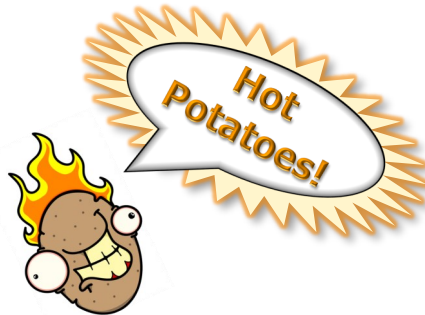


Helping Kids In Anxious Moments



Parenting Help When Things Get Hot!

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Anxious moments are part of life, and learning to manage those moments can be challenging.

We all feel anxious at times, but we don't all have anxiety. Feeling anxious (stressed out, worried) is often absolutely appropriate, especially when we consider a child's developmental stage and life situation.

Ask yourself, "Is my child's fear and the behavior related to it typical for his/her age?"

Feeling anxious springs from a loss of control over parts of one's life or worrying that you might be losing that control.

Ask yourself, "What are the symptoms of the fear? How do they affect my child's personal, social, and academic functioning?"

Conversely, having anxiety is a medical disorder in which someone has frequent anxious experiences that interfere with his/her growth, development, and enjoyment of life.

Ask yourself, "Does the fear seem unreasonable in relation to the reality of the situation? Could it be a sign of a more serious problem?"

Anxiety is feeling anxious without an apparent cause, and it requires professional diagnosis and support.

All emotions are important and have a place in our lives. Often though, we're in a hurry to help

our kids through the "bad" emotions so they can get back to feeling "good." Using such labels and rushing through experiences can cause them to miss out on important internal information to which they need to be paying attention. We can also be passing up opportunities to help our children build skills of resilience that will help them the rest of their lives.

Feeling anxious isn't just normal, it's necessary!



We become anxious when we've lost control - or worry that we might lose control.

Expanding our emotional vocabulary

Having the language to talk about how we're feeling helps us to manage what we're feeling, and the more precisely we can identify our emotions, the more effectively we can convey that information.

There are many ways that we can help children learn about and express the nuances of their emotions.

- **Print out some "How Are You Feeling" posters.** Kids can let you know what's going on inside, without ever having to say a word - just by pointing to an image.
- **Try some "refrigerator poetry" with your older kids.** These sets of magnetic words can allow your kids to express themselves and give you insight into their thoughts and feelings.
- **Talk about emotions using words beyond happy, sad, and mad.**

Try some of these:

Calm	Surprised
Unsure	Mellow
Sneaky	Content
Nervous	Satisfied
Suspicious	Confident
Hopeful	Jealous
Confused	Enraged
Ecstatic	Anxious
Silly	Frustrated
Loving	Overwhelmed

Just being there can make all the difference.

You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to know exactly what to do. You don't have to know the right thing to say. You don't have to be able to fix everything, or maybe even fix anything. Your child doesn't need a flawless parent. Your child just needs you to listen and to care.

Just be there.



Feelings are like waves. You can't stop them from coming, but you can decide which ones to surf.
-Jonatan Martensson

Can Our Kids “Catch” Our Emotions?

Yes - through a phenomenon called “Emotional Contagion.” It’s when one person’s feelings transfer to another person. The more influential that a person is, the greater their emotional “infectiousness” will be.

There are three steps to this process:

1. **Mimicry** - Individuals unconsciously copy each other’s nonverbal cues (posture, movements, facial expressions, tone of voice). For example, if you’re smiling, people around you are more likely to smile too.
2. **Feedback** - We then feel the emotion that’s associated with the postures, movements, facial expressions, and tone of voice that we’ve just mimicked. Smiling is linked to happy emotions, so feelings of happiness are triggered by the physical movements of smiling.
3. **Contagion** - now others have been “infected” by your contagious emotions, and the cycle spreads.

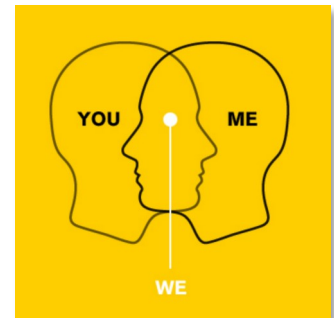
How can I use this to help my kids?

1. **While we’re helping our kids learn to process their anxious moments, we have to pay attention to our own emotional states.**

The ways in which we handle difficult moments can directly impact the ways that our kids will handle them, too. Our kids can inherit more than just our looks. They can also inherit our fears and joys.

2. **We can teach our children to pause and explore how they’re being infected by others’ emotions.** As they learn to identify how the emotions of family members, friends, teachers,

and classmates are contributing to their emotional state, kids become better able to figure out which are their emotions and which are the emotions of other people around them. They can then better decide what they want to act on and what they simply want to notice.



The goal is to manage stress - not eliminate it.

How can I help my child?

1. **Ensure that your child’s physical needs are being met.**

- Is she/he eating a well-balanced diet with plenty of veggies, limited sugar, and no caffeine? It’s hard for anyone to be calm, cool, and collected when they’re jacked up on junk.
- Is he/she getting enough sleep? Children between ages 3-5 years need 10-13 hours a night, ages 6-13 need about 9-11 hours, teens need between 8-10 hours, and adults need 7 -9 hours. We all feel cranky and anxious when we’re sleep deprived.
- Are they getting enough physical activity? Humans are built to move, especially young humans! Activity benefits every aspects of our wellbeing - emotions included.

2. **Check out these resources for more information.**

- **A beautiful article on words that expand our emotional vocabulary:** bbc.com/future/story/20170126-the-untranslatable-emotions-you-never-knew-you-had
- **On the Web**
 - * Anxioustoddlers.com (for teens, too!)
 - * KidsHealth.org
 - * GoZen.com
 - * www.childrensmn.org/educationmaterials/
- **There’s an app for that!**
 - * BioBreathing
 - * Fluid 2
 - * Tesla Toys
 - * Real Chalk HD
- **Google “How are you feeling” posters for lots of expressive options.**

3. **Give them healthy control.**

If being out of control makes us feel anxious, regaining healthy control can be comforting. Check out Sawtooth Mountain Clinic’s Facebook page and watch the videos “Helping Kids In Anxious Moments.” Child Life Specialist, Jeri Kayser, provides easy-to-use tips to help you help your kids!

