

# Helping your teen with anxiety

A practical guide for parents

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# Welcome to ‘Helping your teen with anxiety’ guide

Parenting a teenager can be challenging at the best of times, and when anxiety enters the picture, it can feel overwhelming—for both of you.

As a counsellor who works closely with young people and families, I’ve seen how anxiety affects teens in different ways. This guide is here to help you feel more confident supporting your child, while also knowing when and how to seek extra support.



# What Does Anxiety Look Like in Teens?

Anxiety doesn't always show up as obvious worry. It can look like:

Overthinking or racing thoughts.

Avoiding school, social events, or certain places.

Irritability or snapping over small things.

Trouble sleeping or feeling constantly tired.

Physical complaints like headaches or stomach aches.

Feeling overwhelmed, tearful, or 'shutting down'

**Everyone is different. If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts.**



# Why might my teen be anxious?

There are lots of different reasons why a teen might be experiencing anxiety:

Pressures of school or a fear of failing.

Friendship/relationship changes or social difficulties.

Social media.

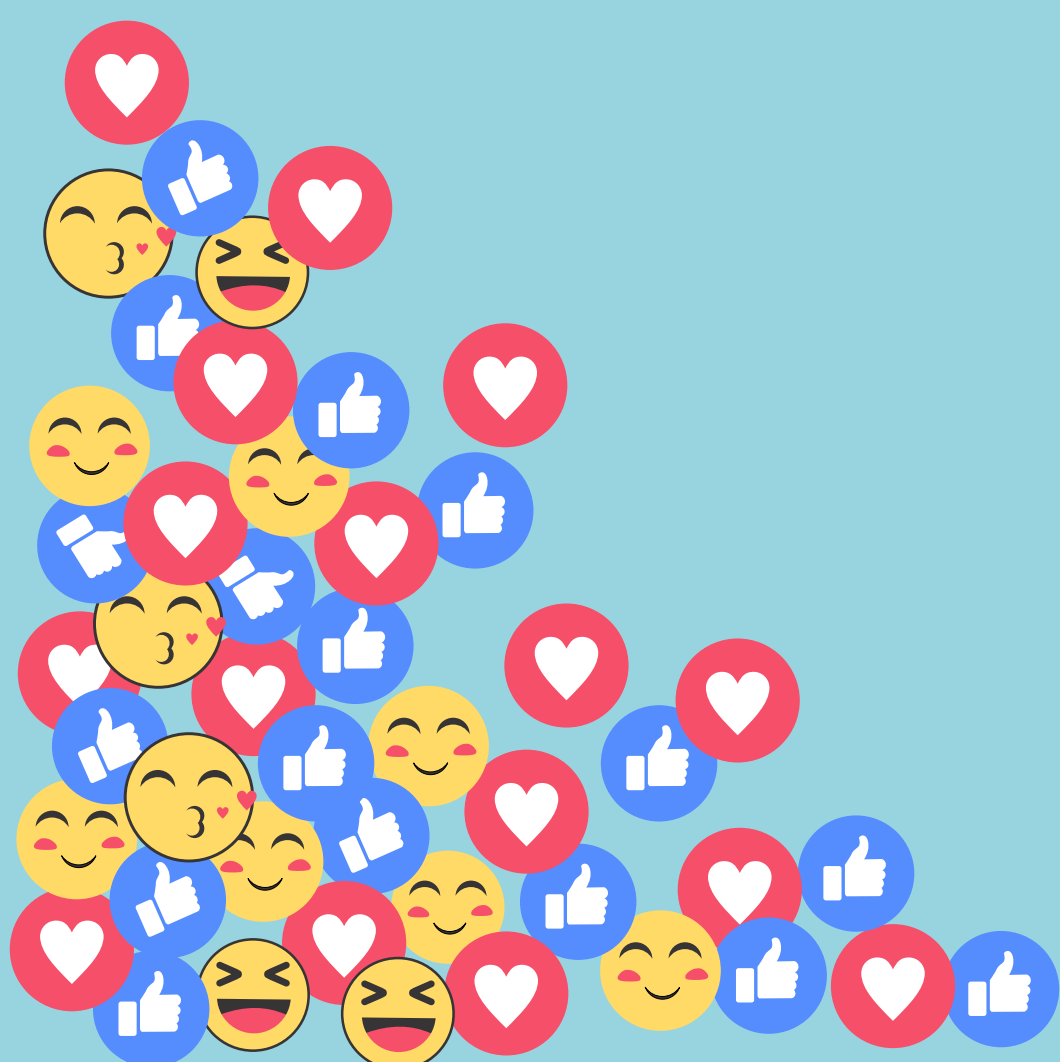
Big life events like parents going through divorce, moving house or a bereavement.

