

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

What is normal worrying?

It is completely normal to worry about some things some of the time. But worrying frequently for a long period of time is not.



What is a lot of worrying?

The worry occurs **more than a few days a week** and has been occurring **for 6 months**, and **involves a number of events or activities** (e.g., schoolwork, friendships).



Children with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) often find it **difficult to control their worry**, meaning that they feel that they cannot stop it. They also have other symptoms such as:



Restlessness or feeling on edge



Easily tired



High irritability



Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank



Muscle tension



Sleep disturbance

Their anxiety, worry or physical symptoms usually cause a **significant amount of distress**.

They will find it difficult to function in activities that most children can take part in.

For example, they cannot concentrate during lessons because they are worrying, or they avoid certain activities because of their worries.



Children with GAD may not get better on their own, especially if people around them accommodate to their worries and other anxiety-related behaviours.

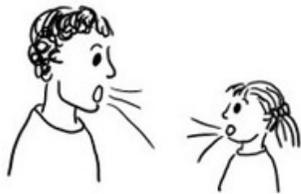
However, many can get better with intervention.

Intervention for GAD usually involves working with the child and parents. The goal of intervention is usually to **decrease anxiety symptoms and increase coping**.

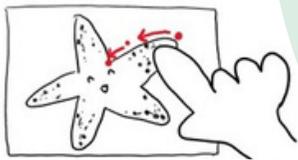


Tips to help children with Generalised Anxiety Disorder

1. Teach ways to calm down



Teach your child to take slow and deep breaths. Practice deep breathing with your child regularly, so that your child is more ready to use deep breathing to calm down when anxious.



Try this out:

You can trace a starfish while practicing deep breathing exercises. Breathe in and out naturally and slowly as you trace up and down the starfish.

2. Model coping statements

Teach your child **realistic** statements to cope with their worry.

I can learn.

I tried my best.

I am okay. Mummy and Daddy love me no matter what.



Everyone makes mistakes sometimes.

3. Reassure your child once, at most twice, then stop.

Children with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) often ask repeated questions, to feel safe. When you respond to their questions again and again, your child becomes reliant on you to reduce their anxiety, instead of learning to cope with uncertainty.

For example:

- "I know you find this difficult, but I know you can do your work without asking me these questions."
- "I will not repeat myself. You can finish your work then come join me for a walk after that."



4. Give balanced feedback

Use the **sandwich method** to give your child feedback so that they know what they have done well and can continue doing, as well as the areas that they can improve on.



5. Establish healthy routines

Routines provide **predictability** which helps to decrease anxiety and worry.



Create a daily schedule that has **consistent** meal and bed times.

Your child can draw or decorate their schedule as you introduce and explain their schedule to them.

To learn more about **Anxiety**, scan this QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/KKHDCD-understandinganxiety>



To learn more about **Generalised Anxiety Disorder**, scan this QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/KKHDCD-GAD>

Disclaimer: The content is for informational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please seek help from a qualified healthcare provider if you have any concerns regarding your child's behaviour.

Department of Child Development

100 Bukit Timah Road
Singapore 229899
Tel: 6-CALL KKH (6-2255 554)
Fax: 6293-7933
Website: www.kkh.com.sg
 www.facebook.com/kkh.sg