

Upheaval and Uncertainty- Fostering a sense of calmness and control

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For starters

- The need for a calm approach
- The need to be sensitive regarding eaves-dropping
- Consistency of message
- The need for tolerance and patience
- The need for compassion and encouragement

What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear that is experienced as a combination of physical sensations, thoughts and feelings
- All children and young people feel worried sometimes, and this is a normal part of growing up.
- First day of school or before an exam, young people tend to become more worried, but soon afterwards they're able to calm down and feel better.

When does anxiety become a problem?

- When a young person feels stuck in it
- When it feels like an overwhelming, distressing or unmanageable experience
- Ongoing / long time
- Exhausting
- A sense of isolation
- Dominating each day

How can you help your child?

1. Providing emotional support
 2. Working on practical strategies together
 3. Sourcing professional help when needed
- Unmanageable amounts of worry and fear can signal that something in their life isn't right and they need support to work out what the problem is

What makes young people anxious?

- Lots of change in a short space of time, such as moving house or school
- Marriage/Relationship breakdown
- Responsibilities beyond their age/development
- Uncertainty and upheaval
- The Minefield of Peer Relationships
- Overload

What makes young people anxious?

- Being around someone who is very anxious
- Struggling at school
- Parental expectations
- Family stress (housing, debt, sickness)
- Being bullied or witnessing or experiencing abuse.

What makes young people anxious?

- Fear of failure
- Fear of not being popular
- Fear of not being loved
- Fear of other peoples' opinions
- Fear of inferiority in comparison to peers

Symptoms of Anxiety

- Physical symptoms
- Thoughts and feelings
- Coping behaviours

Physical symptoms

- Panic
- Racing heart
- Fast breathing
- Sweating
- Shaking
- A sense of not being able to breathe
- Tense muscles
- Feeling sick
- Wobbly legs
- Bowel - IBS - diarrhoea
- Toileting

Thoughts and feelings

- Preoccupied with upsetting, scary or negative thoughts
- On edge, panicky, frightened, overwhelmed
- Loss of control
- Predictions of doom
- Broader concerns of not being able to cope with other things
- Concentration difficulties
- Sleeplessness because of internal dialogue

Coping behaviours

- Withdrawal/isolation
- Not wanting to go to school
- Avoiding social/group situations
- Clinging
- Not wanting to try new things
- Repeated behaviours /rituals
- Appetite change
- Self-harm

Pre-requisites

- Your child is assured that your love for them is unconditional and unending
- I love you and nothing will ever change this
- You can talk to me, I'm here for you
- If you need to talk to someone else - that's no problem at all.
- I mightn't have all the solutions but I'll try my best to help you
- We can get through this together
- Reassure and comfort
- Sustained sensitivity - everyone is entitled to their emotions

Calming down

- Breathe slowly and breathe together
- Offer calm physical presence
- The 5 senses exercise - what can we feel, see, hear, smell and taste?
- Reassure them that anxiety always passes
- Do something that calms - listening to music, quick-paced walk, movie, book
- Pray together

Managing anxiety

- Understanding it better
- How thinking cultivates emotions
- Is what I am thinking helpful? Fair? True?
- Calm/Headspace
- Mindfulness/Yoga
- Flow /distraction
- Prayer/Spirituality
- Seeking the evidence
- **Embracing life truths - working within our scope of influence**
- Exercise/good sleep routine/healthy diet
- Cut out stimulants
- Plan other conversations
- Sit with it

Good questions

- Is there another way of making sense of this?
- Am I right to be as anxious as I am?
- Would this cause you as much anxiety as it's causing me?
- Does it really matter?
- Have I got good advice or am I making conclusions on my own?
- Am I my own best or worst coach?
- How anxious do I want to be?
- How long do I want to be anxious for?

- Seeking professional help
- More specific interventions may be necessary
- A self-care plan and someone to motivate them to take more control with evidence-based interventions
- GP referral
- psychologicalsociety.ie

• **Embracing life truths - working within our scope of influence**

- There is nothing definite about the future
- We are all vulnerable beings.
- We all face challenges
- Everyone fails
- Our scope of influence is often limited
- We should never lose sense of the gifts of life - the things that are right about our circumstances
- You are loved

• **Embracing life truths - working within our scope of influence**

- No one is perfect
- You cannot please everyone
- It takes time to become competent at anything
- The more friends the better
- Comparing yourself to others can foster insecurity - the illusion factor
- You have an innate capacity to calm down but you need to practice this to get better at it