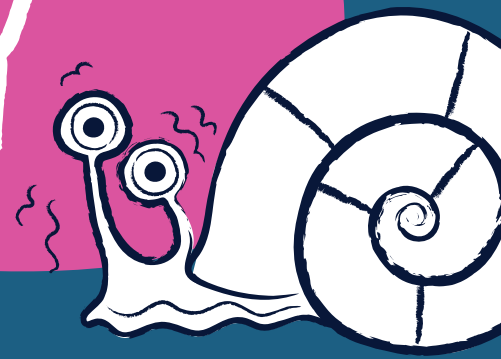


Part of the 'My Brilliant Place to be ME!' wellbeing project

ABOUT ANXIETY



INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL STAFF

WWW.HEADSTARTKERNOW.ORG.UK/BRILLIANT-ME

HEADSTART
KERNOW



CORNWALL
COUNCIL
one and all • oen hag oll



ANXIETY AT SCHOOL DOESN'T MEAN, "I'M NOT BRAVE ENOUGH, STRONG ENOUGH, CAPABLE ENOUGH."

IT MEANS, "I'M BRAVE ENOUGH, STRONG ENOUGH, CAPABLE ENOUGH... AND I NEED A LITTLE HELP TO FEEL SAFE ENOUGH"

KAREN YOUNG | WWW.HEYSIGMUND.COM

ABOUT HEADSTART

HEADSTART KERNOW WORK CLOSELY WITH COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS.

We encourage a Whole School Approach to wellbeing - an approach that is 'Everybody's Business' and founded on creating a school that is founded on safety and belonging.

We wholeheartedly believe that **the wellbeing of the whole school community is vital to:**

- Attendance
- Learning, attainment and achievement,
- Enable all children to achieve their full potential

We ensure our work complements:

- **The Belonging Framework**
- **Parent Engagement Framework**
- The Education Psychology Service **guidelines for developing relational policies in schools** (in development)
- The **Healthy Schools Framework**

More information can be found at
www.headstartkernow.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

This guide accompanies the parent and carers guide. It contains further background and additional resources. We hope you find it useful to share with them.

With more children struggling with their wellbeing at younger ages, 'anxiety' is a concern for schools and families.

WHY THE INCREASE?

- Families are feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis.
- The aftermath of COVID.
- Children and the online world.
- Pressures in schools around tests, behaviour and more.
- More awareness of, and a greater willingness to discuss mental health.

Any or all these may be contributing. For whatever reason, schools now face added pressures and many challenges.

As waiting lists for external services grow, schools often feel alone in supporting a child in crisis.

Earlier intervention can be very effective. Supporting children and families before a crisis can make a huge difference.

This short guide can play a small part. We intend to try and help families and children before things reach crisis point.

We aim to:

- Help normalise worries and stress in everyday life.
- Help parents and carers recognise when they need help and how to find it.
- Signpost to support/further information.
- Share ideas on how parents can support a child at home, including coping strategies.
- Share self-care ideas for parents.

PARENTAL ANXIETY

We have included separate information on parental anxiety. Some parents may be so anxious about their children that their anxiety affects the child.

A FAMILY WELLBEING LIBRARY?

The guide for parents and carers has suggestions for useful books and resources. Maybe you could create a family wellbeing section in the school library. There are more book recommendations on the Headstart website.

For more information about this guide or other ways we can support your school, please contact:

Kate.pordage@cornwall.gov.uk

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENTATIONS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

- [webinar recording](#)

Delivered by Dr Lynette Rentoul, this universal training is open to all and provides an introduction to understanding the many presentations of anxiety among children. It considers the factors that lead to increased anxiety among children and how staff can support anxious children in school. It offers many highly practical suggestions for supporting children.



MANAGING ANXIETY PROBLEMS

- [Guidance document](#)

Practical guidance for schools in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by Dr Lynette Rentoul.

