

# Anxiety



# What is anxiety?

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW9cqh1r6-s>

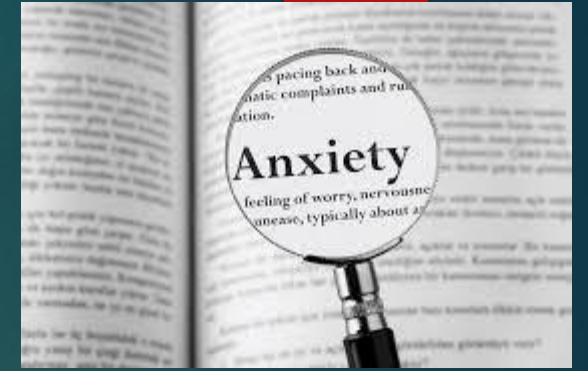
▶ [https://youtu.be/tNsTy-j\\_sQs](https://youtu.be/tNsTy-j_sQs)



# Fear v Anxiety

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v5E6syVppi>

# What is anxiety?



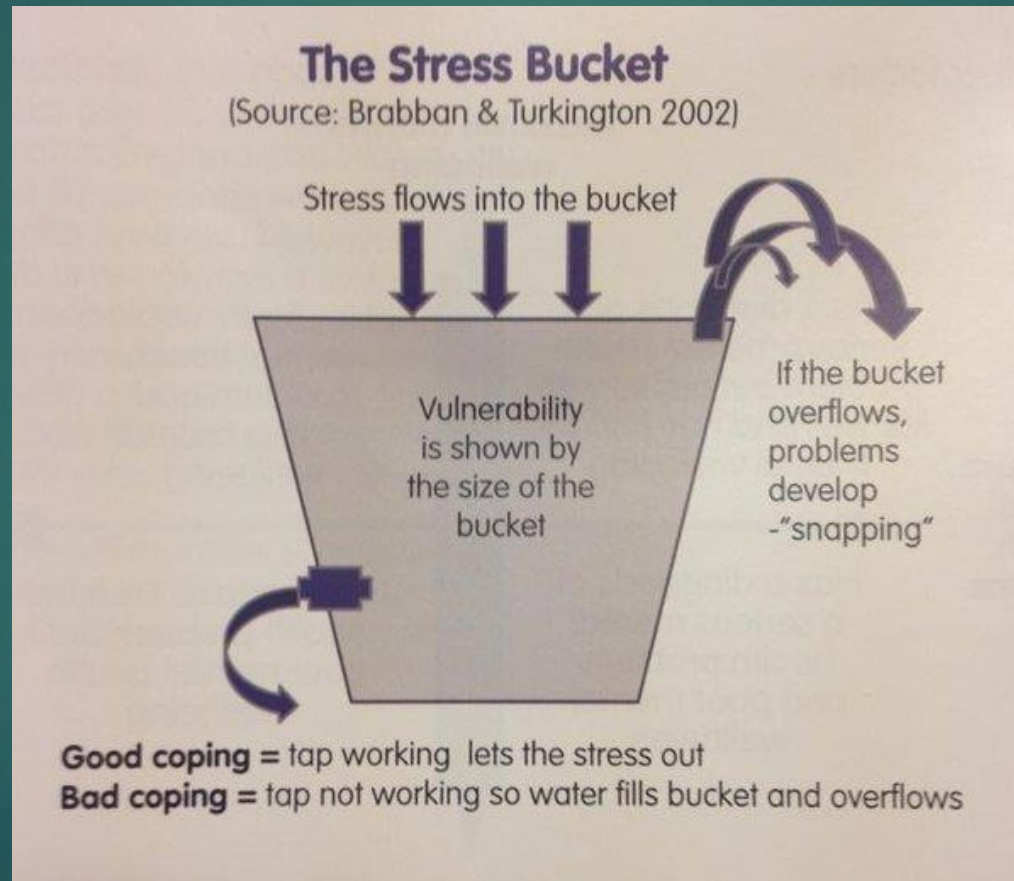
- ▶ Dictionary definition
- ▶ 1. a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.
- ▶ **Anxiety** is an **emotion** characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with **anxiety** disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry.

We ALL get anxious at times and it can be useful!!!

# When is anxiety a problem for children?

- ▶ Anxiety becomes a problem for children when it starts to get in the way of their day to day life.
- ▶ When children go to great lengths to avoid things or situations that make them feel anxious.
- ▶ Severe anxiety can harm children's mental and emotional wellbeing and can cause low self-esteem and confidence.

