

Did you know?

As cavepeople we faced dangers, like dinosaurs and sabre-tooth tigers. Our brain (wanting to protect us from danger) designed a special alarm inside us that was set to go off when we are in danger. This alarm helped us fight danger, escape or hide. We call this the fight-flight-freeze response. However, dinosaurs or sabre tooth tigers don't exist anymore. These days, our fight-flight-freeze response can activate from things like going to school, public speaking or taking an exam. Our brain acts like we are in danger (better safe than sorry) when we might be perfectly safe. Our brains need reminding of this sometimes. We can't turn it off, and some peoples' alarm systems get stuck in 'on mode' which causes them to always feel ready for danger.



What Can Keep Anxiety Going?

Anxiety can feel more difficult when a young person feels stuck in a vicious cycle. This can make young people feel tired and alone, especially if it goes on for a long time.

Signs of anxiety can include:

Unable to concentrate

May be restless or fidgety

Nightmares

Isolating themselves

Headaches

Regularly seeking reassurance

Trouble with toileting

Sleep problems

Extremely shy, timid and clingy

Feeling unwell/tummy pains

Tantrums

Trouble eating

Feeling butterflies in their tummy

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY & WORRY IN CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



Signs of Anxiety:

Many Parents/Carers are unsure whether their child's behaviour and worries are typical for their age. All children experience powerful emotions. To a young child, the world can be a scary and uncertain place.

Some children can become very worried about many situations and they may not understand these feelings. younger often show physical signs of anxiety than telling someone that they feel worried.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear that children and young people experience as a mixture of...

Physical
Sensations

Feelings

Thoughts

Sleep

What's great about sleep?

- It reduces the chemicals that cause stress
- It improves learning and even helps us solve problems
- Improves general mental health
- Sleep better and longer = us feeling better for longer

Remember: It won't work overnight.

Give it at least a week.

Exercise

- Exercise doesn't have to be sweaty and painful. Can you do an activity that they find fun.
- Can your child walk the dog, or walk to school?
- Can you dance around the kitchen to your favourite tunes.

Remember: Don't stress if you miss a session.

Food & Drink

- Try to limit your child's sugar intake
- Encourage your child to drink up to 8 glasses of water a day
- Try to include fruit and vegetables in every meal
- Reduce the amount of salt.

Remember: Eat consistently, make small changes.

Cycle of anxiety



What You Can Do To Help:

Talk About It:

Being open and available to talk is one of the small things you can do every day to help your child.

Top Tips:

- Choose times when they are calm
- Don't force them to share or make them feel pressured
- Create a safe and relaxed space where they will feel comfortable to open up about their fears and worries, so you can talk through them together
- Children and young people often find it easier to talk when doing another activity
- Spend quality time together having fun
- Talk about other things too to take their minds off their worries and help them relax
- Life can be busy so make the most of the small moments.

Finding Time to Talk:

- Go for a walk together (Don't forget the dog)
- Cook dinner together
- Bake a cake or cookies for a treat
- Do some arts & crafts
- Turn the car radio down
- Family mealtime (No phones at the table)
- Movie night (Let them choose one they like)
- Help them with their homework
- Technology free hour (Let them choose an activity to do in this time)



Resources:

<p>CHILL PANDA Helps children to better understand their stress and shows them ways to feel better using breathing techniques, yoga, exercises and games.</p>	<p>Calm Meditation techniques and sleep stories to aid with stress and sleep.</p>	<p>HEADSPACE A meditation app that acts as a personal guide to health and happiness.</p>	<p>WORRY TREE The app aims to help you take control of worry, wherever you are.</p>
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Avoiding Avoidance;

As Parents/Carers, we want to minimise our children's distress. This can lead to allowing our children to avoid situations, for example - School

However, avoidance isn't always the best way to feel safe.

Instead, children need the opportunity to sit with their discomfort to learn that anxiety is temporary.



3 Tips to Avoid Avoidance:

1. Show you understand how they feel by saying something like: "I know you are feeling worried right now." Encourage them by saying: "I know that this is something you can manage."
2. Break the situation down into smaller steps.

For example: If they don't like being away from you, start with a short amount of time and build the child's confidence that it is a situation that they can manage.

3. Go heavy with praise when they have put themselves in a situation they wanted to avoid.

Self Care for Parents/Carers:

It can take time for Parents/Carers to understand their child's worries, and for children to manage their own behaviour.

Remember, change takes time.



Most importantly, you can only ever give your best. But you also need to take care of yourself.