

Safeguarding Bulletin – Anxiety and Depression

1 in 6 children aged 5 to 16 years old have recently been identified as having a mental disorder.

Mind found that 3 in 4 (75%) of young people aged 13 to 24 with an existing mental health problem reported worse mental health during the first lockdown.

It is important to know how we can support a child if they become anxious or depressed. In the last year alone children have faced a whole world of disruption – from their day to day routines (including home schooling), isolation, trauma and hardship.

There are signs to look out for, and with children, it's usually best to look out for what they do, rather than what they say.

Some key indicators include being sad or irritable over a long period of time, losing interest in the things they usually enjoy, for example participating in sports, and being tired a lot of the time.

Just like adults, children can experience anxiety. This can manifest itself in many ways, such as becoming angry, finding it difficult to control their emotions, having trouble sleeping and even having physical symptoms such as tummy ache.

While not every child has the same symptoms, if you notice behavioural changes that don't go away after a couple of weeks or keep returning, seek professional help, or create an opportunity for them to explore their feelings, so you can identify different ways to support them.

Earlier this year Pace2Be, a mental health counselling organisation revealed that 1 in 3 parents admit they would feel embarrassed if their child wanted counselling, with many more feeling other parents would judge them.

However, it is important to be open, and non-judgemental. By normalising conversation around wellbeing and mental, and encouraging and supporting others to seek help if they need it, you could save a life.

Some short term/quick tips to help with anxiety:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/how-to-cope-with-anxiety#long-term-strategies>

- Question your thought pattern
- Practise focused, deep breathing
- Use aromatherapy
- Go for a walk or do 15 mins of yoga
- Write down your thoughts

Look on Facebook and Twitter and follow @YoungMindsUK

to get hints and tips regularly



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For anyone feeling anxious in social situations:

“Understanding our emotions can uncover deep-rooted beliefs we weren’t aware of. This can be a painful process however it is incredibly helpful in the long run. It can help us to understand and process our feelings more easily and enable us to meet ourselves with compassion when we have strong reactions to things. This, in turn, can help us to cope better day-to-day and generally be kinder to ourselves.”



How to support a child experiencing depression:

Always take the signs and symptoms very seriously and don't dismiss your child's behaviour. Try to be patient, because they are not choosing to be anxious or depressed.

Provide a safe space for them to talk about how they are feeling. Do an activity they enjoy with them, chat to them on the way home from school in the car, this may encourage them to open up in a less formal way than face to face conversations as this can feel confrontational.

Sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger than relatives or friends. Share resources with them (see below) and empower them to talk and seek help for themselves.

Contact your GP to get further help. However your son/daughter may find it difficult to talk them, so encourage them to write down or draw how they feel and take these notes with you.

Suicidal thoughts or behaviours are an emergency and must be considered as such. If your son/daughter is at harm of hurting themselves, stay with the, and remove all means of harm. You may need to call 999 or take them to A & E.

How to support a child experiencing anxiety:

Don't put pressure on them to do more than they feel comfortable with. Try to be as patient as you can and listen to their wishes. If they are forced into situations before they feel comfortable this can make their anxiety worse.

If a child is having a panic attack, getting them outside, talking to them calmly or doing breathing exercises with them can help.

Find out as much as you can about anxiety. This can help you understand what they are going through.

Ask about their experience. Ask it feel for them on a day to day basis, what makes it better or worse. Listening to them helps you empathise with them.

Some specific support for anxiety and depression:

Infoline 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm)

Youngmind's Crisis messenger text YM to 85258

Link to the Mind website - [Looking after your wellbeing | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/anxiety-fear-panic/>

Anxiety Self-help guide: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/anxiety-self-help-guide/>

Useful places to go for information for your son/daughter:

Samaritans: 116 123

Childline 0800 1111 Specifically online safety 0808 800 5002

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/> 0808 802 5544

<https://www.kooth.com/>