

# Thrive 365

## Dragonfly: Impact Education



### Did you know?

When children struggle with anxiety, it can often be difficult for them to express what is causing their feelings. This can add to the overall sense of danger, panic and feeling out of control. According to Mind\* there are a number of possible root causes including past experiences, the current situation, health issues, or medication.

Being unable to control the worries is a part of having an anxiety disorder, so it's important not to push children too much - which can be a natural response when you find yourself worried about them and want to help.

1

### Offer control

It's understandable that not being able to articulate where your feelings are coming from, and feeling unable to control the worries, can lead to a negative spiral. Helping them to plan how they will handle worries as/when they arrive can help to give a sense of control back. It's important to do this at a time the young person is feeling in a good place and not at a time when they're highly anxious. Offer suggestions, but give them ultimate control about what strategies will go on their plan. These strategies can then be laminated on a card that the child can keep with them.

2

### Offer structure

When a child is operating in a heightened state of fight/flight/freeze, everyday things can seem threatening and be too much to face. Offering a clear structure and sequence to what will happen in the day, and at what times, can help to reduce the uncertainty. It also gives the young person the chance to rate their anxiety level about each aspect of the day, which can open up a conversation about what could make particular times easier.

Focusing on an activity that is structured and repetitive can also help to soothe anxiety. This might be counting aloud - for example, helping to count texts or resources back into a box.

3

### Offer activity

Physical activity is the body's natural response to feelings of anxiety - think about the instinct for fight or flight. Walking, running, or hitting a punch bag are all ways to allow the body to process feelings of anxiety. Building activity into every day can also be a preventative measure.

Activities such as keeping a diary can help a child to identify patterns in what triggers feelings of anxiety for them. It can also help them to focus on the good things in their life too, rather than only thinking about their worries. If writing isn't something they are keen on, a photo diary can be a good alternative.

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*Islands in the Stream:*  
Senior Mental Health Leads  
in Schools  
by Claire Pass & Rachael Bushby

