



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

We All Worry

When a worry thought stays with us and makes us unable to move on, we might feel anxious. When we have many anxious feelings that impact our daily to day life, we might have anxiety.

Anxiety Impacts

- our thinking (worry thoughts) 
- our body (racing heart, sweaty body and other physical signs) 
- our behaviour (restlessness, repeated questioning) **???**

Children with Intellectual Disabilities are often unable to report their thoughts or symptoms or notice that their behaviour is linked to their thoughts or symptoms.

Anxiety Responses

When getting anxious, we become increasingly distressed; at some point the distress peaks and then resolves. The “peak” could be small and the distress handled well. The peak could be moderate and distressing enough that the person is impacted by their symptoms or behaviour. A greater distress can result in the person becoming overwhelmed or agitated and unable to problem solve or process any new information.

Anxiety can result in responses of fight, flight or freeze; children often instinctively respond with ‘fight’ to escape from their anxious feelings. This may be harder to recognize as anxiety than ‘flight’ or ‘freeze’ behaviours.

Dealing with Anxiety

Anxiety is not logical, and learning to manage anxiety is a skill. Like all skills it takes patience and practice. First, a person needs to know when they are anxious before learning what to do about it. Children with Intellectual Disabilities need coaches to help learn and practice this skill.