

Stress & anxiety

Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, pressure at school and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you do not think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. Friendships are very important and children often suffer stress if they have fallen out with a friend. Could they be being bullied?

Children can suffer from stress and anxiety due to high expectations from parents and family. Let them know that as long as they are doing their best that is okay. Support them in getting extra help if they need it. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues and depression can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.

Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they are upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.

Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to.

Signs can include:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.
- Unexplained injuries - could they be being bullied or are they self-harming?

- 1.** Your child is irritable, secretive and finds it difficult to sleep.
- 2.** Have they fallen out with a friend? Are they being bullied? Pick a good time to chat.
- 3.** Talk to their teacher and ask about friendship groups. If you are still worried speak to your GP.