

- ***It is important to talk things through with a child if the fear came true. Using the maths assessment as an example, you could discuss what could happen if they can't cope physically with the assessment, you can ask to go and stand outside and calm yourself down, we can discuss with the teacher beforehand that you may start to panic and may need to do this. If you don't do very well in the maths assessment we can sit with your teacher and determine the areas that you particularly struggled with and then do some work to ensure that next time you understand it properly and won't struggle in this area again. Having a plan with the child is essential.***
- ***It is essential that we encourage children to talk about the things they are anxious about and ensure that they understand that through not seeking help it will become a much bigger issue. Through using the appropriate techniques, a child should feel comfortable to come and speak to the adult and say that they are anxious about something and know that together they will put an effective plan in place to support their anxiety.***
- ***It is good practice to have a worry jar or worry book. A child can then write down what is making them anxious and choose the time to discuss with an adult. Maybe writing their worries down before they go to bed at night will help them be more restful as they know that they can discuss them with someone the following day. Having a set time to discuss their worries can also alleviate the anxiety they feel as they know that it can be shared the following morning or evening etc.***
- ***Use the word worry rather than anxiety.***

How anxiety

It is not often that a child will immediately come to an adult and say that are worried/anxious about something. It is the skill of the adult that will be able to identify that there is an issue and what the issue is, with the aim of helping the child recognise that these behaviours are as a result of an anxiety.

Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

www.thepathway2success.com

Clipart by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino

may present itself

ACTIVITIES & STRATEGIES

SPEAKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT ANXIETY

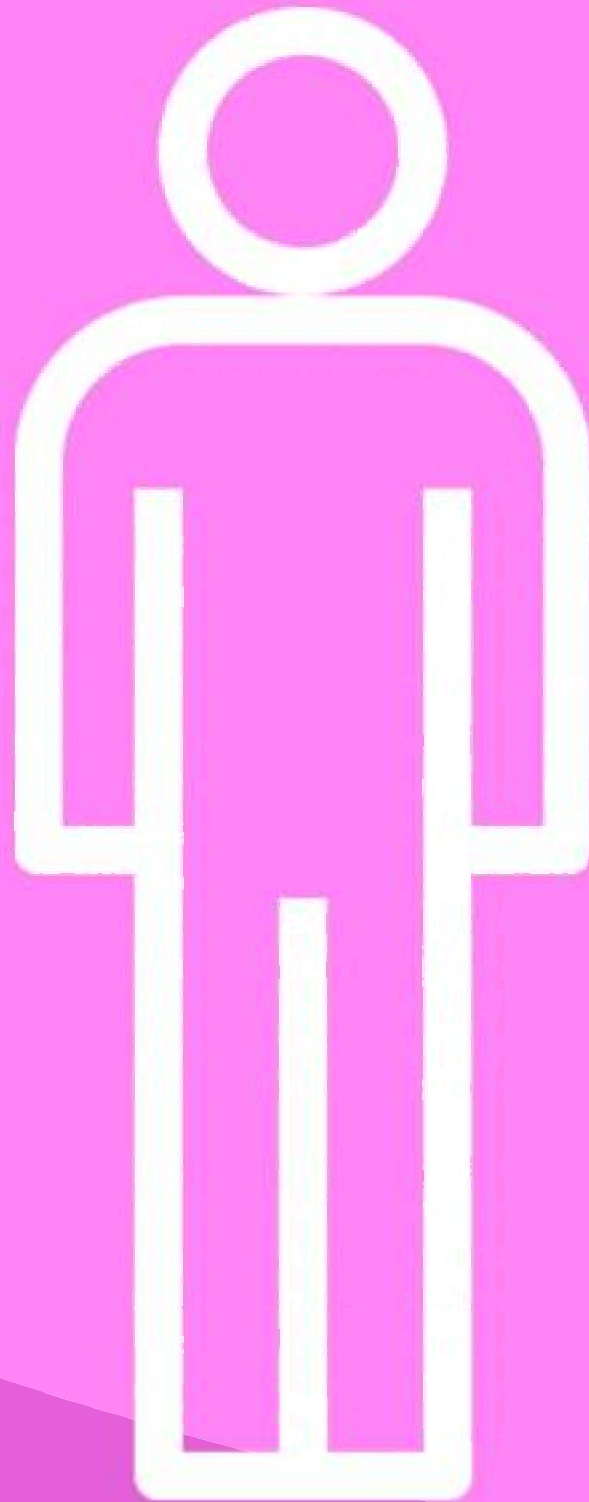
SPEAK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT HOW ANXIETY IS A FEELING OR A WORRY AND THAT IT IS A BODILY RESPONSE THAT EVERYONE FEELS AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES. ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS HOW WE ARE GOING TO WORK TOGETHER ON MANAGING THAT ANXIETY WHICH WILL DEPEND UPON HOW IT CHANGES AND DEVELOPS OVER TIME.

