



A webinar for parents and carers of United Learning Trust

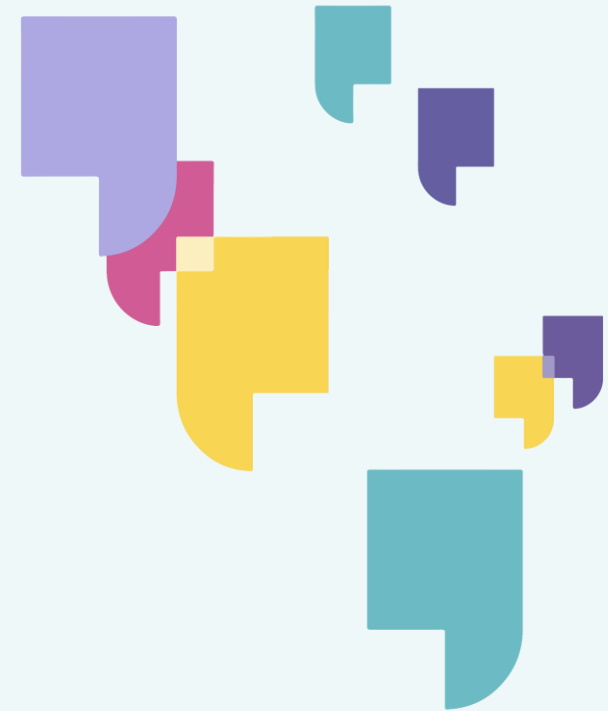
School Engagement Trainers -
Dr. Julia Clements, Arlene McCloskey &
Ali Sparkes



Anna Freud
building the mental
wellbeing of the
next generation

Welcome to your webinar

- Your microphone and camera will be turned off.
- Turn on closed captions (cc) if helpful.
- At the end of the session we will answer any questions that were submitted in advance of the webinar.



Anna Freud

Who we are

Anna Freud is a pioneering mental health charity and we're transforming care for children and young people through science, collaboration and clinical innovation.

We focus on discovery, delivering compassionate support and sharing our knowledge widely.



Anna Freud



Looking after ourselves

The focus of our webinar is the wellbeing of children and young people.

Through our own experience, we will relate and connect to the content in different ways.

It is important that you participate in a way that allows you to feel safe and comfortable.

Step away or take a break if you need to.

Please be respectful of differing opinions and experiences.



Anna Freud

Overview of the webinar

Setting the scene.

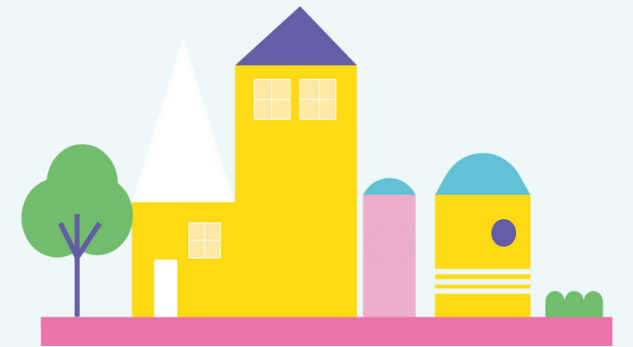
Common experiences in daily life.

How anxiety might be experienced.

Supporting children and young people when they are feeling anxious.

Q and A

Where can I find more information?



Anna Freud

Reflection



2 minutes

Can you reflect on a time when you last felt anxious?

- What did you think?
- What did you feel?
- Where did you feel it in your body?
- How did it affect you?



