

Anxiety in a Pandemic

Mental Health Support Team



House Keeping

- We are hoping to make the session as interactive as possible so feel free to contribute and share your experiences where you feel comfortable to do so.
- Please be mindful of confidentiality
- Please feel free to ask any questions you have during the session. You can do this by typing in the chat box or using the button to raise your hand.
- School are recording the session today so that we can make it available for those who were not able to attend.
- Take care of yourself.

Session Aims

- Have an understanding of the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) and introduction to staff.
- Recognise possible signs and symptoms of anxiety in your child/children
- Learn strategies to be able to support young people experiencing anxiety.
- Recognise when and how to request specialist support for your child.

Introduction to the MHST

- MHST's are intended to provide **early intervention** on some mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, such as mild to moderate **anxiety and low mood** in children and young people.
- Support staff within a school or college setting to provide a '**whole school approach**' to mental health and wellbeing.
- To act as a **link** with local children and young people's mental health services.

Impact of Covid-19

A survey completed by Young Minds interview young people around how their wellbeing had changed as a result of lockdown. The results found that 83% of young people felt that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their social and emotional well being. Young people described increased feelings of anxiety, isolation and loss of motivation.

Key themes included;

Worries around their own and parents health.

Lack of social connection.

Loss of routine and structure.

The logo for Young Minds, featuring the word "YOUNG" in yellow and "MiNDS" in dark grey, with a yellow dot above the 'i' in "MiNDS".

YOUNGMi**NDS**

<https://youngminds.org.uk/media/3904/coronavirus-report-summer-2020-final.pdf>

What do you know so far?

Please take a few minutes as a group to discuss what you already know about anxiety in young people.

- What is anxiety?
- Causes of anxiety in young people?
- Signs and symptoms?



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a **natural human response** when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

Anxiety is what we feel when we are **worried, tense or afraid** – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

It's particularly common to experience some anxiety while **coping with stressful events or changes**, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

(Mind, 2020)

Signs of Anxiety in Your Children

Can you share any signs of anxiety you may have observed in your children?



What does anxiety look like in young people?

Cognitive:

- Finding it hard to concentrate or stay on task.
- Memory difficulties e.g. frequently forgetting homework.
- Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts.

Physical:

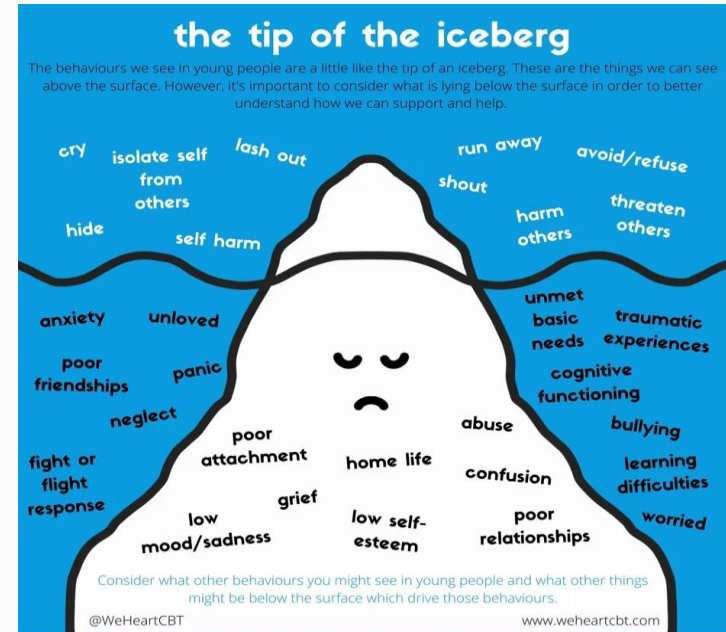
- Complaining of tummy aches and feeling sick.
- Tightness in chest/ heart racing
- Sweating and feeling hot.
- Not eating as much
- Feeling tired but struggling to sleep



What does anxiety look like?

Behaviours indicating anxiety:

- Emotional outbursts
- Irritability and aggression
- Checking and reassurance seeking
- Avoiding or escaping certain situations



Fight or Flight Response

Anxiety is a normal emotion that everyone feels at some point in their life. This is because of something in our brains called the **Fight or Flight response**.

Humans developed this response as cavemen because it was a much more dangerous time to live back then (think running away from saber tooth tigers and hunting for food!).