# How full is your stress bucket?



# What does anxiety look like to you?

Anxiety can manifest itself in a variety of ways:

- ▶ Physically
- ▶ Psychologically
- ▶ Behaviourally

# Physical Symptoms of Anxiety

- ▶ Cardiovascular – palpitations, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, flushing.
- ▶ Respiratory – hyperventilation, shortness of breath.
- ▶ Neurological – dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling, and numbness.
- ▶ Gastrointestinal – choking, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.
- ▶ Musculoskeletal – muscle aches and pains, especially neck, shoulders and lower back, restlessness, tremor and shaking.



# Psychological symptoms of Anxiety

- ▶ Unrealistic and/or excessive fear and worry, about past and future events.
- ▶ Mind racing or going blank.
- ▶ Decreased concentration and memory.
- ▶ Difficulty making decisions.
- ▶ Irritability, impatience anger.
- ▶ Confusion.
- ▶ Restlessness, feeling on edge, nervousness.
- ▶ Tiredness, sleep disturbance, vividness of dreams.
- ▶ Unwanted, unpleasant repetitive thoughts.

# Behavioural symptoms of Anxiety

- ▶ Avoidance of situations.
- ▶ Repetitive, compulsive behaviour, e.g. excessive checking.
- ▶ Distress in social situations.
- ▶ Urges to escape situations that cause discomfort (phobic behaviour).

# Fight, Flight, Freeze

- ▶ When we are anxious our primitive brain kicks in and we respond by instinctively going into fight, flight or freeze mode.
- ▶ Watch out for:-
- ▶ Fight – an aggressive response to simple requests or offers of help; maybe starting arguments with family members.
- ▶ Flight – avoiding tasks they need to do by spending time scrolling through social media, watching you tube videos or gaming.
- ▶ Freeze – trying to study or complete the things they need to do, but instead spending ages looking at a blank page or reading the same page in a book over and over because it won't go in.

# Signs of anxiety

- ▶ finding it hard to concentrate
- ▶ not sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams
- ▶ not eating properly
- ▶ quickly getting angry or irritable, and being out of control during outbursts
- ▶ constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- ▶ feeling tense and fidgety, or using the toilet often
- ▶ always crying
- ▶ being clingy
- ▶ complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell
- ▶ Separation anxiety is common in younger children, whereas older children and teenagers tend to worry more about school or have social anxiety.



# Causes of Anxiety in children

- ▶ Some children are simply born more anxious and less able to cope with stress than others.
- ▶ Children can also pick up anxious behaviour from being around anxious people.
- ▶ Some children develop anxiety after stressful events, such as:
  - frequently moving house or school
  - parents fighting or arguing
  - the death of a close relative or friend
  - becoming seriously ill or getting injured in an accident
  - school-related issues like exams or bullying
  - being abused or neglected
- ▶ Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum disorders are more likely to have problems with anxiety.

# How to support a young person displaying signs of anxiety...

- ▶ Talk to your child about their anxiety and worries.
- ▶ Reassure and show them you understand how they feel.
- ▶ Explain what anxiety is and how it physically affects our bodies.
- ▶ Explore and help them find solutions to their worries.
- ▶ Teach your child to recognise the signs of anxiety in themselves and to ask for help.
- ▶ Routines are reassuring so try to stick to a regular daily routine where possible.
- ▶ Try not to become anxious yourself or overprotective – encourage your child to find ways to manage their anxiety.

# Top tips for parents

- ▶ **1. Avoid the temptation to rescue** - Every time you help your child to avoid a situation that makes them anxious or step in to 'rescue' them, you inadvertently send the message that there is something to be worried about and/or that s/he can't handle the situation on their own.
- ▶ **2. Help them to recognise and make sense of physical symptoms** - Quite often young people don't realise that their fast heartbeat, quick breathing or that feeling in their stomach is anxiety. They may sometimes describe being anxious as having a 'stomach-ache'. These feelings can be worrying in themselves, so helping your child to recognise them and reassuring them that they will pass can be helpful.
- ▶ **3. Make the most of drive time!** - Just 5 minutes with your child each day where you don't give them any instructions or advice but allow them to 'take the lead' can boost their wellbeing and enable them to open up conversations. Children will often talk about tricky things when you can't make eye contact – like when you're driving!
- ▶ **4. Encourage sleep!** - Don't discuss worries at night. Teach kids that they can 'put their worries down' for a while by getting them to write them on bits of paper and put them in a box. You can then talk through them later.
- ▶ **5. Family time** - Being anxious can be lonely. Plan things to do as a family and encourage them to focus on the moment they're in.

