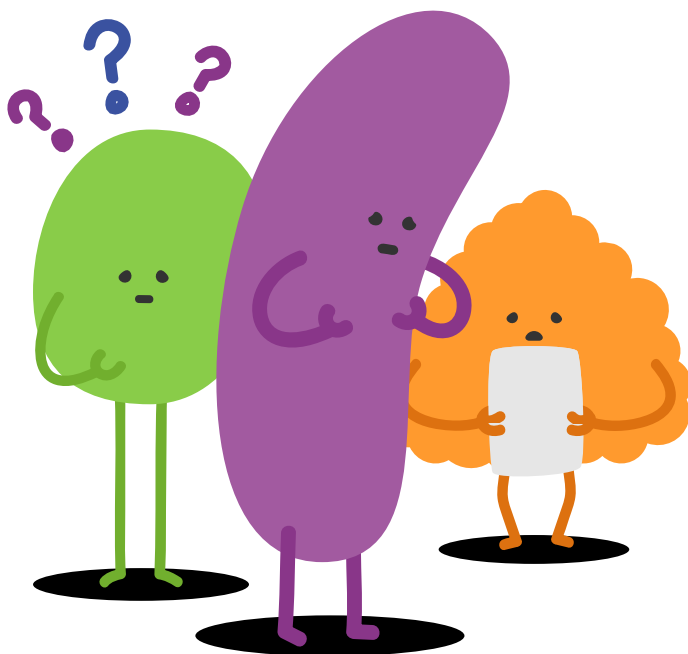


# WORRIED ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL?

A WORKBOOK FOR STUDENTS IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOL (WITH SUPPORT FROM  
THEIR PARENT/CARER)



By Dr. Nihara Krause,  
Consultant Clinical Psychologist

**stem4**  
education  
supporting teenage mental health

Sponsored by:



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[www.stem4.org.uk](http://www.stem4.org.uk)

# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to 'Worried about going to school?' for students in primary schools (with support from their parent/carer). This is a workbook that will guide you through steps you can take to help reduce worry and fear around going to school, as well as provide signposts.

Sometimes going to school can become tough and this can make every day a challenge. Parents, carers, and teachers (and even the young person experiencing it) might have a hard time trying to understand why going to school has become so difficult.

By working through this booklet, the blocks to getting to school may become clear. Trying some of the activities, with guidance from a parent/carer, together with the Clear Fear app, will hopefully make being at school a little easier. There are also some suggestions on steps that can be taken to get further support and help.



## **Dr Nihara Krause MBE**

Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
CEO and Founder of stem4

stem4 is a charity based in London that promotes positive mental health in teenagers. It aims to raise early awareness and highlights the importance of early intervention in teenage mental health issues.

Clear Fear is an app developed for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause MBE, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, and uses the evidence-based treatment Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to focus on learning to reduce the physical responses to threat by learning to breathe, relax, and be mindful, as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions.

TM

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# HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Parents and carers should read through the workbook on their own first. The **orange** sections have instructions for them.

Students can read and complete the **purple** sections either on their own or with a parent or carer.

## Before you start the booklet:

There are many activities suggested in this booklet that can be used together with the Clear Fear app, which parents/carers should download. Each section will detail how to use these activities, or you might like to run through it on your own first to see which sections might be of use to your child.

Clear Fear can be downloaded for free on the App Store or on Google Play. It is built to NHS standards and has been co-collaboratively developed with clinician guidance and young people's input.

The app will ask for some information when downloaded. This is optional but gives stem4 the opportunity to receive some feedback about usage and to help tailor the app.

The app does not collect any personally identifiable data. Whilst this gives complete anonymity, if the passcode is forgotten or the app is downloaded onto a new device, we cannot reunite you with your data. If there are important screens that have been personalised, we advise taking screenshots.

The app can be personalised with a passcode and colours, and there are sections to keep important information.



[www.clearfear.co.uk](http://www.clearfear.co.uk)

[@clearfearapp](#)

# 1

## EXERCISE 1

Working out why you might be finding it difficult to go to school

‘You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.’

–Dr Seuss

There is a saying ‘Everything happens for a reason’ or, in other words, every effect has a cause.

