Mental Health - Anxiety

With Professor Barry Carpenter, Professor Cathy Creswell & Helen Manley
Today’s learning objectives

- Find out about the latest evidence-base on anxiety in children and young people (including what we know about the impact of the pandemic)

- Build knowledge around what anxiety feels like for children and young people, how it can present itself in school settings, and the impact it has on young people’s capacity to learn

- Provide an overview of the principles to support children and young people who have difficulties with anxiety
POLL: Which type of school are you representing this evening?
Anxiety - Cues, Clues & Support for Young People in School

Professor Cathy Creswell & Helen Manley
Oxford University
WHY WORRY ABOUT CHILD ANXIETY?

2 children in a UK classroom

49% increase in the prevalence of emotional disorders from 2004 to 2017

International prevalence in children
(Polanczyk et al, 2015)
WHY WORRY ABOUT CHILD ANXIETY?

MORE LIKELY
- ongoing anxiety problems
- other mental health problems

LESS LIKELY
- educational attainment
- employment Prospects
- social relationships
The 2021 Oxford Children’s Word of the Year

anxiety
2017
1 in 9 (10.8%) children and young people had a probable mental health disorder

49% increase in emotional disorders since 2004

July 2020
1 in 6 (16%) children and young people had a probable mental health disorder

Publication, Part of Mental Health of Children and Young People Surveys
Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey
Survey
Publication Date: 22 Oct 2020
Geographic Coverage: England
Geographical Granularity: Regions, Country
Date Range: 01 Jul 2020 to 01 Aug 2020
Percentage of children with a probable mental health disorder by age, 2017 and 2020

- **5 to 10 years**
  - 2017: 8%
  - 2020: 14%

- **11 to 16 years**
  - 2017: 12%
  - 2020: 16%
13-14 years, SW England
October 2019 – April/May 2020
Widnall et al, 2020

- Reduction in anxiety
- Increase in wellbeing
- No significant change depression

7.5-11.6 years
June 2018/September 2019 - Lockdown 1
Bignardi et al, 2020

- Increase in depression
- No significant change in anxiety
Parents & carers of children aged 4-16 years

Young people aged 11-16 years self-report
30\textsuperscript{th} March
Start of Co-SPACE

23\textsuperscript{rd} March
Lockdown in UK

Monthly survey
Monthly survey
Monthly survey
Monthly survey
Monthly survey

www.cospaceoxford.org
Changes in mental health symptoms over time: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(21)00177-2
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- Lower income
- Primary school aged
- Secondary school aged
- Whole sample

Behavioural difficulties
Emotional difficulties
Attentional difficulties

SDQ centred score:

Months (March 2020 - March 2021)

https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(21)00177-2
Changes in mental health symptoms over time: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(21)00177-2
STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE:
Emotional symptoms

- SEN/ND
- Chronic health condition
- Higher baseline parent psychological distress (DASS)

Emotional Symptoms: 5-trajectories

- < £16k per year
- Female
- Higher parent-child conflict

All reports can be accessed through the Co-SPACE website
https://cospaceoxford.org/findings/

DOWNLOAD REPORTS

Results are regularly made available. Our reports include findings from families where children and young people are aged 2-4 years (Co-SPYCE) and 4-16 years (Co-SPACE). We also produce supplementary reports in response to specific requests from policy makers and other organisations.
How anxiety presents within schools and its impact on school life
WHY MIGHT CHILDREN BE ANXIOUS IN SCHOOL?

issues from home
'some children are already dealing with so much before they even come in'

separating from parent/carer
'saying goodbye can be hard for her'

academic pressures
'exams and tests'
'everything is so competitive'
'not coping with the work'

environment
'classrooms can be busy, crowded and noisy'

'social situations can be overwhelming'

contributing in class
'worrying over what teachers and friends will think'
'getting things wrong'

relationships
'friendship problems can be really upsetting'
'the teacher might shout at me'
WHAT MIGHT ANXIETY LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOL?

- Frequently being late or absent
- Tummy aches/feeling sick
- Headaches
- Frequent toilet requests
- Withdrawal or 'shut down'
WHAT MIGHT ANXIETY LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOL?

