

# Portishead wellbeing workshops

Managing anxiety in children and young people

20 September 2023

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## What is anxiety?

“Anxiety is a feeling of stress, panic or fear that can affect your everyday life physically and psychologically”

- NHS 2023

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“Anxiety is a normal and often a healthy emotion”

Inside Out 2015

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## When is anxiety a problem?

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## The science of stress

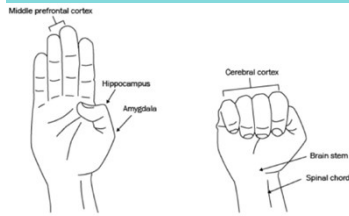
### Equine Reflections

- Worry causes the release of hormones, such as adrenalin, that cause physical changes in the body
- This is called the fight or flight response
- Adrenalin causes fast respiration, which makes you feel more stressed – like you’re running out of air
- It can take a few minutes to many hours for the hormones to return to normal

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## Hand model of the brain

### The science of flipping your lid



Hand model courtesy of Dan Siegel

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## Physical signs of anxiety

- Heart beats faster
- Headache
- Shaking
- Knot in the stomach / feeling sick
- Hot and sweaty
- Stomachache
- Rapid breathing
- Cold
- Red / blotchy face
- Loss of appetite
- Tired
- Tired / nightmares
- Going to the toilet a lot

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## And breathe...

- Taking 3 mindful breaths reduces the physical effects

1. Plant your feet shoulder width apart on the floor and ground – feel calm, reassured and in control
2. Breathe in deeply through your nose for 3 seconds
3. Breathe out completely through your mouth for 3 seconds

- Keep going until your breathing feels steady, your heart slows down and you start to relax



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## The anxious child

### Behaviours you may notice...

- Avoiding people, places or situations
- A desire to stay home
- The need for a comfort item
- Staying close to parents
- Saying certain words / asking certain things repetitively
- Washing, checking, organising, collecting things (*compulsive behaviour*)
- Hiding (*in room, within clothing, behind hair etc*)
- Becoming self-conscious
- Acting in angry ways (*dysregulation*)
- Controlling food and eating
- Self-harming

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## Anxiety triggers

- Personal threshold – how we, as an individual think about a thing or situation
- Change
- Social media
- Our world today
- Social economic status
- Tests
- Media
- The impact of others – parents, friends

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## How can we help?

- Validation / affirmation of feelings
- Co-regulation - being calm, being consistent
- Trust
- Time
- Use of language (label the behaviour not the child)
- Think differently – raise self-esteem, encourage a growth mindset
- Talk openly and without judgement
- Worry time using a worry box / worry diary
- Regular exercise
- Relaxation, visualisation, meditation
- Distraction
- Sleep hygiene practices

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## The PACE model

**P LAYFULNESS**  
**'I can enjoy'**  
 Being playful creates a fun, positive and calm atmosphere when communicating with a child.

**A CCEPTANCE**  
**'I can open'**  
 Accepting a child as a person without judgement, shows a child you can see beyond their behaviour.

**CURIOSITY**  
**'I can make links'**  
 Being open to discovering why a child is behaving the way they are, will help with developing a better understanding.

**EMPATHY**  
**'My feelings are valid'**  
 Put yourself in a child's situation and try to show them that their experiences are important to you.

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## Recommendations

- Ask the school if it can make reasonable adjustments
- Work with the school to keep lines of communication open
- Seek alternative support from professional services
- Ask for a school nurse referral
- Speak to your GP

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## Further reading

**THE UNWORRY BOOK**  
 by Emma Carroll

**Starving the Anxiety Gremlin**  
 by Kate Collin-Dunnally

**Starving the Anxiety Gremlin**  
 by Kate Collin-Dunnally

**Mind Hug**  
 by Emily Acher - Victoria Longwood

**The Knot**  
 by Helen Cousin - illustrated by Sam Brown

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## Getting ready secondary school

### School Nursing Team

School nurses work across education and health providing a link between school, home and the community

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## What can we offer?

- Health Assessments**
- Provide health education, advice and Signposting and referral to other services**
- Chat Health A text messaging service for 11-19 year olds**
- Public health support healthy eating, emotional wellbeing support, dental hygiene etc.**
- School based Drop in / Clinics at secondary schools**

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## The transition to secondary school

- Moving from primary to secondary school is exciting - but can also be a daunting or anxious time.
- As children move into year 5 & 6 there will be lots of conversations happening about "big school" both at home and school. This change can be challenging for some children.
- Feeling anxious about this big change is normal, but as a parent there is much you can do to help your child manage the transition and minimise anxiety.

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## Practical tips for children

- Ask for a Map of your new school
- Practice your morning routine
- Questions/Worries
- Friends familiar faces
- Have you got everything you need?
- How will you be getting to school?

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## Support your child emotionally

- Don't let your worries become their worries
- Don't let them feel unsafe because you're constantly talking about safety
- Show your confidence in your child so that they believe in their own confidence
- Avoid taking over tasks that they can do themselves
- How you choose to talk about transition to "big" school can make it feel like a world of opportunity or a scary place
- Let them know that should they need you; you are there for them and you will help them no matter what

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## School nurse drop in / school clinic

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**11-19 YEARS OLD?**

We help young people with all kinds of things like ...

Message us for confidential advice and support and to chat with a School Nurse.

The service is open on Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm.