Hormones/puberty/ brain development.

Worries about being judged or not fitting in.

Low confidence/self esteem.

**AND sometimes, they might not know why they feel anxious and that's okay!**



# How you can help as a parent/caregiver

Your support makes a huge difference. Here are a few ways to help:

Listen without interrupting or trying to fix straight away

Validate their feelings (“That sounds really tough”)

Encourage small steps, not big leaps

Be patient — even if they repeat the same worries

## Try to avoid:

Saying “Don’t worry” or “You’ll be fine”

Getting frustrated if they shut down

Forcing them to talk before they’re ready

Assuming they’re just being dramatic or attention-seeking

**Even if they don’t show it, knowing you are there to listen will help!**



# Some practical strategies that can help

## **Grounding techniques**

Encourage them to name 5 things they can see, 4 they can touch, 3 they can hear, 2 they can smell and 1 they can taste.

## **Breathe together**

Try some breathing exercises, 'box breathing'  
Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4.

## **Name the anxiety**

Give it a name - like 'The worry monster'  
This helps separate it from their identity.

## **Journaling or drawing**

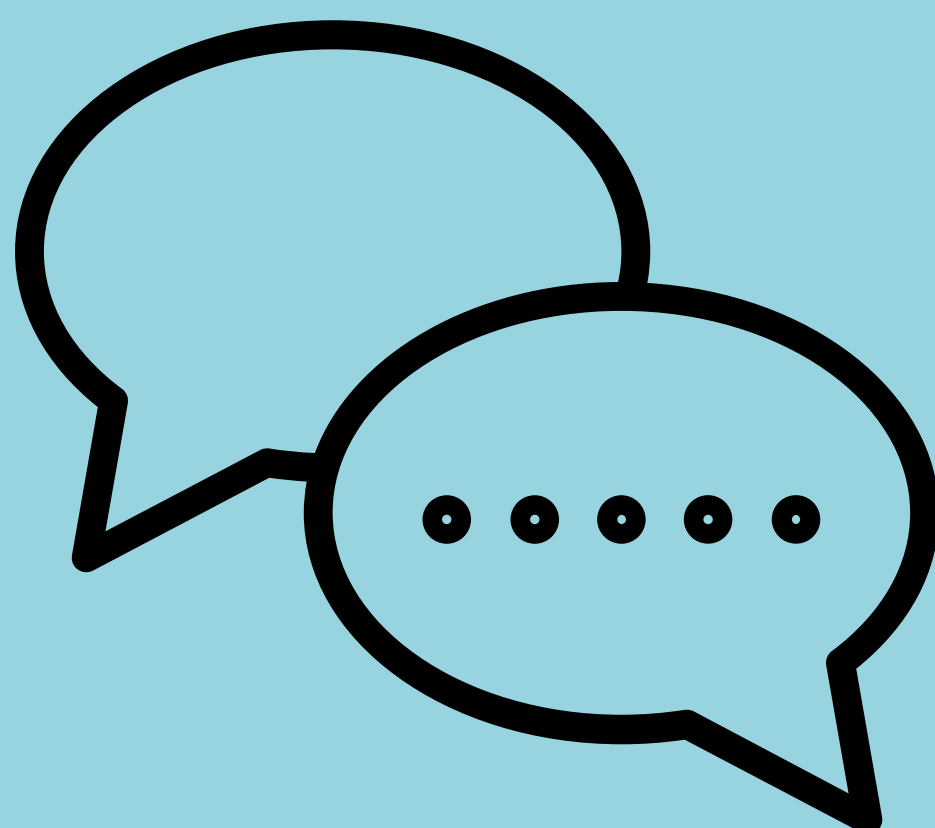
Encourage them to write their thoughts and feelings down.

# Creating a safe and supportive environment

Often, teens feel under pressure to be ‘okay’ all the time, especially when they’re anxious. Creating a calm, non-judgmental and safe home environment will help them feel emotionally safe. This can also encourage them to open up when they feel ready. Below are some ways to make your home feel like a safe base.

Let them know you are available to talk but don’t push them to open up. Try saying things like “i’m here when you’re ready” - this gives them control over when and how they speak. Get curious, not critical - try using open questions.

instead of “what’s wrong with you today?” Try: “I noticed you seemed quiet earlier, would you like to talk about it or just sit together for a bit?”



