

YOU'VE BEEN MISSED

ANXIETY & SCHOOL

A helpful guide for
young people.



What is anxiety?

A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

It's common.

Anxiety is common and is a perfectly normal response to events and changes. It tends to be a feeling we notice when there is something in the future we are uncertain about - it is forward looking rather than worry that looks back on an event.

It's a useful feeling at times.

Anxiety can help protect us from danger and alerts us when things just don't feel right. It can encourage us to practice skills and be motivated to study for tests and exams. But in excess, anxiety is unhelpful and feels horrible.

It's just a feeling.

Sometimes feelings of anxiety can lead you to struggle to get into school or miss a lot of school. If this is the case, it is really important that you let someone (parent/carer/teacher) know so they can help you think about what to do and get some help for you if you need it. What can make anxiety really hard to manage as a feeling is that the thoughts, physical sensations, emotions and behaviours we might notice in ourselves feel really uncomfortable. There are things we can do to help ourselves manage some of this and this guide will tell you a bit more and also tell you about some places you can get help. Learning to manage anxiety is a really positive thing to do for your health and wellbeing.

Autism and anxiety.

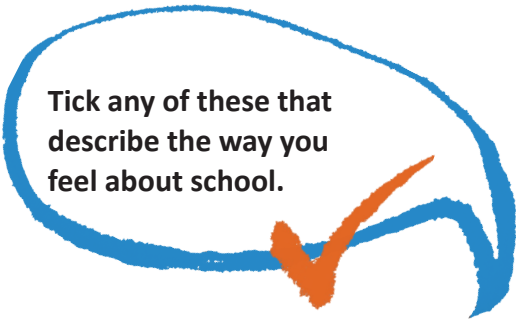
If you have autism you may experience anxiety more often and we know that this can get worse as you reach adolescence. It is really important that you don't delay getting help if you feel that anxiety is getting in the way of you attending school. There are things that school staff can help you with but they need to be made aware of the anxiety to help.

What might you notice in your body when you feel anxious?

Your body might feel different. You might notice some of the feelings listed here, but there may be other sensations you notice too.



For some children, going to school can become hard - these are some of the reasons you might feel this way:



Tick any of these that describe the way you feel about school.

- ☐ Not feeling safe at break and lunch times
- ☐ Problems with friends
- ☐ Changes to school or moving schools
- ☐ Bullying
- ☐ Feeling that you are different to others
- ☐ Worried about the way you look
- ☐ Anxious about the work you are doing or feeling that you cannot get it all done
- ☐ Feeling that you don't have a good relationship with teachers
- ☐ Teachers shouting
- ☐ Anxious about noises at school or other things in the buildings
- ☐ Feeling you are not achieving well enough/not clever enough
- ☐ Not liking to ask for help
- ☐ Worrying that teachers won't understand your differences and the things that are important to you

