



HEALTHY MINDS: HELPING KIDS COPE

Families play an important role in helping kids cope with their emotions in a healthy way.

Here are some strategies to help kids identify their feelings, prepare for life's challenges, build resiliency, process strong emotions, feel supported, and meaningfully engage with the world around them. Parents and kids should determine, together, a strategy that works best for them based on their child's needs and situation.

OPEN CONVERSATION

- Help your child identify what they are anxious about, and why. Respect your child's fears, but do not amplify them.
- Express realistic expectations. There is no guarantee that your child will always be protected from difficult situations or embarrassment despite their best efforts to prepare.
- Talk together though possible outcomes and what would happen if your child's fears came true. Remind them of what tools they can use to deal with whatever happens.
- Limit the amount of time your child talks about their anxiety with you. Set aside 10 minutes a day for focused "worry time" or create a worry box for them to write down their feelings. Avoid doing this before bedtime.
- Children learn a lot from the adults around them. Help normalize conversations about mental health by talking about your own stressors or fears, then model coping skills so that kids can observe how you are dealing with it. Age needs to be considered in what situations a caregiver chooses to model in front of their children.
- Tell them that you are there to help and support them every step of the way.

DE-STRESSING ACTIVITIES

- Do physical activities like sports, exercise or playing outdoors.
- Get together as a family and play games. Each time let a different family member choose the game or activity.
- Color, journal, paint or do something else creative.
- Play with stress balls and fidget spinners to keep hands busy
- Listen to music.
- Try deep breathing, yoga or meditation.

GENTLE EXPOSURE TO NON-THREATENING VERSIONS OF FEARS

- If your child is afraid of thunderstorms, play the sound of thunder on your phone for one minute.
- If your child is afraid of dogs, introduce them to a gentle dog.
- If your child is afraid of leaving you, leave them inside with a loving family member or friend while you go outside for 5 minutes.

SKILL- AND RESILIENCE-BUILDING

- Break down situations or projects that are overwhelming into smaller, achievable tasks.
- Help your child establish a predictable daily routine.
- Keep the time period before a worrying situation short. The hardest time for people with anxiety is the time period before the event or task is accomplished. Keeping that period as short as possible allows less time to worry.





HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



- Encourage your child to engage in necessary activities and situations, even if they feel worried about the outcome. The more positive experiences they have, the more their self-confidence will grow, and their fear will subside.
- Help them identify their feelings of self-doubt or inadequacy as well as things they like about themselves.
- Teach your child the difference between being alone and being lonely.
- Discuss things your child can do if they are alone or feel lonely.

AT-HOME ROUTINES

- Limit the amount of time your kids spend on social media.
- Help them establish a daily routine. This gives structure and purpose to every day.
- Encourage them to get dressed every day, even if they are staying home all day.

CREATE CONNECTION

- Adopt or care for a pet if that works with your finances and lifestyle. Pets give people companionship, comfort and purpose.
- Encourage your child to participate in a peer-to-peer club or group focused on a common interest.
- Get involved in a team sport to encourage relationships and sense of community.

