

ANXIETY



Specialist Nursing Team

Housekeeping

- ▶ There will be a short presentation followed by a group discussion
- ▶ Please feel free to ask questions, share experiences and ideas
- ▶ Please be aware that examples used, and any personal information given during this workshop should be treated as confidential



What Is Anxiety?



Signs of Anxiety

Physical

- ▶ Have trouble sleeping
- ▶ Tummy ache, feel nervous, feel sick
- ▶ Need to go to the toilet frequently
- ▶ Fast heartbeat
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Feel fidgety, tense or restless
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Feel hot or sweaty or shaky
- ▶ Feel more sensitive to noises, smells or sights around them

Signs of Anxiety

Emotional

- ▶ Meltdowns or emotional outbursts
- ▶ Avoid or withdraw from a social situation
- ▶ Struggle to focus or concentrate on things
- ▶ Feel overwhelmed
- ▶ Feel nervous or fear or worry
- ▶ Feel out of control in a situation
- ▶ Increased repetitive or obsessive behaviours – stimming, rocking, flapping
- ▶ Worry about not being able to cope with daily things – school, friendships, sensory
- ▶ Worry about something that may happen in the future or has happened in the past

Signs of Anxiety

- ▶ May spend more time on their hobbies and interests
- ▶ May be more insistent on routines
- ▶ May withdraw or isolate themselves
- ▶ Seeking reassurance
- ▶ Avoid situations – school, social gatherings, clubs
- ▶ Overthink things
- ▶ Fright, flight, fight response
- ▶ May be more irritable or angry
- ▶ Catastrophising

What Causes Anxiety?

- ▶ Change in routine – sudden or unexpected
- ▶ Change in environment
- ▶ Unfamiliar or unpredictable social situations
- ▶ Sensory overload
- ▶ Feeling misunderstood/communication differences
- ▶ Feel the need to ‘fit in’ with those around them



What Causes Anxiety?

- ▶ Fear of a particular situation, activity or object
- ▶ Transitions: a new school year, starting a new school, joining a new club or activity
- ▶ Difficulty recognising the emotions of self and others - Alexithymia
- ▶ Fear of failure or making a mistake
- ▶ Not getting the right support or having your child's needs, strengths, challenges or differences recognised or met



Strategies

- ▶ Identify the cause of anxiety
- ▶ Helping your child learn to recognise when they start to feel anxious
- ▶ Plan how your child will communicate they are feeling anxious or other signs
- ▶ Remove or reduce the cause of anxiety
- ▶ Visual tools: timetables, planners, photos, internet, google maps
- ▶ Social Stories & Comic Strips
- ▶ Structure and routine
- ▶ Sensory toys/fidget toys/calm box/sensory bag
- ▶ Ear defenders, headphones, sunglasses, comfortable clothing
- ▶ Additional time to process changes, tasks, instructions
- ▶ Emotional regulation

Zones of Regulation			
Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
Bored Lonely Sad Tired Unwell	Calm Content Focused Happy Ready to learn	Anxious Confused Excited Frustrated Worried	Angry Aggressive Terrified I need time and space

	I feel...	My body clues...	I can...
5	Extremely tired. A lot less patient. Annoyed easily.	Exhausted – very low energy. Not and bothered.	Take a bit of time to be on my own. Slow down rest and put things into perspective.
4	Anxious. Wandering. Not I'll get everything done. Low energy. A little unsure. Confidence might not be so low.	Bit of a tightness in my chest. Can't focus very well. Might have a headache. Bit of a 'rush' head feeling. Tired.	Have a change of scenery. Spend time with some children or get some fresh air. Make sure I've done something. Let someone know how I'm doing.
3	Calm. I might feel a little pressured but I can handle it.	Quite energetic. Focused on what I need to do.	Remain focused. Prioritise jobs.
2	Extremely relaxed. Energised. I can do anything!	Lots of energy. Smiling a lot. Able to laugh about things.	Enjoy! Talk to others and share my positive mood.

Strategies

- ▶ Breathing exercises & relaxation
- ▶ Mindfulness
- ▶ Self soothing/regulating –
stimming, rocking, swinging
- ▶ Engage/focus on their specific
interest
- ▶ Downtime afterwards – to relax
- ▶ Give them opportunities to
practise handling anxious
situations
- ▶ Use a notebook to write about the
cause of anxiety, strategies to
manage that situation and to
reflect/look back at

