

Small Steps

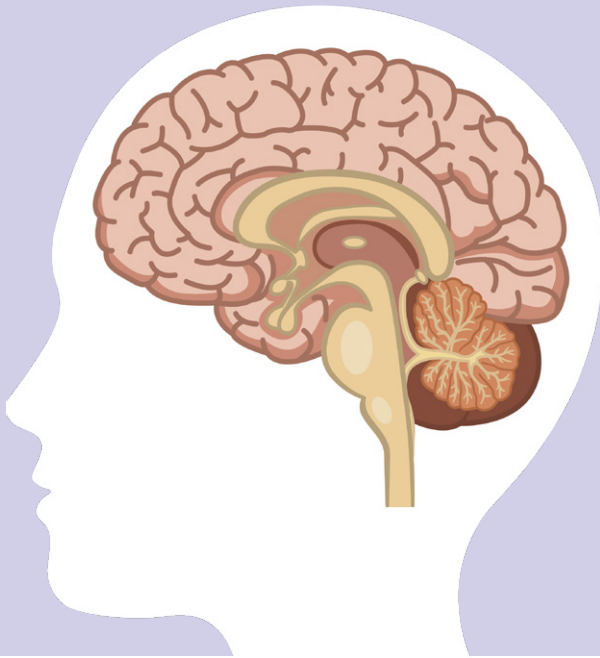
Childhood Anxiety Seminar

Resource Pack





What is Anxiety?



It is normal and natural to feel anxious sometimes. It is important for survival—we need to be aware of our surroundings and to scan for danger and threats to our safety. Our brains are made this way.

When our brain senses danger, an anxiety response is created. Stress hormones surge through our bodies to help us in dangerous situations. We can go into ‘fight, flight or freeze’ mode.

However, we can also experience an anxiety response when **we are not in danger**. We may be doing something out of our comfort zone, something new or something that has caused us fear or worry before. The situation triggers an alarm in our brain and tells us we are in danger.

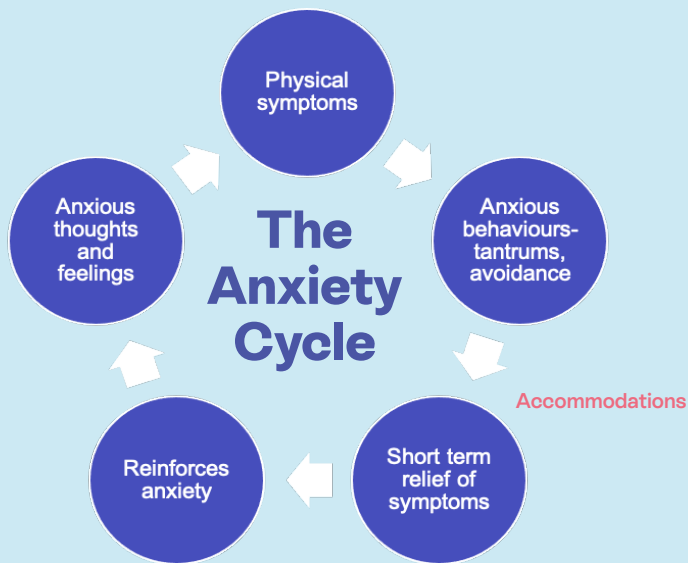
The brains of parents respond to anxiety in children and children can ‘pick up’ anxiety from their parents.

Some people have a very strong anxiety response. They can feel very anxious when they are facing a new or challenging situation.

The stress hormones produced in our bodies when we are anxious can show up in our thinking and behaviour and can cause physical signs and symptoms as well. You may have noticed some of these.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety include:

- headache
- dry mouth
- cough
- fast heartbeat
- shallow breathing
- nausea
- vomiting
- retching-gag reflex
- shaking in arms and legs
- overthinking
- clinginess
- avoidance
- aggression
- being withdrawn
- inability to decide
- being uncooperative
- tantrums
- feeling panic



How the anxiety cycle works

A child experiences **anxious thoughts, feelings and physical symptoms**. These can lead to anxious behaviours.

Anxious behaviours include **avoidance, tantrums, seeking excessive reassurance and asking never ending ‘What If?’ questions**: ‘What if I get lost?’, ‘What if I fall?’, ‘What if the bus is late?’, ‘What if you forget to pick me up?’, ‘What if something happens to you?’, ‘What if...?’

These anxious behaviours can provide short term relief but unfortunately reinforce anxiety and contribute to the cycle of anxiety. The anxiety is still there, it doesn’t go away. The anxiety increases.

Accommodating anxiety means we help children to avoid the task or activity that causes their anxiety, and by doing this we reinforce it.

Children can stay in this ‘stuck’ position with their anxiety when we assist them avoid being in the dark, sleeping in their own bed, separating from us at school drop off, going to camp, attending swimming lessons, sports carnivals, birthday parties etc.

We can help them avoid the situation that caused them to feel anxious but the anxiety does not go away. They are in a ‘stuck’ position.

What we can do to help children get ‘unstuck’ is to help them to manage small amounts of anxiety by breaking down tasks and activities into small steps.

By assisting them slowly and carefully in small steps, children develop confidence to manage their strong responses when in a situation that causes them to feel anxious.

If you are worried your child is spending the majority of their time worried and anxious, seek help. Your GP can refer you to a psychologist who will be able to advise on available current treatments for anxiety.

Questions to help you prepare for a meeting with your GP, your child’s teacher or support staff

- Does your child worry more than other children their age?
- Are their fears out of proportion to reality?
- Do they avoid people, places, events?
- Does their fear significantly interfere in their life or your family’s life?
- Have their worries persisted for more days than not for at least six months?

