

Feeling Worried



Feeling worried is a natural emotion. We all feel worried at times. Last week, we looked at one of the seven ways that the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families recommend for supporting our children to cope with their worries; to create a space for conversation.

This week, we will look at strategy number 2 and 3.

Strategy 2: Demonstrate Calm



This is easier to say than to put into practice. Our natural response is to 'fix' the worry, 'ignore' the worry, or tell our children to 'just get over it'. Demonstrating calm might take some practice. Try to model a calm and measured response.

We know that children are good at noticing when others around them are anxious and will watch the behaviour of others to work out whether they too should feel anxious about themselves. Even if you are feeling anxious on the inside, you can help your child by remaining calm on the outside. This will help to reassure them that things might be difficult, but they are manageable.

Strategy 3: Empathise and Validate

Again, this is tricky! Be kind to yourselves when trying this out, remembering our default is to take away the worry quickly. We often want to reassure children, and to help find solutions to make them feel better, but first, spend time listening to the child, ask them questions, and show an interest in viewing things from their perspective.

Be accepting of their worry, anger and sadness about how things are at present. Try to avoid early reassurance which can often sound like 'everything's fine'. Recognise that these kinds of feelings are common and understandable. Explain that, although the physical feelings we experience in our bodies when we are anxious can be unpleasant, they are normal.



Over the next week, try and practice strategies 2 and 3. At other times, talk aloud about your own worries and what you do to help yourself e.g. 'I was really worried about giving a presentation at work; there were so many people. I had to go into a

quite room and take some deep breaths beforehand; it helped.' These 'think alouds' help your child see that worry is natural, worry is normal, worry affects us all and there are things we can do to help with our worries.

Next week we will have a look at 'introducing alternative perspectives and ways of thinking' as quite often worries are 'unhelpful' thoughts. Until then, have a lovely weekend.



Working together to keep our children safe and happy.

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