



# A Parent's Guide on Supporting Your Child with Anxiety

Information leaflet

Provided by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

# What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a normal emotion. It helps us cope with difficult, challenging or dangerous situations.
- Anxiety is common. There are times when we all feel worried, anxious, restless or stressed.
- Anxiety becomes a problem when it stops your child from enjoying things they like to do and starts to affect their school work, family relationships, friendships or social life.

## Anxious feelings

When we become anxious our body prepares itself for some form of physical action, often called the “flight or fight” reaction. As the body prepares itself we may notice a number of physical changes such as:

- Shortness of breath
- Tight chest
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Palpitations
- Muscle pain, especially head and neck pain
- Wanting to go to the toilet
- Shakiness
- Sweating
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty swallowing
- Blurred vision
- Butterflies or feeling sick

## Often there is a reason for feeling anxious such as:

- Facing a difficult exam
- Saying something to someone they may not like
- Having to go somewhere new or do something scary

Once the unpleasant event is over our bodies return to normal and we usually end up feeling better.

## Worrying thoughts

Sometimes there may not be an obvious reason for feeling anxious. Anxiety can be caused by the way we think about things.

We may think that:

- Things will go wrong
- We will be unsuccessful
- We will be unable to cope

## Stop doing things

Anxiety is unpleasant and so we find ways of making ourselves feel better. Feared or difficult situations may be avoided and we might also stop doing things that worry us.

The more we stop or avoid things, the less we do and the harder it becomes to face our fears and overcome our worries.

## What is self-help guided CBT?

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is based on the idea that how we feel and what we do are due to the way we think. CBT is one of the most effective ways of helping children with anxiety problems.

CBT assumes that a lot of anxiety problems are related to the way we think. Because we can change the way we think, we can learn to control our anxious feelings.

- Thinking in more positive ways can help us feel good
- Thinking in more negative ways may make us feel fearful, tense, sad, angry or uncomfortable

## Teaching children to understand their thoughts is important. Children with anxiety tend to:

- Think in negative and critical ways
- Overestimate the likelihood of bad things happening
- Focus on things that go wrong
- Underestimate their ability to cope
- Expect to be unsuccessful

## Self-help guided CBT is a practical and fun way of helping children to:

- Identify these negative ways of thinking
- Discover the link between what they think, how they feel and what they do
- Check out the evidence for their thoughts
- Develop new skills to cope with their anxiety

## Support your child

**S – Show your child how to be successful.** Show your child how to successfully approach and cope with anxious situations.

**U – Understand that your child has a problem.** Remember that your child is not being wilfully naughty or difficult. They have a problem and need your help.

**P – Patient approach.** Don't expect things to change quickly, be patient and encourage your child to keep trying.

**P – Prompt new skills.** Encourage and remind your child to practise and use their new skills.

**O – Observe your child.** Watch your child and highlight the positive or successful things they do.

**R – Reward and praise their efforts.** Remember to praise and reward your child for using their new skills and for trying to face and overcome their problems.

**T – Talk about it.** Talking with your child shows them that you care and will help them feel supported.

### Do you have a concern, complaint or comment?

Contact: Patient Relations Team, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust 2 Kings Court, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester. WR5 1JR

**Tel: 01905 681517 Email: [Whcnhs.pals@nhs.net](mailto:Whcnhs.pals@nhs.net)**

### Do you have a communication or information support need?

If so please contact the person who gave you this leaflet so that those needs can be recorded and responded to.

### Do you need to know about accessibility?

Read our detailed guides at  
[www.AccessAble.co.uk](http://www.AccessAble.co.uk)



Do you get stressed,  
anxious or have low  
mood?

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