

# Parent Support -Anxiety.

Do you think your child may be experiencing a degree of anxiety?

Does your child have a diagnosis related to anxiety?

What does this mean... and how can they be helped?



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# Our school aims



- ▶ Be equipped to recognise the signs of anxiety in primary school aged children
- ▶ Have a better understanding of the causes of anxiety and its potential impact on primary school children's mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Be able to support and respond to the needs of children with anxiety, including working collaboratively with health and community professionals.

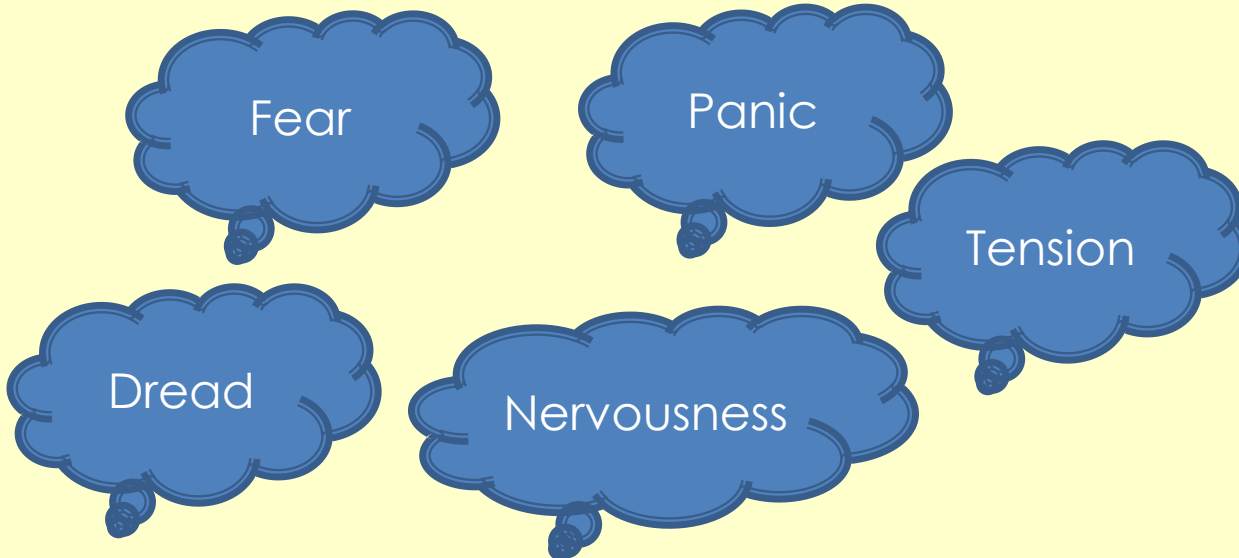
# Aims of this session

- ▶ Provide a forum for parents to come together to get advice and information on this subject.
- ▶ Ensure parents are having their say in how the school supports anxiety.
- ▶ Enable parents to support each other and provide access and signposting to professionals.

# What is anxiety?

- ▶ An emotion
- ▶ Type of fear or strong feeling about a situation
- ▶ Causes fright and uncertainty
- ▶ Lasts a short time or can be prolonged

There are many types of anxiety and everyone's experience of anxiety is different.



# How does anxiety develop?

Anxiety is normal.

It is the basis of Survival because it prepares our bodies to cope with danger-Humans are primed for survival to respond to situations where there are dangers or threats. Some of us, including some children, react more quickly or more intensely to situations that might indicate danger.

- ▶ Sometimes stressful events trigger problems with anxiety.
- ▶ Learning may also play a part in the development of an anxiety disorder. They may learn that the world is a dangerous place.
- ▶ Family member's responses to the world can contribute to the child's ideas about what is dangerous or not.



# Types of anxiety

- ▶ **Generalised anxiety disorder** – worrying about everything and anything, such as things that might happen, past behaviours, schoolwork or how popular they are. Feeling always on edge or restless.
- ▶ **Panic attacks**- intense and overwhelming feeling of panic, terror or fear. Lasts for a short time. Difficulty breathing, heart palpitations, dizzy and faint. Feeling of loss of control.
- ▶ **Specific phobias**- an exaggerated feeling about the level of danger from a situation, thing or object. Common phobias for children- needles, water, the dark, being sick or vomit, animals and insects.