Anna Freud





Common experiences in daily life

The continuum of mental wellbeing
Anxiety defined

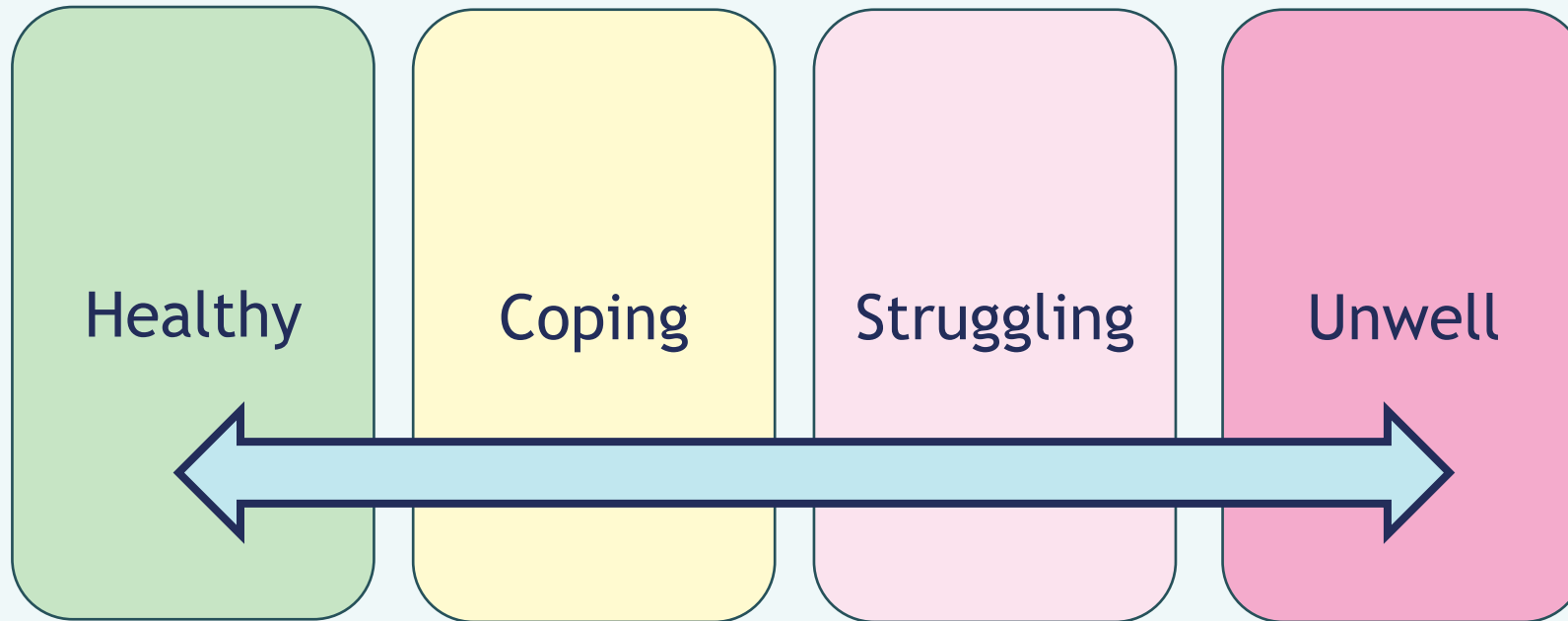


Anna Freud

A continuum of mental wellbeing



Evidence-base



Adapted from Centre for Mental Health



Anna Freud

What is anxiety?



Anxiety is an ordinary everyday emotion, we all experience it. It is there for our survival and it has an adaptive function that helps to keep us safe.



There are lots of situations where we need to feel some anxiety e.g. exams, speaking in class, etc.



Anxiety can become a concern when it is triggered when there is no real danger and when the anxiety response is prolonged.



Anna Freud

Why does anxiety happen?

To help us cope with perceived, immediate threat, humans developed the fight, flight or freeze system.

Anxiety is a natural short-term alarm that tells us of a potential danger.

Anxiety has evolved to be an unpleasant feeling to help us cope with situations which are potentially dangerous.

Anxiety can be a useful short-term reaction to high-stress situations. However, if we are experiencing it over a prolonged period of time - or as a response to most everyday situations - it can significantly impact our mental health.



Common triggers for anxiety

Having a sense of little or no control - *e.g. parental separation*

Being under a lot of pressure - *e.g. exams*

Worrying about something specific - *e.g. grief, loss*

Feeling isolated - *e.g. struggling with friendship*

Facing big changes - *e.g. Moving house, moving school*



Takeaway: recognising anxiety



Mental wellbeing changes

Children move between coping → struggling – this is normal.



Anxiety is part of being human

It helps keep us safe and prepare for challenges.



It becomes a concern when

It is constant, overwhelming, or affects daily life.



Anxiety is a 'false alarm' sometimes

The brain is trying to protect (fight / flight / freeze).



Common triggers

Pressure • Change • Loss • Isolation • Feeling out of control.



Anna Freud

How anxiety might be experienced



Recognising the emotional, physical and behavioural signs of anxiety



Anna Freud

What might you see?