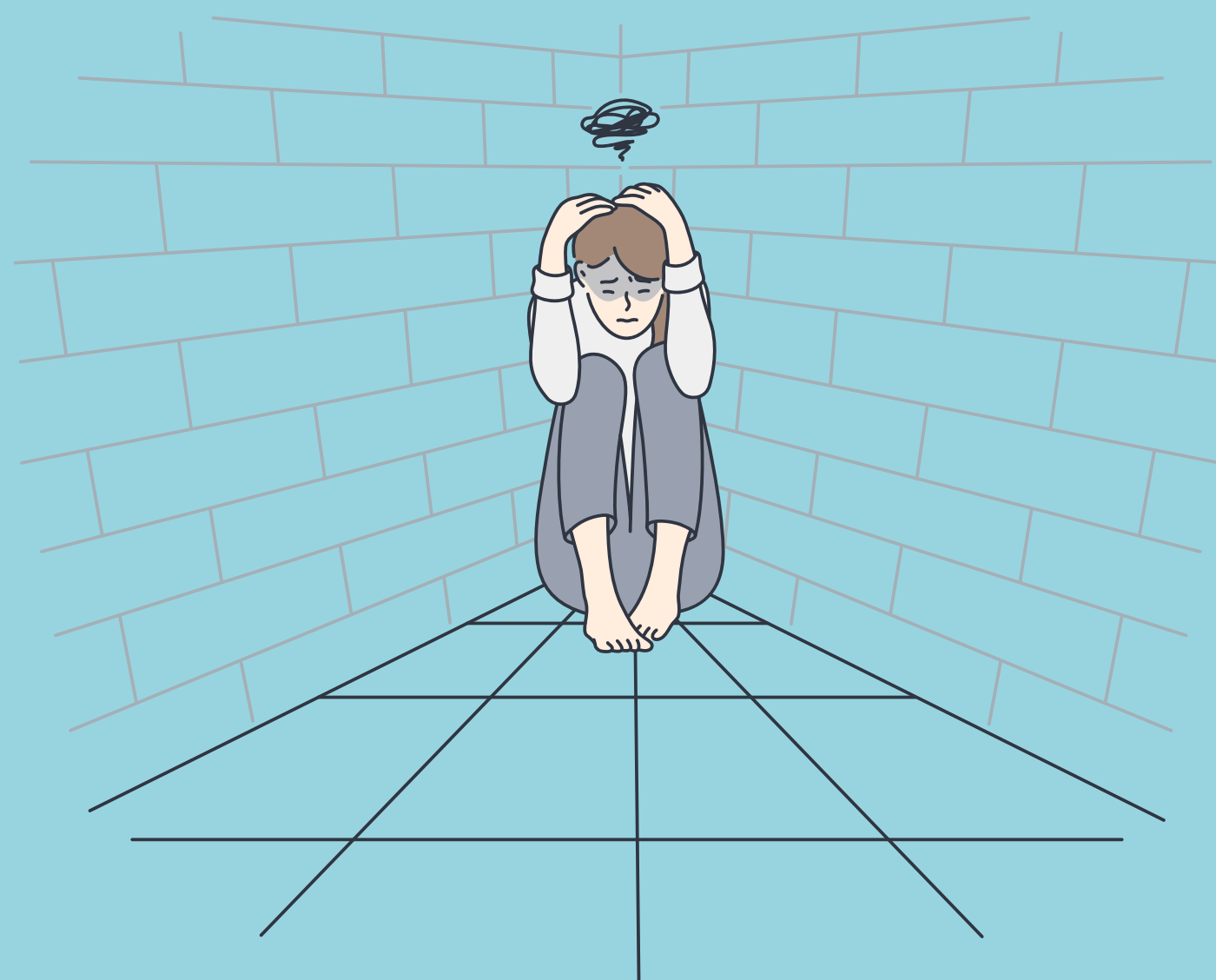
# Helping your teen feel heard, seen and safe

Reassure them that anxiety isn't something to be ashamed of or anything they need to hide.

Make sure they are aware that anxiety is something many people deal with and it doesn't mean they are weak, broken, or 'being dramatic'.

When we normalise mental health, it reduces stigma and shame. It can also help them to feel less alone.

You might say "Lots of people feel this way from time to time - even adults. You're not weird or broken, you're human"





# When to seek extra support

## Consider seeking extra support if your teen:

Seems stuck in anxiety despite your efforts.

Is avoiding school or social situations regularly.

Talks about wanting to escape or feeling hopeless.

Self harms or talks about wanting to end their life.

Has physical symptoms that won't go away.

## Some helpful resources:

Young Minds - support for parents and teens

Mind - mental health support



# You're not alone

Anxiety is more common than people realise, with the right support, your teen can learn to manage it. If you'd like to explore therapy for your child (or yourself),  
I am here to help:

## Contact Ella at ESJ Counselling

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