When your child worries - top tips for parents and carers

Information for parents and carers

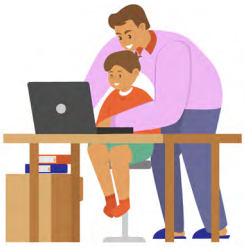
Yorkshire & Humber Congenital Heart Disease Network

LEEDS CONGENITAL HEARTS

Most of us will have moments in life when we feel worried or nervous. These experiences are usually because of some kind of change, whether big or small, that have put us on edge or made us feel uneasy. This experience will be different for different people. Our children are all different too and may worry about some things more than others.

Below are some top tips to help you help your child if they are worried or nervous:

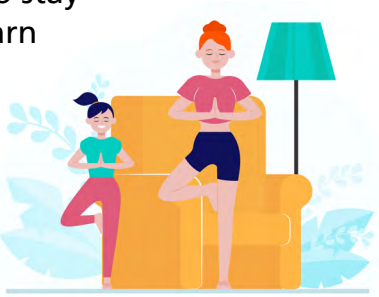
Know what they're looking at



Be aware of how your children get news and information, especially older children who go online independently. Point them to age-appropriate content so they don't end up finding news or webpages that scare them or have incorrect information. For example, some social media may be unhelpful. If you are talking with other adults on the phone, just be aware that your child might be listening. They might not always look like they are listening, but it is amazing what they can pick up.

Practice ways of keeping calm

It is normal for worries and changes to make us feel a bit 'funny' or unsettled. It can help to stay calm and it's always helpful to learn different ways to help your body feel relaxed. There are lots of resources on relaxation and 'mindfulness' which is another way of helping our children to focus on what is happening in the here and now, rather than worrying about what might happen in the future.



Talk to your child about what anxiety is

Many children won't understand what they are feeling and it can be very scary and overwhelming. They might think they are poorly or it is related to their heart.

Give children space to share their fears

It's natural for children to worry. Let them know they can always come to you to talk.

If your child has lots of worries it could help to have worry time, a set part of the day to get the worries out (bedtime may not be the best time to do this).

Some children find it helpful to write worries down and throw them away, or creating a worry box that will "eat" the worries. Remember, no worries are 'silly' and try not to use phrases like 'don't worry'. Children might be worrying about something which seems small to us as adults but are very real to them!

Let your children know that it's normal to feel anxious at times

Recognising these feelings and knowing that stressful times pass and life gets back to normal can help children build confidence and different ways of coping.

Helplines:

- **Childline -** Telephone 0800 1111
- **Crisis Text Line -** Text SHOUT to 85258
- **NHS 111 -** Much more than a helpline! If you are worried about an urgent medical concern, phone: 111 to speak to a fully trained adviser.
- **NHS -** Get urgent help for mental health
- **Young Persons Text Crisis Service -** 24 hours - TEXT 25258 Young Minds.

Resources for younger children:

- Cbeebies ways to help kids keep calm *https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/seven-techniques-for-helping-kids-keep-calm/*

- Cosmic Kids Youtube Channel Yoga and Mindfulness for Kids *https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/*

- How to make your own calming mood jar/bottle *https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/thingstodo/mood-jar/*

Resources for younger children:

- Relaxation Tips for Children – The Sleep Charity
  https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/

Resources for older children:

- **NHS -** Find Mental Health Support for Young People
  https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/mental-health-support/
- **NHS -** How to look after your mental wellbeing
  https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/
- **Video:** ways to support young people through anxious times
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME5IZn4-BAk&feature=youtu.be

Notes

This leaflet has been designed with images used from freepik.com

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