

# Anxiety

## Introduction

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear that can be mild or severe.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, and usually this is a necessary feeling in order to help us cope with challenges and to keep ourselves safe. For example, you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam or having a medical test or job interview. During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal. General anxiety symptoms can last for extended periods; it is more than just being nervous.

However, some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily life.

## When to see your GP

Although feelings of anxiety at certain times are completely normal, you should see your GP if anxiety is affecting your daily life or is causing you distress.

Your GP will ask you about your symptoms and your worries, fears and emotions and discuss a programme of support based on their assessment of your needs.



## Living with anxiety and self-help

Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at some strategies help you or your child cope with anxiety. These are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT help you to examine how you think about your life, and challenge negative automatic thoughts to free yourself from unhelpful thought and behaviour patterns.

## Automatic thoughts – strategy 1

Automatic thoughts are unhelpful thoughts that pop into your mind, without you making any effort to think of them. They are believable and usually upsetting – this can affect your feelings and what you do.

It is important to remember that a thought is not necessarily a fact, or based on reality. You might believe the unhelpful thoughts that pop into your mind, but it is actually important to question them. They can be based on unhelpful assumptions and thoughts. For example, feeling of being judged negatively by others, feeling that you are unable to cope, thinking something terrible is happening or going to happen, feeling that you are unable to control your worry.

Once you have recognised this as an unhelpful thought, the next stage is to challenge it. To do this, you can ask yourself a series of questions:

- Is there any evidence against this thought?
- Is there any evidence for this thought (based on fact)?

- Can you identify any patterns of unhelpful thinking?
- What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?
- Is there another way of looking at this situation?
- Is there a proactive solution to this unhelpful thought?

After you have answered these questions, rate how much you believe in the thought from 0-10, with 0 being 'I don't believe it'; rate how strong your feelings are now from 0-10, with 10 being 'I am really really scared.

You will have noticed that by challenging your unhelpful thoughts and rationalising your thoughts, you start to feel better and more in control of your feelings and thoughts. Have a go this week and see what difference it makes. Try rating your feelings and thoughts before you ask yourself or your child the questions and afterwards. See if your rating is lower.

Next week we will look at another strategy to support you or your child self-managing your anxieties. These strategies together will hopefully build a toolbox of strategies to support you, your child and your family.

***Working together to keep our children safe and happy***

*Halina Rooney*

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