

# COFFEE WITH The Principal

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*Today's Topic: Understanding Anxiety  
How to Support Your Child*



# Agenda:

**1**

Understanding and  
Recognizing Anxiety

**2**

Impact of Anxiety on Children

**3**

How Parents Can Support an  
Anxious Child

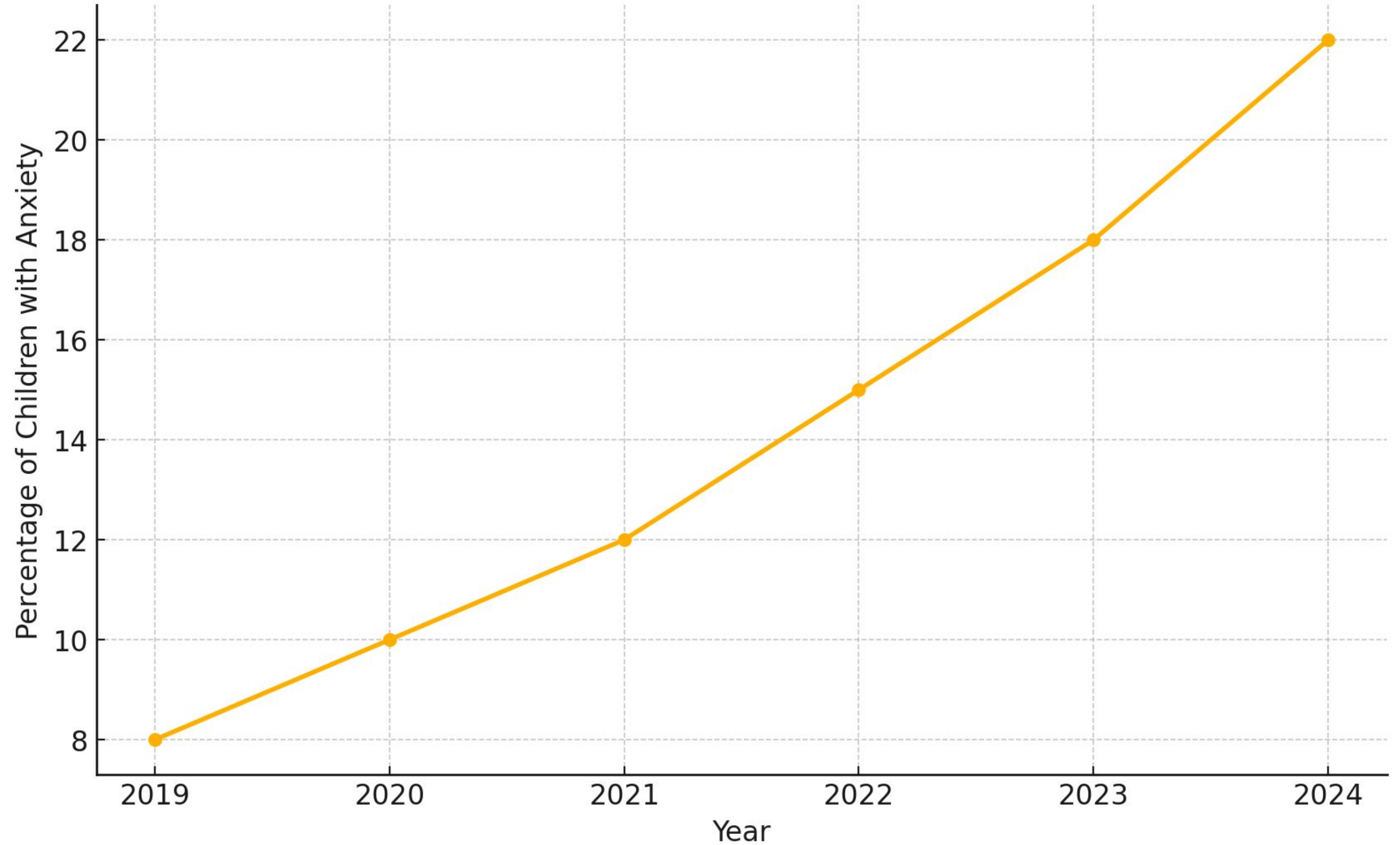
**4**

Strategies for Managing Anxiety  
at Home





# Increase in Anxiety Among Children (2019-2024)



# UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY



*Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. When anxiety does not go away, increases over time, and interferes with daily activities, this is when anxiety can be a concern.*