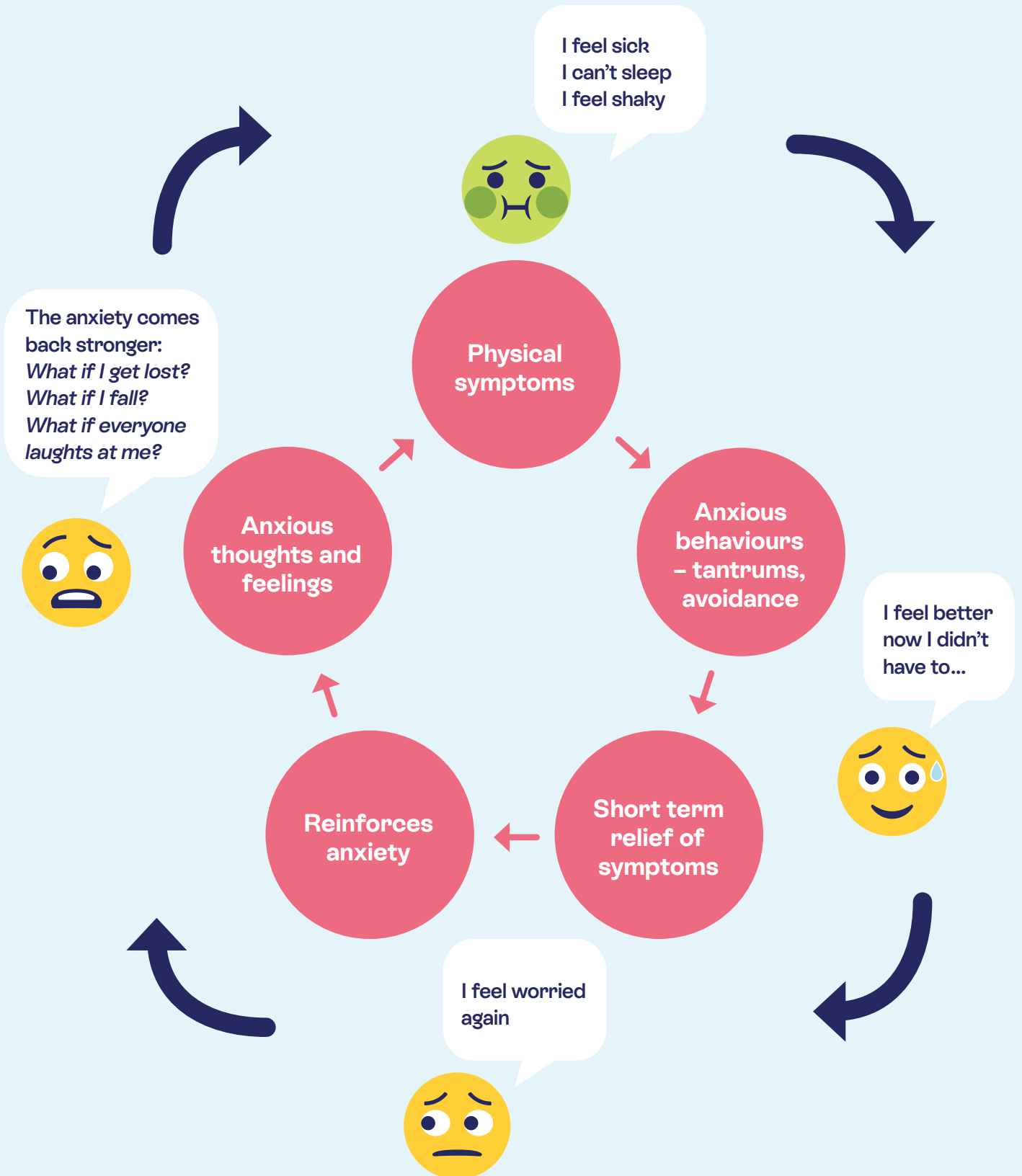
Risk factors for developing anxiety

It is useful to know the risk factors that can increase the chances of a child developing anxiety.

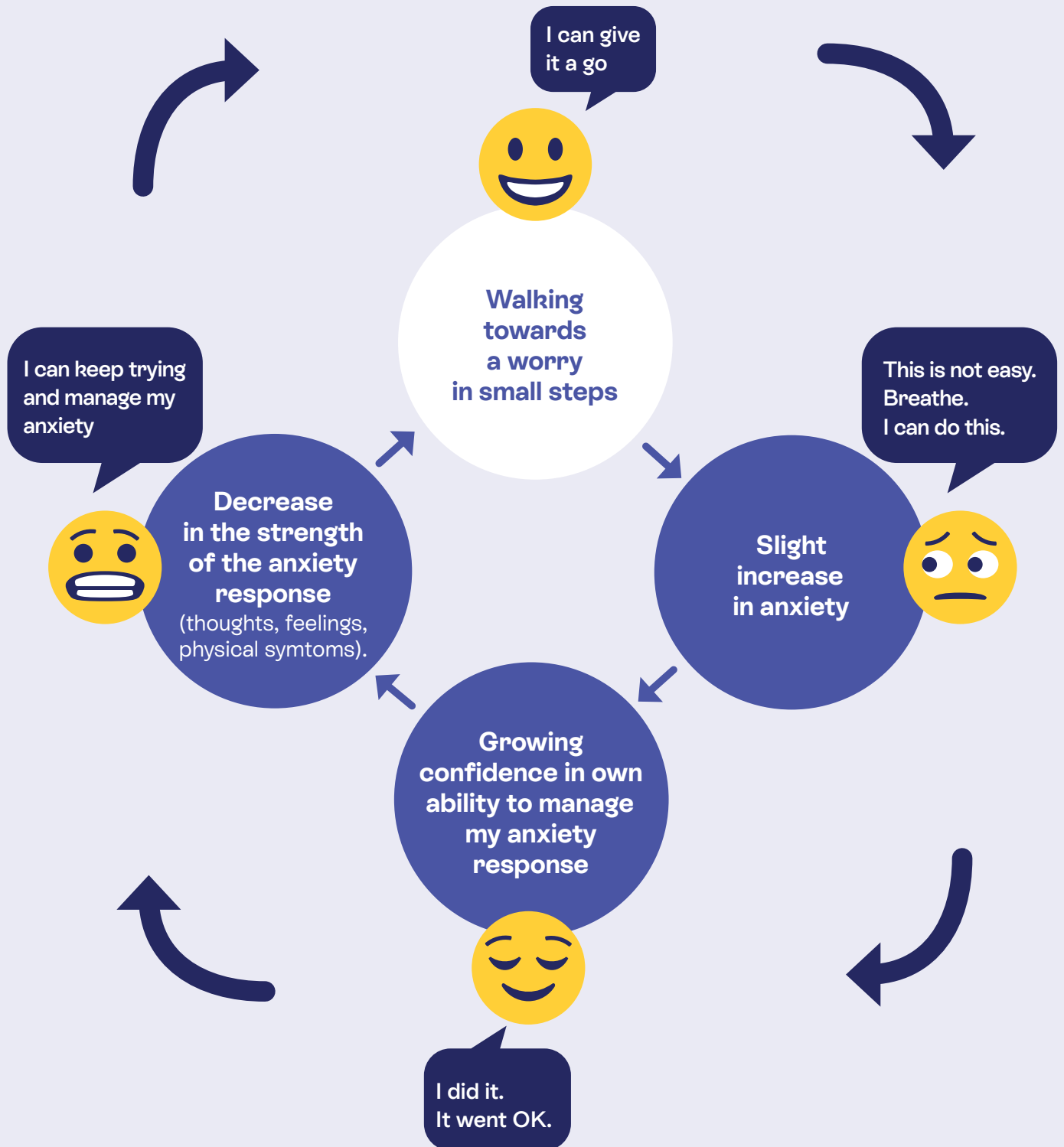
- Family history of anxiety
- Co-occurring medical condition
- Personality
- Family changes and
- Major life events

