

No 2: Anxiety management for over-16s

A stressful period of transition. Exams are more demanding and have greater impact on your future. Friendships and groups change and may even break up. Big decisions about future plans must be made and there are new roles and responsibilities emerging.



What to look out for

- Feeling stressed by the idea that you can never keep up with all that is going on.
- Saying yes to experiences that you do not enjoy, simply to avoid missing out.
- Feeling that you are constantly waiting for something better to come along.
- Constantly checking social media for updates, even while engaging in other enjoyable activities.
- Constantly comparing your life to others' to see if yours measures up – and concluding that it doesn't.
- Fretting about your perceived inadequacies – physical, intellectual, social – and assuming everyone else is more attractive, clever, popular and sorted.

Things you can do

- Reflect on past enjoyable experiences that you have had. This can help shift the focus from what you *might* be missing out on.
- Identify what is meaningful to you and initiate plans for doing these things. Consider what obstacles have stopped you, and how you can overcome them.
- Remind yourself that what most people share on social media is a skewed and selective version of their actual life experiences.



Anxiety management for over-16s, contd

What to look out for

- **Feeling disconnected:** Excessive screen time disrupts and influences our connection with the real people in front of us, without our really noticing.
- **Difficulty engaging in face to face conversation:** If all your conversations are carried out online you might be missing out on important cues, like tone of voice or facial expression. This can lead to a poorer quality of communication.
- **Misunderstanding others or feeling misunderstood:** How often do written messages get misinterpreted? You mean something but the other person reads something completely different, and it becomes more and more difficult to sort out what you do mean – so relationships drift away and interpersonal skills cannot develop.

Things you can do

- **Create quality time:** Create regular in-person time with friends and leave phones at home. Ask about what is going on in someone's life, what is good, what isn't good?
- **Unplug time:** With the co-operation of your family, establish specific 'no technology' times, such as mealtimes and bedtime. Use this as an opportunity to start personal conversations with each other, instead of everyone living in their own little bubble.
- **Listen:** Pay attention and check 'so what you're saying is...?' so there are no misunderstandings.
- **Acknowledge:** Praise or compliment someone on their achievements, then follow up on something they told you before to demonstrate sincere interest.
- **Share:** being open about how you feel creates trust and allows for a more meaningful exchange of words.

Useful websites:

youngminds.org.uk

healthforteens.co.uk

YOUNGMINDS
The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing

