

Worry is a natural part of life. But when normal worries develop into anxiety that impacts our ability to function, we need extra support. Children are no different. Here are some suggestions for helping a child who may struggle with anxiety:

Anxiety in Children

(Adapted from The Center for Parenting Education)

The following information can help you understand and ease your child's fears and concerns.

1. Love and Nurture Your Children

- a. Express your love - Tell your children you love them more than you usually do, verbally and physically. Give plenty of hugs. Hugs, sitting close to read together, and giving back rubs can help restore a child's sense of safety and security.
- b. Be available - Be there for your children as much as possible when they need to talk.
- c. Give them opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings - Sometimes all they need is a chance to talk about their reactions and experiences.
- d. Look for signs of anxiety - These can be in the form of physical symptoms, a change in behavior, a reluctance to go to school, acting out or withdrawing, or increased clinginess.

2. Reassure Your Children

- a. Maintain normal routines as much as possible - They are reassuring during times of stress.
- b. Reassure your child that he/she is safe - All of the adults in their world are doing everything possible to keep them safe.

3. Teach Your Children

- a. It is up to parents to interpret what has happened - Provide facts, in line with your child's age and level of understanding. Keep your answers to your children's questions simple and age-appropriate.
- b. Be patient when he/she asks the same questions many times over - Children often use repetition of information as a source of comfort.
- c. Teach coping skills - Older children can keep a journal, younger children can draw pictures.

4. Be a Good Role Model

- a. Children are influenced by their parents' reactions - Children carefully watch parents to see how worried they should be.

5. Encourage Discussion or the Expression of Feelings

- a. Take your lead from your children - Consider what they need and what they are thinking and feeling.
- b. Do not minimize your child's fears and concerns - The anxiety is a way for him/her to tell you that he/she feels sad, scared, helpless, etc.
- c. Provide reassurance - Often they want to know that their world is safe.