

insights



Managing your child's anxiety

by Michael Grose

If your child feels anxious reassure them that these feelings are a normal response to new people, events or potentially challenging situations. Help your child understand that there is a great deal they can do to manage their anxious feelings, so they can get on with the activities they enjoy.

Explain anxiety

If your child is anxious they may struggle to explain how they feel. An important first step in anxiety self-management is explaining to your child how anxiety works.

- Teach your child that the amygdala, the part of the brain that protects them, is always on high alert when they are anxious.
- Explain that the amygdala sees danger where there is none, but the body prepares to fight for life or flee from danger as if it's protecting them from a hungry lion.
- Talk about the changes that happen in their body to power them up to fight or flee including; increased heart and breathing rates and the pumping of the blood from the stomach to the arms and legs, which can cause nausea and even vomiting for some.

Help recognise anxiety-inducing events

Help your child to recognise the specific situations and events that make them feel anxious such as meeting new friends, sitting tests and fear of rejection. In this way you can help your child manage and minimise his feelings of anxiety.

Respond with empathy

When your child feels anxious, the part of the brain that controls rational thinking, decision-making and concentration temporarily goes offline. They can feel easily overwhelmed by simple, everyday events and situations. Rather than protecting your child by allowing them to avoid meeting these challenges, or dismissing them as trivial, validate their feelings with statements such as "I can see you're feeling worried about going to camp without your brother."

Managing anxious moments

Help your child develop the tools to regulate and push their anxious feelings to the background. Practise these anxiety management tools when your child is feeling calm, and it will be easier for them to practise when they are

nervous. These include:

- Taking some deep breaths: Deep belly breathing from the diaphragm calms the amygdala, reducing feelings of anxiousness
- Bringing their attention back to the present: Use their senses to bring their attention to the present moment and away from their worries – “Tell me five things you see, four things you hear and something you smell”
- Getting them moving: Physical exercise is not only a great distraction but it releases feel-good endorphins that help children and young people feel better and more optimistic about the future
- Defusing their thoughts: Help your child to distance themselves from their thoughts by using distancing statements. Replace “I’m going to fail the test” with “I had a thought that I’m going to fail the test.” Rather than changing their thinking, assist your child to distance themselves from unhelpful thoughts

There’s a great deal you can do to help your child manage their anxiety. Start by assisting your child to understand the fundamentals of anxiety, show your understanding of their feelings and be ready to support them emotionally to push their anxiety to the background.

[As your school has a membership with Parenting Ideas, you can attend the upcoming webinar – Managing your child’s anxiety – at no cost!](#)

About the webinar

Join Michael Grose in this webinar where he will help parents better understand the nature of anxiety, equip them to recognise it in children, and provide practical tools to help children and young people manage and minimise their anxious states.

When

Tuesday 25 June 2019 8:00pm AEST.

Price

This webinar is \$37 per person to attend, and is free of charge to families at schools that have a membership.

How parents can redeem the voucher

1. Click this link: <https://www.parentingideas.com.au/parent-resources/parent-webinars/webinar-managing-your-childs-anxiety>
2. Click ‘Add to cart’
3. Click ‘View cart’
4. Enter the voucher code **ANXIETY** and click ‘Apply Coupon’ (valid until 25 July 2019). Your discount of \$37 will be applied.
5. Click ‘Proceed to checkout’
6. Fill in your account details. These details are used to login to your account and access your parenting material
7. Click ‘Place Order’



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia’s leading parenting educators. He’s the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation* and the best-selling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. His latest release *Anxious Kids*, was co-authored with Dr Jodi Richardson.