



*Supporting your
Child with Worry &
Anxiety*

Created by the Severn Vale
School Wellbeing Team

What is Anxiety?



Anxiety is a feeling of worry, fear or unease.

It is often experienced as a combination of **thoughts, feelings and physical sensations** in our body.

All children & young people feel worried sometimes – this is a normal, human reaction to stressful things, and it doesn't necessarily mean they have a diagnosable condition.

Anxiety becomes a problem when a young person feels **stuck** in their anxious thoughts and it becomes **overwhelming**, affecting their **daily life**.

What makes young people anxious?

Feeling worried sometimes is normal and there is not always a clear reason for this. However, we know that the following things can make young people anxious:

Difficulties at school

Being around someone else who is anxious e.g. a close family member

Bereavement

Significant life changes (e.g. parental separation, moving house)

Caring responsibilities

Friendship issues/bullying

Family stress (e.g. debt, housing issues)

Witnessing or experiencing abuse

How to Help

Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

Physical Signs

- Nausea
- Tense, fidgety, restless
- Feeling hot & sweaty
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling shaky
- Having diarrhoea or needing to urinate more often
- Taking short, shallow breaths

Thoughts & Feelings

- Preoccupied with upsetting or negative thoughts
- Worrying about the future
- Nervous, on edge
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Full of dread
- Impending sense of doom

Behaviours

- Withdrawn
- Isolated
- Not wanting to go to school or afraid of leaving parents
- Avoiding social situations
- Eating more or less than usual
- Self harm
- Being irritable
- Acting out

Take a deep breath!

Trying to support your child with anxiety can feel overwhelming.

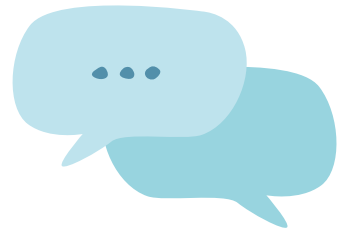
Always remind yourself you are doing your best as a parent/carer, and it's natural to feel overwhelmed.

The following pages will outline some strategies you may wish to try with your child to help reduce their anxiety.

Remember, **you do not need to try all of these tips at once** – have a look, and pick one or two things you feel might help.



How to Help



1

Talk!

- In a calm moment, have a conversation about their anxiety.
- You don't need to be a mental health professional to talk about your child's anxiety. Ask them what it feels like in their mind and body.
- When they share something, let them know **their feelings are valid**.
- It can be tempting to dismiss or try to fix their worries because you want to help them (which is very natural as a parent), but feeling listened to and understood can help them relax.



Ask your child to make a mind map (or for a younger child, draw pictures) of what their anxiety feels like. This can help guide conversation.



How to Help

2

Think together about what makes them feel anxious

- This could include relationships, school work or a combination of things.
- Are there any changes that could be made at home or school that would make things easier?

PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

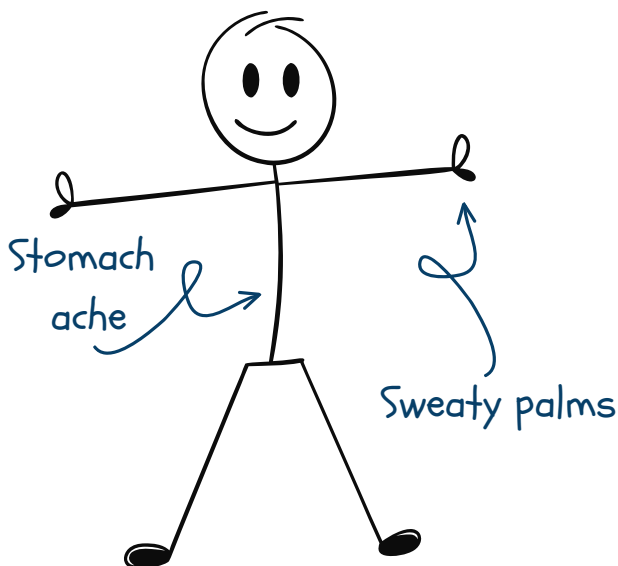
Ask your child if they would like to complete a 'Stress Bucket' activity with you (Found at the end of this booklet).