Everybody experiences anxiety differently, a child or young person with anxiety may:

Ask for reassurance
or repeatedly check
or over prepare
things

Be tearful or upset

Appear distracted or
withdraw from
others

Become angry or
aggressive

Report physical
symptoms, e.g.
feeling sick,
breathless

Anxiety and the body

Fight, flight, freeze

Brain perceives danger

Adrenaline rushes through the body

Ready to fight, flee or freeze



The brainstem is responsible for keeping us safe. It is the part of the brain that makes us run away from danger, fight for our life or freeze; and it keeps us alive.

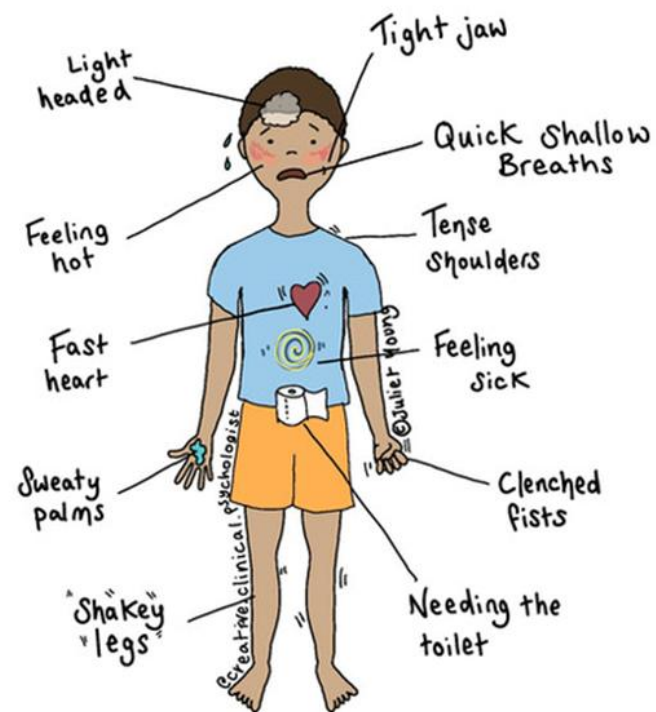
This is very helpful for a child living in a dangerous environment.

Their brainstem will constantly be on high alert, ready to keep them safe and to prevent danger.