OFTEN WHEN WE DISCUSS WITH A CHILD WHAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT THEY WILL SAY "EVERYTHING OR "NOT SURE."

INSTEAD, EXPLAIN HOW WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER ON FOCUSING UPON WHAT THE SPECIFIC TRIGGERS ARE AND INFORM OTHERS SO THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO HELP SUPPORTING YOU WITH REGARDS TO THIS ALSO.

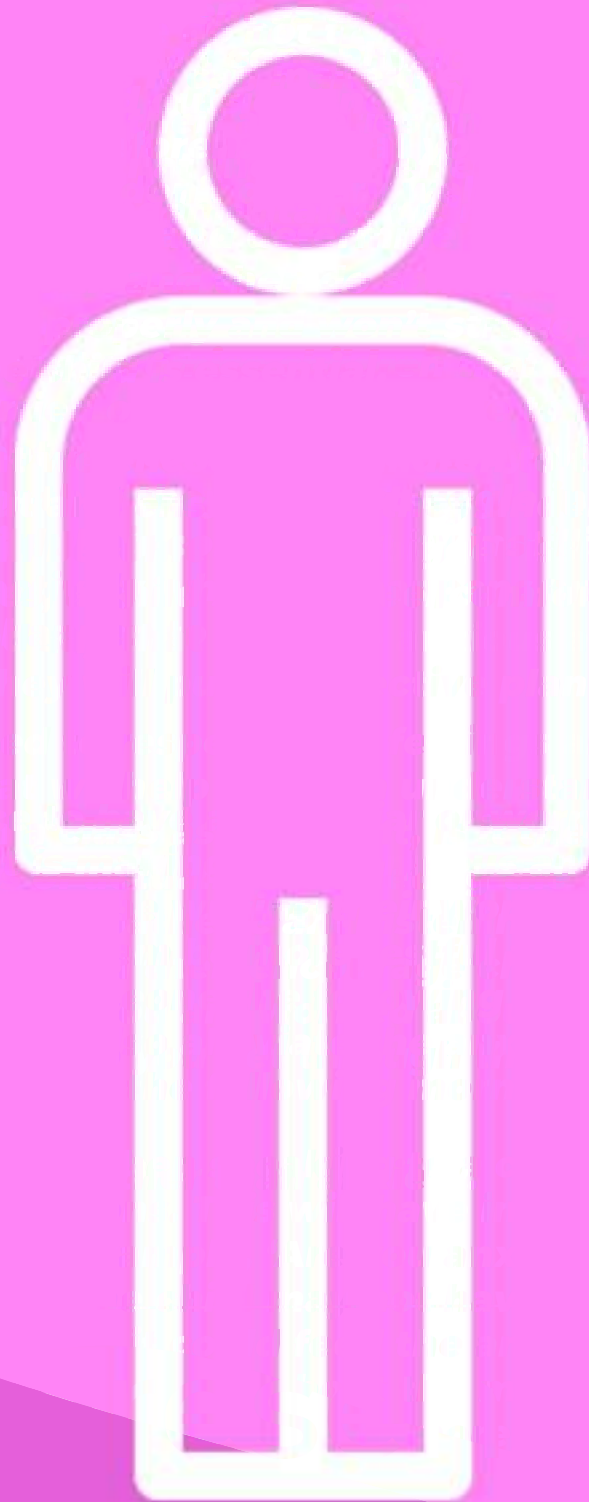
POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR LIFE

WRITE INSIDE THE BODY ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE
POSITIVE IN YOUR LIFE.



THINGS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR LIFE THAT MAKE YOU WORRY

ROUND THE BODY WRITE DOWN ALL THE THINGS THAT
YOU THINK MAKE YOU WORRY IN YOUR LIFE.



