

WHAT PARENTS CAN SAY IN ANXIOUS MOMENTS

PARENT GUIDE



ANXIETY IS OFTEN A PROBLEM THAT GROWS WHEN WELL INTENDED PARENTS ARE TRYING TO HELP THEIR CHILD FIND FAST RELIEF TO BIG FEELINGS. UNDERSTANDING HOW ANXIETY WORKS AND WHAT YOUR ROLE IS IN HELPING YOUR CHILD IS CRITICAL. YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT HELPING YOUR CHILD MEANS FINDING WAYS TO ALLOW THEM TO FEEL THEIR FEELINGS AND NOT HELPING THEM FIND WAYS TO GET RID OF THEM. FAST RELIEF OFTEN HAS THE UNFORTUNATE SIDE-EFFECT OF TEACHING KIDS THAT FEELINGS ARE BAD AND WILL MAKE IT MORE LIKELY THEY RESPOND TO FEELINGS IN UNHEALTHY WAYS. ONCE A CHILD LEARNS HOW TO FEEL THESE FEELINGS, THE BONUS OUTCOME IS THAT THE FEELINGS USUALLY REDUCE. HERE IS A GUIDE TO HELPFUL RESPONSES YOU CAN GIVE TO CHILDREN THAT DO NOT REINFORCE WORRY.

REFLECT

YOU REALLY WANT ME TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION.
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO SAY YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL TODAY.
YOU'RE FEELING SO WORRIED RIGHT NOW.
I NOTICE THAT THIS WORRY KEEPS POPPING IN YOUR HEAD.

EMPATHIZE

I CAN TELL HOW HARD THIS IS FOR YOU.
IT MUST BE SO STRESSFUL TO FEEL THIS BAD.
I AM GOING TO SIT WITH YOU FOR A BIT.
CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW BAD THIS FEELS?
THESE FEELINGS ARE NOT EASY.

*Don't underestimate
the POWER
of your TONE OF VOICE!*

BE CLEAR

I CAN'T ANSWER WORRY QUESTIONS BECAUSE I KNOW THAT MAKES WORRY GROW.
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT, I THINK ANSWERING IT AGAIN WILL MAKE WORRY GROW.
I KNOW IT'S HARD BUT I CAN'T LET YOU AVOID THAT, I DON'T WANT WORRY TO GROW.

ENCOURAGE

THESE FEELINGS ARE HARD AND I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU CAN DO THIS!
YOU CAN DO HARD THINGS.
LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED, THE FEELINGS DIDN'T LAST FOREVER, REMEMBER?
I BELIEVE IN YOU!
YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOUR WORRY!

MODEL

SHOW YOUR CHILD THAT YOU BELIEVE WHAT YOU ARE SAYING TO THEM BY:
NOT CONTINUING TO TALK ABOUT IT (OF COURSE YOU CAN SIT WITH THEM AND BE LOVING)
HELPING THEM TO GET GOING WITH THE DAY EVEN IF THEY HAVE THESE FEELINGS

Instead of:

You have nothing to worry about.
Stop it.
Everything will be fine.
I'll do it for you.
You don't have to go.
Toughen up.
Nothing bad will happen.

THESE STRATEGIES MAY PROVIDE YOUR CHILD WITH SOME QUICK, TEMPORARY RELIEF BUT IT WILL NEVER GIVE THEM LONG-TERM RELIEF BY TEACHING THEM HOW TO FEEL THEIR FEELINGS IN A HEALTHY WAY.