

ANXIETY and WORRY

Three Great Activities to Help a Young Child with Anxiety

At some point in their lives, all children will feel anxious or fearful of something: it might be that they are overly shy, worried about starting a new school or class, or just have general feelings of anxiety with no specific trigger. Anxiety and fear can have a real impact on a child's ability to socialise, feel comfortable and learn in school. It can also have a significant impact on their physical well-being and, in some cases, develop into a physical illness. Here are 3 great ideas and activities to support children who are feeling anxious:

1 Bubble Fun!

One of the physical side effects of anxiety or fear is shallowness of breath. Deep breathing is a great way to manage anxiety; it activates the parasympathetic nervous system which makes us feel calm.

The activity

Purchase a bubble kit from any toy shop or supermarket (you could use washing-up liquid and water) and ask the child to focus on blowing lots of small bubbles. Then, get them to try and blow one large bubble by breathing deeply and slowly releasing it (you may need to demonstrate this). Keep trying until you have used all the bubble mixture. While doing this – ask the child to tell you about their breathing and how a deeper and slower breath makes them feel. Once they recognise how to do it, they will be able to start deep breathing without the bubbles!

2, Worry Tin

Older children often keep what is worrying them bottled up, so here is a fun way of getting them to tell you what they are worried or anxious about.

The activity

Find a box or a tin with a lid. Give the children some resources (great if they have chosen it) and ask them to cover the tin so they feel they own it and have designed it. Label it the 'Worry Tin' or something similar – let them choose the name as again, it will promote their ownership. Ask them to write, draw or

even photograph what the problem might be and put it into the tin. Sometimes it is enough for the child to simply 'put the problem away', but you can always get the worries out and talk about them.

3, Calm Me Down Box

As we get older, we learn ways to keep calm and manage stress. Children find this hard, so we need to show them ways to manage their anxiety and worry.

The activity

Get a large box and ask the child to decorate it. Explain that it is their box and that they can use it anytime. In the box put different stress management tools – stress ball, fidget spinner, BluTac, pencil and paper, favourite CD, small snack or anything that makes them feel good. Put the box where they can find it and encourage the child to use it whenever they feel anxious.