

10 Ways to Curb Anxiety In Children

By: Tony Dungy

(Husband, father, author, retired NFL coach, National Spokesman for @AllProDad, Lives by Mark 8:36)

The world feels unsafe for children. Many times they act out which can seem like selfishness or a bad attitude. However, they may also be reacting due to deep anxiety. Once you know the cause of a problem, you are able to address it. Here are 10 ways to curb anxiety in children.

"Children crave security. Provide it."

1. Know the signs

According to physicians, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States. Symptoms include a racing or pounding heart, heaviness in the chest, difficulty breathing, body shakes, and clammy hands.

2. Know the definition

Webster's defines anxiety as "an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked with physiological signs." Anxiety occurs occasionally within all children. "There is a monster under my bed." "I'm scared to take my math test." etc. are all perfectly normal. But if your child is constantly afraid of everything, take note.

3. Research answers

When your child's anxiety begins to dictate his behavior, it is time consult with your physician. In some cases, anxiety can lead to depression. Research the warning signs and act on them when necessary.

4. Don't micro-manage

Micro-managing every single detail of your child's activities can create anxiety. If he seems to be walking on egg shells in your presence, you are being too controlling. A parent must allow for some autonomy and independence.

5. Dial down family conflict

Studies show that children who regularly hear parents arguing and fighting can develop high levels of anxiety. What might be a benign disagreement can sound like the end of the world to young ears. Be careful what is said and how it is said when your children are around.

6. React calmly

When your son or daughter comes to you overly-excited or upset, respond in a calm manner. Reacting with excessive concern or anger will only heighten the stress. Keep your cool and ease the tension.

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7. Set clear boundaries

As stated earlier, parents can be too controlling. However, they can also be too permissive. If a parent makes no attempt to control, it will lead to confusion and stress. Set clear boundaries and household rules for the expectations of behavior.

8. Provide security

You are the protector, so make sure you are on the job. “Daddy, there is a spider in my bed!” “Dad, what if somebody breaks into our house?” “Dad, what if you and Mommy break up?” Always be comforting when called for. Children crave security. Provide it.

9. Be strong

It is important to limit signs of your own anxiety and worries. Your children will pick up on it and become stressed as well. Discuss your issues in private with your spouse. At the same time, it’s OK for you to occasionally share a concern with your kids and ask them to pray for you. Model how to appropriately handle anxiety.

10. Emphasize faith

Many studies have shown that faith and prayer lead to greatly reduced levels of anxiety. Knowing that God is always in control helps take a lot off a family’s shoulders. Whenever someone gets freaked out about something, encourage her to pray about it.

A child acting out may be doing so out of selfishness or a bad attitude. Or, it could be deep anxiety. Once you know the cause of a problem, you are able to address it.

To learn more about anxiety, helping children cope during this time of pandemic, parenting or other concerns, contact your ***Employee Assistance Program***.

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