

## Anxiety and How Parents Can Help Their Kids

- What is anxiety?
  - Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats.
  - In small doses, anxiety is helpful. It protects us from danger and focuses our attention on problems.
  - But when anxiety is too severe or occurs too frequently, it can become debilitating.
- How does anxiety present itself?
  - Physical
    - Stomachaches
    - Headaches
    - Muscle tension
    - Sweating
    - Increased heart rate and faster breathing
    - Sleep problems
  - Emotional/Mental/Behavioral:
    - Avoidance of situations/tasks
    - Poor concentration
    - Excessive worry
    - Crying
- What Can Parents Do About It?
  - Steps in the Process:
    - Help your child recognize when they are feeling anxious (look for physical and mental/emotional symptoms).
    - Take some deep breaths together to calm down.
    - Have them name that they are feeling anxious. If you can name it, some of the fear goes away.
    - Empathize. Your child needs to know you get what they are going through.
    - Try to pinpoint what is causing the anxiety.
    - Brainstorm possible solutions to the thing that is causing anxiety.
  - Coping Skills: (Google these things)
    - Deep breathing
      - Belly breathing
      - 4-7-8 breathing
      - Square breathing
    - Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
    - Guided Imagery
    - Push--Pull--Dangle
    - Find activities or hobbies or crafts
    - Get exercise or go for a walk
    - Play/cuddle with a pet
    - music/art/read/dance
    - Talk with a parent
    - Drink a cup of tea/hot chocolate

- Write/journal
  - Get organized
  - Make routines/plans
  - Keep a calendar
  - Don't procrastinate
  - If it takes 60 seconds or less, just do it
  - It's ok to say no
  - BALANCE!
  - Cell phones can contribute to anxiety. UNPLUG! Do something offline!
  - **Turn irrational thoughts into rational ones:**
    - Watch out for always and never, catastrophizing, mindreading
  - If your child is falling into a worrying or what if spell, bring them back to the present by engaging their 5 senses (drink water, splash water on your face, focus on your surroundings and what do you see).
  - Make checklists.
  - Don't avoid things that cause anxiety. This will usually make anxiety worse. Help your child ease into situations that cause anxiety. Start small, build success, and then tackle more difficult things.
- Resources:
    - [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/renee-jain/9-things-every-parent-with-an-anxious-child-should-try\\_b\\_5651006.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/renee-jain/9-things-every-parent-with-an-anxious-child-should-try_b_5651006.html)
    - <https://www.anxietybc.com/>
    - <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>
    - [http://www1.ccs.k12.in.us/clm/uploads/File/Carmel\\_Clay\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www1.ccs.k12.in.us/clm/uploads/File/Carmel_Clay_Presentation.pdf)
    - Google coping strategies like the deep breathing techniques mentioned above, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided meditation to find videos that walk you through those strategies.