

NEW Solutions CIC

# Anxiety in Children and Young People

Wadyloan Primary School

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- **What is anxiety**
- **When does anxiety become a problem**
- **How does anxiety work**
- **What causes anxiety**
- **Signs to look for**
- **What maintains anxiety**
- **How to support an anxious child/ young person**
- **Practical strategies**
- **When to ask for help**
- **Who can help**

# Anxiety definition

- **Anxiety is normal, and healthy, not dangerous**
- **Anxiety helps us to survive and to perform well**
- **Anxiety becomes a problem when our minds and bodies react in the absence of real threat**

# When does anxiety become a problem?

Examples –

- Refusal to go to school/school trips
- Not wanting to join in with social activities
- Wanting to stay home sick on the day of a school presentation/exams
- Not wanting to participate in unfamiliar activities
- Worrying excessively about things that is going to happen
- Specific phobias/anxiety that interferes with functioning
- Having an upset stomach/headache every time there is an important test in school

# How does it work? Signs of Anxiety

## Thoughts -

- Worrying thoughts/images -

e.g 'I'm going to make a fool of myself' or "I won't be able to do this' which may lead to child picturing him/herself perhaps going red in the face which will be noticed by others

- Something happening to self or others

## Feelings –

- A sense of dread
- Panic
- Being scared
- Terrified
- Tension
- Confusion
- Irritable

# Signs of anxiety

## Body sensations -

- Discomfort or pain in the stomach, nausea
- Feeling very hot or cold
- Rapid breathing, shortness of breath or breath holding
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Numbness or tingling
- Headaches
- Chest pains or discomfort
- Dizzy, lightheaded, or unsteady feelings
- Feelings of a lump in the throat or choking
- Feeling things are unreal

## Behaviour –

- Talking about body sensations
- Avoidance of feared situations
- Frequent reassurance seeking
- Confrontation
- Clingy/ tantrums when separating
- Fidgety
- Withdrawal
- Safety behaviours

### Situation

Where? When? Who with? What happened? How?

*Padesky 5 Aspects. 1986*

### Thoughts & Images

What went through my mind at that time? What disturbed me? If I had those thoughts/images/memories – what did that say or mean about me or the situation?

### Body / Physical sensations

What did I notice in my body? What did I feel? Where did I feel it?

### Moods / Emotions

What emotion did I feel at that time? What else? How intense was that feeling? (0 – 100%)

### Behaviours / What I did or didn't do

What helped me cope and get through it? What didn't I do or what did I avoid doing? What automatic reactions did I have? What would other people have seen me doing?

# What keeps anxiety going?

- Providing reassurance
- Telling the child/young person what to do
- Colluding with the young person
- Allowing avoidance
- Becoming impatient
- Ignoring the problem



# How to respond to an anxious child

- Establish structure, consistency and predictability
- Don't expect them to 'snap out of it' / normalise anxiety
- Encourage emotional intelligence / problem solving
- Reward brave, non anxious behaviour
- Breaking down tasks into small achievable steps
- Setting small achievable goals together with the child/young person
- Teach them how to manage worries
- Model non-anxious coping behaviour

