

# Understanding and Supporting anxiety and your child's emotional needs

**Social Eyes – A Vision for Inclusion in partnership with Glebe School**



Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. (MIND)

# What is anxiety?

## Anxiety affecting mental health

- your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
- you avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious
- your worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
- you regularly experience symptoms of anxiety, which could include panic attacks
- you find it hard to go about your everyday life or do things you enjoy. (MIND)



# When is the difference between normalised anxiety and an Anxiety Disorder?

## ANXIETY

A normal reaction to stress or difficult times..

Triggered by a specific stressor.

Has a start and ending point.

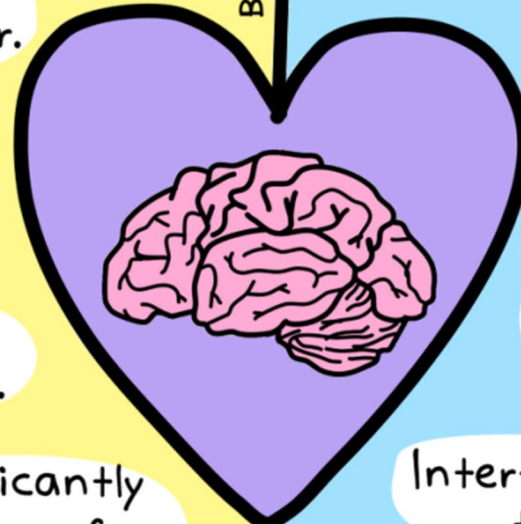
Can be helpful or motivational.

Lessens significantly or disappears away from stressful situations.

Relaxing often helps you feel better.

A response to toxic situations.

Blessing Manifesting



## ANXIETY DISORDERS

Often comes out of nowhere.

Intense or disproportionate emotional response.

Ongoing and lasts weeks or months.

Interferes with day-to-day life.

Physical symptoms like sweating, trembling, lightheadedness, racing heart.

Feels impossible to control or manage.

# Most common causes are:

- ▶ Stressful or traumatic events, such as moving house or school, losing a loved one, being abused or bullied, or getting injured
- ▶ Psychological factors, such as temperament, coping skills, or anxious parenting
- ▶ Some children are simply more pre-disposed to anxiety as part of their characteristics
- ▶ Biological factors, such as genes, brain wiring, or other conditions like **ADHD or Autism** are more likely to see higher and heightened anxiety levels




# What might be triggering anxiety in your adolescent?

CHOOSING therapy

## What Causes Teen Anxiety?

1. School
2. Peer pressure
3. Social media
4. Difficult life circumstances
5. Stressful relationships
6. College



Anxiety in Teens: Signs & How to Help

CHOOSING therapy

## What Does Anxiety In Teenagers Look Like?

- Worry that is greater than the situation warrants and is difficult to control
- Difficulty sleeping, restlessness
- Irritability
- Rumination or overthinking
- Frequent stomachaches, headaches
- Reports of feeling nervous
- Avoidance of activities they used to enjoy (for example, wanting to skip sports practice)
- Catastrophizing or worrying that bad things are going to happen
- Muscle tension
- Difficulty concentrating

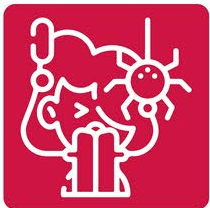
Anxiety in Teens: Signs & How to Help

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF ANXIETY



## Generalised Anxiety Disorder:

Persistent and excessive worry that tends to interfere with daily activities.



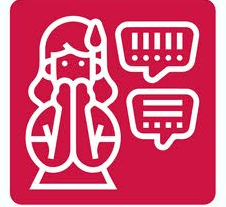
## Phobias:

Persistent and excessive fear around a particular object, activity, or situation.



## Social Anxiety Disorder:

Intense anxiety about being embarrassed or rejected in social situations.



## Panic Disorder:

The main symptom is panic attacks, physical and psychological distress episodes.



# 8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

## 1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



## 4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



## 2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



## 5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

# FOCUS

## 6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



## 7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

## 3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



## 8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



# How do we recognise anxiety in children?

## Increased and prolonged signs to look out for in your child may include:

- always worrying or having negative thoughts
- finding it hard to concentrate
- not sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams
- not eating properly
- quickly getting angry or irritable, and being out of control during outbursts
- feeling tense and fidgety
- using the toilet very often
- always crying
- being clingy
- complaining of tummy aches and feeling unwell

# SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY



## How to Help a Teenager with Anxiety

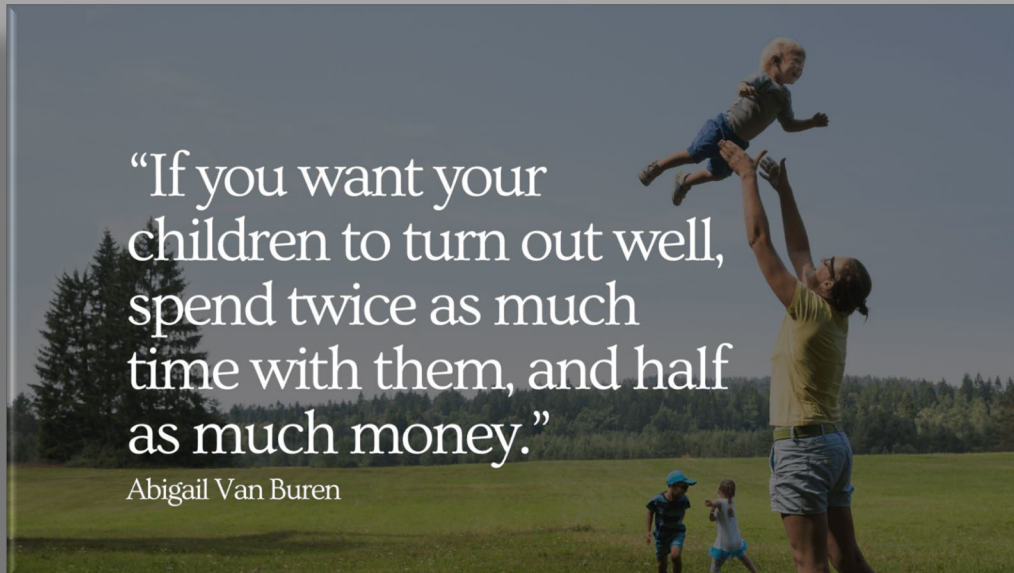
- Help them identify how they're feeling by labeling and verbalizing their emotions and the physical sensations that go with them
- Help them learn coping skills to manage or reduce their anxiety (i.e. meditation, walking, spending time with trusted people, etc.)
- If the anxiety persists or interferes with functioning (i.e. absences from school, inability to sleep routinely, etc.), it may be time to find a therapist.



