

The Whartons

Primary School

A Quick Guide to anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal human feeling of unease, such as worry or fear - it can be mild or severe.

Everyone feels anxious at some time and it usually passes once a situation is over.

We are all unique and our responses to stress will be individual.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it starts to interfere with everyday life and the person starts to feel that their worries are out of control.

Reasons for anxiety can be a variety of life events, thinking styles, and biological reasons.

It is important to find ways to manage anxious feelings that are supportive to each person.

Implications for a pupil

How needs may present in the classroom:

- May show reluctance to enter school/classroom.
- Display clingy or panicky behaviours towards parents/carers.
- Repeatedly request to go home.
- Become withdrawn.
- Refusal to follow instructions.
- Lack of focus, engagement, concentration and motivation.
- Get upset, angry or irritable or show a low mood.
- Complain of physical symptoms - headache, tummy ache.
- Increased blushing, sweating, or using the toilet often.

How to help – top tips

1. Provide safety in routine, with visual timetables and warnings of any change.
2. Be open and available.
3. Be flexible with expectations – adjust demands and requests – use productive control choices and language to offer them a sense of safety and control.
4. Provide a place of safety, comfort, and calm so the child can regulate.
5. Name, normalise and validate the child's emotions.
6. Wonder aloud – “I can see that you are struggling to concentrate, I'm wondering if you are feeling worried/anxious/upset?”
7. Use visual tools around the classroom, such as emotion barometers and worry boxes to encourage awareness of emotions.
8. Support the child to recognise signs of anxiety, so that interventions can be put in place before these feelings become overwhelming.
9. Teach, model and coach relaxation techniques.
10. Encourage the child to focus on the positives, however small, and recognise each small step of progress.

Further advice and support

Useful Websites:

<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/pdfGuides/Anxiety.pdf>

[Helping children and young people to manage anxiety | Guide to managing anxiety in school \(annafreud.org\)](https://www.annafreud.org/helping-children-and-young-people-to-manage-anxiety-guide-to-managing-anxiety-in-school)

Reading:

“A huge bag of worries” by Virginia Ironside.

“When my worries get too big” by Kari Dunn Buron

“My anxious mind” by Michael Tompkins

Special Education Needs Inclusion Team
(SENIT) – consultation and support -
referral via SENCO to
senitrequests@leeds.gov.uk