



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH ANXIETY

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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COUNSELLING AND CONSULTANCY



UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

- **Anxiety can show up in many ways**—worry, seeking reassurance, avoidance, stomach aches, restlessness, irritability, trouble sleeping, or withdrawing from activities. In teenagers, it may also look like overthinking, perfectionism, or distancing themselves from others.
- **It's normal for children and teens to feel anxious at times**—especially during new, unpredictable, or stressful situations. But when anxiety starts to interfere with daily life, it's important to provide extra support.
- **Anxiety isn't always obvious.** Some young people hide it well, especially if they're afraid of being judged or don't know how to talk about their feelings. Look for changes in behaviour, mood, or habits.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

- **Listen and validate:** Let your child talk about their worries without immediately trying to fix them. Use phrases like “That sounds hard” or “I’m really glad you told me” to show understanding.
- **Create routines:** A predictable routine gives children a sense of safety and control. This can ease anxiety, especially during times of change or uncertainty.
- **Encourage problem-solving:** Help your child learn to break down challenges into manageable steps. Praise their efforts to try, even when things feel hard.
- **Avoid reassurance loops:** Constantly telling your child that everything will be okay can unintentionally reinforce worry. Instead, help them build confidence in managing uncertainty.

HELPFUL STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

- **Building a coping toolbox:** Encourage your child to find and use calming activities like drawing, listening to music, stretching, or holding a soft toy. These tools can help regulate emotions in the moment.
- **Encouraging gradual exposure:** Support your child to face fears in small steps. Celebrate their bravery at each stage, and avoid pushing too fast. Over time, this builds confidence and resilience.
- **Using calming language:** Model supportive self-talk like “I can handle this” or “This feeling will pass.” Encourage your child to develop their own calming phrases.
- **Creating a ‘worry time’:** Set aside 10–15 minutes a day as dedicated “worry time.” This gives children a chance to share their concerns while helping them learn to contain anxiety during other parts of the day.
- **Stay connected.** Play, humour, shared interests, or spending time together (even quietly) can make it easier for young people to talk and feel supported..
- **Encouraging movement and activity:** Physical activity is a powerful stress reliever. Support your child to move their body in ways they enjoy, such as walking, dancing, or playing outside.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- **Parenting under pressure:** It's normal to feel unsure or overwhelmed when your child is anxious. Be kind to yourself—you're doing your best.
- **Modelling calm:** Children take cues from the adults around them. Practising your own calming strategies can help them learn how to do the same.
- **Practise self-compassion:** Remind yourself that parenting an anxious child can be challenging. It's okay to have difficult days. What matters most is staying connected and showing up.
- **Getting your own support:** You don't have to do this alone. Talking to a friend, family member, or professional can help you stay grounded and supported.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

- **What to watch for:** If your child's anxiety lasts more than a few weeks, worsens, or begins to interfere with school, friendships, or daily life, it may be time to seek help.
- **How to access help:** A good first step is to talk to your GP about a Mental Health Care Plan. This can give access to rebated sessions with a psychologist or mental health professional.
- **Working with schools:** Reach out to your child's teacher or school counselor. They can help monitor progress, offer strategies, and work with you to support your child's wellbeing.
- **Therapies that help:** Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one of the most effective treatments for anxiety in children. A psychologist can tailor support to your child's needs.

Supporting someone with anxiety can be really tough.

You're not failing if it's hard - reach out for support when you need to

And if you need professional support, get in touch with us

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