

Anxiety in Young People

Full transcript · 12 video clips · generated 22 September 2026

About this transcript. This transcript was produced automatically from the video audio. It has not been checked by a person, so names, place names, te reo Māori and medical terms may be wrong in places. The video is the record. If something here reads oddly, please check it against the video.

Watch the series: listeningtofamilies.co.nz/anxiety/anxiety-in-young-people

IN THIS TRANSCRIPT

1. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray and Lawrence – setting the scene
2. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – Anxiety is normal, being proactive, compassion
3. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – Acceptance, journaling, making a commitment
4. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – keeping busy, importance of exercise
5. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – balance, making time, being comfortable
6. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – being grateful
7. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray – key messages, reflections
8. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence – parents journey, listening
9. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence – getting help, what not to do
10. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence – what parents can do
11. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence – have we caused this, strengths and vulnerabilities
12. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray and Lawrence – feeling safe, resources

1. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray and Lawrence – setting the scene

So I'm Fiona and I'm a psychologist at, well, I've been in CAPS services for a long time and I'm currently working in the inpatient unit, so I'm working in the chip teams for a long time. And I'm Amy, so I'm also a psychologist. I work with Fiona or we, but I'm in the outpatient team. So, yeah, we cross over in some of our work. So what are the patients, what are the ailments? Lots of anxiety, so today is topical, yeah, but all sorts, really. Yeah, I guess our specialisation as psychologists is working with young people, children and young people in families. But then it can be anything that can present.

So, as Amy said, anxiety is probably the most common presentation in young people. You're successful in what you do? Or do you actually get a good success rate? Yeah, obviously there's challenges along the way, but I do, I often say to kids when I'm meeting them that my job would be really horrible if we weren't seeing any success. So, because it's really hard often for kids and young people to feel like there's any hope of things being better. But yes, we do, like that's the part of the job that keeps us in it, or at least for me, I assume for you as well, Fiona. Is the seeing. Yeah, and seeing people move on, you know, and move out of the service, that's really, really good.

And I guess that's why I like to work with this age group and work with families, because it feels like you can make more meaningful, longer-term change. So the wave of anxiety, do you think that's going to get worse? I want to know if, you know, I think there's certainly, it's hard to, for people to put out what's going on for them when they're feeling anxious. And it's probably a little easier

nowadays than it was, you know, 30 years ago. So, and at the same time, I think our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives, our lives have gotten much more pressured.

There's, things happen, are expected to happen sort of immediately, and that you have to take on so many things at the same time. And, yeah, stress buckets get overloaded really quickly. And I think that's the thing with that, that being kind of easier to talk about or acknowledge mental health issues. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think that, I think mental health difficulties now, on the one hand, means that we see more, like we're aware, we're more aware of how many people are struggling, but it also does mean that there's more opportunity for help and to actually kind of engage and acknowledging it and doing something about it.

So, yeah, there's. And, and it's, there's some often quite a lot of particular contextual things like and if you think about Christ Church, you know, there's a lot of things that are happening. Yeah. Young people growing up in Christchurch over the last 20 years have had to deal with a number of big, if unexpected, really unusual events. And that primes us to be hyper-aroused in some way from a young age with earthquakes and COVID. And there's maybe even another little piece in that what I think with anxiety is often it's about really needing to feel in control because it feels so out of control.

And the world, actually, when things in the past, like at school, were much more structured and everybody was set and had to do things in a certain way, it actually helped to feel in control. But now we have a lot more certain choices and there's much more uncertainty. I'm just wondering if it actually might also be, it makes it difficult if you're anxious, because making decisions and making choices can get really hard. Yeah, let's try a new thought in that way.

2. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - Anxiety is normal, being proactive, compassion

because what are you um doing at the moment um i'm in second year at university at uc yeah yeah doing a bachelor of communications oh nice so it's sort of like marketing type stuff yeah yeah how's it going be involved in some of the this or yeah interface yeah i'd like to think i'm all right um yeah it's going all right it's a slow progress i kind of last year went to part time just because of the stuff that was happening yeah um and this this term i've gone back to this semester i've gone back to three papers not four so i'm not full-time completely yeah but i don't know it can be a bit of a workload yeah and then also hard to manage yeah anything else going on yeah so yeah it's like that was like one thing that stood out from reading what you'd written was that you're um obviously very proactive with kind of like thinking about things that you can do for yourself um yes yeah i'd say in the past few weeks it's in the past few months it's probably i've laid off it a bit which is probably not the best but yeah i'd like to think i take it into my own hands yeah i've read read books and stuff and um try and practice mindfulness and whatnot yeah um yeah and where did you was that from books um where was that from i feel like previous therapists had sort of suggested it but um no primarily it was just me like just looking online and there's a few different apps for it um so i tried that and um as i think you said in those points there were a number of points about how we've got it except that anxiety is normal yeah i think that was yeah pretty pivotal sort of yeah step forward for me and just realizing that everyone everyone has it yeah because i'm just thinking great we're sitting here but it's actually also quite anxiety provoking for us to be um even though we work with this this the content quite a lot it's not often full you know yeah so it's um it's a common experience yeah no um i think that sort of ties into the compassion aspect for yourself because you sometimes feel get into the mindset that you're the only one going through this and it can feel like you're the only one can feel quite isolating as a result but then when you realize that i've talked to a lot of people and you you think they're not going through anything like face value and even people have said that with me like face value you don't think people are anxious or anything like i've been thought to be really outgoing person like quite often it seems um but just remembering even though you get told by people that are going through stuff that there is a lot of it prevalent and actually um people who anxious are really good at hiding that yeah yeah and we see that all the time with that social media effect as well like people kind of portraying all of the um bright fun exciting parts of life yeah and and less so um or yeah like you say kind of potentially the kind of surface level visible stuff appearing really confident or outgoing or that things are really great and we don't necessarily kind of see what can be under the surface yeah um i found i like sort of remembering that that everyone has a sort of helps you feel less isolated and also that they're all part of who we are you know like you're talking about your um and outgoing um i can present myself yeah yeah no i guess there must be something about you that is capable of doing that and wants to do that yeah and you can be anxious as well you know it doesn't mean that they're they're all part of who we are yeah

3. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - Acceptance, journaling, making a commitment

I think that that aspect of like it kind of happening for everyone is really important too with another point that you've touched on around kind of not trying to get rid of anxiety completely or actually being realistic I guess about what we expect of ourselves and our experiences of anxiety because I think when we're working with people a lot of the time they do kind of come in wanting it just to be gone like that just like get rid of this anxiety yeah yeah I think when you kind of pressure yourself to not have it anymore it kind of adds the cumulative effect yeah and that's kind of why accepting it looking at perspectives to help you sort of expect or accept that it's a normal thing yeah kind of helps take away some of that pressure yeah yeah and sometimes a helpful thing like you know if we didn't

feel anxious either then we'd probably all be really crap at our jobs and yeah probably fail lots of your exams yeah you just try yeah no it's definitely a gift and a curse yeah because I find I'm pretty prudent as a result of some of that anxiety like with university I'll make sure I'm on time for stuff and everything but obviously this I can swing yeah too far one way but yeah it's definitely a good thing in some senses and helping me like achieve stuff yeah and it's hard to know what's enough yeah when can I just let it go yeah yeah yeah still something I'm trying to work on yeah because I think you talked about when you put down something about perfectionism and things and that's often comes up with young people you know it's really hard to deal with it it's very hard to deal with it but yeah it's still a bit of a burden yeah young people we see um with anxiety is that that's that puts another pressure actually on everything they're doing yeah yeah no that's definitely something that's quite prevalent with me particularly but i think that's what i what i've largely learned in the past few months or this year is just compassion for yourself it's kind of a remedy for all that yeah yeah that's so like nice to hear and such a an important thing and i think something that so many people struggle with is like actually being kind to yourself and realizing that you're a human and yeah yeah it's not like a easy practice where you just can like sort of switch it on you have consistent work yeah and that's sort of i was journaling for a little bit um and i did i'll just write stuff that i'm grateful for it was basically a daily practice um yeah whether that be people people um events or ideas or whatever um and then also just daily reminders i guess because i don't know sometimes you can get into the idea that you just think you're not good enough because you have these problems and just having those writing down those the action of just writing them down for some reason like saying like i am enough whatnot just remembering those and it kind of just keeps that those messages going in your head yeah yeah so it's kind of affirmations and it brings in balance doesn't it yeah and that's not the same for everyone like what someone's affirmations are might be different but i found ones that work for me and it obviously takes a bit of commitment yeah because i yeah i haven't done it recently it's probably something i need to get back into but yeah i found that very helpful how did you i guess when you think back to kind of starting to um try out these things how did you develop that commitment to what made you be consistent because i think i that's what a lot of young people who i'm working with will struggle with is seeing the benefit and it's like flossing your teeth or going for a run or something you know you don't see a kind of necessarily direct benefit from that one time you do it and so that can be hard to build that motivation to then go i'm still going to commit to this and do it every day i think that it's partially just my personality yeah yeah to be honest i've always had that sort of temperament where i kind of apply myself and whatever i'm interested in yeah which i guess links back to sort of partially the underlying maybe anxiety but the helpful stuff i guess you could say um yeah i've always been someone who applies myself um what's the question And just following on from what Annie was saying, do you think that it is something that's become more helpful because of you practising doing, you know, thinking about those lists and writing down things that, do you think you need to keep doing it?

Yes. And would tell other young people to do it? Yeah, definitely. I do. I guess it's sort of portrayed like affirmations and stuff. Like, even I held the sort of idea that they were a bit wishy-washy, I guess. And they get sort of... Discounted. Yeah. But I think if you can put your own spin on it and find what works for you. And I found different books helping. Just books provide perspective. Just different perspectives, like I did. I did a self-compassion book by Kristin Neff. I'm not sure if she's a PhD person in America. And I think it works quite well done. But yeah, just trying to gain new perspective.

