

# Food for Thought

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**Child Focus, Inc.**

*Food for Thought is a continuation of Kilgour's partnership with Child Focus and our ongoing parent series.*

## What to Watch for:

- Irritability
- Sleep disturbance (trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping restfully)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily fatigued
- Restlessness

*If your child has experienced any number of these symptoms on most days for an extended time, they may benefit from learning skills to manage their symptoms.*

# Childhood Anxiety

## How Parents Can Help



Anxiety disorders affect more than 25% of children between 13 and 18 years old (Anxiety and Depression Association of America). That means a quarter of children tackle each day feeling on edge, irritable, inattentive... and then have trouble falling asleep at night! Oftentimes, we minimize childhood anxiety because we think childhood worries are trivial in comparison to what adults manage. But a “yellow slip”, peer conflict, and math tests are not inconsequential to our children as they develop reasoning, problem-solving, and other skills crucial to handling stress. Increasingly significant challenges can occur with young people in high performing communities distinguished by a rigorous academic curriculum, high standardized test scores, and diverse extracurricular activities. As parents, we can help alleviate anxiety in many ways.

1. **Take time to celebrate where your child is and not where they need to be.** For example, place emphasis on effort and increased abilities instead of accomplishments by praising study time and understanding of new concepts versus grade received.
2. Listen to your child about what is too much. **If your child is having a difficult time completing all that's required of them** in extracurriculars and academics, have a discussion about what's most important and **“go back to the basics”** if needed.
3. Similarly, **make sure that children have time for PLAY.**
4. **Build attachment** with your child. The capacity to regulate emotion and reactions is built during the early years of life and is known as affect regulation. Positive affect regulation is enhanced through an attuned attachment relationship with a well regulated care giver. A key way to build attachment is **through interactive, physical, joyful play.**
5. **Model and talk about stress management techniques** such as organization, taking breaks when overstressed, and assertively communicating wants and needs.
6. **Allow your child to vent** when needed without immediately trying to “fix” their worry or challenge. Use open-ended statements such as “Tell me the best and worst thing about your day” instead of “Did you have a good day?” to open the door for communication.