

Helping Your Child Cope With Anxiety

Routines

- Predictable routines lead to fewer surprises and less stress for everyone!
- Write them out and be consistent
- Sleep Hygiene
 - Create a regular sleep schedule and stick to it, even when school is out
 - Decrease intake of sugar, caffeine, and second hand smoke for 3 hours before bedtime
 - Use relaxation activities for 20 minutes before bedtime
 - Create a routine of reading, storytelling, and/or bathing before sleep
 - Quiet music may be helpful.
 - Avoid TV and video games for at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
 - Keep TV out of the bedroom
- Nutrition
 - Breakfast is essential
 - Encourage balanced diet with plenty of protein
 - Encourage water limit pop, juices, and other sweetened beverages
 - Try to have at least one family meal every day. Sit at the table and talk about the day without the TV.
- Exercise
 - Encourage exercise at least 4 days per week for at least 20 minutes
 - Walk in place during TV commercials
 - Exercise together as a family
 - Consider using a step pedometer to give a measurement of actual exercise
 - Set small, concrete goals that are achievable, and build from there.

Social Support

- Increasing social support helps to improve moods, behavior, and relationships.
- Expanding social support helps to improve feelings of connectedness and improves communication.
- Purchase some inexpensive invitations or make some at home.
- Ask your child to make a list of people to whom they can give or mail the invitations.
- The invitations are to ask people to be open to a visit or a phone call when:
 - Support is needed
 - Help is needed with solving problems
 - Some encouragement is needed to improve mood.

Tools to Help Manage Symptoms of Anxiety

- Bubbles
 - Encourage taking slow, deep breaths to get as many bubbles as possible
 - Do this at least once a day, or as often as needed.
- Play-Doh
 - Knead, roll, pound, and shape the Play-Doh
 - Do this at least once a day, or as often as needed.
- Textured cloths
 - Corduroy and silky cloths work best
 - Rub a material that feels soothing
 - Can be kept in a pocket, or attached to the top or bottom of a desk

- Lotion
 - Give a squirt of lotion and ask the child to calm self
 - Have child give themselves a hand massage
 - Parent can give a hand massage, also

More Tools to Help Manage Symptoms of Anxiety

- Superpower Hands
 - Ask child to show how to make fists
 - After making fists, hands rise up and muscles tense
 - Have child give complete opposite response, relaxing hands
 - Superpower hands relax
- “Big Daddy” Sunglasses
 - Can help a child discuss things that are scary or embarrassing
 - Give a pair of big, inexpensive sunglasses to help provide some distance for the worries or fears.
 - Once the sunglasses are on, no one can “watch” him/her talk about the “scary” thing or embarrassing behavior.
- Superhero Comic Books or Movies
 - Have the child choose a favorite superhero comic book or movie
 - Ask the child to describe the superhero and their superpowers
 - Have the child take on the superhero’s power and use it to get through the scary situation.
- Music
 - Have the child listen to soothing, relaxing, and meaningful music before a stressful situation, to calm after a stressful situation, or at the end of the day to relax and help get to sleep.

Books and Other Resources

Children’s Books:

- Belknap, Martha, Stress relief for kids: Taming your dragon
- Buron, Kari, When my worries get too big! A relaxation book for children who live with anxiety.
- Crist, James J., PhD., What do you do when you’re SCARED and WORRIED?
- Guanci, Anne, David and the worry beast: Helping children cope with anxiety.
- Huebner, Dawn, What to do when you worry too much: A kid’s guide to overcoming anxiety.
- Pando, Nancy, I don’t want to go to school: Helping children cope with separation anxiety.
- Shapiro, Lawrence E., The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids: Help for Children to Cope with Stress, Anxiety, and Transitions
- Weaver, Susan B., Worry busters: Activities for kids who worry too much.

Books for Teens:

- Schab, Lisa M., The anxiety workbook for teens: Activities to help you deal with anxiety and worry.
- Shannon, Jennifer, The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens: CBT and ACT Skills to Help You Build Social Confidence (Instant Help Solutions)
- Sokol, Leslie & Fox, Marci, Think Confident, Be Confident for Teens: A Cognitive Therapy Guide to Overcoming Self-Doubt and Creating Unshakable Self-Esteem (The Instant Help Solutions Series)

Educational Books for Parents:

- Chansky, Tamar, Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias
- Pincus, Donna, Growing up brave: Expert strategies for helping your child overcome fear, stress and anxiety.
- Wignall, Ann, Helping your anxious child: A step-by-step guide for parents.

Websites for Children:

- www.JJsPlace.org This website is for children with OCD. Has links for children with OCD, friends & family of children with OCD, Teachers of children with OCD, and professionals working with children with OCD.

Websites for Parents:

- www.worrywisekids.org Educational material/tools for parents of children with anxiety disorders. Provided by The Children’s Center for OCD and Anxiety
- 2. www.aada.org Anxiety Disorder Association of America. Information, resources and tools for families.