Sometimes you can get stuck in the perspective you've been in for so long. Yeah. Yeah.

4. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - keeping busy, importance of exercise

when did you i mean it's funny in a way to kind of say like when did this all start for you because we've just talked about how anxiety is normal and it will have been there to some extent throughout your life but i guess when you think back um to what you've been through how long has this kind of journey been for you i'd say my temperament is sort of i'm inclined in that way so it's probably been an underlying thing for a while but i'd say it's probably been three years maybe going on to four soon yeah so i think it was largely though i've seen the most progress this year i think i went through a few things therapists and then i didn't find them super helpful which again isn't to deter anyone from no using them it's just finding one that works for you but um yeah in the later years i've sort of taken it into my own hands because i guess i've i'm now becoming more of a independent person so yeah yeah and you have a better sense of what you're needing or what you're looking for yeah yeah i think so and what were the things that um you noticed when you when you think back to it what were the things that kind of made you go oh maybe i need to do something about this or i need some help or um i think how it manifested for me was avoidance particularly in close relationships um yeah it's quite specific for me i mean i'm not too bad at meeting new people like i'm all right at that but um yeah how how it manifested for me is i just started feeling tense around people who i know quite well whether that be family or friends or whatnot and obviously that's not a very natural thing to do but i think it's a very natural thing to do and i think that's a very natural feeling given these are the people you're supposed to feel comfortable around so so that was what gave you the sense that what's going on here yeah yeah yeah definitely um and that took a while to sort of get to that point um making that sort of known amongst my family and sort of them saying yeah okay we're going to do this we're going to do that we're going to do that we should probably look into getting some help yeah wow you've really done so much stuff in um a relatively short period of time you know like three four years is um a reasonably short amount of time yeah i think it sounds like you've really committed yourself to kind of learning and yeah no it's a constant that's a constant thing yeah and i think i've sort of put it on the backburner recently yeah but um and i think that's important to normalize as well and to um you know that we all have things that go on

the back burner despite we know us knowing that they're good for us or that we should be doing it or um yeah yeah i think we're we're that when that is sort of put on the back burner like consciously trying to improve your anxiety it's important to have stuff to keep you busy yeah um so i've had university obviously um being engrossed in that um and just like activities hobbies i guess so i play the piano um and that's good to sort of having something you enjoy and getting improving at it gives you a sense of achievement it's all of those things which is sort of indirectly um helps with um self-esteem of course yeah and so doing those things did you find that it helped you to um to take your focus away from the anxious anxiety or worries yeah yeah yeah i think having activities to sort of sublimate that sort of anxious feeling um yeah i have a few of those like i go to the gym which is just good um yeah obviously exercise is really important um

5. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - balance, making time, being comfortable

So I think it's important to keep a good balance in that because it's almost a coping mechanism, I guess. Yeah. And sometimes it's kind of weighing up. It sounds like that's what you do, whether the coping is helpful or is this another kind of way of avoiding? Yeah, definitely. And it is always such a fine balance as well, isn't it? Like you say, there's so many kind of, like Fiona mentioned earlier, there's so many demands in life these days of work stuff or study stuff and social time and then just like getting enough sleep and then having all of these other things that you're trying to keep up to look after yourself.

It is a hard thing to kind of keep all of those balls in the air at once. And I think that's probably, it sounds like you're kind of on this journey of like trial and error in a way of figuring out where the balance is or where the balance is. Or how you balance those things. But I think we're probably all on that journey to a degree or in different ways of kind of going, oh, let that part of my life go. But I think the really important thing is the being able to notice what part of life you've let go or what's missing because you've let that go and being able to recognise the benefit of bringing it back in.

I think sometimes it's important to give time to yourself just to focus on yourself if you want. It's sort of cliché, but no, it's good to sort of pursue your own interests and I think that can, yeah, help build your sense of identity. But obviously it's just whether the pendulum swings too far, you've got to keep bringing yourself back into social settings. And isn't that, as humans, we do that, you know, all the time. We make mistakes. And then, oh, we can repair them. You know, we kind of come back and find that balance because, yeah, we're not robots that are going to be consistently the same all the time.

Yeah, definitely. And that's what helps us to be more compassionate to others too when we kind of can see those things in ourselves. Yeah, yeah, exactly. What's it been like for you with uni? And I guess, like, the knowledge that you have of these things that are helpful for you. I'm just thinking back to my own experience of being at uni and remembering this real moment where I think I was sitting at home watching TV and I was feeling guilty. And then I was like, this is ridiculous. Like, I've got into the space where I feel guilty and I feel like I'm wasting time if I'm not either at uni or at the gym or at my part-time job, basically.

And I realised that, yeah, it was kind of, putting too much emphasis on those activities that I should be doing and not letting myself kind of, like, just be and do stuff that might be kind of, like, time-wasting but actually just what your body needs at that time and kind of self-care stuff. Has that been, what's, have you had anything like that or? In terms of feelings of guilt? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think that's a pretty common feeling. For me, whether that be around relationships or, like, letting relationships slide or, yeah, sort of procrastinating. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I can relate to that too.

