

Anxiety – resources and techniques to support children and young people

Key advice: anxiety prevention and promotion of wellbeing

Diet:

- Low Blood sugar can be a trigger – not eating for long periods, missing breakfast + eating too much sugary food (simple carbs – sweets, fizzy drinks potatoes & white flour) = spike & crash
- Reduce Caffeine: anxiety + sleep issues (3hr before bed). Coffee, Tea, Cola Drinks & Energy Drinks

Sleep: over tired = can worsen symptoms for anxious or depressed children / young people

- Are they getting enough? Difficult to wake up? Sleeping longer at weekends? Falling asleep during the day?
- Ways to improve sleep – no screens, no working late, routines & distraction from thoughts – ‘Beditation’, ‘alphabet game’

Understand their perspective & frame of reference

Breathing techniques

Promote relaxation – model it ourselves – learned behaviours ‘calm down’

Create time to talk & listen

Exercise – 30 mins / day

Pleasure & Mastery Technique – (fun and feeling pleased with themselves!) – one interesting activity outside of school time per day (phone & TV free) + 3 energetic activities per week:

Clubs, Friends round, collecting, swimming, skating, dance, making things, sports, playing instruments, horse-riding, cinema, eating out, playing music too loud, baking, board games, museums, art / drawing etc.

Helping anxious children and young people

- Talk to them about their anxiety or worries. Respond with empathy.
- If the child is old enough, it may help to explain what anxiety is and the physical effects it has on our bodies.
- It is important to help them find solutions - don't teach them that 'if you get anxious about something, it means you can't do it'.
- Teach them to recognise signs of stress and anxiety in themselves and to ask for help when it strikes.
- Children of all ages find routines reassuring so try to stick to regular daily routines where possible.
- Seek support for children who are anxious due to distressing events, such as a bereavement or separation

- Prepare children for upcoming changes by talking to them about what is going to happen and why.
- Avoid overprotection - encourage children and young people to find ways to manage.
- Practice simple relaxation & breathing techniques
- Sensory distraction can be particularly helpful.
- Turn an old tissue box into a "worry" box.

A few Support Strategies for anxious moments

- Sixty Second Timer
- Count backwards from 100
- Listen to a song
- Play Computer Games that do not take lots of brain bandwidth to play but which hook you in and make you want to continue playing can be a great form of distraction and can help the time pass while the body and brain reset (Tetris, Candy Crush-style games)
- Stretch every finger and toe in turn - Some people begin to feel quite distant when they are distressed so simple grounding strategies can help them to feel more connected to the world around them. Very simple things like stretching, clenching and wiggling every finger and toe in turn can help us to feel more connected with our bodies.
- Read a page of a book - Reading occupies our mind and can help to distract us from whatever is preying on it. It does not have to be a book – we could read whatever we have to hand – but reading something that we are especially interested in can help to absorb us and enable the time to pass more swiftly.

Building Gratitude practice into each day – esp. near bedtime – e.g. ‘3 good things that have happened today’

Using Music to flip the mood

- Create a playlist to use at these times – identify the songs that will create a positive / calm mood
- Listen to the playlist when you already feel happy / calm – creating the connections
- Utilise it when feelings of anxiety are there – it may feel a little jarring initially – but it will lower the anxiety gradually

Using positive affirmations

Find a phrase that works for you– that you want to believe.

When anxiety presents, say the affirmation and repeat it over again and try to visualise it being true and act what it would be like if it is true.

Safe Space Visualisations

- A technique widely used in therapy

- Real or fictional
- Try to bring the place to life – sensory elements and feelings
- Can be done anywhere
- Helps children and young people to reset during the day

4 ways to calm things down:

1. Write & Rip!
2. 5-4-3-2-1 = 5 things I can see / 4 things I can hear / 3 things I can touch / 2 things I can smell / 1 deep breath
3. Box breathing
4. 7/11 or finger breathing

Using Mindful Moments:

- Introducing small moments of mindfulness during the course of the day – total sensory focus
- Drinks – 5 mins
- Walking
- Brushing teeth
- Eating a snack etc
- Mindful Monsters cards etc

Tips to support an anxious child / young person:

1. Model confidence in their ability to cope - they pick up on our reactions – therefore ‘fake it till they make it’ – it is really important not to show our anxieties about how they will cope (until afterwards)
 2. Help them identify the difference between a worry and a problem. A worry might happen and often involve ‘what if?’ whereas problems are concrete and can be addressed. Normalise worries and support them in being able to take a break. – “let’s do some research – how likely is that to happen?” Ask them - can we take practical steps to solve these?
 3. Parents - take some time to look after yourself and your own wellbeing – self-care isn’t selfish, and you need to look after yourself if you are going to be able to support your child fully.
 4. Help them to understand that anxiety is normal
- As a parent give examples of times when you may get nervous etc. that they can relate to – esp. the physical symptoms
5. Be a detective to understand the real worry – use helpful open questions to explore – who, what, when, where, why – talking about anxieties doesn’t cause them.
 6. Work with avoidance – otherwise it will maintain the anxiety over time

Healthy thinking: Questions to use to avoid catastrophising:

- The Best Friend Question:
 - How would someone else I respect think about this situation?
 - What would they say to me?
- The Last Time Question
 - What actually happened the last time I was in this situation?
- The Hard Time Question
 - Am I giving myself a hard time? Is this really my fault? Are there other reasons why this has happened?
- The Time Travel Question
 - If I travelled in time 2 years ahead how would I look at it?
- The Mind Reading Question
 - Am I making assumptions about what other people are thinking without finding out?

