

# Helping Anxious Children:

## Parents Handout



### Introduction

Parenting an anxious child can be challenging, but with the right strategies and support, you can help your child manage their anxiety effectively. This handout provides practical tips and techniques to support your child in overcoming their fears and building resilience.

### Validate Your Child's Anxiety

- ✓ **Show Understanding:** Let your child know that you understand they are feeling significant distress.
- ✓ **Be Supportive:** Assure them that you will help them problem-solve and cope, but not avoid the situation.

### Reward Effort

- ✓ **Encourage Attempts:** Reward your child's efforts to face anxiety-producing situations.
- ✓ **Positive Reinforcement:** Avoid disappointment or punishment if the outcome isn't perfect. Focus on rewarding the effort.

## Help with Problem Solving

- ✓ **Coping Strategies:** Assist your child in developing coping thoughts or problem-solving ideas during anxious moments.
- ✓ **Gradual Independence:** Provide progressively less help over time to encourage self-reliance.

## Discourage Avoidance

- ✓ **Face Challenges:** Do not permit or reinforce avoidance of difficult situations, as this reinforces anxiety.
- ✓ **Encourage Exposure:** Support your child in facing their fears gradually.

## Planned Ignoring

- ✓ **Limit Reassurance:** Answer repetitive questions only once. Inform your child beforehand that you will only respond once to help them conquer their anxiety.

## Encourage Relaxation Exercises

- **Daily Practice:** Encourage your child to practice relaxation exercises for 20 minutes each day. This exercises can include [deep breathing exercises](#), [progressive muscle relaxation](#) or [mindfulness](#)

- ✓ **Create a Calm Environment:** Provide a quiet, uninterrupted space and time for these exercises.

## Model Problem Solving

- ✓ **Be an Example:** Show positive coping and problem-solving strategies in situations you face.
- ✓ **Teach Through Action:** Let your child see you handle challenges effectively.

## Set Up Rules and Consequences

- ✓ **Clear Expectations:** Establish rules and consequences for behavior ahead of time to avoid arguments.
- ✓ **Pick Your Battles:** Focus on important areas for structure, and ensure the punishment/reward fits the behavior.
- ✓ **Logical Consequences:** Use natural or logical consequences. For example, if a child leaves their bike outside overnight, they lose bike privileges for a set period.

## Be Consistent with Behavior Management

- ✓ **Immediate Rewards and Consequences:** Provide rewards and consequences promptly to be most effective.

- ✓ **Unified Approach:** Ensure all caretakers are consistent with each other in setting rules and disciplining.

## Conclusion

Helping your child manage anxiety is a gradual process that requires patience, consistency, and support. By validating their feelings, encouraging their efforts, and providing a structured environment, you can help your child build the skills they need to handle anxiety effectively. Remember, small steps lead to big changes, and your support makes all the difference.

