

CALMING THE INNER STORM

How to support a child experiencing panic attacks

Useful Apps:



SAM



FearTools



What's Up?



Fabulous - Daily Routine Planner



Stop, Breathe & Think Kids

Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by the NHS and the NHS is not liable for their use.

CALMING THE INNER STORM

How to support a child experiencing panic attacks

WHEN TO BE CONCERNED?

It is common for children and young people to experience worry as they develop through childhood and adolescence.

When to be concerned:

- If the degree to which a young person feels low appears out of context or disproportionate to the reason why they might be feeling low
- If episodes are more frequent or prolonged and cause the young person distress
- If it impacts on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities

WHAT TO DO:

- Normalise that anxiety is a natural emotion, the physical sensations of anxiety can be unpleasant but it will pass and won't cause any harm
- Encourage, reward and praise a young person not to avoid - the more a young person avoids, the harder it becomes and the more anxious a young person will become. Instead, encourage the young person to face their fear - the more they face it, the easier it will become
- Break things down into steps and do these as often as possible
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious
- Watch a parent/carer workshop on how to support anxiety: youtu.be/EMJj9sHtlfQ
- Watch a parent/carer workshop on coping and resilience skills: youtu.be/K4OGOhNwML0
- Share concerns with your child's school/college
- Depending on the context and/or the origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful e.g. family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict
- There is a lot of information on the Sussex CAMHS website: sussexcamhs.nhs.uk

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Panic attacks are a type of anxiety response and are associated with intense physical sensations which escalate quickly. This can be overwhelming and frightening.

Signs of a panic attack include:

- A racing heart
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Feeling very hot or very cold
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Pain in their chest
- Struggling to breathe or feeling like they're choking
- Feeling shaky and unsteady on their feet
- Feeling disconnected
- Difficulties communicating
- Racing thoughts particularly that something awful is happening such as that they are having a heart attack or are dying

Panic attacks usually last between 5 and 20 minutes although the young person may remain highly anxious and stressed following a panic attack for some time. Whilst the physiological symptoms of a panic attack are unpleasant, they cannot cause long term lasting harm.

#Recipes4wellbeing



sussexcamhs.nhs.uk