It is advised that parents and carers advise teachers about any significant changes in the family and home environment of the child-illness, death, family breakdown etc. Childhood educators and school teachers are in a position to observe for ongoing anxious behaviour and support children when they know there is a risk factor.

The Cycle of Anxiety



Managing Anxiety



Strategies to Manage Anxiety



1. Teach emotional feelings

All feelings are OK.

- Talk about emotions with children
- Tell me about the feeling?
- Where did you feel that in your body?
- What did you do?

Children can draw, use a body map and emoji stickers or post-its. We can use toys to help explore emotions.

Talk to children about everyday worries and how you calm yourself down.

- I felt worried. I took three deep breaths and had a drink of water and thought about what I could do.
- I felt sad so I listened to my favourite song
- Would you like a hug? That usually makes me feel better.
- Going outside makes me feel better.

Help children find something they can do when they feel a strong emotion

Draw, go to a cozy corner, do a puzzle, listen to music etc.

Movement helps to relieve nervous tension – dance, yoga poses etc.

2. Routine and independence

- Predictably helps make children feel safe
- Involve them in getting ready for the day – build independent skills
- Time for rest, exercise and play

Reassurance – develop a ‘goodbye ritual’ with your child – it might include a high five, a hug, a special handshake etc. You can include a ‘transition object’ which can help them move into the day, e.g, a piece of material, a sticker etc.

3. Encourage brave behaviour and alternate thinking

Offer simple choices, provide enough time to watch and learn and try, break tasks into small steps, encourage a curious mindset and don’t pre-empt anxiety.

Encourage positive thinking – I can try, I can ask for help.

4. Teach children adaptive coping skills

- Introduce out of routine activities
- Role model and encourage brave behaviour
- Brainstorm solutions to a challenge and use small steps.



5. Boost the parasympathetic nervous system

While the sympathetic nervous system can put us in 'flight or flight', the parasympathetic nervous system is known for 'rest and digest' functions. It helps calm and bring balance. We can boost it to help us calm sooner when we feel anxious. We need flexibility between the two systems so that we can feel worry or stress but be able to become calm more quickly.

- **Slowing breathing and using breathing techniques:** mirror breathing for the child; the five finger breathing technique
- **Self soothing:** soft toys, weighted blanket, puzzles, books, music, exercise, dance
- **Bubble blowing** can help practice deeper breathing
- **Senses game:** what is one thing you can see, hear, smell, touch, taste. A great game when on a walk.

6. Grounding techniques to use with an anxious child

- **'Mirroring'** slowing breathing down or a breathing technique. The child can copy what you are doing. This is helpful for children who are distressed and can't manage a breathing technique without assistance.

- **The five finger technique:** hold up one hand, spread your fingers. Use the other hand to trace up and down each finger. This allows us to take five long slow breaths. Teach this to children when they are receptive to it and practice regularly.
- **Place both feet flat on the floor.** Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing how your feet feel.
- **Stomp your feet** on the ground several times. Feel the sensations in your feet and legs when they hit the ground under your feet.
- **Rub your palms together.** Notice the sound and the feeling of warmth.
- **Breathe in cool air** from an open window or use a cold compress.
- **Think of** your pet, a favourite toy, a place you love to be.

Over time children can learn what works for them and as a part of their learning about emotional regulation. It is important for them to remember what works when you are not there to help.

This helps bring the child into the present moment and helps bring the mind and body back into balance.

These techniques take practice and patience to work well for children. If they are used regularly, the techniques will be easier to access when they are experiencing anxiety or other strong emotion.

7. Tips for parents and carers

Look after your own mental health

Looking after your own mental health is the number one action parents can take to reduce the impact of anxiety on children. Sometimes as parents we tend to put ourselves last on our 'to do' list.

Parents can ask themselves, how are my own worry/anxiety levels?

Do I need to seek some help? Are there strategies I could use to reduce my own stress levels?

Reassure your child you have confidence in their ability to manage

We can model non-anxious behaviour by talking to children about our own experiences of feeling worried and managing stressful or new situations – running late for an important event, getting lost travelling to a new place, giving a presentation at work, going to a party when you didn't know anyone etc.

