

Taming the Anxious Mind: How Parents Can Help



What we'll be doing:

- Understand the nature of anxiety
- Learn and practice coping strategies for dealing with anxiety

The function of anxiety

- Motivates us to do things
- Warning sign of something that needs our attention
- Sharpens our attention and focus in times of crisis

Normal Anxiety:

- Unfamiliar situations/people
- Fleeting experience
- Transitions in developmental stages
- Responds quickly to reassurance


When Anxiety become a Problem:

- Unremitting worry and fear
- Physical complaints
- Disruption in sleep and appetite
- Impairs functioning in school and socially

Red Flags for Anxiety

- Easily distressed, or agitated
- Repetitive reassurance questions
- Headaches, stomachaches, regularly too sick to go to school
- Anticipatory anxiety, worrying hours, days, weeks ahead
- Perfectionism, self-critical, very high standards that make nothing good enough
- Overly-responsible, people pleasing
- Demonstrating excessive avoidance

Autonomic Nervous system

Sympathetic Nervous System	Parasympathetic Nervous System
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fight flight freeze• Mobilizes body• Purpose to keep us alive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rest and digest• Restores body to calm• Purpose to keep us alive
	



What we know works

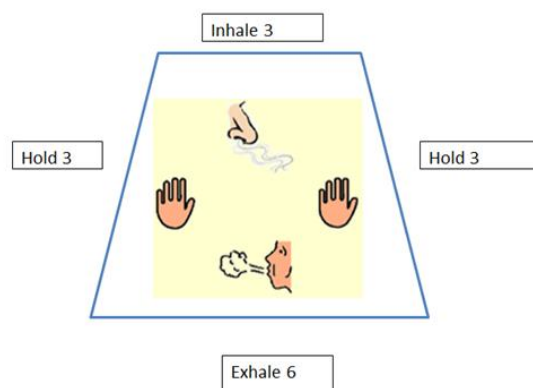
Reduce Baseline Anxiety

- Exercise
- Health diet
- Reduce screen time
- Sleep hygiene
- Balanced schedule
- Time management
- Social support from caring adults

Building Resiliency

- Relaxation Skills
- Polygon Breathing
- Grounding
- Planning Ahead
- Mind as an App
- Critical thinking skills
- Knowing What Matters

Polygon Breathing



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Parenting Skills

- Reinforce approach strategies
- Model approach behaviors
- Reduce shielding behavior
- Encourage healthy risk behaviors
- Toe in the water
- Patience

Reinforce Approach Strategies

- Acknowledge fear *and* praise approach
- Coach skills use during difficult times
- Link approach to bigger picture

Coping Skills Checklist

- Check off the ones that you do now
- Circle the ones you want to try
- Cross off the ones that don't work

Calming Skills

- Deep breathing using a pinwheel
- Deep breathing with bubbles
- Deep breathing with a stuffed animal
- Deep breathing using a feather
- Take a mindful walk
- Yoga
- Imagine your favorite place
- Think of your favorite things
- Picture the people you care about
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Remember the words to a song you love
- Run water over your hands
- Carry a small object
- Touch things around you
- Move
- Make a fist then release it
- Positive Self-Talk
- Take a shower or bath
- Take a drink of water
- Counting
- Block out noises
- Take a break
- Calming Jar
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Distraction Skills

- Write a story
- Crossword/Sudoku Puzzles
- Bake or Cook
- Volunteer/Community Service
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Read
- Clean
- Play with a pet
- Play a board game
- Play video games
- Screen time
- Play with a friend
- Start a garden
- Creative Thinking
- Make up your own game
- Plan a fun event
- Start a new hobby
- Do a crafting project
- Your favorite things
- Be silly and laugh
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Breathing Exercises for Kids

<http://www.cosmickids.com/read/five-fun-breathing-practices-for-kids/>

Tumble Dryer

Sitting in cross-legged position, point your index fingers towards each other and position them so your left finger is pointing to the right and your right finger is pointing to the left overlapping a bit in front of your mouth and blow as you spin your fingers round each other, making a lovely long exhalation and a satisfying swishy sound. This works well after washing machine, which involves sitting in a cross-legged position, interlacing your fingers behind your head and twisting from your core side to side going “wishy washy wishy washy” as you twist each way.