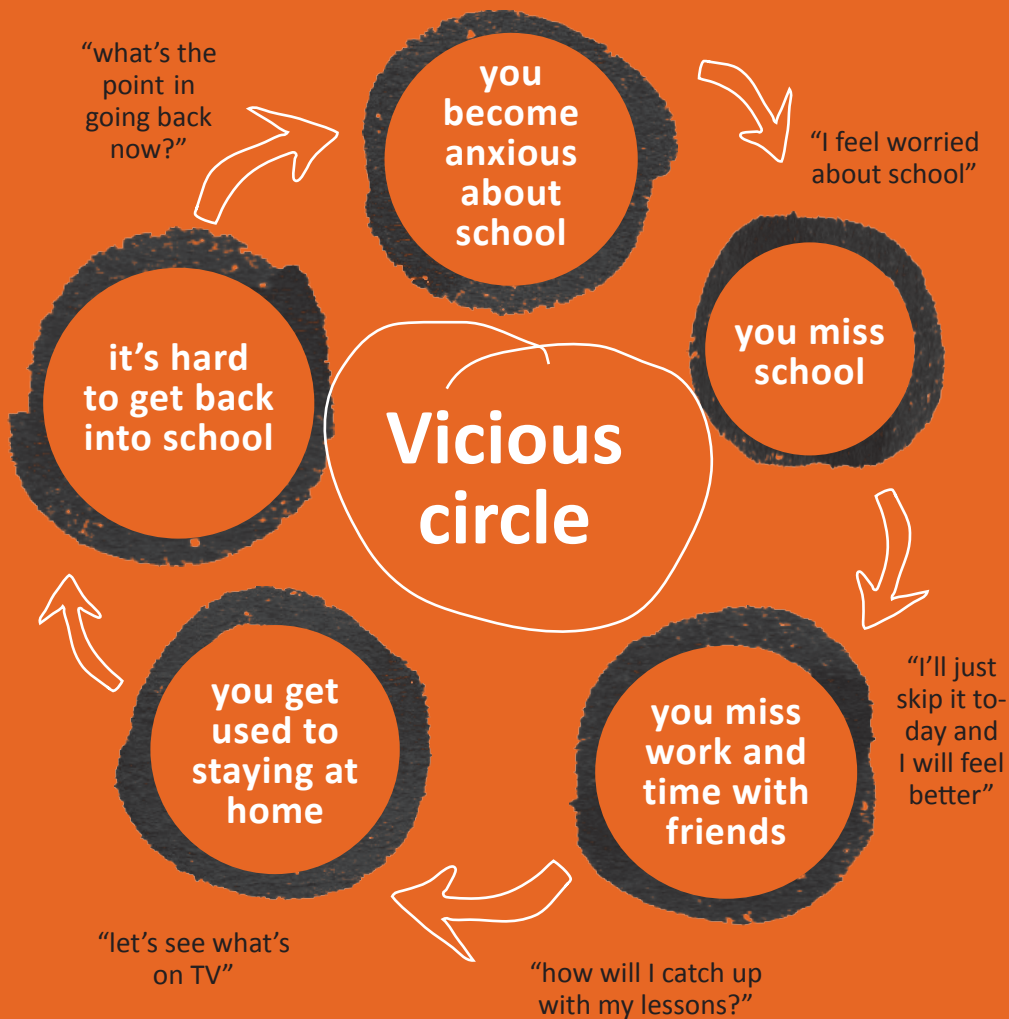
* Outside school there may be reasons you find being in school hard:

- ☐ You may want to spend time doing the things you are interested in rather than what teachers at school want you to do
- ☐ You may be worried about something that is happening at home and feel that you need to be present to look after or protect another family member
- ☐ You may have a parent who is ill that you worry about
- ☐ It may be that there are lots of arguments at home
- ☐ You may not get enough sleep because of things happening at home or in your local area
- ☐ You might have to travel a long way to school
- ☐ You may have experienced the death of someone close to you
- ☐ You may feel that you don't see the reason to go to school if you already have an idea about what job you would like to do
- ☐ You may need to work and this can make you tired and learning difficult
- ☐ You may not have had enough to eat or have food to take to school
- ☐ You may have difficulties wearing the correct uniform

Tick any of the above that make it hard for you to be in school.



What happens when you miss school?



Staying at home will make you feel better... but only for a short time.



Even if you use social media, when you miss school you also miss out on things that are going on with your friends

If you don't go to your lessons this could add to your worries about doing well enough or being able to catch up

Missing school doesn't give you an opportunity to build good relationships with teachers or other pupils

If you miss a few days your anxiety about returning may become worse. It is quite normal to feel a little anxious when we go back to something after time away

