

ANXIETY MANAGEMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

When a child is anxious they tend to seek a lot of reassurance from the adults around them and they can also try to change routines of the household in order to minimise their anxiety. Examples of this can be not going out socially to restaurants or avoiding parties.

The child is trying to control their anxiety by controlling the world around them. Unfortunately the more they do this, the more anxious they get and the more isolated they become.

As parents what we want to do is reassure the child that they are ok. This is great in the first instance but unfortunately what often happens is that more you reassure someone, the more they come back for further reassurance and then this becomes counter productive. In fact it increases their anxiety.

Therefore in order to counter act this, the adults around the child need to provide a good role model of confidence and help the child to see that the world is really a safe place to be in.

Here are some tips for helping your child to feel more confident: -

- As parents you need to show that you are confident and not worried about your child and their abilities. – This can be really hard to do if you are actually worried about their anxiety but it is **ESSENTIAL!**
- Keep reassurance to a minimum –ONE reassurance and then move onto a distracting activity. After this refuse to give anymore reassurance with the comment, for instance that “we have already talked about that and I don’t need to say anymore”.
- Use distracting activities at times you notice your child becoming anxious.
- If a child keeps coming back to anxious thoughts you can name this for them “This are your worried thoughts making you feel like this” – and then help them to move onto to another activity.
- **DO NOT** change family routines to accommodate the anxiety – you may have to be quite firm with your child about this.
- If your child says they need to share worried thoughts with you, you can set a specific time when they can do this. This could be for 20 minutes after tea each day when they can review their

worries through the day with you. **DO NOT** agree to do this at bedtime and if they try to talk at other times refer them to their worry talk time and move away from the subject.

- If a child has a specific worry such as going into town shopping set small goals with a view to increasing this activity as they begin to feel more comfortable. For instance initially you may plan to go into town to just one shop and then come home. After this, do two shops and so on.
- Praise all confident behaviour and attempts at managing their own anxiety behaviour.
- If your child asks for a detailed agenda of what you are doing or where you will be when they are at school, resist giving them too much detail. This is just a way of increasing the reassurance that they get from you and will only increase anxiety in the long run.
- Do not phone or text your child on their mobile phone at school at regular times to check that they are ok or for them to check that you are ok. This is again a way of increasing the reassurance they get from you.
- It is okay and normal for your child to experience some anxiety in life – anxiety is a normal part of life and can be managed.
- Advise school staff of the way you are managing things at home so that they can support you by doing similar strategies at school.
- If your child frequently gets sent home from school feeling unwell and then recovers at home, liaise with school staff to help him to stay there at these times.
- It is important to remember that if you start to use these strategies that things may appear to get **WORSE** before they get better. This is because your child will want you to change back to the reassuring behaviour that they have been seeking in the past – this however only increased the anxious behaviour. If you stick with these strategies the anxiety will then start to reduce and the behaviour will get **BETTER**.

**REMEMBER YOU HAVE TO BE CONFIDENT, FIRM AND KIND
TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO FEEL LESS ANXIOUS.**

**YOU HAVE TO SHOW THEM THAT YOU ARE NOT ANXIOUS
ABOUT THEM.**

**YOU HAVE TO SHOW THEM THAT THE WORLD IS A SAFE
PLACE TO LIVE IN!**

Alison Davies
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