

# How to help if your child is

# angry



## What is anger?

Anger is a normal emotion which can be useful in our lives. It can, however, be destructive and disruptive in respect of relationships, behaviours and learning.

### Signs you might see in your child

You may see excessive outbursts of physical or verbal behaviour such as fighting or shouting.

It's normal for toddlers and teenagers (during adolescent stages) to have periods of emotional outbursts displaying signs of anger, but it may be an indicator of other underlying situations or conditions that could require further support.

### How you can support your child

1. With your child, identify any underlying trigger factors or situations that create feelings of anger.
2. Help your child to 'problem solve' possible situations that cause anger.
3. Give your child the opportunity to have some time out when feelings of anger build up, in order to diffuse those feelings.

4. Encourage your child to try things to relax, such as:

- Going for a walk/run
- Listening to music
- Reading a book
- Seeing friends
- Taking a bath

5. Talk to your child about our bodies and how they can change - specifically talk about how your child's body changes when tension builds before an outburst of anger.

6. Encourage your child to look for signs such as increase in temperature, sweating, breathing faster and pulse-racing.

7. Do not mirror your child's behaviour as this will cause it to escalate. Instead, manage the situation adopting a calm and controlled approach.

Please see our Emotional Literacy booklist.

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If your child is still giving you cause for concern,  
please talk to a member of Central Park staff or your GP.



# How to help if your child is struggling with low self-esteem



## What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is how someone thinks about themselves. Being confident means being comfortable with how they look and how they feel; it means feeling good about themselves, their abilities, and their thoughts. Low self-esteem is when someone is lacking in confidence and doubts their own decisions and abilities.

## Signs you might see in your child

Your child may have poor eye contact, defensive body-posture, be withdrawn and have poor levels of participation in class activities.

Your child may engage in negative self-talk, such as, “I’m not good enough” or, “I can’t do this” or frequently show signs of absorbing negative comments such as, “My mum/dad/teacher/friend says I’m not.....”.

## How you can support your child

1. Focus on positives and find something to praise your child about, such as being kind or being good at sport, etc.

2. Encourage your child to do more enjoyable activities - things you know your child previously enjoyed.

3. Focus on 'small wins', don't chase big achievements. Do the little things and use them as a springboard. Your child should be encouraged to feel proud of even small achievements.

4. Use the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a tool to support your child, maybe use it to make some goals together.

5. Explore positive role models and discuss what makes your child feel good about unique differences.

6. Discuss and practice positive body language, encouraging good posture and eye-contact.

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# How to help if your child is

# anxious



## What causes anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of fear or panic. We all get it from time to time when we try a new experience or things that are difficult. This feeling goes back to the neolithic time when humans were surrounded by dangers. Anxiety is the body's alarm system that sends adrenaline around the body and gives people superhero-like boosts to allow them to run away from dangers. It's known as the FIGHT, FLIGHT (avoiding or running away) or FREEZE response. When children get the FLIGHT or FREEZE response they may find themselves staying away from activities and people. The longer they stay away, the harder it is to go back.

## What you might see in your child

Your child might display or experience different behaviours, such as:

Feelings: frightened, worried, angry, nervous, embarrassed or overwhelmed.

Behaviours: avoiding situations, withdrawing from social settings, biting nails, sleeping issues, tearful, struggling to concentrate, hyper-vigilant.

Thoughts: worrying that nobody likes them, 'I can't do it', 'I must do this', catastrophising, negative thinking.

Physical signs: frequent tummy aches, headaches, shaky hands, tense muscles or scratching.

## How you can support your child

1. If your child is very young, regular routines around bedtime and getting ready for school can help with separation anxiety.

2. It helps if you can prepare your child in advance, explain what is going to happen and why - using a calm tone of voice. Pay particular attention to situations your child may find overwhelming such as crowded spaces.

3. Check your child is eating healthy meals regularly to ensure balanced physical and mental energy levels.

4. Ask your child what they are thinking when they feel anxious. It can help to ask your child to draw a picture of him/herself with a thought bubble above his/her head to show this.

5. If your child is over the age of five, it might be helpful to talk about his/her worries to an understanding adult - this could be someone outside the immediate family.

6. Help your child to control breathing when feeling particularly anxious by visualising blowing out a big bubble. The key is to encourage the child to blow out for longer than breathing in.

7. Re-focus the child's attention using music, exercise, fidget toys or helpful books about worrying/anxiety, e.g. 'Ruby's Worry' by Tom Percival. (Please see our Emotional Literacy booklist for more).



# How to help if your child is struggling with a low mood/depression



## What is low mood/depression?

Feeling sad is a normal reaction to everyday life experiences. However, when these feelings continue and begin to interfere with a child's enjoyment of life, he/she may be feeling depressed. In its mildest form, depression can mean a child feels low.