# What does the media say about children's anxiety?

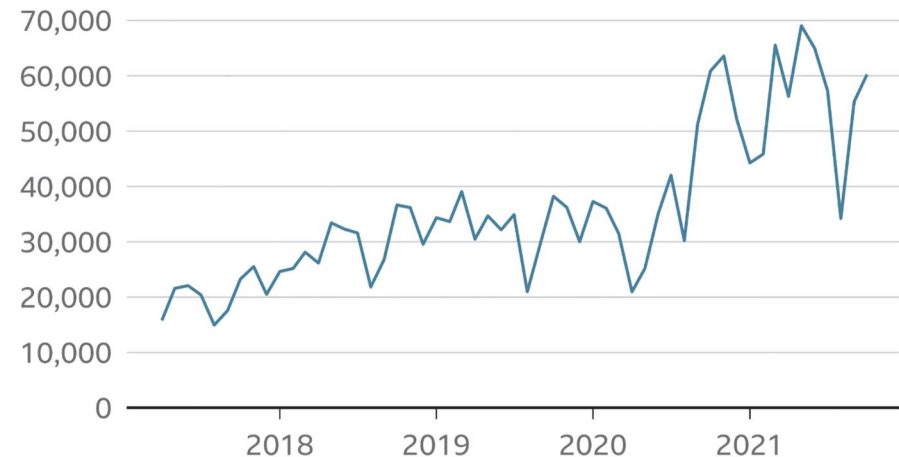
'Parents are always worrying about their kids. Are they hungry? Are they cold? Are they happy? And it doesn't matter if those kids are 30 or 13 years old. Right now...the biggest concern about their kids younger than 18 is not drugs. It's not alcohol or teen pregnancy. It's mental health. A recent Pew survey finds that around 40% of parents are extremely or very worried their children might struggle with anxiety or depression.' [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)

*'He told me he had a 'big tummy ache' and I knew it was anxiety-based' The Guardian*



## Referrals to children and young people's mental health services on the rise

April 2017 to October 2021, England



Source: NHS Digital

BBC



Matty missed 18 months of school with anxiety

**Parent groups are warning of a "tsunami" of crippling school-anxiety cases leading to persistent and debilitating absence from education.**

There is no official data on absence due to school anxiety and many affected pupils are labelled truants but support groups are being flooded with calls.

And an education lawyer in north-west England says the pandemic has made an "unprecedented crisis" even worse.

The education department said it was investing £17m in school mental health.

Children with school anxiety may experience physical symptoms such as stomach pain, nausea and headaches before school or have immobilising anxiety, panic attacks or something that seems like a tantrum.

They may even threaten to harm themselves if parents make them go to school, and yet their parents can still be threatened with fines and court action.

## Anxiety and school attendance & EBSA

**The issue is poorly understood and often incorrectly labelled "school refusal".**

**"It's not about refusal - it's not a child that won't do something. It's about a child that physically can't," Fran says. "It's a debilitating level of anxiety which prevents attendance and the consequences to families are catastrophic."**

**Many parents are being prosecuted and fined under legislation put in place to stop parents taking children on holiday in term time.**

**"But it's penalising all those parents whose children are stuck in the system," Fran says.**

**"We know all the problems with the special educational needs and disability system, we know the problem accessing children mental health services - a lot of those children are the ones who are struggling to attend, and parents are being penalised for that." BBC**

[Parents warn of tsunami of school-anxiety cases - BBC News](#)

**Helping them to become better organised**

**Develop set routines to support their independence**

**Ensure that they gain enough rest, sleep, a balance diet and exercise. Agree online/digital boundaries/experiences together**

**Share their learning journey**

**Keep talking and listening**

**Problem solve and celebrate their journey**

**Help your child to attend school by...**

- lack the complex social skills that come naturally to others, struggle to make and keep friends/experience bullying
- have difficulty coping with the curriculum.
- struggle to cope with the demands of a school timetable because they have difficulty organising and prioritising
- experience sensory differences which can make it hard to tolerate some aspects of the school environment, like noises, smells and lighting
- strive for perfection in their work and see anything less as a failure
- get into trouble with teachers for unintentionally being rude, inappropriate or not respecting authority
- take things literally, which might mean that they misunderstand a teacher's instructions, or jokes
- find sudden changes to their routine difficult
- find transitions difficult, like moving classroom or changing teacher
- find that unstructured time, like breaks and lunchtime, cause anxiety at school
- experience difficulty with a particular subject or member of staff
- struggle with anxiety and find it hard to be apart from family, or away from the familiar routines of home



**Acknowledge and value how they feel**

**Help them to recognise, name, scale and problem solve their day**

**Identify change with Glebe which may be impacting**

**Routine gives security and control in a world they can't control**



- **Encourage them to communicate with you about the problem. Using visual supports may help. Ask your child to rate events or places at school on a scale from 'not scary' to 'very scary'**
- **If you have an understanding of the reasons behind their reluctance, share it with Glebe staff**
- **Create a 'worry book' for your child to record their anxiety during the school day – they can draw/use symbols**
- **Identify strategies to regulate, reduce and monitor emotions and reduce stress, for example exercise, visual stress scales such as a stress thermometer or traffic light system**
- **Reward and praise any progress on specific tasks, like completing something they find difficult, putting on their school uniform or walking past school**
- **Provide structure at home by using visual supports**
- **Try to help them develop their social skills**
- **Help your child to understand the benefits of education**

# HELP YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY CAN AND CAN'T CONTROL

✓ Their attitude

✓ How they treat people

✓ The effort they put into things

✓ Their objectives

✓ Asking for help



✗ What has already happened

✗ Feeling sick

✗ What other people think or say

✗ How other people act

✗ Time or weather



Help your child to recognise what they can and can't change is a key stress trigger

Cyber Bullying -

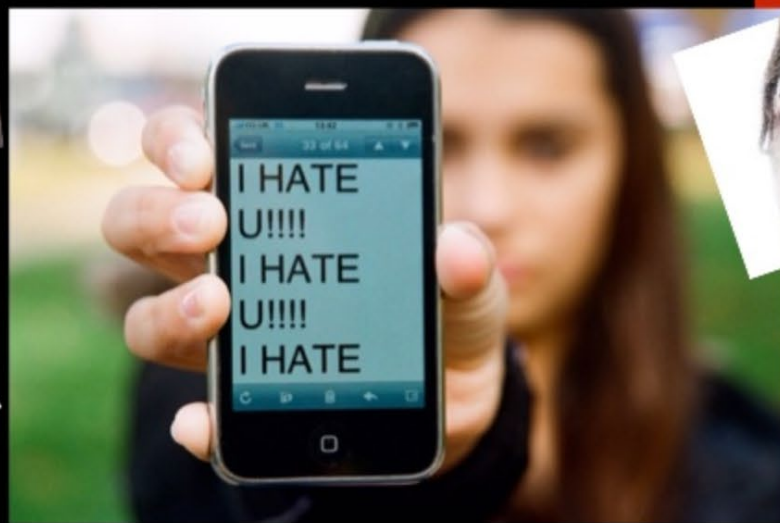
Message  
The next time I see you, I'll grind your face against the pavement. |



badgrl2:  
I HATE U!!!!  
WATCH OUT!!!!



