



# Understanding and supporting mental health and anxiety in our children

What is anxiety?  
When is anxiety a problem?  
Spotting the signs  
Supporting your child  
5 signs of wellbeing.



With input from  
Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health



# Britain's got talent Mental Wellness Campaign.

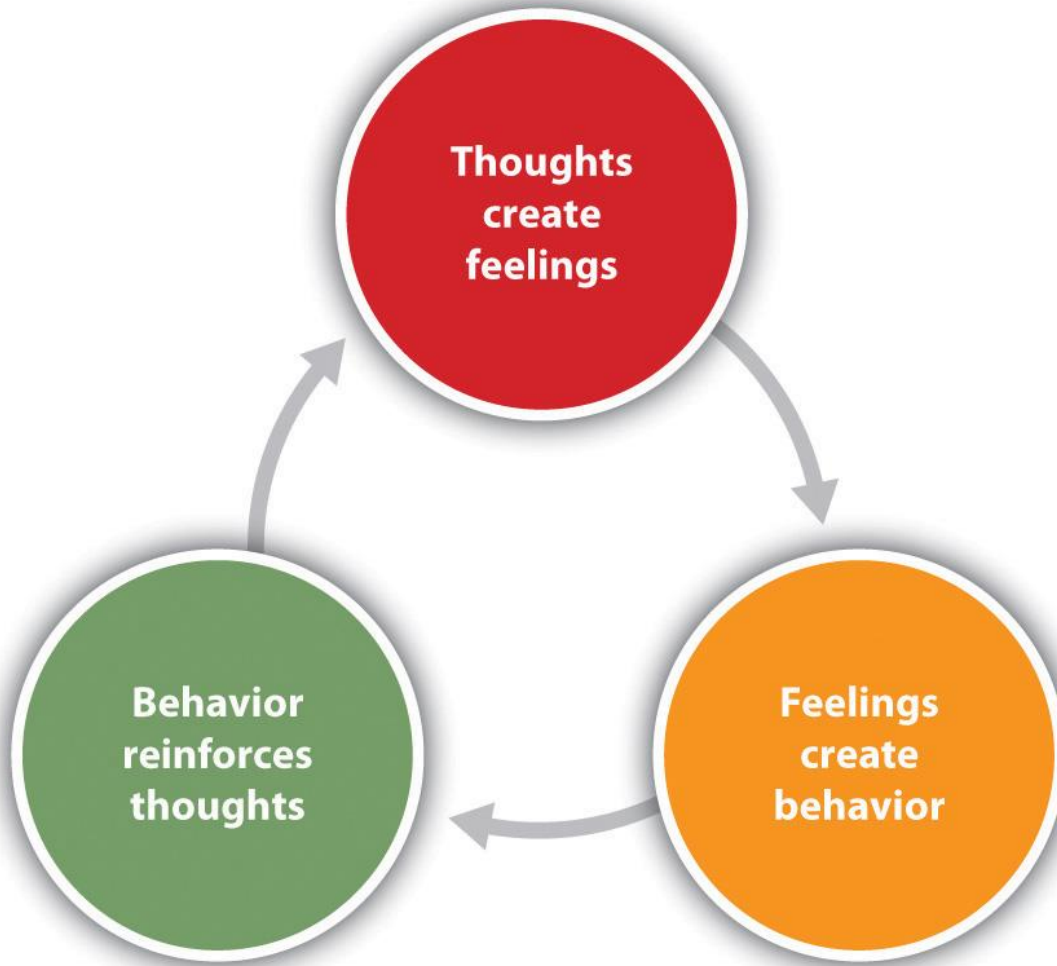
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# Good mental health, why is it important to us all?

- Mentally healthy children can develop intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.
- They can develop and sustain personal relations.
- They can be happy alone.
- They can show empathy to others.
- They have a sense of right or wrong.



# Feelings, thoughts and behaviour



# What is anxiety?

- There are 4 parts:
- Physical
- Emotional
- Thoughts
- Behaviour



# When is anxiety a problem?

- Anxiety is normal – when is it problematic?
- Is it developmentally normal and in proportion to the situation, e.g. separation anxiety in younger children?
- What are the triggers?