- crying
- need for constant reassurance
- behavioural outbursts
- refusal
- worry over lessons/events in the day

SOMETIMES children hold it together in school and the fallout happens when they go home.
WHAT IMPACT DOES ANXIETY HAVE ON SCHOOL LIFE?

Anxiety

- sleep deprivation
- physical ill health
- low self-esteem

Inability to focus/concentrate
- cognitive overload
- chronic hyperalertness

Reduced confidence
- reduced motivation
- negative relationships
WHAT IMPACT DOES ANXIETY HAVE ON SCHOOL LIFE?

- reduced participation
- reduced attendance
- school phobia/refusal
- reduced academic performance/outcomes
Principles for supporting children and young people who have difficulties with anxiety
Schools are ideally placed to identify and support those at risk

- contact with children and families
- knowledge of children and developmental norms
- familiarity, proximity, non-clinical setting - reduced stigma

Education professionals are among the most consulted about emerging child mental health problems
Schools are already doing lots to help those with anxiety...

- PSHCE/RSE/ Social Wellbeing
- CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy), ELSA sessions, play therapy, counselling

Some studies provide support for school-based CBT interventions to reduce anxiety symptoms (mostly in primary schools)

BUT...
Targeted Interventions

only offered to some
miss lessons

short-term

timetabling can be hard

expensive

children may struggle to apply strategies
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- teacher behaviour/teaching styles
- routines & rules
- praise & feedback

- behaviour
- achievement
- anxiety
Principles we can apply to the school setting based on successful treatments
1. Think about how you/the child/the parents want things to be
   (not how you don’t want them to be)
What would s/he be doing that s/he isn’t doing at the moment?

What changes would you notice?

What would he/she be doing differently?
Problem: Coming into classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I want to achieve</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • walk to classroom independently  
  • go into classroom quickly  
  • put my stuff away and start my work |       | • be able to drop off quickly with no crying/resistance  
  • no delay in me leaving the school  
  • stop feeling awful/guilty | • child coming in independently  
  • no need for me to be involved in encouraging to come in  
  • settling without resistance and starting task set |
2. Think about what the child needs to learn

   - Be curious and be brave!
Ask questions

- Why are you feeling worried?
- What is frightening you?
- What do you think will happen if you …?
- What is the worst thing that might happen?
- What is it about (this situation) that is making you feel worried/frightened?
Empathise

• Show you can see how that must make them feel
• Label emotions

‘Normalise’

• Show this is a normal reaction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>WHAT IS THE CHILD THINKING?</th>
<th>WHAT DOES THE CHILD NEED TO LEARN?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To regularly ask questions in class</td>
<td>I will get told off if I get something wrong. The teacher will shout and get cross.</td>
<td>What will really happen if I ask a question? What will really happen if I get something wrong? What will the teacher do? How will I cope?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be in school everyday</td>
<td>My mum will get hurt if I’m not at home, and won’t be there to pick me up</td>
<td>What happens to Mum when I am at school? What would happen if Mum couldn’t pick me up? How will I cope?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Put it to the test!
(You probably need to do it gradually)
4. When problems come along, build confidence in solving them
School staff can make a difference

Key tools that you bring:

- you know your children well
- you are experienced communicators
- you are used to being unfazed and calm in a crisis
Resources

Supporting children and young people with worries about COVID-19

Advice for parents, carers and people that work with children and young people

This is a time of uncertainty and a lot of children and young people will be feeling anxious and worried about what is going on. This is a normal response to the situation and below we offer some advice about what adults can do to help and support children and young people.

There is a lot of information becoming available - this is great but may also be confusing, so we have pulled together some advice and some of our favourite links in one place. We hope this will be helpful.

Given that the situation is changing rapidly at the moment we will make updates from time to time which you will be able to find here: https://osiresearch.org.uk/icats/


https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/


https://osiresearch.org.uk/icats/resources-for-families/
https://emergingminds.org.uk/resources-for-young-people/
Ask the Expert – Mental Health Conditions in Young People - Prevalence, Shifts & Support

With Professor Mina Fazel

3.45pm on 1st March 2022