Further Sources of support:

Anxiety UK – they have really useful guides

Young Minds Parents' Helpline: 08088025544 (Mon-Fri 9.30am to 4.00pm)

Anna Freud Centre Shout Helpline – Text 85258 (24/7)

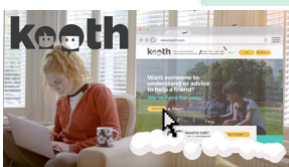
The Mix (see image below)

No Panic www.nopanic.org.uk

- No Panic are the people to call if you are suffering from panic attacks, OCD, phobias, and other related anxiety disorders.
- Helpline: 0844 967 4848 (Daily 10:00 – 22:00 Charges apply)#

NHS – either via the GP, School Nurse or School Mental Health Lead

Apps to support & reduce anxiety in children and young people



Calm



10 mins
Avg. waiting
time for
counselling

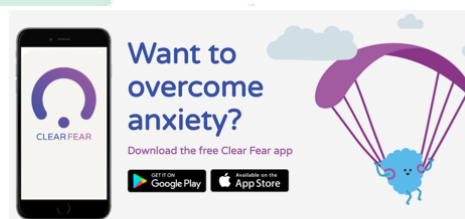


68%
Out of hours
support 365
days a year



NHS
MHSDS
compliant

Calm Counter

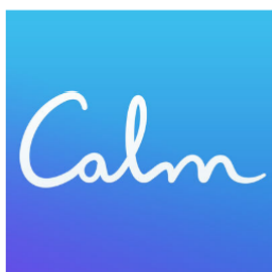


Calm Counter is a visual and audio tool to help people calm down when they are angry or anxious. The app includes a social story about anger, and audio/visual tools for calming down.

1 Headspace: Guided Meditation and Mindfulness

Meditation made simple. Guided meditations suitable for all levels from Headspace. Meditation can help improve your focus, exercise mindful awareness, relieve anxiety and reduce stress.

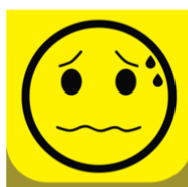
What it Costs: Free ([iOS](#) and [Android](#))



Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners, but also includes hundreds of programs for intermediate and advanced users.

Guided meditation sessions are available in lengths of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 minutes so you can choose the perfect length to fit with your schedule.

What it Costs: Free ([iOS](#) and [Android](#))



MEE TWO

Who is it suitable for?

Teenagers facing issues they'd like to discuss with experts or other teenagers.

How does it work?

With MeeTwo, you can post messages about any issue you're struggling to cope with.

You'll receive supportive responses from other teenagers and guidance from MeeTwo experts designed to build confidence, increase wellbeing and improve emotional resilience.

Every post and reply is moderated to make sure only positive feedback is published.

The app contains advice and information on a variety of subjects, as well as a directory of specialist support groups that can offer further help.

How do I access it?

MeeTwo is free to download from the App Store and Google Play.



SafeSpot - designed to help young people improve their coping skills

SafeSpot is designed to help you through tough spots

SafeSpot gives you your own personalized coping plan, useful strategies and tools to find local resources to help you - all at your fingertips.

SafeSpot has 3 aspects:

1. The Quirky and Cool SafeSpot App
2. SafeSpot website
3. SafeSpot Curriculum



Smiling Mind



Smiling Mind is designed to help people pressure, stress, and challenges of daily life. This app has a fantastic section on Mindfulness in the Classroom and is suited for kids ages 7-18.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Enabling young people to self-manage their worries

Watch the Lumi Nova video trailer below



THE MIX

Essential support for under 25s

0808 808 4994

1-2-1 Chat

Crisis Messenger

GET INFO GET SUPPORT YOUR VOICES APPS & TOOLS GET INVOLVED NEWS & RESEARCH

Discussion Boards Group Chat Speak to Our Team Find Local Services

The Mix / Get Support

Get Support

Welcome to The Mix's Get Support section. Here you can visit our discussion boards, use our Group Chat Service and speak to our trained team.

Group Chat
A safe space to get support or just hang out, whatever you feel you need.

Support Chat
Talk about anything that's on your mind. A judgement-free zone to get and give advice within a group.
Sun to Thu at 8 - 9:30pm

General Chat
A sign-in-based chat for fun, distraction and a chance to unwind.
Sun to Thu at 8 - 9:30pm

SEE MORE

Discussion Boards
An online community to talk anonymously about anything that's on your mind.

Anti Bullying Week - Have you ever bullied someone?
Posted by: Emma_

An update!
Posted by: Toni

Howdy
Posted by: ScifL_456

Anti Bullying Week - How to stop bullying others
Posted by: Emma_

To The Mix Team

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

Discover free, digital resources supporting young people aged 25 and under with their mental health

What is **ON MY MIND?**
Want to know?
Visit **onmymind.info**