

# Summer Term 2025 Newsletter

ISSUE 3

Welcome  
to the SUMMER  
2025 newsletter  
of the WISDOM  
Research  
Network!

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## Our Termly Newsletters include:

### WISDOM Network Updates

### From Beyond the Network

For example:

- Updates from schools
- Interviews with experts
- Spotlight on CYP mental health issues

### Research Opportunities for Schools

## Newsletter Contents:

### Section Heading

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## Please get in touch!

We welcome input from schools to understand better what you'd like to read about here going forwards.



## Understanding and Measuring Overwhelming Emotions in Adolescence

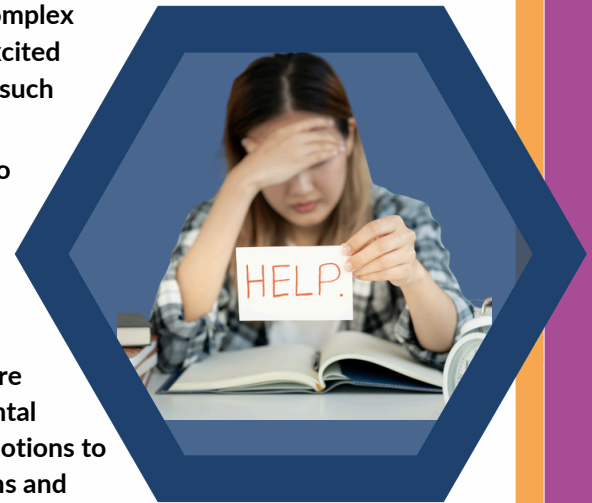
Adolescence is a key time for learning about and interpreting emotions. Complex cognitive abilities, that are developing during this time, allow for a more complex understanding of emotions. This includes experiencing mixed emotions (excited and nervous) and social emotions, like those we have in relation to others, such as shame.

For some people, these emotions can be overwhelming and very difficult to manage. Experiencing overwhelming emotions is a common feature in typical adolescent development, but it can also be a factor in different mental health problems, such as anxiety and eating disorders which often begin at this time.

We are researchers from the University of Oxford, working to develop more effective treatments for children and adolescents struggling with their mental health. We want to better understand the experience of overwhelming emotions to develop better measures and treatments that help people manage emotions and potentially prevent mental health problems.

Research in this area currently focuses on the ways people try to control their emotions, with the belief that some techniques are better than others. This research has found, however, that most people use lots of strategies both 'good' ones and 'bad' ones and this doesn't seem to dictate how successful they are.

We believe that the way we give meaning to what is happening to us when we have big emotions is important in how we are able to manage them. Therefore, instead of looking at strategies for controlling emotions, we are interested in understanding the experience itself and how young people give meaning to these experiences as a way to find better targets for treatments.



In this study, we have been interviewing young people about their experiences of overwhelming emotions and the meaning they give to them.



“From this data and input from other young people and clinicians, we have created a questionnaire to represent this experience.”

Young people with lived experience have been involved in the design of the project, developing the interview schedule and generating the items for the questionnaire.

We are now in the second phase of this study where we need to test this questionnaire on a large sample of adolescents, in order to verify whether:

- It accurately assesses the experience (the validity of the questionnaire)
- The responses are stable over time (the reliability of the questionnaire)
- And provide cut-offs to be able to detect when a clinical problem might be indicated

For this, we need responses from young people with a range of experiences:



If you think this project could be of interest to your school (for schools in Oxford or London only), please get in touch by emailing us at [aim@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:aim@psy.ox.ac.uk) or complete the following form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/ErWjvpWXLK>

# From Beyond the Network

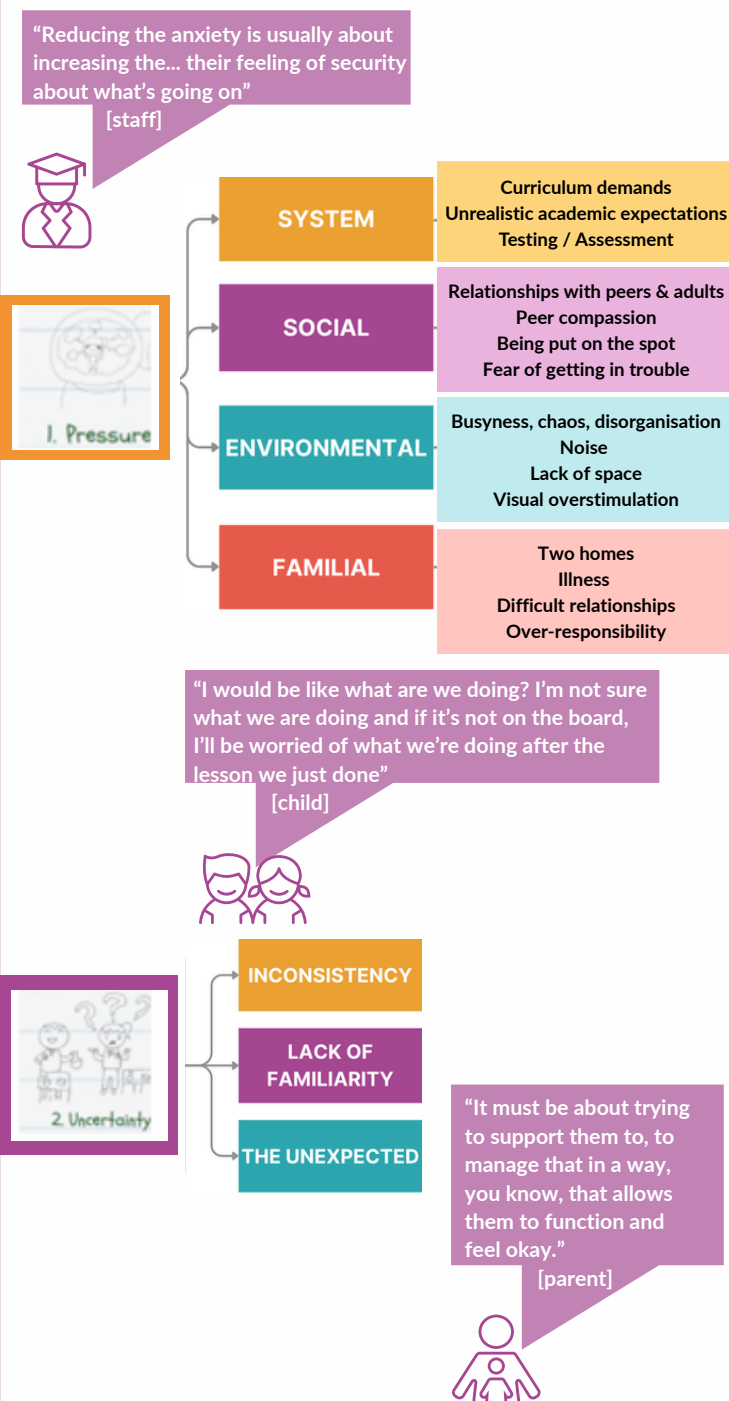
## Managing Anxiety in Primary Schools Through Day to Day Classroom Practice

