

Home Management Strategies for Social Anxiety

Step 1: Teaching your child about anxiety

This is a very important first step, as it helps children and teens understand what is happening to them when they experience anxiety. Let your child know that all the worries and physical feelings he or she is experiencing has a name: **Anxiety**. Help your child understand the **facts about anxiety**.

Fact 1: Anxiety is normal and adaptive as it helps us prepare for danger.

Fact 2: Anxiety can become a problem when our body tells us that there is danger when there is no real danger.

Step 2: Teaching you child about social anxiety

☛ Explain to your child that sometimes we are afraid of being around other people or performing in front of others. These situations can make us feel like we are “on stage,” and we worry that we might do something embarrassing or that others will think badly of us. Let your child know that you will give him or her some tools to help cope with anxiety and gradually face his or her fears.

☛ Let your child know that social anxiety is fairly common, and they are not the only one who feels this way.

Step 3: Building Your Child's Toolbox

You can help your child by giving him or her some tools to manage anxiety. These tools will help your child to accomplish the most important step – facing his or her fears.

- ✗ Learning to Relax.
- ✗ Realistic Thinking
- ✗ Making Coping Cards
- ✗ Facing Fears
- ✗ Developing and Broadening Social Skills

Step 4: Building on Bravery

Learning to manage anxiety takes hard work. If your child is doing better, then you both deserve credit! Learning to manage anxiety is like exercise – your child needs to “keep in shape” and practice his or her skills regularly. Make them a habit! This is true even after your child is feeling better and has reached his or her goals.

Don't be discouraged if your child starts using old behaviors. This can happen during stressful times or during transitions (for example, going back to school or moving). This is normal. It just means that your child needs to start practicing using the tools. Remember, coping with anxiety is a lifelong process.

Helpful Tips:

Exposure! Expose your child to different social situations. Encourage him or her to play with others, attend birthday parties, and join-in after school activities.

Model! Model for your child how to interact with others (for example, start a conversation with a cashier at the grocery store).

Let Them Speak! Don't speak for your child. Encourage them to answer questions for themselves. For example, have them order food at a restaurant.

Get Perspective! Encourage your child to take another perspective. Help him or her identify alternative interpretations of social interactions.

Praise! Don't forget to praise your child's efforts!!!