

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

Neurodevelopmental Conditions & Anxiety

Anxiety is a state of unease, such as worry or fear, that can range from mild to severe.

Children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions often have high levels of anxiety.

Sources of anxiety in children and young people with ND Conditions can be based on their desire for sameness, and struggles with change, especially unexpected change. The more we can structure their everyday activities the less worrying it will be.

Building resilience to change is also essential to enable them to deal with the inevitable changes that will come their way.

Our children and young people with ND conditions can find navigating relationships very challenging, and this can be a source of deep anxiety for some. Supporting them to develop friendships at their own pace and in a way that works for them, and reducing expectations on them in social situations, will increase their confidence and reduce anxiety.

Racing thoughts, overthinking and rumination are common as processing of information can take longer; situations, conversations or interactions can feel unresolved and cause worry and insecurity. Sometimes helping them to work through a situation or reassuring them that it's ok for this to take some time can help. Depending on their age and understanding we can explain how worry works – this in itself can be enough to reduce anxiety levels.

Our bodies have a natural 'alarm system' that is built-in and works to protect us in time of danger or emergency.

When alarmed, our hearts beat faster, we become hyper-vigilant, blood rushes to our arms and legs rather than our internal organs...all in preparation to defend ourselves, run away (or sometimes the 'freeze' reaction where we can become motionless).



The problem arises when our bodies stay in this state of alarm for protracted periods, or in response to small threats.

Stress!



Understanding what lies behind their anxiety is key!

If we understand we can support more effectively. Consider the challenges the child/ young person is facing: are they very sensitive to sensory input – or do they need more input to make them feel safe?

Are they forgetful, disorganised and always feeling that they are ‘getting it wrong’?.

Does their impulsivity or hyperactivity cause difficulties with other people, get them into stressful situations, or cause them frustration?

Perhaps their high expectations of themselves and of others are creating anxiety?

Reduce the amount of communication that you use when a child / young person is showing signs of anxiety. Be mindful of the environment. Their surroundings may be affecting how much they can process.

Support your child / young person with their organisation, timekeeping, structuring their learning etc. This is vital both in school and at home.

Providing a calm, structured and consistent environment will also reduce anxiety.

Calming sensory strategies include deep pressure and proprioceptive activities, also slow soothing sounds. We can reduce anxiety by being aware of the impact of their surroundings and modifying them – e.g., reducing or increasing light depending on their needs.

Creative arts can be very therapeutic. Find what works for them – music, drawing, painting, colouring, playdough, dancing. Doing puzzles can reduce stress too, building with Lego, cooking, can all help reduce anxiety depending on an individual child’s likes, dislikes and skills.

Contact us for additional support or if in crisis see our website for up-to-date crisis contact details for the areas below:

Liverpool / Halton / Knowsley / Sefton / Wirral: **0151 486 1788**

St Helens: **01744 582172**

Warrington: **01925 320863**

www.advancedsolutions.co.uk

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