



Tips for Parents - Anxiety

Anxiety is on the rise in young people and can be really debilitating. It can be tricky to know what might be causing a child's anxiety and how we can help them feel better.

Below are nine top tips from experts and parents for supporting children with anxiety.

Tip 1 - Understand what anxiety is

Anxiety is an emotional alarm system that keeps us safe, but it can become unhelpful if we are anxious all the time. You can support children to find healthy coping strategies by explaining how anxiety works in the mind and body.

Tip 2 – Distract them in the moment of panic

If your child is having a panic attack, help them to focus on their breathing and to lengthen their exhales until they feel better. Noticing what they can see, hear and touch around them can help them to feel more grounded whilst the panic subsides.

Tip 3 - Talk about what happened later

When things are a bit calmer, talk to your child about their anxiety and help them to identify what's really going on. Once you really understand the cause of the anxiety you can explore what they need to be able to cope.

Tip 4 - Avoid avoidance

It's normal to avoid situations that make us anxious, but in the long-term this doesn't always help. Avoidance can bring short term relief, but we don't have an opportunity to learn the skills we need to deal with a situation.

Tip 5 - Support, don't accommodate

Support means accepting and validating your child's fears whilst helping to build up their belief in their own ability to cope. It's helpful to acknowledge how scared or uncomfortable children are, and then work together to find a solution.

Tip 6 - Sleep, diet, exercise and connection

A good routine is important for your child's mental health. Ensure that they're getting enough sleep, are eating healthy meals, keeping active and have a chance to spend time with family and friends.

Tip 7 - For persistent difficulties, seek help

Speak to your child's school or ask for help from the GP if your child's anxiety is getting worse, if they're reluctant to go to school, or they are finding it hard to cope.