

Youth Work Ireland



Be Well

Working with young people to
identify & address anxiety

Activity Pack

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The goal of this workshop is to introduce the issue of anxiety with young people. The workshop will explore signs and symptoms of anxiety, personal triggers and will support young people to identify personal coping skills to deal with anxiety using the “5-A-Day” approach.

Agenda

1. Introduction to the workshop
2. Group and Confidentiality Agreement
3. Anxiety Balloon Popcorn Game
4. Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety
5. My 5-A-Day Information Poster

Outcomes for Young People

- Young people understand what Anxiety is and develop self-awareness around the effects of anxiety.
- Young people can identify what happens to their body, emotions and behaviours when they feel anxious.
- Young people can identify and use their own coping skills for dealing with anxiety.
- Young people understand that they are not alone and are aware of the different supports available to them.

1. Introducing the Be Well Workshop (10mins)

The rationale for this workshop should be carefully explained to participants because it will influence their level of participation. When explaining the rationale for the workshop make the following clear:

- The aim of this activity is to introduce the issue of anxiety to young people.
- Anxiety is a normal human emotion that we all experience from time to time.
- Work/school, new experiences, social situations and interpersonal relationships can all be sources of happiness and joy, BUT may also be potential sources of stress.
- All of us from time to time can feel worried, anxious, nervous, sad, angry etc.. and that this can sometimes be overwhelming.
- This workshop will help them to identify when we have those types of feelings and learn new ways of coping and dealing with them.
- The workshop can provide participants with opportunities to learn new life skills

2 Group and Confidentiality Agreement (10mins)

Before starting it is important to establish group guidelines to ensure that the group functions cohesively and effectively, as this is a sensitive subject, it is important that what is shared is appropriate.

Materials:

- Flip chart paper /markers

Activity Steps:

- Ask participants to consider ideas/guidelines to ensure how this is possible – be clear that the workshop is a place to safely explore anxiety, identify anxieties and the opinions and feelings they have about it - not a place for telling personal stories.
- Write ideas and suggestions down on flipchart paper, when the task is completed ask all participants to sign.
- You may wish to include the following guidelines if they have not already been established by participants such as: Respect each other; only one person speaks; full participation so we can all learn from each other and everything discussed in the group is in strict confidence.



3. Anxiety Balloon Popcorn (25mins)

Aim

The aim of the activity is to let participants begin to explore anxiety by learning the different causes and ways of dealing with anxiety. The "5-A-Day" is introduced to young people as a way of coping with anxiety and building resilience.

Materials

- Different coloured balloons (this activity can also be done with paper)
- Markers & Pens
- The '5-A-Day' poster

Activity Steps

- Give everyone a balloon and a marker.
- Ask them to blow up their balloons.
- Ask them to write or draw on the balloon the issue they're most worried or anxious about.
- Lead a discussion in which the "5-A-Day" and practical steps that young people can take are identified as ways of coping with anxiety and building resilience.

Note: Let participants know that others will see their balloons so they shouldn't write anything that they don't want others to see.

Popcorn!

- When they are done, lead the young people in a game of "Popcorn" this is a simple game in which the group works together to keep all the balloons off the floor, by bouncing them with their heads, hands and feet. It is basically a game of "keepy upppy" with lots of balloons, rather than one football (if using paper ask the young people to crumple up their sheet into a ball and have a ball fight).
- After a few minutes, ask each participant to pick up the balloon closest to them and look at what is written.
- Ask them to go to one corner of the room if their balloon has to do with **school**, another if it's about **relationships**, another if it's about **family**, and the last corner if it has to do with any other source of anxiety

Note: What are the things that fit into the other category? To preserve some confidentiality, ask that young people only mention the general topic of the response, rather than read the response out loud.

Take some time to discuss the following questions as a larger group:

- What suggestions could you give to the person whose balloon you received? (If the person who wrote the balloon chooses to talk at this point that is fine, but they do not have to identify themselves if they wish to stay anonymous).
- Do you think young people feeling worried or anxious is a big issue in Ireland and why?
- How do you deal with being worried or anxious in your own life?
- Have you seen your friend being worried/anxious? How do you help them?

Introducing the 5-A-Day

- Show the young people the "5-A-Day" poster and ask the group if they are familiar with it.
- Explain that the a '5-A-Day' is a programme for mental health and resilience that has been developed to capture the top five things young people can do to develop their resilience, this includes their ability to cope with stress and anxiety.
- Ask the young people if they have found any of the "5-A-Day" things to be helpful to cope with stress or anxiety in the past.

Closing Round

Ask each participant to state one thing that they will do to use the "5-A-Day" in their own lives.



4. Anxiety Signs & Symptoms (20 mins)

Aim

The aim of this activity is to help participants to understand their body clues when feeling anxious and identify how this impacts on their emotions and behaviours.

Materials

- Body Outline Handout
- Signs and Symptoms Handout
- Pens & Stapler

Activity Steps

- Give everyone a body outline and signs & symptoms handout.
- Ask the young people to think about how their body might warn them that they are feeling anxious.
- Ask them to use a pen or pencil to circle the part of their body they notice, or symptom that they experience when they feel anxious.
- Ask them to write on their handout how they feel emotionally when their body feels anxious.
- When they are finished, give them another body outline handout and ask them to place it over the first one and stick them together.
- Now explain to the group that nobody else can see how we feel when we are anxious.
- Ask the group to write on their handouts the things (feelings, behaviour, moods etc..) that family/friends/teachers would see when we are feeling anxious.

Note: You can help participants with some examples such as withdrawn, quiet, shout etc

Ask participants to return to the group and take discuss the following questions as a larger group:

- How does your body warn you when you are feeling anxious?
- How does anxiety impact on how you feel?
- How does anxiety impact on your behaviour?

Closing Round

Ask each participant to state one thing that they have learned or stood out for them from doing this exercise.

5. Coping with Anxiety with my 5-A-Day Poster (25 mins)

Aim:

To make a poster as a group to identify and share awareness of anxiety, positive ways of coping with anxiety and to learn about local and national supports.

Materials:

- A large piece of paper, cardboard or other material suitable for making a poster.
- '5-A-Day' poster
- Support and useful websites listing (it is important for the youth worker/volunteer to add in local services).
- Pens and Paper and other arts materials.

Activity

- Explain to the young people that the information poster should demonstrate their learning about, and how to cope with anxiety.
- Explain to the young people that the poster would be helpful if it included the following headings - Causes of Anxiety - Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety - Help for Anxiety
- Lead a discussion of the 5-A-Day based on practical examples of how young people can include these in their life that they might include in the poster.
- Provide the support and useful websites listing (it is important for the youth worker/volunteer to add in local services that might be included in the poster).
- Provide guidance and support as the young people create their poster.