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Untreated Anxiety Can Harm Health

People with anxiety disorders who receive treatment are more likely to lead more productive, healthier lives, according to clinical research. Why not treat anxiety early in childhood and teach children effective ways to handle anxiety so they have a chance to perfect the techniques before they reach adulthood?

The Anxiety Disorders Association of America estimates only one-third of all people with anxiety disorders receive the treatment they need. The Association estimates a number of reasons exist why people do not receive treatment. However, leaving anxiety untreated has been shown to be very detrimental to health.

A 1990s study of people with untreated anxiety indicates they reported significantly worse functioning on both physical and emotional measures than "non-anxious" comparison patients. These people actually reported reduced functioning levels within ranges that would be expected for people with chronic physical diseases, such as congestive heart failure and diabetes. Teaching people in their childhood how to more effectively handle anxiety can only lead to improved adult health.

Parents of worried children have many options for treatment for childhood anxiety. A first-line, at-home

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approach may include reading several books on the subject of childhood anxiety, such as Dr. Tamar Chansky's Freeing Your Child From Anxiety (for parents) or What to Do When You Worry Too Much by Dr. Dawn Huebner, to become more educated on the subject. Through that reading, parents will discover the causes and connections of anxiety to nature versus nurture, one of which is genetics. A strong genetic link for anxiety disorders does exist, so birth parents of anxious children should be open to examining their lives and seeking treatment for themselves. By doing so, parents are likely to not only improve their health, but also their ability to lead their children toward more productive, healthier lives.

In Dr. Huebner's book, children read a step-by-step guide for overcoming anxiety. One of those steps Dr. Huebner recommends is for children to "imagine a strong box" with "a cover and a strong lock" into which children can place a worry. Children, especially smaller ones, have a tangible storage solution for worries in My Worry Box™, which comes with My Worry Pad, a My Worry Box pencil and a set of instructions for use.

My Worry Box serves as a terrific medium for parental/child communication and a great storage place for worries. By writing worries on My Worry Pad and placing the sheet of worries inside My Worry Box, children begin to feel a sense of power over worries and build confidence in discussing their worries with a trusted adult after they "practice" forming words for them on paper. After children journal their worries and deposit them in My Worry Box, they should review them with a trusted adult periodically to discuss strategies for reducing the worries' impact on their lives. Children and adults may be surprised

how easily worries begin to disappear.

For children whose lives are severely compromised by anxiety, experts agree they should seek assistance from a therapy professional (such as a therapist, and, in some cases, a child/adolescent psychiatrist). Therapy professionals will assess the child and family's situation and prescribe varying forms of treatment that may include cognitive behavioral therapy, medication, group therapy and family therapy.

For more information and resources, visit www.myworrybox.com.

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Sources:

[Arch Gen Psychiatry](#). 1994 Sep;51(9):740-50

www.healthcentral.com/anxiety/c/22705/32960/anxiety-untreated

What To Do When You Worry Too Much, Dawn Huebner, PhD, Magination Press, 2006.