

Overcoming Anxiety:

A parent's guide to helping your child thrive



About me

- Naturopathic physician (ND)
- Specialize in helping adults, children, and families manage ADHD and anxiety
- Private practice in both Issaquah and Seattle
- Published research scientist- sleep medicine
- Mom of three amazing kids with ADHD

More info: www.adhdetails.com



What we will cover

How to recognize anxiety

How to help

- Foundational health
- Strategies for parents

How and when to get support



Recognizing Anxiety

It is estimated that **10-30% of children** in the U.S. suffer from **anxiety disorders**

What does anxiety look like?

Avoidance of school and/or social activities

Sleep issues

Changes in eating patterns

Weepiness

Outbursts/anger/oppositional behavior

Poor grades/inattention/difficulty starting or completing tasks

Anxiety- Effects on Health

Physical complaints:

- Sleep disturbance
- Nausea/abdominal pain
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- General malaise



Contributing factors

Change/transitions

Sleep difficulties

Diet/blood sugar

Illness

Hormone fluctuations

ADHD, sensory issues, other



Is this just normal childhood?

Adjustment disorder

- Short-term
- Due to life change, loss, or event (ex. Moving, pandemic)
- Anxiety is reduced as they adjust to the change

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)

- Chronic
- May not be able to identify stressors

Can have both disorders and a major life change can worsen GAD

Is this just normal childhood?

Check in with your pediatrician or a therapist

How to Help: Foundational Health

Foundational Health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

Nutrition

Exercise

Time outdoors

Create a calm environment



Foundational health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

Nutrition

Exercise

Time outdoors

Environment

Be consistent with:

- Bedtime
- Wake time
- Meals
- Learning time
- Screen time/free time

Get dressed each day

Foundational health

Routine

 **Connection**

Sleep

Nutrition

Exercise

Time outdoors

Environment

Consider relaxing some screen rules to connect with friends

Eat together (no devices)

Give them full attention/eye contact

Play a game or go for a drive

Laugh together

Give hugs, snuggle, hold hands if they are comfortable with it

Foundational health

Routine

Connection

 **Sleep**

Nutrition

Exercise

Time outdoors

Environment

Have a bedtime routine

Make sure the room is dark

Sunrise/daylight alarm clock

Avoid “exciting” activities before bedtime

Meals are circadian cues- keep mealtime regular

Morning routine- even on weekends

Foundational health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

 **Nutrition**

Exercise

Time outdoors

Environment

Blood sugar ups and downs → emotional ups and downs

- Regular meal times
- Make sure they are actually eating
- If having a simple carb, add a protein
- If can't eat a meal, try snack with protein

Correct vitamin deficiencies

Ensure no underlying health conditions

Foundational health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

Nutrition

 **Exercise**

Time outdoors

Environment

Exercise increases “relaxing” chemicals in the brain

Brain learns \uparrow heart rate, \uparrow breathing rate doesn't have to equal fear