# Anxiety



## Digital use – gaming and networking

- How do you boundary/routine access?
- Do you have fixed safety rules?
- Does your child know the safe rules?
- Do you discuss their access as part of your daily routine?
- Do you have parental control over site access?
- Do you have 'digital switch off time'?



# Child Safety Online:

A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media

## Why children use social media

- Entertainment
- Belonging
- Confidence
- Popularity
- Self-esteem
- Expression



Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; and if children never face any risks, they never learn how to deal with them. By helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

## Understand the risks children may need to deal with

### What they could see or do:

- Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual and pornographic content
- Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
- Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia and suicide
- Over-sharing of personal information
- Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

### Who they might meet:

- People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
- People posing behind fake profiles for:
  - Mischief-making
  - Sexual grooming and stalking
  - Blackmail and extortion
  - Identity theft and hacking

### How this could affect them

- Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
- Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
- Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
- Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
- Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to handle
- Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future



internet matters.org

NSPCC

UK Council for Internet Safety

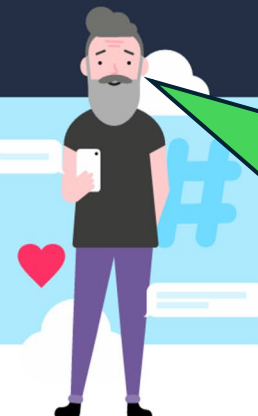
parent zone

IWF Internet Watch Foundation

UK Safer Internet Centre

# Online safety tips for parents of teenagers 14+ Year Olds

internet matters.org



- 99% of 12-17-year-olds have their own mobile phone
- 98% use video-sharing platforms
- 92% have their own social media profiles
- 75% play games online

\*Source: Ofcom Children and parents: media use and attitudes 2022 report

## Checklist:

### Keep talking

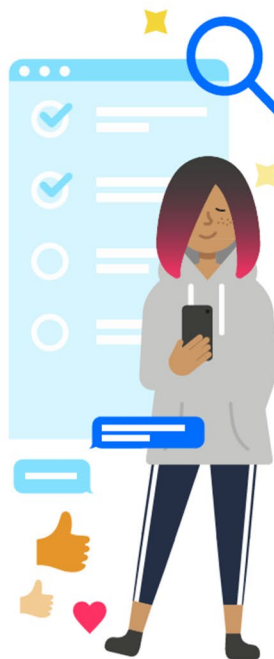
Stay interested in what they're doing online and discuss what they might have come across. **Don't be afraid to tackle difficult subjects like cyberbullying, and sexting and pornography.** Help them to be critical of things they see online and judge the quality and reliability of online sources. Acknowledge that this is difficult considering how content can be manipulated online to persuade even the most savvy people. Talk together about how to manage some of these challenges and why it is important.

### Manage their online reputation

Let them know that anything they upload, email or message could stay online forever. **Remind them that they should only post things online that they wouldn't mind you, their teacher or a future employer seeing.** There are lots of stories in the media that highlight the importance of online reputation and clearly demonstrate how things that happened years ago can resurface in the future. See our [online reputation advice hub](#) to get tips to support young people on this issue

### Adjust controls

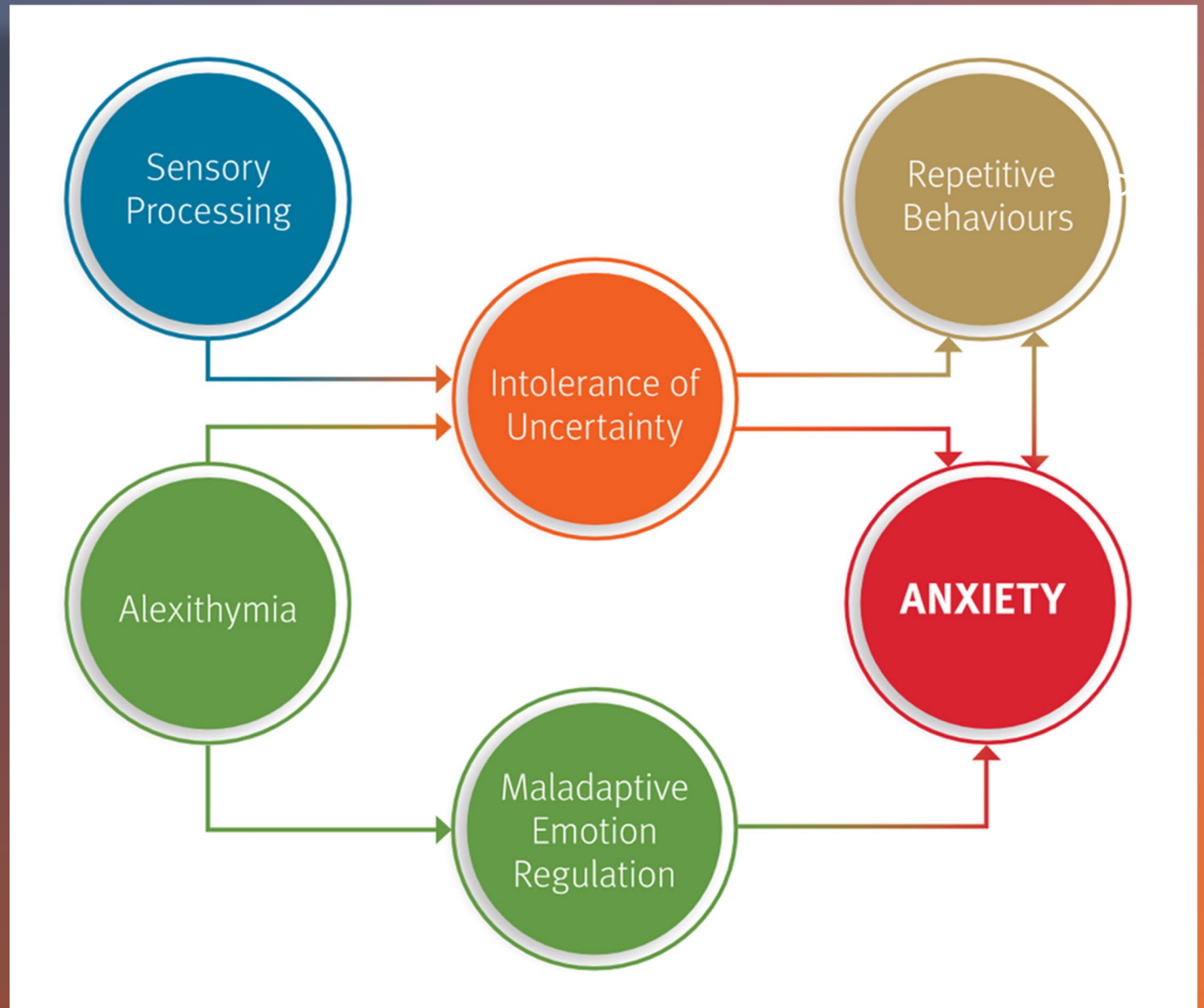
Adjust the **parental controls** on your broadband and internet-enabled devices, depending on your child's age. Your broadband provider can tell you how. Find out how to set up safe search in Google by going to the [Google Safety Centre](#). Remember that at this age they are likely to have friends with unfiltered devices and whilst parental controls and filtering is important this needs to be done alongside dialogue and discussion.