Exploring anxiety with your child

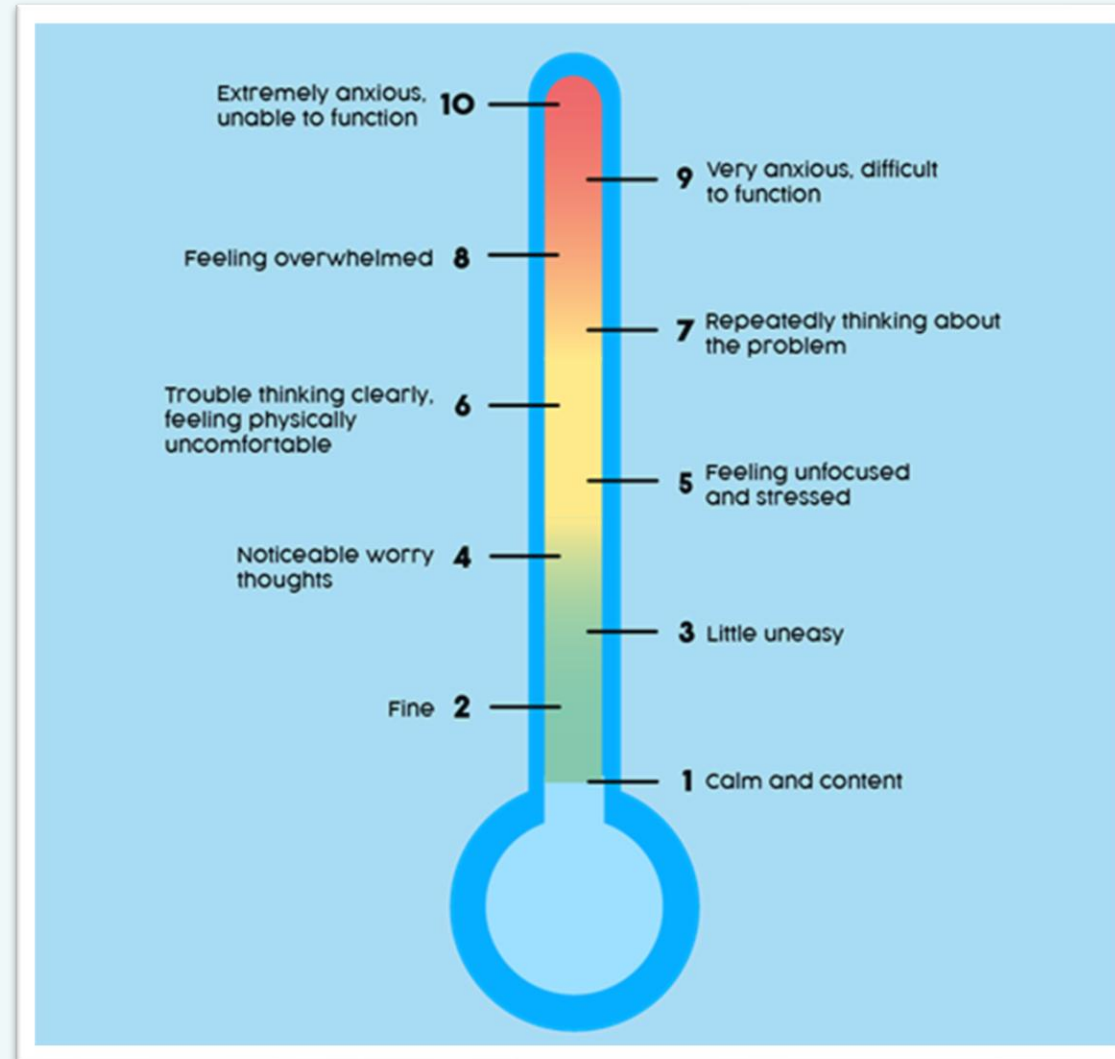
Anxiety and our Bodies



What does anxiety feel like for you?



Anxiety Thermometer



Anna Freud

Anxiety and our thoughts

When your child is anxious, they may be having unhelpful thoughts.

Instead of reassuring your child that nothing bad will happen, you could help them to challenge their unhelpful thoughts.

For example, ask them to recall situations where they felt anxious and managed to cope in the past.

Ask them how they did this and how they could do so again in the future.

Your child should now be able to construct a more helpful thought, that reminds them of their ability to cope with the anxiety.

Positive self-talk



Feel calmer and more confident

Think of some negative thoughts you might sometimes have (e.g., "I can't do this!")

Think of three positive phrases you might try to use instead (e.g., "I can do it, I've done it before!")

Write these phrases down and reflect on when you might use them.



Anna Freud

Digital world



Social support, connectedness and positive interaction.



Feel supported and less alone during tough times.



Easier access to information and informal or formal support - available 24/7.



Foster and sustain relationships with friends and family.



Empowers young people with disabilities or communication needs through creating a sense of community and belonging.



Platforms on which to be creative and have fun.

Whilst there is online content that most would agree to be unhelpful or unhealthy, much of what we see cannot be easily placed into discrete categories.



Takeaway: recognising anxiety



Anxiety can look different for every child
Thoughts • Feelings • Physical symptoms • Behaviour



What you might notice
Withdrawal • Irritability • Reassurance seeking • Physical complaints



What's happening underneath
The body is trying to protect (fight / flight / freeze)