Helen Manley, Postdoctoral Researcher

Anxiety problems are common in children and can have profound adverse effects on personal, social and academic life. Almost 40% of anxiety disorders emerge before age 14, making primary schools invaluable settings for the prevention and early support of child anxiety problems. Despite the impetus and requirement for schools to invest in supporting the mental health needs of children, research indicates that school-based targeted interventions for anxiety problems can be costly and difficult to schedule, school staff may lack confidence to deliver them effectively, and outcomes are mixed. Are there things that staff can do day to day, to better support children who experience difficulties with anxiety?

We interviewed children, parents and staff in primary schools and asked them to tell us about their experiences of children's anxiety in the classroom. We were particularly interested in finding out what they thought might contribute to increased anxiety and, importantly, what they felt school staff can do day-to-day that might help. So what did they tell us?

### Contributors: Pressure & Uncertainty



### How can staff help?

#### Through routines, consistency and control



- Routines should be clearly communicated, understood, practised & embedded
- Provide consistency in layout, expectations, method & manner
- Children like to know someone is in control, using clear but fair boundaries

#### And when you can't...

- Be honest; Prepare them in advance; Recognise the change; Explain why; Check they understand

#### Through good communication and by building good relationships



- Good communication between children & staff / staff & parents / staff & staff
- Manner & tone of communication matters
- Be approachable & show interest
- Make time to talk
- Seek & welcome parental input, to build good relationships with parents as well as children

#### Minimise environmental pressure by managing the physical space



- Consistent layout / Reduce clutter
- Good organisation and sense of space
- Discuss children's seating preferences
- Keep low noise levels
- Try not to overfill walls or have too many resources
- Provide alternative spaces inside & outside the classroom
- Avoid displaying behaviour or reward charts publicly

#### AND create mental space

Children said they would like:

- Time to THINK / TALK / ASK / RESET

#### Provide pre-teaching and alternative, adjusted support



- Give instructions 1:1
- Offer alternative ways to contribute/ communicate
- Provide adjusted support to meet objectives
- Recognise the difficulty
- Provide structured support to help students overcome, rather than avoid, moments of challenge

We are planning to use outcomes from this and ongoing research to further develop training for primary school staff on managing and minimising anxiety in the classroom. We hope this will be helpful for all children, but particularly important for those who are experiencing difficulties with anxiety.

# Research Opportunities

Here are our latest research opportunities for schools.

Don't forget that by participating in any of our advertised research projects, your school will qualify for a membership upgrade and move up a tier, making you an Active or Advanced Member, depending on your current level.

Age Group	Research Title	Page No.
Primary Secondary (Aged 0 - 16 years) <i>NEW</i>	D-CYPHR – The DNA, Children & Young People's Health Resource	5
Secondary (Aged 12 - 15 years)	Supporting Autistic and Non-Autistic Young People and their Parent/Carer to Identify and Explore Signature Strengths: A Qualitative Study	6
Secondary (Aged 13 - 14 years)	Classroom Relationships and Mental Health	7
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 14 - 18 years) <i>NEW</i>	Cross-Cultural Variations in the Relationship Between Perceived Parental Control, Warmth and Threat-Based Interpretation Biases in Adolescents	8
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 11 - 18 years) <i>NEW</i>	Understanding and Measuring Overwhelming Emotions in Adolescence	9
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 15 - 18 years)	Social Anxiety and Classroom Concentration	10
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 11 - 18 years) <i>NEW</i>	Self-Diagnosis Interview Study	11
Secondary 6th Form Colleges Further Education (Aged 16 - 20 years)	Losartan and Emotional Processing in Adolescents	12

If you are interested in taking part in any of the above research activities, please contact the WISDOM Research Network about becoming a member:

[wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:wisdom.network@psy.ox.ac.uk)