

# ANXIETY IN KIDS

Anxiety disorders impact a child's ability to explore new things with enthusiasm, rest peacefully through the night and meet new people in social situations.



# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a very general term used to describe a feeling of extreme worry or unease. Feeling anxious is natural after something upsetting happens. But when a child feels anxiety that lasts a long time and prevents them from doing things like going to school or seeing friends, then it becomes an anxiety disorder.

## SEPARATION

Separation anxiety disorder: Children feel extremely upset when they have to be away from parents or caregivers. This anxiety goes beyond what other kids their age normally feel.

## GENERAL

Children with generalized anxiety disorder worry about a lot of everyday things. Their worry is not caused by anything specific and it is bad enough to get in the way of daily life.

## SOCIAL

Children with social anxiety disorder feel extremely self-conscious around other people. They are so afraid of being embarrassed that they avoid social situations and even speaking in class.

## PANIC ATTACKS

Children with panic disorder have frequent, unexpected panic attacks. Panic attacks cause physical feelings that can make kids think they are dying or having a heart attack.

**Note: Everyone will occasionally experience symptoms of Anxiety. We all feel stressed and overwhelmed when dealing with big life moments. These problems represent a cause that when dealt with (instead of ignored) does not lead to persistent anxiety or disorders.**

## WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?

Anxiety has many symptoms and can look very different from child to child. Some common signs include:

- Trouble sleeping
- Stomachaches or other physical problems
- Avoiding certain situations
- Being clingy around parents or caregivers
- Trouble concentrating in class or being very fidgety
- Tantrums
- Being very self-conscious





## SEPARATION ANXIETY

One of the most emotionally activating events in a child's life is when they must separate from their parent(s). It looks like:

**Social withdraw**

**Extreme clingyness**

**Upset stomach**

**Nightmares about  
being separated**

**Refusal to do things  
that require separation**

**Panic and temper  
tantrums at the  
point of separation**

**Fear of being  
alone**

## THE BRIDGING TECHNIQUE from Dr. Russell Kennedy


In Bridging you never let the next connection left unsaid, there is **always an explicit bridge to the next point of connection of the child to their parent / caregiver.** The anxious child knows exactly and definitively what and when the next point of connection looks like and is looking forward to the fun/security of that specific connection.

### **WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEAVE YOUR CHILD, SAY:**

"I hope you have a good sleep / day at school / visit with grandma..."

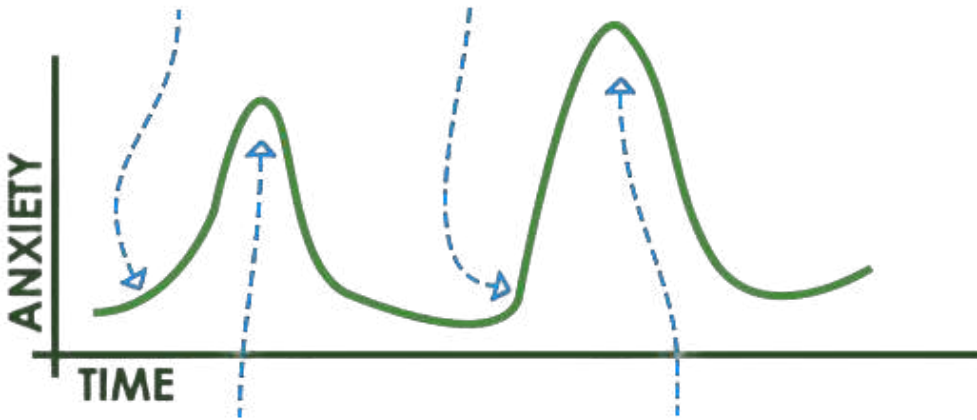
### **AND THEN BRIDGE THE NEXT CONNECTION BY SAYING:**

"...I'm looking forward to playing ponies with you / taking you skating / going for a snack when I come right back here to get you."



# HOW ANXIETY WORKS OVER TIME:

A person faces an anxiety creating situation which leads to an uncomfortable sense of worry and agitation.



The anxiety creating situation is avoided, and the person receives a feeling of relief. However, next time the anxiety will be worse.