Knowing the cause (or sometimes causes) can be helpful because then it’s easier to find the right solution. Young people who find it hard to go to school often don’t know the cause. They just know that going to school feels difficult, sometimes almost impossible.

The quiz below lists some common causes. Why not be a detective and find out what yours might be? Then use the Quiz decoder below to help narrow down what you can try.

### The ‘Everything Happens for a Reason’ Quiz

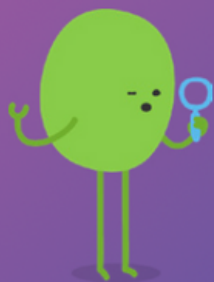
Circle any of the reasons below that might apply to you.

1. I feel worried or a bit scared at school
2. I miss my home / parent(s) / family member(s)
3. I feel shy
4. I feel lonely / on my own
5. I worry about my family when I’m at school
6. Certain places at school (like corridors, assembly, or the dining hall) are too busy and make me feel a little scared

7. I find some of the work too hard
8. I think that people don't like me
9. I don't understand what the teachers are saying
10. I feel scared of some of the teachers
11. I worry about the journey to or from school
12. I don't like exams, sports, or anything competitive
13. I don't know how to make friends
14. People think I'm weird and don't make friends with me
15. I feel really tense and my heart sometimes races, or I have a tense tummy
16. Lots of bad things have happened recently and I'm worried more will happen when I'm at school
17. Any other reason

Share these reasons with a trusted adult.

## Quiz decoder



### Here's what you can try depending on which reasons you circled...

1, 6, 10, 11, 15 → Manage your worries and anxious feelings using some of the tips on pages 8–19.

2, 5, 16 → Sharing these worries with your family might be helpful.

3, 4, 8, 13, 14 → Learning how to be more confident in social situations will help, ask a teacher or a family member.

7, 9, 12, 17 → Get some extra school work help.

## 1. Dealing with generalised worries (1, 6, 10, 11, 15)

Manage your young person's worries and anxious feelings using the exercises on pages 8–19.

## 2. Managing family-related worries (2, 5, 16)

Here are some things parents and carers can do and say:

- a. Prepare them for the experience (but don't over prepare!). For example, run through the routine, the people they know they might be meeting, and their timetable. The 'known' creates a sense of safety.
- b. Listen to their concerns, reassure them that anxiety is something a lot of students feel and that you will be there to listen and support them.
- c. Give them time to settle. Be gentle but firm about your expectations.
- d. Be consistent in your availability and reassurance. For example, 'I'm here to listen' or 'We can have a chat as we drive home from school'.
- e. Routines can help. Have a calm morning routine, if a parent/ carer is stressed, it will likely stress a young person too.
- f. Tell them it's ok to miss you / their pet / their favourite toys / their bedroom and that these will all be there for them when they get back home.
- g. If there are family changes that are worrying them and they don't want change whilst they're at school, reassure them that they will be prepared for changes if and when they happen.
- h. Let them take something special to school that connects them with home (a photograph, a hair band, a small toy). Let a teacher know that this will be in their possession / their bag.
- i. Let school know if there are changes at home or to a family member (such as illness) that might be worrying your young person.



### 3. Learning to be more confident in social situations (3, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, 17)

Here are some things parents and carers can do and say:

- a. Provide your young person with opportunities to learn to interact with others. You can also show them how you interact with others and provide them with some ideas.
- b. Help them to listen and take turns through practising conversations with different family members. This could be made into a fun game.
- c. Help them to observe non-verbal cues (like someone turning their back to them, or someone not including them) and to respect personal space.
- d. Encourage them to keep trying even if they find it difficult. Help them with starter questions such as 'Please could you show me how...?' or 'Please could I join this game?'.
- e. Help them to deal with someone saying 'no'. This might be by asking themselves if they could have asked differently and practising that, or by moving away and asking someone else, or by inviting someone over instead.
- f. Encourage them to make their own wise choices. In most cases, these will be to walk away rather than retaliate, to not gossip or stir controversy.
- g. Role-play some new social situations so that they know some things they can say to get a conversation started.
- h. Help them to understand and express their emotions and where and when these work best. For example, if they are upset with someone not to shout at them, but to understand they are angry (my fists are tight, my heart is fast) and to breathe out and say quietly 'I am angry, and I've decided to leave it until I am calmer'.
- i. Help them learn to be assertive in situations where they need to stand up for themselves.

j. Help resolve conflicts by practising what they can say and do. If they are being bullied, support them by discussing matters with the school.

k. Encourage being 'good enough' rather than always aiming for perfection. Be aware of your feedback and comparison.

l. Find out what support the school offers to shy students or those who lack confidence in making friends.

