

HELPING YOUR FAMILY WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY



ARLINGTON **ON YOUR MIND**

- What do you want from today's online workshop?

OUTLINE PLAN

Children and anxiety

My stress and its impact on my family

Trusted resources

Relaxation exercises to share with your kids

Building resilience



CHILDREN AND STRESS

- Some stress and anxiety is **NORMAL**
- Becomes a problem when it
 - Affects wellbeing
 - Gets in the way of everyday life



- **Normal anxiety:** different things at different ages – the dark, insects, monsters, friendships, school, exams – part of growing up and building resilience
- **Stress is part of life,** a natural reaction – teach children ways to manage
- **Covid and lockdown** is an unknown and frightening situation – it is natural for the whole family to feel anxious
- **Problematic anxiety:** paralysis, refusing to eat, avoidance of situations

CHILDREN AND ANXIETY

Anxiety is increasing in young people

- Busier lives/Tight schedules – no ‘down’ time
- Screens for ‘relaxation’ not processing feelings
- Pre-covid 19: Two thirds of young people spend more than three hours in front of a screen during their free time each day
- Neuroscience research has confirmed that this adversely impacts mental health
- Social Media: 1.79 billion of us log onto Facebook each month, the average social media user spends two hours and thirteen minutes on social media every day – nearly 15% of our waking hours. (Gilroy-Ware report)



- **Screen ‘addiction’** anxious teenagers can become ‘dependent’ on screens – and self-medicate: they use their screen time to manage anxiety symptoms. Avoidance of a direct and complex interpersonal world.
- Direct link between social media and sense of entitlement coupled with low self esteem (Reference - Book: Filling the void)
- **Over-scheduling:** Many children have very busy lives and flourish. Some personality types don’t.
- **Routine** – with flexibility rather than rigid schedule

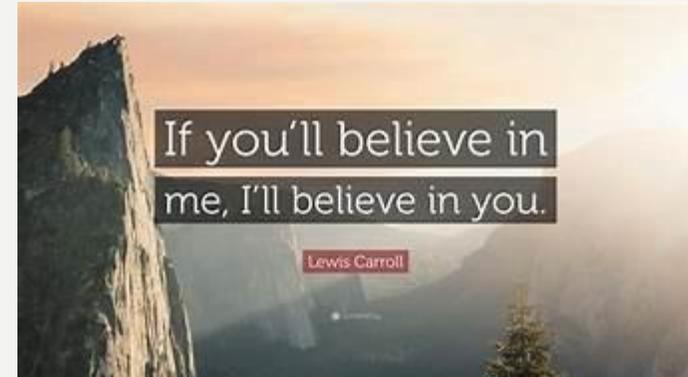
What can you do about it?

- Different strategies for different ages/symptoms

HELPING CHILDREN MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY

What can I do?

- **BELIEVE:** Give your anxious children a sense that you have faith in them. Anxious young people lack faith in themselves and commonly, parents relate to them in ways that confirm this belief.
- **BEHAVE:** From tiny babies children are mirroring our behaviour. What is your relationship with your devices? Do you listen to your children? How do you manage your own anxiety/emotions?
- **SHOW:** Your emotions, show when you 'get it wrong' - talk about your fears and upsets and explain what has happened.



What not to do:

- **Be careful of negative phrases** that reinforce anxiety
- **People don't hear don't**
- **Avoid: There is nothing to worry about**
- There's nothing to worry about, is a rational statement. Anxiety is an irrational process, so these types of statements which are meant to be helpful usually alienate and frustrate the child further.

CHILDREN AND ANXIETY

Is it wrong to avoid places/situation's which make your child anxious?

- Find a balance: Avoiding conflict/challenge increases anxiety
- How do you get out of the 'pit'?
- It is impossible to live without anxiety. Powering through anxious feelings generates feelings of personal satisfaction and confidence
- For example, some anxiety about an important exam will support us to take study more seriously
- It helps to keep children safe, as anxiety supports us to proceed with caution in certain situations – such as covid-19.



What are the signs of anxiety that parents should look out for?

