

Anxiety

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that everyone experiences sometimes. You might describe it as feeling very nervous or “wound up”.

General anxiety symptoms can last for extended periods of time – it could go on for a couple of weeks or longer. It's more than just being nervous.

You might have anxious thoughts about yourself, other people, and how you think other people feel about you. You might also have anxious thoughts about the world around you and what's coming in the future.

Following on from the last article regarding '**Reducing Avoidance**', we are going to look at confronting the things you avoid.

Confronting the things you avoid

There are three steps to this activity:

1. Make a list of situations that you (or your child) often try to escape from or avoid. For example, you could write 'assemblies', 'giving presentations', 'talking in front of the class'
2. Give each situation a 'difficulty score' out of 10. If a situation causes you no anxiety, rate it 0. If it causes extreme anxiety, rate it 10.

Try to put the situations in order from least anxiety to most anxiety. Here is an example:

Situation	Difficult score (0 = no anxiety; 10 = extreme anxiety)
Getting the bus	4
Talking to someone I don't know	6
Reading out loud	8
Playing the playground	9

3. Confront the lowest-ranked item on your list – this is the one that cause you the least anxiety.

Although your anxiety symptoms might feel worse at first, if you keep going they are likely to reduce. Try to stay in the situation until your anxiety has reduced.

Remember, you do not have to be scared of the symptoms of anxiety. They might feel awful, but they are not dangerous.

Keep confronting the situation that makes you feel the least anxiety – every day if you can. If you can't do it every day, try not to wait too long between the times you can confront the situation. The more you confront the situation, the less fear you will feel.

Every time you experience the situation that makes you anxious, you should notice that your anxiety symptoms get a little better.

Next week we will look at moving on with this process when you feel comfortable with the situation that causes the least anxiety. Try to give it a go this week and record how you are feeling; perhaps on a continuum from 0 to 10.

Working together to keep our children safe and happy.

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