

Phrases for calming anxious children

These phrases can be useful if you're supporting a child or young person who is feeling anxious. The best words are your own, so use these just as a starting point.

SAFETY

Using phrases that reassure a child that they are physically and emotionally can be deeply reassuring. Phrases like:

- I'm here I've got you
- It's okay, you're safe
- I'm going to stay with you
- You're going to be okay

PHYSIOLOGY

Using phrases that acknowledge the physiology of panic and anxiety, that remind them the biology behind why they feel how they do right now and that this feeling will not last indefinitely. Phrases like:

- Your body is responding in an anxious way
- This will pass
- Let's give it a minute and see if you feel just slightly better
- You're body can't feel like this forever
- You've got through this before, you can get through this again

VALIDATION

We need to be careful not to dismiss or minimise a child's concerned; if they feel anxious or panicked, that's a real feeling even if we don't understand or agree with the trigger for this feeling. Acknowledging and validating how a child feels without trying to explain or dismiss it can be very powerful. Phrases like:

- That must be really hard
- I'm sorry that X is making you feel anxious
- I can see that X is really worrying you, would you like to talk about / draw that?
- I can see X is really worrying you, I'm going to sit with you until you feel calmer and later we'll begin to unpick it
- That sounds really hard, do you want to talk about it?
- I can see you're very worried, how can I help you?
- It's not silly, if it's making you feel like this, it matters