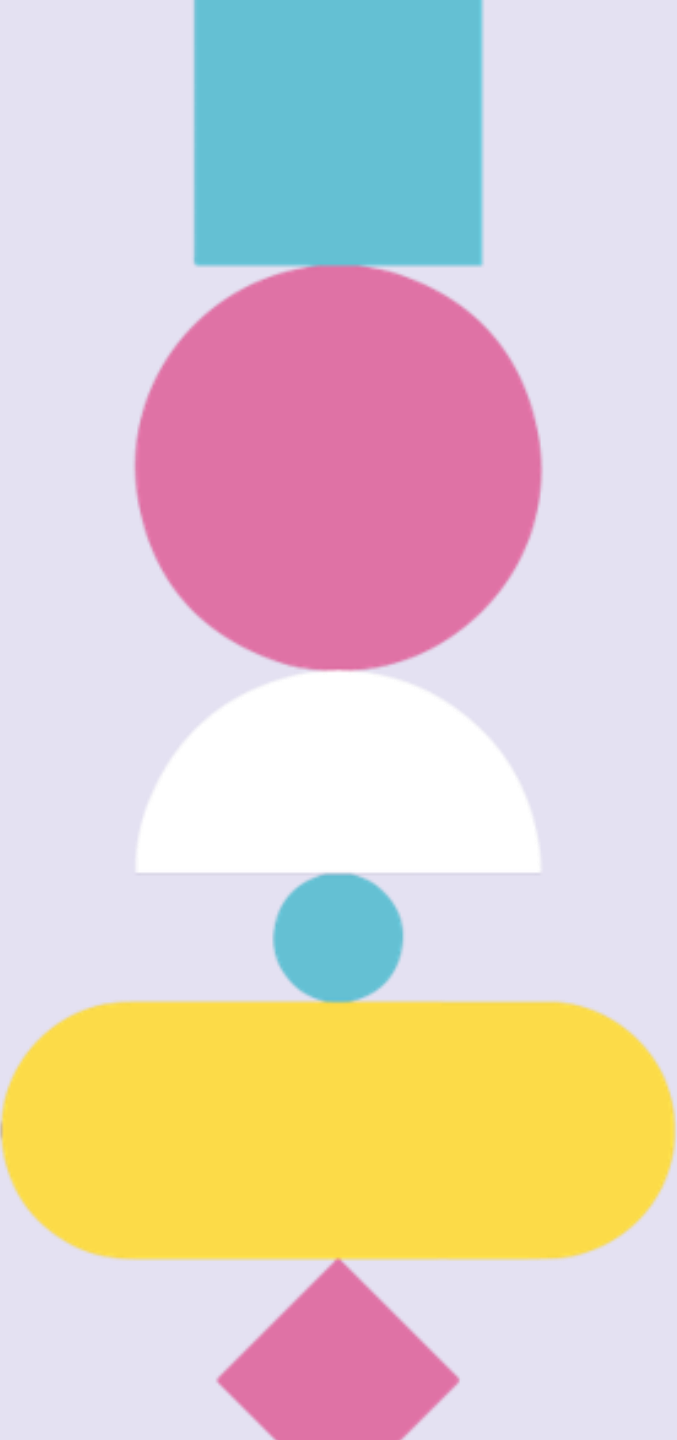
How to support understanding
Notice patterns • Talk about feelings • Link body and thoughts



Support balanced thinking
Thoughts aren't facts • Focus on coping, not avoiding



Anna Freud



Supporting children and young people when they are feeling anxious

Talking with children and young people

Working with school

Self-care



Anna Freud

Tips for talking

Checking in with a young person - is it the right time

Make conversations about mental health a normal part of life

Take their concerns seriously

Ask open questions, showing empathy

Calmly stay with the feelings that arise

Look for clues about feelings

Make sure you have the time and capacity to have the conversation



Anna Freud

Conversation starters

- *“You don’t seem your usual self, do you want to talk about it?”*
- *“Do you fancy a chat?”*
- *“I’m happy to listen if you need a chat?”*
- *“How are you doing at the moment?”*
- *“I’ve noticed that you are a bit angry today, do you want to talk?”*



Things to avoid

01

Dismissing or
minimising feelings

02

Blaming/criticising/
adding more
pressure

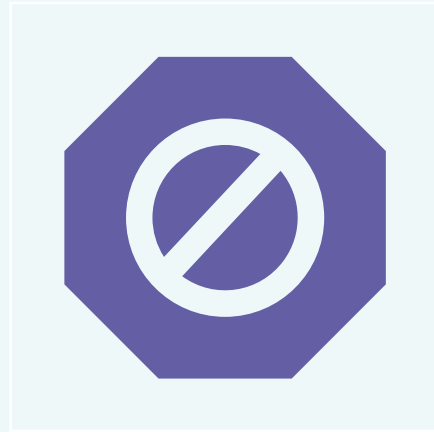
03

Overwhelming your
child with advice
and strategies



Anna Freud

Common pitfalls



Avoidance



Reassurance



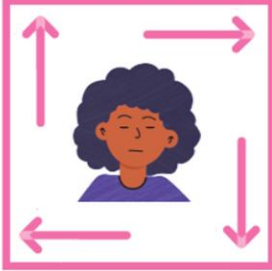
Safety-
behaviours



Anna Freud

Working with the body - box breathing

Box breathing

A diagram illustrating the box breathing technique. It features a central illustration of a person's head and shoulders with eyes closed. This is enclosed within a pink square border. Four pink arrows are positioned around the square, pointing in a clockwise direction: up on the left side, right on the top side, down on the right side, and left on the bottom side.

