

How to Manage School Anxiety

What is School Anxiety?

Consistent and extreme worry or fear when having to separate from a parent or caregiver to attend school.

Symptoms

- Shows reluctance or refusal to attend school
- Frequently talks about fear of school
- Complains often of stomach aches or headaches
- Excessive crying
- Exhibits clingy behavior to parent or caretaker
- Has difficulty accepting change

9 Tips to Help Your Child Overcome School Anxiety

1. Goodbye Routine

Develop a quick goodbye routine and do it the same way every time. Don't drag out the goodbye process... it makes leaving even more difficult.

2. Be Consistent

Keeping a consistent routine helps kids know what to expect. It's tempting to give up or give in when things are difficult. It's important to remember that what feels easier in the short run usually makes things more difficult in the long run.

3. Keep Things Light

Kids are good at picking up on emotions. Appear relaxed and upbeat even if you don't feel that way. It tugs at the heart-strings when your child is anxious. Keep conversations to the point and detached of emotion.

4. Talk to the Teacher

Teachers are a great resource! Open communication helps increase success. Your child's teacher may have tips or ideas to share in dealing with school anxiety.

5. Have Your Child Bring One Small Item From Home

Send a small reminder of home with your child. Items such as a hand written note, a family picture, or a small keepsake that when looked at brings a happy thought.

6. Teach Problem Solving

Learning to handle problems effectively is a valuable life skill. When problems arise, don't rush to solve your child's problem for them. Encourage them to come up with their own ideas of solutions to their problems.

7. Be Prepared for Setbacks

Don't get discouraged with regression. Going back to school after a long weekend, holiday break, or illness can cause anxiety to flair up again. Be prepared for this and remember consistency is the key.

8. Don't Give Up

The best gift you can give your child is to not give up... Even when you feel like it. There's no "quick-fix" in overcoming school anxiety. The best lesson your child learns is they CAN do hard things and be successful.

9. Teach Calming Strategies

Teaching your child calming strategies is a great way for them to take an active role in overcoming school anxiety. Some coping strategy examples include:

- i. Deep Breathing Exercise:
 - I. Inhale through nose. Hold for 5 seconds. Exhale through mouth.
- ii. Do 25 of something active
 - I. Jumping jacks, shooting hoops, jump rope, etc.
- iii. Focus on positive thoughts
- iv. Bring note from home to read at recess
- v. Count down from 10 BACKWARDS

Reducing Anxiety Resources

- ***What to Do When You Worry Too Much – A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety*** by Dawn Huebner
- ***Freeing Your Child From Anxiety*** by Tamar Chansky
- ***Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine*** by Julia Cook
- ***Wemberly Worried*** by Kevin Henkes
- ***Don't Panic Annicka*** by Juliet Clare Bell

- www.worrywisekids.org