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Anxiety Handout - Parents

Source: <http://childparenting.about.com/od/healthsafety/a/handlechildanxiety.htm>

It is an unfortunate but very real fact that stress and anxiety in children is a common problem in today's fast-paced, high-tech, activity-packed society. If your child is experiencing stress and anxiety, use these simple but effective ways, together, to help manage heightened fear or anxious feelings.

Don't dismiss their feelings. Telling your child not to worry about their fears may only make them feel like they're doing something wrong by feeling anxious. Let them know it's okay to feel bad about something, and encourage them to share their emotions and thoughts.

Listen. You know how enormously comforting it can be just to have someone listen when something's bothering you. Do the same thing for your child. If they don't feel like talking, let them know you are there for them. Just be by their side and remind them that you love and support them.

Offer comfort and distraction. Try to do something they enjoy, like playing a favourite game or cuddling in your lap and having you read to them, just as you did when they were younger. When the chips are down, even a 10-year-old will appreciate a good dose of parent TLC.

Get them outside. Exercise can boost mood, so get them moving. Even if it's just for a walk around the block, fresh air and physical activity may be just what they needs to lift their spirits and give them a new perspective on things.

Stick to routines. Balance out any changes by trying to maintain as much of their regular routine as possible. Try to stick to their regular bedtime and mealtimes, if possible.





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Keep your child healthy. Make sure they are eating right and getting enough sleep. Not getting enough rest or eating nutritious meals at regular intervals can contribute to your child's stress. If they feel good, they'll be better equipped to work through whatever is bothering them.

Avoid over-scheduling. Soccer, karate, baseball, music lessons, playdates, the list of extracurricular activities kids can take on is endless. But too many activities can easily lead to stress and anxiety in children. Just as grown-ups need some downtime after work and on weekends, children also need some quiet time alone to decompress.

Limit your child's exposure to upsetting news or stories. If your child sees or hears upsetting images or accounts of natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis or sees disturbing accounts of violence or terrorism on the news, talk to your child about what's going on. Reassure them that they and the people they love are not in danger. Talk about the aid that people who are victims of disasters or violence receive from humanitarian groups, and discuss ways that they may help, such as by working with their school to raise money for the victims.

Consult a counsellor or your pediatrician. If you suspect that a change in the family such as a new sibling, a move, divorce, or a death of a family member is behind your child's stress and anxiety, seek advice from an expert such as your child's school counsellor, your pediatrician, or a child therapist. They can suggest ways to help a child talk about death, for instance, or help them through any other shift in the family.

Set a calm example. You can set the tone for how stress and anxiety in children and adults is handled in your house. It's virtually impossible to block out stress from our lives in today's high-tech, 24-hour-news-cycle world, but you can do something about how you handle your own stress. And the more you are able to keep things calm and peaceful at home, the less likely it is that anxiety in children will be a problem in your household.





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Humour and Levity. Be sure to value, appreciate and utilize your funny bone and your child's. Humour is a great stress reducer while seriousness can fuel anxiety. Watch cartoons, sitcoms and play games. Make it ok in your family to break tension with jokes and humour.

Breathe! Teach Box-Breathing: Practice many, many times per day. Learn this technique on our YouTube channel! Scan the QR code below for more resources.

