

Parental worry, anxiety and stress

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require advice, information or wish to make a referral please visit: <https://childbraininjurytrust.org.uk/how-we-help/advice-information-referrals/>

Worry, anxiety and stress

We mentioned in the Factsheet about “Looking after yourself” that it is important for you, your child and indeed all the family to care for yourself. This section looks briefly at being worried or anxious, whether this is a normal feeling or whether it would be useful to get some help.

What is it?

Anxiety occurs when things or events are unpredictable, or when we do not feel in control about what is going on around us. This may lead to feeling fearful and worried, sometimes about something in particular and sometimes about seemingly ‘everything’ so that we feel constantly worried and anxious.



Is it a Natural Reaction?

At some point in our lives we will all have been worried and anxious about something. To an extent, some worry and anxiety can be thought of as both natural and useful, for instance when we face a challenge, such as going for an interview, sitting an exam or dealing with something unpleasant. Some anxiety can prompt us to look at things from another point of view, consider other ways of solving problems or encourage us to do things differently.

What does it feel like?

Too much worry can lead to stress so that there is an endless feeling of being anxious about something in particular or perhaps nothing specific. It is occasionally linked to being depressed. See our Factsheet on **Feeling, Low, Sad or Depressed**.

Anxiety can show itself in having a specific fear or phobia. People have phobias about all sorts of things, but for those who have a child who has suffered trauma such as an acute brain injury, it could lead to specific worries about illness and separation from your child, being unable to get into a car, or not walking by where the accident occurred or an intense fear of going into any hospital. If you experience anxiety that is specifically about the accident and you have flashbacks (i.e. repeated vivid memories about the traumatic event where you feel like you are re-experiencing it, as if it were happening all over again).

Sometimes anxiety can lead to panicky feelings like a pounding heart, feelings of choking, difficulty breathing and a fear of dying.

Other **physical symptoms** associated with anxiety include feeling faint and unsteady, feeling hot and sweating, having a dry mouth, muscle tension and pain, or problems with digestion, finding it difficult to relax and feeling tired but finding it difficult to fall asleep. It is easy to think that there is something

physically wrong; although these feelings might be symptoms of some illness, it may also be just a way of letting you know that you are very stressed.

When you are anxious, you may also experience strong **emotions** like feeling irritable and angry, and scared, fearful and nervous.

Experiencing a lot of worry and anxiety can also affect your **thinking skills**. For example, it might be harder to sort things out in an effective and organised way, it might be harder to plan your day and prioritise and think what to do next. It can also effect concentration.

What can I do about it?

Going to your doctor is helpful, as it is important to make sure that you do not have some physical illness, but there are also things that can help you with relieving anxiety. Talking to a friend or a family member may be helpful and there are websites and self-help books which are also useful. We have listed a few web-sites below which you might like to explore.

Some useful addresses for further information

Royal College of Psychiatrists: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice>

Mind:www.mind.org.uk

NHS Website:www.nhs.uk

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The Child Brain Injury Trust relies on grants and donations to enable us to continue our work supporting families affected by childhood acquired brain injury.

Please help us to continue our work by making a donation today – [CLICK HERE](#) to make a one off donation or set up a monthly gift.

Thank you – your donation does make a difference.



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