

# Understanding Anxiety



Anxiety is a **normal** emotion, but when it becomes overwhelming or persistent, it can affect a young person's ability to function at school, socially, and at home. Common triggers include:

- Academic pressure (e.g. exams, homework)
- Social challenges (e.g. friendships, bullying)
- Transitions (e.g. new school year, changing schools, starting GCSEs)
- Family stress or bereavement
- Health concerns or neurodiversity

Some common signs of anxiety in young people to look out for:

## *Emotional*

- Overwhelmed
- Nervousness/worrying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily tired

## *Physical*

- Rapid heart rate
- Moments of irregular breathing or breathing difficulties
- Gastro-intestinal issues (tummy ache)

## *Behavioural*

- Worried about attending school
- More Irritable
- Avoidance of certain events
- Changes in eating or sleeping

## How Can Parents/Carers Help?

### 1. Listen and Validate:

- Create a safe space for your child to talk.
- Use open-ended questions like: "What's been worrying you lately?"
- Avoid dismissing their feelings. Say: "That sounds tough. I'm here for you."

### 2. Build Routine and Predictability:

- Consistent sleep and meal times
- Morning routines to reduce stress
- Visual weekly planners to help them feel more in control



### 3. Teach Coping Strategies:

- Breathing exercises and grounding techniques
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Journaling or drawing to express emotions



[More information can be found here on these \(Source: Barnardo's\)](#)

### 4. Model Calm and Confidence:

- Children take emotional cues from parents and carers
- Stay calm during stressful moments and speak positively about school
- Share your own coping strategies when you feel anxious

### 5. Work with the School:

- Speak to teachers or pastoral staff about your child's needs
- School can often make small adjustments that have a big impact before it becomes a bigger problem

### 6. Seek Professional Help When Needed:

- Contact your GP, who can make referrals for extra support
- Reach out to mental health charities for support
- If you believe your child is having a mental health crisis, call 111.

## Trusted Resources & Support

### Helplines & Services:

- YoungMinds [Parents Guide](#) and Helpline: 0808 802 5544

- NHS Mental Health Support: [www.nhs.uk/mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health)

-Anxiety UK Resources: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk/resources](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/resources)

-Barnardo's Mental Health Support: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

-Action for Children—Parent Talk [07700 174470](https://07700174470) (WhatsApp textline) [parents.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk)