

Stanhope Barrington C of E
Primary School



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Dear Parent/Carer

12th May 2023

Re: Mental Health Awareness Week

Next week is Mental Health Awareness Week and the theme this year is: Anxiety. Your child will be taking part in a range of different activities in their Learning Zone which will help them to understand anxiety and learn how to manage their own feelings. In school we will be introducing the Anxiety Gremlin – the character we will be using as a tool to talk to our children about this important issue.

What is anxiety?

- ▶ Anxiety is a common emotion that we've likely all experienced at some point in our lives. People living with an anxiety disorder will feel intense levels of anxiety frequently, which can deeply impact their quality of life.
- ▶ Anxiety disorders affect over 8 million people in the UK – that's a little over 1 in 10 of us – and there are lots of different types.
- ▶ When we talk about anxiety, we might dismiss or invalidate it as someone "*just worrying*" or "*just being stressed*". These common phrases can be harmful. That's why we want to challenge the notion that it's 'just' anxiety, and share the truths about the condition.

Children and young people will feel anxious about different things at different ages, such as when they're starting a new school – this is normal. For some children, however, anxiety can affect their behaviour and every-day thoughts.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it affects a child's day-to-day life. Severe anxiety can harm children's mental and emotional wellbeing, and affect their self-esteem or confidence.

Separation anxiety is common in younger children, while older children will worry more about school or have social anxiety.

Signs of anxiety in young people can include the following:

- Finding it difficult to concentrate
- Not sleeping, or waking in the night with bad dreams
- Not eating properly
- Quickly getting angry or irritable
- Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts

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- Feeling tense and fidgety or using the toilet often
- Always crying
- Being clingy
- Complaining of stomach aches or feeling unwell

Tips and Strategies for Parents

- Severe anxiety symptoms typically last for 40 minutes.
- Help your child understand that they will pass.
- Talk again when they are calm.
- Explore ways to help your child relax.
- Do everything you can to step back from your own anxiety so you are better able to hold your child through theirs.
- If morning difficulties occur frequently and your child seems in distress, speak to your school and ask for arrangements to be made to allow for a slightly later arrival when he or she is feeling better and more able to cope.
- If your child is not attending school, keep to the same routine as if he/she were attending school.
- It is particularly important to keep to the usual getting up time and to put on and wear school uniform during the day.
- For absences beyond three days, ask the school to send home or email some work for your child to complete.
- Refuse access to TV, computer games or other home entertainment until after the learning day is over.
- Do encourage your child to socialize with friends after school hours.

Remember to measure progress in small steps. School anxiety is not uncommon. You are not on your own. There are professionals who can help you and it will all get better with time. If you are concerned that your child may be suffering from anxiety please seek advice and support from their class teacher, GP or please do not hesitate to talk to me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs D Cross

Mrs D Cross
Head Teacher