

## WORKING WITH A LITTLE WHO HAS ANXIETY



### What are anxiety disorders?

At one point or another everyone experiences anxiety to some extent. Some anxiety is normal and can be healthy. For example, a little bit of anxiety before a big exam can motivate a child to study for the test. However, when anxiety is extreme or out of proportion to the circumstances, then this anxiety is unhealthy and may be indicative of a mental health disorder. Anxiety disorders come in all different forms. For example, one's anxiety may be focused on a specific object, such as spiders, or a situation, such as public speaking, or be generalized to almost all situations. This document does not focus on any particular anxiety disorder but instead anxiety in general.

### What are symptoms of anxiety?

- Headaches
- Stomachaches or nausea
- Sweaty hands
- A pounding or racing heart
- Feeling out of control
- Racing thoughts
- Frequent nightmares
- Avoiding certain situations or objects out of fear
- Nervous movements or twitches
- Being clingy or not wanting to separate from others, such as a parent
- Having many fears
- Expressing worry or concern that seems extreme
- Not wanting to leave the house
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Difficulty concentrating

### Online Resources

- <https://adaa.org>
- [www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)
- [www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net)
- [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)
- [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)
- [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
- <https://kidshealth.org>

### Tips for Bigs

- Gain an understanding of the specific anxiety disorder your Little has & how anxiety affects your Little
- Be in good communication with your Little's parent/guardian regarding changes & concerns
- Don't blame your Little for his/her anxiety or minimize his/her concerns
- Avoid going places & doing things that trigger anxiety in your Little
- Do not push your Little to do things that he/she is uncomfortable with
- Be consistent & try to make your visits with your Little predictable to reduce anxiety
- Give your Little a sense of control during your visits, such as allow him/her to make age-appropriate decisions
- Help your Little find ways to relax, such as taking deep breaths or doing yoga
- Try to stay calm even when your Little is anxious
- Focus on your Little's strengths