How can I help my child if they are anxious?

As a result of COVID-19, children who are prone to worry may find the transition to normal activity difficult. They are likely to have common fears such as getting sick, leaving the house, going back to school or other activities, or worrying about being behind on schoolwork.
HERE ARE TWO STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING ANXIETY:

**CHANGE WORRIED THINKING TO MORE REALISTIC THINKING**

To help your children think more realistically, be curious about their worries. Try to find out what they are worried about by asking them the following question.

“I can hear you are feeling worried. What do you think is going to happen?”

This question usually elicits a worried thought like “I will get sick” or “People will laugh at me”.

Then continue being curious and consider asking them three questions:

- **What are the facts?**
- **What is most likely to happen?**
- **Will you be able to cope?**

Here is an example of our [worksheet](#) from Cool Kids that may help you.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS WORRIED ABOUT CONTRACTING COVID-19, YOU COULD ASK:**

- **What are the facts?** The fact is that most people don’t have it and almost everyone gets better.
- **What is most likely to happen?** The fact is that your child is unlikely to contract the virus. Although your child may often worry about getting sick, they don’t usually end up being ill.
- **Will you be able to cope?** Tell your child that they are following the rules. Encourage them to think about a time when they have been sick before, and although it doesn’t feel nice, they do get better quickly.

**FACE YOUR FEAR**

Avoiding situations makes us feel safer in the short term. The key is to gradually face the situations we are afraid of. Start with less scary situations and work up to scarier ones. Continuous practice helps people to learn that a situation is not so scary, and confidence grows.

Here is an example of our [worksheet](#) from Cool Kids that may help you.

To do this well, you need to work out why children are avoiding a particular situation. If your child is reluctant to go to school, is it because they are worried about reconnecting with friends, falling behind in schoolwork or catching COVID-19?

If your child is avoiding school because they are worried about catching COVID-19, you can help them feel more confident by getting them to face similar but less scary situations. By ‘similar’, we mean situations that make your child feel only a little nervous, but for the same reason. If they are worried about getting COVID-19 and avoid going to the shops or using public transport you could encourage them to practice these situations first. This will build up their confidence about going to school, as they will be less scared about catching COVID-19 in general. For example, if your child is worried about leaving the house you might start with situations such as:

- riding a bike or scooter, or going for a walk
- talking to a neighbour outside the house
- stopping to talk to a peer while exercising
- going to the shops and helping to do the shopping
- practicing catching public transport (if they need to do this to go to school).

Encourage your child to face their fears in easier situations and then build up to more difficult situations. Use rewards and praise each time they are able to successfully face their fears.