For example, is there a 'buddy bench' where they could wait for a friend? Are there activities where they can be paired with like-minded students?

#### 4. Getting some extra help from school (7, 9, 12, 17)

Here are some things parents and carers can do and say:

a. Ask the school if they can provide some extra support for the educational difficulties your young person is experiencing. Take some examples of exactly what they might be finding difficult.

b. If they have missed schoolwork, ask if they can have access to any notes and handouts.

c. Ask the teacher if there could be some changes to the classroom seating plan in case your young person is sitting next to some students who might be being unkind or getting them into trouble.

d. Support them if they are concerned about presentations, and don't put them on the spot with questions.

e. Support them in test situations.

f. Provide them with a 'time out' pass when they get overanxious.

g. Provide a safe person they can speak with or access when needed.

h. Address any interpersonal difficulties discretely and sensitively, and according to school policy.

Purchase the full version of the workbook  
on [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)  
or via [www.stem4.org.uk](http://www.stem4.org.uk).

Proceeds from the sale of this workbook  
will be used to continue the work stem4  
does in supporting positive mental health  
in young people.

## ABOUT STEM4

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### Who we are

stem4 is a charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers and those who support them including their families, carers, and education professionals, as well as school nurses and GPs, through the provision of mental health education, resilience strategies, and early intervention.

This is primarily provided digitally through our innovative education programme, pioneering mental health apps, clinically-informed website, and mental health conferences that contribute to helping young people and those around them flourish.



## Dr Nihara Krause MBE

**Consultant Clinical Psychologist, CEO and Founder of stem4**

Dr. Nihara Krause founded stem4 based on the knowledge that early identification and intervention made a real difference in stemming what has recently been reported to be escalating teenage mental health conditions in their often serious and long-lasting course. Nihara has many years of clinical experience working in a variety of mental health settings with both young people and adults. She has specialist experience in eating disorders and self-harm. Nihara is also a university lecturer, works extensively with the media, and has input in informing government on youth matters. She has a special interest in building resilience, as well as practicing effective treatment techniques for a variety of psychological problems.

Nihara is the clinician who developed the award-winning Calm Harm, Clear Fear, Move Mood, and Combined Minds apps for stem4. Most recently, Nihara developed the Worth Warrior app, stem4's latest app which helps manage low self-worth and body dissatisfaction leading to eating difficulties.

# CLEAR FEAR

The fear of threat, or anxiety, is like a strong gust of wind. It drags you in and makes you want to fight it or run away.

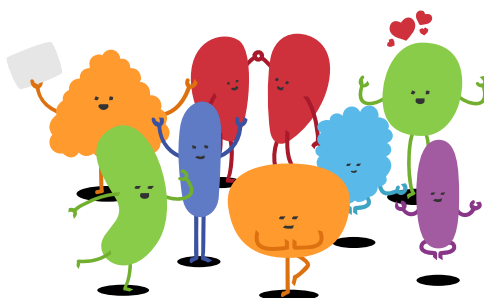
Instead, face your fear with the free Clear Fear app and learn to reduce the physical responses to threat as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions.

Anxiety is a natural response to fear, threat and apprehension. However, when anxiety is extreme or goes on for a long time, or the response to a threat is disproportionately large and affects a person negatively, it may become an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are the most common form of emotional disorder and respond very well to a form of treatment called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or CBT.

When you face your fear, you will reduce the threat and glide.

[www.clearfear.co.uk](http://www.clearfear.co.uk)

@clearfearapp



Please note that none of the stem4 apps substitute for seeing a mental health professional / GP. Please see a suitably qualified professional for assessment and advice on treatment.