- Many children (and adults) mask their feelings
- Withdrawal from school and regular activities
- Feeling pressured and over-thinking
- Being prone to frustration and tearful meltdowns/angry outbursts (not always anxiety).
- **Food and body issues:** Developing an obsessive relationship to body shape, food and exercise is a common experience for anxious young people
- Family Mealtimes – NO screens big help.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF FIRST

Look after yourself first

Ask open questions, listen and acknowledge

- Make time to do this regularly

Discuss their support networks – are they helping or hindering



MINDFUL FAMILIES ACT DIFFERENTLY

- Be a GRATEFUL PICKLE
- **Gratitude**
- **Play** and have fun
- **Imperfection** – embrace it – share it - learn from it
- **Courageously** – communicate, act – be vulnerable
- **Kindness** – practice support and generosity
- **Listen** with curiosity
- **Enable** forgiveness

Support

- Act differently
- Ask friends/wider family
- Be open to Professional support

1 BE A GRATEFUL PICKLE

- Do you and your family take each other for granted?
- Small gestures of kindness can go unacknowledged.
- Simple shifts can go a long way.
- Thank your children for good behaviour – getting ready on time, helping with chores, thank whoever prepared dinner
- Shared meal times (no screens)



PRACTICE:

Can you show your appreciation more intentionally this week?

Start small so choose something that you naturally feel grateful.

Beware your expectations when doing this
Allow this to be a playful exploration of giving and receiving.

2 PLAY (PICKLE)

What does being PLAYFUL look like to you?

- Find enjoyment from being together
- Purposefully change the day to make it more playful
- When the family plays together, there's also often more laughter which creates a joyful experience of connection and healing. These moments are often the ones that are cherished and remembered for years to come.
- Music and dancing (with chores) – family play list
- Games at the dinner table – 5 second rule, word association, fish flower, weekly game night
- Plan your play - discuss ideas together – time together and one-to-one
- Spontaneous fun
- Be present with young children's play (10 minutes a day)



- **PRACTICE:**
- 5:1 ratio Relationship expert Dr. John Gottman, found that in order to have healthy, stable relationships our ratio of positive interactions should be five times greater than our negative interactions with each other.
- **What ratio would you give your family?**
- **How can you change this?**
- **Loving Kindness in thoughts**
- Practice mindfulness playfully together

3 IMPERFECTION (PICKLE)



Embrace Imperfection

- No matter how many books we read or how much we learn, we will never be “perfect” parents – none of us!
- You will still get triggered, overreact, and say and do things that we wish we hadn't.
- Accept yourself and you can move on : When we can practice loving, radical self-compassion and self-acceptance we are transformed. We become a role model as well as teacher to our children. This helps them to do the same for themselves and each other.
- Be honest about mistakes and welcome learning
- Compliment the beauty in your child's imperfections
- Be present

PRACTICE:

Take a moment to think about some way your mind is telling you that you're falling short as a partner or a parent.

- Now, notice the feeling that that belief brings up as you think about this. Be aware of any places of discomfort and apply a soothing gesture, just like you would to your child if they were upset or feeling shame.
- You can place your hands in a comforting way on your body this could be on your heart, belly, cupping your face, or even giving yourself a hug and say to yourself:
- “My mind is telling me I'm falling short, but the truth is, I'm doing the best that I can. I love my child(ren) with all my heart and give to them in so many other beautiful ways.”
- Let these words linger and let your heart receive them. Feel your body soften.

4 COURAGE (GRATEFUL PICKLE)



Courageously

- Communicate: Being vulnerable is hard – do you avoid tough conversations until they become an argument?
- Being clear and honest with each other about what you need and how you feel is ultimately an act of kindness that creates trust and connection.
- Show up. Listen. Repair after misunderstanding. Show you care and want your family to feel safe, soothed, and reconnected.
- In coming together and communicating courageously with a whole heart you may not always be able to give your kids or partner what they are asking for, but you are giving them something far greater – you are teaching them that it's okay to be vulnerable, brave and empowered.
- Be Vulnerable – embracing imperfection, learning from mistakes
- Act – support each other to do things that are sometimes challenging and scary but you also build resilience by doing – let children learn – carry their bags, pack their kit, be responsible for getting breakfast, chores etc

PRACTICE:

Is there something bothering you that you have not shared

What actually happened and how are you feeling?