Both resources can be found on the Cornwall Wellbeing Hub:

hub.headstartkernow.org.uk

KAREN YOUNG

Creator of heysigmund.com and author of Hey, Warrior! and other brilliant books for children. Karen Young is the leading authority on all things anxiety and her website is full of great articles and resources.



www.heysigmund.com

ANNA FREUD CENTRE 7 WAYS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE WORRIED

A handy, practical guide based on CBT principles, created by the Anna Freud Centre. Seven 'doable' ways the AFC team consider to be best practice in responding to children and young people's fears.



HOW TO CREATE AND USE A 'SAFE SPACE' IN SCHOOLS

A thoughtful and practical guide for primary schools.



YOU'RE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO TALK MENTAL HEALTH

Tips and advice for parents and carers on talking about mental health with primary school children.



www.annafreud.org

WHOLEHEARTED SCHOOL COUNSELLING

Blog: [15 Ways to help pupils deal with anxiety](#)



Some excellent free or low cost resources.

wholeheartedschoolcounseling.com

CREATIVE EDUCATION COLLABORATION

Discover a wealth of evidence-based, practical and engaging online CPD courses empowering everyone who works with or cares for children to develop their skills – any where, any time, using any device.

We are working in partnership with Dr Pooky Knightsmith and Creative Education to offer school staff and governors in Cornwall **free and full access to the Creative Education online platform, including over 400 on-demand courses, until at least 31st July 2026.**

Each course takes between 15 and 45 minutes and is made up of a series of short modules. Do a little everyday, or all in one go – it's up to you!

DISCOVER LONGER PATHWAYS

In addition to on-demand courses there are a growing range of pathways and deep dives available. **Each pathway is about 2-3 hours of training time** (and longer with reflection). These courses are appropriate for all members of staff and school governors.

You can watch a short video introducing the platform at:

www.creativeeducation.co.uk/your-new-membership



If you would like to book a free 15-20 minute walk through of the platform for yourself or your team, please contact us at:

www.headstartkernow.org.uk/contact

SIGN UP TO CREATIVE EDUCATION NOW!

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIP (School staff and governors)



www.creativeeducation.co.uk/headstart-kernow

COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP (Parents and carers)



www.creativeeducation.co.uk/headstart-kernow-parents

RECOMMENDED READ

Understanding and Reducing Anxiety in the Primary Schools
Clarke, S., Evans, A. and Moss, K.
Routledge (2024)

For more resources and tools to support a **whole school, trauma-informed, relational approach to wellbeing that is 'Everybody's Business'** visit:

www.headstartkernow.org.uk

PARENTAL ANXIETY INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL STAFF

PARENTAL ANXIETY IS THE WORRY OF BEING A PARENT OR CARER.

It can mean a parent worries about their child's health, social life, and school. Parental anxiety might start at birth. But, it can affect parents of children of any age. It may be set off by a specific event or situation, or it might build up slowly over time.

Parental anxiety can also affect children. They can pick up on their parents' fears and start to worry.

WHAT TRIGGERS PARENTAL ANXIETY?

A range of worries can trigger parental anxiety. For example, a child's **illness**, serious or minor, can worry parents. Sometimes it can be hard not to imagine the worst, even with the smallest of ailments.

A child's **development** can also cause anxiety. Children's progress is not linear. Like a roller coaster, it can go slowly before a sudden burst.

Parents can also feel anxious about children's time at **school**. This could be due to a parent's own school experience. Or, they might worry about how their child compares to other pupils.

TIPS TO HELP PARENTS MANAGE THEIR ANXIETY

PLAN AHEAD

Plan how to handle triggering situations. For example, make a list of situations and coping strategies to use.