# Normal Anxiety



## OCCASIONAL WORRIES

It's normal for children to experience occasional worries or fears about everyday events, such as a test, a new school, or making friends

## TEMPORARY

Typical anxiety tends to be temporary, a response to a specific situation, and it usually resolves on its own or with minimal support

## DOES NOT INTERFERE SIGNIFICANTLY

Normal anxiety does not significantly interfere with a child's daily functioning, academic performance, or relationships

# Problematic Anxiety



## INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY

Problematic anxiety has intense and frequent worries that are disproportionate to the situation. The child may feel anxious most of the time, even in the absence of an obvious stressor

## DURATION AND IMPAIRED FUNCTIONING

Persists over an extended period, often for several months and does not resolve on its own. Significantly impairs various areas: academics, social relationships, and overall well-being

## PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS AND AVOIDANCE

May experience headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, or changes in sleep patterns. To cope with anxiety, a child might avoid school, social situations, or activities they used to enjoy

# COMMON SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN:

## AVOIDANCE

- Avoiding places, people, or activities that trigger anxiety

## PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Complaints of headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, or other physical discomforts without an apparent medical cause

## PERFECTIONISM

- Setting unrealistically high standards for themselves
- Becoming overly upset or frustrated when they make a mistake

## CHANGES IN SLEEP

- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep

## EXCESSIVE WORRYING

- Expressing worries about a wide range of topics including: school, family, health, or the future

## SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL

- Isolating themselves from peers or avoiding social situations

## ATTENTION & CONCENTRATION ISSUES

- Difficulty focusing or completing assignments
- Restlessness or becoming easily distracted

