

Anger

If our bodies perceive danger or stress, then this can be enough to trigger a 'flight or fight' response which can leave your child feeling angry without the understanding to communicate why.

Regression

Children may display a behaviour they had previously outgrown, for example, toilet accidents, bedwetting or using baby talk. This is a reaction to stress and feeling overwhelmed.



Difficulty sleeping

It is typical for children who are anxious to have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep.

Avoidance

Anxious children will often do what they can to avoid particular tasks, people or places.

Chandeliering

This is when a person who seems calm, suddenly flies off the handle for no apparent reason. They have buried their feelings so deeply and for so long that something quite minor can send them 'through the chandelier'.

Anxiety



Negativity

People with anxiety will often experience negative thoughts much more intensely and frequently than positive ones.



Overplanning

Anxiety can cause some children to overplan for situations that actually require minimal or no planning.



Lack of focus

Children who are anxious are often so caught up in their own thoughts, they find it particularly challenging to focus on the world around them.



Defiance

Young children will often attempt at controlling situations when they feel anxious and helpless, this can be misinterpreted as defiance.

It is easy to forget just how difficult and stressful this situation is for children. They are missing their friends, they are away from the structure and support of school and will be concerned about the Coronavirus and the implications for themselves and their families. This can create feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and worry in children, sometimes disguised and presented in other ways.

WAYS TO SUPPORT A CHILD EXPERIENCING ANXIETY

COMMUNICATION

When your child is behaving in a difficult manner, remember 'behaviour is communication', so consider what they are trying to let you know. We often think that children are 'playing up', but actually, they feel their emotions so intensely as they don't have the tools we have, to acknowledge feelings or express themselves. When we are stressed, our window of tolerance is minimised, so not only will our own patience levels decrease, so will our children's.

Just allowing your child to acknowledge and discuss their worries is very powerful, just keep in mind that younger children may not necessarily be able to understand their core emotion or what is at the root of it. It is perfectly ok to try to verbalise what you think could be going on for them emotionally even if they haven't yet acknowledged this themselves, for example if you can see your child is feeling worried you may say something along the lines of;

I wonder if you're missing your friends at the moment?

I can see just how much you're worrying about Grandad.

You're feeling all wobbly and it's hard to know why.

Children may engage in conversation following this, but if they don't that's ok too! You have sown the seed and possibly started the process of them beginning to acknowledge the range of feelings they may be experiencing.

If you find your child is expressing lots of negativity, then consider ways this can be reframed into a more positive statement. For example, turn the statement "I can't do it" in to "I'm still learning how".

Whilst we are cut off physically from our loved ones, using free apps such as 'Zoom' or 'Whatsapp' allows your child to stay connected with their friends and family, which not only allows for some fun and light relief in the moment, it will also support them as they transition back to school.

CREATIVITY

Allow your child time to get creative and just play! Play is essential to children's development, the benefits are endless, but during these times play allows your child to be protected from the scary world around them and allows them to begin to process their fears and worries. Time playing is most definitely not time wasted!

ROUTINE

Routine works for all children, but particularly children who feel anxious or overwhelmed. However, it is important to stress the routine must be one that suits you and your family which may be very different to that of your friends or neighbours.

EXERCISE

Benefits of exercise include;

- An energy boost
- Improved sleep
- Focus and motivation
- Less anger or frustration
- Less tension and stress
- A sense of achievement
- Having fun!

If your outside space is limited or the weather bad, try <https://www.cosmickids.com/> for children's yoga or <https://www.gonoodle.com> for movement ideas. Couch to 5k is another positive option if there is an adult who can support the child in doing this. If possible, going for a walk outside regularly will help to prevent your child from becoming anxious about leaving the home and again will help with the transition as and when we move back towards normality.

MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

If meditation is new to you, these apps are really useful as a way to introduce yourself and your child. Both the following apps provide guided meditations for both adults and children, which train the mind to stay focussed and in the moment. Calm is free, with some payable parts you can opt into. Headspace has a free trial you can use before opting to sign up.



Mindfulness colouring sheets are available for FREE from <https://www.twinkl.co.uk>

STORIES

Storytime between a child and parent has enormous benefits generally, not only is it an opportunity for quality time together, but stories can be used as a basis to discuss worries. The following books are recommended for younger children who are anxious or worried;

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside

Ruby's Worry by Tom Percival

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn (FREE access, using the link below)

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst (particularly for children who are separated from a parent or other close family members).

Follow the link below, for a story regarding how staying at home makes us superheroes (aimed at younger children).

<https://www.sophiestories.co.uk/stay-home-superheroes>

The following website is FREE during the pandemic which allows access to a wide range of stories to keep children entertained ~ www.storylineonline.net

WORKBOOKS

Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly ~ this comes in two versions, one is aimed at children aged 5-9 years old, the other 10 years old plus. It is a workbook to complete together, which discusses ways your child can identify the anxiety and strategies to keep it at bay.

What to do when you worry too much by Dawn Huebner

Through my world by Naomi Moore ~ focuses on creative expression and self regulation, can be accessed for FREE from <https://www.wellbeingresourceszoneuk.com/>

FILM

Inside Out ~ a great film for all children, but again can be used as a basis to discuss thoughts and feelings.

NEWS

If your child is of the age or inclination to want to keep up to date with what is happening in the news, then watching news aimed specifically at children means it is kept age appropriate without being overwhelming. Children's news can be accessed here ~ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

ONLINE SUPPORT

If you would like to read further ideas on ways to support your child's emotional wellbeing, here are a few useful links;

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

<https://amazing-s-school.thinkific.com/courses/amazing-you-me> -a free course designed for adults to develop some insight into how emotional wellbeing can be supported. Activities are provided to support your own wellbeing, as well as your child's.

TIME FOR YOU

Do not underestimate the challenges we are all facing and how much this can and will impact on our own mental health, as well as our children's. Doing something for you each day, no matter how small, will support your own emotional health which will in turn allow you to support your child's.

ASK FOR HELP

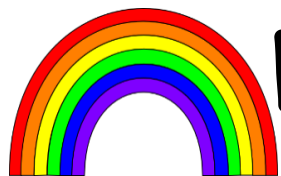
Reach out to a friend or family member, even if it is just to offload and share your own concerns. We cannot provide our children with the emotional support they need if we are running on empty ourselves. School will always aim to help if there is anything you need to discuss, regardless of how small or can signpost you to the appropriate support or organisation if needed.

Southern Brooks is a local organisation offering Online Wellbeing Workshops and Peer Support Groups, please email wellbeing@southernbrooks.org.uk for further information. www.mind.org.uk ~ support online and over the phone.

If it's more practical support you need, the following link is a local Facebook group, volunteers will deliver food, pick up prescriptions or run errands if you are self-isolating. They can also arrange food boxes if you are in need. If you live outside of Kingswood, they can put you in touch with the group in your area.

Covid-19 BS15-KINGSWOOD (BRISTOL) SUPPORT or Phone 0808 164 1047

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