

Helping Your Child Manage Anxiety

Practical Strategies for Supporting Your Child at Home

School Counselor Resource Series

Understanding Childhood Anxiety

It's normal for children and teens to feel worried from time to time. Tests, friendships, new experiences, sports, family changes, and growing responsibilities can all create stress. Anxiety becomes more concerning when worries begin interfering with daily life, relationships, school performance, sleep, or activities they once enjoyed.

The good news is that with understanding, support, and healthy coping skills, most children can learn to manage anxiety effectively.

Common Signs of Anxiety

Children may experience anxiety differently than adults. Some common signs include:

- Frequent worrying or asking for reassurance
- Avoiding school or certain activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Headaches or stomachaches without a clear medical cause
- Irritability or emotional outbursts
- Perfectionism or fear of making mistakes
- Withdrawing from friends or family

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How Parents Can Help

Listen First

Allow your child to share their thoughts without immediately trying to fix the problem. Feeling heard often reduces anxiety.

Validate Their Feelings

Instead of saying, "*There's nothing to worry about,*" try:

"I can see this feels really difficult for you."

Validation doesn't increase anxiety, it helps children feel understood.

Encourage, Don't Rescue

It's natural to want to remove whatever is causing your child's anxiety. Instead, encourage them to take manageable steps while reminding them they can handle difficult situations with your support.

Maintain Healthy Routines

Regular sleep, nutritious meals, physical activity, and predictable routines help children manage stress more effectively.

Celebrate Courage

Praise effort rather than perfection. Recognize moments when your child faces fears, asks for help, or keeps trying despite feeling anxious.

Helpful Coping Strategies

Encourage your child to:

- ☐ Take slow, deep breaths
- ☐ Spend time outdoors
- ☐ Stay physically active
- ☐ Journal or draw
- ☐ Listen to calming music

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- ☐ Pray or spend quiet time reflecting
- ☐ Talk with a trusted adult
- ☐ Break large tasks into smaller steps
- ☐ Practice positive self-talk
- ☐ Focus on what they can control

What to Avoid

Try to avoid:

- Dismissing or minimizing your child's fears
- Comparing them to others
- Expecting perfection
- Solving every problem for them
- Assuming anxiety will simply "go away"

Instead, offer calm support, encouragement, and opportunities to practice healthy coping skills.

When Should You Seek Additional Support?

Consider speaking with a qualified mental health professional if anxiety:

- Continues for several weeks or months
- Interferes with school, friendships, or family life
- Causes frequent physical symptoms
- Leads to avoidance of everyday activities
- Seems to be increasing despite your support

Early intervention often leads to better long-term outcomes.

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A Final Encouragement

Anxiety does not define your child. With caring adults, healthy coping strategies, and appropriate support, children can develop confidence, resilience, and the skills they need to navigate life's challenges.

Part of the Freedom Path Counseling School Counselor Resource Series

These resources are provided free of charge to support school counselors as they invest in the emotional well-being of students and families. Learn more and access additional downloadable tools at **freedompathcounseling.org/school-counselor-resource-center**

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