

Supporting a Young Person who is Dealing with Anxiety: Parent/Carer Pack

Young Minds A Parent's Guide to Anxiety: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>

Mind: Guide to Anxiety: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/about-anxiety/>

Grounding techniques from 42nd Street: <https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk/support/read/grounding-techniques/>

Clear Fear: A free app to help young people manage anxiety: <https://www.clearfear.co.uk/>

Young Minds. Parent's blog on school refusal: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/blog/my-daughter-couldn-t-go-to-school-what-i-wish-i-had-known/>

Young Minds. Parent's blog on supporting your child through exam stress: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/blog/how-to-help-your-child-manage-exam-stress/>

Useful Helplines



Young Minds Parent Helpline

0808 802 5544

from 9:30am – 4pm, Monday – Friday. Freephone.

For support around understanding your child's behaviour, and practical advice for the child or young person's main carer. If you need further help, they'll arrange an independent, experienced professional to call you for a 50-minute telephone consultation within seven days.

For more information <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>

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. At certain points, such as on their first day of school or before an exam, young people may become more worried, but will soon be able to calm down and feel better.

Anxiety can become a problem when a young person feels stuck in it, or when it feels like an overwhelming, distressing or unmanageable experience. If this kind of worrying goes on for a long time, it can leave a young person feeling exhausted and isolated, and limit the things they feel able to do.

If your child is struggling with anxiety, there are things you can do to help them – including providing emotional support, working on practical strategies together and finding the right professional help if they need it.



Taken from Young Minds A Parent's Guide to Anxiety:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>

How to help your child in an anxious moment

When your child is in the middle of a very anxious moment, they may feel frightened, agitated or worried about having a panic attack. The important thing to do in the moment is to help them calm down and feel safe.

These strategies can help:



Breathe slowly and deeply together.

You can count slowly to five as you breathe in, and then five as you breathe out. If this is too much, try starting with shorter counts. If it works for them, gradually encourage your child to breathe out for one or two counts longer than they breathe in, as this can help their body relax.



Sit with them and offer calm physical reassurance.

Feeling you nearby, or holding your hand or having a cuddle if it's possible, can be soothing.



Try using all five senses together.

Connecting with what they can see, touch, hear, smell and taste can bring them closer to the present moment and reduce the intensity of their anxiety. You might think together about five things they can see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste.



Reassure them that the anxiety will pass and that they will be okay.

It can be helpful to describe it as a wave that they can ride or surf until it peaks, breaks and gets smaller.



Ask them to think of a safe and relaxing place or person in their mind.

If you haven't tried this before, agree with them when they're feeling calm what this place or person is. It could be their bedroom, a grandparent's house, a favourite place in nature or somewhere they've been on holiday. Sometimes holding a memento of a relaxing place, like a seashell or pebble, can help.



Encourage them to do something that helps them to feel calmer.

This could be running, walking, listening to music, painting, drawing or colouring-in, writing in a journal, watching a favourite film or reading a favourite book.






Remember that everyone is different, and that over time you and your child can work together to find the things that work best for them in these moments.

How to help your child manage their anxiety

Outside of moments when your child is feeling particularly anxious or panicky, there are things you can do over time to help them manage their anxiety and feel better.

A lot of these strategies are about helping your child to understand themselves and find out what works for them. The more confident they feel about helping themselves when things are hard, the more they will believe in their ability to cope – helping to reduce feelings of panic.

- ① In a calmer moment, talk with your child about their anxiety. 
- ① Think together about whether there's anything in particular that's making them feel anxious. 
- ① Help your child to recognise the signs that tell them they're getting anxious. 
- ① Think together about the activities that help them to express themselves and reduce their anxiety. 
- ① Try activities that help them to relax, such as mindfulness, yoga or meditation. 

- ① Make a worry box or self-soothe box. 
- ① Help them do the daily things we know are important for our mental health. 
- ① Encourage them to cut out stimulants. 
- ① Spend quality time together and talk about other things. 
- ① Seek professional help if you're worried about your child's mental health and things aren't getting better. 

“ I felt that we lost the idea that it's important to validate their feelings rather than dismiss them. But I think this is a really important point that we shouldn't lose. ”

Parent

“ I've found it helpful when talking about anxiety to think about achievable goals for overcoming worries that stop them from doing things, and then to create stages like a ladder to get to them. ”

Parent

Helping someone who is having a panic attack

It's understandable to feel frightened if someone you care about experiences a panic attack – especially if it seems to happen without warning. But it can help if you:

- try to stay calm
- gently let them know that you think they might be having a panic attack and that you are there for them
- encourage them to breathe slowly and deeply – it can help to do something structured or repetitive they can focus on, such as counting out loud, or asking them to watch while you gently raise your arm up and down
- encourage them to stamp their feet on the spot
- encourage them to sit somewhere quietly where they can focus on their breath until they feel better.

You should never encourage someone to breathe into a paper bag during a panic attack. This isn't recommended and it might not be safe.

Grounding Exercise

*For use during a panic attack,
when you need to stay calm,
or anytime you feel "disconnected" from your body.*

Look around you. Identify + name:

- 5 things you **see**
- 4 things you **feel**
- 3 things you **hear**
- 2 things you **smell**
- 1 thing you **taste**