

5 easy ways to help your child deal with stress

1. One of the easiest ways to relax is to BREATHE. To help your child relax, have them place their hands on their abdomen and breathe in deeply enough to make their abdomen push their hands out. Have them take 5 nice deep breaths. Encourage them to repeat this throughout their day. Deep breathing increases the amount of oxygen they take into their body. This reduces the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, improves concentration and helps them relax.

2. Another easy way for kids to relax is meditating. If you and your child are new to meditating, why not try a laughing meditation. Mix up a bowl of laughter soup. Have your child hold an imaginary bowl in their hand and throw in as many funny thoughts as they can. You can throw some in too! Have them stir it up and then drink their soup right out of the bowl. Tell them to feel those funny thoughts move through their body and make them giggle. Try making your own bowl of laughter soup along with them! Laughter is a great way to relax, boost the immune system and improve the connection between you and your child.

3. Visualization is another great way to help your child relax. Below is an example to help your child visualize - read aloud to them. Take your time, pausing now and again.

Get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Take 4 nice, deep breaths. Feel your body relax. Now, imagine yourself floating on an air mattress in the ocean. The waves are gently rocking you on the mattress. The sun is shining down on you, making you feel warm and relaxed. There is a slight breeze, so you don't get too warm from the sun. If you want to, you can roll onto your stomach. The air mattress is clear. You are able to see many colorful fish swimming below you. Once in awhile, you see a turtle pass underneath you. Sometimes they stop and look up at you, almost as if they are saying hello. You feel very relaxed. Out of the corner of your eye, you see something swim towards you. When you turn your head to look, you see a beautiful dolphin making it's way towards the air mattress. The dolphin stops and looks at you. It is like he is telling you he is glad you are here and hopes that you will come back to visit often. You spend a few more minutes enjoying this peaceful place. When you feel ready, you can take 4 nice, deep breaths. Then, wiggle your fingers and wiggle your toes. When you feel ready, you can open your eyes.

4. Self-talk. Ask your child what they say to themselves. Do they say things like I can't do math, I'm dumb, or I'm not pretty? Help them change their self-talk. Examples: I'm calm. I can do math. I am beautiful. I learn new things quickly and easily.

5. Exercise. Take a few minutes to dance around the house with your child, go for a walk or kick a soccer ball around the yard. When you exercise with your child, you both gain the benefits, plus you are creating a deeper connection with your child.

8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



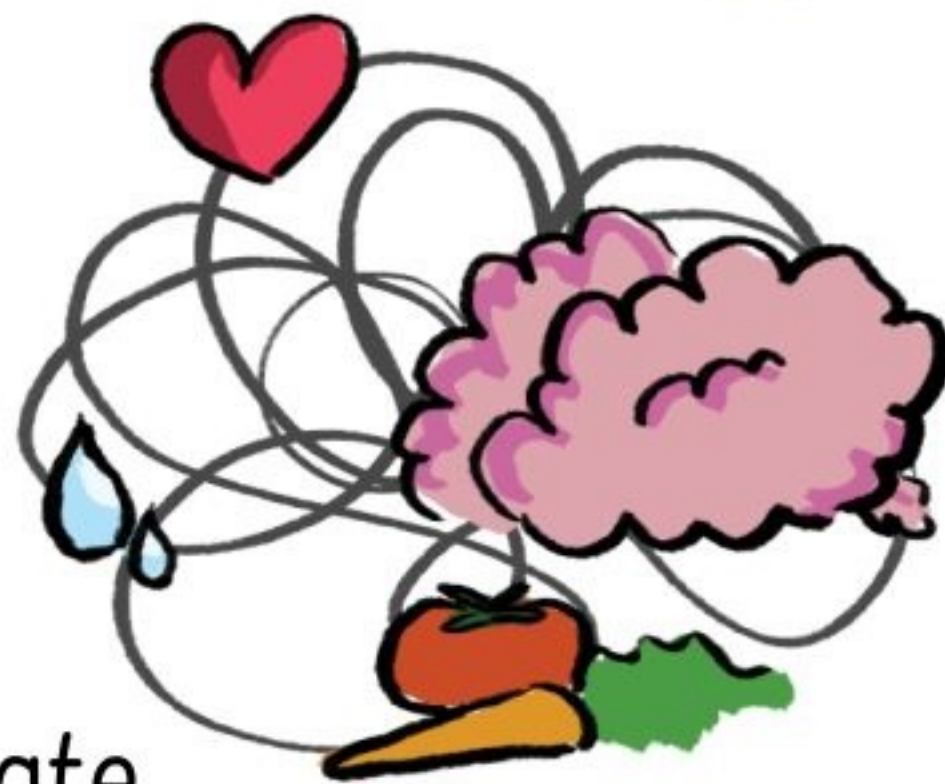
2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

