

**Strategies to help an anxious child**

As a parent it is normal to be concerned when your child worries but we must remember that anxiety is a normal emotion and the reaction within the body is reassuring that things are working as they should be.

The most important thing to tell a child is that ‘this is NOT going to last forever’.

The goal, when working with a child with anxiety, is to help them manage their anxiety rather than elimination of the triggers which make them anxious.

Provide reassurance and understanding without reinforcing the anxiety. Tell your child that you can understand what they are feeling, but it will not last forever and you are there to support them through it.

Talk things through with the child, but do NOT ask leading questions such as ‘are you worried about your exams?’. This should be reframed as ‘how are you feeling about the exams?’.

Prepare your child as much as you can but, where possible, keep the anticipatory period short. Be positive but realistic when discussing something your child is worried about.

When a child is displaying anxiety talk to them about positive things, help them with positive and calming visualisations and discuss something to look forward to.

Help your child get rid of their negative thoughts, write them down and then turn them around with them.

Make a worry box together, your child can write things down or draw things and then post them in the box.

Breathe with your child, encourage them to take deep breaths which use the tummy as opposed to their chest.

As an adult, model positive anxiety and how to deal with feeling fear.

Practice mindfulness with your child- there are free apps such as Calm or Headspace.