Internetmatters.org

# Why are people with Autism more likely to experience Anxiety?

A model of anxiety and autism by South and Rodgers 2017 and Maisel et.al., 2016



# What is the link between anxiety and ASC?

*Anxiety, Autism: Five Prime Suspects*, Christopher Lynch, Ph.D., explores five links between anxiety and autism:

- 1) **Attention to detail:** People with autism tend to be more detail-focused. When a person with autism, especially a child, is forced to shift their attention before they are ready, anxiety may result
- 2) **Sensory sensitivities:** Some individuals with autism experience noise, touch, sight, smell, taste, temperature, pain and other sensory factors more intensely. Overwhelming sensory sensations can lead to sensory overload
- 3) **Social situations:** Increased sensory load and pressure to work within often unspoken social rules can increase anxiety in people with autism. Research has identified a link between high intelligence and social anxiety in autism
- 4) **Language:** Some individuals with autism process language differently. Anxiety may increase when they find it difficult to express their wants or needs or when others fail to understand them
- 5) **Task frustration:** People whose autism symptoms include differences in motor skills, executive function, or abstract thinking may feel anxiety when working on a challenging task

## Other key links between ASC and anxiety...

- Finding it hard to **predict or adapt** to certain sensory situations eg/ hand driers, a swimming pool
- **Fear of the unknown or the unpredictable** – change, uncertainty and transitions
- **Masking** – ‘Trying to fit into a social group to appear ‘normal’/’like everyone else’ or by internalising stress from certain, especially social situations
- **Performance anxiety** – often at school to join in situations/events such as class assemblies, sports’ days, gaining awards etc.
- **Alexithymia** – difficulty recognising and identifying emotions



**40%** of autistic children, adolescents and adults are thought to have at least one and often more than one anxiety disorder.

# What can you do to support your child?

1. **What are the likely triggers? Keep a diary – how are you handling these situations consistently?**
2. **Reduce uncertainty and confusion – use visual support, routine and Social Stories to prepare/explain what is going to happen**
3. **If possible remove or adapt the stressor/address the situation**
4. **Build skills – including coping skills/working on your child's perceptions**
5. **Monitor and support your child's energy levels and tiredness – interests help to re-charge**
6. **Adapt your home – keep it sensory low to reduce overload**
7. **Share these situations and findings with Glebe**
8. **Share how you use visuals and Social Stories at home to support at school**
9. **Discuss with school staff how/if sensory may be affecting your child**



## **It's important to listen to your child about their anxieties or worries:**

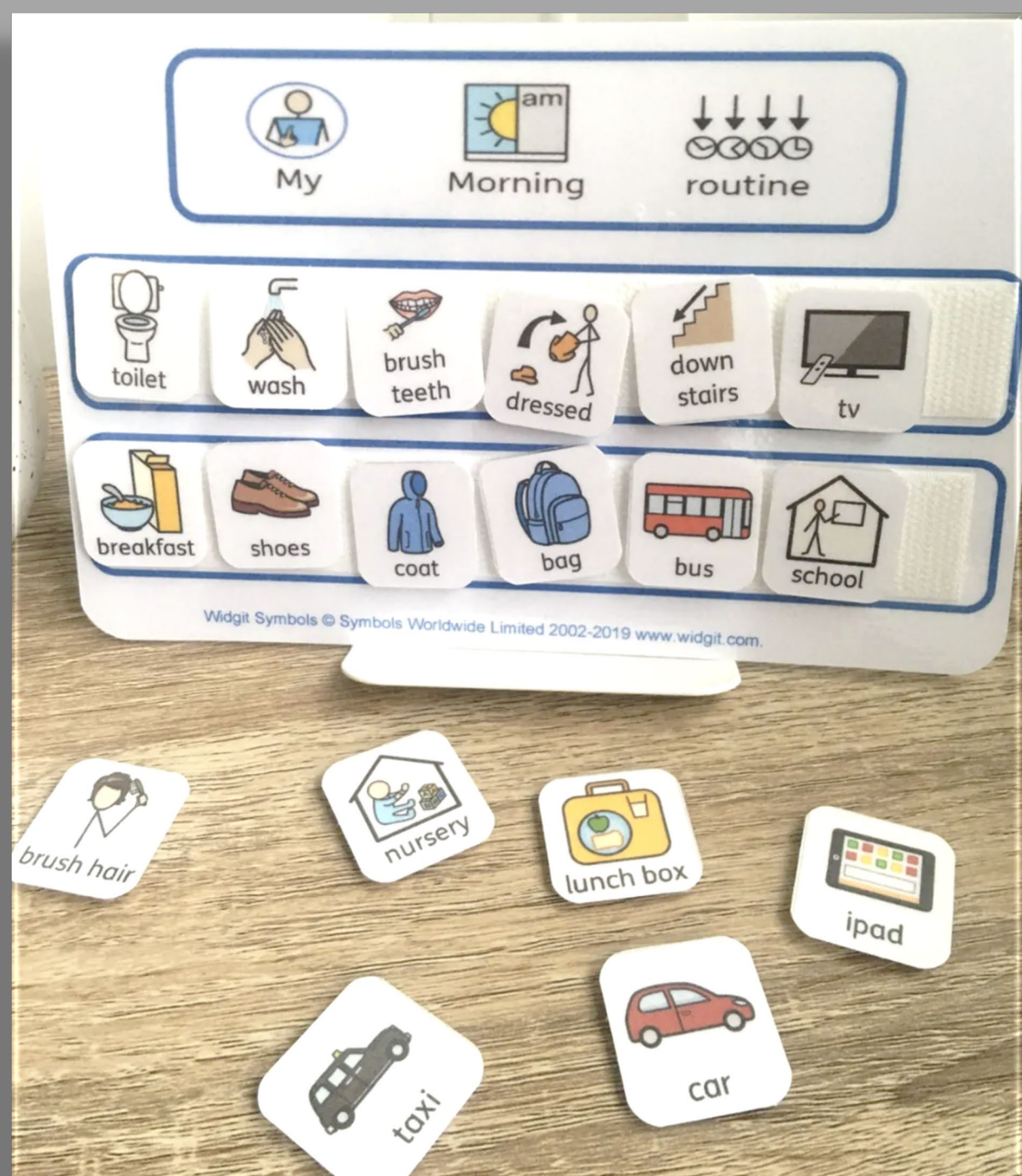
Your instinct may be to tell them 'do not worry, it will never happen.' But reassurance is not always the best strategy. Most of the things' children worry about are possible, even if some of them seem unlikely.