What happened? What did you feel? What steps did you take to feel better? How did you feel when you completed it? How did you manage your worry? etc.

Show rather than tell

Children remember what they see and hear.

Resist solving 'low stakes' problems

Don't jump into 'solve' mode. Practicing active listening and providing space for children to think of ways they can solve a low-stakes challenge. This build confidence.

Reduce 'accommodations'

'Accommodations' are the times you help your child avoid situations that make them anxious. This only strengthen anxiety.



Reduce the amount of excessive reassurance you provide as well as answering endless 'What If?' questions. Remember, this is only a short-term relief and strengthens anxiety.

Help children rely more on the evidence of their own past experience

Brainstorm what else might happen rather than the worst-case scenario they feel is the most likely to happen.

Avoid saying, 'You'll be fine I am here. I'll keep you safe.'

This offers only a short-term relief and if you're not there, what do they do? You could say instead:

- 'You're safe. Your bed is a safe warm space for you.'
- 'You're safe. The teachers are here to help you at preschool.'
- 'You will be at school and I will be at work/home and I'll pick you up at the end of the day.'

The Small Steps Plan



The plan allows us to work with a child to face a situation, task or activity in very small steps. This builds confidence, helps them to manage their anxiety and understand they are not in danger, they are safe.

How to develop a Small Steps plan

1. Choose your time to talk about anxiety when they are calm (and you are calm). Talk about helping them to feel better about going to school **or** going on an excursion etc. Choose only one activity or task that triggers anxiety, at a time.
2. Explain that *'anxiety makes you want you to avoid things, but the more you avoid, the worse the anxiety gets. The best way to reduce the anxiety is to face it. We can work on it together a little bit at a time.'*
3. If it's a school task that is triggering anxiety symptoms, talk to your child's teacher about developing a small steps plan. Parents and teacher may also seek the assistance of the School Counsellor or Learning and Support teacher.
4. If its a home activity that is causing anxiety, parents can use the Small Steps template to help their child.
5. Involve your child in making the plan. As they get older it's important they feel some ownership over the plan.
5. In the first column of the Small Steps plan, brainstorm the steps that might be involved in getting through a task or activity that makes them anxious.
6. Give the plan a name/or ask the child to draw a picture, for example, sleeping in my own bed, going to school or attending school camp.
7. In the second column, put the steps in an order that you, the teacher (if a school task) and your child feel will work best.
8. Make the first step easily achievable for a confident start.
9. Start! Let your child know the plan can be amended and steps can be added if needed.
10. Provide encouragement at each 'win' – a win is also n attempt at a step, not just completing a step. Incentives can be discussed as part of the plan to help with motivation.
11. Revise the plan regularly. Amend or add steps as needed.
12. Help your child see their progress as the steps are attempted and achieved.

Below is the Small Steps template if you would like to try it out!

Write the steps you think of here and cut along the dotted line so you can move the steps around to put them in order. ✂ Step Step Step Step Step Step Step Step	Write your goal, put your steps in order, use as many or few as you need. Tick them off when completed. Discuss any changes needed. Celebrate achievements. ✂ Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4 Step 5 Step 6 Step 7 Step 8
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Taylor moved into a toddler bed at 3. However he usually gets into his parents' bed sometime during the night.

This means everyone has a disturbed sleep.

At 3 1/2, Taylor's parents decided to try a small steps plan. They agree on a regular bedtime and commit to use the plan for two weeks.

Small Steps for Taylor

1. Taylor's parents talked to him about the steps they were making to help him feel OK to stay in his own bed.
2. They made a sticker chart for each step.
3. Taylor's parents helped him with his 30-40 minute preparing for bed routine- bath, teeth, story, nightlight on, setting out tomorrow's clothes, water, bathroom visit, breathing activity, goodnight ritual.
4. Taylor's parent say he needs to stay in his bed for 3 minutes and they'll check in on him. This helped Taylor remain calm. They checked (silently) on Taylor first every 3 mins, then 5 mins, then 7 mins, then 10-15 mins.
5. If/when Taylor came into his parents room during the night, one parent silently guided him back to bed and the breathing activity. Parent said they will check in to see how he's going in 3 mins (3 mins, then 5 mins as before). They did this until they could see he'd fallen asleep.
6. They continued to use the steps for two weeks to establish a pattern.
7. They agreed to go back to the plan if and when needed.



Keira is afraid of the dark. She becomes very anxious and cannot go into a room alone if its dark.

Small Steps for Keira

1. Keira's parent talked to her about helping her with this worry and that 'we'll do this by taking very small steps'.
2. Parent walked with Keira down the hallway into the room and her parent switched on the light.
3. Parent walked with Keira into the room and they switched on the light together.
4. Parent walked with Keira down the hallway and waited at her room doorway. Keira switched on light.
5. Parent walked with Keira halfway down the hallway and Keira walked the rest of the way and then into her room and switched on the light.
6. Parent waited in the lounge out of sight of hallway. Keira walked down the hallway, into her room and switched on the light.

Children can feel anxious about a range of challenges and situations. This can include fear of the dark, of dogs, of thunderstorms etc.

We can help them by making small steps plan to work slowly to develop confidence.

This helps children walk towards a worry rather than away from it.

We need to help them learn how to recognise how they feel and manage the feelings of anxiety.

- Anxiety reduces through experience not by explanation. We can tell children not to worry but this won't stop them worrying.
- If we can break down a challenge or situation into small steps, children can build confidence in their ability to manage one step at a time.
- In this way they build new memories where they have managed the situation.
- Practising coping skills helps them manage their emotional responses to the anxiety. Positive self talk, self soothing, breathing and mindfulness activities can help them to move through the small steps.
- A sense of achievement builds confidence



Alex started school this year. His parents were worried because he was distressed in the mornings, at the school gate, in the playground and when the bell rang. Well into Term 1, this has not improved.

