

Dr Elizabeth Cohen
& ASSOCIATES

Helping Your Children Cope with Anxiety

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What is Anxiety?

- Evolutionarily Adaptive Response
- Combination of thoughts, feelings and behaviors
- Disorders are defined as clinical interfering with functioning
 - Example: snake fear vs. elevator fear



Common Anxieties in Children

- Homework/tests
- Peers
- After School Activities
- Body image
- Performance
- People pleasing
- Systemic racism and prejudices

Common theme in all children's worries....

“Mistakes are not ok. I need to do this perfectly.”





How do we help children with perfectionism?

- Growth Mindset vs. Outcome Mindset
- Model making mistakes
- Cognitive Behavioral Techniques
- If needed, consult a specialist



Define the *specific* worry

- On a piece of paper list your worries
- Rank worries in order of largest worry to smallest worry (0-10)
- Now that you have a ranked list of worries pick one you lower than 4.



Where is the worry in your body?





Brain Retraining and Detective Work

- Treat worry thought as a hypothesis rather than a truth
- Ask what evidence we have to support this fact
 - “Have I felt like this before and did what I was most afraid of actually happen?”
 - If my worry came true could I handle it? Would I remember it a month from now, 6 months from now, a year from now?”
- Most common mistakes over-estimate the likelihood of something bad happening and underestimate our ability to handle situation.



More Detective Questions

Here are some other great questions to ask yourself when gathering evidence for or against your worry thought:

- a) Am I 100% sure of these awful consequences?
- b) Does _____ have to lead to _____?
- c) Do I have a crystal ball?
- d) Could there be another explanation?
- e) Does _____'s opinion reflect that of everyone else?
- f) Is _____ so important that my entire future resides with this outcome?
- g) What is really the worst thing that can happen here?
- h) What would I tell a friend who had this same worry?



Rational Responses and Coping Thoughts

Here are some other useful rational responses:

- a) I am anxious now, but I am still in control and will stay in control of myself

- a) I have handled bigger things than this, like _____ and can handle this too.
- b) I can still be anxious and present a good project.
- c) It is okay to make mistakes, ask questions, and be nervous.
- d) Use stickies, phone reminders, friends.
- e) We learn most from our struggles not from perfectionism



Planning Ahead

Anxiety is apprehension about an unknown experience

Anxiety increases when we do not know what is going to happen next

Planning is incredibly important for a sense of calm, support and presence for kids

Planning requires *specificity*

Backwards planning is key with kids developing brains



Compassion is key

For you and your child!





For More Guidelines

Please sign the email list sheet going around to get updates and speak with me directly

Talk to your children!

I cannot wait to hear from all of you.

Afterall, you are the experts on your kid.

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