(We Heart CBT, 2020)



Physical Symptoms of Anxiety

When the Fight or Flight response kicks in and our heart rate and blood pressure increases, we might notice some of the following symptoms:

Sweating

Stomach ache

Worried

Feeling of panic

Noticeably fast heartbeat

Tense Muscles

Shortness of breath

Shaking

Sweating

Scared

Feeling sick

Pins and needles

Dry mouth

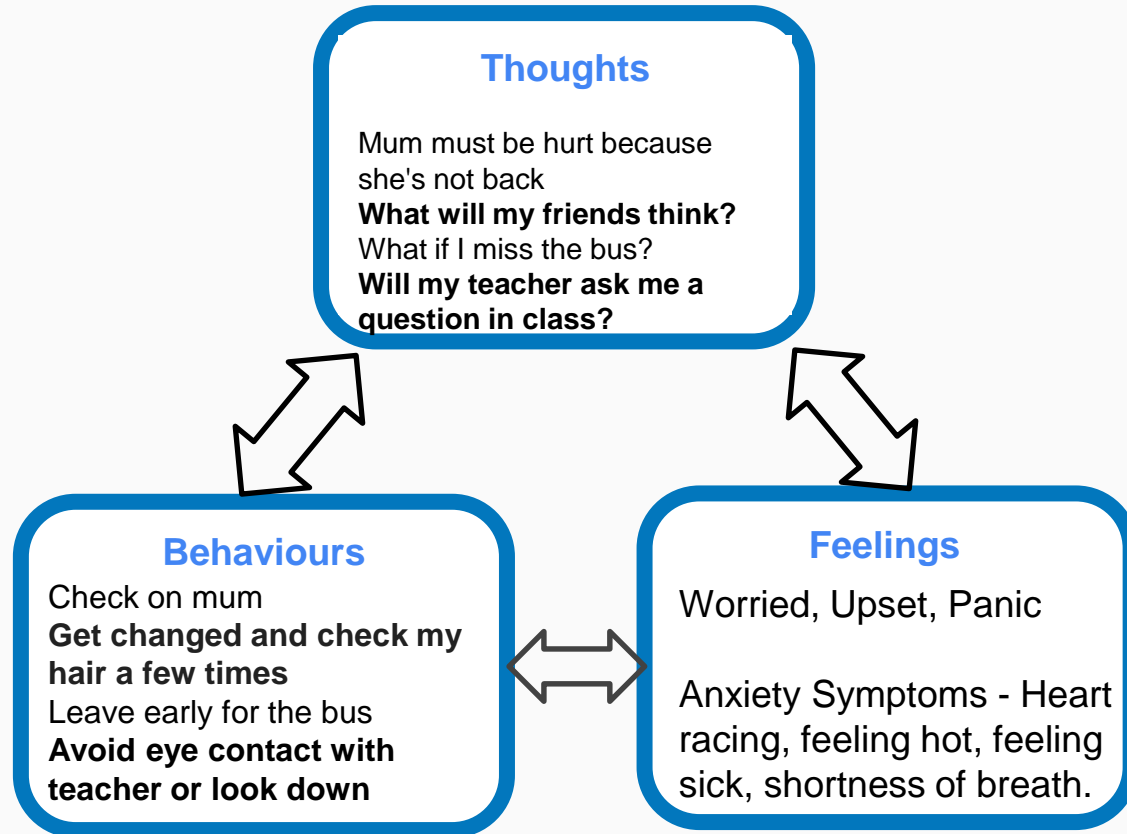
Nervous

Angry

Upset



Understanding The Cycle of Anxiety



Helpful Strategies

Share with each other some strategies you have used to support your children when they are anxious.

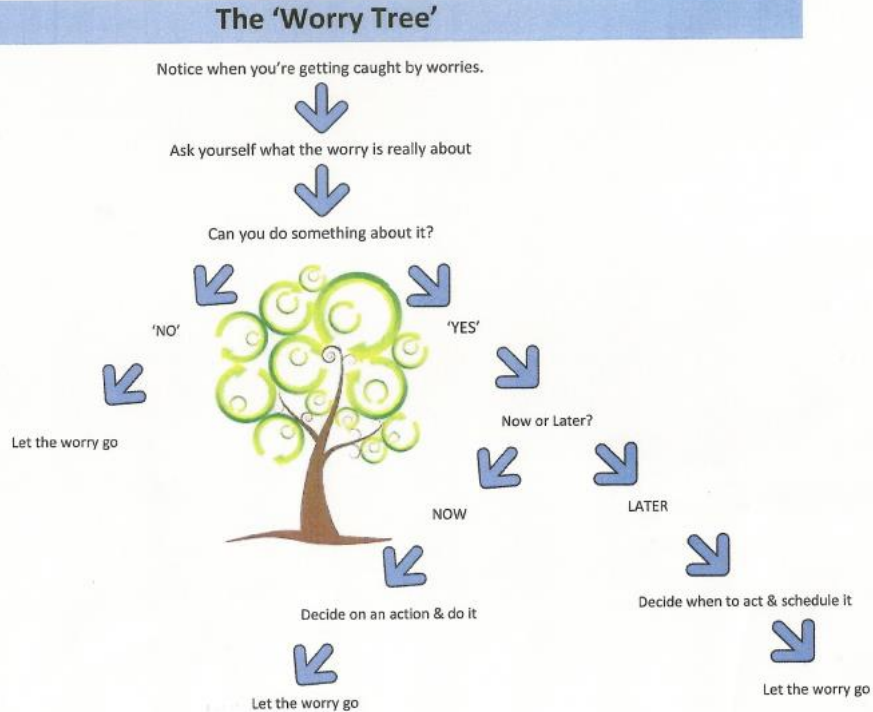


Avoidance

Avoiding situations that make us feel anxious is not helpful for reducing anxiety in the long-term.