Feel calmer and more relaxed

Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds.

Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. Feel the air fill your lungs.

Breathe out through your mouth for 4 seconds.

Repeat this several times.

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/let-s-talk-about-anxiety-animation-and-teacher-toolkit/>

Working with the body - progressive muscle relaxation



Hands - *clench and release*



Arms - *bend and tense*



Neck - *press your head back, gentle side to side*



Face - *frown, raise, jaw clench*



Chest - *Deep breath. Hold for 5 seconds and relax*



Stomach - *Tighten and release*



Legs - *Stretch, flex and relax*



Working with unhelpful thoughts - thoughts in the sky

Thoughts in the sky

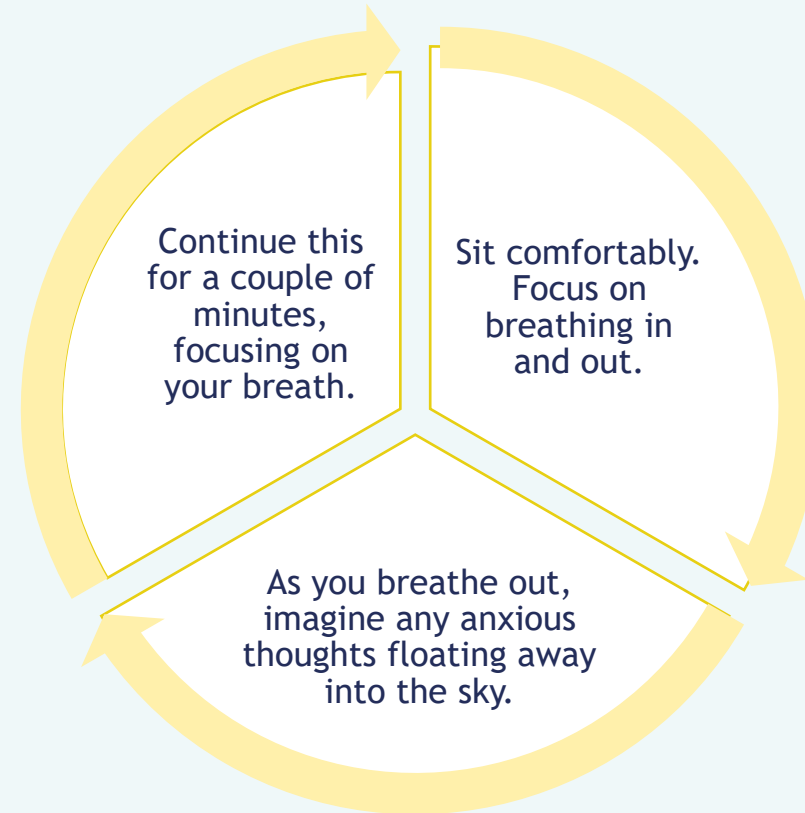


Relax and let go of anxious thoughts

Sit comfortably. Focus on breathing in and out.

As you breathe out, imagine any anxious thoughts floating away into the sky.

Continue this for a couple of minutes, focusing on your breath.



Exams



Support them to plan a revision timetable.



Help them to identify what revision techniques work for them e.g. flashcards, revision videos.



Ensure they have a distraction free place to study.



Reduce challenging subjects into manageable chunks.



Support them to get at least 6 hours sleep before an exam.



Encourage your child to take regular breaks from studying.



Support your child to get the right balance between study and rest.