3

Help them to recognise when they are anxious

- Recognising the signs of anxiety can help them to know when to ask for help.



Draw a stick person on an A4 page and ask them to label the physical symptoms they feel when they're getting anxious.

PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

How to Help

4

Think about anxiety-reducing activities

- In a calm moment, think together about a list of activities that help them feel better. This could include: exercise, fidget toys, arts & crafts, journalling, watching a favourite comfort film/series, talking to friends, cooking/baking.
- Mindful activities can also help your child relax – teenagers might like to use a mindfulness or meditation app such as **Headspace** or **Calm**.

5

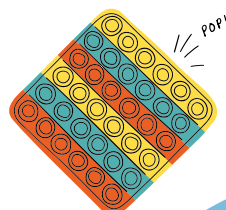
Make a worry or self-soothe box together

- Some young people find it helpful to write down their worries and put them in a worry box (yes, this can work for teenagers too!). This gives them a physical place where their worries are 'held'.
- A self-soothe box can be filled with items that help them when they feel anxious.

PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

Use this link for ideas to put in the self-soothe box:
www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/how-to-make-a-self-soothe-box/

Encourage them to involve a range of senses and something to focus their mind on. You could include something to smell, touch, look at and even maybe something to taste.



How to Help

6

Encourage them to take care of their daily needs

- It might sound simple, but taking care of our basic needs has a huge impact on our mood – and sometimes, teens might need a bit of encouragement and support.
- Encourage them to do some form of physical exercise or movement daily.
- Ensure they are getting enough sleep.
- Encourage them to eat well and drink enough water.



PRACTICAL
SUGGESTION

DITCH THE ENERGY DRINKS!

Caffeine triggers the physical symptoms of anxiety. If your teenager regularly drinks coffee or energy drinks, encourage them to reduce their intake – or even better, ditch them completely.

7

Spend quality time together

- Spending time with family can help take their mind off worries.
- Try something that requires a lot of focus – this helps keep our mind in the present moment.
- You could try a new sport or hobby together, or try something creative like sewing or crochet.

We hope you find these suggestions helpful. However, above all, remember that your calm presence, patience and understanding are the most powerful tools in supporting your child.

Getting Further Support

Support in School

- Talk to your child's Head of Year if you are concerned that they are not coping with anxiety. You can contact the Head of Year via email (<https://www.severnvalesschool.com/contact-us>)
- The Head of Year can liaise with our Wellbeing Team who can help put wellbeing support in place.
- We have Wellbeing Support available in school including counselling and group work, but we are also able to signpost and refer onwards to other local services if necessary. We assess each student's needs individually.

Let's Talk Well provides **free** mental health and wellbeing support to children and young people aged 9–25 in Gloucestershire. They offer counselling (remote or face-to-face), an anonymous chat helpline for young people and a parent helpline. For further information or to refer your child: [Let's Talk Well provides free mental health and wellbeing support to](#)



This Support Finder can be used to find the most appropriate local support options for young people in Gloucestershire: <https://onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>

GP –Your GP can find out more about how your child is feeling and suggest things that might help. They can also let you know about local services that can provide support. If your child's exam stress is more severe, they may make a referral to the NHS Service for children and young people's mental health. This is called CAMHS. Please be aware that schools are not currently able to make direct referrals to CAMHS in Gloucestershire.

Stress Bucket Activity

Daily worries can accumulate like water in a bucket. The size of the bucket varies for each person based on their experiences. When the bucket overflows due to too much stress and insufficient draining, it can lead to symptoms of burnout or anxiety. Recognising the signs of an 'overflowing bucket' allows for better anxiety management.

1. In the boxes with water going in to the bucket, write down things that make you feel worried or panicky
2. In the boxes with water going out of the bucket, write down things that help you to release these pressures and worries. This could be things like talking to friends, listening to music or chilling with pets.

