



Anxiety – a guide to helping young people

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the feeling of intense fear and panic inside us. Most people will feel anxious when faced with difficult and stressful situations in life, such as exams at school – it is a perfectly understandable and common reaction. Often, once a stressful period of time comes to an end, we feel calmer and less anxious again. But sometimes these painful emotions continue, and we may find ourselves feeling greater levels of fear and panic more often than other people. At this point they may develop into anxiety disorders. Anxiety tends to be constant, whereas stress comes and goes.

Typically, anxiety disorders present themselves in one of three ways:

- **Generalised panic disorder (GAD)** – a person will likely feel anxious most of the time and find it heavily impacts their day-to-day lives
- **Panic attacks** – a person may suffer with unpredictable and very intense attacks of anxiety, with feelings coming on suddenly and reaching a peak within ten minutes. Physical symptoms are very common when suffering a panic attack, like feeling short of breath, having a racing heart beat and chest pains, and feeling like you are going to die, making them very frightening
- **Phobias** - When someone suffers phobias their anxiety tends to be focussed on one particular issue. It might not seem like something to be feared by other people, but they can still be anxious and nervous about it, causing them to actively avoid it. Types of phobia include agoraphobia (a fear of going outside and in crowds), emetophobia (fear of vomit or vomiting), and social phobia (fear of meeting new people)

What causes anxiety?

Anxiety can be caused by several factors including:

- Individual family history
- Our genes
- Suffering from pre-existing physical or mental health problems
- Suffering trauma as children or in our teens.

When does anxiety become a problem?

Anxiety becomes a problem when it begins to impact a person's day-to-day life, and it may stop them doing the things they once enjoyed. Anxiety can cause several debilitating emotional and physical symptoms that make coping with it a real battle for many people. Some to look out for are:

- Feeling worried all the time
- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling excessively tired
- Being really irritable with others
- Sleeping poorly
- Feeling increasingly depressed
- Loss of appetite
- Actively avoiding things that make them anxious
- Overwhelming need to seek reassurance from others and being dependant on them

Many young people who suffer with anxiety find it crippling and it can make them feel ashamed that they are 'unable to cope'. In reality there is nothing to be ashamed of, but this way of thinking leads many to try and hide their anxiety from those around them, meaning they can become very isolated.

Techniques to help manage anxiety

Avoidance is a common coping strategy for young people who suffer from anxiety; whilst they might feel this protects them, the truth is it only serves to increase their fear, creating a vicious cycle from which it's hard to break free. Therefore, however hard it might feel, helping them to learn to face their fears gradually will give them the most benefit in the long term:

- **Taking up a new class or hobby** gives a young person goals to aim for and takes them out of their comfort zone – this can have a positive effect on self-esteem and confidence. Some options include self-defence classes, dance lessons, creative writing courses or team sports
- **Deep breathing and relaxation techniques**, whilst they might make a young person feel a little self-conscious, can help them regain some control so that they feel less like they are being ruled by their anxiety – books, CD's and courses are available widely in shops, schools and public libraries and online
- **Exercise is great for us all**, and especially beneficial to people who are experiencing a difficult time emotionally because it releases feel-good chemicals, called endorphins, into the brain, is a healthy distraction, can increase social interaction with other people and boosts confidence – an excellent and largely free coping strategy
- **Complementary therapies** can be helpful for those suffering from anxiety because they can help focus and relax busy minds. Some good examples to encourage are yoga and meditation

Counselling Appointments line: 0118 901 5668

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Getting further help

Sometimes, despite best efforts, anxiety can overwhelm young people and they need more help with managing it than just dealing with it alone. Encourage them to:

- Talk to a trusted friend/parent/carer or teacher
- Speak to their doctor about their feelings and be there to offer help with booking appointments and attending them with them if required
- Access counselling or other appropriate talking treatments through their GP or school/college/university – counselling is confidential and they'll work with a trained counsellor to look at their issues and work through them in their own time and in a safe environment. No one needs to know they are attending counselling if they don't wish them to

How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively channel anxieties can make life feel much more manageable and much less fearful. Severe anxiety can lead to depression and physical health problems. These can become longer-term issues so it is important to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 10-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping young people to work through their problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

Ways to contact us:

Counselling Phone: 0118 901 5668

Admin Phone: 0118 901 5649

E-mail: info@no5.org.uk

Address:

No5 Young People's Counselling and Information
2-4 Sackville Street
Reading, RG1 1NT

Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/no5youngpeople>

Twitter: @no5youngpeople

Our Opening Hours are:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Monday | 16:00 – 21:00 |
| Tuesday | 10:00 – 13:00 and 16:00 – 21:00 |
| Wednesday | 16:00 – 21:00 |
| Thursday | 16:00 – 21:00 |
| Friday | 16:00 – 21:00 |
| Saturday & Sunday | Closed |

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