Worry & anxiety in children

Stubbins Primary School

A supportive coffee morning for parents and carers

- Understanding what children may be feeling
- Practical ways to help at home and school
- When and where to seek extra support

Nurture, Flourish, Grow

A few things to remember

All children worry sometimes.

Feelings are real, even when the feared outcome is unlikely.

Anxiety is not naughtiness or attention-seeking.

Connection comes before problem-solving.

Small steps count.

Worry or anxiety — what's the difference?

WORRY

- Often linked to a specific concern
- May ease after talking or making a plan
- Can help us prepare for a challenge
- Usually comes and goes

ANXIETY

- Can involve thoughts, feelings and body symptoms
- May continue even when we know we are safe
- Can feel hard to control or switch off
- Needs extra support when it disrupts daily life

They overlap. The key question is: how much is it affecting the child's everyday life?

What might children worry about?

- Being away from a parent or carer
- Friendships, falling out or being left out
- Getting something wrong or being judged
- Schoolwork, tests, change or the unknown
- Family changes, illness, loss or world events

How anxiety can show up

BODY

Tummy aches, headaches, nausea, racing heart, sweating

THOUGHTS

“What if…?”, expecting the worst, getting stuck on a fear

FEELINGS

Fear, dread, overwhelm, irritability or tears

BEHAVIOUR

Clinginess, avoiding, withdrawing, reassurance-seeking

One sign on its own does not prove anxiety — look for patterns and changes.

The anxiety cycle

1 Uncertainty

2 “What if?”

3 Alarm in body

4 Avoid / escape

5 Short relief; fear may grow

Support helps children take manageable steps — not face everything all at once.

The goal is not “never feel anxious”. It is “I can feel anxious and still get support to cope”.

Start with connection

Get alongside them; use a calm voice.

Name and validate the feeling.

Listen before offering solutions.

Be curious: “What feels hardest about it?”

Reassure without promising that nothing bad can ever happen.

What to do in a worried moment

1. Pause and help your child feel safe.

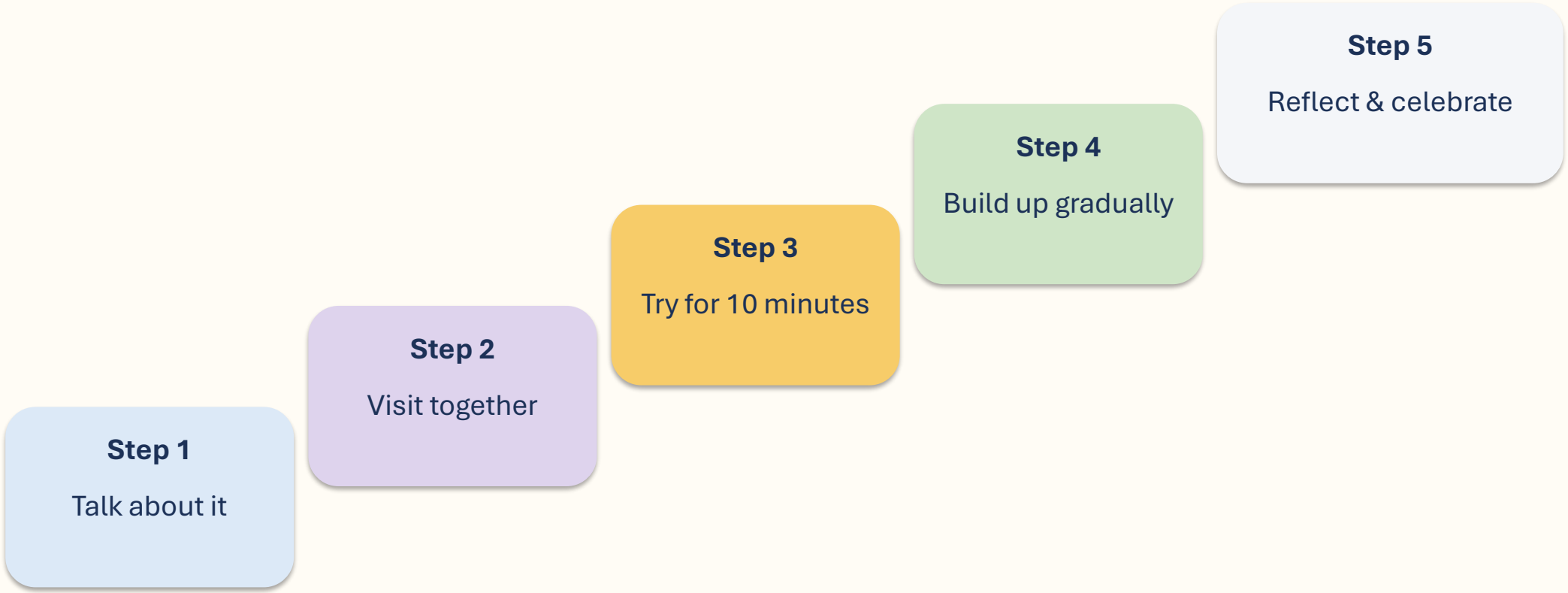
2. Breathe slowly together — try in for 3, out for 4.

3. Ground in the present: name 5 things you can see.

4. Offer a simple choice: sit together, get water, or take a short break.

5. Talk through solutions once the feeling has settled.

Build confidence a little at a time



Agree the steps with your child. Make them small enough to feel possible.

Helpful habits at home

- Predictable routines and warning before changes
- Enough sleep, regular meals, water and movement
- Time to play, connect and do things they enjoy
- A worry box, drawing, journalling or a “worry time”
- Adults modelling calm coping and asking for help

Working together with school

Share patterns: when does it happen, and what helps?

Look for triggers such as friendship worries, noise, transitions or learning demands.

Agree consistent language and a simple plan.

Ask to speak to the class teacher or SENCO.

Review what is helping — support may need to change.

When might extra help be needed?

Worries are persistent, intense or getting worse.

Sleep, eating, friendships, family life or school are affected.

Your child regularly avoids activities or cannot attend school.

Physical complaints keep recurring or you are concerned.

You feel stuck, or your child asks for more help.

Where to find support

School: class teacher or SENCO

GP: discuss persistent or impairing anxiety

NHS advice: nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/

YoungMinds Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

YoungMinds advice: youngminds.org.uk/parent/anxiety/

One small thing to try this week

- Notice one sign your child may be worried.
- Listen and name the feeling without judgement.
- Choose one small, realistic support strategy together.
- Review: what helped, even a little?

Notice • Listen • Plan • Practise

Sources & further reading

- NHS — Anxiety in children: nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-in-children/
- NHS — Anxiety disorders in children: nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-disorders-in-children/
- YoungMinds — Supporting a child with anxiety: youngminds.org.uk/parent/anxiety/
- Anna Freud — Supporting children and young people with anxiety: annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/supporting-treatments/supporting-children-and-young-people-with-anxiety/
- General information only; not a diagnosis or a substitute for professional advice.