**Anxiety**

Anxiety often occurs around change and things we can’t control

There has been and is a lot of change going on right now!

**Strategies**

* Prepare your child thoroughly for the day ahead, particularly any change. Change can cause anxiety. Use visuals where possible as this helps children to understand and remember-draw pictures (younger children) or write (older children). Stick people and simple drawings are fine!
* Talk about how anxiety feels-it is a physical reaction in the body eg you feel like you want to cry, there’s a lump in your throat/chest, you have a funny feeling in your tummy. Labelling and talking about feelings helps children to understand and deal with them. Talk about what you do as an adult when you feel worried.
* Talk about things which help anxiety eg taking deep breaths, going for a walk (exercise and fresh air release the happy hormones called endorphins which then reduces anxiety), listening to music, and/or doing something which makes you feel calm (see below)
* Develop a box of things which help them to calm-a calming toolkit. This might have in it

-a favourite toy which they stroke, or a blanket or ribbon

-fidget toys or stress balls

-play dough

-colouring

Find their happy place and make sure they have access to it!

* Let your child have some control and choice. Anxiety can arise from feeling out of control. Can they choose what to have for tea, where to sit, which film to watch, what they wear? This could be included within a timetable for the day
* If a certain activity/time of day/situation makes them more anxious, use first/then, so that they realise that something is coming after the activity which they are worried about. Eg “first we are going to…and then we can…” Make the second activity something that they enjoy. Again, use pictures or a list to remind them
* Talk through situations. Try not to dismiss their worries as “silly” or trivial. Listen to their concerns.
* After a situation which caused anxiety, talk about the fact that nothing bad happened, and that everything was ok.
* Try to point out things which are still the same, and focus on these, rather than the things which have changed in their life.
* Look at photographs and talk about them. Talking about happy memories will help to develop feelings of well being.
* Consider grounding techniques such as 5,4,3,2,1. Once you have found your breath, find-

-5 things you can see around you

-4 things you can touch

-3 things you can hear

-2 things you can smell

-1 thing you can taste

Look at the following websites for more tips and advice:

**NHS**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>

**Young Minds**

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-anxiety/>