Bumble Bee Breaths

Known as Bhramari in Pranayama practice. Pranayama being the control of the breath in Yoga. Sitting comfortably with your legs crossed, breath in through your nose, then with fingers in your ears hum out your exhalation. The lovely comforting resonance of this has a calming effect and done with eyes closed can make it even more peaceful.

Kids Yoga for Calming Anxiety

<http://www.cosmickids.com/read/kids-yoga-for-calming-anxiety/>

Body Scanning video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIC-lo441v4>

Books

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (6+)

"What to Do When You Worry Too Much" is an interactive self-help book designed to guide 6-12 year olds and their parents through the cognitive-behavioral techniques most often used in the treatment of generalized anxiety. Engaging, encouraging, and easy to follow, this book educates, motivates, and empowers children to work towards change. It includes a note to parents by psychologist and author Dawn Huebner, PhD.

David and the Worry Beast: Helping Children Cope with Anxiety (4 – 9)

Learning to deal with anxiety is an important step in a child's healthy emotional growth. Conquering fears, and not avoiding them, is the lesson imparted in this story. David could not stop thinking about the basket he had missed at the end of the big game. He was worried that he might do it again. He was worried that his team mates would be angry with him. He was worried that his parents would not be proud of him. He was also worried about an upcoming math test. In fact, David was worried a lot. "Should I quit the team?" he asked himself. "Should I be sick tomorrow and miss the math test?" Luckily, David finally confided in his parents and school nurse, both of whom gave him support and techniques for controlling the "worry beast" within him. Delightfully illustrated, it focuses on a very real and essential topic.

Is a Worry Worrying You? (4 – 8)

Adults think of childhood as a carefree time, but the truth is that children worry, and worry a lot, especially in our highly pressurized era. This book addresses children's worries with humor and imagination, as hilarious scenarios teach kids the use of perspective and the art of creative problem-solving.

Sea Otter Cove: Introducing relaxation breathing to lower anxiety, decrease stress and control anger while promoting peaceful sleep (6+)

Sea Otter Cove is a story that teaches children how to use diaphragmatic breathing to calm down, lower stress, and control anger. Children love to experience belly breathing with the playful sea otters and sea child. This self-calming breathing technique can help your child to self-soothe, relax, and manage anger. Children love to experience belly breathing with the playful sea otters and sea child. This effective, self-calming technique also known as diaphragmatic breathing or deep breathing can have a positive impact on your child's health. Focused breathing can lower stress and anxiety levels. It can be used to decrease pain and anger. Delightful characters and this easy breathing exercise encourages your child to slow down, relax, and fall asleep peacefully.

Don't Panic, Annika. (4 – 7)

Annika always panics. She panics when her coat zip gets stuck on the way to a party. She panics when she can't find her favourite toy at bedtime. Her mum, dad and brother try to help her learn how to stay calm and think her way through a problem

What to Do When You're Scared and Worried: A Guide for Kids (9 – 13)

From a dread of spiders to panic attacks, kids have worries and fears, just like adults. This is a book kids can turn to when they need advice, reassurance, and ideas. They'll find out where fears and worries come from, practice Fear Chasers and Worry Erasers, and learn to seek help for hard-to-handle fears they can't manage on their own.

My Anxious Mind: A Teen's Guide to Managing Anxiety and Panic

'My Anxious Mind' outlines a simple and proven plan to help you understand and deal with your anxiety and panic. It is full of simple-to-use tools and strategies that easily fit into any teen's busy routine

Anxiety Sucks! A Teen Survival Guide

Is your anxiety kicking your teen's butt? Are they tired of boring, long self-help books that do anything but help? Are they annoyed by suggestions that show the author doesn't really get anxiety? I get it. I also get anxiety. I have lived it and so have the thousands of kids I have helped in my therapy practice. Until you have lived it – you will never understand anxiety's insidious moves. Anxiety Sucks! Teen Survival Guide is short and to the point. Have them read it. Practice it. Repeat. A book I know kids will be able to get through in one or two sittings. A book that will teach kids how their little dictator rules their mind and tricks them into making their anxiety grow. And finally, a book that will help them develop mad skills to counterattack their dictator and show him who is boss. Every kid being bullied by anxiety should be armed with the skills this book provides.

Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens: A Guide to Living an Extraordinary Life

Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens is a workbook that provides you with essential skills for coping with the difficult and sometimes overwhelming emotions that stress you out and cause you pain. The emotions aren't going anywhere, but you can find out how to deal with them. Once you do, you will become a mindful warrior—a strong person who handles tough emotions with grace and dignity—and gain many more friends and accomplishments along the way.

Based in proven-effective acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), this book will arm you with powerful skills to help you use the power of mindfulness in everyday situations, stop finding faults in yourself and start solving your problems, how to be kinder to yourself so you feel confident and have a greater sense of self-worth, and how to identify the values that will help you create the life of your dreams.

Relaxation and Mindfulness Apps for Kids with Anxiety

Update: A reader recently brought it to my attention that you can save 5% on app purchases on iTunes through iBotta right now. I'm not sure if it works for in app purchases but thought I would share that with ya'll!

Breathe, Think, Do Sesame

Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame is intended for parents and caregivers to use with their young children (ages 2-5) to help teach skills such as problem-solving, self-control, planning, and task persistence.

What it Costs: Free (iOS and Android)

Calm

Calm is the perfect meditation app for beginners, but also includes hundreds of programs for intermediate and advanced users.

Guided meditation sessions are available in lengths of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 minutes so you can choose the perfect length to fit with your schedule.

What it Costs: Free (iOS and Android)

DreamyKid

The DreamyKid meditation app offers meditation, guided visualization and affirmations curated just for children & teens. It uses proven techniques that teach your kids methods to guide them towards a happier life through mindfulness.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Headspace

Meditation made simple. Guided meditations suitable for all levels from Headspace. Meditation can help improve your focus, exercise mindful awareness, relieve anxiety and reduce stress.

What it Costs: Free (iOS and Android)

Kids Yoga Deck

Children will love to move their bodies as they flip through their very own yoga deck. With clear pictures and step-by-step instructions, these yoga poses are fun, child-friendly, and great for every body!

What it Costs: \$1.99 (iOS)

Stop, Breathe & Think Kids: Focus, Calm & Sleep

As parents, we want to raise our kids to be able to handle whatever comes their way. Whether they need to mellow out before bed, develop positive relationships or simply have a peaceful moment, Stop, Breathe & Think Kids offers children a fun and easy way to identify and process their emotions. From counting breaths to friendly wishes or frog jumps, each activity brings fun rewards to keep them engaged.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Breathing Bubbles

Breathing Bubbles is an app that helps kids practice releasing worries and focusing on good feelings by allowing kids to select the emotion they are feeling and how strongly they are feeling it. Kids can choose to handle their emotion by releasing a worry or receiving a joy as Manny the Manatee walks them through deep breathing and visualization.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is designed to help people pressure, stress, and challenges of daily life. This app has a fantastic section on Mindfulness in the Classroom and is suited for kids ages 7-18.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Positive Penguins

The four positive Penguins take you on an interactive journey to help you understand that feelings arise from your thinking and if you challenge your negative thoughts successfully you may be able to see things in a more realistic and even optimistic way.

What it Costs: \$0.99 (iOS)

Calm Counter Social Story & Anger Management Tool

Calm Counter is a visual and audio tool to help people calm down when they are angry or anxious. The app includes a social story about anger, and audio/visual tools for calming down.

What it Costs: \$2.99 (iOS)

emotionary

Emotionary guides users through five primary emotions to find the right category of feeling, with all definitions pared back to the essentials and displayed so they can be easily compared.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Take a Chill – Stressed Teens

This app is full of tools to help manage that stress and bring mindful practices into a daily routine. Using quick mindful exercises and thoughtful activities, begin to overcome those moments whether it's studying for a test or preventing negative thoughts and patterns.

What it Costs: \$1.99 (iOS)

Super Stretch Yoga

Super Stretch is an educational yoga tool to use and teach the fun of physical activity and breathing to children. They will use the skills of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-regulation that they learn from this app as a foundation for the rest of their lives.

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Relax Melodies

Mix and listen to over 52 different relaxing sounds with background sound support — this app can be used while using other apps!

What it Costs: Free (iOS)

Websites:

Kids/teens

<https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/>

<http://www.worrywisekids.org/>

Adults

<https://tinybuddha.com/>

<https://mystrength.com/>