

Anxiety

All children and young people may feel anxious from time to time. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your child if they experience symptoms of worry or anxiety. This is not an exhaustive list. Children and young people will experience other types of worry and symptoms which may not be included in this section of the guide.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support

It is common for children and young people to experience worry as they develop through childhood and adolescence. The typical worries children and young people experience tend to be situation specific, short term and can be managed with the love and support of parents/carers.

Examples might be

- Being away from home/parent
- Going to school (but settling)
- Worrying about going to bed/the dark
- Worry about something bad happening to themselves or to a loved one
- Doing new things
- Going to unfamiliar places
- Doing things independently
- Public speaking/performing
- Tests and exams
- Change and uncertainty (e.g. family breakdown or conflict)
- In response to an upsetting event such as being bullied
- Being in social situations

Needs help

The degree to which a child or young person worries appears out of context or disproportionate to the reason why they might be worrying. Episodes of anxiety might be more frequent or prolonged and cause the child or young person distress or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities.

Examples might be

- Fears that something bad might happen to themselves or someone else
- Worry about not coping
- Worry about performance in exams or the future
- Worries related to being habitually bullied
- or experiencing regular conflict or distress either at home or school
- Worries about what others might think, say or do
- Worries about negative judgements by others or social rejection/exclusion

Needs specialist help:

These anxieties are severe and enduring. These cause significant distress to the child or young person and significantly disrupt daily coping such as school/college, socialising and even self-care activities (sleep, bathing and eating). Despite trying self-help or community-based help (school/college or GP) difficulties remain. This is when you might consider accessing specialist support from a service such as CAMHS.

What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy or faint.
- Disrupted sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, nightmares/night terrors).

Emotions

- May become distressed or agitated when facing fear or even thinking about facing the fear.
- May become oppositional or aggressive towards others when in a situation they are particularly fearful of.

Behaviour

- Persistent physical or verbal seeking of reassurance (being clingy and not wanting to be separated from a parent/carer; not wanting to be left alone).
- Resistance to doing things; requiring a lot of cajoling or persuading.
- Refusal to leave the house or attend/take part in activities such as school, hobbies, interests, seeing friends.
- Some repeated patterns of behaviour or routines which seem to help the young person but don't make sense to others (repeated checking or counting).
- Demanding things be done in certain ways or requesting others to do things for them.

Systemic

- Families might also find themselves struggling to do things as they normally would as they may make adjustments to accommodate how the young person is feeling or responding.
- There may be conflict or arguments between the young person and family members or between family members.



Things to try, support and next steps

- Normalise that anxiety is a natural emotion. The physical sensations of anxiety can be unpleasant but it's OK, it will pass and won't cause any harm.
- Encourage, reward and praise your child for not avoiding things that make them anxious (triggers). The more your child avoids triggers the harder it becomes and the more anxious they will become. Instead, encourage them to face their fear, so your child can tolerate and manage their anxiety.
- Break things down into steps and do these as often as possible so your child can habituate and tolerate their anxiety before going onto the next step.
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious.
- Supporting a young person to problem solve any obvious triggers.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Depending on the context and/or the origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety:
bit.ly/3EiWc6v



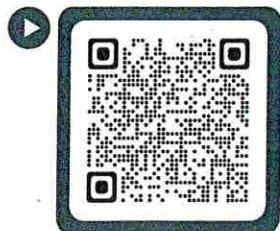
Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness:
bit.ly/44wXoxU



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills):
bit.ly/2NyIRjG



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches:
bit.ly/3xILd3D



A workshop on getting good sleep:
bit.ly/45vAmc9



A podcast on how to manage school anxiety:
bit.ly/3MrgU7n



Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging:

bit.ly/3Bzt1KD



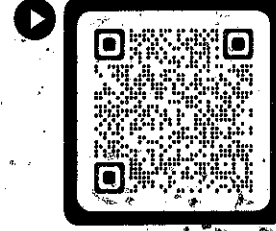
Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important:

bit.ly/3QXWEuU



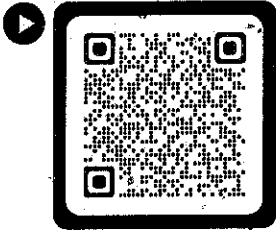
The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation how much we can and can't cope with:

bit.ly/3dC5KQn



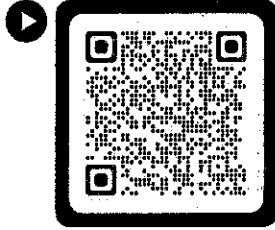
A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try:

bit.ly/3lBwUp7



A coping strategy film about how to make your own self-soothe box:

bit.ly/2H6uDU1



A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling:

bit.ly/3UxEbbJ



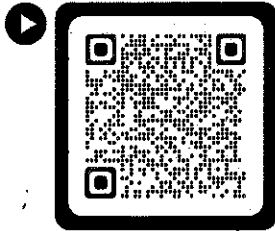
A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation:

bit.ly/3fcoINN



A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals:

bit.ly/3DGOion



A coping strategy film on breathing techniques:

bit.ly/3UyD3Vk

