Generalised Anxiety:

A Parent's Guide

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What is Generalised Anxiety?

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a common mental health condition that affects both adults and children. It is characterised by excessive worry, fear, or anxiety about various aspects of life, often without a specific trigger. Children with GAD may constantly worry about everyday things and events.
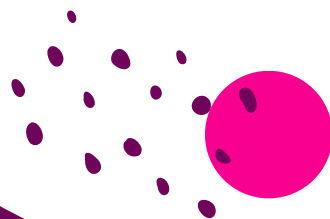
Checklist for Parents:

Characteristics of Generalised Anxiety in Children: Use the following checklist to identify potential signs of generalized anxiety in your child:

✓ Frequent, excessive worry about various aspects of life

✓ Restlessness or fidgeting

✓ Difficulty concentrating or making decisions

✓ Irritability or mood swings

✓ Muscle tension or complaints of physical discomfort

✓ Sleep disturbances

✓ Avoidance of situations that cause anxiety

✓ Seeking reassurance excessively

✓ Fear of making mistakes or being criticised

✓ Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches

How is Generalized Anxiety Diagnosed?

GAD is typically diagnosed by Mental Health Professionals, such as Psychologists or Psychiatrists. Diagnosis involves a thorough assessment of a child's emotional and behavioural symptoms, family history, and other relevant factors.

If You Suspect Your Child Has Generalised Anxiety, What Steps Can You Take?

1. Open Communication: Talk to your child openly and supportively about their feelings and concerns.

2. Consult a Professional: Seek help from a mental health professional experienced in child and adolescent mental health.

3. Keep a Journal: Document your child's symptoms, triggers, and changes in behaviour to help professionals assess their condition.

4. Create a Safe Environment: Ensure your child feels safe and loved at home.

5. Learn About Anxiety: Educate yourself about generalised anxiety to better understand your child's condition.

Next Steps to Support a Child with Generalised Anxiety:

Therapy: Consider therapy options like Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or play therapy.

Medication: In some cases, a Psychiatrist may recommend medication to manage severe anxiety.

School Involvement: Collaborate with Teachers and School Counsellors to provide appropriate support at school.

Family Support: Involve the entire family in the process to create a supportive environment.

Routine and Structure: Maintain a consistent daily routine to provide stability.
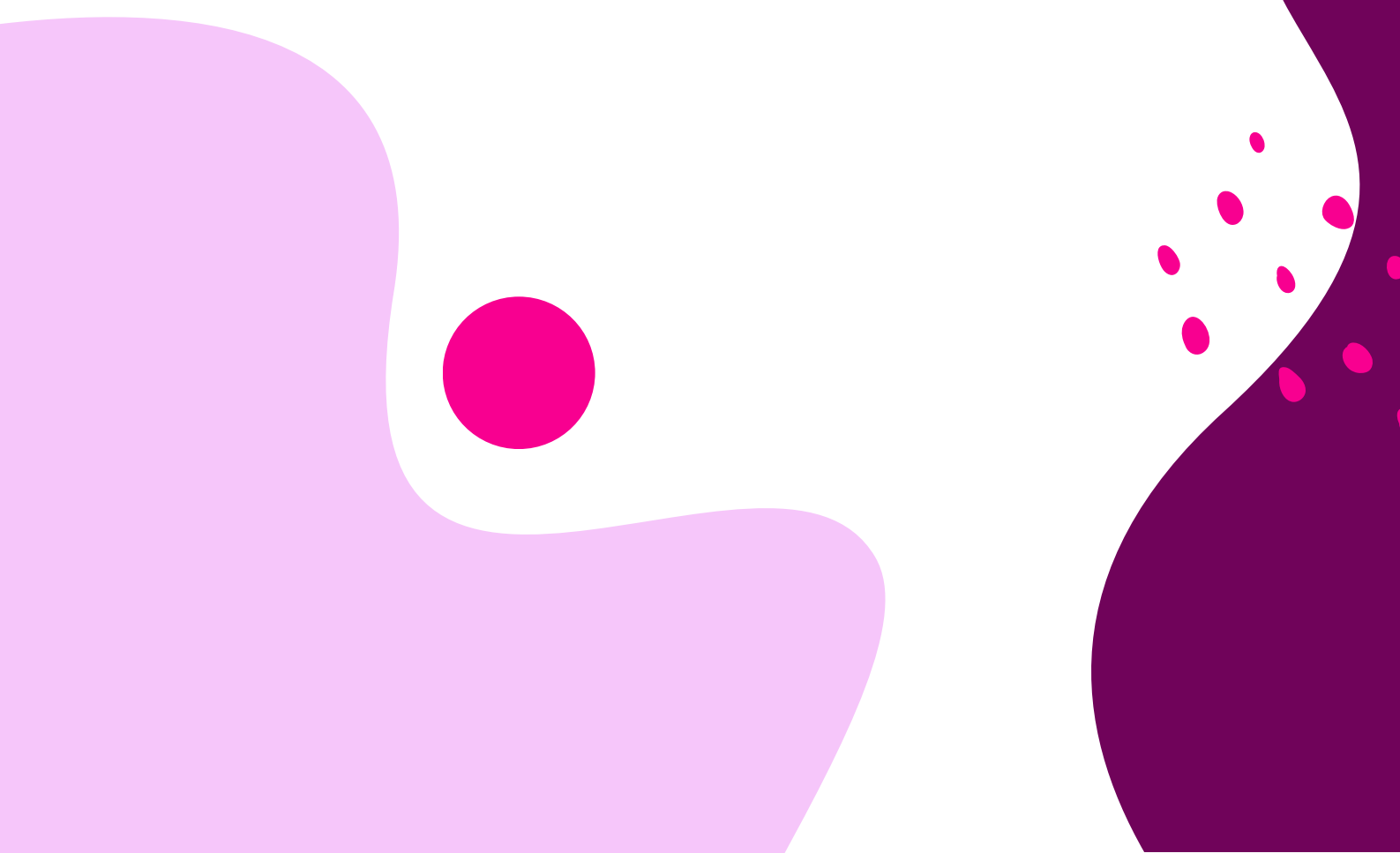
**Mindfulness and Relaxation:** Teach relaxation techniques and mindfulness to help manage anxiety.

Additional Strategies that May be Suggested to Help Children with Generalised Anxiety:

- Deep breathing exercises.
- Mindfulness meditation.
- Progressive muscle relaxation.
- Create a worry journal.
- Encourage physical activity.
- Ensure a balanced diet.
- Establish a consistent sleep schedule.
- Set realistic goals.
- Encourage expression through art or journaling.
- Avoid over-scheduling.
- Teach problem-solving skills.
- Promote positive self-talk.

- Provide a safe space for expression.

- Develop a relaxation kit with calming objects.

- Reward brave behaviours.

- Limit exposure to stressors.

- Foster social connections.

- Offer reassurance but avoid excessive reassurance-seeking.

- Encourage seeking help when needed.

Remember, every child is unique, and what works best may vary from one child to another. Seek professional guidance to develop a tailored plan for your child's needs. With your support, your child can learn to manage and cope with generalised anxiety. Please reach out to Inspire Allied Health and Education Group to find out how we can support your child and family.
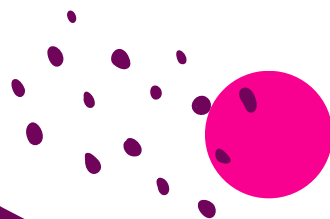
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