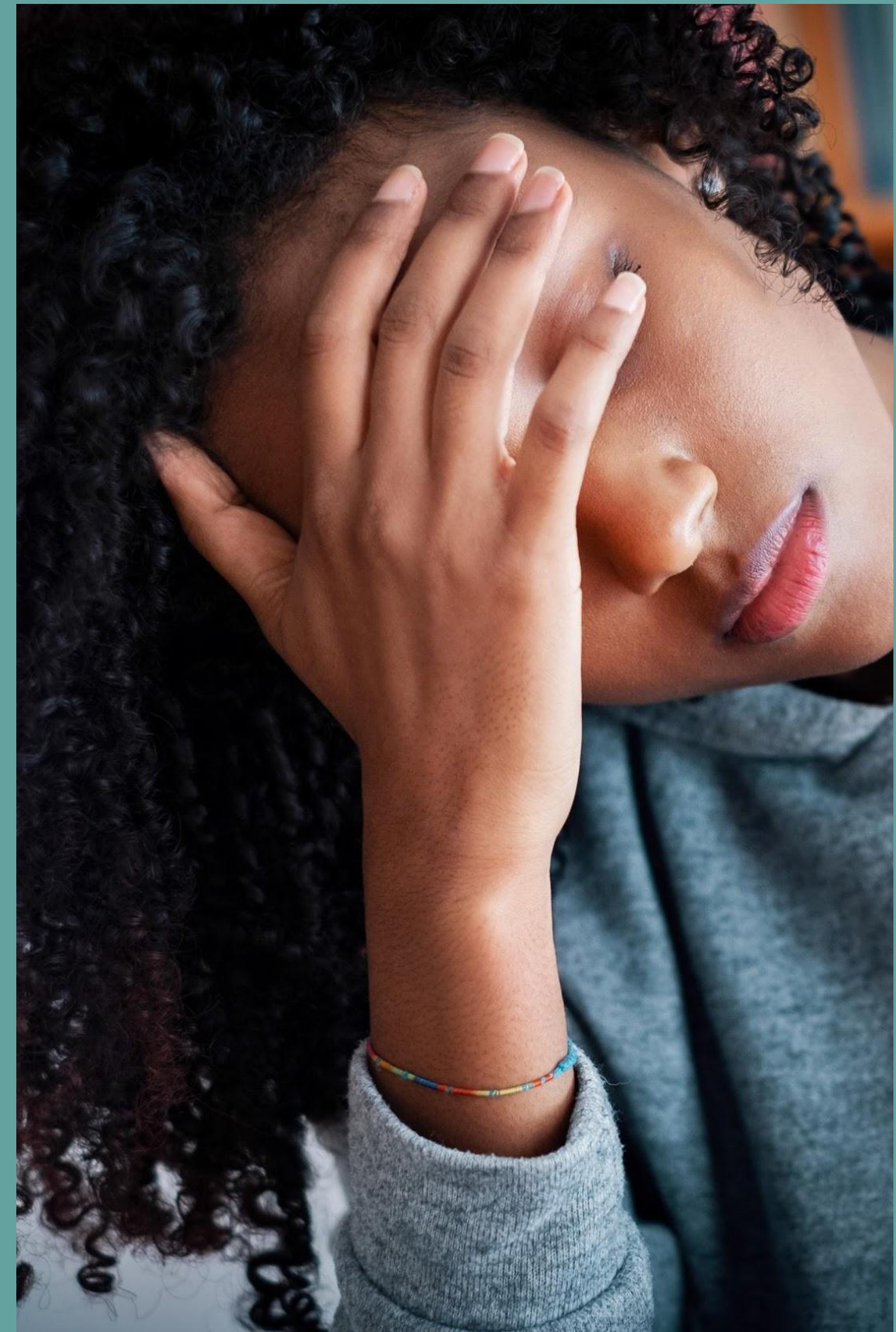
## IRRITABILITY

- Increased irritability or mood swings.
- Outbursts of anger or frustration



# IMPACT OF ANXIETY

- Academic Performance
- Social Relationships
- Physical Health



# IMPACT OF ANXIETY:

## *Academic Performance*



### CONCENTRATION AND FOCUS

- Children with anxiety may struggle to concentrate on tasks or schoolwork.
- Persistent worry or preoccupation with anxious thoughts can interfere with the ability to focus.

### ATTENDANCE

- Chronic anxiety may contribute to school avoidance or reluctance to attend classes.
- Physical symptoms of anxiety (stomachaches or headaches) may lead to frequent visits to the school nurse.

### TEST PERFORMANCE

- Anxiety can negatively impact performance on exams and standardized tests.
- Test anxiety may lead to blanking out, difficulty recalling information, or making careless mistakes.

### MEMORY/LEARNING

- Can impair memory and hinder the ability to retain new information.
- Learning may be compromised as anxious thoughts interfere with cognitive processes.



# IMPACT OF ANXIETY:

## *Social Relationships*



### **SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL**

- Anxious children may be more prone to withdrawing from social interactions, preferring to avoid situations that trigger their anxiety.

### **DIFFICULTY MAKING FRIENDS**

- Anxiety can contribute to challenges in initiating and maintaining friendships.
- The fear of judgment or rejection may lead to hesitancy in reaching out to others or joining group activities.

### **FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION**

- Children with social anxiety may have an intense fear of being negatively evaluated by their peers.
- This fear can lead to avoidance of social situations, limiting the chance to form connections.

### **OVERDEPENDENCE ON FAMILIAR PEOPLE**

- Anxious children may gravitate toward familiar individuals (such as family members or close friends) and find it challenging to branch out and form new connections.

# IMPACT OF ANXIETY:

## *Physical Health*



### **STOMACHACHES & DIGESTIVE ISSUES**

- Anxiety can contribute to stomachaches, nausea, and other digestive problems
- “Butterflies in the stomach” feeling is a common physical symptom of anxiety

### **HEADACHES**

- Tension and stress associated with anxiety can lead to headaches
- Chronic or recurrent headaches may be linked to underlying anxiety issues

### **CHANGES IN SLEEP**

- Excess worry and fear can make it difficult to fall or stay asleep

### **FATIGUE**

- Anxious thoughts and worries can be mentally exhausting, leading to physical fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping due to anxiety may contribute to tiredness during the day

### **MUSCLE TENSION & PAIN**

- Persistent anxiety can result in muscle tension and pain
- Clenching or grinding teeth is another result of anxiety

### **CHANGES IN APPETITE**

- Anxiety may lead to changes in appetite, with some children eating more and others losing interest in food

### **INCREASED HEART RATE**

- Increased heart rate due to anxiety feels like a racing or pounding heart
- Shallow breathing or hyperventilation can occur during heightened anxiety

### **SKIN ISSUES**

- Stress and anxiety may aggravate skin conditions such as eczema
- Nervous habits like skin picking may also arise as a way of coping with anxiety

# HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILD:



## OPEN COMMUNICATION

- Respect and validate their feelings, but don't empower them
- Listen and be empathetic – and then encourage them to feel that they can face their fears.

## HELP THEM FACE THEIR FEARS

- Don't try to remove stressors that trigger anxiety
- Help them learn to tolerate what is making them anxious. The anxiety will decrease over time.

## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

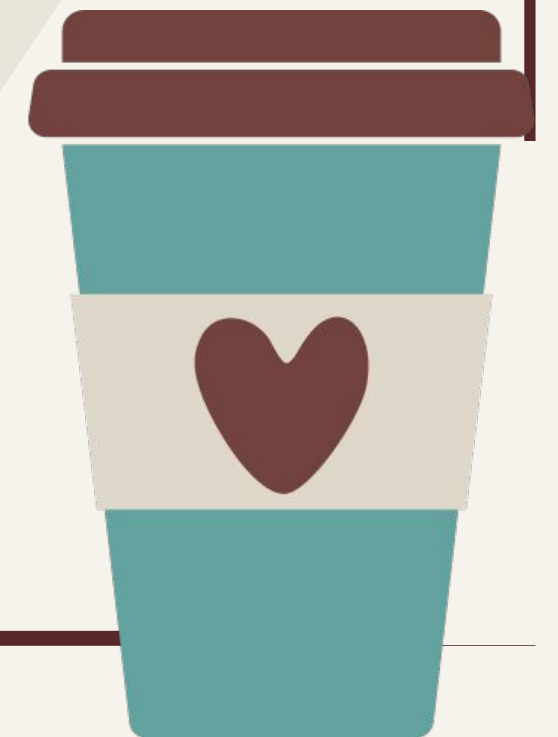
- Practice deep breathing or mindfulness
- Practice these techniques together during calm moments to make them more familiar

## MODEL HEALTHY COPING

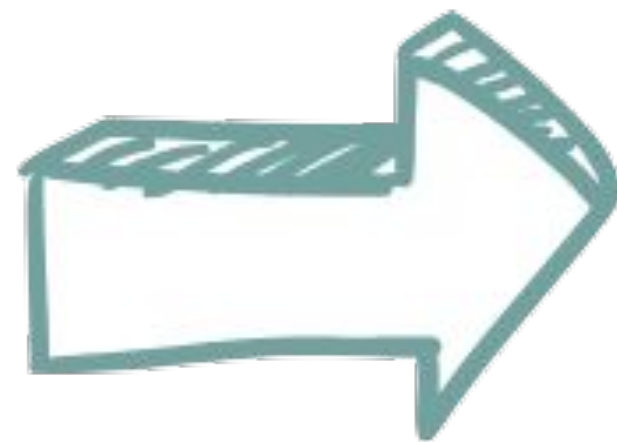
- Demonstrate healthy coping skills by managing your own stress in positive ways
- Model healthy problem solving in the face of challenges



# Exercise



# ADDITIONAL CALMING ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE AT HOME WITH YOUR CHILD



## 8 Calming Activities for Anxiety

Counseling Tools by Jenn

### POSITIVITY BREATHS:

1

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Take a deep breath in and inhale positive thoughts "I am strong", "I can do anything"
- Breathe out stress, anxiety, worries
- Make sure your breaths are slow and calm
- Repeat these positivity breaths and notice how you how feel



### 5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING GAME:

2

- Find 5 things you can see
- Find 4 things you can feel (pay attention to the texture)
- Find 3 things you can hear (people talking, noises outside)
- Find 2 things you can smell
- Find 1 thing you can taste (or imagine your favorite food!)
- Notice how you feel



### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION:

3

- We hold a lot of tension in our bodies when we are stressed
- Try this technique to relax your muscles
- Sit comfortably in a chair or on the ground
- You will tense and then relax each muscle in your body
- Tense up the muscles in your feet for a few seconds, then relax
- Repeat with your legs, stomach, hands, shoulders, neck, and face
- Take a deep breath in and breathe out any stress



### STRETCH BREAK:

4

- Sky Reaches: Stand with your feet slightly apart, slowly raise both hands up and over your head. Reach your fingers towards the sky...hold for 3 seconds. Bring your hands down and touch your toes.
- Shoulder Rolls: Take a deep breath in...raise your shoulders up to your ears...hold...breathe out and slowly move your shoulders back and then down.



### BUTTERFLY VISUALIZATION:

5

- Sit on the ground and place the bottom of your feet together...hold your feet with your hands.
- Close your eyes and imagine you are a butterfly that can fly anywhere you want to go.
- Flap your butterfly wings by moving your legs up and down and fly to your special place.
- As you fly around notice what you see...hear...smell...feel.