Send a message to:  
**07312 263093**

ChatHealth  
For terms and conditions see <https://cohp.nhs.uk/chathealth>

NHS  
Sirona

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## Support strategies at home

- Mindfulness
- Worry monster / Worry box
- Mental Health first aid box
- Emotion diary

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## Support strategies at home

My Support Network - Activity

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## Worries and excitements

What are you excited about?

What are you worried about?

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## Sources of support

- School
- School Nurse
- Chat Health
- GP
- Local council parenting offers
- Youth Clubs – Portishead Youth Centre
- Youth Charities

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## Anxiety in teenagers

### Wellspring Counselling

Anxiety is a common mental health issue in teenagers. It can affect:

- Emotional wellbeing
- Academic performance
- Social relationships

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## Causes of anxiety in teenagers

- Genetics - a genetic predisposition to anxiety disorders
- Brain chemistry - imbalances in neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine
- Environmental factors - stressful life events, trauma, family issues, a chaotic home
- Peer pressure - can lead to social anxiety or a fear of judgment
- Academic pressure - high academic expectations and performance pressure
- General life pressure - the need to be the best and to keep up with trends
- Physical health - chronic illnesses or hormonal changes during puberty
- Gender and identity issues
- Bullying

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## Emotions

The feelings wheel

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## The emotions beneath anger

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## Self-harm

### What is it?

- Self-harm is a coping mechanism, a method of managing emotional pain, stress, overwhelming feelings, and things that life throws at us
- The need to regain some control, release emotional pain, or feel
- Intentionally hurting oneself physically
- Self-harming is often a secretive form of behaviour
- Common methods used may include cutting, burning, scratching, hitting, or any other action that results in physical harm to one's own body

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## The myths

- Self-harm is attention seeking
- Self-harm is a teenage girl thing
- Self-harm is a suicide attempt
- Clever people don't self-harm
- People who self-harm obviously like pain
- People who self-harm are a danger to others
- Talking about self-harm encourages people to pick it up

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## The reality

- Nobody would be using self-harm if it did not work!
- Self-harm offers temporary relief
- It **is** damaging
- It is **not** a healthy coping mechanism

**It gives relief to people who are struggling with over whelming life circumstances, emotions, and feelings**

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## How can you help

- Listen and try to understand their motivations and reasons
- Be compassionate
- Show acceptance and communicate that you understand their feelings

**IT IS GOING TO BE HARD!**

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## The 'not now, later' technique

- Suggest they delay hurting themselves for 5 minutes combined with pre-determined list of distractions
- If they are managing, suggest they add another 5 minutes
- Sometimes the urges ease
- Remain with them if they want you to

**There is a psychological reason behind self-harm  
The behaviour is a symptom of distress  
The goal is to deal with the root of the problem**

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## Do...

- Listen
- Build trust
- Be open, ask questions
- Support them to identify triggers
- Use 'not now, later'
- Offer to talk and suggest counselling
- Be prepared for slip-ups
- Agree on a code word they can use
- Use a mood gauge or traffic light system
- Encourage safe self-harm
- Help them accept their scars
- Remember it may take time
- Be proud they feel they can talk to you

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## Don't...


- Don't show disgust
- Don't overreact
- Don't ask why
- Don't make assumptions
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Don't ask them to stop – It's not that simple and may increase the behaviour
- Don't threaten them – this may push the behaviour underground
- Don't remove tools / objects (unless there is suicidal ideation)
- Don't add guilt
- Don't use words like "cutter" - self-harm is not who they are it is what they do
- Don't make them conscious of their scars

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## Indicators

The following may be indicators that someone has self-harm urges. Ask them gently if they're struggling:

- Panic attack symptoms
- Difficulty paying attention
- Mood dropping
- Retreating inside
- Needing to be alone
- Manic behaviour
- Being severely agitated



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## Further reading

- [www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk](http://www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk)
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

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## Courses

### Wellspring for ages 11-18

[wellspringcounselling.org.uk](http://wellspringcounselling.org.uk)

01275 810 879

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## Courses

### Off The Record for ages 11-25

A 6-week supportive group for parents / carers exploring the factors that contribute to resilience with a focus on self-care.

Tuesday evenings on zoom, 18.45 - 20.00

[otrnorthsomerset.org.uk](http://otrnorthsomerset.org.uk)

0808 808 9120

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## Courses

### Kooth.com for ages 10-25

- Workshops:
  - Stress and Anxiety
  - Anti Bullying
  - Transitions
  - Young Men
  - Self-Care
  - LGBTQ+
  - Practising kindness

Questions from parents / carers - [parents@kooth.com](mailto:parents@kooth.com)

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**WE ARE AWARE**  
**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**  
**WALK**

Come and join us on Saturday 7th October from 5.30pm outside Portishead Lido



Come and join us for a sunset walk around Portishead Lake Grounds led by the awesome Riving Band to raise Mental Health Awareness

Meeting outside Portishead Lido at 5.30pm for walk at 6.00pm 7th October

[www.weareaware.info](http://www.weareaware.info)  
[admin@weareaware.info](mailto:admin@weareaware.info)



BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION

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**Free wellbeing workshops**  
 for residents of Portishead



Over the next 18 months residents in Portishead will be able to attend a series of workshops to support their wellbeing needs.

**THESE WORKSHOPS WILL COVER:**

- 2023 ● 20th Sep - Managing anxiety in children and young people
- 18th Oct - Menopause
- 15th Nov - Developing a healthy relationship with food
- 2024 ● 07th Jan - Living with chronic pain
- 7th Feb - Diabetes management
- 20th Mar - Dementia and falls prevention
- 07th Apr - End of life conversations

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