

“Anxiety – Calming those Worries”

The Bible tells us to, “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6) but the truth is that, at one time or another, all of us have experienced some level of anxiety. If you go into any school at exam, most of the students will have some level of anxiety but some may be so anxious that they don't manage to get to school that morning. So, while some anxiety may be normal, it becomes a problem for children when it starts to get in the way of their everyday life.

Severe anxiety like this can harm children's mental and emotional wellbeing, affecting their self-esteem and confidence. They may become withdrawn and go to great lengths to avoid things or situations that make them feel anxious.

What are the signs of anxiety in children?

When young children feel anxious, they cannot always understand or express what they are feeling. You may notice that they:

- become irritable, tearful or clingy
- have difficulty sleeping
- wake in the night
- start wetting the bed
- have bad dreams



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In older children you may notice that they:

- lack confidence to try new things or seem unable to face simple, every day challenges
- find it hard to concentrate
- have problems with sleeping or eating
- have angry outbursts
- have a lot of negative thoughts, or keep thinking that bad things are going to happen
- start avoiding everyday activities, such as seeing friends, going out in public or going to school

Ways to Ease Anxiety in Children

1. Talk

First and foremost, it's important to talk to your child about their anxiety or worries. Reassure them and show them you care about their worries and understand how they feel.

2. Educate

If your child is old enough, it may help to explain what anxiety is and the physical effects it has on our bodies. It may be helpful to describe anxiety as being like a wave that builds up and then ebbs away again.



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3. Help Your Child Seek Solutions

As well as talking to your child about their worries and anxiety, it's important to help them find solutions.

4. Do not Solve it Yourself

For example, if your child is worried about that science fair project, you may be tempted to do most of it by yourself in order for it to look great, however, it is far better to offer support and guidance to your child as they do the work themselves. This will help to build self-confidence so they can feel better about the projects in the future.

5. Teach Signs

Teach your child to recognize signs of anxiety in themselves.

6. Ask for Help

Encourage your child to ask for help when they need it.

7. Stick to Routines

Children of all ages find routines reassuring, so try to stick to regular daily routines where possible.

8. Provide Resources

If your child is anxious because of distressing events, such as a bereavement or separation, look for books or films that will help them to understand their feelings.



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9. Prep for Changes

If you know a change, such as a house move, is coming up, prepare your child by talking to them about what is going to happen, when, and why.

10. Model

Try not to become overprotective or anxious yourself.

11. Deep Breathing

Practice simple relaxation techniques with your child, such as deep breathing- taking 3 deep, slow breaths, breathing in for a count of 3 and out for 3.

12. Journal or Draw

Have your child journal or draw pictures about their feelings. This is a way of expressing their anxiety in a visual way and often, it is easier than expressing feelings out loud.

13. Pray

Pray with and for your child. Also, ask your child in what specific ways you can pray for them and teach them to take their worries to Jesus.



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When should you seek professional help?

If your child's anxiety is severe, persists, and interferes with their everyday life, it's a good idea to seek professional help. Do not hesitate to reach out to a counselor trained to work with children in this area. Remember, seeking help is a sign that you love your child and want what's best for their mental health.

Above all else, teach your child that Jesus loves them and cares about them. He is willing to listen to their worries and concerns and will help them through the difficult times in their life.

Reference

NHS. (2020). Anxiety in Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/>



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