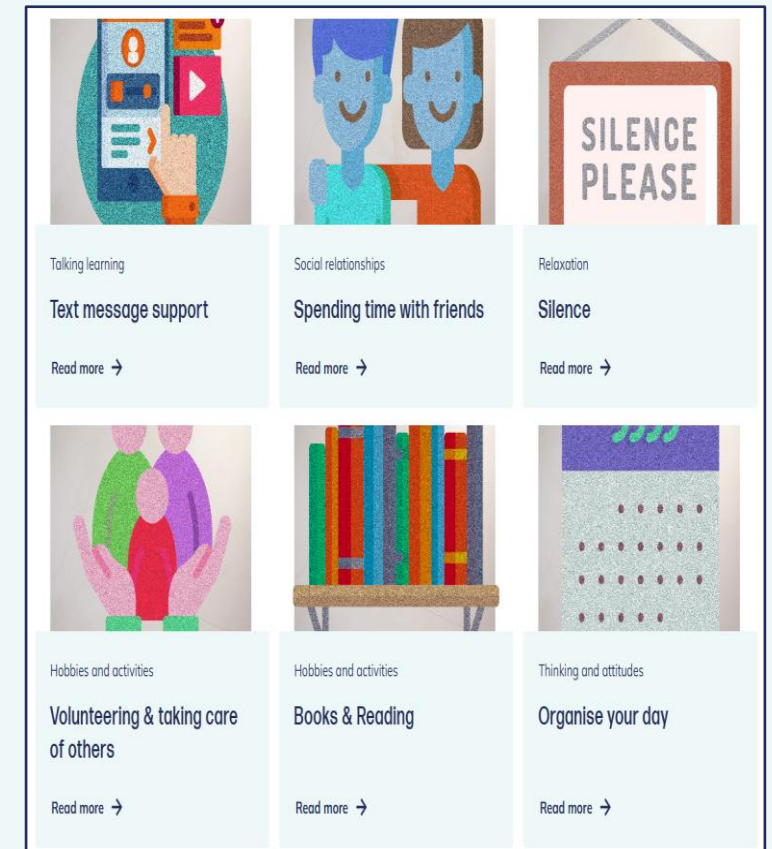
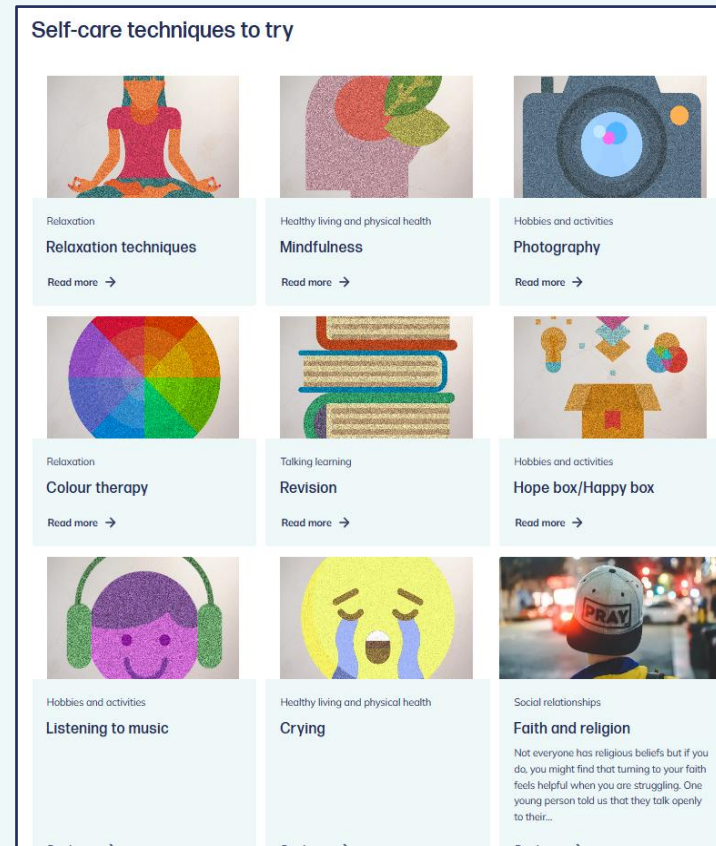
Help your child to practice simple relaxation techniques.



Keep regular family routines of mealtimes and bedtimes.



More practical strategies



<https://www.annafreud.org/resources/schools-and-colleges/Self-Care Resources For Young People> | Anna Freud
[My self-care plan: primary](#) | Anna Freud

When to seek further help

- While moderate feelings of anxiety are normal, **1 in 10 people** experience anxiety severe enough to make it hard for them to get on with the things they want to do in life.
- This may signal an **anxiety disorder**, if this is the case, an appointment with a GP will be a first step.

Example:

Experiencing panic attacks



Anna Freud

Talk to school

- Having a good relationship with your child's school will enable them to feel listened to and supported.
- If you think the school may be putting too much pressure on your young person, it's okay to let them know.
- Explore support available at school/college together.
- Explore how you might offer support at home.



You know your child best, trust your instinct and take your lead from your child.



Anna Freud

Supporting your own wellbeing



- Give yourself permission to take time for yourself.
- Be kind to yourself, we can't have all the answers all of the time.