- ✓ Try to validate them by telling them you can see why they are worried
- ✓ Tell them there are ways to manage worry and deal with the things they fear

## **Get professional help if your child is always anxious and:**

- ✓ it's not getting better or is getting significantly worse (talk to the school first to share insights)
- ✓ self-help is not working
- ✓ it's significantly impacting their school or family life, or their friendship

Visual routine  
gives security  
= reduced  
stress



Hygiene as predictable routine

Reduce family conflict

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

AM



Routine

- Use Toilet
- Wash Hands
- Brush Teeth
- Brush Hair
- Get Dressed
- Eat Breakfast

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
|  <p>I'm a young man</p>                                   |  <p>I'm growing up</p>  |  <p>Sometimes my underarms will sweat and feel wet</p> |  <p>Sometimes they will smell bad</p>      |
|  <p>Now I need to wash with soap and water every day</p> |  <p>I dry off</p>  |  <p>I put on deodorant</p>                            |  <p>It keeps my under arms dry</p>        |
|  <p>Now I smell good!</p>                                |  <p>I will put on deodorant every day before I put on clothes</p>  |  <p>Deodorant helps</p>                               |  <p>Now it's part of my daily routine</p> |
|  <p>I take care of my feet</p>                           |  <p>I wash them with soap</p>                                      |  <p>I dry them well</p>                               |  <p>I use powder</p>                      |
|  <p>Sometimes my toes or feet itch or hurt</p>         |  <p>I have a cream that for my feet to make them feel better</p> |  <p>I wear clean socks</p>                          |  <p>Now I have happy feet!</p>          |



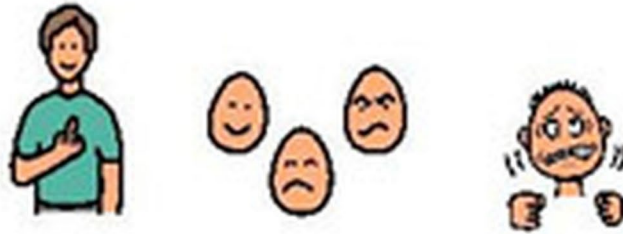
Feeling unwell  
and pain can  
heighten anxiety

Supporting your child  
in knowing the signs  
and how to  
communicate can  
support at home and  
at school

Social Stories can reduce  
anxiety...



Sometimes I feel frustrated  
or upset.



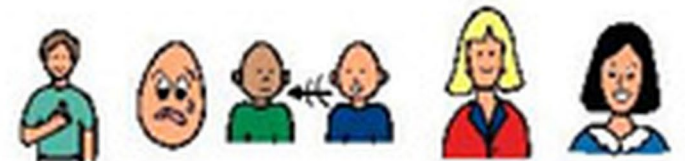
It's OK to feel frustrated but  
I need to stop and calm down.



My work doesn't need to be  
perfect. I just need to try  
my best.












When I am frustrated or upset  
I can tell Mrs. Ashley  
or Mrs. Holbrook and they can





Preparing and  
normalising that  
things may not always  
go to plan





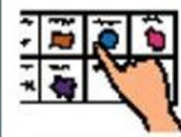
# A Change in My Day

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|    | Most of my days are the same.          |   | When there is a change, I must listen to my teacher. |
|    | Sometimes there are changes.           |   | It is OK to say how I feel.                          |
|    | Sometimes changes feel different.      |   | If I listen, change will be easier.                  |
|   | If I'm upset, I don't want to listen.  |  | Soon things will go back to normal.                  |
|  | Change is different, but change is OK. |  |  |

Recognising  
'big/explosive  
feelings' and having a  
plan

### Staying Calm

angry  

|   |   |
|---|---|
|                          | When you get angry there are things you can do to calm yourself |
|                          | Taking time out in a quiet spot will help                       |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10<br> | Counting slowly to 10 will too.                                 |
| think<br>              | Think about something you like doing or places you like to go   |
|                        | Always use your words or symbols to say what's upset you.       |

### No Hitting

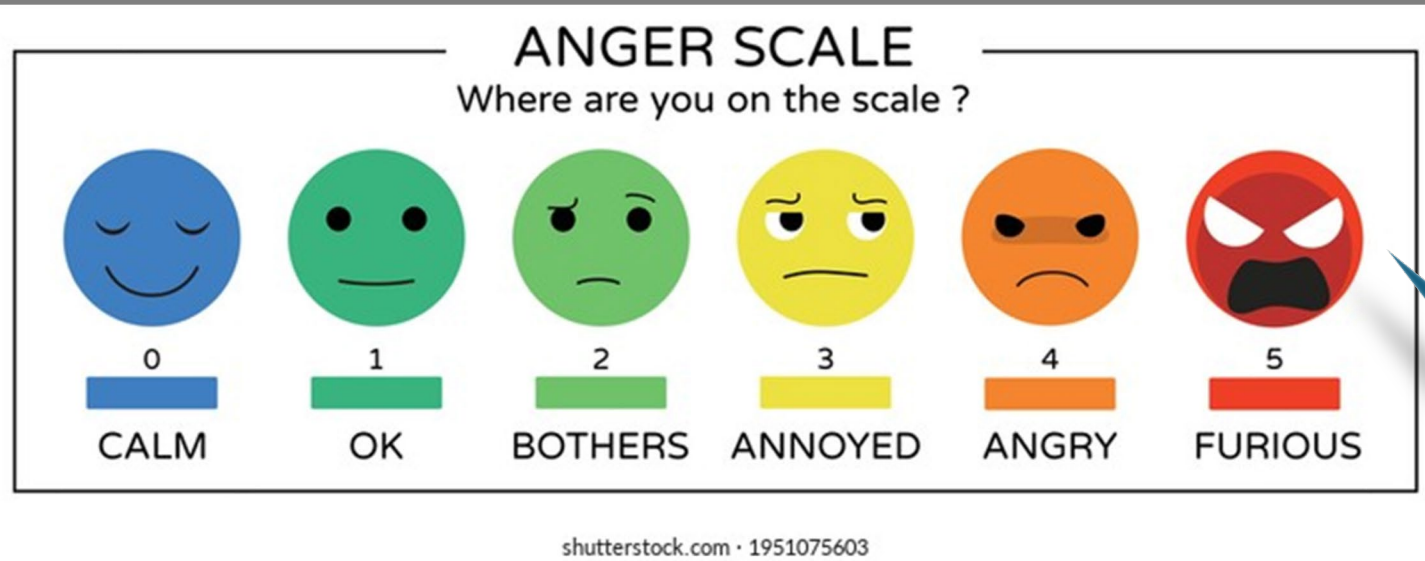
|   |   |
|---|---|
|                            | If you get angry there are things to remember.            |
|                            | Never hit any of the teachers or any of your friends.     |
|                            | Hitting hurts! hitting is not the right thing to do.      |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10<br> | Instead, move away, find a quiet spot and count to 10.    |
|                          | Always use your words or symbols to say what's upset you. |

