


# Supporting young people who live with anxiety

Children and young people of any age can struggle with ongoing issues related to depression and anxiety.

Depression and/or anxiety can be the result of prolonged stress and/or difficult life experiences. This, in turn, impacts the neuro-chemical balance in the brain. Once this balance is disturbed, it can be hard for a person to control their feelings of anxiety and/or depression without medical or therapeutic help.

## Tips for supporting young people with anxiety and/or depression

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1. Appreciate that attending and/or engaging in Sunday services, Sunday school, youth group or Bible study can be incredibly daunting for a person living with anxiety. Let them know that you recognise that church involvement is difficult for them and offer them understanding and patience.
  2. Avoid putting them on the spot to answer questions or pushing them to go first in an activity. Anxious youth need to see their friends have a go first before they are willing to attempt something.
  3. If a young person says they **can't** do something, don't 'demand' they do it or repeatedly ask them to try.
  4. If a young person with a recognised anxiety condition asks to take a break from an activity, wishes to return to their parents or leave an event early - assist them in doing so. This will help them to trust you on future occasions.
  5. Encourage anxious youth to do things that help them to feel calm. This might be drawing, playing with a fiddle toy or standing up and moving around.

## How can you help?

1. Pray that the young person will see themselves as God sees them. Created by God, to do His good work (Eph 2:10)
2. Listen well. Understanding that challenges that may seem small to us, are huge for someone who is overwhelmed by life.
3. Provide 'advice' cautiously. We are not mental health professionals.
4. Provide scripture that the young people can hold onto in their dark moments.