## TREATMENT:

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has become the leading treatment for anxiety, and with good reason. Research indicates that CBT can be an effective treatment for anxiety after as few as 8 sessions, with or without any form of medication. Due to the high prevalence of anxiety disorders (18% of adults in the United States meet criteria for an anxiety disorder over a 1-year period), it's valuable to have a strong understanding of best practices for its treatment.

CBT works by identifying and addressing how a person's thoughts and behaviors interact to create anxiety. Therapists work with clients to recognize how negative thought patterns influence a person's feelings and behaviors. With CBT, a therapist attempts to intervene by changing negative thought patterns, teaching relaxation skills, and changing behaviors that lead to the problem worsening. To help provide motivation for treatment and get a client on board, providing psychoeducation about anxiety is the first step of treatment.

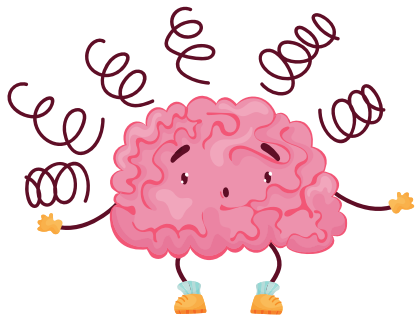
## THERAPEUTIC TOOLS:

- Challenging Negative Thoughts
- Exposure Therapy / Systematic Desensitization
- Body Based Relaxation Skills



# WHAT COULD HAPPEN VS. WHAT WILL HAPPEN

When we become worried it's easy to jump to the worst possible thing we can imagine. However, many of these things will never come true. What could possibly happen is very different than what will happen.



## STEP 1: WHAT ARE YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT?

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## STEP 2. WHAT ARE SOME CLUES THAT YOUR WORRY WILL NOT COME TRUE?

Things that will happen have support to become a reality. The worries that won't come true do not have support to really happen. Name details that show you a lack of support for your worries.

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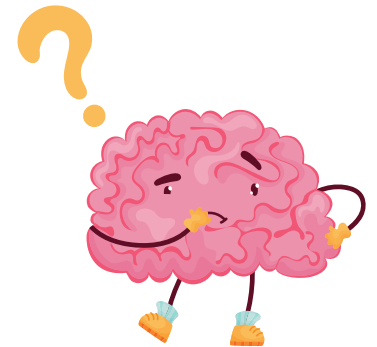
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## STEP 3: IF YOUR WORRY DOES NOT COME TRUE WHAT WILL PROBABLY HAPPEN INSTEAD?

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## STEP 4: IF YOUR WORRY DOES COME TRUE, HOW WILL YOU HANDLE IT? WILL YOU EVENTUALLY BE OKAY?

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Oh, no!



# WHAT IS WORRY?

Worries are unpleasant thoughts that you can't get out of your head. They're like annoying bugs that keep buzzing around and won't leave you alone. It's normal to have worries—everyone has them from time to time. It's only a problem when your worries get in the way of other parts of your life, or if they make you unhappy. What do you worry about? **Circle your worries in the lists below:**

Family	School	Friends	Other
Arguments / Fights	Following rules	Fitting In	Getting Hurt
Upsetting family member	Grades	Making Friends	Being Embarrassed
Getting in trouble	Presentations	Being Teased	Appearance
Family's Safety	Tests	What to talk about	Money
Not seeing a family member	Homework	Bullies	-----

When you worry, your body goes through a number of changes. These changes can be uncomfortable, and for some people they're scary. **Circle each of the worry symptoms that you've experienced:**



**Fast Heartbeat**



**Sweating**



**Feeling Sick**



**Shaking**



**Feeling Hot**

The good news about worry is that it can't hurt you. Worrying might be uncomfortable, but you can learn to control it with a little practice. **Is there anything you already do that helps you control your worry?**

To control my worry, I... \_\_\_\_\_

# THE WORRY IN MY BODY

When we feel scared or anxious and we avoid dealing with it we work hard to forget it so we can feel better fast. However, our brain sends forgotten stress and fears into our body when it doesn't get a chance to deal with. Avoiding the things that make us anxious helps in the short term but it means we have bigger stresses building up in our mind AND also our body. **Let's practice finding and calming the worry in our body:**



**WHEN YOU FEEL ANXIOUS WHERE IN THE BODY IS IT?**

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**WHAT WARNING IS THIS BODY FEELING TELLING YOU?**

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**HOW IS THIS BODY FEELING TRYING TO GUESS "WHAT IF"?**

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**HOW IS THIS BODY FEELING PREPARING FOR THE WORST?**

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**HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR BODY THAT MATCHES THE WAY ANXIETY SHOWS UP?**

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## STRESS RELIEF OPTIONS BY BODY PART:

**The Scalp** - full of pressure points that effectively reduce stress levels. Use two fingers to massage the point where the neck meets the skull for about 20 seconds.

