



Using a worry box

What is a worry box?

Children and teens can struggle with stress, worry and anxieties which can mean they struggle to concentrate on academic tasks or they play out their worries in other ways e.g. withdrawing, aggression towards others, silliness.

Children sometimes need help to make sense of these big feelings. A worry box provides a safe place for children to put their worries so that they can focus their attention on other things. The worry box takes care of the worries until there is time to talk about them or until they are no longer something to worry about.

Starting to use the worry box

- Agree a time that you will use the worry box together – same time every day/week.
- At that time your child can write or draw their worries on the worry slip.
- Fold up their worry/s and put them in the box. Talk about them then if you have time or set a time for later.
- Focus on a positive after worry box time e.g. "what's your favourite thing that happened this week?".
- Each day check the box and check in with your child about their worries.
- Remind them that they can put a worry in the box at any time.

Explaining the worry box

- Tell your child that we all have worries but sometimes our heads get blocked up with them and it stops us being able to think about other things.
- Explain that the worry box is a specific box that looks after the worries for us so that we can focus on other things.
- There is no worry too big or small for the worry box and the worries can stay in there for as long or short a time as we want.
- The box provides a safe place to keep the worry until we can speak to an adult about it.
- If we ever want to talk about a worry in the box they can tell us about it and we can chat with them.
- If a worry is finished we can rip it up and put it in the bin.

How do I make one?

- A box e.g. shoe box, tuppawear or jar with a lid or posting hole to house the worries.
- Things to decorate the box with.
- Paper and pens to write or draw down the worries – you can use the worry slips provided here.
- Label the box – the worry box.
- Find a safe place to keep the box – preferably away from the bedroom.

Why have a worry box?

- They give a physical way of getting the worries out of the child's mind so that they can release them instead of feeling like they have to keep them bottled up in their head.
- They provide a predictable routine for sharing worries and sorting them out.
- They ensure "connection" with an adult to discuss worries – a worry shared is a worry halved. This helps our children to feel more safe.
- They provide a healthy way to "externalise" worries. Instead of simply telling children not to worry they acknowledge the fear and provide an age appropriate way to deal with it.