# Recognising the 'bad day' coming home

- It may not have been the whole day!!
- Think of your child's perspective
- Is talk the best first reaction?
- Self-calming is our aim!!!
- Agree a 'Place to be' when in a positive mindset
- Praise them for using it – they are taking control...
- Teach calming approaches
- Give space to Stim/access Special Interests
- Let them decide when/if they want to talk...they may hold onto thoughts!!!

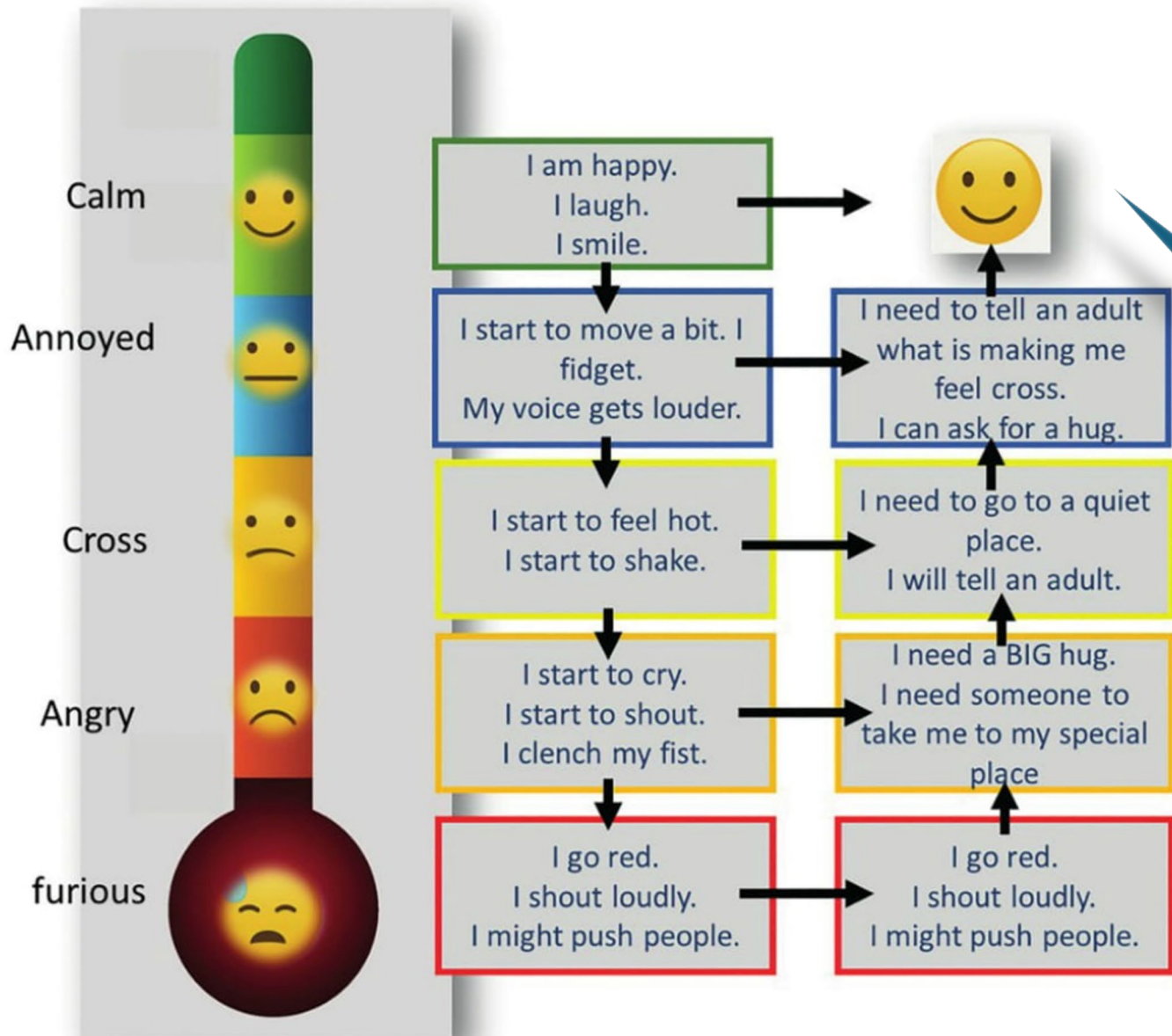


# Scaling anxiety and emotions...



Help your child to number or name the level of emotion they are feeling

Being able to separate the 'little' stuff from the 'big' annoyance is essential to reducing daily anxiety but what if you feel the world in a very big or confusing way?



**A scale which also combines predictable strategies normalises, gives consistency and treats regulation as a skill to be practiced**

# FEELINGS THERMOMETER

How do you feel?

What can you do about it?



**ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE**

▶ Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown

- Vigorous physical exercise
- Breathe deep breaths
- Take a warm shower or bath



**FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE**

▶ Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down

- Meditate/pray
- Listen to favorite music
- Take a fast-paced walk



**ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED**

▶ Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy

- Talk to a family member/friend
- Pay attention to each of your 5 senses
- Focus on what you *can* control



**SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY**

▶ Crying, Withdrawn, Slowed/Disengaged

- Set a positive goal for the day
- Call a friend or relative
- Journal about your feelings



**HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT**

▶ Smiling, Laughing, Engaged

- Help someone else
- Notice and enjoy your positive mood
- Engage in an enjoyable activity



Wisconsin Office of **Children's Mental Health**

[children.wi.gov](http://children.wi.gov)



|            |             |         |       |          |
|------------|-------------|---------|-------|----------|
| excited    | silly       | relaxed | calm  | happy    |
| worried    | My Feelings |         |       | positive |
| frustrated |             |         |       | sad      |
| mean       | scared      | angry   | bored | tired    |

How do you  
Feel today?

