



Supporting an Anxious Child



Anxiety can show up in many ways in children. Understanding what may be happening underneath the behaviour can help adults respond with warmth, confidence and support.

WHAT MIGHT ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?

- Stomach aches, headaches or feeling unwell
- Difficulty separating from parents or carers
- Repeated reassurance seeking
- Avoiding school, activities or social situations
- Perfectionism or becoming very upset about mistakes
- Irritability, meltdowns, withdrawal or becoming very quiet

START WITH CONNECTION

- Stay as calm and steady as you can.
- Acknowledge the feeling without reinforcing the fear.
- Help your child put words to what they are noticing.
- Communicate confidence that they can cope with difficult feelings.

VALIDATE WITHOUT MAKING ANXIETY THE BOSS

- Try: "I can see this feels really hard."
- Try: "It makes sense that you feel worried."
- Then add confidence: "We can work through this together."
- Avoid repeatedly promising that nothing bad will happen.

Support courage, not avoidance

When it is safe and appropriate, helping a child take small, manageable steps towards something they fear can build confidence. The goal is not to push them into overwhelming situations.



Understanding My Child's Anxiety



Use this page to notice patterns and think about how you can support your child. There are no right answers — the aim is curiosity rather than judgement.

WHAT SITUATIONS SEEM TO TRIGGER THEIR ANXIETY?

Think about people, places, activities, transitions, uncertainty, separation, mistakes or other situations.

HOW DOES MY CHILD SHOW ME THEY ARE ANXIOUS?

What do you notice in their behaviour, emotions, body complaints, words or need for reassurance?

WHAT DO WE USUALLY DO WHEN ANXIETY SHOWS UP?

How does your child respond? How do you or other adults respond? What seems to bring short-term relief?

WHAT MIGHT HELP THEM TAKE A SMALL STEP FORWARD?

What support, encouragement or manageable next step could help them practise coping?

Using this with your child's psychologist

Bring your observations to a session if helpful. Your psychologist can work with you and your child to understand their anxiety patterns and develop strategies suited to their age, needs and circumstances.