FOCUS

6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



Feelings Chart


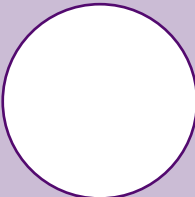
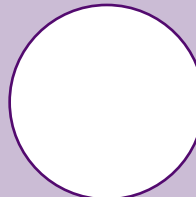
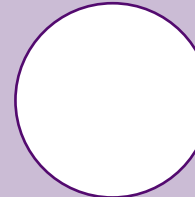
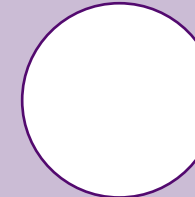
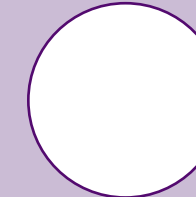
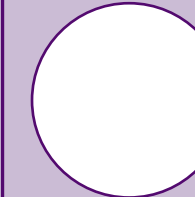

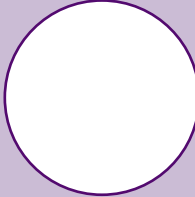
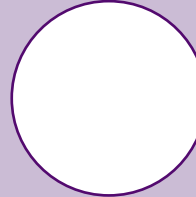
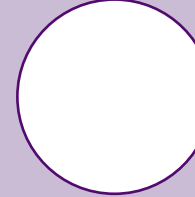
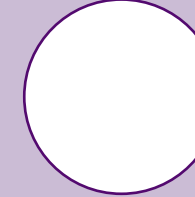
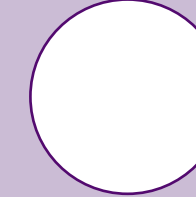
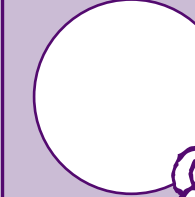


At the end of the day, ask your child:
*What happened today? What did you do? How did you feel?
 What happened to make made you feel that way?*

Have your child draw a face in the chart and write a word describing the feeling.

Talk about your own day and how you felt as you also draw a face and write a word in the chart.

-  **confused**
-  **afraid**
-  **happy**
-  **grumpy**
-  **angry**
-  **sad**
-  **disappointed**
-  **silly**
-  **proud**
-  **excited**

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
CHILD							
GROWN-UP							

Child's Name _____

Grown-Up's Name _____

If your child is feeling bad, ask: "What do you think would make you feel better?"



Coping Skills Checklist

- Check off the ones that you do now
- Circle the ones you want to try
- Cross off the ones that don't work

