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## Children & Young People's Emotional Health

# Worries & Anxiety

Worry is the word we use when we are thinking and stressing about something in particular – like starting a new school. Anxiety can go hand in hand with worry and describes the feelings that can come along with it. Sometimes we can feel anxious without knowing the reason why.

People worry about all sorts of reasons like;

- New experiences / being away from parents
- Arguments in families
- Worries about money
- Making friends / fitting in
- Being bullied
- Being ill or someone in the family being ill
- Dangers in the world.



The person might feel their worry will seem 'silly' to others – but whatever the reason – the feelings are the same and it is just as hard to deal with.

Even if we cannot understand why someone would feel that way, everyone deserves to have their worries and anxieties taken seriously and be listened to.

## Dive Deeper

## How Does It Feel?

**When people are anxious they might notice they have;**

- A fast heart beat and / or be breathless & shaky
- Irritability / angry outbursts
- Restlessness and/or poor sleep
- Poor appetite
- Tummy aches
- A frightened feeling all the time - not wanting to do things or go places.

When these feelings come all together, it might seem like they have taken over the whole body - this is known as a panic attack.

It is not easy to see your child struggling in this way - as a parent or carer you can really help your child manage these difficult feelings.

## How Can I Help My Child?

**Whatever the age of the child who is suffering with worry and anxiety; we can learn ways to make it feel more manageable.**

Learning these coping skills as a child is especially useful; they will be able to rely on them during any tough times. Having these coping skills makes us resilient. It is never too late to develop these skills for ourselves as parents, and this sets a good example for our children.

**Being able to listen to your child's worries and anxieties is really important.**

When your child is telling you they are having a hard time the first thing you will want to do is 'fix' it. This can sometimes get in the way of really hearing what it is like for your child. Then they will not get the chance to say exactly what they mean, and how they feel.

It can get in the way of you helping your child come up with a plan of what they can do to improve things. It is important to help your child feel more in control; worries and anxieties make us feel out of control.

# How To Really Listen

Concentrate on what your child is saying. Turn off your phone / TV. Sit close and give them time. If you really can't listen that moment – make a deal with your child to do so **very** soon – and stick to it.

Let your child talk. Try not to interrupt with your own point of view. Show you're listening by making comments on what they are saying – use 'feeling' words;

- 'That sounds scary'
- 'That must have been a shock'
- 'I wonder if you felt sad about that?'

Check that you heard them right.

- 'So, I think you're saying that you worry something bad will happen when you walk to school on your own – is that right?'

You don't have to know the answer there and then. You can even tell your child you are going to give it some thought / find some things out and talk about it again after tea / tomorrow.

Listening to your child and giving them the chance to explain what they feel can make a big difference and help stop the worry feeling too big and unmanageable.

## Challenge The Worry

One of the ways that our mind plays tricks on us when it is worrying, is to make us 'avoid' the thing that gives us the anxious feelings.

Your child might say they 'don't want to do dancing anymore'. Maybe because they feel anxious about getting the moves wrong. This would mean your child missing out on something they enjoy, and is good for them.

It also puts the worry and anxiety 'in charge' and makes the child think the decision to avoid something was the best way to get rid of the horrible feelings.

## How To Challenge Worries

Encourage your child to child to 'challenge the worry'. You could get them to ask themselves these questions;

1. What is the worst that could happen? (I will get the whole dance wrong and be embarrassed).
2. What is the best that could happen (I will get every step right and feel brilliant).
3. What is most likely to happen (I will get some steps right and some steps wrong and so will everyone else).

Helping your child think differently about their worry can help them 'give it a go' rather than letting the anxiety be 'in charge.'

It is good to give them the message that their worry is 'not always right.'

Sometimes a worry is very real and there is no way to make it feel smaller, for example someone they love being very ill. Being able to talk about how this feels is still important. You can help your child think about how they can look after themselves and where to go for help.

# Learning To Relax

Different people find different things help them to relax; your child might like to read, colour, walk, run, dance, or watch TV.

For most people when they are struggling with worries and anxiety relaxing becomes more difficult. Sometimes people even forget to take the time out to relax. We can learn to be better at this.

One of the ways that we know helps when we are stressed is to take control of our breathing.

Simply slowing our breathing down, and counting our breaths can really help with the horrible feelings worry and anxiety bring.

- Turn off phones and screens, find a quiet place.
- Sit comfortably, close your eyes.
- Breathe in through your nose counting to 4.
- Let the breath out slowly through your mouth.
- Keep this going for about 5 to ten minutes.
- Open your eyes and take a quiet moment.

Practice every day and it will get easier and help more.

Although worries and anxieties are a normal part of life sometimes they get in the way of getting on with and enjoying life. If you feel your child is being badly affected by their worries it is important to seek help.

## Tips

Try and ensure your child is eating a [healthy diet \(/healthy-lifestyles/eat-better/\)](#), has a good [sleep routine \(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/childrens-sleep/\)](#), and is getting fresh air and [exercise \(/healthy-lifestyles/move-more/\)](#). If children feel well physically, they will feel better mentally.

