

Anxiety and Young People



Anxiety is a natural and expected part of growing up. In fact, it plays an important role in helping young people prepare for challenges, stay alert to potential dangers and adapt to new situations. It can motivate them to study for a test, practise before a performance, or tread carefully in unfamiliar settings. However, for many children and adolescents today, anxiety can shift from being a helpful response to becoming intense, persistent and disruptive.

The world young people are growing up in is fast-paced and often demanding. Academic pressures, social expectations, family changes and the constant presence of digital media, can all contribute to heightened stress and worry. When anxiety is left unrecognised or unsupported, it can begin to affect a young person's wellbeing, learning, friendships and self-confidence. That's why it's so important for adult carers to understand how anxiety may present in children. Everyone experiences anxiety differently, and there's no one-size-fits-all solution. But with greater awareness, open communication, and the right strategies, families can help young people manage anxiety in healthy ways.

1

Listen without judgement

Give your child your full attention when they share worries. Avoid interrupting or dismissing their feelings. Simply listening can help them feel understood, supported, and less alone in their anxiety.

2

Normalise anxiety

Reassure your child that anxiety is a normal emotion everyone experiences. Let them know it's okay to talk about it, which helps reduce stigma and encourages healthy, open communication.

3

Teach breathing techniques

Teach your child deep breathing techniques to calm their body's stress response. Practise together when they're relaxed so it becomes a natural tool they can use in anxious moments.

4**Break tasks into steps**

Help your child tackle big challenges by breaking them into smaller, achievable steps. This approach makes situations feel more manageable and builds confidence in their ability to cope.

5**Problem-solve together**

Work with your child to explore practical solutions when challenges arise. Involving them in the process builds problem-solving skills and helps them feel more capable and in control.

6**Prioritise good sleep**

Establish consistent bedtimes and a screen free wind-down routine. Quality sleep supports mood regulation, concentration, and resilience, making it easier for your child to manage daily stress and anxiety.

7**Encourage a balanced diet**

Providing regular, nutritious meals with a variety of whole foods supports your child's physical health and mental wellbeing. A balanced diet can help stabilise mood, improve concentration and reduce feelings of irritability or fatigue.

8**Model calm coping**

Demonstrate healthy ways of handling stress, such as journaling, exercising or talking through worries. Children often copy what they see, so setting an example is a powerful teacher.

9**Celebrate effort, not just results**

Praise persistence, learning and small wins instead of focusing only on outcomes. This shifts pressure away from perfection and helps your child build confidence and resilience over time.

10**Encourage social connection**

Support your child in maintaining friendships and joining group activities. Strong, positive relationships provide belonging, perspective and emotional support, all of which protect against anxiety and build wellbeing.