



Working Through Anxiety with Children

1. Establish vocabulary the child uses to describe their emotions.
2. Discuss how all emotions are healthy, the feelings in our body are made by our brain to let us know how we are feeling.
3. Use a stressor scale to identify main anxieties to try to target in your work. Allow the child to add any ideas of their own.
4. Use a body chart to discuss how the child feels/clues from the body. Use a prompt list as the child may not recognise these physical signs being linked to emotions.
5. Teach the child to recognise signs of anxiety in themselves. Look at levels of stress in a 5 point scale. Draw or write how they feel.
6. Look at a variety of techniques and strategies and find which ones the child responds to help them self-regulate.
7. Areas to explore include: distraction, visualisation, relaxation, reflection, thought challengers and breaking down goals.
8. Distraction: try a calm box, this will have a variety of cards with activities on e.g. have a drink, thread beads etc. bubbles, colouring in, fiddle toys, a family photo or anything related to the child's interests.
9. Visualisation: my favourite place or secret world. Ask the child to draw it and describe it. Include smell, touch sight, hearing and taste. Create a script and teach them to use it to visualise their own world.
10. Relaxation: this could be an app e.g. Breathe, think, do with Sesame Street, Milkshake breathing, Relaxation Routine, calming sequences.
11. Reflection – worry box or monster, share their thoughts write them down and discuss them at the end of the day. A five point scale diary between home and school to discuss stressful parts of the day, strategies used and positives and negatives of these.
12. Thought challengers – work through activities and scenarios and encourage the child to think about their thoughts. Are they negative? Teach them challenger questions to turn these positive.
13. Breaking down into steps: Work through activities to breakdown times when they feel anxious in order to overcome overwhelming situations.

14. Review all the areas and choose the ones that the child has responded well to. Add these to their 5 point scale in order for them to have a visual support to refer to.

Remember! Initially children may need support to recognise physical indicators of anxiety. Try telling them that you can see they are anxious because...and point out the sign. Refer them to the strategies on their 5 point scales.