Takeaway: supporting an anxious young person



Connection comes first
Listen • Stay calm • Take feelings seriously



Keep it simple
Don't try to fix everything – be present



Support, don't reinforce anxiety
Avoid: constant reassurance, avoidance, over-helping
Encourage: small, manageable steps forward



Use simple tools
Breathing • routines • breaks • practical coping



Work together
With your child • with school • with support networks

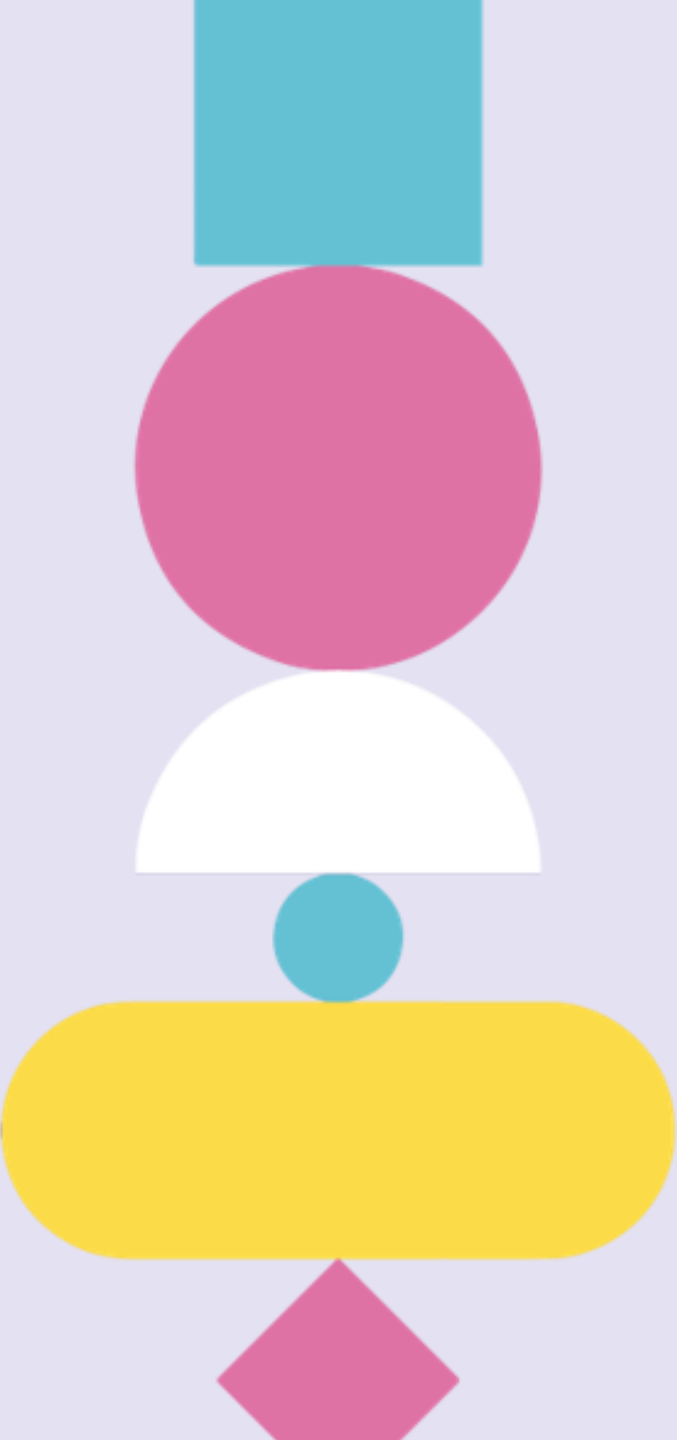


Anna Freud

Q and A



Anna Freud



Where can I find more information?

Further sources of support and information



Anna Freud

Signposting

[How to Talk to Your Child about Mental Health | YoungMinds](#)

[Parents Mental Health Support | Advice for Your Child | YoungMinds](#)

[How to Talk to Your Child about Mental Health | YoungMinds](#)

[Place2Be: Parenting Smart: Articles](#)

[Exam Stress | Feelings | Health for Teens](#)

[Help your child beat exam stress - NHS](#)

[Study support - BBC Bitesize](#)

[Self-Care Resources For Young People | Anna Freud](#)



Anna Freud



How was the
webinar?

Please share
your feedback!

Use the QR code or link below

Parent & Carer Mental Health &
Wellbeing Webinar Feedback
Form



Anna Freud