

Understanding Big Feelings

Printable tips for info on the go! Print, cut on the dotted line, then fold on the solid line in the center. Now, hang anywhere you and your family will see it each day!



SIMPLE WAYS TO BE A SAFE SPACE FOR KIDS

PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

- Make eye contact when they are talking and pause before jumping into problem solving.
- Reflect with validation- ***"That sounds really frustrating", or "I hear you, tell me more."***

SEPARATE THE FEELING FROM THE BEHAVIOR

- Acknowledge the emotion, even if the action is unacceptable- ***"It's okay to feel upset, but it's not okay to throw things."***
- Remind them that big feelings are normal and something everyone experiences.

KEEP IT COOL AND PREDICTABLE

- Try to avoid emotional reactions.
- Thank them if they admit to a mistake- ***"Thanks for being honest with me, let's work through this together."***

NORMALIZE BIG FEELINGS

- Share your own daily frustrations and how you cope with them.
- If you react poorly, apologize to show them repair is always possible- ***"I'm sorry I raised my voice at you; I was feeling overwhelmed, but that wasn't your fault."***



TIPS TO NAVIGATE YOUR CHILD'S BIG FEELINGS

KEEP YOUR COOL

- Getting heightened with a child in the middle of a tantrum will only make things worse. Remember, they're learning how to cope with BIG feelings.
- ***Pause, breathe, and remember tantrums are a normal part of child development.***

OKAY THE FEELING

- When children are validated, the intensity of their emotions often decrease.
- ***"I hear you're feeling sad that it's time to leave the park. It's okay to feel sad."***

HOLD THE BOUNDARY

- Giving in during a meltdown can confuse kids and reinforce that tantrums work to get what they want.
- ***"Time to say bye-bye park, thanks for all the fun."***

SHIFT TO YES

- Remove the attention from the boundary and give kids a little control.
- ***"We're going home now. Do you want to read a book or color a picture with me once we're home?"***



SCAN HERE FOR MORE
WAYS TO HELP KIDS COPE
WITH BIG FEELINGS!

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UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

It is normal for kids to feel stressed. How do you know if what your child is experiencing is a routine worry or childhood anxiety?

WORRY

- Very specific
- Resolve with time & reassurance
- Can be managed at home

ANXIETY

- Occurs quickly & difficult to manage
- Fears last longer
- Often causes a physical response

WHAT IS CHILDHOOD ANXIETY?

The CDC defines this as: "When a child does not 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."

WHEN DO I TALK TO A PROVIDER?

Experts suggest that there are two specific behaviors to look for when spotting anxiety: avoidance and extreme distress.

- Avoiding specific people, situations, or activities
- Fears are interfering with daily activities
- Trouble concentrating, eating properly, and sleeping
- Continued distress even with an adult's reassurance
- Physical symptoms such as tension, fast heartbeat, headache, or stomach pain



TIPS TO COPE WITH CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

When kids feel anxious, caregivers often want to "fix it". Rather than protecting kids from the things that upset them; try to help them manage those feelings!

VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS, WITHOUT BELITTLING THEIR FEARS

"I KNOW YOU ARE FEELING NERVOUS FOR TOMORROW'S TEST. IT IS OK TO FEEL THIS WAY. YOU CAN DO THIS, AND I AM HERE TO HELP."

OFFER A COPING STRATEGY

"I KNOW WE CAN SHRINK THIS BIG FEELING. CAN I HELP YOU USE A CALMING STRATEGY?"

CHOOSE ANY STRATEGY BELOW

- Color or draw how you feel.
- Close your eyes and repeat, "I can do hard things. I believe in me!"
- Take 3 deep breaths.
- Talk with someone you trust.
- Close your eyes and think of a calm, happy place.
- Play with a fidget toy, build with blocks, or squeeze a squishy ball.
- Move your body (go for a walk, yoga).



SCAN HERE FOR MORE SIMPLE COPING STRATEGIES!