

Helping Your Child with Worry and Anxiety

Just like adults, it is normal for children to feel worried sometimes. But if you notice that your child feels overwhelmed and worries are affecting their wellbeing, there are ways we can offer support.

- 🏠 **Normalise Anxiety:** Its normal to feel anxious sometimes. Feeling anxious can happen if your child is nervous, frightened or stressed, and it's an emotion that lets them know when they have faced something difficult and challenging. Anxiety can be an uncomfortable feeling, but its ok to feel anxious from time to time. Help your child to recognise the signs of anxiety, what does it feel in their bodies, what negative thoughts show up. This can support your child to notice anxiety and when they need to ask for help.
- 🏠 **Talk About It:** It can sometimes be really difficult to talk about feelings. Think about how you can start conversations about feelings. Make it part of the daily routine, check-in at dinner-time or on the car journey home from school. Let your children know it's ok to talk about their feelings, and you are there to listen. If you are concerned about that your child's mental health, find the right time to talk. Your child might feel overwhelmed if you suddenly start a conversation about your concerns. Create a space where your child feels safe enough to share their experiences, it might be when watching a film, standing side-by-side on a walk.
- 🏠 **Listen and Offer Reassurance:** We want to protect and keep our children safe, and it can be difficult when we see a child struggle with their worries. Discuss your child's concerns openly rather than saying 'there's nothing to worry about'. Being worried sometimes is normal, keep talking and offer reassurance. We might be tempted to 'fix' their worries, but we can offer support by letting our child know we have listened, taken time to think together about why they are feeling anxious and what they need to work through their tricky feeling. Keep talking and let your child know you will be there to support them.
- 🏠 **Riding the Emotions Wave:** If we notice our child is struggling with their worries and big emotions, we need to support them to ride the emotions wave. Emotions are like waves; we notice the emotion, the wave then gets bigger and bigger, before it peaks and starts to fade away. Emotions can come and go like waves. Talk with your child about how they experience their emotions and what support they need to ride through the wave.
- 🏠 **Ways to Ride the Emotions Wave:** Talk with your child about their tricky emotions, name the feeling and encourage them to think about what they notice happens when they are riding the emotions wave. There are lots of ways we can support our child to ride through their emotions for example, breathing exercises, relaxation distractions and doing activities they enjoy, spending time outside, playing games, having a chat with someone. Talk about the ways you can support your child to ride the emotions wave, keep talking, check-in to see what has worked and what how you might need to do things differently.
- 🏠 **Tackle the Anxious Thoughts:** Anxiety can feel like an internal bully, it shares thoughts that something bad is going to happen, we're not good enough, others will think negatively about

us. It says upsetting things and can tell your child they should avoid situations, spending time with friends and can get in the way of the things they value and enjoy. Support your child to notice and challenge the anxiety bully. Be curious and explore why the anxiety bully shown up, what is it telling your child is going to happen and why they should feel worried. Remind your child not to believe everything the anxiety bully is telling them, let the thoughts go and offer reassurance its ok to do the things that worry us.

- 🏠 **Make a Worry and Self-Soothing Box:** If your child feels worried or anxious make a worry box. Some children can find it helpful to write down their worries and then post them inside their worry box. This can support your child to know thoughts are thoughts, thoughts can be written down and they don't have to carry them around. You can then sit together to talk through their worries, thinking about the worries they can let go let float away and those they need support with. Self-soothing boxes contain things that support your child to ride through the emotions wave. This can include something to smell, touch, listen to, photos and memories, activities, positive affirmation; anything that makes them feel calm and relaxed.
- 🏠 **Professional Support:** It is important to seek support if you are worried about your child's emotional wellbeing. Make an appointment with your GP or contact the Purple House Clinic, a mental health service that offers support to children, adolescents and adults.

