

Let's talk about anxiety: assembly plan



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Resource information



- **Age group:** 11 - 13
- **Timings:** 15 minutes
- **Key words:** anxiety, mental wellbeing, healthy habits, coping skills

Learning outcomes



By the end of the assembly, students will know that:

anxiety is a normal emotion

anxiety is a feeling of unease in response to threat or stress

different people may experience anxiety differently and in response to different stimuli

anxiety can affect our bodies as well as our minds, e.g., sweating, heart racing and butterflies in the stomach. These are part of a helpful biological response that gets us ready to deal with challenges

there are strategies that can help when we feel overwhelmed by strong feelings like anxiety.

Anxious feelings (3 mins)

Slide 2: introduce the topic and show students the definition of anxiety from the PowerPoint: anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as fear or worry. It is one of the body's natural responses to stress.

Draw students' attention to the words 'unease', 'fear' and 'worry'. Ask for some other examples of feelings related to anxiety.

Ask students for a couple of further examples of when someone might feel anxious. How might it affect them?

Explain that these responses are normal – and that there are some skills and techniques we can learn and practise to help manage anxious feelings.

Let's talk about anxiety (10 mins)

Note: if you have a longer assembly, you may wish to use the slides 4 - 7 to guide a more detailed discussion

Slide 3: introduce the Let's talk about anxiety animation. Ask students to look out for the characters on the slide, and to think about the following as they watch:

What are some of the situations that made them feel anxious?

How did it affect them?

What things were helpful for them?

After you have watched the animation, ask for hands up, and gather students' responses to the questions, referring to the characters on the slides.

Encourage them to make comparisons between the different characters, situations and ways of responding. Ask students to suggest their own examples of how someone might cope with anxious feelings.

At the end of the discussion, ask students to take a moment to reflect on when they might use any of the strategies covered in the animation.

If you have more time, use slides 4 – 7 to guide discussion of the content of the animation in more detail.

Slide 4: what did we find out about how anxiety can affect our bodies? (e.g. sweating, heart racing, butterflies in stomach, feeling dizzy, fidgety, etc.) How might it affect how someone behaves?

Slide 5: what kind of thoughts might be going through this character's mind? What could they try to manage better? (e.g. ask for help; create a schedule; stick to a routine; make time for self-care)

Slide 6: what could a healthy evening routine look like for them? (e.g. stop using phone 30 mins before bed; set phone to 'night mode'; try not to use laptop and phone in bed; have a regular bedtime; listen to relaxing music or read to wind down).

Slide 7: what might this character be thinking or imagining? (e.g. "I don't know what I'm talking about"; "I'm not ready"; "Everyone will laugh at me"; "I'll go red").

Explain that one thing they might try is 'positive self-talk'. This is when we talk to ourselves in a kinder and more helpful way. (e.g. rather than thinking "There's no way I can do this," we might think "I've done it before, I'll try my best").

Ask students: how could this character use positive self-talk to 'talk back' to her anxious thoughts?

Slide 8: remind students of the different suggestions and coping skills that you've covered (e.g. talking to someone, taking time for self-care; creating a routine; positive self-talk).

Plenary (2 mins)

Slide 9: close the assembly by emphasising that anxiety is a normal emotion, and that it's important to try and find out what works for you to help manage it.

Remind students that if they're worried, they should speak to a trusted adult, and seek specialist help if it is interfering with their daily life or ability to do things they want to do (e.g. speak to their GP).

Remind students of the support available at school. Explain that staff are available to any students who want to speak further.

