

Anxiety in kids is very treatable but it might take time. Keep practicing and they'll get there.

If you would like any further support or advice, contact your School Nurse or GP.

You can also access the following websites:

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)                      [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.headspace.co.uk](http://www.headspace.co.uk)                [www.calmzone.net](http://www.calmzone.net)

[www.childline.co.uk](http://www.childline.co.uk)                [www.bemindful.co.uk](http://www.bemindful.co.uk)

[www.youthinmind.info](http://www.youthinmind.info)                [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk](http://www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk)

[www.stressheads—TheSite.org](http://www.stressheads—TheSite.org)

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**Sirona**  
care & health

## **ANXIETY IN KIDS & TEENS: TURNING IT AROUND**

### **ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

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## 1. Don't talk them out of it

Telling them "you'll be fine" or "don't worry" probably won't work. When anxiety has a hold of you, you can no sooner stop worrying than fly to the moon!

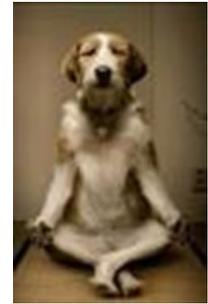


What they need to hear is that you get it. That it's normal. That everyone experiences anxiety at some point in their lives, and sometimes for no reason at all.

Ask them what it feels like for them. Is it like the feeling you get when you feel as if you're falling in your sleep, or stepping off a kerb?



## 6. Practice mindfulness



MRI studies have shown that practicing mindfulness provides relief and protection from stress, anxiety and depression.

Mindfulness doesn't have to be complicated. It's being aware of the present moment.

- a) Get them to close their eyes & notice their breathing. How does the air feel as they draw it into their body?
- b) Now, what can they hear? What can they feel outside of themselves & their bodies?

If their minds start to wander, focus on their breathing again. It might take a bit of practice but it is well worth it.

## 5. But how can they do that?

breathe.

The most powerful thing they can do to make themselves the boss of their brains again is breathe. Breathe slowly and deeply. Breathe right down into the belly, not just into the chest. Do this about 5 to 10 times.

If your child is young enough not to think it silly, put a soft toy on their tummy when they lie down. If the toy is moving up & down, their breathing is perfect.

Practice every day before bed. Remember that their warrior has been protecting them all of their lives & it might take a bit of practice to convince them to relax.

## 2. Explain why anxiety feels like it does

Anxiety is something that lots of people, including adults, get. It feels different for everyone.

It happens because there's a small part of your brain (called the amygdala, shaped like an almond) that thinks there's something it needs to protect you from.



The amygdala switches on when it thinks you're in danger, like your own fierce warrior, to give your body what it needs to be strong, fast & powerful (like oxygen, hormones & adrenaline).



When you burn some toast and set off the smoke alarm, the alarm doesn't know the difference between smoke from a fire and smoke from burnt toast. It just knows to warn you so that you can get out!

The amygdala works in the same way. It's a doer not a thinker and works to protect you, even when you don't need protecting.

### 3. Explain what is happening to their body and why

- ♦ Their breathing will change to fast little breaths, as their brain tells their body to send the oxygen to their muscles, ready to run or fight.
- ♦ The muscles in their arms & legs might feel tight.
- ♦ If they don't run or fight, the oxygen builds up & the carbon dioxide drops, which can make them feel dizzy or a bit confused.
- ♦ Their heart beats faster to get the oxygen around their body & they may feel sick.
- ♦ They might feel sweaty, as their body cools itself down so it doesn't overheat.
- ♦ They might have butterflies in their tummy and their mouth might feel dry.



### 4. Give it a name

Once they understand that their anxiety feelings come from the "heroic warrior" part of their brain, get them to give it a name. Ask them what they think of when they picture it. This will help them to feel as though something else is the problem, not them.

When they get those anxious feelings, their warrior is taking over and getting ready to keep them safe.

They need to let their warrior know that they are the boss, that they are ok and that he can relax.