
Stop your child feeling sad, worried and anxious

Hello and welcome to your free ebook. I'm guessing you've downloaded this ebook because you're worried that your child is anxious, sad, angry, lacks confidence, or is just not happy. Parents tell me all the time that what you want the most for your child is that they are confident and happy: confident in making lots of friends and confident as a learner; happy in everything they do.

In addition you worry that **you're** not confident enough to help them with any homework they may bring home (who remembers how to do long division??) Let's face it, it was a long time ago when you went to school. And that you just have no idea what do when they don't want to go to school, become a fussy eater, don't want to play with friends, or have repetitive nightmares.

I'm Vicki Raven and I've been a primary school teacher for 30 years now so I've seen hundreds of children and parents start and leave primary school. I've written this free ebook because my mission is for all parents to feel confident about their children going through primary school, and onwards through senior school and life.



How do you feel when you think about your child?

You probably feel anxious about a great many things: Are they happy at school? Are they confident as a learner? Have they got lots of friends? Do they do what they're told? Are they going to be able to do the work? How much homework are they going to get? Are you going to be able to help them?

You're almost certainly worried about losing your close bond with your child as they get older and progress through school and want to be able to support them in a loving positive way. But are you worried about the best way to do that?

And, what to do if it all starts to go wrong?

A lot of pressure is heaped upon parents by schools; daily reading, weekly spellings and phonics, topic work, weekly maths and even the annual book character day. Being anxious and stressed about your child can potentially badly affect your relationship. Sometimes it can be long term and permanent and in future when the challenges of adolescence crop up your relationship is not strong enough to cope.

Some of the reasons are:

- Your child feels increasingly anxious
- You feel inadequate and anxious
- You start to take over in an attempt to help them (helicopter parenting)
- You push your child to do well, but it's not in a direction they choose
- It creates multiple arguments

I think it's a tragedy that parents feel so stressed about their children and that many kids hate and feel stressed by school and life. Growing and learning should be about enrichment and expansion. It can be challenging but should be enjoyable. We should all be able to feel that learning is a joy that is lifelong.





What I want for you

I want parents to feel confident and capable of supporting their children through the early years, including school, and not get stressed about how to do things like long division and synthetic phonics.

I want children to be confident, resilient and creative little people.

Through having an awareness of relaxation and mindfulness, starting in the early years, you can avoid the stresses of school for both of you.



Getting the foundations right really matters.

Why a lack of confidence is a problem for you and your child

Surely one of the aims for early childhood is to give children a positive experience that enables them to be confident, resilient and happy throughout the rest of their life? Well, maybe it is, but does that happen for all children?

Cast your mind back to your school days. Picture yourself as a 5 year old waving goodbye to your mum. Did you feel excited or sad? Now move on to age 11. Did you travel to school for the first time without an adult? And finally see yourself at 16 about to sit your first GCSE. Are you feeling confident?

Take a moment to check in with how you feel. Do you notice any of these feelings surfacing in other situations?

In any one of those situations it's ok and completely normal to feel a bit nervous but I see children, and parents, who are super anxious and that can get worse with every passing year. There's always something new and unknown to tackle. It's understandable and normal to be a little worried – that can be motivating. But some children (and adults) develop high

levels of anxiety and that is not ok because it alters the way our brain works. Can you remember everything falling out of your brain in an exam because you were so anxious?



Picture yourself going into a new job where you know you will have to learn new things. How do you feel?

You might feel a bit sick or anxious and try to avoid something that involves you taking any risks. If you ever felt humiliated or stupid at school the chances are you have carried that with you into adulthood.

If you couldn't do long division or dreaded reading out loud in the class you will probably already be dreading the time when your child has to be able to do these at school. And the problem is this rubs off onto your child.

Of course, no-one is immediately good at everything. People who appear to be geniuses get good at maximising what they're great at and minimising what they're less good at.

My son (who is now 24) was ideally suited to school. He could put his head down, get on with his work by himself and was very successful. One of things he wasn't so confident at was speaking on the phone. Mobile phones are perfect! You don't have to speak to anyone you don't want to – you text them. That was fine until he started work in an office. He had to take a big deep breath and just get on with answering the landline phone on his desk. And he was fine! He needed to separate his previous experiences and feelings from his current situation.

But if you experienced repeated failure at school this feeling may well return to you when you think about your own child at school, largely because you don't want your little one to experience the same feelings of anxiety and inadequacy.

When we learn anything new, school related or not, there is always a risk involved and to face risks you need to be courageous. But you become aware of what you don't know, you might have to ask a question (is it a stupid question?). You will have to try something you've never done before and you might fail. If you don't experience some degree of success, the next time you have to do the same thing the anxiety may be even worse.

This is when children opt out. Not trying is better than feeling a failure. There is no risk.

So, if your child is not confident enough to take a risk they may never learn anything new.

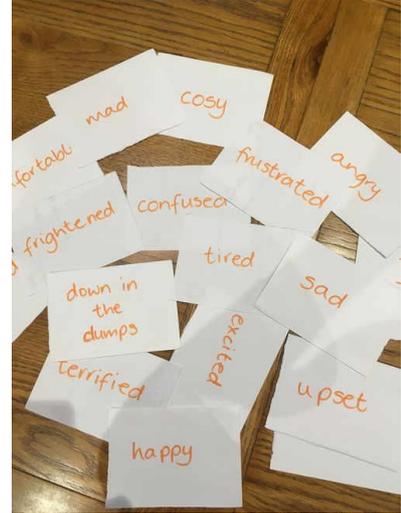
But don't worry. You and your child can be confident.



