



Overflow: A Reflection on Anxiety in Children and How you can Help Them

At times like these our hearts can get very full. It is a bit like packing a bag for a holiday. These are the things we can fill our hearts with:

- Our family and friends
- Those we usually see often and now are missing
- Thoughts for the safety and well-being of our loved ones
- Scary things from the news or things we have heard grown-ups say
- Our unanswered questions
- The things we are most worried about but don't know how to say
- Concerns about adults who are acting differently
- The left-overs from conflicts we have had with our brothers and sisters
- Disappointments over things that we are now not able to do

If our hearts really were bags they would be very full right now, fit to bursting at times! Sometimes even a small thing will make us feel overwhelmed. We might cry or get angry and not even know why. We might be quiet and want to be alone.

Think of it like this- if we have a glass of water that is full to the brim and we add another drop, even though it is small it will cause the water to overflow. It is the same with our hearts. We need a tap to let some of those concerns and worries out. We need to unpack the bag a little.

How do we do that?

Sit down together and read Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus is very clear that we don't need to worry as He will take care of us. The last line in the passage says this: ³⁴Therefore do not worry **about** tomorrow, for tomorrow will **worry** about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

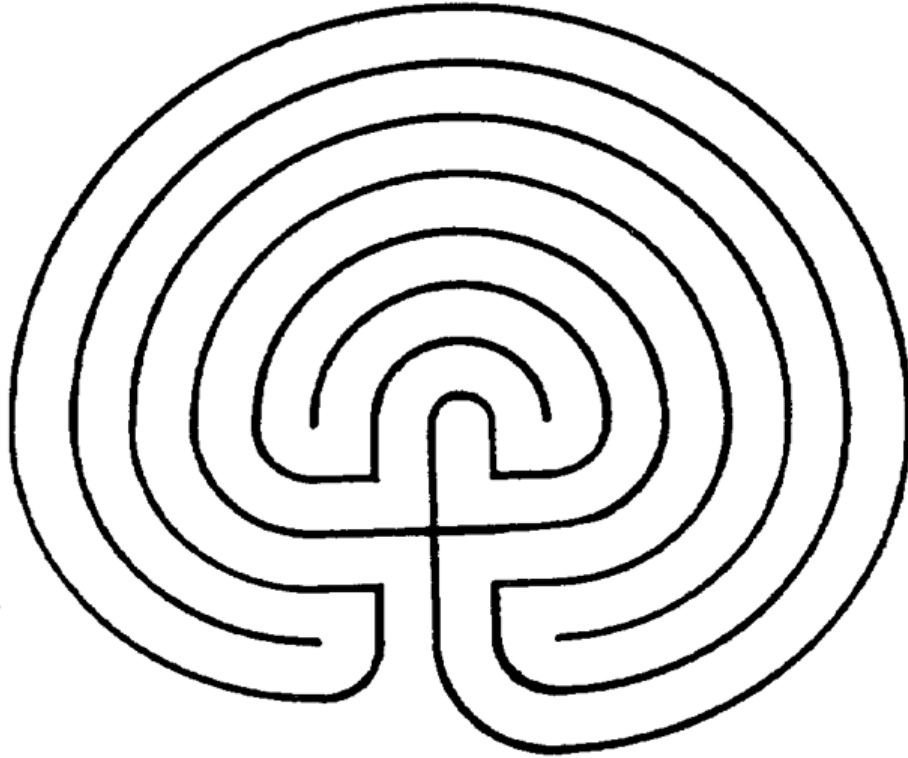
Elsewhere, Jesus says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." [Matthew 11:28]

There are some ways to take the things in our hearts and offer them to Jesus as our burdens, in exchange for His rest. You can suggest these to both children and grown-ups who are feeling frightened or anxious due to current events.

- Pray. It doesn't matter what you say. Tell Jesus how you feel and what you are worried about. Ask him for help and to take care of the people you love, especially those you haven't been able to see for a while.



- Create a prayer/worship space in your home [see the resource on creating a prayer spaces in homes] and allow children to use this as a space to be quiet and to reflect and pray in their own way.
- Draw your worries. Draw the people you love. As you draw, tell Jesus how you are feeling.
- Make a chain of people using a concertinaed piece of paper. Remember you are still connected to your family and friends. Write their names on the people and decorate each person to look like them. Hang it up in your house. Every time you look at it say a little prayer for them.
- Set up two jars. Write your worries on piece of paper and put them into the jar. In the other jar out your hopes- write them, draw them, copy out/print verses from the Bible. Aim to fill your hope jar fuller than your worry jar.
- Write a special prayer on a piece of paper. Roll it up and post it somewhere safe where only you know where it is. Return to it whenever you need to be reminded that you have given this special concern to God.
- Set up one of the home prayer spaces from the 'Prayer Spaces in Schools' website: <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/prayer-spaces-at-home>
- Light a candle and take some deep breaths as you focus on it. Remember, Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." [John 8:12] and we know that "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." [John 1: 5]. As you look at the light, take comfort in knowing that Jesus is the light that is always with us. No matter how dark the world gets, He is here with us.
- Use something that is calming, like a labyrinth, when you pray. As you trace to the centre give Jesus your worries. Pause in the centre to feel God's peace. As you trace your way out ask God to help you to retain peace as you continue on your day.



- Use the Lego Prayers resource to pray for your family and other people you care about.
- Sing! Singing can lift our spirits. Sing the songs you know from church or the songs you do at school in Collective Worship. Use your voice as an offering to God if you can't find the words you want to say.
- Listen to music to calm you. Instrumental music can be both worshipful and calming. Close your eyes and listen.
- Talk to each other. Tell each other the things you are worried about. No worry is too small. When you have said it, imagine it on your palm. Then imagine it drifting up towards God in heaven where he will surely hear it.
- Consider using WhatsApp video chat or Zoom to gather your family together to pray together. You can simply say the Our Father together.
- Start a journal and write your feelings and your prayers in it. Share it with a grown-up who can help.
- Move your body. Try this stretching prayer:



Jesus, my worries make me feel low [bend over and touch your toes]

And my heart is full [bring your hands to your chest, over your heart]

I give my burdens to you [straighten up, stretching your arms out to the side]

You are my hope. [stretch your hand up to the air, hands wide]

Amen. [bring your hand together as if in prayer]

- Go outside. God's glory is all around you in nature. Thank God for the spring time and all the life waking up. Breathe in the fresh air and feel the sunshine on your face.
- Blow bubbles or pop some bubble wrap. As they pop, imagine Jesus taking away your worries.