This may not stop a child from leading a normal life but makes everything harder to do and less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make a child feel suicidal. Depression can be caused by lots of things such as life experiences, family history, bullying, feeling like he/she has a lack of support, or it may even run in the family.

## What you might see in your child

You child might display or experience different behaviours, signs, and feelings such as:

Feeling: worthless, hopeless, moody, guilty or helpless.

Behaviours: tearful, irritable, withdrawn, avoiding friends and family, lack of interest in appearance, difficulty in concentrating.

Thoughts: 'I don't deserve any help', 'what's the point?' Dismissing the positives, negative thinking patterns, including not wanting to live anymore.

Physical signs: tired, eating changes, changes in sleep pattern, aches & pains, slowing of speech.

Share books such as: The Fix-It Friends: Have no Fear! (N. Kear) and Pilar's Worries (V. Sanchez).

## How you can support your child

1. Break things down into small steps and celebrate when achieved.
2. Encourage your child to exercise regularly and keep an eye on diet, avoiding sugary/fatty foods and stimulants.
3. Gently encourage your child to continue to do activities previously enjoyed - even if the enjoyment has lessened.
4. Try to identify any factors that may be contributing to your child's low mood such as environmental issues, age-related physical illness, friendship issues, etc.
5. Help your child to identify a trustworthy adult to talk to.
6. Help your child to identify and access a safe place.
7. Encourage your child to be around people who are caring and positive. Both negative and positive thoughts are contagious.
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9. Please see our Emotional Literacy booklist.





# having problems sleeping

## How much sleep does a child need?

All children are different, but generally each night:

- Children aged 3-5 need 11-12 hours
- Children aged 6-11 need 10-11 hours
- Teenagers need 9-10 hours.

## Why do children experience sleep problems?

There can be different reasons:

- Bedtime fears - many young children are afraid of the dark or being left alone.
- Bad habits - such as napping too much during the day, eating a poor diet, use of electronic devices before bedtime or substance abuse.
- Anxiety, low mood or depression
- A chemical imbalance in the brain.
- Nightmares, sleepwalking, night terrors or insomnia.

## How you can support your child

1. Make sure your child is comfortable. Not too hot, not too cold. Make sure the room is not too noisy or bright.
2. Establish a good bedtime routine. For example a warm, milky drink, a banana/some cheese, a warm bath and say goodnight. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
3. Encourage your child to do some exercise late in the afternoon, but not in the evening to avoid over-stimulation.
4. Help your child to relax before bed - reading a book, listening to music.

5. If something is troubling your child when it's time to sleep, suggest writing it down or drawing a picture of the thoughts.

6. If struggling to fall asleep, help your child to imagine being in a relaxing place, feeling happy and slowly breathing in and out.

## Things to consider:

1. Avoid going without sleep for a long period of time.
2. Encourage your child not to have too much caffeine or sugar in his/her diet.
3. Encourage your family to have supper early in the evening rather than late.
4. Don't allow your child to lie in for too long. After a bad night, don't let your child sleep in the next day, this will just make it harder to get to sleep the following night.
5. Don't allow your child to play computer games or overuse phones and other devices close to bedtime. Screen-time may help with boredom, but it can make it harder to get to sleep as the mind is stimulated. Stop a couple of hours before it's time to sleep.
6. Monitor your child's general online activity - including the types of games he/she is playing online and social media use.

Please see our Emotional Literacy booklist.

# How to help if your child is reacting to trauma

## What causes trauma?



Trauma is a reaction to the experience of events involving threat or danger to yourself or others. Personal experience can cause this, or sometimes through witnessing or hearing about terrible events that have happened to others. Children and young people sometimes witness or are involved in things they find very scary or stressful such as accidents, violence or terrorist attacks. It's quite normal to be upset for even quite a while after a frightening event. Trauma has been described as 'normal reactions to extraordinary events'. If reactions continue for over three months, then it may be necessary to explore professional support.

## What you might see in your child

Your child may display or experience different behaviours, signs and feelings, including:

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Panic attacks
- Hyper-vigilance - a state of increased awareness
- Poor concentration
- Continuous minor physical complaints such as stomach aches or headaches
- Unusual and untypical behaviour
- Feeling angry, sad, guilty confused or any combination of feelings.

## How you can support your child

1. Try and make things as normal as possible - your child will feel safer when he/she is reassured and knows what to expect.

2. Help your child to understand what's happening by explaining the truth, giving facts about the situation.

3. Make sure your child understands you are available to talk when he/she is ready, don't avoid the subject.

4. Your child may find using dolls, toys, books about similar situations, or even drawing pictures helpful to understand what's happened.

5. Answer questions truthfully, but keep them simple. Your child may ask questions several times, which could be his/her own way of accepting what's happened.

6. If someone has died, make sure your child understands what this means, that it is permanent.

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