There's all the shoulds and then actually, ah, you can't get going with anything. And I think that's where that self-compassion is so important. And of actually being able to go, no, it is okay for me to kind of sit and watch this movie or to stay in bed or, you know, like, to kind of give some permission to those times where actually you're just doing something because it's what you need in that moment. And that judgement. Would I judge someone else badly, you know, if they were doing that? Yeah. Yeah, occasionally or, yeah. Yeah, if I'm honest, that's sort of something I'd, like, still struggle with.

Yeah. As I said, I'm quite a diligent person when it comes to, like, maintaining my health, like, physical or mental and obviously schoolwork as well. Yeah. I'm not sure how I combat. I don't really have those set skills yet. Yeah. Yeah. And that's okay too. So it's a journey, learning. Yeah. I think I was probably older than you when I kind of came to the realisation that I didn't need to feel guilty for resting. So. Yeah. Yes, I know a lot of people who are just very comfortable, which can be looked at from both perspectives. But I think it's good to have that sort of drive. Yeah, definitely.

And, yeah, so it's not all bad. Really. Yeah. Because, yeah, there are a lot of people I know who are just very comfortable. Yeah. And sort of let things slide. Yeah. So, yeah. And your values are that you want to be striving and in some way. Yeah. And that's okay. And kind of a when is it enough, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Mm-hmm.

6. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - being grateful

i think sort of on the topic of reminding yourself uh i i kind of started using trying to look at the situation objectively or myself objectively because often times you can get into the mindset of thinking you're not good enough or um um yeah not good enough but i'd try and look at it objectively me as a person and remember that i'm not a terrible person yeah i found that to be like i'm nice i'm nice to people i try hard at stuff i think it's just remembering that overall a lot of the time you're not what your mind tells you you are like even though you have struggles overall most likely you're a good person so i think that's important to remind yourself yeah and i'm thinking amy it's particularly at when we're in our teens that's when we all we're all trying to work out who am i and um and we're so hypercritical and so sensitive to um what what you know looking at ourselves that we um yeah we've got to remember the things that are that are fine that are good yeah yeah that's the sort of um base foundation is if you can like be grateful for what you are and what you have it's sort of a better um point to build off of then if you're feeling negative towards yourself um yeah so having that underlying positive sort of grateful attitude towards things helps you move forward rather than that negative critical it's like positive and negative perfectionism i guess sort of because if you're always looking at it from the perspective of i'm not good enough and trying to progress off that feeling you're just always going to feel um negatively but if you're starting if you're starting with a sense of yeah positive outlook yeah it's just easier to move forward move forward and build up rather than erode yeah exactly

7. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray - key messages, reflections

Yeah, okay, so looking back on my journey with anxiety, I'd say the primary takeaways I've gotten were to understand and acknowledge that everyone or a lot of people experience this anxiety, whether you know it or not and whether you'd expect it or not. And I think, yeah, it helps you stay out of that feeling of isolation. It's a shared sense of humanity, I guess, which I think is nice. It's a sort of nice base level to build off of, so you don't feel alone, because you're not. And then obviously journaling was quite beneficial for me personally. Not to say that's for everyone, it takes a bit of commitment if you're going to make it a daily practice, but that would be what you're grateful for, whether that's qualities, your own personal qualities or people or things you do or hobbies you have and affirmations, whatever that may be for you.

Whatever they may take. Staying busy is important, because if you want some sense of achievement, it's quite easy when you're feeling down to just like fall into the, it's not worth it. But I've definitely found a lot of the times when you don't feel like doing something and then you go out and do it, you feel much better afterwards. Whether that's meeting up with a friend or going to the gym or doing some exercise and having those things that you enjoy doing. And yeah, just as I said at the last point, remembering that a lot of times looking objectively at yourself and remembering you're not a terrible person, because that's obviously the distortion.

That your mind can create. So it's just those base level things to sort of build a positive outlook and then build off from there. Nice. Yeah. Great attitude. Thank you. I just want to say thank you. I think you've done such an amazing job of sharing all of this today. Honestly, it's been really amazing to listen to you. So yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And well done. No worries. Thank you very much.

