

HOW TO PARENT AN ANXIOUS CHILD





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These days, there are a lot of kids dealing with feelings of worry and anxiety.

Often, these feelings are the result of struggling with things they don't understand, or there is a break in the routine, and they are not sure of what is going to happen and when.

Studies show that children feel safe when they are in a consistent and predictable environment. Safety is their main concern and ours.

Kids are exposed to things they don't understand on a regular basis. They overhear adult conversations. They watch the local or national news. They are exposed through the lyrics of the music they listen to or when something pops up on the computer when they are playing games.

Their minds and emotions are not ready to process the information so they think about it frequently, and they worry about it.

Here are some tips for helping your kids with anxiety:

1. Be vigilant about limiting screen time.

This will minimize the flood of messages your child receives daily. Sometimes it's helpful to avoid watching the news or checking social media for a week or two.

2. Look at your family's schedule.

Sit down every Sunday night and review the upcoming week as a family. When changes occur, make sure everyone is informed and plans are in place ahead of time.



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Remember, kids respond well to routine. If there is a change for the week, notify them ahead of time.

3. Maintain normalcy in your daily life and routines.

Don't undermine your children's sense of security by obsessing over media coverage or altering how you live because of some unknown fear or unlikely event.

4. Reassure your children.

Tell your children that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe, and it's not just you who is looking out for them. Let your children know that there are many people in their lives, from grandparents to teachers to police officers, who are doing everything they can to keep their school and community safe.

5. Be honest.

Even if the chances of something happening in your community are remote, don't stretch the truth by saying, "Nothing is going to happen here." Acknowledge the possibility, but remind your children that you and many others are doing everything possible to keep everyone safe.

6. Keep them busy.

Include them in activities in the home and family and make sure they are interacting with others.

7. Make sure they are getting enough sleep.

Worry can interfere with sleep which contributes to more worry. Try our sleep guide if you need some help with this.



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8. Make sure your family is eating a healthy diet.

Avoid stimulants such as sugar and caffeine and any excess.

Common Questions of Parents with Anxious Children:

Q: What are some signs my child may suffer from anxiety?

A: Your child may not want to do as many things as before. You may also see stomachaches and headaches connected to activities they no longer want to do. For instance, you may notice that they don't have stomachaches and headaches on the weekends, but they do right about when it's time to get ready for school. While some symptoms may seem unimportant on their own, when you look at them together, you might start to say to yourself, "Okay, there's something going on here beyond simply not wanting to go to school."

Q: When should I seek professional help for my child's anxiety?

A: Almost everybody experiences anxiety, but anxiety doesn't cause impairment for everybody. So the time to seek out a professional is when it's causing impairment. Let's say a child has to do something like attend school, give a speech or maybe they need to do or want to do



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something. So they want to participate on a basketball team, they want to be a dancer, they want to participate in the debate team, but anxiety is holding them back. At this point if you've tried some strategies at home and they're still not able to do what they need to do or they want to do everyday, it would be a great time to contact a professional.

And remember you can always call the Boys Town National Hotline at 1-800-448-3000 if you have any additional concerns.