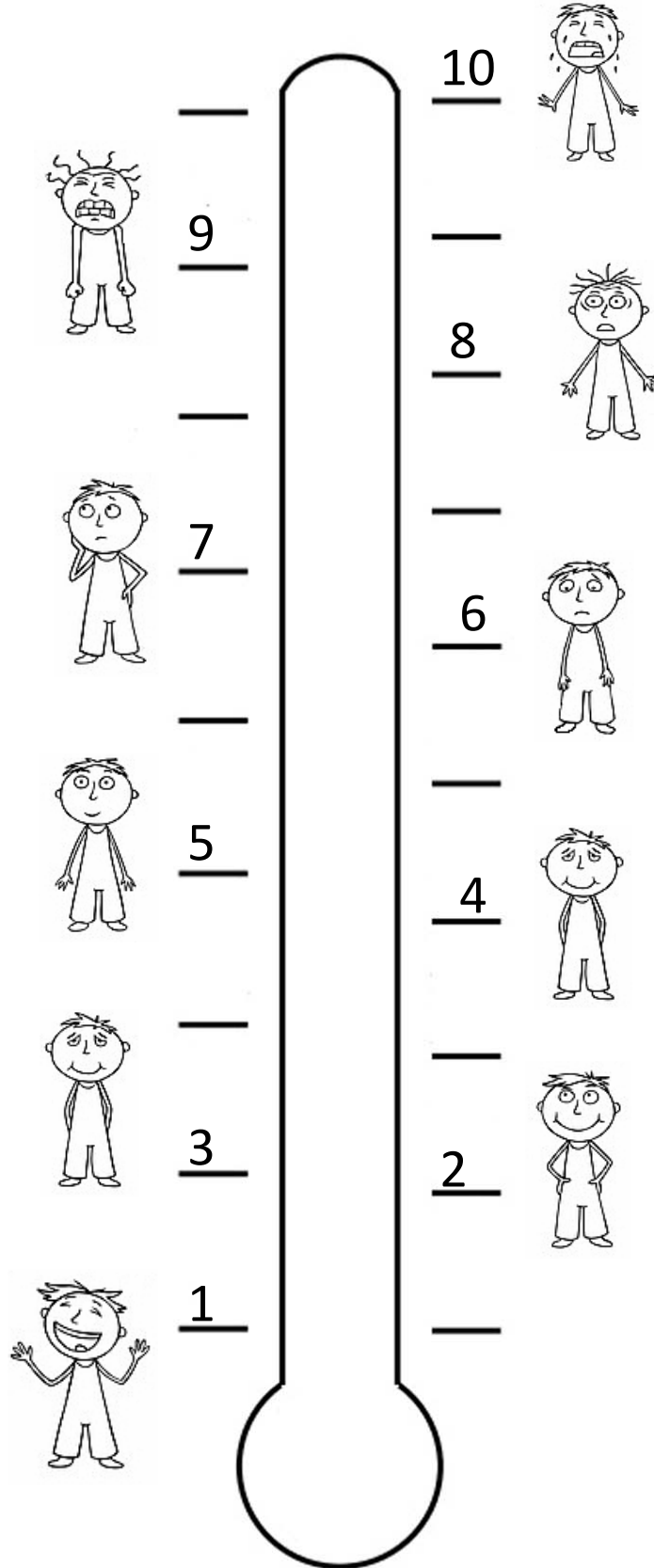
Calming Skills

- Deep breathing using a pinwheel
- Deep breathing with bubbles
- Deep breathing with a stuffed animal
- Deep breathing using a feather
- Take a mindful walk
- Yoga
- Imagine your favorite place
- Think of your favorite things
- Picture the people you care about
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Remember the words to a song you love
- Run water over your hands
- Carry a small object
- Touch things around you
- Move
- Make a fist then release It
- Positive Self-Talk
- Take a shower or bath
- Take a drink of water
- Counting
- Block out noises
- Take a break
- Calming Jar
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Distraction Skills

- Write a story
- Crossword/Sudoku Puzzles
- Bake or Cook
- Volunteer/Community Service
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Read
- Clean
- Play with a pet
- Play a board game
- Play video games
- Screen time
- Play with a friend
- Start a garden
- Creative Thinking
- Make up your own game
- Plan a fun event
- Start a new hobby
- Do a crafting project
- Your favorite things
- Be silly and laugh
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How Are You Feeling Today?



Practicing Emotional Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

Emotional Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to ourselves and our emotions. We can be mindful when we are happy and peaceful or when we are having a hard time with our emotions.

When you are feeling happy, you can be mindful by paying attention to your happy and peaceful feelings and calm body. Notice how your body and mind feel when they are calm. What do you think about when you are happy and calm? Remember how this feels.



When you are having a hard time with your emotions (for example, you are feeling angry, sad, frustrated or anxious):

Before you react, stop and notice that you are having a hard time.

Our bodies remind us that we are having a hard time emotionally. You might have tears in your eyes or feel hot with anger or have a sick feeling in your stomach.



