

香港資優教育學院  
The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

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## Factsheet

### SUPPORTING A CHILD THAT WORRIES

Able children worry about lots of things for all sorts of different reasons. They worry about school because they think they are different, they are bored, they think they don't understand because they see a wider task than the one outlined by the teacher. Some children worry about new situations, they can visualise possibilities for disaster that others can't envisage. Some worry about issues that are happening in the world that they find in the media. Some children have a low self-esteem and worry what others think of them. Some children are perfectionist and expect too much from themselves and possibly other people too. This will often make them anxious or worry. Trying to help your child relax their standards in those areas where it matters less and accept that it is sometimes alright for them or others to make mistakes may reduce the worry. What ever the reason there are steps that can be taken to help alleviate some anxieties. Different things work for different children and all of these techniques can be modified to suit different situations

#### **Worries / Happies Book**

Find two empty notebooks – ask your child to make a front cover for each if you like and label one 'Worries Book' and the other 'Happies Book'.

At the end of every day write down things that your child is worried about in the worries book.

You can share some of your worries too to model for your child how to do it. Don't make the child write it if they don't want to but it can help if they do.

Then take away the book and put it in a safe place that your child can't reach. Say to your child; "I am going to take these worries away with me. I will read them again and if I can help you with it then I will. If I can't do anything at the moment then we will leave it in the book for a time when we can do something."

Make sure you take it away from your child so that they understand that you are taking responsibility for those worries just now.

Then write or draw happy things from the day in the Happies book. Again, you can model how to find the happy things yourself and encourage your child to add theirs. Remember to include the small things as well, like hearing a bird today, or the sky was really blue, or even I got dressed by myself.

The Happies Book is then kept by the child, under their pillow or close by.

The Worries/Happies Books are obviously aimed at younger children. For older children and young adults writing down concerns is often a good way of letting them go or sharing them with another person. Sometimes getting rid of the written worries is often quite liberating – burning them or shredding them, for instance. Writing down concerns can be used at school in various formats to let teachers know when issues are arising in class that can be worrying but difficult to talk about.

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**Talk Tin**

In a quiet corner of the house or classroom place a box or tin with a lid. Next to it leave a pile of post-it notes and a pencil. Spend time outlining the rules to your child (class). The rules are: Anyone can write anything they want to write – no limits. If it is placed inside the tin it is just between the writer and the teacher. If it is stuck on the top it is an issue to be shared with the class. No-one needs to write their name (although handwriting is often recognisable don't make an issue of it). Make the children aware that if what is written is about something harmful or dangerous to the writer or someone else then for safety the teacher may have to share it with other adults. This is common child protection practice. It often helps to talk to someone outside the situation either another adult or another child.

**Mentors / Buddies**

Schools can run a buddy system where an older child is paired with a younger one to support them at various times in the school day. It is beneficial for the older child as it is a position of responsibility and for the younger as they have someone other than an adult to turn to for help. It is worth coaching the older buddies on what to do if they hear something worrying and to designate an adult supervisor for the scheme. An adult other than a teacher or the child's teacher can be designated as a mentor in school. Time can be set aside for meetings where information can be shared confidentially. At home a mentor can also help – someone trusted but outside the immediate family, an uncle or aunt, a family friend.

**Counselling**

Sometimes worries can grow to a point where they are unmanageable. If possible, before this happens you can seek counselling. Go through your GP for a referral to a specialist counsellor. Remember to always check their qualifications and recent training. Remember that there are different methods of counselling – you need to find out a bit about them and pick the one that would help you the most – again; talk it through with your GP.

**Further Guidance:**

<b>Young Minds</b> <a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a> 0800 018 2138	Mental Health Charity concerned with children offering advice and guidance
<a href="http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation">www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation</a>	Offer a factsheet entitled 'Worries and anxieties - helping children to cope'
<b>Helping Children Cope with Anxiety</b> by Jill Eckersley	Book covering all ages of children
<a href="http://www.anxietycare.org">www.anxietycare.org</a>	Information on different fears, worries and phobias
<b>David and the Worry Beast: Helping Children Cope With Anxiety</b> by Anne M Guanci, Caroline Attia	New book due to be released helping young children to understand worries and anxieties

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