

Language of Safety consistent phrases for helping to calm children who feel anxious & worried

These phrases could be useful if you're supporting a child or young person who is feeling anxious. The most effective responses need to feel sincere so feel free to use your own words along these lines. (Please remember to put the word 'feeling' before any words that describe a feeling (Ownership & Empowerment) and to use a sincere and calming voice (Clarity).

Feeling Safer

Phrases that reassure a child they are physically and emotionally safe can be deeply reassuring, such as:

- ✓ I can stay with you.
- ✓ I think you're going to be okay.
- ✓ I'm here for you.

Early Warning Signs

Using phrases that acknowledge the early warning signs associated with feelings of panic and anxiety and remind them of the science behind why they feel how they do right now and that this feeling will pass can feel reassuring.

Phrases like:

- ☺ Your body's early warning signs are doing their job and letting you know you're feeling anxious.
- ☺ This feeling will pass.
- ☺ Let's take a minute and breath slowly together to see if you feel just slightly better.
- ☺ You're body won't feel like this forever.
- ☺ I think you can get through this / I can remember a time you got through this before.

Validation

It is really important not to dismiss or minimise a child's feelings; if they feel anxious or panicked, that's a real feeling even if we don't understand what's behind this feeling. Acknowledging and validating how a child feels without trying to explain, dismiss, minimise or make it better enables the child's voice to be heard.

Phrases like:

- 👐 That sounds really tricky for you right now.
- 👐 I feel sorry that you're feeling anxious about
- 👐 It looks like is really worrying you. I'm here if you'd like to talk about it or perhaps we could draw or write about it?
- 👐 I can see something is really worrying you. How about I sit with you until you feel calmer?
- 👐 That sounds really worrying for you, do you want to talk about it?
- 👐 I can see you're feeling anxious, how could I help?
- 👐 It's not silly to feel like this.

Books provide an opportunity to use the PB strategy of One-Step Removed to talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful or small. Virginia Ironside's, The Huge Bag of Worries, Ruby's Worry by Tom Percival, The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas and Hey Sigmund's, Hey Warrior come well-recommended 😊

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