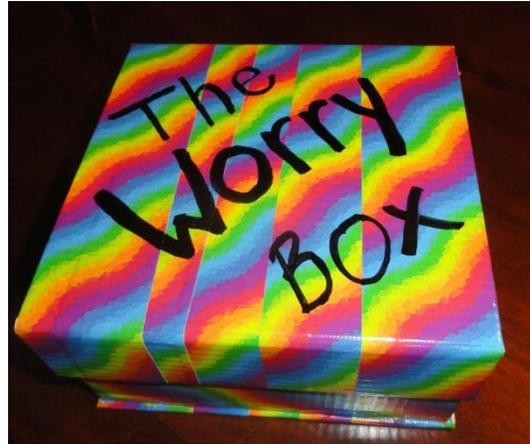


Making a Worry or Feelings Box

Encourage the child to notice what things make them worried or a gives them a 'big' feeling. Talking it through can help but the child can also use a worry or feelings box. This is where the child can write down or draw the worry or feeling and post it into a box so it is contained. Any box will do, you can put a slit in the lid to post paper or lift the lid to post paper. Get your child to decorate the box with wrapping paper, stickers or anything that takes their fancy!



Introduce the idea of the box and help the child choose a safe place to put it (not in their room as this should be their safe space).

They can post their worries/feelings every day if it helps, or leave the worries in there and take them out after a week to see if they were worth worrying about (if not they can be torn up). Discuss what would be helpful for your child.



Alternatively, designate a specific 'Worry/feelings time' for around 10 or 20 minutes in the evening (but not when the child is in bed), so worries/big feelings can be saved up for that time. This will give the message that the feelings are not dangerous and can be contained.



When discussing the worries/feelings be careful not to jump in with problem solving. Name the feeling for the child "that seems really scary", "maybe you are feeling angry about that", "I can see how that has made you really sad", "you seem so proud and happy with yourself about that". Spend some time 'being with' the feeling.

In the Disney movie 'Inside Out', sadness comforts Bing Bong is a lovely example of being with. You can watch this clip on YouTube if you search for the underlined phrase above.



You can try to help your child put their worries into perspective by re-labelling them according to who needs to worry about them. For example worries about finances might be re-labelled as the 'parents worries'. See the book 'The Huge Bag of Worries' by Virginia Ironside for a good example of this.

You could help the child to measure how worried they are on a scale of 1-10 and notice this at different times, to see how it gets better or worse



Notice what things help them relax or feel better and work with your child to find strategies when they are anxious, they will often know best what works for them.

Show them how to think positively. Name their 'worst case scenarios' and think with them how to sort out the situation if it happens - 'I'm worried that we'll miss the bus' 'What do you think we could do if that happens?' 'We could get the next bus'

"After her grandma died my daughter was really scared that me and her mum were going to die too. We made a worry box with her and posting the worries in it every evening really seemed to help her."

It is also nice to add happy things to talk about at the end of worry time, maybe in a separate happy box or on a different coloured piece of paper.

Worry Monsters/Journals

Working together with your child to create a worry box is a really good way of starting to open up communication about your child's worries.



If you are not feeling creative, you might like to consider a worry monster/eater, which works on the same principles.



For older children you could try a worry journal.



Help them choose and decorate a journal and find a safe place for it as above. Get them to write down the top three stresses or worries that day, followed by three positives. They can do this independently or with your help.