And yeah, I guess if I was thinking about what I have taken away from what you've been sharing, I think what you've talked about has hopefully for anyone who watches, created quite a lot of hope, really, of kind of showing actually there is, you know, there is the potential to live with anxiety in a way that means that you have a fulfilling, enjoyable life and you don't have to be kind of ruled by that anxiety and um that you know these things like journaling and um exercise and affirmations and these things that you've tried have had a positive benefit for you because i guess um yeah we are often seeing people who are kind of at the beginning of that kind of journey and struggling to see that um the point to kind of putting the effort into those things and so yeah it's just really nice to hear from somebody who um has seen the benefit and has kind of kept giving those things a go so yeah i definitely think through those practices i do remember clearly a point saying to my cousin i was like yeah i think i can like finally see a way of getting better so yeah i've personally found pretty helpful yeah i'm really struck by how your awareness um yeah and that because that's the first thing is kind of trying to notice and understand and then i'm what i'm hearing you say is all that but around the acceptance piece yeah and being kind to yourself and being objective and so on um and the things you can do to change things up as well that kind of help you can't if you know that help grow and make you feel um stronger and feel like you're building things up yeah yeah it's not um but you have the power to change it yourself you don't have to feel like for those who lack financial ability or whatever to see a therapist you do have the agency to improve yourself it sounds like yeah you've done a lot of that to do yeah yourself definitely yeah yeah oh sweet thank you thank you thank you probably one of the big things it's just the message you're putting out to young people is around how much you know you can do for yourself yeah yeah yeah definitely people that people around you close people can support and kind of guide and kind of pick you up when you need to but actually you're doing it that's yeah yeah yeah

8. Anxiety – Adolescents – Lawrence – parents journey, listening

Do you want to tell us a little bit about your kind of experience of parenting through those years with the anxiety and things being quite challenging for Grey? In what I wrote, I just quickly thought that there were three stages, and one is not realising that he had a problem, a real problem. I just thought it was adolescence growing up, unsure of himself. I'd say, you need to do this and you need to do that and you shouldn't do this, and I did this when I was young, and all that sort of stuff. And then I realised that that was not helping the cause at all. In fact, it was probably driving him away.

And then I realised that that was not helping the cause at all. In fact, it was probably driving him away. or causing him confusion. That took quite a long time to realise, A, that he had a problem. And it's a natural thing as a parent to want to kind of help and fix and, you know, give advice. Yeah. And I sort of figured out that I was a helicopter parent and a snowplough parent and all those things after a while, that I was trying to shield him from bits and pieces. What changed for you when you did realise or come to the reflection that there was? Well, I think Grey helped me, actually. When we'd talk, you know, he'd explain things.

And I came to the realisation that I wasn't helping him at all, really. So then I just backed off and listened to him and we'd do things together and that. And that's probably what I am now, really. I just listen to him and we spend time together. And I assume that's probably what I should be doing, but I'm not 100% sure. I think it's, you know, time is like most kids, they grow through things to a certain extent. And I'm not downplaying what he's got, but I think, you know, he's well on the way to managing it well himself. He's got a lot of strengths, for sure. And life kind of goes like this as well.

But the more, you know, he knows himself and what works for him, the more he can ride that. Yes, yes. I have a nephew, or I had a nephew, but he killed himself very much at the same time as Grey. He'd just lost his way and, you know, he'd just lost his way and, you know, he'd just lost his way. Oh, gosh, that must be hard. Well, it's hard because I sort of think of Grey as being that. Yeah, that's it. Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, I get worried about him. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. But, you know, he's a lot more resourceful than I thought he was. Yeah. And I think coming back to that, what you're kind of focusing on now being it just kind of being there and listening to him, you're, yeah, you're right.

That is, I think, one of the most important things. Yeah. That a parent can do. And I think we see a lot of parents go through that journey of kind of like just, as Fiona said, that being very natural, that you just want to kind of take away. It's horrible seeing your child in distress, right? So you just want to kind of take it away. But with anxiety, often that can then lead to, yeah, the anxiety actually becoming bigger or, yeah, it not being as helpful as parents kind of set out thinking it's going to be. And actually then, you know, often we're kind of working on actually like, let's just kind of take a step back here and just listen to your child and what they're going through and validate that and hear their experience and support them with that, you know, kind of just walk alongside them, really.

Yes. Yeah. When I look back, when he was young, you can see some markers, I think. He had problems with relationships quite early on. Yeah. Yeah. We actually, when he went to secondary school, he was having problems with relationships. And we listened to him in thorough. So we changed schools. In hindsight, it probably didn't help at all. Maybe it didn't hinder, but it didn't help. Yeah. At that stage, there was a problem, I think, way there. Yeah. Yeah. And you're trying to find solutions. Yeah. Yeah. And I think it is so often those kind of practical solutions that let's try a different school that make complete sense at the time.

And you know, for some people that might actually be what is helpful. But yeah, I think everyone... In his case, it just keeps surfacing. Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah, I didn't understand what he was going through. I didn't know what it was all about. Yeah. And it was probably the anxiety. That's if it is anxiety. I don't know what it is. Yeah. Anyway, when I came to the understanding that I wasn't probably helping his cause, I just backed off. And we, as I said before, we just spent time together. And he talks if he wants to talk. But at stages, I would have the phone next to me in bed at night and get a call in the middle of the night.

That was tough. Yeah, it would have been. So... And he would call. Yeah, he would call. Yeah. Yeah. I think it was easier for him because he knew that I wasn't going to preach to him or anything like that. Yeah. So, just let it all come out. Yeah.