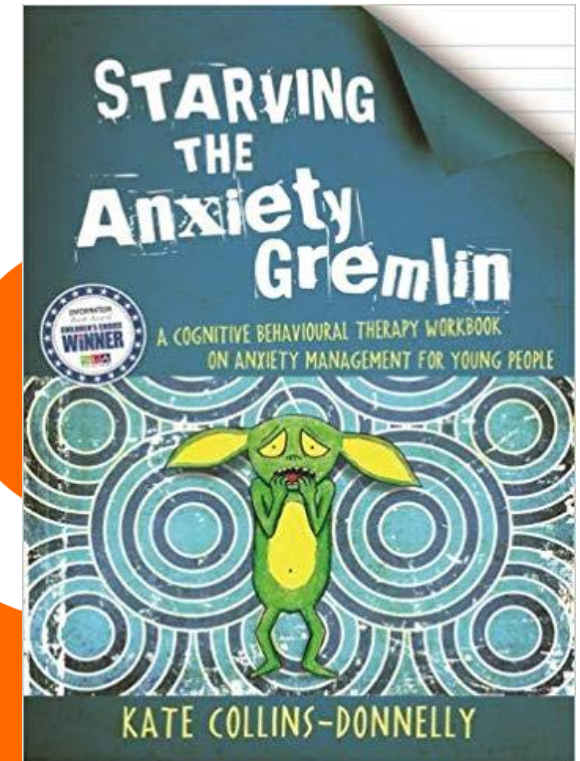
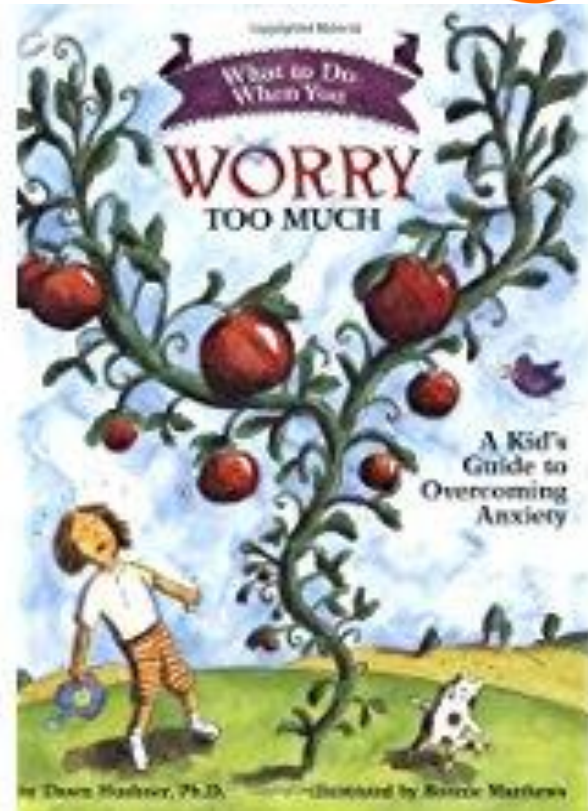
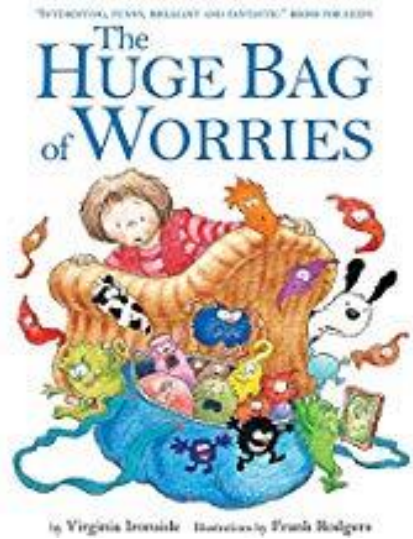
# Practical Strategies

- Relaxation
- Mindfulness
- Distraction techniques
- Modelling
- Keeping active
- Positive reinforcement
- Communicating to the young person that you are confident in their ability to manage

# When to ask for help

- **When anxiety starts to cause considerable distress and interference in everyday life e.g. school**
- **When the strategies discussed have been tried but are not working – consider community resources, e.g. GP, school nurse/doctor, health visitor, educational psychologist.**

# Resources



# Resources

- [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)
- [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvise](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvise)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
  
- Dawn Huebner – What to do when you worry too much
- Ronald Rapee et al. – Helping your anxious child
- Dr. Chris Williams – The Five Areas Model
- Dr. Christine Padesky – Mind over Mood
- Kate Collins-Donnelly – Starving the Anxiety Gremlin

**THANK YOU.**

Any Questions?

