

# Let's talk about anxiety: additional activities



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## Teacher guidance



These activities can be used as extensions to the Let's talk about anxiety lesson, or to revisit the topic in later lessons as part of a fully planned PSHE curriculum. Shorter activities may also be used in tutor time.

If you are using these activities to return to the topic later in the academic year, you may wish to rewatch the animation and revise previous material as necessary.

The content for delivering these activities can be found in slides 31 - 37 of the PowerPoint. You may also wish to print this document to assist with delivery.

## Tell me about... (10 mins)

Note: this activity can be used to extend the healthy coping skills activity. It could also be used in tutor time.

Slide 31: explain that you are going to think about how you can support others who are feeling anxious. One thing that can help is listening to people, and being there to support them.

Ask the class: what makes a good listener? (e.g., paying close attention; showing interest and asking relevant questions; not interrupting, etc.).

In pairs you're going to practise listening to each other by learning another coping skill. In this case, you can use the skill to support others.

Slide 32: introduce the 'Tell me about' technique. Explain that this technique can help someone who is having anxious thoughts by taking their mind off their worries and by helping them feel listened to.

Ask students to practise this in pairs. Each partner should speak for one – two minutes while the other listens, before swapping roles.

Slide 33: afterwards, ask students to reflect: how did it feel to be listened to? When could you use this skill? When wouldn't it work?

What else could you do to support someone who was feeling anxious?

(e.g., make yourself available to support them; offer to practise healthy coping skills with them if they're worried about going somewhere or trying something new; help them to make a plan; suggest they talk to a trusted adult).

## My anxiety toolkit (15 - 20 mins)

Materials: my anxiety toolkit worksheet; healthy skill coping cards.

Note: this activity involves students creating their own toolkit, rather than working with characters or scenarios. You may wish to use this if you feel your students would benefit from more time for self-reflection and focus on building further skills specific to themselves.

It can be used as an extension activity to the main lesson, or as a standalone activity in a subsequent lesson.

Distribute the My anxiety toolkit worksheet.

Slide 34: explain to students that they will design their own toolkit to help them when they're feeling anxious. This is for their own use – they can keep it completely private or share it with others if it will help to support them.

Run through the different sections of the worksheet and ask students for some examples of what someone might put in their toolkit. You may wish to initially refer to characters from the animation to assist with this.

### Feelings

- When might I feel anxious?
- What does it feel like to me?
- How does it affect my thoughts, body and behaviour?

### Responses

- What strategies can I try to help?
- Who could I talk to?
- What activities do I enjoy and need to make time for?

### Goals

- What's one healthy habit I can try to develop?
- What's something new I can try?
- How can I help someone else who is anxious?

Give students 10 – 15 minutes to fill in the different sections of the worksheet in whichever way is most useful to them. You may play some relaxing music to support this.

Invite any students who wish to do so to share anything. It may also be helpful to create your own toolkit and share it with your class.

Explain to students that they can keep their toolkit in their exercise books, bags, at home or at school.

If they wish, they can also discuss it with their friends, parents and carers, or school staff to make them aware of any ways in which they might support them.

## Coping with exam stress (15 - 20 mins)



Materials: Healthy coping skills cards; index cards

Note: you may wish to use this activity as students are approaching exam periods. It can also be used in combination with the anxiety toolkit activity to help students to prepare to deal with ordinary exam stress.

Slide 35: remind students of the anxiety curve. Explain that some level of anxiety is normal in challenging situations, and can even be beneficial: it can help us to perform better in challenging situations.

Explain that it's common to feel worried during exam periods.

Draw a spider diagram on the board and ask students: what are some common worries around exams?

(e.g., feeling overwhelmed by pressure; getting bad results; not having enough time to revise; having too much to learn; thinking you'll forget everything on the day; difficulty concentrating when studying; obsessing over what you forgot after an exam, etc.).

How might these worries affect someone's behaviour? Where would they be on the anxiety curve? (e.g., a student with no motivation might be on the bottom left; a student unable to sleep because they're so worried about revision might be on the bottom right).

Explain that we can use what we've learned about managing anxiety to help during exam periods, and ensure we are in the 'Peak performance' section of the anxiety curve.

Divide the class into groups of two - four. Ask them to take three examples of common worries from the spider diagram, or to come up with their own.

Give each group five minutes to come up with three tips for responding to these worries. Remind them of the healthy coping skills, encourage them to think about what would be useful at different times (e.g., a month, week, or day before an exam) and encourage them to consider practical solutions (e.g., study schedules).

Bring the class back together. Discuss and write down these suggestions on the board.

(e.g., create a study schedule; use the Pomodoro Technique to break up your study; organize a study group with your friends; take breaks, exercise, and make time for things you enjoy; practise healthy coping skills; visualise success; talk to someone).

At the end of the discussion, give students two minutes to reflect, and to write down three tips on the index cards that would work for them.

Remind students that some level of anxiety around exams is normal and even helpful – but that if they're struggling, they should speak to someone and seek further support. Remind them of the support available in your setting.

## Screen time (15 mins)

Materials: paper; index cards

Note: This activity builds on the discussion of phone usage from slides 13 – 14 of the lesson PowerPoint. It discusses both phone and social media usage and is to be used with students aged 13 and over.

Slide 36: show the class the image of the characters scrolling on their phones on the PowerPoint.

Ask students: how might the characters be feeling? What might they be doing on their phone to make them feel this way? (e.g., scrolling through pictures; trying to contact friends; refreshing to see if someone has replied to them or commented on a video; reading negative articles; comparing themselves to someone else, etc.).

Explain that you're going to think about how to use your phone in ways that make you feel less anxious, and come up with tips for using technology more positively.

Slide 37: divide the class into two. In small groups, one half of the class will brainstorm some unhealthy phone usage habits (e.g., constantly scrolling through images that make you feel bad) while the other will brainstorm some ways in which you might use your phone in healthier ways (e.g., using an app to learn something new).

Ask students to think about:

- How can the ways we use our phone make us feel anxious?
- How often should you use your phone?
- How can you balance using your phone for fun and social connection with avoiding negative effects on mental wellbeing?

After five minutes, come back together as a class and discuss different healthy and unhealthy habits. Use this discussion to write a list of tips on the board for how students might use their phones more positively. Consider:

- limiting phone and social media use to specific times of day
- unfollowing or muting accounts that make you feel anxious
- taking breaks from your phone
- switching your phone to 'night mode' in the evening, and not using your phone up to 30 minutes before you go to sleep
- engaging with positive and inspiring content
- using your phone to help you learn something new (e.g., a language or skill) and connect with others.

After the discussion, ask students to write down three tips that they think would be most helpful for them. Suggest that they can keep this card with them as a reminder for when they're struggling with their phone and social media usage.

## Further short activities (5 - 10 minutes)

These activities can be used in tutor time.

### Healthy coping skills

Teach and practise one of the coping skills on one day each week. You could also ask pupils to volunteer to teach these to the rest of the class.

### Express yourself

Give students five - ten minutes to express themselves creatively by writing or drawing in a personal journal. You can play relaxing music to help them with this.