9. Anxiety – Adolescents – Lawrence – getting help, what not to do

But then when we started to try and find some official channel to help him, it was very difficult, very difficult. We went through the normal GP situation, but with all due respect, they floundered a bit too. He was quite unusual because he knew what medication he could have, or he'd push the doctor and say, well, let's try this one, because he'd read about it. But it was a very slow process, and I don't think we've settled on anything yet. He'll probably know more about it than me now, but he's still looking for a clinician or somebody to help him in the future. So, yeah, that's been a... It must be difficult for kids and families to know where to go because there's not a clear pathway at all.

GPs struggle, and then if you find clinicians or people, you don't know if they're genuine or not, or they have got ability to deal with it. He found, and he may have told you, that some people are very prescriptive. He knew exactly what they were going to do. And he felt that they weren't looking at him as an individual and drawing him out. That's been a struggle. And he's still looking. I doubt that you would know better than I would. Yeah, it can certainly be a real challenge to kind of access supports. I think one thing that Grey touched on that was really important to hear as well was the kind of like not letting that mean that, hope is lost in a way, and his kind of recognising the things that he was still able to do for himself, and the kind of being able to take some ownership of that, you know, that journey and those things that he could kind of put in place.

But, of course, then, yeah, sometimes as well, obviously, there's a need for more. But, yeah, it was really good to hear, I think, from him that, yeah, that aspect of kind of still, you know, still keeping on moving amidst that challenge. And what he's learned and what has been helpful for him. He's quite objective about it in some ways. He can stand back from himself. I'm amazed. Yeah. And it sounds like that's something that he's really practised. But, yeah, it's a real skill to be able to do that. And probably at other times he might be caught in that more anxious part of his brain that, yeah, of course, might be more critical in things.

And actually that ability to be objective is something that he's practising and working on. I must admit, now that he seems to be more in control of things, I've let it all slide away. Yeah. Because it's nice that he doesn't have to worry about it again. Yeah. But I think I've learned a bit about it. I've learned what not to do, I think, rather than what I should do. Yeah. What sort of comes to mind about definitely don't do that? What? What are the things? Oh, yes. The preaching to them. The preaching. Yeah. Yeah. And saying, no, you don't do that. You know, you shouldn't be thinking that. That's a load of rubbish.

Come on. Grow up. That's what. The discounting it. Yeah. And telling them that he must feel this and he can't. And then I suppose I came to the realisation that it wasn't anything about that at all. Yeah. It was a sickness or it was something that was, you know, you can't talk your way out of it. Yeah. That's the way I see it. Yeah. So I just. That's been helpful for you to think of it like that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I think that he was. Yeah. What I was doing was not good. It wasn't helping him at all. Mm. Yeah. Because he couldn't process it or couldn't. You know, it just couldn't stop. Mm. What was going on in his brain.

Mm. It wasn't anything to do with being logical about a situation. Yeah. Yeah. What he should do. Yeah. And then I just found that, well, I can't do much at all. Yeah. Other than just being there. Yeah. He wouldn't lie. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He wouldn't lie. Mm. Mm. Which he doesn't unload particularly. He's. Mm. But he knows you're there. Yeah. Yeah. That's about the only thing. Yeah. Mm.

10. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence - what parents can do

I don't know about the social anxiety and you'd probably know. I mean, obviously I do because of his stroke. So it was hard for him to actually really let me know because that was the problem. The more closer we got, the harder it was for him. Because social things come with so many expectations and concern for what impact there's going to be on the other person and how they will respond to that. So I didn't know how to help him. It's pretty disastrous when you're a parent and you don't know what to do and you can't find a channel or some place to help him or help him along his way. It sounds like you've quite naturally kind of come to a pretty helpful place really when I was thinking about what are the kind of main things that I hope parents can kind of learn or reflect on or do for their children.

It is really kind of being that calm, supportive person that walks alongside them in this journey and being able to just acknowledge their experience and be there with them. I think that's the kind of most important foundation to being a parent when your child is struggling because ultimately you want to have that relationship. And it sounds like even when you may have been doing things that in hindsight you go, oh, that wasn't ideal. It sounds like even then you were still obviously maintaining a relationship because of that. Because he felt like he could call you in the middle of the night. So you were obviously doing some things right.

Yeah. I mean, even when you're a parent, I don't know if you are, when you're going about things, you always drop in something, oh, that's probably not the right way. You probably should do it this way or you should be doing this. You should be banking money and not spending it all. It's very hard to just be there Yeah. and not push. Push anything on them or suggest. I suppose it was quite nice when I realised that, I think, and we just sat there and he would say something and I wouldn't say anything. Yeah. It's so hard not to say something and not to try and give an answer or give a direction.

But I think I got better at it and just listened. Yeah. And if we do naturally want to do that, actually noticing if it's helpful or not and that, you know, coming back from that and, sorry, you know, stepping back is okay. Yeah. That we sometimes don't always do it right. Yes. And that's okay too. And that's really, really important modelling for our kids too. Yes. So that they can come back from things. Yeah. Yes. Yes. And we talked quite a bit with Grey actually about compassion and like being kind to yourself. And I think that's another huge part for parents as well is like you've touched on like it's such a big thing to be going through that's scary and awful to be seeing your child distressed but also holding that immense worry about what this might mean.

