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Presentation script

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[Recap: Meeting with Acklima Begum \(2418871\) 13 June](#)

Hello, my name is Acklima. And today I will be talking about anxiety in early years, according to Penninx et al. (2021) anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues. Often starting in childhood and involve strong feelings of fear or worry that can affect daily life.

Waylon Sylvester and Ruby 2017 highlights anxiety effects 10 to 20% of children in the early years. Additionally, Mattila et al. (2022), cited in Mingins et al. (2020), states that an estimated 40% of children with autism meet.

Threshold for an anxiety diagnosis, while Vasa et al. (2020) reports anxiety can present in autistic children in the early years, with figures reaching up to 62%. However, Gupta and Gupta (2023) highlights, anxiety symptoms can be misinterpreted.

As part of a child's autism, which delays or prevents access to the right support. Additionally, the World Health Organisation (2023) state that many children do not receive the support they need. It is important that we understand what anxiety is. How it presents in early childhood and how it connects to the wider aspects of children's lives, including health, well-being and lifestyles.

So what is anxiety? The World Health Organisation (2023) states that anxiety disorders are more than just feeling anxious from time to time, they involve constant fear or worries that becomes difficult to manage and starts to affect daily life. Mishra and Varma (2023) describe anxiety as uncontrollable worry that disrupts normal routine, often leading to problems with sleep, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. This shows that anxiety can affect both emotional and physical well-being, which may impact children's ability to engage in daily learning and social experiences.

Strohle, Gensichen, and Domschke (2018) outlined several types of anxiety commonly seen in children. One of the most recognised is generalised anxiety disorder, where children experience ongoing worry about everyday situation. This can make it hard for them to concentrate or relax even when there's no obvious cause for concern. For example, a child in my setting frequently asked repetitive questions about upcoming activities needing constant reassurance. This ongoing worry affects the ability to settle into free play or focus during.

Up to tasks.

Strohle, Gensichen, and Domschke (2018) Add that another common form is separation anxiety, which involves a strong and ongoing fear of being apart from someone they are attached to. According to Bowlby (1960), cited in Diamond and Keefe (2024), separation anxiety is a natural part of forming bonds and occurs in both secure and insecure attachments. For example, a baby might cry uncontrollably cling.

Tightly to their parents and refused to go into care settings, which may be considered normal. However, Sammallahti, Serdarevic, and Tiemeier (2023) add that babies who cry excessively for prolonged periods.

Are more likely to develop emotional and behavioural issues later, so early intervention is important.

Social anxiety is another form highlighted by by Strohle, Gensichen, and Domschke (2018), characterised by the fear of judgement from others which can cause symptoms like nausea and trembling. However, according to Alomari et al. (2022), Social anxiety often goes unnoticed as IT symptoms can resemble shyness. While some form of anxiety expect is expected in early childhood, Bhatia and Goyal (2018) emphasise that it becomes a concern when the reactions are persistent extreme. Or out of proportion to the actual situation. However, Bufferd, Olino, and Dougherty (2021) highlight that children's anxiety, like behaviours overlap with typical development. This suggests the need to assess anxiety behaviours in line with developmental norms to avoid misdiagnosis.

This ensures practitioners follow legislations as Hallworth (2022) points out that the send code of practise 2015 emphasises the need to identify the reasons behind challenging behaviours.

So how does anxiety link to health? According to Strohle, Gensichen, and Domschke (2018), anxiety can affect physical health. Studies have found that individuals with high anxiety levels have a greater risks of developing heart problems due to increased stress activity in the brain.

Additionally, Battaglia et al. (2017) found that persistent separation anxiety in the early years is linked to higher rates of physical health concerns such as asthma and headaches later in childhood. This suggests that unmanaged anxiety can have a long term physical health implication.

Early interventions, however, can help reduce these risks Anticich et al. (2012)

emphasises the importance of early years as a key time to address anxiety. For example, when non verbal children show signs of physical discomfort and emotional dysregulation, we collaborate.

With parents to explore this further, which leads to early referral and support, this links to Article 24 of the UNCRC, as highlighted by UNICEF (2022), which states that children have the right to the best possible health Strohle, Gensichen, and Domschke (2018) state that cognitive behavioural therapy is the most recommended treatment for all types of anxiety. This process includes supervised exposure to reduce anxiety over time.