# Types of anxiety

- ▶ **Complex phobias e.g. Social phobia** – extreme shyness and fears of being seen in a negative light or judged. Fear of making a fool of themselves.
- ▶ **Separation anxiety** – fear and distress at being away from a member of the family. Commonly a fear that something bad will happen to a loved one when they are separated. Refusing to go to school and not wanting to sleep alone.
- ▶ **Health anxiety**- focusing obsessively on their health, body and symptoms, worrying about dying.
- ▶ **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder** – repetitive, intrusive and unwanted thoughts, often about dirt or germs, something bad happening, causing harm to others or failing to prevent harm. May have compulsions or rituals they feel they need to do otherwise something bad will happen.



Worries about bad things happening

Always worrying about the worst case scenario



Avoids situations they feel anxious about

Can't stop bad thoughts going round and round in head

Uses rituals to try to get rid of anxiety e.g. checking things over and over.

Feels out of control when they are anxious

Heart races and finds it hard to breathe when anxious

Feels shaky, dizzy or sick when anxious



# What are some signs in school?

- ▶ Wanting things to be perfect
- ▶ Reluctance to ask for help
- ▶ Difficulty joining in social activities with peers
- ▶ Stomach pains and headaches
- ▶ Fearful of test situations or performing in front of others
- ▶ Upset when leaving parents

# How common is it?

- ▶ A UK office of national statistics child and adult mental health survey (2005)
- ▶ 2.2. % of 5-10 year olds have an anxiety disorder
- ▶ 4.4 % of 11-16 year olds
- ▶ NSPCC study (2004)

Things children worried about:

Exams, friends, homework, family members or own health, appearance.

Things that would encourage them to share their worries:

Being listened to, believed, not judged or told off, keeping it private, person being able to help or understand.

# Protective factors

- **Attachment/Affection**
- **How we pay attention**
- **Positive thinking style**
- **Support networks** (extended family, community and friendships)
- **Health factors** (sleep, daily physical activity, healthy eating)

# How can we help?

- ▶ Encourage your child to talk about how their body feels when they experience different types of feelings
- ▶ Share examples of your own body clues.
- ▶ Notice your child's physical complaints
- ▶ If they complain of a tummy ache/headache etc, explain that it might be their body's way of telling them something e.g. are they feeling worried or nervous about something?

# Route to resilience/school values

<b>More than just Me</b>  Friendship Fairness Kindness Teamwork Empathy Cooperation	<b>Aiming High</b>  Listening Concentration Imitation Patience Resilience	<b>Thinking for myself</b>  Independence Reasoning Questioning Confidence Self-efficacy Resourceful
<b>I can do it!</b>  Enthusiasm Determination Perseverance Self-esteem Optimism	<b>Daring to be different</b>  Curiosity Creativity Imagination Courage Risk taking	<b>How well did I do?</b>  Honesty Communication / Communicating Making links Reflecting Reviewing

# Growth and fixed mindset

## Growth mindset

- ▶ A person showing growth mindset attributes embraces challenge and difficulty as an opportunity to grow. Will sacrifice opportunities to look smart in order to take risks with learning and therefore make mistakes.

## Fixed mindset

- ▶ A person showing fixed mindset tendencies feels the need to look smart in the eyes of others. Wants to be seen as successful and even perfect. Will avoid engaging with tasks they find hard in case they go wrong.

# Encouraging growth mindsets

## ▶ Red THOUGHTS vs. Green (POWERFUL) THOUGHTS

“I’m dumb”

“I’m ok at lots of things”

“I give up”

“If I try I’ll get better.”

“I hate my sister/ brother”

“I find my brother/ sister annoying sometimes,  
but other times they are fun to play with”

“I have no friends”

“I have 2 people I play with and my dog is my friend



# Unhelpful Red Thoughts

I am going to make a fool of myself

Why do I even bother

I give up

I'm hopeless

This is stupid

I don't want to

What if I make a mistake

This is too hard

I'm no good at this

# Helpful Green Thoughts

I'm sure everyone finds this challenging

I'm going to give this a shot

I'll get there in the end

I will be ok

This won't be so bad

This could be fun

It doesn't matter what anyone thinks

I can cope with this

# Emotion Coaching

## Primary emotions

For children in a constant state of heightened anxiety, these emotions may dominate all the time.

For others, these emotions dominate when we 'flip our lids' and can displace our rational thinking.

When extreme, these emotions lead to the fight, flight, freeze response.



# Emotion coaching

- ▶ Connections can be grown and strengthened by emotion coaching.
- ▶ Emotion coaching enables children and young people to manage their own behaviour through helping them to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them.





# 3 steps to success



## **Step 1**

Empathise then  
label feelings

## **Step 2**

Set limits on  
behaviour

## **Step 3**

Problem-solve  
together