

What Can Parents Do?

There are no right or wrong ways as every child and family are different.

It is typically difficult for a person very involved in a situation/problem to view the situation objectively. Having the help of someone outside the problem can help. School staff, including teachers, social workers, counselors, psychologists, and administrators can help, as can your child's physician and community mental health providers.

Your response to life stressors can empower your child to cope with anxiety in a healthy way. Finding the most helpful "balance" in your behavior is challenging and important (not too much or too little). The following are things to consider.

WHAT TO DO:

- **Listen!** At non-anxious times listen to your child describe their anxiety. Express your love and understanding.
- **Normalize It.** It is important for your child to know that lots of children struggle with anxiety.
- **Model It.** Set the example by modeling positive risk-taking and coping strategies.
- **Avoid Excessive Reassurance.** Let children know they can come up with answers for themselves.
- **Plan.** Calmly plan ahead with your child on how you both will handle his/her anxious situations.
- **Support** your child in taking on situations that cause anxiety.
- **Express Confidence.** Believe in your child's ability to cope.
- **Limit Media Exposure.** Monitor exposure to news events and social media.
- **Praise!** Facing fears is not easy! Praise your child's efforts and self-reliance.
- **Get Help for Yourself.** If anxiety is a problem for you, help is available.

Resources

BOOKS FOR PARENTS:

- *Helping your Anxious Child: A Step-by-Step guide for Parents*, by Ronald Rapee, Susan Spence, Vanessa Cobham, Ann Wignall
- *If Your Adolescent Has an Anxiety Disorder: An Essential Resource for Parents*, by Edna Foa, Linda Wasmer Andrews
- *The Worried Child*, by Paul Foxman.

BOOKS FOR TEENS:

- *My Anxious Mind: A Teen's Guide to Managing Anxiety and Panic*, by Michael Tompkins and Katherine Martinez.
- *The Anxiety Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help with Anxiety and Worry*, by Lisa M. Schab.
- *The Stress Reduction Workbook*, by Gina Biegle.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:

- *Wemberly Worried*, by Kevin Henkes (Available in Spanish)
- *What to Do When You Worry Too Much; A Kids' Guide to Overcoming Anxiety*, by Dawn Huebner, Bonnie Matthews
- *David and The Worry Beast; Helping Children Cope With Anxiety*, by Anne Marie Guanci
- *I Don't Want To Go To School; Helping Children Cope with Separation Anxiety*, by Nancy Pando
- *What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming OCD*, by Dawn Huebner

WEBSITES:

- www.samhsa.gov/disorders/mental
- Anxiety Disorders Association of America, <http://adaa.org>.




1-888-866-8660
For the hearing and speech impaired with
TTY equipment call 1-888-556-117
www.nebraskafamilyhelpline.ne.gov

- Trained counselors 24/7/365
- Children's behavioral issues
- Parent/child conflict resolution
- Youth mental health referrals

Need help?
Don't know where to start?
Dial 2-1-1 or go to
www.ne211.org.

Provided by LPS School Social Workers
BECAUSE FAMILIES MATTER



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Anxiety in Children and Adolescents



Anxiety is a Common and
Treatable Condition

Anxiety affects our thoughts, emotions,
behavior and body.

Your school social worker can help.

 **Lincoln Public Schools**
Department of Student Services

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Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal and expected part of childhood. Some anxiety can even be helpful—it can motivate us and help us to focus. Anxiety is defined as a feeling of worry or unease. How anxiety is experienced depends on genetics, brain chemistry, life events, and personality.

Parents and caring adults often try to protect children from feeling stress and discomfort. It is natural for anxious children to want to avoid anything that will make them feel uncomfortable. However, since life is full of unpredictable situations, it is important to teach children how to deal with the unexpected. Children need to learn to problem-solve so that when unforeseen situations arise they have the skills to cope. This does not mean they won't feel some nervousness or butterflies, but it does mean they will have tools to help them through these situations. As children face and manage fears their self-confidence builds.

In cases of excessive anxiety, children may avoid important life experiences. This intense anxiety can interfere with healthy development and happiness. Some children experience fear, nervousness, shyness, and avoidance of places and activities which continue despite comfort and reassurance. Children may become aggressive, withdrawn or simply "run" from situations that seem overwhelming.

With the right kind of intervention children can learn to manage anxious feelings. Strategies often include helping children to gradually face fears.

LEFT UNTREATED ANXIETY MAY CAUSE:

- School Absences
- Impaired Relationships with Peers
- Low Self Esteem
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Adjustment Problems
- Anxiety Disorders in Adulthood.

Symptoms of Anxiety

- Frequent and excessive worries about things before they happen
- Seeking reassurance/comfort often
- Overly pleasing
- Recurring thoughts and actions
- Excessive fears of embarrassment or making mistakes
- Negative and unrealistic thoughts
- Feelings of panic
- Increased heart rate/respiration
- Shaking or tremors
- Headaches, stomachaches
- Overly sensitive to loud noises/bright lights
- Recurring nightmares or sleep disturbances
- A consistent sense of being uptight
- Nausea and sweating

School and Anxiety

SCHOOL AVOIDANCE:

Some children and adolescents experience anxiety that interferes with them wanting to go to school. This is different than a child wanting to avoid the expectations/demands of school or wanting to stay home to protect a parent from potential harm. School staff or other mental health professionals can be helpful in figuring out if anxiety is the problem. In any event, however, **allowing a child to stay home from school only makes the problem worse.**



WHAT NOT TO DO:

- Let your child stay home from school
- Repeatedly tell your child that "everything will be all right"
- Tell your child exactly how to handle every situation
- Always be tough and unsympathetic with your child
- Remove your child from fearful situations
- Allow them to always avoid feared situations
- Totally ignore your child's anxiety
- Force your child into a situation where he or she will likely fail
- Shame or punish your child for their fears
- React with criticism to your child's fears
- Take on the responsibility for your child's anxiety

TEST ANXIETY

- Anxiety about performance on a test
- Physical symptoms of anxiety
- Study excessively
- Feel a lot of anxiety even though they usually do well
- *Going blank* on a task, although prepared
- School staff can help students learn strategies to lessen anxiety.