**The Ear** - The most accessible point of the vagal nerve system in the body to reduce inflammation and pain throughout the body.

**The Thumb and Palm** - It is believed that much of the stress we experience is stored in the liver, so applying pressure in this area is highly effective. It is also a great spot for treating headaches, stomachaches, indigestion, and insomnia – all of which could be symptoms of stress.





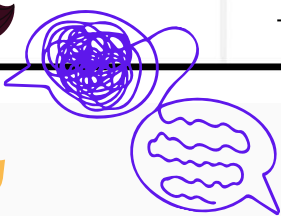
# I CAN USE MY STRENGTHS!

One of the best ways we can support our anxious thoughts is to work against them by using our strengths. People that know how their strengths, and use them, are more successful in many areas of life. Let's learn how we can use our best attributes to feel happier, have stronger self esteem and help ourselves accomplish our goals.



Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own at the bottom.

Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness
	_____	_____	_____



## NOW, LET'S LEARN HOW TO USE THEM



Part 2.

# I CAN USE MY STRENGTHS!

**FRIENDSHIPS:** That includes in your family, at school and at activities like soccer.

Which of your strengths help you with friends?

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Give an example of a specific time your strengths helped you with your friends?

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What are 2 new ways you can use your strengths to make friends?

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**SCHOOL:** Includes your past and future work in grade school, but this can also be used in professional work.

Which of your strengths help you with school?

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Give an example of a specific time your strengths helped you with your school work?

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What are 2 new ways you can use your strengths to help in school?

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**DREAMS / GOALS:** Includes your hobbies, interests and things you do just for fun.

Which of your strengths help you achieve your dreams?

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Give an example of a specific time your strengths helped you with going after a dream or goal?

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What are 2 new ways you can use your strengths to help achieve future goals?

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# PREPARING FOR ANXIETY

Situations that cause us trouble or are completely new make us feel anxious. Feeling uncomfortable can be helped by preparing ahead of time. Let's dive in:

**THING THAT CREATES ANXIETY:** \_\_\_\_\_

Why does it make me anxious?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How have I handled it before?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What warning signs in my body that says I'm getting anxious?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What coping skill would help me feel better with this?

\_\_\_\_\_

What can I do beforehand to prepare?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What can I say to them or myself to prepare?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# SOCIAL ANXIETY



Social anxiety is when you feel nervous, worried, or scared when you are around other people. It often involves a fear of embarrassing ourselves or of being judged. It can sometimes cause you to avoid doing things you want or need to do.

## WHICH OF THESE SITUATIONS MAKE YOU FEEL ANXIOUS?

- Going to a birthday party
- Eating in front of others
- Being on stage
- Talking to new people
- Talking in front of class
- Answering the phone
- Going to school
- Being in a group / large crowd
- People watching me
- Starting or joining a conversation
- Playing a sport
- Using school or public bathrooms
- Making eye contact
- Walking into a new space
- Asking for help (teacher or others)
- Talking to adults
- Answering questions in class
- Walking in the hallway/ alone
- Other:
- Other:



## WHAT THOUGHTS COME UP?

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## HOW DO I FEEL?

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## WHAT STRENGTH CAN I USE TO FEEL OR DO BETTER IN THESE SITUATIONS?

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**New situations will always make us feel uncomfortable.** We want people to like and value us. The secret is to know that everyone feels this way most of the time. When we use humor and acceptance we feel more comfortable and others around us feel more comfortable too! Being ourselves and supporting others to do the same is the magic key to feeling strong *in every situation.*

**PROMISE ME THAT YOU`LL  
ALWAYS REMEMBER:  
YOU`RE BRAVER  
THAN YOU BELIEVE,  
AND STRONGER  
THAN YOU SEEM,  
AND SMARTER  
THAN YOU THINK.**

Christopher Robin