Small Steps for Alex

1. Alex's parents reinforced the calm before school routine.
2. Alex met teacher at classroom door once everyone is in the room.
3. Added the 'special goodbye' ritual with his parent and joined the teacher and class at the assembly line once bell rings.
4. After the special goodbye ritual, Alex was handed to teacher on morning duty.
5. Alex and his parent said their special goodbye in the playground, parent left, Alex was OK.

Tips for parents

- Think through your evening before and morning routines. A structured routine helps promote calm at bedtime, including organising laying out uniform, shoes, having bag ready etc the night before. A calm start to the day with enough time for breakfast and getting ready can set a positive tone for the day. Calm music can be more helpful than screens or TV.
- Make a chart your child can check off as they get prepared for school each morning. You can print and add photos of them achieving each task for the chart. This helps motivate and distract children who may move very slowly through before school tasks as their anxiety grows. Consider incentives for a whole week of good starts.

Note

The Small Steps plan may take longer to move through for parent A than it does for parent B. That's OK. Keep working through at your child's pace. Add in steps if needed to keep up the momentum.

You might be going along well with the plan and then your child is off school sick for a few days and you may find you have to go back a step or two. That's OK. Having a plan to work through one small step at a time helps us to keep moving forward.



Jamil is very anxious about asking or answering questions in class. He worries he'll get his words mixed up, everyone will laugh; he'll get the answer wrong and be in trouble. Just thinking about answering a question makes him feel sick and sweaty.

Small Steps for Jamil

1. Jamil's teacher talked to Jamil and prepared a question and answer with him.
2. Jamil's teacher asked him the question in class at a time organised (e.g. health lesson after lunch). He answered with the prepared answer.
3. Jamil's teacher brainstormed some answers to a questions in preparation.
4. Jamil's teacher asked him to answer the question in class. He chose one of the answers to say.
5. Jamil's teacher asks him a simple question with no preparation.
6. Jamil's teacher asks him questions regularly, slowly increasing degree of complexity to build his confidence.

Breaking down tasks to build confidence

We can support a child experiencing anxiety with a school task by breaking the task down so the child can engage, experience a small amount of anxiety at each step but develop confidence to manage the anxiety symptoms and make it through the task.

Our brains learn by experience.

I did it, I managed to do that.

Experience is far stronger than any amount of telling a child, 'don't worry, it will be fine, everyone else does it.'

Use this plan for other tasks

Teachers can use this small steps plan as a template for any class activity to be modified to help them engage and participate.

Parents can use this small steps plan to think through an activity at home or in the community that could be broken down in the same way. For example, speaking to relatives or family friends can be challenging for children experiencing social anxiety. Scripts and role play can help so the child has one or two answers they can say to questions. Then one or two questions they can ask of others.



Jake manages OK at school but only when the routine is predictable. He seeks reassurance constantly and asks a lot of 'What if?' questions. An excursion is coming up and Jake's anxiety is building. He is biting his nails and feels pain in his chest.

Small Steps for Jake

1. Jake's teacher communicated the excursion plan to class.
2. Jake's parents helped with preparation using the plan.
3. Both encouraged Jake to use the information he has to answer some of his own questions to reduce the 'What If?' questions he asks his parents and teacher.
4. His parents gently challenged his anxious thoughts – is that likely – what else could happen?
5. Jake's teacher organised a few changes to class routine and his parents included after-school out of routine activities to help him build confidence in managing unscheduled events more confidently.

Alternate thinking

The aim of alternate thinking is for Jake to trust his own ability to find/think of an answer and not outsource all the answers to alleviate his feeling of anxiety.

The problem of avoidance and short term symptom relief

If Jake's teacher and parents constantly reassure him by continually answering questions on the same theme, Jake's anxiety is reinforced (remember the anxiety cycle). The short term relief doesn't last, and the questions continue.

Accommodating anxiety or rescuing children too quickly when there is no danger holds them back and may give them the idea, "maybe you aren't capable, maybe you shouldn't try." Provide support and safety but don't jump in too soon.

Dismissing Jake's worries by saying, 'Don't worry, that won't happen. It will be fine' doesn't work either.

Experience reduces anxiety not explanation.

When he asks a 'What If' question, his teacher can gently turn his attention to the document/poster to locate the information. Teachers and parents can also work with him to challenge his anxious thoughts.

When Jake focuses on the worst case scenario happening, his teacher and parents could ask,

- *Are you jumping to the conclusion that this will happen?*
- *What are the chances of this happening?*
- *What has happened in the past?*
- *If your friend had this worry what would you say to them?*

Getting out of your comfort zone

Adding out of routine and spontaneous activities into the week are useful for children experiencing anxiety who resist change. This is helpful for all the family and reminds us what challenging ourselves feels like- go bike riding, try barefoot bowls, parkrun etc

Managing small amounts of anxiety in small steps safely builds children's belief in their own ability to control their own emotional responses.



Lucy has a class presentation assignment. She is very worried about giving talks to the class. She's particularly worried she will drop her cue cards and mispronounce words. Her anxiety as the assignment approaches is disturbing her sleep and causing stomach upsets. Thinking about giving the talk makes her feel faint and shaky.

Small Steps for Lucy

1. Lucy delivered a short talk to her family and deliberately mispronounced a word.
2. Lucy gave the talk to her family and deliberately dropped her cue cards.
3. Lucy delivered a talk to her teacher in the classroom – no eye contact.
4. Lucy gave the next talk to her teacher in the classroom – with eye contact.
5. Lucy delivered the talk to her teacher and her table group.
6. Lucy gave the next talk to her teacher, her table and another table.
7. Lucy delivered the next talk to one of the Kindy classes.
8. Lucy gave the next talk to the class.

Lucy's example shows that activities can be modified so that students experiencing anxiety are able to engage and participate in activities rather than be limited by the anxiety they experience.

Activities such as oral presentations, athletics and swimming carnivals, performance events etc can be challenging for students who experience anxiety when asked to perform in front of others.

