



Do you worry about going to school?

A booklet for young people



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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This booklet has been adapted for Stockport from resources developed by the West Sussex Education Psychology Service. Stockport Family and Stockport Education Psychology Service are grateful to the West Sussex team for allowing us to use their resources.



Are you feeling anxious about school?

Worrying or anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can even keep us safe from harm or help us perform in difficult situations. However, sometimes anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem especially when it stops us doing what we want or need to do.

Many children and young people worry about school. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to deal with them is part of growing up. However sometimes our feelings can make us not want to attend school.

When you think about school are you?

Worried?

Scared?

Feeling unsure of yourself?

Struggling to sleep?

Feeling ill or pretending to be ill?

Feeling low or sad?

Worrying about friends?

Bad tempered?

You are not on your own. All of us feel like this from time to time because of things that happen to us, at home at school or elsewhere.

There may be things at school that can make you feel this way, such as:

Problems with friends

Bullying

Changing school

Worrying about exams and tests

Worrying about the way you look

Not liking the noise at school

Worrying about your marks at school

Not understanding or coping with the work

Worrying about getting changed for PE

Not liking your teachers, or thinking they don't like you



What happens when you don't attend school?

It is very important to try to overcome these difficulties as soon as possible. Sometimes you might feel that staying at home is the best thing to do as it makes you feel better. However, the more time you spend out of school the more you miss out on lessons and the learning gets harder. You also miss out on seeing friends which means keeping friendships going becomes more difficult.

It is important to let an adult know if you are worried about anything in school or home and get the help to make it better rather than let things get worse.

It is easy to get stuck in a vicious cycle of anxious thoughts:

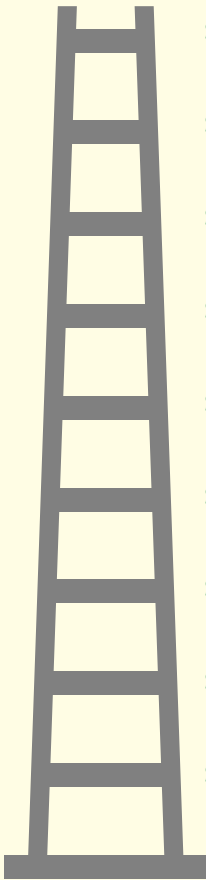


What do I do if I feel like this?

Talk to somebody. This could be your parents, an adult at school, other family members or a friend.

Think about the things that are worrying you, write a list or draw them then order them from most worried about to least worried about.

Use this page to help you think about the things that are worrying you. Then, talk to someone you trust to help you think about how you might fight these fears and what could help these feelings go away.



STEP NINE

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STEP EIGHT

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STEP SEVEN

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STEP SIX

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STEP FIVE

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STEP FOUR

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STEP THREE

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STEP TWO

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STEP ONE

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What can your school do to help you?

Find an adult at school you trust and talk to them, they should listen and believe you. They can work with you and your parents to help find out what things are worrying you and what you and they can do to help you. Things they could do include:

- Having a key person to talk to
- Getting help with schoolwork or friendships
- Finding a safe space for you to go when you're feeling anxious
- Changing your timetable so you can cope with it better

These actions could be written up into a plan so that you, your parents and school know what has been agreed to help support you.

What can I do to get back to school?

If your worries are stopping you from getting to school it is important that you work with your school and your parents / carers to help you get back to school as soon as possible. Things you can do to help include:

- Take part in the planning of how you will go back to school. Work with your parents / carers and teachers to think of things that will help you.
- Think about a time that you did cope with a worry. What did you do then?
- Keep in contact with your friends and what is happening at school.



- Catch up on some of the work that you may have missed before you go back.
- Take little steps to get back into the routine – don't expect that everything will get back to normal or will be okay immediately.
- Take the chance! Once you are at school, it may not seem as bad.
- Acknowledge the steps you have taken and celebrate the small successes!

When you are feeling worried

Your whole body reacts when you are anxious.

You might feel tired, or short of breath. You might get headaches, or stomach-aches, or feel sick. You may go pale and feel clammy. Your muscles may go tense, your mouth and throat may feel dry, your heart may beat faster and you may feel as though you can't cope with all the thoughts in your head.

Try to notice when you start to feel any of the signs above. There are many different strategies to help you feel relaxed and calm when you are feeling stressed or anxious and you will need to find the ones that work for you. To get you started, try some of these...

