


CHUMS
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People

Overcoming your child's fears & worries

Building confidence and managing anxiety in your child




Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People

Based on the work of Vicki Curry & Anna Picciotto, Whittington Health, Islington Community CAMHS

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What are we covering today?

- >What Anxiety is in children
- >The development of anxiety in children
- >How to manage anxiety and build confidence in your child



ANXIETY

Please note this workshop :

- Is aimed at Parents with children aged up to 12 years
- Does not focus on children with neurodevelopmental difficulties (ASD/ADHD)


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How do you know when your child is anxious?

What are their thoughts or worries?

How does their anxiety show in their behaviour? What do they do?

How does it show itself physically in their bodies?




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What is anxiety?

- > Anxiety is a normal emotion, and in the right amounts it can be useful
- > Anxiety has three characteristics:
 - **Physical sensations in the body**
 - Associated with adrenalin - preparing the body for action
 - E.g. sweating, heart beating faster, trembling
 - **Anxious thoughts**
 - Over-estimate "danger"; underestimate ability to cope
 - Worrying about what could happen
 - **Anxious behaviour**
 - Behaviour aimed at helping the child anticipate and/or avoid future danger, e.g. looking out for danger (hypervigilance), avoiding worrying situations

N.B. Anxiety occurs in children AND adults!!!



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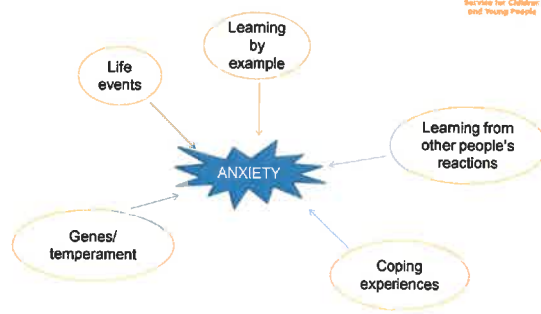
Anxiety is linked to development

(Moore & Carr, 2000)

Age	Developmental stage	Fears and worries
0-8 months	Sensory	Strong sensory stimuli (e.g. loud noises); loss of support
8-12 months	Sensori-motor: cause and effect; object-constancy	Strangers; separation from care givers
2-4 years	Pre-operational thinking: imagination, but limited distinction between fantasy and reality	Imaginary creatures; potential burglars; the dark
5-7 years	Concrete operational thinking: Concrete, logical thinking	Natural disasters; injury/illness/death; animals, media-based fears
8-11 years	Self esteem based on academic and athletic abilities	Poor academic and athletic performance
12-18 years	Formal operational thinking: meta-thinking and anticipation of future dangers. Self esteem based on peer relationships	Peer rejection, world issues

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How does anxiety develop?



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    graph TD
      LE[Life events] --> ANXIETY
      LBE[Learning by example] --> ANXIETY
      LOR[Learning from other people's reactions] --> ANXIETY
      CE[Coping experiences] --> ANXIETY
      GT[Genes/temperament] --> ANXIETY
      ANXIETY((ANXIETY))
    
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Is my child's anxiety "a problem"?

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Things to consider:

- When did the symptoms develop: are they a "normal" response to something that's happening in their lives, e.g. starting school
- How strong is their worry? Is it becoming hard for them/you to manage?
- Is the anxiety stopping them from doing what they want to/should be doing?
 - In their social life (causing problems with friendships)
 - Academically (stopping them from doing as well as they should be)
 - In their mood (are they miserable/low as a result?)
- Is their anxiety stopping *you* from doing what you want to/should be doing? e.g. going out to work

What keeps anxiety going?

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Things children do...

Anxious behaviour:

- Avoidance
- "Safety behaviours"
- Seek reassurance from others

Anxious thinking:

- Notice / remember things that fit in with their worries
- Overestimate danger
- Underestimate coping

Misinterpret physical symptoms of anxiety:

- "something bad is happening"
- "something is wrong with me"
- "I can't bear the feeling"

What do parents do that keep anxiety going?

