



Anxiety in Children

What is Anxiety? Anxiety is a normal feeling people experience when faced with threat or danger, or when stressed. Most people including children feel anxious at times and this is perfectly normal. Anxiety presents itself in 3 ways; behaviour, thoughts and feelings. When children experience anxiety they may experience some of the following:

Anxious Behaviors

- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness
- Fast heart beat
- Sweating
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- Tense muscles
- Difficulty breathing

Anxious Thoughts

- Not being able to think clearly or to concentrate
- Perceptions of threat or danger appear greater than it is
- Excessive worry, or 'catastrophising', about life circumstances that have no factual or logical basis
- Recurrent and persistent intrusive ideas and thoughts

Anxious Feelings

- Feeling anxious or tense
- Irritability, uneasiness
- Feeling 'out of control'
- Fear that something dreadful is going to occur
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed or faint
- Feeling upset and uncomfortable

We all experience anxiety at some time during our lives when we are faced with difficulties, faced with challenges or when we are feeling out of our comfort zone. Some children experience anxiety over everyday life activities and this can be incredibly draining and take the fun out of life. **Although feeling anxious from time to time is normal for children, extra support may be needed when:**

- Children feel anxious more than other children of their age and year level and talk about their worries a lot.
- Anxiety stops them participating in activities at school or socially.
- It interferes with their ability to do things that other children their age do easily.
- Children find it hard to separate from parents.
- Children are afraid to take healthy risks and have a go at new things.
- Children need a lot of reassurance before beginning tasks or socialising.
- There is a need for perfectionism particularly with academic tasks.
- There are ongoing physical symptoms such as an upset tummy and headaches.