### GRATITUDE JOURNAL:

6

- Thinking about what we are thankful for and what makes us happy is showing gratitude.
- Write down something that makes you happy each day (family, friends, teacher, pet, food, weather, home, health, etc.)
- Having gratitude helps reduce stress and increase happiness.
- As you write in your gratitude journal, notice how you feel.



### SOUNDS & MUSIC RELAXATION:

7

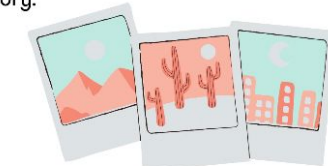
- Play some music that is calming to you.
- Close your eyes and focus on the music.
- Pay attention to all of the different sounds you hear.
- Notice how you are feeling as you listen to the music.



### FAVORITE MEMORY VISUALIZATION:

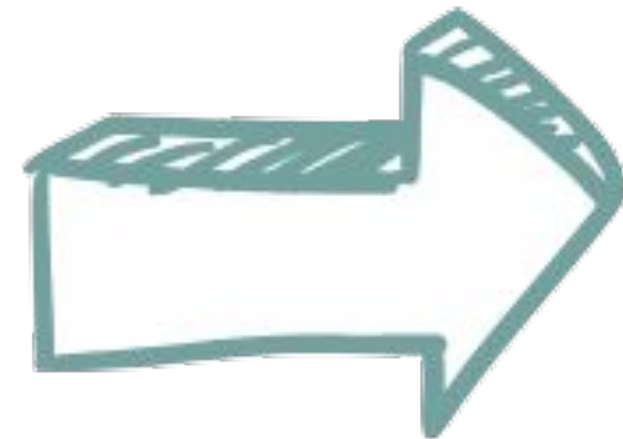
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- Think about one of your favorite memories.
- Think about who was there, where were you? how were you feeling? what do you see?
- Notice how you are feeling as you think about this special memory.





# Community Resources



## Mental Health Resource List

Inclusion on this list does not denote the recommendation of any specific agency or individual by OVSD.

### Resource Helplines

- **211** (General Resources)  
www.211oc.org  
Dial – 211
- **OC Links** (Behavioral Health)  
www.ocalthinfo.com/oclinks  
855-OC-LINKS  
855-625-4657

### Counseling Services

*\*\*If your child has private insurance, you can contact their insurance provider to determine if they can be referred to a mental health provider within their network*

#### Children and Youth Behavioral Services

(Medi-Cal insurance only)  
14140 Beach Blvd., Ste. 155  
Westminster, CA 92683  
(714) 896-7556

#### Western Youth Services

(Medi-Cal insurance only)  
18350 Mt Langley St #220  
Fountain Valley, Ca. 92708  
714-378-2620

#### Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA)

(Medi-Cal insurance and private insurance)  
12900 Garden Grove Blvd. #214A  
Garden Grove, Ca. 92843  
(714) 636-9095

#### Pathways Community Services Inc.

(Medi-Cal insurance only)  
12966 Euclid St, Suite 280  
Garden Grove, CA 92840  
(714)823-4770

#### Community Counseling & Supportive Services (CCSS)

(Free Services For those without Insurance)  
4000 West Metropolitan Drive Suite 405  
Orange CA 92868  
(714) 645-8000

### Family Resource Centers

#### Oak View Family Resource Center

17261 Oak Lane  
Huntington Beach, CA 92647  
(714) 842-4002  
[OakViewFRC@factoc.org](mailto:OakViewFRC@factoc.org)

#### Westminster Family Resource Center

7200 Plaza St.  
Westminster, 92683  
(714) 903-1331  
[WestminsterFRC@factoc.org](mailto:WestminsterFRC@factoc.org)

## Apps to support your child



#### Head Space (free if you have Kaiser insurance)

A meditation app that helps users get more out of their day through mindfulness



**Calm App for kids** is available in the kids category of the [Calm app](#), offering beginners' meditation exercises and bedtime stories specifically designed to calm the mind, which families can do together. (App is free if you have Kaiser insurance)



#### Smiling Mind (free on iPhone & Android)

A mindfulness-based app to help people of all ages from 7 years+, to deal with pressure, stress, and challenges of daily life. Now featuring Thrive Inside, a special initiative to help stay calm and healthy in the physical constraints of your home, while remaining calm and healthy inside your mind.

#### BrightLife Kids

A CalHOPE program by Brightline



Personalized support for California families. Kids ages 0–12 get free, expert coaching for sleep issues, worry, social skills, and more. Live, 1:1 video sessions, secure chat, on-demand content, and more.





*Any Questions or Comments?*