RANK YOUR WORRIES

LOOKING AT THE WORRIES YOU HAVE LISTED, RANK THE ONE THAT CAUSES YOU THE MOST WORRY TO THE ONE THAT CAUSES YOU THE LEAST WORRY.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TAKING THE FIRST ONE OR TWO WORRIES HOW DO YOU FEEL PHYSICALLY WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THESE:

SAD	NERVOUS	PANICKY
ANGRY	AGITATED	DOWN
WORTHLESS	LACKING IN CONFIDENCE	LONELY
STRESSED	DEFENSIVE	FIDGETY
ANNOYED	ANGRY	PARANOID

THE LAST TIME YOU FELT ANXIOUS OR WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING DID YOU HAVE ANY OF THE REACTIONS BELOW:

LEGS FEELING LIKE JELLY,
SHAKING HANDS AND ARMS

DIZZINESS OR HEADACHES

FEELING HOT AND SWEATY

HEART RACING

BLURRED VISION

STOMACH CHURNING,
FEEL SICK.

HOT CROSS BUN

WRITE IN THE 'HOT CROSS BUN' BOXES BELOW WHAT HAPPENS,
HOW YOU THINK AND FEEL WHEN YOU GET ANXIOUS.

THOUGHTS

EMOTIONS

BEHAVIOURS

BODILY SENSATIONS



THINGS TO DO WHEN WE START TO FEEL ANXIOUS



- **BREATHE** - TRY AND CONTROL YOUR BREATHING, TAKING DEEP BREATHS IN AND SLOWLY BREATHING OUT COUNTING TO TEN IF YOU CAN GET THERE. THIS WILL HELP CONTROL YOUR BREATHING, MAKE YOU MORE RELAXED AND REGAIN CONTROL OF YOUR BODY.
- **WALK** - GO FOR A WALK, THIS MIGHT EVEN BE AROUND THE GARDEN OR YOUR LOCAL AREA.
- **EXERCISE** - DO SOME FORM OF EXERCISE YOU ENJOY, THIS WILL TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THINGS AND DOING EXERCISE IS GREAT FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH.
- **MUSIC** - LISTEN TO YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC, EITHER RELAX TO IT OR HAVE A GOOD SING A LONG TO IT.
- **FRIENDS** - GO AND SEE YOUR FRIENDS, DO SOMETHING TOGETHER THAT YOU ENJOY.
- **TALK** - GO AND FIND SOMEONE THAT YOU TRUST AND SPEAK TO THEM ABOUT HOW YOU ARE FEELING.

TALK TO YOURSELF

"IS IT REALLY AS BAD AS I THINK?" TAKE YOURSELF THROUGH THE PROCESS OF BREAKING DOWN THE THOUGHT BEFORE JUMPING TO THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO. IF YOU STILL ANSWER YES, ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING:

- HOW DO I KNOW THE THOUGHT IS TRUE (WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE)?
- CAN I REFRAME THE THOUGHT INTO A MORE POSITIVE OR REALISTIC SCENARIO?
- WHAT ARE THE CHANCES THE THING I'M WORRIED ABOUT WILL ACTUALLY HAPPEN?
- WHAT IS THE WORST POSSIBLE OUTCOME? HOW BAD IS THIS, AND CAN I HANDLE IT?
- HOW MANY TIMES HAS THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?

THIS EXERCISE IS HELPFUL FOR PEOPLE WHO DEAL WITH CHRONIC ANXIETY AND WORRY.

**Use the below example to help
rationalise the anxiety or fear**

Situation where I feel the anxiety or fear

I am worried that I have not done my homework properly and that I will get told off by my teacher.

how that makes me feel (0-10)

8

what are the anxious thoughts that I feel

I feel really sick and my hands go clammy.

what can I do to manage this anxiety or fear

I am going to complete my piece of homework the night or night after I get it, I am going to ask my teacher to have a look at it to see if it is what they would expect. If not they can help me by telling me where to improve. I still have time to change it.

how I feel when I have done that (0-10)

4

ADVICE FOR OUR STUDENTS ON **anxiety**

- **Speak to friends/ family**
- **Speak to any member of school staff**
- **Access mentoring - students would need to speak with their Head of Year/ Endeavour/ Mrs C Wright and a referral form would be completed.**
- **Use a digital wellbeing service e.g. Kooth.com/ Youngminds.**
- **School counsellor - students would need to speak with their Head of Year/ Mrs C Wright and a referral form would be completed.**
- **Visit their GP service**
- **Footsteps (Eaglescliffe Medical Practice). See website link.**
- **CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service).**

Please note that any disclosures will be followed through our school safeguarding procedures.

Please note that there may be waiting lists for support services.

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useful links

<https://www.kooth.com/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

https://www.headspace.com/?gclid=EAiaIQobChMIine8wJVU8wIVie3tCh3KNWCIEAAYASAAEgIrV_D_Bw

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/anxiety/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/7-ways-to-support-children-and-young-people-who-are-worried/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/helping-children-and-young-people-to-manage-anxiety/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/anxiety/>