# Strategies to help anxious children

- ▶ Practice simple relaxation techniques, such as focussing on their breathing.....we often use “Smell the roses and blow the candles out”
- ▶ Distraction can be really helpful for younger children.
- ▶ Use a worry box or worry monster. Encourage children to write down their worries which can then be shared and hopefully solutions can be found.
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlyXffZfynM>



# Self Help Strategies

- ▶ Regular relaxation, e.g. breathing.
- ▶ Counting.
- ▶ Mechanical tasks.
- ▶ Daily exercise 30 – 60 minutes per day.
- ▶ Sleep. (Sleep hygiene -wind down time, no technology in the bedroom, no caffeine after 2pm!)
- ▶ Nutrition.
- ▶ Talking and sharing worries. (Worry Dolls, write it down, Will it still matter next week? Catastrophe scale.)
- ▶ Visualisation. (Train passing by, putting worry in a hot air balloon and letting it go)

# Useful Resources

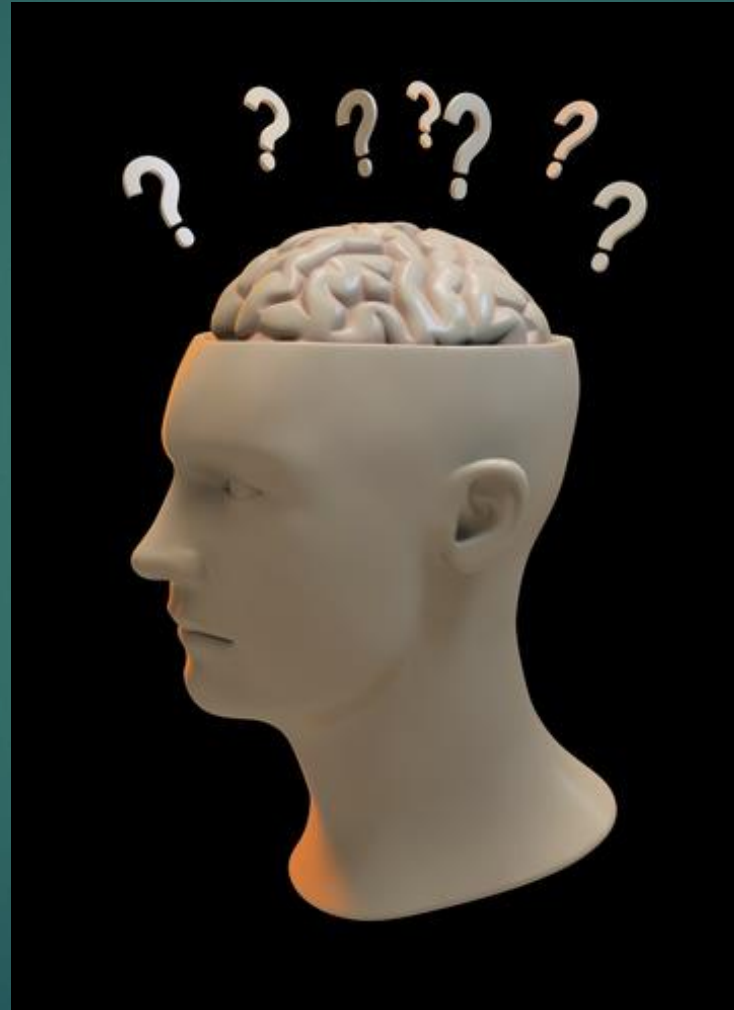
## Websites

- [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)
- [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.juvenilementalhealthmatters.com](http://www.juvenilementalhealthmatters.com) (CBT workbook)
- [https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/anxious\\_child.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/anxious_child.pdf)

## ▶ Stories

- *When my worries get too big!* by Kari Dunn Buron
- *The Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside
- *Willy and the Wobbly House* by Margot Sunderland
- *A Nifflenoo Called Nevermind* by Margot Sunderland
- *Teenie Weenie in a Too Big World* by Margot Sunderland
- *Stress can really get on your nerves* by Trevor Romain & Elizabeth Verdick.

Any questions?



# Sources of information

- ▶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety-disorders-in-children/>
- ▶ Primary Mental Health Service in partnership with Mind and relate.
- ▶ The Mental Health Foundation – The Anxious Child
- ▶ SOLAR – Barnardo's – Helping your child with Anxiety.
- ▶ Stallard – Anxiety resources
- ▶ SISS – SEMH team – supporting anxious children in school.
- ▶ Mental Health First Aid.