

Children and Anxiety.

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Still Water Therapy

What is anxiety.

Defined: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

Anxiety is anticipation for a event or potential outcome.

Anxiety is not fear. Fear is reactive anxiety is anticipatory.

What is normal anxiety? What is problematic?

Intensity is it within expected limits or out of proportion to the actual threat?

Does the anxiety reaction occur with increased FREQUENCY and/or remain fixed despite reassurance?

Is the content of the anxiety focused on a Harmless situation?

How to identify if a child is struggling with Anxiety.

Physical Signs of Anxiety

- Often complains of headaches or stomach aches even though there's no medical reason for them.
- Refuses to eat snacks or lunch at daycare or school.
- Won't use bathrooms except at home.
- Is restless, fidgety, hyperactive, or distracted (even without having ADHD)
- Starts to shake or sweat in intimidating situations.
- Constantly tenses muscles.
- Has trouble falling or staying asleep.

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Emotional Signs of Anxiety

- Cries a lot
- Is very sensitive
- Becomes grouchy or angry without any clear reason
- Is afraid of making even minor mistakes
- Has panic attacks (or is afraid of having panic attacks)
- Worries about things that are far in the future, like worrying about starting middle school in third grade
- Is worried or afraid during drop-offs (at daycare, school, relatives' homes, etc.)
- Has frequent nightmares about losing a parent or loved one

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Behavioral Signs of Anxiety

- Asks “what if?” constantly (“What if an earthquake happened?”)
- Avoids joining in during class activities like circle time
- Remains silent or preoccupied when expected to work with others
- Refusing to go to school.
- Stays inside alone at lunch or recess
- Avoids social situations with other kids, like birthday parties or extra-curricular activities
- Constantly seeks approval from parents/caregivers, teachers, and friends
- Says “I can’t do it!” without a real reason
- Having meltdowns or tantrums.

What to do and not to do with children's anxiety.

1. The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety, but to help a child manage it.
2. Don't avoid things just because they make a child anxious.
3. Express positive—but realistic—expectations.
4. Respect their feelings, but don't enable them.
6. Don't reinforce the child's fears.
7. Encourage the child to tolerate her anxiety.
8. Help the child rationalize the situation causing anxiety.
9. Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to manage your emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions to upsetting stimuli, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations and to handle frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables children, as they mature, to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.

How to develop self regulation skills in students

By not avoiding the anxiety provoking issue but helping the child manage their anxiety.

Teaching anxiety is not always a bad emotions but it helps them to be focused.

Encourage practicing self-regulation in dry runs.

Self Regulation exercises for children.

Taking a break from the anxiety provoking situation.

Engaging in a physically active activity.

Jump rope, Jumping jacks, Push, Pull, Release, etc.

Having a snack or drinking a cup of water.

Lowering the head below center of gravity can help.

Tactile stimulations.

Water beads, Fidget cubes, Weighted blankets, etc.

Engaging in a safe place visualization.

<https://gozen.com/50-calm-down-ideas-to-try-with-kids-of-all-ages/>

References

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/managing-feelings/stress-anxiety/signs-your-young-child-might-be-struggling-with-anxiety>

<https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

<https://childmind.org/article/can-help-kids-self-regulation/>

<http://ageofmontessori.org/teaching-children-to-self-regulate/>

Really Good Video explaining anxiety from UCLA.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQnKJvuWXf8>