



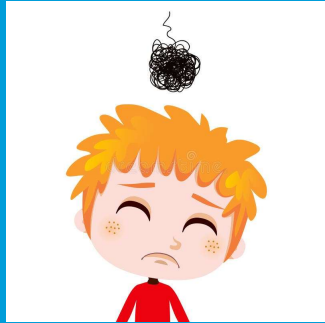
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SEND Coffee Morning with Mrs Drew (SENCO)

26.01.24

How we can support children with
worry or anxiety



Anxiety or worry?

- Worry is the word we use when we are thinking over and over again about something in particular. Children may worry about new experiences or being away from parents.
- They may worry about change e.g moving house or having a new teacher
- It is normal for children and adults to be worried from time to time.
- Worries happen in our heads and tend to be about a specific thing e.g. worrying about a test at school or that they might be late for school
- Worry often triggers problem solving and prepares us to think about strategies to deal with situations and once we've resolved the issue it goes away. For example, your child might be worried about going to a Birthday party or a playdate for the first time if you can encourage them to talk about their worry you can reassure them that everyone gets a bit worried when they go somewhere new and it is very normal
- Worries only last for a short time

How to support children when they are worried

- Be open with your children and let them know that you will listen to their worries.
- For younger children read stories such as 'Ruby's Worry' by Tom Percieval or 'The Worry Jar' by Lou John
- For older children they could write down their worries in a journal or diary
- Children could write their worries in a piece of paper and put them in a worry jar. Take them out at a later date and talk about how they overcame their worry/ what it felt like after or when the thing they had worried about had happened
- Remind the children that it is totally normal to worry about things that are new and different and that worry is a way for the body to prepare for new things



What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is when you feel scared or panic about something. It is also normal as it is your bodies reaction to stress
- At moderate levels of anxiety, a person's performance and attention to detail can improve.
- It becomes a problem when the feelings become more intense, last for a long time and begin to negatively impact on how well you can do things, your enjoyment of things and family life.



What anxiety feels like..

- As humans evolved, our brains developed an inbuilt alarm system. It warns us when something isn't right and we need to keep ourselves safe. This alarm triggers what is known as the 'fight or flight' response – this is when your body prepares to either run away, fight, or freeze.
- When you feel anxious. You might feel a churning feeling in your stomach, dizzy or light-headed or hot and sweaty. These symptoms are all part of the fight or flight response.
- This can make us feel like we're in physical danger, but it's important to remember that feeling this way doesn't necessarily mean you are in danger.



What happens to our body when we are in fight or flight mode?

- Fight – an aggressive response to simple requests or offers of help; maybe starting arguments with family members.
- Flight – avoiding tasks they need to do by spending time scrolling through social media, watching Youtube videos or gaming
- Freeze – trying to study or complete the things they need to do, but instead spending ages looking at a blank page or reading the same page in a book over and over because it won't go in.
- Some of these are typical child/tween behaviours! But you know your child, and if their fight/flight/freeze response is activated, you will see a change in their behaviour.





How to help your child when they are feeling anxious

- **Breathing techniques-** hand breathing, rainbow breathing
- **Grounding techniques using the senses**

5 things you can see

4 things you can hear

3 things you can touch

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste





Top Tips for Parents

- If you feel that your child is constantly anxious and doesn't seem to improve with your support, it's important to make an appointment to see your GP. However, there are some things you can do to support your child:
- **Avoid the temptation to rescue** Every time you help your child to avoid a situation that makes them anxious or step in to 'rescue' them, you inadvertently send the message that there is something to be worried about and/or that s/he can't handle the situation on their own.
- **Help them to recognise and make sense of physical symptoms** Quite often young people don't realise that their fast heartbeat, quick breathing or that feeling in their stomach is anxiety. They may sometimes describe being anxious as having a 'stomach-ache'. These feeling can be worrying in themselves, so helping your child to recognise them and reassuring them that they will pass can be helpful.
- **Encourage sleep!** Don't discuss worries at night. Teach kids that they can 'put their worries down' for a while by getting them to write them on bits of paper and put them in a box. You can talk through them later.
- **Family time** Being anxious can be lonely. Plan things to do as a family and encourage them to focus on the moment they're in.



Thank you for listening

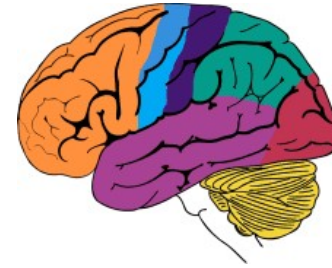
Useful websites

- www.youngminds.org.uk
- [How to tackle anxiety: Just Say Stop! - BBC Parents' Toolkit - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [Anxiety in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)





Children's Brain Development



- Children's brains have a massive growth spurt when they're very young. By the time they're six, their brains are already about 90-95% of adult size. The early years are a critical time for brain development, but the brain still needs a lot of remodelling before it can function as an adult brain.
- This **brain remodelling happens intensively during adolescence**, continuing until your child is in their mid-20s. Brain change depends on age, experience and hormonal changes in [puberty](#).
- Adolescence is a time of significant growth and development inside the pre-teen brain.
- The main change is that unused connections in the thinking and processing part of your child's brain (called the grey matter) are **'pruned' away**. At the same time, other connections are strengthened. This is the brain's way of becoming more efficient, based on the 'use it or lose it' principle.
- This pruning process **begins in the back of the brain**. The front part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, is remodelled last. The prefrontal cortex is the decision-making part of the brain, responsible for your child's ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses. Changes in this part of the brain continue into early adulthood.
- Because the prefrontal cortex is still developing, teenagers might rely on a part of the brain called the **amygdala** to make decisions and solve problems more than adults do. The amygdala is associated with emotions, impulses, aggression and instinctive behaviour.