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Happy     | Excited |
| Sad       | Angry   |
| Surprised | Tired   |

# WHAT CAN HELP...

## Me....

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>when I feel stress:</p> Exercise          Play Outside          Discover Treasures in Nature | <p>When I feel blah or BORED:</p> Build          Play a Board Game                    |
| <p>when I feel sad or hurt:</p> Get a Hug          Journal or Write a Letter                    | <p>when I feel alone:</p> Listen to Music          Cuddle or Play with Your Pet       |
| <p>WHEN I FEEL ANGRY:</p> Ride a Bike or Skateboard          Jump On A Trampoline               | <p>when I feel worried:</p> Create Origami          Visualize a Calm & Peaceful Place |

Help your child to recognise and communicate how they are feeling

## I am feeling

|      |    |       |
|------|----|-------|
| Calm | Ok | Angry |
|      |    |       |

## HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?

|         |            |         |
|---------|------------|---------|
| happy   | frustrated | thirsty |
| anxious | sad        | scared  |
| hungry  | angry      | bored   |

www.HOMEBASEHOPE.COM.AU





## ways to manage autism, anxiety and sensory overload

### Choose sensory-friendly events and places



- Fewer lights
- Less background music

### Choose sensory-friendly features



- Noise blocking headphones
- Calming rooms
- Weighted blanket

### Make sensory experience shorter



- Take breaks from busy, noisy and bright places

### Reduce sensory experience

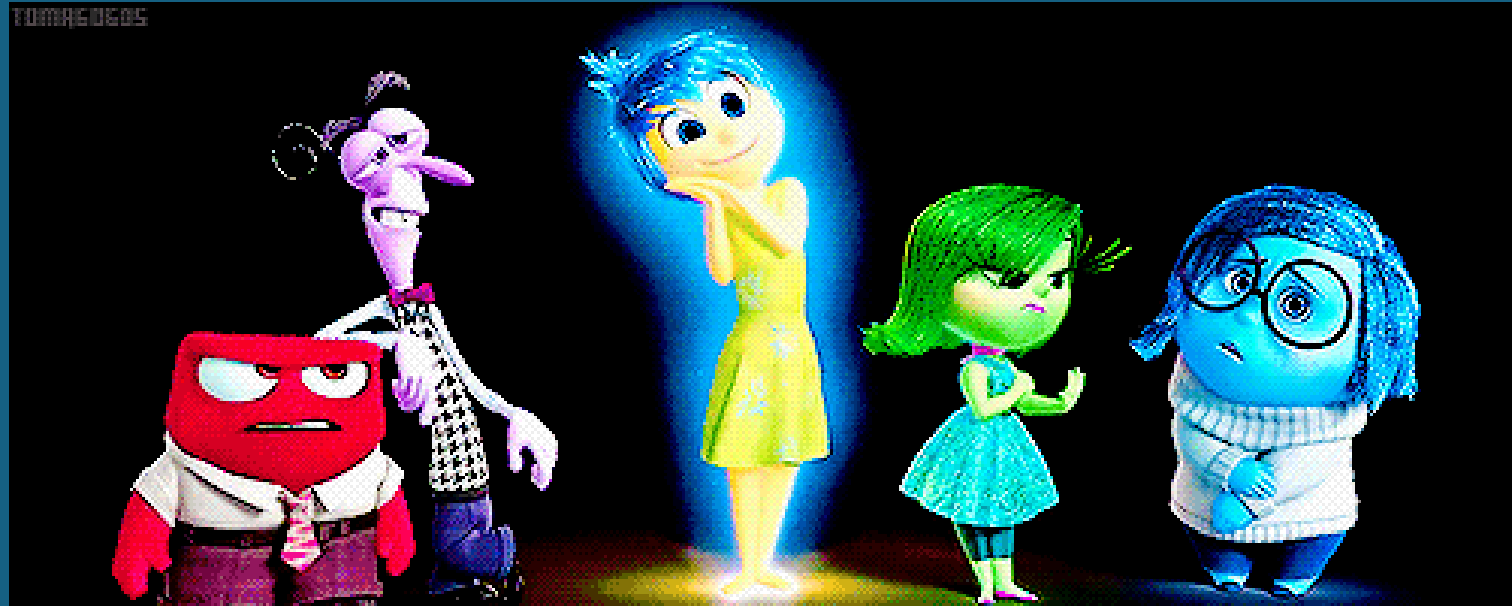


- Noise blocking headphones
- Sunglasses

**Sensory overwhelm could be a significant cause of your child's anxiety/dysregulation**



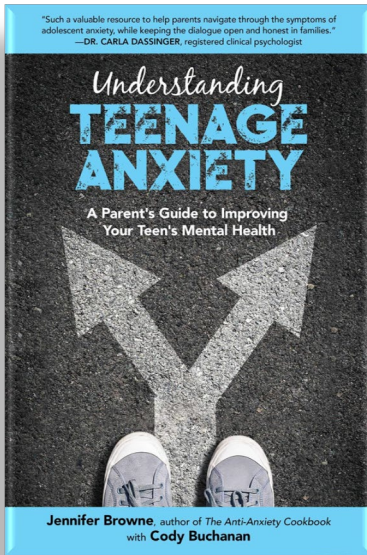