1. Explore ways to help your child cope with their anxieties and worries. Try working together to test out fears gradually - setting small, specific goals.
2. Stay calm. Try not to get drawn into your child's emotions. Praise and reward small (and big) successes when a child faces their fears. It can help them if you remain positive and encouraging, without forcing them into anything.
3. Focus on what helps. Instead of trying to reassure a child that nothing bad will happen, focus on what helped them cope when they faced a similar situation. Help a child think through what they have learned i.e. Did their worry come true? Did they cope?

Worry Tree



The worry tree provides a structure to follow to help us to effectively deal with worrying thoughts.

Helps us to separate worries into two different categories;

- **Hypothetical** “what if” worries.
- **Real event** worries about a current real situation.

Worry Time

Worry time will give your child time each day to address their worries. The more they use worry time, the less their worries will impact you throughout the day.

- Plan worry time for the same time each day. This should be a time where they can focus on the worries and not be distracted (no more than half an hour).
- Record the worries. This could include writing them down, drawing a picture, putting them in their phone or making a sound recording.
- Refocus attention. Encourage your child to do something different and focus on what they are doing at that moment.
- Do the worry time. This time should be used to go back and address all of the worries you have caught that day. For each worry decide whether it is a **practical worry** or **hypothetical worry** and plan next steps.



Reassurance

Children and teens look to their parents, teachers and trusted adults for information about the world around them. Asking for reassurance about the same situation over and over again can become an unhelpful way of coping.

What might this look like? Your child may ask repeatedly for reassurance that what they fear will not happen. They may not be satisfied with simple responses, such as *“You’ll do fine,”* and seem to need unending, and guarantees. *“Are you sure you locked all the doors? When? Even the back door? What about the upstairs windows?”*



Giving this kind of reassurance;

- Can be **exhausting**. No matter how much you give, they will always want more.
- Is a **“Band-Aid”** solution as it only reduces anxiety in the moment.
- Sends the message that there’s a danger they need to be protected from.

Reassurance – What Can You Do?

In order to help your child face fears and cope with anxiety in a healthy way, it is important to stop giving them reassurance. This can help them to gradually learn to cope with anxiety on their own.

How can you do this?

- **Make a Clear Plan** with your child when they are calm, around what you are going to do and why you are going to do it.
- **Get everyone on board:** it is important that everyone in your child's life agrees. If your child can simply get reassurance from someone else, this strategy will not work.
- **Be consistent:** If you give in to your child's demand for reassurance even once, your child will learn that *"If I persist and ask enough, I'll get the reassurance I want."* Be strong- stick to the plan!
- **Praise and Reward** any efforts made to not seek reassurance from you, or attempts to manage anxiety independently

Signposting: Requesting further support

It is important to seek help for your child if;

- Their anxiety is not getting better, or is getting worse
- Self-help is not working
- Their anxiety is causing high levels of distress which is affecting their school life, family life, or their friendships

If you have concerns around your child's mental health, you can speak to their Assistant Head of Year or a member of the Pastoral Team at school; who can then seek advice from our service around the best way to support your child.

Our team will be providing wider support for pupils in school through;

- Delivering school assemblies
- Contributing to PSHE lessons

Helpful links

These are hour long webinars aimed at helping families at home with the issues outlined in the episode. These have been put out by LSCFT and support by Lancashire Mental Support Service.

Episode 1 <https://youtu.be/wZKO4sb9BAk> Anxiety

Episode 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVQRvSxn6gM> Communicating about Mental Health

Episode 3 - <https://youtu.be/95OFYS6p4E8> Social media

Episode 4 - <https://youtu.be/y9Z5tuqLE4Q> About stress, coping strategies and our comfort zone

Episode 5 - <https://youtu.be/em5qprEAYdw> motivation, depression and suicide

Episode 6- https://youtu.be/EYFs_FkncqA Eating Disorders and Body Image

Episode 7 - <https://youtu.be/cR64okqz0xI> self-esteem and confidence.

Episode 8 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0Kt5A_xplU resilience, peer-pressure and bullying,

Episode 9 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWdWPNXiGXU> Mindfulness and visualisation

Episode 10 - <https://youtu.be/SjujcfX93Ok> Round up of Episodes 1-9

Year 6 special - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT35NFK8SYs>

Year 10 special - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRCYeSMWhhU>

Learning Dis. special-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dirhdsY4y_o

Bonus Episode- <https://youtu.be/lhstzZRUKrw>

Useful Links

<https://elht.nhs.uk/services/east-lancashire-child-and-adolescent-services>

<https://www.kooth.com/>



<https://www.annafreud.org/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>



Any Questions?



Thank you!