What you can do to help your child

Your child needs :

- Courage
- Resilience
- Strategies for staying calm
- An approach to life loaded with gratitude
- An awareness of their own, and others' needs and priorities



Most important at the primary stage are the non-academic skills children learn through this non-pressurised approach. They will be actively engaged in their life rather than being passive receivers. So they develop decision making, responsibility, collaboration, communication, imagination, resilience, curiosity, confidence... In our fast changing world these are more important, or at least equally as important, skills as academic knowledge.

We all think it's important for our children to be able to write their name and read a simple book when they start school. But there are sometimes more important emotional skills to learn, that are the building blocks you can be doing with them that will make all academic learning super easy when they are at school.



What not to do

Have you ever noticed that when you walk into some nurseries that they have beautiful displays? Let's say the children have all made butterflies. What do you notice about those butterflies?

When I was looking at nurseries for my eldest child I looked carefully at the work on the walls because I was looking for something in particular. Had the children done all the work themselves?

You might think that's a really odd question! Surely the children do the work themselves? I saw so many nurseries and preschools where all the butterflies looked pretty much identical. The basic shape was lovely and neat and the outlines for the wings and body were

drawn and cut beautifully neatly. They looked great but they looked like, and indeed were, adult work.

Of course the children had stuck on various bits and bobs but I wondered how much they had actually learned and how they felt. They had made choices about what to stick on and where to stick it but they had also learnt that adults draw and cut out butterflies better than them, even if that was subconscious.

Children who regularly do this kind of activity learn that they are passive receivers of education and that they do not make any decisions about what they can learn. They learn that for their work to be good an adult has to do a lot of it for them.

When we try to prepare preschool children in this way, for the fixed curriculum they will follow at school, we are telling them that this is the most important thing to learn. If they find it difficult they have already sensed failure.

We are not enabling them to be confident decision makers, or to be resilient when they fail, or to adapt as a task develops.

Most children love learning. It's exciting, interesting and challenging. But don't rush in and force them to start reciting times tables and complex synthetic phonics. There is plenty of time for that in the classroom.

Don't feel anxious that your child can't write their name or spell cat. If you push this on them they will start to resent learning or simply feel a failure. All children get there in the end, at different times. If you feel your child needs extra support you can always talk to their teacher, or one of us at Caterpillar Learners





So what do we do at Caterpillar Learners?

At Caterpillars we build the skills that make learning everything else easier.

Because we want life to be simple and easy for you there are a range of ways you can join us at Caterpillars and start making a difference immediately to your child.

1. We've set up a free private Facebook community for parents and carers where you can come to ask questions and receive support. We also post news about Caterpillars' services, interesting articles and useful tips for you. You can [join here](#) right now to start receiving free support!

2. Your child can come to a Caterpillars Class. We have a range of classes that run at different times of the year. You can see what's currently running [on our website](#). Classes range from Calm Caterpillars (relaxation & mindfulness), Caterpillar Storytellers, Maths games and Holiday art & craft workshops. Generally the children come on their own but you are always welcome to stay if your child would prefer.



3. Some children need a little bit more support with their school work and 1 to 1 tuition benefits them enormously. We offer a limited number of 1 to 1 sessions for children up to the age of 11 in maths and literacy. These are very much based on our philosophy and belief that happy children are happy learners and so we do not fill children with more of the same stuff that makes them anxious. Instead we have fun and build confidence.

4. Sometimes it's very difficult to work out what is going on that is upsetting or disturbing your child. In this case what works best is an individually tailored programme for your child. We will talk to you and your child about the problem and what you want and then decide what will work best to find a solution for your child. This may involve 1 to 1 sessions in person, or by Skype, sessions with you or with your family.



What happens in all Caterpillars Sessions?

We've designed all our sessions to allow your child to express talk how they feel, in their own way. This may be talking, writing or drawing for example



In our classes we often offer a creative task to the children that is focused on a theme such as gratitude, superheroes , growth, lavender.

We've looked at child psychology and learning styles, so we can adapt sessions to suit every child.

We usually finish every session with a visualisation section so that the children can lie down, relax and reset.

Having said that there's not a strict structure for our classes and sessions because we believe effective learning should be flexible and based on the needs of the children on the day.

However we make sure we always cover important features such as affirmations and relaxation.

All activities are planned and evaluated by a qualified and experienced teacher to ensure high quality consistent learning.

Each session is based on a theme or a story. The kids love it!



The Caterpillar Learning Method has 3 broad goals:

- To prepare children with all the essential learning skills that will enable them to be confident learners for the rest of their lives
- To equip children with strategies and techniques they can use for their own wellbeing
- To provide parents and carers with the skills and knowledge to be a confident supporter of their childrens' well being.



Join the Caterpillars Community today!

If you like the sound of Caterpillar Learners join us in the [Facebook Community](#) straight away to start benefitting from amazing support.

If you'd like to book Caterpillars Classes [click here](#) to go through to our bookings page.

If you have any questions at all [click here](#) to send Vicki a message.

I wish you and your children a truly joyful life!

Vicki x