

Managing Anxiety in Young Children and Caregivers

Activity: Belly Breathing

Have your child lie down on their back on the floor.

Place a small stuffed animal or doll on their tummy. Explain to your child that the stuffed animal is moving up and down as they breath in and out. Talk about how belly breathing is a great way to reduce anxiety and calm down from big feelings.

These are troubling times. COVID-19, along with the usual chaos of the world, can lead to feelings of anxiety. There are some simple things you can do to help minimize your child's anxiety (and your own):

Talk about the scary things: By not talking about what is scaring your child, they may become more frightened. Answer your child's questions with accurate information, in short conversations so they don't feel overwhelmed.

Limit exposure to the news: Watching the news at a time like this can be scary for adults, and especially scary to children, who might not understand everything that is being said. Be mindful of what children are seeing on TV and social media, as well as adult conversations they might overhear.

Recognize a range of emotions: Children and their caregivers are likely experiencing a wide range of feelings right now, from anxiety and panic to frustration, anger, and sadness. Help children to identify what they are feeling and talk about healthy ways to manage those feelings. And don't forget to embrace moments of joy and happiness!

Build a routine: Children feel safe when they have a predictable schedule. Figure out what

the priorities are for each day and build your schedule from that starting point.

Practice self-care: Make time each day to practice self-care, in whatever way is meaningful to you. We cannot expect our children to feel calm if we as caregivers are not calm.



Take action: Sometimes taking action steps, no matter how small, can help relieve our anxiety. Some suggestions include: talk about the importance of frequent handwashing and good hygiene; clean and disinfect your home; check in on neighbors, friends, and families; mail cards or letters to loved ones, elderly people in nursing homes, or "helpers" (doctors, nurses, EMTs); hang artwork or signs of support in your windows at home.

Project ACT Recommended Resources

www.childmind.org

Research based information on a variety of topics, including anxiety and COVID-19.

www.virusanxiety.com

Resources for anxiety and your mental health in a global climate of uncertainty.

www.pbskids.org -and- www.pbs.org/parents

Kid specific webpage (games and activities for children) and parent specific webpage (with articles and information).

www.cosmickids.com

Yoga, mindfulness, and relaxation for kids.

Breath, Think, Do with Sesame Street

Free app for Apple and Android devices

GoNoodle

Free app for iOS, Android, AppleTV, Fire, and Roku

www.crisistextline.org

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a counselor

Maryland 211

Call 211 from your phone for referrals and information about community resources.

Mentalhealth.gov

Site run by US Department of Health & Human Services.

Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Who Do We Trust?

Knowing where to find trusted and accurate information is as important as ever. We at Project ACT recommend these sources for your information:

- American Academy of Pediatrics: aap.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: nami.org
- World Health Organization: who.int
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: ntsn.org