

Anxiety

All children can suffer from anxiety and this can be a normal reaction to a new situation. The aim of this leaflet is to provide strategies and advice to parents to support children who appear anxious often. The strategies aim to reduce the anxiety of our children through changing our behaviour and how we expose them to new situations. There should also be set expectations for the child, so that they are aware of how to begin to self manage their anxieties.

Overcoming Anxiety



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Anxiety in Children

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you to support your children deal with their fears and worries.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. This is a natural response to the environment, however it may appear heightened within some children. They may be more naturally disposed to be anxious. A new or potentially frightening experience will often trigger anxiety.

Younger children:

- Usually anxiety is expressed in their behaviour – afraid of the dark, going to sleep, being clingy, restless or fussy.
- May find it hard to separate from you when going to school.

Older children:

- May experience panic attacks.
- Palpitations.
- High stress levels - they are easily provoked.
- Phobias.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Exercise is a good way to support your child develop a healthy way of dealing with their anxiety. Exercise produces endorphins, which have a positive effect on the mind and body.



Try to avoid 'avoiding the situation', which produces the anxiety. Children need to face their anxieties with support to overcome them and build their resilience to exploring new experiences and places.

HELPFUL STRATEGIES

- Your reaction - adopt a positive and confident attitude. You can set up a reward system and/or use books and other tools to support exposure to the situation causing anxiety.
- Tactically ignore tantrums and minimize the attention that the child receives. Give more attention when your child puts effort into overcoming their anxiety.
- Having regular routines so that anxiety is minimised, children are clear about the environment they are likely to experience.
- Predict success! Express confidence in the experience that your child is going to have. Remind them that you will be leaving them for a while and when you return. Praise the child on your return.
- Remember your behaviour management strategies, giving time and positive attention to your child as well as consistent boundaries/ routines.

THINGS TO REMEMBER!

Simple things support children in reducing their anxiety such as exercise (as mentioned earlier) and your child getting enough sleep. In addition, you can limit your child's exposure to upsetting news stories and create a calm home environment.

You can also protect your child by ensuring that they are not exposed to any anxieties you may have, as well as ensuring that you have any 'difficult' parental conversations when the child is not present.

Finally, you can help your child problem solve the experiences that trigger their anxieties. This can be done through role play, relaxation exercises as well as modelling self-belief and self-talk to your child.

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