

Transcript of the video/slide show, Anxiety Part One.

Slide 1

My name is Louise Jones and my name is Michelle McFarlane. We run parent support courses and workshops at Withycombe Raleigh school.

In normal times we would be running parent workshops in our school on topics around emotional well-being. One of our main topics is on understanding and managing anxiety, and this is something that affects us all and has probably affected many of us, more so during the last couple of years.

There are three parts to this presentation on anxiety, each takes under 10 minutes and they are best watched in order. This is part one and covers an overview of anxiety. We hope these presentations will be of interest and help to our parents and carers.

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To help give you a clear picture of what to expect from this presentation, we have set out some objectives. We hope they will help your: ability to recognise signs of anxiety, understanding of the triggers for anxiety, giving knowledge around the anxiety cycle and confidence in supporting and responding to the needs of children and young people with anxiety.

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We are all used to hearing the word anxiety, sometimes daily, and more frequently in the past 18 months. But what is anxiety? Anxiety can be described as a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.

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Anxiety can feel overwhelming. There are many ways in which anxiety can manifest itself in both children and adults. Sometimes children may not be aware that what they're feeling is in fact, anxiety. Headaches, avoidance, not being able to sleep, irritability, overthinking, and stomach cramps are just a few of the ways that anxiety can look or feel. Obviously where symptoms persist or if you insure it is always best to seek medical advice.

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So, is anxiety normal? Of course, it is normal and natural to feel worried or anxious about events that happened to us or around us. Anxiety is part of our natural survival instinct. For example, it is normal to be slightly anxious when crossing a busy road. This keeps us alert and focused on what we need to do to get safely to the other side. Even though anxiety is normal and natural, there may be times when children need help to find healthy ways to cope with anxiety.

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It may not seem possible, but a small amount of anxiety can actually be helpful. It can help motivate us to do things, particularly if there are consequences involved in not doing something. What would happen if we didn't revise for exams, or didn't turn up to work?

Anxiety can help us with planning and preparation. If you have a test, interview, or speech to deliver, it can help us plan ahead and prepare for these things.

It can help give attention to things that are important in our lives if a big task or event is coming up. It helps us to focus on that thing and the issues around it.

Anxiety helps our basic instinct to survive. It is often related to fear and having fear can protect us from danger or harm. Going back to the example of crossing a busy road. It makes us more alert to the process and the potential dangers so that we keep ourselves safe.

And finally anxiety helps her communicate with others. When we are anxious we are more likely to talk. We let others know how we feel, which can help understanding in our relationships or it can open up doors for getting support.

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Now let's think about when anxiety is unhelpful. While it is normal to have times when anxiety feels like this, at these times it might be useful to ask ourselves some questions to work out whether our anxiety is having a frequent negative effect on our daily lives.

Does the anxiety regularly affect your day to day functioning? A fear of heights may not affect a person's daily life unless their school work, or where they live, is in a high rise building. However, if anxiety stops you leaving the house, going to school, or doing your food shopping, then this has a clear impact on daily life.

Are you avoiding the thing you think you feel? Although avoidance can give us brief relief, in the long run it actually makes anxiety worse, becoming harder to face the fear. Does worry regularly stop you dropping off to sleep? Are you lying awake for hours, thinking about things, unable to switch off? Do you wake feeling worried? Are you relying on ways to cope in which in the long run may not be good for you? As adults we may enjoy a glass of something to help us relax but is it happening more frequently as a way of coping?

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Thinking about meltdowns, children can show anxiety in different ways. Are you noticing increased meltdowns at certain times, or in relation to particular events? Agitated, angry or very clingy behaviour, could actually be a communication of underlying anxiety.

With teenagers they may not express their anxiety openly, but may internalise it and become withdrawn and have a low self esteem. Some may take it out on themselves through self harm. And finally, is anxiety having an impact on other family members. If a parent is anxious, do they have the right supports in place so it doesn't impact their children?

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Let's think for a moment about what life circumstances might bring on feelings of anxiety. Basically, this can be anything about change. Anxiety can develop as a result of many day to day changes. Some of these may involve changes and transitions around school. Change of class, moving house, or family changes, even good changes for example a holiday.

Lack of control and not knowing what is going to happen, or where they may have been a loss for separation. Pressures of exams or homework or tests? Are there any friendship

issues such as bullying? Also going through puberty with hormonal changes can also evoke anxiety. Sleep issues - are children worrying about falling asleep or getting to sleep? Addictions may be more relevant to adults; however a child may suffer from anxiety where a parent or carer has addiction issues.

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So, we are coming to the end of part one, an overview of anxiety, and we want to leave you with something to think about, which connects with our second presentation. Can you think of a time when you were anxious? How did that make you feel? Both in your body, physically, and also emotionally? What were you thinking about at the time? What thoughts were you aware of? And how did you act or behave or what did you do in relation to the anxious event?

Thank you for watching.

Please click on anxiety part 2 to learn more about the anxiety cycle.