

Managing Anxiety



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction, it is designed to keep us safe. It keeps us alert so we can spot and avoid danger.

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.

We all have feelings of anxiety at some point. For example, you may be worried about an exam, job interview or travelling to a new place.

Children with additional needs find it very difficult to control their worries. They may feel very anxious about going to school or talking to new people.

What are the signs of anxiety?

Some of the signs of anxiety are: Panic attacks, Sleep problems, negative thoughts, self-harm.

What causes anxiety in children with additional needs?

Children with additional needs may experience anxiety because they have the following reasons:

- Sensory processing being over or under sensitive to light, smells, sound or touch
- They find it difficult to adapt to certain sensory situations
- Difficulties with communication and social interactions
- Trying to fit in or appear normal
- Worried about coping with changes



How to understand the triggers of anxiety?

Make notes to identify when your child is anxious, what are the symptoms and triggers?

How to help children manage their anxiety?

Help reduce uncertainties with a daily schedule of activities.

How to adapt the environment to help reduce anxiety?

Change the surroundings to minimise sensory overload :

- Use clear visual instructions
- Identify potential sensory triggers
- Have a quiet space available for a break
- Allow children to leave or enter the class room to avoid the busy break times

Self-soothe

If your child can self-soothe with sensory toys such as fidget toys or special interest toys this can help reduce their anxiety.





Tips to help children with anxiety

- Communicate with your child using their preferred method of communication
- Activities are often good to help start conversations
- Take their anxiety seriously
- Use closed questions to make it easier for them to answer
- Keep calm and be positive
- Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour and help them develop the skills to manage their anxiety

Regularly ask them or communicate with them in their most effective communicative method to see how they are feeling.