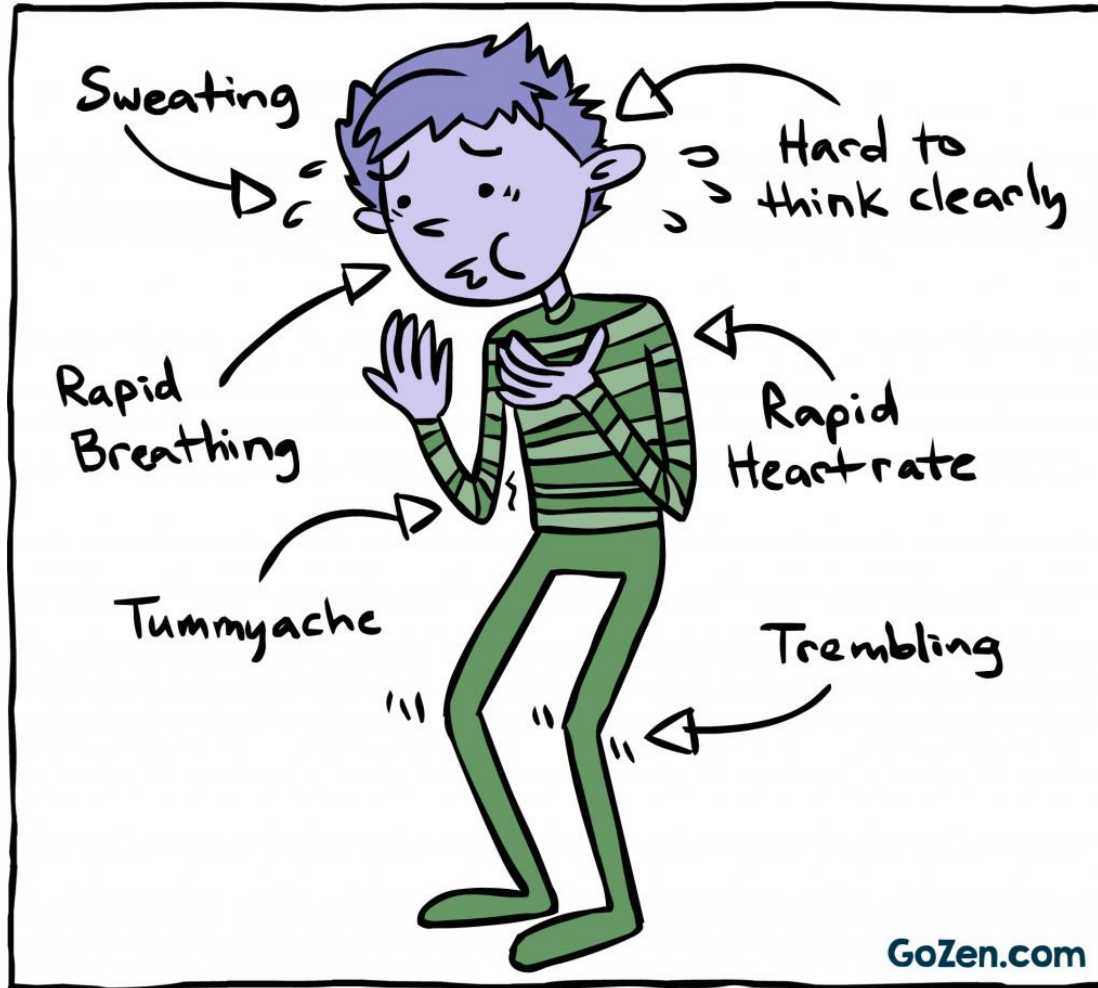
# Risk factors

- Environment – parental anxiety / environmental factors, e.g. school transition, separation, moving house, friendships, poor family relationships, bereavement
- ACE Indicators
- Genetic factors
- Temperament and personality