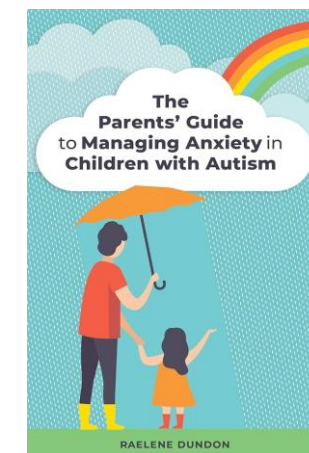
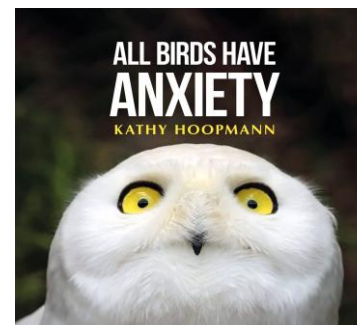
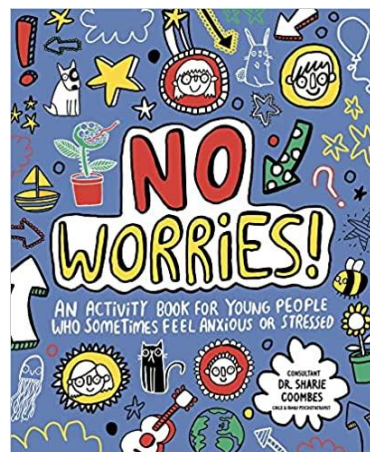
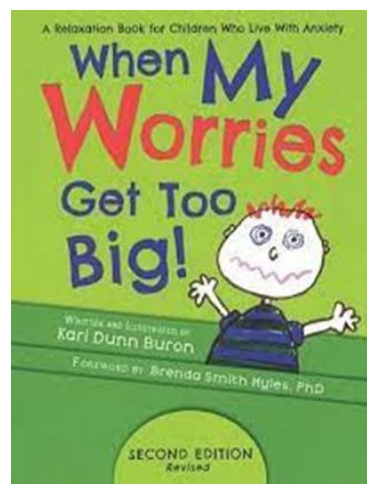
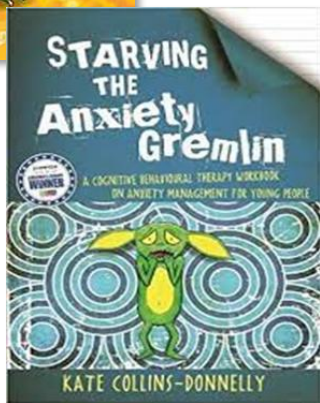
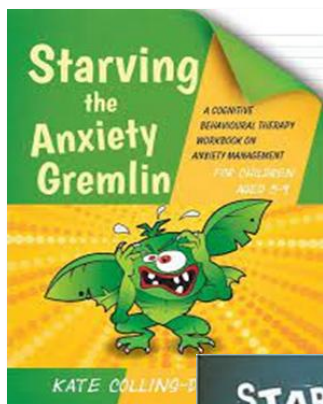
Strategies

- ▶ Speak to preschool/school/6th form/college about the support they can provide to meet your child's needs - mentoring, counselling, buddies, clubs and activities
- ▶ Reasonable adjustments
- ▶ Celebrate every success no matter how big or small

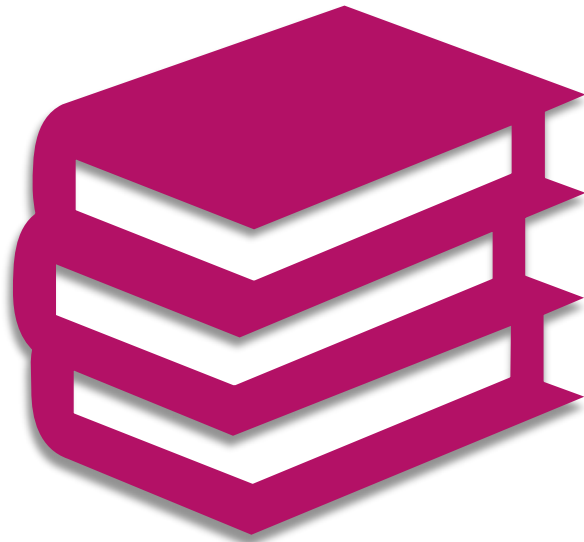
Resources

- ▶ Molehill Mountain App
- ▶ Health passport
- ▶ Reasonable adjustments
- ▶ Talking Therapies
- ▶ Animal Assisted Therapy/Equine Therapy
- ▶ Autism Bedfordshire groups
- ▶ <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>
- ▶ <https://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/>
- ▶ <https://autisticgirlsnetwork.org/reasonable-adjustments-possible-at-school/>

Resources



References



- ▶ <https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/anxiety-and-autism>
- ▶ <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/anxiety>
- ▶ <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/anxiety-parental>
- ▶ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/health-wellbeing/mental-health/anxiety-asd>
- ▶ <https://sensory-processing.middletownautism.com/sensory-strategies/>
- ▶ <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/mental-health/what-is-anxiety>
- ▶ <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>