

Supporting a Child with Anxiety

Sleep and Eat

Getting plenty of sleep is essential.

- For younger children, set and stick to a bedtime routine. Plan for calming activities like a warm bath, bedtime story, quiet music, some warm milk or a snack. Avoid sleeping with your child or having them fall asleep in your bed. If necessary, check in briefly with them every few minutes so that they know you are close by.
- For older children and teens a regular routine for going to bed and getting up is key. Ensure that screens are turned off well before bedtime.

Regular, healthy meals with frequent nutritious snacks are important for children of all ages. Try to avoid food/drinks that are high in sugar or that contain caffeine.

Keep Active

Regular exercise will reduce your child's worries and improve their energy levels. Try to find some fun activities that you can do together as a family.

Limit your child's screen time as studies have shown that too much screen time can increase symptoms of anxiety. Experts recommend no more than one hour of screen time per day for children aged 1 to 5 and no more than two hours per day for older children and teens.

Homework

Anxious children can become overwhelmed by school work and deadlines. It can help to break up big projects into smaller chunks, schedule time for work and setting rewards for completion.

Relaxation

Schedule time each day for your child to relax – that might mean playing a game or a sport (without it being competitive), doing deep breathing exercises, yoga or meditation.

Face Fears

Encourage your child to experiment – in a slow, careful way – with things they might feel anxious about, like making phone calls or talking to new friends. Be sure to give lots of praise when your child does something they used to be afraid of. Your child will learn that if they face their fears, their anxiety will decrease on its own with time.

Model Positive Thinking and Self Care

Children learn how to behave by watching their parents. By taking care of yourself and your own needs, your child will learn that self-care is important.

Sources: Helping Anxious Children. Adapted from Anxiety Disorder in Young People. BC Children's Hospital Mood and Anxiety Clinic & Anxiety Disorders Clinic of BC; Taming the monsters: Helping children deal with their fears. Caring For Kids 2016. http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/taming_the_monsters

