

Successfully Managing Anxiety

Information for children and young people

Understanding and managing fears and anxiety together

Introductory information about anxiety for young people

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1. Dealing with worries and anxieties

This document highlights how you, as a young person, can play your part in managing and reducing anxiety, and increase your confidence.

How you can help yourself

We all experience anxiety from time to time. You might also have different names for anxiety, such as 'worry', 'stress' or 'nervousness'.

If you think you are in danger in some way you will feel anxious; this is a normal response to help us respond quickly.

When you become anxious your body will be affected; signs might include feeling sick, sweating, shaking, having a dry mouth or needing to go to the toilet.

All of the physical symptoms and anxious thoughts can be helped by relaxation but this needs practice.

- Sleep well and eat well
- Balance your life, for example work/study, play, exercise, build friendships, sleep
- Accept your thoughts and feelings. Let them come and run through you. Do not judge them
- Do not fight the feelings of panic. Go with them. They will disappear much more quickly
- Relax your tense muscles. Drop your shoulders, loosen your jaw, feel yourself relaxing
- Watch your breathing. When anxious, your breathing is likely to increase and become shallower. It might even make you feel dizzy or give you a tight feeling in your throat. Breathe slowly in through your nose for a count of four and out through your mouth for a count of five
- Practice positive self-talk., for example 'I can be calm', 'I am going to pass', 'I will succeed'

More useful information can be found on the internet

- Youth Space - [www.twitter.com/youthspace1](https://twitter.com/youthspace1)
- Anxiety UK - <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>
- Young Minds - http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people

The importance of sleep

Sleep is a vital but often overlooked part of a healthy lifestyle. Lack of good quality sleep is often a key cause of low mood and irritability for both children and adults. However, there are often quite obvious reasons for why people may be struggling to sleep, and some simple solutions to improve the situation.

Greater access to TV, gaming consoles, tablets, and/or smartphones in people's bedrooms is seen as a big factor in increased numbers of young people struggling to get enough sleep. South Gloucestershire's 2023 Online Pupil Survey (OPS) found that 68% (8,098 of 11,919) of pupils in Year 4 to 13 took 1 hour or more to get to sleep the previous night. As a follow-up multiple choice question, these pupils were asked what they did between going to bed and going to sleep, of which 50% (4,006 of 7,947) were using their mobile phone, tablet, or other device, 27% (2,110 of 7,947) were watching TV in their bedroom, and 17% (1,316 of 7,947) were using their game console or online gaming. Mobile phone, tablet, or other device usage was highest amongst Year 10 pupils increasing to 72% (574 of 801). This is both disruptive to sleep and often a point of conflict when parents try to enforce screentime limits.

Some simple tips to help all of us sleep.

- **Avoid stimulants** such as [caffeine](#), nicotine, and excessive sugar too close to bedtime
- **Regular exercise** can promote good sleep
- Food can be disruptive right before sleep - stay away from large meals close to bedtime
- Establish a regular relaxing **bedtime routine**
- **Associate your bed with sleep.** It's not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio, or look at your tablet/smartphone
- **Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing.** The bed should be comfortable, the room should not be too hot or cold, or too bright

Some more useful weblinks

- Insomnia treatment - <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Insomnia/Pages/Treatment.aspx>
- How to sleep better - <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/how-to-sleep-better.htm>
- Sleep Problems in teens: http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/sleep/sleep_problems.html

Asking for help

Most of us feel overwhelmed or as if we can't cope with things at least once in our lives, and most people feel like that a lot more frequently. It is at times like these that you need to be able to talk to someone and not be afraid to ask for help.

Many of us don't like to ask for help. We don't like to burden other people, we are worried about what they will think about what we tell them, we don't want them to tell other people, or we are scared they will laugh at us. Yet most of us would want to help our friends and family if we thought they were having a hard time, so why would they feel any differently towards us?

There is the old saying, 'A problem shared is a problem halved' and sometimes you can feel better just by talking to somebody about a problem. It may be that you are just having a bad day or it could be an ongoing mental health problem that you need support with, but the important thing is to not try to cope with everything on your own.

Who can you ask for help?

- Parent
- Sibling
- Family member
- Close family friends
- A mate or close friend
- A neighbour
- A colleague at college or work
- A professional such as a teacher, social worker, doctor or nurse
- A support group in the community
- A helpline

Asking for help is important and can be anything from talking to someone about your bad day, confiding in someone about a long-term mental health problem, to discussing some therapy you are receiving, but it is important for you to have support. It is not good for any of us to spend too much time on our own, especially if we are feeling low and vulnerable.

Top tips about asking for help

1. Think about who would be **the best person to talk to**. Only you can decide who you feel most comfortable talking to. It may well be someone in your family or a friend, but if you don't feel comfortable talking to friends or family, there are online discussion forums, helplines, support groups and professionals that you can talk to instead.
2. **Choose a good time and place** for this discussion to take place so that you are not interrupted and don't feel uncomfortable in the surroundings.
3. **Think about the outcome that you want** from this discussion. Do you simply want to tell someone how you are feeling? Or would you like more practical or emotional support? Be clear what you want to achieve from the discussion.

4. **Write things down before you talk** to whoever you choose to talk to in case you forget exactly what you want to say and so it can act as a pointer during the chat.
5. **Explain exactly how you are feeling** and the type of support you feel would help you.
6. **Remember**, however difficult it is to talk about your feelings, you will probably feel better just for talking about your problems, and it is important that you are not on your own and struggling on your own when you are feeling low. People who care about you will want to help you.

