

Recognizing Anxiety in Your Child and Effective Parenting Strategies to Help Your Child Succeed – Jack Donohue School (April 13, 2016)

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Red Flags for Anxiety in Children and Youth

- Easily distressed or agitated
- Repetitive reassurance questions
- Physical complaints – headaches, stomachaches
- Anticipatory anxiety
- Disruption of sleep
- Perfectionism, self-critical
- Overly responsible, people pleasing
- Excessive avoidance
- Disruption of child or family functioning –difficulty going to friend's houses, school, family gatherings, errands, vacations
- Excessive time spend consoling child about ordinary situations, excessive time coaxing child

Steps to Take if Your Child Needs Help

1. Check in with your child's teacher to find out how things are going at school
2. Gather referrals
 - a. Speak to your family doctor
 - b. Ottawa Academy of Psychology website
 - c. CHEO
 - d. Centre for Psychological Services – University of Ottawa
3. Check with your insurance company about coverage
4. Take some time to observe your child and take notes, if necessary

Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

- CBT is an active skill focused intervention that is the treatment of choice for anxiety
- CBT involves psychoeducation, relaxation, challenging anxious thoughts and exposure to feared situation/object
- Anxiety is normal and helpful -> when it is too high, we can think of it as a "false alarm"

- Use of feeling thermometer (scale of 1-10) to rate the child's anxiety
- Escape and avoidance strength fear, while exposure weakens fear
- The goals of CBT are to learn how to bring down your feeling temperature, teach your brain that you are brave and do the opposite of what the anxiety tells you to do

Helpful Ways of Dealing with Anxiety

- Reinforce brave, non-anxious behaviour in your child
- Model brave, non-anxious behaviour
- Let your child do things on their own
- Externalize worry in young children (i.e. worry bully)
- Reduce hyper-vigilance to danger/threats
- Model confidence in your child's ability to manage situations
- Build your child's personal strengths

Parenting Strategies to Promote Resilience

- Connect with your child before you redirect them
- Mirroring their emotions lowers anxiety and help the child learn to regulate their feelings
- Spend one on one time with your child to strength the parent-child connection
- Connect while setting limits
- Kids need to be exposed to painful, non-catastrophic failures in order to build resiliency
- Teach your child how to handle small disappointments so that eventually they can handle larger ones
- Encourage kids to be flexible and talk about the importance of flexibility on a regular basis at home

Resources

- **Connected Parenting** by Jennifer Kolari
- **No-Drama Discipline** by Drs. Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- **Drop the Worry Ball** by Dr. Alex Russell and Tim Falconer
- **I Can Relax CD**
- **Indigo Teen Dreams CD**