

Child anxiety – when to seek support

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NHS
South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

PLAN FOR THE SESSION:

- ❖ Introductions
- ❖ What is anxiety?
- ❖ Common childhood worries
- ❖ When should we seek support?
- ❖ How do we get support?

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WHAT IS ANXIETY?

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EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTED RESPONSE TO THREAT

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ANXIETY IMPACTS OUR...

THOUGHTS

BEHAVIOUR

BODY

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THOUGHTS

Anxiety = $\frac{\text{Overestimation of danger}}{\text{Underestimation of ability to cope}}$

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BEHAVIOUR

SHOUT

LASH OUT

ARGUE

FLIGHT

HIDING BEHIND PARENTS

NOT TALKING

FLIGHT

AVOIDANCE

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BODY

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COMMON CHILDHOOD WORRIES

Age	Developmental stage	Fears and worries
0-6 months	Sensory	Strong sensory stimuli (e.g. loud noises); loss of support
6-12 months	Sensory-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

Taken from 'Building Confidence and Managing Anxiety in your Child' workshop by Curry and Picciotto 2016

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WHEN IS THIS A PROBLEM?

Normal worry:

- The worry doesn't last for a long period of time.
- It is related to something in particular e.g. starting school.
- It doesn't interfere in your child's life much or if it does, not for a prolonged period.
- Your child can be moved on from their worry.

A problem:

- It's been going on for a longer period of time and is not shifting.
- It feels like the worry is getting worse.
- When it feels unmanageable for both child and parent.
- It is having an impact on your child's life – preventing them/or you from doing something or causing a great deal of distress.

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

As a parent it is really important to think about your own well being as well as your child's. When we are able to manage and regulate our own feelings we are more able to support our children to manage theirs. Talking to friends, partners, family members can be helpful for doing this.

If you feel like there are things which you are finding difficult which may require further support it may be helpful to visit your GP and discuss support options which are available to you.

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

1. Buy Creswell, C. and Willetts, L. (2010). *'Overcoming your child's fears and worries: A guide for parents using cognitive behavioural techniques.'*
2. Ask the school for a referral to the CWP programme
3. Visit your child's GP who will be able to refer you to appropriate services.



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