

CHOOSE HAPPINESS CHAPTER 9-13

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH ANXIETY



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— wellness —

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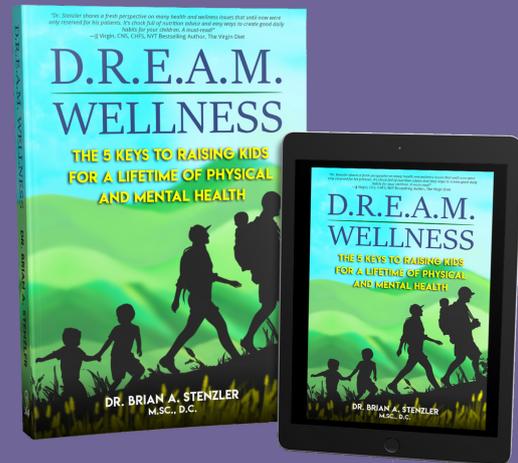
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This guide is a bonus supplement to go with Chapter 9-13, "Choose Happiness" in the book, *DREAM Wellness: The 5 Keys to Raising Kids for a Lifetime of Physical and Mental Health*.

If you do not have a copy, you can order your Kindle or printed version now at www.DREAMWellnessBook.com.



The world can be a scary place, and many children have good reason to worry. However, many children worry much more than is reasonable for the situation.

Anxiety isn't always a bad thing. A person should be worried if they're in a dangerous situation, for example. Anxiety is protective, but too much or inappropriate anxiety isn't healthy.

It is understandable why so children have so many worries. They're under a lot of social scrutiny at school, and kids can be cruel. They have little control over their lives. Most aspects of their lives are controlled by parents or teachers.

If your child is anxious, it can be heartbreaking to see them worry all of the time. It can also be frustrating when their worries seem pointless to you. Be supportive and patient and get professional help if your efforts prove to be insufficient.





Strategies to help your child overcome anxiety:

1 Be supportive and patient. It can be frustrating when your child is constantly worried about things that seem meaningless or silly. However, the anxiety they feel is just as real to them as your anxieties are to you. You don't get to choose the emotions or fears of other people.

- Let your child know that you're sensitive to their feelings and are always there to support them.

2 Avoid giving too much warning about a stressful event. If you know your child stresses out about going to the dentist, it's best not to announce a dentist appointment three weeks in advance. The morning of the appointment is just fine. For some children, it might be even better to say, "Put on your shoes, we have to go to the dentist."

- Too much notice can provide too much time to worry. Figure out how much time your child needs to keep their anxiety at a minimum. Some children appreciate a little time to process what's going to happen.

3 Talk it out. Ask your child what they're worried about and why. Talk about why this fear is or isn't valid. In other words, look for evidence to prove or disprove the reason for the fear.

- If the fear is valid, develop a plan together to handle the issue.
- If the fear isn't valid, help your child to trust the evidence they found that negates the reason for the anxiety.

4 Take a look at your home life. Is your home life stressful for your child? Do you and your child's other parent get along well, or is there a lot of arguing? Are there financial pressures in the household that the child is aware of?

- Children might give the impression that they're not listening, but they are surprisingly adept at figuring out what's going on.



Strategies to help your child overcome anxiety, continued

5 Help your child to keep their attention on the present. We can only worry when we project our attention into the future and imagine negative outcomes. This is largely a habit.

- Teach your child to focus on the present moment and their surroundings. Show your child that it's more effective to focus on what is, rather than what might be..

6 Avoid avoidance. You might think you're being nice if you help your child to avoid everything that causes them to feel anxious, but you're actually contributing to the issue.

- Each time your child is allowed to avoid the situation due to anxiety, there's a part of her brain that says, "Hmmm. If I make her feel anxious, we can get out of doing these things."
- The brain quickly learns what works. The next time, the anxiety will be even stronger. The brain will continue turning up the volume until it gets what it wants.
- Avoiding a stressor brings relief, which is very rewarding. The urge to avoid only becomes stronger as it's reinforced.
- Be supportive but avoid letting them off the hook.

7 Get professional help. It's very challenging for a parent to effectively help a child with moderate to severe anxiety issues. It's likely that professional help will be useful. Find a therapist or psychologist that specializes in children of your child's age.