

Worries and Anxiety

FOR KIDS



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What is anxiety?

Sometimes, you might be in a situation that makes you feel worried or scared, but when it's over, you feel calm. You might even forget all about it. Anxiety is when you keep feeling that way, even when the situation is over. You might not even know when you're feeling worried, and that's ok.

Feeling worried from time to time happens to everyone - even adults. If your worries make you stop doing things like play with friends or do homework, you might need a little bit of help. If worries make you feel like you can't do things you normally do, like go to school, you may need a little bit of help.



Types of anxiety

There are lots of different types of anxiety that can affect people of all ages.

Some are more likely to affect adults, while some are more likely to affect children.

1 in 6

Young
people may
experience
anxiety

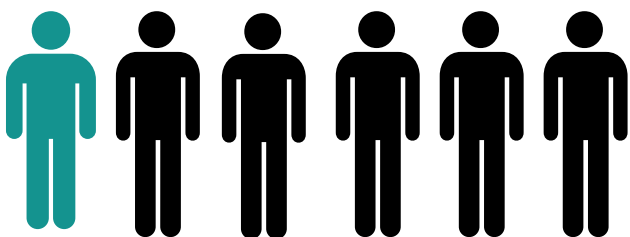
- Anxiety UK

- Separation anxiety. Worrying about not being with your family or someone who looks after you.
- General anxiety. Feeling worried about a lot of things. Feeling anxious most days, or finding it hard to remember the last time you didn't feel worried.
- School-based anxiety. Feeling worried about going to school, schoolwork, friends, or bullying.

How common is it?

Feeling worried or anxious sometimes happens to everyone.

Researchers think that about 1 in 6 young people might experience anxiety at some point.



Why do people experience anxiety?

We don't always know. Sometimes big changes like moving house or changing schools makes people feel anxious. Sometimes anxiety can run in families.

One good way to think about anxiety is imagine it like a bucket. When lots of little things happen, lots of little worries start filling up our bucket. One day, there may be so many little worries, they all come tumbling out. That's how anxiety can seem to come out of nowhere.

What does anxiety look like?

You can't see anxiety, but there are lots of things you can look out for. Anxiety can affect people in lots of different ways. It can make some people feel sick, or others tearful.

We call these physical and emotional symptoms. Some people might feel lots or even all of them, while others feel one or two.



What does anxiety look like?

Someone with anxiety might:

- Find it difficult to sleep, keep waking up in the night, have bad dreams, or wet the bed
- Be tearful, angry, or grumpy without knowing why
- Have trouble concentrating or eating
- Be worried about trying new things
- Want to avoid things they enjoy like playing football or reading in the class play
- Keep thinking about the same negative thoughts
- Feel like they have a tummy ache, butterflies, chest pains, or headaches
- Need the toilet a lot more than usual

Experiencing some of these doesn't mean you have anxiety, but you should talk to someone you trust. **If you can't talk to a parent or teacher, pick someone you want to talk to about what you're feeling.** You may not know what's making you feel this way, but talking to someone can help.



Top tips for tackling worries

There are lots of ways to tackle our worries, no matter how big or small. You could...

Talk to someone

Lots of people care about and love you. Find someone you trust. It doesn't have to be your parents. It could be a teacher, an aunt or uncle, even a family friend. Try and explain to them how you're feeling.

Talking out loud about what worries you is a big step towards finding a way to manage what you're feeling.

Learn the signs

Next time you feel worried, stop and think.

Is your breathing fast or slow?

How does your tummy and chest feel?

Are you doing anything out of the ordinary, like fidgeting a lot or needing to go to the loo more than usual?

Try and remember how you feel and what you do.

Next time you spot yourself feeling or thinking this way, let an adult know and they can try and help.

Think things through

It's easy to imagine the worst-case scenario, and to get stuck on how awful something may be.

Imagine your friend invites you to a sleepover, but you're worried because you haven't been on one before.

It might feel easier to say you don't want to go, but what if you could have had a really fun time? What about the next time someone asks you to a sleepover?

Think about what could do instead of avoiding your worry and talk to someone.

Top tips for tackling worries

Look in the library

There are lots and lots of books about anxiety for everyone.

Your school library should have some to choose from. Ask the librarian or your teacher to help you find one if you aren't sure where to look.

If you don't like reading or find it hard, there are lots of books you can read with your parents or teacher.

Take a deep breath

Try counting to three in your head while taking a deep, steady breath.

Now count to three again while you breathe out.

Try this a few times; you should feel a little bit calmer.

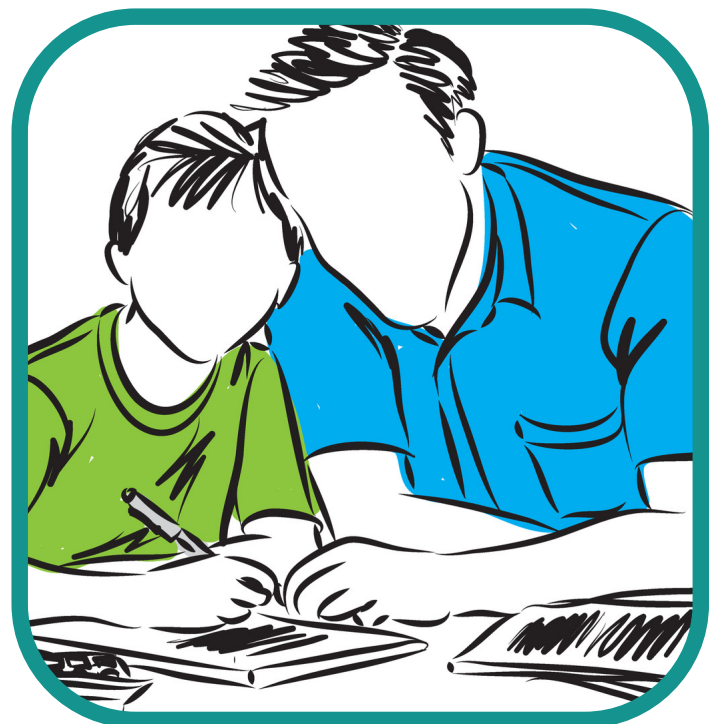
Keep a diary

Try keeping a diary of your worries.

Every time you feel anxious, nervous, or worried, write down what you are feeling.

This might help you figure out things that are making you feel worried that you might not have realised.

It can also be a good way to share what you're feeling with an adult you trust.



What if that doesn't help?

If you're still feeling anxious or worried a lot of the time, your parents might go with you to talk to your doctor. Your doctor can figure out how to help you feel better.

They might recommend you talk to a specialist in counselling sessions. Counsellors help people find what makes them feel anxious, and how they can feel better.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is another kind of talking therapy that doctors might suggest. With CBT, a therapist helps you change the way you think. This can help you find new ways to deal with things that make you feel anxious.

Medication can help people feel calmer and think differently about things that worry them.

Some people find yoga, hypnotherapy, meditation, or mindful breathing classes help them relax. There are lots of different things that can help. Keep in mind that everyone is different. If one kind of treatment doesn't help, there are still plenty more you can try.



Asking for help

If you're anxious about something or worrying more than usual, talk to someone you trust. It can be anyone - your mum or dad, a teacher at school, your grandparents, or a family friend. Pick a time when you know they will be free, or ask them when would be a good time to talk.

If you're really worried about talking, try writing down or practicing what you might say. If you're prepared, it might not seem quite so scary. You can always show your written-down worries to someone if this might help.

Remember that there are people who care, who love you, and will want to listen and help. They just need you to take the first step and let them know how you're feeling.