It is possible for Lucy's teacher and parents to assist her to develop a small steps plan to move towards the goal of giving a class talk.

Modifying tasks means children experiencing anxiety can be supported to manage a challenging task.



Luca is very anxious about attending the Year 6 camp. She's never been away from home before and is nervous about new challenges. She's been worrying about this camp for a long time.

Small Steps for Luca

1. Luca developed a plan with her teacher and parent.
2. Luca and her parents researched the camp website and travelled to have a look on the weekend.
3. Year 6 watched the social story video about last year's camp and had a Q and A with teachers.
4. Luca and her teacher negotiated classmates to share her cabin.
5. The Year 6 students read about all the camp activities and selected one to try. They could try others once they got there.
6. Luca went on the Year 6 camp and checked in regularly with a teacher and her class "buddy."

The Stage 3 (Year 5&6) teachers were able to spend time thinking through the strategy around preparing for the Year 6 camp, to encourage the participation of students experiencing anxiety about the activity.

Incorporating the social story, Q&A and buddy system can actually assist many individual students not just those experiencing anxiety symptoms.

Researching and finding out what the camp looked like helped Luca. The social story from last year helped Luca see some of the activities in action, the cabin and dining area layout, and this helped her picture herself at the camp and how she would manage.

Establishing buddies for students can be a helpful strategy. These may be peer support leaders.

Allowing students to choose one activity meant that Luca could focus on getting through that one task. She could then decide at the camp if she wanted to try out some others.



Jac has always liked things to be 'just so' and organises her belongings in a particular way, hates making mistakes and starts a page again if she does. Her parents had a conversation with the teacher about the length of time her homework is taking. Her teacher mentioned concern with handwashing and excessive checking. Jac's parents made an appointment with their GP, were referred to a psychologist and regularly update the school with progress.

Small Steps for Jac

1. Teacher and parents support Jac to practice strategies for calming her thoughts that work for her e.g. a stretch, a walk, moving around, breathing strategy, puzzle etc.
2. The whole class learn a breathing technique – this benefits everyone as they learn about how breathing techniques reduce stress hormones.
3. Jac and the Learning and Support teacher work out a plan for when she needs to use a timeout for an agreed activity break – breathing technique, mindfulness (e.g. puzzle, book); fresh air, etc.
4. Jac's teacher and parents encourage her to stick to the plan her psychologist is working through with her, e.g. setting an achievable goal for the number of times a compulsion is carried out.
5. Jac's network of support have regular catch ups – teacher, support staff, parents to ensure psychologist's plan can be reinforced at school and home.

Obsessive compulsive disorder

Obsessive compulsive disorder can be described as anxiety which includes intrusive thoughts (obsessions) which can only be relieved by carrying out actions (compulsions).

Some common obsessions include, fear of germs, dirt, poison, fear that illness, accidents or death will happen to their loved ones or themselves.

Compulsions include excessive handwashing, checking of locks, appliance, applying rigid rules to placement of objects, touching, tapping a certain number or rhythm and reciting a number of prayers a certain way.

Learning and support teachers can assist to reinforce the work being done by the mental health professional. This may be a plan usually developed on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy principles, (CBT). Parents can assist through regular communication with their child's teacher/ wellbeing team about the psychologist's plan.

As visits to the practitioner may be fortnightly or even monthly, reinforcing the plan at school can be very helpful to the process as children are there every day. Teachers can ask for assistance from their L&S teacher or school counsellor/ psychologist.

OCD Bounce: <https://kr.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/articles/2024/01/ocd-bounce-bridging-treatment-gap>

Kids Helpline: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd>



Resource links

For each topic you'll find all resources categorised under headings:

- **Managing big emotions – emotional regulation**
- **Clinical programs**
- **Digital safety and screentime**
- **Breathing techniques**
- **Information about anxiety**
- **Mindfulness techniques**
- **Educator and teachers**
- **Parenting advice**
- **Recommended textbooks for parents/carers**
- **Recommended books for children and young people**
- **Trauma and anxiety**

Managing big emotions – emotional regulation

Young children

Raising Children Network

Helping young children to calm down

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/behaviour/behaviour-management-tips-tools/helping-children-calm-down-3-8-years>

Primary school aged children

Let it Go

<https://www.readings.com.au/product/9781761214707/let-it-go--rebekah-lipp--2025--9781761214707>

Interoception and self regulation

<https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/professional-learning-courses/interoception-and-self-regulation/>

A Little Book About Bravery

<https://www.readings.com.au/product/9780241743201/a-little-book-about-bravery--rick-delucco--2025--9780241743201>

My Brain Books

https://www.mybrainbooks.com/products/my-brain-is-a-home?variant=49538353889567&utm_content=blend_feed&utm_medium=blend&utm_source=google&cur

Adolescents

Emotional regulation activities for tweens and teens

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/emotional-regulation-activities-tweens-and-teens/>

Emotion Regulation and Impulse Control skills (ERIC)

<https://www.eric.org.au/>

Clinical programs

Anxiety and Neurodiversity, ADHD and ASD

The Cool Kids Program

https://www.mq.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1341454/Cool-Kids-Autism-Program-Flyer-2025.pdf

Teens, neurodiversity and anxiety

<https://au.reachout.com/identity/neurodivergence>

Sue Larkey on Neurodiversity Education (Australian educator)

<https://suelarkey.com.au/about-sue-larkey-autism-expert/>

Interoception and self-regulation free online module (for educators but recommended for interested parents)

<https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/professional-learning-courses/interoception-and-self-regulation>

Digital safety and screen time

Young children

Protecting young children 2-5 yrs from the news cycle

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/disasters-preparation-support/disaster-news-supporting-children-2-5-years>

For under 5s

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/start-talking-online-safety>

eSafety

<https://www.childsafe.org.au/help-for-families/e-safety-online/>

Primary school aged children

Screen time for Australian children

<https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/kids-health-hub/screen-time/recommended-screen-time-australian-children>

