



ROCHDALE
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Helping children cope with anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic

Rochdale Borough Council
Educational psychology service

This has been a really challenging time for everyone, children included. We've had lots to cope with such as sudden changes to routine, balancing child care alongside work, worries about employment and our health, financial concerns and caring for more vulnerable family members.



This is inevitably going to feel stressful at times and cause anxiety, particularly as the situation continues and we face ongoing changes.

Remember, it's alright if things don't always feel okay at the moment. It's important to make sure that as parents and carers you look after yourself too; when you feel calm you will be more able to help your child.

Our educational psychology service will be hosting online workshops for parents and carers on **29/07/20** and **25/08/20** at **11-11.40am** around understanding and supporting children and young people to manage anxiety. Please request a place on the workshop by emailing:

EducationalPsychologyService@Rochdale.gov.uk



Some ways that you can make a child who might be experiencing anxiety MORE anxious...

1. Tell them there's nothing to worry about
2. Sort out all their problems for them

Does this surprise you? Of course you don't want to see your child in distress and it feels natural to want to take away all your child's anxiety. However, anxiety is **normal** and it is **good** for us; it keeps us safe! Anxiety makes sure we are on the lookout for danger and are prepared to meet life's challenges.

When children are shown that the only way to cope with anxiety is to get rid of it or ignore it, they become more and more intolerant of it. The result can be that a child only has to feel the tiniest bit anxious and it's unbearable, they feel compelled to:

Run (flight)

Resist (fight)

Ignore (freeze)

How to help your child to face their anxiety, understand it, work with it and overcome it

1. Help them to understand anxiety and how it can make them feel by labelling it for them. Explain how everyone experiences it at times.

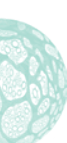
I feel scared sometimes when... but when I'm able to do ... my heart stops beating so fast and I feel happy I have done it.

It looks like you're feeling a little bit scared and your heart might be beating fast. I wonder if it's because...

You can also talk about times you have felt anxious and overcome this.

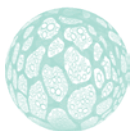
2. Provide opportunities for your child to be in situations where they are able to work out what they need to do in order to solve a problem independently. This helps to build their independence, confidence and their belief that they are able to cope. It's important to try not to do all the fixing for your child, removing any source of stress and experience of failure can make them dependent and feel like they can't do things without help from an adult.



- 
3. You can help by supporting your child to take small steps towards completing tasks they find scary. Reassure them that they will be able to cope and praise them for trying. Giving your child the opportunity to face the things they feel scared of rather than avoid them can help them to feel that they will be able to cope in other anxiety provoking situations. Avoiding situations that make your child feel anxious can give the message that the situation is something to be scared of and that you are worried that they might not be able to cope.
 4. Rather than asking, 'Will you be ok?' reassure your child that they will be able to cope. After they have completed an activity try to talk about the fun they had and not focus on any difficulties they experienced.
 5. Giving your child some information about what is going to happen can reduce their anxiety levels. This might include a broad outline of what will happen during the day. Giving explanations or role playing situations so they know what to expect can also help.
 6. Children who experience anxiety can ask lots of questions to try to eliminate any uncertainty and answering these can give the message that they need to know exactly what is going to happen in order to cope. Try to answer 'worry' questions with another question so children can explore the reasons for their anxiety and test out how they would cope in each situation.

"I'm not sure how many people will be there, why would you like to know? So what could you do if there were more than that? What would make it easier?"

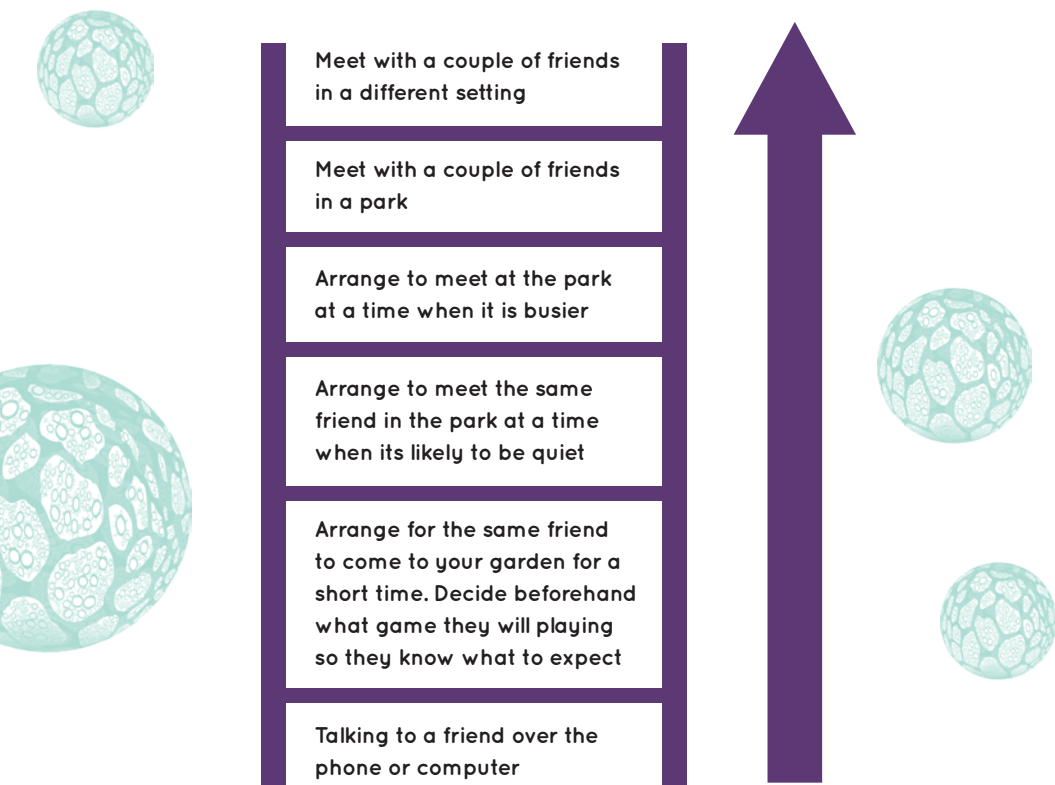
Show children by your own example that it's natural to worry about new situations but you can be brave and give it a go anyway.



During lockdown we've been restricted in the places we've been able to go to. This can mean that starting to visit a wider range of places, even places we are familiar with can feel scary. You can help your child to cope with this by breaking tasks down into small, manageable steps, gradually increasing what you are expecting them to do. When doing so it might help to consider:

- **Which places they are most motivated to visit and who they would like to see?**
- **What is the environment like, e.g. how busy is it? Who are they likely to see and will they know how to respond to them?**
- **Generally making sure the activity is fun and has a purpose is important as otherwise it can feel like a test**

Here is an example of what that might look like:



For further information please contact
the team at:

Educational Psychology Service

Floor 4

Number One Riverside

Smith Street

Rochdale

OL16 1XU

 **01706 926400**

 **RANS/EPAdmin@rochdale.gov.uk**

rochdale.gov.uk