

MHST Coffee Break

I hope you've all had a wonderful October half-term break. As promised, here is the second edition of our MHST Coffee Break - this month, we're focussing on:













Anxiety

Anxiety can affect children of all ages, and it's completely natural for them to feel nervous about new experiences, challenges or uncertainties. As part of our commitment to your child's wellbeing, we're focussing on what anxiety looks like in children and ways we can support.

What is anxiety?

When we think of anxiety, we can commonly refer it to as a "mental illness" - the emotion of anxiety itself is not a mental illness, and is a natural response to stress or unfamiliar situations. In primary-aged children, anxiety can stem from various sources, whether that's academic performance, social interactions, or changes in their environment, such as having to be away from parents for a prolonged period of time. Even though anxiety is a natural response, it becomes a bigger worry if it's beginning to impact your child's daily life and stopping them from doing things they used to be doing. Anxiety can manifest in various ways, which can affect a child's emotions and/or behaviour. Children may not always have the words to express their feelings, but if you recognise the following in your child, it can be useful to prepare you for similar situations in the future:

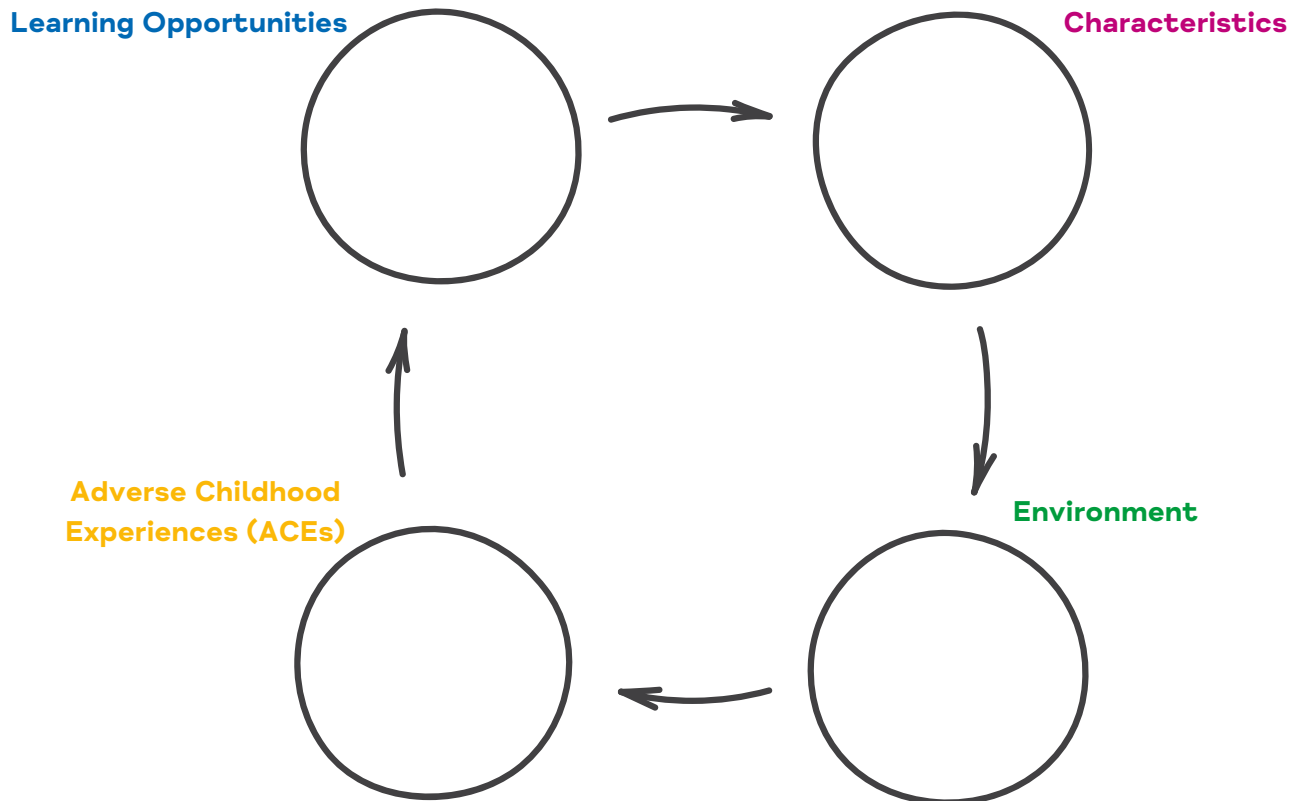
What to look out for:

- | Physical | Behavioural | Emotional | Sleep |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Complaints of stomach aches |  Becoming 'clingy' |  Frequent/excessive worry |  Difficulty falling asleep |
|  Panicked breathing/fast heart rate |  Avoiding certain situations |  Irritable |  Reluctance to sleep alone |
|  Shaking |  Becoming withdrawn |  Easily upset |  Frequent waking/nightmares |

Free Resource!



It's often felt that there is "one particular cause" for anxiety - in fact, there's many contributing factors towards anxiety, whether that's in children or adults! To help understand further, below is an activity for you to complete when thinking about your child and what could possibly be contributing to or maintaining their feelings of anxiety. You might fill all of the boxes in, or only a couple - there's no right or wrong, but it's a helpful visual to enhance our understanding. 😊



Characteristics - what makes your child who they are? Are they naturally sensitive, a worrier, easily scared?

Environment - anxiety is a natural response/emotion, we all have it. How children manage anxiety is strongly influenced by parents/caregivers. Are there any anxious adults in your child's life where anxious behaviours can be learned by example?

ACEs - has your child experienced any stressful events ?

Learning Opportunities - learning from others reactions, is your child encouraged to try new things regularly? Have adults close to your child tried to protect them from anxiety-provoking situations?

If you feel your child is displaying signs of anxiety at home, and you find yourself filling in one or more boxes above, please do come and speak to me and I will be more than happy to help. Just ask your child's school to point you in the right direction!

