

How to Help Your Child with School-Based Anxiety

There are several reasons a child may feel anxious when it comes to school. There may be separation anxiety involved with being away from a parent, and it may come out of the blue. Our education system has also become quite daunting and tedious, even for the smallest of learners. There is very little natural learning anymore and quite a bit more standardized requirements to be met. Whether a child is ready for these milestones or not, it can cause anxiety to fester and grow. Short of withdrawing your child from the school system (homeschooling is always a wonderful option), the only thing you can do is to develop the tools to help your child cope with these feelings.

Children cannot hide their emotions and tend to express them through action. Some act out aggressively, while others shut down and withdraw from activities. As a parent, it is hard to witness the child that you know so well act in ways that you were not expecting. It is even harder when these actions take place in an environment that you are not a part of, but one you send your child to feel safe throughout the day. It can feel defeating to hear your child crying daily and begging to not attend school.

If you are struggling with a child who feels sick every day, begs to stay home, or has a teacher expressing concerns over behavior that is not typical of your child, anxiety may be the culprit. There are several things you can do before resorting to medication. According to the Child Mind Institute, it is extremely important to understand that eliminating the anxiety is not the goal, but instead to provide the tools for your child to understand when an anxious moment begins and the best way to handle it.

7 Tips to Manage School-Based Anxiety

KEEPING OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION.

Talking to your child as a person and not ‘down to’ will help them feel as though they can talk to you openly. Talking about your hard days, finding happiness in situations, and how you talk yourself through things will provide a positive example and allow for them to come to you with questions and emotional struggles.

START THE DAY, AND END THE DAY WITH A PEP TALK.

The key to coping with and minimizing anxiety in your child is to teach them to talk their way through it. “I am strong. I am kind. I will learn something new and smile today.” You can alter the talk to suit your child’s needs, but it is important to follow the day with a second talk. This one should be in response to how the day went – but always taking a positive outlook and including happy things to dream about and plan for the following day.

Talk positively about school, friendships, and learning. Modeling positive feelings can have a large impact on your child.



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These wonderful affirmation cards from [SunForGood](#) can help with back-to-school anxiety for kids as well!

DO NOT ASK PROBING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILD’S ANXIETY.

Questions such as, “Why are you feeling this way? What’s wrong? Why don’t you want to go to school” can cause more stress and will not help you help your child. Instead, stick with simple questions that can invoke positive answers. “Are others including you? Is something happening at lunch that makes you feel bad?”

ATTEND THE CLASS AT SPECIFIC TIMES.

Let your child know that you will be there for lunch, recess, or another specific time frame, and be sure to follow through. Seeing you may ease the anxiety. This may not be convenient, but it can be very important to gradually help your child adapt and feel more comfortable.

HAVE A SECURITY ITEM ON HAND.

A worry stone to rub on, a watch with a known end time to the day, a bracelet, or another item that will remind your child you are thinking of them throughout the day. This little token can make a huge impact. If your child is old enough to write, inform the teacher that you would like them to have the ability to write down feelings, situations, or anything else in the moment to bring home.

TALK TO THE TEACHER.

Work as a team to help your child feel more comfortable at school. The teacher has the ability to be your eyes and ears when you are not present. If you need to go above the teacher, speak with the principal.

RESPECT YOUR CHILD.

Ultimately, your child deserves your respect and support. Figuring out how to help without breaking your child’s spirit or forcing them against their will may be the hardest obstacle you are faced with during this phase of parenthood, but you can do it.

Stay strong and confident as you take this journey. Love your child through these struggles and be there as they need you.