

Information for parents and carers: Mental health and anxiety

City of Bradford MDC

www.bradford.gov.uk

As part of the Mental Health in Schools Strategy, three assemblies have been developed with the aim of opening up conversations about mental health. By normalising the feelings that young people experience growing up, we hope to empower them by helping them to understand what's happening.

This information leaflet follows on from the assembly about anxiety. We talked about the fact that anxiety can be helpful when we face new or stressful situations. We explained that it's a completely normal feeling that everybody has sometimes, and we can find ways to deal with it that keep our minds and bodies safe and healthy.



We described anxiety as being a little bit like a bucket of water. Adding worries to the bucket over time means that it fills up and one day overflows.

What we need is a bucket with lots of holes in to let some of the worries go. Each one of these holes could be something positive to help keep your body and mind healthy and happy.

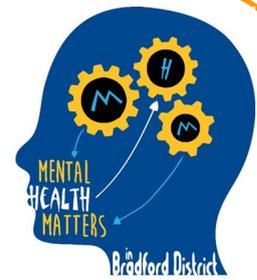
Key points for parents and carers:

- Anxiety stems from our 'fight, flight or freeze' response that's designed to prepare us for challenging or threatening situations
- Sometimes our brains get this wrong and send out these signals too frequently, or at the wrong times, causing anxiety
- Anxiety can result in things seeming much worse than they really are
- There are many coping strategies that we can support children with
- Talking to a trusted adult often reduces anxiety
- Children need to understand that feeling some anxiety is natural and normal

Information for parents and carers: Mental health and anxiety

City of Bradford MDC

www.bradford.gov.uk



The 'fight, flight or freeze' response we have is an immediate way of our brains preparing our bodies to react to a potentially threatening situation so that we can defend ourselves if necessary. It explains the rapid heartbeat, clammy palms and sweating that we experience in new or challenging situations. It is helpful sometimes because it means we are alert and aware of what's around us, for example in a test situation.

We explained to the children that at times our brains can get it wrong, and it sends these signals out too often. We end up worrying about things that we can't control, worrying about things more than we need to, or feeling like things are much worse than they are. By explaining these responses to the children, it helps them to understand that what they are feeling is normal.

This is where the bucket analogy (overleaf) is helpful in supporting children to find ways of coping with anxiety. Ideas for helping included sports, reading, arts and crafts, listening to music or spending time with friends or family. Sometimes talking to somebody is all a child needs, so it's really important to make sure we build a trusting relationship and help them to feel valued.

Useful links:

Information about anxiety

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/our-services/anxiety-information/>

NHS: Information about anxiety in children

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/anxiety-in-children.aspx>

Young Minds: Information for parents

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents/worried_about_your_child/anxiety

Talking to your child about mental health

<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/parents>