2. Internet resources for young people

Beat Eating Disorders

National charity supporting anyone affected by eating disorders or difficulties with food, weight and shape. They provide information and support through Helplines which people can call, text or email; online support including information, message boards and online support groups; and Helpfinder, an online directory of support services.

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

Child Line

Free national helpline for children and young people in the UK. Children and young people can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to talk about any problem. Trained counsellors are always there to help.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Anxiety/Pages/Managing-your-anxiety.aspx>

Get Connected

Get Connected is the UK's free, confidential helpline service for young people under 25 who need help, but don't know where to turn.

<http://www.getconnected.org.uk/>

Kidscape

We equip young people, parents and professionals with the skills to tackle bullying and safeguarding issues across the UK.

<https://www.kidscape.org.uk/>

Mental Health Foundation

UK charity helping people to access information about the steps they can take to look after their own mental health.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/a/anxiety>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline offers advice and support to anyone concerned about the welfare of a child. The Helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls are dealt with by

NSPCC Helpline counsellors, who are all trained child protection officers. You can telephone, email or write to them for information and advice, or to report concerns about a child at risk of abuse.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

NHS Choices

NHS website where you can find information about a range of mental health conditions and search for local services.

Children's Anxiety: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety-children/pages/introduction.aspx>

Youth Mental Health:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/youth-mental-health/Pages/Youth-mental-health-help.aspx>

OCD Youth

OCD Youth aims to increase awareness and access to support for anyone under 25 affected by Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. OCD Youth is run by young people with OCD, for young people with OCD.

<http://ocdyouth.org/about/>

Papyrus - Prevention of Young Suicide

Run a national helpline, including text and email services providing practical help and advice to young people and to those concerned about any young person who may be at risk of suicide

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

Rise Above

Help for 11 – 16 year olds to build emotional resilience by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to deal with pressures they may face. Inspiring and useful stories, videos, games and advice.

<http://riseabove.org.uk/>

Samaritans

Free national helpline that can be used at any time you like to discuss issues affecting you. You don't have to be suicidal. There is also a Bristol Branch available on 0117 9831000.

www.samaritans.org/branches/bristol-samaritans

SAM app

SAM is an application to help you understand and manage anxiety. The app has been developed in collaboration with a research team from UWE, Bristol.

<http://sam-app.org.uk/>

Young Sane

Young SANE is a virtual community that focuses on mental health for people aged under 25.

http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/young_sane/

Self Harm UK

Project dedicated to supporting young people impacted by self-harm, providing a safe space to talk, ask any questions and be honest about what's going on in your life.

<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

Student Health

Useful information on a variety of areas for adolescent students. Areas include healthy eating, sexual health, mental health-anorexia, anxiety and self-harm.

<http://www.studenthealth.co.uk/>

The Site

Online guide to life for 16-25 year-olds in the UK. Provide non-judgmental support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt and drugs.

<http://www.thesite.org/>

Winston's Wish

UK childhood bereavement charity offering practical support and guidance to bereaved children, their families and professionals.

<http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/>

Youth Access

Youth Access is the national membership organisation for young people's information, advice, counselling and support services. Their website offers a directory of local youth information, advice and counselling services for young people aged 14 – 25.

<http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/>

Young Minds

UK charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. Resources include a free confidential helpline for any adult who is concerned about emotional problems, behaviour or mental health of a child or young person up to the age of 25.

www.youngminds.org.uk

3. Video resources for children, young people and their parents/carers

['Child Anxiety' video](#) (10 mins) from [Kids Mental Health- Parent/ Carer education site](#)

['Your Brain on Stress and Anxiety' video](#) (5 mins) for older young people

Mindful techniques video's:

[Muscle tensing exercise](#)

[Hand Breathing](#)

[Box Breathing](#)

4. Useful books and further reading

A Boy and a Bear – The Children’s Relaxation Book by Lori Lite, Partners Publishing Group

ISBN 1886941076

Cool Cats, Calm Kids: Relaxation and Stress Management for Young People by Mary I Williams, Impact Publishers

ISBN 978-0915166947

Indigo Dreams (Audio CD) by Lori Lite, Stress Free Kids

Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People by Kate Collins-Donnelly, Jessica Kingsley Pub

ISBN 978-1849053419

Sweet Dreams and Monsters by Peter Mayle, Macmillan Children's Books

ISBN 1556709455

The Anxiety Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Deal With Anxiety & Worry by Lisa M. Schab, Instant Help Publications

ISBN 978-1572246034

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside, Hodder Children’s Books

ISBN 0340903171

The Panic Book by Neil Philips, Shrink-Rap Press Australia PLC

ISBN 9780958560429

Tim and the Blanket Thief by John Prater Atheneum, Atheneum Books for Young Readers

ISBN 0689318812

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Hueber,
Magination Press

ISBN 978-1591473145

Worry Guts by Jan Mark, Longman

ISBN 978- 0582338913

5. Some quotes – Remember, you are not alone

Together we can tackle anxiety and you can get on with your life.

"It is said an eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him with the words, 'And this, too, shall pass away.'

How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction!"

Abraham Lincoln

"Man never made any material as resilient as the human spirit."

Bernard Williams

"Nothing in life is to be feared

It is only to be understood"

Marie Curie

FEAR is just False Expectations Appearing Real

Anon

And finally...

"When you're chewing on life's gristle

Don't grumble, give a whistle

And this'll help things turn out for the best...

And...always look on the bright side of life...

Always look on the light side of life..."

Monty Python