

Anxiety

PARENT PACK

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN COPE
WITH ANXIETY AND COVID-19



FEELING ANXIOUS

We're all on edge because of the coronavirus. Our daily lives have been disrupted, we aren't sure what tomorrow may bring, and for many of us the nonstop news and social media coverage isn't always helpful.

The advice says that dealing with your own anxiety can be the most powerful way to make sure your children feel secure. If you your children are feeling worried, learning how to deal with that anxiety in a healthy way can help the whole family be more resilient, both now and when the pandemic is finally over...



TOLERATING UNCERTAINTY

The treatment for anxiety isn't to make the fear go away, it's to manage the fear and tolerate uncertainty. Some parents might be having a harder time dealing with COVID-19 than their children, and some of the anxiety that children are experiencing may be inadvertently passed on by worried parents.

It helps for children to see how to react to stressful times and how to cope with anxiety in healthy ways. Being mindful of the present and staying focused on what is actually happening and not let ourselves go to worst case scenarios.



KEEPING INFORMED

Be smart about what you're reading.

While we should make sure we are informed about how best to keep our families safe, we should also be thoughtful about what we are reading online to make sure it's helpful. It is easy to inadvertently get sucked into reading every update as it comes in or clicking on 'fake news.'

Consider putting a limit on the number of articles you read, or for how long you will read about the coronavirus each day. If you're consuming media that is making you anxious — pictures of lines at stores, people hoarding supplies, celebrities getting diagnosed — take a break. Being informed is one thing; being over exposed is another.



WHAT ANXIETY MIGHT LOOK LIKE

- Reassurance-seeking (Are we going to be okay? Is grandpa going to be okay?)
- Reluctance to separate from parents
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches
- Moodiness and irritability
- Tantrums or meltdowns
- Trouble sleeping



SELF HELP IDEAS

Having a routine that involves exercise, regular meals and healthy amounts of sleep are also crucial to regulating our moods and our worries.



Stop yourself if you notice that you are getting carried away with “what ifs.”



Focus on what you're doing right now.



Strategies to try to help support your child

- Make time to talk to your child. Listen to your child and accept that their worries are very real for them. Explain that worries are normal and everybody has them from time to time.
- Try and get your child to spend less time on worries by creating a ‘worry box’ and arranging ‘worry time’.
- Encourage your child to talk back to their worries. Agreeing a ‘code name’ for the worry, for example ‘The Annoying Grape’, may make the worry feel more manageable.
- Get your child to do something fun to distract them from their worries. — Help your child to make a list of things that went right in their day to help them develop an optimistic outlook.
- Support your child to focus on what they can do, rather than what they can't do. Encouraging them to say ‘I can’ will promote more positive thinking



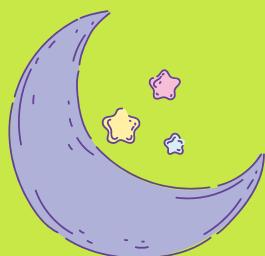
Set aside a specific time to focus on your worries – so you can reassure yourself you haven't forgotten to think about them. Some people find it helps to set a timer



5 Tips



Eat a healthy balanced diet



Sleep for at least 8 hours



Use deep breathing technique



Exercise



Have fun and laugh

The Mindful Jar



This activity can teach children how strong emotions can take hold, and how to find peace when these strong emotions feel overwhelming.

First, get a clear jar (like a Mason jar) and fill it almost all the way with water. Next, add a big spoonful of glitter glue or glue and dry glitter to the jar. Put the lid back on the jar and shake it to make the glitter swirl.

Say something like:

"Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when you're upset – because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us



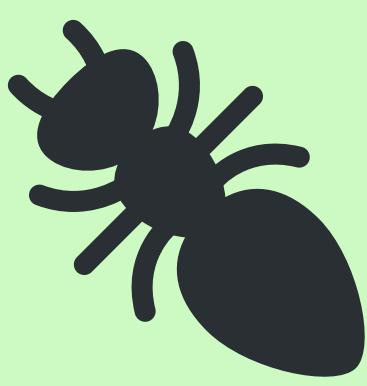
Negative Thoughts

Helping children get rid of ANTS (Automatic Negative Thoughts). Have the children draw ants to make this exercise fun.

Then ask them to write, draw or tell you what the negative thought was.

Typical ANTS may be: "Nothing ever goes my way," "This won't ever get better"

By changing the unhelpful thoughts to more helpful and positive thoughts, for example, saying or thinking, "If I keep following advice, it will get better," the child's anxiety levels will be reduced



Resources

Young Minds Parents Helpline

Call us for free 0808 802 5544 (Mon-Fri 9:30 - 16:00).

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Anxiety UK

Practical advice and information for anybody affected by anxiety, stress and/or anxiety based depression – as well as for their parents, family and friends.

In response to Coronavirus, they are extending their Infoline hours to support as many people as possible.

Now open Monday-Friday 9.30am-5pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10am-8pm.

Phone: 0344 477 5774

Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Text: 07537 416 905

Live Chat available during office hours via the website

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

No Panic

Support for people struggling with panic attacks, OCD, phobias, and other related anxiety disorders.

Also provides support for carers of sufferers.

Helpline: 0844 967 4848 (Daily 10:00–22:00). Charges apply.

Youth Helpline for 13-20 year olds: 0330 606 1174 (Mon-Fri 15:00–18:00). Charges apply.

Tic + counselling parent support

<https://ticplus.org.uk/>

- Phone numbers : 07520 634063 Tel: 01594 372777
- E-mail: admin@ticplus.org.uk

Local support:

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning - <https://www.ghll.org.uk/>
On Your Mind Gloucestershire - <https://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>

This booklet was created by Young Minds Matter Gloucestershire, part of the School's Mental Health Support Team.

