

# Managing Anxiety

*Supporting children when worry  
feels big*



bright path  
THERAPY

## **Bright Path Therapy**

CBT informed support for children and young people

This resource is for information and reflection. It does not replace personalised therapeutic support.



# What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is the body's alarm system.

It exists to protect us from danger. When something feels uncertain, unfamiliar, or risky, the body prepares to respond.

For some children, this alarm system is extra sensitive or activates more quickly.

Anxiety may show up as:

- Avoidance
- Physical symptoms (tummy aches, headaches)
- Irritability
- Tears or shutdown
- Perfectionism
- Repeated reassurance-seeking

Anxiety is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign that the nervous system is working hard to keep a child safe.

“Anxiety is uncomfortable, but it is not dangerous”





# The Anxiety Cycle

When a child feels anxious, they often avoid the thing that feels scary.

Avoidance reduces anxiety in the short term. However it can unintentionally teach the brain that the situation was dangerous.

Over time, this can:

- Increase worry
- Expand avoidance
- Lower confidence
- Make the alarm system more sensitive

This is sometimes called the anxiety cycle.

## Breaking the Cycle Gently

Anxiety reduces when children:

- Face fears gradually
- Feel supported while doing so
- Experience small successes
- Learn that they can cope

Confidence grows through experience, not pressure.

# How Parents Can Support

## Helpful responses might include:

Acknowledge feelings without reinforcing fear

Stay calm and steady

Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps

Encourage gradual exposure at a safe pace

Focus on effort rather than outcome

Celebrate small steps

## Language that can help:

“I can see this feels hard.”

“We can take this one small steps at a time.”

“You don’t have to do this alone.”



# Things To Be Mindful Of:

- 1 Providing repeated reassurance without limits
- 2 Avoiding all triggers
- 3 Rushing children to “just do it”
- 4 Over-explaining or debating fears

Excessive reassurance can unintentionally strengthen anxiety by reinforcing the perception of danger.





# Building Long-Term Confidence

Supporting anxiety is not about removing all discomfort. It is about helping children learn that they can tolerate uncertainty and recover from difficult feelings.

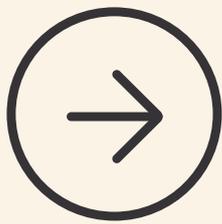
Children build resilience when they:

- Experience manageable challenges
- Feel believed and understood
- Have predictable support
- Are allowed to struggle safely

Anxiety does not need to disappear completely for a child to thrive.

With support, understanding, and gradual experiences of success, children can learn to live alongside anxiety without being controlled by it.





## Next Steps

You might consider seeking further support if:

- Avoidance is increasing
- Anxiety is interfering with school or friendships
- Physical symptoms are frequent
- Reassurance no longer seems effective
- You feel unsure how to break the anxiety cycle

Support can help reduce escalation and strengthen coping.

If you'd like to explore whether Bright Path Therapy may be appropriate you are welcome to get in touch to arrange a FREE 15 minute initial consultation using the contact details below. There is no obligation to proceed following the initial consultation.



WWW.BRIGHTPATHTHERAPY.NET



HELLO@BRIGHTPATHTHERAPY.NET

