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CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

## Wellbeing Newsletter



### Top Tips on Managing Worries and Fears

As parents and carers, our instinct is to shield our children from worries and fears; however, we've all learned in the past year that we can't always stop scary things from happening. Therefore, we should teach our children skills to manage worries and fears, and encourage them to talk about these rather than avoid them. This newsletter focuses on ideas that may be helpful when speaking to your children about their fears and worries, and strategies for supporting them to manage.

#### What are typical childhood worries?

Younger children - fear of the dark, monsters, animals, ghosts, witches, losing their loved ones.

Older children - these worries increase as children notice the world around them e.g. worrying about natural disasters, being more exposed to the news, rejection, danger and social situations.

Other family and community experiences may also be a huge worry for them.

#### Where to begin?

We're all different and will respond to things in different ways - let them know that whatever they're feeling is completely okay. It is crucial to give children positive experiences of telling us how they feel so that they are encouraged to do this more often.

It can be helpful to think about a time when you felt worried and spoke to someone about this - what helped? What didn't help?

Let children know that what they're feeling makes sense - try to avoid saying things like "don't be silly" or "there's nothing to be worried about".

Don't feel like you need to fix things or have all the answers - lots of things that are happening right now aren't easy to fix, so instead listen and be available. Let them know that they can come to you with questions, ideas, thoughts and feelings. Give extra cuddles or read an extra story. Let them know that you are there if they need you.

#### Questions that might be helpful to ask...

I've noticed you don't seem your usual self...

Do you want to talk about it?

I wonder if you might need help right now to feel a bit better/calmer/safer

It seems like you are feeling...

This sounds really important, I can't talk about it right now so can we talk about it in 10 minutes/this evening, please?

### Being a container for worries

Containment is where a person **understands the emotions that their child is communicating to them, but doesn't get overwhelmed by them**. This process allows children to share their worries and avoid feeling full up – “a problem shared is a problem halved”.

#### How do we contain children?

Look for clues about their feelings and help them to name them (e.g. “you seem worried about something”).

**Active listening:** let them talk without interruption, focus on what is being said, show your interest by nodding and commenting on what they are telling you.

**Repeat what you've heard back to them – this shows that you understand or gives your child chance to say “you've not got it quite right”**

*Example: “I can hear that you're feeling scared. It is completely understandable. It is a frightening thing to happen. This is what I do when I feel scared...”*

### Be an emotions role model

Children look up to adults to be their role models. This is why it is important for us to be their emotional role models:

- Talk about your own emotions
- Share strategies you use to feel better (e.g. deep breathing, stretching, talking to friends, being creative, going for a walk)
- Make these conversations about emotions and feelings a normal conversation in your household.

It's okay to let your child know that you are sad for people that are hurting during these difficult times, sharing this with your child will nurture their empathy and compassion – but it is also helpful for them to see your resilience, your ability to cope with the news and look after your own wellbeing.

### Worry Boxes



Create the box: any box will work there is no need to buy something new.

Encourage your child to decorate the box as they would like.

Talk about it: explain to your child that this is a special place where they can put away their worries each night and let your child choose a place in the home where the box will be kept safe each night (not in their room as this is their safe place).

You could both write some worries down to start with to model this and then fold the paper and put them into the box.

Try to spend five minutes each night where your child can discuss their worries, then they can forget about them and drift off to sleep.

## BUBBLE BREATHING



Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Begin by imagining you are holding a bubble wand. Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you are blowing bubbles into the room. Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful, happy feeling. As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.