# STEM4'S MENTAL HEALTH APPS



## CALM HARM

A free app to help teenagers resist or manage the urge to self-harm

[www.calmharm.co.uk](http://www.calmharm.co.uk)

@calmharmapp



## CLEAR FEAR

A free app to help children and young people manage the symptoms of anxiety

[www.clearfear.co.uk](http://www.clearfear.co.uk)

@clearfearapp



## COMBINED MINDS

A free app to help families and friends provide mental health support

[www.combinedminds.co.uk](http://www.combinedminds.co.uk)

@combmindsapp



## MOVE MOOD

A free app to help young people manage the behaviours associated with low mood or depression.

[www.movemood.co.uk](http://www.movemood.co.uk)

@appmovemood

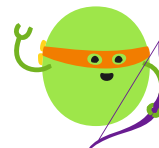


## WORTH WARRIOR

A free app to help young people manage negative body image, poor self-worth, and related early-stage eating difficulties or disorders

[www.worthwarrior.co.uk](http://www.worthwarrior.co.uk)

@worthwarriorapp



stem4's award-winning apps are available to download from the App Store and Google Play.

GET IT ON  
Google Play

Download on the  
App Store

Please note that these apps are an aid in treatment but do not replace it.

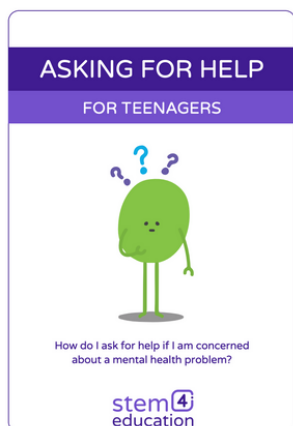
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# SIGNPOSTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



1. If you are worried, please speak to a trusted adult such as someone from your family, school or ask to see a doctor who can help.



Follow this QR code to view the [stem4 asking for help](#) booklet

2. Some schools will have counsellors or adults who can help.
3. There are some helplines, but they are all generally for teenagers or adults.
  - Childline [0800 111](#) will answer calls to anyone of any age.
  - SHOUT - you can text [SHOUT](#) to [85258](#)
4. There are some books that are helpful.
  - A Volcano in my Tummy by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney describes anxiety.
  - The Goodnight Caterpillar: A relaxation story for kids by Lori Lite
  - Huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside
  - Back to school and what to do when you worry too much by Dawn Huebner
  - Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine by Julia Cook

The [Reading Well Books on Prescription](#) site can also recommend books. Access them with a trusted adult.

5. stem4 also has a booklet for parents and carers which has other support signposts for families.



# SIGNPOSTS FOR PARENTS

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stem4 offers a wide range of resources to help parents and carers support their young people:

Our [website](#) has detailed information to help you support a young person experiencing anxiety, stress and a variety of other mental ill health conditions.

Our Apps:



[Clear Fear](#) - an amazing app that you can use with your young person- it provides tools to enable young people to face their fears and overcome them.



[Combined Minds](#) - helps families and friends to find ways to provide the right environment to help the individuals they support affect their own change.

Our [podcast](#) 'Understanding Teen Minds' is available wherever you get your podcasts and taps into the knowledge and experience of Dr Nihara Krause as she discusses practical ways you can support your young person.

Our [resources](#) - stem4 has a wealth of resources that can be accessed online. They are designed with young people and combine the clinical expertise of a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with the needs expressed by our young people.



Links to all our Anxiety apps, resources and podcasts can be accessed via our link tree using the QR code here.



Sponsored by **Bounce Not Break**: the latest addition to stem4's broad suite of mental health products and resources already accessed by over 4 million young people worldwide.

**Bounce Not Break** is an immersive, gamified mental wellbeing and resilience platform for primary school children. Designed by clinical psychologists, teachers and students, the interactive interface teaches the skills young people require to overcome life's inevitable challenges and setbacks.

The platform uses a diverse range of gamified 'missions', suiting a variety of learning styles and enriching any existing PSHE syllabus. Designed to offer maximum flexibility to cater for a busy curriculum, it requires minimal teacher input and enables students to direct their own learning.

Not only does Bounce Not Break effectively teach students important life skills, but it offers a way for the student and teacher to identify and track levels of student wellbeing over time.

Interested to find out more? Visit [www.bouncenotbreak.org.uk](http://www.bouncenotbreak.org.uk) today.



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[www.stem4.org.uk](http://www.stem4.org.uk)