

# Helping a young person break the cycle of anxiety

Here's a few supportive, confidence-building sentences you can use with a young person. These are designed to help validate feelings without reinforcing avoidance, encourage bravery & support gradual exposure.

1

## Validate the Feeling (but not the fear)

- "It's ok to feel nervous - That's a normal feeling"
- "I can see this feels really scary for you right now"
- "Your brain is sending an alarm, even though you are actually safe"



2

## Encourage Brave Action

- "Feeling worried doesn't mean you can't do it"
- "Let's be brave together and see what happens"
- "You don't have to feel 100% ready - you have to take one small step"



3

## Teaching Coping & Reframing Thinking

- "This is your worry talking, not the truth"
- "You've done hard things before, your brain just forgot"
- "Feelings aren't facts, they're signals that we can learn to understand"



4

## Reinforce Progress & Effort

- "Every time you face this, it gets a little easier"
- "I'm proud of you for trying, even if it felt hard"
- "You're training your brain to be braver, like a muscle getting stronger"



5

## Avoid Reassurance Traps - Replace With Confidence

- Instead of saying "I promise nothing bad will happen"
- Say "What ever happens, i know you can handle it & I'll help you through it"



CAMHS  
Child & Adolescent Mental  
Health Services



Emotional Wellbeing Team in Schools  
(EWTs)  
A programme of Support for Post Primary Schools



YOUTH WELLNESS WEB

These phrases can be used before, during or after a challenging moment. Over time, consistent calm messages like these can help young people break the anxiety-avoidance loop