



ANXIETY SPECIALISTS
of ATLANTA
Evidence-based Psychological Services

Tools for Parents to Manage Anxiety

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The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers. -Thich Nhat Han (pronounced Tic Not Hahn)

What is Anxiety?

- Anticipation of a future threat or worry about a past event that leads to biological response.
- Anxiety IS normal and can be adaptive, but also filled with over predictions of danger
- Anxiety is A problem, but THE problem is **our unhealthy response to it**

When we should be concerned in ourselves and our kids

- Notable mood changes (sadness, irritability, anger); “Seemingly” uncontrollable worries
- Physical complaints getting worse; Sleep difficulties or significant change in eating in either direction
- Avoidance of outside and social activities
- Excessive use of reassurance, apologies, or doubting
- Destructive or unhealthy behaviors

Why do parents worry: (provided by NAMI, NIMH, CDC and the ADA)

- Almost 50% of adolescents will have a mental health disorder at some point in their by the time they are 18
- Half of all lifetime cases of psychiatric issues begin by age 14
- Untreated children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences, and engage in substance abuse
- Among those aged of 15-19, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death; it’s the leading cause 14- to 15-year-olds
- Accidents account for nearly 1/2 of all teenage deaths, with MVAs as the leading cause of death to teenagers
- The rate of anxiety in teens doubled after the pandemic. The number of therapists who treat anxiety did not
- Parents who worry often raise kids who worry

Encouraging news

- Promoting positive mental health can prevent many problems. Early identification and intervention is significant
- It is developmentally expected for teens to experience a wide range of emotions and behavioral issues, many don’t require formal intervention. They do require YOU to be there and be available
- A trained mental health specialist and/or Medication can be very helpful
- Family-based therapy and systems oriented approaches are invaluable
- Parent education, support, and skills are absolutely necessary and effective (Leibowitz, 2019)
- Recent NAMI poll of over 1,000 teens found that most teens are comfortable talking about mental health, but often don’t start the conversation

Realistic GOALS to have for your kids mental health needs

- Increase their ability (and yours) to manage and cope with anxiety by teaching skills and insight
- Identify and change unhealthy behaviors and thoughts

CAREGIVERS: SELF-CARE IS MISSION CRITICAL

- “It’s not our stress that kills us, it’s our response to it”- "Hans" Selye Hungarian-Canadian endocrinologist
- “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Austrian Psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl
- “A debilitating weariness brought about by repetitive, empathic response to pain and suffering, - _____ is a result of absorbing and internalizing the emotions of clients and, sometimes, coworkers...AND DEFINITELY OUR KIDS” Karl LaRowe, LCSW
- Mother Teresa wrote in her plan to her superiors that it was MANDATORY for her nuns to take an entire year off from their duties every 4-5 years to allow them to heal from the effects of their care-giving work.

START WITH VALUES: Intentional, Purpose Mindset + Values Drive Actions = A Healthy Life

Identify values as a starting point (Let’s try to find your values, what kind of parent do you really want to be??)

- Values are behaviors. They are not words. Values are freely chosen.
- Values are life directions that are Immediately available (goals are not)
- Values are things you move towards, not away from

INTENTIONAL, PURPOSEFUL MINDSET= A PLAN TO MANAGE YOUR OWN ANXIETY AND EXPECTATIONS, FEEL MASTERY AND CONTROL AND PARENT WITHOUT REGRET:

(Partly adapted from “Raising Resilience: 25 tips for Parenting the Child with Anxiety or OCD”)

- Parents/Caregivers: You are not the problem ...you are part of the solution for your child’s struggles.
- And, you are not alone. Look around the room
- It’s OK to not be OK. Be aware of how your own stress impacts your parenting style and expectations.
- Don’t underestimate the importance of your own education and understanding in parenting skills
- Keep the lines of communication open at all times
- Confidence is something you show AND tell. Teach your child to live with fear, not in fear. This emphasizes resilience in you and your child and healthy independence in your relationship to your child
- Pay attention to your child’s feelings, describe them to your child in the moment (validating for you BOTH)
- Be ready for conflict from your child - but know your job is to de-escalate. Know what you are fighting for
- Family accommodations keep the family stuck. Allow for corrective experiences. Let your kid “fail/fall”
- All family members are affected by a child’s struggles. Be ready to check-in and make time/space for this
- In the moment, step back and consider:
 - What’s the worst that could reasonably happen?
 - What could be gained by not rescuing, punishing, or fighting my child?
 - What have I done in the past and what was the result?
- Look for and praise big and small successes (in yourself or your partner, in your child, in their siblings)
- Validate feelings and the process of parenting, not outcomes of successes/failures

Collectively, this mindset and action plan is your key to self-care, pride, a sense of healthy control, with plenty of space to be flexible, humorous, compassionate and kind to yourself and your kids.

“Raising Resilience: 25 Tips for Parenting Your Child with Anxiety or OCD” can be found on our website

at:

<https://anxiety specialists of atlanta.com/raising-resilience-25-parenting-tips/>

-OR-

On YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxOIg2MwQWE>