- Encourage your child to talk to you about their worries. Stay calm and listen to what they are worried about.
- Talk to your child about emotions and name them.
- Help your child learn to 'pause', spot the emotion they are feeling and what is happening to them. Try the Turtle Technique.
- Help your child to find ways to face their fears in a safe way.
- Praise your child for talking about their worries.
- Support your child with time and safe space to deal with their worries.
- Create a worry box with your child.



## Shelf Help Books

Books about mental health for 13 to 18 year olds, with advice and information about issues like anxiety, stress and OCD, bullying and exams.

All Shelf Help books can be reserved for free from any Norfolk library, or [online \(https://norfolk.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/HEALTHY/BIBENQ?QRY=SVL\(SHELFHELP\)&SORTS=DTE.DATE1.DESC%5DHBT.SOVR&QRYTEXT=Shelf%20Help&ISGLB=0\)](https://norfolk.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/HEALTHY/BIBENQ?QRY=SVL(SHELFHELP)&SORTS=DTE.DATE1.DESC%5DHBT.SOVR&QRYTEXT=Shelf%20Help&ISGLB=0). The books are available to borrow for up to six weeks.

### Suggestions:

- **Coping with an Anxious or Depressed Child** by Dr Sam Cartwright-Hatton.
- **No Worries! Mindful Kids: An activity book for young people who sometimes feel anxious or stressed** by Katie Abey.

# Health Uncovered Podcast

Health Uncovered is a series of podcasts that aims to get young people in-tune with their health and wellbeing. The series is hosted by BBC Radio One presenter Cel Spellman and features young people and health professionals from our Norfolk Healthy Child Programme.

Life isn't always easy - and young people across the country have been helping us explore the issues that they're facing today. From online bullying to sexual health, body image to mental health. They've been asking the questions you want to hear answered, joined by the health professionals that help young people, like school nurses and mental health specialists, to provide solutions, support and understanding.

S1/E1 Sexual health, STIs

00:00 - 24:35



- i **S1/E1 Sexual health, STIs**
- i S1/E2 Bullying, how it feels
- i S1/E3 Mental health, me and my emotions
- i S1/E4 Sexual health, are you ready?
- i S1/E5 Mental health, are you OK?
- i S1/E6 Grooming, could it happen to me?
- i S1/E7 Mental health, taking control

If you have a child aged 7-12 with anxiety, and find it hard to access support, please take part in the I-DIGIT research survey by following the link to share yours and your child's views about the use of digital games and technologies designed to help reduce worries.

Take the survey (<https://forms.office.com/e/xSNvLU9fbJ>)

## Who can Help?

You can contact a member of the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme by

### Also in this section...

Anger → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/anger/>)

Anti Bullying → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/anti-bullying/>)

Bereavement → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/bereavement/>)

Building Resilience → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/building-resilience/>)

Eating Disorders → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/eating-disorders/>)

LGBTQ → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/lgbtq/>)

Low Mood → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/low-mood/>)

Managing Feelings → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/managing-feelings/>)

Mindfulness → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/mindfulness/>)

Self Confidence and Self-Esteem → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/self-confidence-and-self-esteem/>)

Self-Harm → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/self-harm/>)

Top Tips for Young People → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/top-tips-for-young-people/>)

Trauma → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/trauma/>)

Worries & Anxiety → (</emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/worries-anxiety/>)



Children & Young People's Emotional Health

→ (/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/)

Emotional Health



(/emotional-health/)

Click here to speak with other parents & carers

(https://healthunlocked.com/one-norfolk-parents)

Information, advice, services and activities across Norfolk

(https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/norfolk-directory)

health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health-activities/)

Supporting mental health / supporting-children-s-mental-health/ session (/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/)

Still Worried / Need More Help? (/our-services/still-worried/)

## Need More Information

NHS - Anxiety Fear & Panic

→ (https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/anxiety-fear-panic/)

Lumi Nova App - Therapeutic Mobile Game

→ (https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/emotional-health/children-young-peoples-emotional-health/lumi-nova-app/)

BBC - How to help your child feel less anxious

→ (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/bNllj01LY6qNnbmSGGYMgr/how-to-help-your-child-feel-less-anxious)

Action for Children - Helping your Child with Anxiety

→ (https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/how-we-can-help/get-parenting-support/)

Anxiety Booklet For Parents And Carers

→ (/media/ef4bv1fp/anxiety-booklet-for-parents-and-carers.pdf)

# Other Useful Pages



Understanding Child Development

(/child-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/understanding-child-development/)



Teenage Brain

(/child-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/teenage-brain/)



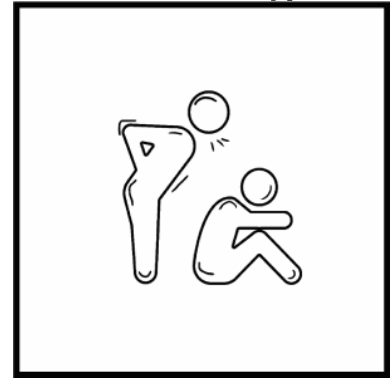
Understanding Your Child's Behaviour

(/child-development-additional-needs/behaviour-sleep/understanding-your-child-s-behaviour/)



Supporting Children's Mental Health

(/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/supporting-children-s-mental-health/)



Anti Bullying

(/emotional-health/children-young-people-s-emotional-health/anti-bullying/)

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Somewhat



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# Latest from social media



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