Don't judge yourself or become frustrated with yourself.

Just notice that this is a difficult moment for you.

If you need to, take time to calm yourself and your body.

Remember how it feels to be happy and peaceful.

Try deep breathing or another calm down method (calmly take a breath, hold your breath for a count of 3, let your breath out as slowly as you can..do this until you feel more calm).

Then, practice Self-Compassion. Don't overreact or become angry at yourself. Tell yourself that it's ok to have a difficult time. Everybody does! You are not alone.



A Breath-Counting Meditation for Teens and Tweens

Here is an 8-minute practice, appropriate for older kids, that uses counting breaths to cultivate mindful awareness. Breath-counting is a foundational mindfulness practice — research suggests breath-counting can decrease mind wandering and negative thought loops and improve mood.

Consider doing this practice with your child on a regular basis or integrating it into bedtime. Incorporate short practices of this kind into any transition, such as setting up activities like homework. Set aside short-term expectations, and as a family, support all the traits mindfulness encourages in everyday life, such as increased resilience under stress, emotional awareness, and even compassion.

- 1. Lie down and let your body rest.** Notice whatever you're thinking right now, however you feel right now.
- 2. When you're ready, take three deep breaths** *while paying attention to the rising and falling of your belly. Simply notice the sensation — what it feels like.*
- 3. Place your hand on your belly.** *As best as you're able, pay attention to the rocking of your hand with each breath.*
- 4. Recognize that your mind will go off somewhere else,** *over and over again, or you might feel restless — all of that's normal, all of that's totally fine. Each time you notice your attention is gone somewhere else, come back to your hand rising and falling on your belly.*
- 5. If you'd like, count your breaths, sticking to small groups.** *Perhaps you could count up to five and then start again at one.*
- 6. Each time you lose track, simply start over.** *Note any tendency to get frustrated — there's no need to, the distractions will happen. Breathe in, one, breathe out, one, breathe in, two, breathe out, two, continuing at your own pace... and coming back again to breathing in and breathing out.*
- 7. Wherever your mind's gone, allow those thoughts to be for just now.** *Allow them to show up and then continue on. Thoughts are normal. Everyone has thoughts continually throughout the day, throughout this type of practice.*
- 8. Come back gently, and over and over again to the feeling of breathing, right now.** *Allow thoughts and feelings to show up because they will and then each time come back again.*
- 9. Breathe in, one, breathe out, one,** *breathe in, two, breathe out, two, and then again coming back to the next breath — not trying to fix anything or change anything at that moment, or at this next moment.*
- 10. At some other time during the day, there might be something to act on,** *but right now, simply lie here, guiding your attention to the rocking of your hand, to the sensation of breathing.*
- 11. And when you're ready,** *if you'd like, opening your eyes, or continuing to lie still.*

Parenting Tips for Anxious Kids

Expectations of your child

It's important that you have the same expectations of your anxious child that you would of another child (to go to birthday parties, make decisions, talk to adults). However, understand that the pace will need to be slower and there is a process involved in meeting this end goal. You can help your child break down big tasks into smaller steps that your child can accomplish (first go to the party with your child and agree to stay as long as your child is interacting with others, next time stay for the first half hour). You can help role-play or act out possible ways your child could handle a difficult situation. Saying it out loud makes kids more confident and more likely to try the strategy when your child is alone.

Build your child's personal strength

It's important to praise your child for facing challenges, trying something new or brave behavior. Some children like big loud exuberant praises, others like a quiet pat on the back. There is a lot you can do to help build your child's competence. Search to find avenues where your child can show he is good at something (music, art, sports). Also be sure your child has jobs around the house that show your child is contributing to the family.

Letting your child learn to do things on his/her own

While tempting, it is best not to take over or do it for your child. While this might help your child feel better right now, the message your child is getting is that you don't believe your child can do it. Then your child will start to think the same way about him or herself. Try not to get caught continually reassuring your child that everything will be okay. Teach your child to answer his/her own questions and provide the reassurance him/herself. You can model how you think through and respond to your child's questions.

