

Top Tips for Parents

Strategies to manage Anxiety:



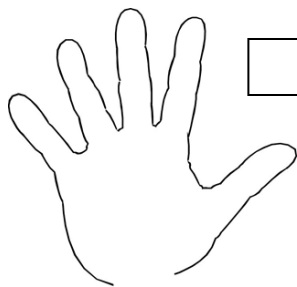
Anxiety is a normal, natural feeling, everyone has anxious thoughts and sometimes these anxious thoughts are appropriate and helpful.

However, for some young people, their worrying thoughts can become disproportionate and the subsequent anxiety can be difficult to manage as it impacts negatively on their everyday life.

Anxiety in children can take many forms but the ideas below can help to challenge and reduce anxious thoughts:

- 1) Try to stay calm, listen to their worries and help them find ways to re-evaluate their thoughts. Offer empathy rather than solutions, show by listening that you accept what they are telling you, but don't try to solve the problems for them, help them challenge unhelpful thoughts. Be aware of your own anxiety and how you respond to stress.
- 2) Anxiety is often increased by people worrying about things that haven't happened yet, predicting a worst case scenario, mind reading or exaggerating the likelihood of an outcome. Sometimes we can help children recognise these negative thoughts by asking:
 - What are the facts, what is it that is actually worrying you?
 - Do you have any evidence to support these feelings?
 - What can you change? What can't you change?
 - Is this reaction proportional?
 - Is it really as important as it seems?
 - Is there another way of looking at this situation?
- 3) It often helps to write down what is it that they are actually worried about? Thoughts are just thoughts? But children who are anxious often need support to challenge unhelpful thinking.
- 4) Ask your child to consider what advice would they give someone else having the same problem?
- 5) Help your child identify a network of people they can turn to for help. People they trust and feel safe talking to. Encourage your child to look at their hand and imagine a person for each finger and thumb who can help/be their support.
- 6) Try to practice and promote positive thinking, instead of thinking I can't help; them to think 'I can't **yet**'.
- 7) Remember the good things that happen. Help your child keep a positive log or diary to record things that actually go well.

- 8) If your child is upset, encourage them to stop and give themselves a little time and space; anxiety does reduce given time. Often music, a chance to draw / doodle, looking through photos or a fidget tool can help distract children and allow their calmer, clearer thoughts to return. Some children find practising breathing techniques or mindfulness exercises help. There are also several apps that can be downloaded free onto mobile phones to help: Sam Anxiety Management is a good example of one.
- 9) Avoiding situations will only reinforce anxious thoughts and in turn children will not learn that they are able to manage and cope. Always focus on what your child can do. Help them decide on small, gradual exposure steps that with support they can take to improve their situation.
- 10) Everyone needs time each day to relax so encourage your child to do something every day that they enjoy and that makes them smile.
- 11) Finally but very importantly encourage your children to make healthy choices, to eat well, exercise regularly and make sure they get enough sleep. Spending time out of doors helps, as does building in time to connect and talk to other people. Helping others is empowering, it can change the focus and distract from their own worries.
- 12) Also remember there are always people around who can help. Talk to your child's teachers at school or your family GP if you have concerns.



Support Network.

