

THE ANXIETY EDITION

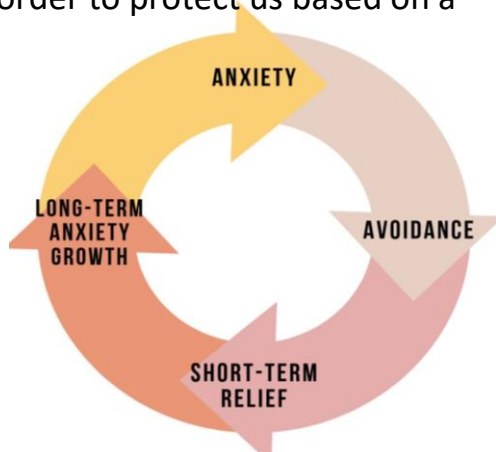


**GEORGE
SALTER
ACADEMY**

Welcome to the GSA Mental Health and Well-Being bulletin! This is a guide for parents and carers to support you with encouraging your teen to look after and manage their own mental health every day. This month's bulletin looks at anxiety; what it is, how to recognise some signs and symptoms and the impact of COVID-19. It is also going to look at some effective methods of reducing and supporting anxiety at home, including some apps and agencies to help.

What is anxiety?

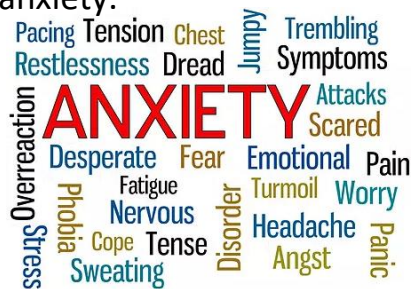
Defined by the charity *Mind* as when an individual feels especially worried, tense or afraid about things that are going to happen, or might happen in the future. It is important to remember that anxiety is a **normal** response we will all experience at some point in our lives. It is a natural reaction for our fight or flight response, where our body decides what to do best in order to protect us based on a



However, when anxiety has a constant impact on aspects of lives and preventing us from completing daily tasks, or has you avoiding aspects, this is when it can become a more significant mental health problem. This can also be known as the **cycle of anxiety**.

Signs and Symptoms

It is important to remember that everyone will experience this differently, and have their own reactions to experiencing and feeling anxious. People can experience heightened emotions when experiencing anxiety.



Prolonged anxiety can impact on children's wellbeing. Signs of this can include:

- Lowered confidence
- Insomnia
- Lack of concentration
- Prolonged avoidance of a situation, place or person
- Negative triad of thoughts; negative thoughts surrounding the self, future and the world.

COVID and Anxiety

Studies and research has shown that during the pandemic, children in particular have had an increase in their anxiety. In secondary school children's anxiety has been concerning, worrying about the impact of COVID on exams and their academic futures, worries about staying on top of school work and concerns surrounding the impact the virus will have on their futures.

- **Teenage girls' mental health has been found to have been affected by the virus the most**
- **Teenage boys are less likely to ask for help or offload about the anxious thoughts they may be experiencing**
- **The virus, lockdown and social isolation has had a huge impact on both genders mental health**

Thinking Errors: The most common trigger for a young person's anxiety.

Anxiety can be triggered by some of these common thinking errors.

- **Catastrophising:** Taking a problem and blowing it out of proportion
- **Fortune telling:** Thinking you know what is going to happen in the future and assuming it will be bad
- **'Should' statements:** Believing things have to be a certain way
- **Self-blaming:** Blaming oneself for anything that goes wrong, even if they had nothing to do with it
- **Blowing things up:** Making a big deal out of something small, or blowing a negative situation up out of proportion

Ways to support your child at home

Top tips and methods for supporting and reducing your child's anxiety at home:

- **Having a regular routine for them to focus on**
- **Encouraging healthy habits: sleep hygiene, diet, regular exercise and water intake**
- **Positive communication: discussing what is on their mind, potential causes for the anxiety to work together to try to find a solution**
- **Spending quality time with each other**
- **Mindful breathing exercises: to regulate and control when feeling anxious or overwhelmed**
- **Setting targets for your child to achieve to reduce anxieties and feel a sense of accomplishment, focussing on the positives.**

Useful Apps and agencies:



Colorfy: A selection of images available to colour in, proven to reduce anxiety



Stress and Anxiety Companion: Breathing exercises, relaxing music and games to help cope with anxious periods



Calm: Techniques to guide through breathing exercises and meditation to reduce anxieties



My Possible Self: Modules guide through methods to manage fear, challenge anxiety and unhelpful thinking



Think Ninja: A variety of tools allowing young people to learn about mental health: including managing anxiety, to stay emotionally and mentally well.



Mental Health Awareness Week 10th-16th May 2021

The Mental Health Foundation are raising awareness this week on the power of nature: the positive impact nature can have on mental health healthy and promoting ways we can **#ConnectWithNature**. Here are some of our Mental Health First Aider's sharing the power nature has on their mental health...

"As the evenings are lighter for longer, I find that on long walks through the countryside help with my wellbeing. I am able to see and hear more than during the long, winter months, and feel my mood lift by being outdoors. There are lots of things to focus on in a natural environment and I find this both calming and beautiful".

Mrs Bradley – English Teacher and SENCo

"I absolutely love taking walks, when weather permits. It is lovely to see the blossoms on the trees and buds developing in the parks; it just give you a sense of re-birth and the colours at this time of year are amazing. Walking makes me feel calm and gives me time to clear my mind".

Mrs Parmar – Attendance Officer

"One of my favourite things to do when I am feeling a bit out of sorts is to get into the garden or go for a walk. I love my garden, being able to plant things and watch them grow reminds me that there is a cycle of life: when a daffodil has lost its bright yellow flower and has started to wilt, I know that next year it will bloom and be beautiful again. That is a powerful reminder that brighter days are coming, maybe not today or the next day, but they will".

Mrs Cook – LSA and iWill Coordinator