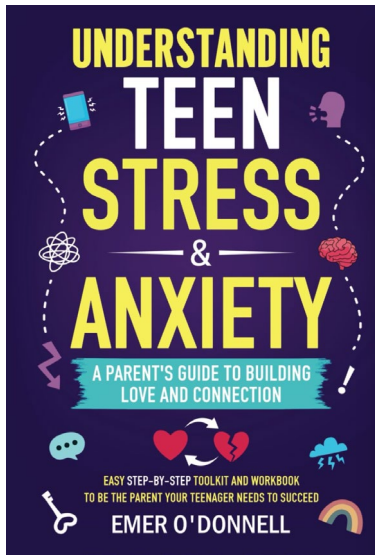
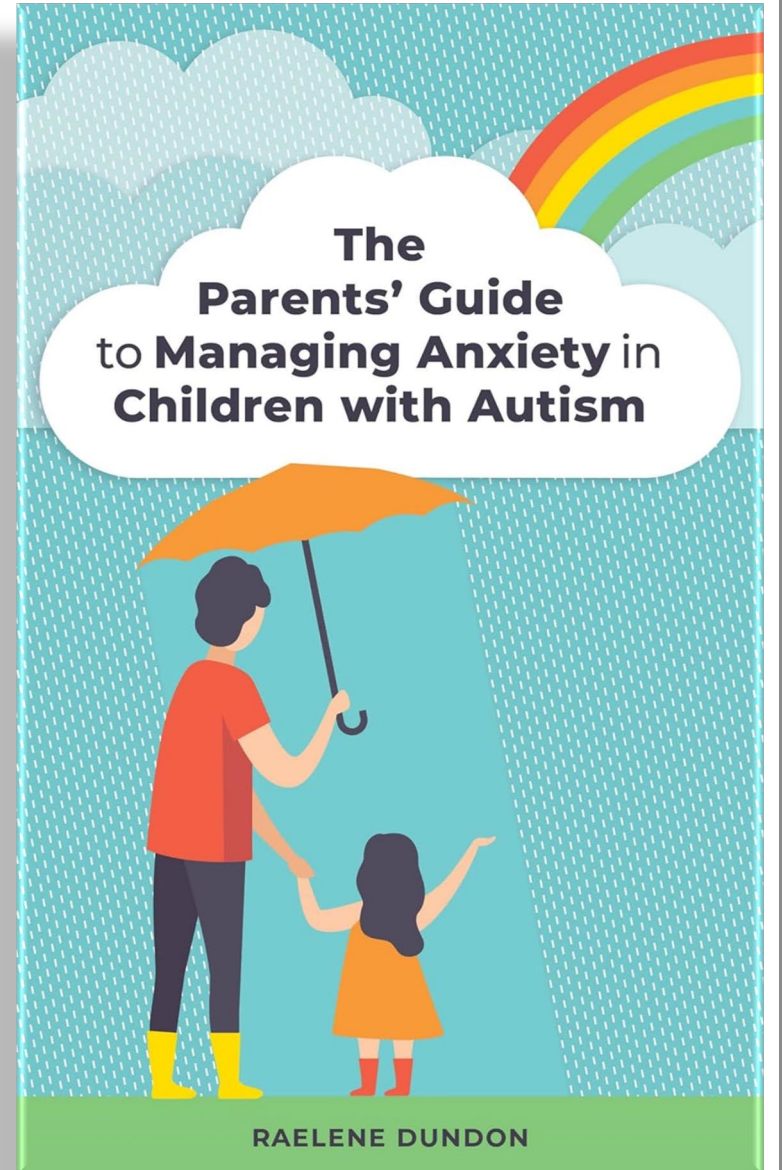
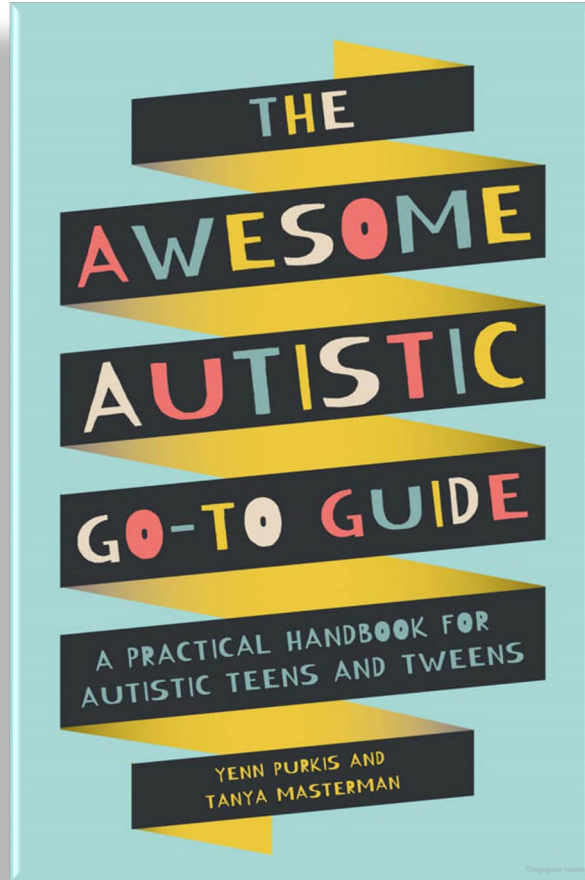
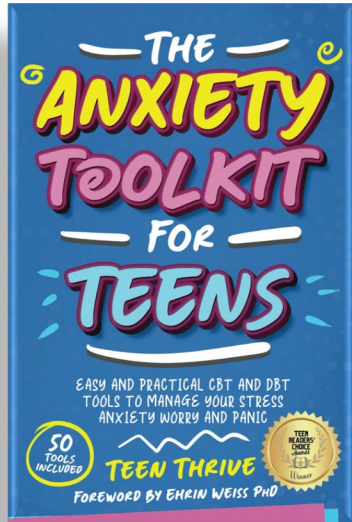
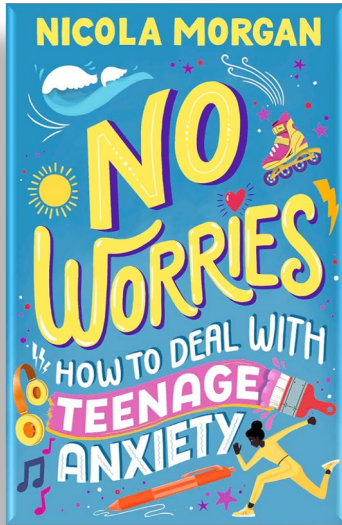
| Happy                             | Sad                             | Worried                             | Angry                             |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| How does <b>happy</b> feel to me? | How does <b>sad</b> feel to me? | How does <b>worried</b> feel to me? | How does <b>angry</b> feel to me? |
| What can I do to feel better?     | What can I do to feel better?   | What can I do to feel better?       | What can I do to feel better?     |



# 'Inside Out'



**Talk about the characters, name the emotions, relate to themselves and situations = normalise!!**



# In summary...

- **Acknowledge and help your child to name, recognise and scale how situations make them feel**
- **Try and problem solve to make the worries smaller**
- **Help them to recognise what they can/can't change – who does the issue belong to?**
- **Try and make basic daily routines as visually structured and predictable as possible**
- **Find 'stress reducers' – interests and release**
- **Ensure that 'balance' is part of their daily life – eating, sleeping, exercise, relaxation, hygiene and non-digital time**
- **Recognise sensory and hormonal factors**
- **If persistent, ensure that GPs know and make a plan**
- **If concerned around your child's perceptions/mental health – discuss with GPs and seek professional assessment**





# What next for your family?

*“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents.”*

**Thank you for taking part in our group today. We hope you have found it helpful**



**Paul Cabb,  
Social Eyes  
and  
Glebe School**

