

Mindful about Mental Health.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be an issue for children of all ages – just like it is for adults. When your child's anxiety is starting to affect their day to day activities and well-being, it may be time to reach out for some support.

It is common for preschool age children to develop specific fears or phobias and the most common ones are – animals/insects, storms, heights, blood and the dark. These fears usually go away as the child gets older. As children get older they can feel anxious about exams and puberty. Some children feel anxious or shy in social situations and may need support with this. Secondary school can be a difficult transition for some children too as the school is bigger, new friends and more responsibility for managing their own day (getting to and from lessons)



When is anxiety a problem for children?

When it starts to get in their way – is the short answer.

It can be a problem when –

- The feeling is very strong or consistently gets worse and does not go over a period of time.
- It prevents the child from completing daily habits or activities (seeing friends or enjoying hobbies and things they'd normally enjoy doing).
- Anxiety starts to affect the child's self esteem and confidence. They may become withdrawn and go to lengths to avoid situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

What are the signs of anxiety in children?

When a child becomes anxious, they don't always understand how they're feeling or why, they may struggle with explaining this to you so you may notice that –

- Become irritable or emotional
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Wake in the night
- Start wetting the bed
- Have bad dreams
- Stomach aches or headaches

In older children –

- Lack confidence to try new things or unable to face simple everyday challenges
- Find it hard to concentrate
- Have problems eating or sleeping
- Have angry outbursts
- Have negative thoughts or keep thinking bad things are going to happen

How to help an anxious child

Firstly, talk to your child about their anxieties and worries. Listen carefully to understand how they feel.

Try not to make assumptions or dismiss their worries. Empathise that taking is a good thing.

Try to describe that anxiety is a natural reaction to stress that affects our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Consider describing anxiety as a wave that builds up and goes away over a period of time. Try and find solutions to the problems.

If your child is struggling, talk to your class teachers, remember we have Mrs Morley as our parent support worker, we are a MHST school and have a linked worker who can help. You can make a referral to MHST for your child (I can support with this if needed) Or you can talk to your GP.

Others ways to support your child

- In school, we teach children to recognise their feelings – encourage this at home too.
- Establish routines
- If you know you have a transition coming (moving home for example) talk to your child about this and be open and honest about it, look for films or books that include this so the child can see how other people deal with it.
- Try not to become overprotective or anxious about your child's anxiety.
- Practise mindful breathing techniques (we practise these in school so your child will know what to do!)
- Turn an empty tissue box into a "worry box" and ask your child to write down their worries and post them into the box. Sort through them together at the end of the day or few days.

I regularly share websites and links via Class Dojo but there's also MHST website and NHS website and this one too...

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/anxiety/?scrlybrkr=0280cc70>

Always here and happy to help,

Ms Winterton x