PRACTICE COPING SKILLS

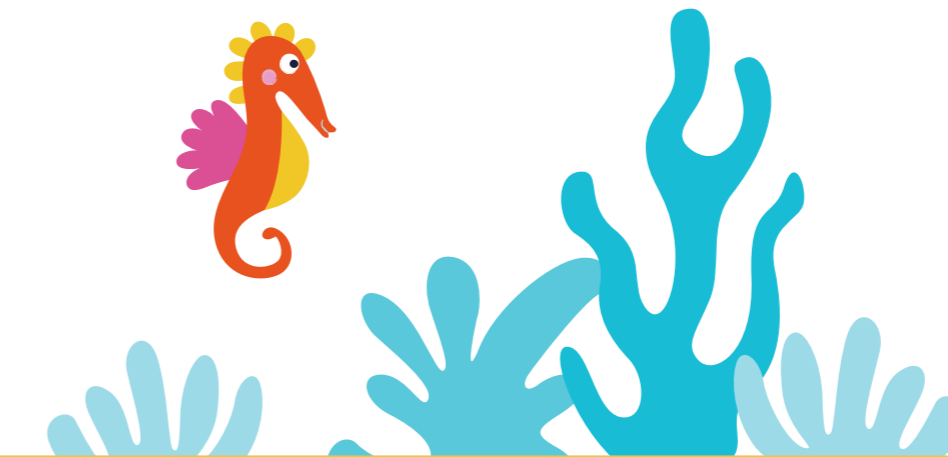
Find and use skills that work for you. When children see you using your strategies, they can learn to cope with stress.

BE OPEN

It's OK to be open with children about coping with anxiety. For example, if you shout at your child during a stressful moment, explain how you felt. Tell them that shouting was a reaction.

AVOID SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGES

When you're anxious, you might teach a child to fear situations you're afraid of. For example, if you're afraid of swimming, you may panic when your child is near water. This could send your fear to them.



USE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

The key is to find something you enjoy and works for you. Ideas include:

- Exercise
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Deep breathing exercises

**SELF CARE
IDEAS FOR
BUSY PARENTS
& CARERS**



An advertisement for ChatHealth, a service for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It features a purple background with a white speech bubble icon and the text 'ChatHealth Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly'. Below this, it says 'Parent Line 5-19' and 'TEXT 07312 263 499'. There are two smartphone illustrations: one showing a list of topics like 'Keeping healthy and safe', 'Immunisations', 'Sleep', 'Nutrition and a healthy lifestyle', and 'Toileting'; the other showing 'Support with behaviour', 'General health and wellbeing', and 'Support with medical conditions in school'. A speech bubble on the right says 'Get confidential health and wellbeing advice and support'. At the bottom, the website 'www.cornwall.gov.uk/chathealth' is listed.

CRABBY CALMER



THE 'CRABBY CALMER' IS A WAY TO HELP WHEN WE FEEL ANGRY OR UPSET.

Using a puppet or a toy can help children practice simple self-soothing. We use Crabby the Hermit Crab (one of the 'stars' of Brilliant ME!) because he can retreat into his shell (a turtle or snail would work well too), but you can use any soft toy or puppet as a prompt.

STEP 1

Introduce the toy to the children. The toy can bring up an example of a time they got really upset or angry.

STEP 2

Ask the children if they have ever felt this way. Then explain that the toy (use their name) has a special way to calm down when they feel angry (called the 'Crabby Calmer' if you're using a crab).

STEP 3

Say...

"Notice that you are feeling angry | upset | frustrated... and the downstairs brain is taking control"

How does your body feel?

STEP 4

Think "Stop" to yourself. Pause and notice your feelings.

STEP 5

Go into your "shell".

It's a safe and calm place to be.

Take some deep breaths or count down slowly from 10, 20, 100.

STEP 6

Come out of your shell when you are feeling calmer and your 'thinking brain' is back.

Now, can you think of ways to deal with the reason you got angry | frustrated | upset in the first place?

BRAINSTORM!

Brainstorm with children about how they could pretend they have a shell to go into to calm down, or ask them to create Crabby Calmer reminder (draw a picture or make a pocket pebble reminder, or...).

