

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD OR TEENAGER?

Here are a few tips and resources for supporting your children at home if they are finding it hard to cope.

Give them space to communicate their worries

Children often need an outlet to share what they worried about. You often notice this is needed when children don't seem their normal selves. It is also very natural after experiencing or hearing about something traumatic like crime. Below are a few helpful resources or strategies we would recommend giving children the chance to communicate their worries in a range of ways.

Worry Monsters

These are cuddly toys that 'eat' children's worries. The child writes down what they are worried about and puts it in their worry monster. Then, depending on age, you either agree to set aside time with your child to look at what the worry monster is eating together, or you take the worries out when children are asleep so you can see what these worries are. This is a nice way of getting your child to talk about what their worried about. It can just be a nice soft toy to cuddle when their feeling sad also!

Worry Box

If your child likes to get creative, you can always apply the worry monster concept to a box. With this activity you get an old shoe box and you get your child to decorate it how they would like it, and then explain it is a box to put their worries in so that they don't have to keep them in their heads all the time.

Talking Signals

Most children we work with sometimes find it hard to ask to talk about their worries. They either don't want to bother you or they might feel nervous about

asking. Something we have created in our sessions with children is ways children can signal to parents they want to talk. This could be by having a jar which the child will fill up with what they want to talk to you about. You then know when you see paper in the jar you can approach them to ask what it is, they wanted to talk about. You can also use a traffic light system where they have something on their wall somewhere which they change to red, amber or green depending on how they are feeling. You can have it agreed that a red light means they don't have anything to talk about, or green means please come to talk to me. This helps shy children who don't want to outwardly ask to talk.

Texting

For some teenagers they feel more comfortable texting or writing down how they feel, rather than having an initial face to face conversation about difficult things. Although it may feel silly if in the same house, sometimes a good tip is to tell teenagers to text you about what they are worried about. And then you can eventually talk about it face to face.

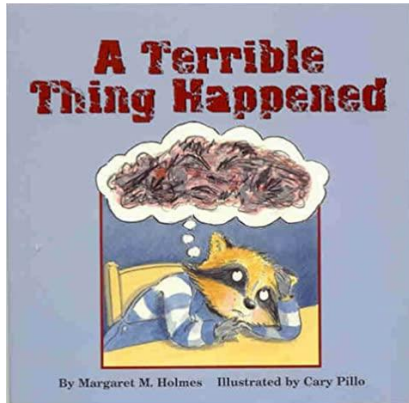
Books

We have found that there are some excellent books you can read or give to your children which help illustrate how they might be feeling, and what can help. Below are some recommendations.

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside



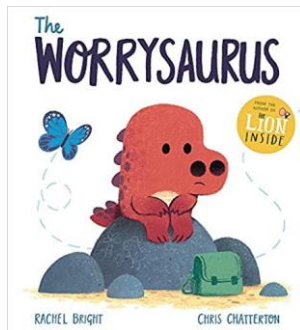
A Terrible Thing Happened by Margaret M Holmes



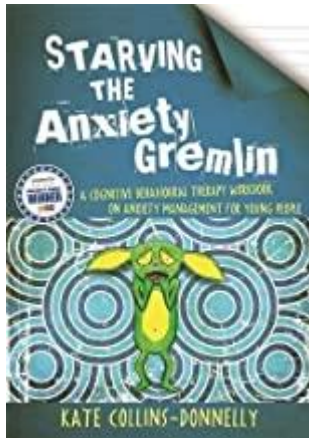
The Invisible Sting by Patrice Karst



The Worrysaurus by Rachel Bright



Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly



No Worries! Mindful Kids: An activity book for children who sometimes feel anxious or stressed by Dr. Sharie Coombes



Seek Support

We always recommend that parent seek additional specialist support if a child is saying they are really struggling to cope. This might mean taking them to their GP or referring them to a local voluntary counselling service. It can also mean giving them access to online resources such as Kooth.com which is an online professional counselling service for young people aged 11 and up. Feel free to call us on 03000 11 5555 (Option 3) to discuss what help you could access in your local area. We might not always know the right answer, but we will always look and try and help you out.

Give them time

It is important to understand that children and young people will all heal in their own time. Just like us adults! The best help you can give them is to allow them this

time to heal and be there for them at every step of this journey. Again, it can also be useful to seek professional advice as discussed above if it feels like it is taking a long time for them to heal. However, its good to know every child is different and this will mean the time it takes them to open up or feel better is different. Your goal is to give them the safe space they need and the opportunities to communicate in their own way.

Sleeping Tips

After a traumatic event or crime, children can experience nightmares or find it harder to sleep. This might mean a period of children asking to sleep in your room or frequent waking up during the night. Again, it is important to understand that this is a perfectly normal reaction to trauma for children and eventually you will get them back in their own bedrooms. Our case managers at Beacon will often work with children and parents on plans to get them back in their own bed at night. This might involve moving or decorating the bedroom around, so it looks different, or adding a night light or comforting feature to the bedroom. It can also possibly involve a phased return plan so that they build up the confidence to be back in their own room. If these sleep troubles carry on for some time and your child isn't getting the sleep that they need it might be a good idea to visit your GP.

An important tip to remember is to allow your child to have time to speak about their worries with you or someone else that is a trusted adult, as this helps them work through what is worrying them so that it is easier to switch off at bed time and go to sleep.

Other tips can include:

- Keep screens out of the children's bedroom, such as phones, tablets etc.
- Play relaxing music when it is time to go to bed
- Teach your child relaxing breathing exercises
- Practice good sleeping habits yourself as you will model this to your children.
- Make sure you have a consistent bedtime routine with your child.
- Keep a sleep diary for your child
- Let them know you are here to keep them safe