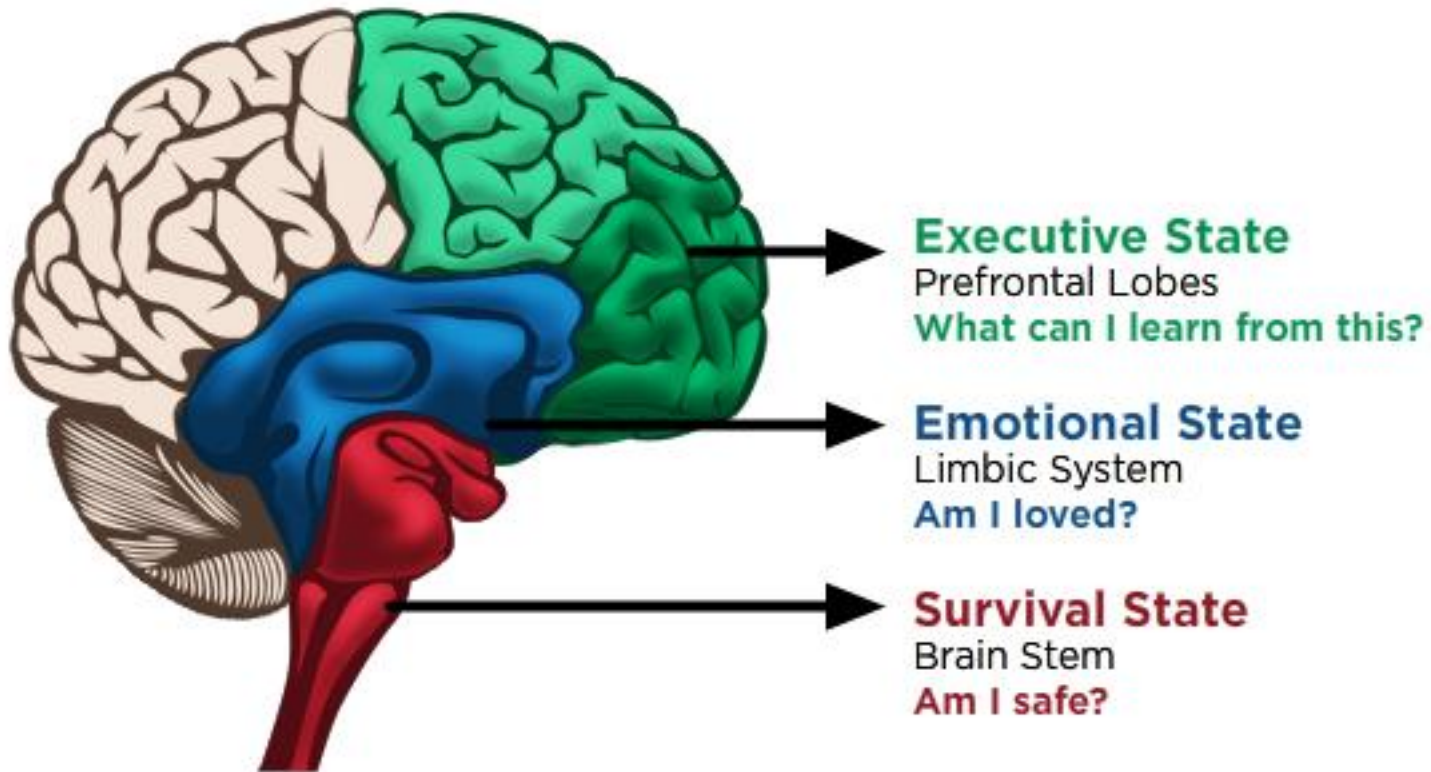




# What does anxiety look like?



# Feelings, thoughts and behaviour



# Adolescent brain development

- During the first year the brain develops very rapidly
- Adolescence is next time that the brain develops so much
- This development lasts from the age of 12 to the mid-20s
- There are scientific reasons relating to the brain's development which have a huge impact on teenager's behaviour

# What behaviours are affected?

- Decision making skills
- Being highly sensitive to social circumstance
- Sleeping patterns
- Emotional outbursts
- Most productive time to learn



# How to spot the signs in your young person

- Unexplained physical symptoms e.g. tummy ache, headaches, fatigue sometimes real or as a way of avoiding particular situations e.g. going to school or social events, exams.
- Needing constant reassurance from parents.
- Asking questions about things that have or might have happened – imagining the worst.
- Difficulty in sleeping.
- Overly perfectionist in relation to school work and appearance e.g. coming up to social events.

# School – How to spot the signs

- May be extremely quiet, withdrawn at school
- Significant changes in academic performance, needing lots of re assurance from teachers.
- Isolated at break times
- May show physical signs of anxiety, sweating, rapid breathing, trembling
- Loss of interest in previous hobbies



# Achievement stress

- Find time to talk about learning and support areas that are under-developed
- Encourage regular extra-curriculum activities such as sports, walking the dog, other hobbies.
- Encourage healthy eating and exercise as this will reduce stress and improve concentration.
- Do not pressure them to study. Encourage them.
- Try and find ways to help them study, showing your support.
- Preparedness for learning

# What can you do to help

- Try to recognise when **you** are getting anxious as this may increase your child's anxiety. It is normal to feel anxious at time.
- Anxiety is normal – when to be concerned – Impact on daily life, out of proportion to the vent/age appropriate?
- Praise for steps in the right direction – face the fear gradually.
- Be honest and talk about your feelings.





# What can you do to help

- Talk to your child about their worries and fears.
- Encourage your child to have a go.
- Praise for steps in the right direction.
- Acknowledge setbacks are normal.