And what risk they might be at and those kinds of things. And I think it's really important to be able to acknowledge the emotions that you hold in that situation as well. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Well, you get to a certain stage in life where a person like I mature, where you realise you haven't got any answers. It's not easy at that stage in life to say, well, I don't know. I haven't a clue. I can't help this person. Yeah. It is. Yeah. Yeah. Quite. Yeah. And we can't do it for them. And we can be there with them. No. Yeah. I agree. I mean, I got into that role of trying to shield him and do things for him.

So it wouldn't hurt. But it wasn't the story at all. Yeah. I couldn't shoulder it, honestly. Yeah. Which took a long time to realise. Mm. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. cruciform bleeding, all that. But as you can probably see in things about it, Deepa works it out. So that was a lot easier when I realised that I didn't have to shoulder all that. Yeah. I had to let him go through it. Yeah. And he seems to have worked his way through it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And then in some ways a bit of an anchor too to kind of come- that foundation he can come back to... when he needs to.

Yes.

11. Anxiety - Adolescents - Lawrence - have we caused this, strengths and vulnerabilities

I'm interested to see what he said and what he's figured out, but he seems to have settled down a lot. He had terrible problems which I struggled with. He was writing essays and that, and he couldn't stop himself. He tried to be a perfectionist and he just couldn't stop himself, and he'd study and study and study to try and get a perfect essay, and he'd do it, and that was tiring himself. Exhausting to watch too. But he said to me a while back, I've been able to say no, I've written enough in this essay, I'm not going to do any more, and that was a big breakthrough. Yeah. Yeah, bad understanding of what's enough.

Yeah, he couldn't control that for a while, he couldn't control it at all. I think partly that's kind of being comfortable with yourself, you know, like when you think about perfectionism, it's what you put out or the work you produce is kind of a reflection of yourself, and so I think actually learning about what is enough is actually about figuring out, kind of becoming content with who you are. And actually realising that you're enough as you are, and so, yeah, it can be hard. Anxiety is natural in that we all feel it to some degree and in some situations, and so I guess that anyone's journey with anxiety doesn't necessarily have a definitive start and an end, you know, it's not kind of like necessarily this thing that you graduate from and never feel anxious again.

Yeah. But, so it's about, I guess, learning to live with anxiety. It's about learning to live with anxiety in a way that means that you are able to enjoy your life and do things that are fulfilling and rewarding, and I think that's something that, yeah, he's impressed with. Yeah, well, that was actually a sort of light bulb moment for me when I heard or read something like that, you know, that it's not, you know, there's not going to be a silver bullet, and it's going to be solved. Yeah. And Grae and I talked about that, and I sort of realised that, you know, it's just a matter of getting it under control and keeping it under control or something like that, which was really, really helpful to know that it's, because, yeah, that he's never, there's never going to be a silver bullet and it's gone.

It's just a matter of getting it under control. It is learning to live with it. Yeah. Yeah. It's really soothing to know that rather than it's an affliction, you know, it's a disease that, you know, it takes the pills and it's going to go away. You realise that it's not, it's just an imbalance in his understanding of anxiety. In some ways, sometimes I'm thinking of something like diabetes and something similar. Yeah. You know, how you have to learn to live with it. Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, you've got to, it'll go up and down and you learn to notice that and learn what's useful to do at those times.

Yes. Yeah. And anxiety is a bit like that. Yeah. Yes. Well, that was a real help and I understood that. And I don't know how we came across that, but it makes me sort of think back, you know, what have we done? Or how have we, what have we done? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know if it's caused it or not. But then I, you know, I look back, you know, I look at the past and I can see markers, but they go way back. And I think so many parents will be kind of doing that, like, what did I do something? Yeah. How did we come? What have I missed? What have we done? Or what have we not done? I guess generally though, like it's never a one plus one equals two.

Yeah. Yeah. It's not a one plus one equals two kind of equation. There'll be so many things and, you know, you touched on when you think back things about his kind of personality or his temperament and he, he similarly talked about his personality and that's often an aspect that actually, you know, we are born with certain temperaments that mean that we might be more or less anxious or more or less sensitive and those kinds of things. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And so, um, kind of, and, you know, interact, I guess, with that temperament and, um, can produce anxiety, but yeah, it's almost never because of any, like one particular thing that happened.