Screen use planning for families

<https://screensanity.org.au/resources/>

Smart goals for screen use

<https://www.thekids.org.au/contentassets/1b8ecd6f30ec48bc9a5fe9733f65f939/smart-goal-examples.png>

Adolescents

Under 16 social media ban resource

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions>

Strategies to help young people cope with the ban

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/under-16-social-media-ban-about>

Screen use planning for families

<https://screensanity.org.au/resources/>

Smart goals for screen use

<https://www.thekids.org.au/contentassets/1b8ecd6f30ec48bc9a5fe9733f65f939/smart-goal-examples.png>

Hunter Medical Research Institute

<https://hmri.org.au/news-and-stories/supporting-your-child-through-australias-new-social-media-ban/>

Focus and distraction blocker apps

<https://zapier.com/blog/stay-focused-avoid-distractions/>

Breathing techniques

Research

Grounding for anxiety: evidence based practice and practice-based evidence

<https://www.aipc.net.au/articles/grounding-for-anxiety/>

Young children

Beyond Blue – Box breathing technique

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woQPHciR5ec>

Five finger breathing technique

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQVZgpyVQ78>

Belly breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ep5mKuRmAA>

Beyond Blue – Breathing and relaxation exercises

www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/wellbeing/relaxation-exercises

Primary school aged children

Hey Sigmund-Karen Young Hand on heart breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJJdCFEsGNU>

Breathing exercises for everyone

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/wellbeing/breathing-exercises-relaxation-activity>

Adolescents

Mindscape for young people- create mental wellness

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mindscape/for-young-people/what-creates-mental-wellness/try-breathing-exercises>

Teen breathe Australia

<https://teenbreathe.com.au/yoga-movement/stress-relief-for-teens-2-easy-breathing-exercises/>

Headspace-breathing exercise to reduce stress

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/breathing-exercises>

Educators and teachers

Emotion cards

https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/campaigns/inclusive-education-hub/pdf/resources/Emotion_Cards-Colour.pdf

Whole school programs

Smiling Mind primary school program

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-for-schools>

Best of Friends program

<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/implementation-tools/programs-directory/t/the-best-of-friends>

Friends Resilience programs

<https://friendsresilience.org/>

You Can Do It (social emotional learning)

https://youcandoiteducation.com.au/?srsltid=AfmBOooGp7sB2mzz3kYwze3WdTikY9MyjyqNeNYGQfGA-ucG-ytb_8vd

Headspace information for educators

<https://headspace.org.au/professionals-and-educators/educators/programs-in-schools/>

Be You

<https://headspace.org.au/professionals-and-educators/educators/programs-in-schools/be-you/>

ReachOut-emotional awareness and self-regulation activities for adolescents

<https://schools.au.reachout.com/resilience/emotional-awareness-and-self-regulation>

Educators and teachers

Resources related to trauma

Berry St

<https://www.berrystreet.org.au/learning-and-resources/professional-development-resources-and-bookstore>

Emerging Minds

<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/how-educators-can-help-in-the-classroom-following-a-traumatic-event/>

Be You-Beyond Blue

<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/trauma-informed-strategies-for-educators>

Understanding trauma, childhood trauma, complex trauma

<https://blueknot.org.au/fact-sheets/understanding-trauma-different-types/>

NSW Teachers Federation

<https://cpl.nswtf.org.au/journal/semester-1-2025/nine-things-teachers-should-know-about-trauma/>

NSW Government-Education

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/ecec-resource-library/working-with-children-who-ve-experienced-trauma>

NSW Government-Trauma Informed Practice for Teachers

<https://share.google/bLEEpMVXD5xBdOzpR>

Caring for students exposed to negative peer behaviour

<https://www.crisisprevention.com/en-GB/blog/education/caring-for-students-exposed-to-negative-peer-behavior/>

Research

Family structure and childhood mental disorders-new finding from Australia, 2017

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28040827/>

Grounding for anxiety: evidence based practice and practice-based evidence

<https://www.aipc.net.au/articles/grounding-for-anxiety/>

Mindfulness techniques

Mindfulness activities for all the family

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/wellbeing/mindfulness-activity-children-parents>

Young children

Short body scan meditation for pre schoolers

<https://www.mindful.org/body-scan-kids/>

Mindfulness activities for preschoolers

<https://earlyimpactlearning.com/16-mindfulness-activities-for-preschoolers/>

Guided mentation scripts for children

<https://www.betweenessions.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Meditations-for-Kids-082023-1-1.pdf>

Primary school aged children

Mindfulness and calming activities for all ages

https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/mental-health/School_link_Newsletters/Mindfulness%20and%20Calming%20Activities.pdf

Guided mentation scripts for children

<https://www.betweenessions.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Meditations-for-Kids-082023-1-1.pdf>

Adolescents

Mindfulness and calming activities for all ages

https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/mental-health/School_link_Newsletters/Mindfulness%20and%20Calming%20Activities.pdf

Five senses mindfulness activities

<https://centerforadolescentstudies.com/five-mindfulness-activities-for-each-of-the-five-senses/>

Information about anxiety

Wayahead Mental Health Association NSW

<https://understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au/>

Better Access Initiative (Medicare rebate for mental health professional help)

<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/better-access-initiative>

Young Minds: Our Future (3rd national survey on Australian children's mental health currently underway)

<https://www.curtin.edu.au/news/media-release/new-national-survey-to-track-mental-health-among>

Understanding anxiety disorders

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/anxiety>

Understanding anxiety

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/anxiety/>

Karen Young

<https://heysigmund.com/>

Parenting advice

Young children and primary aged children

Triple P parenting course – online (free)

https://www.triplep-parenting.net.au/au/free-parenting-courses/triple-p-online-under-12/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlalQobChMIhMqatrT6hQMVeC97Bx3PhgINEAAYASAAEgKbi_D_BwE

