

# 12 Tips to Parent Your Anxious Child

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1. Respect and validate your child's feelings. Anxiety is an unpleasant and a real emotion.
2. Remind your child that all feelings will eventually pass and encourage him to use words to express his feelings and needs. Ex. "I feel \_\_\_\_\_. I need \_\_\_\_\_."
3. Teach your child deep, slow, belly breathing. This is an easy and very portable skill for self-soothing and calming.
4. Filter and place limits on technology. The messages that come through technology can cause disturbing mental images and confuse the brain, making symptoms of anxiety worse- and often causes additional issues.
5. Soothe the senses. Engaging in the senses helps to 'ground' a person who feels 'swept away' by emotion. Try: calm music, diffuse lavender, fidgets (things to do with our hands), chamomile tea, lower lighting before bed and avoiding caffeine.
6. Listen to your child and ask "Tell me what you are thinking?" This will help to reveal scary thoughts and scenes that build up in your child's mind.
7. Rather than swooping to reassure, ask your child "How likely is (that thing you're afraid of) to happen?" You'll be teaching him to challenge his anxious thinking.
8. Prompt your child with "Tell me some things you can do to handle this situation" and help her to brainstorm, rather than just giving her solutions. She'll feel empowered.
9. Let go of "mental health days" "skip days" "sleep with mom nights" or other ways of avoiding feared situations. This makes the anxiety stick more firmly and leads to further avoidance.
10. Work with your child to outline small steps leading to a bigger goal.
11. Recognize when you are anxious and say aloud what you can do to calm down and solve the situation. You'll be modeling coping for your child, but be mindful and don't overshare your anxiety!
12. Celebrate every small step! Create opportunities for your child to practice being brave and coping (it's best to practice in 'calm' times), and then high-five his efforts!