



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

Mental Health and Anxiety

Realising that your child may be struggling with their mental health and experiencing anxiety or depression can be hard to accept. Sometimes parents can feel like it's their fault or want to know why their child is struggling with a mental health problem. This is completely understandable, but the most important thing you can do is to reassure your child and not judge them for how they're feeling.

Talking to your children about their feelings can be very difficult. When there are problems at home or school, they can become withdrawn and upset and seem difficult to reach.

Short-term stress and worry is often a normal part of everyday life for children and their families. However, if you notice a change in your child's emotional wellbeing or behaviour, it is advisable to monitor this closely and seek medical advice from your GP if you have concerns.

HOW WILL MY CHILD MANAGE AT SCHOOL?

Children who have severe mental health difficulties will often meet the definition of SEN (Special Educational Needs), in that their mental health will greatly affect their learning. It is advisable to have a discussion with our Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in order to highlight any concerns you may have. They will be able to assess your child's individual needs and design a bespoke programme of support.

In some circumstances, we may suggest an application should be made for an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) in order to provide emotional support for your child.

The school has a toolkit of strategies to help support children with Mental Health and Anxiety.

Your child's mental health and emotional wellbeing can often be more difficult to determine than their physical needs such as food, shelter, sleep, and exercise.

Good mental health is vital, as this will enable your child to think clearly, develop socially, and learn new skills.

Try to find ways to build your child's confidence as this will also help their self-esteem. This will build resilience which in turn promotes good mental health.

Every child who struggles with Mental Health and Anxiety is different. Make sure they have a support programme that is as individual as they are.



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ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

When anxiety affects your child's wellbeing, they may need help.

Separation anxiety often starts from 6 months up to 3 years — this is when children become clingy and cry when their mother separates from them.

Some children have phobias about insects, noises, animals, or the dark. These often go away on their own.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it gets in the way of everyday life. Severe anxiety can affect children's self-esteem and confidence, often leading to children being unable to get into school in the morning.

SIGNS OF ANXIETY

Emotional and behavioural signs:

- Becoming irritable, tearful, clingy
- Bed wetting
- Difficulty sleeping and waking in the night, bad dreams
- Not wanting to eat
- Poor concentration
- Angry outbursts
- Negative thoughts
- School avoidance
- Lack of confidence to try new things
- Not wanting to see friends, play outside, or go to school

Physical signs:

- Headaches, tummy aches, neck pain, or general aches and pains
- Feeling tired all the time
- Sleeping or eating problems

OTHER MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES THAT AFFECT CHILDREN:

- Depression
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder



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FIVE STEPS TO MENTAL WELLBEING

1. Your child to be connected to others

- a. Good relationships are important. They build a sense of belonging and improve self-worth. Support your child to see friends and family each day.

2. Keep fit and exercise

- a. Exercise improves self-esteem and helps change brain chemistry to give a positive feeling. Encourage play in a safe environment — cycling, running, or games build confidence.

3. Learn a new skill

- a. Helps boost confidence, gives purpose, and offers opportunities to connect. Help children choose activities that test their abilities.

4. Show acts of kindness to others

- a. Acts of kindness increase positive feelings and connection. Praise children for helping others or trying their best. Avoid sarcastic remarks.

5. Daily mindfulness

- a. Encourage awareness of thoughts and feelings. Focus on the present moment and relaxation. Notice everyday sensations and teach your child to name feelings.

WAYS TO HELP A CHILD WHO'S STRUGGLING WITH ANXIETY AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Let them know you're there for them.
- Talk to them via text, phone, or in person — whichever they're comfortable with.
- Be patient and approachable.
- Let them know it's okay to talk about how they feel.
- Some children may need a hug or practical help.
- Try healthy activities together — art, crafts, yoga, or mindfulness.
- Do breathing exercises together — e.g., breathe in for 4, out for 5.
- Ask open questions to help challenge anxious thoughts.
- Discuss forward planning: "What's the worst that could happen? How could I handle it?"
- Talk about how thoughts influence feelings and actions.
- Use grounding tools like holding a small stone to focus and calm.
- Keep a positivity diary — note three things they enjoyed or achieved daily.

WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

Seek professional help if you're worried about your child's wellbeing.

You can ask for help from your child's:

- Teacher
- School pastoral lead

You can also go to your GP or health visitor. The Reach4Wellbeing service offers programmes and workshops. Another source of support is CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). Referrals can be made through GPs, schools, or parents.

If your child talks about suicide or harming themselves all your doctor or local mental health crisis line straight away.



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PARENTS/CARERS WELL-BEING

Parenting/caring can be rewarding, but at times physically and emotionally draining. To enable you to support your child effectively, you need to ensure you are monitoring your own well-being. Keep a check on your personal physical and mental health and seek your own support when needed.

USEFUL MENTAL HEALTH CONTACTS

www.mentalhealthtoday.co.uk

Young Minds Parent Helpline: 08088025544

www.minded.org.uk

USEFUL PARENT/CARER SUPPORT

www.nhs.uk/reach4wellbeing

www.supportline.org.uk 01708765200

www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/send/send-info

www.earlyhelphub.co.uk 01905822666

RECOMMENDED READING