Decreases muscle tension

Foundational health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

Nutrition

Exercise

 **Time outdoors**

Environment

Vitamin D

Connection to nature

- Ecotherapy
- 20-30 min

Foundational health

Routine

Connection

Sleep

Nutrition

Exercise

Time outdoors

 **Environment**

Disorder can worsen stress and overwhelm

Cleaning/organizing can be therapeutic for some but stressful for others

Offer support

Take small steps toward the goal

Get outside support if needed

Limit news/media that focuses on problems

How to Help: Strategies for Parents

Validate their feelings

Give them a safe space to share their feelings

Listen with full attention

Listen and empathize without judgement

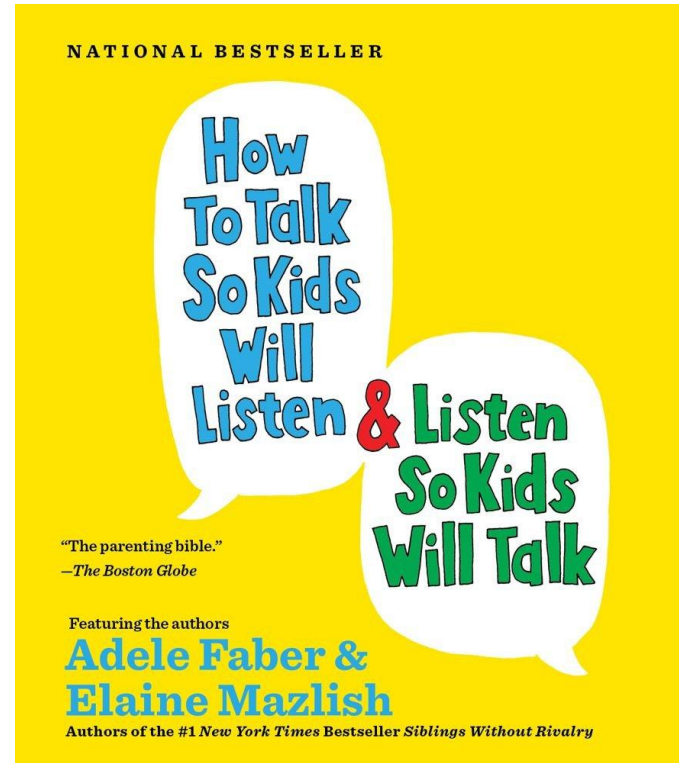
This doesn't mean that you agree with them

Acknowledge these feelings exist and are part of their experience

Helps them to feel understood and not alone

Validate their feelings

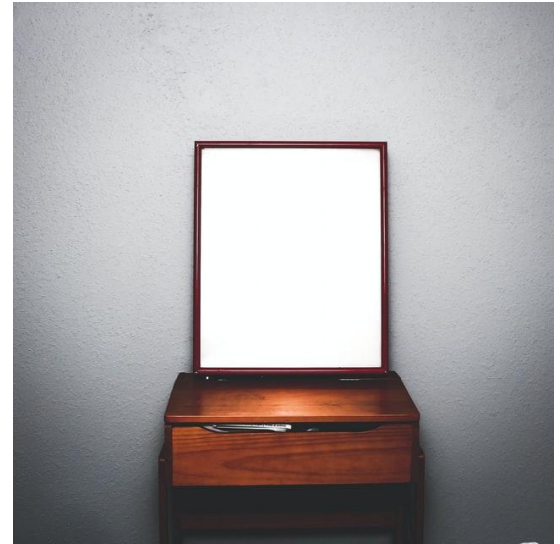
How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish is a fantastic resource



Manage your own anxiety

- Anxious brains are looking for environmental cues
- Mirror neurons
- Vicious cycle
- YOUR anxiety is probably higher right now
- It's okay to share your process with your kids

Practice self-care!



What is mindfulness?

State of mind

Being in the present moment

Emphasizes observing without judgment

Sensing how you are feeling (body, mind)

Helps to bring our bodies into a calmer, relaxed state



Mindfulness activities

Mindful eating

- Try something like a raisin or a piece of apple
- Is it sweet? Sour? What's the texture? Warm/cold?



Mindfulness activities

Sensory scan

- Close eyes and take a deep breath in and then out
- How many different things can you hear right now?
- Can you smell anything? Taste anything?
- What can you feel right now? (ex. My shirt on my skin, where my touches the chair)

Mindfulness

With practice, kids may be able to notice how they experience anxiety

- Tightness in chest
- Feel warm
- Breathing is increasing

Prompt them to be an observer in these moments



Show confidence in their abilities

New research into a parent-based approach (SPACE)

Refrain from accommodating fears

Show confidence in child's ability to deal with anxiety on their own

Give words of support (see script for example)



Show confidence in their abilities

SPACE script:

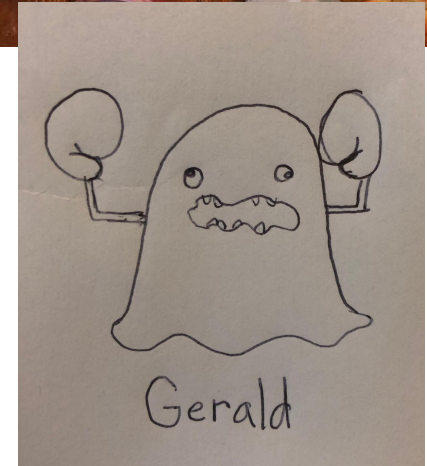
“We understand it makes you feel really anxious or afraid. We want you to know that this is perfectly natural and everyone feels afraid some of the time. But we also want you to know that it is our job as your parents to help you get better at things that are hard for you, and we have decided to do exactly that. We are going to be working on this for a while, and we know it will probably take time, but we love you too much not to help when you need help.”