Helping your child handle his own feelings

It is okay to let your child experience some anxiety. Your child needs to know that anxiety is not dangerous but something your child can cope with. You can let your child know all feelings are okay and it is all right to say what you feel. Anxious children sometimes have a hard time expressing strong emotions like anger or sadness because they are afraid people will be angry with them. It's okay to take time for yourself even if your child wants to be with you at all times. You are modeling for your child that everyone needs some time to themselves.

Passing on your fears

Try to keep your fears to yourself and as best you can present a positive or at least neutral description of a situation. Let them know that it is safe to explore. It is not helpful to laugh or minimize your child's fear. But humor does help one deal with the world, so show your child how to laugh at life's absurdities and mistakes.

Working together as parents

It is important to work with your spouse to have an agreed upon way of handling your child's anxiety that you both feel comfortable with. It is very important that one parent not be "too easy" because the other parent "pushes your child too much." This is very confusing for your child who does not know what to count on.

Consequences

Don't confuse anxiety with other types of inappropriate behavior. It is very important to set both expectations and have limits and consequences for inappropriate behavior. Parents who have reasonable expectations of their children and clear and consistent limits and consequences for behavior along with love and acceptance have the most competent, self confident and happy children.

Positive Affirmations

I Can Do It

I'll try my best and that will
be good enough

I will stay calm and relaxed

I Am Safe

I will do a great job

I have important things to
say

I Like Myself

Positive Affirmations

I Am A Winner

I Am Peaceful

I am proud of what I've done





I Am Brave

I like my body

I Make Good Choices

I Am Strong

How To Be Self-Compassionate

	Without Self-Compassion	With Self-Compassion
	<p>"I'm a loser. No one wants to be my friend. Why does this only happen to me?"</p>	<p><i>"I feel sad that they don't want to be friends. Darn. It'll be ok. I'll find some different kids to hang out with. I've seen this happen to other kids too."</i></p>
	<p>"I'm so stupid! I'm never going to do well in school. Why does everyone do better than me?"</p>	<p><i>"I'm so disappointed that I didn't get a good grade. I going to get some help so I can do better. We all get a bad grade once in a while!"</i></p>
	<p>"We always lose our soccer games. I'm the worst player on the team. I wish that I was as good as everybody else."</p>	<p><i>"I'm really bummed that we lost our game again. It's so upsetting to keep losing, but that's the way it goes when you play sports. Everybody loses some time. I tried my best."</i></p>
	<p>"I'm always screwing up. My mom gets mad at me all the time. I bet other kids don't get in trouble as much as I do!"</p>	<p><i>"I feel so upset when I disappoint my mom. It's hard for me when mom gets mad. But all kids get into trouble with their parents some time. Things will get better."</i></p>
<p><i>Make your own example!</i></p>		



Things You Can Do When You Feel Anxious

***Focus Your Brain On Another Activity**

(read a book, play a computer game, do a puzzle, watch television)

***Participate In A Physical Activity Or Sport**

***Use Deep Breathing Exercises**

***Imagine Yourself In A Special Place**

***Think Positively Using Affirmations**

***Find Something Funny That Will Make You Laugh**

***Write Your Worries In A Journal**

Tips to Talk About It

Is it stress, or is it something more? Talk to your child about anxiety and depression.



Always keep conversations open and honest



Come from a place of love, even when you're having tough conversations



Provide positive reinforcement



It's never too early – or too late – to start the conversation

Top five tips to help your child manage anxiety:

- Pay attention to your child's feelings and modify expectations during stressful times.
- Help your child prioritize sleep. Sleeping less than seven hours a night is a major risk factor for anxiety and depression.
- Work with your child's school and connect with other families for support.
- If your child needs help, get a referral to a mental health specialist.
- Limit screen time. Depression and unhappiness in teens have increased in tandem with smartphone use.

What is Self-Compassion?

Mindfulness

Being aware that you are having a hard time without over-reacting or judging yourself.



Self-Kindness

Being kind, loving and patient toward yourself when you are having a hard time instead of getting upset at yourself or being critical.



Connection with Others

Understanding that you are not alone! Everybody has difficult times.