Try relaxing your body

1. Sit or lie somewhere quiet and comfortable
2. Stretch out your arms and make a fist, then relax
3. Push your legs out, wiggle your toes, and then relax
4. Shut your eyes tight and pull a scrunched-up face, and then relax



Try calm breathing

1. Take a slow breath in through your nose for about 4 seconds
2. Hold it for 1 or 2 seconds
3. Slowly let it out through your mouth for about 4 seconds
4. Wait 5– 7 seconds before taking another breath
5. Repeat 5– 10 times

Try visualisation

1. Close your eyes
2. Take slow deep breaths in and out
3. Think of your favourite place, maybe somewhere that you go on holiday
4. Focus on the place and picture yourself there
5. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you feel?

Try physical exercise

This increases your heart rate and releases endorphins that help make you feel good. Running, going to the gym, cycling, swimming or team sports such as football or netball are all great exercise. Choose one you love (or try something new!) and build it into your routine.

Think balanced thoughts

If you find yourself thinking a negative thought or worrying a lot of the time e.g. 'I will fail all my exams because I am stupid', try thinking of a more balanced or positive thought instead. For example, 'If I work hard, I'll do ok in my exam'. Every time you notice yourself thinking a negative thought, stop and tell yourself the positive thought. If you find this hard to do, imagine what you would say to a friend to help them feel better!



More help and support

If you want more help or support, there are lots of websites and apps which you may find useful.

Websites

Childline helps, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling. Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours)
www.childline.org

The Mix provides information, support and listening for people under 25. Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours) www.themix.org.uk

Stockport Local Offer

Visit the Stockport local offer website and look for the section on 'looking after your mental wellbeing' for advice and support.
www.sensupportstockport.uk

Some websites have useful worksheets that might help you tackle some of your fears.

Try looking at these sites to see how you can help yourself to feel better

Mighty Moe - an anxiety workbook for children aged 5-11
<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/Mighty%20Moe1.pdf>

Worksheets for children, parents and teachers on tackling anxiety
<https://www.anxietybc.com/parenting/worksheets>

Anxiety workbook for young people and adults
https://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/files/counselling/anxiety_moodjuice_self_help_guide.pdf



Apps for Wellbeing

Stress & Anxiety Companion helps you handle stress and anxiety on the go. Using breathing exercises, relaxing music and games designed to calm the mind, the app helps you change negative thoughts to help you better cope with life's ups and downs.

Available free from the App Store and Google Play

Thrive: mental wellbeing helps you prevent and manage stress, anxiety and related conditions. The game based app can be used to relax before a stressful situation or on a more regular basis to help you live a happier, more stress-free life.

Available free from the App Store and Google Play

Beat Panic is designed to guide people through a panic attack or raised anxiety using their phone.

Available from the App Store

Chill Panda: Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with Chill Panda. The app measures your heart rate and suggests tasks to suit your state of mind. Tasks include simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries.

Available free from the App Store and Google Play

Catch it: Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with Catch It. The app will teach you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing.

Available free from the App Store and Google Play

The NHS website (www.nhs.uk) has a library of apps it recommends - the apps detailed above are all on this list.



If you would like to talk to someone about your anxiety, there are services in Stockport that can help.

You could ask to speak to your school nurse, or school counsellor – if your school has one.

You could try the Living Life to the Full course, run by the **Stockport Psychological Wellbeing Service**. This is an 8 week programme for young people aged 11-18 which is suitable for young people with mild to moderate depression or anxiety. You can self-refer to the programme by going to their website and completing the online referral form. www.selfhelpservices.org.uk/service/living-life-to-the-full-etherapy/ You can also see the workbooks and take the course on your own, online and for free by going to: www.stockport.lltff4.com and entering the code: Stockportph2015

The NHS in Stockport has services to support young people and adults with severe anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions. Your school, school nurse or GP can refer you to Healthy Young Minds: <http://healthyyoungmindspennine.nhs.uk>

Adults and young people aged 16+ can refer themselves to the Healthy Minds service: www.penninecare.nhs.uk/healthyminds

The Healthy Minds website also has links to lots of useful self-help leaflets, such as this one on anxiety: www.selfhelpguides.ntw.nhs.uk/penninecare/leaflets/selfhelp/Anxiety.pdf





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If you would like this information in an alternative format, please email communications@stockport.gov.uk

This booklet was produced by Stockport Family, part of Stockport Council.
For more information about the topics in this booklet, please email: schoolwellbeing@stockport.gov.uk



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