

Beyond the Classroom

The Evergreen School District Wellness Newsletter



Tips for How to Help Your Child With Anxiety

As parents and caretakers, we often want to shelter our children from harm and suffering. This is not different when it comes to anxiety. What we may not realize is that although our intentions to protect our children are good, often times we actually intensify the situation. Dr. Clark Goldstien, a child and adolescent psychologist who specializes in anxiety disorders, has developed a few tips for parents to help their children with

anxiety.

1. The objective is to manage the anxiety not eliminate it. The best way to help a child reduce her anxiety is to learn to tolerate it and function the best that she can while experiencing it. This will help her to cope with her anxiety.
2. If you know that something makes your child anxious don't avoid it. While it may make your child feel better in the short-term, when you remove her from a situation that makes her anxious, it can be more damaging in the long-term. You will not always be there when an anxious situation arises and your child will not have learned any coping skills.
3. Make sure that you express positive, but also realistic expectations. It is not fair to promise your child that she will not fail a test or will not be laughed at by her peers because we do not know if that is true. However, you can tell your child that as she learns to manage her anxiety and face her fears, her level of anxiety will drop over time.
4. Respect her feelings while making sure not to empower them. Listen to your child's fears empathetically, but also encourage her to face them. For example, if she is afraid of performing in the school play, you can tell her that you know she is afraid, but that you will be there in the crowd to get her through it.
5. Do not ask leading questions. In order to avoid feeding into her anxiety it is better to ask open-ended questions like, "How are you feeling about your presentation?" Instead of, "Are you anxious about your presentation?"
6. Do not reinforce her fears. It is important to be aware of your body language and tone of voice. If you know that your child is afraid of something and *you* become anxious when you know she is going to encounter her fear again, you send her the message that she should be anxious.

7. Encourage your child to tolerate her anxiety. In efforts to help your child engage in life, tell her how much you appreciate her efforts to tolerate her own anxiety. Explain to her that anxiety is a natural feeling and that the more contact that she has with her stressors, the sooner the anxiety will decrease over time.

8. Do your best to keep the anticipatory period short. When your child is afraid of doing anything, the most difficult time for her is actually the time right before she does it. You can help reduce her anxiety by making the waiting period shorter. For example if she is anxious that you will be going to meet with her teacher, telling her two days before may amp her up.

9. Help your child process scenarios. It may be helpful for you to talk to your child about what would happen if her fear came true. You can ask her what she would do, and help her think up a plan. Children feel less anxious when they have a plan.

10. Do your best to model healthy ways of dealing with anxiety. Children are very observant. If they see you managing your stress and anxiety in a healthy manner it will help teach them to do the same.

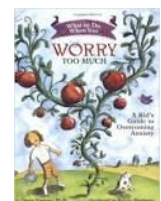
It is important to understand that some anxiety is normal. Further, every child is different. The strategies that work for some will not work for others. As their parent and caregiver, you know your child the best. Use the tips that you feel will help him/her through his/her anxiety. Above all, remember to show your child that you love him or her and be patient with him or her.



Suggested Books on Anxiety

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Huebner

An interactive self-help book designed to guide kids and their parents through various techniques used to treat generalized anxiety. It uses comedy to help explain complicated concept and encourages children to work toward facing challenges in efforts to reduce their anxiety.



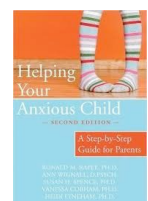
Wilma Jean the Worry Machine by Julia Cook

This book aims to lessen the severity of anxiety by teaching children tools to feel more control over their worries. It helps them identify their anxiety and its cause.



Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents by Ronald Rapee PhD, Ann WignallPh D, Susan Spence PhD, Heidi Lyneham PhD, and Vanessa Cobham PhD

Teaches parents how to help their child recognize irrational worries, what to do when their child is scared, how to gently expose their child to challenging situations, and how to teach their child important social skills





Free Family Fun

Card Making

Location: Japanese American Museum of San Jose, Japantown, San Jose

Time: Fridays, 1-4pm.

Color Fun Fest 5K San Jose

Location: Santa Clara County Fairgrounds

Time: Saturday, July 15

Check website for registration and details

<http://colorfunfest5k.com/san-jose/>

Family Storytime

Location: Evergreen Branch Library, San Jose

Time: Wednesday, May 10, 6 p.m.

Aimed for children 0-7 and their parents

Summer Safety Tips for Kids

- Make sure your children always take a friend with them if they play outside or go places.
- Teach your children to always cross the street at a corner or crosswalk. Look left, then right, then left again before crossing.
- Your children should always wear a helmet while riding a bicycle, scooter, skateboard, etc. A helmet should be worn level to the head, covering the forehead, not tipped forward or backward.
 - If your children plan to go swimming, make sure that there is a supervising adult at all times.
 - Make sure to monitor your children's internet and social media activities.
 - Make sure your children drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
 - Make sure your children wear sunscreen if they will spend a prolonged amount of time in the sun.

