

Anxiety in Children

It is instinctual for adults to try to remove stressors of anxiety for children, but by doing this, paradoxically, it is likely in fact to increase anxiety levels by reinforcing that the trigger is a genuine cause for concern. The best way to support is to guide them in managing their feelings of anxiety and show, with practice, that they are going to be okay even if they are scared. Teaching them to tolerate their anxiety and function as well as they can is empowering for a child.

If a child starts to cry and either they or the trigger are removed from the situation, the child will learn that crying is an effective coping mechanism, their fear is reinforced as being valid and this cycle has the potential to repeat itself.

Adults should express confidence and belief that when the child face their fears, not only will they be okay, but their anxiety levels will drop over time. Respect their fears, but don't empower them. Acknowledge that they are worried/scared, but ensure them they will get through the situation.

Let the child know that you understand the work it takes to tolerate/face their anxiety but also explain that their levels of anxiety will drop over time as they continue to have contact with the trigger/stressor.

Parents/adults can model healthy ways of dealing with anxiety and show that anxiety is normal and doesn't have to stop them engaging in life.

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