

All **children** have worries and fears from time to time and have experiences that make them **anxious**. When children feel completely overwhelmed by anxious thoughts, they struggle to do everyday things. Parents cannot protect their children from experiencing anxiety but what they can do is help their children learn to manage their anxiety.

Respect Your Child's Feelings

Empathise with your child and listen as they express their fears and worries. Avoid saying things such as, "There is nothing to worry about. You will be fine." Let them know you understand how they are feeling.

Healthy Coping Strategies

Talk to your child about their fears and worries and help them learn a variety of coping strategies. Having a list of strategies to use in a moment of anxiety can help children to cope such as deep breathing, using a stress ball, writing it down or counting to 10.

Encourage your child to express his/her anxiety

Validate your child's feelings by saying things like "You seem worried. What are you worried about?" Then have a discussion about their emotions, worries and fears. It helps children to name what they are experiencing or what they are feeling: for example "You appear to be very anxious" and reminding them that anxiety is just an emotion that they may be feeling, anxiety is a completely 'normal' emotion and that it won't last forever.

Don't avoid things just because they make a child anxious.

Helping children avoid the things they are afraid of will make them feel better in the short term, but it can reinforce the anxiety in the long term. Avoidance teaches children that the best way to control anxiety is to avoid whatever triggers it. Encourage your child to identify their triggers and learn how to use coping strategies as a way to overcome anxiety

Stay calm

Stay calm and manage your own anxiety. Children and teenagers pick up on their parent's emotions. If you are feeling anxious, your child will pick up on that anxiety and they could experience an increase in their own anxiety. Deliberately slow down your own speech, take deep breaths to relax, and ensure that your body language and facial expressions show that you are calm.

Focus on the positives

Children who are anxious can get lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism and worry about future events. Focus on your child's positive qualities the more regularly you do this the more that it will encourage your child to focus on the positives.