So. But, you know, maybe the understanding that a person's just born with the intensity to be a little bit more emotional and how we, we, all of us have strengths and vulnerabilities. Yes. Um. I think that's, I think we talked earlier about, you know, there's those two sides of the coin. Isn't there that the, being able to be a really deep thinker can be so, um, such a strength and it can also make us so much more sensitive and aware too. So it's both sides of this. Yeah, that's interesting. That's true. Yeah, he is a deep thinker. I'm pretty sure he is.

it's an interesting kit very interesting kit and i would say one thing that um i've noticed while you've been talking is your reflectiveness as well that clearly you know along this journey you've kind of taken the time to think back and kind of reflect on different things you've tried or what you've done and then think about was that helpful was it not helpful are there things that i could do differently and when we were talking to grey that was one of the things i think that stood out so much was his reflectiveness and his ability to think about um what he can do for himself and so i would say you've modeled some um quite useful um yeah reflection and skills as well in your parenting so

12. Anxiety - Adolescents - Gray and Lawrence - feeling safe, resources

But it seems with anxiety there is no prescribed way or no clearly known way to go and so one flounders around. I know that on the Te Whātua Ora or the old DHB, the website, they've done an updated reference of what do you notice, what do you do. And they've listed very clearly out various community organisations that you can work through for anxiety, for depression. It's all been recently updated and video links that they have recommended or have been recommended by clinicians. So it's a useful site to go into. And you could put in anxiety. You could put in anxiety in young people and it'll come up with web pages.

I don't know if you've seen that. But is it similar to normal ailments, physical ailments, that you do go to the doctor first, your GP, and then the GP will recommend you go more to a person like yourself? Yeah. So that's good to know because it's not out there really. Yeah. Really at all. Yeah. I don't think it is anyway. Yeah. One other thing that we talked about with Grey that I think you've found useful at times, Grey, is mindfulness. And there are lots of apps for mindfulness. I don't know if you have any in particular that you use, Grey. Personally, I use Smiling Mind. But there's other lots out there like Calm and Headspace.

So those can be useful things just for that kind of piece. And if you're looking for self-help resources, the other organization that's quite organized with that is Merck, the mental health foundation. This seems to be, you know, there is all these things out there, but it's all over the show. Yeah. It's a clear pathway. Yeah. Well, I think what you're asking is referral pathway. Is that what you mean? Yeah. And, you know, when you're in the thick of it, when it's really bad, it's not easy to see that clear pathway. But it would help to have a clear pathway, knowing, because there are a lot of facilities out there, but you don't know whether they're good, bad, or not, I guess.

Most of our referrals will come from GPs or school guidance counsellors. I think it's pretty much just GPs now, I think. Mostly GPs. Yeah. Yeah. And then we have an access, CAF access team, and they have a number of... A list of options that you can go to if you're not, you know, meeting criteria for CAF service or need something in the interim. And there are a number of NGOs in the community that do offer counselling and therapy. Yeah. I don't know if that's what you were asking. Well, it just seems to be that there's a lot. It seems to be that there's a lot out there. Yeah. Yeah. And you think, well, who do we go to?

Yeah. And I appreciate mindfulness is helpful, but everybody chucks out. Mindfulness. You need to be mindful. You need to be this, you know. And when you're in the thick of it, it's... I mean, mindfulness seems to probably be of benefit, but it's a long haul, isn't it? Definitely. It's something that you must be disciplined about and believe in. Yeah. But in the thick of it, when things are tough, it's not easy to find a clear way forward and be confident that this way forward's going to help you. I know Graeme needs to say this, but, you know, we've tried many places. We've tried. And it's very hard to feel safe that you actually are progressing or that you've got the best avenue forward.

Is that true? I think that's from my point of view. Yeah. Yeah. No, it can be hard to find a therapist that sort of aligns with you. Yeah. And yeah, sometimes it feels a bit prescriptive. Just they kind of chuck you on CBT. And I don't know. There's obviously different modalities that could be tried, but it just seems, yeah, sometimes it's just like, oh, we'll chuck you on CBT. Yeah. With a normal doctor, you know, your GP, you've settled on a GP and you feel safe that you're going to get dealt with or dealt to or whatever. And you allow that person, because you trust them and you know that they will put you onto the next step or whatever.

But with anxiety and things like this, you don't feel safe that somebody is looking after you and in control of your condition and is taking you on and you can't relax and say, well, look, this is the way. You must go. It seems so fragmented. I guess it's also kind of, in a way, the nature of what you're dealing with as well, isn't it? Yes. Oh, yes. I understand that. But yeah. It is so fragmented. And there's so many people offering these little snippets of things or the latest rage about something or other. I mean, I know mindfulness is helpful. But there's a number of those things. And they also say, well, you need to do this, you need to do that.

You don't feel safe. Well, as a parent, I didn't feel that somebody was embracing the situation and keeping control. And it's hard to say when you go meet someone what you really, what's going to be most important for you. Yeah. Yeah. And it is okay to say that I just want you to really listen to me or have a space to get to know me before we just do a prescriptive thing. Yeah. Yeah. As a parent, I couldn't see a pathway forward. I mean, great at all the hard donkey work. Even a bit of mental health, it's not like a broken bone. You fix it. It's just would be nice to know that the system has got you and that you can trust.

You trust that they will continue the process until the person is capable of looking after themselves or whatever. But it's so fragmented. Nobody takes. The system doesn't take control. Yeah. Yeah. It doesn't take control at all. It seems. I mean, obviously you said, but as a parent, that's the way I see it. It's been really nice to meet you both though. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. Thanks for the time. Thank you. Yeah. For sharing. Yeah. Who you are and with us, but also being prepared to share that with other parents. Thank you. Thank you.