Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

'Anxiety can stem from the unknown. It's a survival mechanism that equips us to anticipate potential threats or dangers, and so deals in 'what ifs'. This means that in uncertain times, our anxiety may go into overdrive.

Another survival mechanism is our ability to pick up on others' anxiety. Think about gazelles in the wild - if one detects a predator and becomes alert, they all do! This can make this emotion 'contagious' [1].

[1] BMJ 2008; 337 doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a2338

1 Connection matters

Anxiety is not the only 'contagious' emotion - happiness can spread too. One of the largest influencing factors in whether or not people report feeling happy are our relationships, Having people to connect with who we feel 'get us' and share enjoyment in the same things can make a huge difference. That's why lunchtime clubs that offer the chance connect with others who share an interest (such as Minecraft, Warhammer, or Hamma beading) can make such a difference to young people.

https://magazine.hms.harvard.edu/articles/contagion-happiness

2 Address thoughts

As anxiety deals with potential threats, thoughts play a crucial role in heightening or reducing levels of anxiety. Offer children strategies to use when worrying thoughts pop up: 'bank them' in a notebook for a time they can be dealt with; rank the likeliness of their worry happening /10; decide if it's their worry or someone else's; decide if it's something they can do something about and bin it if it's not; free write all their thoughts onto a page before the timer pings; create a 'best friend' voice in their head to answer back to the negative voice.

3 Demonstrate tools

Encourage children to reflect on a time they've faced a challenge or difficult time in the past (you can have a 'role model' example ready for those who might draw a blank!). List the qualities and skills they needed to get through that challenge/difficult time. Reflect on how those same qualities and skills might help them now.'

It can also be helpful for particularly anxious children to have their own personal book of evidence, that shows times they have done something they initially found hard. This could include photos, certificates, or examples of work., They could write a note for themselves at the side as a reminder of how they felt before and after.

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