# Supporting your child/young person

- Listen / be calm / reassure
- Help your child to identify and recognise their feelings
- Break down the worries, one by one and take one step at a time
- Ensure that all parents/carers are consistent



# Help your child/young person to rate their worries

- Look at a simple scale from 1 to 10 or use a smiley face chart to enable your child to rate their worries.
- Remember – anxiety is a continuum – anxious feelings will pass.
- Make sure that your child can talk to you and/or another appropriate adult.
- Encourage resilience – give your child the tools to help themselves.

# Simple strategies for supporting your child

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Good diet
- Reduce technology
- Read stories / talk / listen to CDs
- Spend quality time with your child – have fun
- Relaxation / mindfulness / breathing
- If you are very concerned talk to your child's teacher and/or the GP



Happy



Frustrated



Silly



Afraid



Excited



Angry



Worried



Relaxed



Hyper



Thankful



Jealous



Proud



Loved



Disappointed



shy



sad



Forgiving



Confused



Peaceful



Safe



Brave



Annoyed



Bored



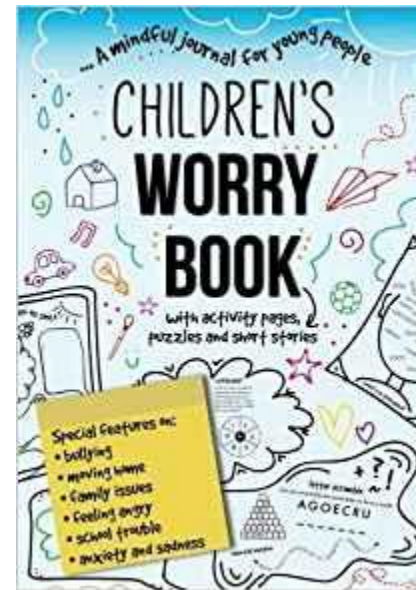
Graceful

# Mindfulness

- Five finger breathing.
- Sparkle jar.
- Mindful colouring, you can draw.
- Guided meditation for children
- Relaxing music
- Cosmic kids
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-CYBzxulsM>

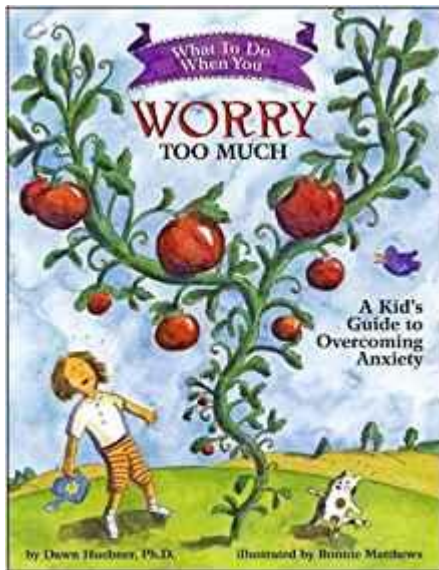
# Recommended books.

- Some children find it helpful to write feelings down. Several friends have recommended this book.
- Other children find worry boxes a useful way to share their worries and feelings.
- Worry people



# Recommended books

Many to choose from.





# Wellbeing

Connect

Give

Be active



Keep learning

Take notice

# 5 steps to wellbeing.

- <https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=5+steps+to+wellbeing#id=1&vid=c8b6ef3a7e3dc7fc028edf1da09e514c&action=click>
- <https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

# Resources

- [www.headspace.com/kids](http://www.headspace.com/kids)
- [www.Kooth.com](http://www.Kooth.com)
- Health for teens
- Health for kids
- [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
- [www.hpft.nhs.uk/wellbeing-service](http://www.hpft.nhs.uk/wellbeing-service)
- [www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk](http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk)
- Books
- Relaxation tapes
- Fiddle toys / sensory toys
- Breathing exercises
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Young Minds – parent line 0800 802 5544

# Local support for young people

- Kooth – [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) – NHS-funded online counselling. Fully trained and supervised counsellors. Young people can book in for regular counselling or visit the website and find resources to support emotional wellbeing, including stories from other young people.
- School Nursing support for emotional wellbeing – up to 6 sessions for low-level anxiety. Parents can refer using the online referral form:  
<https://www.hct.nhs.uk/forms/school-nursing-form.asp>

# Local support for anxiety

- Local counselling organisations with NHS funding; Tilehouse (Hitchin & Stevenage), Raphael House (Hatfield & WGC), Signpost (Watford, Hertsmere and Dacorum), Youth Talk (St Albans)
- Safe Space, counselling in schools
- Families First emotional wellbeing team
- Apps, eg. SAM (Self-help for Anxiety Management) helpful Interactive games and tools