



Understanding the feelings of anxiety

Hundreds of thousands of young people deal with anxiety every day, but what is it?

According to a new report by the children's charity the NSPCC, there's been a rise in the number of children calling Childline because they feel anxious. The report showed that in the past year 11,706 children called the helpline because they were worried about family issues, school or global issues, such as the vote to leave the European Union in June. The number of calls increased by 35% compared with the year before.

KEEP CALM
For more information about anxiety and how to keep calm, go to youngminds.org.uk

There are lots of different reasons why young people get anxious. Most of the time these feelings are normal everyday worries about things like homework or pressure at school, and disappear quite quickly. Every now and again they can become more serious.

So, what exactly is anxiety and how can you learn to control anxious feelings?

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease. Most people feel anxious some of

the time and this is natural. Anxiety is your body's way of preparing you for a challenge when you're feeling stressed. When you're anxious your body releases a hormone (a kind of chemical) called adrenaline. This causes a "fight or flight" response so that you're alert and ready to react to a challenge.

Adrenaline can be very useful in stressful situations like school exams because it can make you more alert and focused, but it can also lead to some unpleasant feelings and can be difficult to control.

What does anxiety feel like?

Anxiety not only makes your mind race, it also causes a number of physical reactions that can feel very uncomfortable. Anxiety might make you feel shaky or lead to stomach cramps, heavy breathing, a faster heartbeat and sweating. Even though these symptoms aren't very nice, they are your body's way of making you stay alert so you can respond quickly to challenges or danger. Usually, after a short while, or when the situation has passed, the feelings of worry will go away.

What is anxiety disorder?

Because everyone feels anxious from time to time it can be hard to tell when it goes from being a normal reaction to becoming a problem. If someone has an anxiety disorder, anxious feelings may become part of their everyday life. They might be too afraid to go to school or to go outside.

Around 300,000 young people in the UK have an anxiety disorder. Young people usually experience anxiety in one of three ways. They might worry a lot, usually because of the uncertainty of events. This is often classed as generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). People can also have panic attacks, which are periods of extreme fear. Suffering from a phobia is another form of anxiety. This is when a person has one specific fear, of the dark, say, or of being sick.

Tell an adult or a doctor if you are feeling anxious on a regular basis.

Adele suffers from anxiety



The award-winning artist, Adele, suffers from severe anxiety and panic attacks which make her feel sick before her gigs. "I have anxiety attacks, constant panicking on stage, my heart feels like it's going to explode because I never feel like I'm going to deliver," she says. To try and get through her panic attacks, Adele has created a more confident alter ego called Sasha Carter. This helps Adele to pretend she is fearless, even if sometimes she doesn't feel it.



"I am scared about my SAT exams tomorrow."

TOP TIP
Get an early night and everything will feel better in the morning.

"My friends have fallen out with me and I don't know why."

TOP TIP
Remember: if something is in the news it is because it doesn't happen very often.

"I'm worried about what is happening in the world."

TOP TIP
Lots of people are afraid of things like volcanic eruptions. Just remember that they are very unusual.

"I heard my parents arguing and it's making me upset."

TOP TIP
If someone is bullying you, make sure you talk to an adult or a teacher, so that they can sort it out.

TOP TIP
Always talk to your friends if something is bothering you.

TOP TIP
Parents argue for all sorts of reasons, but it's important to remember they love you very much.

"Someone is picking on me at school and it makes me not want to go."

Tips to stop anxiety

There are all sorts of things you can do to help yourself to remain calm.

Exercising

Regular exercise is good for your mental health. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins trigger a positive feeling and make you happy.



Breathing

Try the 4-7-8 breathing technique. Breathe in through your nose for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, then exhale through your mouth for eight seconds. Do this a couple of times to help regulate your breathing and reduce your heart rate.



Get a good night's sleep

Lack of sleep can really affect your mood the next day. Don't use gadgets before bedtime and turn out the lights to help get a good rest.



Eat healthily

Too much sugar and drinks such as cola that contain caffeine can make you feel jittery. Avoiding these will keep you feeling more relaxed.



Tamanna's experience

Tamanna was at school when she started feeling depressed and anxious. She was really behind on her schoolwork and felt under pressure from her teachers and her family to do well. So, aged 11, Tamanna started volunteering and campaigning with charities to help tackle young people's issues. When she was 14, she got involved in performing arts: dance, drama and singing at school, which really helped her mental health. All of these activities changed her life for the better. She made friends and as a result some of her anxieties decreased while she grew in confidence.



Tamanna

"No one should feel alone, when stress

becomes too much at school, college or university," she says. "We all experience stress at some point in our lives, but many experience this on a daily basis.

"It's important to talk to someone and not to be too disheartened thinking about grades," she said. "Channel your stresses into something positive, and do something that makes you happy, such as drama, singing and volunteering."

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