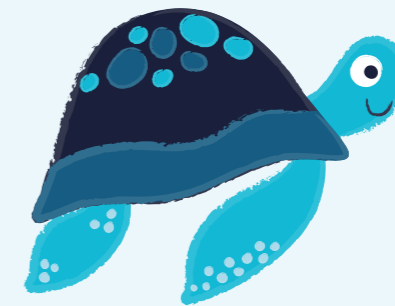
CLASSROOM FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

IN THE CLASSROOM

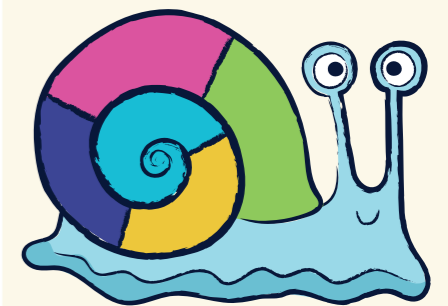
Suggest having a special place in the classroom that is "our safe shell", where anyone in the class can go to calm down.



If you're using a crab character, this could be your **CRABBY CORNER** or **CRAB CAVE**.



If you're using a turtle, it could be a **TURTLE TIME** area, where children can go to take a break.



If you're using a snail, it could be a **SNAIL SPACE**, where anyone can go to take a moment and be calm.

Give children opportunities to **practice using "the safe shell"** through role plays. Find and read stories.

When you notice children becoming upset, remind them about the safe shell.

You can give them the toy or puppet as a reminder, and work through the technique steps with them.

THINGS TO SAY TO A CHILD WHEN THEY'RE FEELING WORRIED

1. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS

“ I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE FEELING WORRIED, AND THAT'S OKAY.

“ IT'S NORMAL TO FEEL ANXIOUS SOMETIMES, EVERYONE DOES.

“ YOUR FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT TO ME, AND I'M HERE TO LISTEN.

“ IT'S BRAVE OF YOU TO TELL ME HOW YOU'RE FEELING.

2. OFFER THEM REASSURANCE

“ I'M HERE FOR YOU, AND WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER.

“ I KNOW THIS FEELS BIG RIGHT NOW, BUT IT WON'T LAST FOREVER.

3. HELP THEM UNDERSTAND WORRY

“ IT'S OKAY TO FEEL WORRIED, BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO LET WORRY CONTROL US.

“ SOMETIMES OUR BRAINS PLAY TRICKS ON US AND MAKE US THINK THINGS ARE SCARIER THAN THEY REALLY ARE.

4. PROBLEM-SOLVE TOGETHER

“ WHAT'S MAKING YOU FEEL WORRIED?

“ LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT WE CAN DO TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.

“ SOMETIMES IT HELPS TO BREAK BIG PROBLEMS INTO SMALLER, EASIER STEPS.

“ HAVE YOU FELT LIKE THIS BEFORE? WHAT HELPED YOU THEN?

5. ENCOURAGE COPING STRATEGIES

“ LET'S TRY SOME COPING IDEAS LIKE DEEP BREATHING OR COUNTING

“ WOULD YOU LIKE TO DRAW A PICTURE OR WRITE ABOUT HOW YOU'RE FEELING?

“ SOMETIMES IT HELPS TO TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST ABOUT YOUR WORRIES.

6. MODEL HEALTHY COPING

“ IT'S IMPORTANT TO TAKE CARE OF OUR MINDS AND BODIES.

“ I SOMETIMES FEEL WORRIED TOO, AND THIS IS WHAT I DO TO FEEL BETTER...

“ WE CAN TRY DOING SOMETHING FUN AND RELAXING TO TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THINGS.

“ LET'S PRACTICE SOME BREATHING IDEAS TOGETHER.

If you would like this information in another format or language please contact us:

Cornwall Council, County Hall,
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY

e: **customerservices@cornwall.gov.uk**

t: 0300 1234 100

www.cornwall.gov.uk