Child Mind Institute – How to help kids learn how to fail

<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-kids-learn-to-fail/>

Anchor program (Uniting) – Helping kids make sense of separation

<https://www.uniting.org/services/theanchor-home>

Triple P Parenting – Support your child through separation or divorce

<https://www.triplep-parenting.net.au/au/parenting-courses/family-transitions-triple-p-online/>

Canadian Paediatric Society – Outdoor risky play guide

<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/outdoor-risky-play>

Adolescents

Partners in Parenting – School refusal help

<https://pip-ed.web.app/>

Reach Out – Transition to secondary school

<https://schools.au.reachout.com/resources-for-parents-and-carers/tips-for-starting-at-a-new-school>

Reach Out – Effective communication with teenagers

<https://parents.au.reachout.com/parenting-skills/effective-communication>

Teenagers on What They Have Learned from Failure

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/26/learning/teenagers-on-what-they-have-learned-from-failure.html>

Starting high school

Top 10 tips for students starting high school

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/latest-news/top-10-tips-to-support-students-starting-high-school>

Pomodoro technique for study

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkRruGqRXTg>

Trauma and anxiety

Helping children and young people whose anxiety is related to trauma.

Note: we recommend you speak to your medical practitioner to seek advice if your child's anxiety is related to trauma.

Young children and primary aged children

Tips for parents assisting children experiencing trauma

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-children-tips-for-parents>

Communicating about death and grief to children

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/connecting-communicating/death-grief/death-of-a-parentsupporting-children-3-8-years>

Death: how to talk about it with children

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/connecting-communicating/death-grief/death-how-to-talk-about-it>

Caring for students exposed to negative peer behaviour

<https://www.crisisprevention.com/en-GB/blog/education/caring-for-students-exposed-to-negative-peer-behavior/>

Understanding trauma, childhood trauma, complex trauma

<https://blueknot.org.au/fact-sheets/understanding-trauma-different-types/>

Adolescents

Supporting a young person impacted by trauma

<https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/supporting-a-young-person/impacted-by-trauma/>

Headspace – Supporting adolescents through grief and loss

<https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/supporting-a-young-person/grief-and-loss/>

Grief Australia

https://www.grief.org.au/ga/ga/Content/Information-Sheets/Adolescents_and_Grief.aspx

Recommended books for children and young people

Young children

Baby's Feelings: a First Book of Emotions

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/56458548-baby-s-feelings---a-first-book-of-emotions--->

How Are You Feeling? (boardbook)

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/55644350-how-are-you-feeling-board-book>

Ruby Finds a Worry

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42972052-ruby-finds-a-worry>

Big Emotions for Little People

<https://www.readings.com.au/product/9781761214721/big-emotions-for-little-people--rebeהל-lipp--2025--9781761214721>

Compass recommended children's books

<https://www.compassaustralia.com.au/books-and-resources/category/childrens-books>

The Invisible String – Patricia Karst

<https://www.silvereye.com.au/the-invisible-string/prod9407>

The Invisible String Workbook – Patricia Karst

<https://www.compassaustralia.com.au/product/the-invisible-string-workbook>

The Invisible String Backpack – Patricia Karst

<https://www.hachette.com.au/patrice-karst-joanne-lew-vriethoff/the-invisible-string-backpack>

I'm Ready for Preschool – Jedda Robaard

<https://www.penguin.com.au/books/im-ready-for-preschool-9781760891602>

My First Day at School – Meredith Costain

<https://shop.scholastic.com.au/Product/8546294/My-First-Day-at-School/?BackToSearch=312fbf31->

Daisy's First Day – Department of Education resources

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/parents-and-carers/going-to-school/getting-ready-for-school/starting-primary-school/the-big-day/daisy-s-first-day>

Sarah Ayoub – How to Go to Big School

<https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781460767122/how-to-go-to-big-school/>

Nic Naitanui – My First Day

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/Nic-Naitanui,-illustrated-by-Fatima-Anaya-My-First-Day-9781761182488>

Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Huge-Bag-Worries-Virginia-Ironside/dp/0340903171>

My Brain Books

<https://www.mybrainbooks.com/>

Recommended books for children and young people

Primary school aged children

Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Huge-Bag-Worries-Virginia-Ironside/dp/0340903171>

Hey Warrior, Hey Awesome – Karen Young

<https://www.heysigmund.com/shop/>

All Birds Have Anxiety – Kathy Hoopman

<https://kathyhoopmann.com/all-birds-have-anxiety-2/>

Books for children experiencing anxiety

<https://www.anxioustoddlers.com/books-for-worries/>

Book guide – books to help children with anxiety

<https://www.readings.com.au/collections/books-to-help-children-with-anxiety>

My Brain Books

<https://www.mybrainbooks.com/>

Adolescents

Hey Warrior, Hey Awesome – Karen Young

<https://heysigmund.com/shop>

All Birds Have Anxiety – Kathy Hoopman

<https://kathyhoopmann.com/all-birds-have-anxiety-2/>

Young adult YA narrative books about anxiety

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/94438.YA_Anxiety_Disorder_Fiction

Anxiety Sucks: A Teen Survival Guide

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/2016/7/29/book-review-anxiety-sucks-a-teen-survival-guide>

My Brain Books

<https://www.mybrainbooks.com/>

Recommended texts for parents/carers

Young children and primary school aged children

Helping Your Anxious Child (with downloadable workbook for families)

https://www.amazon.com.au/Helping-Anxious-Child-Step-Step-dp-1684039916/dp/1684039916/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk

<https://www.silvereye.com.au/how-to-talk-so-kids-will-listen-and-listen-so-kids-will-talk/prod7080>

Adolescents

How to Talk so Teens will Listen and Listen so Teens will Talk

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/Adele-Faber-and-Elaine-Mazlish-How-to-Talk-so-Teens-will-Listen-and-Listen-so-Teens-will-Talk-9781785120183>