

# Anxiety? No Fear!

Uffculme School Newsletter March 2018

**“I have anxiety” is a phrase that we hear at school more and more often.**

**But anxiety is not all bad. In fact it helps to keep us safe.** If we did not experience any anxiety then we might not do things to protect ourselves. For example, if you did not feel a bit anxious about standing at the edge of a cliff then you might not be careful and end up falling off!

Anxiety is our brain’s way of telling us to be cautious. Our brain senses danger and gets our body ready to react and keep us safe. This reaction is known as our ‘threat system’ or the **‘flight or fight’** response. Our body is getting ready to ‘fight’ the danger, or to run away from it - this is the ‘flight’ bit. When our threat system is triggered we might feel our heart pounding, butterflies in our tummy or feeling a bit sick or dizzy. We might feel breathless or have pins and needles. We might feel hot or cold, sweaty or clammy, a bit shaky or feel the need to use the loo. All these physical reactions are perfectly normal and are part of getting our body ready to deal with the ‘danger’. These physical reactions can feel incredibly unpleasant and be really frightening, but it is important to understand that they are not dangerous.

Interestingly, these are the same physical feelings that some people get when they are about to go on a roller coaster, but the feelings are not so frightening as the brain is interpreting these reactions as **excitement** rather than **fear**.

The problem with anxiety is when this ‘fight or flight’ reaction is triggered when it is not needed, or when the symptoms are so overwhelming that they prevent us from doing the things we want, or need, to do. It is a bit like a smoke alarm. When the alarm senses smoke it sets off an alarm. This alerts you to possible danger and you can take action to keep yourself safe. But if the alarm keeps being triggered accidentally, when there is no smoke or danger, then it is really unhelpful (and very unpleasant!)

The good news is that you can learn to manage the unhelpful anxious feelings and control the fear. Next month we will look in more detail about what you can do to help yourself.



In the meantime, if you want to explore this a bit more on your own then take a look at the **MindShift™ app**. This is a free app designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.



Uffculme School Student Welfare Services  
Looking out for our students