

# Anxiety

Many kids have fears and worries, and feeling sad and hopeless from time to time is a part of growing up. However, when kids don't outgrow the fears and worries that are typical in young children, or when there are so many fears and worries that they interfere with school, home, or play activities, it could be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

## Examples of different types of anxiety disorders include:

- **Separation anxiety:** Being very afraid when away from parents
- **Phobias:** Having an extreme fear about something specific, such as heights, snakes, or shots
- **Social anxiety:** Being extremely afraid of interacting with other people
- **General anxiety:** Being worried about bad things that might happen in the future
- **Panic disorder:** Having repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected fear along with symptoms like heart pounding, breathlessness, or feeling dizzy, shaky, or sweaty
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** Experiencing intense anxiety, nightmares, and /or physical symptoms after an extremely traumatic event

## Recommended Actions

- **Offer support.** Let your child know you're there for them — fully and unconditionally. Tweens and teens don't like to feel patronized or crowded, so let your child drive the conversation.
- **Learn to recognize the signs of anxiety.** If your child isn't able to easily tell you when they're feeling anxious, look for signs of physical complaints that may indicate it: stomachaches, headaches, and vomiting. They may also look clammy or sweaty if their heart is racing from worry. Pay attention to abrupt mood changes, as well.

- **Don't try to get rid of their anxiety — help them manage it.** No parent wants to see their child unhappy, but the best way to help kids overcome anxiety isn't to try to completely get rid of stressors that trigger it. It's to help them learn to identify, tolerate, and find ways to reduce their anxiety.
- **Remind them bad things can happen, but they can overcome a lot.** You can't guarantee that a child's fears are unrealistic — failing a test, getting teased, or messing up a piano solo. But you can express confidence that they'll be okay even if those things do happen. They'll be able to manage these bumps in the road, and when they realize this, their anxiety may lessen.
- **Encourage a healthy lifestyle.** Mental and physical health are closely intertwined. Make sure your child is eating nutritious food, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep.
- **Get help for your child.** It's of utmost importance that you arrange professional help for your child if they need it. Talk with your child's school counselor, their physician, or a mental health professional to help them through their anxiety. Online therapy is also becoming increasingly popular. Services like [Talkspace](#) connect teens with online therapists via text, chat, and video.

## Helpful Resources

- › [Childhood Anxiety Disorders](#)
- › [Anxiety Disorders and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\)](#)
- › [What to Do \(and Not Do\) When Children Are Anxious](#)
- › [How To Help A Child Struggling With Anxiety](#)



## Conversation Starters

- How does it feel when you get anxious?
- What is a recent situation that made you feel anxious?
- What do you do when you're feeling worried or stressed?