What are the feelings around this?

What need is not being met in your barrier to share this?
(respect, understanding, space)

Use this to now communicate clearly

- As an example, “When I heard you demand that I take you to your friend’s house I got irritated (feeling). I’d like to be seen and appreciated for the ways I support you (need). Next time it would mean a lot to me if you asked in a kinder way and could say, “thank you” when I do nice things for you.

5 KINDNESS (GRATEFUL PIC KLE)

Practice Kindness, Support and Generosity

- Mindful generosity
- Approach each day with kindness
- Random acts of kindness – donating money, meal for a sick friend, giving a hug or smile, helping strangers
- Model kind behaviour
- Loving kindness in thoughts
- Loving kindness as a practice together
- Words to each other (labels for children)



PRACTICE:

- Just for today, I will be kind in my thoughts, words and actions
- Talk about importance of kindness, generosity and compassion and creatively plan to incorporate (play)
- Invite friends and wider family to get involved/Action for happiness/Mental Health Awareness Week

6 LISTEN (GRATEFUL PICKLE)



Listen with Curiosity

- We are often distracted – trying to do too many things at once, flipping through our phone or rushing to snap judgments.
- Pause and truly listen
- Lean in with curiosity and say, “tell me more.”
- Ask yourself “why might they be acting this way?”
- Remember everyone is different.

PRACTICE:

Mindful listening exercise – today – pay attention to conversations/webinars

This week, see if you can catch yourself in a moment where you are planning a brilliant counter-argument while not letting someone finish their sentences.

This is a sign that you’re not listening. Once you recognize this is happening, the best place to start transforming the moment is with yourself.

7 EMBRACE FORGIVENESS (GRATEFUL PICKLE)

Forgive Yourself and each other

- “Forgiveness means letting go of any hope for a better past.” Lily Tomlin
- Mistakes are all learning opportunities
- Forgive, investigate and invite
- **Just set the intention to forgive**
- Be with your feelings to learn from mistakes
- Invite a change or repair.



PRACTICE:

Look for moments to forgive

Make time for forgiveness

Pause and notice your feelings

- Say in your mind, “In whatever way you have harmed me, out of your own ignorance, confusion or upset feelings, we all make mistakes, I am inclining toward forgiveness.”

SUPPORTIVE EXERCISES

- Breathing buddy
- Colour meditation/game
- Mindful bedtime stories
- Mindful photo (challenge)
- No devices challenge
- Meal-time together
- Grateful PICKLE
- Mindful listening Play, Imperfection, Courage, Kind, Listen, Embrace forgiveness

SUPPORT FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

Mind and Body Professionals

- Youth Yoga – Luci Trendle – Fridays at 4pm – www.lucitrendleyoga.co.uk
- Mindful Photography, Kids Yoga and Meditation – Brilliant Beings (6-12 year olds) www.brilliant-beings.co.uk
- **Mediation. Mindfulness, Adventures in Calm: BalanceTime**
www.balancetime.co.uk – new classes coming for teens
hello@balancetime.co.uk
www.facebook.com/timeforbalance
www.instagram.com/hellobalancetime
- Call Judy on **07789 713 876/**
- **01189 305 586**

Medical and therapeutic Professionals - LOCAL

- GP
- Psychotherapy – ACP, Emma Campolucci
- Counselling – Number 5, Rob Donnelly
- Charities – e.g. Time to Talk (West Berks)

Medical and therapeutic Professionals – UK

- **Association of child psychotherapists**
www.childpsychotherapy.org.uk
- <https://childpsychotherapy.org.uk/resources-parents-and-carers-and-young-people>
- **UK Council for Psychotherapy** www.psychotherapy.org.uk
- **UNICEF**
- **Young Minds**
- **Free helpline for Parents and Carers**
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline/>

