



When Anxiety Interferes as seen in *Make It Better Magazine*

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When a child is feeling anxious, he or she can feel helpless.

At the same time, it can be frustrating for parents. You want to help, but maybe don't know the best way to manage their fears.

The good news is there are strategies both parents and children can learn to help understand and manage anxiety. The best ones teach children to “boss back” their worry with the truth and do things that their worry does not want them to do. Parents and children should know anxiety doesn't have to be in charge.

What is anxiety?

Childhood anxiety refers to feelings of worry and unease that are typically related to an upcoming situation or event. For example, a chapter test in science class, or a birthday party where the child doesn't know many of the guests. The anxiety is more than typically expected for the situation and leads to distress and interferes with performance.

What are some signs of childhood anxiety?

Anxiety affects children in many ways. Some common physical signs of anxiety include:

- racing heart
- headaches
- Stomachaches

When children experience anxiety, they often believe that something horrible is going to happen and they won't be able to handle it. Anxiety becomes a problem when these negative beliefs and uncomfortable physical experiences lead children to avoiding doing things that they would ordinarily enjoy, such as play dates or after school activities. Anxious children are often easily agitated and respond to situations with a lot of distress.

What are 4 things that parents can do at home with their children to combat anxiety?

Create a language to help talk about your child's anxiety.

Prepare your child for anxiety-provoking situations by explaining the schedule and expectations for the activity. Role playing certain situations, such as talking to a teacher about a problem in class or practicing a conversation with a new kid at school, is great practice for kids.

Stay positive and keep parental anxiety to yourself. Children quickly recognize when parents are anxious, which exacerbates their own anxiety.

DO NOT AVOID anxiety-provoking situations. This gives your child the message that he/she cannot handle it. Encourage independence so your child learns these situations aren't dangerous and that he or she can successfully manage their fears.

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