

# ANXIETY

Just like adults, children and young people feel worried and anxious at times. Some are more prone than others, and if it is affecting their wellbeing they may need help to overcome it.

## WHAT MAKES CHILDREN ANXIOUS?

Different things at different ages. Many of these worries are a normal part of growing up. For example:



Moving house or starting a new school



Traumatic experiences such as a fire or car accident



Family arguments



Tests and exams



Social gatherings (especially for teenagers)



Bereavement



Bullying



Illness

# ANXIETY

## SEPARATION ANXIETY

From about eight months to three years it is very common for young children to have Separation Anxiety. They become clingy when separated from parents or carers. This is a normal stage in children's development and tends to ease at the age of between two and three.

## SPECIFIC FEARS OR PHOBIAS

It is common for pre-school children to develop specific fears or phobias. Common fears in early childhood include animals, insects, storms, heights, water, blood and the dark. These usually go away gradually on their own or children learn to manage them.

## POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Replacing worries with positive thoughts can be helpful in any situation:

**"Something bad is going to happen!"**

**"This is never going to end!"**

**"I can't do it! I'm stupid!"**



**"Everything is fine. I'm okay."**

**"This feeling will pass."**

**"I am strong. I can do it."**

# ANXIETY

## SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

When young children feel anxious they cannot always understand or express what they are feeling. You may notice that they:

Become irritable, tearful or clingy

Have difficulty sleeping

Wake in the night

Start wetting the bed

Have bad dreams

In **OLDER** children you may notice that they:

Lack the confidence to try new things

Seem unable to face simple, everyday challenges

Have problems with sleeping or eating

Are prone to angry outbursts

Have negative thoughts going round, or fear bad things will happen

Start avoiding everyday activities - seeing friends or going to school

# Coping with **ANXIETY**

## **HOW TO HELP YOUR ANXIOUS CHILD**

Talk to your child about their worries, reassure them and show you understand

Explain what anxiety is and the physical effects it has

Help them find solutions

Focus on solutions instead of talking about all the things that could go wrong

Stick to regular daily routines where possible

Prepare your child for change by talking about what is going to happen and why

Avoid becoming anxious yourself, or over-protective

Distraction can help younger children

Create a worry box

Entertain your child with books, games or films

## **RELAXATION EXERCISES**

Clench your fist for five seconds and gently release it. Repeat three times

Hunch your shoulders up to your ears, hold for five seconds and gently lower them. Repeat three times

Sit with your ankles together, imagine a beach ball between your knees and grip it for five seconds. Repeat five times