



My Worry Box
Whitney Development Group, Inc
6153 W Mulford St. Unit C
Niles, IL 60714

info@MyWorryBox.com
www.MyWorryBox.com

P: (847) 470-9306

Media Contact: Denise Stillman
708-248-8190
denisestillman@mycleardirections.com

Tips for Parenting the Overly Anxious Child

Many parents who have anxious children easily fall prey to overwhelming feelings of helplessness and lack of direction. Experts agree that parents easily can become confused about where they are headed with their children's development. Are they moving down a path to help their children just feel better or toward the strengthening their children's abilities? Having a clear sense of how to lead children to build their skills so they can grow into productive, happy, relaxed young adults is the best choice for parents of anxious children. Though anxiety triggered by various situations has specific resolution methods, these general skill-building techniques can help all anxious children:

- Acceptance: Accept the anxious child for who he or she is and don't blame the child for the condition. Children can understand the difference between being judged and being loved unconditionally.
- Teach supportive self-talk: Finding skills each child has and teaching him or her to excel at using them boosts a child's confidence. Praising each child in an appropriate way and teaching the child to hear and remove negative inner self-talk will strengthen the ability to conquer anxiety.
- Build awareness and teach control of the "bully" inside: For the younger child, this technique is especially helpful. Teach the anxious child to "talk back" to the worry by relating it to a bully who is giving him or her a hard time and lying to the child. This helps the child build the ability to get mad at the bully and decide to take action against it.

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- Communicate and listen: Taking time away from the television, computer, PDA and other family members to be one-on-one with the anxious child helps the child feel more worthy. If the anxious child won't open up and freely share worries, a therapeutic journaling technique is very helpful.
- Help children write worries down: For children who can write and spell a fair amount, journaling can be very therapeutic. Writing worries down on a piece of paper helps children "park" their worries somewhere other than in their heads and psychologically relieves some of the anxious child's burden. My Worry Box™ makes therapeutic journaling kid-friendly, accessible and fun.
- Synergy with parenting partner: As with all child-rearing situations, being on the same page as each other makes parents' words and actions much more powerful. It's important parents agree on a method of teaching and reinforcing the anxious child's new behaviors. Nothing will unravel the success of these techniques more than having one parent "go easy" on a child while the other pushes the child too much.

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Sources:

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