

HELP! MY TEEN HAS ANXIETY

MASTERFUL PARENTING



BY

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WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a worry, nervousness, or fear about something. We all feel anxiety. It's in our biology. We needed to feel fear in order to protect ourselves.

Anxiety can be a problem when our fears take over our everyday lives.

In our kids, they may not want to go to school, ride their bike, or talk to their friends. Maybe they feel sad, unsettled, or nervous.

The good news is that we, as parents, can help them

In this booklet, I want to share the tools I use to help my own children, my students who I have worked on anxiety with and how I help myself when I am feeling anxious.

The process of experiencing anxiety is the same in all of us. Here is it:

- 1. Body Sensations**
- 2. Thoughts**
- 3. Feelings**
- 4. Outcome**



BODY SENSATIONS

We feel things in our body first so it is really important to know the signs in our body when we are feeling anxious. These body sensations can help to warn us of our anxiety.

So you can ask your child, Where are you feeling the anxiety in your body?

In your stomach (belly ache)

In your head (headache)

In your chest (chest pain)

In your shoulders (tightening)

In your hands (sweaty palms)

In your whole body (your body shakes)

When our kids know the warning signs, we can teach them ways to calm the body and mind down.



What Are Your Thoughts?

It is our thoughts that create the anxiety so it is really important to know what our kids are thinking.

So, let's ask them.

Say, what are you thinking?

Then just listen without judgement.

Say to your child, "I understand." because this statement conveys empathy to our kids.

Then repeat what they said to clarify.

Example: "So you think that you will fail the Math test because you don't understand the lessons. Is that right?"

If they say, "Yes", then you can move onto a talk about the feelings they are having which is the result of their thinking.



An Anxious Mind



*We cannot problem solve when we are
in the midst of anxiety*

In is very important that we do not move into problem solving too quickly. The anxious mind cannot think logically. The brain is in flight, fight, or freeze mode so it is best to wait until our teenager is calm.

When our teenagers are calm and less emotional, then we can try to move into problem solving with them.



What Are Your Feelings?

Knowing how your teen feels is really important in understanding the why.

You can ask, “What are feeling? Scared? Frustrated? Annoyed? Angry?”

Then say, “I understand you feel scared (or whatever they told you they are feeling) because you think you will not pass the test.”

Now your teen should feel heard and understood.

By this time, your teen’s emotions should be calmer.

When your teen is calm, we can move to the next step.

**“Almost
everything will
work again if you
unplug it for a few
minutes,
including you.”**

ANNE LAMOTT



Discuss the Outcome/Move to Problem Solve

Now we can discuss the outcome and move into problem solving.

Our teens will tell us the outcome of their thoughts and feelings.

They will say, I don't want to take the test, go on my bike, or go to the party.

When we understand how they feel we can release their fears by saying,

"You don't have to."

This means they don't have to today. Not you don't have to forever because our goal is for them to face their fears. But they must face them when they are ready.

We let them tell us when they are ready and help them to make a plan to face their fears.

Anxiety stems from feelings of not having any control so we want to give our children control. It is very important to give them control.

I tell my students, "You are the boss."



Steps Summarized

Here is the Helping Our Kids with Anxiety Checklist

1. **Ask where they feel it in their body.**
2. **Let them express their thoughts and feelings**
3. **Listen with empathy and without judgement**
4. **Tell them they don't have to right now**
5. **Ask them if you can help them make a plan**
6. **Check in on their thoughts and feelings after implementing the plan step by step**
7. **Praise every effort they make**
8. **Once they accomplished their plan, tell them how proud you are of them**

This is how we help our kids with anxiety.





Contact ANNE

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