

Anxiety Reducing Actions

❖ Put your anxiety on ice

Sensorial stimulation with cold water can break through dissociative feelings that often accompany anxiety and offer immediate relief from heightened cortisol levels.

❖ Clench your fists

While exercise is great for alleviating anxiety, it's not exactly realistic to go for a run when you're in the middle of a panic attack. However, a few physical activities — even ones as simple as clenching and releasing parts of your body — can have a positive effect.

❖ Repeat a calming phrase

Breathe deeply at least three times, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Assure yourself with this language: 'I am safe, and I am loved.' Repeat slowly three times, and you should begin to feel more at ease.

❖ Allow yourself to feel anxious

Sometimes the more you fight it, the worse it gets. Instead, acknowledge that you're feeling anxiety and give yourself permission to feel uncomfortable. This sounds scary, but anxiety stays anchored into place when we resist its presence- It can literally move through and beyond us the moment we decide to allow it.

❖ Let the tears flow

It can also be helpful to cry. Research shows that crying can be therapeutic, and often it's a sign that there are emotions that need to be released. Often anxiety is a response to trapped or repressed feelings. In these cases, giving oneself conscious permission to cry can offer the catharsis needed to calm the nervous system.

❖ Shut down your social media apps for a bit

Social media — and the internet in general — often heighten anxiety and fear.

❖ Take stock of your surroundings

Distracting your mind by focusing on something concrete in front of you can help you to avoid spiraling out of control. Count different colors, numbers or items in a room. Tune into your 5 senses and notice how many sensations you are experiencing.

❖ Jot down your feelings

Putting your worries and triggers in writing can help you manage your symptoms and challenge negative self-talk that's often associated with anxiety.

❖ Face what's causing your anxiety in the first place

It's important to face specific fears you have and not practice avoidance tactics. Anxiety is fed by avoidance. Try not to retreat. Challenge yourself to stay in it for five minutes. Eventually, your body will regulate itself, and the anxious feelings that you have will become easier to tolerate. This is the development of your mindfulness skills.

❖ Open up to friends / family

Talking with friends or family about how you are feeling can help to normalize what you are experiencing and relieve the pressure of keeping it a secret. This also makes it easier to reach out in the future should the need arise.

❖ Seek help from a professional

Talking things through with a mental health professional can be hugely beneficial and help keep your anxiety from escalating.

How to Talk to Your Kids About Anxiety

❖ YOUR DEemeanOR SETS THE TONE

It's essential for parents to remain calm and positive when talking to a child with anxiety. While a parent should not attempt to "fix" the anxiety, kids do take their cues from their parents. The way you respond to their anxious thoughts and behaviors can set them up for successful coping or increased anxiety. Thank them for trusting you with something so hard to talk about and reassure them that you're on their side in figuring out what to do next.

❖ OPENESS IS KEY

In a non-judgmental way, let your child know that you've noticed some changes in their normal way of behaving, or activities. You are concerned and want to "check in". Encourage your child to open up about any difficult feelings or thoughts they might be having that are hard to put into words.

❖ RELATE

Your teen may be more likely to feel like you understand them if they know you experienced similar issues. Briefly sharing your own struggles as a young person with anxiety in school (and even today) can make your teen feel that these feelings are normal. By being relatable you humanize yourself and open the door for communication.

❖ WHAT YOU CAN DO IN THE MOMENT

Hug and empathize. The power of human touch. Physical touch releases oxytocin, a feel-good hormone, and reduces cortisol, a stress hormone. A long hug can help comfort an anxious child in the moment and restore a feeling of calm. Try to combine this with some basic deep breathing techniques.

When your child expresses anxiety or worry, offer reassurance by saying you believe him or her, and that it's perfectly normal to experience stress and anxiety. Remember, anxious children need to hear this often, especially as you are the main role model for them. Show acceptance of worrying thoughts and anxious feelings. If you stay calm, it will help your child stay calm, too.

Be a good soother. When a child is upset, listening to them, comforting them, and reflecting their distress without adding to it is soothing. It gives kids the confidence that they are understood, that their parents respond to their cues and that they can be soothed.

Help A Friend



❖ DO NOT

- Don't say "Don't worry; Relax. It's all in your head. It's not a big deal!". It's important to acknowledge that your child's fears are real. Be respectful.
- Do not see your child's behavior as manipulative or simply not problematic. This is one of the most dangerous parenting situations. When a parent doesn't see their child's anxiety as real, the child typically defaults to a few unhealthy behavior options:
 - 1.) Hiding their anxiety - this never works
 - 2.) Convincing themselves that there must be something wrong with them because of their parents lack of understanding. Children in this situation tend to become more symptomatic, may suffer from depression, and if they are old enough may use drugs or alcohol to treat the symptoms of anxiety
 - 3.) Making the symptoms more pronounced in order to get the proper attention she/he needs.