

Calming down worries, for children

Psychology & Learning

Putting Psychology at the Heart of Learning

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WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW

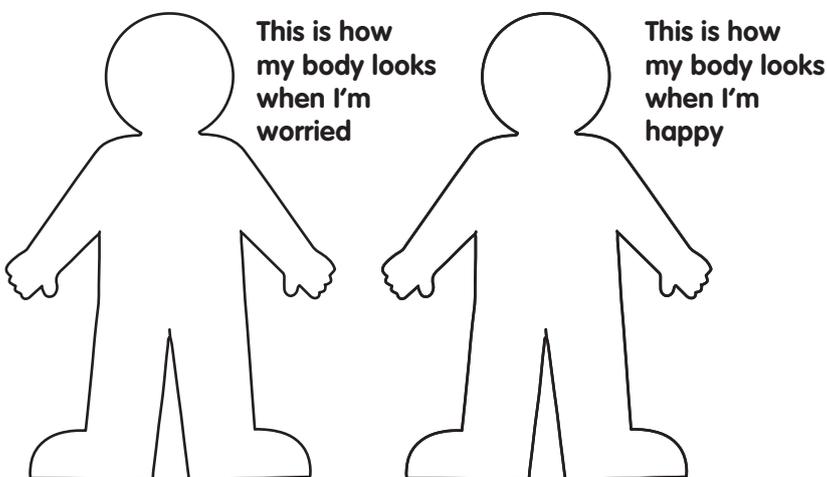
Worrying is normal, we all do it at times

Sometimes it helps us to improve our performance (e.g. before a race) and at other times it can spoil things

The adults are worrying now and are doing their best to help keep us all safe.

Things that will help you:

1. Ask an adult to share some of the points about worrying with you from the adult sheet. They can choose the best ones to talk to you about.
2. Learn to recognise the feelings in your body. When we worry our chemicals make us feel fizzy a bit like a shaken bottle of pop. We need to learn to calm down the fizz as otherwise it might give us headaches, a fast beating heart and make us feel out of breath.
3. Draw the way your body reacts to feeling worried and feeling happy. You can share this with an adult so that they know when you are feeling worried.
4. Recognise that sometimes when you feel odd, fizzy or down you might suddenly become quiet, cross, physical or tearful. You think it is for no reason, but it is your body's way of telling you your stress chemicals are on the rise.



5. Learn to breathe in a controlled way. Take a deep breath in and then out. You need to learn to get the out breath to be longer than the in breath: in for 4 seconds and out for 7 seconds is a good one. It is much harder than you think. You will need to practise it several times. The breath needs to come from deep down within you.

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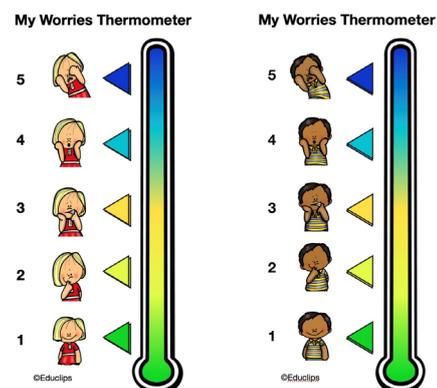
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- As you breathe deeply listen just to your breath. How many times can you do it for? What do you notice? Can you feel how your body responds?
- Draw an octopus on paper, cut it out and hold it at arm's length - can you make all of its tentacles move? You'll have to take in a deep breath and blow out slowly to get all 8 to move.
- Whilst doing your controlled breathing, think of your favourite place, imagine you are there. Make the colours really bright, listen to your favourite sounds, breathe in your favourite smells and enjoy.
- When you look out of your windows or if you are in a garden look and listen to everything around you. What things do you notice that you have never noticed before? Can you copy a bird's song? Can you find where woodlice live?
- Find your favourite song and sing it in your very best voice. Songs can make us have different feelings - which make you happy? which help you sleep?
- Practise some stretching exercises. Pretend you are a tall tree, reach up as high as you can; now be a wide tree; sway like a tree in the wind; curl up into a small ball as tight as you can like the woodlouse does when it is protecting itself. How do your muscles feel when you do this? Each day check if you can reach further.
- Share your feelings - tell an adult what you are thinking or a friend. Talking about our worries stops them keep going around in our heads.
- Spot negative thoughts and have a plan of action. If this happens I will 1...2...3.... Having plans reduces our fear of the unknown. They can also give us things to look forward to...
- Have fun! Write a list of all the things you would like to do - remember to make them things you can do at home. Tick them off when you do them.
- Monitor how you feel - use the thermometer to show adults where you are. Show them when you are getting worried. Notice what helps to bring your worries down into the green zone.
- Write post-its or little notes to yourself and stick them around your bed.

Notice all the great things about you and write them down.

Ask others to write notes too. Read them or get an adult to read them every night before you go to sleep.
- Play fun games. See how many things make you laugh. Write or draw a list to remind you of what makes you feel good.
- How do you feel after fun games? - show an adult on the thermometer. Having fun boosts our oxytocin (our feel-good hormone) and we need to make sure we keep giving ourselves oxytocin boosts.

"Enjoy and have fun!"



More ideas can be found in the Calming Cat resources - see TTS website

These notes and the Calming Cat resources have been written by Paula Williams, Educational Psychologist.