



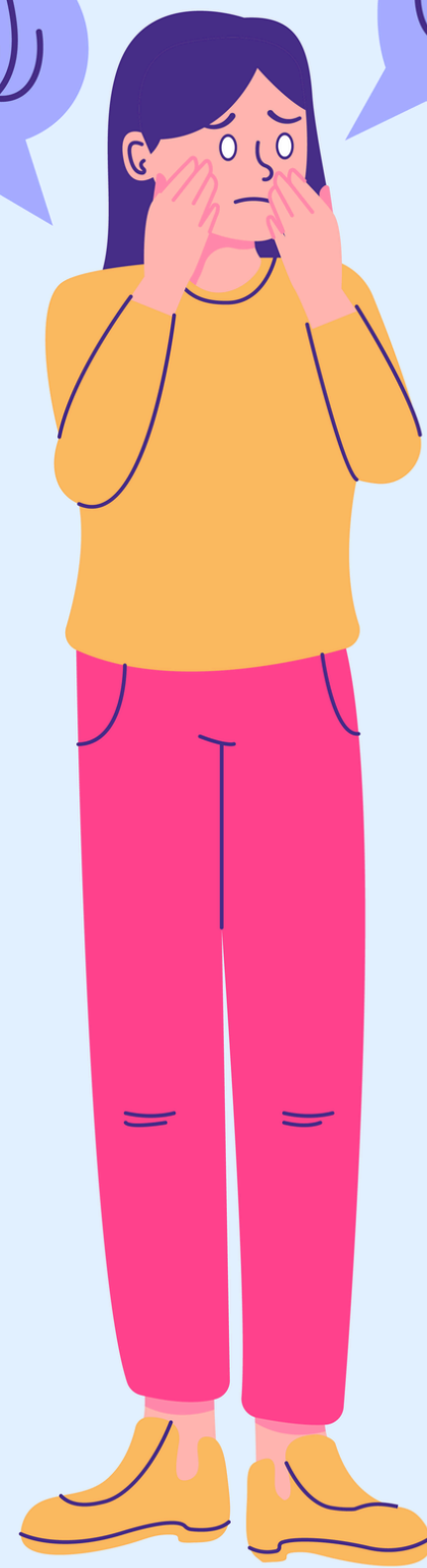
Brooke Lawson, LCSW and Joan Rhyner, LSW

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ANXIETY



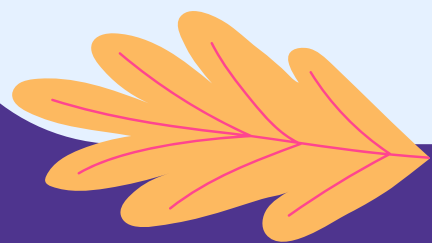
UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

Anxiety is a natural response to stress that helps children anticipate and respond to challenges. However, when fears or worries are intense, ongoing, or begin to interfere with school, friendships, family life, or daily routines, anxiety can impact a child's functioning and well-being.



1 IN 5 CHILDREN

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition in children and adolescents. **1 in 5 children** will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in childhood or adolescence. Many more experience significant anxiety symptoms that may not meet full diagnostic criteria but still affect daily functioning.



THE SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

Anxiety in children doesn't always sound like "I'm worried." It often shows up in their bodies, emotions, or behaviors. Because kids don't always have the words to explain what they're feeling, anxiety can look like stomachaches, irritability, tears, clinginess, or avoidance. When we recognize these signs early, we can respond with support and help our children build healthy coping skills.

