

Tips for helping your student cope with his/her anxieties

Watch out for symptoms of anxiety in your student.

- As anxious children tend to keep their problems to themselves and are generally well behaved and quiet in class, their anxiety problems are often overlooked until they start to greatly affect the students functioning in school.
- Be alert to behavioral and physical signs of anxiety such as increasing avoidance of feared situations and complaints of stomachache, headaches or chest discomfort etc.

Acknowledge your student's anxiety and provide a listening ear.

- Validate your student's feelings. Do not dismiss their anxiety immediately.
- Whenever possible, listen to your student's thoughts and feelings first without any interruption. This allows your student to feel that you are concerned about him/her and what he/she is going through. This will encourage your student to reveal to you more about his/her fears.

Try to avoid giving excessive reassurances.

Resist giving reassurances repeatedly as it may become a form of positive attention for the student, which may encourage the student to exhibit more anxious behaviors.

Calmly react to your student's anxiety.

By responding to your student's anxiety in a calm manner, this not only helps reduce your student's perception of his/her fears as being threatening but also allows your student to model how you can cope with anxiety calmly.

Help your student understand about his/her anxiety

- Educate your student that his/her anxiety and the physical symptoms of anxiety that he/she is experiencing is normal, harmless and temporary.
- Let your student know that **he**/she is not alone in feeling anxious and that most children have anxiety problems at some point in their lives.

Furnish your student with relaxation strategies

- Teach your student how to stay calm and reduce his/her physical symptoms of anxiety through deep-breathing and muscle relaxation exercises
- For information on how to do deep-breathing and muscle relaxation exercise, please refer to http://anxietybc.com/parent/pdfs/howto/calm_breathing.pdf and <http://anxietybc.com/parent/pdfs/howto/MuscleRelaxation.pdf>

Use cognitive strategies such as coping statements and realistic thinking

- For younger students, you may like to develop coping statements together with your student to replace his/her anxious thoughts (Please refer to http://anxietybc.com/parent/pdfs/howto/Healthy_Thinking_for_Younger_Children.pdf for more information)
- For older students, you can teach your student to challenge his/her anxious or negative thoughts and change them to more realistic ones (Please refer to <http://anxietybc.com/parent/pdfs/howto/RealisticThinking.pdf> for more information)

Let your student face his/her fear gradually

- Encourage your student to use his/her relaxation exercises and/or cognitive strategies to overcome his/her fears or anxieties.
- Start with a situation that the student feels a bit anxious. After the student gains confidence that he/she can manage his/her anxiety in that situation, proceed gradually to situations that evoke greater levels of anxiety.
- Give your student lots of praise for trying to overcome his/her anxiety.