According to Schunk and DiBenedetto (2023), Bandura's social learning theory suggests that children learn by observing others. This can be linked to the cognitive behavioural therapy approach. For example, children can learn how to manage their anxiety by observing calm and regulated behaviours.

Modelled by adults during exposure, however, Khaleeq, Malik, and Harpwood (2025) that Khaleeq, Malik, and Harpwood (2025) highlight that adapted cognitive behavioural therapy is currently the most effective intervention for anxiety in children. This supports the Equality Act 2010, as highlighted by GOV.UK (2015), which requires reasonable adaptation to ensure children with additional needs have access to effective support.

So moving on to how anxiety relates to well-being.

Research suggests that children's mental well-being is closely linked to anxiety levels. Xi (2020) states that prolonged or severe anxiety negatively impacts overall well-being. Additionally, Howe-Davies et al. (2022) state that childhood anxiety is associated with low.

Well-being poor social interaction and low academic performance. This is because, according to Mishra and Varma (2023) anxiety can affect daily life, causing emotional distress and difficulty with focus, attention and processing information.

This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as noted in Montag et al (2020), which emphasises that children's need emotional safety before they can build relationships or access learning which requires focus and attention.

In practise, I support children to access learning because of high level of anxiety by creating a morning check in routine, ensuring basic needs are met, such as toileting and breakfast and familiar adults are always available to support the emotional

safety.

Furthermore, according to Wills et al. (2021) young children who struggle to manage parts of their identity in a mixed society can experience anxiety and reduced confidence. For example, a child who feels pressure to act differently with their family and peers may experience emotional distress, which over time can affect their well-being and self-esteem. Bhatia and Goyal (2018) add that external pressures such as high expectation or parental anxiety can also contribute to the rising mental health concerns in young children.

This suggests that both internal and external factors influence anxiety. This also links to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, as highlighted by Crawford (2020), where Microsystems, such as parental influence and wider macro system, such as cultural expectation can influence a child. However, Howe-Davies et al. (2022) emphasises that when children are supported through effective therapies combined with emotional regulation strategies, they show better emotional outcomes.

For example, in earlier setting when a child show signs of anxiety, familiar staff provide predictable routines, use visual timetables and emotional support, and offer access to safe spaces should the child need a break. Additionally, organisations like MIND (2025) offer information and guidance. As practitioners, we can use this information to inform our practise. Furthermore, in my setting we work closely with the child and Adult Adolescent Mental Health services which, according to NHS (2023), assess children and offer tailored strategies to support children with anxiety.

So finally moving on to how anxiety relates to lifestyle.

Lifestyle factors also play a key role in both development and management of anxiety. Mishra and Varma (2023) emphasise that lifestyle changes like introducing relaxation techniques can help children manage symptoms alongside therapy.

Additionally, Wu et al. (2025) found that regular outdoor activities in early years is linked to lower anxiety level. This suggests the importance of incorporating outdoor play into early years routine. For example, in practise we have implemented daily outdoor sessions where children engage in free play, which has supported emotional regulation. This highlights how environmental and daily routine choices such as time spent outside can shape children's mental health.

It also aligns with the Froebelian approach, as Watts (2021) highlights that children's well-being is closely connected to the natural environment. However, Xi (2020) notes

that the fast-paced of modern day life and increased social pressures are driving up anxiety globally. Children may not be immune to these pressures and their daily routines and busy busy schedules may contribute to this rise. For example, in one case a child had a back-to-back schedule of targeted interventions in the morning. Which then resulted in heightened anxiety, behaviours and emotional outbursts in the afternoon.

According to Firth et al. (2020), factors such as Diet and nutrition can increase the chances of anxiety. However, Mahmood et al. (2021) argues that children's habits are shaped by their parents dietary behaviours.

This highlights the importance of working closely with families to encourage healthy eating. In practise, we encourage parents to send in healthy lunches and snacks where needed. We also signpost families to healthy eating workshops or support services.

So in summary, anxiety in early years can affect health well-being and also be influenced by lifestyles, especially if left unsupported. Recognising how it presents and responding early is important.

With the right support, including emotional regulation, strategies and a cognitive behavioural therapy approach, children can manage their anxiety systems symptoms better. As practitioners, we must understand the underlying reasons behind the children's behaviour to create environments that reduce anxiety and help them feel safe. For example, in my setting, we use a child centred approach combining effective interventions, daily outdoor time and collaboration with families and profession professionals to reduce anxiety and promote emotional safety.

And that's the end of my presentation. Thank you.

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