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	Try to avoid:		Try instead:
Displaying anxious behaviour	→	Demonstrate coping behaviour	
Reacting anxiously	→	Use containment	
Being overprotective	→	Build resilience – let them try	
Not encouraging them to try	→	Step ladder approach	
		Problem solving	
REASSURANCE	→	Use open questions	
		Explain fight/flight	

Demonstrate coping behaviour

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- Share your fears & worries (where appropriate) BUT follow up with how you would cope and manage this situation
- React to your child's worries in a calm and collected way and model 'how to cope' with worry


Use containment

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- Try not to jump in a fix it for them
- Reacting anxiously can leave them feeling anxious too – avoid 'are you sure?'
- 'You look like you've had a tough day, let's go home and get a hot chocolate and put a film on'
- 'I can see you feel worries, that's ok we all get that sometimes'
- It is important to acknowledge how they feel
- Name the emotion that they are feeling
- You can't always fix it!

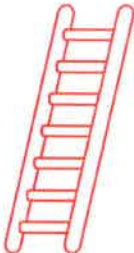
Building resilience



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- Let them try things out (despite your own worries)
- This allows your child to learn that they can cope in tricky situations
- We cannot stop bad things from happening
- We CAN help them to manage these situations though
- Tell anxiety you aren't going to listen to it/fall into its trap

Step Ladder Approach



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- Small steps to face fears, not jumping in at the deep end
- Place your end goal at the top
- Decide up to 10 steps WITH YOUR CHILD
- Each step completed = a reward
- Rewards are NOT bribery they are incentives
- Rewards do not have to cost
- Decorate the step ladder, make it interesting and stick it up somewhere
- NB: if you get stuck try adding in a smaller step inbetween


Open ended questions

What do you think is going to happen? Has this happened before?

What's the worst/best outcome?

Do you know anyone else this has happened to?


Could something different happen?



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- Often most effective technique
- Stops you being exhausted by answering all the 'what if' questions (which is actually reassurance)
- We need to actually find out what they think will happen
- Then you can start to evaluate this thought

Explain fight/flight




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- Children can mistake these overwhelming feelings inside for being ill
- They will say they don't feel well (which is completely true!)
- Helpful for them to know what they are experiencing
- Trying naming it I.E 'worry tummy'
- Have a look at resources online to explain it at their level

- Automatic response to ANY worry
- Our 'animal' brain takes over and tells our body to start doing stuff
- That way we can run faster or fight harder


Problem solving



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- Sit down together and come up with different ideas of how to overcome the worry
- Make sure you understand the worry
- All ideas should be praised (even the silly/impossible ones)
- Then decide if they can actually be done
- Decide which one is going to have the best outcome
- Consider how the plans will impact their anxiety – if they avoid the situation we know their anxiety will not go away, if they face it but with a good plan, they should be able to manage this anxiety.
- Decide the best one & give it go!
- Review afterwards

What strategies do you use already to calm down your child when they're anxious?




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Helpful distractions

- Count back from 20 in 2s
- Imagine a big red STOP sign and stop your or their worries
- Describe something you can see in detail
- Spell the names of your family
- Make a time of the day to think about your worries or a time to write in a worry book








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Summary of techniques



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Useful Apps

- Positive Penguins 
- The Worry Box 
- Sleep Meditations 
- Breathing Bubbles 
- Chill Outz 

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Useful Books when approaching death/dying:

- Michael Rosen - The Sad Book
- Oliver Jeffers - Heart in a Bottle
- Judith Kerr - Goodbye Mog
- Marge Heegaard - When someone very special dies
- Susan Varley - Badger's parting gifts
- Doris Stickney - Water Bugs and Dragonflies
- Also look at the Winston's Wish website



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Useful books for anxiety

- Cathy Creswell - Overcoming your child's fears and worries: A guide for parents using cognitive behavioural techniques.
- Virginia Ironside – The Huge Bag of Worries
- Dawn Huebner – What to do when you worry too much

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Key Points!

- 🔑 Anxiety is normal
- 🔑 Reduce reassurance – Increase questions
- 🔑 Model 'having a go' > increase confidence
- 🔑 Face fears 'step by step'
- 🔑 Remember the use of rewards


What to do if you feel you need more support/guidance

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- Speak to your school SENCO or Family Support.
 - ✓ Shared understanding between home and school
 - ✓ Nurture groups
 - ✓ Guidance for you/your child
 - ✓ Access to support from the school nurse
 - ✓ Refer you for additional support if needed
- If you feel you or your child might need more specialist support, you could consider a referral to CHUMS. This can be completed by you/school/GP. The referral form can be found at: <http://chums.uk.com/refer/>
- Family Wellbeing Team offers Guided Self Help for Anxiety, Low Mood and Behaviour.



THANK YOU



FOR LISTENING

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