



Navigating Anxiety, Worries, and Obsessions: Understanding the Causes and How to Support Your Child

STISD Parent Program February 6, 2025





**Cheryl Ann Chase, PhD
Clinical Psychologist
Cleveland, Ohio
ChasingYourPotential.com**


Facebook: <https://business.facebook.com/ChasingYourPotential/>




This presentation and handout are intended for personal use only and may not be distributed or re-presented without author consent.




www.chasingyourpotential.com



Dyslexia





ADHD



Slidebooks

Check out the helpful information in these slidebooks which cover topics like ADHD and executive functioning

www.chasingyourpotential.com

October 28: Understanding Your Child's Mental Health: Key Signs to Watch For and Effective Responses.

November 18: Guiding Growth: Managing Children's Challenging Behaviors Through Calm, Consistency, and Co-Regulation.

February 6: Navigating Anxiety, Worries, and Obsessions: Understanding the Causes and How to Support Your Child

March 6 Depression, Mood Swings, and Low Self-Esteem: When to Be Concerned and How to Support Your Child


www.chasingyourpotential.com




Anxiety, Worry, Obsessions

Anxiety

- a natural emotional response to perceived threats or challenges
- can range from mild feelings of unease to intense fear or panic.
- For children, anxiety often manifests as worry, restlessness, or fear, particularly in situations where they feel uncertain, vulnerable, or out of control.



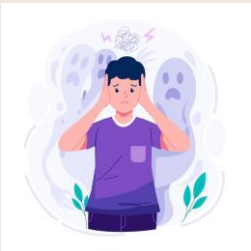
www.chasingyourpotential.com




Anxiety is a normal and even protective response to life's challenges.

It can help children stay focused, take precautions, and prepare for potential threats. For example, anxiety before a big test can motivate a child to study and do their best.


But.....



www.chasingyourpotential.com



Child Care



- When anxiety reaches a level where it's **no longer manageable** or is **severely impairing** the child's quality of life, it's important to seek professional support, such as therapy, counseling, or, in some cases, medication.
- Early intervention can help prevent long-term impacts and teach children effective coping strategies that will serve them well into adulthood.

www.chasingyourpotential.com

Child Care

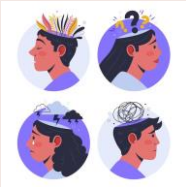
Normal, Everyday Worries OR Clinically Significant Anxiety?

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Normal Worries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's completely normal to feel anxious or worried sometimes (before big test, presentation, party). • Common reactions, help them prepare and stay focused. • Normal anxiety doesn't interfere significantly with daily functioning, and the child is able to manage it and move on once the stressful situation is over. | <p>Clinically Significant Anxiety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • worries become excessive, persistent, and uncontrollable, • cause significant distress or impairment in the child's ability to function in daily life (e.g., at school, in social settings, or at home). |
|---|---|

www.chasingyourpotential.com


Child Care

Signs of (maybe) Clinically Significant Anxiety




- **Chronic worry** about situations that aren't necessarily threatening, like fearing a friend might stop talking to them for no reason.
- **Avoidance** of certain situations or places (e.g., refusing to go to school, avoiding social interactions).
- **Physical symptoms** such as stomachaches, headaches, or muscle tension that interfere with normal activities.
- **Difficulty concentrating** or staying focused because the mind is consumed with worries.
- **Disrupted routines**, like consistently refusing to go to bed, attend school, or participate in activities they once enjoyed.
- **Sleep issues**, including trouble falling asleep or frequent night waking, often linked to anxiety.

www.chasingyourpotential.com


 **Common Sources of Anxiety in Children**


- **School:**
 - Academic pressure, such as fear of failure, difficulty keeping up with homework or assignments, and worries about grades.
 - Social anxiety, such as fear of being judged by peers, bullying, or struggling to make friends.
 - Transition-related anxiety, such as moving from elementary to middle school, or high school to college.
- **Social Situations:**
 - Fear of being rejected, not fitting in, or being excluded can be particularly stressful for children, especially as they navigate peer relationships.
 - Performance anxiety, such as feeling nervous about speaking in front of a group or participating in class activities.

www.chasingyourpotential.com 


 **Common Sources of Anxiety in Children**


- **Family Dynamics:**
 - Changes or stress in the family, such as parental divorce, illness, financial struggles, or family conflict, can trigger anxiety in children.
 - Children may worry about their parents' well-being, safety, or relationships, which can affect their own emotional state.
- **Future Worries:**
 - Fear about what the future holds can create anxiety, particularly around major life transitions such as starting a new grade or moving to a new place.
 - Some children may have a heightened fear of the unknown, or worry about growing up, career choices, or other long-term concerns.

www.chasingyourpotential.com 


 **Common Sources of Anxiety in Children**


- Can also be genetics, temperament, or other variables within the child's "wiring"

www.chasingyourpotential.com 


 **Terms**


- Obsessions: persistent, intrusive thoughts that cause anxiety
- Compulsions: repetitive behaviors or mental acts performed to reduce anxiety
- Phobia: persistent, powerful, irrational fear and avoidance
- Generalized Anxiety
- Social anxiety
- Separation Anxiety
- Worry

www.chasingyourpotential.com 


 **Make home a supportive and open place**

- Consider their behavior – even the tough stuff – a form of communication.
- Do what **you** need to do so **you** remain regulated and calm (starts with self care). Go back and get the co-regulation handout.
- Discourage any teasing, bullying from siblings, other adults.
- Consider warm and positive art, photos on the walls
- Dial back stress for a while

www.chasingyourpotential.com 

 **Start talking but quickly shift into listening**

- Choose a calm time – or make one. Go out for ice cream, a walk. **DO NOT RUSH.**
- If they initiate and you are tired, do **ALL YOU CAN** to suck it up. But if you can't, make a date right then and there and promise to keep it. Do a mini-preview. Especially important with teenagers who are on different sleep cycles than us.
- Using open ended questions, initiate conversation.
- Express your concerns gently with love and support.
- I've noticed that.....What's up?
- Sit in the silence. Let it work. Do not be an expert.

www.chasingyourpotential.com 

For Cheryl Chase

Promote healthier habits

- Slow down and simplify
- Earlier bedtime? Consistent bedtime on weekends?
- Rearrange so less morning chaos?
- Clean and consistent nutrition
- Exercise
- Time outside
- Hydrate
- Turn off tv/internet entirely or for doses
- Sit down family meals a couple times a week
- Model time outs/cool down time

www.chasingyourpotential.com

chasing your potential

For Cheryl Chase

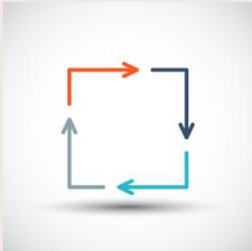
Mindfulness and Positive Self-Talk

- Practice mindfulness throughout the day
 - Being fully present in the here-and-now; awareness of self in the present moment.
 - Take many mindful minutes; not just one, 20-min meditation. Eat mindfully. Work mindfully. Sprinkle mini-meditations in throughout the day.
- Use spiritual resources.
- Try box breathing (in 4 -hold 4 -out 4 -hold 4)
 - Next slide – let's do it.
- Practice positive self-talk and affirmations

www.chasingyourpotential.com

chasing your potential


For Cheryl Chase




Box Breathing


www.chasingyourpotential.com

chasing your potential


 <https://www.purewow.com/family/affirmations-for-kids>


1. I have many talents.
2. I don't have to be perfect to be worthy.
3. Making mistakes helps me grow.
4. I am good at solving problems.
5. I'm not afraid of a challenge.
6. I am smart.
7. I am capable.
8. I am a good friend.
9. I am loved for who I am.
10. I remember that bad feelings come and go.
11. I'm proud of myself.

www.chasingyourpotential.com 

 **Maintain (or develop) routines**

- Structure and routine provide stability and decrease anxiety
- Be consistent with when and where
- Meals, sleep, homework, hobbies, relaxation
- Increase adult presence/supervision

www.chasingyourpotential.com 

 **Get help**

- For yourself and for your child
- Talk to your pediatrician or school personnel
- Psychologist – talk therapy, assessment
- Psychiatrist – medical doctor so can prescribe
- Rely on your faith and spiritual supports.
- Do not try to do this alone. No special medal.

www.chasingyourpotential.com 