It's helpful to talk about your worries and try to put your feelings in to words

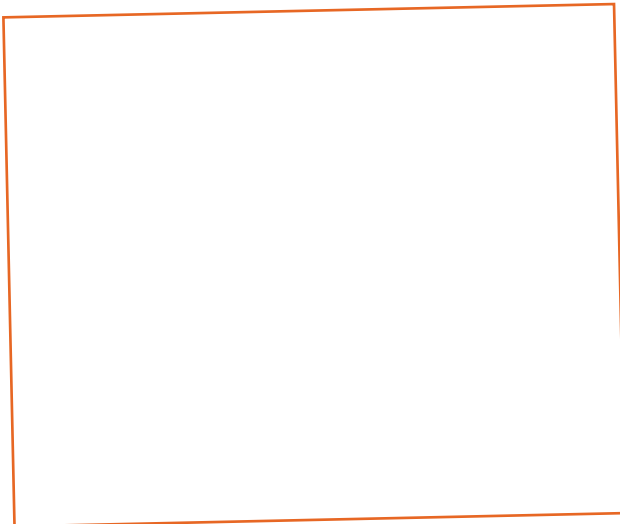
I am most worried about _____

I am not worried about _____

I enjoy _____

I am good at _____

These are the people I like and trust _____



Write down the people that are important to you in this square.

Cut it out and keep it somewhere safe, or take a picture of it on your phone. When you are worried think about what they would say/ how they might help?

Here are some ideas that may help you with your anxiety at school.

Work with a member of staff you trust to make sure that all the staff at school understand your difficulties and the things that are important to you

Talk to someone at school. Find a member of staff you can talk to or email them and ask to meet with them.

Share your worries and tell them what is going on for you:

If you have prefects or a pastoral care team can you talk to them?

“I am worried that I am not clever enough to do well in school”

“I am worried that I have no friends in school and I spend a lot of time alone”

“I feel anxious a lot but I don’t know why”

“I am scared to go to school because I have had some horrible messages on social media”

“I don’t feel safe at school”



Wherever you are, some of these activities can also help keep you calm.

1 ➤ Try distracting yourself.

2 ➤ If somebody is with you, ask them to stay with you until you feel calmer. Talking to them about other things may help to take your mind off the situation.

3 ➤ Take some deep breaths and orient yourself to your surroundings "I am at home. I know I am safe. I can feel the floor under my feet and I am looking out of the window."

4 ➤ Tapping or drumming - in fact anything rhythmic - can help your brain calm down

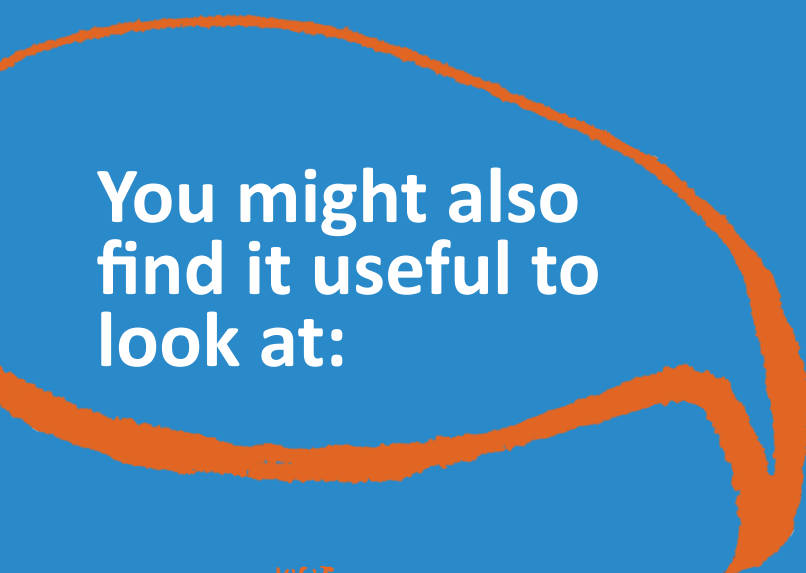
5 ➤ Make a sensory box full of things you like and that soothe you (consider all your senses):

Listen to music or a podcast

Touch Play-Doh or a stress ball

Look at some favourite photos or pictures

6 ➤ Use up some excess energy by taking some exercise: run, walk or play a sport you enjoy



You might also find it useful to look at:

VISIT

- bwc.nhs.uk/youve-been-missed
- forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk/services/13-pause
- kooth.com
- localoffer.birmingham.gov.uk
- headspace.com
- anxietyuk.org.uk
- thetappingsolution.com
- calm.com/breathe
- youngminds.org
- autism.org.uk
- stem4.org.uk
- camhs-resources.co.uk