



Understanding Anxiety in Children



*Presentation notes from your Guidance Officer Louissa Chalk and
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What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is the body's natural way of preparing for danger — it keeps us safe.
- It's common and normal to feel anxious sometimes.
- Anxiety has physical, mental, and behavioural parts.
- Anxiety can help us, but the goal is to learn to manage it.

When is anxiety a problem?

- Anxiety becomes a problem when it causes frequent distress or stops your child from doing everyday activities.
- Sometimes anxiety is mild (sub-clinical) but still affects your child's wellbeing.
- A diagnosis is only made when anxiety is intense, persistent, and interferes significantly.

Why does anxiety happen?

- Anxiety can come from a mix of:
 1. Genetics and temperament
 2. Stressful or traumatic events
 3. Learned behaviours

Signs of anxiety in children

- Avoiding school or certain activities
- Negative self-talk
- Feeling 'worry sick' or physically unwell
- Difficulty with friendships
- Fear of making mistakes or speaking in front of others

Practical Strategies for Supporting Your Child

Be caring and curious

- Give your child space to share their worries.
- Validate their feelings: "I can see why you're worried about the school camp."
- Avoid giving too much reassurance like "That won't happen." Instead, remind them of their strengths and coping skills.

Help your child learn to calm their body

- Breathing exercises
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Helpful apps: Smiling Mind, Calm, Balance, Headspace

Things that always help

- Regular sleep, meals, play, and physical activity help manage anxiety.
- Modelling good coping - share your own worries and how you manage them.

Prepare for setbacks

- Anxiety might get worse before it gets better when routines change.
- Stay calm, consistent, and supportive.

Resources and Support

School support

Graceville teaching and support staff are here to assist and support your child if they experience anxiety.

Professional diagnosis and support

A trained health professional is needed to diagnose an anxiety disorder. Your GP can refer you to a paediatrician, psychologist, or other mental health clinician.

Helpful tools and services

- [The Brave Program](#): An interactive online program aimed at 8–12 year olds to help them overcome worries and learn coping strategies.
- [Fear-Less Triple P Online Course](#): A toolkit to help your child manage anxiety and become more emotionally resilient.
- [Cool Kids Program](#): An interactive online program aimed at 7–12 year olds to help them overcome anxiety and build confidence.
- [The Beyond Blue Child Mental Health Checklist](#): A general tool to check your child's symptoms and whether to get professional help.
- [Kids Help Line](#): A free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people.
- [Smiling Mind Kids Care Packages](#): A series of calming activities and audio recordings for children based on mindfulness meditation.
- [Mental health and wellbeing toolkit](#): Advice to support student mental health and wellbeing, aimed at students, parents and caregivers, and schools.
- [Parentline](#): A free phone counselling service where you can discuss parenting challenges and get support
- [RaisingChildren.net.au](#): free, reliable, up-to-date and independent information.
- [Emerging Minds](#): helpful articles on child mental health

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