

# SEMH Team Newsletter



Newsletter No 7



## Welcome to our Seventh SEMH Team Newsletter!

Since March we have all experienced huge changes in our lives, adjusted to being in lockdown and possibly experienced anxiety about COVID 19. We are now moving into a time of change again for some pupils, as we begin the phased return to schools. Some children and teenagers will go back to school for the first time since March, others may have to wait a little longer. Some are greatly looking forward to returning, whereas others are feeling more anxious. Similarly, some parents are pleased, while others are worried. Our newsletter this week focuses on coping with feelings which can arise from experiencing change. Everyone worries, but ongoing stress can impact negatively on our mental and physical health. However, if we learn to manage our emotions, our wellbeing is improved, we can cope with difficult situations, engage socially with others, boost our immune systems and improve sleep.



### Remember this!



There are lots of reasons why we become anxious!

- Life events—Like COVID 19.
- Thinking styles—always thinking the worse (See page two— Thinking Patterns)
- Evolutionary reasons— anxiety can help us to stay safe.
- Biological reasons— there are other anxious people in the family.

### Fight or flight.

We are programmed to behave in one of the following ways when we are anxious.

- Fight - verbally or physically.
- Flight - run away.
- Flock - find others to feel safe with.
- Freeze - remain still.

Which response do you, your child / teen show most?



### Spot the physical signs of Anxiety in yourself and your child/teen.

Increased heart rate    Rapid breathing or breathlessness    Sweating  
Trembling    Stomach pain/nausea/digestive problems    Trouble sleeping  
Crying/shouting    Tantrums/out of control outbursts  
Being clingy towards adults    Difficulties with concentration.



### Books can help reduce anxiety—here are some suggestions

- The Invisible String** (Patricia Karst)
- The Huge bag of Worries** (Virginia Ironside)
- Dear Teacher** (Amy Husband)
- The Dot** (Peter H. Reynolds)
- The Next Place** (Warren Hanson)
- Tear Soup** (Pat Schweibert and Chuck DeKlyen)



## Patterns of Unhelpful Thinking.

It is good to be able to identify different patterns of unhelpful thinking as this helps us to avoid them.

Predicting the future

“When I go back to school no-one will speak to me.” **A more helpful thought:** “When I go back to school I’m going to speak to...”

Mindreading

“People think I’m a rubbish parent!” **A more helpful thought:** “I will do the best I can and no one is perfect. “My friends think I am stupid.” **A more helpful thought:** “I’ll do my best, it doesn’t matter what others people think.”

catastrophising

“We will never be able to go out and see our friends again.” **A more helpful thought:** “One day I’ll see my friends again and until then I can ‘Facetime’ them.”

Focusing on negatives

Focusing on one thing that has gone wrong when lots of other things are right. **A more helpful action :** to focus on the positives and learn from any mistakes

Should Statements

“I should never be anxious.” **A more helpful thought:** “It’s ok to be anxious, and I can make a plan to cope and will then feel less anxious.”

Overgeneralising

“I had a horrible time at school yesterday so today will be the same.” **A more helpful thought:** “Yesterday wasn’t brilliant but today I will try again as it could be a good day.”

What if statements

“What if I catch COVID 19? **A more helpful thought:** “I may not catch COVID 19.” or “Most people survive COVID 19 and only have minor symptoms. The NHS will do their best for me.”

Labelling

“I’m always anxious.” **A more helpful thought:** “I’m feeling anxious right now but if I use the strategies I have learned I can calm myself again.”



### Some suggestions to help...



If your child worries at bedtime try one of the following:

- **Worry dolls/ worry boxes/monsters - can be home made.**
- **Whiteboard/voice recorder/notebook at the side of the bed.**



## Re-establish a Bedtime Routine for your Child or Teen:

During lockdown some families have chosen to keep routines in place while others have relaxed them. Re-establishing routines may help children and teens who are feeling anxious to feel calmer, providing a predictable routine. This may also help to improve the parent/child relationship and demonstrate that you, as their parent or carer, are still in charge.

### Sleep Hygiene



1. Talk to your child or teen about how much sleep they are getting.
2. Make the room cool, quiet and dark.
3. Make sure that all mobiles, tablets, consoles, T.V.'s are switched off 1 hour before bed. Parents/carers usually pay phone and wi-fi bills, so remember you have the ultimate say about how they are used.
4. No phones, tablets, laptops should be left in bedrooms overnight.
5. Try to establish an evening routine with the same activities and timings each night. Avoid daytime naps.
6. A milky drink and or banana for supper.
7. Keep caffeinated drinks for during the day and limit them to 1-2 per day. (Avoid completely for children)
8. Exercise during the day, but not too close to bedtime.
9. Shower/bath before bed—the drop in temperature after the shower/bath makes us sleepy.



### Sleep deprivation:

*Limits ability to learn, concentrate and solve problems*

*Poor memory*

*Moodiness*

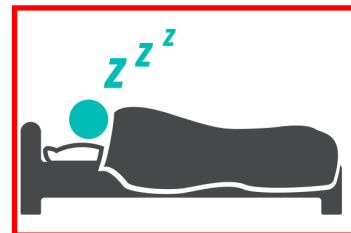
*Poor decision making*

*Aggression*

*Skin conditions*

*Make poor food choices—sugary snacks*

*Eat too much*



Kooth—an online mental health community



For children and teens aged 11—25 (18 in some areas), Kooth is safe and anonymous, offering mental health support and counselling online, using a variety of different methods.

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

### Useful links

<https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-at-bedtime/>

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/12-kid-friendly-strategies-to-calm-anxiety-at-night-from-a-child-therapist>



<https://childrensmid.org/browse-by-age-group/toddler-pre-school/sleep-anxiety-children-10-ways-stop-worrying-get-child-sleep-2/>



Any questions? Please contact the SEMH team via Jane Shaw  
Team Coordinator  
[jashaw@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:jashaw@solihull.gov.uk)