Name the anxiety

Give the “voice” in your head a name

Helps to think of anxiety like an annoying relative

- You take their advice with a grain of salt
- They will always be at Thanksgiving because they're family



Thank the anxiety

From an evolutionary perspective, anxiety helped us survive

Thank you for trying to keep me safe, but I've got this



How and When to Get Support

When should you get extra help?

It is **always** a good idea to check-in with your pediatrician

When should you get extra help?

Is it causing a major disruption in their ability to:

- Eat
- Sleep
- Learn
- Have social relationships

Do thoughts seem obsessive?

Are there significant physical symptoms?

Would they like outside help?



When should you get extra help?

Irritability

- Are there ups and downs or is it a constant?

Engagement

- Are they engaging with family members?

Sleepiness

- Are they getting excessive sleep and still are exhausted?

Who can you reach out to?

Pediatrician

School counselor or psychologist

Outside psychologist/therapist/counselor

NAMI (<https://nami-eastside.org/>)

Teen Link (www.teenlink.org)

King County Crisis Line 1.866.4CRISIS

FEAR "I recognize and respect that you are part of this family, and so I will never exclude you from our activities, but still - your suggestions will **NEVER** be followed. You're allowed to have a seat and you're allowed to have a voice, but you are not allowed to have a **VOTE**. You're not allowed to touch the road maps; you're not allowed to suggest detours; you're not allowed to fiddle with the temperature. **DUDE**, you're not even allowed to touch the radio. But, above all else, my **DEAR** old familiar friend, you are absolutely **FORBIDDEN** to drive." - Elizabeth Gilbert

-April

Questions?
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Resources

Music

Music specifically created to reduce anxiety and decrease heart rate:

- *Weightless* by Marconi Union

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=UfcAVeislrU

Study by Mindlab International found this song resulted in a 65% reduction in participants' overall anxiety and 35% reduction in usual physiologic resting rates.

Websites

Child Mind Institute www.childmind.org

Anxiety and Depression Association of America www.adaa.org

Additude Magazine www.additudemag.com

Understood www.understood.org

Psychology Today therapist directory www.psychologytoday.com

Books

“How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk” by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

“The Whole Brain Child” by Daniel Siegel

“Brainstorm” by Daniel Siegel

Mindfulness- UCLA MARC

http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations

The screenshot shows a web browser at the URL marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations. The page features a blue header with navigation links: About MARC, Classes and Events, Research and Resources, Training in Facilitation (TMF), Free Guided Meditations, and a 'Subscribe to Our Newsletter' button. The main content area is titled 'Free Guided Meditations' and includes a sidebar with social media icons, a 'Free Guided Meditations' section with links to a weekly podcast, and a 'Resources' section with links to 'Online Classes' and 'Support our Work'. The central text provides an introduction to mindfulness meditation and lists various guided meditation sessions in a table.

UCLA Health | myUCLAhealth | School of Medicine | Select Language

UCLA Health | it begins with U

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center

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Resources

- Online Classes
- Support our Work

For an introduction to mindfulness meditation that you can practice on your own, turn on your speakers and click on the "Play" button. Podcasts are also available on iTunes. Download iTunes >

For a more in-depth class experience, take the 6-week Online Classes >

Note: We are experiencing technical issues with the iTunes page. Please use the "Play" button in the meantime. Thank you.

ENGLISH:			
Breathing Meditation (5 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Breath, Sound, Body Meditation (12 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Complete Meditation Instructions (19 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Meditation for Working with Difficulties (7 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Loving Kindness Meditation (9 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Body and Sound Meditation (3 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Body Scan Meditation (3 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes
Body Scan for Sleep (13 mins)	Play	Transcript	iTunes

Mindfulness apps- Headspace



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Mindfulness

Apps:

- Calm
- Insight Meditation Timer
- Stop, Breathe, and Think
- Smiling Mind

UCLA Mindfulness Awareness Research Center

<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

References

<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-teenagers-and-young-adults-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

<https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources>

<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2019/03/26/new-childhood-anxiety-treatment-focuses-on-the-parents/>