Physical Symptoms

- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Trouble Sleeping

Emotional Symptoms

- Irritability
- Perfectionism
- Frequent reassurance seeking

Behavioral Symptoms

- Avoiding school or activities
- Clinginess
- Meltdowns before transitions

THE RULE OF 3



Home



School

Social/Community

ORDINARY ANXIETY VS CLINICAL ANXIETY

- Severe Anxiety is unrealistic
- Severe Anxiety is out of proportion
- Severe Anxiety is often unwanted and uncomfortable
- Severe Anxiety doesn't go away
- Severe Anxiety leads to avoidance



ACCOMMODATIONS

An accommodation becomes unhelpful when it helps a child avoid fear instead of face it

I can't handle this

This must be dangerous

I need someone to rescue me

Communicates to the child that they should believe the anxiety



WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Your job is not to eliminate your child's anxiety. It's to help them learn that they can work through it.

Be mindful of responses

Keep the anticipatory period short

Teach ways to manage and not accomdate

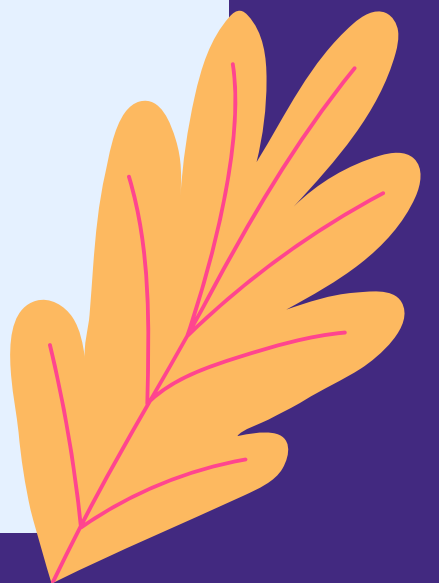
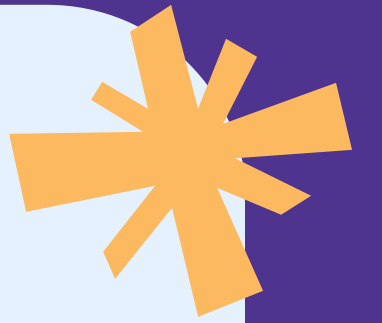
Encourage healthy coping

Validate, don't empower

Stay Calm

Encourage Independance

Praise effort, not perfection



WAYS TO BUILD HEALTHY SKILLS AT HOME



Normalize Anxiety

Help your child understand that anxiety isn't a problem; it's a feeling



Teach Coping

Share strategies to handle uncomfortable feelings,

- Breathing
- Thought changing
- Grounding
- Self talk



Create Routine (when possible)

Routines lower baseline anxiety so kids can practice bravery.

GET HELP!

- Read a book or listen to some podcasts from experts
- Talk with your child's teacher and/or school social worker about your concerns
- Seek out professional support



RESOURCES

Books for Parents/Adults

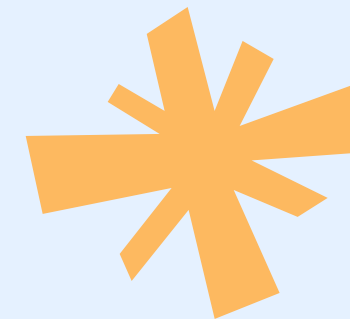
- Flooded or Why Smart Kids Worry by Allison Edwards
- Raising Good Humans by Elaine N. Aron
- Transforming the Intense Child by Howard Glasser
- Breaking Free From Child Anxiety and OCD by Eli Lebowitz

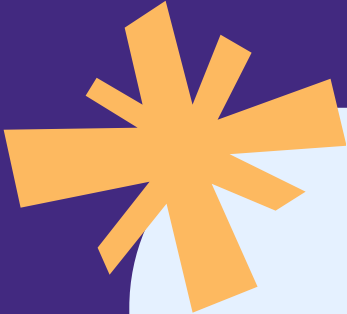
Children's Books

- What to do When you Worry too Much
- Ruby finds a Worry
- Wilma Jean and Worry Machine
- Don't Worry Murray

Podcasts

- AT Parenting Survival: Raising Kids with OCD and Anxiety
- Your Anxious Child
- The Child Anxiety FAQ
- Good Inside





THANK YOU!

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